Slow, cleansing burn

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by pulledporknoods

Summary

Viktor risked everything when he threw in his lot with one Jayce Talis. He expected a lot of things in their budding partnership, but he didn’t expect to fall in love with the man. It’s fine though. He knows how to keep to himself.

Or, how one post-gala evening exposes a completely different secret and sets in motion something that's been building for a long time

Notes

I actually don't know if this will be a slow burn tbh

Chapter 1: A comedy of errors and a ballad of yearning

Chapter Notes

> Just a heads up, vomit features heavily in the beginning (mildly graphic). To skip, ***stop reading*** at "The moment Viktor resigns himself to being stuck here forever", and to ***resume reading***, search the page for "Viktor heaves a hard sigh and walks to his bathroom as quickly as he can".
>
> ▶ Click for anatomy details

The door to Viktor’s apartment bursts open. The fathers of Hextech stumble in, gangly and uncoordinated, reeking of fine Piltover wine. Jayce’s arm around Viktor’s shoulders, combined with at least half of the man’s weight, feels heavier than anything Viktor's felt before. “Jayce, why,” he grunts, trying to shove the man further upright. “Why would you drink so much if you know you can’t *drink*?”

The journey from tonight’s gala was unpleasant, to say the least. Viktor had to juggle an absolutely smashed Jayce while doing his best to hail down carriages that wanted nothing to do with two men reeking of alcohol. It's a miracle they made it to one of their homes instead of sleeping in some bushes. Not that the enforcers will ever allow that, not even from the darling Kiramman protégé.

Said protégé is currently buried in his neck, where he groans and mumbles something incoherent. Viktor shivers at the rush of air against sensitive skin before scoffing, focusing on carrying them both to his couch with minimal incidents.

There he stops for a moment, trying to solve the equation in his head. A massive barnacle of a partner, a bad leg, a couch he will need to lower them both to, and finally, impaired coordination from his own tipsiness…. The odds are against them. Viktor stands there for a moment longer, biting his lip in thought.

Jayce solves the problem for him in the worst way: the man tilts in his hold, causing Viktor to drop his cane and add his other arm around his waist, only for his bad leg to crumple immediately. At the last second, Viktor manages to wrench them forwards. With a cry of “Jayce!” the two of them crash onto the couch in a tangle of limbs. The couch jolts across the floor by a few inches.

Everything is still for a moment, until Jayce quietly groans again. “Viktor…” The man flounders, presumably trying to sit up, but he only succeeds in freeing his face from the narrow space between Viktor’s ribs and the back of the couch. He thunks said face onto Viktor’s scrawny back, eliciting a wince and a quiet “oof” from the man under him.

“Viktooorrr,” he whines again. Viktor can feel the heat between their bodies, the line of physical contact stretching from his upper back to Jayce’s shins. He fights the matching heat threatening to bloom across his face.

Viktor does his best to look over his shoulder. “Yes, Jayce?” Those half-open eyes stare at him from Viktor’s peripheral vision as Viktor contemplates the consequences of a night spent squashed between his lab partner and the couch. Maybe Jayce will be kind and roll off of him. Maybe he won't, and this will be his final resting place.

The moment Viktor resigns himself to being stuck here forever, Jayce makes a distinct retching sound. “No!” Viktor shouts. He starts flapping his hands behind him, frantically trying to push off his partner. Jayce, to his credit, manages to lean off the couch before he starts vomiting. Viktor closes his eyes as he hears liquid hit his floorboards.

The force of Jayce gagging makes his body seize viscerally against Viktor, and that fact alone makes Viktor more than a little nauseous himself. He leans as far into the couch as he can, one hand pressed hard against his own mouth. “You are a horrible man,” he says through his fingers. He lies there, still crushed under his partner, ignoring the smell and the noises and desperately pretending the jerking against him isn’t awfully reminiscent of something more obscene.

Finally, the noises stop.

Jayce immediately starts flailing again, and Viktor shudders at the big, warm hands that alternate between grabbing his torso and pushing down on the cushions around him. “Bathroom,” Jayce pants above him. He staggers upright, wobbling on his feet, barely avoiding the puddle on the floor. He disappears down the short hallway, the occasional banging noise drifting back to Viktor’s ears. Viktor blinks after him, reeling from the last however many minutes. He can feel his clothes cooling, Jayce’s warmth leeching into the atmosphere of the room. His body feels odd now that he’s not being forcibly bonded with the couch. Viktor stares into the dark, selectively replaying the last few moments, the memory of movement against him, of warmth and pressure, of Jayce—

Jayce, who left a puddle of vomit on his floors. Viktor runs a hand down his face and sighs. Best to clean it up as soon as possible. He pushes himself up, grabs his cane (which is luckily vomit-free), and spends the next several minutes puttering between his kitchen sink and his living room. He gets a little lost in the task, trying to eliminate any hint of a smell, before he realizes it is entirely too quiet.

