I am nothing if I can't be yours

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I am nothing if I can't be yours

by Rogue_Taeminbot

Summary

“Let’s not leave it so long again, huh?”

Taemin finds his hand and strokes it fondly, his fingertips trailing light and lingering across his lover’s warm golden skin like they can’t bear to rise away from it. Like he knows, somehow, that it’s the last time they’ll ever be together like this.

“I missed you.”

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Fed-up, defiant, and on the verge of open rebellion, Kim Jongin is called to a private meeting with a senior executive. He expects it to go badly, but the reality is worse than he could ever have imagined.

Notes

This is a work of fiction.

The core concept of this story originated from a hate post by a deranged Baekhyun akgae on Weibo describing Kim Jongin as "Chris Lee's personal chamber pot", which was such a masterpiece of short-form fanfiction I was inspired to expand on it. Or cursed, or something. As absurd as the source material is, it's worth stressing that this fic has ended up dark as hell. I guess that's just how these things go.

On that note: **Please pay attention to the tags.** This is a tragedy, and the things that happen in it are bad.

The title is from Taemin's "Frankenstein".

Chapter 1: Jongin

"Sometimes I lie out of necessity."

- *Lee Taemin*

November 2025

It's way too early, and Jongin's still half-lost in the fog of dreams. He blinks sleepily, dazzled by the early-morning autumn sun as Taemin leans over him, already clean and neat and pretty and smiling and smelling like Jongin’s shampoo, pulling back the covers to kiss him goodbye.

“Nini, I have to go, I have a meeting. I’ll see you soon.”

Soft lips brush Jongin’s cheek, a delicious echo of last night.

“No.”

It’s a growl. *No, you’re not going; no, you’re staying here in bed with me*, that’s what he means, even if he's too sleepy to say it yet. It’s been so very long since they’ve been together like this, too long. He doesn’t want to let it end already. He won’t, not when he’s only just finally got his Taemin back. He paws his way out of the sheets and loops his arms around Taemin’s shoulders and pulls him close and noses at his cheek and rumbles, feeling the weight and the warmth of him against his chest. He’s almost forgotten what this felt like, having this weird brilliant beautiful little creature in his house and in his bed.

His. Not anybody else’s. Until he's gone again, like he always goes.

Taemin laughs, and kisses him again. Then he squirms his way free. Of course. He has to. It's like the sun coming up in the morning. There's this, there's them, and then there's work, and work calls with far less patience every time. But for a moment now even Taemin resists it. He pauses, perched on the edge of the bed. He's half-turned away, his head ducked low so he can hide behind his fluffy hair, his insecurity veiled as playfulness, vulnerable and uncertain, the same way he's been for months. Not quite right.

He'd been different last night, in the calm quiet darkness, hidden and safe and liberated and finally himself again. Jongin had felt it. Felt it in Taemin's breath, hot and urgent on his skin, felt it in how Taemin took control of him with the slightest of whispers and touches as only he could ever know how; as easy and natural and fluid and seductive as the way he dances; as soft and gorgeous as his voice. It was clearly good for him: in the moment, it made him radiant with fearless self-satisfied joy, exactly the way Taemin should be.

It's good for him, and it's good for Jongin too. He has to admit that. He's been needing it desperately.

It's not just about the pleasure, it could never be as simple as that. They both find pleasure in other places when they need it, they always have, it's not that big a deal. It's just sex. This is probably why their other relationships, such as they've been, have never lasted very long. It's never worked. Jongin's given up, he's been burned too many times and it hurts too much now. Taemin hasn't admitted it yet, but Jongin has the sense he might finally be edging his way towards the same conclusion.

Pleasure comes easily, but trust does not.

It's why they always end up back here, they can't help it. They've known each other for so long they both know everything that matters. *Everything.* It might not be just about the pleasure but it's not just about friendship either, otherwise something powerful would be missing, something they both always sink back into with relief. There's something pure and perfect in it: intimacy with someone who has such flawless understanding they know exactly what you need. Jongin can surrender himself and let Taemin take control, and for once it's not a performance for either of them.

