

It was already twelve o'clock at night, and Taehyun was completely exhausted. The only reason he wasn't sleeping, surrounded by his warm blankets was because, despite how comfortable he would feel, he knew he wouldn't be able to fall asleep. He'd been trying to for the past hour, and he figured that if he wasn't going to get any sleep anytime soon, that he might as well should finish his homework.

He did have a desk in his very spacious bedroom, but sitting up straight in the chair always ended up hurting his back. Taehyun, as an alternative, liked sitting on his bed. It was more comfortable for his posture because every now and then, he could just throw himself into the cushions. And although it did leave his butt feeling numb, he didn't mind it as much as his back.

But at this moment, he wasn't really focused on his homework. He had stopped being focused on his work as soon as Beomgyu had texted him that he wanted to come over. I mean, who would be able to focus after that?

He really didn't know why he was so intent on it. It's not like they needed to discuss anything that couldn't wait until tomorrow. Not to mention how late it was, and that they would for sure wake up groggy in the morning. But he didn't seem to care, and it was clearly evident when he felt his phone vibrate in his palm.

His heart jumped as soon as he read who the message was from.

He felt his lips form a tiny smile, letting out a little laugh. That was before he realized that he should probably get up and open the door for him. He couldn't imagine how cold he probably was.

Quickly, he jumped to his feet and sprinted out of his bedroom. And he didn't realize it but his smile only grew stupidly bigger as he ran closer towards his front door.

He checked through one of the small glass panes on either side of the door to make sure it was in fact Beomgyu outside.

And it was. He was standing on the second step, his hands stuffed into the pockets of his grey jacket as he shivered. He had his hood on, and his pants were also extra baggy.

He didn't dress to impress anyone, seemingly to rather keep himself warm. And Taehyun more than admired that. With a little eye roll, he unlocked his door, and opened it only a little to not let the cold hit his bare limbs.

"You're actually crazy." He stated teasingly through the small gap in the door. Obviously referring to the fact that he did this in the first place. Beomgyu snapped his eyes towards him at the sound of his voice in a panic, but when he saw who it actually was, his eyes softened with a shameless smile.

"What? You didn't think I would come?" He stepped a little closer, the dryness of the air turning his airy laugh into a cloud. And it was this that told Taehyun that he couldn't stay outside for longer. He didn't even want to know how far away he lived.

He reached out for his hand, which was ice cold to the touch, and pulled him inside.

"Aren't you afraid of catching a cold or something?" After Beomgyu stepped through his door frame, Taehyun pushed the front door closed, making sure to lock it like it previously had been.

"No, not really."

In the corner of his eye, Taehyun could tell Beomgyu was loitering around. Probably taking in his sudden surroundings. Though he wasn't planning on keeping him here. Not when his mom could come home at any moment.

"Come on. My room is just down the hall."

Taehyun tugged at Beomgyu's sleeve to get his attention. Mainly because he seemed too intrigued by his living room. Though he didn't blame him. It was only compulsion to be that way when entering a new space.

Eventually he began to tail him, of course still eyeing everything he passed by.

"You don't have any siblings?" Beomgyu, as soon as they entered the comfort of Taehyun's room, popped this question. Was he that nosy about other people's lives? The younger found it kind of amusing in a way. And there was no reason he couldn't know, so of course he was going to answer.

He slowly pushed his door closed until he heard a click, and then looked back up towards the older to answer his question. But as soon as he entered, it looked as if he even forgot Taehyun existed. He seemed to be more interested in his shelf just above his desk that showcased multiple framed pictures of his friends and family, and awards that he had gotten over the years from playing volleyball.

Taehyun couldn't help but to smile at his curiosity towards everything. He reminded him of a toddler at the store, unable to keep their hands to themselves.

"Never seen these guys before.." He picked up a bronze plated frame from his shelf carefully as he asked this. "Are these your friends?" He held it closer to his face, examining the unfamiliar faces.

Taehyun walked toward his side to try and see what he was referring to, though he had a hunch on what it could be.

And just looking at the picture brought back memories. Good memories.

"Yeah.. my old team back in Acedami.."

