

Depend on Me

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Depend on Me

by [sunshine_sparrow](#)

Summary

Lee Jaehwan, the charismatic darling of the entertainment industry, publicly came out as gay several months ago. Now he's receiving death threats, which, although not unexpected, worries his manager, Lee Hongbin. Luckily, Hongbin knows an excellent bodyguard...

Notes

Written for my darling darling Stephanie, on the occasion of her birthday! Happy birthday, beautiful girl, sorry I couldn't celebrate it with you! Have some Leo/Ken bodyguard fluff instead. ♥

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

“I,” Jaehwan said, “do not need a bodyguard.”

Hongbin ignored him, as he always did. Jaehwan puffed out his cheeks in aggravation, and upped the whine in his voice. “Hongbinnie, I don't need a bodyguard!”

“You've had three death threats in the past week alone,” Hongbin said, not even lifting his head from his phone. “You're the darling of the entertainment industry, hyung, but some people took your coming out last month badly. We knew they would, but these death threats seem serious. The police agree. So until the threats stop or the police catch the guy, you're going to have to deal with a bodyguard.” Hongbin finally locked his phone and looked up at his best friend and client. “I have a friend who does this kind of thing, don't worry. He's very good.”

Jaehwan pouted, sticking out his lip for added effect and slumping down in his car seat. “But I don't want someone following me around all the time!” He complained. “They're gonna be all nosy and in my business and I won't be able to walk around my apartment without a shirt on and... and eat cereal on the couch!” He glanced speculatively over at his manager. “I could always fire you,” he said.

Hongbin snorted, looking down as his phone vibrated and unlocking it with a swipe of his thumb. “Yeah, you could,” he agreed drolly. “And then your career could crash and burn without me there to make you get out of bed in the morning.”

Jaehwan pouted harder and turned to watch Seoul speeding by outside the car window. “I would be fine.”

Hongbin patted his knee. “Of course you would, hyung.”

Jaehwan sighed and sat forward as the car began to slow, pulling into the parking lot of the theatre where his new musical was rehearsing. “If I'm going to have to deal with a bodyguard, he'd better be hot,” he grumped. “And he'd better protect me really well!”

Hongbin covered the sound of his chuckle by opening the car door. “Oh, don't worry,” he replied. “I don't think you'll have any complaints. Like I said, he's very good.”

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Lee Jaehwan had debuted as a singer-actor at the age of seventeen. To his (and his entertainment company's) well-hidden surprise, he had shot to the top of the music charts and stayed there, his debut single breaking records and securing him the title of Rookie of the Year. Both his ballads and his dance songs were popular, and his fanbase was wide and varied—and became even more so after he began acting in musicals.

Now, seven years later at the age of 24, Jaehwan's face was plastered on billboards all over Seoul, and his name regularly topped the charts of various music rankings and award shows. Jaehwan, although he'd never admit it to anyone, still couldn't really figure out how he'd

gotten so popular. But he was, and therefore he'd had to make a lot of adjustments to how he lived his daily life.

One of the things he had always been firm about, however, had been his privacy. No 'accidental leaks' of his address, no video tours of his apartment, and most importantly, no work following him home. That last one was, of course, not always possible, but he'd managed pretty well so far.

And now he was going to have a bodyguard living with him until the death threats were dealt with. Which could be months.

"Fucking great," he grumbled, closing the door to his apartment behind him and listening to the automatic lock beep pleasantly as it engaged. Toeing off his shoes and leaving them in a slightly untidy pile in the entryway, he padded further into his home in his socks, tossing his bag onto the arm of the couch with a sigh as he passed the living room.

His bodyguard was supposed to show up sometime this evening. Due to Jaehwan's unpredictable schedule, Hongbin had promised that he would notify the man when he dropped the star off at his apartment, so Jaehwan didn't know exactly *when* he was coming—only that he was.

"Might as well change into something comfortable," Jaehwan sighed, tugging at his shirt as he headed into his bedroom. The cleaning service kept the apartment neat, so he didn't have to worry about picking up at least.

He changed and wandered back out in soft pajama pants and a worn t-shirt from his high school days, the logo on the front worn away and the neck stretched out. The bodyguard was going to be around him all the time, so he might as well see the lazy parts of Jaehwan first.

But he wasn't *here* yet. Jaehwan flopped onto the couch and turned on the TV, scowling at the music show that came on. He just wanted to get this over with so he could go to bed.

Finally, half an hour after he'd gotten home, Jaehwan heard the doorbell ring. "About time," he muttered, levering himself up off the couch and heading to the door. He opened it, ready to stonewall his unwanted bodyguard with a cold greeting, when he actually got a good look at the man standing on the other side of his door. His mouth fell open, every snide remark he'd prepared completely flying out of his head.

Jaehwan's first thought, when he saw the tall, imposing, blank-faced man standing in his hallway, was, *scary*. Then his second thought, as he got a better look, was, *hot. Really hot. Kind of devastatingly hot.*

"Good evening," the man said, his voice higher and softer than Jaehwan was expecting. It sounded very diffident, as though the speaker didn't want to inconvenience anyone with the sound of his voice. "Lee Jaehwan? Your manager Lee Hongbin sent me."

