"Give me a number," Yoongi says when Namjoon finally turns around in his computer chair. Namjoon looks at him and sighs.

"One."

It's not the first time he's stumped with one plan. Namjoon looks at Yoongi, eyes trained on him like a hawk. “One?” Yoongi asks, voice low. “One,” Namjoon repeats, “and you’re not going to like it.”

There’s a hint of curiosity in Yoongi’s eyes and a question attempts to come out from his lips. But instead, Namjoon hears the order from his partner.

“Call them in.”

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Min Yoongi isn’t that fond of meetings. No one should really be fond of it, he thinks, except for his best friend Namjoon, who really likes talking. Namjoon can be soothing and perfect for PR, while Yoongi can be a bit stiff and unemotional, to say the least. In an alternate universe where they aren’t criminals, Yoongi deduces, his partner would make a good speaker for some government official or CEO.

The thing is, Yoongi doesn’t care that much if the USB he needs to steal contains files that can ruin a city’s economic growth, or if the necklace his team has to retrieve is a family heirloom that has the sentimental value of about eight generations before and after it. Most of the times Yoongi sees the client on the second or third meeting, when they’re discussing payments or other pertinent information to their jobs.

For Min Yoongi, there are only two things that he needs to know: what needs to be stolen, and how much his team is going to get paid for it.

“When they tell you the sentimental value of the item, it means they want you to value it as well so you’ll work harder to retrieve it,” Namjoon explains and Yoongi rolls his eyes at him.

“Pay me higher and I’ll work harder.”

So now he and Namjoon are sitting inside Kwon Jiyong’s office, waiting for their client to say something. Namjoon almost fainted when he found out that Kwon Jiyong, billionaire businessman, fashion designer, artist, producer, and overall rich guy is looking to have a job for them. He’s giddy their entire drive to his building, thinking about what job he has for them.

“Steal competitor secrets? What do you think, Yoongi hyung? Shit, what if he wants us to acquire files that can actually ruin the Korean economy? I can’t have that hanging above my head for the rest of my life!”

“Shut up and drive carefully, Namjoon,” Yoongi drones. He pretends to be nonchalant about this possible gig, but he’s curious as well. Kwon Jiyong is literally rich enough to buy half the land in Korea. Whatever job he has for them won’t be easy, but it also won’t come cheap. They know the job will be illegal (when was it not, really) when they’re made to park in the next building and then walk to the car park of Kwon Jiyong’s building, where a man named Kang Daesung is waiting for them, giving them special visitor passes.

“Please press for the 59th floor and scan the passes for access. I’ll only be with you up to the lobby,” the man informs them as they walk inside the building. Yoongi does a quick scan of where the CCTVs are and does a mental note to make Jeongguk erase traces of them entering the building, just in case.

Yoongi and Namjoon get inside the elevator, use the passes, and the box moves.

“It’s going down,” Namjoon notes. Yoongi isn’t surprised and instead just shrugs. “This guy’s going to be a dramatic one,” he tells the older one. The door opens and they walk down a particularly long hallway. “A really dramatic one.”

But when Kwon Jiyong, wearing a full, plush velvet suit, ears studded with jewelry that can feed a family of four for an entire year, leans forward across his desk and tells them what they have to steal, Yoongi is a bit surprised.
“Say that again?” Namjoon stutters.

“I need you to steal me a painting.” Mr. Kwon smiles but the glint in his eyes is far from affable.

Yoongi crosses his legs and arms. “And would that be the *Mona Lisa*, Mr. Kwon?” He literally cannot and will not be bothered to steal the most famous painting in the world, even if he can. Kwon Jiyong laughs and plays with the bracelet on his wrist.

“Please,” he scoffs at them, ”I don’t need you to acquire the *Mona Lisa*. I can get her if I want.”

Namjoon raises his eyebrows but Yoongi’s only impressed enough to raise just one. “And this painting you want… is harder to acquire than the *Mona Lisa*?”

Kwon Jiyong walks around his desk and sits on it, so there are no barriers between him and Namjoon and Yoongi, who are still seated on the velvet chairs. “Something like that.”

Yoongi assesses his potential client. He called some of the people he knows have worked with and for him, just to know what he’s like. Everyone told him the same thing: he’s extremely rich and extremely petty, and that makes him a good and dangerous client.

“It’s the other half of this painting behind me.” Kwon Jiyong continues, hand vaguely gesturing to his back. Both Yoongi and Namjoon look up at the small painting propped at the wall. The canvass is about four square feet in size, covered with gold streaks and white lines. The signature of the artist is nowhere to be found.

“Do you have a photo of the other half, Mr. Kwon?” Namjoon asks.

“No, but once you see it, you’ll know.” Kwon Jiyong informs them, like not knowing what their target item looks like isn’t a problem at all.

Yoongi realizes he *really* hates first time client meetings and would really rather get the Cliff’s Notes version from Namjoon next time. He blinks to avoid rolling his eyes and looks around the office, rich and filled with expensive things. He looks back at the frame behind Kwon Jiyong and thinks that if anything, the painting is the cheapest looking item in the place.

“I had this painting, and its twin, personally commissioned. It’s nothing of value to the black market, but it’s priceless to me,” Kwon tells them, tone suddenly a bit melancholic.

Yoongi succeeds in suppressing a groan sitting at the base of his throat.

Kwon Jiyong assesses their reactions and nods when he sees that both Namjoon and Yoongi seem to be genuinely disinterested in the monetary value of the piece of art. “The other half of this painting, the one I want you to steal,” he continues, his tone back to cold and sly, “is in the possession of Choi Seunghyun.”

****

At any given moment Kim Namjoon is contemplating something.

At any given second he has a certain number of plans to get out of wherever he is, and that increases or decreases depending on the external factors he has little to no control of. If, for example, he suddenly finds himself locked out of his and Hoseok’s shared apartment, he has 52 ways to get in without a key.

While listening to Kwon Jiyong explain the job, he starts with 153 plans. A hundred and fifty three
ways to steal a painting. That number's pretty high, considering the fact that they don't steal paintings that lot. Not anymore, at least, after what happened several years ago. Their expertise nowadays lean more on information extraction: files, photographs, things like that. Sometimes even governments hire them to retrieve information their own funded bureaus can’t get into, but he can’t elaborate on that.

While their potential client further describes the situation, the nature of the building, and the target, Namjoon’s number of ways to steal said painting slowly goes down. Choi Seunghyun, like Kwon Jiyong, is a businessman and an art collector. Almost as equally rich as Kwon. But unlike their potential client, their potential target is more reclusive. Namjoon has heard of his name, knows how much the paintings in his house are worth. He’s heard of Jackson Wang’s crew steal one painting from that place several years ago, and it’s buffed up its security ever since.

There are seven levels of security to get to the one painting, Mr. Kwon explains to them. Said painting seems to be the most precious one in Mr. Choi’s collection. It actually makes stealing the Mona Lisa seem a lot easier, and Namjoon has nine ways to do that, if he needed to.

Kwon Jiyong goes back to his seat. “I’m actually very kind, so I’ll give you 48 hours to decide whether or not you can do the job.” He pauses and leans back.

”Maybe 7 billion won is good enough to motivate you?”

Namjoon’s brain freezes at the mention of the pay. He looks at Yoongi, who has his eyes squinted and directed towards their potential client.

“You’re willing to pay us 7 billion won for this painting?” he hears Yoongi ask.

Kwon Jiyong chuckles and plays with the rings on his left hand this time. “I’ve heard of your team’s talents, gentlemen. I know you won’t come cheap. And I really, really want to get that painting.”

Yoongi and Namjoon stand up and prepare to leave. “And uh -- Suga-sshi, RM-sshi,” Kwon calls out to them. Both turn around and face him. “If you do accept this job but fail to acquire the painting, I’ll let you know I’m not very forgiving. Consider yourselves dead if Choi Seunghyun arrives in Paris with the painting.”

Death threats are about as regular as breakfast for Yoongi and Namjoon. Over time the latter has mastered how to look like the threats don't send shivers down his spine. He looks at Yoongi who looked bored, like he'd just been told he'd have to wait five more minutes for his burger. By the time the two get back to their headquarters, which is the basement of Yoongi's house, Namjoon reads more about their target and contacts some friends to know more about the building, which is located at one of the most secured villages in Seoul.

More research on the house says that it’s practically a fortress.

Yoongi stands patiently behind him, waiting for him and his brain to compute and deduce and create blueprints inside his head. Namjoon plans the heists, but Yoongi is the one who molds it into an actual, executable, successful one.

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a hawk. “One?” Yoongi asks, voice low.

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Jung Hoseok leans back and watches as the guy who shoved him on the train and attempted to pickpocket him get arrested by the subway cops. He smirks and turns around, satisfied as he feels his wallet back and safe in his jacket pocket -- along with the pickpocketer’s, a random lady’s, and one of the cops’ money clip.

He’s known as Hope by other fellows like him. *Hope on the Street*, they called him back then, when he was still very active and not into big-time heists yet, because he knows the streets of Seoul, Gwangju, and Gwacheon like the back of his hand. He didn’t need to study it because he lived in it out of necessity. If it weren’t for his cousin, he would’ve had to live in it longer and he wouldn’t be the Hope everyone knows him to be. He would’ve been far worse.

Hoseok goes inside one of the public bathroom’s cubicles and checks his loot. He takes out the money and credit cards and puts it back in his pockets, while he tears up the photos and other identification and flushes them down the toilet. The pickpocketer’s wallet is made of genuine leather, so he keeps that and thinks that maybe Jeongguk would want it. The lady’s wallet is a knock-off, so he chucks it to the trash can.

“What a dumbass,” Hoseok mutters under his breath as he plays with the cop’s badge between his fingers, “who doesn’t notice his badge being taken?” He stops and thinks that well, it was the notorious Hope himself who took it, it’d be bad for his morale if he got caught. He laughs as he tosses the money clip and pockets the badge, because it might be of use to Taehyung.

Hoseok goes out and exits the subway station. He walks along the streets while playing with the lollipop in his mouth. He wasn’t even supposed to pickpocket today but the asshole had to shove him and attempt to steal his wallet, so he had no other choice.

He stole the lady’s and the cop’s wallets for fun, since they’re already there on the scene. Hoseok sighs and looks at his phone. He’s extremely bored, he realizes. It’s been a long time, about three months, since they’ve had a gig. He’s running out of reasons to drop by at Jimin’s shop on top of that Laundromat. Practically all his clothes are clean now because he keeps on going to the Laundromat every two days and the only dirty shirt he has is the one he’s wearing right now.

Hoseok hangs out at the bus stop, watching people pass by, and thinks about the ways he can pick their pockets. It’s his go-to leisure activity. But even that can’t stomp his boredom out, so after several minutes he prepares to get on the next bus about to arrive.

Suddenly he hears his phone ring. “What’s up?” he asks Namjoon as he takes out the lollipop from his mouth.

“We got a gig. A big one,” his friend on the other line says. Hoseok smiles and quietly thanks the universe for looking out for him.

“But we need to find someone first,” Namjoon tells him, the tension palpable in his voice.
Hoseok’s grin turns into a frown. “Why are you calling me about that? I’m not Jeongguk.”

“You know where your cousin is right now?”

Hoseok drops the lollipop, and the candy breaks into tiny little pieces when it hits the asphalt.

“Wait, you don't mean Seokjin hyung?”

*****

Jeongguk can do anything. That’s an understatement. He’s such a literal genius that he hacks into Mensa’s system from time to time, just to fuck with the list (“Technically, hyung, Tony Stark is a genius so me putting ‘Iron Man’ on the list makes sense,”) and makes sure his name doesn’t appear in it.

He hates it when people use his IQ to justify his genius, because your IQ doesn’t push you to get up in the morning to practice bowling and having a photographic memory isn’t sufficient to make you good enough to compete for the Olympics. Your IQ doesn’t predict your path in life, and your IQ certainly doesn’t tell you when and how to make good career choices, that’s why now he’s a hacker working for one of the best thieves in Korea, maybe even in the world. And he loves it.

Jeon Jeongguk can do anything and find anything and anyone. He can hack into various levels of security systems, ranging from pet shops (Taehyung snuck inside to pet all the animals, even the snakes -- to Hoseok's dismay -- for fun) to federal government websites (he did this once, also for fun).

This time Namjoon gives him a name that makes him cock an eyebrow.

“Kim Seokjin.”

He’s heard the name before, the first name at least. It brings him back to the memory of a drunk Yoongi almost passed out on his bed. He muttered the name as Jeongguk placed a pillow under his head. He had asked Namjoon about it, and the other gives him one look and says, “Don’t mention that name again in front of Yoongi hyung, or anyone for that matter, if you still want to be part of this team.”

So when Namjoon tells him to find out where Kim Seokjin is, how he looks like and what he’s up to, Jeongguk had to ask. He usually doesn’t. “Is this the same-”

“Yes,” Namjoon says, cutting him off. “Now go find him.”

Jeongguk bets it’s going to take him a while to find this Kim Seokjin. He was right: he starts with basic police records and isn’t surprised when he finds none. There are approximately 358 Kim Seokjins in the world right now, and his instinct tells him to reduce the age range five years older and younger than Yoongi. Then he eliminates the ones who have died already, hoping that the Kim Seokjin they’re looking for is still alive. That puts him down to 125, which is still not good enough. He looks at the photos and sees if anyone is familiar, even if he has no clue how this man would look like, and that puts him down to about 78 Kim Seokjins.

Jeongguk takes about three more hours before he goes to Namjoon and demands for more information. He finds him in the basement, reading and eating on the couch. “How about a picture?” he asks.

“I don’t have one,” Namjoon replies lazily.
“Maybe Yoongi hyung has one? Where is he by the way?”

Namjoon peels his eyes off his book and looks up at him. “No idea. And he doesn’t know I’m looking for Seokjin-hyung.”

“What?” Jeongguk’s eyes go round. He knows Yoongi will not like this.

“It’s for our next gig, Jeongguk. We need to find him immediately. Even if we had a photo, Kim Seokjin may have had his face altered already. He could be posing as a high school student right now, for all we know,” Namjoon informs him.

“I doubt that,” Hoseok says as he descends down the stairs, entering the basement’s living room. “He knows he’s too handsome to get his face worked on for the sake of hiding. No reason to, anyhow, it’s not like the cops are after him. Only we are.”

Jeongguk puts his hands on his waists and closes his eyes. Now he knows three things about his target: his name is Kim Seokjin, he’s a very, very sensitive topic for Yoongi, and he’s pretty. That should get him somewhere.

Jeongguk might deny it, but sometimes IQ gives you enough fuel to deduce well and having a photographic memory is really just a huge perk. He suddenly scrambles for the pad of paper and pencil on the coffee table, kneels in front of it, and starts sketching, his hands moving wildly on the paper.

He blocks out Hoseok’s and Namjoon’s confused voices in the background, determined to make the blurry memory inside his head a bit crisper, sharp enough to be drawn: a fuzzy but very real memory of Yoongi opening his wallet once while they’re at a café, pulling out some freshly-made counterfeit bills Jimin made to pay for their food when half of a photograph slips out, and Yoongi swiftly putting it back inside the wallet, and then glaring at Jeongguk, daring him to say something.

Jeongguk feels the beads of sweat on his forehead when he finally lifts his pencil from the paper. He shows the rough sketch to Namjoon and Hoseok.

“Is this him?” he breathes out. He realizes he barely breathed the entire time he was drawing the face.

“You never fail to surprise me, kid,” Namjoon smiles at him and nods. Hoseok gapes at the paper, eyes round and unbelieving. “This is – this is from the only photo they had. I remember because I was the one who took it! How did you know about this? I thought Yoongi hyung burned this photo or something,” he tells Jeongguk.

“He didn’t burn it. Well, at least not before I saw it. Accidentally. And once it’s here,” Jeongguk taps the side of his head with the pencil, “it’ll never go away.” He smirks.

“We don’t have a lot of time to clinch this gig. How long until you can find him?” Namjoon asks.

“Give me half an hour.”

*****

Kim Taehyung hasn’t been doing cons for a long time when he met Kim Namjoon, maybe only for a year or so. His grandparents accidentally owed money to some bad people and he had to find a way to pay them back. He started working and conning people for their insurance policies, using his wit, charm, and acting skills to pry it out of them.

When he bumps into Namjoon on the streets of Seoul and “bumps” into him again at the coffee shop
he frequents, Namjoon had told him, “Why are you using your skills for this cheap kind of con?”

Taehyung had wanted to say “Why are you using those lips to drink that coffee instead of making out with me?” but he bites the retort back and renders himself speechless in front of Namjoon, who smirks and proceeds to hand him a calling card, bearing only a phone number and two letters: RM. Namjoon leaves with his coffee.

Taehyung takes approximately twelve seconds before he reaches for his phone and dials the number, eyes following Namjoon's walking figure on the streets. There is a ringing tone and Taehyung smiles when Namjoon picks up.

“You don’t mind having a second cup of coffee at four in the afternoon, RM?”

Namjoon introduces him to Yoongi and Taehyung finds out that their crew needs a conman, as their previous one had left months ago. “He didn’t die, don’t worry,” Hoseok assures him, but that didn't help Taehyung feel at ease.

But working as part of Yoongi and Namjoon’s crew helps Taehyung successfully pay off his grandparents’ debt within a month. He finds himself embracing bigger roles, better than the ones he’s ever dreamed of when he initially thought of being an actor. He’s been to countries he never thought he could visit in his lifetime. The job’s more challenging as well, seeing as how there are no cuts or rehearsals when he’s in the middle of a con.

It also helps that Kim Namjoon is always talking in his comms, soothing voice ready to tell him what to do when their plans hit a wall. Now if he could take Taehyung’s invitations to go out on an actual date seriously, things would be perfect.

Taehyung is playing games on his phone, lying on his bed, when Namjoon calls him. His screen goes from the game to the caller ID photo of Namjoon laughing and hiding his mouth with his hands. Taehyung snapped the photo while he and the rest of the crew were out for drinks one night. Taehyung almost drops the phone and he catches it before it drops on his face. “Hi, hyung! What’s up?” he answers the call way too enthusiastically.

“Taehyung, come to HQ, we’ve got a gig. Pick Jimin up on the way here?”

The boy’s lips break into a grin and he half-shouts, “We’ll be there! Give me fifteen minutes!” He drops the call and runs to his closet to look for something to wear. By the time he’s halfway out the door, his grandma calls from the kitchen.

“Where are you off to, sweetheart?”

His grandparents believe that he’s working as an actor, which is technically isn’t a lie – he assumes different roles to trick people out of their money, which is basically the same thing as an actual actor.

“Uh, an audition, Grandma!” Taehyung looks down and sees that the laces of his shoes are untied. “On a Sunday? How about some lunch?”

Taehyung looks up from his boots and shouts, “Uh, yeah! They’ll be feeding us there, don’t worry. If I’m not home by ten I’ll be back tomorrow, alright? Please lock the doors.”

“Okay, take care, love.”

Taehyung tosses a scarf over his head and heads out.

*****
Jimin didn’t start out as a forger.

He had a future prepared for him, a future with his family’s company. His entire life had been mapped out for him by his father, so much so that for a very long time, Jimin felt like it wasn’t actually his life that he owned. That his life was fake.

A mandatory art class at eight years old (to make him a well-rounded person, so he can converse well with other businessmen when he takes over the company) makes Jimin realize that he was good at making fakes: they were made to recreate a painting, and Jimin – who knew nothing about going your own way or deciding for yourself or having your own style – ends up copying the painting down to its last stroke. He starts liking painting but then his father makes him stop taking classes out of fear that he will end up taking a degree in Arts and not Business.

That same day Jimin succeeds in forging his father’s signature on a check to continue paying for his art classes.

At school he starts earning his own money by falsifying signatures for his classmates: for credit cards, permission slips, and other documents the rich kids in his school don’t want their rich parents to see. When he went on to high school, he learns how to make counterfeit money.

By the time Jimin’s father finds out that a considerable amount of money has been taken from his trust fund, he is already out of Busan and has successfully changed his last name, having taken on his late mother’s maiden name. He becomes Park Jimin, expert forger, someone who finally owns his life.

Jimin’s work makes a name for itself in Seoul and several heist crews offer him to work for them full time. He refuses, not wanting to be tied down again and being told what to do. One day Namjoon comes to him, saying they’re going to steal some money and documents from a certain company in Busan. Jimin chuckles as soon as he finds out the name of the project.

“I’ll do it for free,” he tells a confused Namjoon.

Once again Jimin forges his father’s signature, and six days later he watches on the news how the company he was supposed to be at the helm of, the one he was supposed to own, comes falling down at his own doing. He felt fantastic.

Namjoon and Yoongi insist on paying him – it’s business anyway – and sends someone named Jung Hoseok to his shop above the Laundromat. Jimin doesn't look up when Hoseok puts the wad of cash on his table. Before he leaves, he tells Jimin that he loves his work, especially his signature.

Jimin abruptly looks up from the painting he was working on at the time. “My signature?” he asks.

Hoseok smiles at him brightly. “The little sun? You have to look for it, but it’s always there, somewhere. It’s how I know the work is yours.” He waves goodbye and closes the door on his way out.

In all his years working as a forger, no one has seen or figured out Jimin’s signature, not even on the murals and murals of things that he has painted and duplicated and counterfeited for people. People thought his signature was that he had none. The next day Yoongi calls about another job, and Jimin asks if he wants a fulltime forger in his team.

Jimin is in the middle of counterfeiting some Canadian bills (“Why does it have to fucking smell like maple?” he mutters every ten minutes) when he hears Taehyung knock on his door.

“JIMIN-AH!”
Jimin removes his mask and walks to the door to open it, and finds Taehyung grinning at him from ear to ear. “What,” he asks, “Namjoon hyung finally agreed to go out with you or something? I’m busy.”

Taehyung’s smile abruptly turns into a frown. “You finally asked Hoseok hyung out, at least?” he retorts.

Jimin rolls his eyes and ignores Taehyung’s question. “Why are you here?”

“We have a new gig. Big one, from the looks of it, and Namjoonie hyung wants us at HQ. Why does it smell like maple in here? You eating pancakes?” He pokes his head inside Jimin’s shop and sniffs some more.

Jimin reaches for his jacket hanging behind the door.

“That’s for a different day. Let’s go.”

Yoongi wasn’t able to sleep at lot that night.

Aside from the idea of getting paid 7 billion won overwhelming him and keeping him awake, the job Kwon Jiyong has for his team also reminds him of a certain heist he and his crew did several years ago. One that he’s forcing himself to forget and to move on from, but can’t.

Yoongi closes his eyes and wills himself to sleep, because he has to have a clear, well-rested mind for when he calls Kwon to formally accept the job.

“Hyung, wake up.”

Yoongi opens his eyes, and it feels like he hasn’t even slept for an hour, though the sunlight coming from his bedroom windows suggest otherwise. His eyelids feel like lead and he lets it close again for several seconds.

“What is it?” he asks Namjoon, who’s standing by his bedside, shaking him by the arm.

“They’re all here,” he informs him. Yoongi forces himself to open his eyes again. “This early? What time is it?” he groans.

“It’s almost two in the afternoon, hyung. I’m the one who should be sleeping, I haven’t gotten a wink since yesterday. Get up.”

"That’s my fault, somehow?" Yoongi sits up, waves Namjoon away, and stumbles into the bathroom to wash up.

“What are you still doing here?” he asks when he finds Namjoon outside his bedroom. Now that he’s all washed up and at least half awake, he’s able to observe how tense his friend looked. Namjoon looked disheveled and jittery, the tip of his shoes tapping the hardwood floor.

They slowly make their way downstairs. They stop in front of a bookshelf near the living room. Yoongi finds the secret door handle behind some books and pushes it open, revealing a staircase to the basement, their headquarters.

“Hyung,” Namjoon stops him before they descend down the stairs. “If you don’t like the plan, we can always not take the job. You know that right?”
Yoongi looks back at him, his eyebrows scrunched. “Why wouldn’t I want this job, Namjoon? It’s 7 billion won.”

“I’m just saying,” Namjoon walks ahead of him down the stairs, “you wouldn’t like my plan.”

“I’ve literally been asking you about your plan since yesterday and you’re not telling me a single thing,” Yoongi replies. They get to the basement and he sees that the place is uncharacteristically quiet, given that all his members are present but no one is actually talking.

“I – I just had to make everyone we needed is here first, before I present it to you,” Namjoon answers and turns around to face him.

It doesn’t take Yoongi long to realize that there’s a seventh person in his headquarters, standing in between Hoseok and Taehyung. Yoongi freezes at the foot of the stairs, eyes zeroing in on said person. He feels the air knocked out of his lungs and he barely hears Namjoon whisper, “I told you you wouldn’t like it.”

Min Yoongi hates meetings.

But when he looks at Kim Seokjin, smiling at him like the past three years didn’t happen, like he never left, like already he belongs in Yoongi’s basement, he realizes he hates reunions even more.
Kim Namjoon was born to move.

The day he was born, his mother and father were on a plane back to Korea from New Zealand, traversing the Pacific Ocean. They only spend two months in the country before they move again, this time to the United Kingdom.

Namjoon's parents' work as diplomats exposed him to a lifestyle that required him to travel from country to country, living from one apartment to the next. He grew up meeting and knowing people only for several months, a year at most, before he has to leave them behind.

His mother gets pregnant for a second time and gives birth to his sister, and Namjoon's parents decide that the semi-nomadic life will not fit them any longer. His father takes on a job that required them to settle back in Korea, in a city called Daegu.

Namjoon finds himself missing the people in the other countries he’s been in, missed learning about other people’s cultures and repeating foreign words until they become familiar in his tongue.

Namjoon was a ten year old who's too smart and too tall for his own good, studying in a school that was, in his opinion, too low for his intellect. Suddenly he felt caged in, and that is how he learned how to escape, learned to find ways to leave if he wants to. He does, most of the times.

Kim Namjoon skips one grade level and starts the year in fifth grade. This is how he meets Min Yoongi, an eleven year old who has never set foot outside of Daegu.

Yoongi's parents, and their parents before them, were all from this city and none of them have been outside the country. Daegu, in their opinion, is and should be enough. But Yoongi believed there are so many other things out there waiting to be explored and he longed to escape. Despite all the trouble he gets into he always manages to pass exams, both to his parents’ surprise and his teachers’ dismay.

One lunch time, Namjoon sees Yoongi trying to scale the walls of the school. He adjusts his glasses and looks up at the eleven year old with a hint of judgment. "You know there are about four other safer ways to get out of here, right? Five if the guard's lunch is gimbap, because he'll take a longer time to eat it."

Yoongi stops halfway through lifting his legs over the school walls and stares back at Namjoon, assessing him like how an ahjussi would scrutinize fish at the market. He tosses his backpack to the younger and jumps back inside the school walls.

"How about you show me?"

That is how Namjoon and Yoongi met, trying to escape the school that was too suffocating for them. That little school in Daegu saw the biggest pranks and heists it will ever see during Namjoon and
Yoongi's stay. Their most successful one is when the two manage to steal the school principal's stationery, forge his signature, and release letters to the faculty, making them believe that they will be having a week-long holiday in the middle of October. Poor Mr. Lee didn’t even realize that no one is attending his school until Thursday at lunch time, when he passed by the cafeteria and sees no one inside. The staff was severely reprimanded and the stunt was blamed on the high school seniors, who could only dream of being able to pull off such a trick.

Together, Namjoon and Yoongi dreamed of leaving Daegu. They take the bus to Seoul a week after their high school graduation, starting out with small time heists, living from one motel room to another, from one subway station to the next. Somehow for Namjoon, it felt a bit like he was living his life as a diplomat’s child once again. They find that they’re not the first heist crew Seoul has seen, and they both barely manage to survive day by day. But still, Yoongi and Namjoon dreamed of performing the same capers they see on movies, dreamed of forming their own crew, dreamed of making a name for their own.

In all those years in between leaving for Seoul and now, Namjoon never saw himself going back to Daegu. It wasn’t even a discussion between him and Yoongi. They both longed to leave that place and worked their asses off to get to where they are today. There’s nothing to go back to in that old city of theirs.

Namjoon shakes his head and smiles when Jeongguk breaks the news to him. Somehow, he should have known.

"He's in Daegu."

"I got a couple of CCTV shots of him frequenting a market." Jeongguk drags several icons on his screen and zooms them in to give them a better view.

"He's really there," Namjoon hears Hoseok mutter under his breath. He knows Hoseok is thinking the same thing.

"Of course he's in Daegu. How long has he been living in there?"

Jeongguk types some codes on his keyboard. "Well," he says, "this shot is from yesterday." Using two fingers, he drags a grainy photo from his computer screen to the extended LCD above it so Namjoon and Hoseok can see it better. "I also have these old shot of him in a bank -- still in Daegu -- about a year ago, then another one several weeks ago at some kind of park? So it's safe to assume he's been living there for at least a year."

Seokjin can scrunch his shoulders all he wants, but his broad and tall stature stands out in the crowd of ahjummas and ahjussis in the quaint little Daegu market. He has a hood covering his head, hiding his dark brown hair. Namjoon leans in to zoom the photo out with his fingers and sees that Seokjin carrying a basket full of vegetables.

"Why do we need to find him?" Jeongguk turns around and asks the two of them. Before Hoseok can reply they hear Jimin from behind.

"What are we looking at?"

Namjoon turns around and sees Taehyung looking at the photo as well. "I'll let you know on our way. Jimin, will you drive first? I'll take over at the next stop," he says. Jeongguk hands him a piece of a post-it. “That’s where he works.”

Namjoon nods and puts the piece of paper in his jacket pocket. He tells Hoseok to stay and the other
only nods, still looking rather wistfully at his cousin’s grainy photo.

"Wait, why aren't you coming with us, Hope-hyung?" Jimin asks. Hoseok puts an arm around him and grins. "Someone has to wait for Yoongi hyung to come back. I know you'll do well, Jiminnie."

Namjoon chooses to not tease Jimin over the blush taking over his cheeks and moves on with the plan. "Besides," Hoseok says, "if Seokjin hyung decides not to come back, it'll - well. It'll be better if I don't see him at all, I think."

Namjoon motions Taehyung and Jimin to follow him. They go to another set of stairs near the bathroom and climb up to the garage. As Namjoon wears his seatbelt, he hears Jimin ask.

"Who's Seokjin?"

*****

"This bangjija is dated way back from the Goryeo dynasty, used by the royal family themselves. Would you believe that? Really, such an honor, I didn’t expect to have this lying in my home one day. What else do I own, anyway, those artifacts lining my living room wall? Hah, anyway – this was gifted to me after I helped archive the libraries in China…"

Yoongi stifles a yawn as he listens to the professor drone on about the old plates and utensils in front of him, placed in layers on a clothed table. That's what those things are: old plates and utensils. Why they would cost more than 5 million won apiece, he doesn't have a clue.

In between lousy part time jobs and some lucky schemes Yoongi and Namjoon managed to sneak into universities and sit in some classes. They get invited to college parties and start scheming and conning people, the basic move being the “put some money in this hat so we can buy more booze for the party” trick. When that happens, Yoongi and Namjoon are able to eat a full meal, maybe even get to treat themselves to meat. They start meeting people in the same field and start gaining their trust.

Namjoon becomes particularly invested in one Art History class in Konkuk University, and the professor one day announces that he’s inviting everyone in his class for a party, boasting about the bangjija that Yoongi and Namjoon decided to target. Their backer is willing to pay and they're desperate to finally start earning big.

The suit they borrowed from the laundry shop Namjoon works at doesn’t fit Yoongi well, and it’s getting hot inside the living room. The crowd hovering around the piece makes it hard for the two to move, but soon enough the free flowing alcohol starts doing its job and people walk away from the ancient bangjija, seeking to talk to other guests.

Yoongi sees Namjoon twenty feet away, playing with his left cuff links. He continues observing the crowd in front of him and doesn’t expect the real-life version of Michelangelo’s David suddenly coming up beside him.

“Ugh, horrible party.”

The unbelievably gorgeous stranger looked bored out of his wits and in need of a second glass of wine. He scans the crowd and looks at Yoongi. “What do you think?” he asks.

Yoongi finds himself lost in the other man’s gaze. It takes him several seconds – or minutes, he isn’t quite sure – to recover. Fucking focus, Min Yoongi, he chants to himself. “Well,” he pries his eyes away from the man, “it’s a party for old plates and utensils. So. I wasn't really expecting it to be a banger.”
The presence of the demigod beside him was unexpected, but his laughter is what catches Yoongi off-guard. He laughed with his whole body and squeaks vibrated out of him like a five year old on a sugar high. He couldn’t help but smile. Yoongi’s eyes catch Namjoon from afar, who’s now playing with his right cuff links and has probably been doing so for a long time, because his face was a mixture of confusion and impatience when Yoongi finally notices him.

Fortunately the half-drunk professor calls on to the man beside him.

"I'll see you around," he tells Yoongi as he walked away.

"Sure," was all Yoongi could reply, but the man is already too far away to hear him.

Yoongi springs back into action: he sees Namjoon nod and raise one forefinger before abruptly disappearing within the small crowd between the library and the kitchen.

Yoongi looks at his watch and starts his countdown. Ten seconds before the minute is over, he walks into a waiter holding trays of entrees on both hands. The metal tray hits the floor and makes an obnoxious crashing sound that gets everyone's attention.

Yoongi holds the waiter's arm, apologizing profusely. "I'm so sorry! Ah, what a mess I've made."

As if on cue, the crowd hears a scream from the kitchen. "A pipe got broken!" one of the waiters announces. The professor and several other guests start to crowd in to look at the mess.

"Just a broken pipe everyone, no worries! The party will definitely conti-"

The professor gets cut off when he looks at the table in his living room and notices that more than half of his 30-piece bangjja set is missing. By then, Yoongi was already two streets away and Namjoon is waiting for him in the corner, car engine running and ready to leave. They don't talk the entire drive, they don't even bother turning the radio on. Yoongi feels like someone is following them, although they don't hear any other sounds or see any car tailing behind theirs. They reach the old pub they frequent and were only able to breathe when they finally take their seats in their usual booth.

"We did it," Namjoon breathes out. The bag with the bangjja is still clutched it in his hands, as if it will disappear if he lets go of it. Yoongi nods and allows himself to smile. "We did."

Slowly a feeling of relief and exhilaration takes over Yoongi, unknotting the tension in his muscles one by one. They did it. Their first big heist. An actual one, one that involves taking something really old and expensive with them. They didn't really plan on taking the whole set with them, but he thinks they were able to take more than enough. Namjoon orders them food but neither of them touch it. Somehow they're still waiting for cops to show up and take them. Yoongi doesn't know why but he feels like he’s waiting for something, for someone.

"Space for one more?" Yoongi hears from behind him.

He stops breathing for a solid three seconds before he looks up from the table to see the demigod from the party now sitting across him, shuffling inside their booth, causing Namjoon to move closer to Yoongi.

It's okay, he doesn't know if we stole anything. He got bored and left, that's what happened, and he happened to go to this same pub, Yoongi convinces himself. Namjoon raises his eyebrows at the stranger and then turns to look at Yoongi. Yoongi knows the other has five ways to get out of the bar and he also knows Namjoon is currently thinking of the best, fastest way to do so.
"Party bored you?" Yoongi asks, snickering a little. In his peripheral vision he waits for Namjoon to give him a signal.

"It's a party for old plates and utensils, what do you expect?" The stranger smirks and suddenly Yoongi isn't able to stifle the laugh that comes out of him.

He feels Namjoon's eyes on him, and Yoongi forcefully brings himself back down to earth. *You should be distracting him, not the other way around.* He reminds himself that he's in a universe where he is a criminal, where he literally just stole millions' worth of relics, and this offensively beautiful man in front of him is someone who can report them to the police. This isn't the universe where he can go about flirting with people, the universe where he can't share a dumb inside joke with a stranger.

"Speaking of which," the man across him says and Yoongi eyes his hands – definitely not looking at his fascinatingly crooked knuckles and at the way they smoothly moved – as he takes out something from his sleeves.

Yoongi tilts his head to the side.

"Chopsticks are very important. Your set won't be complete without them."

Two pairs of chopsticks from the professor’s bangija set lay in front of them. The stranger smiles at Yoongi, like he just gave him cooking tips and hadn't just handed him stolen goods. "I have a pair I've owned since I was eight. It’s feels like family to me.”

"Who are you?" Yoongi blurts out. He thinks if there was any other crew who was apparently out to rob the same place they just did.

"Someone who's really pissed off at that professor.” The stranger scoffs and rolls his eyes. “I mean, I'm the one who did most of the archiving for that project, and he gets all the credit? Please," he takes a french fry from the untouched platter. "You don't mind?" he asks Yoongi as he pops the cold potato in his mouth.

Even Namjoon seemed too fascinated with the stranger to do much else. Yoongi doesn't know how long he stared at the man in front of him, watching the way he ate without any worries, at the way he wipes the cheese off his lips with his fingers. He offers Namjoon a piece and the other dazedly takes it from his hand. By the time Yoongi's able to think of something to say the platter's already half-empty.

"You only managed to get chopsticks?" Yoongi finds himself saying, a sneer edging at the corner of his lips.

The man chuckles. "Well, I just tried it out. My cousin is a pickpocket, a good one. You should learn from him," he informs them casually.

"Are - are you actually a student at Konkuk?" Namjoon probes.

"Yes, and you're not," he smirks at him. "Bring a notebook sometimes, will you? It wouldn't hurt." Namjoon looks deeply offended at the retort and turns to Yoongi, expecting his friend to defend him.

Yoongi turns his attention back again to the stranger. He looks at the loot on their table, casually lying beside a half-empty platter of fries, and somehow he feel like he won't be getting arrested tonight.

"Who are you, exactly?"
The stranger smacks his lips in a way that's too unnecessarily sexy for Yoongi and smiles brightly at them.

"The name's Kim Seokjin."

*****

Kim Seokjin is in the middle of dusting the tea set displayed under the glass counter when a young man enters the antiques shop. He looks up and greets him. "How may I help you today?"

The man, perhaps several years younger than him, has long bangs partially hiding his small eyes. He pushes his hair back and grins at Seokjin. "Hi, I'm looking for something. A ring?"

Seokjin leads him away from the main counter to the left wing of the store, where he keeps all the rings and other jewelry sold or pawned off to the shop. "These are all the rings we have. Will it be for yourself? Or someone else?"

The young man hums as he scans the tray through the glass. Another customer walks in, wearing a coat and a scarf. "I'll be with you in a minute," Seokjin calls out as the tall man went ahead looking at the wall displays.

The young man raises his hand to get his attention back.

"I'm thinking of this - this gold one, the one with orange stones that kind of look like the sun? For - for me." He points to the ring at the left end of the tray. Seokjin slips his hand under the glass and reaches for it. In his peripheral vision, he notices the other customer go to the direction of the main counter.

"I see. A unique choice."

"Unique?" the black-haired boy asks.

"It never really catches the eye of customers who wear a lot of silver rings." Seokjin looks down at the fingers of the young man, studded with silver bands left and right. The man grips the edge of the glass and smiles at him eagerly.

"Oh, I think it looked pretty," he told him. "But do you think it will fit me?"

"Only one way to find out." Seokjin replies and hands him the ring. The other customer stands in front of the main counter, hands in his pockets. "Feel free to call me when you want to see the other rings," he starts telling the man in front of him, stepping away. "I'll just-"

"Oh!" The young man reaches over the counter to hold him back. Seokjin looks at the hand grasping his arm and then back up at its owner. "Look, it doesn't fit me well, does it?" The man pouts at the gold ring on his middle finger, out of place among the silver bands on the other fingers. Seokjin cocks an eyebrow, takes the ring from his finger, and puts it back on the tray under the glass.

"There’s a reason why it caught your eye, but if you feel that it doesn’t suit you, feel free to look at the others."

The other customer, who hasn't spoken a word the moment he entered, quietly makes his way out of the store. Seokjin focuses back on the one in front of him, who after a few seconds of tapping on the glass, smiles up at him. "Nothing else is to my liking. Maybe when I get back you'll have something new?"

Seokjin nods. "Next time, then." The young man leaves and Seokjin walks back to the main counter,
shaking his head. He tries to guess which item the intruder was able to take. Seokjin hates having to run after petty thieves, and he hopes it's an item small enough for the ahjumma and ahjussi who own the shop to not notice. He can just replace it with something else, maybe the ones he just swiped from the other thief's hand.

Seokjin is about to groan when he sees that the tea set is incomplete, one of its cups missing from the tray. But the groan gets stuck in his throat when he sees what lies in place of the stolen item.

A single black feather.

Seokjin doesn't notice his hand shaking when he reaches under the glass to take the feather. He doesn't notice his heartbeat going undeniably faster, doesn't notice his lungs stilling for a second when the feather makes contact with his skin. He takes it out and runs it between his fingers.

For several seconds, Seokjin doesn't know what to do. He can throw the feather away, tell the kind owners of the store that he broke the cup, and that he will pay for it instead. Or maybe he can replace it or have someone forge it. Some people still owe him favors.

But he knows the black feather was there for a reason. The cup is almost useless if it doesn't come in a set. He's being sent a message. Slowly Seokjin walks to the door, flips the sign to "CLOSED" and locks the store. The feather crumples in Seokjin's grip when he makes his way to the back door, pausing for several seconds before he pushes it open.

He finds himself being able to breathe when he sees the person leaning on the wall opposite the door.

"Namjoon."

"Hi, Seokjin-hyung." Namjoon smiles at him.

Seokjin can't help but smile back. Namjoon looks healthy, alive. He seems to have aged a bit, but maybe that's because his hair is a bit longer now. He seemed richer at least. "What brings you here?"

Before Namjoon can answer, the two thieves from his store walk up to them. Seokjin finally sees the face of the man who took the teacup, which is being carelessly tossed back and forth between the two. Seokjin shakes his head and looks back at his old friend.

The two young men look at Seokjin, both of them smiling apologetically for robbing him. Namjoon kicks himself off the wall and walks up to Seokjin. "What a place to hide in, huh."

"I'm not hiding, Namjoon," he says, voice gentle but firm.

"But Daegu, really? The last place Yoongi-hyung would even think of looking for you?"

Seokjin ignores Namjoon, stops the words "Is he looking for me?" from coming out and instead repeats his first question. "What brings you here?"

"Hyung," he says, voice low and quiet. "We need your help. For a heist."

Seokjin wasn't able to suppress the scoff that came out from his mouth. "Right. After you steal from my store? You really had to be dramatic with the feather. You couldn’t have just knocked on the front door or something?"

Namjoon chuckles and turns to the tall man holding the teacup. "Taehyung, please give it back to him."
Taehyung gapes at Namjoon. "Excuse me, hyung? I stole it! And so easily, too." He pouts.

Seokjin cocks an eyebrow at the young boy. "How about a trade?" He reaches inside his pocket and reveals two silver rings. "Stole these so easily too."

"Wha-" the other man curses and looks at his hands. "How did-"

"Give it," Namjoon insists and takes the cup from Taehyung, who then smacks the third man on the arm. "You didn't notice that, Jimin?"

Seokjin tosses the rings to the boy named Jimin as Namjoon hands him the cup. He smiles and touches the edges of the delicate china, checking if anything has chipped.

"How's my Hoseokie?" he asks quietly, not looking up from the cup on his hand.

"'My Hoseokie'?" Jimin stops from putting the ring back on. "Who is he again, exactly?" he asks Taehyung.

Namjoon ignores the banter behind him and answers Seokjin. "He's doing well. He misses you, of course."

Seokjin nods and smiles. He's missed Hoseok. And Namjoon too. But he's turned his back on them, along with Yoongi, and they have nothing to do with him anymore.

"Yoongi hyung's doing well too – well, he's alive." Namjoon tells him.

Seokjin places the cup inside his coat pocket and tenderly wraps a hand around it. "It's good to see you, Namjoon-ah." He prepares to turn and go back inside the store.

"Hyung, you didn’t-" Namjoon calls out.

"No." Seokjin stops and looks Namjoon in the eye. "You don't need me."

"We do, hyung." Namjoon says as he stops the door with his foot.

"Do you really think I would go to you if I had another way?"

The words sting Seokjin for a bit, but they were true. If Namjoon really did have another way, he wouldn’t come looking for Seokjin. He wouldn’t risk possibly hurting his best friend.

“What reason would Yoongi have to even consider working with me?” Seokjin then asks.

Namjoon sighs. “Seven billion of them.”

They both hear Taehyung and Jimin gasp from behind them. “What!?" Taehyung exclaims. “You – this gig is worth seven billion won? Did I hear that right?"

Namjoon continues to ignore them and he looks at Seokjin. “I don’t know if you’re still doing heists-

“I don’t,” Seokjin replies. Not outside of what he does in the antiques shop, at least.

“-but you’re the only one I know that can help us pull this off.”

Seokjin shakes his head. "Does Yoongi even know you're here?"
Namjoon looks away. Even if he agrees, he knows Yoongi wouldn’t want to work with him, let alone see his face. Seokjin playfully kicks Namjoon’s foot out of the door’s way. “Going back will be a waste of time.” He turns around and starts to close the back door, but not before he hears Namjoon tell the other two to get back in the car and tell him, “Hyung misses you, you know.”

Seokjin closes his eyes and focuses on his breathing, pushing memories and words and feelings away. He inhales the scent of the antiques shop behind him, the place that has been his home for the past three years. It’s quiet, domestic. This is enough for him. It should be enough. Only the pang in his heart says otherwise.

“He might not tell me, he might be a hard-headed son of a bitch, but he hasn’t forgotten about you.”

Namjoon continues when Seokjin doesn’t reply, “And it might seem heartless, but it – you can be in it just for the money. Leave again after.”

Seokjin smiles at the way Namjoon said it. They really were in it for the money, that's how cons should be in the first place, but somewhere along the way the four of them – him, Yoongi, Namjoon, and Hoseok – they all knew they were bonded by something greater than the desire for money, than the feeling of victory after every successful heist.

“We’re conmen, after all,” he concludes.

“Goodbye, Namjoon.” Seokjin barely manages to say.

“If you ever change your mind, we’ll be here until seven tomorrow, then we go back to Seoul. We’re staying at that motel near the beach.”

Seokjin finally closes the door and manages to drag his feet back up to the counter. He takes the cup from his pocket and puts it back together with the rest of the set. He puts a hand inside the other pocket of his coat and feels the crumpled feather between his fingers.

He doesn’t know how long he stood there, eyes closed and trying not to think of what Namjoon had told him. But when Seokjin opens his eyes again it’s already sundown and it’s time to close the shop. After closing up he quietly walks up the stairs, to the home of the people who have fostered him for years.

Seokjin pauses by the door and quietly listens in on the conversation of the couple inside the kitchen.

"Maybe, maybe he can help us?"

"No, Kiae, he's helped us enough. He's treating us like we're his own parents. More so than our actual one, who's bringing us nothing but problems. He helps us with the shop and takes care of us when we’re sick. God knows where we'll be if it weren't for him." The old man's voice is tired and ashamed at the same time.

"But our-"

"No buts, love," he says, ending the conversation.

Seokjin puts on a smile and comes inside the kitchen like he didn't hear anything. "Good evening, ahjumma, ahjussi."

"Ah, Jin-ah. Hello!" The old woman's startled voice welcomes him. "Everything went well at the shop today?"
Seokjin nods, maybe a little bit too eagerly. The old man reaches for his wife's hands, as if to relax her, and he beckons Seokjin over at the dining table. "Let's have dinner, Jin-ah."

Seokjin nods and sits beside the old woman and lets her serve him a cupful of rice, piled with kimchi on top. He bows in thanks and tells them that he'll eat the food well. "I really like Jin-ah, look at how happily he eats!" the old woman laughs and rubs his arm.

For a while the three of them eat quietly, but Seokjin feels the tension between the couple, notices the way the woman's hands are shaking and the way she stuffs her mouth with food to keep herself from saying something.

The distinct clatter of the spoon on the table unsettles everyone in the kitchen.

"I can't do this," the old woman sobs and covers her mouth.

"Kiae!" her husband exclaims, reaching for her hands. Seokjin mimics his action and reaches for the old lady's arm. "What's wrong, ahjumma? Please tell me, I'm ready to help-"

"It's nothing Jin-ah, nothi-" the man starts to dismiss Seokjin's concerns before he gets cut off by Kiae. "No, it's not nothing, Namyoone! This is about our son! Our family!" she cries and leans on Seokjin's chest.

Namyoone sighs and watches his wife sob, chest heaving and shoulders shaking. Seokjin rubs circles on her crooked back and waits for her to speak.

"It's my Sunwoo, Jin-ah -- he's gotten himself in trouble again," Kiae says in between her tears.

Her husband shakes his head. "He's in hiding but - but the loan sharks after him, they're going to kill him. They're threatening to take the shop away from us. It's the only thing we have left."

Seokjin nods solemnly. He knows how much the shop means to the couple, knows how much they work to keep it going. "How much does he owe them?" he asks. He has some money stashed away. Maybe it's enough, he thinks. The couple has given him a home and whatever amount of money he has, he doesn't mind giving it to them.

"Jin-ah!" Namyoone exclaims.

Kiae moves away and wipes the tears away from his eyes. "It's-" she stutters and beads of tears fall on her lap. "He owes them two hundred million won. We – we don’t have a lot of money, I don’t know what to do."

Seokjin closes his eyes. He tries not to think of what would happen if he had ignored the feather, if he had just let his past slip behind him, let the teacup be kept by Namjoon and his friends. He would be still in the same kitchen of the same house, hugging the same old lady who has given him a warm home. His life would be the same, only he wouldn't have a problem telling the couple that he doesn't have a way to help them out.

One sleepless night later Seokjin finds himself standing in front of the motel Namjoon said he and his friends would be staying at. Before he left he wrote a letter to the couple, saying that he's transferred some money to their account. "It should be enough to tame the loan sharks", he writes, he will transfer more money in several weeks. He tells them he's not sure if he can still come back to them after this, so he thanks them for all the years they've taken care of him.
He leaves the letter on the kitchen table and leaves.

It's the tall one who sees him first, pointing to him from the other end of the parking lot. Namjoon gives him a knowing smile as they reach him. Jimin, the smallest one, gives him a curious look.

"Any reason why you changed your mind?" Namjoon asks as he hands him a cup of coffee and opens the car door.

_We’re conmen, after all._ Namjoon's words from yesterday echo in his ear.

Seokjin doesn’t look at him when he answers. "Seven billion of them."

He gets in the front seat and looks out the window as Namjoon drives out of the parking lot and out of the city.

In several hours he's going to see Yoongi again. He tries not to think about it, about how Yoongi will look at him in disgust and anger. Seokjin had expected to feel fear, shame, and sadness when he does. Instead he feels the pain in his heart lessen.

He's going to see Yoongi again.

*****

Min Yoongi blinks once or twice, to make sure what he's seeing isn't some sort illusion brought on by alcohol. Impossible, since he hasn't had a drink in approximately twelve hours. He waits for Kim Seokjin to vanish, to slowly disappear in his place between Hoseok and Taehyung, just like it usually happens, especially during the start when he first left.

Weirdly enough, after realizing that Seokjin is really there standing in his basement, Yoongi's first thought was that Seokjin looks like he hasn't aged at all.

Somehow, he looked younger. Maybe that’s what happens when you stop living a life of crime and go live quietly somewhere. Maybe that’s why his parents preferred the quiet, peaceful, and repetitive life Daegu offered, Yoongi thinks. Not worrying about complicated plans and disguises and hacking into systems and picking locks and making sure you don't end up getting caught.

Yoongi looks at Seokjin: his eyes are the same brown ones he liked looking at so much, his lips the same ones he used to make himself familiar with every night. He stares at him, in his pink hoodie and his skinny jeans and his gentle smile looking like he already had a place in Yoongi’s basement.

"I told you you wouldn't like it," Namjoon tells him.

Yoongi finally acknowledges the anger spreading from his chest to the rest of his body.

"I wouldn't like it?" Yoongi seethes, not peeling his eyes away from Seokjin.

"Will you at least hear about my plan first?" the younger replies.

"Why didn't you tell me what the plan is first before dragging him here?" Yoongi fumes and finally turns to Namjoon. Seokjin keeps a straight face, much to the surprise of the youngest three who abruptly turned to see his reaction.

"Because of this, hyung!" Namjoon replies, hands splaying to his general direction, voice an octave higher. "The mere mention of his name will make you say no immediately! But if you heard of it when he's already here -- I know you'd at least consider it."
Yoongi doesn’t answer and Namjoon continues, “What I told you five minutes ago still stands. If you don’t want to do this, just say so.”

Six pairs of eyes look at Yoongi expectantly and finally Jeongguk speaks up. "Look, I don't know what exactly happened before the three of us came in," he says and gestures to himself, Jimin, and Taehyung, "but-

"That's right, you fucking don't." Yoongi snaps at him.

"Hyung," Hoseok calls out.

Yoongi turns around. "I need to fucking breathe."

No one stops him from leaving, and before he's able to slam the door back to the living room he hears Taehyung say, "Hyung is important to me but I’m not going to say no to seven billion won,” and then the sound of several people smacking whichever part of him they could reach.

Yoongi marches up to his room and goes straight to the bathroom. He stares at his reflection, cheeks and neck red from what he believes and will insist is anger. He splashes water on his face to calm himself down.

"You're a conman, Min Yoongi," he tells himself. This is possibly the highest paying con of your life. Seven billion won. They’d get a billion each if they succeed.

In the hundreds, possibly thousands, of possibilities that Namjoon's brain could come up with to steal the painting Kwon Jiyong needs, he ends up with one and that one happens to require Kim Seokjin to work. Yoongi shakes his head in disbelief.

Yoongi knows Namjoon wouldn't have brought Seokjin back, wouldn't have looked for him, if he had another plan that didn't involve his ex. He kicks the sink cabinet, finding no hole in his logic. He knows he can't risk using or hiring another person just because the first and best option is the very same one who left him three years ago. His crew is respected in the field and he definitely can't say no to seven billion won just because he has to work with his ex.

Yet somehow all of this doesn’t make Yoongi feel any better.

His thoughts are momentarily disrupted when he hears padded steps approaching from behind. Yoongi turns around and sees a solid pair of black eyes looking up at him curiously.

Yoongi’s face smoothens as he stoops down to pet his dog. “Where'd you come from, Holly?” He sits at the edge of the tub and brings Holly to his lap. The dog almost immediately falls asleep as Yoongi pets him, a steady hand on his fur.

“Do you remember him, Holly?” Yoongi whispers, voice low and fond. “The one who told me to adopt you?”

He smiles as Holly wagged his tail, eyes still closed.

"I don’t think you’ll remember him."

Yoongi absentmindedly pets him for some time, refusing to face the decisions he has to make the moment he walks out of the door. He looks at his watch and figures he has about two hours left before Kwon Jiyong’s deadline ends.

It wasn’t long before he hears someone calling for him.
“Hyung?” Hoseok knocks on his bedroom door. Holly wakes up at the noise and Yoongi carries him to the door, where Namjoon and Hoseok are both on the other side waiting for him.

“I thought you ran away or something,” Hoseok tells him.

“I’m not going to run away from my own house,” Yoongi scoffs. Before either can say anything else, Yoongi orders Namjoon to tell him his plan. The younger starts to speak when he's interrupted by an erupting cackling coming from Hoseok. They both look at him, shoulders shaking and hands hitting Namjoon on the arm.

“Shit, I’m sorry hyung.”

Yoongi glares at him. “What the hell is wrong with you?”

“I’m sorry. It’s just,” Hoseok squeezes in between his giggling, “you don’t look as intimidating when you’re carrying a little dog.”

Namjoon looks away to hide a smile. Yoongi feels the heat climb up his neck again but he doesn’t put Holly down.

“Fuck off, Hoseok.”

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“You’re really Hoseok hyung’s cousin? As in, blood relative kind of cousins? Not the 'our-parents-are-best-friends-and-you're-practically-family' kind of cousins?” Taehyung asks Seokjin, arms folded as he follows him around the headquarters like a reporter out for a story. Seokjin nods and continues to look around at the basement. The place is almost twice as big as the place Yoongi and Namjoon had before, which happened to double as Yoongi's apartment as well.

“But you don’t look alike.”

Seokjin looks at Taehyung and tilts his head. “We’re cousins, not twins.” He pauses in front of the small bookshelf which he’s sure is owned by Namjoon, based on the number of philosophy titles on them. He feels Jeongguk and Jimin from the couch following them with their eyes.

“You’re also Yoongi hyung’s ex?”

Seokjin takes a book and leafs through it. “Yes,” he tells Taehyung. “To be honest I thought he would have told you guys horrible things about me already, but apparently Yoongi is quite the gentleman. I feel a bit guilty thinking he’d do that.” He smiles as he looks over at the notes Namjoon made on the book. He highlighted one quote and put a note: "Show to Taehyungie."

“He’s never mentioned you,” Taehyung informs him as he continues the interrogation.

Seokjin nods. “Which, now that I think about it, is probably worse.” He puts the book back on the shelf and goes back to the couch.

“If Yoongi hyung refuses to work with you, are you going to leave?” Jeongguk asks him without a beat.

Seokjin looks at the boy and smiles. He's learned that Jeongguk lives with Yoongi in the house above the basement, having taken him in when he dropped out of high school and started working for him. Either his ex's bluntness has rubbed off on the boy, or his personality was part of the reason Yoongi recruited him.
“I don’t have to be told twice.”

He turns to look at the stairs when he hears footsteps. Namjoon calls him to the house. Seokjin walks up to the top of the stairs, into the living room, and sees Yoongi standing by the windows looking out at the streets. Namjoon and Hoseok turn to go back to the basement.

“Yoongi-” Seokjin starts, when they're finally alone. You look good, he wants to tell him. You look like the past three years have been good to you. You have this house now! And you look like you remember to eat regularly now, unlike when I first met you.

You look like you're doing fine.

"I don’t even know why-" Yoongi starts but he winces and cuts himself off. Seokjin doesn’t say a word as he lets Yoongi restart, lets him take a deep breath, lets him pretend he didn’t almost break.

“Yoongi, you're not a part of this crew. Not anymore.”

Seokjin had wanted Yoongi to get mad at him, shout at him and to get all his anger out now so they can be over it. And maybe after all that, maybe they can start over. But Seokjin knows he can't demand such a thing from Yoongi, not after what he did.

And Seokjin understands.

“I know, you don’t need to tell me,” he replies, voice gentle. He looks at the house and is surprised by all the white around it, accented by blacks and grays. It was far from Yoongi’s old place, the rundown flat that had yellow lighting all the time, covered with splashes of blue and green at every corner, walls covered with thumbtack holes for when he and Namjoon plan their heists and get carried away that it almost covers the entire living room.

"You leave the moment the heist is over, the moment you're paid," Yoongi tells Seokjin.

Seokjin lets his eyes wander at the high ceiling, at the staircase painted white, at the small chew toy lying on one of the steps. He smiles when he realizes Holly is probably somewhere around the vicinity.

"Again, you don't-"

"I need to hear you say it," Yoongi hisses, and Seokjin straightens to look at him. Yoongi’s eyes are flaming black, relentless and unforgiving.

And Seokjin understands.

"I will leave the moment I am paid," he complies. He digs a nail on the skin of his palm to keep his voice from cracking. Yoongi starts to say something else, but Seokjin gets to him first, eager to finish whatever other terms of negotiation the other had in mind.

“This gig is a one-time thing. I will follow the plan, whatever you and Namjoon have thought of. I will leave the moment, the second I am assured of my pay. You will never see me again after this.” He utters the words out mechanically, almost as detached as Yoongi would have said it.

“Is that all, or did I miss anything?” Seokjin asks after.

“Yes,” Yoongi answers, to his surprise. His voice is a bit gentler now, but just as detached. “I’d really – not rather talk about before. Whatever it was."
Whatever it was, Seokjin thinks to himself, it lasted for four years.

"No use talking about it, anyway. We just need to work together until this is over."

Seokjin simply nods and watches as Yoongi take his phone out from his jeans pocket and make a call. “Mr. Kwon? Yes, this is Suga. Took us quite a while to decide, but yes, we’ll be taking on that job. Yes, I understand what you've said before. Yes. RM will call you about the other details.”