Viktor heaves a hard sigh and walks to his bathroom as quickly as he can, wincing the entire time. His body was not made for scrubbing floors. Once outside the bathroom door, Viktor stops, allowing his eyes to adjust to the golden light. “Are you…okay…?” He trails off, eyes dropping immediately to the swathe of bronze skin on display.

Jayce sits on the tiled floor of the tiny bathroom, half naked—his vest, shirt, and tie flung into a pile in the corner. The man’s chest is heaving, full pectorals drawing Viktor’s eyes as they swell and deflate distractingly. His arms sit behind him, propping him up, long legs extending as well as they can with the lack of space. Viktor watches as if from afar as he steps into the room. By necessity, he stops right between those legs. Viktor’s grip tightens on the handle of

his cane. Silence reigns. Jayce stares up at him with wide, innocent eyes, and Viktor stares back, bewildered.

“Why are you naked?” he whispers.

Jayce makes an offended noise. “I’m not naked, I’m—” He looks around dejectedly. “My clothes were gross,” he pouts, not meeting Viktor’s eyes. “I was jus’ gonna sit for a bit.”

Viktor closes his eyes and prays to Janna for patience. Both for Jayce’s antics, and for those nipples staring directly into his soul.

“Okay.” He concentrates on stepping around Jayce’s limbs to turn on the shower. Pipes in the walls creak and groan as he fiddles with the knobs, the showerhead sputtering to life. Jayce stays on the floor behind him, doing gods know what. Viktor waits until the water is at least lukewarm before turning back around. “There.” He jabs a thumb in the direction of the shower. “Clean yourself.”

Jayce’s head lolls onto his shoulder as he looks at him. Viktor waits for his words to sink into Jayce's alcohol-soaked skull and thinks about making Jayce sleep in the living room, scrunched up on the couch. He starts to leave, only to be interrupted when Jayce finally opens his mouth. “Vik,” he slurs in syrupy surprise, “Your clothes got gross too.”

Viktor’s eyes snap down to his front. Nothing. “Where?” He shuffles over to turn his back to the mirror, craning his head to look. He sees a few smears on his waistcoat, spread over the expanse of his back. A quick onceover reveals more smears further down, dangerously close to his ass, and even smudges on his arms. His mind flashes back to Jayce flailing on top of him earlier, the way those hands landed everywhere…. He claps a hand to his forehead. There better not be vomit on his couch.

Surprisingly, Jayce seems to catch on at the same time. He stumbles to his feet, clutching at the walls for support. “Vik. Vik, ’m sorry, I'll clean it up,” he mumbles. Warm hands grasp at Viktor’s upper arms. “I'll clean it up, promise.” The last sentence is spoken right into his face as Jayce looms in, much too close. Viktor grimaces, turns away, and pushes at Jayce with a palm to the jaw. It only works for about a second before the man effortlessly leans back in.

“Hey Vik…” Fingers fiddle with his waistcoat buttons in a way that is definitely hazardous to his health. “Vik, how ’bout…how ’bout we shower together?”

Viktor jerks in shock as the words “shower together” ping-pong around his skull.

Jayce nods slowly, seemingly to himself. “Yeah, I'll clean you. Clean you now, clean the floor later. Tomorrow.” Jayce nods again, decisively this time.

“What do you mean, clean me?” Viktor croaks out.

“Your shirt has vomit on it,” Jayce explains patiently, as if Viktor’s brain is the one actively pickling in wine. As if he isn't currently sliding Viktor's waistcoat off his shoulders. As if he isn't currently wreaking havoc on Viktor’s mind, body, and soul.

Curse this man, and curse Viktor too, for still finding him attractive.

Viktor's hands shoot out, grabbing Jayce just as he starts on the buttons of his shirt. “Jayce, no.” He tries to sound gentle and firm, instead of borderline hysterical like he feels on the inside. “You don't need to clean me. I can clean myself.” There's no way he can let Jayce see his chest, much less anything else. He scuttles backwards to gain as much distance as his tiny bathroom allows.

Jayce immediately closes the gap. “Lemme take care of you,” he whines. Those hands are at his front again, batting at Viktor's hands with a surprising amount of coordination. “You always fix my problems,” Jayce continues. “I wanna help.”

Viktor is at a loss. Of all times for the man to be selfless, now?

Those fingers keep working while Viktor mentally grapples with his situation, until moist bathroom air hits bare skin. Viktor snaps out of his daze and looks down. His shirt is open and half pushed off, exposing his bare shoulders and two visible layers of undershirts. Despite the layers, the front of the shirts round out in a very distinctive manner. Viktor sharply raises his head to see Jayce Talis, his lab partner and best friend, staring at his chest in confusion. He gets a front-row seat to Jayce's thought process: first a realization, then doubt, then the suspicion that his initial idea is, in fact, correct. Jayce brings up a hand as if to touch, but his hand stops in the space between them. “…Vik?”

