

Taehyun usually always went alone. After every game, after every practice, after every day alone. And it wasn't because nobody wanted to walk him home. Hell, all of the members had offered to walk him home at least once in the time that he knew them, so that wasn't the reason he always went alone.

It was a choice. A conscious decision he always made. It's not like he didn't like their company. He did. He loved it. But it was during that time, that alone time during the way home that Taehyun was at peace the most. When he felt the most zen while walking along the nighttime bridge, stargazing with himself like he was his own best friend.

So he appreciated the most those moments with himself that the world was able to give him after a long day.

But for some reason, he didn't feel like being alone this time. For some odd reason, he felt like being with someone on this walk. And not just anybody. A certain someone that's been on his mind for a long time.

"She's different." He found himself finally voicing after a couple minutes of silence. He could barely feel his fingers in the pockets of his thick coat, but the view of the Han river made the enduring worth it.

The two had been walking in silence. As usual, it wasn't bad silence. Peaceful silence rather. "You think?" The older boy wondered back, a still voice. "What were you expecting?"

To be honest, Taehyun was sure himself what he was expecting from her. After everything he was told prior, he wasn't expecting to see someone like her. Someone so honest and true. So down to earth yet a complete airhead. She was the type who could get along with anybody she wanted to, which is probably why the members loved her as much as they did.

"I don't know," He trailed, looking up at the stars hoping to find one he could call his. "But she was really nice... so she's a good different."

Taehyun glanced over at Beomgyu, but he still looked deep in his thoughts. He had been ever since Joy had left his sight. He hummed to let the other know he had heard what he said, his eyes skipping over the cracks of the sidewalk they walked along.

Taehyun had been curious about something ever since the game started. He hadn't asked before since it really didn't seem like a good time. But he figured he could ask now.

He breathed in deeply, afraid that this question might ruin the mood, but shot anyway. "Before the game started, you told me something." He continued looking straight, unable to meet Beomgyu's expectant gaze as he said this. "You said that Joy should've gotten that tuition without having to worry about anything.." He was hesitant on continuing since this could be a sensitive and personal topic for him, but still, he couldn't hide his desire to know.

"What tuition were you talking about?"

He waited a moment, maybe two as he allowed Beomgyu to collect his thoughts on the matter. But after a moment, he spoke.

"Oh.." He let out, almost like he could understand why Taehyun would be confused by that. The boy sighed deeply, reeling his head back to look at the dark sky above him. For a second, Taehyun could see a twinkle in his eye. Though it faded quickly.

"You probably already know this but Joy wasn't born to the wealthiest of families. It's been that way for as long as I can remember." Yeah. Taehyun figured when she spoke about her financial problems as something of the usual. He didn't want to assume anything then, but since Beomgyu was now confirming it he didn't feel so dumb for thinking so.

"She wanted to go to college more than anything in the world, but she knew she couldn't. Not right after graduation at least. So I made a promise with her." He paused, his tone becoming more somber.

"After finding out that the prize for the spring championship was a scholarship, I knew I had to do something to help her." Taehyun finally allowed himself to look at other, and he could only feel bad.

Beomgyu really did care about the people around him. It hurt Taehyun to see almost. Because when he couldn't do the things he wanted, he got angry at himself. The fact that he even tried in the first place said something about who he was. There was no reason for him to go around and say things about himself that simply weren't true just because he failed. He tried, and he was a good person because of that.

Though Taehyun realized he could tell him that however many times he wanted, but it wouldn't mean a thing unless Beomgyu knew it to be true.

"After all those years of only being able to watch, I wanted to help her in the only way I knew how. But you already know how that turned out." He let out another sigh, his eyes drifting to the river just beside them. Taehyun eyed the side of his face, unsure of why he seemed so down. I mean he knew sadness could come whenever it pleased upon someone, but he just couldn't understand why now?

They had won the game they had longed for, he got to finally see and talk to Joy after the longest of only being able to wish for her to be there, and it was a Friday night. What was there to be upset about?

"What's wrong, Beomgyu?" He could only ask worriedly. Again, he knew it could be nothing, or maybe simply because he was tired, but he had a feeling it was something more. He was concerned and wanted to help, but knew it was his decision whether he chose to disclose his problems.