Yoongi ends the call and walks past him as he makes his way to the basement. Seokjin follows, keeping a safe distance between him and Yoongi, refusing to acknowledge the crippling feeling budding in his chest.

The other five stand up when they arrive. A look of relief washes over Namjoon's face when he sees Seokjin about five steps behind. Hoseok looks like he's held his breath the entire time Yoongi and Seokjin were upstairs and is only able to breathe again now. The other three look curiously at them.

Yoongi puts his hands behind his back and clears his throat. “Alright, everyone,” he starts, voice big and demanding despite his small frame.

“We got ourselves a heist."

Chapter End Notes

I just realized that the fic's title is so cheesy.
Anyway - we're getting to actual heisting stuff next chapter!
The right amount of money can turn any relationship ugly, can make anyone whom you thought were your lifelong friends into your worst enemies. The perfect amount of desperation and greed can put loyalty on the sidelines. Right from the start, he has been careful of who he works with. It's always better to be safe than sorry.

But Min Yoongi didn’t expect his betrayal to go this way.

Apparently, it only takes a bucket of seasoned chicken and a bowl full of kimchi for his crew to turn their backs on him.

"Oh my god," Jimin moans and closes his eyes out of bliss. "This is literally the best chicken I have ever had."

Jeongguk is too busy stuffing his face with the meat to properly react, Taehyung and Hoseok are fighting over the wings, and Namjoon is just busy eating whatever his hands can reach. Yoongi glowers, his arms crossed as the five people he considers -- considered -- his friends fawn over the food Seokjin brought over at the headquarters. They're too easy to win over, Yoongi thinks. And it's only been, what, four days since he arrived?

"An exaggeration, but I'm flattered," Seokjin says, smiling at the five surrounding the table. “I could’ve made more but I haven’t cooked in a long time so I didn’t realize I was running late.”

Yoongi looks back at Hoseok and the others around the table and pushes the thought but you used to cook every day out of his head, and frowns even more.

"How about you, Yoongi? You should try some," Seokjin suddenly tells him.

"I'm good," he says, spinning the computer chair around and facing Jeongguk's computer screen, which is showing CCTV feeds of Incheon International Airport.

"More for us then," Taehyung says, and Yoongi resists the sudden urge to throw his shoe at him.

“Namjoon-ah, were you able to get a photo of the painting?” Seokjin asks.

The other swallows the rice in his mouth before answering. “The twin paintings were personally commissioned by Kwon. The moment it was done they went straight to Kwon’s and Choi’s possessions. Choi hasn’t shown it to anyone that we know of. Yet.”

“How about the artist?”

Jimin raises his hand, still holding a piece of chicken. “Oh, I can answer that: there are about three or four artists with the same painting style, but none of them have the said paintings in their dossiers of commissioned works."

"And Kwon Jiyong won't tell us who the artist is?"

Namjoon shrugs. "He says he prefers not to, and it's not important to the job anyway."

From the reflection of the computer screen Yoongi sees Seokjin nod and furrow his eyebrows.
“That’s… interesting.”

“What are you saying, Jin hyung?” Hoseok asks as he swats Taehyung’s hand away from his plate.

"Did you ask Kwon Jiyong why he wanted to get the painting?"

Both Namjoon and Hoseok shake their heads. "We didn't ask, and he didn’t say." Seokjin sighs and Yoongi feels him looking at him for some reason.

"Right." Seokjin turns to Jeongguk. “JK-sshi, were you able to make me a copy of the files about the painting?” The youngest momentarily stops chewing and points his chopsticks to the computer table where Yoongi is. “Red folder.”

Yoongi taps his finger on the computer table and watches Seokjin in the corner of his eye as the other ran his fingers on the box of files. “Gemini, is it?” Seokjin glances at Yoongi. The younger nods without looking. Seokjin finds the red folder and briefly looks at its contents before snapping it close, walking away from him.

“I was just thinking,” Seokjin mulls, “if no one else has seen the painting, how can we be sure it’s at Choi’s gallery?”

“Kwon Jiyong knows the painting is there because he was there the day the painting was installed at Choi’s gallery.” Yoongi turns the chair around and faces the other six. “Besides, we checked and none of Choi’s other properties – listed or otherwise – possess the said painting.”

“Yes, and as you said Kwon Jiyong says we’ll know the painting once we see it. But he’s not exactly being helpful. He's not giving us anything,” Seokjin answers, voice tinged with what seems to be annoyance, opening the folder again.

Yoongi feels the other five shifting their eyes from him to the other, chicken and kimchi left uneaten on the table. He clears his throat and crosses his legs.

“Well, his PR forced him to let one magazine do a photo shoot and an interview in his gallery a year ago,” he informs Seokjin as he brushes imaginary dust on his pants.

“Yes,” Namjoon nods. “That made quite a buzz. The magazine paid a lot of money to get the exclusive but news came out that they felt cheated because only several photos were taken.”

“None of the photos from the shoot match. The painting must at least look similar to the one Kwon showed you guys at his office, but I’m not seeing anything there, not in colors or strokes” Jimin notes, and Seokjin agrees.

“How about outtakes?” The eldest frowns at the folder’s contents, picking up the pictures and holding them up in the light.

“Yeah, that --” Jeongguk butts in, “each and every photo taken by the magazine went through Choi’s approval and all rejected photos were deleted immediately. I saw the e-mails of the editor complaining to Choi’s PR. What the magazine has and what they released are all they have.”

“So he’s obviously hiding it,” Yoongi and Seokjin say at the same time.

The awkward silence that followed was only broken by the sound of Namjoon dropping his chopsticks on the table. Yoongi blinks and scrambles to conclude the discussion. “Yes – well, that’s why we have to get through Seunghyun’s house security, along with the key to the gallery immediately.” He turns the computer chair around again and pretends to see something interesting
happening in the airport feeds.


He waves the red folder on his hands. “I’m going to study the files. Might catch something in the article, I don’t know.” Seokjin bids goodbye, and he’s met with enthusiastic grunts as the others resume eating.

Seokjin leaves via the garage exit, and in the glass of the computer screen Yoongi thinks he saw Seokjin looking at him before going up. He blinks and tries to think nothing of it.

"You're really not going to eat, hyung?” Namjoon asks Yoongi in between his chewing.

Yoongi zooms in on random cameras and says "I'm full," before his stomach audibly grumbles, both to his astonishment and dismay. Now even his own organs are betraying him. Hoseok almost chokes on the chicken while laughing. “How did he even make this?” Jeongguk asks the others, ignoring Hoseok's plight, “I thought he’s staying at a hotel?”

“During the first night yes, but he’s going to be here for a while and hyung wanted a residence that has a kitchen, so I found one for him,” Hoseok answers as soon as he cleared his airways.

For a while. Yoongi closes his eyes and repeats Hoseok’s words in his head. It’s only going to be for a little more, a little more than five weeks and Seokjin will be gone. That shouldn’t take long. They’ve had jobs where planning takes months and he slightly shivers at the thought of having to see and work with him for that long. Yoongi holds on to that thought, to the idea of being able to move on again when he leaves. Right now, his focus should solely be on Choi Seunghyun and this job Kwon Jiyong has for his team. Seven billion won. They can all afford to take a long break after that.

He tries to start working and the others’ conversation behind him becomes a gentle buzz in his ears, until he hears Seokjin’s name being mentioned again.

“Hoseokie hyung, what did Seokjin hyung mean when he said he might catch something in the article?” Jimin asks.

“He has a degree in Art History but he minored in Psychology,” Hoseok answers. “He’s really good at reading people. We did a lot of art heists when—” Yoongi pauses and he feels the others' eyes on his back. “When he was still working with us.” Namjoon finishes the sentence in a lower voice.

“I actually like Seokjin hyung.” Taehyung finally speaks up, done with eating. “Aside from the fact that he’s Yoongi hyung’s ex and things have neeever been more awkward whenever they’re around each other,“ he declares and the others burst into laughter. Yoongi spins around from his chair. “Excuse me?” he asks, eyes hardening on the other.

Taehyung simply shrugs at Yoongi. “I’m just saying! Is it not awkward, Yoongi hyung?”

“It’s not. It's called being a goddamn professional,” he bites back.

“If being a ‘goddamn professional’ means it’s okay to blush when you and your ex happen to say the same thing at the same time, sure,” Jeongguk notes and the others laugh again.

Yoongi grimaces at the joy his friends find in his distress. He pushes himself off the chair. “I can’t believe all of you.”

“We’ll leave some of the chicken for you!” Hoseok calls as he walks up the stairs back to his house.
“If it helps, he also blushed!” Jimin shouts from behind him. Yoongi shakes his head. No, it doesn’t. That definitely doesn’t help. Yoongi ignores the snickering behind him as he walks into the living room, and he almost stumbles back when he sees Seokjin from his window, standing on his front lawn.

It unsettles Yoongi at first, knowing that he’s actually there and not a product of his imagination.

During the first few months after Seokjin left, Yoongi thought he had lost his mind. He kept on seeing Seokjin’s face in busy crowds, in bustling coffee places, in between hushed library bookshelves. Each time it happened Seokjin’s name gets stuck in Yoongi’s throat and a shout never quite makes it out, afraid to know if it really was him.

A sick, sad part of his brain liked it whenever it happened: he’s comforted by the idea of Seokjin being around and everywhere, like he never actually left. It was a dysfunctional clutch that he secretly held on to that no one knew about.

But it happens one time in the middle of a job – Yoongi sees Seokjin in the crowd of partygoers, smiling and almost beckoning him to join him – and they almost get caught.

It was only then that Yoongi realizes it has to stop. He can’t risk his crew getting in danger so he forces himself stop thinking about Seokjin or even entertain the idea of him coming back to his life. He pushes himself to move on.

Yoongi likes to think that he’s been successful in doing so.

He walks closer to the window and looks at Seokjin talking on the phone, and he can’t help but audibly groan when he sees his own Holly running to him.

“Seriously?” he grumbles.

Seokjin smiles and stoops to pet the dog, one hand still on the phone and the red folder tucked under his arm. Yoongi doesn’t know what pushed him to walk out the door and into the lawn, but he’s able to catch the last of the conversation before Seokjin notices him and ends the call.

“…yes, I was just checking if you were able to – no, please don’t say that. I'm fine, yes – oh, hey, Yoongi.”

Seokjin shoves his phone back in his pocket and stands up to greet him. The dog jumps up to get his attention back, not even glancing at his owner until Yoongi stoops down to scoop him up in his arms.

“Oh,” Seokjin whispers, and when Yoongi stands up he realizes how close they are to one another. His free hand accidentally brushes Seokjin’s, and Yoongi stumbles back at almost the same moment as the other. Not awkward, he chants to himself, not awkward. A goddamn professional.

“I should get going,” Seokjin says, smiling gently at him, and Yoongi can only nod. “Wednesday, then?” he asks.

Yoongi nods again, mentally cursing himself for not even being able to say, yes, we convene at the airport on Wednesday properly.

Holly barks and Seokjin gives him a little goodbye wave before disappearing behind the gate. Yoongi turns around and lifts the dog to his eye level.

“He didn’t even have to give you chicken,” he mutters bitterly to Holly, and Yoongi’s only returned
with a tilted head and an adorable yelp.

They go back inside the house and as he fills the Holly's bowl with food he suddenly pauses, feeling a little dizzy. He ignores the burning feeling at the back of his hand, the part that touched Seokjin’s skin. He exhales, eager to expel Seokjin’s scent from his system. He tries hard not to think about who Seokjin was talking to.

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Seokjin puts the glass of wine down and asks the bartender for a refill.

"You're tense. Old age getting to you?" Hoseok nudges his shoulder and laughs. He shakes his head and scoffs. "I'm only two years older than you are, Hoseok."

Normally three in the afternoon is too early for alcohol but Seokjin doesn't care. The pub he and Hoseok went to just opened when they arrived, so they have the place to themselves.

Their reunion several days ago had been quick, to say the least. They didn't need to say a lot when Hoseok pulled him in for a hug. "You've been missed," Hoseok whispers. Seokjin only laughs. "I didn't die, Hoseok," he tells him. Namjoon tells them they should get inside, and Hoseok leads them to the basement.

"I'm just a little worried about tomorrow. I need some warming up, it's been a long time," Seokjin admits into his glass.

"You'll do well," Hoseok assures him. "You're a natural."

"Stop patronizing me, Hoseok." Seokjin smiles and remembers the time before Namjoon and Yoongi came into their lives, when it was just the two of them – just kids who tried to be each other's escape and support system. His earliest memory of his cousin goes way back when he was six years old and Hoseok was four. Their mothers are sisters and they rarely saw each other, because Seokjin's family lived are from Seoul and Hoseok's in Gwangju. Their relationship was of the typical "I only really interact with you during holidays and family reunions" kind of familiarity but Hoseok is loud and funny and Seokjin always found him amusing.

But one day Seokjin finds out from his mother that Hoseok's parents and sisters died in an accident and left Hoseok under the care of his paternal uncle in Gwacheon, which is right beside Seoul. Seokjin had been twelve and Hoseok ten. They saw each other more often because of that, and Seokjin finds out that Hoseok's uncle's family isn't very welcoming, isn't really eager to take him in, if it weren’t for the monthly pensions they receive from his parents’ insurance.

The two see each other on the weekends, sometimes even after school, and spend days walking around the streets and playing at arcades. Most of the times they would hang out by Han River, just talking. The older tries his best to cheer Hoseok up, bringing him food and lending him his gaming consoles.

Even after everything, Seokjin notices, Hoseok had remained cheerful -- but the smile on his face easily fades away when he thinks Seokjin isn't looking. He talks to Seokjin of his hopes and dreams, of the places he wants to visit, the countries his parents once promised they’d visit one day.

One weekend Hoseok takes Seokjin to a toy store to look around. Once they were out Hoseok grabs him by the elbow and Seokjin looks back to see the storeowner shouting at them.

"Run, hyung!"
Seokjin runs far and fast, following Hoseok from street to street, until they reach Han River his lungs give out.

"What - what did you do?" Seokjin pants as he falls on the grass. Hoseok lies down and smiles as he takes out the pack of some limited edition playing cards from his jacket pocket. "I've been asking my uncle if he could buy me this for my birthday," he explains. "I realized he's not going to do it, so when I saw it today, I decided I'm going to get it for myself. No use waiting or hoping."

"You could've asked it from me!" Seokjin wheezes and lies down beside Hoseok on the grass.

"Nah, hyung. You hanging out with me, that's enough."

Seokjin doesn't reply, but he had wanted to tell Hoseok that it was actually the opposite: he was grateful for Hoseok's company, for showing him the side of the city he never knew, for dragging him to places that he wouldn't go to alone. Rain or shine Hoseok would be waiting for him by their spot by the river, ready to take Seokjin to a new adventure. Before he got to know his cousin, he had been living a quiet, monotonous life in Seoul, and he didn't realize this until Hoseok came around. He felt horrible for thinking that if his cousin's family hadn't died, they wouldn't have been close.

Seokjin knows what Hoseok did was wrong, but he wasn't quite sure how to ask why he was doing it. It wasn't out of greed definitely, but Seokjin thinks that after everything has been taken away from him, Hoseok has all the right to be. His cousin becomes quite notorious in the streets of Seoul, but never vicious unlike the other kids.

“It's because you're too smiley,” Seokjin says. “No cop would think someone like you would be a pickpocket."

One day, five years later, Seokjin sees Hoseok waiting for him outside his school and tells him that he's running away from his uncle's family. Seokjin is flabbergasted and he offers their home to him. "We'll hide you!" he tells him. Hoseok refuses. He hugs Seokjin and whispers, "Thank you, hyung. You've been like a brother to me."

"Where the hell are you off to?" Seokjin asks.

"Gwangju, maybe. Visit my parents’ and sisters’ graves first, I don’t know. I might make it to Jeju if I'm lucky. Just - the streets, in general."

Seokjin asks Hoseok to keep in touch, to visit him, to write him a letter from time to time.

"Hope-ah! Come on!" Seokjin hears someone call Hoseok from behind.

Hoseok nods, carries his backpack and runs off into the sunset. After that, Seokjin went on his own little adventures all over Seoul and Gwacheon, looking out on the street and hoping he would see his cousin and hoping he's still alive. Seokjin doesn't hear from Hoseok again until two years later, when he's already on his second year at Konkuk University.

"I tried running after the asshole! But he and his friend were fast," his classmate recounts to him, cursing about a lost wallet.

"Any chance you saw the guy's face?" Seokjin asks, trying not to sound too curious.

"Nah, but I did hear his friend call him Hope."

Seokjin hangs out at the place his classmate got pickpocketed in, waited every day until one day he’s able to catch the wrist of the person about to swipe his phone off the coffee shop table.
"I wouldn't do that, if I were you." Seokjin says, not looking up from the book he was reading. "Seokjin hyung?" Hoseok stops and looks at him.

Seokjin offers his home to him once again, and this time he doesn't take a no for an answer. He's tried asking Hoseok once, if he could study, maybe do something other than pickpocketing. Hoseok drinks the contents of an entire soju bottle in one go.

"I don't really know who I am, hyung, if not this," he tells his cousin, smile not quite reaching his eyes.

Seokjin doesn't ask again.

One evening Hoseok comes home with a minor cut in his arm. Seokjin panics but Hoseok just laughs at him. "This is nothing, Seokjin hyung. You've seen my other scars."

"This is my first time seeing one when it's still fresh, okay! I'm staying with you, what do you need?" the other tells him, reaching for his first aid kit and taking a seat beside Hoseok on the couch.

"What? No!" Hoseok scoffs. "I'll live, don't worry. Don't you have that party to go to? You rarely go to parties!"

"It's a party hosted by a professor, I'm not going to enjoy it."

"Ah, that asshole professor of yours? Want me to get back at him or something? Maybe his wallet needs a new owner- ow." Hoseok winces as he pours alcohol on his wound.

Seokjin laughs. "No thanks, I'd want to exact revenge on my own."

"Go forth, then, my young Padawan. Hope on the Street blesses you with his expert thieving powers. Steal his credit card information or something. Make out with someone. Hopefully not with your professor. Have fun." Hoseok pushes him off the couch.

Seokjin rolls his eyes as he reluctantly walks to the door. "Okay number one, I'm older than you are. Number two, ew on the making out suggestion. And number three, I'm pretty sure that party's not going to be life changing."

Hoseok shrugs at Seokjin from the couch.

"Who knows?"

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Seokjin watches as Hoseok gently takes the glass from him.

"I think that’s enough, hyung."

"Do you really think I’ll get drunk on my third glass of wine? You don’t know me anymore, Hoseokie." Seokjin smiles but doesn’t protest. He settles on munching on the peanuts in front of him instead.

"Has Namjoon talked to you about Yoongi hyung?" Hoseok suddenly asks.

"Just a bit," Seokjin answers, “I mean, before we got here. Why?"

"Ugh," his cousin groans, and the other furrows his brows in confusion. “Why is he called a 'planning genius' yet he doesn’t know this is his role, not mine? Technically speaking he should be
on Yoongi hyung’s side and I should be the one on your side and not the other way around but here he goes bringing you here and I’m the one giving you the talking!” Hoseok fumes, cheeks red from ranting.

Seokjin fails to suppress a laugh. “Maybe you’re the one who’s had too much alcohol?”

Hoseok scoffs and rolls his eyes. “No, I need alcohol to be able to say this.” He orders a bottle of soju and drinks half of the contents in one go.

“What are you talking about?” Seokjin asks, punching Hoseok lightly on the arm. Hoseok looks at the liquor shelf across them and takes another swig.

“Okay - I don’t know what you and Yoongi hyung talked about when you came back–” he starts. Seokjin was about say something but the younger raises a hand to stop him, “And I don’t want to know, Jin hyung. I already know too much. Please.”

Seokjin grabs a tissue from the container beside him and starts folding it absentmindedly. “Yeah – I’m sorry about that, Hoseok.”

“What I’m trying to say is that – three years ago I chose not to say anything.”

Seokjin’s grip on the thin fabric tightens and he hopes his cousin is too busy getting himself drunk to notice the deep breaths he’s taking.

“But, hyung, you can’t do that Yoongi hyung again,” Hoseok murmurs into his bottle. “You can’t leave that way again.”

Seokjin nods. “Don’t worry.” He remembers his conversation with Yoongi the day he came back to Seoul. “Yoongi and I – that’s all in the past now.” That wasn’t a lie. Yoongi refuses to talk about it, and Seokjin isn’t going to force him to.

“So you’re going to stay after this? If ever Yoongi hyung asks you to?” his cousin asks him. Seokjin puts his elbows on the counter and calls for the bartender. “I thought you didn’t want to know?”

Hoseok groans and finally manages to laugh. “Right. Don’t tell me so I can sleep properly at night.”

"Thank you, again, Hoseok,” Seokjin says after ordering a glass of beer this time. "For not telling anyone, not even Namjoon.”

Hoseok empties his bottle and shakes his head. “If he knew you would have been found a week after you left. He’s Yoongi hyung’s best friend and you know Namjoonie would’ve told him.” Seokjin munches on the peanuts quietly as Hoseok asks for a beer as well.

“Yoongi hyung would have turned the planet upside down looking for you.”

Hoseok’s voice is wistful and scratchy and Seokjin is curious, so curious to ask what happened, what Yoongi said, what Yoongi did when he left. But instead he scoffs in an attempt to dismiss both Hoseok’s words and the feeling of budding regret in his chest. “When did you learn to be so dramatic?”

As Hoseok takes his beer from the bartender, he says the words Seokjin has been dreading to hear.

“You shouldn’t have left in the first place. It’s not-”

“A little bit too late to talk about that now, isn’t it,” Seokjin replies, cutting him off.
It's Hoseok's turn to punch him playfully on the arm. "Is it, though?"

Seokjin doesn't answer and returns to his own drink. While Hoseok is busy with his he suddenly asks, "So we're not actually here to talk about whatever's going on between you and - what's his name again - Jimin?"

Hoseok chokes on his beer and he abruptly jumps off the bar stool, grabs his jacket and starts walking out. "Come on, time to steal stuff, hyung!"

Seokjin laughs, takes out some money to pay for the drinks, and runs after his cousin, putting him in a headlock while they walk down the streets of Seoul.

*It's too late*, he thinks. *It has to be.*

****

"He's late."

Taehyung quietly agrees with Yoongi and adjusts his glasses as he continues to doodle on his reporter's notepad. He's wasted six pages already and he hasn't gotten any instructions yet.

Their jobs require them to wait. A lot. Waiting for the right timing, looking for that perfect second to move. Taehyung has been doing this for almost three years but that doesn't mean he's used to it. The others' voices in his in-ear serve as his radio, as his distraction, until he is given actual commands. They've only been at their positions for an hour but to him it feels like an entire day already.

"He's reclusive. He probably intended to be late to avoid reporters."

The in-ear crackles a little as Namjoon explained, and Taehyung notes that Namjoon isn't even a little bit annoyed, it was like he actually expected their target to be late. He hears him sipping something, probably iced coffee.

Taehyung stretches his neck and listens to the others. Jeongguk is overlooking their operations in their headquarters, Jimin is in a getaway van, while Taehyung and Hoseok are at the arrival area of Incheon International Airport, waiting for Choi Seunghyun to arrive from his trip to Japan. The others are waiting somewhere around the area as well.

Hoseok sits beside him, busy reading a tourist guide he stole from one of the souvenir shops, only quietly listening in on the others' conversations.

"I can't believe this -- even maps are a business now," he tells Taehyung. "Look, they're telling people that the best way to get to Gyeongbokgung is via a cab." He shakes his head. "Ridiculous. I know four different routes to Gyeongbokgung and none of them involve a cab."

"Yeah, hyung, but then they'd have to give their wallets to you," Taehyung answers, not bothering to look at him. Hoseok frowns but nods in agreement.

"I hacked into the tower," Jeongguk announces, ignoring Hoseok's rants about businesses robbing people while they themselves rob people for a living. "Choi's private plane just landed. He'll be out in ten minutes."

"Alright everyone."

Taehyung stops doodling and straightens up when he hears Yoongi's voice, steady and ready to give orders. "He's not going to go out of the main arrival area, so V-"
"On it." He stands up and Hoseok follows closely behind, clutching a camera bag. He heads for Terminal C where the private cars are parked.

"Head for Terminal A," an unfamiliar voice suddenly comes in. It's Seokjin. Taehyung still has to get used to the sixth voice in his ear, seventh if he counts his own.

"Why?" Yoongi questions over the comm. Taehyung raises an eyebrow. He and Hoseok pause, looking at each other and waiting for further instructions. "Choi's Vellfire is here. It just pulled up, not at the other terminal," Seokjin answers.

"Why are you there?"

"I got a hunch," Seokjin says, and Taehyung swears he almost heard Yoongi scoff.

"Go," Namjoon finally says, and they march to the taxi bay.

*****

"Tell me when, Hope-hyung," Jimin murmurs as he parks the van behind a truck and jumps out, barrel bag on hand.

"Got it, Chim," he hears Hoseok reply. Jimin sits by the bus stop near the taxi bay and scans the area. From afar he spots Seokjin, wearing an airport staff uniform and carrying a lady's luggage into a cab.

"You're such a lovely young man, thank you," he hears her tell him through the in-ear. Seokjin bows and waves her away, but not before she presses some bills on his hand as a tip.

"Nice one," Jimin says. Seokjin smiles and continues to wave at the cab. "Stop brown nosing, Jimin," he teases.

Jemin hears at least two people laugh in their comms.

"I'm not brown nosing!" Jimin replies. "What makes you think that?"

"Well, ever since you realized I'm Hoseokie's only living relative that he recognizes you've been especially-"

"Jin hyung!" Jimin half-shouts into the in-ear and he hears the others flinch in response ("Jeez," Yoongi grumbles). He stands up and looks at Seokjin from afar, who's smirking at his general direction. Jimin gives him an exasperated look, one which he hopefully translates to as, "Stop now, he can hear us because of these stupid in-ears."

Seokjin hums and turns to help another traveler with their luggage.

"Choi out at Terminal A in two minutes," Jeongguk announces, and Jimin stands straight. At the corner of his eye, he sees Seokjin pull up a bunch of empty airport trolleys.

Jemin opens his bag and looks at the device carefully cradled inside it, making sure it's turned on. He looks around and watches as the driver of the parked black car come out and run to the other side of the airport.

"Okay, got the nerd out of the car, RM hyung," Jeongguk says.

Jemin hears Taehyung snicker. "You're the nerd."

"Shut up or I turn your comm off."
They usually ignore bantering over the comms when they're not involved; after all, six voices talking simultaneously in their ears can be overwhelming, not to mention irritating. But all of a sudden Seokjin starts giggling, Hoseok and Taehyung closely follow, and Jimin can't help but laugh as well. He may even have heard a smirk from Namjoon, who should be busy planting the intercepting device in Choi Seunghyun’s car.

"Everyone shut up, please," Yoongi announces, and Jimin can almost see their leader’s eyes rolling at the rowdiness. Two minutes later Namjoon comes out of the car and disappears into the crowd of travelers before the driver gets back inside, wearing a confused look on his face.

"Chim, get ready," Hoseok says.

Jimin smiles as he adjusts his mask. "Anytime you are, hyung."

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"Heads up," Hoseok tells Taehyung, tilting his head slightly to the left.

Choi Seunghyun is walking approximately twenty feet away from them, miserably failing at trying to look nondescript: the head full of turquoise hair peeking under his hoodie is enough to make people do a double take, and his casual ripped jeans and jacket look would have worked if it weren't for the fact that he's dragging a limited edition Louis Vuitton luggage behind him. He seems to be alone, but before Hoseok can speak about the men following Choi, he hears Seokjin in his ear.

"He's got guards."

Three men in casual wear - also failing at trying to blend in - are walking behind Choi, on the lookout for possible reporters or paparazzi. Taehyung straightens, thinking of a strategy on how to get to the target fast and without being pushed away. Hoseok looks at Seunghyun: he looks tired, frazzled, and desperate to just get into his car.

Too bad. Taehyung and his long legs sprint to the direction of Seunghyun, followed closely by Hoseok and his camera.

"Mr. Choi Seunghyun! KBZ Universal, can we have a minute? We have some questions and the public needs answers!" he practically shouts into the arrival area of the airport, and people's heads start turning to their direction. Hoseok flips his snapback and aims the lens at the shocked Seunghyun. Several people in the area start pulling out their phones.

"What in - how - no, you can't have a minute. I don't owe anything to the public," Seunghyun spits out as he struggles to move away from Taehyung's recorder. One of the bodyguards start pushing Taehyung away but Taehyung is taller and much broader than he is. Hoseok struggles to aim the camera at Choi.

"Please Mr. Choi, it's about your falling out with Mr. Kwon Jiyong of GD Enterprises. What can you say about his recent statements?"

Choi suddenly stills and glares at Taehyung. "What recent statements?" he hisses.

Hoseok finally gets an opportunity, puts an eye on his view finder, and he starts looking for the key. It takes him several seconds, but the camera's x-ray feature finally zeroes in on Seunghyun's left wrist, where a plain silver band is hidden under the sleeves. "Gotcha," Hoseok mutters under his breath. "Chim, give me a minute."

The crowd of onlookers, fans, and other people start growing and Choi Seunghyun’s three
bodyguards aren't enough to keep them away.

“There’s so many people,” Jimin grumbles.

"Hope, get it fast. V, do your best to stop him from getting in the car. Keep on talking about the partnership with Kwon, it seems to trigger him,” Yoongi orders.

“I’m trying,” Hoseok mutters.

“Kwon Jiyong’s holds large assets in his company, that should make him talk,” Jeongguk supplies from the headquarters.

While Hoseok struggles to find a better position he hears Yoongi ask, "What – what are you doing?" No one knows who Yoongi is talking to, but Seokjin answers. "We need to disperse the crowd. Jimin can't get in. It's too crowded."


"Mr. Kwon says his partnership with you has been a mistake. Years of hard work down the drain. Do you agree?" Taehyung asks, his voice drowning out the murmurs of the people surrounding them. He pushes his recorder up to Seunghyun's mouth, and elbows one bodyguard in the process.

Seunghyun stumbles back a bit and Hoseok catches him by the arm.

"I - he said that, huh." Choi clears his throat as he gathers himself.

"Excuse me, please make way!"

Seokjin passes by, partially clearing the continuously growing crowd with the empty airport trolleys. Several seconds later Jimin appears beside Hoseok and he drops the bracelet in the open bag.

"Key's with me," Jimin announces to the group and Hoseok hears everyone but Taehyung sigh in relief.

"Well, Kwon Jiyong might feel like years of hard work were wasted, but I feel like my whole life was wasted in this partnership," Choi Seunghyun says into the recorder and even Taehyung was surprised by Seunghyun's statement. The crowd collectively gasps and Seunghyun smirks. One of his bodyguards takes him by the elbow. "We have to go, Mr. Choi," he says, and the four of them move on to walk to the direction of the car.

"The scanner will take two minutes tops," Jimin announces in the comms as he disappears into the crowd.

"Give him three minutes, V," Yoongi instructs. Hoseok moves to Seunghyun's right side as Taehyung presses on. "What will happen to all your assets and shares at GD Enterprises?"

The bodyguard tries to elbow Hoseok away and he successfully dodges the attack. He frowns and takes the guard's watch with his free hand as revenge, smirking beneath his mask.

"No comment, go away." Seunghyun adjusts his sunglasses and steps forward.

"Is your move to Paris related to this fallout with Mr. Kwon?"

Seunghyun pauses before muttering, "No comment. Leave me alone."

"One minute!" Hoseok hears Jimin announce. "Jin hyung, where are you?"
"I'm on my way," Seokjin replies.

"How about Mr. Kwon's assets at The House of T.O.P? He states that his assets are large enough to buy the company out." Taehyung finally says.

The crowd gasps again and there are more flashes and whispering everywhere. Hoseok notices the flashing lights make their target flinch.

"Jiyong can shove his assets up his ass," Choi snarls and pushes through the crowd as his bodyguards struggle to protect him. Hoseok sees Seokjin approach from afar and this time he runs the trolleys straight into the crowd behind Choi. The force was strong enough to push Choi into Taehyung's arms, and his sunglasses fall off in the process.

The slight commotion allows Hoseok to swiftly take the key back from Seokjin and before Seunghyun can get up and check if it has fallen off the band is back on his wrists, like it was never gone.

"Mr. Choi, are you alright?" Taehyung asks, holding him up in his other arm. There are more flashes coming from other cameras and phones trying to document the event and Choi Seunghyun shields his eyes and shouts to get the cameras away from him.

His bodyguards finally get Seunghyun to his car and Taehyung shoves his recorder through the car window. "Do you have anything else to say to Mr. Kwon, Mr. Choi?" he asks.

"I have no desire to acknowledge his existence from here on out," Choi puts his glasses back on and the car moves forward. Slowly the crowd disperses and only Hoseok and Taehyung are left standing by the bay.

Yoongi comes from behind, wearing a cap and clutching a camera.

"You got them, hyung?" Hoseok asks.

They scan the crowd of dispersing onlookers checking their phone galleries, only to find out that none of the photos or videos of Seunghyun they took have been saved properly, no thanks to the flashes of Yoongi's specialized camera.

Yoongi puts a hand on his shoulder and Hoseok knows he's smiling despite the mask covering half his face. From afar they see Seokjin return the trolleys back where they belong. He looks up and smiles at them before disappearing in a crowd of tourists boarding a bus. Hoseok looks at Yoongi, whose eyes are still glued on the crowd.

"Yeah, I got them. I'll see you all at HQ."

Chapter End Notes

(What is this chapter even lmao)

So yes, there is the mystery of The Real Reason Why Seokjin Left and we’ll be getting answers in The Future hahaha. I want to hear your feedback on the action(?) scenes! And hit me up on Twitter as well. Thanks for reading, I hope you enjoyed!
Yoongi.

Seokjin’s voice glides smoothly into Yoongi’s ears, sending goose bumps down his arms. Yoongi looks down at Jeongguk who has heard the same thing in his headset, but is unaffected by the elder’s voice and still concentrating on his computer. His eyes dart to the others onscreen, and they all seem to be acting as if he’s the only one who heard Seokjin’s voice.

Yoongi shakes the feeling off and tells himself the low temperature of the hotel room was responsible for the shivers.

“What is it?” he asks.

“You’re gonna be mad at me for this,” the other tells him.

Their situation is too dire and crucial at the moment for him to be sarcastic, so Yoongi asks, “What?”

Jeongguk’s hands freeze over the keyboard, round eyes suddenly looking up at Yoongi. At the architectural firm’s main office, Namjoon coughs to hide his obviously surprised expression while Jimin pats his back, apologizing profusely to the two Japanese men they’re trying to distract. “What the fuck is going on?” Jimin murmurs to his in-ears in Korean.

Seokjin’s tone is so nonchalant, so casual, so painstakingly calm that Yoongi almost thought he heard wrong.

“Did he just say he’s going to-” Taehyung exclaims.

“Dammit - Jin hyung!” Hoseok’s hiss cuts off into the comms.

Yoongi grabs the mouse and zooms the camera to the street outside the building, where the getaway car is located. He can see Seokjin inside, looking at the side mirrors and assessing his situation, hands firmly on the steering wheel.

“Say that again?” Yoongi grits his teeth in anger, but in the back of his mind he wonders how exactly they got into this situation.

“I said,” Seokjin sighs, as if he’s being horribly inconvenienced, “I’m going to crash the car.”

*****

Namjoon pinches the bridge of his nose and sighs deeply. He has one plan. It shouldn’t be as complicated as how he initially planned it. Granted, his plans have always been like that, but it has
always worked for their crew.

"You're saying the blueprints are in Japan," Yoongi tells him.

But Namjoon didn't really think that Choi Seunghyun would be so oddly paranoid, so terribly possessive over his art collection and this mysterious painting that he wouldn't even put a single security camera in his gallery. All of them are back at the headquarters, looking at the CCTV feeds of Seunghyun's house after Jeongguk successfully hacked into the built-in security system. It doesn't take them long to realize that none of the 45 cameras feature Choi's infamous gallery.

"Yes," Namjoon answers. "Now our only way to even have the vaguest idea of how the gallery looks like is through the blueprints."

"Which are in Japan," Yoongi says again, slower this time. Namjoon nods.

"There's no way Jeongguk can acquire the blueprint from here?" Seokjin asks.

"I can," Jeongguk scoffs defensively. "But someone has to be there to plug the hard drive and take it online." He pouts and looks up at the screens, filled with empty hallways and rooms. "Look, the asshole has two cameras in his kitchen but none in his gallery?"

"That kitchen contains original Francis Bacon paintings," Jimin points to the small frames hanging by the west wall, "so if he can casually put two million dollar works of art in his kitchen, imagine what he has in his actual gallery."

Namjoon crosses his arms as he further explained to the others. "Blueprints for VIP clients at the architecture firm are secured by making sure that there is only one digital file in existence, placed in an external hard drive that never goes online. Only the partners of the firm have access to it."

"It’s that confidential?" Jimin asks.

"Their clients range from banks and federal offices, to paranoid rich people like Choi Seunghyun, so yes."

Taehyung raises a finger, and Namjoon smiles at the way his eyes light up. He nods to the younger’s direction so everyone else would acknowledge him.

"Okay, so we have several photos of the gallery already, right Namjoonie hyung? That’s something. And, we know how to get there already, so - I mean, why not just wing it?" he suggests.

Seokjin nods in agreement. "I can always make sure that Choi Seunghyun will-" he starts before he's cut off by Yoongi's resounding "No."

Yoongi doesn’t look at any of them when he speaks. "Choi might have changed the whole layout of his gallery after the magazine shoot. That’s completely plausible, given his personality. We are not going in without knowing where is what," he tells them with conviction.

Namjoon looks at Yoongi, and then he throws Hoseok a knowing look. Hoseok only shrugs back, and Namjoon has to shake off the feeling of dread that suddenly latches itself on his back. We're better now, he thinks. They have more capable people in their hands. It's not going to end up like the last time.

"Okay, jeez." Taehyung throws his hands in defeat. Seokjin shrugs, apparently unaffected by the interruption, but Namjoon looks at him and he sees the older isn't meeting his eyes.
Namjoon frowns and looks at the CCTV feeds in front of them. "Well, the only good news about this is," he says in an attempt to elevate the mood, "Kwon Jiyong is ready to provide us with anything to get to the painting, including a ride in his private jet."

“We leave in two days,” Yoongi announces abruptly before leaving for the stairs.

*****

Yoongi can’t help but frown when he hears the laughter coming from the hangar where Kwon Jiyong's private plane is waiting to take them to Tokyo. He sees Seokjin, Taehyung, and Jeongguk howling with laughter while Hoseok is in the middle of telling one of his anecdotes, making large gestures, as if he’s being punched in the face.

He doesn’t know why but the way Seokjin’s voice tinkled when he giggles, the way he slaps Taehyung’s back as Hoseok delivered the punch line, the way he looks like the others’ old friends when he’s only been here a week, makes him uncomfortable.

If Yoongi is going to be honest, it annoys him.

His annoyance is justified, at least for him. Because it’s not just the way Seokjin moves freely around him, not just the way he integrates himself back into his life.

It’s the way he’s risking the group by deviating from the plan. The plan is there for a reason. Seokjin is there because of the plan, because he’s part of Namjoon’s plan, and yet somehow he always finds ways to not follow it. It happened the first time when they acquired the key from Choi Seunghyun, when he just decided on his own to ram the empty trolleys through the crowd. Yoongi didn’t say anything because it really did help Jimin get to Hoseok faster, but it kept on happening: Seokjin kept on asking questions, kept on giving his input, like he was actually a part of this crew. And he’s not. Not anymore, Yoongi was clear about that when he and Seokjin talked. He was going to follow the plan, listen to instructions, take his pay, and then leave.

“Ah, hi hyung!” Taehyung waves at Yoongi when he sees him. The others smile at him, including Seokjin. He gives them a non-committal nod and turns to look at the nearest plane a good hundred feet away from them.

“You look like you need a drink,” Namjoon tells him from behind. Yoongi furrows his brows and turns to Namjoon, who's wearing a ridiculous scarf and large hat.

“You look like you need to take your sunglasses off because it’s almost midnight and we’re indoors,” he bites back and walks to where he can see Kwon Jiyong’s secretary Kang Daesung waiting for them. He ignores Namjoon’s offended sounds following him.

The secretary bows to them as he hands Yoongi and Namjoon their hotel keys.

“Mr. Kwon has arranged rooms for you at the Victory Hotel. He sends his regards and wishes you the best of luck,” his eye smile takes Yoongi a little off-guard.

Yoongi clears his throat. “He didn’t ask why we needed the plane?”

"No," Kang Daesung shakes his head. “To be honest, Suga-ssi, he doesn’t care if you end up crashing this plane. As long as you get him what he needs.” He smiles and leads them onboard. Namjoon calls on to the others and Yoongi breathes in the richness exuded by the cabin: eight first class leather seats, champagne and wine bottles everywhere, and luxury Egyptian rugs are carpeting the floor. He hears the oohs and aahs of the others behind him.
"Man, I wouldn't mind living in this plane," Taehyung whistles.

"You used to bowl!?" Yoongi hears Jeongguk suddenly exclaim as they settle down in their seats.

Seokjin laughs – and again, Yoongi feels annoyance creep in his skin – and says to Jeongguk, “It’s for a class back in college. It was required. I barely scored.”

“No, we’re going to play when we get back. One on one. I don't care, I can never get these people to play with me,” the youngest frowns at the others and tells Seokjin. Yoongi takes a seat by the window beside Hoseok, who then chimes in, “That’s because you get overly competitive and I don’t want to be around you when you're holding a sixteen-pound ball and start throwing a tantrum.”

Seokjin laughs again with the rest and Yoongi almost jams his earphones in his ears so he won’t have to hear it anymore.

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"Excuse me, how much did you say this wine costs again?" Taehyung asks the stewardess of the private jet. She smiles and bows at him. "It's 65,000 won, Sir."

"That would be per bottle, right?" he asks. The woman shyly shakes her head. "Per glass?!" he exclaims and looks at the liquid in his glass. Seokjin laughs across him. "It's a 2004 Petrvs Pomerol. Wait until you get to taste the 1987." Taehyung frowns, having understood only half of what Seokjin said.

"I know. Rich people, am I right?" he says as he flips through a magazine. The lone stewardess then leaves for the cockpit.

The trip from Seoul to Tokyo is short but everyone except for Taehyung and Seokjin are asleep. Most of their trips require them to catch a red eye but that doesn't stop them from complaining and sleeping through a three-hour flight.

“Ah, speaking of the rich devil,” Taehyung flings his legs over the arm rest of his seat and watches the news on the small screen on the wall of the cabin. Seokjin looks up and observes as Kwon Jiyong, hair now a violent shade of highlighter yellow, make a statement to the media.

"As far as I am concerned," their client lazily speaks to the microphones in front of him, “the House of T.O.P will be nothing but a shanty without my shares.” He smiles devilishly. The press explodes and bombards him with more questions.

Taehyung subconsciously starts imitating Jiyong’s movements, fascinated by the way he spoke and moved every muscle in his face, the way he looked at each and every person in the room like he knows how much they cost, the way his lips curl up with every question. It’s good practice for Taehyung to find someone to imitate. He then notices Seokjin, whose eyes are plastered on the screen, eyebrows furrowed as their client answered more questions from the press.

“What’s wrong, hyung?” Taehyung asks.

“Kwon Jiyong doesn’t do a lot of interviews,” Seokjin says, not looking at him, “not until lately. It’s like he’s doing this just to taunt Choi Seunghyun.”

“Yoongi hyung says he’s known to be petty.”

“Yeah,” Seokjin scoffs and shakes his head, “that attitude will bite him back in the ass one of these days.”
As if on cue the media interview ends and Seokjin goes back to his magazine. Taehyung tries reading one of the in-flight publications as well but he gets bored and starts fidgeting around his seat. He ends up looking at Namjoon on the seat behind his, feet propped up on the small table and slightly snoring.

*Cute,* he thinks. He likes seeing Namjoon like this: when he’s vulnerable, when he’s not really stuck in his mind thinking of plans and not thinking of ways to escape. It always amazes him how Namjoon is the type of person who for no reason will have five ways to escape a plane, but is also the type of person who would spill soda on himself because he absentmindedly shook the can before opening it.

The younger puts his glass down and looks at the sleeping figures of the others several feet away from them.

"Hyung," he almost whispers, turning and leaning forward towards Seokjin. The other doesn't stop from flipping through his magazine, legs crossed. He hums to let Taehyung know he heard him.

"I have a question?" he says. "What is it?" Seokjin still doesn’t look up at him.

Taehyung pouts but he presses on. "It's about Namjoon hyung."

Seokjin closes the magazine with a flip and finally looks at Taehyung. He gives him a small smile. "What about Namjoonie?"

“You’ve known him a long time right?” he asks. Seokjin nods but says, “Yoongi's known him a longer time, though.”

Taehyung wrinkles his nose. “You think I haven’t tried talking to him? Yoongi hyung is so emotionally constipated that laxatives won’t work on him anymore.”

Seokjin laughs out so loud that Jimin stirs and mumbles something in his sleep. The older covers his mouth and Taehyung continues, "It's um - I just want to know." He stammers, but he can't see the find the right words to express his frustration, "if - well, how do I-

The older nods, like he already knows what Taehyung wants to say. "You like him."

"Wha- How did you know?"

"Taehyung, everyone knows."

Taehyung splays his hands in front of him in frustration. "Yes, except for him!"

Seokjin crosses his legs. "And you wanna know why Namjoon is about as dense as a rock?" he asks Taehyung with a glint of amusement in his eyes.

Taehyung sighs and closes his eyes.

"Yes, oh god. Yes. So. Dense. I'm just. Why." He puts his hands on his face and nods and he can hear Seokjin laugh at him again.

"Well," the older starts, "Namjoon isn't used to other people putting up with him." Taehyung puts his hands down to his lap and looks back at him.

"What?"

Seokjin takes a sip of the wine, swirling the glass in his hand before speaking again. “Namjoon, like
Jeongguk, is a genius. But he’s his own kind of smart. Namjoon is always moving and walking. Not in the literal, move-out-of-Seoul sense, but in the ‘oh this place is quiet and new, I should go here’ kind. He likes exploring, I’m sure you’ve noticed.”

Taehyung nods vigorously. "And?"

"In my opinion," Seokjin nods after emptying his glass, “he doesn’t think there’s someone out there patient enough to go with him wherever his feet suddenly decide to take him."

“That’s – that’s not true.” Taehyung frowns, a sudden heavy feeling settling on his chest, uncomfortable about the possibility that what Seokjin said about Namjoon might be true.

“Someone should tell him that,” Seokjin says. “Maybe you?”

“But I – I don’t know, maybe he's really not just interested.”

The older frowns and tilts his head. "I see Namjoon's not the only dense person in this potential relationship."

Taehyung brightens up considerably and he reaches his hands out to Seokjin's. "You think, hyung? But I've asked him out so many times already and he always thinks I'm kidding or something."

Seokjin chuckles and pats his hands. "Asking someone out and telling them how you feel are two different things. I told you. Dense. You'll never know until you try and talk to him properly."

Taehyung nods solemnly as he goes back to his seat and starts thinking. He looks at Yoongi, leaning on Hoseok's shoulder on the other side of the cabin, and then he smirks at Seokjin's direction.

"I can say the same thing to you, hyung," he tells him.

Seokjin immediately narrows his eyes at him. "I talk to Yoongi, if that’s what you mean. We’re professionals working together."

“Ah, you’re forgetting there’s another actor in this group now, Seokjin hyung. You have a tell.”

Taehyung grins devilishly. The older raises an eyebrow curiously.

“You try too hard to make it not awkward, so you laugh differently when he’s around.”

Taehyung cackles when Seokjin decides to ignore him and goes back to his wine and magazine.

*****

"Jin-ah?"

Seokjin turns around and sees Kiae, wrapped in a shawl he gave her on her last birthday. She smells of vapor rub and old books, of calm days and quiet evenings. She reminds Seokjin of his own mother sometimes.

"Ah, hi ahjumma. It's quite late, are you having trouble sleeping? I can make you some tea." He lifts his hands, holding a cup he made himself not long ago. The old woman shakes her head. "No, I'm fine. I wanted to check on you." She sits beside him on the bench by the window. Seokjin shuffles and makes space for her, and she puts a gentle hand on his right knee. "Are you thinking about our problem with our son, Jin-ah? Don't worry about that, I-" she pauses and looks out the window, "we will get through it. I don't know how, but we will."

Seokjin smiles. "It's not about that, ahjumma. Don't worry."
"What is it then?"

Seokjin isn’t sure where to start. When Kiae and her husband took him in, they never asked him to tell them everything about his life. He spoke very little of his past, using vague markers and words to satisfy their curiosities.

"Is it about those young men you talked to earlier outside the shop?" Kiae suddenly asks. Seokjin looks up from his cup. "You saw, ahjumma?"

She smiles. "Just from the window. I've never seen them before so I'm assuming they're from your past." Her voice is neither questioning nor demanding. When Seokjin doesn't reply, the old woman chuckles lightly.

"You and my Namyoon, you're very much alike, you know that? Especially the way you keep things to yourselves. My husband never tells me the bad things as long as he can help it."

Seokjin laughs gently and covers the woman's hand on his knee with his own.

"But if I learned anything from our relationship," she continues, "is that hiding things never helps."

Seokjin's grip on Kiae's hand tightens, and the woman proceeds to put her other hand over his. "When you arrived here in our little shop in Daegu, you said you're eager to start afresh. But ah, Seokjin - the way you spoke of things, of this town even if you’re not really from here, of the items we sell at the shop - it makes me think that something, or someone, is still holding you back."

His vision starts to blur but even before the tears fall Kiae reaches out to wipe the creases around his eyes. "Ah, this old woman just made a beautiful young man cry," she whispers. Seokjin sniffs and manages to laugh a little. "Your husband is a lucky man, ahjumma," he teases, and she pats his neck.

"So is the person you left back in Seoul," she tells him.

Seokjin shakes his head. "I don't think he'll agree."

"Ah, but you'll never know, right? Unless you really want to spend the rest of your life with this old woman and her grumpy husband," she smiles at him and once again Seokjin is reminded of his own mother. Seokjin leans his head on her shoulder.

"I don't think I want to know," he whispers.

"Ah, Jin-ah," she tells him, "The truth has a way of haunting us, one way or the other. Life has that kind of a cruel way of setting us right."

They don’t say anything for a while but eventually Kiae pats his hands and tells him she's going back to sleep. Seokjin sits up and watches her walk away, but not before he catches her hand. "Ahjumma," he whispers, "thank you for everything." She smiles and nods, tightening her shawl around her shoulders before going back to the bedroom.

Seokjin looks out at the window. The skies of Daegu, far away from the blinding lights of billboards and skyscrapers, are beautiful and studded with stars. He realizes he's looking at the same sky Yoongi looked at when he was a kid, and he figures this is how he started dreaming of escaping the town.

He had wanted to catch one, he told Seokjin before. They were lying on a hammock somewhere in Japan having successfully finished another job, looking up at the stars, looking like diamonds scattered on a velvet background.
Seokjin chuckles after Yoongi tells him. "And how did the great genius Min Yoongi react when he found out you can't lasso a star out of the sky?"

"What do you mean you can't?" Yoongi replies and Seokjin turns his head to look up at him.

"I caught one right here," he flashes Seokjin a gummy smile and gently bops his nose with a finger.

Seokjin rolls his eyes and pulls away from Yoongi's embrace, violently shaking the hammock. "Ugh, that is so incredibly cheesy. Stop spending all of your waking hours with Namjoon, will you?" he teases.

He wrinkles his nose when Yoongi only laughs at him, but Seokjin doesn't complain when the other gently pulls him back, tilting his head up until their lips are touching each other, until they’ve completely forgotten the skies and stars above them.

Seokjin doesn't realize the time until he puts the cup up to his lips and notices that the tea has gone cold. He remembers Namjoon's last words to him the day before, about going back. This job, the old couple’s sudden need for money – he figures this is what Kiae meant when she said that life has a way of setting one right. Back in his room, he writes a goodbye letter to the old couple who has taken care of him for three years and says farewell to the household that willingly let him escape from finding out the truth.

The truth, which Seokjin realizes, is a hard thing to confront even if it’s right there in your face.

They arrive at Kwon Jiyong’s private hangar in Japan a little past four in the morning. Yoongi and Namjoon thank the pilot and attendant while the rest step out of the plane one by one, alternating between yawns and grunts.

The late August winds of Tokyo aren’t as cold yet but Seokjin can already feel the onset of autumn in his skin. He thinks it’s nice, but he tries not to remember the last time he was here. He’s probably not the only one who’s thinking the same thing. The trip to the hotel is short but half of them quickly fell back asleep on the way and Seokjin had to wake them up one by one. The rest spill out of the car to the hotel and clumsily take their room keys from Namjoon, who had almost left it in the plane.

“Be up by lunch,” Namjoon yawns and the others answer noncommittal nods as they go ahead to their rooms. Seokjin takes his time to walk to the elevator until he realizes that only he and Yoongi are left behind on the floor.

Seokjin settles to look at the elevator sign as it goes back down to the lobby, while Yoongi opts to focus on the potted plant in front of him. Seokjin doesn’t bother for small talk, because he knows Yoongi hates that. Which is why he almost jumps out of his skin when the younger suddenly speaks.

“Can I ask you something? I figured I might as well know now, before the job tomorrow,” Yoongi’s voice is raw and unused from sleep.

Seokjin blinks and turns to him. “Uh, sure.”

“Do you have any problem with the plan?”

Seokjin smiles and looks back at the elevator. In his peripheral vision he sees Yoongi frown at his reaction.

He’s noticed it several times, the way Yoongi flinches or gets quiet or even frowns when he speaks up or deviates from the plan. Seokjin wasn’t not expecting it, but he had hoped that Yoongi would yell at him at a later, more humane time of the day, not when there’s barely any even light outside.
“I don’t have a problem with the plan, Yoongi. But I know you have a problem with me,” he says, his matter-of-fact tone causing Yoongi to raise an eyebrow at him. The elevator is still two floors away from them.

“I don’t-”

“And you have all the right to be, I know.” Seokjin cuts him off swiftly. “I’m not expecting you to be nice to me, but I’m expecting you to know that I know what I’m doing.”

“I’ve always done things like that before, Yoongi,” he continues.

The elevator doors open and Yoongi steps inside. “That was before,” Yoongi says, eyes hardening on him.

Before. And they both agreed to not come back to that. Seokjin agreed to follow the plan, do his job, get paid, and then leave. It’s a mantra that he keeps on repeating inside his head whenever he’s around Yoongi. But Seokjin is not going to let himself be stepped on at the moment, not when he hasn’t had a wink of sleep in 21 hours, not when he knows there’s an incoming neck pain waiting for him later when he wakes up, and especially not when he knows he’s right.

Seokjin laughs derisively as he puts a hand on the elevator door.

“If Namjoon or Hoseok did the same thing you wouldn’t even have blinked.”

There is a split second moment where Seokjin sees Yoongi’s expression change to something softer, like he realized something – but before the older can see more of it, it quickly snaps back to whatever unsympathetic expression he had a second ago. Seokjin is not sure if what he saw was real or not, but what he knows is that the pain blooming in his temples are gone and are replaced with something far worse settling in his chest.

“Just because you think you know what you’re doing doesn’t mean you can just go do it without telling me,” Yoongi tells him with a hollow voice. “There’s a plan. You’re here in the first place because of that plan. Learn how to follow it.”

Seokjin desperately wants to yell in anger but his voice ends up somewhere between an appeal and a cry.

“Then tell me who to be when I’m around you, Yoongi!”

Yoongi blinks in surprise and before he can say something Seokjin continues, “Are you going to let me act like nothing ever happened like **you** wanted, and do my job, or do you want me to act like a kicked puppy every time you’re around?”

He pants and the heat has risen up from his chest up to his neck and he just knows that he’s already red in the face but Seokjin can’t stop talking.

“Choose Yoongi, because I can’t be both.”

Again, before Yoongi can say anything else, Seokjin lets go of the elevator door, looking away as it closes between them.

Whether he did it out of pride or out of fear of finding out Yoongi’s answer, Seokjin doesn’t know.

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Jimin huffs and shoves his hand in his pockets as soon as he gets out of the cab, clutching a paper bag from a nearby convenience store. He is eager to get inside the warm lobby of the hotel they’re all staying at, but the scent of cigarettes makes him turn. It always reminds him of his father. He raises his eyebrows when he sees Yoongi standing by some potted plants of the hotel façade, deep in thought.

He hops his way towards him and Yoongi nods to Jimin in greeting. He takes out the cigarette packet and offers it to him, but Jimin shakes his head and the other just shrugs as he puts it back in his coat pocket. “I thought you quit,” Jimin notes as he settles beside the older and he paws through his bag and produces a lollipop. He unwraps the candy and puts it in his mouth.

“Well,” Yoongi says as he takes a drag, “I thought so too.”

A distant relative once told Jimin that his father stopped smoking when his mother got pregnant with him. But when Jimin was three and his mother died of an illness, his father went right back into smoking a pack a day. He tries hard to remember her, but he only has faint memories of her quiet laughter and melodious lullabies.

Sometimes, Jimin tries to imagine what his life would be like if his mother had lived. If she had, Jimin figures he would be the kind of person who goes overseas for vacation, not for a heist.

“You got something on your mind?” Yoongi asks him.

“Well,” Jimin takes out the lollipop from his mouth, “I have a theory as to why you’re smoking again but I’m scared you’ll punch me or something.”

Yoongi snorts. “Good. Stay scared.”

Jimin laughs and shakes his head. “Aigoo, Yoongi hyung. You’ve been so tense lately.”

He was the first one who brought it up to the rest, several days ago, when they were eating the chicken Seokjin brought for them.

“He’s working with his ex, why wouldn’t he be tense?” Jeongguk says. Hoseok and Namjoon both nod, and Taehyung takes the opportunity to know more about Seokjin, who had been quite elusive towards them during the start.

“Why did they break up?” Taehyung asks. “Was it a mutual thing or someone left the other? I bet it was Yoongi hyung who broke up with him,” he waves the chicken wing all-knowingly. Namjoon balled up a piece of tissue and threw it playfully at him. “Don’t assume things, Taehyungie.”

Hoseok suddenly stands up and murmurs something about getting water for them.

Yoongi breathes out and taps the stick, watching the wind blow the ashes away before they hit the asphalt. “Why do you guys keep on telling me I’m tense? Of course I am, there’s seven billion won on the line here.”

Jimin puts an arm around him. “Ah, maybe you just need a good sauna, hyung. You need to de-stress. There are lots of good places here in Tokyo, let’s all go after work tomorrow.”

Yoongi shakes his head. “I’d rather go to sleep.”

“Aish, hyung!” Jimin frowns.

“What?”
“We’ve only been here twice before and on both times you refused to go with us! Why is that? The last time we went here for the bank job in Nagoya you even went on an earlier flight ahead.”

Yoongi reciprocates the frown and uses his free hand to remove Jimin’s arm off him. “We’re here for work, not for vacation.”

The younger runs his hands through his hair before shoving it back to his pockets. “Hmm.” He nods and looks out on the busy streets of Tokyo. “How about sashimi? It’s Jeongguk’s birthday the day after tomorrow.”

“We can celebrate back in Korea,” Yoongi mutters as he tosses the cigarette butt, takes out another stick, and puts it between his teeth. Jimin hums again in response.

Yoongi tuts, shoves his lighter back in his pocket, and faces Jimin.

“Why do you keep on saying ‘Hmm’? That’s annoying,” he glowers at him.

Jemin couldn’t help but hum again and when he realizes what he’s done he laughs and apologizes. “Ah, I’m sorry hyung. I just – it’s just I remembered something Hoseokie hyung told me once.”

Yoongi furrows his eyebrows, waiting for further explanation. Jimin looks up at the early night sky. “He said,” he starts, “that you want to settle down here, in Japan, some day.”

At the corner of his eye Jimin watches Yoongi’s expression soften and then look up like him. The older lights his cigarette and takes a long drag before speaking again.

“People like us, Jimin,” Yoongi’s voice is low and throaty, “we settle down when we’re dead.”

