"You're the freak."

It’s only a second. Between the anxiety that creeps into Evan’s lungs and the cold of the ground, he registers pain in the words. Before he can think- and isn’t that how it always is- he’s stumbling to his feet and through the streams of students flooding the halls to follow Connor.

He’s sick too.

Notes

Written for a request. (If you have a Dear Evan Hansen [or be more chill] request you can send it to my tumblr!)
part of me wanted to make this longer or chaptered but Idk that anyone would want that so heres this.
Chapter 1

It’s anger. No, actually, that’s not quite what Evan sees. Yes, there’s anger there, pushing it’s way out in the “you’re the freak” Connor sends at him. Pushing it’s way out through the shove he sends Evan to the ground with. Yet, that’s not it. It isn’t anger that registers to Evan.

Pain.

It’s only a second. Between the anxiety that creeps into Evan’s lungs and the cold of the ground, he registers pain in the words. Before he can think- and isn’t that how it always is- he’s stumbling to his feet and through the streams of students flooding the halls to follow Connor.

He’s sick too.

There’s this familiarity that he recognizes. Part of him argues, that he could be wrong. That he’s misunderstanding, that he’s just projecting. Hoping for someone to understand. Still, Evan follows.

A bell rings, signaling students to start heading to their classes, but instead of listening to the part of him that says he should turn around and do just that, he catches up to Connor. It’s only once he’s close enough to speak, that his mind catches up with what he’s actually doing and words catch in his throat.

“Are you okay?” Evan is more startled by his own voice than the snap of Connors gaze from a glare at the path ahead of him, to one at Evan’s face. Instinct has Evan curling in on himself.

“What is that supposed to mean?” There’s anger again. Every instinct tells him to hide or run, because anger means danger and danger means- Evan shakes the trailing thoughts away. Tries to focus on a response because if he doesn’t respond there’ll be even more anger and because if he’s right then they’ll both go on being sick without having anyone else that understands and- Evan breaths.

“I-I just- I mean- you seemed u-upset?”

“Upset?”

“I mean- I- I’m sorry.”

“Is that it?”

“No! I mean- I just- I’m not trying to say there’s- I mean.” Evan sighs, frustrated with himself. “Do you need help? No- wait! I mean n-not that I think there’s something wrong with- I just mean-”

“You think there’s something wrong with me?!?”

Evan flinches, shakes his head, fumbles to form words until the one’s he finally grasps are ones he hasn’t thought through. “You called me a freak.”

“What, you want me to apologize?” A glare and a noise that portrays annoyance..

“No that’s not- I’m sorry. I just- you’re right?” For the first time, Connor looks genuinely startled and Evan thinks that might be progress. “I’m ill- I mean- mentally? R-right? Well, I just- there are t-things you pick up on with other people who are- that also- so I thought I noticed- Or I thought you… I’m sorry.”
“You… think I’m sick?”

“Yes.” Evan freezes, then processes what he said. “I mean- well…. No, that is what I mean. I don’t- I don’t think you’re like, a freak or anything, so- I just- if you want to talk to someone…”

“You think I’d talk to you?” Connor spits the word ‘you’ out like it’s personally offended him. Like Evan has.

“No- Sorry. I’m sorry. I should- class.” Evan forces himself to spin around. With shaky steps he walks away, rushes towards his classroom and hopes he won’t be late. The realization that if he is late people will stare at him is enough to almost ignore the fact that he’d just had that conversation.

Evan thinks he probably should have planned the conversation out before starting it.

The computer lab is empty. Evan checked three times before finishing his letter to himself. It’s more self-deprecating than he’s supposed to make them, he knows, but how could he not curse his past self for thinking approaching Connor- of all people- about mental illness was at all a good idea? At any rate, he quickly hits print, before stuffing his laptop into his bag and going to retrieve the email.

The computer lab is not empty. Evan pauses, breath catching in his lungs, when he finds said email being held by Connor. He- Connor- doesn’t seem to realize what it is, taking one glance at the name and then to Evan. This fact does nothing to calm the racing that’s begun in his heart at the thought of someone reading it.

Connor glances over Evan, as if trying to figure something out, before he speaks. “So… what happened to your arm?”

Evan is startled- all the things his mind supplied that Connor might say were incorrect so he doesn’t have a response figured out- and mumbles a few filler ‘um’s before anything real comes out. “I- um- fell out of a tree, actually.”

“Fell out of a tree?”

“Yeah.”

“Well that is just the saddest fucking thing I’ve ever heard.”

“Y- I know.” Evan shifts on his feet.

“Uh- No one’s signed your cast.”

“No- I- I know.”

“I'll sign it.”

“You don’t have to.” But Connor takes a step towards him. Evan is going to add more assurances that it’s unnecessary, but is cut off by Connor speaking again.

“You have a sharpie?”

The whole thing is a mess of awkward that Evan feels like he should be used to. He is, sort of, but it never feels any less uncomfortable just because he’s used to it.

That might just be the worst part.
He’s hardly present, his mind stumbling to try and figure out what’s going on while his cast is signed- big letters that cover the whole side of it- and part of him wonders why it’s happening.

“Oh- great.” It looks less like a signature and more like the writing someone would put on their belongings so nobody can claim they didn’t know who’s they were. Which is a thought that makes Evan frown. “Thanks.”

“Yeah, well.” Connor motions vaguely as if Evan should understand. He sort of does. “Now we can both pretend we have friends.”

“Oh- great.”

“Um- so- this is yours, right?” Connor motions the email around, and Evan reaches for it. In just a moment, Connor looks down to the words, and Evan grabs the edge of the letter. It’s only a second, but Connor’s expression turn back to a glare, and Evan all but yanks the paper away. “What is that?”

“I- It’s just an assignment.”

“Assignment?”

“From- It’s- for therapy? I have to- they’re- never mind. Sorry.”

“Therapy?”

“Yeah.”

“You… fell.”

“Huh?”

“Your arm, you said you fell. From a tree.”

“O-oh. Right. I said that. That is what I said happened, yes.”

“You sure do feel the need to say ‘I said that’ don’t you?”

“Huh?” Evan pulls his hands together. The more he’s questioned the smaller he feels. “No- I just- it is. What I said, I mean. Or- I mean- what happened.”

“Is it?”

“Technically?”

“Right.” Connor sighs. Evan doesn’t know how to respond to that, so he doesn’t. Which just leads to them standing there, awkwardly. The part of Evan that doesn’t want to speak- they’ve been quiet too long now wont it be weird- has an argument with the part of him that think he should fill the silence- isn’t it weirder to not say anything? Which leads to him continuing to stand there, not saying anything. “Were you serious?”

“Wha- about what?”

“Being sick. Talking. That shit you were saying earlier.”

“Oh! Yes. I- um- yeah. Like I couldn’t, fix anything but- I just- I think it’d be nice to talk to someone else who get’s it? You know?” Evan draws his eyes up from the floor. He hadn’t even realized he’s been starring at it until he forces himself to look up at Connor. “Cause- like- I mean my therapist
is… fine and my mom cares b-but they aren’t- they don’t also feel… this.”

Evans’ vague hand motions for ‘this’ somehow seem to make sense, because Connor nods. “I get… half of that.”

“Oh… good.”

Another silence.

“So- uh-”

“This isn’t some kind of stupid fucking joke is it?”

“No!” Evan is almost offended at the idea, but he knows it’s not necessarily his actions that caused that suspicion. “I dropped myself from a forty foot tree I’m not g-going around pulling pranks on people about s-stuff like this.”

“So ‘fell’ huh?”

“Oh god.” Evan’s hands slam over his mouth- which causes a sore pain to fill his broken arm for a moment- realizing what he just said. “Y-you can’t- please don’t tell anyone. They’ll think I’m worse and then they’ll-” Evan cuts himself off, for once aware hes going to start rambling off how everything is about to go wrong. He counts this as a success, context aside.

“I’m not going to tell anyone. Just… stop freaking out.”

“I’m not freaking out!”

“You kind of are.”

“I’m not!” Evan gets a raised eyebrow in response, and clears his throat. “Okay, a little? I’m sorry.”

“You apologize a lot.”

“Sorry.” Evan sighs. “Yeah, I know.”

“Well I should… be… going home.”

“R-right.”

“See ya.”

All in all, Evan thinks things could have gone worse.

Evan finds himself being startled for a new reason. Someone is talking to him. Someone being Connor, again. Evan nearly jumps when he’s addressed with a “Hey Hansen.” Nearly throws himself into the lockers next to him in a useless attempt to make himself appear somehow less like someone that should be spoken to. Then he realizes it’s Connor, and he breaths a sigh. Evan isn’t sure if that’s a relief, but at least he it’s not someone he doesn’t know.

“Yes?”
“Um…” Connor shifts on his feet, straightening his bag on his shoulder. “Good morning?”

“Oh-” Evan straightens his posture, the threatened feeling that comes with the presence of another person slightly lessened by the greeting. “Good… morning?”

“Listen.” Connor’s jaw tenses and Evan just nods. “I don’t know what the fuck I’m doing? How the ‘friend and or mutually sick person’ shit works, okay?”

“I don’t either!” Evan speaks too quickly, but he thinks he was still understandable, because Connor nods. Then he realizes something. “Wait are we- you said- friends?”

“Yeah? Why not. We can pretend, at least? I mean that was the point of signing that, wasn’t it?” Connor motions to Evans arm, and Evan nods in turn.

“R-right.” Evan shifts, staring at his hands. “First friend.”

“What?”

“Huh?” Evan looks back up, startled once again by Connors voice. “What?”

“You said ‘first friend.’”