"Right," Jaehwan said weakly, and cleared his throat. "Right. Uh, my new bodyguard. Right." And now his mind was filled with images of *bodyguarding*...

The man nodded and bowed slightly, ducking his head. "My name is Jung Taekwoon," he murmured. "It's nice to meet you."

"Yeah," Jaehwan croaked. "Uh, you too."

"...May I come in?" Jung Taekwoon asked, after several seconds of Jaehwan just standing and staring in the doorway.

"Oh, right!" Jaehwan jumped and stepped back, ushering him inside.

Taekwoon stepped inside, and Jaehwan noticed for the first time that he had a large black duffle bag slung over his shoulder, presumably with his clothes and other things inside. He set the bag down inside the door and took off his shoes, politely lining them up to the side. Jaehwan did his best to ignore the stretch of the man's slacks over his firm rear, as well as the way the pants emphasized the length of Taekwoon's long legs. He did not do a very good job.

"May I look around?" Taekwoon asked, turning to face Jaehwan, who blushed bright red as though his thoughts about the firmness of his bodyguard's rear could be seen on his face. If Taekwoon noticed anything strange, however, he gave no sign, simply politely meeting Jaehwan's eyes as he waited for a response.

"Um, sure," Jaehwan said, and quickly looked around his apartment with new eyes, trying to see if there was anything embarrassing lying about. He suddenly became acutely aware of his appearance, dressed in an old stretched-out T-shirt and low-hanging pajama pants, his feet bare. His fading blush came back, but for different reasons.

Taekwoon wandered slowly from room to room, opening and closing the windows and standing in odd corners. Jaehwan followed him, wondering what the heck he was doing for about three minutes before it finally dawned on him that Taekwoon was *casing the apartment for threats*. He was checking the accessibility of the windows, seeing if someone could get in (or out), and Jaehwan was ninety percent certain that the corner-standing was to gauge vantage points and visibility.

Jesus Christ. Jaehwan's life had just become an action movie.

"Is... Is the threat really that bad?" Jaehwan asked, feeling a little nervous for the first time. Now that he had a bodyguard, the threat seemed much more *real*, much more present. It seemed suddenly believable that someone was out there who wanted to hurt him.

Taekwoon turned to look at him, quiet. Jaehwan's skin heated under that intense gaze. "It is... not terribly bad," the bodyguard finally said in his soft voice. "I've read the letters he's sent so far. But he seems the type to escalate, and so your safety is very important. Death threats are never something to take lightly."

Jaehwan nodded and wrapped his arms around himself, looking down at his feet. He wiggled his bare toes in the carpet.

"That is why Hongbin hired a bodyguard," Taekwoon said, suddenly closer than he'd been before. Jaehwan looked up to see him only a few steps away, looking at him with that blank

expression, those dark eyes. “That’s why I’m here.”

Jaehwan nodded, mustering up a smile with maybe a quarter of his usual cheer in it. “I know!” he said, rubbing his arms briskly and then forcing himself to drop his hands to his sides. “Hongbinnie’s really on top of this stuff, and he said you’re really good. So I trust him!” His smile gained a little more brightness. “And I trust you!” He bowed, hair flopping forward over his forehead. “Please take care of me!”

The bodyguard was silent for a long moment, and Jaehwan straightened back up to see his eyes a little wider than they had been before. “Of course,” he murmured belatedly, bowing back.

Jaehwan yawned suddenly, one hand flying up to cover his mouth. “Oh, I’m sorry!” He blinked rapidly. “I guess it’s later than I thought.” And his schedule had been pretty crazy lately. “Here, I’ll just show you the guest bedroom and let you settle in. It’s the door at the end of the hall—”

“Actually,” Taekwoon said, halting Jaehwan in his movement down the hallway, “before you go to bed, may I look at your bedroom?”

Jaehwan froze, a dozen different sexy reasons for that sentence instantly flying through his brain.

All of them were dashed, however, when Taekwoon continued, “I want to check for threats.”

“Right,” Jaehwan said, “of course! It’s this door here.” He led the way to his bedroom, glad that Taekwoon couldn’t see the expression on his face. He hovered in the doorway as the bodyguard did a swift sweep, checking his windows and locking them tight. His room was a little messier than the common space, mostly because he spent more time in here, but he was quite glad that nothing embarrassing or incriminating was lying out in view.

Like his modest collection of dildos, for example. That would be *mortifying*.

“Okay,” Taekwoon said, after a period of time that seemed both too long and much too short for Jaehwan. “Thank you, Mr. Lee. I’ll let you go to bed now.”

“Oh, please!” Jaehwan sputtered, waving his hands frantically. “Only people like my accountant call me Mr. Lee! You look like you’re my age, or... a little older?” He looked up inquiringly at the taller man, who hesitated, then nodded.

“I was born in 1990.”

“See,” Jaehwan grinned, “you’re two years older than me! Just call me Jaehwan, please. We’re going to be living pretty close for a while.”

Taekwoon hesitated again, as if he wanted to refuse, but finally nodded.

“Okay,” Jaehwan said, probably feeling way too happy about that *but he didn’t care*, “so, I’ll see you tomorrow, then. Have a good night.”