Jemin doesn’t answer. He’s not going to lie and say he hasn’t thought of settling down in the future. Not in the near future, of course, but there has to be an end to their capers somehow. Jemin loves what he does, and he’s sure Yoongi also feels the same way towards their jobs, but he doesn’t know why the other’s voice sounded melancholic, almost like he had to learn that fact the hard way.

*****

Jeongguk pants as he continues hacks into the security system.

“I need more time!”

The others’ voices become a buzz in his ears as he tracks Hoseok’s and Taehyung’s movements within the building. Hoseok has successfully picked their way inside the room where the external hard drive is located, but Jeongguk still needs to unlock the drive so he can secure the files.

He hears Yoongi ask something, presumably something about why he hasn’t hacked into it yet, but Jeongguk fails to reply and continues to type away into his computer, which is not figuring out the algorithm of the hard drive’s lock system as fast as he thought it would.

“It’s just five digits, what’s taking so long?” Hoseok asks. He’s watching the device he plugged in to the external hard drive light up, pressing a finger on his in-ear to make himself clearer.

The hard drive does not just require five digits to be unlocked, it’s five characters. The permutation shot up to a billion when asterisks, dollar signs, underscores, and ampersands were thrown in to the equation. On any other day he’d be glad to explain this to the others thoroughly (even if they won’t really listen), but they’re currently in the middle of a very perilous situation, so Jeongguk doesn’t bother to answer. Instead he types in more codes to speed up the process.
“The guards are about to make their rounds on your floor in two minutes, you have to hide,” Yoongi informs the others.

“Can’t we just grab this damn thing and leave?” Taehyung asks.

“We can’t let Choi Seunghyun know his house’s blueprints have been compromised. Now hide,” Yoongi instructs.

Hoseok mutters a string of curses under his breath and calls on Taehyung to climb on the vents so they can hide when the guards inevitably pass by to do their rounds.

Jeongguk’s eyes flit to the other smaller squares on his screen. At the office of the architectural firm’s owners, Namjoon and Jimin smile their way into charming and distracting the owners, their fluent Japanese impressing the men, pitching a possible museum project somewhere in Germany.

He moves his eyes to the other screens. The guards are about to reach the floor where the hard drive is located, but Hoseok and Taehyung are still not in hiding.

“I can probably stall the elevator for a minute, but I can’t prolong that without raising suspicions,” he suggests, voice on edge.

“Don’t,” he hears Seokjin suddenly say. He hasn’t been talking the entire time - since they arrived at the hotel, actually - and Jeongguk had almost forgotten he was there, at the firm’s parking lot waiting for instructions. “It’s not worth risking the file. We’ll think of something else.”

Jeongguk looks up at Yoongi, whose eyebrows are furrowed either in frustration or concentration, he’s not sure.

“Hoseok, Taehyung, why aren’t you hiding yet?” Yoongi asks, voice dangerously on the brink of snarling.

“The device we attached to the hard drive, hyung!” Taehyung explains. “If they see it they’ll know someone’s here and we’re fucking done for.”

“Hyung,” Jeongguk whispers, voice a little desperate and apologetic. He hates it when a machine is succeeding in outsmarting him and he hates it even more that it’s being proven to him in the middle of a heist. “I really need more time.”

Yoongi places a reassuring hand on his shoulder. “Just do your best,” he tells him, “we’ll find a way.”

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In retrospect, it dawns to Yoongi that their current situation is not at all surprising.

“Just what the fuck do you think you’re doing?” he repeats, leaning forward like being closer to Seokjin’s face on the screen will somehow stop him from crashing the car and possibly injuring himself.

They haven’t talked since yesterday morning, after what happened at the hotel elevator. Seokjin didn’t say anything while Namjoon was giving out tasks, didn’t react when he was assigned to be the driver, didn’t give input while Yoongi was talking about the personalities of their targets for the day: two Japanese architecture firm owners and their building in downtown Tokyo.

“You see this Jaguar about a hundred feet away from me? It’s one of the owners’ cars. We need to
create a distraction to have more time,” The nonchalance in Seokjin’s voice unnerves Yoongi, sending unwanted tension to his spine.

Seokjin has always been petty like that, that’s how they met in the first place. But unfortunately a small, dumb part of his brain agrees with Seokjin: neither Namjoon nor Jimin are capable of doing anything to distract security without attracting suspicion, and Jeongguk is too preoccupied with a more important task at hand.

Either way Yoongi is pissed. But the way his heart is beating fast, the way anxiety is creeping up to his bones, the way he can’t feel himself breathe the longer he looked at Seokjin on the screen, about to crash a two-ton machine into another, is reminiscent of something Yoongi didn’t think he felt anymore: fear.

“I’m not going to total either car, just going to make enough damage so the owner will call the chief security officer on his way to that room,” Seokjin adds when Yoongi doesn’t answer, as if that should make him feel better.

“That-” Yoongi finally huffs, pushing his hair back, “that was not my point.” He wants Seokjin to stop, wants Seokjin to leave the car right now. He’s Genius Suga, Heist Mastermind Extraordinaire. He will think of other ways to distract security and Seokjin doesn’t have to risk his life.

The car backs up a little and Yoongi hisses as he watches Seokjin pop his head out of the window to see if he’s going to hit anyone else.

“Yeah, I don’t see any other way this can go,” Seokjin says as he revs the car. Yoongi knows he can’t do anything else to stop him. If Namjoon could actually talk to them at the moment, he would agree with Seokjin.

“Just-” Yoongi pushes his hair back again and moves away from the computer, refusing to see what Seokjin will do. Jeongguk follows him with his eyes but decides to go back to working on the hard drive.

“Be careful,” Hoseok whispers, saying the words Yoongi didn’t know were stuck in his throat.

Before anyone else can say anything, Seokjin announces, “Yeah, you might want to remove your in-ears for a second, it’s going to make some noise,” before they all hear the screeching of tires.

Before he knows it Yoongi's turned himself around and is looking back at the screen, hands on his hips, biting on his lower lip.

Jeongguk removes his headphones and lets it rest on his neck. Yoongi doesn’t and instead he lets the deafening sound undulate in his ears as he watched Seokjin hit the Jaguar with the car.

Smoke emits from both vehicles and a wave of panic crashes onto Yoongi’s chest. From the angle of the CCTV camera, he can’t see the inside of the car and people are going for the direction of the Jaguar, paying little mind to the one driven by Seokjin.

By the time security and traffic personnel have pushed onlookers far enough for Yoongi and Jeongguk to see the inside of the car, the door of the driver’s side is open and they can’t see anyone inside.

Almost consequently, one of the owners of the architectural firm receives a call and he excuses himself from the meeting with Namjoon and Jimin. The guards two feet away from the room where Hoseok and Taehyung are radioed in and they immediately turn on their heels, no doubt to attend to the accident.
“I’m in!” Jeongguk declares victoriously as soon as the guards land on the building lobby.

The hacker locates the correct file, copies it to his computer, and erases any trace of him opening the hard drive. “Alright, we’re done here,” the youngest says, and he turns back to the screens to keep track of the others.

Yoongi fails to hear him, only staring at the smoke-filled screen where Seokjin disappeared. He holds his breath until he hears a crackle in his in-ear, followed by a low grunt.

“Did we get it?” Seokjin whispers.

“Where are you?” Yoongi growls almost immediately, eyes darting from one street camera to another, looking for any sign of him. At the building’s cameras, he sees Namjoon and Jimin end their meeting with the firm owners. Taehyung and Hoseok scale down from the back of the building, picking up their window cleaners and other props before they leave. Taehyung makes a joke that only Jimin laughs at, presumably because all others are still doing something. Jeongguk intercepts with the security cameras one by one, installing a virus that erases their presence in the building.

“We got it Jin hyung, where are you?” Namjoon asks this time, finally able to talk.

“Ah, that’s good,” The relief in Seokjin’s voice fails to hide his pain. “And don’t shout, Yoongi,” he adds, and Yoongi gapes at Seokjin’s audacity to scold him when he’s the one who had just deliberately crashed into a hundred million won car. “I’m fine. No getaway car anymore though, RM, Chim?” he asks them.

“We’re about to get a cab, hyung, we’ll be okay,” Jimin answers, “Are you alright? You sound a bit shaky.”

“I’m fine,” he insists, and the slight ripple in his voice dismays Yoongi, because he knows Seokjin is just lying.

“Where are you?” Yoongi asks again. He cannot and will not be responsible for Seokjin’s safety because he’s not a part of their crew. He’s not. But he also can’t just let Seokjin bleed out or something in the middle of a foreign country where he’s using a fake passport.

Jeongguk tilts his screen towards Yoongi and shows him Hoseok and Taehyung disappear amidst the crowd going down to the subway station, while Namjoon and Jimin get into a cab.

“I’m at a café two streets away. Just in a bit of a shock, it’ll pass.”

In one other screen, Yoongi finally sees Seokjin at a coffee shop, sitting at one of the outside tables, coat tossed carelessly on the table.

“We can pick you up, hyung,” Taehyung suddenly offers.

“Ah, no. I’m fine, really. Good job,” he tells them.

“You didn’t have to risk your life,” Hoseok says.

“I didn’t risk my life, Hoseok, don’t be dramatic. I knew what I was doing,” Seokjin chuckles.

Yoongi looks at the screen where Seokjin is, and suddenly he wonders how many times they’ve been on a mission for the past years and have unknowingly passed by Seokjin on camera, living the peaceful life of a civilian. He’s sitting quietly, massaging his neck and looking out onto the crowd. He looked like he could be on vacation, for all Yoongi knew.
Seokjin spots the street camera Yoongi is watching him from and he smiles at it, and Yoongi is taken aback at the way he knew he was being watched.

“I just ordered a drink,” he tells the camera just as a server brings him some iced coffee. “I’ll be back soon.” He stands up and Yoongi watches him disappear from the camera frame and into the crowd of people crossing the street of Tokyo.

Yoongi knows Seokjin will be back in their hotel room within the hour, following the others shortly. He knows Seokjin will be with them on their flight back, will be with them until the painting Kwon Jiyong wants is in their hands.

He will be with them until he’s not.

But Seokjin’s last words suddenly reminded Yoongi of something else: of one evening, three years ago, when he stirs from his sleep.

“Hyungie?”

His eyes open when he feels Seokjin’s fingers on his chin. In the dim light of their night lamp he sees the other smile as he pulls the sheets up to Yoongi’s shoulders and buries his face on his neck, a habit Seokjin has formed over the years.

“Hey,” he murmurs, “I’m sorry I woke you up.”

“What’s wrong?” Yoongi asks, hands snaking to the small of Seokjin’s back.

“Nothing, nothing.” Even in his half-awake daze Yoongi recognizes the slight ripple in Seokjin’s voice.

Yoongi leans back to look at Seokjin, blinking to see him better. “You know better than to lie to me.”

Seokjin’s hand shoots up to cup his face and he starts playing with his hair. “I’m fine,” he insists, “just feeling a little uneasy, I think. Maybe I just need to go to the bathroom.”

“Okay,” Yoongi nods sleepily as the other pulled away. “Come back fast,” he half-whines with his slurred voice, his skin missing Seokjin’s warmth already. The other chuckles and walks away.

Yoongi had been too sleepy to remember if Seokjin had replied, the memory a bit too fuzzy and painful for him to ponder on it long enough, but he thinks he heard the other whisper before he finally fell back to sleep.

“I’ll be back.”

But the next time Yoongi wakes up the other side of the bed is still empty, except for a neatly folded piece of paper addressed to him.

Yoongi shakes his head and pats Jeongguk’s shoulders, praising him for a job well done. He mutters something about going to the hotel bar for a drink, so he’d have something to fill the pit forming in his stomach.

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Seokjin immediately heads for the room he shares with Hoseok when he gets to the hotel. He winces and feels a bruise about to bloom beneath his left rib. He was wearing a seat belt and he made sure
the impact wouldn’t even be strong enough for the airbags to activate, but the crash still left an impression on him.

He tosses his coffee cup on the trashcan and presses the elevator button. What he needs right now are a warm bath and some room service. He’s sure Kwon Jiyong won’t mind, especially if he’s the kind of guy who has 65,000-won-per-glass bottles of wine in his private jet. He hears someone clear his throat; Seokjin turns and he sees Yoongi beside him.

“Hey,” Yoongi murmurs. Seokjin can smell a hint of whiskey and cigarettes, and he bites his tongue to stop himself from saying something. Keep it professional, he tells himself. No references to anything before he got back from Daegu, like Yoongi had wanted. Nothing about Seokjin pouting for an entire day until Yoongi promised he’d try to stop smoking. Nothing about nights spent with their legs tangled, sharing a glass of whiskey, and talking until they fell asleep.

Which is good. Because now he knows his boundaries and now he knows what Yoongi wants. That, however, doesn’t stop Seokjin from thinking that he really, really needs that room service alcohol right now. He might as well drink all the memories away.

“Hey,” he finally manages to say back.

“You-” Yoongi starts.

Seokjin sighs and stretches his neck sideways. “Will you yell at me tomorrow or something, Yoongi? I’m exhausted.”

“I wasn’t going to yell at you,” Yoongi says, surprisingly calm. The elevator finally reaches the lobby and the doors open in front of them.

“Well, thank god, am I right?” Seokjin scoffs and steps inside ahead of Yoongi, who only stares back at him from outside.

“What I was going to say was that – I just didn’t want you to get hurt.”

Soft. That’s how Yoongi sounded. Seokjin thought he would never hear that voice again, soft but still rough around the edges. He thought that the last time he would ever get to hear it was during that night, when Yoongi had sleepily told him to come back to bed immediately.

But Seokjin didn’t. And now here they are, and he can only stare at Yoongi’s hands that were about to reach for the door when it closes in on them.

“Oh,” Seokjin finally replies, but he’s all alone inside the elevator.

He blinks and it takes him several seconds to realize the he too was about to reach for the door. He clenches his fist and shoves it his coat pocket, and swallows down the feeling of regret, something he’d been hiding for three years within the tendrils of his lungs.

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Hoseok, on the other hand, rarely regrets things. That’s because he rarely makes decisions without thinking, which for him, is Yoongi’s job. He also doesn’t overthink like Namjoon, so most of the times Hoseok considers himself the most levelheaded among the three of them. During the short period after Seokjin left and before Taehyung and the others arrived, he learned how to balance himself between knowing if they can pull off a heist or not, because Yoongi has the tendency to barge in head first, while Namjoon has the tendency to think of the thirty different ways of how their plan can go wrong.
So when Hoseok finally does something stupid, he does something *stupid*.

But come to think of it, he believes Jeongguk is to blame, because his ass decided to be born on the date after their flight back to Seoul. The moment their plane lands back in Seoul the boy invites – no, demands – that everyone celebrate and rent a private room to drink.

“We are one step closer to stealing that 7-billion painting, and we all lived. More importantly, this is the day I was born, which is - let’s admit, the most important part of this celebration,” Jeongguk tells them and he’s met with raised eyebrows and crossed arms.

“I’m paying,” he finally says, and then there’s an explosion of cheers and congratulations, backs and asses being pat as they made their way to the restaurant. Despite Hoseok’s and the others’ protests Seokjin tells them he can’t go with them and insists that he needs to do something else. Hoseok asks his cousin if he needs company, but the older shakes his head and pushes him towards the group about to leave.

“Aish, don’t worry about me. Enjoy your night.”

“I’m going to drink in your stead, hyung,” Hoseok smiles.

“You’re a shit drinker and I don’t trust you,” Seokjin teases before he gets inside a cab.

Hoseok isn’t sure how it happened, things are still hazy in his head. He ought to ask the birthday boy, the dumbass with the photographic memory, but Hoseok was pretty sure Jeongguk was the first to pass out on the table, shot glass still on his hand.

Their conversation starts out normal, just like how it usually does when they go out for drinks after finishing a job: how they almost did this, how that almost happened. Taehyung is animatedly demonstrating how he and Hoseok were about to climb into the vents when Jeongguk (really, this is all Jeongguk’s fault) slams his soju glass on the table.

“You aren’t drinking,” he eyes Yoongi, who is seated beside him.

“You’re drinking enough for both of us,” Yoongi drawls, looking down at him.

“Yoongi hyung,” Jeongguk murmurs, “you usually like drinking. You *love* drinking! We always go out for soju together. Our *fridge* is half soju. Is it because of Seokjin hyung? Have to keep yourself in check around him, no? Even if he’s not even here?” he grins maliciously back at Yoongi, eyes glinting and eyebrows wiggling.

Hoseok, because he’s still sober and is fully capable of keeping himself in check, fills his glass with more sake and encourages Jeongguk to make an ass of himself even further. “To Yoongi hyung being the only sober person tonight!” he shouts, raising his glass.

The rest laugh and raise their glasses, even Namjoon.

Jeongguk stands up. “To Yoongi hyung being the greatest killjoy in the whole world!!!” he screams and double fists the soju. Taehyung starts clapping wildly and Jimin drapes himself on Hoseok’s shoulders, shaking from laughter.

Yoongi glares at all of them as he grabs a whole bottle from the table and drinks with much fervor. “I don’t have to keep anything in check around him,” he says as he slams the empty bottle back on the table, wiping his lips with the back of his hand. Taehyung and Jeongguk start hollering so loudly that the restaurant hostess checks in on them to see if they’ve somehow turned the private room into a wrestling ring. Namjoon apologizes to the woman, and slaps the other two’s heads on his way back.
Hoseok hasn’t had this much fun drinking in a long time. He doesn’t realize this until he hears Jeongguk mention Seokjin’s name again to annoy Yoongi. It dawns on him that he hasn’t drunk this much because he knows his drunk self might say something to Yoongi about Seokjin. Might say something out of frustration, out of his desire to make Yoongi feel better, out of his need to stop Yoongi from drunkenly announcing that Seokjin left because he got tired of him, got tired of the life they were living, because it wasn’t true at all.

And so Hoseok drinks. He smiles at Jimin, who’s looking at him amusedly. “You’re drinking a lot tonight, Hoseokie hyung,” he tells him, voice soft and so fluid that it makes Hoseok’s nose scrunch in delight.

“Aish, don’t worry about me. You’re so cute, Jimin!” Hoseok giggles as he puts an arm around the other’s neck, pulling his head down and plants a solid kiss at the back of his head. When Jimin sits back up his face is red, hidden behind his hands. Taehyung witnesses the whole thing and laughs the entire time at Jimin, who reaches for a glass of soju and drinks it quietly.

Minutes before Jeongguk eventually passes out he’s back to teasing Yoongi. “I just need to know, hyung – just, I just have one question,” he says, words slurry and almost unintelligible.

“If I answer will you finally pass the fuck out?” Yoongi pushes Jeongguk’s face out of his space and reaches for a piece of meat.

The others laugh because Jeongguk looks like he was going to cry at the disrespect. Suddenly the youngest braces his hands on Yoongi’s face. Jeongguk’s eyes are already half-closed but still intense when he spits his question out.

“So why did you two break up?”

A veil of tension settles in the room, and even Namjoon who’s focused on half-drunkenly telling Taehyung the benefits of eating raw food like sushi, looks up from his little lecture.

Jeongguk frowns when Yoongi doesn’t answer.

Hoseok considers himself the most levelheaded among Yoongi, Namjoon, and himself. Considers himself the most practical because he thinks properly before doing anything. Not too little, not too much. Just enough. Hoseok wasn’t, however, at that moment, doing any kind of thinking at all.

Hoseok grins and starts clapping. “Me! Me!” he tells them. He slaps his chest and leans forward to the table.

They all turn to him and he blissfully ignores the confused look on their faces, especially Yoongi’s. Jeongguk tilts his head sideways at him before finally passing out on the table.

“Hoseokie hyung,” Jimin whispers to him, “I think you’ve had too much to drink.” Hoseok also ignores that, takes the shot glass in Jeongguk’s hands and finishes it for him before speaking again.

“Ask me. I know the real reason why they broke up.”

Hoseok doesn’t remember much after that.

Chapter End Notes
Should we thank drunk Hobi?
As always, comments and feedback are much appreciated! <3
What They Remember

Chapter Summary

Drunk Hoseok is a Truth Telling, Secret Spilling Hoseok.

Chapter Notes

Okay first of all I’d like to apologize for last chapter’s cliffhanger. Some parts of this chapter originally belonged to that one but I thought about it and they didn't quite fit, like this specific reveal needs a chapter of its own, so here we are hahaha

Anyways, I’d like to thank you all for being really patient with me and giving wonderful feedback and support! Keep on shouting at me on Twitter/the comments section, it gives me life hahahaha 1/2jk <3 <3 <3 I hope you enjoy this update!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

This is what Yoongi remembers:

A piece of paper. Two sentences.

Him, looking at the words over and over again, trying to decipher them, even though they're clear enough to be read by anyone. Him, trying to find something else, a hidden message, perhaps. His left hand holding on to his phone, repeatedly dialing Seokjin's out of service number until it ran out of battery.

Him, sitting at the edge of the bed, limply holding the letter, waiting for Seokjin to pop out of the closet and tell him it's a prank or just a really mean game of hide and seek. Waiting to hear Seokjin’s tinkling laughter that will lift the heaviness off his chest, will remove the clawing pain from his stomach.

Yoongi's going to be mad. He's going to be so mad that he's going to yell.

But Seokjin will be there, Seokjin will laugh at him and point at him and imitate the faces he’s going to make. And then he's going to kiss the grimace away from Yoongi's face, going to part his hair and playfully coo at him. Namjoon and Hoseok will be filming the entire thing and will use it for blackmail purposes in the future.

And Yoongi will stay mad but Seokjin will roll his eyes and push him on the bed and will lock him in an inescapable embrace. He will murmur his pet name for Yoongi in his ears over and over again until Yoongi's resolve falters and he stops being mad.

Yoongi will pout and frown and scowl every time they remind him about this moment, this moment that he prays to whatever higher power out there, is not real.

And Seokjin will be there. Seokjin will be there holding his hand, will be there to bury his head on
his shoulders when he can't help but laugh at Yoongi again. Will be there beside Yoongi when he wakes up, will be there when he falls asleep.

But Seokjin doesn't come out of the closet. Namjoon and Hoseok don't pop out behind the door holding a handheld camera, cackling at him like maniacs. Yoongi looks up. It's already dark outside. His legs feel numb and he can't feel his arms. The pain is gone, but now he just feels hollow.

Seokjin's letter falls on the floor.

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When Jeongguk finally passes out on the table, Yoongi is relieved. That's one less loud person in his ear. It would probably be a bitch to take him home and drag him to his bed, but at least the rampant questions about Seokjin will finally stop.

Now the only loud person left in the room is Hoseok, who is screaming "Me! Me!" like a lunatic. Yoongi furrows his eyebrows and watches him finish the soju Jeongguk left in his hand.

"Ask me. I know the real reason why they broke up."

Yoongi's glass stops halfway to his mouth.

There is one reason why Seokjin left. If there is anything Yoongi is sure of, anything he knows that is true about Seokjin and everything that happened between them, it is that. That one reason is the only reason, a truth that has kept Yoongi up for the better part of the past three years.

"What?" Namjoon asks. "What do you mean real reason?"

Hoseok nods vigorously, lips pursed and hands clasped, like he always looks like when he's drunk, and it makes Yoongi realize that he hasn't seen him that plastered in a long time. Whenever they went out for drinks, Hoseok would always stop after his first bottle of soju and then settle for something lighter, like beer, always volunteering himself as the designated driver.

"Yes! Real reason!" Hoseok yells into the space, clapping and grinning at all of them.

"What?" Yoongi finds himself asking. Hoseok slowly turns to him and gasps, round eyes looking at him. "Y-yoongi hyung! You're - you're here! Oh no!"

"He has been. Ever since the beginning. He never left?" Taehyung smirks amusedly at Hoseok, who covers his mouth and shakes his head violently.


Yoongi tilts his head. He doesn't know what has gotten into Hoseok, but he decides it's better to ignore him and finish his drink. When he goes for another one he suddenly hears Hoseok gasp and Yoongi can only blink when the other suddenly stands up and takes the seat beside Jeongguk.

"Hyung! Please, stop drinking already. Seokjin hyung lied. Enough!" he pleads, draping himself over the Jeongguk's passed out body to reach for Yoongi's hands.

Yoongi used to enjoy seeing Hoseok get drunk. He gets loud and speaks truths and claps like a five year old for no reason at all. But now it's just making him uncomfortable, making him think things. He's still pretty sober at the moment, but he wants to blame something for the rapid beating in his
chest so he tells himself it's the soju's doing.

"What are you talking about? What real reason?" Namjoon asks again.

Hoseok bobs his head up and down continuously. "Yes, real reason. But Seokjin hyung made me promise to never tell. I don't think I've even said it in front of my parents' graves. Because. It's a secret." He puts a finger on his lips and does ridiculous shushing noises before he buries his face on Jeongguk's back.

Several seconds pass and they start hearing gentle snoring.

"I think he's passed out," Jimin says concernedly, blinking at Hoseok. Yoongi puts his glass down and lifts Hoseok's face up.

"Yah, Hoseok. Wake up." Hoseok groans and frowns at Yoongi, eyes closed and lips turned downwards. "Hngh, hyung…"

"What are you talking about?" he asks. Namjoon puts a hand on Yoongi's shoulder. "He's really drunk, hyung, maybe he's just saying things-"

"No," Yoongi says, shaking the younger's hand off him as he turns his chair to Hoseok.

Hoseok has the tendency to tell the truth when he's drunk. It's how Yoongi found out Seokjin actually liked him back, years ago. The four of them were drinking soju and eating pork belly at a restaurant when Hoseok started poking him with his chopsticks: "Genius Suga doesn't even see how my cousin likes him back. What a dummy, am I right?" he laughs before passing out on Namjoon's shoulders, leaving Yoongi to look up at Seokjin across him at the table, looking murderous and horrified at the same time.

"Hoseok." Yoongi slaps the younger's face lightly, earning a drunken chortle from Taehyung and a squeak of protest from Jimin. Hoseok grumbles and finally opens his eyes. "Hi," he tells him, smiling like an idiot.

"I have never seen him this drunk," Taehyung muses. “Like, ever. Why am I only seeing this now? How?"

"Hi. Yes. I'm here. What- what reason are you talking about?" The alcohol buzzing in Yoongi’s ears is starting make him feel a little dizzy but he fights it to keep himself focused. Finally Hoseok smiles and whispers, "Okay - but you can't tell Yoongi hyung okay? He can't know. He can't. He'll get mad."

Taehyung chokes on his drink. “Hyung, maybe you shouldn’t,” Jimin starts to say but Yoongi ignores him. He really does feel a little guilty tricking Hoseok, but his curiosity gets the better of him and he nods solemnly in response.

"I won't tell him."

Hoseok pulls away and leans on the back of the chair, pouting at the ceiling. For several seconds the rest just look at him until finally he sighs and asks, "Do you know what the letter in Seokjin hyung's letter to Yoongi hyung said? Do you?"

Yoongi suddenly feels the others’ eyes on him and he hesitates.

"He-" Yoongi starts but suddenly the alcohol isn't making him strong enough to say it out loud. He reaches for a bottle and takes three large gulps of the soju, letting the liquid sting his throat so it won't
hurt as much when he says the words out loud.

"He said he's tired. He told him not to look for him." He feels Namjoon’s hand on his shoulder, giving him quiet comfort.

"Lies!" Hoseok bellowes, pointing at him accusingly, making Namjoon jump out of his seat and Jeongguk stir from his sleep. "Just," he shakes his head. "Lies." All four of them - Namjoon, Yoongi, Jimin, and Taehyung - raise their eyebrows at Hoseok, waiting for him to continue.

"Namjoonie hyung," Jimin says, "maybe we should take him back to your apartment."

"He's not going anywhere," Yoongi tells him, almost hissing, and Jimin curls his lips in disapproval, but Yoongi doesn't care. He pats Hoseok on the jaw, as if to wake him up again. Hoseok takes his wrist and holds on to them. "Seokjin hyung." He sighs audibly, then he pouts and looks at Yoongi, droopy eyes about to close.

"What is it, Hoseok?"

Yoongi can feel the rapid beating in his chest, can feel himself wanting to lurch all of a sudden.

"Seokjin hyung, he - he thinks it's his fault Yoongi hyung almost got killed."

Yoongi's heart stops in his throat.

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This is what Namjoon remembers:

He receives a call from Jackson Wang that day, asking for their help for a certain plane heist. He tells him to go to Ilsan to meet because the job's a bit too sensitive to be discussed over the phone. He brushes his teeth while trying to call Yoongi so they can meet up somewhere more convenient, because Yoongi's apartment is all the way downtown and out of his way.

Yoongi doesn't answer, so he tries to contact Seokjin. He frowns at the phone when an operator tells him the number isn't being used anymore. Wang calls him again and says they're needed immediately, so Namjoon decides that he's going to go alone this time, figuring that maybe Yoongi and Seokjin are sleeping in.

He decides to call Hoseok, who at that time was still living in Seokjin’s old apartment.

"Where are you?" he asks. "I'm on my way to Ilsan for a possible job."

"What - uh, I'm on the subway."

"What's wrong?" Namjoon asks when he hears panic in Hoseok's voice. "Nothing!" Hoseok scrambles to answer. "You know me, always scared. I think there might be rats in this old train. Have - have you dropped by at Yoongi hyung's this morning?"

"No, I haven't yet. He won't answer my calls. And why is Seokjin hyung's number out of service?"

"What do you mean?" Hoseok asks. "Didn't you call Yoongi hyung using his number last night?"

Namjoon frowns as he takes a turn on the road. "Yeah, I don't know what happened. Ugh, never mind. I don't have the time to drop by today, maybe when I get back tonight."

"A-alright."
"You sure everything's okay?"

"I-wait Namjoon, the signal's-"

The call gets cut off. Namjoon tries to think what's happening to Hoseok, but there are more pressing matters at the moment. He thinks they should get a new gig so they can forget about the last one they had already. The operation had been the closest they all have ever been to death, and while they know it comes with the job, it still left them a bit shaken in the end.

He tosses his phone on the dashboard and makes his way to Ilsan. The meeting and negotiations take almost the entire afternoon, and by the time they’re done it’s almost five. He tells Im Jaebum's crew he’s going to get Yoongi's opinion by tonight, and he makes his way back to Seoul. It's already dark when he gets to the apartment building and Yoongi still isn’t answering his calls.

Namjoon walks up the stairs and knocks on the door but no one answers. He uses his spare key and fervently hopes that he doesn't catch Yoongi and Seokjin in action, if ever. Not like it would be the first time. "Yah, Yoongi hyung! Seokjin hyung! I'm here!" he announces into the flat when he opens the door. The door to the bedroom is ajar, and Namjoon peeks in. In the dim glow of the night lamp that sheds light to the room he sees Yoongi sitting on the edge of the bed, alone.

"Hyung?" Panic starts creeping up Namjoon's veins. Yoongi still doesn't answer. Slowly, he walks inside and approaches the older.

"Yoongi hyung?" he calls out again. Yoongi's blank eyes are staring into space. Namjoon sees a piece of paper on the floor and he goes down on one knee to pick it up. The contents confuse him, but he knows it's in Seokjin's handwriting. He starts looking around the room.

"Namjoon-ah." Yoongi finally speaks, voice as hollow as he looks like.

"Hyung, what's going on?" he asks, desperately trying to sound calm for the sake of his best friend. "Where's Seokjin hyung? What's this?"

Yoongi's chest heaves and he bends over, and Namjoon catches him by the shoulders just in time. "He left. Namjoon-ah. Seokjin left."

Namjoon remembers that it would be the last time Yoongi utters Seokjin's name.

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Namjoon's jaw goes slack when Hoseok tells them. He turns to look at Yoongi, frozen in his seat, watching as their drunken friend laments about how Seokjin felt responsible for almost botching that job they had three years ago.

"So yeah," Hoseok sighs and reaches for a piece of meat. "That is -- that's everything." He tries to reach for another bottle of soju but Jimin takes it away. "You've had enough, hyung." Hoseok pouts, but he turns back to Yoongi again, who's only staring dumbly at him.

"I - I should have told Yoongi hyung." He smiles sadly and starts swaying to the faint music coming from the small party in the next room. "But he pleaded. Seokjin hyung…" He hiccups and buries his face on Jeongguk's back again.

"How do you know all this, hyung?" Taehyung suddenly asks.

Hoseok looks up at the younger. "What? Oh, hi Tae Tae! Our actor, our conman. Yes. What was I
talking about? Right - well, I tried to stop him. I saw him, that morning he left, you know? I really tried. But. I couldn't. I'm sorry. I'm really sorry," he says as he looks at Yoongi again, and there is a moment where Namjoon sees that Hoseok maybe realizes that he's been talking to Yoongi after all, apologizing for not saying anything in the past three years. Hoseok looks like a huge burden has finally been lifted off his chest, and he finally passes out on his chair.

For a moment no one in the room speaks. "I - let's take you home, Hobi hyung." Jimin stands up and hoists Hoseok up in his arms, who only grunts as the other carries him off. Namjoon tosses their apartment keys to Jimin, who catches it with his free hand.

"Take him, I'm staying." He looks at Jimin and the younger only nods.

Taehyung also stands up and smiles at Namjoon. "I'm taking Jeonggukie back." Namjoon smiles back and mouths thanks to him. The other winks at him as he drags Jeongguk out of the room, following Jimin and Hoseok out. Namjoon manages to laugh a little.

When they're finally alone, Namjoon calls for the waitress to clean their table and to bring in more soju. Namjoon opens a bottle and pours a glass for Yoongi. The older wordlessly takes it, slams the empty glass back on the table, and Namjoon refills it for him. They keep on doing this for a while: silently drinking while trying to digest all the information revealed to them. Their friendship has never involved a lot of words, never involved overly emotional gestures or touches. And that's good enough for them. Namjoon waits until Yoongi says something, until he's ready. They're on their second bottle when Yoongi, voice cracked and a little slurry, asks him.

"What are you thinking?" Yoongi asks.

If he's going to be honest, Namjoon is thinking about how painful his hangover will be tomorrow. He's probably going to need full twelve hours of sleep to get through it. Yoongi will be fine, he's their strongest drinker, but Namjoon is thinking that he's probably wishing he would get knocked out right then and there.

He shrugs as he refills Yoongi's glass. "Hoseok doesn't have a reason to make up something like that," he tells him. Yoongi shakes his head and rubs his eyes. "He really doesn't."

"What are you going to do, hyung?" Namjoon asks.

Yoongi takes the glass. He isn't sure how to read his friend's face. He remembers that night clearly, remembers how broken Yoongi looked. Namjoon reckons the older probably wouldn't be taking this revelation well without the soju. "What do you mean what am I going to do?" Yoongi looks at him.

"I mean-what are you going to tell Seokjin hyung? How are you going-"

Yoongi scoffs. "I'm not going to say anything, Namjoon. It's pointless," he tells him and shakes his glass, asking Namjoon for a refill, but the younger just gapes at him.

"What-" he stammers, "What the fuck do you mean it's pointless? Hyung, what the fuck?" He doesn't stop cursing for a full minute until Yoongi finally cocks an eyebrow to his direction. "Are you done?" Yoongi asks.

Namjoon rolls his eyes. "Well, are you hearing yourself? Pointless?"

Yoongi sighs and pours himself a drink. "Let's say I do it. Say I go to him and tell him I know the truth. What happens after?"

The other sighs and closes his eyes. If his brain is functioning properly at the moment, Namjoon can
probably tell thirty two different things that can happen after Yoongi tells Seokjin that he knows the truth. You can be happy again, and He’ll realize he made a mistake were just two at the top of his head.

Yoongi continues, "Will him knowing that I know the truth change how he feels about this, what we do? You heard what Hoseok said."

"It literally has been three years, hyung. There's a reason why Seokjin hyung agreed to come back."

"There's also a reason why he agreed to leave right after the mission," Yoongi murmurs.

Namjoon opens his eyes. "What?"

Yoongi takes a deep breath and looks at him. The alcohol stops Namjoon from realizing that the look on his best friend’s face is the same one he saw the day Seokjin left.

"He's going to leave after he gets paid. It’s – it's all pointless."

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This is what Hoseok remembers:

It's a warm summer morning and he's on his way to Yoongi's flat in downtown Seoul. He has a cup of iced coffee on one hand, humming as he thinks of the possible breakfast at the apartment. He hopes it's something sweet, like pancakes. But Yoongi is a bit traditional when it comes to food, so Seokjin will probably be cooking rice and luncheon meat and some eggs with kimchi and soup. He assumes Namjoon will be there too. Maybe they can all think of a new mission while eating.

His smile abruptly turns into a frown when he approaches the building. Hoseok sees his cousin walking outside the apartment building, in a bit of a hurry. He sees the duffel bag in his hands and Hoseok curses under his breath. He runs and grabs Seokjin's arm.

"Hyung!"

Seokjin's eyes betray guilt as he looks back at Hoseok. "H-Hobi."

"Where are you going? Where's Yoongi hyung?" he asks, throwing the cup recklessly on the sidewalk.

"He-he's in his apartment," he answers as he looks up at the building, at Yoongi's apartment window. "Are you leaving? Is this still about the Red Bullet? Hyung, what the hell!"

Seokjin weakly twists out of his grip. "I can't take it, Hoseok. I can't go on thinking I can put his life in danger again."

"Hyung, it was not your fault!" Hoseok hisses with conviction.

Seokjin shakes his head. "No. I- Yoongi- he doesn't deserve someone like me."

"Someone like you? And what are you?" Hoseok asks. Seokjin looks away.

He first noticed it after they came back from the mission. Seokjin had been quiet and uneasy when Yoongi’s not around so he brought it up with the older. Yoongi asked him what was wrong, but Seokjin is quick to put on a mask, quick to tell them all that he was only feeling unwell.

Seokjin finally confides in Hoseok one evening, when both Namjoon and Yoongi are out. He feels
responsible for almost failing their latest mission. Hoseok had been quick to shrug it off, to tell him that it’s not his fault. He didn’t think it would affect his cousin this way, to the point that he feels the need to leave.

"What are you, hyung, exactly?" Hoseok repeats.

Seokjin looks back at him with a sad smile on his face. "You told me once, Hoseok, do you remember?"

"What?" he asks, suddenly confused.

"I asked you once, long ago, if you wanted to study again, maybe do something other than pickpocketing. Do you remember what you answered?"

Hoseok's hand falls beside him and nods. "Y-yeah."

"You said," Seokjin takes a deep breath. "You said you don't know who you are, if not that. And after what happened three weeks ago I realized that the same goes for you three. You, Namjoon, and Yoongi - this is your whole life. And that's fine. You love it. And I do too, it's just that - I treat it differently, you know?"

His cousin continues, "I had a life before this, however boring or monotonous it was. When you guys came and well - you tagged me along in your little missions, it didn't dawn on me just yet then but it was good escape. I don't want to call it that, but it is what it is. I didn't know but I treated it like a game."

Hoseok shakes his head and is about to protest but Seokjin cuts him off.

"And how I acted almost got Yoongi killed. I'm not going to let that happen again."

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Hoseok winces when the pillow hits him right on his left ear. He groans and opens his eyes slowly, reluctant to wake up. He's had a weird dream. Weird, but good. "Go away," he grumbles.

"Wake the fuck up," he hears Namjoon says. Hoseok slightly stirs but goes right back to sleep.

"Wake up before I pour water on your face," Namjoon announces, voice a bit louder. Hoseok groans and slowly sits up, his half-open eyes looking at the other at the ottoman across the sofa. They're not at the restaurant anymore. He tries to let his eyes adjust to the light, to let the change in the environment sink in, but Namjoon doesn't let him do that in peace.

"Is it true?" he asks him.

Hoseok frowns and tries to speak again but he ends up croaking. Namjoon points to his lap and he looks down to see a bottle of water. Hoseok slowly moves his arms, which feel like lead at the moment, and opens the bottle. He drinks sluggishly and only then he realizes how dry his throat is. He finishes half the bottle before slowly, very slowly rubbing his temples and speaking again.

"What – what are you talking about?" he asks Namjoon after clearing his throat.

Namjoon, he notices, is also rubbing his temples. "What you said about Seokjin hyung leaving Yoongi hyung. It was because of the Red Bullet job."

Hoseok freezes for a moment, lets Namjoon's words travel from his ears to his brain and process it
for what seems like a full minute.

“Okay, back up a little there, genius. I’m having an onset of the biggest headache of my life. Where did you get that from?”

Namjoon groans and reaches for the bottle of headache medication on the coffee table between them. “You told all of us last night, dumbass,” he mutters.

“What? And how did I get here?” Hoseok frowns as he looks around their shared apartment. Namjoon is a slob and Hoseok always cleans up after him, so his eyes automatically zero in on the coat and shoes on the floor. If he had the energy right now, he would pick it up and throw it on his face. Then he realizes those are his coat and shoes.

“Jimin carried you here,” the other answers as he tosses him the bottle of pills. Hoseok barely manages to catch it and takes one out of the cylindrical container, hoping that the medicine would take effect immediately. “He did?”

“Yeah, after you apparently made out with him, no less.” Namjoon stretches his neck and starts doing breathing exercises.

“I see,” Hoseok nods.

And maybe he’s still a little bit drunk, it has been years since he got this inebriated, but it takes him several seconds to process what his roommate just told him.

"Wait wait wait wait wait - say what now?” Hoseok stutters. It’s a joke, he thinks, to get him to wake up. Namjoon sighs and pauses from his exercise. “I was asking if what you said about Seokjin hyung was re-”

“Okay I couldn’t care less about Seokjin hyung right now, what did you say about Jimin?! And me?” he cuts him off, panic waking him up abruptly. Namjoon is good - Hoseok suddenly felt any desire of going back to sleep leave him. He stands up and gets a little dizzy so he falls back down on the sofa.


“No,” Hoseok whispers, eyes widening, suddenly forgetting how to breathe for a moment.

“I don’t care if you believe me,” Namjoon shrugs.

In Hoseok’s head snippets of the dark facade of the restaurant start to surface, the memory of Jimin’s hands on his arms slowly coming back to him. He recalls words being said, but he can't quite make them out just yet right now. He subconsciously lifts his fingers to ghost over his lips. He hears Jimin’s voice, whispering something, sending shivers down his spine.

It wasn't a dream apparently.

"Ya!” Namjoon shouts, and they both wince at the sudden noise between them.

"Fuck, what?” Hoseok shakes his head and puts his hands back down on his lap. Namjoon groans and recounts to him whatever happened last night - from him revealing Seokjin's biggest secret up to Taehyung witnessing said making out before Jimin finally took Hoseok home.

The entire time Hoseok is internally screaming at himself, staying frozen on the sofa, and looking blankly at the floor while he listened to Namjoon. Words and pictures and faces pop inside his head.
as Namjoon narrates to him all the stupid, stupid things he did the night before, including apparently
him kissing the back of Jimin’s head at one point. He ardently hopes that he’s just dreaming and that
when he wakes up he’s back at the restaurant.

“And then you said Seokjin hyung thinks he’s responsible for almost botching the Red Bullet job,”
Namjoon concludes. Hoseok groans and buries his face on the arm rest of the sofa, already thinking
of the fifteen different ways his cousin will kill him and how he will never be able to look Jimin in
the eyes again. Namjoon seems unfazed, however, and he continues.

“And he left because he thought he was-

Hoseok raises a hand to stop Namjoon from further speaking. “Fuck, shit, don’t repeat it alright, I
know what I said. I remember now, fuck.” His hangover is slowly taking over and he’s feeling the
pain from the top of his head to the bridge of his nose.

The other puts his feet on top of the coffee table and looks at him like a disappointed dad would. “So
you also remember Yoongi hyung being there. Listening to all that.”

Hoseok takes another sip of his water and massages his forehead. “Unfortunately I do. Fuck, what
did he say?”

“He’s surprisingly calm about it. But that’s because he’d been drinking at the time. I’m giving him
about thirty minutes after he wakes up before he goes out for blood.”

“Fuckkkkk,” Hoseok moans and plops himself back on the couch. “What about Seokjin hyung?” he
asks.

Namjoon stands up and goes to the bar in the kitchen. “I haven’t seen him since we all left for the
restaurant last night.” He starts tossing fruits and vegetables in the blender.

Hoseok closes his eyes. “God, he’s going to kill me.”

“Not if Yoongi hyung kills you first,” the other replies casually. “Thanks, man. Where is he by the
way?” Hoseok asks.

“No idea. He might be home but when we got out of the restaurant at like three he said he’s going to
take a walk first.” Namjoon presses the on button and for a full minute only the whirring sound of the
machine can be heard in the apartment. Hoseok thinks about what will happen now, now that
Yoongi knows the truth. Now that Yoongi knows that Seokjin lied, and that he also lied to him. That
for three years Hoseok didn’t say anything whenever the topic was brought up. He wishes his
current headache will send him to a comatose so he won’t have to deal with any of it.

“What do you think will happen?” he asks when Namjoon is done with the blender and he’s pouring
the mixture on a glass. The other goes back to his seat on the ottoman and takes several seconds to
answer.

“Well, best case scenario is Yoongi hyung is actually at Seokjin hyung’s place right now and they
finally got back together after some angry confrontation sex,” Namjoon tells him and nods in
satisfaction after tasting his hangover cure.

Hoseok grimaces and sits up, reaching an arm out. Namjoon hands him the glass. “Really, you had
to say that out loud?”

Namjoon shrugs and ignores him. “On the other hand the worst case scenario is Yoongi hyung is
also at Seokjin hyung’s place right now but instead of having sex they’re both planning your death,”
he says as he grins at him.

“Well shit,” Hoseok sighs in resignation as he drinks the mixture. “You asked.”

“No one was supposed to know,” he mutters under his breath. Surprisingly Namjoon laughs. “You know, it’s probably for the better.”

“What do you mean?” Hoseok asks, handing the glass back to him. “Seokjin hyung probably didn’t tell you. He’s going to leave right after the mission. He and Yoongi hyung made a deal. That might change after all this, who knows.”

Hoseok reckons he hasn’t been up for maybe half an hour and yet he already managed to mutter a string of curses that would probably make Yoongi proud, if he wasn’t too busy plotting his death.

“Seriously? A deal?”

“Well he says it's more of like an agreement between two exes who decided to stay professional while working together,” Namjoon replies. “So - a deal.” Hoseok glares at him and the other only shrugs back.

“Shit, why are they so fucked up?”

Namjoon shakes his head and finishes his smoothie. “Beats the fuck out of me.”

They stay quiet for a few moments before Namjoon looks up at him with a glint of menace in his eyes. “So about you and Jimin-”

“Nope, no, no, we’re not fucking talking about that!” Hoseok shouts and puts fingers in his ears, running to the bathroom to drown out the voice and take a cold shower.

*****

This is what Seokjin remembers:

He doesn't look back when he puts on his jacket and cap. He doesn't look back at Yoongi sleeping on the bed, doesn't even think of craning his neck to look at him one last time before taking the duffel bag and quietly walking out of the apartment. He doesn't look back because if he does he knows he won't be able to do it.

And when Hoseok asks him he refuses to look him in the eye.

"What did you tell him? Don't tell me you just left him without saying anything like you're walking out on a one night stand and not a four-year relationship." The judgment in Hoseok's voice stings but Seokjin shrugs it off. He closes his eyes and tightens his hold on his bag. "I left a letter."

"A letter." Hoseok scoffs. "I'm going to bet all the money I'm going to earn for the rest of my life that you lied in that dumb letter of yours."

Sometimes Seokjin hates how easily Hoseok can read him. "Just let me leave, Hoseok," He murmurs and starts walking away, but his cousin's grip stops him from taking another step. "Then leave, hyung. But Yoongi hyung deserves the truth. Look him in the eye and tell him – or you know he won't let you just leave over something like that because it’s not even true in the first place?"

Seokjin drops his bag and grabs Hoseok by the arm. "That's why you can't tell him."

It’s Hoseok’s turn to try and twist out of his grip, shock painting his face. "Hyung, what the fuck?"
"Not - not a word. Please, Hoseok." Seokjin tries to smile while he pleads. "Yoongi cannot afford having a liability in his life."

"You are not a-"

Seokjin grits his teeth. "Then why do I feel like one?!" He shakes Hoseok’s arm in frustration. "Tell me, Hoseok. Because every time I close my eyes I see that gun pointed at the back of Yoongi’s head and I know that wouldn't have happened if only I weren't so stupid."

He leans his head on Hoseok’s shoulder, and his grip turns into something more of a clutch. Seokjin feels his cousin’s hand on his arm loosen and make its way to his back, rubbing gentle circles onto it. He's not sure how long they stayed like that, but when Hoseok finally pulls away the sun is already halfway up on the horizon.

“What am I supposed to tell Yoongi hyung, then?” Hoseok asks. Seokjin shakes his head. “Nothing. Let him think whatever he wants to think.”

Hoseoks tuts. “Am I supposed to let him believe that you’re some kind of coward or something, hyung?” Seokjin nods and the younger pushes his hair back in frustration. “I can’t believe you. I - where do you even plan on going?”

"I don't know yet," Seokjin whispers.

"You were planning on not saying goodbye to me and now you won't even tell me where you're going?"

Seokjin smiles sadly. "You're carrying enough burden as it is, Hoseokie."

Hoseok shakes his head and stuffs his hands in his jacket pockets. "Is this your way of getting back to me for leaving you before?" Seokjin manages to laugh. "Yeah, sure. You're an asshole for leaving me."

Hoseok punches his shoulders lightly. "Take care of yourself, hyung. That's the least you can do."

Seokjin takes it as Hoseok's permission, as his resignation, as his farewell. Whatever it is, it makes Seokjin feel a little better. He gives Hoseok one last hug before turning around. "Hyung," Hoseok calls out when he’s several feet away. He turns around. "Yeah?"

"When you finally realize you're making a mistake, come back."

Seokjin looks down at the asphalt. "Ah, I won't be welcome."

Hoseok shrugs. "You'll never know until you do." Seokjin doesn't reply and turns his back again, and he feels Hoseok’s eyes on his back until he makes a turn. Seokjin suddenly thinks if Yoongi had woken up already. He fishes his phone out of his pocket and makes a call to the operator, telling them to cancel his account in the phone company. She asks for his reason for terminating his number.

"Ah, well,” he says, “no one’s going to call me here anymore."

She tells him the number will deactivate immediately after the call, and she starts giving him instructions about the remaining billing but by the time she’s finished the phone has already found its way to the bottom of Han River.

Seokjin wasn’t lying when he told Hoseok he didn’t know where he’s going yet. He walks and walks until he finds himself at the bus station, looking at the schedules for the day. He sees one trip
that’s coming in three minutes, and he smiles. Maybe he really was meant to leave, he thinks, really meant to end up being just a part of Yoongi's past. By the time he gets to the right terminal the bus was just about to leave. He gets inside and bows at the driver.

"To Daegu, young man?"

He smiles and shows his ticket. "Yes, ahjussi."

The bus is almost empty and Seokjin takes a window seat in the back. For a split second the fear of the unknown crashes over him, and he considers standing up and running back to Yoongi's flat, thinks about burying his face on his shoulders and guiding his hands around his waist. For a brief moment he considers going back and crumpling the letter like it never existed, so he and Yoongi together with Namjoon and Hoseok can have breakfast and talk about their next mission. But he blinks and even in that instant where he closes his eyes the image of the gun behind Yoongi’s head haunts him, and it pushes back all his desire to step off the vehicle.

The bus moves and Seokjin lets the tears he’s been holding back since he left the apartment finally spill from his eyes.

*****

Seokjin rubs his eyes and he slowly sits up from his bed. The light spilling from behind the curtains prompts him to check the watch on his phone, and he groans when he sees it’s just seven in the morning, his body clock having conditioned to wake him up at that time, even though he dozed off at around two last night.

He calls Hoseok to ask if he’s at the headquarters, so they can have breakfast together. He’s used to sharing his meals with the old couple back in Daegu and doesn’t really like eating alone. But Hoseok doesn’t answer and Seokjin remembers that the rest went out drinking last night. They’re all probably nursing hangovers right now, his cousin especially.

Seokjin sighs and thinks about going to Yoongi’s house alone. Forty eight hours ago he wouldn’t have hesitated, but a lot of things happened since then and suddenly he’s not sure if he’s confident enough to face Yoongi alone, with his soft black eyes and raspy voice telling him that he didn’t want him to get hurt, sending shivers down his spine. Seokjin shakes his head.

“No,” he says to himself out loud, into the apartment. Yoongi still hates him, still doesn’t want to see him unless he needs to. He wants him to follow the rules, get his pay, and then leave. And that’s what he’s going to do.

Seokjin goes inside the apartment and watches TV to kill time but it doesn’t take even take him twenty minutes before he’s groaning out of boredom. He finally decides to make some breakfast. By the time the kimchi is simmering on the pan it’s almost nine so he decides to call Hoseok again, who still doesn’t answer so he takes a deep breath and decides he’s going to go to the headquarters.

"Yoongi probably won’t even be awake yet, he tells himself. He usually appears at around lunchtime. By that time at least one other person would be at the basement already. Seokjin places all the food in several containers and makes his way to the headquarters.

"Okay," he says as he gives himself a little pep talk about not making a big deal about what happened in Japan. Nothing big, he convinces himself. Yoongi just didn't want to take home a dead body from Japan, that's all.

Seokjin opens the door to the basement and slowly makes his way down the stairs. He doesn’t see
anyone inside and he’s able to breathe again. Not that he was expecting anyone.

Except Yoongi suddenly sits up from the sofa, revealing himself, and Seokjin almost jumps out of his skin. He curses and clutches his chest, almost dropping the bag he’s carrying. Yoongi raises an eyebrow at him as he struggled to collect himself. "Uh, hi - yeah, uhm, sorry - I didn't expect to see you there." Seokjin splutters.

"You didn't expect to see me in my own house?" the other asks. Seokjin frowns as he walks to the small kitchen of the headquarters. "That wasn't what I meant. I mean - I expected you to sleep in your bedroom?" he tells him, rubbing behind his ears.

He thinks he hears Yoongi scoff, but he ignores that and puts the bag on the kitchen bar. "Anyway. I - uh, had some time. To cook. Food. Ah, I must have disturbed you, I’m sorry. Yeah." Seokjin curses himself for stammering and hopes his blush isn't as red as it feels on his cheeks.

"So, I'll just leave this here when the others arrive. I mean. I'm guessing they aren't here yet. So. There you go." He pushes the bag a little towards Yoongi, who's made his way to the other side of the bar, bed hair sticking out in all directions.

Yoongi looks at the bag and Seokjin purses his lips. "So. Uh, I'll go ahead I guess," he walks a step backward and turns on his heels.

"Don't leave," Yoongi says, voice gravelly and soft at the same time.

It makes Seokjin pause. It makes his heart skip a beat, sends shivers from his spine down to his toes. He blinks and slowly turns around, and he sees Yoongi tiptoeing to look inside the bag he had brought. "I doubt anyone else is going to be here anytime soon, we might as well eat this now," he tells him without looking.

"I - ah, no it's fine, I'm just gonna go and-" he starts but Yoongi is already taking the bag to the table. "Will you get us plates?" Yoongi continues, as if he didn't hear Seokjin.

Seokjin stands frozen in the middle of the small kitchen, unsure of what to do. He looks at Yoongi, who's taking the containers out one by one. He opens one box and the smell of the stew wafts around the room. "And chopsticks too." The younger says as he takes out the containers. Seokjin doesn't know what pushed him to the dish rack three feet away from him, doesn't know what urged him to drag his feet to the table and sit on the chair across Yoongi. He's not sure what really urged him to stay, but he does and now he's watching Yoongi help himself to the food.

"Aren't you going to eat? Or did you put poison in this?" Yoongi asks, a smirk hidden in the corner of his lips.

Yoongi looks at him and Seokjin has to catch his breath, has to pause and remind himself that he shouldn't be feeling this way, so he rolls his eyes and takes a pair of chopsticks. "Here," he takes a piece of meat and puts it in his mouth, cocking an eyebrow at Yoongi. "Are you happy now? No poison."

Yoongi shakes his head and gets back to eating, and Seokjin swears he saw the smirk turn into smile. He doesn't know what happened but he decides not to question it, and lets the gentle clatter of the metal chopsticks on the bowls be the only sound as they eat. He concentrates on his plate but couldn't help but hear and feel every minute movement Yoongi makes. He seems to be enjoying the food, seems to be having the time of his life while Seokjin sits across him reminding himself to take a breath every few seconds because this isn’t how he pictured himself in this basement when he left his apartment half an hour ago.
“Is there something wrong?” Yoongi asks when he catches Seokjin, tilting his head. The older takes a spoonful of rice, stuffs his mouth with it, and shakes his head. “Nothing.”

Seokjin reaches for the kimchi and steals a glance at Yoongi, whose biggest crisis at the moment seems to be choosing between more tteokbokki or japchae. The little pout that Yoongi makes while trying to decide suddenly makes Seokjin feel at ease, suddenly makes him feel a bit more at home.

This is fine, Seokjin realizes. If this keeps on going, if they keep their relationship like this - quiet and almost friendly - they shouldn't have any problems until the day of the heist. Yoongi won't have any problems with him being around, and Seokjin won't have any other problems until he leaves.

This is enough, Seokjin thinks. He steals another glance at Yoongi, chewing and pawing the container of the stew.

He convinces himself that it's enough.

*****

It’s almost three in the morning when Yoongi and Namjoon part ways.

"Hyung, I don't know what you're planning to do-" Namjoon starts as he gets inside the cab, and Yoongi cuts him off. "I already told you, I'm not going to do anything."

The younger sighs and shakes his head. "Fine. Don't do anything. Let's all pretend this night never happened. Keep on pretending Seokjin hyung left because he didn't love you anymore or whatever. I don't know. Good night." He rolls his eyes and tells the driver where he's headed. Yoongi shoos him away and he starts walking to the direction to his house. He finds Jeongguk sprawled on the couch in the living room, no doubt tossed into it by Taehyung. Holly is still at the sitter's, and Yoongi makes a note to pick him up later in the day.

Yoongi should be tired. He should pass out immediately and without any problems. But his head keeps on replaying Hoseok's story.

"He thinks he's a liability."

Yoongi opens his eyes and for a split second he thinks he's back in his old flat in downtown Seoul, alone and looking at a piece of paper on the pillow beside his head. He blinks and it disappears. Yoongi clenches his fists the sheets and closes his eyes again, forcing himself to fall asleep.

"This gig is a one-time thing. I will follow the plan, whatever you and Namjoon have thought of. I will leave the moment, the second I am assured of my pay. You will never see me again after this."

He groans and sits up. "Fucking hell," he mutters and drags his feet down to the basement, where he plops himself face down on the couch. It's pointless, he tells himself. Namjoon tells him that he’s saying that because he's drunk at the moment but he is very clearheaded, thank you very much, and he knows that it’s just pointless to confront Seokjin. He already left, already disappeared for three whole years, and Yoongi survived that.

How is it going to be different after he leaves?

Yoongi doesn't know how much time had passed, whether he had actually fallen asleep or not, but the clicking of the garage door causes him to open his eyes. It takes several seconds and the smell of food, of what he knows is Seokjin's cooking, wafts inside the headquarters. He sits up and looks at Seokjin, who curses loudly and struggles not to drop the bag of food. "You didn't expect to see me in
my own house?” he asks when Seokjin says something about not expecting to see him.

Yoongi slowly gets off the couch and walks to the kitchen bar where Seokjin places the bag, stammering about something he really isn’t listening to. He feels a little headache coming, hears his stomach growl at the sight of the food.

"So, I’ll just leave this here when the others arrive. I mean. I’m guessing they aren’t here yet. So. There you go," Seokjin says, smiling shyly, and it sends a tremor straight to Yoongi’s chest that he desperately fights to keep himself stable. It's pointless, Yoongi tells himself as he looks at Seokjin. He's going to leave. He agreed to leave. He-

"He felt he needed to leave."

"Don't leave," Yoongi says the words before he can stop himself.

Seokjin turns around and Yoongi grabs the bag to take it to the table, telling the other to get utensils on his way. He doesn’t look back to check if Seokjin does it, but he hears footsteps approaching, followed by the soft scraping of the chair on the floor, and he sees Seokjin’s neatly folded coat placed on the corner of the table.