“Oh. I did?” Evan mutters a curse under his breath. “S-sorry I just- I didn’t mean to say that out loud.”

“Isn’t that bullshit though?” Connor scoffs. “You’re friends with-”

“I’m not.” Evan purses his lips when Connor frowns at him for cutting Connor off. “If you mean Jared- I mean- we’re ‘family friends.’ And t-that’s not the same thing. Which he like to remind me of. E-even then, that’s all I’ve got, so.” Evan shrugs.

Connor just nods.

“So, first friend. Or-”

“First friend, then.” Connor nods. Evan breaths out, relieved, and smiles.

Today’s going to be a good day, and here’s why. You made a friend, who might just get it a little. One who will call you a friend. That’s a start, right?
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

“Evan’s always nervous.” Connor shrugs and motions towards Evan. “That’s like his thing.”

“I thought my thing was trees.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Evan admittedly has no idea what he’s doing. Though, he thinks, Connor doesn’t either. Which is why they’re standing awkwardly outside of the school, trying to figure out what they- what friends- are supposed to do. They’ve been standing there long enough that Evan thinks his awkwardness is taking over the situation, and he’s at least got a family friend, so maybe he’s supposed to know what they should do? Evan mentally curses. He should say something.

Evan doesn’t say anything.

“This is stupid.” Connor sighs.

“Sorry.”

“Don’t apologize.”

“So- okay.” Evan clears his throat and nods.

“What do friends do?”

“I have no idea.”

“Great. Thanks. You’re a big help.” Connor sighs, rolling his eyes. Evan bites his lip, holding back another apology.

“W-well, friends do stuff together, right? U-uh. What do you… usually do after school?”

“I don’t really…” Connor shrugs. “I don’t do anything. Then I go home and fight with my family and maybe get high.”

“Oh… uh… what do you like?”

“I don’t know.”

“W-what- do you have a favourite colour?”

“Black.”

“That’s not technically a colour.” Evan huffs. Connor glances at him, looking surprised, and maybe vaguely amused.
“I guess not. Dark, *Dark* re- blue, then.”

“You were going to say *red*.”

“It doesn’t matter what colour if it’s so dark it’s almost black.”

“W-why change it to blue then?” Evan looks over, turning his whole body to face Connor for the first time since arriving outside the school next to him.

“Seemed like a better option.” Connor motions vaguely, and Evan can only nod. “Are we done quizzing me?”

“O-oh. Yeah. Sorry.”

“Good. My turn then.” Connor shifts, crossing his arms. “What do you like?”

“Trees.”

“You broke your arm because of a tree.”

“No I b-broke my arm because I’m a human disaster. That’s not the tree’s fault.”

“So… trees.”

“I know a lot about them! I worked at the park last summer and- well… T-they’re- I actually- they also don’t… judge you.”

“I should hope not.”

“I- you know people are awful? N-not *everyone*, but?” Evan shrugs, like he’s given a complete statement. Connor nods, apparently understanding. “Tree’s don’t stare at you, or judge you because you can’t pay for a pizza without feeling like you’re messing up because you don’t know how to make small talk, and stutter, and what if they pizza guy somehow figured out that I thought Neapolitan ice cream was pronounced Napoleon for my entire childhood, and-” Evan stops. “So yeah. Trees.”

“I think that’s the longest I’ve heard you speak without stuttering.”

“I either stutter or ramble. I-it’s great *really*, fantastic, u-until you actually have to talk to someone.”

“Hey at least if you’re rambling I don’t have to speak.”

“I- I don’t think I’ve ever understood something as much as that statement,” Evan mutters, gaze shifting down to his hands. Only to snap back up when Connor gives a small- barely audible- laugh.

“So… *trees*, huh. You know what, that’s actually helpful.”

“How so?”

“I know a place with lots of trees. Probably. Assuming they’re not all dead since the place is closed down.”

“O-okay?”
Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why. It already sort of is, actually. I still have no idea how to ‘friend’ but at least it almost doesn’t feel like he hates me. Well, okay, anxiety wants me to believe he does anyway, but I’m trying to pretend I don’t believe that.

Anyway, apparently there’s an apple orchard you didn’t know about- I’m a disappointment to tree experts everywhere- and it’s amazing.

You didn’t talk much, but still. This is progress, right?

I even managed to write this mostly positive!

Friends visit each other. Logically, Evan knows that. Logically, he also knows it’s easy enough to just say they’re going to work on homework, and usually that will mean they don’t have to deal with too many questions from parents. Logically, Evan knows he wont have to talk too much, and it’ll be fine. Logically, it should be.

Which is why he hates that he can feel his chest tighten uncomfortably at the invitation. “Maybe if I show them I have a friend they’ll get off my back.”

“Y-yeah but- wont they- what if they don’t think I’m…” Evan doesn’t even know, really, how he was going to finish the sentence, so he doesn’t. Connor just stares at him, as if expecting something more than that. “What if they think I’m weird.”

“You are.”

“But I don’t want people to know that!” Evan pauses. “A-also that’s mean.”

“Hey I didn’t claim I wasn’t.” Connor shrugs. Evan doesn’t even know if Connor means that he never said he wasn’t ‘mean’ or ‘weird.’ “Listen, they’ll love you. Hell they’ll probably be like ‘wow Connor your friend is so great we wish he was our son instead’ or something.”

“I-I don’t think that’s true.”

“You don’t know my parents.”

They’re nice. Sort of, at least. There’s this underlying uncomfortable feeling- one that isn’t directly related to Evan, himself- that sits over them, and Connor seems to be holding back anger again. Still, they seem to be trying, at least, to be nice to- and about- his new friend. So Evan tries to be nice, too. Which has him defaulting to overly polite and agreeable. At the very least, he can thank anxiety for that.

Unfortunately the positives of anxiety- there aren’t any, Evan would argue- don’t last, because that positive turns into a detriment. They ask if he’d like to stay for dinner, and Evan can’t do anything but nod, even though he told himself he wouldn’t.

Connor is glaring at his head, when they’re left to their own devices. “Why’d you say yes?”

“Anxiety.”

“That’s… fair, I guess.” Connor doesn’t seem any less annoyed, despite it.

“I- sorry. I’m sorry, I can tell them I remembered I can’t stay?”
“Nah.” Connor sighs. “It’s fine.”

As it turns out, having dinner with a family, means interacting with them. Which would be fine, if Evan hadn’t- somehow- forgotten that he was awful at that. Or if he remembered that Zoe was a member of said family. As it is, Cynthia is expressing how glad she is that Connor has a friend, and Zoe is glaring between Evan and Connor as if trying to figure something out.

“Are you sure you’re actually friends?”

“Zoe!”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Connor leans against the table, glaring.

“Well for starters I’ve seen you together, like, three times, and one of those was you shoving him.”


“I-it was just a friendly shove,” Evan starts, clearing his throat when eyes turn to him, “y-you know? Friends… being… joking?”

“Yeah.” Connor nods.

“You pushed him to the ground.” Zoe crosses her arms.

“I just lost balance!” Evan speaks louder than he should, octave raising.

“Is he threatening you? You don’t have to pretend to be his friend.”

“He’s not! Threatening me, I mean.”

“He does seem really nervous,” Larry mutters, speaking for the first time.

“Evan’s always nervous.” Connor shrugs and motions towards Evan. “That’s like his thing.”

“I thought my thing was trees.”

“Trees, being nervous, and falling, then.”

“C-can we not make falling one?”

“Okay, just trees and being nervous.”

“Thanks.” Evan sighs. “That’s what I want to be know for.”

“Is that… sarcasm?”

“Y-yes?”

“From you?”

“I can be sarcastic!” Evan huffs. “You know… sometimes…”

“Really?”

“Yes, but… I’m sorry.” Evan pauses, then covers his mouth. “I did it again.”
“See, look at that, friends.” Cynthia’s voice startles Evan, and reminds him of the situation.

“Sure.” Zoe rolls her eyes.

“Don’t roll your eyes!” Connor glares at her. Evan sighs.

“So you’re like… friends with Connor now?” Evan is startled by Jared’s voice, and can’t form a response other than to nod. “Why?”

“What do you mean?”

“Have you seen him? Why would you be his friend?”

“What does that mean?” Evan frowns. “Why wouldn’t I be?”

“Because you’re you.”

“What do–” Evan huffs, tired of repeating himself. “W-what, because I can’t make friends?”

“Well, there’s that, but I was more talking about the fact he’s an anger filled freak, and you’re scared of everything.”

“Shouldn’t- shouldn’t you just be glad I have ano- that I have a friend?”

“Why? I don’t care if you have friends.” Evan’s heart sinks at that, just a bit, despite already expecting that. It still hurts to hear, every time. “I just mean-”

“I know what you mean. I- I’m not going to suddenly tell your mom you aren’t being nice to me, just because I have a friend, o-or something. If that’s what you’re worried about.”

“Whatever.”

Evan doesn’t think the annoyed tone or roll of his eyes that Jared gives are really deserved.

*Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why. You have a friend that isn’t Jared. So you can ignore the fact that your only “family friend” wouldn’t hang out with you if he wasn’t being forced to. At least your new-first, real-friend get’s that you’re sick. At least he doesn’t believe you actually fell.*

Evan erases the last line before printing it.

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact: the Neapolitan thing is actually a me thing.

yeah.
secondary fun fact: 50% of my motivation comes from attention, so if you leave a comment i’ll probably cry and then work on the next chapter more.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

“You’re- you’re uh, secretly really nice huh?”
“How dare you.”
“Who knew?”
“I’m disowning you.” Connor huffs. “How could you say that about me?”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

His heart pounds in his head, this hands shake, his breath catches in his throat, and Evan can’t do anything to stop these things from happening. He just stands there, staring ahead- but not really looking- and trying to form a thought. Any thought.

