

Lovesick

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Lovesick

by [justanother30](#)

Summary

Part 2 of the [LOVEFOOLS SERIES](#). Read Part 1 [LOVEFOOLS](#).

When JJ decided to travel to the other side of the world to tell Yuri how much he loved him, part of him expected to be told to fuck off — that he had screwed things up too much for Yuri to ever forgive him. Instead, Yuri had pulled him in close, confessing that he would always love him. That he would be there for JJ no matter what, in whatever way JJ needed.

So what is he supposed to do with that?

As JJ and Yuri try to move forward with their new relationship they soon discover how much JJ's trauma from the past year still haunts him, and how hard it is for JJ to trust Yuri's commitment to him when Isabella wasn't able to stick by his side.

Will JJ be able to put the demons brought up by his stalker to rest once and for all, or will his past tear Yuri and him apart?

Notes

Okay, I just couldn't stop JJ's and Yuri's story at the end of [LOVEFOOLS](#). JJ's voice in my head was just too loud, and he wanted to have his say as well.

So, the story continues...

Prologue: The Gift

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Immediately following the [Instagram Livestream](#)

Yuri.

Yuri did this.

It was obvious his hand was in all of it. And here was the final proof, in the picture frame that lay in my lap.

I stared down at it through blurry eyes. I couldn't seem to stop the rush of tears that kept falling uncontrollably. The gold medal — *Yuri's Plisetsky's fucking first Grand Prix Final gold medal* — pinned inside looked up at me, glinting in the daylight streaming through the small window in my bathroom, and it was if Yuri's emerald eyes were staring right back at me, crashing through the last of my defenses that I had tried to keep in place.

I tried not to blink, afraid that if I did the frame in my hand would dissolve and I'd lose that last piece of him. So instead I sat and cried, ugly sobs shaking through me.

This last year had been such hell, I wished I could just forget it. Completely black everything out of my mind. Except for Yuri. Yuri was the one luminous, bright, glowing ember in my otherwise fucked up life right now.

I didn't understand what I'd done wrong to encourage that crazy woman to become my own personal nightmare. I tried being nice. I tried being a jerk. I tried ignoring her. But nothing worked. She was always there — even when she wasn't. I couldn't get rid of her and I was just so fucking tired of it all. Even now, when she was in jail, I couldn't shake the feeling that she was still leering in the background, watching my every move.

When Victor approached me about doing the charity to help stalking victims I cringed inside. Was *that* what I was now? A victim?

I hated that that's how everyone saw me. Weak. I had to pull my shit together and show everyone that I could still be me, that I still had my *JJ Style*. But it made me sick to think about and I could taste the sharp metal of bile in my mouth.

I *was* surprised by all the fan responses. I hadn't expected that and it was touching. Staying away from social media was how I tried to stay sane these last few months, but I could see that I had to enter back into that arena again. *King JJ* doesn't hide after all.

The darkness was crushing though. I could barely breathe underneath it. Yuri was the only bright spec that I could look to. I craved his light, yet I knew it was something I could never have no matter how much my heart wanted it. All I could do was ignore that craving for him.

At least that's what I'd been trying to do. Of course, it was Yuri and he wouldn't be ignored. That evidence practically shouting up at me. How could he still be there for me? Why would he do all of this? For the life of me, I couldn't fathom what the hell he saw in me that made me worth all this effort.

The knock on the door startled me. Without waiting for my answer the knob turned, but I knew that my sister Lou would come in no matter what I answered. When I looked over though I surprised at the person who entered. It wasn't Lou.

Beka came and sat next to me on the edge of the tub where I was perched.

"Everyone's gone now. Your sister scared them all away," he chuckled a bit. I nodded, and sniffed back my tears, grabbing some toilet paper to blow my nose and wipe up my face.

He took the frame out of my hands, a slight frown on his face, and muttered, "I can't believe he gave you *this* medal."

I exhaled a deep breath and shook my head, just as much in disbelief as he was. "I don't deserve it," I said quietly, looking over his shoulder at the frame.

"No, you don't," Beka's voice didn't hold any animosity, but his words made me wince.

He was completely right. I didn't deserve it. I didn't deserve Yuri. I thought of the last time I saw him. I hadn't even been completely cognizant at the time. All I knew was that he was the only one who could pull me out of the pit I was sinking in. I don't even remember calling him. The only thing I remembered was feeling his arms tight around me, his brilliant green eyes filling my vision when all else was a blur.

Then, it was like that angelic force was ripped away from me. Even though I couldn't be with him, I always felt like Yuri was my guardian angel from afar. I just had to think of him there, in my city, his presence permeating everything, keeping me from losing myself completely to the abyss that was always one breath away from swallowing me whole.

Of course, he had to go back to Russia — though I'm sure he didn't realize he was taking my mangled, bloody mess of a heart with him. I couldn't even pretend with Izzy anymore after that. All I could do was stare at the black hole in my chest.

Absentmindedly, I rubbed at my chest. Beka noticed. "You know, Yuri didn't do this because you deserved it." I knew he was referring to more than the medal.

Handing me back the frame, he flipped it over. In the corner was tucked a small but thick envelope. The surprise must have been evident in my face because he gave a small grunt and nodded.

"He did this because he loves you." Standing, Beka turned to leave. But before opening the door he turned back, his face solemn. "Do better than I did, Jean. Don't let him go."

I've decided to stick to Kubo's world, where no matter the country, no matter the gender, ALL love is accepted, embraced, and treated with the respect and normalcy it deserves. So, while my heart breaks that Russia right now is not tolerant of LGBTQ+ love, let's have hope and model what should be a completely normal thing!

Storm Clouds

Chapter Summary

When I entered the rink Yuri was with Victor in the middle of the ice, nodding at whatever instructions Victor seemed to be giving him, but upon seeing me turned his head and beamed a smile so bright at me my heart skipped like a teenage boy in love. Criss, I had it bad.

I was a little early to pick Yuri up at the rink, having finished with my errands quicker than expected. That just meant more time to watch Yuri train. He was such an angel on the ice. Of course, he was also the fierce Ice Tiger of Russia, making sure we all knew that fact every time he did an exhibition skate. He oozed more and more sex appeal each passing year with those exhibitions. And now by some miracle, both the angel and the sex god were now mine.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Walking down the hall I could feel my skin prickle the closer I got to the door. The pit in my stomach told me something wasn't right. I wanted to turn around and run but something was behind me. I couldn't see what it was but I could feel its dark, heavy presence. The whisper of a breath. Cold tendrils of fingers hovering over my skin. It inched closer and my heart sped up.

The door neared, almost pulled towards me, more than me moving closer to it. I didn't want to enter it, but it swung wide open despite my fear. Or almost because of it. Bright music poured out, fast and hectic, a swirl of lights pulsing in and out with a cacophony of drums in a harsh syncopated rhythm. The music should have been joyful and happy, but instead it grated on my nerves, too loud and too fast.

Suddenly I was there in the middle of a dance floor surrounded by dancers, skirts twirling, feet stomping. It was making me dizzy until a hand grabbed mine. Turning around I saw Yuri and I relaxed, smiling at him. He didn't return my smile, but instead pulled me to leave the dance floor which became increasingly difficult as the crowd got denser the closer we got to the edge.

Then someone yelled 'Fire!' and it became complete chaos. The room became blurry and cold, and I couldn't see through the water now streaming down my face. Looking up I saw fire sprinklers raining down on the crowd. Or was it rain clouds?

Wet bodies pressed in, everyone shoving their way to the exit, though I had no idea where it was. If I could just hold onto Yuri's hand, I knew he would lead me to safety. He was so far ahead of me though — I couldn't see him anymore, his body lost in the crowd, our arms stretched to the max, his firm grip on my hand my only point of contact.

Up ahead I could finally see it, the way out. A green exit sign was the only light glowing through the darkness. But it was more than darkness. I could feel it again. That cold presence filling the room, like storm clouds that build and grow ominous in the sky, swallowing up all light and energy in their path.

I was completely soaked, blinking against the water in my face, and it was getting harder and harder to keep a hold of Yuri, our hands wet and slick. In trying to grip his hand tighter it shot from my grasp and I lost contact. Scanning the crowd I desperately tried to locate him. Yelling out, my voice was lost in the noise around me, making my attempts completely useless. I continued to yell for him though, until my voice was hoarse and raw, my shouts only coming out as dry gasps.

Before I could find Yuri the cloud overtook me and I couldn't see anything anymore. The panicked crowd's shouts were drowned out, replaced by a sharp screeching, the sound of glass and metal scraping and shattering.

Huddling down and throwing my hands around my head I prayed that the cloud would just pass over me. Instead, the pressure increased, slow and smothering, making it harder and harder to breathe. The screeching only grew louder until I could feel my insides shake. Screaming back against the sound I felt like my head was going to explode from the pressure building there inside and out.

Then a light replaced the darkness, but with its appearance came a sharp pain behind my eyes. The light grew until it was so bright I couldn't move at all and I could feel the contents of my stomach coming up.

My eyes flew open and I threw up all over my bed.

It was a good long minute before I stopped heaving and shaking. Drenched in sweat, chills running along my skin, I took several steady breaths as I tried to recover from the dream.

That one was particularly bad. It was just so vivid. Usually, it was just an eerie feeling that was always on the edge of my sleep. And Yuri hadn't made an appearance before. Not that I was one to psychoanalyze my dreams, but I still could feel his hand slip away from mine and my heart continued to beat fast and hard at the fear of losing him in the crowd.

My stomach roiled again, so I continued to take measured breaths and tried not to move too much in the bed. Blinking against the harsh sunlight flooding the hotel room, it took several minutes before the everything became more than an awful blur.

Eventually, the fog cleared and I could see well enough to make out the shapes of the furniture crowding the room. Intricately scrolled woodwork with a gold inlay on the mahogany desk came into focus first, followed by the leather armchair in the corner by the floor to ceiling windows.

Most of my clothes from yesterday were thrown in a pile on the seat, and I was irked at myself that I hadn't hung them up as I should've last night. I'd also forgotten to close the blackout drapes, so the windows were only covered by the sheer linen curtains, the only filter between me and the bright morning sun.

The large matching mahogany dresser across from the bed with the same scrolled pattern as the desk was the last to come into focus, flat screen TV perched on top, my wallet, phone and room key scattered next to it.

The dark painted walls of the room helped temper the glow of the harsh sunlight, but they made the room feel smaller than it was. It felt too cramped with its oversized, ornate furniture. I preferred more open and airy rooms, but when you take a last-minute trip across the globe to confess your love to someone, beggars can't be choosers. I'd been meaning to move to another hotel, one I could relax a bit more in, but I also didn't want to take away from my time with Yuri to bother finding another room someplace else.

The coldness of the wet bedding was really starting to become uncomfortable. The sheets were twisted and wrapped tightly around my legs and torso, and everything was covered in puke. Though it was pretty pointless to try to maneuver around it, I did the best I could, finally untangling myself. I was still a little dizzy on standing, so slowly made my way to the bathroom to piss and clean up.

My head was still pounding and I pressed the palm of my hand to my left eye to try to dull the pain as I fumbled with the bottle of migraine pills my doctor had given me. I only had a few left even though I'd just gotten the prescription the day before I came to Saint Petersburg a week ago. They didn't really help, but they were better than nothing. Thankfully housekeeping had restocked the mini fridge last night while I was out with Yuri. Opening it up I grabbed a couple of the small bottles of Jack. Not my whiskey preference if I was out with friends, but right now I didn't care.

Turning on the shower, I downed the bottles quickly and went back into the room with a towel to scrub up the vomit that was splattered on the carpet as best as I could while I waited for the water to heat up.

After a hot shower I felt more awake, the headache finally relegated to just a constant dull pain in the background. But I could deal with that.

Luckily I wasn't meeting with Yuri until noon, after his training with Victor. That gave me a bit more time to get myself together. I stripped the bed and balled up the bedding. Then I wiped down the bathroom and gathered all the towels that needed changing. Opening up the ironing board I took my crumpled jeans and button down shirt from the chair and ironed them before hanging them back in the closet. With the room and myself cleaner, I started to feel calmer, the nightmare now growing distant in my mind.

Picking out an outfit took some time. Today was special and I couldn't just take Yuri out in a plain old t-shirt and jeans. Taking several pieces and laying them on the bed I debated for a bit, thinking of what I had planned. The weather had turned cooler, storm clouds already rolling in and blocking out the morning sun, so I opted for the long-sleeved burgundy button down, black chinos, and black leather boots.

Twenty minutes later, now freshly shaved, hair styled, and dressed, I gave the outfit another once-over in the full-length mirror. The pants were slipping a little, so I pulled my belt to the next notch. It was the last on the belt. Normally, I had two before the end. My button-down hung a little at the sides, not as fitted as it used to be, but I tucked the front in nice French tuck and that disguised the loose fit. Rolling the sleeves up to my elbows only made my arms seem thinner than they used to be, so I unrolled them until they hung just over my wrists.

It wasn't perfect but it worked. I slipped on my black leather ankle boots then stood, shaking my arms out, trying to relax. It didn't help as the butterflies in my stomach were fluttering like mad.

How could I still be nervous going to see Yuri? I'd been here for a week and seen him every day. And every day I was just as nervous. Taking a few deep breaths and rolling my neck, I attempted to loosen up. *JJ Style*, Jean-Jacques. *JJ Style*. I just had to focus on that and I would be okay.

Going through my mental checklist of what I needed to finish before I went to the rink to pick Yuri up, I slipped on my black hooded jacket. I couldn't help smiling to myself thinking about Yuri's reaction to what I had planned.

We'd spent this last week visiting about every historic building and museum that Yuri could find. He excitedly played tour guide. Even though I'd been to Saint Petersburg here and there over the years for competitions, I'd never really visited the city for pleasure. Not that I really cared about all the boring historical stuff — but seeing Yuri's enthusiasm for his home filled my heart with joy. I'd never seen him light up so much as he did holding my hand, pulling me from building to building, spilling out fact after fact.

But today was different. Yuri probably didn't realize it, but it marked four months since we'd had that first dance at the salsa club. Did people celebrate *four-months-since-you-changed-my-life-forever* anniversaries? Probably not, but I didn't care. It was important to us. Well, to me at least. I hoped it was for him, too.

I'd told Yuri I wanted to be in charge of our activities for the afternoon. It also happened to be his one day without having a lesson with Lilia or teaching the kids over Skype, so other than his time with Victor I'd have the entire rest of the day with him. I did a little research and found a couple of hidden gems of my own I was excited to show him.

Fluffing the pillows and putting a few extra bills on the desk for housekeeping, I grabbed the bag I had packed, and my wallet and phone. I hadn't checked it for messages yet. There were a few from Yuri, which I read about a half a dozen times, relishing each '*thinking about you, baby,*' '*can't wait to have you all to myself this afternoon,*' and '*hurry up and save me, I think Victor's trying to kill me with these new drills.*' I almost didn't see that I also had a missed call and voicemail.

Seeing the name 'Logan Martel' on my screen was like throwing a wet blanket on my good mood. Instantly, my mind brought up an image I couldn't seem to banish — Yuri and he standing close together, talking in that quiet, intimate way. Then the detective pulling Yuri in a tight embrace, Yuri's head buried on his shoulder. I knew I shouldn't be jealous. Yuri had assured me several times that the man was just a friend and was as straight as straight men

got, with absolutely no romantic intention whatsoever. But, the way Yuri had turned to him for comfort...

I slammed my finger on the screen to dial voicemail, gritting my teeth as I heard Martel's soft voice.

'Hi JJ, this is Logan Martel, the detective over your case against Ms. Grenier, calling again. Yuri told me you are in Saint Petersburg with him right now, but I do need to talk to you. The trial is coming up soon and I just want to clarify a few things. I'm sorry to bother you on your vacation, but it's important. Please call me back — don't worry about the time difference.'

His voice continued to prattle on from my phone on the floor, but I couldn't be bothered with it just now, as I was too busy throwing up again on my way to the bathroom.

When I entered the rink Yuri was with Victor in the middle of the ice, nodding at whatever instructions Victor seemed to be giving him, but the instant he saw me he turned his head and beamed a smile so bright my heart skipped like a teenage boy crushing over his first love. *Criss*, I had it bad.

Victor noticed that Yuri had stopped paying attention and turned around as well, the two of them watching me make my way over to the boards. Yuri waved but Victor's face was completely passive. Although he and I had worked together on the charity we'd started up, and although one of his gold medals hung on the wall of my bedroom back in Montreal, I still couldn't quite read him — especially when it came to how he felt about me dating Yuri now.

I waved back at Yuri and gave him a wink. He blushed. Then, realizing he was blushing, turned even redder. I couldn't help the laugh that came out. He flipped me off and turned his attention back to Victor, purposely positioning himself so he couldn't look at me. Laughing out again I draped my arms over the sideboards, settling in to wait for them to finish.

Despite my rough morning, I was actually a little early, having finished with my errands quicker than expected. That meant more time to watch Yuri train. I absolutely loved watching Yuri skate. I'd been enamored with his skating since he made his Senior Debut back when he'd turned fifteen. He was such an angel on the ice. Of course, he was also the fierce *Ice Tiger of Russia* — a point he made sure to drive home every time he did an exhibition skate. He oozed more and more sex appeal each passing year with those exhibitions. And now by some miracle, both the angel and the sex god were now mine.

Yuri glided across the ice and I could tell there was something new in his skating style. The step sequence he was working on was seamless. It didn't have any of the choppiness that often accompanied complicated step sequences like that. It melted together like honey. Or, more like hot molten lava. There was such a strong new energy to it.

Merde, he was really stepping it up this season. I knew I should be intimidated, but instead I was completely mesmerized and just let myself ogle him like the lovesick boyfriend I was, instead of a fellow competitor. I could watch Yuri skate all day, every day, for the rest of my life.

The rest of my life.

That thought hit me like a ton of bricks. I had barely gotten Yuri to give me a second chance. Was it tempting fate to dare hope for him to want to be with me for as long as *'the rest of our lives'*? I mean, yes, that's what I wanted, what I yearned for. To grow old with him. But it seemed like such an impossible dream, so far away. Even being with him now seemed unreal, though I wasn't going to look the gift horse in the mouth. I would take every second he would give me.

He continued to sail around the ice and I couldn't take my gaze off him. Passing in front of me Yuri caught my eye and threw me a jaunty smirk and wink over his shoulder as he picked up his pace, quickly building up speed before launching into a quad-triple combo, executing it perfectly before finishing with a beautiful camel spin, his long limbs stretched to show off his elegant lines.

My heart skipped again. Yuri had only grown more beautiful as he got older. Taller now, he was still lean, but his muscles now filled out his tight black workout shirt and black compression leggings. It only proved to make him stronger. And more sensuous.

Finishing up, he skated quickly over to me. Before I could hand him a towel and his skate guards he planted a quick but sexy kiss on my lips, sweeping around my mouth once with his tongue.

"I'm so going to kick your ass this season," his eyes sparkled with mirth.

Holding onto my shoulder for balance, he wiped off his skates before slipping on his skate guards, still panting a bit from exertion. His long hair was braided back, though several strands had fallen out and were dripping with sweat and clinging to his face and neck. He gave his face a quick swipe with the towel, then threw it around my neck. With his skates and guards on he was as tall as me and only had to pull me forward to give me another kiss, softer and slower this time.

"You looked amazing out there today," I said once we parted, trying not to stare too much at the brightness in his eyes and flush on his face.

"You spying on me, Leroy?" There was fire in his eyes at his teasing tone. I knew he was just joking around, but the name startled me. He hadn't called me that since we competed against each other last year, and it grated on me now.

The feelings from this morning's dream rushed in — the fear I felt at losing Yuri in that crowd, the darkness that pressed in at his absence. Looking down at his skates, toe-to-toe with my feet, I couldn't seem to come up with any quippy retort to meet his teasing. I just needed *my* Yuri here with me right now, not the smack-talking competitor.

My voice lowered and I mumbled, "No... I just was watching... plus it wouldn't matter if I was. I mean... you're going to kill it this season."

Closing my eyes for a moment to recover from that bumbling mess, I felt the heat from Yuri's body as he stepped closer, the fabric of his gloved hand cupping my face.

“Hey, you okay?”

“Of course,” I automatically responded. I opened my eyes to meet his green ones and tried to shake myself out of my melancholy, giving him a small smile. “I’m good.”

Concern furrowed his brows as he stroked my cheek with his thumb. “You’re going to have an amazing season too, baby. I know it.”

I didn’t say anything. The thought of going back home to train was not something I was looking forward to and not something I wanted to think about right now.

“Are you sure you’re okay in that hotel? You look pretty tired. I told you, you can always stay with me.”

Grabbing his hand, I gave his knuckles a quick kiss. “I’m fine. Really.”

I didn’t want him worrying about me. *JJ Style*, Jean-Jacques. Come on, *JJ Style*.

Brushing my nose against his I wagged my eyebrows at him. “And are you saying I don’t look good today?”

He laughed then. “Not in the least. You look hot, like always,” he smacked my chest lightly, then thumbed my shirt. “This is nice. Green brings out your eyes.”

I thanked god that my new outfit choice worked. I’d thrown it on right as I’d run out of the room after cleaning myself up again.

Leaning in he whispered in my ear, “And these jeans hug your ass just right.”

Now it was my turn to cuff him lightly back. “You haven’t even seen my ass in these jeans yet.”

Turning me slightly so he could peek over my shoulder he said, “Mmm, I wasn’t wrong.”

I laughed and leaned in for another kiss. He smiled back, closing his eyes and tilting his head expectantly. Before our lips could meet Victor cleared his throat as he exited the ice. I automatically straightened. Victor came over and shook my hand as he did every time he saw me this past week.

“JJ.”

“Victor.”

Yuri turned back to Victor, towel now draped over his own neck, holding my waist loosely with one arm. I don’t know why, but the fact that he didn’t break physical contact with me despite Victor’s assessing look made me realize, once again, that this was real. I was really with *Yuri Plisetsky*. And he was making it very clear that he wanted to be with me as well.

“Alright Vitya, are you going to ask him or do I have to?”

The smile Victor gave Yuri surprised me. Last season Victor had officially become Yuri's coach, but it was obvious to everyone it was an awkward fit. Yuri and he bickered constantly, usually ending with a red-faced Yuri and an exasperated-looking Victor. Even when Yuri won a competition, Victor never seemed to be overly pleased. He was definitely not the gushing coach with Yuri that he'd been with his husband, Yuuri Katsuki.

But now, the look Victor turned on Yuri was soft and warm. Not like how he would look at Katsuki, but more... *fatherly*. There was softness in the look, but there was pride as well.

Yuri's look back surprised me even more. He hadn't raised his voice or rolled his eyes once at Victor. In fact, his look, his tone — it was full of *respect*.

The new skating style, this new dynamic with Victor — there were some new things, different things, going on with Yuri and I wasn't sure what to make of them all.

Chuckling quietly, Victor put on his skate guards and turned to head to the locker room. "I'll let you make the invitation, Yura."

We followed behind Victor slowly, Yuri squeezing in as close as he could get with my arm holding him around his shoulders. The height from his skates prevented him from tucking under my arm like he usually did. However, that height put him right in line to simply turn his head and plant an open-mouthed kiss on my cheek.

"Victor and Yuuri want to have us over for dinner tomorrow night. The official 'meet the parents' I guess." Yuri rolled his eyes then, but he couldn't hide his smile as he said that. Kissing my cheek again he kept his lips there as he said, "Not like they haven't known you for years."

"Well, they haven't known me as your boyfriend, so I think it's different, Yuré."

"Hmm," he purred as we walked over to his locker. Instead of opening it though, he turned and leaned back against it, pulling me forward, tightening his arms around my waist. "I like hearing you call me that. Come here and kiss me, *boyfriend*."

Grinning, I couldn't help but obey and closed the last inch between us to meet his lips, my hands sliding up to the sides of his neck. Kissing Yuri was a dream, unlike anything I'd experienced before. Sweetness and fire. Passion and innocence. That was how Yuri kissed. I'd fallen for his kisses the moment he shocked me by kissing me in front of Izzy. I still couldn't believe he did that. And he didn't just kiss me. He *kissed* me. His tongue and mine seemed to instantly sync and his mouth was the only thing that filled my mind. For the first time in a long time I had forgotten my pain, fully consumed by that moment with him.

It was the same now. I was melting, completely lost in his kiss. Lost in his hands as they ran over my chest, my shoulders, up behind my neck into my hair, not staying in one place too long, seeming to touch everywhere at once. Lost in his hungry mouth moving all over mine, lips sucking, teeth nipping, the tip of his tongue running along the edge of my lips, dipping in my mouth every so often.

My body temperature went from normal to overheated in a manner of seconds. I chased his movements, my own tongue licking after his until I grunted in minor frustration and gripped his hair to hold him still so I could deepen the kiss. Yuri pressed himself against me and opened his mouth in response. Then, he breathed out a sultry little moan. It was so sexy, but for some reason it made me nauseous, my palms instantly clammy. I needed air and quickly pulled back. Yuri's lips tried to stay attached to mine as long as they could, his head craning forward chasing the kiss.

"No-o-o," he pouted. "That wasn't enough."

Still a little breathless, I tried to play off whatever the hell *that* was. "I don't want Victor walking in on us. Besides, you stink," I teased, kissing his nose and stepping out of his arms. "Go shower."

"Cocktease." But Yuri turned and proceeded to get his things out of his locker, then sat to unlace his skates. Handing them to me, I gave them a more thorough wiping before putting them away for him.

Standing and stripping his shirt off he gave me a seductive look over his shoulder. "You can always join me."

I could feel myself heat at the invitation — and at seeing him shirtless. I tried not to gawk, but Yuri had gotten more cut since I'd last seen him sans clothes. The muscles were sharper and there seemed to be more of them, filling in all the places that still had any softness to them. He was like a sinewy cat, lethal and beautiful.

Taking his sweaty shirt from him I threw it in his laundry bag, scrunching my nose at the stench. "I already smell amazing, thank you very much."

"Fuck yeah, you do," he stepped close, taking a deep inhale, nipping my neck lightly before stepping away again. The move was so quick I didn't have time to react — except with a wave of dizziness that washed over me just as quickly.

Yuri then began removing his workout leggings. I immediately turned away. "I'll see you outside. I have to make a few calls."