Beomgyu looked over at him, almost like he didn't notice Taehyun walk that close to him. But once he knew, he angled the photo to make it so they could both see it together. It was a picture of tiny Taehyun, and five other students posing with a trophy. Taehyun barely remembered what happened that day. Only vividly remembering them winning, and taking this photo together.

"We took this when we won our first game. It was also my first time competing..."

Just gawking at the way he used to look left him in shock no matter how many times he did it. Puberty hit hard in just a span of three years.

Taehyun could see in his peripheral vision a small smile forming on the older's face as he put the picture back where it once stood.

"These were taken a while ago."

This sudden observation threw Taehyun for a small loop as he looked pointedly at the other, hoping he would elaborate on his statement. And Beomgyu returned the look with a curious gaze..

"Don't you still hang out with them?"

This question, for some unknown reason, left Taehyun feeling a little dejected. Maybe because it just reminded him that him and his old team weren't that close anymore. Not after he transferred anyway. He tightened his lips, and let his eyes fall to the floor.

Wouldn't it be a little embarrassing to admit that Taehyun had absolutely nobody else besides his current team? Would it be humiliating to admit that the friends he used to consider close let him go so easily? He almost didn't want to answer this question.

Taehyun let out a wilted sigh, walking over to the foot of his bed, and letting himself crawl into his previous spot. The spot he had been curled up in doing his homework since before Beomgyu came. A spot that made him feel relatively secure.

He never wanted to admit it. Never even had to think about it since everything that was happening in his new school was all happening so fast. But Beomgyu out of all people being able to see it, despite not knowing anything about their relation standing, didn't sit right with the blonde.

"After I left.." Taehyun paused for a second, looking up at Beomgyu a little reluctantly. On a normal day, he wouldn't want to even speak of it. But there was something about feeling drowsy that made people reveal more than they intended to.

"They just kind of forgot about me, so..." The last thing Taehyun wanted was to force people to pity him. To feel bad for him. He didn't need their sympathy, especially not Beomgyu's sympathy.

"I've been thinking of replacing those pictures with some new ones anyway."

Beomgyu stood still, staring at him a little unsure of what he was saying. Almost like he could sense he was bothered by the question in one way or another. But Taehyun wasn't exactly the best at hiding what he felt. It didn't take a genius to see that.

But the air did feel a little tense after that.

Dammit why did he always have to go and ruin good things? He hated that he had this effect on people. He just wished there was someone who could counter his actions. Make them bounce back like they never happened.

Taehyun looked down at his textbook as he tapped it with his pencil, a slight scowl to himself for always managing to do this.

At least he could keep Beomgyu busy for a little bit longer with those photos. It would give Taehyun a little bit of time to figure out what the hell he would say nex—

Snap!

But Taehyun was so distracted by his thoughts that he didn't notice Beomgyu pull out his phone, and snap a picture of him with the flash. He quickly looked over, just slightly blinding his vision to the light, before he realized what the older had done.

"What th—"

"This can be the first one."

Taehyun was ready to question him. Ready to scold him for taking such a sudden picture without his permission. He didn't like taking pictures to begin with, but these simple words made his voice halt midway.

Beomgyu, with a little smile, ambled over to the younger who was speechless. He let himself sit down next to his side, and showed him the picture that he took on his phone screen.

Taehyun looked, and there was nothing special about it. It was just a picture of Taehyun sitting alone on his bed, surrounded by books and blankets.

He averted his eyes towards the boy next to him. Why would he replace such memory filled pictures with a photo of him doing absolutely nothing? This is what he wondered.

Beomgyu returned the look as he seemingly answered the question Taehyun was pondering at this very moment.

"I know it looks like nothing," He looked down at the picture, zooming in on the other's face a little.

"But I think you'd look much better in a frame by yourself, than in a frame with other people who don't care about you anymore."

Wow. That sentence felt like a punch in the gut.

But a good punch. A punch that he desperately needed to hear.

Was this actually Beomgyu talking to him right now? How did he always know what to say? It didn't make him feel better per se, but it did help him remember that he didn't need them anymore. So rather, it made him feel cared and watched for.

And his heart tightened, unable to express in words how grateful he was to have met not just him, but all of the other guys as well. He wasn't alone. He never was.

So all he did was smile. A smile that said the simple words of 'thank you' but also that expressed gratitude beyond words.