It wasn’t like he hadn’t ever expected it. But he really isn’t sure what he did. One second he’s asking Connor if he’s okay, because Connor seemed angry again and Evan just wanted to know. Just needed to know. Then Connor snapped at him, voice raised, and stormed off, leaving Evan there to wonder what he did wrong.

“Oh,” Evan mutters, realizing he’s verging on a anxiety attack. He steps back, presses himself against the school wall. No one’s paying him any mind, walking past as the bell rings. He breathes, slides to the floor, and everything is too cold. Or too warm.

His mind is a chorus of ‘I fucked up’s.

Connor doesn’t apologize directly. At first Evan thinks Connor wont at all- internally thinks he probably did something wrong even though logically he knows he didn’t- but Connor does, in a way. Not in words, but he does. In explaining why he snapped- an argument with his parents, again- and offering to take Evan somewhere, “or whatever.”

Evan doesn’t actually have any idea about where he would even want to go. Part of him screams about the orchard, but another part thinks that would probably bore Connor, and doesn’t want to cause anymore annoyance between the two of them. So instead, he mumbles something about ice cream and finds himself in the passenger seat of a car, with Connor saying something about a place by the orchard.

“You probably didn’t get your fill of that place, anyway, right?”

“Can I- um- is it okay to ask-”

“About the argument?” Connor asks, raising his eyes from the ice cream he’d been stirring around. It's going to melt, Evan worries, but Connor doesn’t seem particularly bothered.

“Yeah.”
“You know I don’t think—” Connor stops, frowning. “No, I know for a fact. Larry doesn’t think I’m sick.”

“What?” Evan doesn’t even bother to hide his gasp.

“I’m just trying to get attention, or some shit. I don’t fucking know, maybe he’s right. But they can’t seem to agree on if I need help or not, and act like I’m not there while they argue about it.” Connor sighs, sliding the ice cream away from him, and folding his arms in front of him so he can rest his head on them. “I don’t really care if they aren’t sending me to therapy or whatever, but I’m pretty fucking sick of them acting like I’m not right there while they talk about it.”

“So you said something?”

“Yeah I told them to ‘stop fucking talking about me like I’m not here’ and got yelled at for it.”

“Sorry.” Evan doesn’t get a response, so he feels the need to fill the space, and starts speaking again. “Um have you- not that- just if you’ve thought about it-”

“Spit it out.”

“Have you thought about telling them you want therapy?”

“I don’t.”

“I- I mean to see if they’d agree if you asked.”

“No,” Connor sighs, shifting so he’s looking at Evan, while keeping his head in his arms. “Then they’d make me go.”

“I-it’s not that bad?”

“What if my therapist makes me do something weird or dumb, like write letters to myself.”

“That would be pretty awful.” Evan shrugs, tilting his head. “It was just an idea.”

“How’s that going?”

“Huh?”

“The letters?” Connor frowns. “If you’re going to questioning my mental state, I’m going to ask about yours.”

“O-oh, right, that’s fair.” Evan nods. “Okay? I mean… I guess. I don’t think- well- that they’re actually raising my self esteem or a-anything. M-mostly I just end up using them t-to complain or, well, once to be excited.”

“So they’re a diary?”

“Oh my god.” Evan stares at the table in front of him. “They are.”

“Wow.”

“I can never tell anyone else about them. Jared would have a field day with this.”

“Speaking of, what’s up with him?”
“Wh-what do you mean?”

“He keeps glaring at me like I personally insulted him. Which maybe I did, but if so I’d like to know what I did so I can do it again.”

“Don’t you mean so you won’t?”

“No.”

“O-oh. Well, I don’t know? He hasn’t really spoken to me.” Evan shrugs, frowning. “W-want me to ask him?”

“No.” Connor scoffs. “I don’t care that much.”

Evan stops himself while he’s talking about how the trees are actually still doing well for not being specifically cared for and why they are, realizing something. “Hey Connor?”

“Yeah?”

“If trees and- well- nervousness are my things. W-what are yours?”

“Being dead inside.”

Evan almost responds saying he, too, is dead inside. He doesn’t, if only because he can’t be dead inside when he’s so stressed all the time. The dead aren’t stressed, probably. “That’s only one thing?”

“What about painted nails, will that work?”

“Are you a nail paint expert?”

“Do I look like one?”

“Th-then it doesn’t count!” Evan huffs. “As a tree expert-”

“I can’t believe you’re calling yourself that-”

“I can say trees a-are my thing. So you have to be an expert on the not-being-dead-inside one.”

“Did you just talk over me?”

“Yes?”

“Wow.” Connor puts a hand to his chest, mock-pride on his face. “They grow up so fast.”

“D-did you just make a joke?” Evan pretends to gasp, putting a hand to his own chest. “I’m so proud.”

“Shut up.”

“Okay.”

“I’m kidding.”

“I-I know.” Evan laughs. “I’m not that bad at the- the whole friend thing.”
“Well I never know with you.”

“Oh?”

“Don’t wanna like,” Connor shrugs, and makes a vague hand motion in front of himself that Evan can’t find meaning for, “Make you cry or something.”

“Ha,” Evan forces a small laugh out. He stores away ‘having an anxiety attack because Connor raised his voice at him’ away as something to not mention. “Right.”

*Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why. You have a friend who- even though he didn’t technically apologize- tries to make up for being mean to you. Was that passive aggressive? Oh well, you’re the only one who reads these anyway.*

*It’s a less great day because you realized you’re using this as a diary- why would you point that out Connor? Why are you terrible? (He’s not terrible.) Oh well.*

Evan doesn’t do well with confrontation. Or conversation in general. But especially confrontation. Which is why he tries to sink into himself- it doesn’t work, since he’s a human with bones- under Zoe’s gaze when she corners him. Once upon a time he would have been overjoyed to have her speak to him. Once upon a time being last year. Right now, though, he’d rather she not.

Especially when the first words out of her mouth are, “be honest with me, are you actually friends?”

“Yes.” Evan huffs. Part of him doesn’t want to be rude. A very, very loud part of him, in fact. One that’s internally screaming- and has been for years, but that gets louder- when he speaks again. “Why is that so hard for everyone to believe?”

“Because he’s awful?”

“He’s really not th-that bad?” Evan frowns. Zoe, too, frowns. Everything is uncomfortable, and Evan takes small, tentative steps, away. Zoe sighs.

“Fine.”

Evan really isn’t sure what she’s decided is ‘fine,’ but she leaves.

“How?” Evan looks up from his laptop, to his mother, “how are things?”

“Good.” Evan offers a smile, and Heidi gives one in return.

“That’s good, I’m glad.”

“Is something… up?”

“I hear you’ve made a new friend?”

“How?” Evan sits up straighter, surprised, and she frowns at him. It take a second to realize the situation may look like he didn’t want her to know. Really he just never found the chance to say it.
“Jared stopped by earlier looking for you.” There were many things about that which surprise Evan, but he stays quiet. “And when I said you weren’t here, he said something about you having a new friend.”

“Oh. Right, I do.” Evan nods.

“So…”

“So?”

“Can I meet them, or?”

“O-oh. Um, I’ll…I mean I’ll see about that, but…” Evan doesn’t want to say ‘when are you ever here to meet them’ even though he thinks it, but isn’t really sure what else to say.

“How about I take next Wednesday off?” Heidi offers. “Meet your friend, and, hey, we can spend some time together. I feel like I hardly see you anymore.”

“Right, sounds great.” Evan nods, another comment held back.

“You ever think something really mean a-and then realize you don’t want to say it so you just… Internally scream b-because part of you means it?”

“No,” Connor says, simply, “I always say all the mean shit I think.”

“I- I doubt that. You haven’t once said any of the many bad things a-about me you could have.”

“What-” Connor stops himself, crossing his arms. “Exactly what mean things am I supposed to think about you?”

“U-uh… I mean, my stammering is annoying, o-or that I just am in general. The tree thing is weird. T-the letters are weird. I apologize too much-”

“Evan.”

“Y-yeah?”

“I don’t care about your stuttering.” Connor shrugs. “The tree thing isn’t that weird. Unless that’s like your ki-”

“No!” Evan huffs.

“Alright, a bit defensive.”

“I- I am not.”

“And I’ve told you not to apologize so much, but you could have way worse habits.” Connor shrugs again.

“Wow.”

“What?”

“You’re- you’re uh, secretly really nice huh?”
“How dare you.”

“How dare you.”

“I’m disowning you.” Connor huffs. “How could you say that about me?”

“I-it’s just so terrible? You? Being nice? H-how can I live with this information?”

“Shut the fuck up.” Connor rolls his eyes. “Wait.”

“What?”

“You actually think mean things about people?”

“N-no?”

“Evan Hansen thinks mean things. Wow.”

“I can’t believe you- you turned this around on me.”

“That’s my one skill.”

“You have other skills.”

“Shut up.” Connor rolls his eyes. “Who are you thinking mean things about?”

“W-well…”

“W-well?” Connor repeats. Evan halfheartedly glares.

“Yesterday- I- my mom?”

“Oh.”

“S-she tries so I don’t want to- like- blame her for these things, but I… Sometimes she says things a- and I’m just… like… ‘well, yeah who’s fault is that?’ But I don’t… want to say that, you know?”

“Nope.” Connor corrects himself when Evan’s expression shifts to worry. “I usually say stuff, remember? But, hey, you can’t help it if you’re angry. Or… something.”