Before his mouth and his brain can do anything further embarrassing Yoongi starts eating, and he likes how the rice is still warm and the bean paste stew is still smoking a bit when he opens the containers. He doesn’t see another pair of hands reaching for food, so he looks up at Seokjin, who’s staring at him point blank without shame. Yoongi feels the heat rise up to his neck.

"Aren't you going to eat? Or did you put poison in this?” he asks. Seokjin blinks and takes a couple of seconds to respond. He watches Seokjin’s hands swiftly take a piece of the luncheon meat from his plate and eat it. "Are you happy now? No poison,” he smirks at Yoongi.

Yoongi looks back down on his plate, rubbing his dry lips to stop the smile threatening to escape and show itself to Seokjin. They resume eating, and in the middle of the quiet they throw in a banter or two, and each time it happened Yoongi wants to keep on going, keep on talking until they get to the question Why did you think you could leave just like that? but he forces himself to stop, because a voice inside him is screaming that it’s all pointless, drowning out the voice that wants to ask all the questions.

The sounds of the door slamming open and feet running make them turn their heads, and they see Hoseok almost tripping on the stairs, looking at them with round, bulging eyes. Yoongi glares at Hoseok, who more or less gets his message and puts a hand on Seokjin’s shoulder. "So," he starts, “we missed anything? We – we’re having breakfast quietly? Nothing? Anything? No?” he smiles at them, wiping the sweat on his brows with his other hand.

Seokjin raises an eyebrow. “What? Are we supposed to be having breakfast loudly?” he asks. Namjoon finally reaches the table and takes the seat beside Yoongi. “I forgot he’s still loud even if he has a hangover,” he mutters to them.

“Nothing! I mean, have breakfast any way you want, right?” Hoseok grins theatrically and pats his
cousin’s shoulders. “I mean, the best way to spend your morning after a night of drinking where totally nothing happened and nothing much was said is to have breakfast, am I right?!” He pulls the chair beside Seokjin and sits down to reach for a plate.

“Right. Nothing at all,” Namjoon murmurs as he disappears behind the bowl of soup, slurping loudly and moaning in satisfaction. Yoongi kicks him under the table but Namjoon somehow knew he was going to do it and he misses.

Seokjin tilts his head and looks at Yoongi. “How much exactly did you guys drink last night?”

“We had about three, four bottles each but your cousin there had about half a bottle before passing out,” Yoongi lies through his teeth. Hoseok frowns and points at him. “He’s teasing me, hyung!” he tells Seokjin.

The older only laughs as he puts a fried egg on each of their plates. Seokjin used to do it all the time whenever they’re having breakfast and the gesture suddenly reminds Yoongi of how long he actually has been gone, yet how much of him he remembers.

*But it’s all pointless.*

“You’re a grown man, Hoseok. It’s not our fault you can’t take alcohol well,” Seokjin tells his cousin as he pushes a bowl of soup towards him. Hoseok pouts at all three of them, and then back at the food. “I was hoping for something like pancakes,” he mutters, but he thanks Seokjin and starts eating.

“If you want pancakes go to Jimin’s place,” Namjoon says, and Hoseok suddenly chokes on the fried egg. Seokjin laughs and Yoongi looks at him, at the way he covers his mouth because it’s half-full with food, at the way his eyes turned into half-crescents as they light up. The others start talking and Yoongi can only look at him.

Yoongi has so many questions and he wants to say a lot of things and do a lot of things but it’s pointless, he tells himself for what is probably the thirtieth time since Seokjin arrived at the basement.

"Seokjin hyung," he finds himself suddenly saying. The way Seokjin’s name rolled in his tongue is natural, and he hated that it sounded that way, like he’d been waiting to say it out loud all this time. Namjoon stops from eating and looks at him in surprise. Seokjin pauses from teasing Hoseok to look at him, eyes curious and a smile edging the corners of his lips. "What is it?" he asks.

He’s not going to do anything, Yoongi decides. *He shouldn’t.* Because what he has in front of him right now – Seokjin laughing and eating and pouting at them – is temporary. He shouldn’t feel any different than how he felt five days ago, when he was grateful that Seokjin will be gone in five weeks. If Seokjin thinks he doesn’t deserve to be with Yoongi, then he doesn’t.

"I - the eggs aren't that well done," he says.

Seokjin suddenly laughs and shakes his head. "Ah, yes. I'm sorry about that. Next time?" He shrugs and takes a glass. "Sure, whatever." He sees Namjoon roll his eyes at him and this time he succeeds in kicking him under the table.

Yoongi tries to soothe the sudden aching in his chest with the cold water, and he tells himself he would be fine.
Chapter End Notes

When will Yoongi learn to use his words, really.

PS. I actually have some sort of playlist that I use as an inspiration while I write and for this chapter it's *Amber Run - I Found* (for Yoongi's flashback) and *BEATWIN - Don't Leave* (for the last scene). I'll post the other song recs as I go I guess? Thanks and as always feedback and comments are appreciated! <3
“I’m going to take you down next time.”

Seokjin laughs as he follows Jeongguk inside the house. He finds Yoongi looking at his phone by the breakfast bar while Holly looks up from his chew toy and runs to the door to greet them. Seokjin smiles and shakes his head. “You already beat me, Guk. I think you forgot?” He smiles at Yoongi in greeting and the other nods back, taking a sip of his coffee. Jeongguk goes to the kitchen to grab a box of banana milk. “I only beat you by a hairline, hyung. And you said you only took a bowling class for college. I’ve been practicing almost every day for a year. That’s not a win for me.”

Seokjin laughs and carries the dog pouncing by his feet. “Sure, whatever. He’s so oddly competitive, isn’t he, Holly? Why is that? What do you think, cutie?” he says and the dog barks in reply. Seokjin wishes he actually can understand the dog for once.

“What’s with the smile, Yoongi hyung?” Jeongguk asks as he puts his banana milk beside the espresso cup. Seokjin looks at them. Yoongi looks up lazily from his phone.

“Nothing. I just remembered how you passed out on your birthday.”

Jeongguk frowns. “It’s been like a week and no one will still tell me what happened. I clearly remember Hoseokie hyung saying something like-”

Yoongi shoves a piece of cold toast in Jeongguk’s mouth and Seokjin widens his eyes in surprise before laughing.

“You were blackout drunk and your brain got fried with all the alcohol. That comes with old age,” he tells him. The other angrily chews the bread and scowls at him after he downs it with the milk. “You’re four years older than I am. You’re a grandpa compared to me.”

Seokjin laughs and then frowns when Yoongi tells him he’s even older than he is.

“Ya, Min Yoongi, I’m technically only four months older than you are,” he admonishes as he cradles Holly in his chest. Yoongi pouts at him and goes back to Jeongguk. “At least I’m a grandpa who doesn’t black out and suffers from hangovers. And I’m also the grandpa who’s letting you live in his house – for free, if I may add – so shut up,” Yoongi scolds the youngest as he jumps off the stool and walks to the basement.

“Oh, we’re counting now? Really hyung? Is that how it is now?” Jeongguk pouts at Yoongi, who ignores him as he goes down the stairs. Seokjin throws the frowning Jeongguk a sympathetic smile, follows Yoongi, and finds him lounging on the couch.

When Holly sees Yoongi again the dog barks and Seokjin puts him down so he can jump up in his owner’s arms. Seokjin somehow suddenly remembers the day he dragged Yoongi to the animal shelter.
“It’s just a trial, Yoongi.”

Seokjin doesn’t look at him as he walks around the shelter, looking at the cats and dogs. Yoongi sulks but lets the other drag him by the hand. The attendant follows close behind, looking at them amusedly.

“If it doesn’t work out, you can always return it. I doubt you will, but you can.” Seokjin stops in front of a small pen and looks around, waving a hand at the eager puppies, which start to bark at them. He doesn’t say that he sees Yoongi’s face change when he sees a puppy, that he looks so painfully cute when he’s holding one, and that once Yoongi told him that he wanted one as a child.

“But it won’t work out. Why are you even considering this, hyung? We’re out for days when we’re working. Sometimes even weeks. How am I supposed to—”

“There!” Seokjin ignores him and lets go of Yoongi’s hand to point to the corner of the pen where a small, brown puppy is sleeping with its face mashed against the walls. Seokjin reaches for Yoongi’s hand again and the other reaches his out, long fingers intertwining with his crooked ones. The animal shelter attendant goes to the corner and bends to pick the puppy up.

Seokjin drags Yoongi to get closer to the puppy, which doesn’t even wake up despite the noise. “What’s the little guy’s name?” he asks the attendant. She smiles at them and shows the puppy’s nametag.

“His name is Holly. He’s barely a month old when he and his siblings were left in front of the shelter one night. He—” the attendant bites her lip, looking a bit worried. “I don’t know if this should be a concern, but he sleeps a lot.”

Seokjin squeals in delight and the attendant almost jumps in surprise. “He’s perfect! Yoongi, did you hear that?” He takes the puppy from the girl’s arms and brings Holly closer to Yoongi. “He’s just like you!”

The attendant laughs and quickly covers her mouth. Yoongi scowls at Seokjin. “I don’t sleep a lot,” he grumbles but still takes the puppy – which finally woke up – in his arms. Someone else enters the shelter and the attendant leaves them to get to know the puppy more. “Oh, he’s so cute. He reminds me of Jjanggu,” Seokjin coos as he plays with Holly’s fur.

“You said that dog hated you.” Yoongi places his hands under the puppy’s arms and lifts him up. “Jjanggu hated everyone. You know how many neighbors of ours he bit before? Anyway - come to think of it, he reminds me of you,” Seokjin turns to look at Yoongi. He pouts at Seokjin before looking back at the dog.

“I don’t know,” the younger says. Seokjin tells him he can leave the dog with a sitter when they’re out, but Yoongi says it defeats the purpose of adopting one in the first place.

“But he’s cute, look how small he is!” Seokjin protests. “He’s so cute, he’s like a little chicken nugget. Ooh, should we rename him that?” he asks.

“We are not naming him Chicken Nugget,” Yoongi answers, cradling the puppy to his chest. Seokjin grins victoriously at him. “See, you’re so territorial of him already.”

“Hyung, you know how we live. I just don’t think I have a place in my life for a dog.” Yoongi mumbles, rocking his heels back and forth, which lulls the puppy back to sleep.

Seokjin steps closer to Yoongi and snakes an arm around his waist. His other hand pets the puppy’s head as he leans his head on the other’s temple. “But you made space for me,” he whispers, and
Yoongi smiles.

“I didn’t make space for you, you kind of just barged into my life,” he mumbles quietly, and Seokjin scoffs. Yoongi turns his head to catch Seokjin’s still-frowning lips in his. It slowly turns into a gentle smile and when he pulls away he says, “While holding stolen chopsticks, if I may add.”

Seokjin laughs. “And that’s how all great love stories should start,” he tells Yoongi. Holly whimpers and they both look down at the puppy. Yoongi smiles fondly down at him and Seokjin rests his chin on the younger’s shoulder. “Ah, he’s so cute and quiet, I know you’ll get along.”

Yoongi shakes his head a little, still doubtful. “I don’t know…”


“Look at him,” Yoongi drawls as he pets Holly’s head.

Seokjin blinks and he realizes he never left the basement. Yoongi stares at the television, frowning at whatever’s on the screen. Seokjin turns his head and cocks an eyebrow when he sees Kwon Jiyoung being interviewed on another news program. The host reads from her cue card and looks at Kwon.

Mr. Choi Seunghyun has responded to your previous statements and insists that his company, including The House of TOP, is in no way indebted to GD Enterprises. Your 19% share is, and I quote, “nothing compared to the hard work that the original founder put in for it to succeed.” What can you say about that?

The camera pans to the audience, all eager to hear his answer, before swiftly turning back to him. Kwon crosses his legs and folds his hands on top of his knees.

I would just like to correct you right there. It’s actually 19.79%, and next to Mr. Choi’s 20.21%, I am the biggest shareholder of the company. You could even say we have joint custody of The House.

“Aish, look at him, so arrogant,” Seokjin shakes his head and crosses his arms

“That’s not the problem. The problem is Seunghyun even pays him attention,” Yoongi says. Holly ignores them both and goes to sleep.

“So far Kwon hasn’t actually done anything to claim or fight for the ownership of his company. I just haven’t figured out yet if he’s doing this for his own amusement or he’s planning to do something else. It’s pretty obvious Kwon is just taunting him, so why does Choi even bother?” Seokjin says, eyes not leaving the TV screen.

Yoongi shrugs. “Not everyone has a minor in Psychology, hyung.”

Seokjin scoffs. “You don’t have to have a minor in Psychology to read other people, especially if he’s your—”

“What are we watching?” Jeongguk cuts him off and plops himself down on the couch beside Yoongi. Holly jumps up and yelps at the interruption, before putting his head down again to go back to sleep.

“Nothing, just watching our employer be an asshole again. He’s everywhere lately,” Yoongi answers, eyes still on the television.

Jeongguk takes Holly from Yoongi’s lap and starts tickling the dog. “Everywhere but Choi Seunghyun’s farewell party. Parties, because his sister is going to throw him his first one in about
“Yeah, what’s your intel on that?” Yoongi asks and Seokjin looks down at Jeongguk as well.

“Well everyone and their mother are invited, except for Kwon Jiyong apparently. It’s going to be held at this place called The Rooftop.”

Seokjin turns the television off. “The Rooftop? That really exclusive membership-based club?”

“Based on research, yes. Hasn’t even been up for two years but everyone wants in.”

Seokjin frowns in thought. He’s heard of that place before, way before it was even established. He shakes his head and asks instead, “Is he coming though?”

“Who?” Jeongguk asks.

“Seunghyun. He’s coming?”

“Why wouldn’t he?” Yoongi asks. “It’s his farewell party.”

Seokjin stands up from the armrest of the couch. “He hates loud parties. You’ve seen him flinch at all those lights back at the airport, right? A club is going to be full of that and more.” He goes to the kitchen bar and grabs an apple from a fruit basket he put in the day before.

“We should recon the place.”

Yoongi nods in agreement. “We’d have to do it in three days, though. I’ll tell Namjoon to call everyone.” Seokjin nods and takes a bite of the apple. “I’ll see what I can do about entrance. I think I know someone who can get us in, but I doubt if Choi Seunghyun will attend.”

“Wait, are you saying we shouldn’t go?” Yoongi asks.

“No, there’s a high chance he’s still going because he loves his sister and-”

“How do you know, hyung?” Jeongguk asks. Seokjin frowns at him while chewing.

“What’s with the occupants of this house seemingly liking to interrupt me all the time?” he rants. “Even Holly does it to me. Anyway I’m not saying we shouldn’t go, if he goes then good – I can establish rapport earlier – but if he doesn’t, no loss on us.”

Seokjin gets a text. It’s from an unknown number, but he feels like he knows who it’s from. He looks up and sees Yoongi looking at him rather curiously. He’d rather not tell him now.

“Uh, I’ll go ahead,” he tells them as he drops his phone in his pocket. “And JK, try doing other things instead of bowling all the time so you’ll get information you can’t get from hacking.”

“But bowling is life!” Jeongguk answers back. He waves goodbye, ignoring Jeongguk’s soliloquy about how bowling is Very Important and Crucial to his life.

As he goes up the stairs he hears Yoongi and Jeongguk start bantering again. Seokjin laughs to himself but stops to sigh right after. He laughs at the warmth he feels whenever he’s at the headquarters. He finds himself almost not wanting to leave, but he knows he should. He doesn’t have the right to stay. He sighs at the fact that even though he and Yoongi are civil, almost friends again now, their agreement from three weeks ago still stands. Right before he gets to lock the door of the garage, what Jeongguk said earlier about Hoseok comes to his mind. Yoongi obviously stopped the younger from saying something. He suddenly gets worried that Hoseok has said something about
that he shouldn’t.

“No,” he tells himself and shakes his head. It doesn’t matter. Yoongi probably would have said something, but hasn’t. The others haven’t told him anything as well. Either way, three weeks more or less, he’s out of Yoongi’s way.

It shouldn’t matter.

*****

“You’re a traitor.”

Jimin finally stops from what he’s doing and looks up. From his seat on the other side of the table, Taehyung glowers at him. “Traitor,” he repeats, words sounding more sulky than angry. Jimin sighs and leans back on his chair as he removes his gloves. “I don’t know what you want from me,” he tells Taehyung as he looks down at the bangle he’s forging in front of him.

The taller one stands up. “We made a promise, Jimin. A sacred promise built on our friendship! And what did you do? Tell me!”

The smell of laundry detergent and fabric softener wafts up from the laundromat downstairs. Jimin reaches behind him and cracks a window open to let the fresh air get inside his shop. “Okay, first of all,” he grunts as he pushes the window lever, “-we didn’t make a promise or a pact or whatever.”

“Ah, so now you’re a liar too?” Taehyung exclaims, pointing at him and pouting.

Jimin gapes at him. “Tae, will you let me finish? Okay, number one that ‘promise’ wasn’t built on our friendship, it was built on bottles of soju.” The other is quick to say something again but Jimin raises a finger to shush him. “Second, that ‘promise’ was dumb in the first place.”

“It’s not dumb!”

“And finally,” Jimin breathes in a whiff of air from outside and stares at the streets, “It’s not like it’s a real kiss, alright. Hoseok hyung was blackout drunk. He was so drunk he revealed his cousin’s biggest secret. We haven’t even talked about it yet.”

He turns to Taehyung, who has his hands shoved down his pockets. “Still not fair,” he grumbles. Jimin laughs and returns to his chair, putting the gloves back on. “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have more pressing matters to deal with.” He reaches for a needle file and moves the magnifying glass back to its place over the band he’s holding in his other hand.

The bangle, which is supposed to go to the door of the gallery, looks like a simple silver band. Upon close-up, however, the bracelet turns out to have intricate carvings of a dragon on the inside part. A small microchip is hidden within the silver and he and Jeongguk were lucky enough to find and equipment that can duplicate it. Jimin looks down at the blueprint spread on his table and his hands work nimbly along the edges of the silver. One wrong angle and he’ll have to repeat the whole process.

He thinks Taehyung has finally stopped bugging him when he hears a chair being dragged closer to his working desk. “Fine,” Taehyung huffs as he plops himself back down on the chair. “I forgive you for making out with Hoseok hyung even if you promised that you wouldn’t go out with him until Namjoon hyung agrees to go out with me.”

Jimin looks up at him and rolls his eyes before going back to work. “That is literally one of the weirdest sentences that ever came out of your mouth. And we’re talking about you, Taehyung.”
The other ignores him. “But you have to tell me: how was it?”

Jimin pulls up the mask resting on his chin up to his nose. “I can’t remember,” he lies.

“Lying,” Taehyung says easily. Jimin groans through his mask but the other doesn’t stop badgering him. “Come on, Jimin-ah! How was it? Sloppy? With tongue? Gentle? How about his hands, did they reach-”

Jimin throws his carving tool on the table and pulls his mask down. “If you don’t leave within ten seconds I will call Yoongi hyung and say you’re disrupting me from my work.”

Taehyung raises an eyebrow. “I’m not scared of Yoongi hyung,” he huffs.

Jimin smirks. “Namjoon hyung, then.”

Taehyung grimaces and stands up. He scrapes the legs of the chair on the floor in a way that he knows annoys the hell out of Jimin. “Fine,” he says, “but this isn’t over.”

Jimin shakes his head in annoyance and flicks his hands towards the door. “Go, go.”

Taehyung leaves, sticks out a tongue at him, and slams the door on his way out. Jimin sighs in relief and tries to go back to work again, but now that he’s alone and there’s no Taehyung to talk to him or turn into his background noise, memories of several days ago – of Hoseok’s breath on his lips, of his half-lidded eyes staring at Jimin, of the words that he really can’t quite forget – come rushing back to him.

“Ah, Jimin-ah. I really like you. I really, really do,” Hoseok whispers before leaning in to kiss him. Jimin’s heart stills in his chest for a second, not being able to fully comprehend what was going on. Truthfully, he had imagined their first kiss going differently than this. Probably somewhere cold, where snow is falling down on them, and Jimin would be close enough to see snowflakes landing on Hoseok’s gentle slope of a nose, close enough to cup his sharp jaw. Not quite like this: under the harsh lighting of a restaurant awning, both of them drunk and unable to stand up properly.

But Hoseok’s lips are Hoseok’s lips, no matter how much alcohol was laced in it. Jimin found himself pulling him closer, cupping his face and angling Hoseok’s chin, eager to kiss him right back. He barely hears Taehyung gasping in the background, grunting under the drunk Jeongguk’s weight, and it takes Jimin several heated seconds before he was able to pull away.

“Hyung,” Jimin breathes out and curses himself in his head, “you-you’re drunk, I’m going to take you home, alright?”

Hoseok smiles and pats his face, cheeks pink from alcohol. “Ah, Jimin-ah, I really like you,” he repeats before burying his face on Jimin’s shoulder. Jimin tells himself that it wasn’t true, that this sudden confession was just brought upon by alcohol. But then again he remembers what Namjoon said inside the restaurant minutes prior, about how Hoseok tends to say the truth when he’s drunk. Hoseok lifts his head up and whispers something to him before he fully passes out.

“Ah, but I’m scared, Jimin. I’m really scared.”

So Jimin reckons that was true as well.

“Aish, seriously.” Jimin finally throws his tools on the table and gives up on thinking that he’d be able to get some actual work done for the day. He realizes he should have just let Taehyung bug him.
Hoseok puts his hands together in imploration as he follows Namjoon to the kitchen.

“Can’t we delay this meeting? We still have what, three weeks and like two days and several hours? Come on.”

The other frowns at him as he approaches the refrigerator door. “You can’t hide in our apartment forever, Hoseok,” he says from behind the fridge door.

“I’m not saying forever, Namjoon-ah – just, maybe until the day I die perhaps?” Hoseok answers as other closes the door. Namjoon rolls his eyes and steps around him. “You’re overreacting, you know that?” he says as he opens a can of soda and takes a swig.

Hoseok pouts and leans his forehead on the refrigerator. In the past week he has been considering the idea that maybe he can survive avoiding Jimin for the rest of his life. Yoongi too, but really, he’s more concerned about Jimin at the moment. He knows his way around the streets and he can always disappear when he sees him approaching.

Hoseok groans and whines, stomping his feet until Namjoon gets annoyed with the sound.

“Yah, stop it, will you? We can’t delay the meeting. We have to do a proper recon of that bar and we’ll be talking about assignments so you need to be there,” Namjoon scolds. “And we’ve got a bigger problem, you know. Yoongi hyung has to talk to Seokjin hyung. Properly. Preferably sober. He says he won’t but the thing is he tends to say one thing and do another. But does he listen to me? Nooo. I mean, who am I right? I’m merely the guy who’s known him practically all his life.”

If Hoseok has been hiding for the past week, Namjoon has been complaining about the whole situation about Yoongi and Seokjin, worried that something will happen during the most inconvenient moments, the over thinker that he is. Hoseok agrees but it’s not like he can do anything about it. If anything, he’s the one who let all the worms out of the three year old can.

He ignores Namjoon and wails instead. “God, why did I do that?”

“Which one: hiding the truth from Yoongi hyung for three years, accidentally telling Yoongi hyung the truth, or drunkenly making out with Jimin?” the other asks.

“All of that, Namjoon. All of that. But more about the thing with Jimin, if I’m going to be honest with you.”

“Psychology suggests that being inebriated pulls down the barriers we put around our subconscious, so maybe you’ve been wanting to make out with Jimin for a long time now,” Namjoon tells him. Hoseok slowly turns around and faces Namjoon leaning back on the counter across him. Of course he knew that, he’d been wanting to kiss Jimin for a long time now. He’s asking why it had to happen when he’s drunk out of his wits.


The other salutes him with the hand still holding the can of soda. “So I’ll see you later at Yoongi hyung’s place?”

Hoseok nods. “Fine. If you don’t see me it means Yoongi hyung’s cornered me alone and finally found the chance to murder me. That or I simultaneously combusted in embarrassment when I saw Jimin.”
Namjoon nods. “I’ll take note of that,” he says as he walks out of the kitchen.

Hoseok turns around again and returns to leaning his forehead on the fridge door. He stays there until he hears his phone ring. He sighs as he looks at the screen and sees his cousin calling him.

That’s one other person he can’t hide from. Once Seokjin finds out that everyone except for Jeongguk knows his secret, Hoseok is dead. Okay maybe not dead, just probably disowned by his only family left.

“Hey hyung,” Hoseok answers the phone gloomily.

“Hey Hoseokie. Are you at the headquarters yet?” Seokjin asks. “Is something wrong?”

Hoseok forces himself to smile and hopes it helps him fake a happy tone. “What? I’m at home. Nothing’s wrong.”

“Are you still not talking to Jimin? You can’t hide from him forever,” his cousin says and Hoseok curses. “How do you-

“Hoseok, everyone knows. Taehyung has been grumbling about it for some reason. I haven’t seen you at the headquarters in days. I wasn’t there that night and I know what happened. You can’t hide there forever.”

Not everything that happened, Hoseok thinks. “Watch me,” he grumbles.

“Aish, you think you’re the only one embarrassed with this? Jimin is the other half of that messy drunken making out equation and he’s out there working his ass off. Talk to him properly so you can either both move on or do something about it.”

Sometimes Hoseok hates it when his cousin suddenly spews out random words of wisdom. He also wants to tell him that maybe he if he had followed his own advice, Hoseok wouldn’t even be suffering like this in the first place. He sighs and peels his face from the fridge door. “I know. Fine. Ugh, I hate you,” he tells him.

“Aw, I love you too, dear cousin.”

Hoseok hisses at the phone and hangs up.

*****

Namjoon has known Yoongi for almost eighteen years. He knows his pet peeves, his favorite food, his changing hobbies, his smallest mannerisms. He could be blindfolded, hear only Yoongi’s breathing, and still know what mood the other is in. It’s the sort of friendship that has been weathered by multiple storms and only ended up being stronger. He takes pride in knowing a genius such as Min Yoongi and will stay loyal to him until his dying breath.

But sometimes Yoongi just pisses Namjoon off and he uses all his knowledge to piss him off right back, especially when he doesn’t listen to him. Since the night of Jeongguk’s birthday, he has been bugging the older to tell Seokjin already, to get over the confrontation so it won’t have to interfere with their work. Yoongi is adamant in following his plan to ignore the truth.

They’re all at the headquarters, discussing progress in their mission, when Seokjin announces he was able to get a membership to The Rooftop. Everyone turns to him in surprise and slight confusion. He shrugs at them. “What? Turns out I know one of the owners.”
Namjoon frowns and looks up from his iced coffee. “Wait. We’re talking about The Rooftop right? Don’t tell me this is the very same club one owned by—”

If Namjoon has ways to escape a place at any given time, he also has a variety of ways to get under his best friend’s skin. Turns out this time he doesn’t even have to do anything serious. When Seokjin mentions the name, Namjoon doesn’t even have to look at Yoongi to know that he’s suddenly livid. And jealous. Emotions he only gets to see on Yoongi when the topic is Seokjin and his past or present admirers. Under normal circumstances, Namjoon would have let it slide, ignore it even. He doesn’t like making his best friend uncomfortable. But Yoongi is a hardheaded asshole sometimes and this isn’t really what denotes as normal circumstance, so Namjoon hides a smirk and asks Seokjin, “Say who again, hyung?” in an innocent tone.

Seokjin looks at him and grins. “It’s Lee Jaehwan! He’s one of the owners, along with Choi Sooyoung, Seunghyun’s sister. Do you remember him?”

“Lee Jaehwan?!” Hoseok suddenly exclaims. He’s been hiding from Jimin and the rest of the group behind his cousin’s shoulders and he surfaces when he hears the name. “That Lee Jaehwan?”

“Who’s Lee Jaehwan?” Taehyung and Jimin ask in unison. Jeongguk taps on an icon on the screen. “Well this is Lee Jaehwan, one of the co-owners of The Rooftop.”

A photo of an attractive looking man with blonde hair appears on the screen, looking rich and very much like an owner of an exclusive bar. The photo is of him walking out of a plane, coffee on one hand and a very rich, business-like folder on the other.

“Oh god,” Hoseok murmurs. “It is him.” He and Namjoon exchange looks, one that says this can’t be happening, and then they grin devilishly at each other. Hoseok also likes tormenting Yoongi when he’s jealous, even more so than Namjoon.

“He’s… pretty,” Taehyung nods in approval. “Is he my target?”

Namjoon suddenly frowns and looks down at Taehyung sitting on the couch. “He’s no one’s target,” he says. “Your target is Choi Sooyoung, Choi Seunghyun’s sister.”

“Seokjin hyung was once his target, though,” Hoseok teases and jumps away when his cousin grits his teeth at him.

“How do you know him, Seokjin hyung?” Jimin asks.

“What? Oh uh, he’s an ex,” Seokjin says coolly.

Namjoon steals a glance at Yoongi, arms crossed and not looking at anyone as he sits on Jeongguk’s computer chair. He can already feel the annoyance dripping out of him ten feet away. Out of all of Seokjin’s exes, the one who resurfaces is the one whom Yoongi hates the most. Namjoon sneers as he slides off the armrest to sit beside Taehyung.

“Where do I even begin? Lee Jaehwan isn’t just a simple ex-boyfriend, contrary to what Seokjin hyung might tell you.”

“He’s Seokjin hyung’s almost husband,” Hoseok interrupts. Namjoon presses his lips tightly and tries really hard not to laugh. Seokjin groans and puts his hands on his hips.

“Almost husband, almost soul mate, almost father to Seokjin hyung’s children – preferably two boys and one girl, and they would have lived in that nice bungalow Jaehwan’s family owns somewhere in a more rural part of Seoul, complete with a dog and an Olympic swimming pool where I get to swim
whenever I want. Lee Jaehwan is the almost owner of Seokjin hyung’s heart. He’s Seokjin hyung’s biggest.”

“Anyway,” Seokjin cuts Hoseok off and desperately tries to put the meeting back on track. “Since The Rooftop is a membership-based club he gave me a platinum card membership so I can enter even on the day of Seunghyun’s farewell party. Jimin can probably just duplicate it as needed.” He fishes out a silver card out of his pocket.

Again, under normal circumstances, Namjoon would have only been grateful for Seokjin’s help. With the platinum card, they don’t have to sneak into the bar anymore or steal it from someone. But he takes a sip of his coffee and grins at Seokjin. “Really? Ah, how nice of Jaehwan hyung.” He turns to Yoongi. “Right, Yoongi hyung?”

If Yoongi’s eyes could turn into daggers, Namjoon would have already died of multiple knife wounds. “How nice,” the older drawls as he looked at Namjoon, words dripping with sarcasm as he spat it out.

“Why’s he Jin hyung’s almost husband? Were you guys engaged at one point?” Taehyung asks, eyes wide and mouth hanging open. Namjoon finds his innocent question too cute not to answer, so he clears his throat and tells him, “They were college boyfriends. We believe he was about to propose at one point. And apparently, he’s still in love with Seokjin hyung after all these years.”

“He is not in love with me anymore,” Seokjin says resignedly, like he’s talked about this a hundred times already. He has, actually, and Namjoon and Hoseok are witnesses to it. It only seemed like yesterday when Yoongi would grumble on about Lee Jaehwan and his obvious moves to get Seokjin back. “We’re just friends now, alright. I haven’t even seen him in years. Can we just-”

“Lee Jaehwan is deeply in love with him but Jin hyung didn’t like him back as much so they broke up and then Yoongi hyung came and-”

The throw pillow from the couch hits Hoseok straight on the face and sends him off the chair he’s at. Namjoon and Taehyung guffaw loudly.

“If you’re going to hide from Jimin forever as you told me, shut up and go sit in a corner,” he tells his cousin, poised to throw another pillow but Hoseok throws his hands up in complete embarrassment and silent surrender. Jeongguk laughs and points at Jimin, who has gone pink in the ears and decides to squeeze himself between Taehyung and Namjoon on the couch.

“Holy shit. Yoongi hyung came and then what?” Taehyung’s eyes go round.

Namjoon wipes his eyes of the tears and shrugs. “Well, Yoongi hyung came.”

Jeongguk starts cackling. “This is the best mission ever. You’re all a huge mess,” he tells them, even pointing at Yoongi. Namjoon throws Yoongi another look and finally tries to get back on discussing the mission.

“Long story short he’s the guy that came before Yoongi hyung,” he tells them. “So the night after tomorrow we’ll recon the club?”

Seokjin nods overeagerly. “Taehyung’s target is Sooyoung, right? Do we have a profile on her already?”

“Yeah, yeah I have one on her. Intel on The Rooftop is there too,” Jeongguk is still snickering when he hands Taehyung a folder on Choi Seunghyun’s sister. Taehyung reads the contents and Namjoon reads along beside him. Seokjin hands the platinum membership card over to Jimin.
“Can you make several by tomorrow evening?” Yoongi asks, voice undeniably tense. Jimin nods.

“Shouldn’t be hard.” He flips the card over and studies the material. “This isn’t easy to acquire though, Seokjin hyung. They don’t give these out too easily, even to the bar owners. I actually thought we’re going to have to steal from one random member to get a sample. Lee Jaehwan just decided to give you one?”

Seokjin crosses his arms. “I just asked for a favor, that’s all,” he tells them. Hoseok snorts from his seat by the breakfast bar. “And what did he ask in return?” he asks.

“Why would he ask for something in return?” Seokjin arches an eyebrow.

Taehyung grins. “We’re all friends here, Seokjin hyung. No problem with you telling us.”

“Ah, he’s right. We’re just a couple of friends and some very professional exes in this group,” Hoseok nods and grins maniacally at Yoongi’s back. In the corner of Namjoon’s eyes he sees Yoongi shift and clench his jaw before turning away to look at the screen.

Seokjin narrows his eyes at the two of them.

“Coffee. Seokjin hyung owes Lee Jaehwan coffee.” Jimin sits back up as he reads from a piece of paper that fell on the floor when Seokjin pulled the card out of his coat pocket. Seokjin hisses and tries to snatch the note back from Jimin, who is quick to pull away and pass it to Jeongguk.

Taehyung squeals, stomping his feet in excitement. “Read it! Read it out loud!”

Jeongguk steps away from Seokjin’s reach. “Dear Seokjinnie,” he starts reading.

“Seokjinnieeee,” Hoseok and Taehyung sing in unison while Jeongguk gags at the nickname.

Namjoon can’t help but laugh at Yoongi, who can’t do anything but sit still and listen to the contents of the note. Because you said you’re a goddamn professional, hyung, Namjoon thinks.

“Here’s the card. You owe me coffee for this. I hope you still remember how I like it,” Jeongguk reads and shudders. “Ugh, so cheesy.”

Seokjin rolls his eyes and Yoongi bites the inside of his cheek.

“I hope to see you at The Rooftop soon. I’ll be waiting. Jaehwannie.”

Seokjin finally gets ahold of the note and shoves it back in his pocket.

“Wow. Now is that not a letter from a man in love?” Namjoon announces and only shrugs when Seokjin throws threatening looks at him. Being mean feels nice apparently and Namjoon only realizes why his friends love teasing each other so much.

“I’ll be waiting.’ God, hyung he’s so whipped for you. How long are you going to make him wait?” Taehyung says and Namjoon nods in agreement.

“It’s an inside joke alright,” Seokjin frowns, but Namjoon can’t help but notice the shade of red slowly climbing up his neck. “We used to study together at the rooftop of the university dorm, I’m always late so he ends up waiting for me and I always bring him coffee as an apology.”

“What!? That’s even worse!” Jimin exclaims. “And he’s been waiting for you for how long now – seven, eight years?”

“Wait, you said rooftop? Holy shit,” Jeongguk says, round eyes staring at them before he hops back
to his computer to show them a screenshot of a magazine article. “Holy fuck, okay look: this is an interview with Jaehwan and Sooyoung. I read it and apparently one of the inspirations for The Rooftop is, and I quote: ‘Some good memories that one of the owners, Lee Jaehwan, wants to relive over and over again, and he wants the bar-goers to experience the same too.’”

Taehyung clutches his chest. “Aw, that’s so sweet! Seokjin hyung, you’re his good memories!”

Seokjin massages the bridge of his nose but doesn’t say anything.

“Oh, that’s cute. A small world indeed. Now we have access to the club thanks to their friendship. What do you think about that Yoongi hyung?” Namjoon asks, an arrogant smile peeking at the corner of his mouth.

“That’s – that’s just convenient,” Yoongi mutters under his breath, through gritted teeth. “Thank Jaehwan for me.”

“Yoongi, I told you a million times-” Seokjin starts but abruptly stops. Namjoon and Hoseok exchange looks and Seokjin ends up shaking his head. “You know what, whatever. What’s important is we have a way in. I’m done here.” He turns and leaves the headquarters.

“Oh, we’re done?” Jeongguk asks. Namjoon is about to say no but he and Taehyung have already plugged in a video game and Jimin approaches him about the key. “I should be done in two or three days. I just want to make sure it will fit the doorknob. I’m betting the material’s sensitive and I don’t want us to set off any alarms,” he tells him. Namjoon pats him on the back. “You’re working hard, Chim.”

“Thanks. I’ll go ahead, hyung.” Jimin nods, hesitates, and eventually walks up the stairs.

“Don’t make out with anyone on your way out,” Jeongguk says without peeling his eyes away from the television. Jimin curses at him and Taehyung laughs. Namjoon raises an eyebrow as he watches Hoseok from the corner of his eye, quietly slipping out of the headquarters via the garage exit. He hopes that at least those two can resolve things amongst themselves.

Namjoon turns his attention to Yoongi still sitting on Jeongguk’s computer chair, staring daggers at the screen showing Lee Jaehwan’s face. The younger grabs a chair and sits beside him. “So,” Namjoon starts.

“So?” Yoongi asks, eyes still glued on the screen.

“Lee Jaehwan.”

Yoongi takes the cup from Namjoon’s hand and takes a sip. “What about him?”

Namjoon laughs and pats Yoongi on the shoulder. “You’ve always been so sensitive when it comes to Jaehwan hyung. I have to say I missed seeing this side of you.”

“I think it’s great we already have a way to enter that club. It’s convenient.” Yoongi finishes the last of the iced coffee. “Just. Great.”

Namjoon nods. “Sure, sure. You didn’t just spend the last ten minutes glowering at his picture. We’re all doing great here. Maybe we should ask Seokjin hyung to ask for more passes so Jimin won’t have to duplicate them? Seokjin hyung probably won’t mind bringing him more coffee.”

Yoongi turns to glare at him.
Namjoon knows he’s about to cross a line. “What? You just said it was great. And you and Seokjin hyung are just exes now right? Just like they are. You’re not going to do anything so that shouldn’t be a big deal. Maybe it’s good timing for them now. Let them have that nice bungalow and children and pool that Hoseok was yammering on about earlier.”

Yoongi stands up from his chair. “Yeah, maybe. I don’t care.” The younger tuts and jogs after him, leaving Taehyung and Jeongguk behind them, screaming at the TV screen. He laughs as he puts an arm around Yoongi.

“Aish, hyung. I love it when you’re in denial. But at the same time it pains me to see you like this.”

“Shut up, Namjoon.”

They reach the living room and Namjoon removes his arm. “I have to remind you though,” he says as he walks out the door. Yoongi raises an eyebrow at him but stops to listen.

“You’ve always been a tiny bit incapable of sound judgment when it comes to Seokjin hyung.”

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“Hey!”

Jimin turns around and his heart skips a beat when he sees Hoseok jogging after him. “Oh, hi Hoseokie hyung.”

Hoseok is panting by the time he gets close to Jimin. “Hey,” he says. “Are you on your way back to your shop? Is it okay if we uh – go for a walk or something?” Jimin nods and Hoseok smiles gratefully. “I mean, I’d invite you out for drinks but I’m officially banned from alcohol for the rest of my life.”

Jimin laughs and Hoseok continues, “Uh anyway, I – I’d like to apologize to you.” Jimin shakes his head and his hands. “No, hyung, you don’t have to-”

“No, I have to. I have to apologize for a lot of things actually.”

“Aish, Hoseokie hyung,” Jimin clicks his tongue. The older frowns a little at him. “You have to let me, Jimin, or as I told Namjoon I will spontaneously combust in here right in front of you.”

Jimin laughs again. He missed hearing Hoseok’s voice, and it hasn’t even been a full week yet. They walk almost aimlessly until they arrive at a park. “I’m sorry for uh, hiding from you. And avoiding you, as my asshole cousin said earlier. I didn’t mean to, I really just didn’t know what to say.” Hoseok rubs the back of his ear as they go and sit on the swings. Jimin shoves his hand in his pockets and pushes himself back and forth. “It’s okay, hyung. I mean, I don’t know what to say either to be honest.”

Hoseok smiles and copies him. “And for uh, kissing you. In the first place. I do remember it, and it’s shitty of me to do that.”

“You were drunk, hyung. And I – well I kissed back, so. I think that’s shitty of me as well?” Jimin bites his lips and tries to hide the heat climbing up his neck by putting his hoodie up. Hoseok makes a little surprised noise in his throat. “What? No. None of this is your fault, really, Jimin-ah. I’m sorry.”

Jimin grinds his feet on the gravel until the swing stops. “You know hyung, none of us will stop apologizing to each other. I think we should just stop and-” he suddenly trails off, suddenly at a loss
at what to say. He stands up and a huge gust of cold autumn winds makes him shiver. Hoseok stands up from the swing as well. Jimin looks up in surprise as Hoseok steps into his space and reaches for his collar.

“Yah, Jimin-ah,” the older tells him as he tugs the cloth and zips up the jacket up to his chin. “You shouldn’t be cold.”

Another shiver shoots down Jimin’s spine and this time he highly doubts it’s from the weather. “Thank you, hyung,” he manages to stutter out. Hoseok looks back up at him and Jimin hopes his whole face isn’t that red yet.

“Stop and what?” he asks.

“What?” Jimin blinks.

“You said, we should just stop and then you kind of… stopped?” Hoseok tells him and Jimin suddenly he remembers. They both start laughing quietly and he hits Hoseok on the arm. “Aish, hyung. Stop making fun of me.”

“I wasn’t!” Hoseok grins. Jimin looks down at their feet on the gravel, marvels at how close they are to each other. He looks up and sees Hoseok is still waiting for his answer. “Do you want to get some fish cakes?” he suddenly asks. “We passed by a stall on our way here.”

“Okay.”

The walk from the swings and out of the park is suddenly long and quiet and Jimin hates the tiny bit of awkwardness between him and Hoseok, something that has never truly existed between them before. He pouts and kicks the leaves on his way, trying to think of something to say. “So you really kept that secret for three years?” he asks after a couple of seconds.

Hoseok looks up at the dark night sky. “I did. Miraculously. It was hard.”

“So how does it feel like? Finally telling the truth?” he asks.

“Well, I didn’t tell the truth, I accidentally revealed it to all of you,” Hoseok corrects him and Jimin nudges his arm with his shoulder. “But really, it should comfort me, but with the way our dumb friend whom I choose not to name is not doing anything about it, it just saddens me a bit.”

Jimin chuckles and the other continues, “They were really good together, you know? Really loved each other. Still do, I think, but look at them now. They really made me believe in dumb shit like love. It’s – sad.”

Things fall into place and Jimin finally understands why Hoseok said what he said that night. He bites his lip and hesitates. He stops walking.

“But you’re neither Yoongi hyung nor Seokjin hyung,” he finally says. Hoseok stops in his tracks and looks back at Jimin.

“What?”

“You’re neither of them. You’re you, Hoseokie hyung, and for me that makes all the difference,” Jimin says and Hoseok looks down shyly. He steps closer to Hoseok, takes a deep breath, and reaches for his hand. Hoseok always makes all the difference. Jimin never wanted to become a permanent part of any heist crew, but Hoseok made him think otherwise.
“I’m not saying that we’re not going to end up like them and – ah, what am I even saying?” he stops in embarrassment. He’s about to drop his hand but Hoseok holds it tight. Jimin looks up at Hoseok.

It’s cold and Jimin is close enough to see the gentle slope of Hoseok’s nose, close enough to see the sharpness of his defined jaws and the twinkling of his eyes. He smiles shyly and Hoseok tugs his hand.

“Fish cakes?” he asks Jimin.

Jimin starts walking again. “Okay, hyung. Fish cakes.”

“You’re buying, I don’t have money with me.”

Jimin laughs and fakes a scoff at the back of his throat. Hoseok doesn’t let go of his hand.

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Yoongi vehemently disagrees with Namjoon. He is fully capable of assessing any situation and be fully aware of the consequences of his actions. He would not have gotten this far in his life if he doesn’t.

He is, however, also aware of the fact that he has an irrational amount of hatred towards Lee Jaehwan, even if he hasn’t seen the guy in years. This doesn’t stop him at times.

“What are you doing here?”

Yoongi shrugs as Seokjin stares him down. “What,” he asks, “I can’t be part of my team’s recon mission?” He looks around at the bar, playing with the edges of the duplicated platinum membership card in his pocket.

Seokjin looks sleek and scrupulously striking in a crisp white shirt with a red bejeweled collar, paired with sleek black dress pants. His hair is pushed back and he’s wearing a silver bracelet on his left hand. He fits in well with the crowd of the rich and famous with their branded everything – from the tips of their hair extensions to the top coating of their pedicured toes. Yoongi suddenly feels a bit underdressed in his black shirt and leather jacket and ripped jeans.

Seokjin smiles at him and leans back on the bar. If he didn’t believe Yoongi, he doesn’t say anything about it.

The Rooftop is a three-floor building located at one of the most upscale parts of Seoul. Only members and select guests can get in, and even then there’s a hierarchy of who can enter where. Lowest paying members can only get up to the first two floors, where a huge club is located. A lot of idols and actors own membership for the third floor, which holds private rooms and a more intimate dance floor.

The rooftop of the building caters to the VIPs and the richest young people of the city. They can eat, drink, dance, or simply relax while looking at the best skyline Seoul can offer. An infinity pool appears during the summer, while a plush garden with exotic flora emerges during spring. A special glass roof is installed during winter and the place resembles a beautiful snow globe filled with rich people having the time of their lives.

During fall, however, the place resembles a regular but still a high-end bar, filled with sleek purple couches and ambient floor lighting accentuating leveled steps. The dance floor in the middle is a pit of bodies standing flushed next to each other. At the west end there is even a more closed off area, leveled higher above the rest. At any given moment, at least one VIP member of the club is staying
here, watching the crowd while being surrounded with highly trained security guards, as part of the membership. This is where Seokjin thinks Choi Seunghyun will situate himself when he attends the party his sister will throw for him.

Yoongi finds Seokjin at the rooftop, looking at the skyline the club so gladly boasts in its website. Yoongi believes he has seen better views before. “I didn’t say that,” Seokjin tells him. “I just didn’t think you’d go, since it’s just recon.”

Yoongi shrugs and orders a vodka martini from the bartender, sliding a freshly-minted and forged credit card on the bar. He’s keen on swindling as much money as he can from Lee Jaehwan’s establishment, he’s petty like that. “Where’s Taehyung?” he asks Seokjin.

“He’s downstairs studying the club. Choi Sooyoung is seen more on those floors, talking and partying with regulars.”

“And your friend?”


Yoongi doesn’t really know whether to be glad that Lee Jaehwan isn’t there at the moment, or to be pissed off because Seokjin knows he isn’t.

It then dawns on him that he doesn’t have the right to be either.

But contrary to what Namjoon says, Yoongi and Seokjin’s relationship has been doing extremely well. Yoongi’s plan to not tell Seokjin anything is working. They’re not back to being truly friendly, but they’re not as awkward around each other anymore. In the past few days Seokjin has been walking in and out of the headquarters freely, talking to Jeongguk or even sharing a meal with him. As he keeps on telling Namjoon, after several weeks Seokjin will leave and they’ll be back to normal. There is no point in unearthing the truth about what happened three years ago.

But out of all the people Seokjin dated before him, Lee Jaehwan has to be the one who resurfaces, has to be the one involved in this mission. Lee Jaehwan who changed his major for Seokjin, Lee Jaehwan who apparently has dedicated an entire building for Seokjin. Somehow it rubs Yoongi the wrong way. He downs the vodka martini easily and catches Seokjin looking at him as he wipes his lips with his thumb. The other turns a shade of light pink, almost indiscernible in the purple lights, and turns to pay for his own drink. Yoongi smirks but doesn’t say anything.

“I was able to talk to one of the bartenders. Choi Seunghyun isn’t a regular at any of the floors here but he’s a fan of one of the hidden features of this place,” Seokjin tells him as they walk to the elevator.

“Which is?”

“Guess!” Seokjin beams at him and Yoongi turns to look at the elevator buttons. “Which floor?” he asks, ignoring him. Seokjin puckers his lips in a pout.

“Ah, you’re no fun, Yoongi.”

“So I’ve been told,” he shrugs and gestures his hand towards the floor buttons. “Which floor?” he asks again. Seokjin leans forward and puts a hand on Yoongi’s shoulder as he gently pulls him out of the way.

“Let me see,” he whispers, hovering a finger above the buttons.
Yoongi inhales and realizes he’s made a mistake in doing so. He can smell Seokjin, and his lungs start aching, triggered by the scent it hasn’t known in years. The smell is just like it was before: earthy yet fragrant, minty yet warm by the time it hits his lungs.

“Ah yes, I think it’s this one,” Seokjin says and presses for the third floor. He pulls back and Yoongi exhales sharply. They land on their desired floor and they are welcomed by an alarming amount of silence and numerous hallways.

“This is supposed to be the one with the private rooms?” Yoongi asks.

Seokjin nods, but even before Yoongi can step out of the elevator they hear footsteps approaching. Seokjin pulls back and grabs Yoongi along with him.

Suddenly Yoongi’s back is against the cold wall of the elevator, Seokjin’s hand is holding his neck, and Seokjin’s lips are on his.

Yoongi stands frozen, hands limp on his sides as Seokjin tilts his head to fit his lips with Yoongi’s, plump and chaste and warm. He can almost taste something, most likely the drink Seokjin had minutes ago. Seokjin’s lips are closed so Yoongi can’t figure out the truth, but he wants to, with a frightening amount of desire. He doesn’t hear the female voice saying to hold the door as it slowly closes and another voice saying “Oh” in a whisper when they are able to catch it. The rapid, unbelievably loud beating in his chest is louder than any voice he could possibly hear at the moment.

Seokjin pulls back and the hand holding Yoongi’s neck makes its way to his waist. Yoongi blinks up dumbly as Seokjin goes and looks at the two girls, whose faces he doesn’t get to see clearly because he’s busy looking at Seokjin’s lips.

“Oh, sorry, we were busy,” Seokjin apologizes, and he gently ushers Yoongi out of the elevator. The other can only move his feet almost limply. The two girls laugh and cover their mouths as they squealed. “It’s okay!” one of them say. “Enjoy the rest of your night!”

Seokjin waves a little and the elevator doors close. The little “ding” that it makes seems to wake Yoongi up in his daze, and he shakes his head to find Seokjin still holding his waist, looking at the elevator door.

“I thought they were security,” he says nonchalantly, frowning before he looks back at Yoongi.

They’ve done this hundreds of times before, in different situations. It’s one of Seokjin’s most effective ways of distractions. The kiss makes people look away, makes most uncomfortable, and makes them forget their faces in case security asks for description. Seokjin’s actually done it with their other hired distractions too, as it’s part of work. It shouldn’t be new to Yoongi.

But there’s always that operative word, that small asterisk, that footnote in the end: before. Before, when they were still together and each kiss wasn’t just a simple distraction for either of them. They made it into their own little game, sometimes their way to comfort each other when situations get too intense.

Yoongi clears his throat and Seokjin pulls away. “I guess I should’ve given you a heads up,” he tells the younger, smiling at the growing blush in his cheeks. Yoongi shakes his head. “No, it’s fine. Let’s just go, hyung,” he answers and quickly changes topics. Seokjin nods and walks ahead of him.

“No CCTVs?”

Seokjin shakes his head. “A lot of their members are idols. They don’t want any evidence of their presence in this place. I actually think the ones we saw are from this big agency?”
Yoongi shrugs, because he didn’t see the girls’ faces. Seokjin leads the way and he follows.

“There should be a room leading to a wine cellar. The bartender says Choi Seunghyun personally chooses his wine before settling in the lounge.”

“He sounds like a pretentious asshole,” Yoongi mutters as he follows the other down the corridors, rubbing his lips and his entire face to push the blood down back to everywhere else but his cheeks. Seokjin ignores him and looks at the walls are adorned with different paintings left and right and at the small statues holding the lamps that light the hall. Each room is soundproof and they can only vaguely hear music from somewhere very far. “This place is wonderful. Ah, Jaehwan must have spent a lot of time looking for these paintings,” he whispers.

Yoongi frowns at Seokjin’s back until they suddenly stop when he was about to turn a corner. “Oh, I think I see it!” he tells Yoongi excitedly. The younger crosses his arms as he leans sideways to take a look at the door at the end of the hallway. “And your plan for tonight is?”

“I want to see the different kinds of wines they have so – oh someone’s coming!”

There is a split second, a split second where Seokjin’s and Yoongi’s eyes meet when the older holds him back again to hide from whoever’s about to pass by. Seokjin asks for a nonverbal permission, in the way his eyes meet Yoongi’s before it shoots down to his lips. A wordless heads up. Yoongi involuntarily opens his lips in anticipation, his hands open to make way for Seokjin’s arms as the other steps into his space.

In that split second several thoughts pop up in Yoongi’s head: that this kiss is fake; that they’ve done this before; that this kiss is fake; that Namjoon will probably tut at him if he finds out, but this kiss is fake, not real, just pretend, so it’s okay. Yoongi will be fine. But none of those seem to matter the moment Seokjin’s lips touches his again, like open wire falling onto water.

It’s soft and intoxicating and so painstakingly familiar that Yoongi fails to pay attention to the footsteps approaching; he only tugs in Seokjin closer, pulls him down on his nape and finally fully tastes the whiskey lingering on his lips. He pays no mind to the low murmurs and squeaks of apology that he hears when the men from the wine cellar – probably servers, he doesn’t care – pass by them. He only feels every nerve in his body spark to life with every movement of Seokjin’s lips moving against his.

It takes Yoongi a couple of seconds to open his eyes after Seokjin pulls away. He looks up at Seokjin, looking around the other side of the corridor. Yoongi looks at his left hand, fingers curled at Seokjin’s bejeweled collar. This is a fake kiss, Yoongi, he tells himself. It’s over now. He pulls it back down and sees his right hand lingering on Seokjin’s impossibly small waist, white shirt slightly wrinkled under his palm. He pulls that one back as well and finds Seokjin looking at him, cheeks suddenly a little pink. Yoongi swallows and concentrates on looking at his eyes instead of his lips.

“Um,” Yoongi whispers. “They’re gone, I think.”

“Yes,” Seokjin takes a step back and nods. Yoongi feels goosebumps on the part of his neck that Seokjin touched. The silence the follows is unnerving and awkward when it shouldn’t have been.

“So wine cellar…?” Yoongi points his thumb to the door. “Yeah, yeah we should go,” Seokjin replies immediately.

Seokjin walks ahead and Yoongi takes shallow breaths, tries to convince himself that the rapid beating in his chest is caused by adrenaline of being almost caught sneaking around the floor for a second time around. They reach the end of the hallway and Seokjin opens the door.
“Ah, this is amazing!” Seokjin raves at the racks of wine bottles neatly stacked against all four walls of the cellar, looking around in wonder. Yoongi squints at the dimness inside but one by one small lights on the floor and the ceiling are switched on. He doesn’t quite expect the sudden drop of temperature and the chill from the air conditioner sends goose bumps on his arms. “It must be ten degrees in here,” he shivers from behind Seokjin, shoving his hands in his pockets. The other turns to him and laughs at his pouting face.

“I’ll be quick, don’t worry,” Seokjin smiles and starts looking at the bottles before him. He pulls a handle and a step ladder appears. Yoongi looks up at Seokjin, looking giddily at the bottles like he’s not on a recon mission.

Yoongi’s never liked wine discourse; he finds the talk all a bit too pretentious, and he doesn’t even like wine that much in the first place. He’s a soju guy through and through, and he knows Seokjin is aware of that, that’s why the other doesn’t talk all throughout his search, just mumbles words under his breath as he reads the wine labels and sniffs corks here and there.

Yoongi suddenly becomes aware of how Namjoon carefully planned this heist; Seokjin is truly the only conman they know who has a vast knowledge of art and wine, the two things that can get Choi Seunghyun talking. He’s the only distraction they know who can pull an entire night’s worth of conversation about art and alcohol and look absolutely hot doing it.

Yoongi suddenly wonders how they even got together before in the first place, when he’s not as interested about the things Seokjin is passionate about, thinks about how they even lasted four years.

“Aha,” Seokjin smiles and looks down at Yoongi from the top of the step ladder. He pulls out a bottle and walks down the steps. He goes to the small bar at the north end of the room, takes a glass, and fills the glass with a bit of the wine and beckons Yoongi over. The other walks up to him and holds the glass while Seokjin switches the bottle with another one from the other side of the cellar.

“And what exactly is supposed to happen here?” Yoongi asks, holding the stem of the wine glass rather cautiously. Seokjin puts the wrong bottle back on the shelf and hops to Yoongi. “Choi Seunghyun is going to look for this bottle but the servers won’t be able to. I enter with my amazing wine skills and he falls in love with me,” he says smugly as he takes the glass from Yoongi.

Yoongi scoffs and rolls his eyes. “Right, because he’s going to look for that specific bottle,” he tells him. The younger gets a little stunned when Seokjin’s expression abruptly turns hostile. “Yoongi,” he says his name with an impossibly low voice.

“What?”

“Do you think I know what I’m doing?” he asks, voice borderline frightening, brown eyes piercing at him. Yoongi tries to avoid his eyes and looks at his lips instead but he realizes they’re still a bit swollen from their fake kiss minutes before so he resorts to looking back up at Seokjin’s eyes.

“I – I do, hyung,” Yoongi stammers.

“Do you think I’d risk the mission, or anyone, for that matter?”

“I – I don’t.”

And Seokjin’s alarming glare turns into a huge, childish smile and Yoongi just groans at how he was played. The other smiles smugly into his wine. “And may I ask why you need to drink that wine?” Yoongi asks. Seokjin smacks his lips and Yoongi has to bite the inside of his cheek. “I’m calling it an advanced celebration. Taste?” he hands the glass over to him. Yoongi shakes his head.
“Your loss.” He hums happily as he drinks the wine and looks around the cellar. Yoongi can only watch him, and after a few seconds Seokjin turns around. “Hey Yoongi.”

“Yeah?”

Seokjin puts a finger over his own lips and tries to stop himself from laughing and Yoongi just knows what’s coming next. “Don’t, Jin hyung.”

“Let me say it first! It’s funny, alright. Okay, okay: what did the grape say when it was crushed?”

Yoongi sighs at the sight of Seokjin giggling. The other wheezes as he puts a hand on Yoongi’s shoulder for support. “Come on, Yoongi, ask me.”

It’s going to be fine, Yoongi tells himself. He lets himself smile a little. Just a little. “Fine, what did the damn grape say?”

“Nothing,” Seokjin tells him, eyes already teary from giggling. “It just let out a little wine.”

Yoongi swallows the very, very tiny laugh that about to bubble up from his chest. He almost fails. “Alright, we need to go,” he tells Seokjin and the other nods as he wipes the tears from his eyes.

“You’re such a killjoy. It was funny, okay. Let me finish this glass.”

Yoongi turns and takes two steps towards the exit when he sees the door knob move. He silently curses at himself. The both of them – him, mostly – should have heard the approaching sounds seconds ago. They could have left an entire minute before that. He swiftly turns to look back at Seokjin, looking as wide-eyed as he is, empty wine glass frozen in his right hand.

“Heads up.”

Yoongi can already hear Namjoon tutting at him, can already see him tilting his head and saying, "I told you so."

Yoongi ignores the thought as he closes the gap between him and Seokjin, catching him in an open mouthed kiss, just as he hears the door click open.

The sharp, minty tang of the whiskey is gone, replaced by the wine Seokjin just had seconds ago. It’s bittersweet and it tastes just like every other white wine Yoongi’s had. He wouldn’t even be able to distinguish the difference from a 5,000-won bottle at the grocery store. Maybe Seokjin knows why Choi Seunghyun would specifically crave for it. Maybe it’s something about the age or the country it’s grown or the way it was distilled. Yoongi doesn’t care. Suddenly it’s the best wine he’s ever had and he needs to have more of it.