Beomgyu slowly turned him, averting his gaze to meet Taehyun's. And for a moment, he looked about ready to brush it off. To say 'nothing. i'm fine'. But he didn't. Instead, he smiled a bit. A weak smile. A wilted smile that only lasted a second before he looked away again. Like if he kept looking any longer, Taehyun would eventually figure it out.

And it was quiet for a moment. The air as still as it always was, the vague yells and screaming of people from the distance coming and going with the wind though he could never fully make out their words. It stayed this way, until he spoke up again softly.

"Can we stop here?"

He slowed his pace, his hands slipping out his pockets to run along the railing. The only thing separating the two boys and the big fall into the river. Taehyun followed his actions hesitantly, also beginning to lean onto the ice cold railing as he took a small step next to him. Taehyun looked at him, and could tell straight off the bat that he was troubled by something.

The older dipped his head frustratedly, his fingers running up and down the nape of his neck. Taehyun wondered why Beomgyu wanted to stop so suddenly, but could only figure that it had something to do with the next thing he would say. He just looked to be struggling to find the right words.

"I... just thought it would feel different.."

He finally looked up. His stern eyes looking out into the distance that could only go so far. Taehyun could only continue to look at him. He didn't show it in his expression, but this statement threw him for a big loop. Mainly because it could mean a lot of different things. But the only real question in his mind despite it all was still 'he thought what would feel different?'

"*Feel different..*" He repeated under his breath quietly, trying to decipher just what he meant.

"Are you talking about seeing Joy again..?"

It's the only possible conclusion his brain could come up with. He didn't quite know what Beomgyu meant. But when the boy never answered him, instead his throat producing a tiny sound of dubiety and his eyes only continuing to look solemnly ahead, he would only assume his assumption was correct.

Taehyun continued to look at him for a second longer, until he diverted his attention onto whatever it was Beomgyu had been looking so attentively at in the far distance. It was hard to see anything really. He only really noticed the moon's light reflecting onto the river's soft ripples calmly.

"When she left, everything felt meaningless." He started this silently. His tone as soft and calm as the ripples in the water he couldn't stop looking at. His voice vulnerable and open to the other like he was finally letting down this wall he built up. Like he was finally being honest with himself. And when he spoke like this, the younger fell captive for him. For his voice alone. So naturally, he listened intently.

"I felt incomplete because for my entire life she was the only person in the world who I felt truly comfortable with. The only one I wanted to be with constantly. And I thought I'd never get to have that with anyone else."

Wait. Hold on..

"I was so used to being taken care of by someone that I was scared of being alone."

What.. was this..?

Why the older was telling him this he was unsure of. Though it sounded like something that had been on his mind for a while. So Taehyun listened closely despite his confusion and uncertainty. Despite the beat of his heart that for some reason was picking up pace just listening to his words. Just thinking about what they truly meant.

"But then I met you, and I..." He paused, almost like he was preventing himself from finishing whatever he had originally been planning on saying.

"Everything just changed." He quickly finished after a moment.

Everything just changed. Is that so? Now that Taehyun thought about it, he could say the same about him. And he wanted to speak, to say something in return. But for some reason, he didn't. For some reason he found his voice stuck in his throat and unable to come out. Unable to form the words that he knew he'd been thinking for awhile. Yet every time he was close to making them out, they always found a way to dissipate into his thoughts again.

His mind at this second was too busy trying to fully understand what he was telling him. Running at full gear to not miss a single beat.

"I found myself starting to worry less about being taken care of, and more on how I could take care of you. When we were together, I always wanted to be looking out for you. The same way she looked out for me I guess.. except,"

Taehyun noted the way he nipped at his lower lip, reluctant on continuing he could only assume. But he wanted him to. Taehyun wanted him to say absolutely everything that was on his mind. He wanted him to say it all without watering anything down. Without fear of what Taehyun might think in response to it. Because at this moment, all he wanted was to know it all.

"I did it because every time I saw that look in your eyes when I said something to you—when I touched you.. I felt something. And it didn't take me long after being around so much to realize that I.. was starting to fall for you."