“N-no that was good. You can’t help it if you’re angry. I- I would have said upset, instead of angry, but it works.”

“Wow, look at me, giving solid comments and everything.”

“Oh yeah- uh- actually my mom wants to meet you.”

“Why?”

“You’re my friend.”

“So?”

“I don’t have any of those? O-or didn’t, I guess.”
When Evan returns home on that next Wednesday, Connor trailing after him, he finds money on the counter, and his mother absent. Connor glances at him, then the money, then Evan again. Evan just… stares at the money after picking it up, and processes.

“She forgot.”

“Oh?”

“W-well… sorry I made you- I had you come over for no reason.”

“Are you okay?”

“Great!” Evan huffs. “Why wouldn’t I be?”

“You’re raising your voice, for one.”

Evan looks back down at the money in his hand. “Want pizza?”

“Oh, sure.”

Evan calls his mom. She lets out a string of apologies that’s only ended by Evan’s assurance that it’s okay. Evan hangs up, and stares at the phone in his hand until Connor kicks him from the other side of the couch.

“The door bell rang.”

“O-oh, right.”

“Here, give me the money. I’ll go get it.”

“Huh?” Without thinking Evan does just that, even as he questions it.

“Well this way the pizza guy can’t find out you mispronounced Neapolitan for most of your life.”

Evan doesn’t know if he should be offended or happy that Connor remembered that. He settles on happy.

*Today was not a good day, and here’s why. Your mom forgot she was supposed to meet your new friend despite being the one to suggest it in the first place.*

Evan deletes the letter completely and starts over.

*Today was a good day, and here’s why. You hung out with your friend and had pizza and avoided having awkward small talk with he pizza guy.*

Evan sighs, closing his laptop.
Hey so for those of you who don't know, I have no self control when it comes to writing. I once wrote over 15,000 words in two days. Of course I also took a year once to write 5000 words so, /shrugs/

anyway yeah.

once I realized this was going to be more than one chapter i went "shit better set up some future stuff" which i've done some of in chapter 2 but, a lot of this chapter is that. sorry.

ALSO thanks for all the comment I promise I didn't cry but my heart went !!! bc people are too freaking nice.
“Yes. Every day at 4:20 I post ‘blaze it.’ It’s very popular.” Connor rolls his eyes.

“You ever just- fucking- slip up and make a joke that’s- uh- about death?”
“Fatalistic?” Evan looks up from where he’s laying on the orchard ground. Connor had been sitting next to him, quiet and staring at his phone until then.
“What?”
“Fatalistic humor. Like…” Evan hums. “You know like- uh- a villain, right? W-well they’re going ‘I’m going to make you wish you were dead,’ and you’re like ‘ha j-jokes on you I already do.’ Something like that?”
“Yeah.”
“W-what about it?”
“Do you?”
“O-oh no. I tend to just not… speak? O-or when I do anxiety goes ‘don’t fuck up’ s-so I over think a lot of what I say.”
“Holy shit.” Connor leans too look directly at Evan’s face from above him. “Who are you?”
“What?”
“You swore!”
“I-I’m a high school student. And a teenager. I swear.”
“I’ve never heard you swear.”
“Well okay… maybe I don’t usually out loud. However my mind is a constant stream of swearing- well- and screaming. M-mostly screaming.”
“That sucks.”
“Yeah.”
“Anyway, I knocked over a cup on accident- a really fucking simple, mundane thing right? Well I followed that up with ‘wow kill me’ because I, my friend, am apparently a moron.”
“I can’t argue with that.”

“I’ll end you.”

“Oh no,” Evan mock-gasps, “that would be terrible.”

“Shut up.” Connor sighs. “Anyway then my parent’s were like ‘Connor no,’” Connor extends the no out, until Evan sighs.

“Right?”

Connor stops, grinning like he’s accomplished some victory Evan isn’t aware of. “You can’t say stuff like that, there are people out there who, blah, blah,’ you get it. Anyway I escaped that lecture because of school, but god it was awful.”

“Because it was a lecture or- or because they were lecturing you about offending yourself?”

“Both.”

“That’s rough, buddy.”

“Wa-” Connor looks at Evan, wide-eyed- “Was that an Avatar reference? Like, last airbender shit.”

“I- I really didn’t think you’d notice.”

“Wow, you’re a nerd.”

“Says the person who- who recognized it.”

“You got me.”

“N-next I’m going to find out you have a tumblr.”


“Yes. Every day at 4:20 I post ‘blaze it.’ It’s very popular.” Connor rolls his eyes. “But, ‘reblogged?’ Sound like I’m not the only one.”

“Shit, you’re o-on to me.”

“Wait-” Connor holds up his hands- “let me guess. Trees.”

“Yep.” Evan rolls his eyes.

“Are you sure you don’t have a tree fe-”

“P-please don’t finish that sentence. No, I don’t. W-why would you make jokes like that?” Evan huffs, then has a realization that he can prevent jokes like that. “Y-you’ll sound like Jared.”

“You ruined this for me.”

“That was the point.”
Connor sends a simple message. “ATLA marathon.”

Evan stares at the message, having just woken up on a Saturday, and laughs. “What?”

“good morning.”

“That doesn’t answer my question, Connor.”

“just agree or not”

“Sure, when?”

“now im outside.”

“What the hell.”

“I was bored. open your door.”

“When did you become a nerd?”

“When I stared hanging out with you. You’ve corrupted me.” Evan vaguely notes the sudden use of proper capitalization and almost laughs.

Evan rolls out of his bed, dresses as quickly as he can with a broken arm, and heads to open the front door.

“You look horrible.”

“I- I just woke up?” Evan frowns, stepping aside with a yawn. Connor enter, holding up a box-DVD case, upon further inspection- that Evan only takes a moment to process. “You were serious?”

“I’m always serious about cartoons.”

“Y-you know I could ruin your reputation.”

“That would mean talking to someone,” Connor shrugs. “So could you, really?”

“That’s low.” Evan closes the door. “True, but low.”

The look on Heidi’s face when she comes home to find her son and someone she doesn’t know on her couch watching a children’s cartoon is almost amusing enough to make Connor ignore the fact that Evan falls off of the couch when she speaks.

“Mom!” Evan clutches his chest, and sighs, staring at the ceiling. “Welcome home?”

“You’d think someone scared you while you were watching a horror movie, or something.” Evan rolls his eyes at Connors comment, pulling himself back onto the couch.

“Is this your friend?” Heidi sounds much too excited and Evan muffles a groan. The downside, he realizes, to having friends is being able to be embarrassed in front of them by your mother. He finally understands.

“Hi.” Connor shifts, and Evan is suddenly aware of how tense he’s become at Heidi’s appearance.

“This is great,” Heidi starts- before clearing her throat. She’s making an effort to not embarrass him,
Evan realizes, and he can’t help but be a little grateful. “It’s great to finally meet one of my sons’ friends.”

“One of,” Evan mutters. Quiet enough she doesn’t seem to hear him.

“Uh, yeah.” Connor nods. “Nice to… meet you, Ms. Hansen.”

“Mom don’t you… have to get ready for work?”

“Oh! You’re right,” She says, cheerful tone struggling to remain. “Well, I’ll leave you be, then.”

“Your mom’s… nice.”

“Yeah.”

“That’s… good.”

“Connor?”

“She sort of,” Connor pauses, as if trying to figure out what how to phrase it, “intimidates me.”

“Well- that- that’s new.”

“I don’t know how to deal with it.”

“Ah.” Evan nods, understanding. “Like how I don’t know how- how to deal with being around your whole family at once?”

“Yeah, I guess.”

“S-something else?”

“No, you’re right.” Connor shrugs. “I feel like I- I pretty much always offend people, so…”

“You… don’t want to offend her?” Evan smiles at that, he’s not sure what about it does, but something in that makes him happy. “Well, is- isn’t that new?”

“It’s gross. Like I’m… polite or something.”

“The horror.”

“I’m serious. I have no fucking idea how to deal with people being nice to me anymore.” Connor makes an annoyed noise. “My default is not ‘be nice to people.’”

Evan feels almost offended that their friendship isn’t considered ‘being nice’ but shakes that thought away. Worries for another time. “Just be-”

“If you say yourself I will leave immediately and never talk to you again.”

“Agreeable.”

“Agreeable?!” Connor laughs, in an un-amused, harsh way. “What does that even fucking mean?”

“Just smile and nod and- and- I don’t know.”
“Really helpful, Hansen.” Connor scoffs. There’s something in his tone that makes Evan feel like somehow he’s being blamed for something. Which doesn’t make any sense- Evan knows it doesn’t make sense- but Connor is glaring at the wall and it feels like that’s what’s happening, anyway.

“I don’t know what to do either!” Evan throws his hands up. “I- I don’t- I never talk to people and when I do it’s just- just nod, or say whatever you think they want you too because i-if you don’t they’ll hate you and then want you gone and nobody will care if you-”

“Evan.”

“If you-”

“Can you- fuck- just, breath?”

“I am breathing!”

“Can you, maybe, calm the fuck down?”

“I’m calm.” Evan huffs, leaning back as if trying to disappear into the couch. He knows he can’t- not for lack of trying- but it makes him feel better. At least a little. “Sorry.”

“I-” Connor runs a hand through his hair, sighing- “me too.”

“By the way, I’m pretty sure as long as you’re my friend, you can’t offend my mom. She- she’s probably just glad you exist.”

“Well that’s new.”

“I- I am, too…”

“Yeah, thanks.” Connor avoids his eyes, and Evan almost thinks he might be embarrassed. “You- I’m glad, too… that you’re… alive?”