Seokjin’s free hand clutches at the collar of his leather jacket. Yoongi steps forward and Seokjin stumbles back into the wall where the other wine glasses are hanging from small pegs. He hears the faint clinking of glass on wood. Yoongi’s left hand finds the small of Seokjin’s back and pulls him even closer, taking in a deep breath through his nose. Someone behind them clears their throat but Yoongi continues kissing Seokjin, his tongue dangerously on the verge of darting across his lips just to taste more of the wine, more of Seokjin. The older’s gentle, almost indiscernible groan doesn’t help.

“Um, sir-”

“Babe,” Seokjin moans into his mouth. Yoongi pulls away and settles for Seokjin’s neck, thick and full of his scent. He hears the person behind them say something again. Yoongi inhales, hands
tightening on Seokjin’s waist. He struggles to not get lost in the feeling but finds himself groaning and mouthing at his neck. Seokjin’s breath hitches and Yoongi grins onto his skin.

“Oh, sir, we uh-”

“Shit, babe, someone’s here. Babe.”

Yoongi only hums.

“Yoongichi,” Seokjin breathes out.

Yoongi tentatively pulls back at the mention of Seokjin’s old pet name for him. They never use their real names during missions, recons included.

“Oh, oops. Sorry about that. Babe, we – I think we got the wrong room?” Seokjin tells the flustered boy.

For a fraction of a second Yoongi doubts if what they’re doing at the moment is still playacting. He turns his neck to look at the young uniformed waiter, looking completely embarrassed for no reason. Seokjin laughs and Yoongi feels the rumbling in his chest, flushed against his. The laugh is too twinkly and overly-melodious and now Yoongi knows Seokjin is just acting. He must have just forgotten to not use Yoongi’s real name. It’s been years, in his defense.

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“Um, sir – I – sorry, I don’t think you’re supposed to be here.”

For a fraction of a second Yoongi doubts if what they’re doing at the moment is still playacting. He turns his neck to look at the young uniformed waiter, looking completely embarrassed for no reason. Seokjin laughs and Yoongi feels the rumbling in his chest, flushed against his. The laugh is too twinkly and overly-melodious and now Yoongi knows Seokjin is just acting. He must have just forgotten to not use Yoongi’s real name. It’s been years, in his defense.

Yoongi looks up at Seokjin and sees him completely red in the face. He looks at the kid and then around the room, like he’s only realizing that he’s in a wine cellar.

“Yeah, I don’t think this is our room. It doesn’t have a bed in it,” Yoongi says haughtily and Seokjin’s hand on his jacket tightens.

Yoongi, however, goes back to mouthing at Seokjin’s neck. He feels Seokjin’s hand playfully slapping his arm. “We need to go,” he tells him, almost laughing.

Yoongi takes one last gentle nip at Seokjin’s skin before pulling away, reveling at how Seokjin’s breath stopped when he did. He doesn’t know why he felt the need to do that. He puts one arm around Seokjin’s waist and the other puts his free hand around his shoulder.

As they walk out of the cellar, the older stumbles a bit and covers his lips with the empty wine glass in fake inebriation. “Oops, clumsy!” he giggles into the glass. Yoongi hates how good Seokjin is at this. If he didn’t know any better he would have believed Seokjin is actually really drunk, was really about to trip, was really kissing him back with equal fervor.

Yoongi reaches inside his jacket pocket and hands a wad of bills on the waiter’s free hand. Also fake. He almost feels sorry when he gives it to him. “For your troubles, kid. Sorry about that.”

The boy beams and bows at them. “Are you sure you don’t need assistance? I can-”

“We’ll manage,” Yoongi says as they step out into the corridor. Seokjin pauses and twists his torso to look back at the boy. “Bye!!!” he waves at him and Yoongi smiles at how shocked and amused the boy looks as he waves back almost hesitantly. “Let’s go,” Yoongi says and they walk down the hallway, not letting go of each other until they reach the elevator. Once the doors close Seokjin’s
hand falls and Yoongi clears his throat and steps away from him. Seokjin presses for the ground floor. Neither of them speaks on their way down. When the door opens they’re welcomed by the roaring music from the club. Yoongi gets out first while Seokjin places the empty wine glass on the tray of a waiter passing by.

“Jin hyung!”

They both turn to see Taehyung smiling at them across the room. He runs to them and he looks at Yoongi. “What are you doing here, Suga hyung? I thought Namjoon hyung said you couldn’t join tonight.”

Yoongi clears his throat. “I didn’t say that I wouldn’t. How’s recon?”

“I’ll have Choi Sooyoung wrapped around my fingers by tomorrow midnight,” he grins at them, feet tapping to the music. Yoongi scoffs. “She better be.”

“I told Jin hyung to contact me when he’s finished with his recon, but he hasn’t. How’s your recon, hyung? Wait, is it hot upstairs? Why do you guys look so flushed and flustered?” he asks as he sways to the beat of the music.

“We just finished. Recon, I mean. You’re staying?” Seokjin asks and ignores his other questions. Taehyung looks at them curiously but nods in reply. “I might as well. You’re not?”

“Yeah I think I’m done for the night,” Seokjin huffs and Yoongi nods. “Me too.”

“Alright, bye hyungs!” Taehyung smiles at them as he walks backwards to the dance floor, throwing them finger guns. “Don’t get too drunk, you cocky son of a-” Yoongi starts but Taehyung already disappeared in the crowd. It’s just the two of them again and Yoongi walks out of the bar, Seokjin tailing close behind. He suddenly turns around and Seokjin almost stumbles back in surprise.

“We-we’re good right?” Yoongi asks.

Seokjin takes a second before nodding. “What? Oh yeah, yeah we’re good. No problems tomorrow, if all goes according to plan. That was a close one to be honest, good job for thinking fast.”

“It was. Um, you too.” Yoongi nods and offers Seokjin a ride back to his apartment but the other politely refuses. Yoongi almost sighs in relief, because he isn’t exactly sure what would happen if he has to spend more time alone with Seokjin.

He watches Seokjin get into a cab before walking back to his car. Once he gets inside he takes deep breaths and tries to focus into getting out of the parking lot. Memories of the drive back to his house is a blank; Yoongi isn’t actually sure how he got home safe because all he can think of at the moment is Seokjin - him and his breathy words on Yoongi’s mouth and his graceful hands hovering on wine bottles and his dumb wine puns and his tight clutch on Yoongi’s jacket collar and his too beautiful smile and his skin emanating warmth and the way he said his name and finally, the horrible awareness that Yoongi is longing to hear it again somehow.

Once Yoongi’s parked inside his garage he slams his head face first on the steering wheel.

“Three more weeks, three more weeks, three more weeks,” he murmurs.

Yoongi chants those words over and over again whenever he’s on the verge of telling Seokjin that he knows, whenever the questions lingering on his tongue attempt to come out. It calms him down; it justifies his silence despite Namjoon’s or even Hoseok’s consistent nagging. But the opposite happens when he does it this time: Yoongi realizes with an increasing level of horror that he just has
three weeks left with Seokjin, before he disappears again, most likely permanently.

“Shit,” he hisses into the steering wheel.

Chapter End Notes

lmao yeah my self-indulgent shipper self inserted three kisses, because I can. haha and I resolved that jihope quickly because unlike /that/ other couple they actually know how to communicate lmao. anyway, as the chapter title suggests and as yoongi would oh so unwillingly remind us, we only have three weeks left before the heist. that means we're also actually more than halfway through the fic, so i guess what i'm trying to say is really, thank you for reading this far and being patient with me. thanks and feel free to comment or @ me anytime on twitter!
Gentlemen Prefer Blondes

Chapter Summary

Hi! Well, this is a filler chapter, so more action that I actually expected and less angst than the previous chapters? I hope you guys find it satisfying tho lol T_T

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Something totally happened."

Seokjin sighs as he ties the ribbon on his robe. "Nothing happened, Hoseok."

"Yeah, you can't lie to me, hyung. You're a great actor, but you can't lie to me. I've known you since I was four years old. Four! Our bond is stronger than Namjoon and Yoongi hyung's and that's not just because we're blood relatives."

Seokjin laughs as he rubs the towel in his wet hair. "I didn't know it was a competition," he tells the younger. His nose scrunches at the scent of chemical in his hair.

"It's not because we won already. By like, a mile and a half," Hoseok tells him from the couch in the living room.

"I see. And how was your talk with Jimin the other night?"

"Hah, you're changing topics! See, I know. I want to know what happened to you last night! Something definitely happened, I know it."

Seokjin plugs in the hair blower and Hoseok's words fade in the background as he turns the machine on. He stares at the mirror and remembers last night.

He made a mistake. He shouldn't have kissed Yoongi that first time. He shouldn't have initiated the second one. He shouldn't have let himself slip on the third. He hopes Yoongi will just ignore what he said, if he heard him.

*Add it to the list of things you regret, Kim Seokjin,* he tells himself.

Seokjin sighs and tilts his head to the right to dry the other side. He pauses as he runs his fingers down his neck. He can almost feel Yoongi's breath on his skin, his low groans and mumbled words. The blush is creeping up his neck already just thinking about it.

"… then Taehyung told me you both looked awkward and flustered when he saw you, and…"

Seokjin shakes his head and resumes drying his hair. He has work to do tonight, he has no time to assume, to think about anything, to hope. This is work. Him being distracted by trivial things such as hope will only stop him from doing his job. "*No pressure, hyung,*" Namjoon had told him, "*but half of this job's success is resting on your shoulders. I mean they're wide enough, but you know. No pressure.*"
So Seokjin should focus on work, because that's what he's here for. He finally turns off the blower when he feels satisfied about the state of his hair.

"… now you're dancing around and not telling me anything. Pft, you really think I wouldn't see that?"

Seokjin walks out of the bathroom, towel resting on his shoulders. He walks up to Hoseok and pushes his hair back.

"What do you think?" he asks his cousin. Hoseok's jaw drops. He doesn't look away as he scrambles to get his phone and takes a picture. Seokjin winks and does a pose.

"Handsome enough for Choi Seunghyun?" he asks. Hoseok doesn't answer him, too busy typing on his phone.

Seokjin turns his attention to the television, where he sees Kwon Jiyong again, this time showing off his jewelry collection in some lifestyle show. "Why is this guy everywhere?" Seokjin groans and turns off the TV. He turns back to Hoseok, eyes round with glee.

"What are you doing?" he asks his cousin.

"Yoongi hyung's going to die, "Hoseok cackles as he looks up at Seokjin. "I can't wait!"

*****

Yoongi crosses his arms when he finishes telling Namjoon what had happened last night. He wouldn't have, but he had no one to talk to, he felt like his chest was going to implode if he didn't tell anyone. He wouldn't have said anything, but it almost drove him crazy last night.

He tried sleeping on his bed, on the living room couch, on the headquarters couch, but sleep refused to visit him. At one point he thought that maybe sleeping beside Holly's bed would make him feel better. It was getting worse and worse. He got close to barging in Jeongguk's room, but the kid sleeps like a log and he will end up getting thrown off the window if he dares wake him up.

Yoongi clears his throat.

"So. Yeah. That happened," he concludes as he pokes on the cake they ordered. Namjoon doesn't say anything; he just sips his iced coffee, a bit too cockily for Yoongi's taste. Finally the younger puts his drink down on the table in front of them and crosses his legs rather smugly.

"What do you want me to say, hyung?" he asks as he picks imaginary lint off his jeans.

Yoongi stops poking the cake and looks up at Namjoon. "At this point, anything."

"You already know what I'm going to say." Namjoon takes his fork and starts poking the cake too. "Fucking. Talk. To. Seokjin. Hyung." Each word matches each stab, and in the last syllable he shovels a mouthful of the pastry in his mouth.

"Don't let all those feelings burst out during the worst time, like during the heist itself."

The heist. Yoongi's suddenly reminded of his and Seokjin's deal. "What will even happen if I confront him about it?" Yoongi asks out loud.

Namjoon frowns at him. "That depends on what you tell him."

Yoongi looks up.
The smugness from Namjoon's face fades, replaced by a placating look that he only uses in the moments they genuinely need each other's advice and comfort. "After you say you know the truth, are you going to ask him to stay?" Namjoon asks him. "Do you want him to?"

Yoongi blinks. He hasn't even thought of that. Never imagined what he would tell Seokjin, because he never planned on doing it in the first place. It was all clear between them. Yoongi shakes his head looks down at his free hand. He doesn't answer Namjoon's question.

"You know what, I'll deal with it after tonight. Maybe the next day. We just have to make sure all goes well tonight."

Namjoon tilts his head. "Your choice. But you don't have a lot of time left."

"There's three weeks left, Namjoon."

"You think that's a long time but you blink and we're already at Seunghyun's final farewell party and Seokjin hyung's walking out the door," the younger says casually. Yoongi hisses at him, the thought sending a block of ice down to the pit of his stomach. "Why do you like saying cynical shit like that?"

"I like keeping things exciting for you," Namjoon smirks. "Just promise me, hyung."

"What?"

"Don't do it in the middle of a job."

Yoongi's about to scoff and complain how Namjoon completely underestimates his self-control when they hear a phone ring. The younger smiles at his phone. "Speaking of exciting things," he murmurs into his straw. Yoongi raises an eyebrow.

"I can't wait for the party tonight. Seokjin hyung's look is gonna be a killer."

"****

"I know my cousin is hot, so promise me even if you find him to be the most beautiful person in this room, you won't make a move on him."

Jimin laughs amusedly at Hoseok. "What are you even saying, hyung?"

"You saw the picture I sent you guys, right?"

Jimin nods. "He looks good!" he tells Hoseok, who frowns disapprovingly. "'Looks good?' Jimin, that's how you describe food. My cousin looks like a frickin' masterpiece. His face deserves to be in the Louvre. This handsomeness runs in our family."

"Are you telling me not to hit on him or are you pimping him out to me?" Jimin leans forward across the counter of the headquarters and looks Hoseok in the eye.

"I'm just saying," Hoseok says, voice lowering down to a whisper, jutting out his lower lip in a cute pout.

"Ah well, I prefer orange hair, so," he tells him, and Hoseok fails to hold back the squeal that escapes from his throat. "Shit, Jimin, stop saying things like that," he mutters as he hides his face on the counter. Jimin laughs and tousles Hoseok's bright orange locks, soft and straight under his touch.

"Yeah, Jimin hyung, stop saying shit like that!" Jeongguk grimaces at them as he carries several
small boxes to the dining table. Jimin makes a face at him. They hear the garage door open and they all turn to see Seokjin walk down the stairs. Jeongguk whistles and Hoseok leans over the counter to smack the back of his head. "Don't let Yoongi hyung catch you doing that," he tells him, "or you'll find yourself homeless all of a sudden."

Jeongguk frowns as he massages the back of his head. "I'm representing Yoongi hyung in this situation, since he and his emotionally constipated ass won't be able to produce a proper reaction."

Seokjin laughs as he approaches them. "Hey guys."

"Looking good, hyung," Jimin tells him. The older smiles. "Ah, thanks Jimin-ah. You seem to be in a good mood yourself?" he asks as his eyes dart down on the counter, where the tips of Jimin's and Hoseok's fingers are touching, almost but not quite intertwined. Hoseok abruptly pulls his hand in embarrassment. "Hyung!" he whines, and Seokjin pats them both in their backs.

"Ah, young love. Cherish that. Communicate. Take it one day at a time."

Hoseok frowns and puts his hands on his waist. "Speak for yourself, Seokjin hyung." Jimin bites his lower lip and nudges Hoseok, who ignores him and continues to pout at his cousin. But Seokjin only laughs and turns to Jeongguk, who has been keeping a permanent scowl on his face the entire time.

"Guk, you told me you have something for me?" Seokjin asks.

"Yeah, yeah I do," Jeongguk glowers at Jimin as he takes one of the boxes and brings it to the counter. "You can't have your targets nuzzling at your faces or whatever without seeing the regular in-ears so I got you and Taehyung hyung these."

Jimin raises his eyebrows. "Ooh, are those what I think they are?" Both he and Hoseok crowd around Seokjin as the latter opens the box. Jeongguk nods as he takes out the plain silver dangling earring. "Noticed you only have one piercing though, so we made just the one."


"It's just a tracker," Jeongguk explains as Seokjin puts it on. "We can't hear each other but we'll be able get to you if ever you get into trouble."

"I'll be beside you anyway, hyung. Just stay by the bar so Yoongi hyung and I can keep an eye on you," Jimin tells Seokjin.

"Thanks for these. I think I'll be fine though, hopefully everything will work out later tonight," Seokjin says as he checks his reflection of Jeongguk's computer screen. "Will that be all? I have somewhere else to be," he asks as he turns around.

Jimin turns and leans back on the counter. "Wait, where are you going? We have briefing later, don't we?" he asks him.

"I told Namjoon I'll head straight to the bar. Choi Seunghyun should be doing his rounds at The House of TOP this afternoon. Guy's pretty hands on when it comes to his gallery, so I've been going there whenever he is."

"So you've met him already?" Jeongguk asks. Seokjin shakes his head. "No, just making my presence known." He smiles smugly and winks at them.

"Well if he doesn't notice you in that state I regret to inform you but our dear Mr. Choi Seunghyun
might actually be blind after all," Hoseok says. Seokjin laughs before bidding goodbye. The moment they hear the door close Jimin says, "Yoongi hyung's a goner, isn't he?"


Jimin shakes his head and laughs. They didn't think their leader’s lingering looks at Seokjin the past two weeks could get worse.

"Even if he doesn't, I think I might have to move out. I can't take Yoongi hyung and his disgusting longing looks at Seokjin hyung anymore," Jeongguk informs them. "You know we were just watching TV the other day and Yoongi hyung was looking at him like if he blinks he's gonna disappear?"

Jimin pats him on the back. "I feel for you, Guk."

Jeongguk sighs and puts his hands on his hips. "Well, I'm gonna take Holly with me."

*****

The light and hollow music of bamboo organs flow from one room to the next. Seokjin's already been in the gallery for almost an hour, but he hasn't seen Choi yet. He decides to walk to the direction of the Mark Grotjahn collection, but he raises an eyebrow when he sees that the room has been temporarily closed off.

"Will the collection be removed?" he asks one of the passing staff. The girl, already familiar with his face, shakes her head. "No Sir, Mr. Choi is currently inside, he's only removing some of the works."

"I see. What for?" he asks. She shrugs and excuses herself. Seokjin proceeds to the next room, empty except a handful works of art hanging on the walls. He stands in front of a mural, where black streaks of paint looking like tendrils reach out to the very ends of the canvass.

"I can't wait for Mr. Choi to leave for Paris. At least we won't be micromanaged anymore," Seokjin hears from the hushed voices of museum staff passing by.

"Let's just pray he doesn't change his mind," the companion answers. Seokjin continues to look at the painting even when he feels someone walk up beside him.

"Interested in this piece, Sir?" The gallery manager asks. Seokjin smiles. "Very much," he tells her.

"It's not for sale."

Seokjin’s lips curl up in a smirk when he hears Choi Seunghyun's deep and intimidating voice from behind.

Choi Seunghyun is a man with intriguing taste and attention even harder to appeal to. Outright flirting will not work with him, Seokjin figures, and so on the several times that he and his target have crossed paths within the gallery, he's only given him a chance to notice him in stolen glances and curious stares from afar, in between art works and gallery doors.

Seokjin puts up an innocent smile before turning around to face him.

"I apologize. I didn't realize immediately it was your work," he tells him. Choi looks at him curiously, eyes piercing unto his.
"I should have known."

The room was unlabeled, but it didn't take Seokjin long to realize that most of the pieces inside were created by Seunghyun himself, a fact that the touring groups in the gallery aren't informed of. Before the manager can introduce Seokjin to Seunghyun, he puts a hand on her shoulder. "I'm afraid I have to go ahead, Ms. Lee. Maybe we can have a formal introduction next time." He bows to her and Seunghyun and walks away from them, hands folded behind his back.

"How did you know?" he hears Seunghyun ask.

Seokjin stops from his tracks but only turns his head slightly to the left, not facing him. "It's the energy," he tells Seunghyun. "Powerful, but a bit melancholic. Much like you."

When Seunghyun doesn't answer, Seokjin finally walks out of the room.

"I'll see you around, Mr. Choi."

*****

"Where's Suga hyung?!" Taehyung rushes down the stairs, almost tripping down the last step, looking around wildly for Yoongi.

“What’s going on?” Hoseok asks from the couch. “Hyung’s right there.” He points his thumbs to the dining table, where Yoongi looks up from the blueprint of Choi Seunghyun’s house. Jeongguk and Namjoon look at Taehyung confusedly.

“Yoongi hyung!” Taehyung finally sees him and pants as he runs up to him. He still looks fine, he still looks like he hasn’t seen a ghost. He can’t miss this for the world.

“What’s going on with you?” Yoongi asks.

“You haven’t told him?!” he looks at the others. Jimin tilts his head and studies Taehyung’s face for several seconds before laughing so hard that he has to drape his torso on the backrest of the couch. Jeongguk and Hoseok bite their lips and turn away to hide smiles. Namjoon shakes his head.

“You're being ridiculous, Taehyung.”

“You heartless bastards,” he hisses at them, hiding the grin at the corner of his mouth. “How can you do this to our hyung? To our beloved leader?”

“Okay, what the hell is wrong with you?” Yoongi finally speaks, eyebrows raised at him. Taehyung turns to him. “I need to warn you, hyung.”

Jimin is still laughing and Hoseok rubs his back. Taehyung narrows his eyes at them and wants to say something but he’ll get to those two later. He looks back at Yoongi and holds him by the shoulders.

“If this turns out to be one of your dumb pranks again I don’t.”

“He’s blonde, hyung.”

Yoongi stops. “What?”

“He’s blonde!” Taehyung exclaims almost excitedly, waiting for Yoongi's reaction. “Who?”

“Seokjin hyung!” He stomps a foot on the floor like a five year old on a tantrum. Yoongi tilts his head and studies Taehyung’s face. There is a slight glimmer of realization in the older's eyes, but is
quickly replaced by a look of annoyance.

“So? You’ve had purple hair before. You have this tomato red hair right now that frankly hurts my eyes,” Yoongi drawls. Taehyung clicks his tongue. “What? I’m not talking about odd hair colors. Okay, I already know he’s hot, right – don’t give me that look, hyung, we all know he’s hot.” Taehyung tells Yoongi and he looks around at the others for backup, but they all avoid his eyes and suddenly find something else to do. *Traitors, all of them.*

“But this is different okay hyung, it’s like he leveled up when we didn’t think he could level up even more,” Taehyung continues. Yoongi rolls his eyes. “I don’t know how you want me to react.”

Taehyung frowns and drops his hands from Yoongi’s shoulders. “Fine. Don’t say I didn’t warn you. But if your jaw breaks when it drops on the floor that’s not going to be my fault.”

“I’m grateful for your concern, Taehyung,” Yoongi tells him rather lazily as he returns to look at the blueprints.

“I’m just sayiiing,” he tells him in a sing-song voice. Yoongi groans and calls their attention. “As Taehyung seems to be done with his… whatever he just did, I think it’s time we go.”

The others nod and start preparing. Taehyung pouts at them and Hoseok comes up to him. “Aish, Taehyung-ah. Way to ruin the surprise!”

“But I wanted to see his reaction!” The younger pouts.

“You think we don’t want to see that going down? I’m sticking with Yoongi hyung until he sees Seokjin hyung! I’m bringing one of Jeongguk’s cameras with me so I can capture the moment clearly!” Jimin tells him.

“Ya, hyung, you better get a good angle,” Jeongguk tells Jimin, “I want to make hyung’s birthday video for next year extra special. Open mouth, wide eyes, preferably with his jaw on the floor. The works. I’m never going to let him live this down.” He hands Taehyung his tracker, a pair of black helix earrings.

Jimin laughs and gives him a thumbs-up.

"As much as I enjoy seeing you guys happy I do have to remind you that we're going to work tonight," Namjoon tells them. They all turn to him.

"What?"

"What did you do, hyung?" Taehyung asks suspiciously, narrowing his eyes as he puts on his tracker. Namjoon takes a second before answering. "Might have suggested Seokjin hyung to wear those jeans, if he still has it."

Hoseok gasps. "You didn't."

Taehyung turns to him. "What jeans?"

*****

Yoongi’s going to kill his entire crew.

All of them, one by one, in this very bar. They planned this. They just did, there is literally no other explanation for their smirks and jokes earlier. He's going to kill Namjoon first, for bringing Seokjin
back in the first place. Next is Hoseok. He's probably the one who suggested his cousin dye his hair blonde for this mission. He's also most likely the one who informed the others about this, except for him. After that is Jimin, because he might as well, since he's already going to kill Hoseok. Then Taehyung, who warned him, but didn't warn him enough. Lastly, he's going to kill Jeongguk for giving Seokjin that earring. He's going to steal the painting all Choi Seunghyun's himself and spend the seven billion won to hide in the mountains somewhere.

Namjoon and Hoseok are assigned at the second floor of the bar to help Taehyung target Choi Sooyoung. Jimin is at the rooftop bar with Yoongi, while Jeongguk is at the headquarters overlooking the entire mission, in charge of keeping track of Taehyung’s and Seokjin’s safety.

“Jin hyung’s on his way up,” Jeongguk announced, and Yoongi turns just in time to see Seokjin step out of the elevator.

Yoongi is pretty sure he’s not the only one staring at Seokjin at the moment, with his blonde hair and pink silk shirt and those ridiculous ripped jeans that show more skin than it should. Yoongi stops breathing involuntarily when his eyes shoot down Seokjin’s legs. How he somehow managed to keep those jeans all these years, Yoongi has no idea. It’s like the hole has gotten even bigger, and the glowing multi-colored lights of the bar hit the pale skin of his thighs playfully and it’s making Yoongi dizzy.

Yoongi isn’t even sure if his hair is real. He vaguely remembers Seokjin telling him before that he's scared he might damage his hair if he bleaches it. But here he is. Very blonde and very much here. Every time Yoongi blinks Seokjin somehow becomes more attractive. Taehyung was right. It’s like he leveled up when we didn’t think he could level up even more.

Someone whistles in the comms. Yoongi makes a mental note to figure out who that is so he can strangle them. He catches Seokjin’s eye and the other walks up to him. He barely hears Jimin giggling beside him. Why is Jimin even beside him now? Yoongi wants to say something but he’s rendered immobile by the overwhelming everything in front of him.

“Hey,” Seokjin says, voice somehow angelic and seductive at the same time. Yoongi exhales loudly without him realizing. Jimin laughs at him. “Hi hyung! You’re here, so uh, I’m gonna go back to my position, okay? Good luck!” he waves at Seokjin and disappears into the crowd.

Seokjin turns his attention to him. "Hey, Yoongi."

Yoongi doesn't know if the music has stopped, the beats turning into dull thumps in his ears. He can't hear anything else but Seokjin, can't see anything else but him. "You okay?” Seokjin asks. Yoongi blinks and clears his throat. “You’re late,” he finally musters to say. Good job, Min Yoongi. “Seriously, hyung?” Hoseok asks over the comm. Seokjin pushes his very blonde hair back in front of him and giggles. Yoongi finds himself leaning to the pillar beside him for support. The nerve of him.

“Ah, well, Choi Seunghyun left his gallery late. I actually thought he wasn’t even going to go here in the first place,” Seokjin smiles and apologizes. Yoongi looks at the south end of the floor. “Whatever. Jimin will be by the bar, stay there until your target arrives.”

“Hm,” Seokjin nods, looking at him from head to toe, assessing him.

“What?” Yoongi frowns.

“You look good,” is all Seokjin tells him. Yoongi feels self-conscious all of a sudden, folding up his blue printed shirt up to his elbows and pulling his cap down. “I just threw this on,” Yoongi mutters.
and rubs the back of his neck.

“God, hyung, pull yourself together,” Namjoon tells him while Jeongguk laughs. He hisses at them. “Shut up Jeongguk.”

“Oh right!” Seokjin puts his hands in his pockets and suddenly leans forward, and for a moment Yoongi freezes, heart stopping in his chest. Seokjin misses his lips and goes for the side of his head instead. “Hey guys, I miss you already!” he speaks into Yoongi’s in-ear.

“Aw, tell Jin hyung we said hi!” Hoseok says. Yoongi doesn’t, primarily because he’s still frozen from where he’s standing when Seokjin pulls back, only to suddenly duck down and move in closer again to Yoongi’s space.

Yoongi swears this is how he’s going to die.

“Is that gray hair?!?” Seokjin exclaims as he tries to peek under Yoongi’s cap.

“It’s just wax color,” Yoongi mutters. Seokjin giggles as he stands up straight. “It fits you well. Now I know how you’ll look like twenty years from now, old man.”

Yoongi scoffs and tells Seokjin to get to his position. “I’ll see you later,” Seokjin tells him cheerfully. Yoongi reckons he's probably already forgotten about last night. As we both should. He turns his back and murmurs, “Yeah, get to work.” In his peripheral vision he watches Seokjin hop towards the crowd, a drink already in his hand.

Suddenly Yoongi imagines, just for a brief moment, how Seokjin will look like thirty years from now. Probably still handsome as hell. He wonders if he’ll be there to see it.

*****

Taehyung smiles as he enters The Rooftop, playing with the platinum card between his middle and forefinger. He winks at everyone as hecuts the line, showing security his card. The guard lets him in and he only laughs at the groans and complaints of everyone back outside.

Once he gets in, however, the smile slowly fades. He instinctively puts a finger on his ear, only to find that his usual in-ear isn’t there. He takes a deep breath and takes in the immense crowd in the first floor of the club. It wasn’t like this yesterday; he’s going to have a hard time looking for Choi Sooyoung at this point. There isn’t any free space by the bar, everyone’s shouting to catch the bartender’s attention. Hopefully the rooftop will have less people. Taehyung settles to hang out by the porch on the upper floor, overlooking the entire hall.

“Something on your mind?”

Taehyung turns and his eyes widen when he sees Namjoon beside him, wearing a ridiculous looking red printed shirt that Jimin and Hoseok laughed at. Taehyung thinks it’s cute and avant garde.

“What are you doing here, hyung?”

“You’re nervous,” Namjoon tells him simply. Taehyung gapes at him. “What, no I’m not,” he says, the lie dry in his tongue.

Namjoon shakes his head. “Ah, what to do with you, Taehyungie. You didn’t even notice me walking up behind you and you were doing that little ‘he, he’ sound that you only do when you’re nervous. What’s up?”
Taehyung looks away shyly, a bit glad that the part of the club where they are is a bit dark. “Ah, well, I’m a bit worried, Namjoon hyung,” he finally admits. “About what?” Namjoon asks as he turns to observe the crowd.

“About my in-ear,” the younger finally says. He looks at Namjoon who twists to snatch a glass of champagne from a tray passing by. “About your in-ear? Worried it won’t match your very cool-looking cowboy jacket?”

Taehyung pouts. “No, I’m worried because I realized I won’t hear your voice,” he admits and refuses to look at Namjoon. “I think it’s the first time I won’t be, and a lot is at stake here. What if I say something wrong to Choi Sooyoung? You won’t be able to help me.”

Taehyung doesn’t hear any reply so after a few seconds he finally turns to look at the older. He finds Namjoon smiling at him gently, his small smile a huge contrast to the flashing lights and thumping sounds of the club.

“Don’t worry, I’ll take care of you.”

“What?”

He represses the boxy smile and the shy giggle attempting to come out of his lips. Namjoon tilts his head. “You can do it, Taehyung. And you don’t need to worry, even if you can’t hear me I’ll always be looking out for you.”

Taehyung ducks his head and absentmindedly plays with his hair. “You really don’t have to do that.”

Namjoon shrugs noncommittally. “It’s my job.”

Taehyung sighs. Of course it’s just Namjoon’s job.

“I like taking care of you,” the older suddenly adds.

Taehyung bites his lips and uses all of his will power to restrain himself from kissing Namjoon right then and there. Why does he have to be this cute? he asks himself. “Aish, hyung!” he manages to tell him in the end. Namjoon laughs at him. “Feeling better?” he asks.

Before Taehyung can nod Namjoon suddenly looks past him and reaches for his nape. For a solid second Taehyung thinks that Namjoon was actually going to lean forward and kiss him and he braces himself for it, but he only ends up staring in disbelief when the other removes the tinted sunglasses he has placed at the back of his head.

“Ah, this is really cool! Where’d you get this?” Namjoon asks with a little “o” with his lips. Taehyung frowns and snatches it from his hands, a bit disappointed. “I bought it at a thrift store. Give it to me hyung, you broke the last pair I had,” he pouts at him.

Namjoon chuckles at him. “Wow. You don’t even remember how I replaced it? Now I think you’re feeling so much better. I’m glad.”

Taehyung smiles at him. “Thanks, hyung.”

Namjoon winks at him and pushes himself off the railing to leave. “No problem.” He leans in and whispers, “Target at eleven o’clock. Good luck, V-ssi.”

Taehyung turns to the direction Namjoon just told him and sees Choi Sooyoung talking to a bunch of
girls by the DJ’s booth. He grins and puts on the glasses.

“On it.”

*****

Yoongi is able to find higher ground where he can watch over both Jimin and Seokjin comfortably. Seokjin, mostly, but he will never admit it. He swirls the whiskey in his glass and asks Namjoon about the status of their assignments from time to time. “Hyung, it’s been ten minutes since you last asked. Calm down,” Namjoon finally tells him. Yoongi scoffs but doesn’t answer. "Are you in a rush? Worried someone you don't like will appear?"

"Like who?" Jeongguk asks.

"Like Lee Jaehwan," Hoseok answers for Yoongi. Before Yoongi can answer he hears someone call his name. "Suga-ssi?"

He turns and sees a familiar face approaching. "Ah, Minzy, hey. Long time.” They nod at each other and the girl stands beside him. "Long time, because your crew hasn't given me work in so long,” she complains to him. "It's been, what, a year and a half?"

"Well, you've got a job right now?" he asks. Minzy nods and takes a sip of her drink. "Yep. I don't frequent here though. You can’t do that every day with these people. How about you?" She asks, swaying to beat of the light music. Jeongguk gasps over the comm. "Oh, is that Minzy noona? Tell her I said hi!"

“JK says hi,” Yoongi tells her, taking a swig of the whiskey.

"Hah, you're still the same,” she laughs. “Way to change the topic. Anyway, tell JK I miss his bunny smile.”

“Tell him that yourself.”

“Tell her I heard her, Suga hyung!” Jeongguk says. Tell her that yourself, Yoongi thinks. Minzy’s one of the distractions they hire from time to time and Jeongguk has always had a little bit of a crush on her. “Heard you're working on something big,” she finally tells him. Yoongi shrugs and leans on the railings. "None of your business, Minzy."

"Aish, I wasn't trying to fish anything from y- oh, is that Jin oppa?!" she gasps and points to where Seokjin is standing and talking to several people twenty feet away.

"Is it?" Yoongi asks nonchalantly.

"Please, I've made out with him more than a couple of times for missions. Remember the Gwacheon heist? I will recognize those lips from a mile away! It is him!” she gushes and slaps Yoongi’s arm. Her shoulders sag and she sighs. "Guy's hot but unfortunately he's not the greatest kisser."

Yoongi coughs into his drink and Minzy slaps him rather sharply on the back this time. "I fucking knew it. You guys are - or were - an item, weren't you!? Bom and I were betting on it, damn it, I would’ve won that bet if that girl didn’t go into hiding in Hawaii."

Yoongi clears his throat and shakes his head. "No, we're not," he lies. "And don't disturb him, he's working."

"So you are onto something. Huh, I can't believe it, he's back in your crew now?"
No. He's not. Only temporarily. It's what we agreed on.

"More or less." Yoongi finishes the drink in his hand. Minzy shrugs and doesn’t push the topic any further. "Last time we saw each other he said he was retired."

Yoongi pauses and turns to look at her. "When did you last see him?"

Minzy puts her glass down, only to take another drink from a tray passing by. "What, like a year ago?" She plays with the drink in her mouth before continuing. "Told him his beautiful face doesn’t deserve to be hidden within that old Daegu town."

Yoongi thinks he’s only misheard. He blinks and tries to process whatever he just heard. "Daegu?" he asks, trying to keep his voice level and uninterested. Minzy smiles at him as she nods. "Yeah! Told me not to tell anyone if someone ever looked for him. You didn’t know?"


The last place he’d even think of.

Minzy seems to not notice the blood draining from his face as she continues, "And look at him now, obviously he listened to me. He looks good in blonde hair." She turns and sees someone behind them. "Oh my target's here. I'll see you around, Suga-ssi," she puts her glass on an empty table and leaves. Yoongi nods weakly at her. No one in the comm speaks for several seconds.

"Did you know?" Yoongi finally asks. He waits for someone, anyone, to answer.

"Of course not, hyung," Namjoon finally says.

"We only found out the day JK looked for him," Hoseok supplies.

"Are you okay, hyung?" Jimin asks.

"Wait what’s going on?" Jeongguk asks. No one answers.

"Prepare a glass of whiskey for me, Jimin. I want it ready by the time I get there." Yoongi almost slams the glass on the table and walks towards the bar.

Before he found out the real reason why Seokjin left, Yoongi thought he could live the rest of his life in relative peace, content with the fact that the questions sitting at the back of his throat will never be answered. But since the night of Jeongguk's birthday, and each day after that, he's finding it harder and harder to ignore them. The number of questions he has for Seokjin continues to grow, along with his desire to hear answers straight from him.

*****

Taehyung even wonders why Choi Seunghyun would let her sister into his gallery, when this is the way she talks; they haven't even been drinking for two hours and he feels like he knows all about Seunghyun already.

Sooyoung finishes her phone call and goes back to plop down beside Taehyung on the couch. "Where was I?" she asks. Before Taehyung can answer she continues, "Right, so I tell my brother, right - why this sudden move? Your entire life is here. Then he tells me he's moving his entire life there in Paris. You'd think he'd be talking about his family, right?"
"Of course," Tahyung answers.

"But nooo, he's talking about his chairs and his ten thousand paintings. Gonna spend millions for movers and everything!" Sooyoung briefly shouts at her friends to keep their voices low and turns back to Taehyung. "Chairs?" he asks. Choi Sooyoung nods as he gets them another drink. "Loves 'em. I love him and he's my brother and everything but it's not like you can sit in all of those at the same time, am I right?" She laughs and spills a little of the pina colada on herself.

Taehyung laughs and brings out a handkerchief from his chest pocket. “You might need this, Ms. Choi,” he smiles coyly and hands it to her. Sooyoung looks at him in awe. "It's like you knew I'm clumsy with my drinks!” she squeals to him.

Taehyung does.

Sooyoung takes the handkerchief and very suggestively dabs it on her chest. Taehyung doesn’t break eye contact, smiling down at her innocently. “Where were we?” she asks, still drying her dress.

"Still about chairs, I think? Maybe we should talk more about you, Ms. Choi," Taehyung asks. Seunghyun’s sister shakes her head. “Right, the chairs. God I don’t get to talk about this, you have to forgive me. It’s just that – okay my brother is rich, but he’s costing himself millions just to move all his belongings!” she pouts and leans on the backrest of the couch, her head landing on Taehyung’s arm.

“Millions?” Taehyung asks as he reaches for his drink.

"Because of the damn paintings! He even has special security who will move it on the night of his last farewell party!" she tells him impatiently. “It’s like you’re not listening to me, Rex-ssi.” She pouts and murmurs into her drink. Taehyung laughs shyly and apologizes.

How wrong you are, Ms. Choi Sooyoung.

"You know, I love art too, a huge fan of Van Gogh myself actually. I'd understand if he wants to keep his collection safe."

Sooyoung giggles and pats him on the chest, and her hand stays there. "Oh, no, no don't get me wrong. God, that sounded mean, didn't it. What I meant was there's this one. Has the sentimental value of all his paintings combined when it shouldn't anymore. He's still keeping it."

Bingo.

Taehyung smiles inwardly. He has to keep her talking about it while she still can, because she’s already halfway through her fourth drink and her words are starting to get a little slurry. “Not anymore?” he asks, looking at couple of Sooyoung’s other friends are busy drinking jello shots and dancing. The girl nods and reaches for Taehyung’s glasses.

"That dumb Kwon Jiyong, he always finds a way to get to my brother’s nerves!” she hisses as she puts them on and poses for Taehyung. “And my brother! So fickle. So kind and endearing but so, so fragile. So sentimental."

Taehyung laughs at Sooyoung. “Has to be some kind of painting then.”

“What do you mean some kind of painting? It’s not even that pretty.” She frowns at him and hiccups. She reaches over him and grabs her phone on the table. “Look, look at this. Oppa told me never to take pictures in his gallery, but I did. Hah.” She sniffs as she swipes through her phone gallery looking for a certain photo. “Look at this,” she shows a selca to Taehyung. His hearts skips when he
sees the painting in the background. Kwon Jiyong was right, one look at this painting and you’ll know it’s the other half of the painting he owns.

“You’re really very pretty, Ms. Choi,” Taehyung says instead.

Sooyoung giggles and slaps his chest. “Stop it! Call me noona okay. And I’m not talking about my face, I’m talking about what’s behind it.” She zooms in behind her and shows Taehyung a painting.

“This. This is the painting that my dumb Seunghyun oppa cares so much for. You see? It’s a bit blurry, but wow, it doesn’t look like it’s worth much.”

*I beg to disagree*, Taehyung thinks and grins victoriously.

It looks like it's worth seven billion won.

*****

The thing with Lee Jaehwan, Yoongi thinks, is that he has nothing in common with him. He's the rich city boy who's been given everything he wants and is satisfied with everything that he has. He's a bit like Jimin, who had his life originally planned out for him, but their difference is Lee Jaehwan was fine with that, fine with inheriting the family businesses and fine with his life paved before him.

Jiimin is posing as one of the bartenders at the party while Seokjin is sitting on one of the bar stool. "Here he comes," Jeongguk announces. Yoongi looks up from his drink but doesn't look at where Seokjin is. "Who? Choi Seunghyun?"

"What? No."

“It’s Lee Jaehwan,” Jimin whispers into his comm. He walks nearer to the two sitting by the bar so everyone can hear. Yoongi frowns into his drink, finding the alcohol suddenly too bitter for his liking.

"Finally found you," Lee Jaehwan greets Seokjin.

"Long time, Jaehwannie," Seokjin answers and they share a quick hug. "You're here to give me my coffee? We are at a rooftop after all," Jaehwan asks.

Seokjin shakes his head. "Are you sure we always had coffee then? I have more memories of us being drunk than sober." He and Jaehwan laugh and Yoongi's ears tick at the inside joke, ad the immediate comfort that the two found in each other despite not having seen each other in years. "Why do I suddenly feel like I'm third wheeling?" Jimin mutters.

"Welcome to my life eight years ago," Hoseok tells him. "Believe me, Yoongi hyung and Seokjin hyung were worse."

"I second that," Namjoon says.

"I third that," Jeongguk adds, and Yoongi frowns. "How can you even third that, Jeongguk?" he mutters. The youngest scoffs. "I've been alone with the two of you enough in the past week," he informs them and the rest laugh. Yoongi feels his cheeks turn hot. He finishes his drink and asks for another from the other bartender.

"How have you been Jaehwan?" Seokjin asks.

"Ah, we're in public, Seokjinnie. People call me Ken now," Jaehwan says. The other laughs.

"Ken, like – as in Barbie and Ken?"
Jaehwan finally steps away from Seokjin to take the empty stool beside him. "Could be. Jin and Ken sounds nicer though, don't you think. Isn't that your nickname?"

"Holy shit, someone tell me how I can unhear that," Jimin says to them as he ducks his head down in the underbar. Yoongi wants to vomit.

"That was really cheesy but watch Seokjin hyung fall for it," Hoseok tells them. True enough Seokjin's squeaky laughter follows, and annoys the hell out of Yoongi. He finally looks up from his drink to the two of them from the other side of the circular shaped bar. "I told you," Hoseok tells them.

Yoongi watches as Seokjin leans his elbow on the bar. "Well, you look great, Ken-ssi. You've been in Seoul all this time?"

"Yeah, built this place and a few others. Kept myself busy tending to the family business. European vacations from time to time. Been to the North Pole once, met some penguins."

"I see he's still a rich asshole," Namjoon mutters. Yoongi wants to hug him for saying it out loud. He knows they're best friends for a reason. Seokjin laughs and leans forward. "That must have been fun."

Jaehwan orders a drink from Jimin. "You're new?" he asks him. The other only smiles as he starts mixing his drink. "Just filling in, Sir. It's an honor to finally meet the famous Lee Jaehwan in person."

"Famous, you say?" Jaehwan raises an eyebrow. Jimin bows to him. "I've read about your vision for this place. Quite a romantic inspiration, I must say." His voice is laced with just a tiny bit of malice that Yoongi is sure is directed towards him. Jimin just became his number one person to kill after tonight. Namjoon click his tongue. "Are you trying to dig your own grave, Chim?" Jimin doesn't answer and just hums in reply. Jaehwan smiles at him before nodding his head towards Seokjin. "You're looking at the inspiration."

Jeongguk whoops so loud in his ear that Yoongi flinches. "God, I think I fell in love a bit," Jimin whispers as he slides the two of them their drinks.

"Don't even dare," Hoseok mutters. "I will literally walk up there and push Lee Jaehwan off that rooftop."

"I was just kidding, Hoseokie hyung! But look at Seokjin hyung, his ears are red!" Jimin informs them. Yoongi knows, he can actually see it from where he's sitting. Suddenly Namjoon instructs Jeongguk to cut off the others’ lines except for Yoongi’s.

"Give me two minutes with Suga hyung."

Yoongi raises an eyebrow. This isn’t the first time they’ve have done something like this; they usually need the time between the two of them when plans suddenly change in the middle of an assignment. Sometimes Namjoon just does it to nag him. Yoongi’s afraid it’s going to be the latter. "Alright, RM-hyung. I’ll time it," Jeongguk says. A familiar click follows and Yoongi sighs.

He sees Jimin moves away to get other customers’ orders. Jaehwan’s and Seokjin’s voices fade away as he steps away and Yoongi finds himself needing to keep track of them.

"Hyung," Namjoon starts.

Why is Seokjin even talking to Jaehwan in the first place?
“What is it?” he asks.

“I’m serious about what I told you earlier. Don’t confront Jin hyung in the middle of an assignment.”

“I know that. Why are you reminding me all of a sudden?”

“Do I have to say it out loud?”

No. Namjoon groans. “You hate Lee Jaehwan so much I actually pity the guy. Let Seokjin hyung work.”

He’s talking to Jaehwan, how is that considered work?

“Whatever.”

Namjoon sighs resignedly. After a few moments they both hear Jeongguk’s voice again. “We good?” he asks.

“We’re good. Bring back all the lines,” Yoongi answers before Namjoon can say no. He hears Jimin’s and Hoseok’s indistinct voices come back. Jimin is still far away from Seokjin, and somehow Lee Jaehwan is getting closer and closer to Seokjin’s space.

“Chim, get back to Jin hyung,” Yoongi orders.

“Wait why? I’m tending to some actual orders here, give me a minute, Suga hyung. Also people here have amazing credit card limits, good thing I brought my skimmer with me,” Jimin giggles excitedly.

Namjoon curses under his breath. "Hyung, I literally just said-"

“You have to make sure Jin hyung is sober when Choi Seunghyun comes in,” he says. The other laughs sarcastically. “Jin hyung can take on a whole line of vodka shots without batting an eyelash. Just say you want to eavesdrop on them.”

“We need to know if they’re gonna get back together!” Hoseok replies and Jeongguk laughs. Yoongi rolls his eyes. “Fuck off, both of you. What’s your update on V?”

Hoseok laughs. “Still with Choi Sooyoung,” he tells them in between his devilish cackling. “I don’t see him being hauled out by security so everything looks good on our end. He still hasn’t given any distress signals so far.”

"Fine, since I'm a good friend Suga hyung," Jimin says as he eventually steps back near Seokjin, pretending to wipe glasses for the twentieth time. “And also I don’t want him to kill me.”

"I haven't seen you in years. Where have you been?" Yoongi hears Jaehwan ask Seokjin.

The question abruptly prompts Yoongi to realize he and Jaehwan have one thing in common now: they're both Seokjin's exes, both with a lot of questions. Seokjin swirls the alcohol in glass, contemplating his answer.

But unlike Yoongi, Jaehwan doesn’t have any problems asking the questions he needs answered.

Where have you been, Seokjin hyung?

"Oh, just - here and there. Lying low. It's been fun," Seokjin answers coolly. "I haven't known you to have fun and lie low at the same time," the other answers.
"People change, Jaehwan. Like you, now you're telling people to call you Ken."

"What have you been doing, then, when you were lying low? I tried looking for you at one point."

That's another thing Yoongi and Jaehwan don't have in common, which stings him without him realizing it. "You did?"

"I did."

Yoongi shifts in his seat, suddenly a bit uncomfortable. He finishes his drink and suddenly his fingers itch to hold a cigarette.

_I didn't. Because you told me not to._

"Ah well, I've been enjoying the country life. The quiet. It's - it's something, let me tell you that. I haven't had a proper cocktail in a long time, though."

"Let me get you another drink then." He motions to Jimin and orders two cuba libres. "If you don't mind my asking, why leave in the first place?"

_Why leave in the first place, hyung?_

Yoongi watches Seokjin pause, look at Jimin on the other side of the bar, and then back to Jaehwan. "Circumstances, Ken. Just - ah, why are we talking about this? I'm already back, aren't I?"

Jaehwan looks at him and nods eventually. "True. So, what brings you back?"

_What brings you back?_

"Lots of things."

"You're being really vague right now, aren't you?" Jaehwan laughs and moves even closer to Seokjin. "Let me rephrase - did someone bring you back? That's just a yes or no question."

_Did someone?_

"Is he talking about himself? Fucking asshole," Yoongi mutters.

"Calm down, Suga hyung," Namjoon mutters to him.

"Someone tell me to calm down one more time. And why is he even talking to him, his target is about to arrive anytime soon," Yoongi hisses.

"You want to know the real reason I came back?" Seokjin asks Jaehwan.

Jaehwan steps in closer and Yoongi stops breathing. _"Yes."_

_Yes. Please._

A loud commotion makes Yoongi turn from his seat. Someone takes the mic from the singer onstage. "Ladies and gentlemen," the half-sober host starts.

Jeongguk gets to them first, however. "Choi Seunghyun's here!" he announces to them.

*****

Seokjin wonders if Yoongi knows it, how he makes him feel whenever he looks at him. Whether
he's two or twenty feet away from him, the distance barely matters; Seokjin just knows when Yoongi's eyes are on him. It's unsettling and thrilling at the same time.

Yoongi's eyes never left him the moment he stepped into the bar. He mingled, talked, and partied fully aware that Yoongi's keeping an eye on him. He should be annoyed, Seokjin hates being micromanaged. But somehow he feels exhilarated that in a room full of beautiful strangers, Yoongi only has eyes for him.

Half of it is because it's his job, but still.

Seokjin settles by the bar after half an hour, talking to Jimin and getting all his drinks sans alcohol. He makes several dad jokes which sends Jimin into a fit of giggles. Across the other side of the bar, he watches Yoongi scoff and roll his eyes at his jokes. When Lee Jaehwan finally arrives Seokjin spends the entire time talking to him knowing that Yoongi's hearing their conversation via Jimin's in-ear. He raises an eyebrow when Yoongi starts looking shamelessly straight at them, instead of just listening in. How Jaehwan doesn't see Yoongi, he has no idea.

He realizes that maybe, he's been keeping an eye on Yoongi the entire time as well.

Seokjin and Jimin's eyes meet when the host announces Choi Seunghyun's arrival. He briefly turns to Jaehwan, who stands up from the stool to watch Choi Seunghyun arrive and poses to step away from him.

"Oh, you're going?" Seokjin asks. Jaehwan studies his face, suddenly curious, but Seokjin's way better at this. He smiles back innocuously.

"If you don't want me to, I won't," Jaehwan tells him. "I was just asking." Seokjin shrugs and reaches for his drink. Jaehwan's attention is suddenly back to him.

"I was, too. Listen, Seokjin."

"Hm?"

Seokjin glances at Jimin, who suddenly gives him a startled look, like he's seeing something bad about to happen. He suddenly gets the urge to ask if anything happened to Taehyung or to the others downstairs. Jaehwan’s hand on his thigh gets his attention back.

"I want to know if you and that guy -"

Seokjin looks up from his drink. He can't feel Yoongi's eyes on him for a second, but he feels odd. He's not in his seat anymore. He feels him get closer to him somehow, he can barely register what Lee Jaehwan is saying to him at the moment.

"- what was his name-"

And then he's in front of them.

Before Yoongi can say anything Seokjin's looking at him, wondering how he was somehow able to navigate through the crowded floor without difficulty, wondering how and why he's suddenly in front of him and Jaehwan and Jimin.

"Yoongi?" Seokjin turns to him.

_Speak of the devil._
"Yoongi," Jaehwan repeats rather dejectedly. The other barely acknowledges him. "Seokjin hyung, let's go," Yoongi tells him. When Seokjin doesn't move nor talk, he steps up to him, takes the drink from his hand and puts it on the bar. "Yoongi, what-

Yoongi looks at him, eyes piercing from under his white cap, and Seokjin suddenly doesn't know what to say next. "We need to talk." Yoongi takes his hand and tugs him off his chair.

"Seokjin? Is everything alright?"

Seokjin blinks at Jaehwan and remembers he's working. He's in the middle of working. He's supposed to take Lee Jaehwan and make sure he gets introduced to Choi Seunghyun properly this time, make him believe that their second meeting is some kind of weird destiny laced in drunken talk about art.

And Yoongi, the guy who has been telling him to follow the rules since he got back, just ruined half of his plans for him.

Seokjin stops before Yoongi can pull him away any further. "I'm sorry, Ken. I-I have to deal with something for a bit. I'll see you in a bit!" he tells Jaehwan. The other opens his mouth but nothing comes out, still looking at Yoongi's hand wrapped around Seokjin's waist.

"I - yeah, sure."

"We'll see you around," Yoongi tells Jaehwan smugly. Before they walk away Seokjin catches Jimin's eye behind the bar. The other only shrugs at him. When they're a good fifteen feet away from Jaehwan Seokjin takes control, grabbing Yoongi’s hand as they make their way through the crowd of people dancing and partying, and tugs him into a quieter part of the bar, behind pillars and far from the dance floor.

“What the fuck was that, Yoongi?” Seokjin hisses. He doesn't ask where Yoongi's in-ear suddenly went. Yoongi crosses his arms. "Choi Seunghyun arrived five minutes ago," he tells him. Seokjin rolls his eyes so hard he feels they'll fall inside his skull.

"Fucking hell, Yoongi. I thought we agreed I know what I'm doing."

“He’s your target, not that sleaze over there,” Yoongi says imperturbably.

“Christ. Tell me something I don’t know.”

“Then what were you waiting for?”

“You think I was just going to flirt with Jaehwan for no reason?” Seokjin asks.

Yoongi’s stone-cold expression disappears as he blinks up at him. “Well-”

"You know I had a plan for him, alright?" Seokjin pinches the bridge of his nose. "I don't know why Namjoon assigned you to tag along with me."

"What's wrong with me?" Yoongi protests. Seokjin doesn't listen to him and looks at Choi Seunghyun from faraway, being ushered to one of the VIP corners by security guards. People are clapping and cheering for him and he just looks bored. Seokjin doesn’t have much time left. He looks at Yoongi as he takes him by the waist and tugs him to the dance floor.

“And now you’re going to have to do. I swear to God, Min Yoongi.”
“What the hell-”

“You took my diversion away so now you’re going to replace him,” Seokjin says, just loud enough for Yoongi to hear amidst the music.

“What?” Yoongi asks, but Seokjin’s already making his way towards Choi Seunghyun’s company. “Quiet, Yoongi,” he says as he guides the other’s hand around his waist and shoulders his way in front of Choi Seunghyun, stumbling.

“Sorry about that!” he giggles to the unamused group he and Yoongi just blocked. One of the guards grunts and tries to nudge them away, but Seunghyun stops from walking, pulling his eyeglasses down to peer at him rather curiously. His eyes light up in recognition and Seokjin smiles at him knowingly.

*I told you I’ll see you around.*

Yoongi’s grip on his waist tightens. Seokjin smirks and tugs him away, fully aware of Choi Seunghyun’s eyes following them. He continues to drag Yoongi just by the edge of the dance floor, well within the view of Seunghyun in his little VIP corner. The partygoers cheer and call for the next song. Seokjin pulls Yoongi to stand in front of him, and he grins when he sees him obviously blushing.

“Are we done here?” Yoongi asks. “He saw you already.”

Seokjin shakes his head as the music transitions and pulls Yoongi closer. "He did, but he needs to see what he's missing," he smiles as he puts his arms on Yoongi’s shoulders, hips starting to involuntarily sway to the beat of the drums. Seokjin turns to look at Choi Seunghyun in his seat, trying to see if he’s still looking, but suddenly Yoongi hooks a finger on the belt loop of his jeans and yanks him close until their chests are flushed against each other. Seokjin looks back at him in surprise. Yoongi's piercing looks under the cap sends a shiver down his spine.

“What has he been missing?” he asks Seokjin.

****

The multi-colored lights playing on Seokjin's face turns him into art: his brown doe eyes reflect the colors and his strong lashes flick up and down rather attractively every time he blinks – how exactly, Yoongi has no idea. His tall nose creates mesmerizing shadows on his skin and his plush lips – lips that Yoongi still remembers kissing – are curled up in a smug smile that Yoongi wants to shut down by kissing him again. He wonders if his lips taste differently tonight, different from last night's whiskey and wine. Finally, Seokjin's freshly dyed hair makes him look like an angel – *a fallen angel*, Yoongi corrects himself. And quite frankly, he’s willing to sin.

“What has he been missing?” he asks Seokjin, forefinger still hooked on the belt loop of his pants.

Seokjin's eyes widen and Yoongi grins at the blush climbing up his neck, visible despite the reds and pinks and purples of the bar lights. More people joined the dance floor as the music starts and they’re eventually pushed against each other at the decreasing amount of space. Yoongi slowly follows the sway of Seokjin's impossibly tiny waist.

"Shouldn't you know?” Seokjin finally answers, a smirk edging the corner of his lips. Yoongi's eyes dart back up and he raises an eyebrow.
"I don't know," he shrugs as he leans forward, chin almost resting on Seokjin's shoulder, "it's been a long time."

Seokjin's is flushed enough against him that Yoongi feels his chest vibrate in the silent laughter. He laughs and pulls Yoongi closer, arms lightly wrapped around his neck.

"I'm unforgettable, Min Yoongi," Seokjin whispers into his ear, sending goosebumps in his arms.

*How right you are.*

Yoongi scoffs. "Sure, hyung."

"I must have done something wrong then, for you to forget so easily."

Seokjin he freezes in his place right after. Yoongi reckons he didn't realize what he said after he said it. He pulls away, looking Seokjin in the eyes. Yoongi's never been good at reading people, but over time, over so many dinners and after so many nights spent looking at each other's eyes, he's learned how to read Seokjin.

*You did, hyung. You've done something wrong.* He doesn't have to say it out loud, Seokjin's eyes are already pleading guilty. If he still had his in-ear, Yoongi knows Namjoon would be shouting at him right now. *Don't do it in the middle of a job.*

He decides to listen to him this time. Before Seokjin can say anything Yoongi grabs his wrist and pulls him forward as he moves behind him.

"Show Choi Seunghyun what he's been missing, then," he murmurs, hands holding on to Seokjin's waists and gently urging him to start swaying to the rhythm of the music he can barely hear over the deafening beating in his chest. Yoongi flicks his eyes up momentarily and sees Choi Seunghyun seated with a few other people. He steals a glance towards their direction. Seokjin's hand on his cheek pulls him back, crooked fingers lightly ghosting over his jaws, body slowly moving again to sway.

"I'm going to need you to shut up then," Seokjin breathes out as Yoongi buries his nose at the junction between his neck and left shoulder. Seokjin smells of pine, sweat, and the chemical of his hair dye. It's oddly, oddly addicting, and despite the fact that there is literally no space in between them any longer, Yoongi still needs more.