He chuckled. "You've seen me naked before, Jeh. You don't have to leave."

I could tell by the rustle of fabric that he was sliding the leggings down his lean legs. Then his hand gripped my shoulder from behind, holding me for balance again as I heard him kick off the last of his clothing.

Suddenly cold, my heart began racing, the walls starting to close in. I really couldn't handle seeing him naked right now. Voice tight, I managed to get out, "It's alright, I'll just be outside. I can get more bars out there anyway."

"Jeh —"

Before he could say anything more, I quickly walked out of the locker room. It took everything in me not to break into a run, though my strides got longer and faster the closer I got to the front of the building. Finally pushing open the doors, I gasped for breath once I made it outside.

Bent over, hands braced on my knees, it took several minutes for the panic to pass.

Once I was able to think straight I went and collapsed on a bench next to the building.

What the *fucking hell*?

Running my hands over my face I tried to make sense of what just happened, but I came up empty. First this morning's dream and now panicking in the locker room? What the hell was going on with me?

Though I didn't really need to make any phone calls, there was one I could make.

"Jean, I'm in the middle of a shoot, so make it quick," my sister Lou picked up before the phone had even finished ringing, practically shouting over the noise in the background.

A much sought-after stylist, it was rare I wasn't interrupting some photo or video shoot she was on. But I didn't care. For all her toughness I knew that my big sister would be there for me no matter what and right now I just needed to hear her voice, sharp and annoyed-sounding though it may be at the moment.

Smiling to myself, I drawled out, "H-e-l-l-o-o-o, L-o-o-u-i-s-s-s-e."

"Stop being such a shit, *espèce d'idiot*." But she laughed. "So, how's *mon cher* Yuri? Wait, let me guess. Beautiful, wonderful, amazing —"

Hearing her ask about Yuri drained away any of my playful banter. "Lou..." my voice cracked.

"Oh, Jean," instantly her tone softened and I could tell she was moving away from the commotion of the shoot, the noise in the background receding. "What's wrong, *mon petit frère*?"

Sniffing, a couple of tears trickled down my cheek. Lou hadn't called me that since I was a teen. "Just a rough morning, *soeur aînée*."

"Migraines still bothering you?"

"Yeah, they're getting pretty bad. Do you think you can get me some more medicine? I'm almost out."

"But didn't you just get another refill? Wasn't that supposed to last you a month?"

"I woke myself up by puking my guts out this morning, Lou."

She let out a large sigh, “Okay. I’ll see what I can do, but you should see the doctor again when you get back.”

“Yes, *maman*,” I groaned, rolling my eyes.

“Don’t you roll your eyes at me.”

“How did you —”

“Sisters just know,” she said confidently. Then after a moment, “So, the doctor, Jean.”

“Yes, yes. I know.”

Silence lengthened for another moment.

“What else?” Lou prodded.

I knew I’d be a bawling mess if I told her any more. I was trying to pull myself together not let myself fall apart.

“I’m fine.”

“*Jean*.”

“I just needed a little pick-me-up, Lou. I’m all good.” I heard the door to the building open and Yuri’s voice calling out my name. “Yuri’s coming. I’ll call you later.”

“Alright. *Au revoir, mon chou*.”

“Jeh!” Yuri called out again, then seeing me sitting off to the side, hurried over.

His hair was still wet from his shower, piled on top of his head in a wildly messy bun. Wearing white ripped jeans, black and red mid-top sneakers, and a tiger-print hoodie under his black leather jacket, he looked effortlessly gorgeous even though I could tell he’d just thrown his clothes on.

Yuri sat down on the bench but kept a little space between us. His eyes darted to mine before quickly looking away again as he bit his lip and gripped the seat. *Uh-oh*.

“I think we need to talk,” he fidgeted and kept his eyes fixed on the ground.

Yeah, this wasn’t good.

Sighing, he started, “It’s just that...” then he bit his lip again.

I could already tell where this was going and my stomach dropped. “*It’s just that this isn’t going to work out...*” “*It’s just that this was a mistake...*” “*It’s just that you’re too damaged...*”

“It’s just that... well, I can tell I made you uncomfortable earlier, and I’m really sorry Jeh. I never should have gotten undressed in front of you like that. It was inappropriate. I mean, it

seems like you want to take things slow, sex-wise — which is *completely* fine — so I shouldn't have come onto you like that.”

Wait, he *wasn't* breaking up with me?

“I just want you to know that I'm totally okay with taking our time. I'm not going anywhere. Whatever you need is perfectly alright —”

I grabbed Yuri's face and gave him a big, open-mouthed kiss — both to stop him from taking the blame for my fucked-up mental state, but more so because I was beyond relieved. A surprised gasp escaped his mouth, his hands landing on my thighs to keep his balance as I pulled him tight against me, pressing my mouth firmer over his.

Yuri thought I didn't want to have sex with him? I laughed inside at such a ridiculous idea. It's true that we hadn't had sex again. But not because I didn't want it. *Criss*, I wanted him so badly I could barely see straight sometimes. Just the memory of what sex with Yuri was like made my dick twitch and my stomach explode with butterflies. Mind-blowing was probably too mild a word for it. Of course, that was before... well, before I acted like a total bonehead and royally screwed things up.

I was trying to make up for that now. However, my brilliant plan to show up in Saint Petersburg like a damn knight in shining armor and sweep Yuri off his feet was closer to resembling me showing up on some shabby old donkey, wearing tattered rags, barely making down the street before both the donkey and I collapsed from exhaustion.

As for having sex again? It just hadn't quite happened yet. The night I showed up at the dance studio to tell Yuri how much I loved him had ended on such a beautiful, tender note, that when Yuri offered for me to stay with him I pushed it off, not wanting to ruin the moment. Plus, I wasn't one-hundred percent sure if that offer was actually an offer to share his bed — not just crash on his couch. But either way, it wasn't something I wanted to really think about at the time. Not when the unexpected happened and he had accepted me back into his arms, into his life.

And even though each night after that he would renew his offer to stay with him, I couldn't quite make it through his door, opting to simply enjoy passionate goodnight kisses before heading back to my hotel.

I don't know. The timing just never seemed right, and something like this — it needed to be perfect.

Finally releasing the kiss, I smoothed the few stray hairs that had fallen from Yuri's bun out of his face as he blinked up at me, mouth slightly agape.

Licking his lips and swallowing, his voice came out a little breathless. “Jeh?”

I looked into those bright green eyes, wanting to make sure he understood me clearly. “You didn't do anything wrong, Yuré. *Nothing*. It was just...” How could I explain what I didn't even understand myself? “Well, you're just... very tempting.”

Color flooded his cheeks and ears, and he smiled at me shyly. *Criss*. Tempting indeed.

Then I took his hands in mine and sighed, “And I don’t want our next time to be someplace like the men’s locker room. I want it to be special. Like you.”

In the distance, the storm clouds broke a little and I could see a sliver of blue sky. At the same time, the color of Yuri's eyes seemed to shift, looking less like bright green jewels and more like moss or cool grass.

Bending down, he brushed his lips lightly over my knuckles and scattered a few kisses on them before tucking my hands under his chin, gazing at me softly.

“Jeh, it *will* be special, no matter what. Because it’s you.”

What on God's green earth did I do to deserve you, Yuri Plisetsky?

“Come on,” I stood and held my hand out to him. “I think you're going to love this place I'm taking you.”

“And where is that exactly?” he asked, quirking an eyebrow and placing his hand in mine.

I waggled my eyebrows back at him as I dialed my phone for a cab. “Oh, you'll see.”

He just shook his head and laughed before tucking himself under my arm while we waited. I might never fully understand Yuri's love for me, but I was going to make damn sure I did everything I could to show him how much I loved him in return.

Chapter End Notes

First "real" chapter up and we're off to the races! What do you think?

Your comments really do encourage me so much, and I love hearing what you think of the chapter!

Where do you think this will go? How do you think JJ and Yuri are doing as they start dating?

I'm on a long work-trip this next week, but I'm still planning on having the next chapter up next week. Might be Saturday instead of Friday though! XD

French translations:

Criss = Christ

merde = shit

espèce d'idiot = you idiot

mon cher = my dear (e.g. Lou asks, "How is my dear Yuri?")

mon petit frère = my baby brother (my little brother)

soeur aînée = in essence, "big sis" (oldest sibling)

mon chou = sweetie (literally, "my cabbage")

maman = mom (informal)

And you can always find me on [tumblr](#) and [twitter](#) @suzewrites for both.

Hounded

Chapter Summary

“Are you JJ Leroy?”

“He sure is,” Yuri grinned, throwing his arms around my waist. “JJ Girl?” The woman turned red and nodded, so Yuri responded with a wink, “Me too.”

“So, was that song you posted on YouTube about Yuri?”

I forgot how nosy fans could be and was taken aback. Thing is, questions like this never used to bother me at all. Most of my interactions with the JJ Girls had been fun and I always enjoyed them — until that crazy bitch had gone postal on me. I felt dizzy as I stood there staring blankly at the woman, wishing she would disappear so that I could just go out with my boyfriend without being hounded by fans.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The look on Yuri’s face as the cab pulled up to the place I’d chosen for us to visit was forever going to be imprinted on my mind. It was pure delight.

“Are you *fucking* kidding me?” Yuri wiggled his fingers anxiously, waiting to grab my hand as I got out of the cab, then as soon as our hands connected he was pulling me forward through the doors of the Russian Vodka Museum.

“How the fuck did I not know this place was here!” he exclaimed excitedly.

Inside there were already several people waiting for the tour. A small group of retirees chatted amongst themselves in what sounded like Portuguese. A couple of younger women were off to the side taking selfies and giggling to themselves. I guessed they were either American or Canadian. And an older Russian woman who looked to be the proprietor was looking stonily at the group, though I couldn’t tell if she disapproved of the tourists or if that was just her typical resting face.

“It’s kind of touristy, I know,” I rubbed the back of my head, thinking perhaps this was a dumb idea after all, as Yuri was the only native Russian in the bunch. “We can leave and go someplace else if you want.”

“No way, Jeh! This is so fucking fantastic,” Yuri laughed out. Whipping out his phone he pulled me close. “Here, we definitely need to document this.”

Yuri took a few photos of us. His enthusiasm was contagious and I smiled brightly. I actually looked pretty happy in the photos. Well, I had Yuri with me and we were finally together. Of course I was happy. After a moment, one of the young women offered to take our picture for us and Yuri made sure to make the most of it, kissing me on the cheek when the pictures were snapped.

As she handed Yuri back his phone she shyly asked me, “Are you JJ Leroy?”

“He sure is,” Yuri grinned, throwing his arms around my waist. “JJ Girl?” The woman turned red and nodded, so Yuri responded with a wink, “Me too.”

“And you’re Yuri Plisetsky, aren’t you?” the other woman came over, giggling as she said it, and blushing just as furiously. Yuri affirmed he was and the women asked us to take some pictures with them.

One of the Portuguese tourists helped take the picture as Yuri encouraged us all to give our best *JJ Style* pose. We took a couple of shots with each of our phones, the women barely able to contain their excitement.

Right as the Russian woman began clapping her hands to start gathering us for the tour, the first woman asked me point blank, “So, was that song you posted on YouTube about Yuri?”

I forgot how nosy fans could be and was taken aback. Thing is, questions like this never used to bother me at all. Fans were always prying for personal stuff — asking about when Izzy and I were going to finally get married, or if the rumors that she was pregnant were true, or all sorts of other crazy things. Usually, I’d play coy, not giving a definitive answer one way or another. Well, except about Izzy being pregnant. I squelched that one pretty quickly.

Most of my interactions with the JJ Girls had been fun and I always enjoyed them — until that one crazy bitch had gone postal on me. Following me everywhere, sneaking into the locker room, or my dressing room when I played a show. It didn’t matter how many times security dragged her away or how many places she was blacklisted from, she’d only grown more aggressive until I’d finally put the restraining order out. And even then, she’d found other ways to harass me. Worse ways.

I felt dizzy as I stood there staring blankly at the woman, wishing she would disappear so that I could just go out with my boyfriend without being hounded by fans.

Yuri stepped in, “I’m sorry, but that’s private.”

“No, it’s not,” she retorted, now a little snappish at being denied her answer. “He posted it on YouTube. If he wanted it to be private he shouldn’t have posted it there for the entire world to see.”

I could see that she wasn’t going to let this go. Yuri’s face started to get red but he didn’t yell back at her like I expected. Instead, he lowered his voice and spoke in an even, albeit firm

tone. “He posted the *song* on YouTube, that’s what musicians do. He purposely left the details out —”

“Yes,” I said, interrupting their argument.

Both women and Yuri turned to me. I took Yuri’s hand and brought it to my lips, looking right into his beautiful eyes. “That song was absolutely about Yuri. Because I will always love him. Always.”

Screw it. Screw the fans and their questions. It had taken Yuri and me so long to get here I didn’t want to be disingenuous about our relationship.

Though he seemed a bit shocked by my declaration, Yuri looked back at me with such love it stole my breath for a moment. I forgot the women were even there as I leaned in for a soft kiss. It didn’t matter how many times I kissed this man, every time my lips met his it sent an electric jolt to my heart, giving it a spark of life, reminding it that no matter how much heartache it had endured there was still someone worth beating for.

It wasn’t a long kiss, but the world melted away for that space of time. The women’s whispered responses of “*Oh, my God,*” and “*That’s so romantic,*” brought me back to awareness and I finally pulled away.

The Russian woman cleared her throat and beckoned for us. Yuri tucked himself under my arm, wrapping his own around my waist and placed one quick kiss on my neck before we turned to follow her. Once the tour started in earnest he was completely rapt with attention though. I had hoped that Yuri didn’t know about this place since he hadn’t taken me here or even mentioned it in our own tour of the city, and I was thrilled that I had guessed right.

I wanted to take him someplace *he* could enjoy. And enjoying it he was. He was like a kid in a candy store. If candy was vodka. Which it was. The Russian woman gave the tour in a very emotionless, succinct manner, but every time she would recite some detailed fact, Yuri sucked in his breath a bit and squeezed my side.

The tour wasn’t long but at the end they did a small vodka tasting. My morning headache was starting to make a comeback by this point. I was trying to ration the last of my migraine pills, so I was glad we were here where I could at least have a drink. When they brought out the flight, I downed the first two quickly. Yuri didn’t fail to notice.

“Jeh,” he tsked, holding my hand down before I could grab the next glass. “You need to sip it. Really savor it. You’ll get drunk if you just keep throwing them back like that.”

“I can hold my liquor, *mon beau,*” I said, smirking back, but when I took the next glass I sipped it instead.

Slowly the vodka helped with the headache that was creeping back. I bought a couple of bottles for Yuri and myself. Yuri assumed I’d be taking mine back to Montreal, but I knew it would be gone in a day or two.

“You are welcome to eat at the restaurant next door,” the woman offered and Yuri turned his face to mine, eyes wide and hopeful.

“I already made reservations,” I chuckled.

We were led to a small table tucked in the corner window and sat down across from each other in the small adjacent cafe. It was bright and homey and I looked around while we waited for our waiter to come over, but once I took in the bar, the deli case, the Russian nesting dolls in a display case off to the side, my gaze settled back onto Yuri.

Smiling softly, he took my hand and gave it a kiss, then set it on the table between us, his fingers playing with mine. “This was so great, baby.”

That smile made my heart flip. “I’m glad you liked it.”

“I *loved* it.”

When the waiter came over I let Yuri go ahead and order for us. Russian sounded so sexy coming out of his mouth. I had no idea what he ordered until the food came out. We started with pickled herring, which unfortunately made my stomach turn. Yuri only laughed as he held up one of the fishes in my face and I was seriously trying not to gag. Luckily, he also ordered some type of stuffed pastry.

“Piroskis,” he announced. Then after taking a bite, “Not quite as good as my *dedusya*’s, but still really good.”

He waited expectantly for me to take a bite and glowed when I declared it delicious.

“*Dedusya*?”

“Wow, your accent is atrocious!” he laughed. “*Dedusya*,” he repeated. “My grandpa.”

“Okay, okay, smart guy,” I kicked him lightly under the table, eliciting another soft laugh. “Do you get to see him a lot?”

Yuri instantly turned more somber. “Not lately,” he pushed around the pastry crumbs on his plate. “He broke his hip last year, then fell again a few months ago and blinded one eye. I couldn’t let him live by himself anymore, and I couldn’t take care of him, so I had to move him into a home. I haven’t had a chance to visit him yet.” He kept his eyes down. He obviously felt guilty.

“Yuré,” I brushed my hand on his cheek, trying to comfort him as best I could here in the cafe, “it’s not your fault, and I’m sure your grandpa understands.”

He sniffed, “I know, but he was the only one that was really there for me. I mean, since mama wasn’t around. *He* was the one I missed when I got sent away to train with Yakov.”

I kicked myself for making Yuri sad with all this talk about his family that was obviously painful. I realized that outside of skating I really didn’t know too much about Yuri’s family or past at all. I wondered how much he knew about mine.

The next course was brought over. Stroganoff. I wasn't really hungry, plus I really didn't want to give my stomach any ammunition for just throwing up later. But Yuri simply pushed his food around on the plate. I didn't want him to miss out on his meal just because I once again was an idiot, putting my foot in my mouth. Scooping some of the noodles onto my fork I held it up to him. He raised an eyebrow.

"I've got to make sure my hot boyfriend is well fed." I winked at him and moved the fork closer to his mouth. He rolled his eyes but smiled before he took the bite.

I continued to feed him until both our plates were clear. Scrapping up the last bit for him, he closed his eyes as he slowly took the last bite, licking his lips to capture the sauce caught in the corners of his mouth. I couldn't help but lean in for a quick kiss, wanting to taste him as well.

"Hmm. You're delicious."

"I'm stuffed is what I am. How was your stroganoff?" Yuri looked over at my empty plate, then realization lit his eyes. "Jeh! I ate all your food! Here," he started to wave down the waiter, "we need to order some more."

Grabbing his arm back down, "No, I'm good."

"But you barely ate."

"Not feeling hungry," I shrugged.

"Are you sure you're okay? Not getting sick? I know it's been pretty hectic since you've arrived."

"I'm stronger than a little travel, Yuré. I'm fine."

After I paid, the host brought out my large bag filled with a blanket and the other things I'd previously prepared. I slipped him a couple of bills and put our bottles of vodka inside. Yuri quirked his head and I winked. "Just some supplies for our afternoon."

Leaving the museum, Yuri put his arms around me and gave me a long, sweet kiss.

"That was so wonderful, Jeh. What now?" He tried to peek in the bag.

"Nuh-uh," I shook my head, pulling it out of his reach. "One step at a time. Next, we get another cab."

As we waited outside the museum I could feel a buzz in the air that made my hair stand on end. There was the faint sound of some sort of commotion in the distance. It grew louder, obviously moving closer. Then my stomach tightened. It was the high-pitched screaming of a crowd only a block or two away.

Ah, *merde*. Those women must have tagged the location on the photos they had taken with us. I looked on Twitter and yeah, trending was a photo of Yuri and me kissing, the interior of the museum in the background, the location tagged clear as day.

The cab pulled up, but it was too late as Yuri's fans descended on us and we were instantly surrounded by a sea of cat ears, the mass of young women crying and screaming to get Yuri's attention. Then I thought I had probably shifted into an alternate reality, because Yuri smiled and waved, and started posing with his fans who only got more ecstatic.

I was shoved around by the crowd as they clamored for my attention as well. And just like in my dream, I lost his hand that I'd been holding and we continued to get shoved apart.

I called out to him. He couldn't hear me of course, but something made him turn. He was in the middle of taking another picture, but as soon as he saw me his eyes widened. I knew there was outright panic on my face. I needed to get out of here before I lost it completely. I felt sweaty and chilled. Then the first drops of the breaking storm hit my cheek and I looked up to see the clouds thick above us as it began to rain.

Someone grabbed my hand and pulled me away from the crowd. Yuri. He held my hand firmly in his and we ran down the street away from the women, splashing through puddles, dodging cars, until he pulled me into a random small shop.

Yuri looked out the window to see if we'd lost the crowd. When he turned back around I pulled him against me. Shivering and gasping, I couldn't get my shaking under control. Yuri tightened his hold around me. "I've got you, I've got you," he murmured into my ear.

After a few minutes he said, "I'm going to call us a cab," but I wouldn't loosen my hold on him. Rubbing my back he tried again. "Baby, I'm right here. I'm not going anywhere, but I need to get my phone out of my pocket, okay?"

I nodded stiffly and let him go so he could make the call, though he kept a tight hold of my hand until it arrived.

Once we were in the cab I realized something was missing. "Shit! Where's my bag?"

"I don't know, baby."

"No! I can't have lost it! We need to find it! Shit, what if one of the fans took it?"

"Well, they might have, but it's okay. It's just stuff."

"No, it's — fuck! Fuck, fuck, fuck! I need that bag, Yuré, I need it!"

"Okay," he took my face in his hands. "Okay, let's just go retrace our steps."

We spent the next half hour having the cab take us back along our path, Yuri and I getting out in the pouring rain to explore while the cab waited. I threw a bunch of money at the woman driving us so she didn't complain. We finally ended back at the Vodka Museum.

After scouring the museum and the restaurant, the bag was nowhere in sight. I couldn't believe I lost track of something so important. Of all the things that could go wrong today... Leaning against the wall outside the restaurant I slumped down, my hands over my head.

Yuri bent down next to me, “Come on, baby, let’s get out of the rain. Whatever it was, you just have to let it go. It’ll be alright.”

I didn’t say anything, but he was right. It was gone and my heart sank. He pulled me up and we headed back to the car.

“*Izvinite*. Excuse me.”

We turned. It was the Russian woman from the museum shuffling after us, holding an umbrella.

When she got closer she extended her arm, holding out my bag. Yuri and I both stood there, stunned. “I think this is what you are looking for? I found this on the ground in the rain after all those screaming girls left.”

I took it from her and looked inside. The blanket, vodka, champagne and glasses were all gone, but thank God there was my package still at the bottom. That’s what I couldn’t bear to have lost.

“Thank you,” I hugged the bag in close. “Thank you, thank you.”

She patted my cheek. “You are too handsome to be so sad.”

I don’t know what it was — my panic from this morning, the craziness with the fans, losing the bag — but I started crying. She simply continued to pat my cheek until I sniffed back my tears, quickly trying to pull myself together. Then she turned to Yuri.

“Give him *borscht*,” was all she said, before turning to head back to the museum.

Well, I finally made it through Yuri’s front door.

After what happened this afternoon, Yuri seemed to be on a mission. First, we stopped by my hotel room where Yuri marched straight in, grabbed my suitcase, threw it on the bed and packed me up in a whirlwind while I simply stood there dumbfounded. Then, towing my suitcase in one hand and me in the other, he checked me out of the hotel and took me back to his flat. As soon as we were inside he pushed me into his bedroom.

“You’re going to stay in here, Jeh. I’ll be out in the main room.” I tried to protest — there was no way I was kicking Yuri out of his own bedroom — but he promptly threw a hand over my mouth, the tone of his voice brokering no contest. “I’m not going to hear it, Jean-Jacques. You *are* going to stay in here, and I don’t want you to worry. I meant what I said earlier. We’ll take things slow. Now,” pushing me into his bathroom, “are you a bath guy or a shower guy? I’m a bath guy, but...?”

“Shower.”

He nodded, “Okay, take as long as you want. Run out all the hot water. Just relax. I’ll get some food going, and we can just watch a movie. Or not watch a movie. Or listen to music, or whatever you want to do.”

I stared at Yuri, a bit overwhelmed by everything he was doing for me. I know he only wanted to help, but it made me feel... deficient. First, our afternoon went to hell and then I completely flipped out on him over the whole bag incident. Seemed that no matter how hard I tried I failed to do right by him — *again*.

“Yuré, stop.” Grabbing his hand I stopped him in his tracks, “Please. I’m okay. I’m okay. I’m okay.”

Maybe if I said it out loud enough times it would finally come true.

I don’t know what he saw in my eyes but he stepped up and hugged me close, running his hands over my back in slow circles. “Yes, you are, baby. You’re going to be okay. I love you. Everything’s going to be okay.”

I didn’t realize I had started shaking again until Yuri tightened his hold on me, soothing me with his quiet voice, repeating once more, “I’ve got you, everything’s going to be alright, I’ve got you,” while I sobbed in his arms.

Eventually, Yuri was able to get me into the shower. As the water poured over me, I leaned my head against the shower wall and banged my fist on the tile. Why was I so fucked up? I used to be on top of my life. I was a fighter, like Beks said. So why wasn’t I able to pull myself out of this?

If only the water could just wash everything away. Though I didn’t mean to, I did end up running out all of Yuri’s hot water, standing there until the water turned ice cold. Perhaps it would finally numb me so I wouldn’t feel anymore. Finally freezing enough that I couldn’t stand it anymore, I got out. Shivering and wet, I ambled my way back to the bedroom and slowly dried myself off and got dressed in the first thing I grabbed from my suitcase, a white v-neck t-shirt and red joggers.

I sure could use a drink. If only I hadn’t lost that damn bottle of vodka in the crowd of fans. I thought about taking another migraine pill but then decided against it. Those wouldn’t help with the pain in my heart.

Making my way out to the living room, Yuri gave me a quick kiss before going to change and clean himself up, telling me he was used to cold showers and was glad I was able to relax — though relaxed was the farthest thing from how I felt.

I fell into a fitful sleep for a bit on his couch and woke up to the sounds of Yuri bustling around in the kitchen. Dressed just as casually as I was, in gray sweats and a black loose fitting, wide-neck long-sleeved shirt, his hair down and still a bit damp from his shower, he brought over some cold meats and cheeses, and of course two big bowls of *borscht* with huge dollops of cream on top. Sitting on the floor of his living room we had a bit of a make-shift picnic.

He then opened a bottle of vodka from his cabinet and poured us a drink, thank God. “I think we both need one.” We both downed them quickly, and he poured us each another before returning the bottle. I downed that one just as quickly, though this time Yuri didn’t comment.

We ate slowly, not really saying much other than the occasional, “*Here, try this*” and “*Yeah, that's good,*” then cleaned up just as silently. Settling back on the floor, Yuri brought over my bag and set it in my lap, resting his chin on my shoulder as he snuggled up close.