It's not like that with anyone else, even when it's going well. Jongin's always had a talent for making other people feel good, it's his great gift, but he's never been able to master the same art when it comes to himself. He enjoys it, he really does, he likes to be generous, but he never feels the same way he does when he lets go, and abandons his will, and allows himself to be consumed by the sweet violence of Taemin's desire.

He loves it. He loves *him*, in a way that's impossible to explain and he's given up on trying. Always has and always will, he can't imagine it any other way. The world just wouldn't make sense.

It's not just about what they shared last night, but also it is. It's at the core of everything. It's been so long since the last time, far too long, long enough he'd half-wondered if this was all over, but now it comes flooding back with such power he can't believe he ever doubted it. No-one else will ever understand.

“Let’s not leave it so long again, huh?” Taemin finds his hand and strokes it fondly, his fingertips trailing light and lingering across his lover’s warm golden skin like they can’t bear to rise away from it. Like he knows, somehow, that it’s the last time they’ll ever be together like this.

“I missed you.”

I missed you too.

He hadn’t said it, he should have said it. He’ll do it tonight, maybe. Squeeze Taemin close and tell him the truth, *I missed you, and I don’t want to share you any more.*

He shouldn’t be thinking about Taemin. He’s at work.

It’s a defence mechanism, probably, given how much everything else sucks. Work is a mess. It’s wall-to-wall incompetence and fights and vicious pointless cruelty. It’s not just his company either, it’s not like Taemin’s escaped. He’s got his own world of shit to deal with, a good bit of it welling up from the same places. All they can do is survive and hope better days are ahead.

Right now that seems very distant. At least he’s still glowing from the warmth of last night. He’s missed it so much: the freedom that only comes from being with someone who understands *everything*. It’s embarrassing, but he’s catching himself wishing Taemin still worked here, like the old days. It would be nice if he could find an excuse to sneak off hide in a corner and let Taemin hold him close, like he used to, and sink into the intoxicating peace of being loved by someone who knows him down to his bones.

There’s no serious plan for him to see Taemin tonight, but he’s got a feeling it’ll happen. The way this day is going, he’s not sure he’ll still have a job at the end of it. And you know what, getting fired may end up having perks.

It’s not fair, how it’s somehow gotten harder over the years for them to be together. It should be the other way around. They’ve got money now, and autonomy, sort of, but don’t have time to do anything with it. He’s told himself he’s fine, they’re both stronger now, better able to cope with the harshness of the world without needing to crawl into each other's arms about it. He thought he was okay getting by without it until last night, when he realised just how badly he’s missed it.

Everything fucking sucks and Taemin isn't here any more. Not just Taemin: he's lost half the people he'd relied on to get through the madness of his job and his group without blurting something that's an unforgivable violation of nondisclosure rules, and whoever's still stuck here is wallowing so deep in their own misery that they're coming to *him* to vent. He's been trying so very hard to hold his shit together and be a professional, but he's too pissed-off to keep going with anything more than the bare minimum. He'll do his job, but he won't pretend he's happy about it. He'll sing and dance and look like Kai, but they can damn well hire someone else to be chief morale officer and pretend everything's flowers and sunshine.

Given what a disaster everything else is, he's half-expected to get away with it. There's too many pressing problems for them to care about him. And it's not like he's still some naïve junior who can be bullied and pushed around. What are they going to do, fire him? Okay. He's got his quitting speech half-planned, stewing away in the back of his mind. He doesn't really mean it. He still loves his stupid job and his stupid members. He doesn't really want to leave. And it would never come to that, right? Surely.

And then a message had come through for him, late enough in the afternoon he thought the corporate guys would be winding down. He's got a meeting, upstairs. Yes, up there. Yes, instead of the session with the choreographer. No, not with his manager. Just him and his least favourite person in this whole place: that asshole who insists on acting like CEO even though he got fired from that job months ago, the usurper who flopped and didn't even have the dignity to quit.

Which is scary, but also very irritating, because he's got little enough time in the day as it is. He's not at the point of openly ignoring orders, though, so here he is, sitting uncomfortably in this big glossy empty office, waiting to be yelled at by the kind of guy who thinks you'll be more intimidated if he makes you waste half an hour hanging around first.