"And you were planning to do this with Jaehwan?" Yoongi mouths into the fabric of Seokjin's pink shirt, fitting well with the lights. The other scoffs and shakes his head in disbelief. "No," he tells him, pulling down his cap teasingly. "I had a different plan, but if I were, I'm sure Jaehwan would shut up if I told him to."

"Right," Yoongi scoffs.

Seokjin pauses.

"And frankly, he'd hold me closer."

Yoongi isn't able to stop the low growl that escaped from his throat as he yanked Seokjin's waist closer to him, angrily, possessively, their bodies flushed close against each other. Seokjin only laughs at the gesture but his hand finds Yoongi's on his hips, their fingers tightly intertwine for some reason.

Yoongi doesn't know how long this song will last. He doesn't know Seokjin what will do after this. He knows they're working, knows they're putting on a show, much like yesterday. The knowledge
doesn't stop Yoongi from holding on for as long as he could. The music is dull in his ears, he only follows Seokjin's movements; he barely feels the people around them, couldn't care about the laughter and the singing and the shouting. He gets pulled back to reality by Seokjin, left hand holding on to his neck. "Yoongi," he calls. Yoongi hums into his skin, and he smirks when he sees Seokjin swallow.

"I need to get rid of you now," he whispers to him.

“What?”

“I'm going to count to ten,” Seokjin says. Yoongi reckons Seokjin expects him to get it immediately; he does eventually, but he takes a few seconds longer. He finally nods. Time to let go then. Until then, he has ten seconds.

"Tell me what to do."

"Back up and you'll hit a guy holding drinks."

Yoongi tuts at the thought of the sticky alcohol in his skin, at the possible fight that will break out. Maybe Seokjin can think of something else. He'll be happy to continue dancing while he does. They have time. It's only been, what, fifteen minutes since Choi Seunghyun arrived?

"But I like this shirt."

"You can buy a hundred of those when we get paid."

Yoongi groans. "Fine."

"If I didn't know any better I'd say you're enjoying this," Seokjin tells him.

Yoongi takes a second to answer. "So what if I am?"

*****

Yoongi moving behind Seokjin does give Choi Seunghyun a better view of him - of what he's missing - but it makes Seokjin's breathing stutter, sends unwanted shivers down his spine. Seokjin is taller and definitely broader, but if someone asks him, Yoongi is firmer, rougher. He holds on to Seokjin like he’s been doing it for the past hour, swings them to the music like he composed the song himself, only for them to dance to.

Seokjin is drowning – in his scent, in his skin, in his words, in his attention. He wonders what it would even feel like if he can look at Yoongi straight in the eye. All of it feels too good, too familiar. Yoongi’s hand slowly moves down, and his breath hitches when the pads of his fingers find their way to the part of his thigh exposed by the hole of his jeans.

Seokjin is drowning, but it feels too good.

A sharp sensation on his toes pulls Seokjin back like a lifebuoy he never asked for. He flinches slightly but the girl who stepped on his feet with her five inch heels barely looks back at him to apologize. Yoongi didn’t even seem to notice. Seokjin realizes he should thank her, however, because it reminds him that they’re here, at this bar, for a reason. He immediately scans the crowd, only sparing a quick glance at Choi Seunghyun – he’s almost forgotten about him – and squeezes Yoongi’s hand.

Ten seconds, Seokjin thinks. He has to move immediately before he slips again, before he can say
something dumb again. He tells Yoongi what to do.

"So what if I am?" Yoongi asks, when he teases him about enjoying their little show. Seokjin's breath hitches; it wasn't the answer he was expecting. He turns and sees the guy with the drinks re-enter the pit. "Now, Yoongi," he tells him instead, ignoring Yoongi's question.

"What?"

But before Seokjin can remind him of what he's supposed to be doing, he sees someone familiar.

"Shit, shit!" he curses. Yoongi’s grip on him loosens, and looks to the direction he’s looking at. "Well fuck," Seokjin hears him whisper.

Kwon Jiyong isn't hard to find in a crowd. This guy is everywhere, Seokjin thinks. This party, despite the lack of invitation, is not an exception.

They’re too late.

****

Taehyung raises an eyebrow when he sees Lee Jaehwan run towards the couch he and Choi Sooyoung are seated on. *He’s prettier in person*, Taehyung thinks. When he approaches however, he suddenly wonders why he’s here, when Seokjin told him earlier he’s going to use Jaehwan as a distraction.

“Noona!” Jaehwan pants, ignoring Taehyung altogether. Sooyoung lifts her head from Taehyung’s shoulders. “What is it?”

“Kwon Jiyong is here,” Jaehwan says, eyes round and scared.

“What!?” Both Taehyung and Sooyoung exclaim, standing up at the same time. Jaehwan turns to look at him in confusion. Sooyoung sways a little at the sudden movement and Taehyung catches her by the elbows. “Well-” Taehyung stammers, “Noona here told me he wasn’t invited!”

She recovers after several seconds, eyes suddenly lacking any of the sweetness, replaced with borderline fury. “Damn right, he’s not. He’s not going to fucking ruin this party I threw for my brother!” she screams at Jaehwan. “What do we do?” the other asks.

“You kill the people who let him in, and I’m going to kill him,” Sooyoung hisses and marches forward to the elevators, having completely forgotten about Taehyung. Not that he’s complaining; his arms hurt and he really was starting to have a hard time refusing drinks from Choi Sooyoung and her friends. He slips out of the small corner and snakes through the crowd until he spots Namjoon by the bar, trying hard not to look obvious that he’s talking in his comm. He looks frustrated and fed up. Namjoon has told him that nine times out of ten, it’s because of Yoongi.

“RM-hyung!” he hops up to him. “What’s going on, I heard-”

Namjoon nods at him. “Kwon Jiyong’s here, yeah, we know. JK,” he instructs, “make sure Yoongi hyung’s in-ear is useless to whoever finds it. Find a way to make it set itself on fire, if you can. *Then* I’m going to set Yoongi hyung on fire.”

It’s one of those times then. “What happened to Yoongi hyung’s in-ear?” Taehyung asks.

“He tossed it.”
“Why? And was Seokjin hyung able to-”

“No.”

Taehyung gasps. “What happened?”

Hoseok comes up from behind him. “Long story. We’ll tell you on the way back to headquarters. Hopefully you have some good news for us?”

Taehyung turns to grin at him. “I do.” Namjoon puts a hand on his shoulder. “At least I have you to count on. What kind of intel did you get?” He smiles at them proudly. “Only the best.”

Namjoon’s gentle smile makes Taehyung want to melt. “That’s my V-ssi.”

*****

The ride back to headquarters is quiet and uncomfortable. Yoongi doesn’t like large crowds and loud music, but suddenly he prefers that to the unnerving quiet of his car and the space between him and Seokjin. Right after word of Kwon Jiyong showing up at the party spreads, it doesn’t take even a minute for Choi Seunghyun to stand up and leave, to forget about Seokjin, to get away from Kwon as far as possible. At the very least, Yoongi thought there would be a confrontation. When their target disappears into an exit escorted by his sister herself, Seokjin lost his chance for the night.

They reach a stoplight and Yoongi looks at Seokjin. “It’s fine,” he finally tells him. “Not a bad night. Taehyung got us valuable intel.”

Seokjin pushes his hair back and grits his teeth in annoyance. "Will you tell Kwon Jiyong he's our employer and he shouldn't be getting in our fucking way?" Yoongi nods, not wanting to make Seokjin feel worse, but he says, "Kwon Jiyong doesn't know each and every step of our plan. Probably didn't even know we were there. It's not a big deal, we can always get to Choi in another way."

"We have a lot of time left, hyung," Yoongi insists.

"Do we?" Seokjin asks. Yoongi grips the steering wheel. "We do," he answers, he says as strongly as he could muster at the moment.

We do.

Seokjin sighs and leans his head back. “I should have-”

“No,” Yoongi cuts him off swiftly. “You couldn’t have predicted Kwon Jiyong’s bullshit party crashing act. None of this shit is your fault,” he tells him, voice suddenly tense. He can’t have Seokjin thinking like this again. None of what happened tonight, or any other night before this one, is your fault.

Seokjin opens his eyes but doesn’t look at Yoongi. He looks straight ahead blankly, like he’s remembering things. Yoongi grabs his wrist, warm and soft under his touch. “Hyung,” he says. Seokjin finally turns to look at him.

“None of this is your fault,” he repeats.

Seokjin smiles weakly. “Thanks, Yoongi.”

Yoongi hisses and Seokjin raises an eyebrow at him. “Shit, will you listen to me?” he says almost
impatiently. “None of it was your fault, okay? If anything, it was mine. I ruined your plan with Jaehwan.”

Seokjin shakes his head. “Jiyong still would have arrived, though.”

“Exactly. Not your fault or mine. We still have a lot of time,” Yoongi tells him.

Seokjin nods and he looks up to see the light turn green. “We should go,” he smiles at Yoongi.

Yoongi reluctantly lets go of Seokjin’s wrist to turn back to driving. He remembers Namjoon's question earlier.

Are you going to ask him to stay?

He's said lots of things tonight, admitted things quietly to himself, almost secretly, hidden behind double meanings and hushed words. More and more Yoongi realizes his need to finally confront Seokjin about everything, but more and more he realizes he's afraid of what Seokjin's answers will be, what his response will be when he asks the question, because Yoongi can't accept any other answer than yes.

He needs him to stay.

Chapter End Notes

1. **this is the song** yoongi and seokjin dance to. it is. don't fight me on this.
2. 70% of the reason this chapter exists is because of that song and [this wonderful artwork](#) by dreamydxze, don't forget to check out the rest of her yoonjin tag! and yes, everyone was wearing their outfits from the FIRE mv because that song is legendary
3. **this is my song inspiration** for the last scene
4. the chapter title is shit but i love it don't @ me. actually @ me on twitter i'm actually really friendly lol
5. thank you so much for reading! tell me what you think, ok? :)
Hi. Yes. It's been exactly a month and a day since I last updated, and I sincerely apologize, life got in the way, hah. You may have noticed that I updated the number of chapters, and yes, we are getting closer to the end. Believe me, the original outline called for seven chapters only. I hope you enjoy... whatever this is that you're about to read LOL. Thank you very much for being patient with me!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Seokjin debates whether to answer the phone. He considers turning it off completely, but he opts to put it on vibrate. He places the device on his lap and picks up the cup.

“You know you can answer the phone, right?” Choi Seunghyun smiles at him from his tea. He picks up a sugar cube and puts it in his teacup.

“I’d really rather not,” Seokjin replies, smiling back.

He really shouldn’t. Hoseok has been calling him for the past twenty minutes, not aware that he’s in the middle of working. After the party two nights ago Seokjin didn’t waste any time, the guilt creeping up his back despite his best efforts, and created another chance meeting at a small bookshop somewhere in Gangnam. Now he and Choi are having tea outside across the shop, talking about the latest Mark Gotjahn collection. There weren’t a lot of people, and it made Choi happy, how he can be outside and not recognized under his hat and hoodie.

Contrary to how the public and the media frames him as an anti-social, moody introvert, Seokjin finds a certain kind of gentleness and quietness in Choi Seunghyun. The moment he got him to talk about his passions, his eyes light up in a way that reminds Seokjin of Yoongi when he talks about his grand plans and dream heists. Their hands move upwards, long and rough fingers splaying out like they’re drawing in the air.

“I haven’t had tea in such a long time. I think I was forced to drink it. By my mother, even.”

Seokjin shakes his head and floats back down to the conversation. This. This is exactly why he’s been avoiding going to the headquarters lately unless he needs to. He keeps on getting distracted. Choi raises an eyebrow curiously. Seokjin puts on an apologetic smile. “I prefer to have tea in the mornings. No judgments, though, I truly see the appeal of having wine all the time.”

“I can’t wait to get to Europe and not be judged for my drinking preferences.” Seunghyun laughs quietly. “I lived in Germany once, for a while, for work,” he tells Seokjin.

“How did it go?” Seokjin asks.

“It was quiet. I was mostly alone. I couldn’t wait to go back here at first.”

Once, Seokjin also couldn’t wait to go back to Daegu. Couldn’t wait to go back to Kiae, couldn’t wait to get away from Yoongi and his angry eyes, couldn’t wait to disappear again. He doesn't know exactly when that desire faded away.

“What makes you want to go back then, Seunghyun-ssi, if I may ask?”
Seunghyun laughs and browses through the book he just bought. “I realized I’m better off alone,” he answers, not looking up.

Once, three years ago, Seokjin thought he'd be better off alone, far away, away from the group of people he considered his family. Once, three years ago, he made a decision that led him to this place, thinking about his time running out before he has to leave again. Seokjin wonders if Choi Seunghyun will regret this decision of his.

“I haven’t gone to the Louvre in a long time,” Seokjin segues, a bit wary that he’s speeding up their conversation. “When I visit Paris, maybe we can see each other again. I’m sure you’ll be swimming in wine up there so I’ll bring you some good old soju.”

“I’d like that, Jin-ssi,” Seunghyun smiles.

There’s a certain kind of interest in Choi Seunghyun’s eyes. It’s not the same with his other targets, which makes his job actually harder. There’s always a hint of hesitation in him, Seokjin observes, but at the same time the desire to move on from everything that has been bothering him here in Korea. The more time he spends with his mysterious target, the sadder he gets about stealing the painting from him.

Sad doesn’t give you seven billion won, though.

Choi continues, “I highly doubt you don’t know about the farewell party I’m having, since you were already there at the shit storm my sister threw for me.”

“It was a good party, well – the parts I can remember, at least,” Seokjin replies, laughing.

“I think I should leave you with a better memory, Jin-ah. I’ll have the better party some time from now. Mark Grotjahn’s going as well.”

“I’d love to be there, Seunghyun-ssi.” Seokjin’s surprised face is feigned, but the smile that follows is genuine.

“Please, you can call me hyung.”

*****

When Namjoon arrives at the headquarters, everyone except for Yoongi is already waiting for him. He finds Hoseok in the middle of a conversation with Seokjin on the couch.

“Why weren’t you answering my calls, hyung?” the younger asks. Seokjin frowns and shrugs. “I was working.”

“It was a very important call,” Hoseok counters. “More important than getting Choi Seunghyun to finally invite me to his party?” Seokjin asks him.

Before the other can reply Namjoon interrupts.

“Maybe.”

“Maybe?” Seokjin turns to him.

While Seokjin is busy targeting Choi, Namjoon and the rest are busy planning and re-polishing their plans based on the intel Taehyung was able to acquire from Choi Sooyoung. It was great progress,
all in all. Jeongguk hacked into Choi’s sister’s phone and he was able to find more photos of the
gallery that helped them piece the layout of the mysterious gallery. Everyone’s relieved and felt the
night was a success, well, except for Namjoon.

There’s an unsettling quiet among the others. “Is there anything I need to know?” Seokjin asks them.
Before anyone can answer they hear Yoongi enter the basement. Namjoon hisses under his breath.
“Fucking finally.”

Yoongi is drenching wet from the rain, his black hair plastered on his forehead. There’s an annoying
squishing sound in his boots every time he takes a step, and it makes Namjoon’s eyes roll to the back
of his head. He’s obviously fighting the shivers, but keeps a nonchalant face in front of them. He
looks briefly at Seokjin.

“You’re wet,” Jeongguk notes. “I’m well aware, thanks. What do we need to talk about?” Yoongi
asks them.

“How you mind telling us where you came from?” Namjoon interrupts.

“No.”

“Change into dry clothes first, hyung?” Taehyung asks Yoongi. The other ignores him pointedly.
“What’s our progress on the key, Jimin?”

In the corner of his eye Namjoon notices that Seokjin was about to say something, but stops. The
older was probably going to scold Yoongi about his wet state, but he takes a step back and sits
beside Jimin. Namjoon shakes his head and watches Yoongi act like he didn’t disappear for a solid
36 hours, without telling anyone where he went.

Jemin takes out a box from his bag. “It’s here,” he smiles at them and everyone crowds around the
table, admiring his handiwork. They spend a few more minutes discussing, and one by one the
members, including Seokjin, leave the headquarters. Namjoon doesn’t point out how Seokjin looked
like he was eager and hesitant to leave at the same time.

Namjoon follows Yoongi up to his living room without a word. When they reach the top of the stairs
Yoongi turns around. “What is it?” the older asks him, not bothering to cover up the annoyance in
his tone.

Namjoon sighs. He’s exhausted, tired, in need of sleep. He’s moved on from Yoongi going rogue
and almost derailing half their plans that night, but he’s also tired of trying to think of the possible
things Yoongi can do on the night of the heist. Yoongi already got an earful from him that night, and
if he pushes any further he knows it’s going to turn into a fight.

“You tell me, hyung.” Namjoon says, “you disappear for a day without saying anything and you
expect me to not ask questions? Where the fuck did you go?”

“Don’t worry, it’s not related to the job.”

“Is it related to Seokjin hyung?” he asks.

Yoongi grabs a towel lying around. “If it is, it’s none of your business.”

They reach the door of Yoongi’s room. Namjoon sighs. He doesn’t know how many times he’s
sighed in the past days. “You’re right, hyung. None of my business. But I’m telling you. This whole
thing is honestly a distraction.”
“I’m not distracted,” Yoongi says defensively. The younger would beg to differ, but instead he says, “I’m not talking about you. I’m talking about Seokjin hyung.”

“What?”

“This shit works two ways, Yoongi hyung. If you haven’t noticed, then apparently I’m not the densest person in this crew.”

Namjoon shrugs and turns to leave.

*****

"Hyung, what the hell is this?" Hoseok gapes at the table. Seokjin doesn't answer him, even as he turns around from the sink carrying the plate of fried chicken. When he turns back to the table and to his cousin, he realizes that there's no space left for him to put it on.

With a small pout Seokjin gently nudges the side dishes and plates. Hoseok moves his chopsticks to make space for the chicken. When all of the dishes are finally on the table he drops his shoulders and sits on the chair across his cousin.

“Eat.”

"You're stress cooking," Hoseok tells him. "What's going on?"

Seokjin ignores him again, and takes a bowl of rice for himself. Hoseok frowns and refuses to touch any of the food. Seokjin swallows the food and frowns at him.

"If I knew you weren't going to eat, I would have called Jimin or Jeongguk instead."

Hoseok rolls his eyes at him and crosses his arms. "What happened? I'm serious, hyung."

Seokjin hesitates, he can tell. His cousin was the same those several days before he left all those years ago. Stress cooking, more quiet than usual when they're alone, and then suddenly loud, as if trying to compensate for how quiet he was earlier. Hoseok doesn't bulge; he takes a glass of water and patiently waits for him to explain.

"Hobi-yah," Seokjin starts. "I'm thinking about something."

Hoseok's glass stops halfway to his mouth. He braces himself for what Seokjin will say. Maybe Yoongi’s finally told him and the food is poisoned and his cousin will finally kill him. That’s probably not a bad way to die, since Seokjin cooks well anyhow.

But instead, very slowly, Seokjin recounts to him what happened several nights ago in Yoongi's car, the night of Choi Seunghyun's party. "And he told me it wasn't my fault-"

"Which is true," Hoseok interjects. Seokjin sighs. “I know that,” he says and continues, “But when Yoongi said it - it felt like he's talking about something else?"

Hoseok finally grabs a plate and piles it with food. So he hasn’t, and Seokjin’s nearing to getting to the answer all by himself. He’s sober right now, so at least he won’t be able to reveal anything dumb to his cousin. All he hopes right now is he doesn’t slip.

"Do you think-"

Seokjin stops himself and proceeds to stuff his mouth with chicken, eyes furrowed in thought as he chews. Hoseok looks at him curiously, cautiously. When the older finishes eating he looks back up at
Hoseok. "I think - I think he would have said something, if he knew. Did he ask you anything?"

Hoseok gulps and reaches for his water. "He didn't." That wasn't a lie. Hoseok revealed it all on his own, Yoongi didn't ask. Seokjin exhales, giving off a look of relief. "I see. Well, maybe I'm just thinking things. I'm feeling a bit pressured lately, I don't know. Just jittery, I guess. But I think it's all good now, we're back on track."

"We really are getting closer to the end," Hoseok says. "We're actually looking at other offered jobs right now, you know. Namjoon's getting some good word from other crews."

Seokjin nods, not meeting his gaze, and fills his mouth with food until his cheeks are full. "Good for you guys," he tells him, halfheartedly. Hoseok asks himself when this will end, because honestly, he wants to tell Seokjin the truth, but he knows it's not his place to do so.

So he tells him, "Hyung, you know, why don’t you talk to him about it?"

“What?”

Hoseok shrugs and starts filling his plate. “You know, about why you left. Just admit that you weren’t… exactly telling the truth.”

“Ah, I told you already, what for?” Seokjin shakes his head.

Hoseok frowns and pokes on the food in front of him, pondering. Seokjin waits for him to answer, and when he looks up he takes a deep breath.

“For Yoongi hyung.”

"For Yoongi hyung.

Hoseok’s words resonate in Seokjin’s ears, long after he’s left his apartment, saying something about a job he and Namjoon have to attend to.

Even if he tells you to leave, Hoseok had told him, in the end he still deserves the truth. That’s the least you can do.

He was being selfish. Hoseok didn’t say it out loud, but Seokjin knows that’s what he meant. It was so selfish, what he’s done. There was no other word for it.

“Shit, fuck!”

Seokjin scrubs the dishes too hard and he ends up breaking a plate. Blood blooms to the surface of the dishwater and he lifts his hand to see the shallow cut on his palm. The pain distracts him briefly from his thoughts. He’s sitting on the couch, disinfecting the wound, when his phone rings. He swipes the phone and puts it on speaker.

“Hi Jin hyung!” Jeongguk says on the other line, voice suspiciously bright and joyful.

“Hey JK, what’s up?”

“Ah, are you busy?”

Seokjin frowns as he sloppily puts a band-aid on the cut. “What’s wrong?”
“Well – uh, it’s uh… so everyone’s busy right? I mean I hope you’re not. I mean, so Namjoon hyung and Jimin hyung and Hoseok hyung aren’t here because they’re going to that meeting in Jeju and Taehyung took his grandparents to a short vacation, so I’m alone here and I have this job outside that I need to go to but… I really don’t know—”

“Cut to the chase, Jeongguk.” Seokjin snaps a little, wincing at his wound.

“Ugh fine,” Jeongguk groans. “I mean you don’t have to do it—”

“Jeongguk if you don’t—”

“Yoongi hyung is sick and he’s being an asshole.”

Seokjin pauses and looks at the phone lying on the coffee table. “What?”

“Yoongi hyung is sick,” Jeongguk repeats. “He has a raging fever and he’s holing up in his room and he literally just told me to fuck off but I’m scared he will die or something.”

Seokjin stands up.

“Don’t leave him until I get there.”

*****

In retrospect, Yoongi should have listened to his members when they said he should change into dry clothes first before proceeding with the meeting. Before that, he should have listened to that random guy on the street, telling him to run because it was about to rain hard and heavy. And even before that, he should have listened to Jeongguk when the boy told him to take his car after he gave him the address he was asking for. He opted to take the bus and when he got back to Seoul the rain was already threatening to engulf half the city.

But it’s too late, he thinks, and his entire body is shivering but his face feels warm and each of his lashes feel like rocks pulling his lids down. He curls up under the covers after shouting at Jeongguk to leave him alone. He’s already downed half a bottle of fever medicine and he hopes he feels a little better when he wakes up.

When Yoongi opens his eyes, he’s still dreaming, he thinks. Because Seokjin is standing beside his bed, peering down at him curiously.

Yoongi hates this dream. Because it’s a dream, it’s all it is. How many times has he had this dream, years ago? It’s why he left his old apartment in the first place. Why is it coming back to haunt him now?

“You’re sick, Yoongi,” Seokjin tells him disappointedly. Yoongi frowns. He can’t believe he’s so sick, he’s sick even in this dream. “Well, that’s obvious isn’t it?” he frowns. Yoongi continues as he clutches on to the edges of his comforter, feeling cold and small under Seokjin’s gaze. “And it’s your fault. It’s your fault, hyung.”

Seokjin bends down closer to him and scoffs. “How is this my fault!?" He yanks the comforter down and exposes Yoongi’s shoulders. Yoongi shivers and pulls it back up. “If you were there,” he pouts, jutting his lower lip out – because this is a dream and he can do whatever he wants in his dream – “you would have been able to stop me from walking in the damn rain. I wouldn’t even get rained on if you hadn’t gone off running to dumb Daegu. Dumb, stupid, fucking Daegu.”

Seokjin’s frown disappears. Yoongi continues to sulk up at him. His eyes feel like lead again. He
wants to sleep and then wake up now, for real.

“What?” Seokjin asks. Yoongi blinks and ignores his question.

“Why did you leave?” he mumbles, his illness making it hard for him talk properly. His head is pounding but he keeps his eyes open, if only to confront Seokjin even in this hallucination. Seokjin reaches out a hand to part Yoongi’s bangs. He’s warm, Yoongi thinks, and he knows he’s hot but he feels so cold right now so he leans in to Seokjin’s touch. It all feels too real, but maybe that’s what a raging fever can get you.

“Go back to sleep, Yoongi,” Seokjin whispers. Yoongi shakes his head slowly. He hates his dream, he absolutely hates it. But he doesn’t want to leave it just yet.

“I’ll be here when you wake up.”

Yoongi almost laughs, but he’s too weak to do it properly. Now that’s something he’s heard before. “Liar,” he mutters under his breath, before he finally lets sleep take him. It was hard for Yoongi to close his eyes again, hard for him to just let go. When he wakes up for real, he knows Seokjin will not be there.

Except when he opens his eyes again, Seokjin is there, sitting on a chair beside his bed, pushing his glasses up his nose as he tries to figure out the thermometer.

“Seokjin?” Yoongi struggles to sit up.

Seokjin looks at him. “Just because you’re sick,” he frowns at Yoongi, “doesn’t mean you’re allowed to be disrespectful.”

Yoongi blinks again. He’s probably still burning up; his limbs are heavy and for the most part he feels like going back under his duvet. He’s really awake now. And Seokjin is here, beside him. He puts his hands on his face, trying to figure out exactly what is going on.

It takes him a good ten seconds to realize that his dream may not have been a dream at all, and all the things he said out loud were really said out loud, in front of Seokjin.

“How long have you-”

Seokjin sticks the thermometer inside his mouth.

Yoongi scowls but doesn’t remove it from his mouth, because he knows the older will stick it right back, and he doesn’t really want to die by choking on a thermometer. After several seconds of weird silence, Seokjin leans forward to remove the device and read the result. He shakes his head at Yoongi, and before he can say anything the younger stammers something about needing to go to the bathroom.

Seokjin nods. “Do you need any help?”

Yoongi glares. “I didn’t lose my ability to walk.” Seokjin rolls his eyes at him and goes back to reading the labels on the medicine. Yoongi stumbles to the bathroom, grabbing his phone on the way. When he locks the door he rests his forehead on the wall tiles and speed dials Jeongguk, and the boy answers after the sixth ring.

“Where the fuck are you!?” Yoongi hisses. The cold tiles help him cool down, but his cheeks feel hot and he suddenly contemplates on sinking his entire body in cold water. He switches the shower on so Seokjin won’t hear him from outside, just in case.
“Hi! Yoongi hyung!” Jeongguk greets him. “Well, I see you’re a bit better now, your cursing’s more fluid, less garbled.”

“Don’t make me repeat my question you fucking-”

“I’m working on a sideline with Jaebum hyung’s crew!”

“Okay but why the fuck is Seokjin hyung here?” Yoongi seethes, trying to keep his voice level.

“Because you should rest, hyung, Seokjin hyung said he’ll take care of you! Isn’t that sweet? He went there immediately when he found out.”

“You called him?”

“Yeah!” Jeongguk answers happily, like he didn’t just give Yoongi additional headache on top of his actual, very real headache.

“I don’t need h-”

“But you do, Yoongi hyung.”

“I am perfectly fine on my-”


“You said his name. Multiple times. It was scary. Do you want me to dictate to you what you specifically said? Because I can, hyung. You know I can.”

Yoongi fails to find a seething retort so instead he says, “Stop cutting me off. I was talking.”

Jeongguk just laughs at him from the other line. “I learned from the best. Just rest well. We have a job, remember? Let him take care of you.”

*****

Seokjin doesn’t know why he suddenly felt awkward, going inside Yoongi’s room. Jeongguk lead him upstairs to his room, scratching the back of his head as he explained.

“When he’s sick, he’s usually just quiet, you know? I’d bring him his medicine and some ramyeon and he’d pass out until he felt better. But uh, I uh – I don’t know, I think he’s really sick?”

“Should we take him to a hospital?” Seokjin asked worriedly. The younger shook his head. “It’s bad, but I don’t think it’s that bad.” Jeongguk opened the door and let Seokjin in. Yoongi was hiding under the covers, and the slight movement of the duvet was their only indication that he isn’t dead yet. Jeongguk bade Seokjin goodbye, saying something about how he needed to attend to something.

When he left, Seokjin slowly walked towards the bed, towards the side Yoongi is facing. His eyes were furrowed in sleep, no doubt brought upon by the discomfort of the fever.

“You jackass,” Seokjin whispered under his breath as he felt Yoongi’s forehead. “So careless.”

Yoongi’s burning up and probably thinks that sleeping it off will make it go away. Seokjin goes back downstairs and makes some soup in the kitchen. When he got back to Yoongi’s room, he pushed a finger between the younger’s eyebrows, in a gentle attempt to smoothen his face.

That’s when he woke up.
Seokjin looks at the empty bed as Yoongi walks inside the bathroom. He shakes his head and makes his way back downstairs. The soup must be done by now. He didn’t have a lot of time to buy ingredients, but he thinks anything warm can and should make Yoongi feel better.

“It’s nothing, it’s nothing,” Seokjin whispers to himself. It’s nothing, everyone knows where he’s been hiding because they found him right there in Daegu. Of course they would have told Yoongi. It’s nothing, the pain in Yoongi’s eyes when he told Seokjin how he wasn’t there to stop him from getting rained on, asking him why he left. He knows why he left. All of it was just because of his raging fever. It’s nothing, the pain clawing in Seokjin’s chest, made worse by the words Hoseok had told him earlier.

“What’s nothing?”

“Nothing!” Seokjin almost yells as he turns to look at Yoongi, eyebrows knit and a frown etched on his face. “Shit, make some noise when you walk around, will you?”

Yoongi doesn’t answer. The younger has washed his face and smoothened his hair. Seokjin tries to smile as he picks the ladle again, making weird, uneven circular motions on the pot of soup. “Go back to your room. I prepared some soup for you.”

Yoongi ignores him again. “How long have I been out?” He leans on the breakfast counter and blinks. Seokjin bites his lips and turns the stove off. “Around two, three hours?”

Yoongi avoids his eyes and slowly moves towards the fridge. “You don’t have to do this, you know. I’m fine,” he murmurs weakly. Seokjin wonders how he was even able to manage to walk downstairs and into the kitchen. “Yoongi, come on, go back to your room. You have to recover immediately.”

Yoongi resurfaces from behind the fridge door, pausing to look at Seokjin. “Why’d you come?”

“Jeongguk told me you were sick.”

“Did he ask you to come?”

Seokjin gulps. He can’t remember if Jeongguk explicitly told him to come, he just remembers running off to the market, remembers cursing on the taxi on the way to Yoongi’s house, remembers muttering about how he should have told Yoongi to change his damn clothes when he got home soaking wet from the rain the night before.

“Yes,” he lies.

Yoongi nods. “You can just leave the soup. I’ll get to it when I’m hungry,” he tells Seokjin as he turns around.

Seokjin rolls his eyes and puts his hands on his waist. Right, he thinks. He fills a bowl and sets up a breakfast tray, carrying it back up to Yoongi’s room, only to find that Yoongi wasn’t there. Seokjin frowns and makes his way back downstairs. Yoongi couldn’t have gone out the front door, he would have heard. He looks at the bookcase at the foot of the stairs.

He finds Yoongi tucked on one side of the couch in the headquarters, covering himself snug with the throw quilt. Seokjin places the tray on the coffee table. “What are you doing here?” he asks. Yoongi barely moves from his position. “I feel more comfortable here.”

“Than on your queen size bed?”
Yoongi doesn’t answer, just basically shivers and curls up like a cat underneath the thin quilt. Seokjin sighs and goes back up to Yoongi’s room, grabbing the duvet and his pillows. When he goes back to the basement, he pulls the quilt from Yoongi, earning an actual whine from the younger. Seokjin stops himself from chuckling. “Hyung, what the hell!”

Seokjin throws his duvet at him and Yoongi instinctively pulls it to wrap around himself. “So stubborn,” he mutters as he pulls Yoongi to sit up.

“What the hell are you doing?”

Seokjin wordlessly takes the pillow and puts it behind Yoongi’s back. Yoongi frowns at being manhandled, but he’s too weak to do anything but whine and scowl at him, still curled up. Seokjin opens the medicine kit he brought along and takes out a fever plaster. Yoongi tries to pull away when he sees what Seokjin is about to do, but the older is stronger and he holds Yoongi still with one hand as the other pushes his hair back to put the cooling patch on his forehead, complete with the kitten pattern. Seokjin is sure Jeongguk's the one who bought the patches, and he makes a mental note to give a kid a high five when he sees him again.

“So cute.” Seokjin can’t help but laugh. Yoongi looks so small underneath the duvet, his pouting face making him look like a whiny child. “Shut up.”

“How are you feeling?” Seokjin asks, and he reaches to cup Yoongi’s cheeks. Still hot, pink and flushed underneath his usually unseen freckles.

Yoongi closes his eyes at Seokjin's contact with his skin. “Sick,” he groans. Seokjin pulls his hands back with great effort, almost not being able to stop himself from running his thumb on Yoongi’s cheekbone.

“Well, I promised Jeongguk he won’t come home to your dead body, so you have to eat,” Seokjin says as he takes the bowl of soup.

“I’m not hungry,” Yoongi murmurs, words a little garbled. Seokjin sits beside him and sighs.

“I know, but you still have to eat.”

“Let me sleep, hyung,” the younger groans and leans his head back on the backrest of the couch. Seokjin rolls his eyes as he scoops up a spoonful of the chicken soup and lifts it to Yoongi’s closed lips. Yoongi flushes even harder but Seokjin doesn’t say anything, feeling the sudden warmth climb up his neck as well. He blows on the soup to make sure it’s cool enough and lifts it back up to Yoongi’s lips.

The younger stares at the bowl, avoiding his gaze. Before Seokjin can think of a threat to make Yoongi eat, his eyes widen in surprise when the younger leans forward to take the spoon in his mouth. Seokjin blinks at the empty spoon a second later, like he didn’t know where the soup went. He shakes his head and smiles instead as he takes another spoonful.

Seokjin watches Yoongi’s quiet eating, hears his slightly labored breathing, and feels the heat emitted by his skin. He reckons Yoongi’s actually hungry, he just didn’t realize it with the way he was too busy trying not to die from the cold. He feels his heart swell at the sight, at how vulnerable Yoongi looks at the moment, at how he’s letting him take care of him. Yoongi devours the soup within minutes, actually complaining when Seokjin starts going slow with the scooping and feeding.

“And you said you weren’t hungry,” Seokjin teases as he feeds Yoongi the last of the soup. The other ignores him and smacks his lips instead. “I’m sleepy,” he tells him.
Seokjin chuckles as he pulls away to get the medicine on the table. “Don’t worry, you can go back to hibernating after you take your medicine.” He suddenly feels his left hand being tugged.

“What’s this?”

Seokjin feels shivers down his spine as he feels Yoongi’s hand on his, but he manages to pull his injured hand away. “What? This is nothing. I just-”

Yoongi clicks his tongue and reaches for his hand again. “Give it here.”

“I said it’s nothing-”

Yoongi looks up at him, eyes half-lidded but still piercing, as if daring him to say that it’s nothing. But it is nothing. Seokjin shakes his head. “It’s fine, just a little cut.” He forces himself to pull his hand away, but Yoongi holds on to his wrist, suddenly warm and firm and determined. He doesn’t let go as his other hand reaches for the first aid kit on the coffee table. “Sit down,” Yoongi orders, voice deep and gravelled. Seokjin scowls.

“Wow, Jeongguk’s right, you really do turn into an asshole when you’re sick.”

“I’ve heard worse from that kid,” Yoongi tells him as he rips off the band-aid off Seokjin’s palm. The older rolls his eyes in an effort to fight off the smile forcing its way on his lips. He sits on the edge of the couch, channeling his willpower to not let any goose bump, not one, show up on the arm Yoongi’s holding.

“What happened?” Yoongi asks him, hands firm and sure as he dabbed disinfectant on the cut on Seokjin’s palm. Seokjin pushes his glasses back and shrugs. “I broke a plate.”

Yoongi smirks. “Clumsy.”

Seokjin sneers and reaches for the ice pack on the table and dabs it on Yoongi’s neck. “This coming from the guy who has a raging fever because he doesn’t know what an umbrella is?!”

“Aish, hyung!” Yoongi flinches at the cold touch, but Seokjin continues to hold it, patting his cheeks more gently this time. His injured hand relaxes under Yoongi’s ministrations, long fingers moving to wrap the thin gauze around his hand.

The smell of the soup, the sudden quiet, and Yoongi’s touch makes Seokjin remember things, makes him remember quiet Sunday mornings in an old one-bedroom apartment, the smell of coffee wafting from across the street, gummy smiles, and gentle kisses. Things he’s long forced himself to move on from. He remembers Yoongi on his bed, asking him why he left. Seokjin catches Yoongi stealing glances at him.

“Hyung,” Yoongi starts, “about earlier, what I said when I was-”

“I’m sorry,” Seokjin interrupts. He might as well get ahead of Yoongi. He should, because this is really all his fault in the first place. Yoongi was right, Hoseok was right, Namjoon was right. At the back of his head Seokjin thinks about how horrible his timing is, how dumb and maybe even unfair he’s being right now, but he doesn’t know if he will have any other chance.

“What?”

"I know you said you don't want to talk about it, and we don't have to -- so stop me if you're uncomfortable," Seokjin starts. His heart falters in his chest but he fights to continue talking, Hoseok’s words ringing in the back of his head. "I know this won't change anything at all, and I'm
not expecting you to forgive me."

Yoongi stops wrapping the gauze around his hand and looks up at him. Seokjin takes a deep breath and smiles, hoping his voice won’t crack. "I'm sorry," he repeats, out loud. “I really am.”

"It was very cowardly - the way I left, why I left - and you didn't deserve that. You really deserved something better than that. I’m really sorry, Yoongi."

Seokjin tears his gaze away from Yoongi, eyes piercing and face unreadable, as if he’s waiting for him to say something else, as if he knows there are still so many words needed to be said. *I'm sorry the note was a lie, I'm sorry I'm still keeping things from you* But Seokjin can’t find it in himself to say anything else other than *I'm sorry, I was a coward, I'm sorry.*

Seokjin counts the seconds, until it turns into a minute, before Yoongi finally replies. “We’re really doing this right now?” Yoongi asks, a little incredulously.

Seokjin looks at him and he sees a small smile hidden in the corner of his lips. He aches to move his hand to it, to smoothen it and coax it into the grin that it wants to be. He laughs and his shoulders shake. “Well, I’ve always had bad timing.”

Yoongi smiles. "You really kind of do."

“You don’t have to say it out loud, jackass.”

“Can I ask a question?” Yoongi asks. “Just one.”

Seokjin owes Yoongi so many truths, owes him answers to more than just one question. But Yoongi probably wants to get this over with, just like him. He smiles and tells him to go ahead, already forming the words to his possible questions like *why did you come back if you said you were tired of what I'm doing or do you regret leaving or why Daegu of all places or--* 

"How would you have done it?"

Seokjin looks back at him, surprised. “What?”

"If you didn’t, didn’t leave that way--" Yoongi stammers, dancing around the words like *not with a note or just like that or without a proper goodbye or all of a sudden, How?"

Seokjin huffs out a distressed laugh, resting his hand holding the ice pack on Yoongi’s shoulder. "I actually don't know, I'm not sure."

*How?*

He tries to think and Yoongi waits. He wants him to say *never mind or you can leave now*, but he doesn't. He waits. He meets Yoongi’s eyes, sad but patient. "I don't think--" Seokjin says slowly, carefully pronouncing every syllable. "I don't think I would have been able to do it."

"But you really needed to leave," Yoongi says. It wasn’t a question.

Seokjin nods.

"Yes. I did."

Yoongi nods back in understanding. In understanding or forgiveness, Seokjin isn't quite sure. He blinks and he sees Yoongi looking at him. He clears his throat and shakes his head. It’s useless. He turns to look at his hand, suddenly small when it’s enclosed around Yoongi’s; the other
has just finished tending to his wound.

He should pull away and move to stand up from the edge of the bed. It’s useless. He should tell Yoongi to take his medicine so he can leave the basement now. Leave the house. Leave. But he doesn’t, because he still has a little time with Yoongi, and he’s going to take care of him until his time runs out. And when it does, maybe that’s when he’ll finally be able to muster the courage to tell him the truth. Not just yet.

“Hyung?”

“Yeah?” Seokjin asks.

“My fever isn’t concentrated on my left cheek,” Yoongi smirks, and Seokjin frowns as he pushes the ice pack on Yoongi’s face. Yoongi laughs despite his fever. He looks at his hand, covered in gauze and lying limply on Yoongi’s. He thanks him and pulls away.

“You should take your medicine now,” Seokjin smiles as he stands up from the couch.

Yoongi reaches for his wrist.

"Watch a movie with me?"

The shop is almost unnoticeable, almost invisible in the corner of the street. The bright neon signs of the store next door overshadows it and Yoongi's sure he wouldn't have seen it if he hadn't been actively looking for it. He reaches for the handle and opens the door.

The old woman doesn't look up when Yoongi enters. She's busy wiping down a teacup, smiling at its intricate design, relishing its smallness in her hands. It doesn't even seem like she's noticed him. He walks around: the walls are covered with all sorts of items: busts, old guitars, paintings, calligraphic signages, mirrors, small cupboards. A table in the middle of the floor is littered with little trinkets like old toys and fridge magnets and books.

"Anything caught your eye, child?" the old woman says, still looking at the cup. Yoongi turns to her and nods. "I'm just here to look around, ahjumma." Her eyes sparkle behind her glasses when she hears his native accent. "You've been gone from Daegu for a long time, I can hear it."

She smiles gently at him and Yoongi smiles back, mostly out of respect. She puts the teacup back under the glass counter. "You'd have to forgive me," she suddenly says, "my husband is out and I won't be able to reach high if you want something on the walls."

Yoongi shakes his head. "I don't think I'm here to buy anything, ahjumma. Just - looking around."

She nods understandingly but tells him, "Sometimes when you say you're just looking around, you end up finding something you didn't know you needed." Yoongi smiles at the woman and continues walking around until he reaches the area where she is.

He imagines Seokjin behind the counter, wearing his glasses and wiping down the items with a piece of cloth. He imagines him entertaining customers and opening the store at sunrise and closing the place by dawn. He imagines him sweeping down the place, moving items here and there. If he focuses even more, he can hear his quiet, giggly laughter with the ahjumma in front of him, living peacefully, quietly.

Yoongi stands frozen in place when he sees the contents of the glass counter. She looks curiously at
him. "These are my shop's most important items. The crown jewels, if you may, of this small antique shop. Each of them has their own story." She spreads her hands on the glass, voice fond and proud.

"For example, this tea set," she continues as Yoongi stares at the glass, "this was said to be used by that French princess Marie Antoinette herself. When the people raided her palace, they sold off all the princess's belongings. Through trade and pawning, it ended up here in my little shop when a teacher at the university sold it here. She said it belonged to her husband, whom she just divorced. A bit sad, but fascinating story, don’t you think?"

Yoongi nods absentmindedly. "How - how about this?" he asks as he points to another item under the glass. The old lady of the antiques shop clasps her hands. "Oh," she says. "I didn't think anyone would notice that. I apologize, but I'm afraid that's not for sale."

Yoongi looks up at her. "But what's its story, if I may ask, ahjumma?"

She smiles and gingerly takes the chopsticks on its wooden handle and takes it out for Yoongi to see. "A boy who used to work here, lovely young man, he told me to keep it for him, before he left. Ah, I miss him. I miss feeding him too." She laughs as she pats the chopsticks lightly, and starts talking again.

"He says these are part of a bangjja set. But more importantly, he told me, these chopsticks changed his life. I laughed at first. How can a pair of chopsticks change one's life, more so an ancient pair that you can't use?" She giggles and Yoongi smiles, tries to ignore the mix of warmth and pain clawing in his chest.

"There's another pair," she tells him. "He told me there's supposed to be another pair and he left it back home."

"Back home?" Yoongi manages to ask, words almost stuck in his throat.

"Oh, yes. That's what he only told me. No name, no place. Used to just refer to it as ‘back home’ whenever I found the chance to ask. He told me he can't go back anymore."

Yoongi spits the question out before he can stop himself. "Why not?"

The old woman smiles. "I don’t know what he did that’s so unforgiveable, but—" she pauses and looks at Yoongi with curious eyes. Not questioning, just curious. She looks back down at the chopsticks. "—he doesn’t believe in second chances for himself."

She shakes her head and places the bangjja back under the glass counter, "That odd, sweet boy thinks he can carry the world’s burden on his shoulders."

Yoongi doesn’t know how he can agree without revealing anything, so instead he asks, "Where is he now? The owner?"

"Well," she laments, "I wouldn't know. I have no idea where he came from and I have no idea where he went. He still calls me, from time to time, but not lately. I really do miss him. I sometimes wish he’d never left."

He stares at the chopsticks and remembers the one he has back at home. Yoongi laughs to himself. He’d given it to Seokjin before that night ended, said it was his commission. Seokjin only laughed, saying something about how he can’t even use them to eat. They never talked about it after, so he only thought Seokjin sold it or lost it.

Kiae sighs sadly.
“But you know, I hope he doesn’t come back. If it means he already found himself back home, wherever that is.”

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Seokjin turns to look down at him from his end at the couch, eyebrows raised in surprise. Yoongi clears his throat and repeats his question. “I’m too awake to sleep anyway,” he adds, lying. To be honest, he feels like passing out. But Seokjin smiles at him, fond and sweet, and it makes Yoongi ache dully in his chest, a little bit more painful than the ones caused by his fever. He wants to pull him down, wants to take him in his arms. “I’ll get some snacks,” he tells him.

Yoongi rubs his hands under the duvet, curling up his knees to preserve his body heat while he waits for Seokjin. He’s not completely sure why he suddenly suggested watching a movie, all he knows is he doesn’t want Seokjin to leave just yet, and the large TV was the first thing he saw. Not just yet.

A minute later Seokjin plops himself down on the other end of the couch. “What are we watching?” he asks, already opening a pack of potato chips. Yoongi looks at the gap between them and frowns. “A classic,” he answers, turning to browse the menu on the television. Seokjin groans. “Please don’t tell me it’s _Inception._”

“What’s wrong with _Inception!?_” Yoongi gawks at him.

“We’ve seen it at least twenty times together. We’re going to watch something else.” Before he knows it Seokjin has taken the remote from him and is browsing through the menu on his own, his mouth full of chips.

“Yeah, like what? _Spirited Away?_” Yoongi frowns. He shifts from the comfort of his seat to reach for the remote, but Seokjin pulls away. “Yeah, like _Spirited Away_,” he laughs, swatting Yoongi’s hand away.

“I’m the one who’s sick, I should decide what we’re watching,” Yoongi protests, biting the inside of his cheek to keep himself from smiling back. The comforter falls off his shoulders and he shivers, to Seokjin’s amusement. The older bends down to pick the comforter and smirks as he wraps it around Yoongi. “A Ghibli film is good for the sick soul, Yoongi,” he tells him.

“But hyung we’ve seen that one at least thirty times, give me—” Yoongi holds out his arm, getting on his knees until he falls on top of Seokjin, who giggles adorably as he tucks the remote behind his back.

Yoongi swears he can literally see the blush on Seokjin’s cheeks grow and spread throughout his face. He can hear and feel Seokjin’s breathing, can feel how warm he is despite the comforter between them. Yoongi can see himself in the reflection of Seokjin’s round glasses, hair ruffled and cheeks flushed. They end up staring at each other, maybe a little bit too close for comfort.

But the thing is it’s not too close, not for Yoongi at least. It’s never too close for him, when it comes to Seokjin. The other clears his throat. “There’s a new Ghibli film,” he stutters, looking down at Yoongi’s lips instead of his eyes, not really telling him to move away or anything. Yoongi smirks. “I’ve seen it.”

“Really?” Seokjin raises an eyebrow.

Yoongi nods. “Yeah.”

“But you don’t watch Ghibli films—”
“—unless you ask me to watch with you, yeah,” Yoongi finally pushes away from Seokjin and settles beside him, almost tucking himself beside the older, satisfied at closing the gap between them. He pulls the rest of the comforter on the floor up on the couch and wraps himself in it. “I haven’t watched it with you, though. So fine.”

Seokjin sits frozen on his end of the couch.

Yoongi turns to look at him. “What? Are we not going to watch it?”

Seokjin blinks, adjusts his glasses, and finally moves to take the remote from behind him. “Right.” He starts the movie and they quietly watch.

Every moment that passes leaves Yoongi sleepier, more tired, probably a bit sicker. His head starts becoming heavy again, his meds must be kicking in. Half an hour into the movie, he feels Seokjin’s hand on his cheek, gently pushing his head sideways until it meets the broadness of his shoulders. It’s soft and warm and firm and safe. Yoongi’s breathing evens out as he snuggles his head closer.

It’s home.

“You’re still warm,” Seokjin whispers, eyes on the television but hand still lingering on his left cheek. Yoongi doesn’t know whether to lean to his touch or lean more to his shoulders. “Go to sleep, Yoongi.”

Yoongi musters his energy to shake his head. “You always hated it when I fell asleep in the middle of watching a movie,” he mumbles, and hopes that Seokjin was able to hear, or that he just ignores him so he can tuck himself closer to him in peace. Yoongi hears the low rumble in Seokjin’s chest. "No, I didn’t.”

“No, I didn’t.” Seokjin tuts. "Look at you, already sick but still picking a fight.”

“But you really don’t like it when I fell asleep, hyung. I heard you tell Hoseokie once,” Yoongi mumbles. His eyes are involuntarily closing themselves and he blinks himself awake. Seokjin laughs. “When was that?”

It was a long time ago. Maybe four or five years ago. Too far ago to be remembered, the memory too mundane to stay in the confines of his brain. But Yoongi closes his eyes and he can still remember that early morning, when Seokjin and Hoseok are in Yoongi’s kitchen talking. They thought he had fallen asleep on the living room couch.

Seokjin chuckles as Yoongi recounts that day to him. He pats Yoongi’s cheeks teasingly and the younger frowns. He unearths his hands from the safety and warmth of the comforter and grabs the older’s hand. Seokjin surprisingly doesn’t say a word when Yoongi starts playing with Seokjin’s fingers, starts tracing the lines of his palm, starts touching the edges of the gauze around his hand. ”See, I told you I know you hate it whenever I did that,” Yoongi concludes. "I tried not falling asleep after that, but I rarely succeeded.”

“I did tell Hoseok I didn’t like it when you fall asleep while we’re watching a movie, but I didn’t tell him that it’s because I don’t get to see you close your eyes,” Seokjin mumbles to his hair. “I liked doing that, watching you fall asleep.”

Yoongi’s hand travels from Seokjin’s fingers to his wrist, placing his thumb over his pulse point, rapid and throbbing under the soft skin. He tugs it gently, but still strong enough to get Seokjin’s attention.
“How about now?” Yoongi asks, looking up at Seokjin. It’s gone dark, and the glow of the forgotten movie on the screen is their only source of light. The blue and yellow lights play on Seokjin’s face, on each strand of his blonde hair, and create small illusions and reflections on the surface of his glasses.

Yoongi moves forward, slowly, upward, his right hand moving until it finds itself on the back of Seokjin’s head, holding him close and steady. Slowly, upward, gently, needy, he doesn’t remove his gaze from Seokjin’s.

“How about now, hyungie?” he asks again, lips not more than inch away from Seokjin’s lips.

It’s a small movement, a miniscule gesture; if Yoongi wasn’t so attuned to every move Seokjin makes he would have missed it, but Seokjin nods, letting out the smallest of smiles escape from his plush lips. Seokjin nods and affirms and says yes without words but it’s still a yes and Yoongi finally lets out a deep breath before pulling him close, eager to close the gap between them, but Seokjin holds him back, his hand quick to cup him by his jaw.

“Yoongi,” Seokjin whispers, hot breath fanning his cheeks, “You’re still sick. You have to rest.” Yoongi doesn’t hold back the whine that comes out rumbling from his throat, and Seokjin laughs before caressing his cheeks. He can almost hear his thoughts. Not just yet.

“Stay with me?” Yoongi asks, voice breathy and labored. He pulls away and rests his forehead on Seokjin’s shoulder, but his hands stay where they are, holding the other close, never letting go. He wants to say more, stay with me after this, stay with me after tomorrow, stay with me after this mission, stay with me after that. How many times Yoongi’s uttered the words to Seokjin only to find himself holding back, twisting the ends of his sentences, segueing it to something else, he doesn’t know.

“Okay,” Seokjin whispers, already moving him to a more comfortable position on his side.

"Will you be here when I wake up?"

Yoongi counts the seven seconds before Seokjin answers, the seven seconds that seemed to go on forever.

"Yes."

He doesn’t know if Seokjin is telling the truth, doesn’t know if he really will be there when he wakes up because the last time he said so, Yoongi woke up to his heart getting broken. But right now, this moment, Yoongi thinks it’s enough. He closes his eyes and feels Seokjin tugging the comforter until it’s covering the both of them. He takes a deep breath and finally, finally lets himself fall asleep, holding Seokjin by the wrist, never letting go. For the first time in three years, Yoongi falls asleep without wild dreams, without nightmares, without any sort of hollowness echoing in his chest that drains him until he wakes up.

It’s never going to be enough, and Yoongi knows he has to do something about it.

But until then, they have this moment.
Not just yet, you guys :)

I really appreciate your patience, thank you for reading! Tell me what you think, and/or find me on twitter!
The morning is warm and the sunshine creates a soft glow inside the apartment. Seokjin pours coffee on two cups, puts sugar and milk in one, and leaves the other black. It’s quiet, peaceful, and it should lull anyone back to sleep, but his mind is too busy with thoughts and there are voices in his head fighting, fighting, fighting.

Seokjin feels Yoongi’s presence even before the other is able to make himself known. He walks up behind Seokjin and puts his arms around his waist. “Good morning, hyung,” Yoongi whispers on Seokjin’s back, chest vibrating with his deep voice.

It was not your fault.

It is, it is.

The other voice wins, quite easily. And it has to be tomorrow, Seokjin thinks. There’s no other time but tomorrow. Namjoon and Hoseok will not be at the apartment, and Yoongi usually sleeps in on Sundays. He takes deep breaths and taps the counter with the tips of his fingers to ground himself.

Seokjin pastes a smile on his lips and turns around. “Good morning, Yoongichi,” he whispers as he pushes stray hair away from Yoongi’s face. “Why are you up so early? I was going to bring you breakfast in bed.”

Yoongi shrugs. “I smelled the coffee.”

Seokjin raises an eyebrow. “Really? But I closed the bedroom door.”

Yoongi stares at him, eyes still half-closed, and then buries his face on his chest. “Fine,” he mumbles. “I woke up and you weren’t there. I couldn’t go back to sleep.”

“Aigoo, Min Yoongi,” Seokjin coos and plants a kiss on top of his head. “So painfully cute in the morning,” he teases as he wraps his arms around the younger, playfully swinging them from side to side to nonexistent music, their bare feet padding on the floor.

“Where’s my coffee?” Yoongi grumbles as he pulls away to look at Seokjin.

Seokjin shakes his head. “Let it go cold, I’ll make you a new batch.” He pulls Yoongi back and rests
his chin on his shoulder. “Let’s stay like this for a while, okay?”

“Hyungie,” Yoongi whispers to his ear, voice so low that Seokjin almost doesn’t hear it. “Are you sure you’re okay?” he asks. Seokjin closes his eyes and hums. It’s getting harder and harder to lie as each day passes by.

“I’m okay, Yoongichi,” he answers.

In his head, Seokjin chants the first of the thousand apologies he’s going to make over the next three years.

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Yoongi wakes up to the smell of coffee. The warm feeling starts creeping up his bones even before he can taste it. He shifts his head and flexes his fingers but instead of comfort working its way through his muscles, a surge of panic arrives. He opens his eyes and finds himself alone on the couch. Alone again.

“Hey.”

Yoongi turns his head and lets out a breath when he sees Seokjin by the kitchen sink, pouring a cup of coffee. He watches the other walk to up to him and Yoongi takes the coffee in his hands idly, still staring at Seokjin who sits on the coffee table in front of him.

Yoongi blinks. Seokjin did promise to stay, and he’s here giving him coffee. He smiles at Yoongi and reaches his hand out. “You’re all good now, I think,” he says as he peels the vapor pad off Yoongi’s forehead. “How are you feeling?” he asks. Yoongi stares at the flush on Seokjin’s cheeks. He remembers seeing them up close last night, remembers his lips being dangerously close to his.

“Good. Good, I think,” Yoongi finally manages to answer. Seokjin pulls his arm back and Yoongi lifts the coffee up to his lips.

“Listen, Yoongi—”

“Do I smell coffee?!”

Both Yoongi and Seokjin jerk up to look at Jeongguk running down the stairs. The boy grins at the sight on the counter and rushes past them to get to the coffee maker. “Hah, yes, finally. I was stuck with instant coffee for about thirty six hours, not good, not good,” he babbles as the other two look over at him. Yoongi suddenly remembers that it’s him who told Seokjin to come over, and that he previously vowed to kick Jeongguk’s ass out of the house the next time he sees him.

“How’s work with Jaebum?” Yoongi asks instead. Jeongguk nods and pouts at them. “All good, all good, nothing too complicated but Yugeyem had a bit of a hard time infiltrating this system, but it’s all good now. How about you, hyung? All good now?”

Yoongi turns around to face Seokjin. “Yeah, all good now, I think.” He ducks his head and drinks more of the coffee.

“Okay, I’ll go ahead,” Seokjin says and Yoongi looks up, eyes widening.

“Wait, what no, no,” Jeongguk gets ahead of Yoongi, “I just got home! I’m planning to sleep for like 36 hours straight, I’m not going to be able to look out after Yoongi hyung. Please, don’t make me take care of him?” he pleads Seokjin. The older laughs as he stands up. “Don’t be a dumbass. Yoongi’s fine now, you don’t have to do anything.”
“Where are you going?” Yoongi asks. He wants to tell him no, you can’t go, no, wants to hold his hand and make him stay there. But Seokjin’s promise to stay is only until after he wakes up, and only until their work for Kwon Jiyong is done.

“Taehyung called me earlier asking for a favor. We’re going to meet at Hongdae.”

“What for?”

Seokjin shrugs. “He just said it’s urgent.” Yoongi can’t help but frown, and Seokjin laughs at the face he makes. “I promised I’ll meet him in half an hour, so I need to go. I was just waiting for you to wake up before I leave.”

Yoongi doesn’t stop frowning, and Seokjin doesn’t stop giggling fondly back at him. Jeongguk clears his throat quite audibly and grimaces at them. “This coffee is great. Just the right amount of bitterness, complements the amount of sugar I’m seeing right now,” he tells them from where he’s standing. Seokjin shakes his head and grabs his jacket on the other seat.

“Well, um, I’m leaving.”

Yoongi nods.

“Take your medicine right after breakfast, alright?”

“I will.”

“What, no goodbye kiss? It’s okay I’ll close my eyes,” Jeongguk teases from behind the kitchen counter.

“Fuck off, Jeongguk,” Seokjin tells him as he walks up the stairs.

The moment they hear the door close Yoongi puts the coffee mug back on the table and burrows himself back on the couch, determined to make a hole he can hide and sleep in. He hears shuffling on the other side of the comforter and he peeks to see Jeongguk making himself at home on the living room floor, setting up his console and starting up a game.