He allowed his head to bonk with Beomgyu's playfully, signifying something that not even he was sure of as he averted his gaze down onto the books and notebooks in front of him. At this moment, he felt like he could tell Beomgyu anything. It was dangerous, and he knew that. But he just wanted to feel vulnerable. Feeling vulnerable was relaxing in a way.

"I know what it feels like."

Taehyun's ears twitched at these words. He didn't look over, but surprisingly enough he knew exactly who Beomgyu was talking about. And he kind of felt guilty that he knew. But of course he wasn't going to say anything. Not now at least.

In a placid and gentle tone, Taehyun went on.

"What it feels like?" He repeated in question. He could see Beomgyu nod slowly, his eyes stuck on his blank phone that was held inside of his palms.

"When someone you thought would always be there for you, cuts you out of their life.." Taehyun noticed the boy look up at him, and he couldn't help but to stare back.

"I know what that feels like... and I know that it fucking sucks."

Taehyun felt his eyebrows press together, a feeling of empathy rising up in his throat. He knew what happened between Joy and Beomgyu. He'd known for the longest time. And he knew the emotional impact it had on Beomgyu, or at least he thought he knew.

But his bittersweet smile that he was trying so hard to hold on his face only assured Taehyun that he knew nothing. Absolutely nothing.

"Yeah.. It does, doesn't it.." Taehyun found himself not knowing what to say. He'd thought he'd know the perfect thing to say in response, but he didn't. He could only silently agree with him, hoping that him knowing he wasn't alone in his emotions made him feel the slightest bit better.

Beomgyu though, was more than ready to move past this topic as he waved his hand in the air. "It doesn't matter anymore though. People come and go, you know?"

It was clear that Beomgyu was still hung up on her, in more ways than one. Even Taehyun could tell. And yeah, he felt bad for him. He was more hurt by her than Taehyun could ever allow himself to be by his old team.

And yet, that wasn't the only thing he felt.

Something in the pit of stomach made him feel a dislike for this person Taehyun had never met. For Joy, despite the fact that he's heard nothing bad about her nor has ever seen her.

"Need help with that? Pretty sure you've been working on it since before I got here."

But this sudden change of topic threw him off a bit. He looked over, following Beomgyu's eyes as he spoke this. And of course he was referring to Taehyun's homework.

"Oh um," He brought it closer to his lap a little awkwardly. He wasn't expecting Beomgyu to offer his help so randomly. "It's homework from statistics class." Taehyun fingered the pencil in his hand, still trying to figure what it was asking of him.

"I've been on it for a while. I don't think you'll be able to help me though."

Taehyun noted the way Beomgyu's mouth hung open at this. "You don't think I can help you?"

There was no way he would be able to. If Taehyun wasn't able, what were the odds that Beomgyu would be? Taehyun looked over at Beomgyu with an unsure glare, confident that he knew wasn't going to figure it out.

"Well honestly, no."

Beomgyu's jaw hung even wider. He crossed his arms over his chest as he looked off to the side with a big sigh.

"And if I do the entire thing by myself, then what?"

Of course he would try to make a deal. It was only like him. Taehyun rolled his eyes with a little smile before handing Beomgyu his homework.

"Do the entire thing by yourself first."

Beomgyu looked down at the paper, only looking back up for a second at Taehyun. "Alright then." He smiled mischievously, before taking the pencil from Taehyun's fingers, and scribbling something's on the paper.

"Unluckily for you, I focus more when I'm nervous."

Taehyun's heart dropped when he heard this.

"You *would* be the type to not pay attention in class before a big game." And the scribbling only lasted for a second or two before he brought it near his face with a smile.

And to his shock, the worksheet was filled. Filled with answers that Taehyun could not come up with for the life of him. Given that he couldn't be sure that they were correct, he chose to be suspicious. But then again, he couldn't prove that they were incorrect either.

He took the paper from Beomgyu's hands hesitantly, and scanned it from the top to the bottom.

They didn't look incorrect. But that was the thing that made Taehyun wish they were. Because knowing Beomgyu, he would ask him for something that the other wouldn't want to give.

He sighed, putting the piece of paper inside of his textbook book, and pushing them to the side.