“Oh.” Evan blinks. He tries not to sound too surprised, not to show how much he still had trouble accepting anyone is. “Thanks….”

“Hey Hansen.” Evan looks up, raising an eyebrow at Jared. “Come over today so I can show my mom we’re still friends.”

“W-what if I’m busy or had plans?”

“You never have plans.” Evan frowns at that. “Come on, my car insurance is at stake here.”

“Right.” Evan nods. “Sure, okay.”

Despite everything, Evan is usually happy after hanging out with Jared. Maybe because part of him is trying to convince itself that Jared doesn’t mean half the things he says, even if the other part of him screams that he does. Maybe it’s because, at least, Jared will fill the space with words and Evan doesn’t have to. Maybe it’s because he’s the closest thing Evan has to a friend- oh.

Evan sighs, drops onto his bed once he get’s home and feels…. empty.
When he has something to compare it too, the distaste of Evan’s presence is harder to overlook. Yet, Evan doesn’t even feel sad, or upset. Anxiety isn’t creeping into his mind, whispering everything terrible about their (family) friendship.

He’s weirdly calm.

The last time he was this calm, he broke his arm.

“Are you ever,” Evan starts typing a text to Connor, “Calm, or empty, or numb, when you shouldn’t be.”

“its usually the opposite.” Is the response he gets only a few seconds after he hits send.

“Same. But not right now.”

“isn’t that good? since youre always freaking out?”

Evan huffs, rolling his eyes despite- or maybe because of- being by himself. “It would be.”

“Buuuuh?”

“The last time-” Evan shakes his head, deletes the message and starts over. “I haven’t been this calm is a while.”

“how long is a while”

“Are you busy?”

“Evan.”

“Well?”

“no im grounded.” Evan frowns at that, wondering what happened. Before he can ask, Connor sends another message to tell him not to.

“Okay.”

“why?”

“I broke my arm last time I was this calm.”

“are you by yourself?”

“Yes?”

“dont be.”

“How?”

“I don’t have any rules about having friends over when im grounded. they never gave me any.”

Evan doesn’t need Connor say it, to realize that’s because he never had any over in the first place.

Evan doesn’t know what makes him think it’s a good idea, but he finds himself at the door to the Murphy household, anyway. Cynthia opens the door, and seems genuinely shocked to see him. A moment passes, where it seems like she’s debating what to say to him, before she simply tells him Connor is upstairs.
Evan can hear conversation as he makes his way up the stairs. “Isn’t Connor grounded?”

“I wasn’t going to do it again.” Evan breaks the silence sitting over the room. Connor just nods from his place sitting in the middle of his bed. Evan leans against the headboard, sighing. “I wasn’t. I just… didn’t want to be alone with my thoughts like that.”

“Yes?”

“I-it’s really loud, normally? Like everything is- is so much.” Evan sighs. “When it’s quiet I- I don’t know who I a- what to do?”

“It’s probably different,” Connor turns his head to look at Evan, “but I know what you mean.”

“Oh?”

“Everything’s loud and chaotic, and then it’s not and you just…” Connor motions to the empty space in front of him, Evan nods.

“Yeah.” They sit, silent.

“Hey- uh- Evan.”

“Yes?”

“Thank you.”

“I- for what?”

“Telling me.” Connor shrugs.

“T-that was the whole- that’s why we started being friends, right? I mean- originally. So- so of course I would. You… you can, too, if- I- if you ever need to.”

“Yeah.”

*Today’s going to be a good day, and here’s why. You didn’t want to try.*

Evan shakes his head, erases the email and sighs. He really doesn’t know what to say.

*Tomorrow will be a good day, because you’re alive.*

Evan erases it again, sighs, and shuts his laptop.
everyone is nice and im /dying/ (in a good way) thank you everyone who's read/commented/left kudos

also fun fact: when i was writing the calm part i kept thinking about this scene in the show M*A*S*H where this psychiatrist in the show was talking about a patient he lost because they were more calm than usual and he didn't realize that was a warning sign. (Even tho the context for that was calm because he'd made a decision and not just calm enough to do something like that.)

anyway yeah im secretly an old lady who watches shows that are like over twice her age.
“No, you did.” Evan sighs, then starts typing again before Connor can respond. “I get it. It’s like when people tell you ‘everything’s going to be okay’ but you’re like ‘yes but right now it’s not can we focus on this.’”

The first sign is how tense Connor is. The second is how tightly he’s gripping onto the strap of his bag. Like he’s trying, really trying, to hold whatever it is inside him back. The last time Evan saw him like this- only a few days ago, though it feels like more- he’d snapped at Evan. The time before then he’d pushed Evan over.

So Evan is going to ask him if he’s okay. So he’s going to accept the probability that Connor will snap at him, ask Connor what’s wrong, and try to give Connor someone to talk to about the anger. Before he can, Connor drops his arms to his side.

“Shut the fuck up!” Evan doesn’t know who Connor’s yelling at, specifically, but his voice is directed at the throngs of nearby students. Connor is shaking, and turns to rush out of the school.

Evan hesitates. For just a moment his hands shake, and he feels like he can’t move. Then he follows despite the bell ringing. Despite knowing he’s too far from his classroom to make it on time if he doesn’t head in it’s direction immediately. Evan follows Connor all the way out into the parking area.

“Connor!”

“What?!” Connor spins around with an exaggerated hand motion.

“What’s- are you okay? What’s going on?”

“I’m fan-fucking-tastic.”

“C-Connor-”

“Leave me alone.”

“What-”

“What? Can you not fucking hear me? I don’t want to talk to you! I’m not in the mood for whatever bullshit you have to say about why this is ‘totally okay’ or whatever.”

“I- I’m not-”

“Go away, Hansen.”

Evan just stands there. Stands there while Connor walks away. Stands there until he hears the bell ring again- class is starting- and realizes he can’t breathe. He can’t breathe.
He can’t breathe. Evan sinks to the ground and everything is just too much. Way too much.

It’s twenty minutes later, from his spot on the ground, he tells him mom he didn’t go to school because he felt sick- says he thought he was going to throw up, leaves out the part about not being able to breathe- and goes home.

“im an asshole”

“Brand new concepts with Connor Murphy.”

“im sorry.”

“I gathered.”

“????”

“You’re forgiven.”

“cool.”

“But I want to be angry for a few more hours. So.”

“OK.”

“Then you can tell me why everything is awful and I can offer you some bullshit you don’t want to hear.”

“I didn’t mean that.”

“No, you did.” Evan sighs, then starts typing again before Connor can respond. “I get it. It’s like when people tell you ‘everything’s going to be okay’ but you’re like ‘yes but right now it’s not can we focus on that.’”

“yeah.”

“So text me in like 2 hours and you can tell me why it’s not.”

“thanks.”

At exactly 2 hours and 1 minute after their text conversation, Connor does just that.

“My parent’s suck, as does everything else.”

“Wow proper capitalization too. It’s really bad?”

“yeah.”

“Shoot.”

“literally?”

“You don’t have a gun.”
“I have a rubber band tho.”

“Those are dangerous.”

“It wasn’t new just a fight like usual but”

“But?”

“im like a soda can.”

“Explain?”

“shaken so I explode when you open it.”

“Ah. Try something then.”

“Try what?”

“I’m typing!!”

“Sorry.”

“Pan full of steaming water, with a lid, right? You’re that.”

“???”

“Talk- to me, to anyone- let out some of it so when it’s opened you aren’t giving people steam burns.”

“that’s weirdly specific.”

“I once gave myself a- very minor- burn because I opened a pot full of steam. As someone who has accidentally burnt themselves many times; steam burns are awful. The worst.”

“this is taking ‘let off some steam’ really literally.”

“I didn’t plan that.” Evan laughs to himself. “I can’t believe this.”

“okay. I’ll… talk to you before I explode next time.”

“Thank you.”

“Did you skip school?” Evan blinks, spins around to face Jared, and raises an eyebrow.

“What?”

“Don’t play dumb with me, Evan. You skipped school yesterday!”

“N-no I wasn’t- I stayed home because I wasn’t feeling well-”

“I saw you leave.” Jared shakes his head. “Hey, I’m trying to be proud of you, here. Skipping school, you’re all grown up.”

“I- I didn’t.”
“Come on, no need to lie, we’re family friends here.” Jared throws any arm over Evan’s shoulder, grinning. Evan huffs.

“I didn’t!”

“Sure, sure.”

“I didn’t- I wasn’t- I had to go home-”

“Dude, you don’t have to lie to me.”

“No, I had a panic attack! I wasn’t skipping!”

Evan freezes. Jared freezes. There’s an awkward, uncomfortable silence where Jared pulls back his arm and just stares. Then Evan turns and runs because he doesn’t know what else to do. All he knows is he doesn’t want to be there, and that he’s shaking again.

It’s halfway through lunch, so Evan figures he can calm down by the time he has to return to class. Until then, he sits against the wall near one of the side doors on the building he has classes in. It’s when he’s been sitting there for a full minute- probably, he thinks- that someone sits next to him. For a moment he doesn’t look over. Then he does. His gaze remains lowered, but he only needs to see the arms resting on said person’s knees to realize it’s Connor.

“Hey.”

“You okay?”

“I-I guess?”

“You… yesterday.” Connor sighs, sounding exasperated. “You had a panic attack?”

“W-well I knew why so- so actually an anxiety attack but- I- yes. I’m sorry.”

“What?”

“Sorry- I- I didn’t mean to-” Evan shrugs, cutting himself off. He doesn’t know what he didn’t mean to do.

“Man,” Connor starts, sighing, “I was going to apologize to you.”