“Good night,” Taekwoon echoed, and Jaehwan waited until he heard the door to the guest room click shut before falling on top of his bed and flailing around in a silent but rather violent freakout. He finally rolled onto his back and stared at the ceiling, breathing hard.

*Good god. With that living in my house, I might actually die BEFORE the crazy person gets to me. What on earth was Hongbin thinking?*

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Jaehwan woke the next morning to the soft sounds of voices somewhere in his apartment. Yawning sleepily and ruffling his bed-mussed hair, the singer wandered into his kitchen, saying, “Hongbinnie, why’re you here so—”

But Hongbin wasn’t alone, and Jaehwan’s mouth snapped shut, sleepy eyes going wide at the sight of Jung Taekwoon sitting at his kitchen table, eating breakfast. Oh. Right. That happened.

...God, he probably looked *terrible* right now.

“Morning, hyung,” that traitor Hongbin said brightly, scooping up a bite of rice. “Sleep well?”

“I slept fine,” Jaehwan replied distractedly, quickly trying to flatten down his hair while Taekwoon was focused on his food. He glared at Hongbin, silently promising him a *long* conversation in their future, but the impertinent brat simply smiled smugly back at him. “Any food for me?”

“On the stove,” Hongbin replied, and Jaehwan served himself a quick breakfast. Hongbin walked him through a simplified version of his schedule for the day as he ate, and then chivvied Jaehwan back into his bedroom before he could corner him about the bodyguard thing, hurrying him along because they didn’t have time to hang around and chat, hyung, we’ve got a full schedule today and we’re gonna be late.

Through various situations (probably orchestrated by his devil of a manager), Jaehwan and Hongbin were never alone together without Taekwoon for the next several days. But Jaehwan was determined, and he finally got his chance when they were at a radio recording. Taekwoon was waiting outside the booth where he couldn’t hear, and everyone else was busy getting things ready. “Hongbin,” he hissed, grabbing his manager’s arm, “what on earth were you *thinking?*”

Hongbin blinked, confused. “What, about the Q and A portion? I was just telling the producer —”

“No, not about the stupid Q and A,” Jaehwan waved that away irritably, “about my *bodyguard*! Why did you choose *him?*”

Hongbin’s confusion melted into amusement, and he smirked. “What? Has he not been living up to your expectations the last few days? He’s a professional, hyung. I’ve been friends with

him and his partner for a long time, they work for a very good private security company. What's the problem?"

"The *problem*," Jaehwan whispered, "is that he's too damn attractive! What are you trying to do, start rumors about us?"

"Oh?" Hongbin raised an eyebrow. "Is that a problem for you, having someone attractive as an employee? I had no *idea*, hyung, you should have told me *years* ago, I had no idea my presence was affecting you that way—"

"Oh shut up, you stupid show pony," Jaehwan grumbled, pushing Hongbin's face away as his friend cackled. "You're so not my type and you know it. Besides, don't you already have a hot boyfriend stashed away somewhere that you refuse to introduce to me?"

"Mmhm," Hongbin hummed, setting a bottle of tea in front of Jaehwan's seat. "And I'm going to keep it that way for as long as I can. You two would get along *far* too well."

"Uh-huh," Jaehwan sighed, unscrewing the top of the bottle and taking a swig. It was his favorite brand of tea, and his fans always sent a couple to wherever he was working.

It tasted a bit odd today, though, and Jaehwan frowned, taking another sip. That was weird. What was that flavor...

His stomach cramped, and Jaehwan grimaced, placing a hand on his belly. Ow. Maybe he'd eaten something that was a little off last night. Then it cramped again, harder, and then it began to *burn*.

"Ow," he gasped, the bottle sliding from his hand to wobble on the table, both hands coming to wrap around his stomach. This was wrong. Something was *wrong*. "Hongbin!"

"Jaehwan, what's the matter?" Hongbin said urgently, placing a hand on his shoulder. Jaehwan shook his head, gasping as the pain in his stomach intensified. He slid out of his chair onto the floor, landing on his hands and knees amidst all of the cables and electronics on the floor of the radio room. He could hear voices above him, speaking in worried tones, but all he could focus on was the pain in his stomach.

There were hands on his shoulders, a soft voice Jaehwan recognized as Taekwoon asking him what was wrong. Jaehwan shook his head frantically and gasped, "Trashcan!"

Taekwoon was instantly on it, snagging a small trashcan from the corner of the room and holding it in front of Jaehwan's face just in time for Jaehwan's stomach to heave and empty its contents into it.

"It's okay," Hongbin said, voice tight with panic, "It's okay, Jaehwan, the ambulance is on its way, just hold on."

Jaehwan leaned into Taekwoon's solid strength and wiped blood from his mouth.



“Glue poisoning,” the doctor said grimly, standing next to Jaehwan's hospital bed so that an exhausted Jaehwan could hear him as well. “One of the worst cases I've ever seen. You're very lucky you vomited almost immediately after it happened, Lee Jaehwan-sshi, or it could have caused permanent damage.”

“From *what*,” a white-faced Hongbin asked, standing very straight and still next to Jaehwan's bed. “Jaehwan's not a child! He didn't accidentally open up a bottle of super glue and stick it in his mouth!”