“Will you tell me why this was so important to you?”

Sighing, I pulled out the package. The wrapping paper was now crumpled from being rained on and dried out and ripped a bit.

I had wanted this to be something special after a quiet afternoon with Yuri. My plan was for us to catch a ferry over to Vasilievsky Island and take a walk around the strelka. I imagined us being there near the water, holding hands like saps and just enjoying each other's company without really having anywhere to be. I heard that sometimes there was salsa music on the square and that people gathered to dance, and secretly hoped we could recreate our first dance. We'd end the day sitting together to watch the bridges rise, toast my idiotic made-up anniversary, and then I would have given Yuri this memento.

Of course, that had all gone to shit. All that was able to be salvaged was this package, beat-up and tattered, barely surviving. Not unlike my heart.

“It's stupid,” I said, but handed him the package. “It's just, well, today is four months since we were at Salsathèque together and you rescued me from being completely humiliated by Izzy.” I had a hard time looking at him, feeling his eyes on me as he listened quietly. After a moment though I forced myself to meet his gaze and tried not to get lost in those cool green pools. “Ever since that time you've been in my mind and heart, especially with all of the shit I was going through.”

Yuri breathed out and put his hand over mine, whispering, “Jeh.”

“And well, I just wanted to let you know how important you are to me, *mon ange*. What it means to have you in my life now. And how much it means to me that you gave me a second chance.”

“Jeh,” he said again.

“Go ahead, open it.”

Slowly Yuri unwrapped the package, pulling out a frame. Inside I'd put the original sheet of staff paper I'd written Yuri's song on. It wasn't neat — *je t'aime, mon ange, toujours, tu es ma vie, mon tout* were scrawled in the margins in my scratchy handwriting. Passages were crossed out and rewritten. It had been hard for me to capture how I felt in something so trite as a song, but I had tried.

Yuri just stared at it, but I couldn't read his expression. The longer he stared, the more self-conscious I became.

“You framed your gift to me so I wanted to do the same. But it was a dumb idea,” I said, shaking my head at my stupidity.

I went to grab the frame out of his hands, but he quickly held it out of my reach and slapped my hand away.

“You can’t take this back, it’s my song and I love it.” Then, looking down at it again he repeated quietly, “I love it, Jeh.” Turning those mossy green eyes on mine, “And I love *you*. That night changed everything for me, too.”

His eyes started to shimmer and like that we were kissing before I even knew we had connected. I tried not to let my desperation seep into the kiss, but I needed him so much. Here, in a kiss, I could pour my soul out to him in a way that was pure and true, and that didn’t make me feel like I couldn’t measure up to being worthy of him. And as he kissed me back, it was as if he was pouring his light back into me.

Like in the locker room, the kiss heated up instantly. Yuri opened to me without any prompting, and I kissed him deeply, lips glued together, our tongues circling over and over, the two of us breaking apart only to quickly gasp before we collided together again, needing this connection more than we both probably realized after this afternoon's ordeal.

Yuri clung to me, arms wrapped around my shoulders, hands clutching my shirt, and I thought I sensed his own desperation in the kiss. We fell back on the floor, my body laying over his, Yuri wrapping his legs around mine, drawing me even closer.

Moving from his lips, I trailed my mouth under his jaw to bite and suck along his neck. He arched, exposing it for me perfectly. I pulled his wide-necked shirt down so I could kiss and lick below his collarbone and down to his pec. Soft skin belied his hard muscle as I traced his chest until I found his nipple under the fabric, just under where the top of his shirt stopped. Pinching the nipple, I bit hard on his exposed skin and Yuri gasped out “*Fuck!*” as I lapped over the bite mark with my tongue.

“Jeh,” he breathed out as I pushed his shirt up his chest. Before I could work it off him he grabbed my face and pulled me up to look at him. He was panting and it looked to be an effort for him to speak. “Wait... baby... I told you, I can wait. We don’t have to do this yet.”

The concern in his eyes only lit a fire in mine. I was tired of failing Yuri again and again. I didn’t want to wait for my fucked up head to figure shit out anymore. I just wanted to move past all the disappointment and pain and fear.

Shaking my head I began kissing his neck again, “I want to. I want you, Yuré. I need you so badly.”

He whimpered under my ministrations before breathing out, “Are you sure?”

“Please, Yuré,” I was begging now, but I didn't care. Please don’t stop me. Please let me have this. Have you.

But then Yuri was pushing me off him, pulling his shirt back down and pushing himself up off the floor. I sat back on my heels, but before I could wonder what I’d done wrong he pulled me to standing and led me down the hall and back into his bedroom, turning on a low light on the nightstand.

“Okay, Jeh. God, I want you too, so fucking much,” he said, closing his eyes and taking a measured breath, obviously trying to regain his composure, though his shaky voice gave away his desire. “But we can take this at your pace. Anytime you want to stop —”

I covered his mouth with mine, silencing any talk of going slow or stopping what we both so desperately wanted — and needed — and pushed him back to lay on the bed, crawling on top of him.

Yanking his shirt opening over to one side, I kissed and sucked my way up and down his neck and shoulder, my other hand moving under the fabric to feel his hard chest. He began moaning over and over between breaths. Part of my brain was waiting for this morning's panic to hit me again, but it didn't. Instead, his soft moans went straight to my heart, reminding me that I could still do *this*. I could still make Yuri feel good. And for this moment I clung to that thought like it was my last saving grace.

Shirts were quickly shoved up and off and I kissed, bit and licked my way down his extremely defined abs, though right now his gorgeous body barely registered — the fire in my gut urging me to stop wasting time and hurry and get his cock in my mouth, which I did without any more preamble. As soon as I pushed his sweats and boxers down enough to free his cock, I pulled him immediately into my mouth, taking him all the way in and began sucking with a fury.

“Ah! Jeh!” Yuri cried out loudly, his long strong fingers gripping my hair, pulling me off him somewhat. “Easy baby, easy,” he panted.

I slowed my assault, alternately sucking and swirling my tongue around him in time to his gasps of “Yes... that's it, baby... yes... fuck, yes.”

I just needed to make him come, then I would know everything would be alright between us, back on equal footing. He was getting close and I could feel him tensing under me, but he pulled me off him again.

I growled in frustration, “No, want to make you come.”

“Baby, please, I need to kiss you.” I would never be able to deny this man anything, but I gave him one last deep suck, rewarding me with an inhaled “*Oh, God!*” before I moved up to meet his hungry mouth.

Gone were Yuri's attempts to keep things slow, his kiss making me dizzy, sucking my tongue deep into his mouth, his body arching up to mine. I was so overtaken by his kiss that I didn't notice he'd worked my pants and underwear down as well, until I felt his hands on my ass, massaging firmly and pulling me into him. Electricity shot straight to my dick as soon as I felt his hard length press against it.

My body took over and I rocked down hard into his hips. His hand slid over our cocks and squeezed hard enough that I thought my eyes were going to explode out of my head, it felt so good.

My strangled cry of “Oh fuck... *Yuré!*” echoed around me, reverberating off the walls, and I instantly froze.

I’d heard myself shout that out before, just that way. The memory came rushing back, washing over me, filling me with dread. Me holding my phone, repeating after a long silence, “Hello, hello? Anyone there?”

“*O-o-h*, JJ,” Izzy’s moan came at me through the phone, followed by heavy panting.

“Who is this!?” I demanded, though the pit in my stomach told me who it was.

My own voice answered me, “You like that, huh, you like how I fuck you?”

More of Izzy’s moaning, her breathy “*ah... ah... ah’s*” continuing as I listened in utter horror.

“You want me, don’t you?” My voice was harsh. Desperate. Dangerous. “You want me to fuck you hard, don’t you?”

“Yes... yes... yes... yes...”

Each of Izzy’s chants was punctuated by the sound of the bed rocking, my own grunts mixed in, both growing faster and faster, louder and louder, until after another minute our orgasms were obvious.

“Yes! Yes! Yes!”

“Oh fuck... *Yuré!*”

I’d held the phone back, stunned. Not only was my awful mistake being replayed back to me, but it had just happened the *night before*.

She was everywhere. That woman. The stalker. Hounding me, following my every move. Nowhere was safe. Not even my own home apparently.

I yelled into the phone.

“LEAVE ME THE FUCK ALONE!”

But I hadn’t yelled into the phone just now.

The moment the words were out of my mouth I realized whom I had yelled them to.

Yuri’s eyes flew open and he stiffened under me. In an instant I saw it all in his eyes — confusion, hurt, anger, embarrassment, worry.

I was scrambling off the bed, retreating to the bathroom and locking the door behind me before another second passed.

No, no, no. Why couldn’t I get rid of her? She was everywhere, no matter where I was.

Pants still pushed down to my thighs, I sat down on the toilet seat — but I didn't even have the energy to break down anymore. All my anguish, all my pain, my distress. I couldn't feel any of it. I was just a shell. Empty.

The door handle jiggled, followed by a soft knock on the door.

“Jeh, baby, please let me in.” Yuri's voice was full of concern.

I didn't want to let him in, but what else could I do? Standing, I pulled up my pants then unlocked the door before sitting back down on the toilet seat. I kept my head in my hands. I didn't want to look at him, see his anger, or worse, how much I disappointed him.

“Hey, *lyubimaya*, please look at me.”

I finally did, to see him sitting on the edge of the tub next to me. He didn't look mad or disappointed. Only worried. He reached out and softly rubbed the back of my head.

“I'm sorry,” I whispered.

“It's okay.”

“No, it's not.”

“Are you okay? What happened?”

“I don't want to talk about it.”

“Okay,” he sighed, “you don't have to.”

Taking my hand he pulled me up. I trudged behind him back into the bedroom, then simply got into bed and curled onto my side, facing away from him. Shame and humiliation completely engulfed me.

The bed dipped and a hand smoothed over my back. I tensed at first, but Yuri's touch felt more comforting than I expected. He slowly ran his fingers up through the short hairs of my undercut, massaging my neck and lightly caressing my ears. After a while, I turned onto my back, though I kept my eyes closed. I could feel tears running down the sides of my face, back towards my ears. Yuri wiped them away until they finally stopped, his hand moving to rub my temples, smooth my forehead, and comb through the long hair on top of my head. I almost thought I heard him singing, but it was so low and soft I couldn't be certain.

Right as I was drifting off to sleep I felt Yuri move to get off the bed. Jolting back awake, I reached out for him. “No, please... please don't leave me.”

“Alright, *lyubimaya*.”

I felt my arm lift up and then lower back down around Yuri's body. With his head resting on my chest and his body pressed next to mine I heard him whisper, “*Ya lyublyu tebya vsem serdtsem.*” I didn't know what it meant, but the sound of it soothed me and I finally let go and fell asleep.

Chapter End Notes

The song [Hold Me by The Sweepings](#) haunted me while writing this. *Sniff* Here is the [YouTube link](#) if you don't have Spotify.

French translations:

mon beau = my beautiful/my handsome

mon ange = my angel

je t'aime = I love you

toujours = always

tu es ma vie, mon tout = you are my life, my everything

Russian translations:

Dedusya = Grandpa (a derivative, Yuri's personal nickname for his grandfather)

Izvinite = excuse me

lyubimaya = beloved, or my love

Ya lyublyu tebya vsem serdtsem = I love you from the bottom of my heart

Your comments really do motivate me *so much*, so thank you always!

Shaky Ground

Chapter Summary

“Stop worrying. You’re going to be fine. It’s just Victor and Yuuri. They already like you.”

Easy for him to say. But I knew better. I knew tonight was pivotal in Yuri’s and my relationship. These weren’t just any normal ‘parents’ that I was having dinner with. It was Victor Nikiforov and Yuuri Katsuki. Ice power couple. Living legends. And although he wouldn’t admit it out loud, I knew Yuri looked up to them and took what they thought very seriously.

Unfortunately, right now I was on precarious ground. After yesterday’s disaster, Yuri and I were having a hard time reestablishing our footing with each other.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“What do you think about these flowers? Are they okay?” I shifted the large bouquet of purple lilies from one hand to the other so I could take Yuri’s hand, needing reassurance. Using the bouquet to point to the bottle of wine Yuri was carrying I bit at my lip, worrying it, and asked him, “And are you sure they like that vintage?”

Yuri squeezed my hand as we walked up to Victor and Katsuki’s house, then brought it up to his lips for a quick kiss. With each step I was getting more and more anxious, the house growing more imposing the closer we got. After we passed the front gate we had driven at least a mile through a thick forest of trees before we even reached the house, and now three stories stared down at me.

Light poured all around the building, illuminating the beautifully sculpted trees and bushes that framed the front lawn. The very modern-looking building stood in stark contrast to the old buildings I had come to associate with Saint Petersburg. And although it was undeniably exquisite, it was just as unreadable as Victor himself.

I was no stranger to large mansions like this. My own family’s home was pretty large, and probably from an outsider’s perspective quite grand. Yet it never felt intimidating, and it definitely didn’t ooze the prestige of Victor and Katsuki’s home. I may have been a popular athlete in Canada, the son of Olympians, but here in Russia, you could tell — Victor Nikiforov was practically royalty.

“The flowers are beautiful. And yes, believe me, they love this shit,” Yuri held the bottle up and shook it slightly. “Stop worrying. You’re going to be fine. It’s just Victor and Yuuri. They already like you.”

Easy for him to say. But I knew better. I knew tonight was pivotal in Yuri’s and my relationship. These weren’t just any normal ‘parents’ that I was having dinner with. It was *Victor Nikiforov and Yuuri Katsuki*. Ice power couple. Living legends. And although he wouldn’t admit it out loud, I knew Yuri looked up to them and took what they thought very seriously.

Unfortunately, right now I was on precarious ground. After yesterday’s disaster, Yuri and I were having a hard time reestablishing our footing with each other.

This morning was awkward, to say the least. Though I had a dreamless sleep, I woke up to an excruciating migraine and had to rush out of bed to throw up, barely making it to Yuri’s bathroom in time. Since I had eaten more last night than I had in days, I ended up retching for several drawn-out minutes, unable to catch my breath between heaves. Yuri was there almost the moment I fell on my knees above the toilet, his hand rubbing my back until I was done, immediately handing me a glass of water, then wetting a towel to wipe my face and neck.

Criss, I wished I was at my hotel instead of here so Yuri wouldn’t have to see this. Of course, he wouldn’t even think of leaving for training after that, no matter how much I insisted. “And I’ll tell Victor we can’t make it tonight,” he said, trying to reassure me.

“No!” The last thing I wanted was for Victor to think that I was the problem boyfriend — first keeping Yuri away from practice, and then being too fucked up to go to dinner. “*We’re going*,” I ground out. “I’m fine. I just need to rest.”

Yuri frowned, unconvinced. “Jeh, you’re not fine. We can do dinner another day.”

“Please Yuré, I don’t want Victor thinking I’m too weak and needy.”

Yuri looked genuinely surprised. “Victor doesn’t think that.”

I doubted that.

“Would you *please* just go to practice? I’ll be fine,” I closed my eyes, tired of arguing.

But he didn’t listen. Instead, Yuri turned into a complete mother hen — checking on me every half hour, asking if I wanted tea, or if the temperature of the room was okay, or if his neighbors were too loud. My nerves were already raw and he was getting on my last one.

“*Yuré!*” I finally snapped after he came in to make sure I had enough blankets. “*Criss!* I’m fine! I don’t need a babysitter. And how can I get any rest if you keep coming in every few minutes?”

Hurt immediately flashed in his eyes and I chided myself. Great, way to go shithhead.

I grabbed his hand. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry. It’s just this headache is lingering and I’m still really tired.”

His voice was quiet as he moved away, letting go of my hand. “Of course, baby, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to bother you so much. I’ll let you get some sleep.”

I couldn’t stand to see those bright eyes dull with sadness, especially knowing I was the one that caused it. I scurried out of bed, fighting against the dizziness that washed over me at my sudden movement, to block him from leaving. His head hung down so I lifted his chin with my finger, but his eyes stayed lowered.

Bending down to brush my lips softly against his I said, “I just need a couple hours, *mon beau*. Then I’ll feel better, I promise.”

He gave me a small smile then left the room. Although I felt guilty for yelling at him, he left me alone and I was able to finally get some sleep.

Several hours later I woke up, but my migraine hadn’t improved much. What I needed was one of my pills — and a drink. However, I couldn’t exactly go out to the living room and grab one with Yuri out there. Listening at the door all seemed quiet. Perhaps Yuri was running errands. I decided to venture out, see if I could find something from his liquor cabinet.

Making my way slowly down the hall I stopped before I got to the end, seeing Yuri sitting on the couch facing away from me, holding his phone to his ear.

“You didn’t see him yesterday. I’ve never seen anyone panic in a crowd like that before,” he said, voice low.

I knew I shouldn’t eavesdrop, but I moved as close as I dared, heart pounding, trying to figure out who Yuri was talking to, though he only hummed into the phone for the next several minutes. Was he realizing that I was more than he signed up for?

Sighing, Yuri said, “I’m worried about him going back to Montreal on his own. Maybe I should sit this season out, go back with him.”

Oh, *hell* no. I was NOT going to be the reason that Yuri sat a season out. Alright, Jean-Jacques, you really need to pull your shit together. Striding back to the room, I grabbed my medicine bottle, opting to take two pills instead of simply chasing one with a drink, because tonight I really needed to be at the top of my game. That only left me one, but I’d figure out what to do about that later.

Jumping in the shower, I washed up as quickly as I could, gritting through the pain until the medicine finally kicked in and the headache lessened. Twenty minutes later I was fully dressed and ready, putting fresh sheets on the bed that I found in the bathroom linen closet when Yuri came back into the room, stopping short.

“Jeh? You’re feeling better?”

“Told you — I just needed some rest. Fresh as a daisy,” I winked at him.

Tentatively he came over, scrutinizing me as I finished smoothing out the bedspread then fluffed the pillows. After I placed them on the bed I sat back down.

“I’m sorry I worried you so much, earlier,” I said, pulling Yuri to stand between my legs, holding his hips and stroking them lightly with my thumbs.

Yuri’s face was still furrowed with worry. He simply stared down at my chest while he played with one of the buttons on my shirt. “But... you were really sick this morning. Are you sure you’re okay?”

“I just had a doozy of a headache this morning,” kissing his chest. “But I got some rest and now feel right as rain.”

I stood up and took his hand. It was time to show Yuri — and Victor and Katsuki — that he was dating Jean-fucking-Jacques Leroy, not some mopey loser.

“Come on,” I led him back to the living room and got on my jacket, then held his out. “I need you to help me pick out a good bottle of wine to bring tonight.”

“Jeh, I can’t go out like this!” Yuri indicated his outfit. He was still dressed in his sweats and black shirt from last night, and his feet were bare.

Oops. I hadn’t really stopped to observe him, caught up in my determination to pick myself back up.

“I guess not,” I laughed and pushed him back towards the bedroom. “Go on then, get ready. But hurry it up. I want to make a good impression tonight.”

“Alright, alright.” But before he made it too far he doubled back, looping his arms around my neck to give me a couple of sweet pecks, then headed back down the hall. “I’m glad you’re feeling better, baby.”

Once he was gone, I went to the liquor cabinet and grabbed the first bottle I could find to stash away in my suitcase. The knot in my chest relaxed a little, knowing I at least had something for tomorrow until Lou could come up with another prescription for me. I hoped it would be soon. The King really needed to his groove back.

Now, standing hand-in-hand with Yuri while he rang the doorbell, flowers and wine in hand, I was hoping I could show that *JJ Style* groove tonight with two of the most important people in Yuri’s life.

Victor answered and immediately my hands start to sweat. Grabbing the wine bottle from Yuri I shoved it and the flowers at Victor, avoiding having to shake his hand with a clammy palm. That was not how I wanted to start the evening.

Taken aback for a moment, Victor took the items. “Um. Thank you, JJ.” He stepped aside inviting us in, humming low and nodding, “Looks like you’re feeling better.”

I flushed, embarrassed, and Victor turned. We followed him through an insanely large entry that was lined with dark wood-paneled columns inlaid with gold, my boots clicking loudly on

the expansive marble floor. Several paintings were on the walls, highlighted with lights from above. Although I didn't know who each piece was by, I could easily guess they weren't purchased at your typical gallery. Auctions most likely. And I would bet last season's winnings that they were at least a million each.

Despite the big house, Victor and Katsuki were the only ones there, Victor leading us to the kitchen where Katsuki himself was finishing up final preparations for dinner. He stopped to gush over the flowers, then began digging around for a vase while Victor looked for the bottle opener. It was an odd juxtaposition seeing these two legends fumbling through drawers and cabinets in a kitchen probably built for master chefs.

Yuri rolled his eyes at them and turned to a nearby drawer filled with random utensils, immediately finding the bottle opener, handing it to Victor with a sigh.

“You’re so useless, old man.”

Victor grinned at Yuri, but that smile seemed to drop away when he turned to me as he opened the bottle of wine. “I’m sure Yura told you, JJ, but this is one of my favorites. It will go very well with dinner tonight.”

“I may have helped a little with the wine,” Yuri confessed, “but Jeh chose the flowers.”

“Well they are stunning, JJ,” said Katsuki. “Though of course, a fashion icon like you would have great taste.”

Katsuki's compliment took me by surprise, and let out a breath I didn't even realize that I had been holding. Yuri noticed though, squeezing my hand and giving me a smile. Okay, Jean-Jacques, at least you're doing good with one of them. As for Victor... well, you'll get there.

After Victor poured the wine, we all convened in their living room. Yuri pulled me next to him on the couch while Victor settled on a chair opposite us, sipping from his glass slowly as he eyed us over the rim. It was hard not to squirm under Victor's scrutiny, but Yuri seemed to intuit my nervousness and scooted right up next to me until he was completely flush to my side. Our bodies were in complete contact from our feet to our hips and Yuri wound his arm around mine, stroking my bicep with his free hand. The contact bolstered my confidence and I draped my hand over his leg, squeezing his knee in gratitude.

“So, how have you been enjoying Saint Petersburg?” Katsuki joined us after setting the flowers on the table, sitting on the arm of Victor's chair.

“Well, Yuré's been a very enthusiastic tour guide,” I laughed and patted Yuri's leg. “Let's see, we've gone to the Winter Palace, what's-his-name's palace, some cathedral with blood —”

“The Cathedral of the Spilled Blood!” Yuri huffed. “It's one of the most famous cathedrals!”

“Yeah, that one. A few museums, and a fancy garden... Alexander's? I think I've learned more history this week about Russia than I ever learned about Canada,” I teased.

Yuri elbowed me. “You make it sound like it was torture!”

Kissing his cheek, “I will be tortured by you any day, *mon ange*.”

“Sounds like you’ve been fully immersed.” Katsuki looked down at my hand on Yuri’s knee. I had been circling it absently with my thumb but automatically stopped. I shifted to move it when Yuri’s placed his hand on top of it, trapping it there. Katsuki smiled at me, a little softer than before, and said, “Well, I’m glad Yu-chan has been taking good care of you.”

Victor set his glass aside, then interlaced his hands together, “So, how long do you plan to stay in town, JJ? I’m sure you don’t want to delay your training too long.”

“Vitya! It’s only been a week, please don’t scare off my boyfriend before we’ve had some time together,” Yuri pouted, his bottom lip stuck out petulantly. Damn, I wish he wouldn’t do that. It was too tempting to kiss him right here. I focused on Victor and Katsuki instead, willing the butterflies in my stomach to calm down.

“If you want some ice time JJ, I can arrange that,” Victor said.

Internally I cringed. Victor’s tone wasn’t outwardly hostile, but there was an undercurrent there of disapproval and I heard what he really meant beneath the simple statement. “*Stop being a lazy fuck and stop distracting Yuri.*” I was going to have to do better at not getting in the way of Yuri’s training. I couldn’t let there be a repeat of this morning — I had to find a way to make sure I didn’t keep Yuri home with worry.

And as for my own training? Honestly, I didn’t want to think about it at all. I wanted to forget about being Canada’s star figure skater. I was so tired of keeping up that front. I had done it for so many years. And after last year, I just wanted to hide away here, half a world away with Yuri. Couldn’t I have that at least a little longer?

“God, just let the man have a vacation, Vitya,” Yuri jumped to my defense. Although I was grateful, I couldn’t let him take all the hits Victor was throwing my way.

“Nah, it’s alright. I’ll need to wrangle up some skates, but thanks Victor. It probably would be good to get in some practice while I’m here. Gotta keep up with you, Yuré, if the King has any chance of beating you this season.”

Bumping his shoulder, I gripped Yuri’s knee again, but this time it was to keep my hand from shaking. He squeezed my hand back, intertwining our fingers and I could see the flicker of concern in his eyes, so I beamed a smile at them and said. “Yes indeed, *mon chou*, this season you’d better watch out.”

It was a little too silent for a moment, and I realized I had spoken that last bit a little too loudly. Victor continued his steady gaze and Katsuki shifted a bit on the arm of the chair, taking a drink from his wine glass. I followed suit, though I took a much larger gulp of my wine before Yuri plucked the glass out of my hand to take his own sip instead of drinking out of his own glass. Thankfully some timer in the kitchen buzzed.

“Sounds like dinner’s ready,” Katsuki chimed in and all of us sighed slightly in relief. “I hope you like pork and rice. Yuri requested it special for tonight.”

“Katsudon!” Yuri exclaimed, rubbing his stomach. “You are definitely going to love this, Jeh.”

“Wait, *katsudon*?” I looked at Yuri, eyebrows raised.

“Pork cutlet bowl,” Katsuki supplied. “My mom’s most popular dish she serves at my parents’ inn. And my personal favorite too.”

“Mine too,” Victor heartily agreed.

Not to be left out, Yuri joined in, “And mine!”

“So, all these years you’ve been calling Yuuri *‘pork cutlet bowl’*?” Yuri simply shrugged and I burst out laughing. “It all makes sense now!”

Maybe it was all the tension releasing, but I couldn’t stop laughing, and soon I was crying I was laughing so hard. Yuri and Katsuki started laughing as well, though I could see mostly they were laughing at my reaction. Even Victor cracked a smile.

It took several minutes for me to finally calm my laughter down, though I still had a few bouts of giggles as we sat down around the table and Katsuki served up the laugh-inducing dish. Victor refilled the wine glasses and soon we were all digging in. It was quite delicious, though I always loved any Japanese cuisine. Yuri cheered that he had recruited another fan of the dish.