“What?”

“I yelled at you and you had a pa- anxiety attack. I’m at least smart enough to connect the dots.”

“It’s fine.”

“It’s not.”

“But it’s not your fault that I- that I can’t handle a little yelling. A-and I knew you were upset. I expected it, s-so I should have- I’m sorry.”

“You know this doesn’t fucking work if you don’t- shit- tell me when I fuck up?” Connor sighs, again, and leans against the wall behind him. After a moment, he stretches his legs out and makes an annoyed noise. “Like- yeah- I don’t like to hear or admit that I fucked up, but if you don’t tell me I’m
never going to be a good friend.”

“Oh.”

“I mean- the only people who try to call my bullshit out just-” Connor flaps one of his hands in front of him, as if waving the thought off- “they get mad at me for so much shit that I can’t pick out what’s actually my fault and not just them being terrible.”

“Oh,” Evan repeats. Connor turns to him, and Evan takes a deep breath. “Okay. Well you- it’s okay if you want to be by yourself, but if you could- or try to…..”

“Yes?”

“Say that you want to be alone in- instead of saying that you don’t want to talk to me or be around me? I- I mean I know that’s technically the same thing but- I just- phrasing it that way make me…” Evan motions to himself, as if that someone explains everything. He thinks it does, really, since he’s a disaster. Connor nods.

“Okay.”

Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why. I didn’t realize it before, but for a friendship started on the grounds that you’re both sick, you sure didn’t try to set up grounds for discussing that. Now, though! Now you have, and that feels… better.

Evan adds the letter to his folder of them, and smiles. Progress.

Chapter End Notes

I have... no.... self control.. Save me from myself. (don't though I gotta write as much as I can before my brain gives up on me again)

Also.... listen i love Jared, he's insanely cool, but he /is/ sort of terrible also. (and I gotta set up future stuff somehow, don't I?)
Chapter Summary

“You’re my best friend,” Jared mumbles, shifting. “Can you… not replace me?”

“I’m not replacing you!”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

“Yo, Evan.” Jared’s casual greeting does nothing but increase the confusion Evan feels. “I want to talk to you.”

“Yes, just come to my house early on a Sunday, with no warning, uninvited. That’s cool,” Evan thinks when Jared does just that. Instead of speaking he only nods and closes the door while Jared pushes past him and towards the living room.

“So-” Jared spins around, to face Evan- “are you like best friends now?”

“Who?”

“You and Connor. Dude, keep up.”

“I- I guess so?” Evan shrugs. Before he fully thinks the words through- before part of him can argue it’s passive aggressive and mean- Evan speaks again. “S-since he’s my only friend I guess that makes him my best friend.”

Jared visibly deflates. As if somehow that hurt him. Evan doesn’t think it’s entirely fair for him to seem upset over the comment when he’s made it constantly clear that he doesn’t like Evan. That they’re only friends because Jared doesn’t have a choice.

“I- only friend?!”

“Y-Yeah?”

“I’m your friend!”

“You- you only hang out with me because you- because you have to! You always say that what-” Evan takes a deep breath- “where did this come from?”

Evan doesn’t know why they’re arguing. Doesn’t get how Jared can be mad at him. Feels like Jared has no right to be mad at him. If it was anyone else, Evan thinks he would have sunk into himself at the anger. It isn’t anyone else, though. It’s the person who’s made it abundantly clear they aren’t really friends. Who Evan can’t help but be angry is getting mad at him.

“Oh my- family friends are still friends!”

“You- what?! You always say there’s a difference.”

“Different but still-” Jared huffs. “You think I’m not your friend? I was your only friend until
recently! Or did you forget that?"

“C-can you actually say that? You- you didn’t even care that I broke my- my arm. You make it-
make it so clear that you don’t- that you don’t want to hang out with me. It- it’s only because of your
car insurance that you- you do so….” Evan can’t breath. It’s not anxiety, though, for once. His throat
is tight and he feels like he’s crying. *Knows* he’s crying.

“Holy shit don’t- fuck, Evan, don’t cry- you’re- I’m sorry! Okay?!” Jared reaches towards him, but
seems unsure what to do. Evan doesn’t know what to do either. “I’m- I was joking! It was a joke, I
didn’t think you took it that seriously.”

“How- how could you- you think I don’t take that seriously?!”

Jared can’t seem to answer that. Evan isn’t sure what kind of answer he wants. They’re silent for a
long time.

“You’re my best friend,” Jared mumbles, shifting. “Can you… not replace me?”

“I’m not replacing you!” Evan almost laughs. “You’re my only *family* friend.”

“Oh, ha.” Jared rolls his eyes. “I deserved that, didn’t I?”

“Yes.”

“So… you guys are really friends, huh?”

“Huh? Oh, yeah.” Evan nods, pursing his lips. He doesn’t know where this conversation is going,
especially with the argument they just had.

“Well that’s disappointing. I was hoping it would turn out to be a secret homoerotic relationship.”

“Wha- why are you like this?!”

“It’s okay Evan; embrace the gay.”

Evan would like to believe his most comedic action in his entire life was at this moment. When he
hugged Jared. “Okay, but is there a point to this?”

“I can’t- I can’t fucking believe you’ve done this to me. I’m so proud.”

Evan approaches Connor early Monday morning- Connor had been coming to school a surprising
amount- with a warning. “I think Jared and I are friends again.”

“Okay?”

“The last time- back when we were friends in elementary school- when I had another friend he felt
the need to- to try and also be their friend. Something about *friends should be friends with their
friend’s, friends.* I- I can’t say for sure he’ll do that but- but if he does-”

“Oh god he’s going to try and be my friend.”

“M-maybe?”

“I’ve just decided, right now, that I’m skipping school today.”
“Connor- please-” Evan huffs while Connor speed-walks his way towards the exit. He’s not fast enough, though.

“Hey, Connor!” Jared draws out both words, grin on his face. Evan shakes his head. He tried, he tells himself, there was nothing else he could have done. “And Evan!”

Now they can suffer together, at least.

It’s not as if Jared is awful to be around. Evan wouldn’t say that. Yet, he worries that Connor will have problems being around Jared. Especially with the fact that Jared had, on the first day of school, called Connor a ‘freak.’ Evan is fairly sure Jared doesn’t remember doing this. He tends to move past things quicker than most people- or perhaps Evan just doesn’t move on as quickly as others- or at least believe that others are over it.

Connor, for his part, does seem to try and get along with Jared during entire five minute conversation they have. Evan can see the tell-tale signs of not wanting to be in his current situation, but Connor does a very good job of not snapping at Jared- or Evan for that matter- during that time.

And when the bell rings, and Jared gives a small, “see you two later,” Connor even waves.

“Sure.”

It’s something.

Today’s going to be a good day, and here’s why. You’ve got your former best friend back. I don’t think it’ll ever be the same, like when we were kids, but I think he does feel bad. Maybe he still doesn’t quite realize how much I thought he didn’t care, or how alone…

Still. It’s nice to have him back, I think.

Connor even seems to be trying to get along with him. Maybe that shouldn’t be surprising? I guess after years of him not really talking to people- except sometimes fighting with them- and only just being your friend because you’re both sick, I didn’t think he’d be so willing to try and, at least, tolerate someone new so quickly.

It’s a good thing. There’s no reason for them not to be friends. It’s probably the best part of what happened this week! You’ve got a friend back and he’s even trying to make nice with your new friend! That’s good!

You’d have to be a really, really selfish to feel otherwise.

Evan thinks he might be a bit selfish.

Chapter End Notes

I love my gay son.
okay but for real, i even /named this chapter/ guys, Jared's so cool. Anyway he totally seem like the type to be like "i have to be friends with your friends because friends want their friends to get along with each other right?" but in reality he's just a lonely bean, wanting friends himself.

lol but actually that's (naming the chapter) because I finally figured out how i want to get where i'm going with this story (I already know where I want to end up) and this chapter having a title wont be the last time.

fun fact: I'm actually a kliensen shipper, but no one can deny that he might be the biggest tree bros shipper of us all.

anyway. This wont be the /end/ of the developments including him, but there- for at least a while- will be a switch in secondary focus (since thus far tree bros has been focus A and focus B has been jared being... jared)
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Evan sets his cast up on his dresser and takes a picture of it, signature out, which he texts to Connor.

“It’s you!”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Alana Beck is an intimidating person. Under most circumstances, Evan would be glad for the opportunity to not speak while someone else does. However, when he actually does have something to say- and when he can force it past his lips- it’s even worse when he can’t speak. Especially when, for once, it’s not because of his own ability, or lack thereof.

So, he tends to avoid talking to her, despite not disliking her. So, he’s unsure what to do when she initiates a conversation with, of all things, the words, “you’re Connors friend, right?”

Evan nods, opens his mouth to respond, but is cut off by her continued speech.

“Could you talk to him for me? I don’t like going to someone else to deliver messages for me, but he’s hardly in class you know?”

“He isn-”

“Oh, maybe you don’t. Either way, I recently found out his grades are dropping- because of not coming to class? Well, as a tutor- oh, I know what you’re thinking, I didn’t think I had the time either, but how could I not become one when I know so many students need help?”

“That’s nice-”

“Besides, it would be good for my college applications. So, my- our- chemistry teacher asked me to talk to Connor about my potentially tutoring him, to catch up with everything he’s been missing. I can’t seem to catch him, though. Zoe recommended I ask you, since you’re such close friends.”

“I don’t know- I don’t know about that… Why would- why wouldn’t Zoe just do that?”

“She’s quite busy, with jazz band. You don’t seem to have anything else going on, though, so I didn’t think it would be too much to ask you deliver my message.”