So what was it that he was trying to say? He was seemingly telling him all of this for a reason, right? What was that reason? Was it simply because Beomgyu wanted to make Taehyun flustered? To make him shy? To make his entire body go warm even though it felt like absolute zero where they stood? What was it that Beomgyu wanted Taehyun to know?

"I guess what I'm saying is that... um.. I.." He was stammering. Buffering like not even he knew what he was trying to say. Sucking his teeth out of frustration like the words still weren't coming to him. Sighing at the sky like the words would be plastered up there for him. He was struggling, and the younger could see that.

But luckily for him, Taehyun was quick to pick up on things. And soon enough, he knew what Beomgyu wanted to say. Had a vague idea of it. Now it was just up to older to figure it out himself.

Taehyun found himself taking a step closer to him, their shoulders slightly bumping into each other as a smile began forming on his lips unknowingly. His heart was racing. He was nervous, but they were good nerves. Exciting nerves. Nerves that he only ever got around him.

He felt like the entire world around him was spinning on its axis, back and forth and trying to pull together unbeknownst to the two. So it felt natural when he rested his head on his shoulder. His entire body leaning toward him just as if it was the first time he had done it. But this time he did it with certainty in his heart that kept reminding him just how much he wanted to be around the older by the uncountable times it thumped in his ears.

Taehyun grabbed his hand, a hand that had been picking at the fabric of his jacket ever since they had stopped at this spot, and opened up his palm slightly.

"Why are you filtering your words?" He asked him, a way to guide his mind on the right path as he traced the lines on his palms with his thumb. "You know what you want to say, so say it exactly the way you're thinking it."

He wanted them, his words, unfiltered. Untouched by the human conscious. Unaltered by words. Unchanged by him. He wanted them the way they were. He wanted Beomgyu the way he was. But there was only so much he could say to make that happen.

"I don't think that's a good idea.."

"Why?" The blonde pushed further, now noticing how the love line on his palm arched upwards. But Beomgyu didn't seem to have an answer ready for him. He remained silent as he allowed the younger to continue to run lines through his hand, and Taehyun could tell he was really thinking about it.

"What I'm really thinking... is that really what you want to hear?"

Yes. Without a shadow of a doubt it was. More than anything, that's what he wanted to hear right now.

"If you're willing.. yes." He wasn't begging by any means, but the way he responded could be taken that way. He didn't mean to sound so desperate, but he guessed he just couldn't help it. He couldn't help a lot of things when he was around Beomgyu.

And for a couple of minutes longer, the two stayed silent. Taehyun continuing to feel the sensitive skin on his palms like he had never seen anything like it before, Beomgyu further pondering what it was that he wanted to say. What it was that he wanted to be let known to the other. And it felt like an eternity of this. It felt like time was simply an illusion for those mere minutes. He wouldn't have minded staying like that for a bit longer, but at some point it had to end. And he knew the moment that Beomgyu had closed off his hand that it was ending. He knew when he turned his entire body to face him, that something new was starting.

Yet he only eyed him in confusion, curious as to what he was doing. Why his attention had suddenly shifted towards him entirely. But he never questioned it, didn't have time before he took Taehyun's hands in his, forcing the boy's body to face him as well.

What was he doing?

For a second, the older boy looked down at them. He gazed down at their interlocked hands, his thumb soothing the delicate spot opposite of his palms lovingly as to not cause any pain or discomfort for the younger. But Taehyun only found himself dazing at him, unable to look away in awe and bewilderment.

He parted his lips, and spoke his next words delicately.

"Listen carefully then." His eyes traveled up, and finally locked with Taehyun's. He felt his breath hitch as soon as they did. He could never handle being so close to him, being touched by him. Even after so much he always found himself feeling the same panic that was being unable to handle it all.

"I don't know how long this feeling will last. Maybe it'll go away at some point, maybe it won't. I don't know. But.. I do know that right now, at this moment all I want to do is to be with you."

Beomgyu..

"I want to take care of you. I want to hold you, always be near you. To be there for you because only God knows how much you've been there for me."

.. stop it..

"I want to see your smile. I want to be the one that makes you laugh. Anything in your life that hurts you, I want to be able to make you forget about it."

You.. can't..

"I want to do all these things for you, if you let me."

If Taehyun let him?

If Taehyun let him.