During dinner, I asked Yuri about his students back in Canada and he and Katsuki were very enthusiastic about their progress, as the kids had apparently been Katsuki’s students originally. Since I only knew Liam, I was especially interested in hearing more about him. Seemed Yuri also had an extra soft spot for the kid. I felt another pang of guilt that my being sick today had kept him from his Skype lesson with them today. I would just have to rectify that somehow as well. Tonight I needed to call Lou. I needed those pills.

We finished eating but just continued sitting for a few minutes, letting dinner settle, quietly sipping our wine.

“Have you started the choreography for Yu-chan’s free skate, Vitya?” Katsuki asked after a few minutes.

“I’m almost done. Yura, I actually wanted you to choreograph your step sequence. Perhaps we can go over that tomorrow.”

Yuri hummed into his wine glass and didn’t answer for a long moment. Then he took a deep breath. “So... actually I was thinking of taking a couple of weeks with Jeh to go to Deda’s place and pack things up. I’ve been needing to visit him and take care of things anyway and it would give us some time to be together, to get away. I think that would be good for us right now.”

Victor looked stonily at me as if this was my idea. But I was just as surprised as he was at this announcement. Was Yuri crazy, thinking he should take off in the middle of training? The

first Grand Prix competition was just a month away. I could feel its presence looming over me. As wonderful as spending two weeks away with Yuri sounded, and despite my own dread at returning to Montreal to train, I knew Yuri couldn't afford to stop his momentum now.

I was about to protest when Victor turned back to Yuri and said, "Absolutely not. That is much too long to be away from training."

Yuri glanced at Katsuki briefly. "I'm not going to stop my training. I'll keep up practice at the rink in Moscow. It's only two weeks." Then, quieter, "It's important, Vitya."

"*Important.*" Victor also looked over to Katsuki for a moment, lips pursing, before turning a stern look back on Yuri. "You told me yourself how *important* this season is to you, Yura. When you were dating Otabek it never interfered with your training. If JJ doesn't think training is *important* right now that's his business, but every second away makes an impact. You know that."

"Stop being such an asshole, Vitya. This has nothing to do with dating Jeh over Beka," Yuri countered.

"Doesn't it? It has everything to do with who you're dating, apparently."

"Vitya, that's not fair," Katsuki said, touching Victor's arm.

"No Yuuri, you need to stop babying him. He has finally stepped up his training, but as soon as JJ shows up he just wants to go off with him —"

Yuri pounded his fist on the table, making his and my dishes jump, cutting Victor off. "You are such a fucking hypocrite, Vitya! I thought you *finally* cared more about me than my damn skating career. Guess not. Not if what I do reflects badly on you, right? Well, you can't stop me. We're fucking going."

No one spoke for a minute, but the silence crackled around us. I wanted to say something. I tried to force my brain to work, to explain, to apologize, to defend myself. But my dark cloud was back, seeping through the air, smothering my voice. Though my heart was beating fast, I only could sit and look down at my hands in my lap.

I felt someone's eyes on me and tried to ignore them. I could only imagine whose they were. Victor's, looking at me with disdain. Katsuki's, probably looking with pity. Or Yuri's, filled with concern, as they only seemed to be these last couple of days.

I dared a glance at Yuri, but he wasn't looking at me. He was glaring at Victor, who was glaring right back. I caught the worry in Katsuki's face for a split second before he turned his gaze to Victor, whose eyes narrowed at Yuri, barely perceptible.

"Yura. Study. Now."

Yuri's hands slammed down again on the table and he shoved his chair away then stalked out of the dining room not waiting for Victor, who got up much calmer than it was obvious he

felt, following Yuri's path with his long strides.

Katsuki sighed. "I'm sorry about all that, JJ." He got up and started clearing dishes. I stood up to help.

We quietly cleared the table. Instead of loading the dishwasher though, Katsuki filled up one of the huge sinks until it was practically overflowing with fluffy suds.

Answering my questioning brow, he smiled, "This helps me relax when they argue like that." And with that, he started washing. I grabbed a towel.

It was quiet except for the clink of dishes for several minutes. Then Katsuki said, tone quiet, "Yu-chan told me what happened yesterday."

He spoke without looking at me, wiping the delicate stemware. My heart seized up. Please don't. Please don't talk about it.

But he continued, "You know I used to be riddled with panic attacks as well. That's actually one of the reasons I studied psychology. I don't know if you knew that. Did you know I got my masters? I haven't gotten my license yet, and of course it would be a breach of ethics for me to be your therapist," he said more to himself. "Anyway, if you'd ever like to talk to a therapist, I can connect you with some very good ones back in Montreal."

"Thank you, but I'm fine," I gritted out, trying not to smash the dish I had in my hand against the nearest wall. Well, now I knew who Yuri was talking to on the phone. Why in God's name did he have to say anything? "I just got a little overwhelmed yesterday, but Yuré and I worked it out."

Katsuki turned to me then. "JJ, there's a difference between being overwhelmed and a panic attack—"

"I know what a panic attack is."

Katsuki just looked at me for a moment, evaluating, his expression neutral. Then, with a slight nod he turned back to washing the dishes. "Thank you for helping me clean up. Washing by hand is always better when there's someone to help dry." He handed me the last dish.

Yuri and Victor finally emerged from wherever the hell the study was to join Katsuki and me in the living room, where we had been sitting for the last twenty minutes. After that awkward conversation in the kitchen we'd barely been able to keep up any small talk before it had quickly deteriorated and now the room was filled with a dreadful silence.

As soon as Yuri and Victor entered I jolted out of my seat, though I wasn't quite sure why. Both were red-faced. I expected that of Yuri, but it was a shock to see actual anger on Victor's face. He turned his eyes on me for the briefest moment and the look was nothing but pure hostility. He remained silent though and passed through the living room, disappearing down the hall.

“Thank you for dinner, Yuuri,” Yuri said, voice low and raw. He looked like he was about to either cry or punch a wall. Katsuki put an arm out to him, but Yuri waved him off. “I’ll talk to you later. Jeh, let’s go.”

Merde. Well, any hope I had of making a good impression was now completely obliterated. I had no idea how I would ever recover with Victor and Katsuki after tonight.

Yuri and I were both silent on the car ride home. My heart was pounding so fast I could hear it in my ears, and I thought my jaw would be permanently locked, it was clenched so tightly. Yuri’s knuckles were white as he gripped the wheel, eyes narrowed as he sped home. I knew he and I were mad at very different things, and that only served to make me more pissed.

As soon as we were through the door, Yuri went straight for his computer, same determined look on his face that he had yesterday when he checked me out of my hotel. He didn’t even blink when I slammed the door behind us.

“Fuck Vitya,” he muttered under his breath as he clicked furiously, “I’m getting us the first train out in the morning. We’ll be in Moscow a little after noon.”

“I’m not going,” I said through gritted teeth. There was no way in hell I could leave with him now. Not after tonight’s fiasco.

“What?” Yuri didn’t seem to hear, just continued to click away on the computer.

Louder, “I said, I’m not going.”

Yuri turned to look at me over his shoulder. “What?” he said again. “What are you talking about?”

Was he really that clueless? I closed my eyes and pinched the bridge of my nose, trying to keep my voice down, but it was hard. I could feel my hands shaking. “Were you even going to ask me?”

“Ask you what?”

“*Criss!* I don’t know, Yuré. How about asking me if I wanted to go to Moscow for two weeks? Maybe I don’t want to go.”

“You don’t want to go?” Confusion colored his face. “I just assumed —”

“Are you serious? I mean fucking hell, Yuré! Now Victor absolutely hates me!” Yuri started to protest, but I cut him off. “And then Katsuki cornered me in the kitchen, asking if I needed a therapist! You just had to go tell him all about my humiliating experience yesterday, didn’t you? He told me I should see a shrink to help with all my panic attacks, since you know, I can barely keep it together! Did you tell him I freaked out during sex, too?”

“Of course not,” Yuri blinked up at me, completely perplexed.

His shocked innocence just about pushed me over the edge. “Don’t lie to me, Yuré. I heard you on the phone with him today. *I don’t know what to do about JJ freaking out over*

everything.”

I knew I shouldn't have admitted that the moment it came out of my mouth as I watched Yuri's face turn red, though it wasn't from embarrassment. His voice dropped as he said, “You listened to my conversation?”

Hell if he was going to turn this back on me though. There was no way my eavesdropping outweighed him talking about what should have been private between us. “And so what if I did? Not like I could help it — coming out this afternoon after I got up to find you blabbing to Katsuki about what a fuck-up I am.”

Yuri looked absolutely stricken at that. “What? No, Jeh, I swear! It's just I see how much you're struggling. Getting so sick this morning. And yesterday, with the fans —”

I scoffed, “So you *do* think I'm fucked up.”

“I didn't say that. Would you just listen to me?” Yuri groaned, running his hands back in his hair in obvious frustration.

“I know that's what you think. You've been treating me like I'm your broken boyfriend that could fall apart at any time.”

“I'm just trying to help you, that's why I talked to Yuuri. That's all! Baby, please. What that woman did to you —”

“She didn't do anything to me!”

“Please, Jeh, let me help you.” Yuri came over and took my hand, but I yanked it away.

“I don't need your help — and I don't need your pity!”

I stormed down the hall into the bedroom, slamming the door behind me. My skin pricked and I felt overheated as I stood there in the middle of the bedroom, shaking until I couldn't hold back any longer.

“Fuck!” I yelled out, punching the wall in front of me, breaking through the plaster, bloodying my hand.

The force of my punch shook the dresser next to the wall and knocked several things off, scattering them on the floor. A picture of Yuri with Victor and Katsuki, glass and frame now cracked on the floor. Several necklaces. And my leather pouch with Yuri's medal that I didn't even realize he'd placed up there. I fell to my knees beside it, pressing the heels of my hands hard into my eyes.

If I did that to try to hold back the tears it was a fruitless effort, as they came regardless. I just couldn't do this anymore. I was so raw. The shell of the man I once was.

How could Yuri not see what Victor, what Katsuki... what Izzy saw? I was worthless. Useless. He kept thinking I was still *'JJ Leroy.'* *'The King.'* *'Champion skater.'* What a joke. It was obvious after tonight that that man didn't exist anymore.

Had I never been that man all this time? All these years? I thought he was real. I could see now it was all a lie. Perhaps he never existed at all. Only in everyone's mind. And I was just as fooled.

The leather pouch stared at me from the floor. Yuri had given me his medal to show me he believed in me. But there was no one to believe in anymore. That man was gone — if he was even there to begin with.

I snatched the pouch off the floor and gripped it tightly, wishing I could crush it like all my other medals that had been crushed. They were gone and no amount of pity-medals from the other skaters would make them come back.

Closing my fist tighter I felt the medal cutting through the soft leather that surrounded it. Yanking it out of the pouch, I scrambled closer to the dresser. Pressing my shoulder against the heavy wood, I shoved and it tilted back, lifting one foot a couple of inches in the air and positioned the medal directly underneath it. The foot of the dresser was tall but wide. Wide enough it would just cover the medal. And the dresser was heavy. I could feel its weight dig into my shoulder, waiting for me to let it drop. All I had to do was shift just a fraction and it would come crashing down on the medal below.

I pushed the dresser a fraction higher, glaring at the gold glinting below me. Taunting me, telling me that I should have just given up back then. That I didn't deserve it. Or the beautiful man that had won it.

And I never would.

Gritting my teeth, I shoved against the dresser again, its weight begging for release. I just needed release. Yuri had this delusion that I was some amazing boyfriend. But I wasn't. I was the piece of shit that was going to crush his medal. And he would finally know I wasn't worth it.

I couldn't look at that damn medal anymore and turned away, heaving one last time before moving out of the dresser's way.

Then I saw it, just a sliver of white.

The letter Yuri had given me was peeking out of the leather pouch. I never could bring myself to read it, but... I couldn't throw it away. Whatever Yuri had said in that letter, I knew it was something special. I knew *I* wasn't special, not like Yuri thought I was, but Yuri... No matter what, he would always be special. Everything he did, everything he touched, was special.

"Argh!" I bellowed, and pushed the dresser one last time. The loud crash brought the real Yuri through the door. He took in the scene — the dresser turned on its side, me leaning against it, upturned feet digging in my back as I clung to the medal and pouch tightly in my fisted hands, those fists pressed hard against my forehead — and rushed over.

Dropping in front of me he reached out, but his hand stopped before it touched mine, poised in the air in front of me. "Jeh! Are you okay?"

“I’m sorry, *mon ange*, I’m sorry.” Would I ever stop apologizing for how fucked up I was?

“No, baby, I’m sorry. So sorry. Are you okay?” he asked again. “Your hands.”

I couldn’t even feel them, but I knew the damage I’d caused. “I’m sorry, Yuré. I fucked up your room. I’m sorry. I’ll fix it. I promise. Please don’t hate me.”

He leaned in closer, “I don’t hate you, baby. I could fucking care less about any of this shit. I only care that you’re alright.”

“They hate me,” I told him.

“What?”

“Victor and Katsuki. They think I’m just dragging you down.” I knew it was true, but admitting it out loud made this evening’s nightmare more real.

“No, they don’t. I’m the one that fucked up. Victor’s mad at me, not you.”

“He thinks I’m useless.” I let out a bitter laugh. “He’s right. You don’t need me. It would be better if I wasn’t here.”

Yuri gasped. Then he gripped my wrists, bringing my hands down, away from my face. His hot tears sprinkled on my hands as he whispered, “Baby, no, not yet. Please don’t go. I *do* need you. I need you so badly. We don’t have to go to Moscow. We can stay here. Whatever you want. I don’t care...just...” he gripped my wrists tighter, leaning his head against my hands, “please... don’t push me away. I can’t bear for you to shut me out again.”

It was killing me what I was doing to Yuri. I should stop his suffering, tell him to let me go and move on with his life. Forget he ever knew me. Except I felt cold at that thought. The chilling darkness was surrounding me. I could feel it squeezing my lungs, my heart, crushing them. If Yuri wasn’t in my life it would swallow me whole and that terrified me more. I hated myself for what I was doing to Yuri, but I couldn’t stand to be without him either.

Letting the pouch and medal fall to the floor I grabbed Yuri’s face and pulled him closer.

“I’m sorry,” I said. “Please don’t cry, Yuré. Not for me.”

“This was all my fault, Jeh. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. Just stay, please. Just stay just a little longer.”

The vice around me tightened. My mind filled with images of what happened tonight. Of Victor’s absolute disgust as he looked at me. He knew. He knew. And it was squeezing the life out of me.

“I can’t,” I shook my head violently. “I can’t stay here anymore.”

Yuri hiccuped a sob and nodded against me. “If that’s what you need... I understand,” he choked out. “Do you want to go... home?”

Thinking of returning to Montreal was worse. “No. I can’t go back there either. I just... can’t. I don’t know where to go. I just need to go away. Please *mon ange*... Please just take me away.”

“Okay, baby. Okay. We can go anywhere you want. It will be just you and me.”

Barely breathing, “You and me?”

“Yes, just you and me. Is...” he hesitated, then asked quietly, “is Moscow still okay? It’s just... I mean, I can take care of things quickly with Deda and then we can go anywhere you want.”

My chest loosened, just the slightest. Yuri and me. Just Yuri and me. That’s all I wanted. Just to escape everything with Yuri. I simply nodded my head.

We sat there for several moments, our tears pooling below on the hardwood floor beneath us, when Yuri whispered, “Jeh, will we be okay?”

God I wish I knew, but I couldn’t see more than this moment with him. I tightened my hold on Yuri, probably tighter than was comfortable for him. His own grip on my wrists tightened as well in response.

As we held each other there on the floor of Yuri’s room, half destroyed, I tried to push away the cloud that hovered around me, telling me with a harsh laugh that this would all fall apart and its darkness would overtake me in the end.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry it's been forever and a day since I updated this! These last several months have been a bit rough to say the least. But now I feel better and plan to pick back up again and post more regularly!

Hope this chapter read alright! Fights are hard for me to write, so let me know what you think.

I could really use the encouragement from your comments! Xoxo! Thank you my lovelies!

Discovery

Chapter Summary

Hi everyone!! I'm soooo sorry it's taken me so long to update this! Your comments did encourage me and I won't give up on this story, I promise!

"Where are you going?" Panic laced Yuri's voice.

"Nowhere, mon ange," I reassured him.

"Are you sure? Are you okay?" Then he whispered the question that went unanswered last night, "Are we okay?"

I sat back on the bed and sighed. My chest was still tight from my nightmare even though I couldn't remember what it was about. It's presence still lingered, though. Or maybe it was because of last night's disastrous events. There really wasn't a difference anymore between the nightmares of my sleep and this constant feeling of dread when I was awake, except now I was dragging Yuri into this darkness with me. I couldn't let that happen.

Chapter Notes

Please note, I added a bunch of tags, because this chapter delves into Yuri's past, and it's not a happy place. There's also things referenced in JJ's past as well that the tags refer to.

Also, trigger warning: Drugs. More notes at end of chapter in this regard.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

I woke up with a start, heart pounding from a nightmare I forgot as soon as I opened my eyes. The room was dark and it took me a minute to orient myself. Slowly my eyes adjusted to the darkness and I eventually made out the shapes in Yuri's room, my eyes lingering on the shape

of the overturned dresser across from the bed. Immediately everything came rushing back and I felt my stomach churn, though for once it wasn't from a migraine. The dinner. Victor and Katsuki. *Merde*. I really humiliated myself last night, didn't I?

There was the drizzle of rain outside, the soft fanning of breath on my face. It was Yuri, halfway draped over me, a leg wrapped around mine, his arm holding me tight. Despite us still being fully clothed on top of the bed, Yuri was shivering and trying to snuggle as close as he could, seeking warmth. I worked to slowly untangle myself so I could get him under the covers. Though I tried not to wake him, he stirred and blinked sleepily at me.

"What time is it?" he mumbled, barely audible.

After checking my phone, "Three in the morning. Go back to sleep."

His eyes drifted back closed as I removed his shoes then tucked him in. But when I moved away after kissing his cheek he bolted up and grabbed my arm.

"Where are you going?" Panic laced Yuri's voice.

"Nowhere, *mon ange*," I reassured him.

"Are you sure? Are you okay?" Then he whispered the question that went unanswered last night, "Are *we* okay?"

I sat back on the bed and sighed. My chest was still tight from my nightmare even though I couldn't remember what it was about. Its presence still lingered, though. Or maybe it was because of last night's disastrous events. There really wasn't a difference anymore between the nightmares of my sleep and this constant feeling of dread when I was awake, except now I was dragging Yuri into this darkness with me. I couldn't let that happen.

"I can't sleep, is all," I told him, brushing his hair aside and out of his face. "Everything is going to be okay, I promise."

Yuri nodded once, then threw a hand behind my neck and pulled me in for a kiss. It wasn't soft. It was rough and tinged with desperation.

He pulled back and looked me square in the eyes. His intensity startled me. "I love you."

It still floored me that Yuri could say that to me, especially after last night.

"*Je ne sais pas pourquoi, mon beau garçon, mais je t'aime aussi.*" His face relaxed some and I kissed his forehead and pushed him back down to the bed. "Get some sleep."

In the living room, I sat in the dark and stared out the window, caught in a trance as I watched the rain trail down the glass. My reflection stared back at me. I looked as hollow as I felt. I couldn't go on like this. *We* couldn't go on like this. Yuri needed more from me.

Before I could think too much about it I opened my phone screen and dialed Lou's number. She answered right away.

“*Mon petit frère*,” she said softly.

Fuck. She never answered the phone like that.

It broke me.

Lou tried her best to soothe me as I cried into the phone. It took me several minutes before I could pull myself together.

Eventually, I said, “I don’t know what to do, *soeur ainée*. I don’t know.”

She shushed me, “Everything will be okay, *mon chou*.”

“No... last night... I fucked up, Lou. I fucked up.”

“I’m sure it’s nothing that can’t be fixed. Whatever it is, it can’t be as bad as some of the shit we’ve been through together, right?”

“Yeah, I guess...” I wiped at my tears. Then after a moment, “Did you get me more medicine?”

She sighed, “I’m sorry, Jean. I tried. But the doctor won’t give me another prescription so soon, especially not without you here.”

No! My heart started racing, “Lou, you aren’t getting it. I need those pills. I *need* them.”

“I don’t like hearing you say that. Not like that.”

Ugh, the last thing I needed was for Lou to start making this into something it wasn’t. “This is different. It’s just for my headaches.”

“Well then, come home Jean, so you can see the doctor. Besides, you have to start training and the trial is coming up. Logan told me he’s been trying to get a hold of you. Have you called him back yet?”

“No, I haven’t called *Logan* yet,” I could barely say that fucking detective’s name without throwing up.

“Why not? *Ne soyez pas un gamin gâté*.”

“You know what? I don’t have time to deal with this.” My heart beat faster, my tone pitching higher, even as I tried to keep my voice down so I wouldn’t wake Yuri. “Yuri needs me right now. We’re going to Moscow to help his sick grandfather and the last thing I want is for him to worry about me and these damn headaches. So I just need my medicine, Lou. *You’re* the spoiled brat. I don’t care where you get the medicine. I mean, *Criss!* So what if the doctor won’t let you renew my prescription? It’s not like that’s stopped you before.”

“*Putain, es-tu sérieux?* I can’t believe you even said that to me. I’m about ten seconds from hanging up, Jean-Jacques.”

Yeah, I was a dick for asking, but right now I didn't care. I could feel the pulse of my heart pounding loud in my head and it was making me dizzy. "*Câlice!* You don't get it. I'm dying, Lou. I can't do this anymore!"

"So come home!" she implored. "You're sick, and it's not just the headaches. You need help — a doctor, a therapist, something."

"*L'enfer je fais!*" my voice was harsh and low. "Why does everyone keep saying I need a shrink? It's just these headaches. Why won't you just listen to me?"

"*Putain de merde*, Jean, I *am* listening! You're the one not listening!"

"*Va te faire foutre!* If you won't help me, then I'll figure it out on my own!" I hung up on her and threw the phone across the room. Grabbing my hair, I pulled on it hard, willing myself to breathe and count, until the panic passed.

I was well over five hundred when a siren in the distance finally broke me out of my counting. The sky was starting to lighten. I got up. I needed to shower, pull myself together before Yuri woke up. He needed me and I couldn't let him see me fall apart like this anymore.

Heading back into the room I was relieved to see Yuri was still asleep. His hair was fanned out on the pillow, like a soft golden halo around his face, his lips barely parted. God, he really did look like an angel. I bent down and brushed a kiss on his head. He sighed in his sleep.

"I won't fail you again," I whispered.

I walked over to my suitcase and took out the vodka I'd stashed there and drank a long pull straight from the bottle. Once we got to Moscow I would figure out something.

I had to. I simply had to.

We didn't go to the part of Moscow I'd seen the few times I'd competed here. No, this was the part of the city that no one talked about. Yuri was silent as we sat in the cab, passing old Soviet-era buildings, gray and crumbling, graffiti the only color standing out. Though he was silent, he held my hand like a vice, staring straight ahead as the car drove slowly through the pothole-ridden streets.

The cab finally stopped and we got out. I hefted my duffel bag over my shoulder and Yuri took his own, but then just stood there for a moment, looking up at the building in front of us.

Putting my hand on his back, "Everything okay?"

"Just never thought I'd be back. I mean, now that Deda's not here anymore." His voice was quiet, and he lowered his gaze and turned his face away. "I forgot... what it looks like. I can't imagine what you're thinking."

I couldn't lie. I was shocked when the cab pulled to a stop in front of the worst-looking building on the block. But then I looked over at Yuri. He was one of the most incredible

skaters in the world, getting better year after year. The fact that he came from a place like this only made him more amazing in my eyes. My own skating career had grown out of my parents' legacy. It was expected. Training and opportunities for becoming a great skater were never far. Yuri obviously had a very different upbringing. I couldn't imagine sacrifices he and his grandfather made to get someone as elite as Yakov Feltsman to be his coach.

"Yuré, look at me."

He turned, but it took another minute for him to lift his eyes to mine.

"I think you are one of the strongest men I've ever known. Whatever your background, you became one of the best athletes in the world. This," I waved my hand at the building, "would never make me think less of you."

Yuri sniffed and quickly brushed away a tear that escaped. I walked over to the front door and opened it. "Come on, *mon ange*, let's go."

He squared his shoulders and walked passed me into the building. I followed. There wasn't an elevator, so we climbed the five flights of stairs to the top floor and made our way down the long hallway. As Yuri fumbled to find the keys in his backpack, a door a few doors down from ours opened up.

"Yuri-*Fucking*-Plisetsky."

The voice, harsh and hoarse, made my skin prickle. Yuri stiffened, as did I. An older man, perhaps in his forties, stepped out and leaned against the doorjamb. He was bulky, and though it looked like he might have been quite muscular at one time, now most of that had turned to fat. He smiled a sinister, chilling smile, most of his crooked teeth encased in gold. He only wore a white undershirt, and both his arms had full-sleeved tattoos, though it was the snake tattoo winding up from his chest and around his neck that really set my hackles up.

"Well, lookie-here. Mr. High-and-Mighty himself, finally back to grace us with his presence."

Yuri tried his best not to look scared, but I could see he was nervous. He gave the guy one of his most scathing glares. "Vlas. You're still here?"

The man looked completely unaffected. "Of course I'm still here. Not all of us want to prance around in sparkles and shit so the government will give us money."

He then strode over, looking Yuri up and down. Yuri straightened to his full height and the man gave a short laugh, "Well, the little pussy grew up. Did your balls finally drop?"

He grabbed Yuri's crotch. Yuri immediately pushed him back and tried to punch him, but the man caught his hand and sneered. "Oh-ho. All tough now, aren't you?"

"Leave me the fuck alone," Yuri ground out, trying to pull his hand out of the man's grasp. But unfortunately, the guy only twisted Yuri's hand back making Yuri cry out. I ran over and pulled Yuri away, pushing the guy back with a lot more force than Yuri had managed.

"Get away from him." I was *this* close from punching the man myself.

Though he stepped back, this Vlas guy only laughed and looked up at me, scoffing, “Ooh, looks like someone got themselves a bodyguard. Unless... this your pimp, Yurachka?”

