

# dis|entanglement

a *Long Time No See* ficlet

by Rodo

for *Corvidology*

THE PHONE KEPT ringing. Actually, both of theirs did, although Chi-soo's less often than Gi-tae's. Chi-soo watched as Gi-tae checked who was calling before sinking back into the couch of Chi-soo's apartment with a wince and an apologetic glance his way.

"It's my sister."

Chi-soo had figured as much. She'd called him as well. She must be worried sick, with Gi-tae disappearing on her, and then Chi-soo going incommunicado on top of it. He nodded tiredly at Gi-tae before leaning back against his couch as well – a sudden, unbidden memory of the first time they'd made love resurfacing as he did so. He closed his eyes, allowing himself to wallow in the memory for the moment. He was so tired. Not so much from the fight, but the years that had preceded it. It seemed the life he'd led was catching up with him, now that he was finally free of it.

When the phone rang again, he heard Gi-tae sit up and take the call, followed by an unintelligible barrage of words. The volume was too low to make out any of them from even this short a distance, but the worried tone was very clear.

"I'm fine," Gi-tae promised his sister. He wasn't. He'd been beaten to hell and back. That was why they'd gone to Chi-soo's place rather than hers. It was best if she didn't see him like that. "I'm staying at Chi-soo's place for a bit, so you don't have to worry." A small pause. "Yes, he's taking good care of me. We'll be by in a couple of days. I'll explain everything then. Promise. Love you."

Chi-soo imagined his sister replied using the same words. It was still strange to him, to see siblings who loved each other so much. And then there was a tiny pang of jealousy. It was the part of him that yearned for a family, one that he'd thought long dead, until Gi-tae.

A moment later, he felt Gi-tae lean his back against the couch again and heard the phone being dropped on the coffee table. Then Gi-tae's clammy hand curled around his. Chi-soo held onto it for dear life, feeling as if he was about to fall apart, not knowing why.

"I think I might be bleeding on your couch."

Chi-soo's eyes shot open. "Are the bandages not enough? Do you need to go to a hospital?" He stared at Gi-tae, looking him over, his torso wrapped in gauze, cuts covered in adhesive bandages. He looked like a badly patched doll, with bruises blooming everywhere on his skin. He'd likely cracked a few ribs, even if he'd assured Chi-soo that nothing was broken.

Gi-tae leaned forward. He groaned and nodded towards his back. One of the bandages had loosened. With a relieved sigh, Chi-soo began to rummage through the open first-aid kit lying on the table for a replacement. When he leaned over Gi-tae to patch him up, he could hear how much every breath cost him, especially while forcing his body into this position. Chi-soo's own ribs hurt in sympathy. Once he had finished treating the wound, he pressed a tender kiss to Gi-tae's nape.

"Are you alright?" Gi-tae asked.

"Shouldn't I be the one asking that?"

Gi-tae huffed, then moaned. "You haven't even mentioned the couch. A neat freak like you. That's reason enough to worry."

Chi-soo shook his head in exasperation. "I'm not the one bleeding. Besides, the couch is black."

"The cushions are not." He leaned back into said cushions again so their eyes could finally meet again. One look, and God, Chi-soo hadn't thought himself capable of loving someone like that. The fire in his chest was all-consuming.

"I was there. I've seen you. I know what he meant to you, even if it was complicated," Gi-tae argued. It seemed he wouldn't let this go.

"It doesn't matter now. He's done." As wounded as his adoptive father was, so were his dreams of an empire of his own. For a brief moment, Chi-soo allowed himself to wonder what had happened to the man after they'd left. Had he crawled back to his office to lick his wounds? Had Black Leopard's people taken care of him? He shook his head, reminding himself that it didn't matter. What mattered was that he was free. That Gi-tae was alive. Everything was alright now. He wouldn't let this haunt him as well.

Steady hands took hold of his shoulders, shaking him back into reality. Gi-tae. He focused on Gi-tae. On the life they'd have together.

"I'm fine," Chi-soo insisted, his smile feeling brittle rather than reassuring. "I will be."

"You will," Gi-tae assured him. His hands moved upwards, gently taking Chi-soo's face and drawing him closer. Chi-soo let it happen, pliant in Gi-tae's hands as he'd been since their first night. They were both in no condition to do more, but the kiss was everything. As their lips met, the world made sense. *They* made sense. Worrying about Black Leopard

and Black Rose could come later. Chi-soo might have no idea what he wanted to do with the rest of his life, but he was one hundred per cent certain who he wanted to spend it with.

“Time to go to bed?” Gi-tae asked.

Chi-soo nodded.

*Fin*