“What the fuck are you doing?” Yoongi grunts. “Playing a game,” Jeongguk grabs the remote and clicking on the menu screen. “You said you’re going to sleep for 36 hours straight.”

“Yeah but I’m still awake because of the adrenaline from my last job. Don’t worry, you can go back to sleep, Yoongi hyung, I like sitting on the floor.” Jeongguk leans back and doesn’t look at Yoongi as he continues to click on the menu. Yoongi doesn’t speak, but he pulls the covers down a little and decides to watch the game. He can’t fall back asleep anyhow. He keeps on replaying last night, keeps on trying to think what was real and what wasn’t. He remembers Seokjin apologizing, remembers Seokjin holding his face and running his thumb across his cheek.

“Soooo… how was last night?” he suddenly hears Jeongguk ask, just a little bit of malice in his voice. Yoongi frowns and shifts to look at Jeongguk, who’s concentrating on the TV screen.

“I was mostly passed out, so I don’t remember anything,” Yoongi mumbles.

“Right,” Jeongguk hums. “That’s why we have a Ghibli movie on our TV as the last played item. Hm, yes, I wonder who watched it last night.”

“What’s it to you if I watched that film?”
Jeongguk shrugs and continues to select the menu so he could go back to his game. “You only watch Ghibli films when you’re drunk. Drunk and sad, to be specific.”

Sometimes Yoongi forgets that a bigger part of his genius lies on the fact that he’s actually really observant. It’s part of the DNA of a hacker, Yoongi reckons, seeing the tiniest details in the most refined strings of code, putting two and two together no matter how far apart they are, and getting the connection between Seokjin, the films, and Yoongi watching them whenever he feels particularly shitty about himself.

“Seokjin hyung was the one who watched it. I was…” Yoongi looks at the screen blankly, “I was asleep,” he lies.

“I see.”

Jeongguk starts another round and Yoongi can’t see the point of playing games like it, but he doesn’t say anything, not now at least. He thinks he can watch the game in relative peace, but then his housemate continues talking to him.

“But does he know?” Jeongguk asks.

“Know what?”

The younger shrugs. “I don’t know, that you asked me to give you his address in Daegu? That you went there without wanting to tell anyone else? I mean I don’t even know what you did there, exactly.”

Yoongi sighs. “He did.” He didn’t mean to tell him, but Yoongi also didn’t mean to go on a rant in what he thought was a dream. “What did he say?”

“We didn’t talk about it.”

“Well son of a bitch.” Jeongguk curses and smashes the console buttons harshly.

Yoongi reaches to slap him at the back of his head. “Excuse me?”

“Ow, hyung! I wasn’t cursing at you, I was cursing the damn game!” Jeongguk pouts as he massages his neck.

“I hit you because of what you did yesterday.”

“And what did I do?” Jeongguk challenges him as he returns back to his game. Yoongi fails to find the words, and the younger continues, “Call him? You needed someone who can take care of you, hyung. Besides, I didn’t say you were looking for him and saying his name, repeatedly.”

“Ya, do you really want to be hit again?” Yoongi scolds. Jeongguk sighs dejectedly and shakes his head. “You know Yoongi hyung, if there's anything I learned in this game-”

"That game. That dumb video game you spend hours on-"

"If there is anything I learned,” Jeongguk repeats, speaking over Yoongi, “is that you don't get to regret the things you didn't fight for."

Yoongi met Jeongguk when the boy was barely into junior high school. He was too smart and too feisty for a school and a home that tried to contain him. Jeongguk spends too many hours in front of the computer, works too hard to the point of exhaustion, is easily grossed out by affection, and would
really rather be alone most of the times. He reminded Yoongi of his younger self back in Daegu.

"If there's even just a small part of you that knows you might regret it if you lose whatever – or whoever it is – it already makes them worth fighting for, no matter the end."

When he first let Jeongguk move in to his house to start working for him, he was most comfortable in front of his computer; he rarely talked to Namjoon and Hoseok, and mostly kept to himself at night. But sometimes Jeongguk misses his parents, sometimes Yoongi just feels alone, so they talk over soju and lamb skewers. He’s never mentioned Seokjin to him, and he’s grateful to the kid for never pushing it. Even up to now, Namjoon points out their similarities, but Yoongi’s guessing Jeongguk was able to pick up more things along the way.

"Maybe I should play that game," Yoongi answers instead. Jeongguk cackles and shakes his head. "Nah, you'll hate it."

Yoongi smirks. “You’re just scared I’ll beat you.”

“Over my dead, genius body.”

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“Hyunghyunghyunghyunghyunghyunghyunghyung!”

Seokjin turns around and sees Taehyung practically pouncing on him in the middle of the street. He laughs as the younger pulls away. “Seokjin hyung!” Taehyung half-yells. “Thank god you came. I need your help!”

“What’s going on?” Seokjin asks.

“I’m in a dilemma, a problem, a crisis. Only you can help me because Jeonggukie and Jiminie are being useless as of the moment.”

“What?”

Taehyung hooks his arm on his as they walk along the busy streets and explains. “So it’s Namjoonie hyung’s birthday the day after tomorrow, right?”

Seokjin blinks. “Right. I almost forgot.”

“Right. So I’ve been planning a surprise party for him but everything I think of is lame. You have to help me to decide! Yoongi hyung only tells me to give Joonie hyung beer, and Hoseokie hyung is being monopolized by Jimin now, so you’re the only one I can ask help from.”

Seokjin laughs and puts an arm around Taehyung. “Ah well, I should be offended by being the last choice, but hyung is here to help you anyways.” The other grins at him and promises him lunch. They enter a party supplies store and Taehyung excitedly dumps streamers and party hats in Seokjin’s arms.

“Ooh, Namjoon’s birthday celebrations have always been really fun! What are you thinking of doing?”

“I was thinking we could set this up in Jimin’s or his and Hoseokie hyung’s apartment and surprise him! Make it colorful and everything! What do you think?” Taehyung smiles as he grabs several packs of balloons.
Seokjin frowns. “Wait, is that not how you celebrate Namjoon’s birthday?”

Taehyung looks up at him from the bin of balls and piñatas, confused. “How did you guys celebrate Namjoon hyung’s birthday before?” he asks.

When they first got together as a group, Namjoon’s birthday was the one that came first. That time they just finished a particularly good paying heist and so Seokjin insisted that they celebrate. Yoongi decorated the apartment with streamers and balloons and confetti – despite initial protests from Yoongi himself – and Hoseok brought the food while Seokjin baked the cake and played MC. They gave Namjoon a paper crown from the fast food place they always ate in and they played card games and drank until they all passed out on the floor. It became a tradition that only happened particularly on Namjoon’s birthday, because Hoseok would always go back to visit Gwangju on his, while Yoongi strictly prefers celebrating at a lamb skewer place with zero party hats.

“We… we’d just eat and drink,” Seokjin shrugs and looks at the shelves beside him.

Taehyung shrugs back and goes back to pawing at the items on display. “I mean we always celebrate as a group – just drinks, nothing like what I’m planning. But on a separate day – sometimes before, sometimes after – Namjoon hyung, Hoseok hyung, and Yoongi hyung would go out and drink. Just the three of them. We don’t know exactly where they go, but maybe you know? They always do it every year,” Taehyung tells him. “It’s like some kind of tradition.”

Seokjin nods and smiles as he grabs an empty basket that he spots on the floor. “That’s good,” he says, not looking at Taehyung. At the back of his mind, Seokjin always thought that they would continue their tradition, but he realizes it may have been too painful for them, because of what he did.

Seokjin suddenly feels that he doesn’t have the right to go to Namjoon’s party, suddenly feels like he’s intruding at this group’s intimate celebration, when he’s not really quite part of it. He looks at Taehyung, wide eyed and giddy, and realizes how fond he’s grown of him; Taehyung and Jeongguk and Jimin, the three of them that arrived after he left. They complement the others’ personalities well, and Seokjin’s glad they found them. He wonders if they still would have found them if he had stayed, wonders if there’s some kind of parallel universe out there where they’re all together as a group, found each other without him having to leave.

*It doesn’t matter,* Seokjin thinks, because in this universe he’s already left, and in less than two weeks he’s going to leave again.

He walks around the store and finds a huge box in the games section. He smiles when he gets near it and almost runs into Taehyung when he runs back to the other aisle. “Look at this.” Seokjin shows the box to Taehyung. The younger’s eyes go wide and he grins bigger than Seokjin could ever imagine. “What do you think?” he asks as Taehyung slowly takes the box from him.

“This is amazing! Yes! I knew it was right calling you, Jin hyung. Ah, hyung where have you been all these years!?” Taehyung exclaims and goes in for a hug. Seokjin looks at him and sees that the younger seemed surprised when he pulls away. Taehyung flushes and bites his lips. “Ah, I mean-”

“Don’t think about it too much, kid,” Seokjin says as he pats his shoulders.

Taehyung smiles sheepishly at him and they go to pay for all their stuff. Seokjin laughs at him as they pick up their bags. “You should call Hoseok so he can prepare their apartment, they should be back from Jeju or wherever they came from,” he tells him. “Oh, you know about the new job?” the younger asks. Seokjin shakes his head and focuses on looking straight ahead. “Oh, no, no. Hobi just mentioned it to me in passing.”
Taehyung pouts at him. “Hyung, do you not like us?”

Seokjin looks back incredulously. “How did you even get to that conclu-”

“Are you not staying?” Taehyung asks, cutting him off. “We like you, you’re good for us! At first I thought you will cause some sort of a rift, you know? Because now there’s two of us here, but I really learned a lot from you! And you’re fun to be with! Though let’s be honest, only Jimin laughs at your jokes.”

“Aish, this kid,” Seokjin reaches to pinch Taehyung’s puffed out cheek. He laughs but the younger still waits for an answer.

“I can’t,” Seokjin finally mutters as he puts his hand down. It’s the first time he says the words out loud. He swallows the next words that attempt to come out of his mouth. *Even if I want to.*

Taehyung purses his lips. “Why? Do you need to go back to Daegu? Or is it because of Yoongi hyung?”

Seokjin shakes his head.

“No. It’s because of me.”

Taehyung sighs. “And nothing can change your mind?”

Seokjin pastes a smile on his lips. It’s not up to him to stay. He reckons that if he keeps on saying it out loud, if he convinces himself out loud that it’s fine, then he will be.

“It’s not like I’ll disappear from the face of the planet. I mean, you guys did find me, right? It’s not really goodbye, I think.”

Taehyung nods, but Seokjin thinks he’s still unsatisfied. “Hyung, can I ask you about something different this time?”

“Shoot.”

The sun is high but the clouds offer enough comfort as they walk down the street. It takes a minute or two before Taehyung speaks again, slowly forming the words in his tongue as clutches the shopping bags in his arms. "When you and Yoongi hyung got together, how did it feel?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean. You were friends first, right? Then you started working with him and you liked him. Then you got together. How did you feel about it all?"

Seokjin knows what he means: he wants to know how it feels to be working with someone you should be professional with. How it feels to look at that person every day and realize that you don’t just like them, you *like* them, and it’s scary, how much you do. How it feels to work with them on an assignment and see them turn into a completely different person, smart and fast thinking and feisty and *attractive*. How you think maybe it’s just that, but suddenly you look at them and everything they do is simply, heartbreakingly endearing, even when they’re just idly tapping their chopsticks or flexing their fingers or holding out a potholder as you place a piping hot dish on the table. How you long to hold them and tell them, but the fear of the unknown eats up all your courage; how you poorly attempt to not gush at everything they do.

How your heart stops in your throat when you find out that somehow, they like you too. And finally,
knowing that the sturdy hands, that gummy smile, the precious eye smiles, are all yours.

"It felt right."

Taehyung smiles as Seokjin looks down on his bags, not knowing why he suddenly feels a little shy. But it also felt nice to share, so he continues. "You know, I was with Jaehwan for a bit of a long time. And we've been friends for even longer. I've only known Yoongi for several months before we got together."

"And?"

"I don't know how else to describe it, it’s just that, you know? What I feel for Yoongi, I never really felt the same for Jaehwan or anyone else. Not that I didn’t love Jaehwan, but you know. It’s different with Yoongi. That’s how I know it’s right."

"I see. That must – must be really nice, you know?"

“It really is.”

Taehyung nods, face melancholic and longing. “But I don’t want to rush or force Namjoonie hyung.” Seokjin frees a hand to ruffle the younger’s hair. “You’ll get there eventually, kid. I have a gut feeling, and my gut’s usually never wrong. Don’t give up.”

Taehyung laughs and thanks him, whining a little about his messed up hair. They walk along the sidewalk quietly, looking for a place to eat, when the younger calls him again.

“But hyung?”

"Yeah, Taehyung-ah?"

Taehyung smiles slyly at him. "You said ‘feel.’"

Seokjin prepares to correct himself but he doesn't find himself doing it. "Do you want to get soondae? Let's go get some soondae, it's going to be hyung's treat," he says instead. Taehyung punches his arm lightly. “Fine,” he says, “but you’ll have to buy me like three plates and an extra serving of tteokbokki.”

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“I can’t believe we’re doing this again,” Hoseok says as he pulls out a streamer from its packet. Yoongi just laughs at him as he paws through the bags for more of the decorations. “Yeah, me too.”

“How are you feeling, hyung?” Hoseok asks. Yoongi pauses from unpacking balloons to look up at him. “What?”

“Don’t tell me it’s not weird, celebrating Namjoon’s birthday again like this and Seokjin hyung being here again,” Hoseok says as he puts up one of the streamers by the window.

“Why would you even put those colors in there, it doesn’t work that way!” Yoongi scolds him and takes the streamers away from him. Hoseok frowns and puts his hands on his waists. “Well I’m sorry Mr. Interior Decorator, I’ve forgotten how much you take birthday party color schemes seriously.” He proceeds to pump the balloons with air instead. “You still haven’t answered my question,” he tells him.

“I don’t know what to tell you,” Yoongi answers. Hoseok looks up at the older, whose back is
turned to him. He moves a little to the side and smiles when he sees him hiding an obvious smile. “You like it, you fucking sap,” Hoseok throws a pillow at Yoongi, who easily deflects it away. The older doesn’t answer and kicks the pillow back to him.

“You missed him a lot,” Hoseok says, pointedly. “Despite the way he left. God, why can’t you just yell at him about it and then make out or something?” he groans at Yoongi. “I mean not in front of any of us of course.”

Yoongi rolls his eyes and is about to say something when the doorbell rings.

“Hey, my hands are a bit full, can you open the door?” Seokjin shouts from outside.

Yoongi stands up. “I’m going to the bathroom,” he murmurs. Hoseok scoffs and opens the door for his cousin, just as Yoongi gets inside the bathroom.

“Ah, welcome to our humble abode, Seokjin hyung! Ready for the party?”

Seokjin rolls his eyes at him and goes straight to the kitchen counter where he puts the two boxes of cakes. “I’m just dropping these, I still have to get my gift for Namjoon. And I don’t know what flavor he would like, so I got strawberry and cheesecake for good measure.” He unties the red ribbons from the boxes and opens them in front of Hoseok, who sighs at the smell.

“We’re lucky to have you back, hyung,” he smiles as he looks at the cakes, “This would be a really great party.”

Seokjin looks up at him and bites his lower lip. “It would be. You should all enjoy.”

Hoseok looks up from the cakes and narrows his eyes, reading into his cousin’s words. His eyes widen in realization and before he can say anything Seokjin says he’s not attending.

“Ah, it’s not a big deal, Hoseok—”

“That’s bullshit. We want you here.”

“Ya,” Seokjin reaches across the counter and slaps his arm. Hoseok doesn’t even flinch, watching his cousin’s face carefully. Seokjin clears his throat and plays with the ribbons idly. “It’s not like you didn’t know that I’m leaving after this, Hoseok. You know I’m not a part of this, I’m only here for this particular mission—”

“But you want to stay,” Hoseok points out, just as Yoongi shows up from around the corner behind his cousin. Seokjinbreathes out and smiles sadly – and no matter how much people say that Seokjin is quite the prodigy when it comes to acting – Hoseok is still different, Hoseok knows him before he became Jin, and Hoseok knows he’s going to lie.

“No, I don’t want to.”

*****

Namjoon looks up at the evening sky, clear and full of stars. It’s always fascinated him, the way they work. They’re nothing but dead rocks, he read once in a book, but their light comes from so far away, traveled so far and vast, that we’re just seeing their impact now, the traces they left behind.

The park had been almost empty the entire afternoon; it’s a weekday after all, and there are very few people except for old men and ladies who go walking around as exercise. Birthdays have never been
a big deal to him, ever since he was a kid. It’s just a simple date, a record, a certain moment in time when a person is born. It shouldn’t be that important. Yet Namjoon finds himself a little excited for what waits for him, even if it should be a surprise. Jimin had slipped about it earlier, much to the chagrin of Jeongguk and the others.

Where are you? Hoseok texts him. Namjoon tosses his empty coffee cup in the trashcan and stretches his legs as he stands up from the park bench he’s spent the last four hours on. He finds Yoongi outside his and Hoseok’s apartment building, smoking by the sidewalk. He pulls his red hoodie up and walks beside him.

“Hey, hyung,” he greets him. Yoongi breathes out a smoke upwards to the sky, and Namjoon follows his gaze. The smoke is beautiful against the dark backdrop. “Ready for your surprise party?” he asks him.

Namjoon sighs and ignores his question. “Hoseok-ah told me,” he says instead.

“He should learn how to mind his own damn business,” Yoongi snaps. Namjoon laughs and puts his hands inside his pockets, knowing the older wasn’t really that mad.

“The last time Hoseok minded his own business—”

“I don’t want to hear it, Namjoon-ah,” Yoongi pleads. “I’m tired. I’m really, really tired. Fuck.”

It’s been three years since that night that Namjoon found Yoongi alone in his apartment, broken and hollow, the moon quietly shining through the bedroom window. For quite sometime Namjoon resented Seokjin for leaving Yoongi, mad even, and he can’t even begin to imagine how his best friend must have felt. After a while he came up with several reasons why Seokjin did what he did, and what he thought of was simple, logical: their jobs really weren’t ideal or even legal in the first place, and Seokjin must have been looking for something else, something more normal. It was easy for Namjoon to accept that theory, and so he did. But he knows it’s not the same for Yoongi.

“I was going to ask him, Namjoon. I really was,” Yoongi whispers under his breath. The younger puts his arm around Yoongi’s shoulders. Namjoon went to Seokjin’s apartment earlier that morning, to confront him, to ask how easily he could just drop those words like it wouldn’t affect anyone but himself. But you said it yourself, Namjoon, Seokjin had told him, just do it for the money. Leave right after.

We are conmen, after all.

But hyung, it’s different when I said it before, Namjoon had replied.

Seokjin shook his head at him. I’ve hurt him too much. I don’t deserve to stay.

Namjoon watches Yoongi drop the cigarette butt on the asphalt and grind it with the heel of his shoes. “

But I guess it’s easier this way. It’s good that I finally heard him say it out loud,” Yoongi tells him.

It’s been three years since Seokjin left, and Namjoon knows Yoongi still ached, even if he forced himself not to. They stay quiet for some time. Namjoon refuses Yoongi’s offer for a cigarette, and together they watch people and cars pass by. They’ve done this so many times in so many different situations: back when they were kids in Daegu, when they were struggling during their first year in Seoul, and even up to now. Yoongi’s phone rings and they both read the text from Taehyung upstairs, hiding in the apartment. Is he there yet? Is he there yet? the text says.
“He’s really excited for this party of yours,” Yoongi says as he puts a hand on Namjoon’s shoulder and walks with him towards the apartment building, intent on leaving their earlier topic behind.

“He’s a good person,” Namjoon says. *An amazing one. Too precious, too kind.*

Yoongi scoffs. “Who likes you a lot, yeah?” Namjoon shrugs as they walk inside the elevator.

“It’ll pass,” he says offhandedly, almost out of habit. “It’s been more than two years,” Yoongi informs him, as if he didn’t know.

Namjoon shakes his head. “It’s not gonna be worth the ending,” he mumbles as he walks out to the hallway.

“The ending?” Yoongi catches his wrist and stops Namjoon from walking any further.

“I mean, hyung, ah-what I meant to say—”

“Namjoon-ah,” Yoongi says, suddenly stern. “You either tell Taehyung you’re not interested, or you admit to him and to yourself that you like him. Whatever happened to Seokjin and I, it doesn’t mean that the same is going to happen to you and Taehyung. Do you understand that?”

Namjoon ducks his head. “Aish, hyung—”

“You’re the guy who thinks of hundreds of possibilities. Of course the possibilities with you and Taehyung are endless. You’re not me, Taehyung is not Seokjin hyung.”

Namjoon doesn’t know what to reply, but Yoongi smiles and pats his arm. “You can think about it later. Right now you have a surprise party you have to go to, birthday boy.”

“You’re such an asshole, hyung,” Namjoon grumbles. “But thanks for saying that.”

“Birds of the same feather, kid. Hoseok was probably thinking the same thing with Jimin. You guys are a mess.”

“Oh,” Namjoon pauses as he types in the code for the apartment. “I invited Seokjin hyung here. You know, as his gift to me.”

Yoongi narrows his eyes curses at him under his breath.

“Well, like you said, birds of the same feather.” Namjoon grins at him and opens the door.

The yelling doesn’t stop the moment the lights at the apartment are flicked on. Hoseok’s the loudest of course, but Taehyung comes second close and the party poppers and the music come third. Namjoon is speechless when he sees the apartment, memories and nostalgia flooding towards him. He knew there was going to be a party, but he didn’t think it was going to be like this.

“It’s-it’s just like before,” he stutters under his breath, loud enough for only Yoongi to hear.

The older nods and smiles; they watch Hoseok force his way in between Jeongguk and Taehyung to force a paper crown on his head. Jeongguk is yelling greetings and filming with his camera at the same time, and Taehyung is standing in front of Namjoon, clearly looking out for his reaction.


He sees Seokjin come out of the kitchen with a plateful of chips, and more memories come back to
him. Seokjin’s the one who started that old tradition of celebrating his birthday at their apartment, whining about how hard it is to make a cake only for Namjoon to complain about it.

“What were you expecting?”

“Not-not this,” he mumbles, and before he can explain Taehyung’s yelling again and they’re being pulled towards the center of the living room. Beers are passed around, asses are pat, songs are sung, and Namjoon blushes giddily the entire time.

“Let’s start the party!” Jeongguk yells as he comes out of the bathroom wearing a gold bedazzled jacket and introduces himself as the emcee with his toy mic. Taehyung pushes Namjoon towards one of the seats and put an arm on his shoulder as he sits down beside him.

Hoseok walks around and passes out party hats to the rest, and forces Yoongi to wear one. “You look cute, hyung!” he yells as he pats Yoongi’s cheeks. “And you’re already drunk, asshole,” Yoongi deadpans, but he doesn’t move to take off the hat. The other just laughs at him and proceeds to sit in beside Jimin and Seokjin on the couch.

Jeongguk asks everyone to give their gifts. Jimin and Hoseok go first and presents Namjoon with a watch. “You’re doing couple gifts now? Cheesy and cheap, I can’t believe you,” Jeongguk grimaces at them.

Namjoon ignores that and hugs the two gratefully. Jeongguk’s gift is a beanie (“That’s even cheaper, kid!” Jimin yells), but to which Namjoon squeals at happily. Next is Seokjin, who hands him a paper bag full of toy figurines. “Woah hyung, there must be at least thirty toys in here!” Namjoon exclaims.

“Aish, it’s because he spent all his free time at the arcade,” Jimin tells them. Seokjin playfully kicks at him and turns to Namjoon. “Namjoon-ah, don’t believe them! I was there all the time because I wanted to get those for you,” he grins at him.

Namjoon smiles and pulls Seokjin into a hug. “Thanks, hyung.”

The older pats his back. “I’m sorry I missed the last couple of years.”

“Nah, what’s important is you’re here with us,” he replies in a murmur.

“Hopefully the gifts are enough for the next thirty,” Seokjin replies in a whisper. “Aish, hyung,” Namjoon tuts and shakes his head. Jeongguk then calls for Yoongi, who rubs his nose as he pushes a paper bag to his best friend’s chest. Namjoon’s eyes widen in surprise. “You got me something?” he asks.

“This gift is not from me, though,” Yoongi says. Namjoon looks up from the still-closed bag and the others turn to look at Yoongi as well, confused.

“Your mom – she’s a writer, right?”

Namjoon nods dumbly and the older continues, “Well she had this new book – you probably bought your own copy already – but she had a book signing about several months ago,” he mumbles and scratches the back of his head. Jeongguk then calls for Yoongi, who rubs his nose as he pushes a paper bag to his best friend’s chest. Namjoon’s heart beats fast and loud as he takes out what is obviously a book neatly wrapped in yellow paper. He rips it open and bites his lips when he sees the name in the front of the book.

“Thankfully she didn’t recognize me, the devil kid who influenced her genius child,” Yoongi continues, “when she asked whom to address the dedication, I asked... well, it’s there, you can read
The room quiets down as Namjoon reads the writing. The paper catches droplets of his tears and he rubs them away with the sleeves of his jacket, careful to not smudge his mother’s writing.

Yoongi moves to return to his seat on the floor, but Namjoon grabs his arms and pulls him into a hug. “Thank you, hyung,” he mumbles, cradling the book close to his chest.

“Aish, why are you such a sap?” Yoongi whines.

“No, you’re the sap, hyung. Thank you for this,” he whispers. The older replies with a pat on Namjoon’s back, warm and fond.

“Is Yoongi hyung gonna cry? Are they gonna start crying?” Jeongguk asks, before laughing wildly, but Hoseok starts sniffing and he pulls the others to a group hug.

“Damn it, are we going to all start crying?” Jeongguk says while mushing his face on Seokjin’s back. The others laugh and Jimin hits Yoongi. “It’s Yoongi hyung’s fault! He’s ruined the mood!” he says as they all pull away. Namjoon takes the book to his room for safekeeping, peeking at the front page again one last time.

To the person I dearly miss,

I look up and somehow I know that you are looking up too, watching the same stars as I am. I am the moon who will forever follow and guide you in life.

Kim Soo Mi

He smiles and puts the book on his bedside table.

When he goes out the room is suddenly quiet and he frowns in confusion as he looks at Yoongi, holding a strawberry cake on his hands, smiling at him ominously.

“Wait, why are there no candles?” were the only words Namjoon was able to say before the entire pastry lands on his face, along with crumbs of potato chips courtesy of Seokjin, Jimin, and Hoseok, and confetti from Taehyung and Jeongguk. Everyone half-laugh and half-sings ‘Happy Birthday’ him while they wipe the icing across his face, and Namjoon can’t do anything but laugh and yell at them that he really liked the jacket he was wearing. Seokjin brings out a polaroid camera and starts taking photos of him.

“Happy Birthday, Namjoonie hyung,” Taehyung smiles as he hands him some wipes. “I’ll give you your gift later, okay?”

“What? No, no Taehyungie – all of this, it’s too much already!” Namjoon exclaims but the younger shushes him and pushes him to his room. “Just go change into something, we’re starting the game!” Taehyung tells him before running back to the living room. He washes his face and changes into a more comfortable sweater and when he gets back Jeongguk announces that they’ll be playing charades -- with drinks, of course.

Taehyung’s group wins the charades by a landslide, partly because Yoongi and Namjoon’s group chose sports as their category and Hoseok keeps on laughing and making mistakes while doing the interpretations. The three take a shot for each mistake, but by the third one they decide to make Hoseok drink soda instead.

“And for the next game! If you could all move, yes – yes, move your ass from the floor Jimin hyung,
why do you like laying down on the floor so much? Alright okay, here we go—” Jeongguk kicks Jimin away from the center of the living room rug.

When Taehyung and Jimin finally unfurl the entire thing, the mat takes up almost half of the floor. “What the hell is that?” Yoongi raises his eyebrows as he walks close to the center. Namjoon wrestles his way to see what the fuss is all about.

“You’ve never played Twister before, hyung?”

*****

Yoongi does not have, literally zero, right to be mad or feel bad. He doesn’t. Because this is what he wanted, this is what he told Seokjin right off the bat. Leave when the job is done. Even after finding out the truth, Yoongi has been telling himself that it was pointless, it doesn’t matter.

And he was right.

He was too dumb to nurture that small part of him that had hoped that Seokjin would want to stay, too dumb to think he could hold on just for a little bit. This arrangement is temporary and he doesn’t know what’s gotten into him, for him to think they could go back to where they left off before. This isn’t like me at all, Yoongi thinks. He’s Min Yoongi, capable of sound judgment and logical conclusions.

“For the others’ sake – Hoseok hyung’s, to be more specific - we’re reshuffling the groups,” Jeongguk announces as he pulls out a bunch of straws in his hand. Yoongi groans when the others push him to grab a straw, but he laughs menacingly as he’s able to grab the one Jimin was going for. He gets a short one, and he sees a hand holding a similar one holding it up to his.

“Guess we’re teammates,” Seokjin tells Yoongi.

But then again Seokjin is always that one person capable of tearing down his walls so effortlessly, that person who looks at him once and he’d be ready to lasso the stars if he asked him to.

Seokjin laughs, voice twinkly and squeaky as a half-drunk Hoseok pulls him and Seokjin with each arm, showing them his straw similar to theirs. “Yaaaaaay, we’re teammates!” he tells them and they all gather around the mat. Yoongi shakes all his thoughts away.

It’s Namjoon’s birthday, for heaven’s sake. He should be enjoying, should be having fun. It’s all over now, he thinks, and there’s nothing he can do about it.

“Alright rules are rules: when you slip you have to take a drink, okay? When you fall out of the mat, you drink. If you can’t find a spot within five seconds, you drink but you still play. And finally when your team loses, you drink. Okay, I’ll do the spinning, let’s start!”

Namjoon gets into the mat first with his right hand on a red dot, followed by Seokjin who puts his left foot on a blue dot, then followed by Jimin, Hoseok, Taehyung, and finally Yoongi, who realizes it was a bad idea to go last, because he turned out to have limited space to work on. He ends up with his left foot on a red dot and his right hand on a blue one. He thinks of slipping and dropping off the game on purpose, but he doesn’t want to be labeled a killjoy once more.

As expected the half-drunk Hoseok gets eliminated first. He whines about getting a second chance but three people (including Yoongi) simultaneously kick him off the mat. Namjoon’s long legs surprisingly give him an advantage in reaching colors that Jimin’s shorter ones couldn’t reach, and the younger falls flat on his ass when his left foot fails to maneuver to a green spot.
“I can’t believe this!” Namjoon yells as Jimin rolls on the floor laughing when he gets eliminated. “I’m finally not last at a game!” Jimin takes Seokjin’s camera and takes photos of them, while Hoseok volunteered himself to give out drinks to people. Yoongi’s not sure if playing Twister should be this intense, but after several more rounds Namjoon and Taehyung start whispering to each other, like Yoongi and Seokjin aren’t inches away from them, and conspires to get Yoongi eliminated.

“That’s cheating!” Seokjin bellows, and Yoongi looks at him. He’s sitting with one foot on a blue dot and his other foot stretched up in the air, while his left hand is on a green dot. He points to Taehyung and Namjoon with his free hand, and Yoongi tries to reconcile Seokjin’s obviously uncomfortable position and the fact that he doesn’t seem to be having any problems with it.

“It’s not cheating, hyung! We’re teammates! Maybe you should talk to your teammate?” Taehyung smugly replies, and Seokjin’s free foot misses him just by a couple of inches.

He’s really flexible, after all.

Jeongguk tells them that Namjoon’s team is right, which earns him a “How dare you!” from Seokjin and an “I raised you on my back!” from Yoongi. The youngest ignores them with ease and spins the wheel for Taehyung.

“Alright, alright – Taehyung hyung…”

Yoongi hears Taehyung whisper “yellow, yellow please” under his breath and Yoongi looks down at the mat, confused.

“Yellow!”

“Yes!” Taehyung yells victoriously and places his heel on the dot near Seokjin. Namjoon almost falls when he moves to place a foot on a blue one, but recovers pretty quickly.

Seokjin’s right hand lands on another green dot, and when Yoongi’s turn comes, he hears Taehyung murmur for yellow again.

That’s when he sees it.

Throughout the entire game he’s succeeded on keeping distance from Seokjin. He looks intensely at the spinner, the arrow moving slower and slower. *Not yellow, damn it*, he hopes. *Not yellow.*

“Right hand yellow!”

Yoongi thinks Taehyung had the game rigged. It’s totally possible, this really can’t be incidental. Nevertheless he rolls his eyes and moves towards the nearest yellow dot left, his face no more than five inches away from Seokjin.

The others make suggestive “ooh-ing” sounds, because they’re apparently all twelve year olds. Yoongi’s eyes flicker to Seokjin’s lips, and memories of two nights ago come back to him. He ducks his head and decides to stare at the mat instead, but not before he sees the blush blooming in Seokjin’s cheeks. The rest of the round is a blur to him, and all he knows is Namjoon fell and got eliminated, and now it’s just him and Seokjin against Taehyung.

“Yoongi.”

Yoongi blinks and looks up at Seokjin. He blinks and opens his mouth. “What?”

“If you get red, try to reach for that spot near Taehyung,” Seokjin whispers to him. Yoongi nods,
avoiding Seokjin’s eyes. Namjoon walks to the edge of the mat at whispers something to Taehyung, and the younger slyly eyes them. But then Jeongguk announces, “Seokjin hyung, left hand yellow!”

Everyone yells, and Yoongi doesn’t understand until Seokjin’s towering form moves on top of him so he can reach the yellow dot to Yoongi’s left, the older’s arms bracing his shoulders. He can feel Seokjin’s hot breath in his ears as he laughs, entire torso shaking at the awkwardness. Yoongi can feel all the blood rush to his cheeks, but then he blinks and Seokjin topples down, taking Yoongi along with him as he wraps a hand on his waist. “Ah, this is so unfair!” Seokjin yells at them. Taehyung stands and jumps in victory, leaving Yoongi and Seokjin on the mat.

Yoongi twists and goes on his knees to stand up, and he watches Seokjin with splayed on his back, his laughs turning his eyes into the most beautiful crescent moons. Hoseok hands them shot glasses and Yoongi yammers on about how they just let Taehyung’s team win because it’s Namjoon’s birthday after all. “Damn it, where’s the food?” Seokjin sits up from the mat and complains.

“When’s the food coming?” Jimin asks Taehyung. Taehyung stops from dancing around in the room. “Why are you asking me? Weren’t you the one who ordered it?”

“No, I didn’t.”

“What do you mean you didn’t?”

“Oh my god, I can’t believe you guys.” Hoseok groans and lies back down on the floor. “I can’t survive on beer and chips alone, I need my protein!” Jeongguk throws pillows at both Taehyung and Jimin, and the others join in hitting them. Yoongi takes the opportunity to hit Jeongguk too, and before he knows it a pillow hits him in the head, and the fabric rips off and the feathers burst out.

In the midst of the pillow fight he sees Seokjin, cackling and smiling as he tries to deflect Namjoon’s attacks. Maybe it’s okay that it ends like this, Yoongi thinks. He’s not going to regret this. Maybe it’s fine that Seokjin gets to move on.

At least one of them should.

*****

The night is cold but Taehyung feels warm, giddy, soft. The speed at which Seokjin - the most sober person with only a single shot of soju in his system - drives is almost illegal, he’s pretty sure, but he feels like everything is moving in slow motion. He’s not sure where they’re going, exactly, but it doesn’t matter. What matters at the moment is that he’s alone beside Namjoon at the back of Yoongi’s pickup, both of them feeling the cold September gusts in their skin, inhaling the polluted air of Seoul in their lungs. Someone suggested they go out to get food, and like a bunch of kids they raced to the car, and now they’re here.

He looks up and raises his hand as if to touch the moon, which seems to be running along with them. As an only child, Taehyung only had the moon as his playmate at night, when his grandfather is still out working while his grandmother is past asleep, exhausted from an entire day’s work. He would run left and right on the small porch of their old home, laughing as he thought the moon was catching up to him. His grandmother had told him that the moon was his mother, and she was guiding him even when she’s not beside him anymore.

“It’s really beautiful, right?” Namjoon says, his voice deep and languid. Taehyung nods and puts his hand down as he turns to Namjoon.

“Yeah, it is,” he replies as he adjusts the crown on Namjoon’s head. The other laughs and muses
about how he’s forgotten to take it off.

Taehyung doesn’t know what time it is. Hoseok is sleeping beside Yoongi and Jeongguk at the backseat of the car, while Jimin is seated in the front seat with Seokjin. They go through several more tunnels and some high ways before Seokjin parks the car at some 24-hour burger joint.

“What are you guys having? Jimin and I are gonna get the food for all of us, you can stay here,” Seokjin tells Taehyung with a knowing look, arms perched at the edge of the truck.

“Whatever you guys are having. But add a large soda for me, please!” he replies gratefully. Jimin winks at Taehyung before him and Seokjin go inside to order. When he checks that no one else inside the car could be listening to them, Taehyung turns to Namjoon. He can give his gift now, no one will tease either of them and quite frankly, he’s a little embarrassed to show it to him.

“Hyung,” he whispers as he turns to Namjoon. “My gift—”

Namjoon’s lips are soft, but his lower lip is a little chapped, a result of him biting it out of habit when he’s thinking, which Taehyung knows he does a lot. His hands are big and his fingers are long and they hold Taehyung’s face perfectly, warmly. Taehyung can only clutch the soft fabric of Namjoon’s sweater as he melts into his hold, like chocolate left out in the warm morning sun.

“You were saying something?” Namjoon whispers when he pulls away, his face just inches away from Taehyung. The younger stares at Namjoon’s lips for quite a while before the words register to his brain. “What? Oh-oh, I was – something – a gift, I was–” he stutters and Namjoon laughs at him fondly. Taehyung is suddenly washed over by embarrassment and buries his face at the crook of Namjoon’s neck, goose bumps forming on his arms.

“Why did you suddenly do that, hyung!? I wasn’t ready. Shit, I wanted it to be really romantic,” he whines, mortified. He feels Namjoon’s hands on his waist, pulling him close, and hears him chuckle. “Was it not romantic? Ah, I’m sorry, Taehyung-ah,” he whispers. “I’m not-I’m not really good at these things.”

Taehyung pulls away and shakes his head. “No! It was good, you were good! I mean, it was all good: the kiss and the mood,” he explains, “I just didn’t think it would happen now, you know? I don’t think I was even able to move my lips, and, and – wow, I think I have to pinch myself to check if this is real.”

Namjoon reaches and pinches his cheek for him. “I didn’t think it will happen too,” the older replies. “But in life I’ve learned that there are lots of outcomes for separate actions. I act when things happen to me, I make decisions based on what life decides to throw at me, and it’s always been like that. If it weren’t for people like Yoongi hyung and you guys, I think I would have lived a very boring life.”

“When you came, well – this is going to sound dumb but I found you really cute, but I didn’t think you would…” Namjoon trails off and puts his hand down.

“Pursue you for almost three years?” Taehyung fills in for him. Namjoon nods and laughs shyly.

“Yeah. I always think of the worst. So for this, for you – I thought the same. But I also learned that I can’t keep on just receiving and reacting to what life gives to me out of fear.”

Namjoon’s smile warms Taehyung despite the cold weather, and he can’t help the blood rushing to his cheeks when he takes his hands. “Thanks for listening to me, Taehyungie.”

“Thanks for kissing me, hyung,” Taehyung says before he can stop himself. Namjoon ducks his head, embarrassed. “God, was I bad? It’s okay, you can tell me.”
“Hyung, you were good! But you know, we can try it out again so you can prove yourself wrong.”

Namjoon looks up and shakes his head. “Maybe next time. You were going give me something?” He peeks behind Taehyung. Taehyung’s almost forgotten about it, what with Namjoon suddenly kissing him and making all of his dreams come true, so he scrambles to hide the wrapped gift and scoot away from him. “Ah, now I’m even more embarrassed to give this gift to you because it’s creepy,” he mumbles, but Namjoon just reaches his hand out expectantly.

The gift contains photos of Namjoon when he wasn’t looking, all in black and white, curated and printed in specialty paper. At the back of each page are handwritten dates of when the photos were taken. “It’s nothing like Yoongi hyung’s gift-

“What are you talking about? Shut up, this is-this is really beautiful,” Namjoon tells him.

“Oh well, I know we don’t do a lot of pictures because of our work, you know,” Taehyung explains sheepishly as he watches the other flip through the pages, “but I’ve been taking photography as a little side hobby and well, you’re my favorite subject, hyung.”

Namjoon looks up from the photo book and Taehyung doesn’t think he could blush even harder, but he does. “It’s beautiful. Thank you, Tae.”

“Happy birthday, Joonie hyung.”

Namjoon leans forward to give Taehyung a peck on his cheek, chaste and sweet, but this time Taehyung is ready on his end, and his heart soars up to the sky, to the moon, to the stars.

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They end up driving back to Yoongi’s house by around four in the morning. The others hop off the car even before Seokjin can park it. He watches the others walk away and almost jumps when Namjoon pops up outside his window. “Memorable day?” Namjoon asks him. They’re left alone by the driveway, hearing the faint sounds of Jeongguk saying something about leftover soju from the kitchen and a game of Overwatch with Taehyung.

“I should be asking you that, birthday boy,” Seokjin replies. “I’m really proud of you, Joon-ah.”

“For what?”

“For coming this far. I know you and Yoongi went through a lot of things together, I’m glad you stuck with each other and tagged all the others with you,” he tells him.

“Well, it’s good to have you back here, hyung,” Namjoon says. Seokjin nods. “Thank you, Namjoon-ah, for asking me to come back for this mission.”

“You know you don’t have to leave, right?” he tells Seokjin. Namjoon has always been the most blunt among the four of them. People would think and assume it would be Yoongi, but Namjoon’s always the one who sets them straight, the one who tells them if they’re not doing their job right. “Go ahead, I’ll just park the car and follow inside,” Seokjin says instead.

Namjoon pauses to look at him, but in the end he just nods wordlessly and walks away, just as Seokjin’s phone rings. His eyebrows raise when he sees the caller, but he accepts the call either way.

It’s going to be okay, he tells himself.

You were expecting this.
When the call ends Seokjin goes ahead and parks the car inside the garage. Before he turns the engine off he takes out his camera case and brings out the photos he’s taken from that evening. He smiles at each and every one. He gets to the photo of Jeongguk, Yoongi, Taehyung, Jimin, Hoseok, and Namjoon by the Twister mat, laughing in a pile. He should have that one, at least.

He takes that one and places the rest inside the glove compartment. He tucks the photos in one corner, tutting at the mess inside – made by Yoongi or Jeongguk, he’s not sure, and is about to close it when he sees another polaroid.

It’s older, the white frame yellowed by time. The corners are a little tattered, like it was made to fit somewhere smaller, like a frame or a wallet. The photo isn’t that clear, but it was clear enough for him to remember, that night when he and Yoongi first went on a date that ended up with Hoseok fetching from a bus stop somewhere downtown. They both looked young and happy, unaware of what’s going to happen to them four years later. Their cheeks are flushed and Seokjin is throwing a peace sign while Yoongi has an arm around him.

Seokjin bites his lips and closes his eyes. He can still remember his smell; can still hear his laughter in his ears.

“Ah, I’m sorry, Yoongi-chi. I’m so sorry.” He pulls up the sleeves of his sweater to wipe the tears threatening to fall from his eyes. He takes the photo and places it behind the casing of his phone for safekeeping. As he walks the small pathway to Yoongi’s door, he tries to remember that this might be one of the last moments that he’ll be here. He shakes his head and shrugs off the sinking feeling in his stomach, as he always does.

When he opens the door to the living room, soju is already being passed around by Yoongi while the others eat their burgers and soggy fries, all too lazy to walk the fifteen steps to the actual headquarters, but all too awake to fall asleep.

Seokjin meets Yoongi’s eyes, reading into his every move, effortlessly seeing through all his barriers. Goosebumps form in Seokjin’s arm and he has to look away. He mutters something about making coffee and walks to the kitchen. Namjoon asks for a cup, while Hoseok on the other hand tries to start some kind of bet between Jeongguk’s and Taehyung’s push up capabilities.

Jimin’s camera is ready to record and both Taehyung and Jeongguk are already facing down on the floor, ready to start, when Yoongi’s phone rings.

“Who’s calling you at this hour?” Namjoon asks. Yoongi stretches his neck in annoyance.

“It’s our beloved employer,” he mumbles before answering the call and putting it on speaker. Seokjin pauses from pouring the coffee in separate mugs and looks up in surprise. Kwon must have other people watching over Seunghyun, then.

“Mr. Kwon, to what do we owe the pleasure?” Yoongi greets him.

Ah hello, Suga-ssi, I didn’t think you’d answer. It’s almost morning after all.

“No, no of course, it’s fine.”

Ah, I should’ve known. Men like you probably don’t follow the usual schedule. He laughs and Yoongi rolls his eyes, annoyed at the small talk.

“Is there something wrong?”

Well, yes, I’d just like to assure that everything’s going well with our plan?
“Of course, of course, what would be—”

_Because I’m getting reports that our Mr. Choi is, ah, taking precautionary measures._

Everyone in the living room looks at each other, confused, but no one moves. Seokjin puts the coffee pot down, almost soundlessly. Yoongi turns to look at him, confused.

I’m expecting you know of this, Kwon continues.

Seokjin walks to Yoongi in three long strides, holds his arm and whispers in the lowest voice, “Tell him you know. Party’s moved to the 20th.”

Yoongi looks at him in disbelief, but Kwon Jiyong is waiting on the other end of the line. “Yes, Mr. Kwon, of course. He moved the party up earlier, we’re fully aware,” Yoongi says confidently, but he is still looking at Seokjin.

And you’ll have my painting by then, Suga-ssi?

“We didn’t come this far to fail,” Yoongi replies almost impatiently.

_I knew I could count on you. I must admit this was all of a sudden, but I needed your word before I get some proper rest._

“Of course. Have a good evening, Mr. Kwon.”

Kwon ends the call and everyone stands up from their seats the moment it does.

“What is he talking about?” Jeongguk asks, bewildered.

“The 20th? That’s four days from now! I thought we still had a week and a half,” Hoseok exclaims. Everyone looks at Seokjin, expecting him to answer all their questions.

“He moved it,” he offhandedly explains. “Seunghyun called me right when I was parking. He requested explicitly to not tell anyone.”

“Why didn’t you tell us?” Yoongi asks, trying to control the temper in his voice. Seokjin moves back and leans on the kitchen counter. “I was going to tell you later today, when we’re sober and well rested.”

“But why is he moving it up?” Jimin asks.

“To surprise Kwon. Seunghyun knows he’s is going to do something, he doesn’t know what it is, but – he expects him to do something.” Seokjin shrugs and shakes his head. “I saw it coming, if I’m going to be honest. Kwon Jiyong was too desperate to get his attention, used the media too much thinking he could get Choi— it doesn’t matter, alright?” Seokjin tells them irritably, annoyed at hearing Kwon Jiyong’s voice, annoyed that his instincts were right about their target’s moves.

The room was quiet for a while.

“Well, either way, we’re ready, aren’t we?” Taehyung finally says.

Namjoon affirms the Taehyung’s statement and nods. “We only need to review the plan, move some stuff around, and do final recon. It’s good we were able to finish all the important work immediately. We’ll be busy the next couple of days preparing, but I’d like to think we’re good to go.”
Jimin, Jeongguk, Hoseok, and Taehyung agree, confident that this slight hiccup won’t affect their plans. Which is true, because Namjoon and Yoongi’s plans are airtight secure, and there shouldn’t be any problems. Seokjin crosses his arms and nods. Yoongi’s crew the best team Seoul has ever seen, and Seokjin will do whatever it takes to make sure they will get that painting. No matter what happens.

When he looks up he meets Yoongi’s eyes, and for a moment, underneath the dim lights of the living room, it felt like they were the only ones there. He smells the coffee, feels the silence, sees only Yoongi. *Only four days left, then, he thinks, and then it’s over.* He smiles brightly at them.

*One last lie won’t matter.*

“Yes, we’re ready.”

Chapter End Notes

Song inspirations: *You Were Beautiful* by Day6 for the very first scene, *Daydream* by Empty Houses for the Twister scene and *Spring Day* by BTS for the whole chapter, overall. Plus points if you got the references hahaha

I’ll be having a little poll for the epilogue on my Twitter, check it out if you want. See you on the last chapter!
It's been a while! I just want to give a little shoutout to Vero and AP who made some wonderful, wonderful things. I am so grateful to you guys.

And to you, of course thank you. Thank you so much for waiting. I hope you enjoy this one.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“JK.”

Jeongguk grunts and almost hits his head. “JK!”

He snaps his eyes open and freaks out for half a second before realizing where he is and that there’s no reason to panic. His fingers instinctively reach for his keyboard and when he presses the nearest key, the screen glows up and lights up the room.

“I’m here, I’m here,” he mumbles, voice thick with sleep and exhaustion as he stretches as focuses his eyes on the screen.

"Were you sleeping?” Namjoon asks in disbelief. Jeongguk sighs. “Well, it’s almost what – god, it’s seven in the evening!? And I’ve been here since two in the afternoon, you can’t expect me to just… you know, not.”

He hears Yoongi sigh in the background. “I told you to not play Overwatch for a single night so you won’t get sleepy.”

“You’re not my dad.” Jeongguk frowns, and that’s when he hears the others laughing. He must have been out for maybe just an hour. Yoongi ignores him. “We’re going in,” he tells him instead. Jeongguk clears his throat and stretches his neck. “Alright, give me one minute.”

The screen in front of him shows multiple boxes, all showing various angles of Choi Seunghyun’s house. On another monitor to his left are yet more screens, while the screen on his right shows series of codes running swiftly up and down. He zooms in to one camera outside the walls of the house, where a black pickup truck parks twenty feet away. Jeongguk types in several lines of codes and clicks some buttons and the screen switches to a loop: an empty street with nothing interesting going on. His eyes flicker on the box showing security tracking all the cameras.

The woman staring at the screens doesn’t even bat an eyelash. Jeongguk turns to watch Yoongi and
Namjoon throw hooks on the wall. Yoongi tugs on the rope lightly. The hacker swiftly moves his mouse and types away until he disables of the alarm on the wall.

“Scale it.”

Namjoon climbs the walls first, legs long and used to this type of work. Yoongi’s legs are shorter, but he’s more graceful and a little faster than the other. They reach the top of the wall that faces the back of Choi Seunghyun’s house.

“V-ssi…” Jeongguk mutters under his breath and moves the cameras around until he reaches the edge of the backyard, where a pool and a small garden are located. It’s not as well lit because the pool has been emptied and none of the guests are in it, but he finally spots Taehyung talking to a security personnel before bending down to pet the two black Labradors held by the man.

With a soft thud Namjoon and Yoongi land on the manicured grass. The man, wearing a crisp black suit and boasts a built wider than Taehyung, turns around briefly before being distracted. “Uhm, Sir, excuse me. The dogs might-”

“Ah, no, no, they won’t.” Taehyung grins up at him, smile boxy and wide. “They, however, would,” he says as he points to the shadows behind the man. It’s too late for the poor guy to turn around, as Yoongi swiftly stuffs a chloroformed handkerchief up his face. It takes two seconds before the guy is out like a light and being dragged behind one of the trees.

“Hi Berry, hi Plum, you’re such good boys!” Taehyung coos and scratches the dogs’ chins.

Jeongguk frowns. “You named them?”

“No,” Taehyung answers, “those are their names. It’s on their tags. I’m respectful of animals’ names.”

“Right, okay.”

Taehyung continues to pet the dogs, gleefully eating treats as Namjoon and Yoongi swiftly discard their clothes. By the time Taehyung’s led the dogs faraway and tied their leashes somewhere far but easily seen, the other two have already changed into suits. Yoongi dons a crisp black and white patterned jacket with a white shirt underneath, while Namjoon changes into a blue suit with small white polka dots.

“I think we’re good,” Yoongi tells Jeongguk as he holds the security guy’s radio. “JK, hack into this?”

“Done before you could even ask. It’s like you think I don’t know my job?” Jeongguk asks him in mock indignation. He sets up one small speaker and overhears all the other the other security personnel’s’ conversations.

“Alright, you fucking genius then. Give us the picture.”

Jeongguk clears his throat. “Target is still in his room. Same people in and out: stylist, sister, one household help, then his mother. Another stylist came in with a rack of suits at 18:08 so I’m assuming he’s about to get dressed. I’m close to hacking the elevator security system and once Chim hyung rigs into the power I can say we’re running smoothly there. I’ve got all eyes on all angles of this damn maze of a mansion.”

“We’ll get there eventually,” Yoongi assures them. “Where are you, Hope-ssi?”

“On the floor,” Hoseok replies. He has successfully infiltrated the catering services and acquired a crisp white suit that serve as his uniform. He hums along to the music in the background, busy handing out flutes of champagne to the growing number of guests. “Good. Then that leaves—”

“We’re here,” Jeongguk hears Jimin say. The youngest zooms in to the front door of the mansion, where Jimin gets out of the limo he’s driving and opens the door to let Seokjin out, wearing a soft pink suit and a smile that can charm anyone. He’s wearing his earring again, the same one he wore at the bar. He nods to Jimin in recognition, movement of his head subtle but firm.

Seokjin goes straight to the host with his invitation, who checks his name on the list and lets him in. Jimin drives away to park the vehicle. “Jin hyung’s in the house,” Jeongguk confirms.

“Alright men,” Yoongi tells them as Taehyung, Namjoon, and him get inside the house and go about their own directions. Jeongguk smirks and straightens his back, fingers all set to work.

“Let’s get paid tonight.”

*****

Not a lot of people have the privilege to get invited to Choi Seunghyun’s house. Very few, in fact. They’re all selected, hand-picked, background checked. The mansion’s structure is a mystery; its hallways and passageways are like a maze to anyone who dares to enter without a guide. Even his handful of household helpers do not go beyond their assigned areas, not just out of fear of the owner, but out of the sheer fear of getting lost, or worse, accidentally ruining one of the paintings, each of them easily worth twice their lives.

Each room is filled with luxurious art pieces, from small figurines from Thailand to ancient Chinese scrolls to framed oil paintings during the French Revolution to modern paintings, each bearing their own meanings for the owner. Every two days ten different household helpers do the dusting, the vacuuming, the wiping, and the general wiping of their assigned floors. As Choi Seunghyun prepares to leave the house and move to Paris, all of the said pieces are said to be moving with him as well, all to be taken with him in his private jet, even bigger than the one Kwon Jiyoung owns.

But as their target moves his departure date earlier, the house is currently quite a mess – what with the movers trying to navigate the hallways without disturbing the party, and with the growing number of guests trying to roam around the house, especially the ones who have never been there before.

Namjoon quietly observes from behind one of the pillars by the side of the ground floor of the house, holding a half empty glass of champagne in one hand. Seunghyun or his staff probably didn’t foresee the mess behind the scenes that this shift in the schedule has made, failed to see beyond the petty tactic that will inevitably cause his downfall.

“The party organizer keeps on coming to Seunghyun to tell him about some kind of problem,” Jeongguk informs them in the comms. There are approximately forty people in the receiving area alone, not counting the roaming security, the waiters and caterers, and the 12-piece band on a makeshift stage playing music for the audience. A large chandelier up above moves slowly, giving an impression of the classiest disco ball, sparkling and reflecting light in the most beautiful way.

Namjoon nods and taps his feet to the music, closing his eyes and humming to the rhythm. “I’m sure this party wasn’t scheduled for tonight. No one in their right mind would schedule moving men and a grandiose party on the same night. This just makes our jobs easier.”
Namjoon opens his eyes and looks at his watch. A little half past eight. In the corner of his eye, he eyes the grand staircase, closed off with a huge red ribbon and guarded by four stoic-faced men. He turns his gaze and he sees Yoongi walking around with a flute of champagne in his hand. Namjoon rolls his eyes. “Suga hyung, stop following Jin hyung around, will you?”

Yoongi stops in his tracks for a second in the middle of the dance floor, but continues walking and following the man in the light pink suit. “I’m not following him around,” Yoongi tells him. Jeongguk snorts in the background.


“I’m just making sure he does his job.”

Whatever retaliation Namjoon has in his tongue fades away as the band stops playing. The low murmurs from the guests halt and everyone slowly turns to the direction to the top of the grand staircase. If Choi Seunghyun was trying to look discreet during their first encounter at the Incheon International Airport, this time their target seems to make sure that all eyes are on him.

“He’s so dramatic,” Jimin tells them. Namjoon nods in agreement, though none of the others can see him.

Choi’s hair is pushed up and styled to look like pink flames, and he’s wearing a custom suit that resembles one of the paintings of Dutch artist Piet Mondrian: a white jacket with black vertical and horizontal strips, making uneven squares filled with the occasional red, blue, and yellow patches. The crowd claps upon Seunghyun’s entrance, all looking up to him, including the security. “He’s so fucking rich, what the fuck.”

“How about we do a counterdeal with him?” Taehyung suddenly suggests. “Maybe he can offer something bigger than what Kwon did you know?”

“Don’t be dumbasses,” Hoseok gripes. “Get back to work.”

“Did you just call me a dumbass, Hope-hyung?” Jimin asks, apparently hurt. Namjoon rolls his eyes.

“It’s just V, Chimmie, don’t worry,” Hoseok replies. Jeongguk makes a grossed out sound. “Did you just call him Chimmie?”

“Now’s your chance, Chim,” Namjoon instructs, focusing on their plan, very much unlike his crew. Yoongi groans under his breath. “I’m going to fucking vomit.”

“Right, roger that RM,” Jimin says, but not before adding, “As if you didn’t call someone we know Jinnie Jin Jin, Suga hyung.”

Namjoon couldn’t hold the back his snort. Jeongguk hollers and Taehyung cackles. “Fuck you,” Yoongi hisses under his breath. Namjoon goes back and watches Seunghyun smile at the crowd before raising a hand to stop the applause.

“Good evening, everyone. I’m glad you could make it tonight. I know, I know your actual suits and gowns were still being made when I had you informed that this party’s being moved, but I’m grateful you could understand.”

Another round of applause, mixed in with low whispers and chuckles here and there. Namjoon takes the time to survey the crowd. There aren’t more than a hundred guests scattered around the spacious floor. Several cocktail tables are set up on the sides, but most of the people are gathered at the foot of the stairs. The crowd mostly consists of Choi Seunghyun’s closest friends in business and the arts.
“You may be wondering why,” Seunghyun continues, “why there aren’t many of us tonight. Not more than usual, of course. Well the answer is simple. I want this, my last night in Seoul, to be as intimate as possible. I’ve spent time with my family already, and now I want to spend time with you, my brothers and sisters in covenant.”

The crowd makes a collective crying sound. Seunghyun laughs and shakes his head. “Ah, but please, let’s not talk about that tonight. I want us to treasure this night together. For spending your precious time with me, I want to thank you.”

"Ah, this party is just him being petty towards Kwon Jiyoung," Taehyung notes. Namjoon nods. "They've got too much money lying around."

Choi continues, “I know that this house of mine has been sort of a mystery to a lot of people. It still is, and still will be. As you can see, there isn’t any media here. It is my intention, because I want you, and only you guys, to see this little surprise I’ve prepared.” Seunghyun pauses for a second to scan the crowd. He finds Seokjin and smiles as he walks down the stairs. “Before I move to Paris, I’m letting everyone see my art collection. The second floor will serve as your exclusive gallery tonight.”

The crowd goes wild, in high society and art enthusiast standards at least. There’s a lot of clapping and whooping and one Caucasian man starts hopping in joy. Seunghyun laughs at them and he gently removes the ribbon that closes off the second floor to the guests. A woman with a bright smile stands in front of the crowd going upstairs. She bows to them and introduces herself.

“Good evening. I am Min Hyorin. Dinner will be served here at the foyer. I encourage you to look around only with permission from our wonderful security personnel here. Thank you.”

Namjoon slowly follows the crowd. “Exclusive gallery my ass,” Jeongguk tells them. “The pieces here are not everything this man owns.”

“He’s trying to contain all the guests in one location,” Yoongi tells them. “That way his security isn’t spread out too much. He thinks that this will make his actual gallery safe from whatever he thinks Kwon Jiyoung’s planned out for tonight.”