I stepped forward, making the man take a couple more steps back. “Ask that again, asshole.”

Yuri reached out and grabbed my arm. “Jeh, just let it go. Come on.”

The bastard took a step forward. He wasn’t as tall as me, but he wasn’t far off. He got right in my face as he said, “Looks like you graduated from prancing around in sparkles straight to sucking dicks, Yurachka. Looks like you got real good, too.” Then he craned his neck to peer around me, cocking one eyebrow, “*Mamochka* teach you all her secrets, did she? *Piz`da*.”

Yuri landed his punch that time.

I kept myself in between them, holding Yuri back for his own good. Although the guy was old and out of shape, I didn’t want him anywhere near Yuri. The guy didn’t make a move towards Yuri though. He simply spat out some blood and laughed. “So, you’re not a complete pussy then.”

He shuffled towards his flat. Taking a step inside the open doorway he looked back at Yuri over his shoulder. “I knew you’d be back, eventually.” He spat again on the ground, “Trash like you always returns home, *suka*, *blyat*’.”

Then the bastard crumpled to the floor, this time from the hit I gave him right to the gut. I yanked him up and slammed him against the concrete wall next to the door. “The only trash I see around here is the trash I’m about to take out.”

The man started laughing. “Looks like I upset your *kot*, Yurachka.”

I slammed him against the wall again, but he only continued to laugh, looking right at me with wide, crazed eyes.

“Is he good, *mu-dak*?” he said to me. “You like shoving your dick in that trash *blyat*’ mouth?”

Another slam.

Another laugh. “Maybe it takes one to know one, *xyecoc*.”

Slam.

“Jeh!”

Yuri was yelling behind me, but I barely heard him. All I could hear was the man in front of me, laughing, those wild eyes staring back at me, never blinking. That laughter. It was grating on my ears, permeating everything in my immediate consciousness, loud and echoing in the hallway. I just needed to make it stop. But the asshole wouldn’t stop laughing. Another slam. And another. And another.

“That’s enough, Jeh!”

Yuri was suddenly in front of me, forcing me to drop the man, a laughing beat-up pile on the floor.

I called back at him as Yuri pushed me down the hall. “You don’t come near Yuri, you hear me! Don’t go fucking near him!”

Yuri shoved the key into the lock and quickly pulled me into the flat. Behind the closed door we could still hear the cackle of that motherfucker’s maniacal laughter. My blood pulsed in my ears and I felt hot with rage that I was having a hard time controlling. I could feel my body shake with it.

“Hey,” Yuri dropped his bag and turned, putting his hands on my face. He forced me to look down at him. “He’s not worth it. Believe me, he’s not worth it.”

“He can’t treat you like that! I’m going to kill him for saying that to you!”

I didn’t realize I was yelling until Yuri said, “Shh, baby. It’s okay. He can’t hurt me. Look at me. Just breathe.”

Yuri kept his eyes trained on me and took a deep breath. I mimicked him, focusing on Yuri’s green eyes. They grounded me. Slowly, the pounding in my head drained away and I made my way back to myself.

Lowering my head to Yuri’s, I closed my eyes and said, “I’m sorry, *mon ange*, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have lost it. I don’t know what happened...”

Why did I let that bastard get to me like that? But, what that prick had said about Yuri — I took another breath and shook my head, trying to cast off the last traces of my anger that still lingered.

I opened my eyes and looked right into Yuri’s emerald ones. “He’s wrong, Yuré, he’s wrong. You aren’t trash. You are *nothing* like that man.”

A bitter laugh escaped Yuri and his hands fell away from my face. “I don’t know. Maybe.” He walked over to the window, pulling back the curtain. “He’s my stepdad.”

“What?” Shock rippled through me. “What do you mean? How can he...?”

Yuri didn’t say anything. He just continued to look out the window.

Holy fuck. What kind of hell did Yuri grow up in here? “I’m sorry, Yuré. I didn’t mean to—”

“Forget him, Jeh, just forget him.” Yuri waved my comment away. “He’s not why we’re here.”

Yuri turned back around and stood with his hands on his hips. He took a deep sigh as he surveyed his grandfather’s flat. It was a total mess. And it stank to high heaven. This whole building stank, but the flat smelled worse if that was possible. Like piss and shit and God knows what else. The cracked and peeling wallpaper covering the walls was so worn the pattern was almost as yellow as the paint peeking through. Trash was everywhere, but it was

mostly concentrated around a sagging armchair that must have been where Nikolai spent most of his time. It looked like its own little nest, dirty dishes filled with the remnants of rotten food surrounded the chair, on the floor, on the little side table, all only within arms reach. Piles of crusty newspapers stacked high created a short wall around the area, and I could hear the scurry of several rodents running away, though their droppings were everywhere. Whatever had remained of the rotting food not eaten by rats or mice, was currently being cleaned up by roaches. The chair itself was covered in blankets, soiled and stained. It was obvious Yuri's grandfather had struggled to live here with his failing health.

Yuri stoically made his way through the mess and disappeared down the hall. I set my own bag down near the entrance and followed, glancing into the one bathroom, which was just as disgusting, and then a bedroom that must have been Nikolai's, though it didn't look like he made much use of it. I finally found Yuri in the last bedroom, sitting on the double bed, flipping through a weathered photo album. This was obviously his old room. An old cat-print comforter covered the bed, faded posters graced the walls. Some were of video games and movie art, one of a rock band I'd never heard of, and a couple of Katsuki and Victor from their skating days.

I sat next to Yuri and watched him continue to look through the album. It was mostly filled with clippings and images of Yuri's skating career. The occasional image of Yuri with his grandfather, Yuri with Victor and Katsuki, even a few group photos where I was in the background, were included.

Yuri didn't say anything, just continued to carefully turn the pages until he reached the end and closed the book. Then he turned to me, the album slipping off his lap, landing with a soft thud on the floor. He just looked at me for a long moment, eyes glistening with tears. I could tell he was trying to keep them from falling.

I didn't say anything. I simply cupped his head and pulled him down to my shoulder. Yuri let out a choked sound, then his arms came around me fisting my shirt in his hands. I felt the moment when he finally let go, slumping into me fully as I rocked him while he wept.

After Yuri's tears subsided he took me to the local grocery store, a small crumbling building with bars on the window. It looked freshly whitewashed, though you could still see traces of graffiti underneath the fresh paint. But there was a small window box near the front with a few bright and lively flowers that gave the building some life here in this more desolate part of the city.

"Yurachka!" a big voice bellowed as soon as we entered.

I bristled at first, ready to spring, wondering if this would be another asshole looking to harass Yuri, but Yuri beamed and ran straight for the burly man who lifted him off the ground in a big bear hug.

"Toyla!"

Then, the man pulled me in for a crushing embrace as well once Yuri introduced me to Anatole Semenov, owner of this homey little store. I couldn't help but give a smile back to

the giant of a man, though I was having a hard time breathing.

“You’re smothering him, Toyla!” Anatole’s willowy wife Larisa pulled me away and cooed, “Yura, you brought home such a handsome young man.”

“Risha!” Yuri went naturally into her open arms and kissed her cheeks.

Soon I was following Larisa down the narrow aisles while Anatole grilled Yuri on every moment of his life since he left to go train with Yakov when he was ten. Larisa only shook her head as she filled up my arms with towels, trash bags, and various cleaners.

“Nikolai is headstrong,” she told me. I hadn’t asked, but she seemed more than happy to fill me in on what had happened after his surgery. Her voice lowered and she grumbled out, “*I’m fine, I don’t need help. I can take care of myself. Don’t tell Yura, he has enough to worry about.*” She sighed. “And then Vlas was there keeping guard.”

My skin prickled. Larisa picked up on my stiffness.

“You know Vlas?” she asked.

“We met,” I said flatly.

Larisa scowled. Whomever this Vlas was around the neighborhood, he sure wasn’t a local favorite.

Anatole must have overheard us as we approached the front because he frowned.

“You saw Vlas?” he asked Yuri.

“*Da*,” Yuri glared at the floor. But then he brightened and turned to me with a wicked grin. “But, Jeh here beat the shit out of him.”

Both Anatole and Larisa looked at me with raised eyebrows. A quick glance to one another and they seemed to come to some sort of agreement.

“You’re going to stay with us while you’re here, Yura,” Anatole announced.

I was about to protest but Yuri pulled my sleeve, shaking his head slightly. Stepping up to Anatole, he gave the huge man a gentle hug and quietly said, “*Blagodaryu vas, Dyadya.*”

The couple closed the store early and we stopped by their flat before heading back over to Nikolai’s. Their place was much nicer than I expected. Simple, but clean with lovely little arrangements of the same bright flowers from the store’s window box spread throughout their home. It was slightly larger than Nikolai’s and had a couple of spare rooms, though one was full of crates and boxes, leaving only a small bedroom with a twin bed available for Yuri and me. I quickly schooled my surprise before thanking our hosts for their hospitality.

Then, we all headed back over to Nikolai’s. Anatole and Larisa hurried past Vlas’ door, but Yuri assured them that he wouldn’t be making another appearance after running into me.

Even so, they seemed to breathe a sigh of relief once we were safely inside — until Yuri turned the lights on and they saw the condition Nikolai left the place.

Anatole swore. “Nikolai, you stubborn ass.”

We dove into the dreadful task, cleaning supplies in hand, handkerchiefs around our faces to try to block out at least some of the stench. Yuri and I started in the living room, while Anatole headed down the hall to the bathroom. Larisa especially seemed single-focused on cleaning up all the rotten food and the kitchen. I would have to get that woman flowers every week for a year. That was the part that I was steeling myself up for, especially since a dull but throbbing headache was back, and I didn’t trust myself to not throw up if I got closer. As it was, the combined smell of trash and chemicals was getting to me despite the handkerchief, the nausea becoming close to overwhelming.

I snuck off to Yuri’s room, the cleanest place in the entire apartment. I opened the small window and tried to breathe in some fresh air. It helped the nausea, but unfortunately, my headache was growing. Luckily, I had been able to quickly purchase a small flask of vodka from a street vendor when I begged off to go to the bathroom before our train ride. Pulling the flask from my jacket I took a swallow, closing my eyes to let myself feel its effects. Taking another long drink I startled as I noticed motion in my periphery. I hurried to close up the flask and tuck it away. I had just slipped it in my pocket when Anatole came in. I tried to determine if he’d seen it, but he didn’t give any indication that he had.

Instead, Anatole handed me a trash bag and started to walk out of the room. I just stared after him. He turned back and nodded for me to follow. We went into Nikolai’s bedroom across the hall.

“So, Jean-Jacques,” he paused for a moment, rich brown eyes staring right at me. They were capped with the bushiest eyebrows I’d ever seen. There was something about Anatole that made me feel like I was staring at a lion, and I knew how Yuri had survived here. Anatole exuded protectiveness. He continued to look at me and I tried not to squirm under his gaze. After another excruciating moment, that gaze softened and he nodded slightly to himself. Immediately I had the sense that he was accepting me into that protective aura, and with that acceptance he seemed to absorb some of my dark cloud into that large frame of his. I exhaled the breath I had been holding and felt a bit lighter.

Anatole continued, “Yura said you are his biggest competitor. You must be very good to give our Yurochka a run for his money.”

Shrugging, “Yeah, I guess.”

“He also said you were a cocky bastard.”

I could only huff a single laugh. “That was true once.”

“But no more?”

“I’m not a lot of things anymore.” I sagged and turned away, filling the trash bag with whatever was in front of me. Being reminded of my old self made that slight reprieve in the

darkness disappear.

Anatole merely hummed and picked up some trash as well. “But, Yura is happy with you.” It was a statement more than a question.

“I hope so.”

A large hand squeezed my shoulder. “I know so.” Then he slung the trash bag over his shoulder. “This is enough for today. Let's go and tell Yura that Risha will make him piroskis.” He then wagged those shaggy eyebrows and grinned mischievously. “Now, *that* will make him very happy indeed!”

It took three days to finally get Nikolai's flat cleaned, and then another two days for the exterminators to fumigate it.

Today we were back, going through the last of Nikolai's personal items. I heaved a box filled with old letters and photos that were still salvageable onto the bed of Anatole's old truck, then arched my back to stretch out the knot that was forming there. A hand clapped on my back and I turned, Anatole setting down another box next to mine.

“Where's Yuré?” I asked him.

“Sleeping.” Anatole tilted his head, indicating Nikolai's flat. “I think maybe the place is clean enough that you two can stay here now, *da?*”

I nodded back and sighed. Yuri hadn't gotten a good night sleep since we'd arrived. Although I was grateful for Anatole and Larisa's hospitality, the sleeping arrangements weren't working. Yuri and I tried cramming in the small bed the first night, which despite being completely curled up together when we fell asleep turned awkward as I was tossing and turning all night with another nightmare. I awoke to find Yuri sleeping on the floor with a single blanket.

“I'm sorry, Yuré.”

“It's okay, Jeh.”

The days hadn't gotten easier for either of us.

The guilt gnawed at me seeing the circles under Yuri's eyes darken each morning. He had given up on trying to sleep in the bed and just went straight to the floor of our room when we crashed after another day of cleaning. I tried to swap places with him, but of course he wouldn't hear anything of it and I got tired of arguing with him over it each night. It wouldn't have mattered anyway. Nightmares plagued me. I'd wake several times a night with a jolt and a cry only to find Yuri kneeling next to the bed, head laying down on the mattress, eyes half-lidded with sleep, his hand in my hair as he murmured sleepy words in Russian to try to soothe me back to sleep.

We hadn't been able to visit Nikolai yet, but it looked like we'd finally be able to see him tomorrow. I wasn't sure if I should be relieved or not. Yuri seemed nervous about it as well, fretting to me repeatedly about how if he had known about the squalor his grandfather was living in he would have come home sooner. I did my best to reassure him that his grandfather was only trying to protect him.

"I don't need protecting. Fuck! He needs to stop treating me like a child!"

Of course, Yuri immediately regretted getting angry and wound up crying on my shoulder for a good thirty minutes after that outburst.

Anatole and I closed up the truck. The Semenov's had agreed to store Nikolai's things until Yuri had a chance to ask his grandfather what to do with them. Giving my shoulder another squeeze, Anatole got in the truck and drove off, and I headed back into the flat. I decided to finish clearing out the bathroom, taking a trash bag and emptying out the medicine cabinet of the few remaining items. Old tooth powder. Blackened toothbrush. A dried cake of shaving soap, next to a worn-down brush and a dull razor. The cabinet under the sink looked empty but I knelt down to double-check it just in case. It was a good thing I did because tucked in the back corner beneath the rusty pipes was a box, warped from water leaks. I pulled it out, then set it on the counter and opened it up.

My heart stopped.

The box was full of prescription bottles. A dozen at least.

Holy shit.

They were probably for things like heart medication or blood pressure.

And perhaps, pain killers.

Suddenly my heart started beating at a breakneck pace.

Though I couldn't tell by the Russian labels which ones would be for pain, I had an idea of what to look for and started opening bottles in a frenzy. Small pink pills, white round ones. Then, I found them. Oval. And *green*.

Shit.

I stood staring at my discovery and ran my hand down my face. Pain meds. I found fucking *pain meds*. I mean, I was pretty sure I found pain meds. But I had to be *really* sure. I took a picture for Google Translate.

It could only make sense of a few words, but yeah, it picked up the one word I needed to know: Оксикодон.

Oxycodone.

Fuck.

Shit.

Fuck.

And the bottle was *full*.

Yuri's grandfather had been in the nursing home for several months and probably had new meds by now, so he most likely didn't need these anymore. And if he hadn't used this prescription in all that time he probably didn't need it anyway. It may have expired. But I knew that didn't matter as much as doctors wanted you to think it did.

I thought of my own empty prescription bottle.

I'd been keeping my headaches relegated to a constant dull pain — *barely* — with vodka. Thankfully, Yuri was so busy with all the cleanup he was too distracted to see me taking breaks every hour to sneak drinks from my flask so I could keep working through the pain.

Yuri was still asleep in his room. Did he even know these were here? Probably not. He may have known that his grandfather was on pain killers after his hip replacement surgery, but he probably thought that Nikolai had taken any prescriptions with him, or at least that the nursing home staff would have taken care of such things.

He wouldn't even know they were missing. And if I could just have a bit of relief from the pain, I'd be able to support him better. He needed me right now, especially with all of this craziness with his grandfather. And then after we were done here, we could take that break Yuri promised me. Go away together. Maybe France? I'd been thinking about Paris. I had dual citizenship. I could see a doctor there to prescribe me more migraine medicine, then maybe Lou and everyone would get off my back.

Lou.

She would kill me if she knew. Or worse, she would never forgive me.

I set the bottle back in the box and sighed.

But *merde*, this wasn't like that situation at all. She didn't get it. I just needed something to help me, so that I could help Yuri. Yes. Just something to see me through. That's all this was. Nothing more. I could control myself. This was different.

This was different.

I took a deep breath and went to grab the bottle.

“Jesus.”

I jumped. Yuri was right behind me, staring down at the box of pills.

“Where did you find these?” He reached around me and picked up the entire box, looking down at the open bottles. Then he pulled out the bottle of green pills and read the label.

“Fuck.”

He turned and left, taking the box with him.

“What are you doing?” I tried not to sound panicked as I followed him into the kitchen.

Yuri set the box on the small table then started opening various drawers, digging around for something.

“Vlas would jump all over these if he knew that Deda had left them here. I’m surprised he didn’t raid this place already, though maybe the smell and the cockroaches kept him away.”

Yuri gave me a grim look as he pulled out a hammer from a drawer. Moving to the table he dumped out all the pills, careful to keep any from rolling away and escaping. Then he started smashing. “I can’t risk anyone else getting their hands on these. Not in this neighborhood.”

It took all of my willpower not to wrench that damn hammer out of Yuri’s hand, scoop up the few remaining pills from the table and yell, “*Stop! I need those!*”

Instead, I had to stand there helpless, watching Yuri destroy the only thing that would have *actually* helped me right now.

He finished crushing the last few pills then swept the dusty remains into a trash bag, poured cleaner over it and tied it off. He moved towards the door, but I yanked the bag out of his hand. He frowned, confused.

“I... I’ll take it out,” I said numbly.

Turning, I walked out of the flat, down the hall, down the stairs, until I found myself outside in the ally beside the building, staring blankly at the concrete wall in front of me, still gripping the trash bag. A cat screeched and I startled, turned and kicked a nearby rock in its direction.

“Fuck!” Then it all came out as I screamed and kicked the wall, over and over and over.
“Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!”

“Temper, temper,” a gravelly voice tsked.

Whipping around I saw Vlas a few meters down the alleyway, casually leaning against the wall, smoking a cigarette.

“Looks like you’re a little stressed out, pretty boy.”

He finished his last drag, then let the cigarette drop, slowly grinding it with his foot.

“You think you’re better than me, don’t you, *krasavchik*?” He narrowed his eyes on me and for the second time that day I could tell I was being assessed, not that I cared what he thought of me. I narrowed my eyes back and he grinned, “But you’re not like Yura. You have balls.”

“*You* have some balls, talking to me at all,” I growled. He started walking toward me. My hands fisted.

Vlas stopped and raised his hands. “Hey, I’m not here to pick a fight. But I see you, *krasavchik*. Yura doesn’t see it, but I do.”

“Get away from me.”

“You may be a *krasavchik*, but you’re a fucked up bastard. Fucked in the head. I can see it in your eyes.”

I pushed passed him to throw away the trash, but he grabbed my arm, grip firmly holding me in place.

Prodding the side of my temple with his middle finger he said, “Yeah, you’re real fucked in the head, aren’t you?” I swatted his hand away. “I could help with that, you know. Something to help you chill out. Or maybe something to pick you up?”

“I said, *get away*.”

I wrenched my arm out of his grip and stalked to the trash bin at the end of the alley, chucking the bag inside. On my way back I grabbed Vlas by his jacket and shoved him against the wall.

Lowly, I ground out, “Don’t talk to me again.”

“See? Balls.”

He pushed me away with more strength than he had shown before, and I realized I shouldn’t underestimate him. Then he laughed, that sinister laugh that had chills running down my spine.

“It’s okay, *krasavchik*. I can wait.”

Chapter End Notes

Trigger warning note: This story is about JJ's struggles with his feelings of guilt, depression, and anxiety. Part of that will be drugs. At first, JJ will think that they are his answer to his problems so they will be shown in a sort of 'positive' light from his point of view. However, this story will be how someone becomes a drug addict, but ultimately how they can also overcome it. Though this story may not be what others experience in this world, it is drawn from my own life experiences.

There is also a lot of explicit swearing in French and Russian. There are some pretty offensive words in the translations below, so again, be warned.

I did use more than Google Translate for the French and Russian. I looked at forums and such, but forgive me if anything is incorrect!

French translations:

merde = shit (can also mean fuck)

Je ne sais pas pourquoi, mon beau garçon, mais je t'aime aussi = I don't know why, my beautiful boy, but I love you too.

mon petit frère = my baby brother (my little brother)

soeur ainee = big sis (older sister)

mon chou = sweetie (literally "my cabbage")

Ne soyez pas un gamin gâté = Don't be a spoiled brat

Criss = Christ

Putain, es-tu sérieux? = in essence, "Are you fucking serious?"

Câlîce = this one's harder to translate. In Quebequois it means "chalice," as in the chalice used in religious ceremonies, but the word is used to be sacrilegious in this context

L'enfer je fais = in essence, "Like hell I do!"

Putain de merde = Fucking shit

Va te faire foutre = Kiss my ass

Russian translations:

Mamochka = Mama, used in a condescending way in this context

piz`da = cunt

suka, blyat' = in essence, fucking bitch

kot = in essence, male pimp (literally, cat)

mu-dak = shithead

blyat' = bitch or slut

xyecoc = cocksucker

da = yes

Blagodaryu vas, Dyadya = Thank you, Uncle

krasavchik = pretty boy

Your comments really do motivate me so much, so thank you always! ♥♥♥

Last Straw

Chapter Summary

Yuri leaned his head on my shoulder, his fingers threading through mine to hold my hand. His body slumped into mine and he let out a loud sigh. He was worn out, I could tell. Everything that had happened this week had taken its toll on him. I ran my thumb in circles over his knuckles, doing what I could to soothe him and hoped this would be a good visit for him. And me. Because Yuri may have been worn out, but I was just plain nervous.

Chapter Notes

So I've committed to finishing the first draft of this story for NaNoWriMo this year! And I have been writing it, though it's very, VERY rough so far. But this chapter was fairly close to done, so I wanted to edit it and get it posted! The next one is about halfway done, so I hope it will be up in the next few weeks. XD

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“We’re here to see Nikolai Plisetsky,” Yuri told the receptionist at the desk of the nursing home.

The young woman at the desk gasped a little when she looked up and saw Yuri, whispering “*Yuri Plisetsky*” in awe. The name made the other attendants milling around stop in their tracks to all turn and stare at us. Well, at Yuri.

Yuri smiled kindly down at her, “*Da*, I’m here to see my *ded*, Nikolai Plisetsky.”

The woman only continued to stare wide-eyed, fumbling a bit as she slid a clipboard over the counter, “Please sign-in here.”

As Yuri signed in, I looked around. If there was any place that was the opposite of Nikolai’s flat, it would be here. It was more of a private mansion than some ultra-modern facility, with wood-paneled walls, rich leather couches, and even a water feature in the lobby. It was probably the nicest nursing home in all of Moscow and I’m sure Yuri spent a pretty penny to move his grandfather here. Not that Yuri didn’t have the money. After all these years, all his wins, he probably did extremely well for himself between prize money and sponsors. But I knew from his apartment that Yuri lived pretty simply. Now I knew why.

After Yuri finished signing in he asked, “Who is the attending doctor?”

A stout little roly-polly man scurried forward and cleared his throat, “I am, sir.”

Sir? Wow. I couldn’t help the little chuckle that snuck out and had to hide it behind a cough. Yuri ignored me and looked seriously at the man, as if he knew he deserved every bit of respect that he was being given. I kicked myself for underestimating him.

Of course Yuri deserved that respect. He was a gold-medal Olympian and several-time World-champion. It was just that I’d never seen him take on that mantle with any seriousness before. As the “Russian Punk” he notoriously disdained any attention, flipping off photographers and swearing at the press.

“*Zdravstvujtye*,” Yuri shook the man’s hand. “What’s your name?”

“Dr. Litvin,” Yuri repeated. “It’s nice to meet you. Do you have a paper and pen?”

The doctor scrambled to get the items to Yuri. Yuri didn’t take them, however, and instead began dictating orders. Dr. Litvin scribbled the instructions quickly as Yuri drilled him on the care of his grandfather, nodding fervently to each request — including giving Nikolai a little dark chocolate with his tea before bed — repeating, “*Da, da.*”

When Yuri finished, he smiled at the staff. “Good. I know that you all will make sure that my *ded* is given whatever he needs to make his stay here as comfortable as possible.”

Yuri put his hand out for the notepad, taking his time to write, then signing the paper with a flourish before handing it back.

The doctor blinked at the notepad as he read it aloud in reverent tones:

*“Thank you Dr. Litvin,
I will be forever grateful for the extra care you and the wonderful staff will give my
deda. Please also extend my thanks to any of the other nurses and orderlies that help. I
hope to return to find him in excellent hands.
Sincerely,
Yuri Plisetsky.”*

“Like I said,” Yuri gave him a serious look. “I hope that whenever I come and visit, I will find that my grandfather is receiving the best care. Your hard work will not go unnoticed.”

The entire staff nodded furiously, none more so than Dr. Litvin. “Of course, sir.”

“Good.”

Yuri and I were directed to a room on the top floor and made our way to the elevators. Yuri pushed the button to the elevator casual as ever, but I couldn’t help but look at him, a little incredulous.

“What?” he finally asked.

“It’s just I’m not used to seeing you interacting with people like that. You realize you’re just as famous as Victor?”

Yuri elbowed me.

“That doctor will probably frame that note, you know,” I chuckled.

Yuri elbowed me again, but he smiled slightly. It was a brilliant move actually. That doctor would be sure to give Nikolai the best attention and care.