He's so close to walking out. It's a nice evening, the view out of the big windows of the sky is glorious. He could go ride his bike along the river, look at the trees, breathe some air, and come back later to find out if he still has a contract or not.

What a joke. They can't fire him; they need the group to still exist so they can make a point to the members they already fired about how they aren't in it.

He could walk out, and go and find Taemin, and work out a plan together. God knows they both need one.

He's about to actually call it quits for real when the jerk shows up, in his fine wool and pretentious cologne; a well-fed well-groomed bit of management-consultant nothing; a blank hollow soulless void with an MBA stuck on it. He makes Jongin's skin crawl.

On paper at least they should be allies, united by their shared loathing of that old bastard Lee Sooman. But this guy just sucks. Nasty, venal, not as smart as he thinks he is, entirely lacking in the dark brilliance his uncle had brought to this place until he was so unceremoniously kicked out. The old man's always been an evil piece of shit, but he had a flair for his job. He made terrible choices but good art. He had an eye for talent, even if he then abused it. This guy is just an empty suit with a shitty attitude.

All that aside, Jongin hates this guy because he knows how much this guy hates Taemin. He loathes Taemin with a vicious resentful bitterness, because Taemin was the founder's favourite. And when the founder got stabbed in the back, and Taemin was meant to stay trapped here in the only place he'd ever known, helpless and ready to be humbled in the absence of his long-time patron, he'd done what nobody expected, and fled.

Any normal person who wasn't a vindictive freak would let it go, water under the bridge. It doesn't matter anyway, not right now, Taemin's not the one who's deepest in the shit. He's out, and Jongin isn't, and Jongin's the one who's currently in the doghouse for failing to toe the line, or so he assumes.

And that doesn't matter either. This guy isn't the CEO. He's meant to be in charge of picking music for them all, which is a sick joke, but that's how things are around here these days. Jongin's not doing another solo any time soon, that's been made abundantly clear, so this meeting can't be anything except empty posturing.

That's what he thinks, going in. But then it's weird.

There is no yelling. There is no lecturing him about company loyalty. Instead for some reason it's all grandstanding about the nefarious untrustworthy criminal ways of the old man who used to run the place, and how bad things had been. Which, sure, but what's that got to do with him? Why is he sitting here listening to this shithead blathering in a pompous attempt to establish his own authority, droning on and on about the management culture, about secrecy, about executive office renovations and antiquated data storage systems and archival file recovery and computer forensics, which is all mysterious because this is exactly none of Jongin's business. He's confused. What do the suits think he's going to do, get so fed up with them he stages a coup of his own to restore the glory days? By hacking the mainframe or something? Who does this guy even think Jongin is? Has he got EXO mixed up with NCT lore, or something? This clown.

Who cares. He zones out, staring at the sky. Why is he here? He could be doing so many other things. Sorting out his life. Talking to Taemin.

"—Taemin was closer to you than anyone back then, I'm told."

Huh? What's any of this got to do with Taemin?

"Uhhhm. Probably. Sir." He has no idea what's going on and he doesn't like it; he'd better stick to vague and safe.

Vague and safe doesn't work. The look he's getting now has a horrible edge to it. This guy doesn't do a lot of human emotions but he's good at smug gleeful triumph, and something is very wrong here if he looks as pleased as he does.

"Probably?" His voice is full of oily menace.

"We were friends and we worked a lot together."

“Well if you were his—*friend*—you need to tell me if you were aware. You, or anyone else on our current teams, before we move ahead. Because once we involve the police, it won’t be pleasant.”

“The… police?”

“Did you know *this* was going on in this company?”

A huge curved monitor glints in the light, gliding silently on its bearings as it turns to face him. One glance at it and he’s on his feet, jerking up like he’s been shocked, rigid with adrenaline, unable to flee.

“What the fuck!” Not what he should say, but the only thing he can. He’s going to be sick.