It seemed like he didn't have a choice in the matter. Whenever the older spoke like this, when he held him like this it felt like nothing in the world could make Taehyun want to distance himself from it. He knew that no matter how hard he tried, it would be hard for him to leave his grip. He honestly felt like his heart was being held hostage, but he truly didn't want to be let go. Not now. Not ever.

He felt Beomgyu's hand cup the side of his face, his thumb gently riding across his cheek as he looked towards him for some type of reaction. But Taehyun didn't say anything. He couldn't. He found his words stuck in his throat again, his eyes growing dry as he had forgotten to blink.

"I realized the moment I hugged Joy, that you were always there. That I didn't need her to feel complete again because I already felt complete." He inched closer, his eyes never departing from the others as he smiled. A smile that wasn't broken for once. A smile of pure... joy.

"You completed me, Taehyun."

And these words struck him like an arrow to the heart.

Beomgyu. If only you knew that was the worst possible thing you could've said right now.

Because in a sense, the feeling was mutual.

But his damn words. Right when he needed them the most, they wouldn't form. Right when he felt like saying a million things at once, his voice refused to come out. He absolutely hated this.. and loved it at the same time.

Hated the feeling of being left speechless, heart pounding like it would rip straight through his chest. Loved.. well, everything else that weren't those two things. The loving way he held his hands and face, gentleness in his tone when he spoke that made Taehyun absolutely melt every time. The warmth that he radiated effortlessly whenever they were close. All these feelings inside of him, and he still knew not what to say.

"So.. will you let me?"

Yes. Goodness yes. One million times yes. Taehyun would let him, wanted nothing but to let him. Wished there was a way to express his answer other than just standing there and looking at him. But he was heartstruck, and it was all thanks to Beomgyu.

He felt himself swallow hard, finding it hard to look away from him.

"Yes.."

Finally, after what felt like forever, he managed to find his voice deep inside of him. Managed to force it out to say the one thing he wanted to say the most. The one thing that was the most important. He said this with uncertainty in his tone, though he had no uncertainty in his heart about his decision.

Taehyun could see the way the corner of Beomgyu's lips curled to his answer. How his eyes softened even more than they already were. How it felt like everything in his body lost its tension as he leaned closer to the younger, their lips just inches apart as they lingered above one another's.

This could only have lasted less than a second, but that second felt excruciating to Taehyun. The amount of self control it took of him to not go in for a kiss right then and there was outstanding. He didn't need to resist, but wanted to moreover. He wanted to wait for Beomgyu whenever he was ready to close the gap himself. Taehyun had gone in for a kiss the first time, so it was only fair that he give him this opportunity.

But it was all the same to him when it happened. All the same when Beomgyu's lips finally met his like he had been waiting for, sending his body into shock as he felt his legs grow weaker. His body grow warmer. And yes they've kissed before, but why it felt like it was the first time he didn't know. Why his lips still felt so unfamiliar to him he wasn't sure. He didn't want to admit it, in fear of the realization that Beomgyu really had him wrapped around his finger. But the chills that ran up his spine and up his arms—not because of the cold—already told him the truth.

He wanted to know Beomgyu's lips better. To be able to recognize them with his eyes closed, from their taste alone. So he kissed him back, all of the memories the two had shared together flashing just behind his half lidded eyes.

He would've never thought that Beomgyu out of everyone he had met in Carastol would make him feel this way. Back then, he'd never think that he would ever allow himself to be so open and ready for him. Taehyun just thought of Beomgyu as a lowlife. As somebody who was rude just to be rude. Who made people feel bad for the sake of his own boredom. He thought Beomgyu was one of those people. But he was so wrong. And this moment, the way Taehyun's entire being followed his every movement just to keep up only proved that he never really thought those things to be true.

His hand that once was placed on his cheek had travelled to the back of Taehyun's neck, caressing his nape and only continuing to send him into a whirl. An endless spiral of a maze that no matter how many times he kissed Beomgyu, no matter how many times he felt his touch on his bare skin, he'd never be able to find the way out. He'd only continue to wander, never being able to know what it would be like not having this. Not having him.

He wanted this to last. With each second that passed, it dawned on him that at some point it would end. That their lips would at a certain moment have to depart. That at any given time, they would have to let each other go. But it was more bearable knowing that Beomgyu wasn't going anywhere far. And neither was Taehyun.