In the privacy of the elevator though, Yuri leaned his head on my shoulder, his fingers threading through mine to hold my hand. His body slumped into mine and he let out a loud sigh. He was worn out, I could tell. Everything that had happened this week had taken its toll on him. I ran my thumb in circles over his knuckles, doing what I could to soothe him and hoped this would be a good visit for him. And me. Because Yuri may have been worn out, but I was just plain nervous.

In all the years I’d seen Yuri and his coaches, I’d never met or even seen Nikolai, probably because of his failing health. Having my parents as my coaches was often a pain the ass. There was constant pressure to fulfill their legacy; yet at the same time, I’d always had family around and couldn’t imagine competing without them. Once again I marveled at my amazing boyfriend, at his strength.

The door to the elevator opened and I gave Yuri's hand a squeeze. He squeezed back.

“Ready?” he asked.

I nodded and did my best to hide how anxious I was, now that the moment finally arrived.

Nikolai’s room was one of only three at the end of the short hallway. We entered to find him sitting in the corner dozing in a comfortable-looking recliner, feet propped up, a newspaper spread out across his chest. A wheelchair was close by.

Yuri went over to tap him on the shoulder. I lingered in the doorway.

“*Deda?*”

Nikolai stirred, but it took a bit more prodding by Yuri before he blinked up slowly at him.

“Oh!” he startled once he saw who it was. “Yura?”

“*Dedusya!*” Yuri all but threw himself at the man, who quickly recovered and pulled Yuri in to a tight hug, Yuri crying in his arms for a few minutes. “Oh, *Dedusya!*”

Nikolai sighed and soothed him, but when he’d had enough he pushed Yuri back, frowning. “What are you doing here, Yurachka?”

“I came to visit you, you stubborn old man,” Yuri couldn’t help the smile under his teasing.

But Nikolai didn't seem to be in the mood for teasing. "You shouldn't be here," he chastised. "You can see I'm just fine." Then he busied himself with folding up his paper, continuing to grumble.

Yuri huffed, "Of course I should be here! I needed to make sure you are well. And it's a good thing too. I saw the flat."

Instead of looking ashamed, Nikolai looked straight back at Yuri.

"And I saw Vlas," Yuri challenged.

At that, Nikolai's eyes got wide for a moment before he turned away.

"*Deda*, what happened?" Yuri moved to kneel in front of Nikolai, who was purposely not looking at him, and grabbed both arms of the chair. "Why were you still living there? What happened to all the money I sent?"

"What I do with the money is my concern," Nikolai shot back, finally looking back at Yuri. The fire in his eyes surprised me. "You gave it to me, *da*? Then it is mine to do with as I please. It is no concern of yours."

"*Dedusya*," the pleading in Yuri's voice broke my heart. "I sent you that money so you would move out of there. Did Vlas steal it?"

"No! He does not know about the money."

"Then where did it go?"

"You don't need to worry about that. It went where it was needed. That's all you need to know."

Yuri stood up and rubbed his forehead in frustration. "Please, *Deda*. Let me help you. I couldn't help Mama, but I *can* help you."

"It is not your job to help me! You are my responsibility, until the day I die. Yakov promised to look after you. There is no need for you to come back and fuss over me."

"Well, *you* don't have to worry about *me*. I'm not a child anymore, *Deda*. I can take care of myself now. I'm successful in my career — I don't need you, or Yakov, or Victor to tell me what to do!" Yuri's face was red but he closed his eyes and took a few deep breaths. His control over his temper continued to surprise me.

Nikolai turned away again and caught sight of me in the doorway. His eyes narrowed. "Who are you?"

Yuri flushed, realizing I was there, witnessing that entire exchange, but then composed himself and came over to take my hand.

"This is also why I wanted to come visit, *Deda*," he pulled me to stand beside him in front of Nikolai. My palm was sweaty in Yuri's but he only gripped it harder, encouraging. "I wanted

to introduce you to my boyfriend, JJ Leroy.”

“Boyfriend? What about Otabek? I thought he was your boyfriend?” Nikolai eyed me warily.

“No, *Deda*, I told you,” I could see Yuri was trying not to roll his eyes. “We broke up last year. JJ was the one who was there for me, and he came to visit me all the way from Canada.”

“Canada? Why can’t you ever date a nice Russian boy?” Nikolai sighed, resigned.

“*Deda!*”

Nikolai still eyed me dubiously, “What is your name again? Jeh-Jah?”

Yuri didn’t hide his eye roll then. “JJ. It stands for Jean-Jacques, *Deda*.”

“You can just call me John, sir.” I offered him my hand. I knew Russians were funny about names. Being with Yuri this short time taught me a thing or two, so I’d come prepared. Jean, John. It was all the same really, just different languages.

Nikolai looked more satisfied. “Ah, *John*.”

“Yes, sir.”

We all were silent for a beat. I wasn’t sure what to do next.

“Well,” Nikolai said gruffly, “don’t just stand there! Sit, sit.”

There was only one other chair across the other side of the room, but once I sat down Nikolai’s frown deepened, “How can I talk to you if you’re so far away, boy?”

Gulping, “Sorry, sir.”

Yuri hid his smile in his arm as he helped me bring the chair closer and I shot him a glare, which only made him give a quiet snicker. This wasn’t going well, but Yuri was enjoying it far too much. I sat down, perching more on the edge to prevent from sinking back into the plush cushions, while Yuri made to sit on the arm next to me.

Nikolai however, shooed him away. “Yurachka, please go get me my tea. *Ivan* and I need to talk.”

“*Ivan?*” I looked at Yuri.

“He means you, Jeh,” Yuri patted my hand and leaned down to kiss my cheek. Then he whispered in my ear, “It’ll be okay,” before saying to his grandfather with a pointed look, “Be nice.”

“I am always nice,” Nikolai harrumphed.

And then it was just the two of us. I did my utmost to not squirm under Nikolai Plisetsky's stare. Though one eye was almost completely white with blindness, the other was like green glass and gave nothing away. His gaze wasn't the assessing gaze that Anatole had given me. Nor was it the dismissive gaze of Vlas. Instead, it was completely clear. Like crystal. The longer we sat there the more I found myself lost in his gaze. His good eye was exactly the color of Yuri's. Green. Flashing bright when he was fired up, but now, sitting here with me, cool and deep.

After several minutes Nikolai finally let out a sigh, and just like that, his expression opened up to me. His face was filled with wisdom. And regret. And a sadness that was absolutely heart-wrenching. Especially, since his eyes suddenly filled with tears. Nikolai Plisetsky sat in front of me, tears streaming down his face.

I froze for a moment, then scrambled around to look for a tissue or something. Nikolai waved me off, pulling a handkerchief from his shirt pocket.

"I am sorry you have to see an old man cry, but I can't let Yuri see me like this."

"Sir?" This turn of events took me completely by surprise. I expected to be grilled on my background, my career prospects, and perhaps even threatened a little, but this? I had no idea what was happening.

Nikolai bent forward and took my hand, holding it tightly, much stronger than I would have expected. Then quietly, so quietly, he said, "*Ivan*, why did Yurachka come back here?"

"It's like he said," I stammered. "He wanted to visit and make sure you were okay."

Nikolai shook his head several times, tears falling over our hands. "Yura should not have come back. I didn't work as hard as I did to get him and my Sonechka out of here, for him to come back now. Why, oh why did he go back to that ghastly place? Why did he have to run into Vlas?"

"It's okay," I tried to comfort him, patting his hand. "I made sure Vlas won't bother him."

His head snapped up and that fire was back. "You stay away from Vlas! You hear me boy! He's like poison. Even when you think you have him beat, he gets in your system. It took Yura's mama running to the other side of the world to escape him, and for me to get Yuri under Yakov's protection to keep them from Vlas' grasp."

I gasped. I couldn't help it. Hearing him mention Yuri's mother made me curious. Nikolai pulled back though, quickly wiping at his face again. "Nevermind, nevermind. Don't worry about the ramblings of this old man. Now, *Ivan*, tell me about your parents."

And just like that, Nikolai was grilling me as I expected about my parents, my skating, Yuri's and my rivalry, our new relationship. I gave him the typical story. But all the while, my mind was still reeling. What did Nikolai mean, Yuri's mother ran to the other side of the world? And what did Vlas *really* do to Yuri and his family?

Yuri finally came back in with a tray filled with dishes of coleslaw and mashed potatoes, as well as a pot of tea and of course, chocolates. His face scanned mine for clues about my conversation with his grandfather. I didn't want him to worry so I simply winked. He relaxed, placing the tray in front of Nikolai, who went straight for the chocolate.

"That is dessert," Yuri slapped Nikolai's hand away. "Potatoes and greens first."

Nikolai rolled his eyes and I couldn't help but laugh. It was the *exact* expression of Yuri. The two of them tried to hold their smiles back, but by the time Nikolai had made it to his first chocolate, we were all smiling and laughing. Nikolai told me story after story of Yuri as a young skater, how he knew how much talent he had, even back then. He conveniently left out anything that would reveal more clues about Yuri's past, but I did get to see some old photos that Nikolai had tucked away.

"Look at your little bum!" I gushed at a photo of Yuri as a toddler standing next to a bubble bath, a bright smile on his face. Nikolai's eyes sparkled with mischief.

"Give me that!" Yuri tried to wrangle the photo away, but I wouldn't let him.

"Behave, Yura," Nikolai tsked as he took the photo back from me, gingerly placing it back in his album.

The morning grew to afternoon and soon Nikolai needed some rest.

"We'll visit you again tomorrow, *Deda*," Yuri said.

Nikolai, who had begun dozing, shot back awake. "No, Yurachka. You have visited me enough. You see I am well. And I see you are with a good man. That is enough. Go back to *Piter*. Do not stay here any longer."

"But *Dedusya*," the hurt in Yuri's eyes in being dismissed couldn't be hidden.

Nikolai stood his ground, however. "I said no, Yura! Go home with *Ivan*." He settled back in his chair and closed his eyes. "Now, get me my blanket. I need to rest."

Yuri got up and I joined him. After tucking Nikolai in, Yuri bent down to kiss his grandfather, sniffing back his tears. "*Ya lyublyu vas, Deda*. I'll call you as soon as we're back."

"Yes, yes. You do that. Now, no more tears for me, my Yura. You said it yourself — you are a man now and have a good future ahead of you." Then before he fell asleep Nikolai pulled Yuri closer and, looking at him with deadly seriousness, told him, "It's time for you to let me go, Yurachka. Let the past go and don't look back."

Yuri was melancholy the entire way back to the flat. Once we were through the door, he immediately went to the couch. I followed and put my arm around him, but he swung his legs up and laid his head in my lap. I thought of what Nikolai had said about this place. About his need to get Yuri out of this ghetto. I agreed with that fully. Yuri didn't belong here anymore. So far, Vlas had left us alone, but I didn't want to chance it.

“I think it’s time we head back to Saint Petersburg like your grandfather said,” I told him.

Yuri gripped my legs. “No, please Jeh. Not yet.”

“But we’re done cleaning up here. And your grandfather is doing well in the home. What else is there?”

“I know,” he said quietly. “You’re right. It’s just…”

“What is it?”

He sighed. “Once we go back, Victor will be on me to train even more to make up for being gone. Which means you’ll be going back to Montreal to train, too. I’m just not ready to let you go back yet.”

“*Mon ange*,” I whispered, caressing his hair.

I completely understood. I cringed at the thought of going back. Especially the thought of being away from Yuri. But I knew I needed to leave, and soon. The cloud in my chest laughed wickedly at the prospect and I internally shuddered. Yes we were dating, and I knew we were serious, but he’d done the long-distance relationship thing before. I hadn’t, and with everything looming back home, I didn’t know how I would survive being so far away from him.

Brushing his hair back, I cupped his cheek and he turned to look up at me, his hand resting on my face in turn. We kissed, soft, sweet, lingering kisses. My whole body ached kissing him.

“I told Victor two weeks,” he smiled, “and damn it, we’re taking them. We still have a week left. Where do you want to go?”

“As long as I’m with you, I don’t care.”

He beamed at me and pulled me down for more kisses, which grew heated, his tongue teasing my mouth. Before those kisses could turn into anything more though, Yuri’s phone buzzed in his back pocket. Reluctantly, I let him go.

He groaned, but then his expression turned mischievous. “Get my phone for me, baby?” He shifted, presenting me with his gorgeous backside.

“Is this just a ploy to get me to grab your ass?” I teased.

He waggled his eyebrows and I could only laugh. Giving his butt a pinch, I pulled out his phone. Unfortunately, the name on the screen brought the taste of bile to my mouth. *Logan*. I suddenly felt numb as handed it over to him.

After reading the text, Yuri sat up. “Jeh? Haven’t you called back Logan yet? He keeps bugging me about it.”

“No,” I said sharply, shifting away from him. “If you haven’t noticed, I’ve been busy.”

Yuri immediately chafed. “No need to be a dick about it.”

“I’m not being a dick.” Yeah, right. I was totally being a dick. “I just don’t need him bothering you about my problems.”

I went to the kitchen, suddenly needing a cup of coffee. Actually, I needed a drink, but with Yuri there, I just had to busy myself with anything available. Yuri came over as I started pulling out the coffee grounds and fiddling with the coffee maker. He watched me for a moment, but then put his hand on my arm to stop my movements.

“Hey, what’s wrong?”

“Nothing.” Flipping on the faucet I started filling up the pot until it was almost full.

“You’re a bad liar.”

I merely gave him a side glance. This wasn’t improving my mood.

“Listen,” he said. “I know you’ve been busy helping me with *Deda*, but I don’t want that to get in the way of taking care of things with the trial. I know how important it is for you to get that all squared away. You need to make sure that woman never bothers you again.”

I shoved the pot in the coffee maker — harshly — water spilling out on the counter as it sloshed around. Swearing under my breath, I yanked open several drawers until I found a towel.

“Jeh,” Yuri grabbed my arm again, forcing me to look at him. “What’s going on with you, really?”

“I told you. *Nothing*.”

He stood there, frustration emanating off him. I kept my eyes on the coffee pot. I knew he was looking at me, waiting for me to say something. I didn’t.

“Okay. Fine. Don’t tell me. I have to get ready for my Skype lesson with the kids anyway.” He finally turned away with a huff. “But I texted Logan that you’d call him back today.”

Great. I finished with the coffee while Yuri got ready, which was filled with just as many grumblings and noisy bangs as my coffee-making had been. I heard a couple of shoes hit the wall in the bedroom as he changed, then the door wrenching open and him stomping down the hall, followed by the loud drag of the table and chairs in the small dining area, as he moved the furniture around to make room for dancing.

I ignored him, leaving the kitchen and purposely *not* stomping down the hall — though I may still have closed the bedroom door with a little more force than necessary.

Flopping back on Yuri’s bed, I knew I needed to call that damn detective. I couldn’t put it off anymore. I glared at my phone for a while, like it was the phone’s fault that the detective kept calling and texting. Pulling up the name Detective Martel had me glowering, but I hit dial. Best to rip off the band-aid.

“Detective Martel speaking,” came the cheery voice.

“Um, hi Detective. It’s JJ Leroy.”

“JJ, hello! You’re a hard man to get a hold of.” He didn’t sound exasperated or mad that I had taken so long to return his calls. He sounded quite friendly, and that for some reason made me more irate. “Thank you for calling me back.”

“Sure.” Whatever.

“I want to let you know that we have the trial for Ms. Grenier tentatively scheduled for early December. Yuri tells me that may conflict with the Grand Prix Final. But don't worry — we will work with the judge on the trial date once your competition is set, since this is part of your career and cannot be moved.”

“Okay, sounds good.” This was assuming I made the final. I always did, of course. But this year, I was already dreading the upcoming season.

“There may be a deposition beforehand. Yuri let me know when your assignments will be announced, so we can work around those dates as well.”

The fact that the detective knew all about the competition from Yuri had me squirming. It was like this dude was rubbing it in how close he and Yuri were. Why was Yuri still talking with him? I knew the answer. Because I was a fucking mess, that’s why. Even though I tried my best to be there for Yuri, the fact that he was still sharing things with his guy had my blood boiling. I still wasn’t enough for him.

“Okay,” I repeated, ready to finish up. Was this the reason he kept pestering me? I almost sighed in relief. “Thanks for letting me know. Unless there’s anything else, I really have to go.”

“Actually...” There was an uncomfortable silence.

Well, fuck. I knew it couldn’t be that simple.

“Detective? *Is* that all?” I just wanted him to spit it out already.

“Well, I would like you to review the incidents that I have documented. I want to make sure I have every incident against Ms. Grenier. Even ones that you may think may be insignificant.”

“Sure, sure, fine. I’ll take a look. Just email them to me.”

Like hell I wanted to review them. But something was off. I knew this was not what he was holding back. He kept deflecting and it was pissing me off.

“Detective, what is it?” I couldn’t keep the exasperation out of my voice.

“Please JJ, call me Logan.”

“Detective?” I pressed.

“Well,” he cleared his throat, hesitating. “It seems that although we have detained Ms. Grenier on a criminal charge, she was able to make bail and will be released this week.”

“*What?*”

“Please, I don’t want you to worry. Her passport has been revoked, so she can’t leave the country.”

That won’t stop her from being online or calling though.

“And there’s one more thing,” he said quietly.

“What *now?*”

“Ms. Grenier is suing you for defamation. She’s claiming you slept with her and now you are trying to sully her reputation.”

“WHAT?!” I shouted.

“I’m sorry, JJ. Do you have a lawyer? I’d recommend you retain one as soon as you can and we will, of course, provide access to all of our reports.”

“This is fucking ridiculous!”

“I agree. I will help you in whatever way I can.”

This was not happening. I chucked the phone across the room, yet I could still hear the detective’s voice in the distance. I wanted to scream, punch something. But I couldn’t panic. Yuri was right out in the front room teaching his lesson to the kids.

But what the hell? Defamation? What the fuck for? Why the hell wouldn’t that woman just leave me alone? What the hell did I ever do to her? I never so much as touched her, or even took a selfie with her, yet for some reason, I became her personal obsession.

I felt like I was going to puke. Staggering down the hall to the kitchen, I found myself getting a cup of coffee. Mug in hand, I pulled out the pot. Come on Jean-Jacques. Just focus on pouring a damn cup of coffee.

Yuri didn’t notice me. He was talking to his laptop propped up on the top of the kitchen table, arms stretched overhead.

The mug, now overly-full, slipped from my shaking hand and smashed on the floor. The sound of glass rang all around me. Metal screeching. The room grew fuzzy and started to swirl. I tried to get my bearings, but all I could see were shards of metal scattered all over my room. Shreds of ribbon. Then my dark cloud started to descend, but I couldn’t let it swallow me up anymore. I wouldn’t. I fucking *wouldn’t*.

Screaming against it, I swept my arm over whatever was on the counter. Several dishes, the coffee maker, the full pot of hot liquid, all flew across the room, smashing against the opposite wall.

The silence was suddenly thick behind me. I glanced over my shoulder and saw Yuri staring at me, wide-eyed and still. In the background, I could see Phichit and the kids on the computer screen. Fuck. I tried to breathe, but the room felt smaller and smaller the longer the silence went on.

In the next moment, I was grabbing my coat and rushing out of the flat, ignoring Yuri's calls after me. It was several blocks before I slowed down. Clouds were gathering overhead, threatening a thunderstorm. The air crackled with electricity that made the hair on my arms stand on end. My entire body felt like it was pulsing, heart still pounding from my call with the detective. I needed to calm the fuck down. I needed a drink. God, I so needed a drink. And *now*.

Though I had no idea where I was, I didn't care and wandered for a bit, not paying much attention to where I was going. Luckily this was Russia and I soon found myself outside a small bar. Since it was still the late afternoon I wasn't sure if it would be open. But then again, Russia.

I landed on a seat at the far corner of the bar.

"Vodka?" the bartender asked.

I was so fucking sick of vodka.

Sighing, "Whiskey?"

The bartender looked perplexed. *Merde*. I went for my phone to try Google Translate, but my pocket was empty. I couldn't remember for the life of me what I did with my phone. Great. Rubbing my temples I squeezed my eyes shut and tried to think of another way to ask.

"*Visky*?" he suggested.

"*Da! Visky*," I echoed. Thank God he seemed to figure it out.

But the bartender shook his head. "*Nyet*. No *visky*." Then he tried again, pointing to a top-shelf bottle, "Vodka. Nice, good vodka?"

Why couldn't I catch a break? My frustration was obvious as I ran my hands through my hair, shaking my head. "Fuck," I muttered.

A woman, the only other patron in the place and sitting a few seats down from me, laughed. It wasn't a nice sound though. It sounded hollow. It reminded me of Yuri's stepdad. She eyed me skeptically, "American?"

"Canadian."

"I thought you might be American. Fancy shoes. Good coat." She waved her hand up and down and smirked. "Our vodka's not good enough for you?"

Scoffing, I found myself echoing her hollow laugh. "Just need something stronger."

“Stronger than vodka?” She looked incredulous.

Honestly, I had no idea if whiskey was stronger than vodka. But it burned more. I needed that burn.

“I don’t know,” I shrugged. “It’s just... been a bad day.”

She smiled. A smile full of pity. It made me bristle. How could I deserve *her* pity? She looked like she belonged here, in this dark hovel in a crumbling corner of this even darker part of the city. She looked old — though not so much *old*. She actually looked close to my age. But she looked worn. Tired. Stretched out.

“Senya,” she called to the bartender, shaking her glass at him, “*Razve ty ne vidish', chto on stradayet? Kak khoroshiy Russkiy.*”

The bartender huffed and looked extremely put out, but he reached down under the bar and pulled out a bottle and poured me a glass.

“*Skotch*,” the woman said to me, clearly satisfied with herself for coming to my aid.

Grabbing my wallet I threw way too much money on the counter, indicating to the man he should pour drinks for the woman and himself.

“*Blagodaryu vas*,” I told the woman.

“To Canadians,” she raised her glass. “To Canadians who suffer like Russians.”

I gave a short laugh. Russia was a dark place, that was for fucking sure. That dark cloud residing in my chest seemed to take grim satisfaction that I found a place like this to hide away in.

The three of us downed our drinks quickly. I indicated a refill for us and downed the second drink just as fast. The woman nodded with approval. Even the bartender seemed impressed. Closing my eyes as the alcohol took its effect, I slowly started to feel mellower. I indicated a third glass, throwing more money on the table. Taking another large sip, the woman looked at me and smiled again.

“Do you need something stronger, Mr. Canadian?”

I wish. “I think this is as strong as I can get here.”

“No,” she got up and sat right next to me. “I mean something *else*.”

My ears perked up. “What do you mean?”

Lowering her voice, she leaned in. “There are pills that could help.”

Of course. In a hole in the wall like this, talking with a woman like this, getting my hand on pills would be easy. I knew I should shut her down. But I didn’t.

“You know a guy,” I stated. I didn’t even have to ask. A woman like this always had a guy.

“I’ll text him. Tell him to bring the good ones.” She looked me over once again. Yeah, I was too obviously well off. I’m sure I’d be milked for as much as I had. And I could fucking care less.

“Fine. You know I’ll pay. But tell him I need a bottle.”

Her eyes widened at that and she snorted a laugh. “Canadians. Americans. I wish I was as rich as you.” But she fired off the text. Her phone buzzed almost immediately. “Just wait here. He’ll find you.”

Downing the last of her drink she slipped off the barstool, “*Dasvidaniya*, Mr. Canadian.” And with that, she stumbled her way out the door.

Alone with the bartender, I sat and waited in silence, watching the TV behind him, not having any clue what was going on. The bartender leaned back against the bar to watch as well.

After a while, a few more people came in, waving at the TV and setting in further down the bar. The bartender changed the channel to what looked like a rugby match. I watched with them until well into the second half, getting angrier as time wore on. Where the hell was this “guy?” I knew I was a foreigner here, but come on. I’m sure whatever low-level dealer the woman had texted needed my money just as much as I needed his drugs.

Every passing minute made me more agitated. I shouldn’t be doing this. I should get up and leave now. I thought of Lou, of Maman and Papa, and of— I couldn’t even let myself think his name, the guilt weighing me down. Instead, I thought of Yuri, of our fight earlier. Which led me to thinking about the detective, and the trial, and then of that woman spreading lies. My chest squeezed, hard and tight. My breaths started to shallow. Shit. I couldn’t panic here. Rubbing my chest, I took another drink then started counting bottles on the bar back. One. Two. My stomach was in knots and I was feeling dizzy. Three. Four.

Argh! Where the fuck was this douchebag?

The loud bang of the door startled me out of my counting. Fucking *finally*. I didn’t turn around though, not wanting to be completely obvious to my desperation.

The stool next to me slid out. Way to make this whole thing less conspicuous, dude. Though this was a skeezy enough place, people probably didn’t care. The bartender definitely didn’t, a drink already poured and set down before the man sat down. I turned then — and just about shit my pants.

“*Krasavchik!*”

Fuck, fuck, fuck! Of course, that woman’s “guy” was Vlas. Why did it have to be him? Weren’t there any other lowlifes around to do shitty street deals like this?

Vlas for his part seemed wickedly delighted to find me here. “I knew I’d eventually see you again.” He laughed and my stomach roiled some more.

“Fuck,” I muttered and moved to get up, but Vlas flung an arm over my shoulders and pushed me back down.

“I heard you needed a little something,” he continued. “If I knew it was you I would have brought something even better than these.” He pulled a bottle out of his pocket and shook it, like the rattle of a snake. The sound transfixed me and I knew I was trapped.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I struggled to get out of his hold, but he only tightened his grip.

“You don’t have to play coy with me, *krasavchik*. We both know what a hard-on you have for these.”

He set the bottle right in front of me. I shoved it away. That only made him laugh harder. “You’re a tough customer, *svoloch*!” Pulling away, he opened the bottle. “When I first heard that some rich *chuzhoy* was here, needing desperately to get high, I was thought to myself, ‘This is a lucky night for me.’ But then to find it’s you? Ha!”

I was *not* some rich boy desperately needing to get high. I just needed to relieve this pressure, this panic, that was crushing me every waking moment.

Shaking the bottle lightly into his palm, one pill fell out. He placed it next to my drink.

“Here *krasavchik*. This one’s on me. We are practically family, you know.” Then he pulled me back in, his breath hot and heavy in my ear. “And I never forget my family, no matter how far away they are.”

I shivered.

“Go on. You look like you’ve had a rough day.”