The screen is covered in video thumbnails. Rank after rank after rank of them. Most of them involve so much bare skin he reflexively averts his eyes because he knows exactly what sort of thing they are and he’s not keen to look at that, not here with this bastard watching him. But something grabs him, forces his gaze back, a brutal shock of recognition, a face he knows as well as his own.

“They’re fake,” he says. *They have to be fake. They can't be real. What the fuck.*

“Sit down.”

“Some psycho’s made fakes, call the cops, why do I need to see this?”

Because you want to hurt me, that’s why.

“They’re not fake.”

“Of course they’re fake. They have to be fake. What the fuck!"

“Sit down. They’ve been verified. They go back for years. *Many* years.”

"Oh my god, what—”

The page of images shifts as he scrolls down, new rows of files spawning underneath. More, and more, blurred with speed until they hit the end of the archive and hang there for a moment. Viscerally evocative familiar scenes are suddenly revealed with a startling immediacy; scenes of a place he remembers as well as his own home. An older place.

And in it, a younger Taemin.

Jesus, *so* young

He’s swaying on his feet. His ears are ringing. He grips the edge of the desk so he doesn’t fall.

The list jerks back up a row or two, like he wasn’t supposed to see that much. A more recent file expands and opens; if Taemin blonde and lean and slinky for his solo debut at all of 20

years old counts as recent, better than those horrifying glimpses of what came before it, *god*

"Mmmm," Taemin purrs on the screen. He's half-naked. One hand snakes down the edge of his narrow waist, teasing across his bare skin, tantalising. He bites his lip, painfully overt, staring right into the gaze of the lens with that hint of danger that's so quintessentially Taemin, throwing down a challenge, like *you want this? Come and take it*.

But that's not what he says. It's worse than that. He smiles, sly and hungry, and his moan is sheer filth:

"What if I want to earn a bonus~?"

"STOP!" Jongin's fist slams down on the desk. "Stop, why—"

His voice is fractured, he can't control it. He's lost.

At least the video stops. The smug glossy bastard sits back in his big heavy leather chair and watches him, studying his face, a cruel smile playing over his lips.

"Ok. So I should take it you didn't know your—*friend*—was engaged in prostitution?"

"In what?? No, no that's not—"

"What would you call it when someone offers sex in exchange for money?"

"He's not—it's not—"

"Did you do the same?"

"What?? No! What the fuck kind of question is that?"

"One that will be asked, once this is reported, if we don't make very clear you weren't involved."

"Reported—" Buzzing panic rises up through his chest. Sick and numb and blinking away tears, he mumbles the only thing he can think right now:

"This will kill him."

He's more sure of it than he's ever been of anything. The inevitability of it horrifies him. He can feel in his gut the terror of it playing out. What Taemin would be dragged through if this got out, oh *god*... the vile torrent of contempt and disgust and rage that'd be unleashed on him, the insinuation that *this* was how he'd bought his success... it'd poison everything he'd ever touched or loved or created, everything that defined who he was, everything he was proud of. He'd be annihilated so quickly there'd be no possible way back. He'd be destroyed.

Or worse. The thought of Taemin in jail—

His heart hurts. He falls to his knees.

“Please, you can’t. Please. This will kill him.”

He forces himself to raise his head, imploring. All he gets is that same gloating, self-satisfied look, like this is amusing, how total his defeat is, how fast he’s crumbled.

“Kim Jongin, are you suggesting that I should hide evidence of a crime?”

“You don’t know that’s what it is! You don’t know if—they—jesus, he was a child, how can —”

“Oh please, he was fully of-age.”

“But—”

“I know what you'll say. But who cares when it started. He was always a little snake. Do you think it ever stopped? And do you think my uncle was the only one? You’re not that naïve, surely. No, I know enough about you, you’re good at playing dumb but you’re as slippery as he is. Don’t think I don’t know about all the back-handed seditious bullshit you’ve been pulling.”

“I’m sorry—"

You have no loyalty at all. Except to Lee Taemin, it seems.”

“I—”

“You want me to protect him. You think he’d protect you? If you’re not lying to me now then he’s been lying to you for years, that backsliding self-serving little faggot whore.”