"Well then." He murmured almost to himself. But considering how close they were to each other, he was sure Beomgyu could hear him. "I guess it's your call. What do you want?" He gazed back up at Beomgyu sternly, waiting for what he would say next. Really hoping he wasn't going to say what he was thinking at this very moment.

Giving Beomgyu too much freedom could be beneficial at times, like during a game when his judgement was usually spot on. But it could also be disastrous at times like this. Specifically at times like this.

He put a finger on his chin, smiling giddily into Taehyun's eyes. The blonde could tell he knew exactly what he was going to ask, only pretending to be thinking. And the pacing of his heart only increased by the second.

"I want..." He trailed teasingly with a small smirk. And it wasn't just that that made Taehyun's ears redden. He could faintly tell how Beomgyu's gaze would drop to his lips, then back up to his eyes. He just wanted to pretend it wasn't happening, like it wasn't so blatantly obvious what he was doing.

But this didn't last for long after he began to lean in closer a bit. Taehyun again tried pretending as if it wasn't happening. Didn't want to move back in fear that his cover would be blown. But Beomgyu wasn't stopping, only moving closer. And he knew he was way too close for comfort when he felt his hand land on his thigh, throwing his heart into a spiral.

What the fuck what he doing? Was he actually going to try and...

"*I want..*" He spoke these two words again, this time much slower and way closer than before. And the boy shut his eyes tightly, in preparation for whatever it was that he was about to do. Until..

"--to spend the night."

Taehyun's chest tightened as he finally finished his sentence. A sense of relief finally coming upon him. And the Beomgyu that was once centimeters away, was now throwing himself into Taehyun's pillows, a teasing smile plastered on his face.

"You're so annoying." The blonde grumbled, cheeks flushing like crazy. He could hear a faint snicker come from the boy laid down behind him. What was the point of all that? To tease him? He didn't know if he was more mad at the teasing, or the fact that he didn't just do what he was insinuating.

"You know I *had* to mess with you." Taehyun crossed his arms with an eye roll, choosing not to look at Beomgyu despite what he said. He was sacrificing his potential sleep for *this*?

"You're not mad, are you?" Taehyun's answer to this though, was crystal clear when he ignored his words and began to flip through his textbook pages as if he had something to do in them. He didn't like being teased. Not like that. Not with his feelings. It made them seem like a joke.

He thought Beomgyu would understand that, especially since he *was* the one that got upset when Taehyun assumed he was faking everything.

But then he felt something shift behind him.

Only a second later did he also feel something start to slide itself around his waist.

Then a tiny mutter in his ear. "*I was only joking. Sorry.*"

He felt Beomgyu lay his cheek on his shoulder, his thumb grazing an area where his shirt was the slightest bit lifted. But that alone sent a chill through him. His fingers weren't as cold as they were before, but that was the least of his concerns at this moment.

"I was serious when I said I wanted to spend the night, though."

Of course he did. Why didn't Taehyun expect that? The worst part was that it wasn't like he wanted to say no. It's that he genuinely couldn't say yes.

If his mom found him here, he'd have to explain less on why he let him inside in the first place, and more on why they were sleeping together.

"Beomgyu, you know you can't."

"*Please..*" He begged quietly.

Taehyun sighed.

He couldn't say yes, but he also couldn't let him walk back home this late at night, and in this cold. Not to mention it could be dangerous. A lot of things could happen if he said no.

He bit his tongue, hesitantly taking one of Beomgyu's hands that was planted on his waist. And the older didn't resist against it. In fact it seemed as if he didn't notice Taehyun fitting his fingers around his effortlessly. And only when he did that did Beomgyu tighten his grip, like he was waiting for it.

And he knew it was a mistake, but he just couldn't say no..

"Fine.."

And he could almost feel how much the other radiated in happiness.

"You like me too much." Beomgyu teased jokingly.

Taehyun huffed in response. He really didn't know what to make of his humor at this moment. It was mostly made up of teasing. And despite how much he hated it, he preferred it over the way things used to be when they first met. Taehyun sometimes still found it hard to believe they started out hating each other.

"I'm not letting you walk back home in the cold. I would've done that for anybody."

He heard Beomgyu giggle a little. "I know." He felt Beomgyu's arms pull his body closer to him, resting his temple on his back like Taehyun was some sort of pillow.