I stared at the pill. An oval green pill, just like the ones I had lost when Yuri destroyed all of Nikolai’s medication. It was so innocent looking. And I wanted it. God how I wanted it. I wanted to rip Vlas’ jacket open and grab the whole damn bottle. But this was fucking *Vlas*. The man who had most likely made Yuri’s young life a living hell. At least that what I assumed, and from Nikolai’s comments this morning, I probably wasn’t far off. There had to be someone else in this shithole part of town that could get me something.

I knew that was impossible as soon as the thought ran through my mind. Vlas probably had this whole place under his thumb, with how openly he was acting.

There had to be another way. There *had* to.

But there wasn’t. Not anymore.

I took my drink and downed the rest of it in one go, then shoved Vlas’ arm off. He finally let me go. Standing, I grabbed the pill, not saying a word. Vlas’ eyes lit up and he grinned, sinister and bright.

Several blocks away I found myself at another bar, settling for the shit vodka they had until I was too numb to care.

Chapter End Notes

Russian Translations (these are from my research on forums, but also some from Google Translate, so they may be incorrect):

Da = Yes / *Nyet* = No

Ded/Deda = Grandfather

Dedusya = Yuri's name for his grandfather

Zdravstvujtye = Hello

Piter = Short for Saint Petersburg

Ya lyublyu vas = I love you

Visky = Whiskey

Skotch = Skotch

Razve ty ne vidish', chto on stradayet? Kak khoroshiy Russkiy. = Can't you see he is suffering? Like a good Russian.

Blagodaryu vas = Thank you

Dasvidaniya = Farewell

Krasavchik = Pretty boy (derogatory)

Svoloch' = You bastard

Chuzhoy = Alien/Foreigner (I was looking for something derogatory, but I don't know if this is)

Note: Ivan (pronounced ee-van) is a Russian nickname for John; Sonechka is the nickname Nikolai has for his daughter, Sofiya. (That is the name I came up for Yuri's mom.)

And believe me when I say, ANY kudos and comments pretty much make me cry with happiness right now. It's no joke when writers ask for them at the end of chapters. It's pretty much my life blood for this story!

Relief

Chapter Summary

Letting my head press against the door, I remembered the night before we came to Moscow and my promise to him, whispered in the dark, that I wouldn't fail him again. But I had. I failed him, and his hurt was thick, leaking through the door, suffocating me in the narrow hallway. I couldn't let things go on like this. Not anymore.

Chapter Notes

A little Thanksgiving present! (For my international readers, you can benefit from my American Holiday Spirit!!) :D

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When I dragged my way slowly up the stairs and back to the flat it was well after midnight. I was pretty fucking drunk, though I made it back somehow. I got turned around for a bit — and I threw up a couple of times along the way — but here I was, slinking past Vlas' door, praying he couldn't hear me. I didn't take the pill. Instead, I'd pocketed it and tried to just forget about it. Yet no matter how much I drank it screamed like a fire alarm blaring inside my coat, shrill and unrelenting.

God, I hoped Yuri was in bed. Sure enough, though, he wasn't. When I opened the door he was right there sitting on the couch, lit only by a single light on the side table and staring listlessly at his phone, eyes red and puffy. He startled when I entered and dropped his phone. Then he lept off the sofa and threw his arms around me, practically bowling me over.

“Jeh!”

Of all the things I thought he would do, embracing me like this was not one of them. Why wasn't he yelling like Izzy used to do? Or even, like *he* used to do? I really didn't understand this new Yuri I'd been seeing more and more of lately, but my head hurt too much to think about it right now.

“Oh my God!” he sobbed as held me tightly. “You're okay!”

He was shaking as he clung to me, so I brought my arms clumsily around him to pat at his back, swaying a little.

“M’sorry,” I managed to slur out.

“No, I’m sorry, baby” he pulled me tighter, “I’m so sorry.”

Why the fuck was he sorry? I’m the one that destroyed the place then ran out and got smashed, returning in the middle of the night without a word as to where I was.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” he kept repeating.

“For what?” I couldn’t keep the annoyance out of my voice and shrugged out of his hold, stumbling my way to the sofa, almost falling over as I tried to sit down.

Yuri’s arms came around me to help, then he pushed me to lay down, taking off one of my shoes before lifting my leg to rest it on the cushions. “Logan called me and told me everything. I’m so sorry.”

Merde, why did he have to bring this up now, when I was so wasted?

He kept his eyes focused on removing my other shoe and went on, “And I’m sorry for this shitstorm. For you having to deal with Deda’s literal shit, and Vlas—”

“Fucking stop.” The last thing I wanted to hear about was Vlas. I didn’t even know why he was talking about this. Even though everything was hazy, I wasn’t sure if I was drunk enough to handle this. Running a hand over my face I tried to concentrate, my words slow to form and even slower coming out as I muttered, “Why are you apologizing? This isn’t your fault.”

He sniffed and looked away, my foot in his lap, his hand absentmindedly playing with the hem of my jeans. “But I haven’t been there for you like I should be. I’ve been leaning on you too much when you’ve been strug—”

“*Don’t*. Don’t say I’m struggling,” I ground out.

“I’m sorry,” he said again, then quieter, “I was so worried. You just ran out and I tried to call you, but you left your phone here and I had no idea where you were.”

He was right. It was a shitty thing for me to do, but I just couldn’t see straight after that damn phone call. I closed my eyes and tried again to focus. “I know, I know. I’m sorry, Yuré. I fucked up.”

“Please,” he whispered. “I’m here for you, baby. You don’t have to deal with this alone. Please, tell me what’s going on.”

Despite how drunk I was, my cloud permeated the entire room, especially with Yuri here quietly crying, begging me like this. But how could I tell him that I could barely breathe every time I had to deal with that damn trial? How could I tell him that when he left Montreal I felt like a piece of my soul left with him, how I needed to be near him so desperately, yet I could tell how much I kept disappointing him over and over?

“I’m just... It’s just...” I looked over at him. Those green eyes turned to look at me, piercing, pleading, filled with tears. I had to close my eyes. I couldn’t stand seeing him cry over me

like this anymore. Was he regretting being with me, now that he was seeing more and more what it really meant to be in a relationship with me? It was too crushing. Exhaling, I shook my head, "I'm so drunk, Yuré, I just... I can't talk about this now."

Yuri sighed, resigned, and got up, placing my leg back down on the couch. Water rushed distantly in the background. Then a glass was in front of my face, a couple of aspirin cupped in Yuri's hand. "Here."

I couldn't even sit up. I was exhausted and I just wanted to sleep. Slip into oblivion. Yuri's arms came around me again, bringing me to a semi-sitting position. Mostly, it was me slumped against him. After he helped me take the aspirin and drink down the water, he peeled me out of my coat, setting it over the opposite arm of the sofa. I felt the pull of what was inside my left breast pocket. Then Yuri laid me back down and pressed a soft kiss on my forehead. And that was the last thing I recalled before I passed out.

It was still dark when I woke a few hours later, head pounding, and immediately started to retch. Leaning over, my vomit hit a trash can conveniently placed right next to the sofa. After I finished, I laid back down, exhausted, my mouth burning with the acidic aftertaste of puke. A glass of water and a bottle of aspirin were thoughtfully set next to the trash can on the floor. I rinsed my mouth out and took the aspirin, though I knew it would barely help. What would help was merely feet away, still in my coat pocket, draped at my feet over the arm of the couch.

However, now that relief was within my reach, I hesitated. Taking that pill would give me what I needed, yet it was tainted because of Vlas. And I wanted nothing more than to take Yuri and run as far away from that man and this place as I could.

My chest ached with that old familiar pain and I pressed my palm hard against it. I didn't want to think anymore. Instead, I tried to put the last twenty-four hours from my mind. Staring at the ceiling I counted breaths until I luckily fell back into nothingness.

The next time I awoke, light was just starting to warm the edges of the horizon. Though I felt physically better, my chest still ached and I groaned to myself as I remembered staggering in drunk off my ass last night, then having to listen to Yuri's tearful pleas to get me to talk to him. Truth was, I didn't want to talk to him. I didn't want to have to tell him that his boyfriend was just a fucked-up loser that couldn't get his shit together. That was the last thing I wanted Yuri or anyone to know.

Pushing off the blanket that Yuri had obviously put on me last night, I stretched, then folded it up. I had to make this up to Yuri. What had happened yesterday couldn't happen again.

The flat was quiet, but there was still an unmistakable tension in the air. Making my way to the bedroom as quietly as I could, I hesitated outside the bedroom when I heard Yuri's muffled voice. He must be on the phone again. Carefully, I leaned in and pressed my ear against the door, straining to hear.

“I don’t know what to do, Beka, I just don’t know. Things have been so stressful, I think I’ve just made things worse for him. I want to be there for him...”

Fuck. Now Yuri was talking to Otabek about our problems? How many people knew how much I’d been fucking things up?

Softly, he went on, “I know, you’re right... Okay... I’ll call you later.”

Quieter, almost so quiet I might have missed it if I wasn’t holding my breath, I heard Yuri crying for a few minutes before his sobs ended. Then all was silent. It seemed he had cried himself back to sleep.

How did it get to this, with Yuri turning to others instead of me for comfort? Was I so deficient that I couldn’t even be there for my own boyfriend?

Letting my head press against the door, I remembered the night before we came to Moscow and my promise to him, whispered in the dark, that I wouldn’t fail him again. But I *had*. I failed him, and his hurt was thick, leaking through the door, suffocating me in the narrow hallway. I couldn’t let things go on like this. Not anymore.

Turning on my heel I strode into the living room, right over to my jacket, and took out the little green pill. Without pausing to think, I popped it in my mouth and with a swig of water from the glass still on the floor swallowed it down.

While I waited for the pill to kick in I decided to wash off yesterday — the puke and the smell of dingy bars. Throwing my clothes in a bag to take to the laundromat, I went and took a quick shower. Afterward, not wanting to wake Yuri, I just wrapped a towel around my waist and headed to the kitchen. The least I could do was to make him breakfast. Of course, crepes were the easiest thing and they were my specialty after all. Perhaps a Leroy family-style breakfast in bed would help to smooth things over with him and be a good way to apologize for last night.

And then I felt it. Halfway through making crepes. A warm glow suffusing my chest, banishing my dark cloud in an instant. One moment it was there, the next it was completely gone as if it never existed at all. The shock of it practically knocked me over and I had to grip the counter for support. I was expecting to feel better, but I hadn’t expected to feel like *this*.

For the first time in months, I finally felt light. Free. My chest relaxed, the tension in my muscles simply melting away. I’d almost forgotten what it felt like to feel alive. And *happy*. Did I ever feel like this before? Before all the shit happened last year? Or even back when I was young and arrogant and naive to the troubles the world held? I couldn’t remember *ever* feeling like this. Standing over the stack of crepes I burst into tears, completely overwhelmed with how fucking amazing I felt.

It was several minutes before I was able to get more in control of myself. Wiping my eyes and taking a few deep breaths, I finished my preparations. When I was stacking the tray full of crepes, eggs over easy just how Yuri liked them, hot tea and jam, I found that I was singing to myself. Wow. I used to do that all the time, but I hadn’t even thought about singing since I wrote Yuri his song. Now, it came out naturally.

Taking the tray, I kept humming as I went back to the bedroom. When I entered, Yuri was already awake, dressed in his skinny white jeans, just pulling on his shirt. He turned and his eyes grew wider as they ran over me as I stood there in the doorway. I could only grin back at him like an idiot in love.

Though his face completely flushed with color, he scowled and turned away. “Are you seriously bringing me breakfast dressed only in a towel?”

I looked down. I’d completely forgotten that I hadn’t been able to get dressed yet. I merely shrugged with a chuckle, “Looks like it.”

“Hmph,” was all he said before grabbing his hoodie from the floor and yanking it over his head, pulling his hair out of the collar to fall down against his back. Giving me a cool look, he strode past me out of the room. “I’m not hungry.”

Okay, so he had gone from worried to mad. I knew why and I knew I deserved it. At the same time, it didn’t phase me, not like it had before. I still felt too damn wonderful for it to get me down. Besides, I was much more used to mad Yuri. I could deal with that. Following after, I found him standing by the kitchen table, scowling down at his laptop as it laid innocently on the table. Setting the breakfast tray down on the counter I went over to him. He only crossed his arms and turned away from me.

Well, best to get this over with. Ever so lightly, I ran a finger across his shoulder. “*Mon ange*,” I said softly. “I’m sorry.”

He remained rigid as my finger brushed back and forth, but he didn’t flinch away either, so I bent closer. “Can you forgive me, *mon amour*?”

Still no movement. Taking a step forward, I let my hand start to trail down his arm until it reached his waist. Slowly, I wrapped my hand around him and drew nearer. We were a breath apart, chest to back, but I could tell he was purposely keeping himself from leaning back into me.

“*Je suis vraiment désolé, mon ange*,” I murmured in Yuri’s ear. He shifted back slightly, so I continued, “*Je ne voulais pas te mettre en colère*.”

He exhaled and his shoulders relaxed even more, though he kept himself from touching me, barely. His stubbornness only made me smile, so I whispered into his ear. “Talk to me, Yuré.”

At that, however, he stiffened back up again. “Why should I? You don’t talk to me.”

Sighing, I said, “I was pretty drunk last night. I’m sorry you had to deal with me like that.”

“You think I’m mad because you got drunk?” he whipped around and gave me an actual shove. It took me aback. But the fury in his eyes was unmistakable. “You were gone for ten hours, Jeh! Ten hours! And I had no idea if you were okay, or hurt, or anything!”

I reached out and took his hand. “Yuré, *mon ange*—”

“No!” He yanked his hand out of mine. “Don’t *‘mon ange’* me! You don’t want me to say you’re struggling? Well, you can’t just make breakfast and spew French and expect me to be okay!”

This was not going as I’d hoped — I couldn’t understand why Yuri kept persisting on being so angry. Trying desperately turn things around, I tried again. “I’m really sorry, alright? I don’t know what else to say Yuré.”

“You can tell me what’s going on! Fuck, Jeh! I just...” he strode into the kitchen and slapped his hand down on the counter. It was a long moment before he continued, quieter, “If you don’t tell me what’s going on, how can I help you?”

Now *I* bristled. “I don’t need you to help me.”

It rankled me still, the fact that Yuri thought I was so weak and helpless that I couldn’t help myself. But I could. Especially now, with the medication running in me, I finally felt like my old self again and I didn’t need to be fussed over anymore. I could finally get back to being King JJ. Not this shell of a boyfriend that I’d been this past month. No, I wanted to show Yuri what being my boyfriend would *actually* be like. That I was the type of boyfriend who would take him out, spoil him. Sweep him off his goddamn feet.

So what the hell was happening here? Why was I getting upset? I had been feeling so wonderful, but this fight, it didn’t fit with that feeling. I needed to get my mojo back. Shaking my head, I tried to dislodge my irritation. I needed to break through this wall that had started to grow between us. It didn’t belong. After everything I’d struggled with, I couldn’t let it separate me from Yuri. Not now. Not when I actually felt good after all this time.

Testing the waters, I moved behind him again and traced a finger down his spine. I could feel him react to my touch. Slowly, I slipped my hands around his waist again. “Listen, you don’t have to worry about me anymore, okay?”

“How can I not worry?” he said, though his voice had lost some of its hostility. “Where the fuck were you?”

“Nowhere,” I automatically replied.

He stiffened again, but before he could pull away I tightened my arms around him, tucking my chin over his shoulder. “I mean, I just went to a bar. It was nowhere special. I was upset about what the detective told me and over-reacted. That’s all, Yuré, I swear.”

He stood there, wrapped in my arms but I could tell he was reluctant to let go of his anger. I held my breath and tightened my arms around him even more. I wouldn’t let him pull away. Physically at least. I could only hope my words were enough to bring him from the edge where I could feel him hovering, struggling with some internal battle. My heart almost stopped as I waited. Waited for him to forgive me.

But then he exhaled and finally relaxed into my arms. I breathed a sigh of relief. We stood there for a few quiet moments while my heart resumed beating and I nuzzled my face into his

shoulder. Then I moved my mouth to the crook of his neck and gave him a few soft kisses. I felt a spark as soon as my lips touched his skin. I knew Yuri felt it too, his breath hitching.

“You can’t just run out like that,” he said, voice shaky, though he was still trying to sound firm.

Threading my fingers in his hair I gently tilted his head to the side, exposing his neck and started nibbling. Between kisses, I murmured, “I know, you’re right. I’m sorry I worried you. It won’t happen again. I promise.”

He moaned once as I sucked on a particular spot behind his ear. “Fuck...” His breaths were coming quicker, but he continued his weak protest, “I just wish...” a heavy breath, “... that you’d share with me when you’re upset.”

“I’m sorry, *mon amour*. Truly. Let me make it up to you?” And with that, I began kissing his neck in earnest. Fully, open-mouthed. Sucking and swiping my tongue around.

“*God*, Jeh... You make me so... mmm...”

“So, what?” I couldn’t help but smile. “So, mm—?”

“M-mad...” he sighed.

“Is that so?”

“Y-yes... I’m...” he swallowed, trying to regain his composure, despite the fact that I was now mouthing my way over his collarbone, “I’m still... mad at you.”

“So, you want me to stop?” I nipped the junction between his neck and shoulder.

“Don’t you fucking dare,” he said before finally turning and throwing his hands on my head to drag me down to his mouth.

We kissed madly, practically eating each other’s mouths, our moans deep as we clung desperately to each other. I tried to pull him as close to me as humanly possible and could feel his heart beating in his chest. I wanted to make love to him, slow and sensual, but now that we were here, there was nothing but fire and passion surrounding us. Then Yuri’s mouth began traveling. Down my neck, to my exposed chest. Yanking my towel free, his hand was on me in an instant, his grip tight, stroking, as he licked then bit my nipple. My hips jolted into him. I was quickly losing myself over to his touch, already halfway to hard.

It felt backward, off-kilter. Here I was already naked, while he was still completely clothed. I wanted to be the one making *him* undone, not the other way around. Pulling myself back from the brink I grabbed his hand to stop him, then swung Yuri around, trapping him between me and the counter.

“Slow down, Yuré. I want to make love to you,” I told him, trying to turn things back down to a simmer, “not just fuck in the kitchen.”

Sure, I could start right here — flip him around, bend him over the counter and fuck him senseless. The look in his eyes was practically begging me to do just that. But it would be our first real time since we had started officially dating and I could *finally* make it mean something.

Yet Yuri seemed more desperate than ever. “But I need you, Jeh. It’s been too long.” His mouth was back to sucking and biting my neck while he scratched at my back with one hand, the other reaching again for my cock.

Quickly snatching his wrists I pushed them back against the counter. “There’s no need to rush this. I want to make love to you, *mon ange*. I want to make love to you all morning long, for *hours*.”

He struggled for a second, but I tightened my grip. At that, he bit his lip and gave me his most smoldering look that had my dick twitching and rising.

“You sure you can hold out for *hours*?” he smirked.

No. I was barely holding myself back.

Surging forward, I kissed him. Hard. Teeth biting roughly at his lips, pushing my tongue deep into his mouth. Yuri shivered and moaned his sexy, sexy moan. I hadn’t heard that moan in so long and I wanted to hear it, and only it, for the rest of the morning. I kept up my onslaught and Yuri continued to moan. Instead of pushing me into a frenzy though, each moan only made me feel more powerful. More in control. *Yes*. I was finally feeling fully myself, confident and sure. Eventually, I pulled back when I felt Yuri's own dick pressing against mine through his jeans.

“*Fuck*, Jeh... the way you kiss me...” Yuri said, breathless. He leaned forward to kiss again but I pulled away slightly. I wanted to be the one kissing him. I wanted to be the one in control. Each time he surged forward, mouth open and panting, I pulled back until he whimpered out, “*Jeh!*”

Leaning close, but not close enough to kiss, I said, tone low, “*Mon ange*, just let me kiss you.”

Finally he relented and I resumed kissing him hard for a good long minute before slowing down to pepper his lips with softer kisses. With each press of our lips, he melted more under me and I couldn't help but smile against his mouth. “Are you sure you want me to fuck you here?”

“*God*, Jeh...”

My hands made their way under his hoodie and in one swift move, I pulled it off him. Cupping his pecs through his shirt, my thumbs started circling his now very hard nipples. “Or, can I take you to bed and let my tongue roam every inch of your body?” I twisted a nipple for emphasis.

“*Ahh...yes...*”

“Yes, what?” I couldn’t help my smirk at seeing Yuri in this state.

“Ugh,” he half-heartedly tried to push me away, turning his head to hide his smile, “you are such an asshole.”

I laughed then gave him one more kiss before pushing away from the counter. Taking his hand I led us quickly to his bedroom. Knowing I was going to make love to Yuri on his childhood bed made me chuckle inside. What would I have thought at nineteen, when I competed with him at the Rostecom Cup, if I knew that I would eventually be having sex with that same fiery boy where he probably slept that night? I shook my head in wonder as I turned to him once we had entered the room — and was immediately thrown back on the bed with the force of Yuri launching himself at me.

“Oompf!”

We both burst into laughter as the force of two grown men falling on his small double bed knocked the headboard against the wall and made the bed groan loudly beneath our combined weight.

Looking up at Yuri I was taken aback. Bright green eyes were now dark and hooded. The way he was looking at me sent an electric current from my head to my toes, making every hair on my body tingle with anticipation. He wanted me. God, Yuri Plisetsky *wanted* me. Our fight long forgotten and now, right now, I was going to make love to him until he was drunk with pleasure — and he *wanted* me to.

Before I could process that, Yuri was kissing me like he had never kissed me before. Messy, deep. His lips hungrily moving against mine, his tongue dipping in and out of my mouth, over and over, not letting up. Things instantly heated up, but I didn’t want this to be over in an instant. Like I told Yuri, I didn’t want to just fuck. I wanted to make love. To show him how much I loved him. And that I wasn’t broken anymore. That he didn’t have to worry about me, or try to make me feel better. I was finally back to being myself.

Gripping his hair, I pulled his head back to break the kiss. His eyes widened in surprise until I flipped us over and laced my fingers in his hands, pinning them back on the mattress above his head.

“Oh, you’re not in charge here.”

Yuri’s eyes darkened even more and he arched a brow, challenging, “Is that so?”

I bent down to kiss him and he opened his mouth expectantly but I stopped short, feeling our breaths between us, that crackle of desire. Yuri kept looking from my eyes to my mouth.

“The King is in charge right now,” I smiled wickedly, before kissing him again. This time just as deep but much, much slower, snaking my arm behind him and down, until I reached his ass and squeezed hard, forcing another long moan from him.

“I told you. I’m going to make love to every...” tracing my tongue around the curves of his ear, “single...” moving down, lightly tugging his nipple with my teeth through his shirt,

“inch...” shifting down further and lifting the hem of his shirt to circle my tongue deep in his navel, “of your body.”

He shuddered at each word. “*Shit*, yes... Please, baby, I need you so fucking much.”

Although I loved the fact that Yuri was begging for more, I felt the intensity had ebbed, and no longer felt the need to rush. “Patience, *mon beau*, patience.”

And it was so worth it, taking my time. Listening to Yuri’s moans as I worked his clothes off, slowly peeling each article away. Lingered as I sucked his skin harshly, watching marks bloom a trail down his body. Over his neck and collar bones, around each nipple, over his abs, on his hip bone, until I had his leg over my shoulder and was alternating biting and sucking his inner thigh, high near his groin, my thumb brushing up and down his cock ever so lightly.

After another bite he cried out, followed by soft moans of “*oh god baby*” when I swept my tongue over this latest mark. I sucked deeply one last time before pulling off with a loud pop.

Sitting back on my heels, I looked down at him, drinking him in for a moment, laying back on the bed, covered in my marks, one arm over his face, panting in pleasure. I was feeling even better than before and could go all for hours without a worry. I was in awe of this moment.

The moment lingered and Yuri peeked out from under his arm.

“Hey,” he reached up, brushing my cheek, “everything okay?”

“Everything is perfect. This is perfect. You’re perfect.”

“That’s a lot of perfect going around.” He huffed out a breathy laugh.

“How are you feeling?”

“Baby, you’ve been torturing me for the last forty-five minutes. I’m so fucking close to coming, you have no idea,” he chuckled, voice dry and low.

Those words were music to my ears. God, I loved this so much. How could one little pill do so much? Take away so much pain and replace it with such euphoria? I was so afraid for so long. Afraid of being with Yuri again like this. Worried I wouldn’t be able to recreate the amazing lovemaking we had before. That I wouldn’t live up to it. That he would be disappointed. Yet, here he was completely wrecked on the bed, wiggling and panting under me, as I continued to lightly thumb around his cock.

Smiling wide, “*Mon beau*, come as much as you want.”

Yuri shook his head. “I don’t want to come until you’re inside me.” Then, pouting up at me, “So will you *please* come here?”

Yes, it was time. Time for me to hold him in my arms. Quickly I slid behind him, pulling him back against me and reaching around to take his dick fully in my grip. “How’s this, *mon*

amour?”

“*Finally...*” Yuri turned his head back to me and I leaned down to his parted lips. He licked all around my mouth as I stroked him. Wrapping his own hand around mine he squeezed my hand tighter around his cock, then began pumping his hips up into our fists. I could feel his cock throbbing in my hand. He was panting heavily now, and I could feel him getting close.

“It’s okay *mon beau*, come for me.”

He shook his head sharply again. Suddenly he was pulling my hand off him and moving away. He reached over to the nightstand, half hanging off the bed, his pert ass filling my view. I gave it a hard smack and he yelped, “*Fucker!*” but didn’t move back. I heard him rifling through the nightstand as I smoothed my hand over the hot handprint, red on his skin. Finally giving a small whoop, he spooned back into me, handing me back a bottle of lube.

“It’s old, but...” he blushed. “It doesn’t go bad does it?”

Criss, I hoped not. Opening the bottle and taking a whiff, it didn’t smell bad. It didn’t really smell like anything. I figured that was a good sign.

Arching his back, he rubbed his ass against my dick. “Now baby, please. I can’t wait any longer. Don’t worry about stretching me, just fuck me slowly.”

No sooner had I slathered my dick and tossed the bottle somewhere on the bed, than I looped my arm under his knee to lift up his leg and slowly pressed into him, making us both cry out. Sweet Jesus, he was so tight. He was right, it *had* been too long, but here we were. Finally connected again.