The doctor glanced at Jaehwan sympathetically. “Well,” he hedged, “Lee Jaehwan-sshi did just come out with a very big announcement not too long ago. I would perhaps start looking into the possibility that this was deliberate.”

“The tea,” Taekwoon said suddenly, from Jaehwan's other side. Jaehwan was too tired to turn his head to look at him, so he just closed his eyes and listened. “The bottle of tea that he was drinking. Where did it come from?”

There was a long pause. “From the fans,” Hongbin whispered, sounding stricken. “Jaehwan's fans always—but it was sealed! I watched him crack the seal myself!”

“There are ways to get around that,” Taekwoon said quietly.

“If you still have it, please bring that bottle to the hospital immediately,” the doctor ordered. “He's not out of the woods yet, and anything we know about the concentration and makeup of what he drank could help.”

His and Hongbin's voices moved away, probably discussing Jaehwan's treatment further. Jaehwan kept his eyes closed and just really hoped he could fall asleep until everything—the burning in his stomach, the pain in his throat, the knowledge that someone had tried to poison him—went away.

A hand settled softly in his hair, and Jaehwan startled slightly. “I'm sorry, Jaehwan,” Taekwoon whispered. “I'm sorry I couldn't protect you.”

Jaehwan wanted to tell Taekwoon that it wasn't *his* fault that some people were psycho, but it hurt far too much to talk, so he just let himself slip away into a drug-induced slumber.

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Jaehwan stayed in the hospital for a total of four days. His fans sent him outpourings of gifts, cards and flowers and stuffed animals filling his private room. He did not, for obvious reasons, accept any edible gifts.

Even after he was released, however, he didn't go back to work. Instead he went straight back to his apartment, where he was on strict bed rest and some serious painkillers. His voice had been wrecked by the glue and subsequent vomiting, and Jaehwan hadn't told anyone, but he was deathly afraid of permanent damage, so he did as he was told.

This meant, however, that he was spending nearly 24 hours a day with Taekwoon. Taekwoon, who was convinced that Jaehwan's poisoning was somehow his fault, despite both Hongbin and Jaehwan himself assuring him that neither of them blamed him for anything. Honestly, was Taekwoon supposed to taste-test everything Jaehwan ate? It had been a sealed bottle. No one was to blame.

*Well, except for the bastard who sent it to me,* Jaehwan thought bitterly, trying to flail his way upright so that he could grab his notebook off of the coffee table. The warm, comfy burrito of blankets that he was wrapped in foiled his every effort, however, and finally he had to give up in defeat, flopping back down on the couch and gasping for breath.

“Jaehwan?” Taekwoon's head popped up over the back of the couch. “What are you doing?”

Jaehwan glared up at him and flapped his hand imperiously in the direction of his notebook. “Hand me my notebook, peon!” he rasped.

Taekwoon folded his arms and frowned. “I don't know if I should,” he said. “You're supposed to be resting.”

“I *am* resting,” Jaehwan whined, his voice cracking a little and making him cough. “Look at me, I'm all wrapped up in a blanket burrito! I just really need to write down this melody before I forget it, okay, and play with some lyrics for a little bit—”

“That doesn't sound like resting to me,” Taekwoon reminded him, but he leaned over with his long arms and picked up Jaehwan's notebook. “No singing, all right?” he warned, bringing the notebook within reach of the singer's grasping hand. “You're still recovering.”

“I know, I know, you remind me all the time,” Jaehwan grumbled, snatching the notebook and flipping it open feverishly, pulling the mechanical pencil from its place in the spiral-bound spine. “Really, I only need a few minutes, don't worry...”

And he was lost in composition, barely noticing Taekwoon's fond sigh and the very light trailing of fingers through his hair as his bodyguard returned to his book.

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Jaehwan was basically used to living with Taekwoon now. He'd been thrown off a bit at first by the combination of Taekwoon's intimidating appearance and his absolutely ridiculous attractiveness, but he'd reconciled the two images quickly and now enjoyed the shy man's blushes whenever Jaehwan teased him. And now that they'd spent so much time together just quietly in the apartment, not rushing to schedules or in public, Jaehwan felt like he'd really gotten to know Taekwoon personally.

So yes, he was used to having another person in his apartment, used to eating with someone, used to small arguments about keeping their belongings out of the common space...

...Totally, completely, and absolutely *not* used to seeing Taekwoon flushed and wet, water droplets sliding down his bare chest to soak into the towel wrapped around his hips.

“Oh my god I am so sorry,” Jaehwan choked out, stumbling back a step and slapping a hand over his eyes. Not that that helped; the image of a mostly-naked Taekwoon, barely covered by a towel, was most definitely burned into his eyelids forever. “I am *so* sorry, I didn't know you weren't finished yet, I'll just—wait in my room—” he groped for his bedroom door and slammed it shut, melting into a puddle of aroused mortification on the other side. Dear god, what must Taekwoon think of him now? A pervert, for sure, who crept on his innocent, beautiful, completely straight bodyguard roommate who would never want to talk to him again and would surely immediately ask for Hongbin to find someone else—

A knock on his door vibrated against his back, making Jaehwan sit bolt upright. “Um,” Taekwoon's soft voice came through the wood, even more hesitant than usual, “I'm finished in the bathroom now, if you want to take a shower.”