He was almost paralyzed, like if he moved, he would wake up a sleeping bear. Except this wasn't a bear, only a close second.

"You know, I was thinking about our game today.." Beomgyu's voice was soft, but like sandpaper. A sleepy like voice with a small rasp to it.

"And I think that it'd be a good idea if we made you a setter in the starting line up. You know.. for our next game."

Taehyun took a second to process this.

"Wait what?"

He pried Beomgyu's hands away from his waistline, and turned around to face him. He couldn't help but to be utterly confused by this. Why would he want Taehyun to be switched when he almost fucked everything up? Was he crazy?

"Let me explain--"

"Why would you do that though? Yeonjun is a much better setter than me, and he's been on the team for longer. Plus I almost ruined everything today, and the only reason I was even able to play decently was because--"

"*Taehyun*," The boy interrupted in a grave tone, evidently to make him stop blabbering about everything he did wrong. And of course, Taehyun stopped. Mostly because his sudden change in voice threw him off.

"For being thrown into a position in the last second, you did amazing. So stop making excuses for yourself."

Taehyun looked down at his hands shamefully, like a puppy with its tail between its legs.

"And besides it's not your call. It's mine, alright?"

Man, Beomgyu could become so serious in less than seconds. Taehyun guessed when it was about volleyball, he took it extra seriously. But he didn't blame him. If Taehyun was a team captain and one of his teammates was being stubborn, he'd probably scold them too.

Taehyun only found himself nodding sheepishly in response.

He could only assume that the older noticed his sudden submission, because a moment later did he sigh deeply. Almost regretfully.

"It's not that Yeonjun is a bad setter. He's great if you consider the fact that he only started setting a couple months ago." Taehyun looked up at him, finally able to meet his eyes. And even he could tell Beomgyu was struggling with his words. "But he plays better as a libero. And there's nothing bad about that, it's just.."

Taehyun could only take his word for it honestly. He had never seen him play libero aside from today's game, and a couple times in practice.

"Let's just try it out in practice first and see how it goes, okay?"

Of course Taehyun didn't want to accept this offer, though it seemed more like a command than an offer. He genuinely believed Yeonjun was the better option. But maybe that was just his self confidence talking.

But they could try it out in practice, and if Taehyun liked the feeling then he'd have to consider it. But not now. No, definitely not now.

He nodded silently, sparing a small glance at the older one more time before looking away again.

He heard him let out a small sigh, and felt when he fell back down onto Taehyun's sheets lazily.

The two didn't say a word for a moment. Taehyun didn't really know what to say after that. But Beomgyu noticed this, and in a way to break the ice, finally spoke up.

"I'm jealous of your bed you know? It's so much more comfortable than mine." Taehyun glanced over at him, surprised to find him wrapping himself in his blankets. "You have so much more space too..."

Taehyun, even if he tried, couldn't look away. He looked like a cat, rubbing itself onto its human caretaker. He looked so serene with his eyes closed. So peaceful, and calm. Something that was hard to see in him during the day. And it didn't help that his hair was getting messier the more he moved around.

And yeah, there was nothing special about a human being comfortable. But this was simply just a sight Taehyun found hard not to look at. And he would have to sleep next to it.

He highly doubted he would manage.

He rolled his eyes, a slight smile on his lips, before scooting over to the empty spot next to him. The boy made extra sure that he left a big gap in between them. Then it wouldn't look so weird if someone (his mother) walked in on it.

"Yeah yeah.." He reached over to the nightstand next to his bed, and turned the only light in his room off.

He didn't have any windows, the only thing slightly illuminating it was the tiny night light he had plugged into the wall in the corner of his room. And yet that barely helped with anything.

Taehyun though, was obviously already used to this. He rested his head on his pillow, and lifted the thick blankets up to his chin. He loved to sleep in the cold because of this. Because then at night, he felt the chill in his feet even under the blankets. He was never too hot, or too cold. It was perfect.

At least that's what he thought. He didn't really know what perfect was to him until he heard Beomgyu moving next to him. Moving seemingly closer to the younger.

"I can't sleep without a stuffed animal Taehyun."