The boy for that moment just allowed himself to have this. He allowed himself to live in this moment, this second. His fingers tightening around Beomgyu's hand that was still holding onto his as he was unable to express any other way just how the older made him feel.

So when he slowly found the warm soft feeling in his lips disappear, he didn't feel sad or upset. Instead, excited and hopeful for the next time they would appear again. The next time he would feel them.

His chest and heart felt weak as he allowed himself to catch his breath, the pressure of something pushing up against his forehead gently shortly after they pulled back.

He couldn't tell straight away what it was, but he knew it felt warm on his skin. So he opened his eyes, his heart full and ready to erupt from inside of him to find that Beomgyu had rested his forehead on his. The boy's smile as beautiful and captivating as anything he'd ever seen.

Was this a dream? It all felt so surreal. Too good to be true. At this moment he wished he could have this for the rest of his life. But knowing well that graduation was right around the corner, he knew that this wish was almost impossible.

He knew that life after high school wasn't going to be the same. Knew that they'd both probably go on to pursue two completely different paths. It made him sadder than he'd like to admit. He always thought of himself as independent. Taehyun always knew he was better off by himself in the long run. But this moment made him question the integrity of that thought. It made him question whether he could even stand to be alone after all that's happened.

It was definitely something worth thinking about. But not now. No, not now.

"Thank you for pulling me into your light, Taehyun. For not leaving me in the dark."

He couldn't take much more of the sweet talk. The sincerity in his words, he didn't want to hear it anymore. At least he thought he didn't. Deep inside though, he knew he loved it more than anything.

"God, you're so formal." He aired out with a chuckle, finally fully being able to use his voice after everything. "You don't have to thank me. As long as you're here and happy.. that's all I care about."

Beomgyu's grin grew even wider at this. His eyes twinkling like the night sky was painted in them.

Taehyun shut his eyes again, wanting to just feel everything in this moment without missing a single second. Wanting to memorize what Beomgyu's forehead felt on his in case he'd ever forget. Wanting to remember what it was like standing so close to him.

He felt strangely at peace despite the speed his heart was going. And it only got worse as he felt Beomgyu's hands clasp the back of his head suddenly. He didn't know why he did so, but he didn't question it. He just continued to feel the world around him through closed eyes. Allowed Beomgyu to pull his head downwards and toward him. And didn't say a word when he felt him plant a small but lasting kiss on his forehead.

A forehead kiss.

Man it really felt like his heart would explode at any second now. He didn't know how he was so composed.

He only found himself opening his eyes a little shortly after he did this, Beomgyu's tense but soft and love filled eyes welcoming him back into the world around him. Again, he couldn't say anything. Could only stare at him, not surprised over anything he did per se, just unable to understand how this was real. How he was real.

"*My second chance..*" He whispered this under his breath, though Taehyun more than heard it. The name pulled on the strings of his heart like it was a marionette doll, Beomgyu being it's puppeteer and controlling it however he pleased with the simple movements of his fingers.

"No matter what happens, you'll always be my second chance."

No matter what happens, huh Beomgyu?

Taehyun smiled stupidly, trying to avoid a toothy grin though he couldn't help it.

After all of his struggles he seemed to face throughout the couple of months he'd been here, those exact words made it all seem worth it. Being here with Beomgyu made it all worth it in his eyes. Would it be selfish to say that if given the choice he'd do it all over again? Maybe it was. Maybe it wasn't.

He didn't know. Didn't care actually. Not right now at least. The only thing on his mind right now was him. And because of that, he didn't feel like he needed to worry about things that would later come. He just wanted to focus on the now. Nothing but the now.

Because, although he never thought the older would do this, people disappeared without warning. Without any say in where they went or why they did it. They both knew that from experience. So he wanted to make sure that every second they spent together from here on end was lived to the fullest.

At the end of the day, he never really knew what could happen. And if one day Beomgyu disappeared from his life too, then he'd want to have good memories of him. Memories that never died, that were long lasting in his heart.

Memories that he could recall in the moment, only to feel as if he was back in that present time.

Yeah, that's what he wanted.

And weirdly enough, he knew that this moment would for sure be one of them.