“Great,” Jaehwan squeaked, and cleared his throat. “Um, great, thanks. I'll be out in a sec.” Just as soon as he could make his legs work. And make his boner go down.



Taekwoon didn't ask Hongbin to find a new bodyguard the next morning. Unfortunately, that might have had more to do with Hongbin's bad news than any lack of desire to do so on his part.

“We have a problem,” Hongbin announced grimly as soon as he let himself in to Jaehwan's apartment.

Jaehwan poked his head out of the kitchen, munching on a piece of toast. Hongbin was carrying a large manila envelope, already opened. “What's up?” Jaehwan asked, brow furrowing.

Hongbin entered the kitchen without answering. “Good, you're here,” he told Taekwoon, who was standing at the counter clutching his first cup of coffee. The sleepy-eyed bodyguard blinked slowly at this intrusion into his morning, but his eyes sharpened at the sight of the envelope and he moved to the table. “You need to see this.”

Without ceremony, Hongbin upended the envelope onto the table and poured out...pictures.

Pictures of Jaehwan, entering and exiting various music halls and recording studios around the city. Pictures of Taekwoon, standing in doorways. Pictures of the two of them, getting coffee in between schedules. Jaehwan laughing at something Taekwoon had said. Taekwoon ushering Jaehwan into a building, one hand hovering above the small of his back. Jaehwan and Taekwoon *in their apartment*, reading and making food and talking to each other.

All of them had been defaced. Jaehwan's throat was torn out in many of them, red marker ink spraying from the ruin of his throat like blood. Taekwoon's face was scratched out entirely, and in some of the pictures his body was so badly cut up that the pictures were barely holding together. Scribbled words screamed their hate over the pictures, four-letter words that made Jaehwan feel dirty just to read. Words like *slut* and *faggot* and *whore* and *slag*.

Mind numb, Jaehwan reached out with trembling fingers for the one piece of folded printer paper mixed in with the printouts. A large, warm hand covered his, preventing him from picking it up. Jaehwan turned uncomprehending eyes to look at Taekwoon.

“Here,” Taekwoon said. “Use chopsticks. The police might be able to get something from the paper.” He pressed a clean pair into Jaehwan’s hand, soft brown eyes understanding.

Jaehwan swallowed hard and nodded. Hands still trembling, he used the chopsticks to open the paper, and his breath shuddered out of him in one long rush.

GET RID OF HIM OR I WILL.

“This has officially escalated,” Hongbin said, face pale but set. “But I must confess I’m a little surprised at the focus. Taekwoon, what’s your impression?”

Taekwoon let out a long sigh, eyes darting over the filth spread over their table. “Hakyeon’s a better analyst,” he said, as though he was admitting to something embarrassing. “I think maybe we’d better call him in. Especially because this seems to be more focused on me. Which is a first, I have to admit.”

Hongbin nodded sharply, already pulling his phone out of his pocket. “I called the president as soon as I saw these, hyung,” he said to Jaehwan. “The entertainment company agrees that we shouldn’t take risks with your safety, so we’re going to put off your return to activities for hopefully only a few more days.” He raised his phone to his ear.

“Hi, Hakyeon-hyung. Yes, it’s been a long—no, hyung—*hyung*, listen, I’m not calling to catch up. I need—yes, I know, I’m the worst dongsaeng, even though Sanghyuk is *definitely* worse—No! Don’t distract me! Hyung, we need you to come over to Jaehwan-hyung’s apartment. Something’s happened.” Hongbin glanced over at the two other men. “No, they’re both fine, just a little shaken up. We just need your expert opinion. Okay. You know where it is? Okay, give me a call when you get here and we’ll buzz you up. Okay. See you soon.”

The apartment seemed very quiet after Hongbin hung up. “Who’s Hakyeon?” Jaehwan finally asked, just to break the silence.

Surprisingly, it was Taekwoon who answered. “My partner,” he said simply. “He usually does the analysis on cases like this, while I do the fieldwork.”

“Oh,” Jaehwan said, and fell silent again.

“How are you doing, hyung?” Hongbin asked tentatively.

Jaehwan shrugged. “Dunno.” His eyes drifted towards the pictures again, and he jerked them away. “It’s weird, you know.” He sat down in a chair and stared at his hands in his lap. “Even when Taekwoon came, after a while it just seemed like I had a friend living with me who just happened to follow me everywhere. This...” He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “This is all because I came out as gay? How can people hate other people so much?” His voice came out sounding small and lost, and Jaehwan bit his lip, fiddling with his fingers in his lap.

“Some people,” Taekwoon said, and his voice was unexpectedly fierce, “hate themselves so much that they can’t stand seeing anyone else doing well at something, and they have to spew their hate all over that person. They can never reach your level, so they’re trying to drag you down to theirs. Don’t let them.”

Jaehwan smiled gratefully up at Taekwoon, who was standing next to his chair as if ready to protect him from any crazy stalkers that came swinging through Jaehwan’s tenth-story window. “Thanks, Taekwoon,” he said softly. Taekwoon ducked his head, eyes sliding to the floor bashfully.