The bastard’s on his feet now, his fists on the desk. The flaring heat of his loathing makes Jongin reel back. There’s nothing he can do except cringe away from him, but he’s coming closer, striding around the desk, overflowing with unhinged fury.

“Do you understand the risk to the company if it ever gets out that we knew and we did nothing? Or the risk to me? Why the hell should I do that? For you of all people. You’ve been given everything and done nothing to show your gratitude. You’re just like him. You think you’re too good for this. You forget your place.”

“Forgive me—"

There’s movement, a quick step towards him, and he cowers from the blow even before it lands, so he takes it on his ear instead of his cheekbone. It fucking hurts, everything lurches and spins hideously, adrenaline surges white-hot through him, but it can’t do him any good. He should get up and run, but he can’t, can he, not now, that would make this even worse, there’s nothing he can possibly do except take this. He curls, bowing down, hoping his pitiful submission will be enough, not really believing it.

“Please what can I do—”

“Obey.”

He deflates with relief that the answer isn't *nothing*, bowing lower to the floor.

“I will. I will. I swear. I’m sorry if I disappointed you, it wasn’t intended, we’ve all been under so much stress, I’ll do better—”

“You will. You’ll do your fucking job the way you should, god damn you, or I’ll destroy you the way I’ll destroy those other treasonous brats. You’ll be loyal to this company. And you’ll be loyal to me. You’ll obey.” Jongin gasps at the sudden shock of pain as a hand grabs his hair and yanks him back. The figure looming over him is so close now it’s overpowering, a shadow blocking the golden sunlight from the windows. He closes his eyes.

“Starting now.” There’s the smallest, most banal imaginable sound, but it freezes his blood. It’s a zip.

Fuck.

He’ll do it. He’ll do anything, the alternative is unthinkable.

“Open your mouth.”

He can't, though. He's paralysed. His face is so hot he can feel his tears evaporating from his cheeks. He can barely hear anything except his thundering pulse.

Fingers brush slowly along his lower lip, then scrape against his teeth, forcing his jaw wider.

He obeys.

It’s not like he can’t handle this, he thinks. It’s not a big deal, it’s, it’s just. It’s just a cock in his mouth. It’s not like it’s the first time for that. It’s just a cock. It’s soft and warm and earthy on his tongue, so soft, so unfamiliar, it’s a stranger, a stranger who has their hand on his head, rough and harsh and tugging at his scalp, dragging him close so his nose is pressed against their coarse hair, but he can handle it, he can—

“Swallow it all.”

What

It’s the heat that startles him, flooding into his mouth in a rush. It’s so much so quickly he groans and starts to gag, but there’s a snarl that reminds him he can’t fail to obey. Just drink. Don’t think about it. Don’t taste it. Drink, keep drinking, don’t stop, *swallow it all*

The cock in his mouth twitches as his throat convulses. He fights to keep his teeth behind his lips. His breath hisses through his nose between big ugly spasming gulps. He’s unprepared for this, he’s frightened and he’s out of air and starting to panic. Dizzy and desperate, he presses his hands against the thighs in front of him, and whimpers, and swallows this bastard’s piss until there’s nothing left.

The hand in his hair releases. He slumps forwards into empty space, falls until his forehead rests on the rough fibres of the carpet. He claws at it and clenches his teeth and tries with all his will not to be sick.

Just breathe

Shit, he's crying, and there's nothing he can do to stop it. His shoulders are shaking. At least he manages to stay silent.

Above him, a zip closes.

"That's funny. Your—*friend*—looked like he enjoyed it more."

"No—"

Something twists in his chest, it hurts so much he moans. Thank god the bastard doesn't seem to hear. He walks back around his big desk and smacks down into the leather of his big chair. Jongin flinches. Holds his breath.

Maybe it's over. Please.

Just let me go

"Maybe you need more practice? Ah, stop cowering like a bitch. Do your job and keep your mouth shut and get out of my sight."

He makes it as far as the dance studio toilets before he doubles over and retches. It's not like there's anything to bring up any more, he hasn't eaten all day, but it's the only way he can rebel.