Viktor wrenches the two sides of his shirt together and runs.

Or at least, he tries. Even at an accelerated pace, he is no match for an inebriated Jayce, and he also fails to account for Jayce’s arm span. He barely clears the door of the bathroom before a hand curls around his bicep, with a cry of “Wait!” Viktor tries to struggle out of Jayce's grip, but the delay is enough for the man to draw him back.

Viktor gives up. He allows Jayce to pull him back into the bathroom. After all, if Jayce is regaining coordination, then with his size, Viktor has no choice but to hear him out.

“The water, Jayce,” he says dully. The shower is still going.

Jayce pauses, as if assessing his flight risk, before slowly turning knobs until silence fills the room.

Well. This was always going to happen.

Viktor takes a deep breath and uncrosses his arms, raising his chin defiantly. Jayce looks at him but doesn’t quite meet his eye, and Viktor pretends that doesn’t stab him through the heart. Neither of them speak.

Viktor quickly loses his bravado and sags against the wall. “Well?” His tone is resigned.

Jayce startles at that. “What?” His eyes contain nothing but confusion when they finally meet Viktor’s, and now Viktor is also getting confused.

“I…have breasts, Jayce.”

He gets a bright red blush in response. “Ah, yeah, I-I see that.” The blush deepens. “Sorry.” Another moment of silence, before: “Ah, n-not about the, ah. Breasts. Having them. Just. Um. You know.”

Viktor stares.

This is not how he wanted this reveal to go. In fact, the past few hours were entirely outside of anything he expected. The effects of the entire evening suddenly hit him and hit him hard.

Viktor no longer has the energy to care about any of this. He suddenly wants to just go to bed, close his eyes, and let the day end. Jayce doesn't seem to have a real issue with his chest, and Viktor is still apparently wearing vomit-covered clothes, which means all he needs to do is go to bed and let the conversation wait until morning.

Mind made up, he turns his back to the man and starts undressing. “I am going to shower,” he declares over the sputtering behind him. He pauses in the middle of undoing his pants as Jayce's previous offer of sharing a shower resurfaces. Is he really going to offer…? Viktor bites his lip before sighing. At this point, it's more of a practical concern, he rationalizes. There's only so much hot water to go around. Viktor says over his shoulder, “If you want any of the hot water, you'll join.”

There's a deafening silence as Viktor wrestles out of his remaining clothing, relying heavily on both his cane and the walls. He enters the shower stall and closes the curtain with a rattle. There he stills, shoulders pulled up to his ears, waiting to see if Jayce leaves.

Unfortunately, Jayce seems to care more about hot water than dignity. Jayce's large frame enters the stall, and Viktor suddenly realizes he made a grave error, on multiple counts.

Firstly, he cannot, in fact, handle taking a shower with Jayce. His mind is already filling with images of their wet bodies rubbing against each other, together with the sound of klaxons going off.

Secondly, the shower stall is small enough that two regular-sized people will be uncomfortable, much less someone the size of Jayce.

“Wait,” he starts. He turns, hand up to push his friend back out, only for Jayce's momentum to herd him up against the back of the shower. They come to a stop with Viktor flat against the wall, one hand on Jayce's chest, facing each other, mere inches apart and—gods above—naked.

They both freeze.

Viktor stares straight ahead with all the willpower he can muster, unwilling to let his eyes wander either up or down. Either direction feels like it’ll cause him to spontaneously combust.

They're so close, Viktor can feel Jayce almost hyperventilating. Literally—he's very aware of both Jayce's chest, rapidly expanding and contracting under his hand, and the quick, shallow

breaths ruffling the very top of his hair. Every couple of seconds, Jayce’s throat bobs as he swallows nervously.

The angle of Jayce's jaw suggests he's looking straight ahead as well, and something in Viktor wants to check. Just a quick glance. His eyes flick upward.

Jayce really is just staring intensely at the wall above Viktor’s head.

Except the moment Viktor locks on to his face seems to be the moment Jayce also has the urge to check on him—and the two of them make eye contact. Gold meets hazel in a mutually terrified stare. Jayce opens his mouth as if to say something, and Viktor decides he definitely cannot handle that.

The hand on Jayce’s chest shoots up to clap over Jayce’s mouth. “Don’t say anything,” he hisses, not caring if he seems insane.

Jayce gawks back at him like a spooked horse. Viktor closes his eyes again. Maybe if they just clean themselves as quickly as possible, and he makes Jayce sleep on the couch, they can pretend this night never happened.