After a minute, Hongbin suggested, “Why don’t we move to the living room? We’ll be more comfortable while we wait.”

Jaehwan nodded, and so the three of them left the pile of pictures on the table and sat down in the living room, Jaehwan curled up on one end of the couch and Hongbin settled into an armchair. Taekwoon went around and closed all of the thin privacy curtains on the floor-to-ceiling windows before he sat down at the other end of Jaehwan’s couch, and Jaehwan wondered why for a second before he remembered the pictures of them in this very apartment. Goosebumps shivered up his skin, and he rubbed his arms, feeling dirty.

It didn’t take long for Hakyeon to arrive, which was good, because no one seemed to have anything to say about the situation. Hongbin’s phone going off felt like a firecracker, the way all three of them jumped. Hongbin fumbled it open. “Hello? Yeah. Okay.” He went to the door and checked the intercom, then pressed the button to allow Hakyeon into the building. “He’ll be up in a minute,” he told them.

When the knock on the door finally came, Hongbin pulled it open to reveal a slim, handsome man similarly dressed to Taekwoon in heavy black pants, white collared shirt, and many-pocketed black cargo jacket. “Hi!” he said, smiling and holding out a hand to Jaehwan, who shook it a bit bemusedly. “I’m Cha Hakyeon. I’m a big fan of your music, it’s an honor to meet you. I wish it could be under better circumstances. So, what’s the big emergency, Taekwoonie? Why did you call me in?”

Taekwoon gestured silently to the kitchen table, and the two of them moved into the other room to examine the evidence. Jaehwan didn’t watch; he didn’t want to see those pictures again. Instead he said to Hongbin as his manager took a seat on the couch, “I can see why Taekwoon is the one who does the fieldwork usually.”

Hongbin grinned, eyes crinkling. “Yeah, Hakyeon-hyung’s not really what most people would call *intimidating*. Since Taekwoon’s got that in spades, it works out well for them.”

“Hongbinnie,” Hakyeon called from the kitchen, “what do you want me to do with these pictures? Do you want me to take them into the police for you?”

“Yeah, actually, that’d be great,” Hongbin replied, levering himself up and joining the two bodyguards. Not wanting to be alone, Jaehwan followed, hovering at the edge of the kitchen and not looking at the pictures spread across the table. “I don’t want to leave Jaehwan alone right now.”

Taekwoon's head lifted and he looked over at Hongbin. "I am here," he said quietly, maybe a touch pointedly.

"Yeah, Taekwoonie'd never let anything bad happen to Jaehwan!" Hakyoon flashed a smile at Jaehwan, who managed a small one back. "He's really good at his job, you know, Taekwoonie is, and he loves you so he's been going absolutely crazy trying to make sure you're protected—"

Jaehwan blinked, every thought in his brain grinding to a halt. "What?" he squeaked, positive he couldn't have heard what he thought he heard, but Taekwoon was already punching Hakyoon in the arm and trying to smother his face, cheeks a brilliant pink.

"Ouch, Taekwoon, what is your problem?" Hakyoon complained, fending him off expertly. "Yeah, didn't you know?" he said to Jaehwan. "Taekwoon's one of your biggest fans, he loves your work. Taekwoon!" he gasped dramatically, grinning widely, "did you not *tell* him? Not even one autograph? Ow!"

Taekwoon finally managed to get his partner in a headlock and covered his mouth with his free hand. "I'm *working*," he mumbled, face still bright pink. "I would never ask my employer for something so unprofessional." He glanced at Jaehwan, eyes darting away quickly.

Jaehwan smiled, utterly charmed by this cute side of his manly, strong bodyguard. Taekwoon was his *fan*? He'd had no idea. "Well," he said, "after this guy is caught, I won't need a bodyguard anymore. I can sign anything you want then."

Hakyoon did something that made Taekwoon yelp and let go, rubbing his side. "Excellent!" Hakyoon said, raking his fingers through his hair to reorder it. "Sounds like a solid plan. Let's catch this creep!"

But that, unfortunately, brought the mood back down as they focused on the pictures. Jaehwan did his best to not look, but the discussion was unavoidable, and he found himself reluctantly listening in.

"Here, see this," Hakyoon was saying, busily rearranging the pictures with gloved hands, "he's focused on Jaehwan's throat in most of these, destroying what makes him famous. He's probably super jealous of your voice, Jaehwan, and your ability. And in these ones..." he hummed, looking over the others. "Definitely a lot of rage focused on Taekwoon. He's scratched out your face, which indicates that he wants you to disappear, as well as that he thinks you're handsome. Same with destroying your body; he wants to get rid of what makes you valuable to Jaehwan, although... I think..." Hakyoon pursed his lips and hummed in thought, sharp eyes darting over the pictures. "Yeah. Based on the pictures that he chose to send you—look at all these. There's no direct evidence that Taekwoon's a bodyguard. I think this guy thinks that you're Jaehwan's boyfriend, Taekwoonie."

Jaehwan gaped, totally surprised. "What!" he squeaked. "That's impossible!"

Hakyoon shrugged, still looking over the pictures. "Not really. Taekwoon's living with you, spending all of his time with you, accompanying you to all of your activities. Pretty close to a

boyfriend, if you ask me.”