“Let’s make him think that, then,” Namjoon replies. His eyes flit and he sees Seokjin talking to several ladies about twenty feet away, all with stylish haircuts and bright eyes.

“Jeongguk, tell me the best vantage points for this floor.” Namjoon walks up the stairs slowly, counting the security overlooking the ground floor from the balconies.

“Walk straight ahead, just follow the crowd until you reach the showroom. West corner will give you the best view.”

“Thanks.”

Jeongguk was right; based on the number of pieces that he can see, it’s not even half of what Choi owns. “These are the pieces that he displays in his kitchen,” Namjoon almost laughs under his breath. Does he think Kwon Jiyoung is dumb? “There are a couple of good ones, but the rest of these, you can’t even pay me to get up from my bed to steal.” Namjoon walks around and converses with the other guests on occasion, sociable enough so security won’t be suspicious, but conspicuous enough for people not to stick with him for a long conversation.

Yoongi catches his eye as the younger passes by him. Namjoon follows him discreetly, ready to stop him from following Seokjin, if he still was. He pauses when Yoongi halts abruptly, feet almost faltering. They’ve both reached the south end of the room and Namjoon walks to the side to see what
made Yoongi stop.

Yoongi watches Seokjin standing in front of a painting, color drained from the older’s face as he stared at the piece in front of him.

The Red Bullet.

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“The Red Bullet is a post-World War painting, passed on from one family to another. It shouldn’t be of any significance, but ever since the painter got recognized posthumously, collectors and other art enthusiasts began collecting his other works.”

They’re in the living room of Yoongi’s apartment, and Namjoon is standing in front of them talking about their new job. “Painting in question is his most famous one, and it happens to be in the possession of one Bang Shihyuk,” Namjoon tells them.

Bang Shihyuk is a gun expert and art collector, living in a small but luxurious home in South Jeolla, house secured with multiple alarms on every window and door. He doesn’t seem to be living with anyone else, and his only relatives left are his two nephews who visit him from time to time. “One of which, is also our employer for this job,” Namjoon continues.

“Said nephew says he acquired the painting after blackmailing the last family who owned it, and then went about boasting how it’s the perfect piece of art for him,” Hoseok further explains, “he wants to take it from his uncle after he found out that he isn’t part of his last will.”

Namjoon, Yoongi, and Hoseok arrive at Bang’s house a little before midnight, when they know that the house owner is at the nearby bar, boasting about his collection for the thousandth time to anyone who will listen. Seokjin is sitting by the bar, assigned to keep the target drunk and put in his bar stool.

“It’s going to be okay,” Yoongi tells him an hour before. “Just keep him distracted and we’re good.”

“Of course,” Seokjin assures him with a smile. “Easy money, right?”

Yoongi gives him a peck on the cheek, quick and light. “Easy money.”

It’s easy, Seokjin thinks as he settles on a bar stool, playing games on his phone. The night starts out normally and Seokjin, that night, opts to not approach Shihyuk, preoccupied with chatting with the resident bartender, talking about the oldest kind of slingers that are currently in his possession. Several other bar regulars listen to him, but mostly because Bang is buying them drinks. Seokjin prepares to enter, but he feels relaxed, steady. Easy money, he thinks. He doesn’t even have to do anything, the target’s doing all the drinking by himself.

Merely ten minutes into the conversation, however, another man arrives – his wide grin and goblin-like face under his cap immediately annoys Bang Shihyuk. The other man easily piques the interest of the other bar goers, leaving their poor target behind. Seokjin would have laughed, if it weren’t for the fact that Bang suddenly announced his intentions to go home. He approaches Bang before he could pay for his tab, but the man just shrugs and grunts at him and turns to leave in his car.

Seokjin tries to contact Hoseok and the others but it’s too late and Bang Shihyuk’s already opening the gate to his house. He immediately notices the flicker of light from the second floor and before he could reach the stairs, Seokjin runs and bangs his fists on the front door a little too desperately. He’s met with a frown by the old man through the three door chains between them.
“Who are you?”

“Hi! Good evening, Sir!” Seokjin bows and smiles. “I’m the…guy from the bar. I was—”

“What the fuck, did you follow me here?” Bang looks to his left and right, paranoia spreading on his face.

“Oh, Sir! I’m sorry, I just—I’m a huge fan of your collection,” Seokjin says a little too loudly as he bowed at him, not allowing panic to surface in his voice. “You mentioned you have a Smith & Wesson, didn’t you? I was wondering if you could tell me how to properly clean mine,” he says. Yoongi and Namjoon should have taken the painting by now, it shouldn’t take long. But he sees Hoseok at the top of the stairs, looking at him and gesturing his hands to his neck, as if about to slit it. He mouths something to Seokjin.

No, not yet.

Shihyuk scans Seokjin’s face. “Smith & Wesson, you said?” he grunts. Seokjin nods, maybe a little too aggressively. “Yes, the victory model! I got it from my father.”

“Do you have it with you, then?” the man asks. Seokjin scratches the back of his head. “Ah, I don’t, Sir, I left it at home of course. I didn’t really expect to see you at the bar, Sir, and I was too shy too approach.”

Shihyuk is unresponsive as he continues to scan Seokjin’s face.

“Come back tomorrow with it, then, maybe I can show you,” Shihyuk tells him, eyes droopy with fading interest. No, Seokjin thinks. Think of something else, Seokjin. It can’t be tomorrow. Tonight.

But it’s too late, and Bang slams the door in front of him, heavy sound of each lock closing in on him hitting him in the chest. Seokjin stands in front of it, thinking, pacing his breathing. There’s only silence on the other side. It’s not much of a mistake, he thinks. Maybe I was able to give them enough time after all, he tells himself. But later – approximately ten seconds after he runs to the back door – Seokjin learns that Bang Shihyuk isn’t just a gun expert, he’s also a quite the shooting enthusiast.

The sounds of gunshots don’t exactly surprise him, but the noise that comes after – of a sound of something big, like a body, crumpling on the floor makes his heart stop in his chest. He looks up from the small yard and sees two shadows within the darkness of the balcony.

“Put it down, you fucking lowlife.”

No, no, no, Seokjin thinks, Seokjin murmurs, Seokjin prays. He’s frozen in his spot as he watches Bang Shihyuk cock his gun, the muzzle in contact with the back of Yoongi’s head.

“You fucking son of a bitch, of all the fucking people you decide to rob.” Shihyuk guffaws as he grinds the gun further into Yoongi’s nape. Yoongi is expressionless, but he moves his eyes and sees Seokjin standing on the yard. The late night wind is cold but Seokjin can’t feel anything else but Yoongi’s eyes on him.

His smile is subtle, and in the darkness it glints with mischief, with fear, and with a look that almost says goodbye.

This is all because of you Seokjin, a voice yells at him. But please. Not him, please. Not him. I’ll do anything. Please, another voice pleads.
Seokjin’s fingers tremble as he lifts them, as if to reach Yoongi. The movement of Yoongi’s lips is subtle, silent words only meant for Seokjin.

I love you.

A gunshot.

Seokjin’s eyes close involuntarily, his brain desperately trying him from whatever he was about to see. He feels his heart stop when he hears a body crumple onto the floor.

Tears are already flowing from his eyes when he opens them. His vision has gone blurry and he thinks it should stay that way, he doesn’t want to see a world without Yoongi in it. But eventually everything becomes more crisp, and under the mellow light of the moon Seokjin starts to see the aftermath. He sees Namjoon standing beside another man, unfamiliar to him.

Seokjin steps back. His feet falter and he falls on his ass on the grass, entire body trembling as he feels his own world crumble. He looks up at the balcony; he can’t bring himself to stand up, to walk, to approach them.

“Are you guys alright?”

The low, raspy voice sparks something within Seokjin, his last tether to the world. He looks up and sees Yoongi stand up, painting still tucked in his arm. He pats Namjoon’s shoulders, who’s nodding as he looks at what it seems to be Bang Shi Hyuk on the balcony floor.

Yoongi turns to look down at him and smiles, as if to tell him that he was okay, as if everything was fine. All good, Yoongi signals to him.

Seokjin desperately wants to believe it, but he doesn’t.

He couldn’t.

*****

“I see The Red Bullet has caught your attention.”

Seokjin keeps his eyes trained on the small canvass, at the dark red bleeding horizontally across the canvass, at the small detailed bullet seemingly ripping through the fabric. The painting hasn’t changed at all, ever since that night they turned it over to Bang Shi Hyuk’s nephew, the man who shot his own uncle in the first place.

Every detail is the same, it’s not a reproduction. Choi Seunghyun wouldn’t let a cheap reproduction pass the threshold of his house in the first place.

“It’s newly acquired,” Choi continues. Seokjin trains his breathing, controls his muscles, clears his head. He can’t afford to make any mistakes tonight, can’t afford to risk anyone. He smiles and turns to see Choi Seunghyun looking at the painting.

“It’s a little out of place,” Seokjin comments. Choi juts out his lower lip in slight disapproval. “Is it? How so?”

Seokjin shrugs and moves a little to the side as Seunghyun shuffles beside him. “Well, maybe it’s just me. I find it rather violent. Your pieces, well – they’re usually chaotic, but never violent.”

Seunghyun looks at the painting again, as if to reassess, deep in thought. Seokjin stares at the
painting. He can still remember how Yoongi held on to it as he was about to be shot point blank. He can still remember how Yoongi looked at him from the balcony and smiled.

Seokjin turns his head and catches a glimpse of Yoongi, staring at him through the crowd intensely. What the hell are you doing? Seokjin wants to ask. Almost every night, as the day of the heist approached, he’s caught Yoongi looking at him like this, multiple times, like he wants to say something, like there’s something that Seokjin needs to know, only for him to look away again.

“Does it? Ah, to each his own, I guess. But you’re not completely wrong. The painting really has a violent history,” Seunghyun notes, and Seokjin pulls his gaze away from Yoongi to nod and smile at his target.

“I see.”

Seunghyun and Seokjin eventually walk away from the painting, looking at his other collections one by one. He gets introduced to several of Choi’s acquaintances, and he smiles and laughs and covers his mouth shyly. They all love him. Seunghyun gets pulled away every five minutes, either by his party organizer or other guests, but he always ends up standing beside Seokjin.

“Please don’t feel obligated to walk me around, Seunghyun-hyung. I know these people want to spend time with you as well,” Seokjin tells him. Seunghyun shakes his head. “I have to apologize to you, but that’s not how I feel at all. I’m using you, in fact.”

Seokjin raises his eyebrows and laughs. “Excuse me?”

The other crosses his arms and chuckles. “I know I threw this party, but I can’t stomach huge crowds or consistent conversations. You give me my much needed alone time in the midst of this gathering.”

Seokjin shakes his head. “Ah, I feel used, hyung.”

That should be Namjoon’s cue.

Seunghyun laughs again, but doesn’t apologize. Ten seconds later Seokjin sees Hoseok snake his way through the crowd, smoothly and with finesse. He wouldn’t be surprised if he already has several wallets and watches nicked from the guests. Hoseok smiles as he offers them two glasses of champagne on his tray.

“Drinks?” Hoseok smiles brightly at them, lips forming something akin to the shape of a heart. Seokjin shakes his head. “I’m not really a champagne guy, but thank you.” Hoseok nods solemnly in understanding, and turns to offer a glass to Choi Seunghyun. He takes one and drinks it in one go. Hoseok bows and takes his leave. Seokjin turns to ask about a piece, but Choi cuts him off.

“Thank god you didn’t get a glass,” he tells Seokjin. “This one’s too bland. Did I just allow this to be served at my party?”

“I think that champagne is strong enough to knock some people out.”

“Hmm. Not me.”

Seokjin laughs.

“Seokjin-ah, would you like to see a different collection?” Choi asks, eyes glinting. “I think you’d find that a little bit more interesting.”

Seokjin smiles. That’s Yoongi’s cue.
“That would be lovely.”

****

The path to Choi Seunghyun’s wine cellar is new but not unfamiliar. Seokjin has spent hours poring over the blueprints and even more nights studying about the pieces that they know of. His shoulder brushes with Seunghyun’s arm, covered in the multi-colored jacket, as they walk down the hallways, winding and long and filled with sudden turns. The walls are bare and the floors aren’t carpeted, and each footstep echoes like they’re in a hollow chamber. The longer they walk the more it gets quiet, far and away from the party. They finally reach the cellar, and Seokjin notices how it’s similar to the wine cellar back in The Rooftop, only thrice as big and almost empty. There are two uniformed women inside, carefully packing each bottle in special boxes.

“I bought a vineyard in Northern Europe,” Seunghyun tells Seokjin as they watch the women clear out the racks. “I was thinking of creating my own wine, you know.”

“Are you planning on selling it here in Korea?”

“Here? No.”

“Why not? People would line up for anything you’re going to sell.”

“Didn’t you listen to my grandiose speech earlier, Seokjin-ah?” Seunghyun asks and Seokjin turns to look at him in confusion. “I said this is my last night in Korea. There’s no going back for me here.”

“There’s no going back.” Seokjin echoes the words slowly. He nods in understanding, completely aware of how Seunghyun looks at him curiously, waiting for him to ask more, to poke in more like the other. But he doesn’t need to. He knows the feeling.

Seokjin turns back to watch the women gently finishing up one shelf and moving on to another. “Are they not going to look for you, Seunghyun-ssi? Your guests?” he asks.

Choi scoffs, donning a mask of haughtiness once more. “No,” he says, a little too casually. “They’re not here for me. They can always come and look for me in Paris. They’re here for the house, the connections, the paintings, the alcohol,” he tells him, and there’s a hint of forlornness in this tone. "But how about you, Seokjin-ah?”

Seokjin turns to look up at him. “I’m sorry?”

“What are you here for?” Choi Seunghyun asks, eyes curious, a playful glimmer in his eyes. He thinks it’s the same look he’s seen in Kwon Jiyong. Before Seokjin could answer someone knocks on the door.

“Good evening, Mr. Choi.” A man wearing a pitch black suit enters. It’s Dong Youngbae, the head of security that Choi Seunghyun hired for tonight. Jeongguk has only talked to him about the man, could only describe him as ‘the one with the ugly dreads.’

The man bows to Choi and Seokjin, but only Seokjin bows back. “What is it now?” Choi asks Youngbae.

“Just routine report Sir, as you requested.”

Dong Youngbae glances around the room and the two women quickly stand up and walk out. Seokjin shuffles to follow them but Choi raises a hand to stop him. “Ah, no need, Seokjin-ah.”
Seokjin pauses and only shrugs smugly when Youngbae raises his eyebrows at him.

“Go ahead, then,” Choi instructs lazily as he walks past Seokjin to the wooden bar in the middle of the cellar. He pulls out a bottle and swiftly takes two wine glasses from under the counter.

“Yes, sir. We’re done with the items in the guest rooms. All pieces are accounted for, sealed, and safely guarded—”

“Seokjin-ah, this is one of my go-to drinks after a tiring day,” Choi interrupts as he opens the bottle and starts pouring its contents in the glasses. “Continue, Youngbae.”

“Yes, Sir. So once the party ends it will only take two hours tops for the items in the second floor gallery to be packed up. I’m here to ask for your clearance about—” Dong Youngbae looks at Seokjin apprehensively, but Seokjin isn’t bothered, he simply takes a glass from Choi and takes a sip.

“—about the final room,” Youngbae ends, and Seokjin almost wants to laugh. Literally everyone in that house knows about the gallery, and almost everyone will give an arm and a leg to have access to it. Dong Youngbae should study more about the people he’s dealing with, he thinks. Seokjin looks away and decides to walk along the aisles of the half empty wine racks, glancing at them from time to time, reading labels and sipping from his glass.

Choi nods. “The gallery, then. I already told you that I will personally see to the packing and clean-up. What are you here for?” he asks after emptying his glass. Dong Youngbae shifts from where he stands.

“Well, Mr. Choi, actually.”

“What is it?”

“About the clearance. We know the value of all your pieces, as well as this house, of course. We thank you for the trust you’ve given White Night Security Services for—”

“Stop beating around the bush, Mr. Dong,” Choi Seunghyun snaps and shakes his head in disappointment.

Dong Youngbae clears his throat. “Infiltration has less than 1% chance of occurring, as promised by our services. However, just in case and as we do with our other VIP customers, we would like to ask for your clearance for a vehement approach to any possible intruder.”

Seokjin’s feet falter on the carpeted flooring of the cellar, and his glass almost slips from his hands. Choi Seunghyun puts his glass down. “Vehement approach,” he says, playing the words in his tongue, waiting for Dong Youngbae to elaborate.

“Permission to shoot, Sir.”

There’s a silence in the room that makes Seokjin dizzy. Not again, he thinks. Seokjin looks up at the CCTV at the corner of the cellar, way past behind Dongbae and Seunghyun. Are you hearing this? He looks at the camera. He knows Jeongguk has heard, he knows Yoongi and Namjoon have been informed.

Seokjin forces himself to breathe, to focus, to look up at Choi Seunghyun through the gaps in the wine racks, contemplating what Dong Youngbae just asked from him.

No, your house is too valuable, Seokjin says. You can’t risk your other collections to be just shot, he tells Choi Seunghyun in his head. It doesn’t make sense. Billions worth of art pieces, irreplaceable
works you can’t even let people touch, much less shoot through. You can’t--

“Well then,” Choi says.

Jeongguk has done his research on Youngbae’s security firm. Did they really not know? Seokjin thinks.

Unless.

It’s impossible for Namjoon to not know this, for this to not be a part of his plan. Namjoon and Yoongi are better than this.

“As long as they don’t die in my house,” Seunghyun finishes, shrugging as he refills his glass. He crosses his legs and shoos Dong Youngbae away with a flick of a hand.

Seokjin looks at the camera in horror, realization creeping up his bones, working up his spine.

“Yoongi.” Seokjin’s breath is shallow, his voice small and wispy.

You know.

*****

“Permission to shoot, Sir.”

Yoongi stops in his tracks, a string of curses spills from his tongue. Namjoon calls out to him in his earpiece. “Suga hyung, whatever happens—”

“As long as they don’t die in my house.”

A pause.

Yoongi turns around in his heels, going back to the direction he came from.

Yoongi’s already passed by and snuck around not one, not two, but five men roaming around the hallways with the help of Jeongguk. He’s two levels away from the gallery, and he’s so close, so close. “Ah, fuck,” Namjoon hisses right after.

“Suga hyung, where the hell are you going?” Jeongguk asks.

“Wait what’s going on?” Taehyung asks. “Any changes in the plan?” Jimin asks almost right after. “Suga hyung, I’m almost done here, you could enter the elevator two minutes in advance.”

“Everyone continue with your assignments until Namjoon tells you so. JK, give me a visual on Seokjin,” Yoongi instructs, ignoring the questions and the low murmured cursing from Namjoon. “What? He’s still in the cellar,” Jeongguk replies.

Yoongi pauses at a corner, hearing footsteps approaching. He reaches for the nearest door and ends up in one of the guest rooms, emptied out except for a bed and a small table. “I know he’s still in the goddamn cellar, tell me what he’s doing,” Yoongi hisses.

“He’s just standing, approaching target and – wait,” Jeongguk pauses.

“What is it?” Namjoon asks.

They hear Dong Youngbae bid goodbye to Choi Seunghyun.
“I don’t want to alarm anyone but Jin hyung keeps on looking at the camera. I don’t know if he’s sending a message or not, he’s not saying anything,” Jeongguk says. “Wait, okay Choi Seunghyun is going out! He’s going to… okay his organizer called for him again.” The youngest sighs in relief, but Yoongi waits.

“All good here,” Seokjin informs them as soon as Choi goes out, voice bright and clear. “I should be able to keep the target in here until Jimin hacks into the elevator system. Continue with the mission.”

“The fuck I am,” Yoongi hisses. He goes out of the room he’s hiding in and he sprints to the stairs, panting as he quickly gets to the kitchen, grabbing Hoseok and pulling him to a corner just in time. “Give me your jacket, Hope.”

Hoseok’s jaw drops. “What the fuck are you doing here? You shouldn’t be here!” he whispers loudly as he shakes Yoongi’s hand off his arm.

“You’re giving me a fucking headache, Suga hyung. We’re in the middle of a mission, hyung. The mission.” Namjoon hisses, and Yoongi doesn’t bother making up an excuse because Namjoon’s already moved one, brain working out a new plan and he calls on Taehyung to meet him by the pool.

Yoongi tugs the waiter’s jacket off Hoseok. “Just give it to me, let’s switch.” He then takes the tray from the younger. “What are you going to do?” Hoseok asks.

“I have to stop Seokjin. He’s going to do something.”

“He literally just told us to continue with the mission,” Hoseok scoffs.

“You’re dumb if you’re going to believe that. He’s going to do something Hoseok. You know it.” Yoongi looks at him, and he doesn’t know if Hoseok can see the fear and desperation clawing out of his eyes, but the younger nods and takes the jacket off.

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“Screw you, Hope,” Namjoon tells them, but it’s really more tired than angry.

“Take the stairs to the right. Guy there seems new,” Hoseok advises. Yoongi nods and makes his way to the stairs.

“Mr. Choi asked for ice,” he tells the guard. The man squints at him and doesn’t move. “Ice? Why would he -- how -- where’s your identification?” he asks. “All staff should have identi-”

“Mr. Choi. Asked for ice.”

“Where’s—”

“Mr. Choi. Are you ready to answer to him?” Yoongi glares. The personnel couldn’t be any older than he is. He sees the flicker of doubt being overshadowed by the fear in his eyes. He steps aside and Yoongi lifts his chin as he walks past, into the hallways to the cellar.

“JK, now loop all cameras on this floor. Do what you can to delay Choi from going back. Set a car on fire, I don’t care, just do it.” Yoongi orders as he walks through the hallways leading to the wine cellar.

“Tall order, but okay,” Jeongguk answers. “Namjoon,” Yoongi calls out. “Give me three minutes.”

There’s collective gasping and cursing from the others that Yoongi ignores or mostly doesn’t hear, because he’s too focused on getting to Seokjin.
“Wait, Suga hyung, you’re not—”

“Is this really happening right now?” Jimin asks. “Like right now? I am literally hanging off a god damn-”

“I can’t believe I’m saying this right now,” Namjoon replies. “But JK, cut Suga and Jin’s lines.”

“I don’t know what the fuck is happening but we better be fucking getting that painting in the end as we fucking planned,” Jeongguk announces. Before Yoongi can say anything further he hears the familiar cackling sound, and then the usual humming in his ears is gone. He walks forward, nervously fiddling with replica of Choi Seunghyun’s bracelet on his wrist, hand suddenly clammy as he holds the knob.

"Seokjin hyung."

*****

Namjoon had one plan. Granted, it’s not the quickest or the smoothest he’s ever thought of, but he’d like to think that it’s one of his most intricate yet, and therefore it should be something that he should be proud of. Each step has a cause and an effect, something that he wants people in their line of work will talk of for years until his next best plan, their next grandest heist.

The past few weeks have been something, to say the least.

Namjoon had one plan. But after that night at The Rooftop, Namjoon suddenly found his web growing bigger, requiring more plans, more backups, and more steps until he’s sure that they will get the painting in the end. He sighs as Jeongguk cuts Yoongi’s and Seokjin’s audio lines. “What do you want me to do next, RM hyung?” Jeongguk asks right after.

Namjoon adjusts his tie as he walks out into the backyard, dimly lit by small lamps. The foyer has been transformed into a dining area just in time, with several guests starting to eat, while others are occupying the cocktail tables by the edges, He notices that there are even more security personnel observing as they stand by the walls surrounding the mansion. “JK, right now I just want you to keep an eye on Jin and Suga hyung. The rest, we’ll be changing things up,” he says with a start.

*****

Jimin reckons he’s been inside the elevator shaft way longer than he should be. His job should be done the moment he rigs the wirings so any thumbprint on the key for the gallery floor will be recognized as Choi Seunghyun’s, but alas.

“Chim?” Namjoon calls out. “Yeah?” Jimin grunts as he adjusts the belt on his harness.

“Do you still have it?”

“What is it?”

Namjoon doesn’t answer. Jimin groans when he realizes. “Are you kidding me, hyung. That spare bracelet doesn’t have the technology. I told you that’s just one of my samples.”

“There’s no other way.”

Ten minutes later he hears a distinct knock from inside the elevator car. He kicks himself off the wall
and lands gently on the roof before prying one panel off. “Hey.”

Jimin smiles back at Hoseok. “Hi, hyung.”

“Come on, bracelet.” Hoseok spreads his hands below Jimin. “Say the magic word,” Jimin teases, and he ignores Namjoon and Jeongguk cursing at him. Hoseok pouts. “Chim is the best forger in the entire universe.”

Jimin laughs. “The magic word is ‘please’ but okay then.” He takes out the duplicate of Choi Seunghyun’s bracelet from his pocket and tosses it down to Hoseok. “You know this is crucial work you’re doing, hyung.”

“Aish, stop pressuring me.” Hoseok pockets the key and frowns up at him.

“You can even say you’re—”

“Don’t.”

“—our only hope.” Jimin giggles even before he can finish his sentence. Hoseok rolls his eyes at him.


“On Hope’s mark, alright?”

“Yep.” Jimin nods as his feet land on the mansion rooftop.

“Hyung, you know Choi would eventually realize he’s not wearing the right bracelet, right?”

“Yes,” the other replies. “And?” Jimin frowns as he swiftly climbs back up until he moves out to the roof. He sets his toolbox in front of the power box of the mansion.

“That is exactly what want.”

*****

“Seokjin hyung.”

Seokjin hates it sometimes, how he knows Yoongi so much, even after three years apart and only a couple of weeks together. How he can say something and he knows exactly how Yoongi will react. Seokjin gently places the wine bottle back in its rack, willing himself to focus. “What are you doing here?” he asks.

“You called,” Yoongi replies, blankly. He thinks, at least, but Seokjin can read into every lilt of his words. “Did I?” Seokjin finally looks up at him. Yoongi doesn’t answer.

“Why didn’t you tell me about Dong Youngbae’s security firm?” Seokjin asks. Yoongi’s voice takes a sharp upturn. “Yeah? Why should I?”

Focus.

“You’re better than this, Suga. Why would you hide such crucial information?”
Yoongi scoffs. "You, of all people, can’t say that to me. Not to me, hyung.” Yoongi walks up to him and Seokjin fails to answer. The words get stuck in his throat, resolve slowly breaking down. He hates this. He hates how much Yoongi can get to him, without even trying. “Why didn’t you tell me, Seokjin hyung?” Yoongi’s words are fierce and fiery as he steps up closer to Seokjin.

*Focus.*

Seokjin clenches his fists and uses all his remaining determination to move on with his plan. “Dong Youngbae and his men were just given permission to *shoot*, Yoongi, why are you ruining your own plans?” he bites back and points to the door, ignoring the clawing in his chest, not minding what Yoongi had just said. He has to do this. He can’t risk anyone ever again.

Seokjin takes a deep breath. “Maybe you can get Taehyung to—"

“Why didn’t you tell me, hyung.”

“—he and Namjoon can get the—"

“Why didn’t you just fucking tell me!” Yoongi half-yells and Seokjin barely manages to keep it together. *Focus, Seokjin.* He tears his gaze away from Yoongi and looks at the cellar door behind him. “Choi Seunghyun will be back any minute, you have to get back.”

“Three years.” Yoongi’s voice drops, and at the same time Seokjin feels his heart drop down to the pit of his stomach.

*Focus.*

“*Yoongi-*"

“Three years, hyung. I thought you—” Yoongi takes hold of Seokjin’s arm, forcing him to look at him as Seokjin backs into the wooden bar. He hears the slight clinking of glasses from behind. "*Yoongi, not now,*” Seokjin deadpans, pretends to have his patience expended. “Please.”

Yoongi leans forward until his head lands on Seokjin’s chest and his hands drop poff Seokjin’s arm. “You made me believe you hated me.”

No. Seokjin reaches for Yoongi’s arm. “No,” he whispers. “Never.”

“Then why didn’t you just tell me,” Yoongi’s voice shifts from anger to simple desperation, sadness, and Seokjin feels like crumbling. But he couldn’t. Not now.

*Because I’m a coward,* he wants to answer. *Nothing but a coward.* Instead he tells him, “We are literally right smack in the middle of this job, Yoongi. Don’t be a fucking idiot. You’re not the only one at risk—"

"You should have told me," Yoongi whispers again into Seokjin’s chest, right above where his heart is.

Seokjin stares at the door. He wants nothing, nothing but stay with Yoongi like this. He holds both of Yoongi’s wrists and buries his nose on his hair. He smells the same as he always did, a hint of vanilla and some kind of gentle musk.

“What would you have done, Yoongi?” Seokjin murmurs. Yoongi pulls away and asks, almost in a whisper, like he couldn’t believe Seokjin just asked him that. "What would I have done?”
Seokjin knows the answer. Seokjin knows the exact words Yoongi would have said, knows the exact way Yoongi would have held his face and held on to him.

“I would have stopped you.” Yoongi says, and his words pour out slowly, gently, but Seokjin reckons no matter how slowly Yoongi says it it will still hurt, regret finally breaking out of the confines he kept them in for years.

“I would have held you until you didn’t think that way anymore.”

“You don’t deserve someone like me, Yoongi.” Seokjin smiles, fighting the tears from falling. Don’t make this any harder for me.

Yoongi scoffs. ”You don’t get to tell me who I deserve, Seokjin. You don’t get to fucking do that. I decide who I want.”

Seokjin looks up with wide eyes as hears the distinct clacking of heels from the other side of the door, walking along the hollow chamber-like hallways. ”Yoongi.”

"Don't make me say it again,” Yoongi says, ignoring him completely.

"Yoongi, shut up!” Seokjin hisses.

"Damn it, hyung!”

“Mr. Kim?” A female voice calls out from outside. It’s Min Hyorin. Seokjin immediately pushes Yoongi forwards to the wall beside the cellar door. Yoongi’s back lightly crashes against the padded walls and Seokjin’s lips crashes on his.

It takes a second for Yoongi to realize what’s going on, but when he finally does he scrambles to hold on to Seokjin’s face, to keep him where he is.

"Damn it, Yoongi. I love you,” Seokjin whispers into his the corner of his lips fervently, like a quiet prayer. Yoongi’s breath is hot against his skin, his grip firm and unrelenting.

“Hyung-”

“I’m sorry. For the three years. For everything.”

Yoongi only shakes his head minutely as he reaches to kiss up to Seokjin again. Seokjin lets him steal one, two, three, gentle pecks. He wants to count until it reaches to a hundred, to a thousand.

“Mr. Kim? The door’s locked, I-”

Focus, Seokjin.

Seokjin looks into Yoongi’s eyes. "I’m so sorry,” he repeats, smiling and fixing his face. He pulls back swiftly, even as Yoongi’s hand chases after him. Seokjin steps away and closes the door, the replica of Choi Seunghyun’s bracelet in his pocket, and his heart left behind with Yoongi.

*****

"You ready, Hope?”

Hoseok scoffs indignantly. Hoseok manages to snag another set of waiter’s uniform, and he smiles in front of the bathroom mirror as he ties the bow perfectly. “When was I never ready, RM?” He stretches his arms, starting from his shoulders and down to each digit. He’s excited, really, more than
anything. He gets out of the rest room, walking confidently back to the kitchen, all in a quiet but messy state of chefs and other wait staff walking around.

He swiftly takes a tray full of appetizers from a waitress walking out. “Hey, I got this,” he tells her, smile bright and assuring. “Oh thank you so much, I’m scared of handling those,” she tells him before scurrying back to the kitchen.

“Remember,” he hears Namjoon say in his ear, “He’s gonna be in a rush, it’s gonna be chaotic. We don’t have a lot of time.”

“Hey RM?” Hoseok says as he walks down the hall to the foyer where most guests are eating. “Yeah?”

“Have you ever been in Myeongdong during rush hour?” Hoseok asks.

“What-”

“No? It’s chaotic. You can’t drop a needle there, People are literally everywhere. I worked there for around two years, took probably a thousand wallets.”

“…Okay?”

“What I’m saying compared to that, this snobby art party is a piece of cake,” Hoseok finally gets to his point, trying to assure Namjoon. “Trust me.”

A pause.

“Good luck, Hope-ssi.”

Hoseok only nods. He stops in front of the crowd. It’s not hard to look for Choi Seunghyun: outrageously tall, pink hair, sharp cheekbones, glaring eyes, glittering outfit. He will stick out like a sore thumb. Hoseok swiftly moves around, letting guests take entrees from his tray, and counts the number of security around. Eight. That’s four more than mere ten minutes ago.

Jeongguk on the other hand gives them a blow-by-blow account of the events in the cellar. “Nothing too serious, a bit dark from this angle in the camera. I think they’re just talking and – okay I think Yoongi hyung’s mad.”

“Have they found the guard’s body already?” Hoseok interrupts. “Not yet,” Taehyung tells him. “But they will. He won’t wake up just yet, but one of the dogs will find him soon. It’s a big backyard and they’re not as trained yet. What happened next, JK?”

“I didn’t ask JK to keep tabs on them just for you to all sound like aunts having their afternoon tea and gossip,” Namjoon lightly scolds them. The others only chuckle in response, but their voices die out when they see Choi Seunghyun come in sweeping, followed by a man and a woman on his either side. The two are wearing identical black crisp suits, faces hard and blank.

“Dong Youngbae and Min Hyorin,” Namjoon supplies. JK’s rigged into their communications. Hope, we’ll loop you to his own earpiece.”

Hoseok nods in affirmation and hears a slight crackle, and as he watches from afar, he overhears Choi’s conversation with his security.

Choi is talking to Min Hyorin. “All this inconvenience you’re causing me made me forget that I left someone in my wine cellar. Come back and fetch him, I don’t want people getting lost in my house.
He might even cross paths with whoever Jiyong sent, I don’t want him in danger.”

Hyorin bows deeply and turns back swiftly. “I don’t want anyone to start panicking or doing anything dumb,” Choi mumbles under his breath to Dong Youngbae. “Have you found your guy already? Exactly when the fuck did he disappear?”

Dong bows. “Just five minutes ago, Mr. Choi. Intruders may not even be close enough yet, but as you said, we should report everything to you.”

“Are you sure it’s just five minutes ago?” Choi turns to glare at him. Dong doesn’t reply. Choi sighs and almost reaches to massage the bridge of his nose before stopping himself. “Check the guest list. I need to know who wasn’t able to come and then compare that to your head count.”

“How’s Suga hyung and Jin hyung?” Jimin asks.

“It’s okay,” Jeongguk assures them. “I mean, I think? They both look mad.”

“I’m mad at the both of them,” Namjoon groans, “but Seokjin hyung knows what he’s doing.”

Hoseok watches Choi as his eyes sweep the crowd, as if looking for someone. He turns and tries to make his way to the second floor gallery and Hoseok makes his move to follow him.

“Oh,” Jeongguk murmurs a while later. “Um.”

“What is it?” Jimin asks.

“Aaaand they’re making out.”

“Um, ew?” Hoseok frowns as he moves through the crowd, following Choi up the stairs. Taehyung scoffs. “You don’t get to say that when I caught you and Jimi—”

“Shush!” Jimin hisses. “Okay, everyone shut up, I’m about to go in,” Hoseok tells them, deciding to get back at Taehyung later. “You should get it before Jin hyung appears again,” Namjoon tells him.

“Roger that.”

Hoseok sees Choi Seunghyun closely guarded by two men. He doesn’t have Taehyung or Seokjin right now to keep people distracted. He looks at the crowd, filled with people busy drinking or making half-drunk conversations about art or the latest film. Swiftly he squeezes through a crowd, murmuring and holding his tray up.

“Hi, Madame, Sir, if you’ll excuse me!”

“What the hell!?!”

A tall, muscular man with a bowlcut that almost covers his eyes frowns at him. “I’m sorry,” Hoseok bows quickly and repeatedly, “I have to get this to Mr. Choi, my apologies.”

“I don’t care- wait, who?”

Hoseok points his lips to the east side of the room, “Mr. Choi, Sir, he’s right there!” he almost exclaims. People within his five-foot radius crane their necks to get a look of Choi Seunghyun. “Ah, there he is! I’ve been looking for him!”

“Where did he go off to?”
“His gallery, maybe?”

“Let’s go greet him!”

“Maybe he’ll let us see his infamous gallery.”

The crowd is not large, but it is large enough for Choi Seunghyun. Dong Youngbae motions for security to make a move, but the tipsy party guests are faster, excited and giggly as they approached the host.

Hoseok almost dances his way through the crowd, little pieces of stuffed baby tomatoes not even moving an inch on the tray as it almost surfs above the heads of the guests, moving up and down.

“Hi, yes, Chaerin, of course you can visit me in Paris, it’s not like you need my permission for that,” Hoseok hears Seunghyun tell a woman with long grey hair and pitch black eyeliner, who’s trying to monopolize him from the others in the crowd. Choi smiles but he emits anxiousness, tension palpable in the way his smile is set. Not that his friends and other guests seem to have noticed.

“Appetizers? You seem hungry,” Hoseok smiles as he lowers his tray down. The woman named Chaerin plucks one from Hoseok’s tray and pops the appetizer in her mouth. “I know, oppa, but I know how you are. I know you won’t show your face to me even if I’m on the other side of the door already.”

Choi laughs, quite loudly. “At least you know.” They laugh and the guests start to join in, and Hoseok is a little confused as to how these people seemed to just deliberately ignore Choi’s obviously nervous laughter. No time for that now, he thinks, because he gets the opportunity when his target finally gives in and asks for an appetizer, Hoseok taps quick and fast on his earpiece.

Almost consequently the large chandelier suddenly flickers and the entire crowd looks up, confused. “What-” Choi mutters, but even before Hoseok can hear the rest of whatever he has to say he’s out of reach and on his way to wherever Namjoon is.

“We meet again, my friend,” Hoseok mutters to the bracelet in his hands.

*****

“Suga hyung.”

Yoongi blinks. He can still feel Seokjin on his lips, on his hands, against his chest. He looks at his wrist, devoid of the key that will open the gallery door.

“Suga hyung!”

Yoongi exhales and tries to remember where he is. He’s in the wine cellar of Choi Seunghyun’s mansion. He should be making his way through the security. He and Namjoon should have the painting by now. It should have been smooth sailing. “Namjoon,” he calls with a start, still confused, but Jeongguk’s brought his communications back and he at least remembers that he should be working. “Seokjin took the bracelet.”

He hears Namjoon sigh. “We know.”

“He’s gone rogue.”

“We know, hyung.” Taehyung tells him.
“He’s going to-”

“Try and take the painting in your stead, yeah – Chim, now! – we know,” Namjoon informs him, a little impatiently.

“Fucking hell.” Adrenaline sets in and Yoongi reaches to open the door. He has to get to Seokjin. No matter how good Seokjin is as a distraction, as an actor, he is not Yoongi or Namjoon. “It’s fucking locked from the outside,” Yoongi grits his teeth. “Give me a minute,” Jeongguk tells him, and Yoongi counts every second before the electronic lock gives out. He slams the door open and almost sighs in relief when he sees Namjoon waits on the other side holding the bracelet between his fingers, but then he notices the dark look on his face.

“Suga hyung.” Namjoon looks a little disappointed, but if Yoongi’s going to be honest, he’s been on the other end of that look for him to think too much into it.

“Is that-”

“This is the original.” He plays with the bangle between his fingers.

“Then-”

“Jin hyung’s still on his way up,” Namjoon confirms, and almost simultaneously Yoongi grabs the bracelet and runs, but Namjoon grabs him by the wrist first. “I got this, alright?” he tells Yoongi. “Just don’t get killed, both of you. JK will guide you.”

Yoongi can only nod back and he immediately calls out to Jeongguk as he runs through the hallways. “Lock the elevators, JK. It’s too dangerous for him,” he commands. “Can’t,” Jeongguk replies. “Chim already manually rigged it along with the power. Wiring’s already done.”

Yoongi curses. “Then give me a visual on him.” He makes a sharp turn to one of the hallways to the left and almost gets seen by roaming security guards.

“He just slipped passed security. Choi delayed him for like two minutes, but now he’s on his way to the third level. And there are a lot of guards in there.”

“Why the fuck can’t I hear him?”

“He ditched his tracker,” Namjoon answers him. “Of course he did.” Yoongi hears some shuffling and he quietly slips inside a supplies cabinet as Dong Youngbae and his men pass by the same hallway he’s in.

“Keep an eye out on all guests, especially the one Mr. Choi took with him inside the cellar,” Yoongi hears instruct one of them as they walk by. “I got a feeling about that guy. Check if he’s still downstairs.”

Yoongi fights the urge to throw a punch out of nowhere but he focuses on Seokjin and getting to him. “How fast until Seokjin gets to the elevator?”

“Way before you can,” Jeongguk tells him without pause. Yoongi hisses. He should have known Seokjin would take the bracelet. Too much has happened already and yet he’s nowhere near that damn painting. He tosses his jacket off and pulls his sleeves up.

“Watch me.”
Taehyung stares at the portrait set in front of him. "The Red Bullet," he reads title on the plate below, almost twice as big as the actual piece. "Acrylic and mixed media, bullet made of gold." He tilts his head and nods when Namjoon informs him it's the newest and most expensive piece in the room. He crosses his arms and taps his feet, looking at the red roped in between him and the piece.

“Sir?”

Taehyung turns and a man wearing a crisp black suit greets him. He nervously and awkwardly bows back to him. “Hello,” he murmurs and bows.

“We’re just confirming our guest list for security purposes,” the man tells him, electronic tablet clutched in his arm. Taehyung doesn’t have to look around much to see that he’s the only person being questioned. “Did Mr. Choi invite you personally or are you someone else’s plus one?” the security asks.

Taehyung grins sheepishly and scratches the back of his head. “Ah, I’m neither. I was invited by Ms. Choi Sooyoung, Mr. Choi’s sister?”

The man nods and only smiles at him for two seconds, very clearly listening to orders in his own earpiece. “Ah,” he finally tells him, “We see. Yes. Enjoy the party, Mr….?”

“Rex.”

“Rex.”

The man takes his leave and Taehyung smirks as he turns around to look at the painting again. He bites his lower lip and shuffles around the second floor gallery, fully aware of all the shifting eyes on him. As he walks down the grand staircase he finds a waiter and takes a glass of champagne.

“Easy, V-ssi,” Namjoon says. Taehyung takes a sip and plays with the liquid in his tongue, fidgeting and looking back at the painting from time to time. There are three men following him at any given moment.

“On my mark.”

Taehyung downs the entire glass of champagne, flinching at the slight sting of alcohol in his throat. He wishes they served something non-alcoholic, like strawberry juice. When he puts the glass back on a passing tray he sees Namjoon amidst the crowd, subtly running his thumb on his lip.

Taehyung looks at one, two, three, men in the eye, and he grinds his heel on the marble floors. He jogs back up the stairs and the three men who are following him become four, five, six. He weaves through the crowd at the second floor, like satin ribbon dancing in the wind.

“They’re closing in too early,” Namjoon warns. “Go left,” Jeongguk instructs. Taehyung makes a sharp turn and the men in black suits scramble to find him. He slips behind a pillar and sees all exits blocked and secured.

“Now.”

Taehyung removes his suit jacket and takes out a beret from the inside pocket.

“Do you mind giving me a tour? I’m a little alone.” Taehyung pouts as he hooks his hand on the crook of a tall silver-haired man’s elbow. The man stares at him curiously with his bright brown eyes before chuckling.
“You’re cute, so sure,” he smirks at Taehyung.

Taehyung slips past three men and he successfully gets to the other end of the gallery, where the main door is left unguarded. He nods mindlessly at the descriptions of his new nameless friend.

“Of course his collection’s exquisite but nothing like—”

Taehyung disappears from the silver-hared man’s side just as he’s about to introduce him to a couple who seem to be his friends, slipping away to the doorway. “Left then straight ahead,” Taehyung hears, and he sprints and jumps over the ropes that prohibits guests from wandering around.

“There!”

Taehyung looks behind and sees four men running after him. He has the audacity to wave at them before sprinting faster, Jeongguk guiding him through the maze that is Choi Seunghyun’s mansion. “How long can you make them run after you?” Namjoon asks worriedly.

Taehyung grins as he hops up the stairs.

“As long as you need me to.”

*****

"Hold it right there."

Seokjin turns around and sees two uniformed men approaching him with caution. One has a gun pointed at him.

"This is a prohibited area, Sir."

"Oh!" Seokjin exclaims, trying not to look at the gun too much, "I'm actually lost, it's just that I'm looking for the wine cellar," he pouts. One of the men raises an eyebrow and slowly puts the gun down. "What's your name?"

"I'm Choi Seunghyun's guest."

"Everyone here is a guest," the other, smaller one says. "We need a name."

"It's Min. Min Seokjin." Maybe he shouldn't have used that name when he first introduced himself to Choi. The taller one nods at him. "Right, let's check with our records. May we escort you back to the party Sir?"

"But I have to retrieve my earring back at the wine cellar," Seokjin explains. The two frown at him. "W-why did you leave your earring back at the wine cellar?"

"You'd have to ask Mr. Choi about that!" Seokjin crosses his arms and the two men almost choke on their own saliva. "I-we, right, okay - we still have to get you back to the party, Sir."

Seokjin sighs. "I really, really need to get it back."

One of them steps closer to Seokjin, ready to grab him by the arm, but both men suddenly stop as they listen to their earpieces. The taller one pulls away and looks at Seokjin. "Sir, this is a very dangerous place. Please take the stairs down the hall and go straight down to the party." He and his companion run the other way, and Seokjin reckons Namjoon's backup plan is taking place. He easily finds his way to the elevator, but each step is cautious when he gets to the gallery floor because he won't have any reason as to how he accessed it without alerting Dong Youngbae.
The key that Jimin made fits the door knob perfectly, like it was really made for this moment. He smiles and admires the bracelet once more before opening the door.

Seokjin isn’t quite sure what to expect when he gets inside, but at the same time the whole structure is exactly what he expects from someone like Choi Seunghyun: high ceilings, bare grey walls, grey cemented floors. The heels of his shoes click with each step, and he looks around in wonder. Paintings hang from five pillars built around the room. His chair collection is suspended in almost invisible thread from the ceiling, giving the impression that it’s falling on whoever looks from below.

And not surprisingly, the painting he’s about to still isn’t the first painting that catches his eye. There’s a bigger mural by the south wall that deserves better attention, there’s an installation at the north wall that will create more talk.

“There you are.”

Seokjin smiles as he spots the painting. It really is the twin of the one Kwon Jiyong owns, but not quite. It's not outstanding, not worth seven billion won. He's studied better things, critiqued better artwork. And yet here he is, looking at the painting that brought him back to Seoul in the first place. He should take it and leave it at the headquarters. And then it’s all over.

His feet stop five feet away, the realization of the end of everything dawning on him. But all things end, he tells himself. So should this. He remembers overhearing security looking for someone who sounds like Taehyung. He recalls Choi Seunghyun telling him about “a little problem about a mouse” in his house and how he needs to exterminate it.

He approaches the painting with caution, and tilts his head when he notices the glass frame around the canvass. “Movement sensitive glass, passive infrared sensor,” he mutters under his breath as he hovers a hand around it. He doesn’t know if Jimin or Jeongguk have gone through the security system within the gallery already. One wrong movement and the alarms will go off. Seokjin doesn’t have much time.

“Min Seokjin, huh.”

Seokjin freezes on his spot. He turns his head slowly and sees Yoongi checking his nails as he saunters towards him lazily.

“Yoongi.” He bites his lips in frustration and a little embarrassment, fully aware of the flush in his cheeks. He doesn't even have to ask how Yoongi got here before him, how he got in without a key. He's not the leader of one of the best heist crews in Korea for nothing.

Seokjin tries to prepare himself for whatever Yoongi has to say, but the other just walks past him and walks towards the painting. “Chim should have the emergency power broken into already,” he informs Seokjin. He brings his hands near the bottom corners of the painting.

“Take the other two,” he orders him.

Seokjin realizes he’s still standing five feet away from him. He looks at Yoongi and sees the drive in his eyes and the determined set of his jaws. He wills himself to focus for the last time.

“Right. Yes, yes.”

“JK?” Yoongi calls out. “Yeah, okay. Roger that.”

He turns back to Seokjin. “Look at me, Jin hyung.”
"What is it?" Seokjin asks. Yoongi looks him straight in the eyes. "We only have one chance to do this."

"Yes."

"The power will go out for three seconds."

Seokjin nods. "I know, Yoongi."

"We only have three seconds to remove the glass, take the painting, and then get it back again."

"I know," he repeats.

"Jimin can’t do it again."


"I am breathing."

"Relax."

"I am relaxed!" Seokjin answers petulantly, and before he can say anything else Yoongi’s hands hold his face and pulls him close until their lips are connected. Seokjin hated it when Yoongi kissed him to shut him up before, but it isn’t until then that Seokjin realizes how much his hands had been shaking and how fast his heart had been beating. Yoongi’s thumb runs across his cheek, down to his jaws. Seokjin’s hands pull him instinctively, holding him close as his fingers travel just right below Yoongi’s ribs.

"Are you ready?" Yoongi asks as he pulls away. Seokjin lets out a breath, which Yoongi takes as a yes. He puts a finger on his earpiece. "On three, JK."

Seokjin nods and clenches his fists before settling them on the edges of the frame.

"Let’s take this damn thing already."

*****

"Who sent you?" Dong Youngbae asks.

Taehyung giggles and falls on the hallway floor. "That was fun. Really fun. My mother used to work on the field, it was like my personal maze!" he yells at the men in front of him. Dong throws a punch and it hits him right on his sides. Taehyung coughs but he still manages to smile.

"What the hell are you doing!?"

Taehyung smirks as he hears the shrill voice of Choi Sooyoung.

"Ah, noona, hi," Taehyung pants as the woman runs towards him, pushing her own brother and the other men away.

"This man stole a painting. He probably has accomplices in the house," Seunghyun tells her, but she scoffs. "This man is my guest! You poor kid," she pouts and helps Taehyung up. "Are you alright?"

"I think I’m just a little drunk noona, I’m sorry. Did you know you’re even prettier tonight,"
Taehyung giggles into her ear, and Sooyoung goes red in the face.

"I don't know what they're talking about, though."

"How much did Jiyong pay you?" Choi Seunghyun asks him. "Where did you put my damn painting?"

Taehyung grunts at the pain in his sides. Sooyoung tuts and confronts her brother "He's clearly drunk! And what painting are you talking about? I didn't see any missing--"

"My newest one, *The Red Bullet*, Jiyong sent him to steal it and fuck with me."

"*The Red Bullet* is right there!" Sooyoung almost yells back at Seunghyun. Taehyung holds on tighter to her. "I just came back from there, nothing was missing!"

Choi stops and blinks. "What?"

Sooyoung rolls her eyes and drags Taehyung out of the hallway. "Your dumb moving men thought it was time to pack up the paintings, so it was the first they took because it was new or whatever. Didn't you know? It's back there now. Way to ruin your own party."

Taehyung smirks as he walks away with Sooyoung. He doesn't see Choi looking at Dong in confusion, doesn't get to see his reaction when he raises his hands and looks at the bracelet in his wrist, realization slowly but surely settling in any second.

*****

Kwon Jiyong is wearing a velvet robe as he taps away on his tablet. He nods at Yoongi and Namjoon. "The balance of the seven billion won, paid and transferred to your accounts."

"Payment received, RM hyung," Jeongguk confirms in their comms. Hoseok hands the painting to Kang Daesung. As if on cue, Kwon Jiyong's phone suddenly rings.

"Ah, hyung, why are you calling me?" Kwon Jiyong turns to smile at them devilishly. "What, I thought you said you're never going to acknowledge my existence from hereon out?" he says on the phone. "Hyung, it's not just your painting, it's mine too. You know that. *You know what, you're never going to see that painting again -- oh, you're on your way*? That's interesting. *Really* interesting. I'll have your favorite wine served. See you, Seunghyunie hyung."

He puts the phone down. "It's been a pleasure doing business with you, RM-ssi, Suga-ssi," Kwon tells them. *It definitely has not been*, Yoongi wants to say, but Namjoon gets to him first.

"It's been ours, Mr. Kwon."

As Yoongi finally walks out of the office followed by Namjoon and Hoseok, he finally feels the exhaustion and pain from working the past few hours, something he hasn't really felt in a long time. He looks at the sky. It's almost dawn. He can't wait to start the day by sleeping for eighteen hours, preferably with Seokjin on his side.

They see Taehyung and Jimin outside the office building. "God, it feels nice to see this many numbers in order and know it’s money, you know?" Jimin tells them as he looks at his phone. "Oh, Jeongguk transferred it all already?" Hoseok asks. Jimin nods. "I’m going to buy some new equipment, maybe a nice new couch for us."

The others start stretching and walking to their cars. Yoongi pauses when he does an involuntary
Something's wrong.

“Where’s Seokjin hyung?”

“Wait, we thought he was in there with you?” Taehyung frowns as he rubs his sides. “Why would he be there with us?” Namjoon asks. Hoseok blinks. “He ditched his tracker, didn’t he? Jeongguk, where did you last—”

"JK?" Yoongi presses to his in-ear and only hears static. “Are you at the headquarters?”

“Not yet. Wait, I can’t hear anyone, I’m having fucking interruptions—” Jeongguk manages to say before his line goes off. Namjoon turns to Yoongi in confusion. "I thought-

“Okay, I’m calling him, I’m calling, the line's busy,” Hoseok interrupts, phone in his ear.

Again.

“Where did you last see him?” Namjoon asks. Yoongi loses his words again, loses the feeling in his legs, in his chest. He's not quite sure what's happening, but the others' voices keep him grounded. “At the party, at the party!” Taehyung exclaims. He tries to remember what he told Seokjin when they got the painting. He only remembers smiling, only remembers pulling him into another kiss before they escaped the mansion.

Where did he go wrong again?

“I'm going to his apartment, see if he's still there, I'm on my way, I'm running, fuck- taxi!”

Their casual strolling turns to panicked running. Jimin and Hoseok jump in Jimin’s motorcycle. “We’ll go to the bus station, we might see-”

“Just keep your fucking in-ears on,” Namjoon tells them as he gets in the driver’s seat of Yoongi’s car. Yoongi stands frozen in the middle of the parking lot. He holds his phone in his hand and hears Jimin and Hoseok drive away.

“Hyung, what are you doing? Let’s fucking go!”

“I-” Yoongi blinks. “Namjoon.”

“Hyung.” Namjoon steps out of the car. “I can’t.” Yoongi stammers. He can't go through three years again. He remembers six weeks ago, remembers what he told Seokjin. Six weeks, and then he's gone. Their payments have been divided. It's all over. Again and again he replays his own words, like repeating them could turn back time. He remembers telling Seokjin how he doesn't know how to follow instructions.

Maybe he's learned to follow them now.

“You won’t, hyung, you won’t lose him this time. Even if he does, we’ll find him, okay? Get in the fucking car, will you? The longer you stand there the- damn it,” Namjoon strides up to him and pushes him to the passenger’s seat. The longer Yoongi sits inside the car the louder his heartbeat drums until he can’t hear the comforting, reassuring words that Namjoon is saying anymore. He stares at the stoplight in front of them, at the sun steadily rising across the horizon. He's losing Seokjin with every second. Not again.

“Hyung, where the fuck are you going?” Namjoon yells behind him. Yoongi pushes the car door open with his last remaining energy. “Look for him somewhere else, drive around until you find
“Where are you going?”

“I can’t—I can’t just sit here,” Yoongi pants and walks out into traffic. *Never again.*

*****

Seokjin looks at his phone. The last of his payment. He should be happy. Whatever’s left of this money, it’s enough. To leave, retire, for good this time. He remembers his purpose of going back. Seokjin clutches his phone with two hands as the couple answer their phone.

“Jin-ah, we don’t know, we don’t know how you got this, how we’re going to repay you,” Kiae cries on the other end of the line. Namyoon takes the phone from her and Seokjin smiles when he hears him try to hide the sound of his cries.

“Jin-ah, son, thank you, thank you. We owe you our lives,” he murmurs.

“Ahjumma, ahjussi, I told you it’s nothing, please. Do it to save your son,” Seokjin tells them. “Where are you now?” Namyoon asks, and then Seokjin hears Kiae’s voice again. “Are you coming back here?”

Seokjin pauses. “I - I don’t know, ahjumma.”

"You always have a home with us, you know that, right?"

"I-do, ahjumma," Seokjin answers. And really, it's enticing. The peaceful life, the monotonous drone of life standing behind the counter of the antiques shop.

"But have you found your way home now, son?" she asks, and Seokjin can see through her words, carefully woven and pronounced. He isn't quite sure what to answer.

Before he can say anything Seokjin hears loud banging. He ends the call and turns around.

“JEONGGUK!” Startled footsteps follow the yelling and Seokjin whips around from where he’s standing. “Jeongguk, where the fuck are you?!” Yoongi yells from the basement stairs, like he’s seeing a ghost.

“—Seokjin hyung,” he breathes out, still staring at Seokjin.

Seokjin tries to smile and raises a hand in greeting. “Hey.”

“Seokjin hyung,” Yoongi repeats.

“Hey,” Seokjin repeats.

“Hey?” Yoongi pants.


"Why?"
"Why?" Seokjin frowns. "You said this is the meeting place after the mission!"

"Why weren’t you answering Hoseok’s calls?"

"I was on the phone and—"

"You were on the phone."

"Well, yes."

Yoongi stares at him. He squats on the floor and falls on his ass, covering his face with his hands. "Fuck," he hisses under his breath. "Shit, god."

"What’s wrong?" Seokjin asks, suddenly worried.

"I thought you were gone," Yoongi breathes out. "Oh, well I—"

"Gone, Seokjin hyung!" Yoongi yells, desperately. "Again!"

The first step is always the hardest, Seokjin knows. Always cautious, always unsure. His legs feel like lead as he walks to Yoongi, and Kiae's words echo in his head. *Have you found your way home?* It took him a long time, cost him a lot of tears, energy, and denial. But he thinks he has the answer now. Seokjin kneels in front of Yoongi, placing his hands on his knees. "Well I’m here, aren’t I?" he smiles weakly at him.

"I’m sorry," he whispers to him. Yoongi brings his hands down from his eyes. "Stop fucking apologizing."

"But I have to," Seokjin chuckles. He takes a deep breath and smiles sadly. "Because I didn’t trust you. I didn’t trust us. I don’t even know how—"

Yoongi leans up and kisses him, long and hard and hungry. Seokjin can only chase after him, follow every movement of his lips, his tongue, and lean in to his touch, fire against his skin. He’s practically breathless when he pulls away to look at Yoongi.

Yoongi is beautiful in the light of dawn. Seokjin remembers waking up to it, staring at the bow of his full lips and the way his freckles looked like the universe against his pale skin. He is his universe, Seokjin realizes. His sun, his moon, his stars, every last bit of it. He cups Yoongi's cheek with one hand and the younger leans onto it, closing his eyes. Yoongi starts, chasing words even before they he can form them into coherent sentences. "Before, when you came back, what I said, we agreed- I told you—"

"Can I stay?"

Yoongi opens his eyes to look up at him. *Three years.* There are so many things to be still discussed, so many words are still needed to be said. But Seokjin smiles and waits for Yoongi to speak. "I-if you want.” Yoongi shrugs, but he takes Seokjin's hands in his and holds it close to his chest.

"Please."

"As long as you want me here."

Yoongi pulls him down, one arm around his neck and the other on his waist. "I'm going to hold you to that."

Seokjin laughs and buries his face on Yoongi’s neck. He can smell it again, that hint of vanilla, and it
feels so much like home that it hurts, it hurts because he's deprived himself of this for so long, chose the easier path of safety and fear.

“I don't know how to make it up to you.”

"Shut up and just-" Yoongi scoffs. "Just don't let go."

Seokjin laughs, and he laughs so hard it hurts. Yoongi rubs his back and his hand rests on his waists and pulls Seokjin closer.

"I won't."

Seokjin took three years, but he's finally back home.

Chapter End Notes

CLICK HERE FOR THE EPILOGUE! Thank you so much for reading!

I hope you enjoyed it! Talk to me on twitter if you want to yell at me or whatever.

End Notes

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