Viktor removes his hand from Jayce's face and reaches out toward the shower knobs again, intending to get this ordeal over with. Instead, he's distracted by a touch on his lower abdomen. He looks at Jayce in confusion, noting his slightly terrified expression, and glances up to where both of Jayce’s hands are braced against the shower walls.

The realization hits him, and Viktor starts to look down. At the same moment, Jayce grabs him by the jaw and wrenches his head upward. It's so sudden Viktor doesn't even have the time to put up resistance, and he hisses when the back of his head bangs against the shower wall. “What—” he starts.

“Sorry!” Jayce gasps out. “Sorry, sorry. Just, um, do me a favor? Okay? Don't look down, please?”

As if Viktor can even move his head right now. At this angle, they're once more looking towards each other, though Jayce still avoids eye contact. His face, what Viktor can see of it anyway, is flushed red. Viktor too is bright red. He can feel himself radiating heat from chest to forehead.

“Sure,” he replies faintly. Jayce jolts and lets go of his face. Viktor doesn't change the angle of his head.

Jayce's—Jayce is still touching him, down there. Just the tip, resting gently against the tiny swell of fat under Viktor’s navel. Viktor feels like melting into goop and disappearing down the drain. Was the scene on the couch not enough to mock him? Gods, what are they doing?

Viktor shifts in place, hoping Jayce also won't look down. An irrational part of him wants to buck up, create some friction, just to see what can happen. Jayce getting hard means something, right? Sure, it can just be a natural biological response, but maybe Viktor can lean

into it. There's no way Jayce likes him that way, but maybe he's open to something casual. Viktor can just reach down and wrap his hand around that thick, hot—

Viktor turns the shower knob, and the water that spews out is, in fact, not hot. The air explodes with shrieking and profanity.

“Fuck, Viktor, you said it'd be hot water!”

“It was, until you took too long!” Viktor frantically lathers up his hands and jabs the bar of soap at his partner. “It's not going to get any warmer, so hurry up!” Jayce obeys, all previous tension abandoned. They frantically clean themselves, ignoring the way their limbs collide in their bid to exit the shower as soon as possible.

Viktor is first out of the shower, tumbling out past Jayce in a tangle of elbows. He catches himself on the sink edge and turns just in time to see Jayce exit the shower, shivering.

“I hate you,” the man mutters, hugging himself tightly for warmth.

Viktor ignores the way his heart clenches—it's just a joke—and says lamely, “You wanted a shower.” He grabs a threadbare towel off the rack and hands another to his partner. He turns around, quickly scrubbing excess water off his body before using the towel to squeeze at his hair. He's actively fighting the urge to bolt out of the room, but what use is that when Jayce already saw everything?

“Hey.”

Viktor turns slightly, just enough to acknowledge Jayce's bid for attention.

There's a hesitant pause before Jayce speaks again. “I um…maybe I'll say this better in the morning, but uh…you're still you, you know? You're just Viktor. To me.”

Viktor doesn't say anything back. Can't, because suddenly he's on the verge of tears. Sure, Jayce seemed accepting earlier, but thinking it and hearing it are completely different.

”…Thanks,” he croaks, and immediately winces at his lackluster reply.

Jayce doesn't seem to notice. “I'd hug you, but uh…” He chuckles awkwardly.

Right. They're still naked.

Viktor wraps his towel around himself. “I'll, ah, get us some clothes.” He moves to pick up his cane. Thank the gods Jayce already has spare clothes here. He stays over enough to warrant it, says it’s because Viktor's place is closer to the lab. Personally, if Viktor had Jayce’s house and Jayce’s legs, he would take the additional travel time over packing himself into a narrow bed with a friend, but there’s no accounting for Jayce’s stubbornness.

He rummages through his drawers, dressing himself completely before finding something for Jayce. He turns around, clothes in hand, only to see the man himself standing in his doorway. Jayce's muscles glimmer in the low light, his hips only covered by a towel that leaves nothing to the imagination.

Viktor thinks his soul leaves his body a little.

“Your clothes,” he says, thrusting out the hand with the clothes in question.

“Thanks,” Jayce says, taking them.

Sounds of clothes rustling fill the room as Jayce gets dressed. Viktor stares very intently at his wallpaper before remembering something. “I, ah…I cleaned the mess already. In the living room. You don’t need to worry about that.”

“Oh.”

Silence falls as Jayce finishes dressing, and they both contemplate Viktor's singular bed.

“I can sleep on the couch if you want—”

“Nonsense.” Viktor steps forward, pulls his covers back. “Nothing's changed for me.”

“Uh. Me either.”

“Then it's settled.” Viktor nods at his bed. “Well?”

Jayce looks at him for a moment before climbing in, scooting close to the wall as he always does. Viktor turns off the lights and climbs in after him, stopping just a breath away from touching. He can feel the heat radiating off Jayce's back, warming Viktor's face. For one moment of insanity, he contemplates pushing closer, like usual, before deciding against it.

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