Jaehwan groaned, closing his eyes. “I’m so sorry,” he told Taekwoon.

“Why?” Taekwoon and Hakyeon asked together, sounding a little surprised.

Jaehwan gestured impotently. “Well, because he thinks we’re dating!”

“It’s fairly common,” Taekwoon told him softly. “Don’t worry about it.”

“Well, yeah, but probably not to a gay music idol,” Jaehwan replied. “Everyone will think you’re gay now. I’m sorry.”

Hakyeon busted up laughing. Jaehwan frowned, confused, and Taekwoon said quietly, “Well, I *am* gay, so that doesn’t matter.”

Jaehwan gaped again, utterly and completely thrown for a loop. “You’re—what?”

“He’s gay,” Hongbin put in, a grin pulling at the edges of his mouth. “Sorry, did I forget to mention that when I hired him? Taekwoon’s been quietly out to his family and friends for years.”

Jaehwan turned slowly to look at his manager, whose grin only widened. “Well, guess we should get these to the police,” he said brightly. “Hakyeon, do you need a ride?”

“Sure, that’d be great,” Hakyeon said, quickly and carefully gathering up all of the pictures and sliding them back into the envelope. “See you later, Taekwoonie. Nice to meet you, Jaehwan-sshi!”

And with devious grins, the two of them left the apartment in ringing silence.

“I thought you knew,” Taekwoon said finally.

Jaehwan huffed out a laugh. “No. No, I definitely did not know.”

“Oh,” Taekwoon said. He cleared his throat and shifted his feet.

Jaehwan took a deep breath. “So, uh,” he bit his lip, “after this is over, I mean, once you’re not my bodyguard anymore, would you—”

The fire alarm went off.

“Motherfuck!” Jaehwan shouted. Just when he was going to finally nut up the courage!

“Come on,” Taekwoon said, suddenly right next to him, hand on his arm. “Grab your wallet and your phone, let’s go. Stick close to me.”

Wide-eyed, Jaehwan did as he was told, barely able to hear himself think over the shrill alarm. “What’s the matter?” he yelled, shoving his shoes on.

“Do you think it’s an accident that the alarm went off right after Hakyeon and Hongbin left us alone?” Taekwoon shouted back, leading the way to the front door. “I don’t know if he actually set a fire or just pulled the fire alarm, but I think this is your stalker. We can’t stay here. Follow me.” He stuck his head out the door cautiously, and Jaehwan noticed with a jolt of fear that he was holding a gun low against his side.

They hurried along the hallway, eyes peeled for any movement. There were only two other apartments on this floor, and nobody seemed to be at home at this time of morning, so they were alone as they entered the stairwell. Voices could be heard above and below them, other residents heading for the ground floor, and Taekwoon’s body language became tenser, his gun held close to his body.

They clattered down ten flights of stairs with no incident, entering the lobby with the rest of the residents. The security staff were helping everyone move onto the street, ushering them forward, and Taekwoon wrapped an arm around Jaehwan’s shoulders, eyes scanning the crowd sharply.

It happened in a split second; one man was moving against the flow of traffic, away from the front doors, and Jaehwan and Taekwoon noticed him at exactly the same time, Taekwoon bringing up his gun as the stranger did the same.

Screams could be barely heard over the shrieking of the alarm, other residents noticing the guns, and suddenly the area around them was mostly empty as people dashed for the doors. The security guards didn’t have guns, but their batons were out and ready as soon as they noticed what was going on, circling the three of them warily.

Jaehwan, heart in his throat, clutched the back of Taekwoon’s jacket. Oh god, oh god, oh god...

The stalker was screaming something inaudible, wild-eyed and crazed, and Taekwoon didn’t even blink. His arms dropped just slightly, and he fired.

The sound of the shot was swallowed by the alarm, and Jaehwan watched as the man crumpled silently to the floor, writhing and clutching his leg. The security guards moved in immediately, one of them wisely picking up his dropped gun and the other one grabbing him under the arms and dragging him to the door. Taekwoon wrapped an arm around Jaehwan and led him out after them.

They were the last ones out of the building, and Jaehwan blinked owlishly at the bright sunlight that seemed completely incongruous to everything that had just happened. The fire alarm was still loud, even outside, but his ringing ears could pick up a bit more sound now, the gasps and cries of the crowd as they spotted the bleeding man, the murmurs as they recognized Jaehwan, the wail of the sirens as the fire trucks finally came barrelling around the corner onto their street.

“Come on,” Taekwoon said, gently leading Jaehwan over to the side of the road and sitting him down on the curb. “Here. Look at me. Are you all right?” He tilted Jaehwan’s face up to look in his eyes, then ran brisk hands over his arms, checking to make sure he hadn’t been hurt.

“I’m fine,” Jaehwan said weakly, and blinked furiously, finally kicking his brain back into gear. “I’m not hurt. Are you okay? You—you shot him in the leg—”

Taekwoon nodded, settling back on his heels and looking at Jaehwan. “I’m a fairly good shot, and I was lucky he stood so still and let me shoot him. Oh.” He patted his pockets. “I should probably call Hakyeon and Hongbin, tell them to come back.”