All he wants to do is run and never come back. But he can't, can he. This is as far as he can go. Or else—

Do your job.

He's failing at that already. He's got a string of stressed-out messages from his leader, *where are you? we're getting started, are you almost here? is your meeting done yet? is everything okay?*

He groans and closes his eyes. Taemin drifts through the static of his mind, half-naked and purring, his hand slipping under his waistband.

What if I want to earn a bonus ~ ?

He retches again and there's nothing but sticky bile.

He's still leaning against the wall of the stall, breathing heavy, his legs shaking and his throat burning, when he hears the bathroom door open.

"Jongin?"

Fuck.

"'m okay."

He can barely croak the words. There's no way Junmyeon will believe him. Junmyeon doesn't. He's just outside the stall, his shadow fading onto the tiles at Jongin's feet. He must be able to smell...

"Jongin, open the door."

"Can't. Just. Give me—"

Junmyeon's voice is more gentle now: "Nini, what's wrong?"

"I'm fine. Hyung. Just—tired."

"Where did you go? What happened?"

"I—I drank too much."

"You *what*? Where were you?"

"That meeting. You saw my schedule right."

"And you—what on earth did he want?"

"Nothing, just. Old stuff. It doesn't matter. Hyung I'll be okay I just need a minute."

"Yeah that's fine, I'll be here, the others can get started—"

Go away

"Alone. Please."

"Oh. Yeah, okay. Alright."

It's far more than a minute, and it's not enough. All the face-washing in the world can't make him look human. He doesn't even have a hat to hide under. He slinks into the practice room, where the lights and mirrors are merciless. The others, lined up in formation where he's interrupted their work, stop and stare.

Of course they're staring. He looks like death. He's grey and sweating and swaying, like he's got a fever. His eyes are bloodshot, and not quite focused. He's a mess.

"Wow, you look like shit", Sehun finally says.

Yixing shakes his head, breaks rank, comes over. His hands are on Jongin's shoulders, calm and soft. There's zero chance he can't feel the way he's shaking.

"Hey."

His gentle intelligent eyes are full of worry. He's a lot better at expressing it now than he used to be, better at making decisions, better looking at situations sensibly, better at taking care of people, better at leading. He'd be the perfect person to ask for help, if—

Keep your mouth shut.

"Jongin, you shouldn't be here. You should go home."

"I'll be fine. Just dehydrated."

Yixing sighs. He's never going to be the kind of guy who tries to force people into doing things they don't want to do, even if it's for their own good. And it's not like he'd listen to own advice, if it was him.

Or he wouldn't have, back in the old days. It feels like he's different now.

"You really don't look well."

"I'll be fine, don't worry about me. I just need some water. We've got work to do."

"You sure?" It's Junmyeon. His leader's by his side now, patting his back. "Okay then."

That's it, take over. Thank you hyung.

He makes himself stand tall, somehow. Squares his shoulders, stretches his neck, takes a deep breath. This is where he needs to be right now, in his place, with his members, doing what he's supposed to do. He's safe. He can be normal here, or at least he can try. He can not think about Lee Taemin. Maybe he can make it all be okay.

It's not like he has any choice.

"I can't let you guys down, right? I need to do my job."

He does his job, for the rest of the session. He works hard.

By some miracle the impossible happens: he starts to feel okay. He's with his members, working hard, being Kai, not thinking about anything except music and movement and the simple immediacy of physical form. The fog of dread lifts just enough for him to feel like he might be able to survive this.

At least Kai might.

They finish. An hour late, but he doesn't care. They finish and drift off towards their little piles of possessions near the walls, drawn inexorably to their phones by the brain-stem reflex everyone has these days. He's no different.

Kai finishes practice, pulls on his hoodie, sits down against the wall, and checks his phone.

Jongin sees the messages from Taemin.

Missed you today

I finished my meetings

You free yet?

Want to see you x

He can hear that little purring playful voice in his head. *Mmmm. What if I want…*

He stuffs his phone in his pocket.

Nobody saw. He's fine.