He heard this, as if a child just came into his room to tell him they threw up. His eyes shot open, annoyed at Beomgyu's constant bugging. But isn't this what he gets for letting him come over?

He took a long and deep breathe in, before forcefully letting it all out at once frustratedly.

"Hold me then." He quickly responded, desperate for some shut eye.

"But.." He sounded hesitant. Like he wasn't expecting Taehyun to say that. Funny enough, Taehyun wasn't even expecting himself to say that. He was just going off the first solution that came to mind.

"I was just going to ask if you had an extra pillow I could use.."

Taehyun felt his face heat up. He was embarrassed. Anyone would be. How could he just blantly offer something so stupid to him like that?

In an attempt to play it off, he propped himself up on his elbow, ready to get up in search of another pillow.

"Oh.. yeah I have one around here somewhere."

But he couldn't make it halfway up before he felt Beomgyu pull him back into the bed, his arms hooking themselves around him. He froze mid sentence. And nobody could see it, but his eyes were wide in shock.

"Forget about it.. I prefer this anyway."

Taehyun felt nauseous. Like any second he would throw up. Not because he was disgusted, but because he was so nervous. So unknowing of what to do, and how to act. Nobody had ever wanted to hold him that badly before.

Reluctantly, he let himself get comfortable under his blankets again. He felt Beomgyu's body nestle up near him, but his heart only pounded.

Man, so much for getting over his crush. He had already dug himself a way deeper hole than he intended. He truthfully didn't know how he was going to get out of it.

But did he really even need to? It's not like he had anybody else.

Taehyun breathed out a little shaky sigh. One that he didn't want Beomgyu to hear, but he probably did anyway.

"Beomgyu..?" Taehyun called out silently into the dark void that was his room. He could barely see anything, but could feel everything. The way Beomgyu held onto him. Everytime he breathed out, how his breath hit the back of his neck. Each and every time sending goosebumps down his arms.

Beomgyu hummed in return, to let the younger know that yes he was paying attention.

Taehyun bit the bottom of his lip as he continued.

"I just... I wanted to thank you for taking care of me during my transfer... you and all of the other guys.."

He really didn't know if Beomgyu was listening or not. For all he knew, he could be asleep. But even so, he continued.

"I thought I'd never meet friends like that ones I had in Acedami, but I was lucky, and ended up meeting even better ones.."

Taehyun was reluctant on continuing. His next words were risky, but he was already in it. He would might as well finish it.

"I guess what I'm saying is that.. I hope you find someone better than that person who cut you out from their life.."

The blonde didn't know if he was crossing the line by saying this. But Joy's disappearance in Beomgyu's life was the very thing that made him the way he was when Taehyun met him. He felt that it was only fair for the older to move on from a person like that. To be happy.

It wasn't totally ridiculous, or unreasonable.

"And I know that they might mean the world to you.. " He pressed further. *"But I still hope that you find someone that can share that same energy with you, and pay it back in return."*

He felt like he had just read a script off his own heart.

Had he revealed too much?

It remained silent after Taehyun finished his sentence. Beomgyu didn't say a word. Neither said a word.

He had, hadn't he? He scared him off. Creeped him out with his thoughts. Must have since he wasn't speaking a word.

Though words seemed unnecessary when Taehyun felt Beomgyu tighten his grip around him, and pull him closer to his body, completely contradicting his own train of thought. The way he held him was like he was scared. Afraid Taehyun would disappear. Afraid that he would walk away. Afraid that he wouldn't be there when he woke up the next morning.

"I already have."

He already had.

He already had..?

Taehyun found himself staring blankly into the dark, unable to comprehend Beomgyu's words thoroughly for what they really meant.

Was he... talking about him? About Taehyun?

He couldn't be sure, almost didn't want to be. Yet something about the way Beomgyu held him close spoke more than those words.

And for some reason, Taehyun couldn't imagine himself sleeping without this warm presence near him. Didn't know how he got through those lonely nights without this thing. This thing that, with touch alone, reassured him he wasn't by himself.

So those simple three words were more than enough for Taehyun to be able to confirm that he had nothing to be afraid of. There was nothing for the older to worry about, because he wasn't planning on going anywhere.

Not tonight. Not tomorrow. Not anytime soon.

At least at this moment, he wasn't planning on going anywhere.