“Don’t leave,” Jaehwan said hurriedly, sitting up straight and holding out a hand. “Don’t leave? Just sit next to me and call them.”

“Okay,” Taekwoon agreed, and folded his long legs down to sit on the ground next to Jaehwan.

The call was brief. Taekwoon told them that there’d been an incident and that the problem was handled, and that they should come back right away. Then they sat, watching the paramedics arrive and take charge of the stalker, the firefighters finally turning off the alarm and verifying that it had been false; the stalker had pulled the alarm in the lobby to get everyone out of the building.

Finally the police arrived, and hot on their heels were Hakyeon and Hongbin. The police immediately wanted to talk to Taekwoon and the security guards, and Jaehwan stuck to Taekwoon’s side stubbornly, telling all and sundry that Taekwoon was his bodyguard and had taken out a known threat to Jaehwan’s safety. Hongbin, after squeezing Jaehwan so tight he was actually afraid for his ribcage for a moment, verified that authoritatively, and Taekwoon and Hakyeon produced their certifications both as private security and as gun-owners. The security guards backed them up as well, and it seemed as though it would be an open and shut case. The police were already aware of the death threats, after all, and the man himself wasn’t helping his case any, ranting crazily about Jaehwan and his career through the painkillers the paramedics had pumped into him.

It took several hours, a trip to the hospital and the police station, and multiple written and verbal statements before Taekwoon and Jaehwan were finally allowed to go home. It was early afternoon, but Jaehwan felt absolutely exhausted as he toed off his shoes and padded wearily into his apartment. “I want to sleep for a week,” he sighed, flopping onto the couch.

Taekwoon remained standing, shifting his weight a little anxiously. “Well,” he began awkwardly, “the threat’s over now. I suppose I’ll be leaving you in the next couple days.”

“What?” Jaehwan jackknifed upright, adrenaline surging through his body. “No! You can’t leave!”

Taekwoon blinked at him, and Jaehwan blushed. “I mean,” he said awkwardly, “I wanted to, uh, ask you if maybe, now that you’re not my employee, you want to, uh, go on a date... sometime...?”

Taekwoon stared at him, and then Jaehwan had the delightful pleasure of watching him nearly melt into a puddle of mortification. Hiding his bright red face in his hands, Taekwoon mumbled, “You want...to go on a date...with me?”

“Well, yeah,” Jaehwan grinned, getting to his feet and pulling Taekwoon's hands away from his face. The taller man just ducked his head instead, refusing to let Jaehwan see his expression. “I mean, I thought I was pretty obvious with how much I liked you.”

“I thought you were just friendly,” Taekwoon whispered. “You’ve always seemed super friendly on TV.”

Jaehwan shrugged. “Well, I am,” he replied. “But there's a difference between being friendly and flirting. I was actually trying to keep it low-key, I thought you were straight until Hakyeon said otherwise.” He squeezed Taekwoon's hands, refusing to relinquish them as Taekwoon made a half-hearted attempt to tug them away. “So how about it? Will you go on a date with me?”

Taekwoon was still hiding his face, but he nodded shyly. “I...I would like that a lot,” he said quietly.

Jaehwan grinned happily. “And can I kiss you?”

Taekwoon’s head ducked even lower as he made a mortified sound, but he whispered, “Yes, you can.”

Jaehwan carefully tilted Taekwoon's face up, smiling at his embarrassed glare, and placed a delicate kiss on his pouty lips. Despite his embarrassment, Taekwoon kissed back, their lips clinging and coming together again as soon as they pulled away.

Finally Jaehwan pulled back and wrapped his arms around Taekwoon, grinning up into his face. “I am going to date the *shit* out of you,” he promised. “Just you wait. I am going to be the best boyfriend *ever*.”

Taekwoon rolled his eyes, but wrapped his own arms around Jaehwan, returning the hug. “I know you are,” he said, as if there had never been any doubt in his mind, and Jaehwan smiled happily, resting his head on his shoulder.

Turned out getting stalked wasn't so bad after all.

End Notes

Although dramatized for the purpose of fiction, the description of Jaehwan's glue poisoning is fairly accurate, and inspired by the poisoning of TVXQ's U-know Yunho by an anti-fan in 2006. To my knowledge, Yunho spent several days in the hospital after drinking something with super glue in it given to him by a fan. However, I have no idea how long it would take to fully recover, and I'm only speculating about it potentially damaging Jaehwan's voice. It's fiction, I can do what I want.

The bit about being able to reseal plastic bottles without breaking the safety seal is also true. People in California use the trick to bring alcohol into places that charge expensive prices for alcohol and don't allow outside drinks other than water. (I'm sure people in other areas do the same thing, but I'm from California so my only experience is from there.)

The stalking and defaced pictures I made up, mostly from my imagination and the many, many cop shows I have seen in my life. Hakyeon's psychobabble when he analyzes the pictures also has no real basis in reality, although people with mental fixations often do want to destroy whatever they're fixated on.

Also, Hongbin's secret boyfriend that he never wants to introduce to Jaehwan is Wonshik. But I couldn't work that into the story.

Thank you for reading! If you've got any other questions, drop me a comment and I'll be happy to answer them!

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