“Your message?”

“Just tell Connor to speak to me.”

“Oh-”

“Great! Thank you. Well, I have an AP class to get to.”

It’s only once Alana is out of sight that Evan allows himself to sigh. “But I never actually said I
“How can I see- how can I see you at school every day, yet you be skipping classes?”

“Skill.”

“Connor.”

“I’ve only been skipping… half of them.”

“Oh my god.”

“What are you, my mother?”

“I sure hope not.” Evan sighs. “I can’t handle that kind of responsibility. I can’t even make phone calls.”

“Why?”

“Anxiety.”

“No, Hansen. The skipping.”

“O-oh, right. Alana Beck wants to speak to you about tutoring, because- because she said you’ve been missing classes.”

“Who on earth thinks I want to give myself more school when I’m not doing the school I’m supposed to.”

“Doing… school.”

“Yeah, doing school.”

“I-” Evan clears his throat, trying not to laugh- “I think I spend too much time with Jared.”

“Why?”

“I wanted to say- thought of saying you can’t do the whole school, Connor, that’s how you get diseases.”

“Oh my fucking god.” Connor makes a startled noise in the back of his throat. “You do spend too much time with him, clearly.”

“So you wont do the tutoring thing, then.” It’s not really a question.

“No.”

“Will you- can you at least talk to Alana?”

“Why?” Connor let’s out an exasperated sigh, putting his hands behind his head and drooping down to lay on the grassy ground around them. Evan frowns, leaning his back against a tree.

“Because if- if you don’t she’ll think I never talked to you and what if- what if she asks me about it again. Connor I can’t handle that kind of pressure, I’m not an oven.”
“I-” Connor pauses, blinks, then turns to Evan. “An oven?!”

“N-no wait, I should have said pressure cooker.”

“Listen, you’re my best friend.”

“I don’t like where this is going.”

“But you’re really fucking weird.”

“I mean… yeah.” Evan sighs. “I expected something worse.”

“So little faith.”

Evan has never been particularly good at saying no to people. Though he knows when he’s supposed to, or when saying yes isn’t feasible, actually getting the words out is fairly difficult. Which is why he stumbles over trying to say no with Connor frowning at him. “I can’t.”

“You can’t?” Connor looks genuinely disappointed. Which makes Evan feel bad, especially since it’s a pretty simple thing. Going over to the Murphy’s for dinner, again, next Friday because they’re starting to question if Connor and Evan are still friends.

“I get my cast off that day.” Evan lifts his arm, the singular signature on it slightly faded. “Mom is going to be home for- for once? So I can’t.”

“Oh.” Connor nods. After a moment pause, in which Evan worries, Connor shrugs. “How about Saturday?”

“O-oh, sure, that- that works.”

Heidi hasn’t cooked in a long time, and she doesn’t want to spend the time on it that she could be using to talk to Evan. She hasn’t gotten the chance to talk to him in maybe longer than since the last time she’s cooked. So Evan isn’t surprised when they stop to get tacos- to go- before heading home. He twists his cast- he was shocked, himself, with how insistent he was he keep it- around in his hands.

It gives him something to do, something to use his excess of energy- originating from his constantly being wound too tight- while they talk.

And when they settle down for the night, Evan sets his cast up on his dresser and takes a picture of it, signature out, which he texts to Connor.

“It’s you!”

The first thing Connor does is point out how pale Evans left arm is. Which makes Evan laugh. He turns his arm around in front of him, examining it himself, then nods. It hadn’t seen the sun in a while, so it was no surprise. It was an especially obvious contrast with Evan spending so much time outside recently. He hadn’t been doing that after breaking his arm, much, until he and Connor had become friends.
The second thing he does is plop down onto his bed and motion Evan to sit next to him.

They talk. It’s not particularly meaningful or memorable conversation, but it’s nice. It almost makes Evan forget that he’s going to have to interact with the rest of the Murphy’s again, later that day. *Almost.*

Zoe is giving him weird looks again. It’s as if she’s trying to figure something out, like she knows she’s missing something, but can’t put it together. Evan wishes he knew what it was she was looking for, so he could just tell her whatever it is that would put the puzzle together. Then she’s stop giving him weird looks and he would stop feeling like he was going to do something incredibly stupid.

*That’s not true,* Evan tells himself, he’d still feel like he’s going to do something stupid.

Mr. Murphy is mostly silent, but that does nothing to ease Evan’s worries, either. Ms. Murphy- Evan doesn’t know why, but his mind supplies her first name before that- is the one who fills the space. She’s speaking about something Evan isn’t really paying attention to, trying to be nice.

“Anyway,” She waves her hand, as if dismissing what she was talking about, “it’s nice to see Connor has friends.”

While Connor groans, Zoe scoffs. Evan flinches at the quickness with which Connor turns to glare at her. “What?”

“I didn’t say anything.” She rolls her eyes, Connor makes an annoyed noise.

“You might as well have!”

“Maybe I just think it’s funny how we’re *so happy* that you’ve got a friend, when all we know is that you sit in the same room sometimes? What do you two even *do?*”

“How about it not being any of your fucking business?”

“Yeah, that’s not suspicious.”

“What, is it so fucking hard to believe someone can spend time with me?!”

“A little, actually! Since you snap at everyone all the fucking time!”

“Zoe! Connor!” Cynthia reaches out, over the table, as if trying to stop them.

“Oh yeah I just- fucking- snap at everyone, right? Wow, maybe that’s just because you’re all terrible and I don’t want to fucking talk to you!”

Evan stares, wide-eyed, and glances around at everyone at the table as if searching for a way to calm the tension in the air. He doesn’t know what to do.

“Connor, calm down,” Larry speaks, exasperation in his tone. Evan frowns. How can he be exasperated? Shouldn’t he be worried about what’s being said.

“Oh wow! Calm down?! Wow, amazing, I’m suddenly so calm!” Connor stands.

“Sit down, Connor. We aren’t doing this right now.”

“You’re right, we aren’t!” Connor turns, as if to leave, then stop. He stops, drops back down with his
arms crossed, and glares. Evan watches him, sees him shaking, angry. “There’s no point, you don’t fucking listen anyway.”

“You can’t just get angry at us every time we try to talk about this.”

“Talk about it?! We don’t talk about it! You just act like it’s only my fault that I’m angry. Wow, here’s a concept, maybe you fucking make me angry!”

“Connor can we not- your friend-” Cynthia seems to be trying to reach for anything to draw the conversation away from this.

“We’re trying to talk about it right now-”

“You just said we weren’t!” Connor huffs.

“Because you-”

Evan doesn’t know where his voice comes from. In fact, he doesn’t realize he speaks until everyone is staring at him. “You weren’t listening to him though.”

Connor looks over, surprised. Either because of the comment or because of the calm way Evan says it. He doesn’t know which. Cynthia stares, mouth open as she tries to respond but can’t. Zoe laughs, in a way Evan understands is out of lack of having a better response. Larry frowns, his jaw set, and eyes narrow.

“Excuse me?”

Evan doesn’t know what to do or say. It wasn’t like he knew what he was doing when he spoke in the first place. Now everyone is looking at him, and expecting him to say something, and- oh, he realizes, he can’t breathe.

Great.

“Evan, dear,” Cynthia starts, but seems unsure what else to say, “you…”

“You don’t know what’s going on here,” Larry says, simply. “It’s not your place to-”

Connor laughs. Attention shifts to him. He laughs, hand over his mouth, and lets out a wheezing breath. “Holy shit, Evan.”

“I- uh- I didn’t-”

“Thanks.” Connor shakes his head, stands back up. His face immediately falls back to annoyance. “I’m going to my room. Any objections?”

Connor doesn’t actually wait for any, if they’re coming, just starts walking away. Evan fumbles to grab the back of his chair as he stands, barely manages not to knock it over. Following Connor, Evan mumbles apologies.

“I can never come back here.” Evan breaths out, trying to steady himself.

“Nah, you’re fine. I keep coming back and you’ve seen how I am.”

“Still.”
“Thanks, Evan.” Connors voice is surprisingly calm. Evan just nods, gaze remaining on the floor.

“I just- you shouldn’t feel like they wont listen.” Evan nods to himself, deciding that’s right. That’s what he wants to say and he’s sure of it for once. “Even- even if I don’t feel like I can talk to my mom, I know she’d listen- she’d listen if I tried to.”

“Yeah.”

“S-so you should…”

“Mhm.”

“Feel like you have someone that will listen too. I- I’m really- I’m sorry it makes me upset that- that you don’t.”

“I don’t?”

“Huh?”

“You listen.” Evan looks up to be greeted with Connor shrugging. “I get you think that’s not the same, but it’s something.”

“Oh. Oh, then- I’m- I’m sorry. That’s good.”

“You know on the first day of school I…”

“You?”

“No, never mind.” Connor shakes his head, sighing. “You’ve helped though, okay?”

“Okay.” Evan nods. “You- you too, you know?”

“Good, I’m glad.”

*Today was a good day and here’s why.*

Evan doesn’t even get thought that without deleting it.

*Today was, objectively, not a bad day. Even if you’re currently scared to ever face the Murphy’s again.*

Chapter End Notes

me, every time I write this story: hey look im projecting again.

unrelated: I love both zoe and alana a lot please don’t think I don’t. but if i’m going to give them ~development~ they have to start somewhere.
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

"im going to go over there just to fight you"

";)

"i got nothing man"

"Screaming."