His phone throbs against his leg. He knows in his gut it's Taemin. Taemin wants to see him. Wants to have dinner with him, wants to talk and laugh and gossip the way they always have, the only way they ever stayed sane, by sharing all their secrets, all of them…

If you're not lying to me now then he's been lying to you for years.

The thought of that bastard being right…but he is, isn't he? *God*

Wretched, he curls into a ball, his head between his knees.

Is this why Taemin never—

“Jongin. What’s wrong?”

Kyungsoo. It’s Kyungsoo, quiet and calm and warm, crouching by his side, his body sheltering them from the bright open room.

Keep your mouth shut.

“’m fine. Just tired.”

Nothing. Silence and stillness. He knows perfectly well the look Kyungsoo is giving him.

“You’re not okay.”

Fuck. He knows. He always knows, damn him, it’s like he can smell when Jongin’s hurting.

Jongin blinks up out between his knees at him, nose still hidden in the soft fabric of his sleeves. He lets himself make the tiniest small shake of his head. Kyungsoo says nothing, just sits quietly, thinking.

And then, very carefully, he says:

“Your back’s a problem still, huh.”

Thank you hyung

He heaves a sigh, not really sure if it’s exhaustion or despair or relief.

“Yeah.”

“Do you want me to take a look.”

“Yeah.”

Kyungsoo nods, sits back on his heels, gestures for him to lie down. He calls out to the others, who are still scrounging around, getting their stuff together, getting ready to leave.

“Junmyeon! You guys go for dinner, I just want to help Jongin with his back a little bit.”

“Oh, yeah, alright.” Their leader’s clearly in the middle of something, their manager’s in his ear. “Jongin, you’re okay?”

“He’ll be fine.”

From the floor, Kai gives a weak thumbs-up.

“That’s great. See you guys tomorrow, hey.”

The noise of his members bickering and sniping at each other about stupid bullshit like dinner options fades quickly as the practice room empties. Even Yixing, after giving him a long, searching look, skulks out after them.

Everything’s quiet.

Jongin rests his head on his folded arms, flat on his belly on the smooth cool timber, and lets himself go limp. Kyungsoo kneels over him, tucked neatly and professionally over Jongin’s thighs. The weight of him is comforting, a familiar presence. His calm slow methodical strength has given Jongin relief from so many nights of pain.

His back does hurt. It always hurts. He doesn’t have to pretend.

Kyungsoo’s *very* good at this. He knows how Jongin’s body works, and how it breaks, and how to fix it again. He slides his hands under the hem of Jongin’s loose shirt and works his thumbs into the muscles of his waist, and the deep bruised ache that always lurks there flares and radiates, then starts to melt away.

He moans. No shame in that, Kyungsoo gets it. He’s made Jongin cry enough times doing this. He feels like he should be crying now. For some reason he can’t. He breathes in very deep and tries to make his body relax.

“You want to talk about anything?” Kyungsoo says.

Jongin glances up at the unblinking eye of the camera in the corner. He shakes his head.

What can he possibly say anyway? What good could it do to curse him with this? The whole fucking point is to keep this all buried, what on earth could Kyungsoo say or do to help?

What if Kyungsoo doesn't think this should be kept hidden at all...?

There’s a very long silence. Kyungsoo’s powerful hands pause where they’re framing Jongin’s spine, then knead deeper into his flesh.

“Let me cook dinner for you.”

“I can’t, I’ve got a call—”

“Take it at my place, I don’t mind. Unless you’re seeing Tae—”

Jongin flinches. Can’t not. Winces and whimpers, like he’s in pain. Which he is. Kyungsoo stops himself mid-word with an apologetic little hiss, and lightens his touch.

“Sorry.”

“It hurts.”

Kyungsoo sighs and sits back on his heels, like he’s had enough. As gentle as his voice is, there's an undercurrent to it which doesn’t welcome resistance.

“You need to eat and you need to rest. Let somebody take care of you for once.”

Jongin doesn't move. He closes his eyes. He's never been more tired in his life. Someone leans close to him, hovering, their breath tickling his skin.

I'll see you soon

He shakes with sobs. Kyungsoo holds him like he knows it all.

"Jongin. You'll get through this. You're gonna be okay."

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