My shallow thrusting slowly opened up his body and eventually I was fully seated, circling my hips to simply grind in him for several minutes. Yuri’s moans lengthened until it was practically one sweet continuous note filling the room. I picked a languorous rhythm. Steady pushes in followed by long drags out. I felt like I was moving inside of God, Yuri felt that fucking good, and I could feel everything, skin tingling and mind blissfully cloud-free.

“*Holy fuck*, Yuré.” I buried my head in his hair and breathed him in. It was like a prayer, making love to Yuri like this. The heavens opening — and entering an angel.

“Baby... *oh fuck*, baby...” Yuri moaned out, reaching his arm back around my head, as he rocked back onto my cock. Like a dance, we moved together in this sweet, slow rhythm.

Yuri shifted his head and we kissed again, tongues connecting when lips didn’t. I let his leg rest back over my hip and reached around to stroke him again, slow pulls that made his body start to shake under me.

My chest was burning more than my groin. I was making love to Yuri. After everything these past weeks, I was finally inside him with my tongue, with my cock, pulling him as close as I could, wrapping him into me. I wished we could be one like this always. Surrounding each other, in each other. I felt like we could make love like this for days.

But all too soon that slow buildup crossed an invisible threshold and our need suddenly rushed forward. Yuri's moans grew deeper, louder.

"More, baby, *more*. I need you more," he growled.

He pushed back against me harder, trying to quicken the pace, but it wasn't enough for either of us. I quickly shifted us, moving up to straddle his leg on the bed while he remained on his side, holding his other leg straight up in front of me, pausing only the briefest moment to get re-situated before pushing back into him.

Yuri was just as flexible as ever, and I drove into him deeper, harder, faster. I couldn't get enough, running to the edge of ecstasy. Yuri grunted out "*fuck yes... fuck yes... fuck yes...*" his head buried in his arm, hands gripping the bedding as I continued to hammer into him, barely seeing straight. He had been begging all morning for this, but really, I was the one who needed him, who needed to be inside him. To hide myself away in him and never come out.

Yuri cried out, "I'm coming, baby, I'm coming!"

I grabbed his cock and pumped him fast in time with my thrusts. Then he yelled out in Russian, convulsing as he shot out on the bed, long white streaks that kept coming as I continued to stroke him through it.

He barely finished when I felt my own release imminent.

"Can I...can I... inside?" I was already falling over the edge. I couldn't hold it back anymore.

"Yes, baby, *fuck yes*. I want to feel it."

Yuri pushed back into me and clenched around my cock, though his body was still trembling under me. I fucked into him as I came, my own cries echoing around us.

After I let his leg down, Yuri rolled onto his back, flinging his arms over his head, "*Jesus... Fucking... Christ...*" he said between pants. "That was fucking amazing, Jeh. I mean, sex with you has always been amazing, but that was..."

"Yeah," I huffed out and fell forward into his now open arms, our sweaty chests making me slippery on top of him. "*Tu êtes vraiment incroyable.*"

Yuri blushed, then groaned, "Ugh! Why am I such a sucker for your damn French?"

"*J'ai toujours su que tu étais,*" I laughed as we lay there panting, wrapped in each other's arms, in a bed now wet with sweat and come. But God it felt so good to finally laugh with Yuri. To laugh. To make love. All the things we were meant to do now that we were together.

"Shower? Before round two? Or maybe round two in the shower?" Yuri bit my chin again and wagged his eyebrows at me. "You *did* say you wanted to make love to me for hours."

Yes. We had all morning. Hell, all day. JJ-fucking-Leroy was finally back.

Chapter End Notes

French Translations (these are from my research on forums, but also some from Google Translate, so they may be incorrect):

Merde = Shit

Criss = Christ

Mon ange = My angel

Mon amour = My love

Mon beau = My beautiful

Je suis vraiment désolé, mon ange. = I'm really sorry, my angel.

Je ne voulais pas te mettre en colère. = I didn't want to make you angry.

Tu êtes vraiment incroyable. = You are really incredible.

J'ai toujours su que tu étais. = I always knew you were.

I was so happy to finally get to this chapter! I think our boys and all of us really needed it! XD

Something's Off

Chapter Summary

"I've got plenty of medals," he continued. "But I only get this short time with you. It's not enough." Then he buried himself in my chest and squeezed me tightly.

Chapter Notes

I know, I KNOW. It's been a few YEARS since I updated this puppy. But the story has never left me and I do want to finish it, even if it's just for me at this point.

Thank you to anyone still reading it!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The next week went by like a dream.

With Nikolai and his flat taken care of we decided against wasting time traveling and instead settled in a five-star hotel in the heart of downtown Moscow. As soon as we'd entered the room, luggage was forgotten and we couldn't get out of our clothes fast enough, scrambling to the bed and fucking until we were both coming dry.

The days after blurred together. We never did make it out of the hotel room. Hell, we'd barely made it out of the bed. Each day started with a ruckus round (or three) of sex followed, eventually, by a lazy bath together in the en suite's enormous roman bathtub. That, of course, led to more sex and a lot of water sloshing on the floor. Afternoons were spent napping in each other's arms, catching up on the sleep we missed from even more love-making throughout the night. We survived on room service when we finally thought to eat.

My entire world consisted of only that room for five glorious days. Our phones were off and hidden away in the nightstand. For Yuri, he took a break from lessons with the kids. We pretty much "forgot" to practice. More importantly, there were no nightmares. No dark cloud. No calls from the detective, and no distractions from the trial or anything else from back home. It was just me and Yuri.

And my life-saving bottle of pills.

It had come at a steep price though. I had to swallow my distaste and hunt Vlas down to secure it, tracking him down until I finally caught up with him at another random bar several

neighborhoods away. He didn't give them over easily either, especially knowing how desperate I was for them.

"I think something this precious needs to be given its fair value, don't you say, *krasavchik*?"

Vlas kept flipping the bottle over and over in his hand as he leaned against the back door of the bar, the sound of the pills inside making my heart sink further and further.

"Just tell me what you want for them," I growled out, reaching for them. I had needed to take care of this transaction quickly, as I had snuck out while Yuri was sleeping back at Nikolai's that night.

He only continued, calm as ever. "I mean, these were hard to come by. A full bottle, and *greens*. Not easy, not easy at all."

Wallet in hand, I pulled out all the cash I had on me. "I only have a grand on me."

Vlas only laughed. "Well, it's a start."

"Are you fucking kidding me. That is giving you much more than you'll get from anyone else, you bastard. Take it or leave it."

"Oh, I can leave it," then Vlas got right in my face. "But can you?"

"Just give me the fucking pills."

"Tell you what. Because you're practically family I'll take that grand now and you can wire me another two later."

I couldn't help but bark out a laugh. "You're out of your mind if you think I'm paying that."

Vlas just leaned back against the doorframe. "Oh, I know you will. Unless you fancy seeing certain stories about our precious Yurachka's mysterious childhood reach their way to some very inquiring minds."

Fuck. I couldn't drag Yuri into this. I just needed those pills and to move on with my life. For us to move on with our life. And to keep Yuri out of Vlas' way.

"Fine. Just text me where to wire it."

"Oh don't worry, *krasavchik*. I'll let you know."

So, I handed over the money and the next day was finally with Yuri in a taxi leaving that dreadful place. Yuri's tension slowly left his body the further we got and by the time we'd pulled up to the hotel he had melted fully into my side. We'd left that hell and finally made it to the other side.

Thing was, Vlas still hadn't told me where to wire the money. I could only pray he decided it wasn't worth the hassle.

“Mmm,” Yuri’s hum into my chest was delicious against my skin as we woke up slowly, the early morning light warming the curtains. “What day is it?”

“Honestly, I’m not quite sure,” I said, reveling in his sleepy hands roaming my skin. Even more honestly, I didn’t want to know. I was content to just stay here, enjoying another blissful day with Yuri wrapped in my arms.

Reaching down to his ass, I took a handful and squeezed, rolling us over and kissing his neck. I’d discovered how much his neck was his weakness. He stretched it for me in response, his hand gripping my back. Too soon he pushed at my chest, though.

“We really should get out of the room today,” he sighed as I tilted his head back for more neck access.

I ignored that remark and continued to lavish his neck with kisses. Yuri didn’t push it, his hand moving to the back of my head to hold me in place. Only when I started to move south did he let out a half-groan, half-laugh.

“Seriously, baby,” he pushed against me with more force. “We have to go to the rink today. If I go back home without having practiced at least once Victor will have my head.”

“I thought you didn’t care what Victor thought,” I buried my head back in his neck to nuzzle with more force.

He only pulled my hair to lift my head and gave me a look.

“Alright, fine,” I mumbled before rolling off him.

Yuri reached over me and pulled open the nightstand drawer, its soft slide more grating against my ears than it should be. He took out his phone and turned it on, then snuggled back in the crook of my arm. A cacophony of sound rang through the room with all the notifications. I tried to stifle my sigh and closed my eyes against what I knew was coming. Yuri was silent for the next several minutes, but I could hear him tapping away. Taking a peak I watched him scroll through his social accounts and texts, firing off a few of his own. Eventually, he sat up and stretched his arms, before crawling over me to head to the shower.

I didn’t bother with my own phone and instead followed him into the bathroom. As soon as Yuri stepped in the shower I pulled out the bottle of Oxy and shook out some pills. Practice. Though I knew this time would eventually come, it still seemed to come too soon. Feeling the weight of that bottle in my hand though, the sound of all those pills rattling softly inside, put me a bit more at ease. I could do this. I could get back on the ice. I was fucking Jean-Jacques Leroy after all. There was no dark cloud anymore. There was nothing for me to worry about.

I didn’t notice the shower had stopped until I felt arms wrap around me from behind just as I was tucking the bottle back in my bag. I quickly zipped it up and shoved it away. A sigh and several light kisses landed between my shoulder blades. The touch of wet hair brushed my skin as Yuri rested his head on my back.

“I shouldn’t have turned on my damn phone,” Yuri whispered.

Pulling his hand to my mouth, I kissed his knuckles. “It’s okay, *mon ange*. You’re right, we really can’t stay in anymore. Besides, don’t you have another medal to try to win from me?” I said tone light.

Turning to tease him some more I was surprised that I wasn’t met with an eye roll or a smirk of annoyance, but instead sadness in his eyes as he tried to smile.

“I’ve got plenty of medals,” he continued. “But I only get this short time with you. It’s not enough.” Then he buried himself in my chest and squeezed me tightly.

I agreed. But I had to be strong for him. As much as I wanted to just stay here forever, I had to get back to where I was so that he could get back to where he needed to be. I couldn’t be selfish anymore. Luckily, now I was finally able to get back to normal and be there for Yuri.

“It’s time.” I kissed the top of his head and walked over to the nightstand and finally turned on my phone as well. The same disturbance of rings followed. I could see messages from Lou, Detective Martel, my lawyer, even Maman and Papa. I flipped the phone over. “I’ll shower and then we can head over to the rink.”

Yuri smiled a small, knowing smile then followed me into the shower, even though he had just taken his own. We made love one last time before we had to leave and finally face the world.

“Time to start kicking your ass, *mon ange*,” I wagged my eyebrows at Yuri as we laced up at the rink.

He scoffed. “In your dreams.”

We had been able to secure a couple of hours without any other skaters at Yuri’s old rink where he trained with Yakov. We each set off on opposite sides to run through our different warm-ups. It was a bit surreal being back on the ice. I hadn’t laced up for a couple of months. But I was back to feeling good, so there was nothing to stop me now from getting back into my groove. Pulling up one of my favorite playlists I skated through my regular warm-ups and let myself get used to the feel of the ice below me.

Hearing the scrape of my skates on the ice, the background whir of the air-conditioning, brought me back to last year, when things were going well for me. That season had started strong — I had breezed through the GP qualifier and edged out Yuri from the top of the podium at the Final and 4Cs. Worlds was where things had started to go south, though I’d still made a strong showing. Yuri had barely beat me that time.

But this, here, skating with my full self back again, I knew this season was going to be even better. Yes, Yuri was upping his game, but now he was my boyfriend not just my competitor. And now that I was finally moving on from my past, it gave me something even more to buoy me up. I ran a few various triple jumps and landed them easily. Playing the music from last year’s short program I decided to just run through it for shits and giggles. Landing my first quad perfectly I knew I had hit my stride. The rest of the routine was close to flawless. It

was like I hadn't been away from the ice. I finished and though I felt the need to catch my breath after the exertion, I felt exhilarated too.

"Fuck!" Yuri's voice and a thud broke through my music and I turned to see him on the ground, pushing himself back up off the ice.

Wincing, I skated quickly over. I could tell he was okay from the fall, but still — a fall's a fall, and with how hard Yuri had been working it was surprising to see.

"What happened?" I held my hand out to him.

Yuri grabbed it and shook his head, "I just thought I saw... never mind." He brushed himself off and cupped my face, bringing me down for a quick kiss. "You're here. That's all that matters."

Something was off. "Yuré. What is it?"

He only looked away. "I think last week really fucked with my head. That's all."

Vlas. I knew he was talking about Vlas. My stomach dropped.

I scanned the rink, the stands. No one was there of course. Yuri wrapped his arms around my waist, head falling to my chest. I wrapped my arms around him, reassuring him. And me.

"We're here now, away from him," I squeezed tighter. "I won't let him get anywhere near you ever again."

"I know," he whispered.

We left the rink a couple of hours later, arm in arm. But I couldn't help but turn to look back and feel eyes on me. Eyes I couldn't see. And it was like my year of looking over my shoulder had never ended.

We planned to take Toyla and Lisha to dinner before we both left tomorrow. Yuri was heading back to Saint Petersburg, and I... well, I still hadn't decided. But I needed to, and fast. While Yuri went to pick up the Semenovs at the bus station and take a cab with them to the restaurant, I excused myself to stay behind.

Now, here I was, staring at my phone. I could do this. I was fucking Jean-Jacques Leroy. I needed to rock it this season and I really just couldn't do that doing the same old thing I'd been doing for years. It was time to take a risk.

My phone stared back at me. I knew what I had to do. But before I dialed, I took a couple of pills out and crushed them on the counter, almost without thinking. I felt the calm hit quickly then picked up my phone, punched in the number, and hit dial.

A booming voice answered. "Jean-Jacques? Ciao! I haven't heard from you in quite a while!"

"I know Coach, I know."

“I haven’t been your coach in over 10 years. You know to call me Ciao-Ciao, Jean-Jacques,” Celestino Cialdini said. It was true, I hadn’t trained with him since I was what, fourteen? But I hoped that would change.

Taking a deep I plunged forward, “Well, I’m actually hoping that I can call you Coach again.”

After much reassurance that there wasn’t anything going on with my parents, and that I really just wanted to make some big changes, Celestino seemed to be much more open to the idea of taking me on this season.

“But I’m not in the US anymore. I’m back in Europe, training in France now,” he said, still a bit concerned.

Of course, I knew this. It was one of the reasons that I decided I wanted to make the switch. I just couldn’t go back to Canada right now. Not with all the media talking about my stupid trial and the civil suit. This was a perfect solution. I could be that much closer to Yuri, and far, far away from that shit storm.

“And you’re sure your parents are okay with this?” Celestino asked again.

“I’m the one that’s in charge of my career now,” I tried not to sound too sharp over the phone. Taking a breath, I said with a good-natured laugh, “But yes, they support me fully.”

“Okay, then. I’ll see you in a couple of days.”

After hanging up I quickly fired off a simple text to my parents and then opened their contacts back up and hit block.

Dinner with Toyla and Lisha was very nice. I insisted we treat them to the best and we ended up at a restaurant that Yuri told me Victor always raved about that also had the best top-shelf liquor that he knew Toyla would appreciate. I wasn’t sold just because of Victor’s recommendation, though I knew that he did have impeccable taste. More importantly, I wanted to show my gratitude to the Semenovs for all they did for us.

Being seated with them and Yuri, enjoying one of the best steaks I’d ever had, I realized how much I was going to miss this. Miss Yuri. Being here with him felt so right. I was glad I wasn’t going too far.

They reminisced about Nikolai and Yuri and all the hell he gave them as a scrappy and mischievous little brat. Then vodka started to flow.

“We can’t drink too much tonight, we’re traveling tomorrow,” Yuri said as Toyla handed him a glass.

I tensed. Please, Yuri, can’t you just act like a 22-year-old and let go for one night?

Toyla ignored him and held up his glass. “*Za nashu družbu!*” Yuri reluctantly took the drink, but then Toyla refilled all our glasses.

“Really, Toyla,” Yuri sighed.

Taking a deep breath, Toyla moved to sit next to Yuri and pulled him close. “Boy, you have done good here. You have made all of us proud. You don’t have to be so perfect. You are such a fine young man, but we also love the messy, passionate boy that gave Nikolai and us all hell growing up. You are still young. Be young.”

I gave Yuri a nudge with my shoulder, “Don’t worry, *mon ange*. I’ve got you tonight. Drink as much as you want.” Then I leaned in and whispered. “Besides, I haven’t seen you drunk since our first dance. Maybe you’ll get lucky.” I pulled back and gave him a quick kiss and wink, and he snickered.

“You are a very bad influence,” he shook his head.

“The worst.”

Toyla cheered and we toasted again. Toyla kept our glasses full until we finished the bottle. Yuri was pretty buzzed when we finally left after a prolonged goodbye to Toyla and Risha, everyone shouting loud goodbyes and *‘I love yous.’*

“I love you, too,” Yuri said as he stumbled next to me as we left the restaurant. “So fucking much. I didn’t think I’d love you this much. I mean, I always thought you were hot, but you were soooo annoying.”

All I could do was laugh and hope that Yuri would keep talking. “Well, I always thought you were cute. Why do you think I teased you so much?”

“Jackass,” Yuri shoved me half-heartedly. “Ugh, I had so many wet dreams because of you.”

“Oh, really?”

“God, yes. And it’s even better in person and not just in my head. You’re so good at sex. Do you know how good in bed you are?” he continued. “It’s because you have such sexy rhythm. Your ass can move.” He waggled his eyebrows suggestively.

“What are you talking about?” I was full-on laughing now.

“At the salsa place. I saw this really hot ass dancing, but then it turned out to be you,” he grimaced for a second. “Then you got us drinks and were bending over the bar and I couldn’t stop staring. You know, I think I fell in love with your ass first.”

He stopped suddenly in front of me, his hands reaching around and squeezed my butt and giggled.

“I thought Russians could hold their liquor better,” I said.

I hadn’t seen Yuri drunk in a while. He’d been so preoccupied with everything I was glad that Toyla gave him that push. He needed to let go. And now that I was better I knew he could.

However, looking around at people walking through the area — which was quite nice — giving us looks of disapproval, I pried his hands off me. “Not that I mind being groped by you, but we are still very much in public, *mon ange*.”

“I can hold my liquor just fine, see?” And with that, he started dancing in front of me to some unknown music in his head. “Not even falling down!” He stumbled a bit and giggled again, then he stopped just as suddenly as he started. “Oh, I know, let’s go dancing Jeh! One last time! *Pozhaluysta moya lyubov’!*”

So we did. Though once we were in the cab Yuri started making out with me sloppily in the back, half sitting in my lap, and I almost decided to take us back to the hotel instead.

But as soon as we were on the dance floor of the club it was magic. Yuri moved with me so easily. He always had. Like instinct. Bodies rolling together to the music, his arms draped over my shoulders, or running down my chest, kissing me.

We kept drinking, Yuri more than me though. I just wanted him to let go and have fun. But eventually it started to get a bit out of hand, and he was barely able to keep vertical.

“Okay,” I said, grabbing his latest shot glass and handing it back to the bartender. “I think that’s enough for the night.”

“But why? I just don’t want you to go!” He pouted. “You’ll be so far away! All the way in Montreal. And there’s such a time difference. I’ll miss you so much.”

Well, I had to tell him eventually I guess. “Lucky for you I’m not going back to Montreal.”

“What?” He blinked at me without focus. “What do you mean? You have to start training.”

“Yes, but I’m going to Paris to train with Celestino instead, so I can be closer to you.”

Yuri’s brow creased. “I-I don’t understand. I mean,” he slurred, “you didn’t say anything. You never tell me anything.” He wobbled a bit and I reached out to catch him, but he shoved me back. “Lemme alone.”

Stumbling out of the club he tried to hail a taxi. I wasn’t far behind, but when I reached him he bent over and threw up right there. The taxi driver looked wary, but I shoved Yuri in anyway. He didn’t say anything on the way back, just pressed his face sleepily against the glass. I tried to put my arm around him, but he simply grunted and batted my hand away.

But by the time we got to the hotel he was practically asleep, so he let me pull him out of the cab and guide him to the elevators with his arm slung over my shoulders. Thank God there were just a few people lingering in the lobby, and no one seemed to take any notice of us.

Once in the elevator, I leaned Yuri back against the wall, his eyes still closed. It was one of those elevators that needed your key card to get up to your floor. As I fumbled to get my card out I saw someone move towards us. But they didn’t call for me to hold the door. I don’t think I would have been able to manage it anyway, trying to keep Yuri upright and finally

getting my card out of my pocket and swiping it. As the doors closed, I made to shrug as an apology but froze as I glimpsed cold eyes and a sinister grin right before the doors closed.

Fuck. It was Vlas.

“This drink’s courtesy of my friend,” Vlas told the bartender when I found him in the hotel bar. Luckily, Yuri collapsed on the bed and fell immediately asleep. I didn’t even take the time to make him more comfortable in my rush to get back downstairs.

“What the hell are you doing here?” I demanded in a harsh whisper.

“That’s no way to talk to family, *krasavchik*. After all, I had to keep an eye out to make sure my Yurochka was in good hands. He’s finally making himself worth something again.”

I just stood there, saying nothing. He was so incongruous with the sleek bar. A thin pinstriped suit, a size or two too small. A black button-down shirt, barely buttoned, with a short but heavy-looking gold necklace displayed prominently. The bartender was eyeing him and me and it took everything I had not to deck him right there. I just needed to get him out of here and quickly.

“I know you’re here for the money.” My voice was low. I pulled out an envelope and shoved it at him. “Here! Now get out of here before I call security!”

“Touchy, touchy.” But he got up and tucked the envelope into his inside breast pocket and slowly walked away.

Right before he exited, he turned back, phone in hand typing something. My phone chimed and I looked at the text. It was a photo of me dragging an almost unconscious Yuri through the lobby. My stomach dropped.

“Just a little going away present,” he sneered, then turned and left.

“So, you really are going to stop training with your parents?” Yuri was sitting on the bed while I was packing, sipping some green juice concoction to nurse his hangover. His hand was over his eyes, but he peeked out to glare at me. “The season has already begun! Are you trying to sabotage yourself?”

“Of course not,” I said, throwing a shirt in my suitcase. “I don’t get why you’re so upset.”

He harrumphed. “Because you’re being an idiot.”

“How am I an idiot? I did it to be closer to you!”

“So it’s *my* fault?”

I only gave Yuri a flat look. “Don’t be dramatic. I just want to change things up moving forward. Take a new direction in my career.”

Yuri looked at me, incredulous. “Why the hell would you do that, now?”

“It’s *my* career. If I want to change coaches I’ll damn well do it.” I stormed into the bathroom to gather my things, throwing them too into my toiletries bag. It was silent for a few minutes.

God, I needed another pill. I started digging through the messy bag, but Yuri’s voice caught me off guard.

“I thought we were over this. I thought you trusted me,” he was standing in the doorway, empty glass in hand.

“I don’t know what you mean. Of course I trust you.”

He simply crossed his arms and turned away, muttering something in Russian.

Merde. My flight wasn’t till later this evening, but I couldn’t spend my last day with Yuri like this. I closed the bathroom door and just stared at myself in the mirror. I was doing this all for Yuri. He just needed to see that. I just needed him to see that. Finding the bottle and turning on the sink, I crushed a couple of pills and let them sink in.

I loved him. He loved me. So why did we always fight over stupid stuff like this?

I opened the door to find him packing. It was slow. Defeated. I sat down on the bed next to his suitcase and grabbed his hand. He came over and sat down next to me.

“Izzy and I fought all the time.”

Yuri flinched. “I know. She didn’t support you. I don’t want to be like that.”

“I know you are just looking out for me. But Yuré, I meant it. I did this to be close to you.” And of course, it had the added bonus of keeping me away from the mess back home. “You say I don’t trust you? Well, I need you to trust me.”

“I’m sorry, I fucked up,” Yuri sniffed. “I shouldn’t second guess your decisions. You’re right, this is your career and you have every right to make your own decisions about it.”

He turned away and sniffed again, wiped his eyes. We sat there for a moment, saying nothing. Then, quietly Yuri said, “I just don’t want to lose you.”

“Why would you?”

He turned around and looked at me, then before I could blink he was kneeling in front of me, undoing my belt, my pants. His eyes were wide and pleading.

“Yuré, what are you—”

I didn’t have a chance to finish because he engulfed my cock. It was so sudden and hot, I yelped and my hips jolted up into his mouth. He groaned and sucked me harder, getting me to full mast within a matter of minutes. I pumped up into him and he grabbed my hand, placing it on his head. I couldn’t help it then, and tightened my grip in his hair and shoved him back

down on my dick, fast and rough, his gagging noises driving me even harder. I came, shoving my dick down his throat, and he clamped his lips tight around me, swallowing everything.

What the hell just happened?

That just felt... wrong. Something was definitely off. Yuri carefully put my softening dick back in my underwear and zipped me back up, then sunk back down on his heels and buried his head in my thigh. I stroked his hair as he cried.

“Please, Jeh, don’t leave me. I need you. I need you,” his pleas were muffled into my leg.

“Never,” my heart clenched that he thought I ever would leave him. “I’m yours. Always.”

He nodded but continued to cry and I... I...

I let him.

Chapter End Notes

Russian Translations (these are from my research on forums, but also some from Google Translate, so they may be incorrect):

Krasavchik = Pretty boy (derogatory)

Za nashu druzhbu! = For our friendship! (a common toast in Russia)

Pozhaluysta moya lyubov'! = Please my love!

French Translations (same as above):

Mon ange = My angel

Merde = Shit (can also mean Fuck)

And... if anyone's still out there, reading this story, I'd love to hear from you!!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!