Chapter Notes

Hello yes i'd like to order 1 self control please

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Zoe approaches him at school again. This time it’s after the final bell, while Evan is making his way to the exit. He’s supposed to meet both Connor and Jared, all three of them planning to do something. Evan isn’t totally sure, but he figures it’s likely to play video games, since Jared was the one who suggested it. Evan was honestly surprised Connor so willingly agreed, but figured he was trying to be nicer, and this was a way of doing that.

At any rate, Evan is stopped on his way to said friendship endeavor by Zoe, who asks to speak with him. Of course, he agrees because he’s, well, Evan. Thus they end up standing to the side of the hall, awkward.

Finally, Zoe sighs. “You weren’t wrong.”

“Huh?”

“When you said they weren’t listening.” Zoe shrugs. “Dad’s too strict, mom’s too lenient and Connor just keeps getting worse and angrier.”

“O-oh I- I’m sorry. I- they seem to- I mean they’re trying? I just- I-”

“Don’t apologize.” Evan bites his lip, holding back another apology, and nods. “That’s not what I wanted to say, anyway.”

“Okay- okay what is it, then?”

“What-” Zoe shakes her head, thinking better of whatever question she was going to ask. “When you hang out with him, what’s Connor like? Because at home he’s just… angry. All the time, and it’s terrible. Yet, you seem fine with him and- no offense- you’re the jumpiest person I’ve ever met.”

“He- he’s still angry, but… he’s trying.” Evan nods, more so to himself than for anything else. “He’s trying not to be but- I think- it seems like he can’t keep that up at home? I guess? I mean- I mean,
since you said he is angry all the time at home.”

“Okay.” Zoe sighs, nodding.

“I- um- is that all?”

“One more thing: thank you.”

“For… what?”

“Being his friend? Listen, I’m not any less pissed off about all the shit he pulls, and nothing’s changed, but it’s probably good for him. To have a friend, you know?” Zoe shrugs, looking away. “Just because I hate him doesn’t mean I want him to be friendless forever.”

“Oh.” Evan doesn’t know what to say, but that seems to be enough for Zoe, since she leaves with a wave.

Jared loves playing video game. This, however, doesn’t mean he’s any good at them. Which is likely why he invites Evan to play against him so often. Evan is even worse, and Jared can be good by comparison. It’s not something Evan particularly minds- being bad at video games is one of the things he doesn’t care that he is- so he never puts up much of an argument about it.

As long as Jared is better than Evan, he can pretend he’s good. Which makes the fact that Connor is beating Jared at the game annoying to Jared. Evan can see the frown- really a pout- on his face as he loses yet again. Connor’s number of wins increases, and with it the amusement on Connor’s face. It took twenty minutes for him to learn the games controls- it’s a very simple fighting game, nowhere near as complex as some get- since he’d never played it before, and then he was winning most matches.

“I can’t believe this! Are you sure you didn’t lie about having never played it?”

“Scouts honor.” Connor holds up a hand, while Jared huffs out an annoyed breath. Evan is fairly sure Connor was never a scout.

“Give Evan the controller, I want to win again.” Evan is broken out of comfortable state, watching them play, when he’s handed the controller.

“That’s cruel, taking advantage of the fact he’s worse than you.”

“He’s cool with it, right Evan?”

“Yeah.” Evan shrugs. “For the sake of your self-esteem, I’m okay with it.”

“Blocked.”

“This- this is a real life conversation.”

“Double blocked.”

“Jared-”

“Sorry can’t hear you, you’re blocked.”

“I can’t believe you. You- you’re the worst.”
“Evan,” Connor starts, looking sympathetic, “he can’t hear you, you’ve been blocked.”

“I should have never let you- let you guys become friends.”

“Eh, friends is a strong word,” Jared says, eye’s trained on the screen where he’s currently beating Evan. “Acquaintances maybe.”

“Who are you, Alana?” Connor scoffs.

“Speaking-” Evan loses with a startled noise- “speaking of. Did you talk to her?”

“Yeah I told her I don’t need tutoring.”

“You need tutoring?” Jared turns to them, grinning.

“No.”

“He needs- He needs to attend school.” Evan likes to believe he does a good job of not shrinking under the glare Connor sends him.

“I do not.”

“Yeah. What he really needs is to let me beat him at this game.”

“Not gonna happen.”

Today’s not a good day. It’s only three in the morning when writing this, sure, but that’s besides the point.

Evan doesn’t have nightmares much. It’s a fact that most people would find surprising, considering his mental state, but it’s still a fact. At least, he doesn’t often wake up scared or with his heart pounding. Dreams that most people would be considered nightmares- filled with the threat of death, or other horrible imagery- just don’t do much but make him exhausted. Which, sure, is a problem since he’s trying to sleep, but they don’t make him afraid.

So when he wakes up, heart pounding, after a very normal, mundane dream he has a hard time processing it. His clock reads 2:58, his heart’s pounding, and all he can think of is the fact that the dream shouldn’t have affected him so much.

Evan was laying on the grassy ground, staring at the sky. The sun was setting, and Evan’s whole body felt numb. Everything was numb.

Then he woke up with a racing heart.

I haven’t had a nightmare in a long time. This wasn’t even a nightmare, though, I guess? The last time I can remember feeling like this was when I was 8.

Whatever it was that my subconscious was so scared of can
Evan frowns, deleting the last sentence without finishing it.

The last time he’d had a nightmare he had been 8 years old, it was a week before his birthday, and he’d just been informed his father wouldn’t be visiting him like he had originally been promised. He vividly remembers only one part of the dream: he was completely alone.

“Riddle me this: why does a dream where I’m running from a murderous monster do nothing to me. But laying on the ground with the sun setting is heart racing. What is that?”

“its 4 in the fuckin moring”

“Morning*”

“fight me.”

“I woke up at 3, help me.”

“any more detail s?”

“Details* and no? I was by myself, numb, staring at the sky and then I was awake and my heart decided to make it’s grand escape from my chest, to little success.”

“dont correct my typos im half alseep man.”

“Don’t* and I’m*”

“im going to go over there just to fight you”

“:)”

“i got nothing man”

“Screaming.”

“maybe it was the crushing possibility of dying alone”

“That’s too real.” Evan sighs. “And a little too possible.”

“go back to sleep tree boy”

“How about fuck you.”

“holy shit. Im so proud of you.”

“Ugh.”

“but for real GO TO SLEEP.”

“But I’m EXTRA SCREAMING.”

“ugh.”

“Fine! Fine! Goodnight.”

Evan doesn’t go back to sleep, instead getting up in search of food. If he’s going to be awake, he
figures, he should at least feed himself.

*Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why*

Evan pauses writing when Connor text him again at 10am, with an offer to hang out.

**Chapter End Notes**

fun fact you may or may not have noticed: when correcting connors ""typos"", after he says not to, evan doesn't correct his misspelling of "asleep"

take that how you will.

secondary fun fact: Requiem is 4 minutes and 20 seconds long and I don't know what to do with this knowledge.
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

“I was just tried. I was- am- angry and that’s exhausting and I was just really tired. The longer that day went on the more sure I was that I wanted to, too. If one thing had gone differently, I probably would have.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Evan is doing homework on a Sunday- because somehow anxiety doesn’t prevent him from procrastinating- when his phone lights up telling him he has a text. With a sigh, he glances between the paper in front of him- he’s almost done- and his phone.

Then he picks up his phone. Just in case.

“im angry.”

“What happened?”

“nothing. thats the problem. i don’t know why im angry I just fucking am.”

“So you just started feeling angry, with no clear reason?”

“yea”

“Want to talk?”

“about what? I don’t know why im angry”

“In general? Maybe it wont help you feel not-angry but ranting about even an irrelevant topic might help? I don’t know, anger isn’t my expertise.”

“ok but typing is so much work.”

“Hm.”

“i know u cant phone call, so?”

“Yeah, yeah, where?”

“Orchard?”

“Orchard it is.”

Evan sets his homework aside and stands. He can finish it when he gets back, he tells himself.

Evan sits on the ground, legs crossed and arms resting on them, watching as Connor paces back in
“Connor?”

“What?” Connor pauses rating about how he thinks soy milk doesn’t even taste good, and turns to Evan.

“Why- do you not want to sit?”

“No.” Connor sighs. “I need- I just need to be doing something, you know?”

“Mhm.” Evan nods, sitting back. “I- yeah- I get that. Okay, go ahead then. What was that about soy milk?”

“It’s fucking gross!” Connor throws his arms up and makes an annoyed noise.

“I like it.”

“You’re gross.”

“Thanks.” Evan shakes his head, smiling. “Unless you drink it- you drink it not knowing you’re getting it instead of regular milk, it’s not that bad.”

“Are you trying to compromise on my soy milk hate?”

“No?”

“How dare you.”

“Some people like soy milk! Or- or can only drink it.”

“Those people must be sad, since it’s so gross.”

“You’re not giving this up, are you?”

“No way.”

There’s a lapse in conversation, a fragile silence where Connor seems to be debating what he’s next going to say. Evan, for once, doesn’t feel the need to fill this space. Instead waiting patiently while Connor glares at the ground, thinking. With a sigh, Connor slowly settles on the ground next to Evan, hands moving to pull grass from the ground.

“I was going to kill myself.”

“Wh-” Evan stops, clearing his throat to keep from shouting- “when?”

“Right at the beginning of the school year.”

“Oh.”

“I was- I wasn’t even any angrier than usual, or weirdly calm, or anything I just…” Connor sighs, running a hand through his hair and tugging at it. “I was just tried. I was- am- angry and that’s exhausting and I was just really tired. The longer that day went on the more sure I was that I wanted to, too. If one thing had gone differently, I probably would have.”

“But- but you didn’t.” Evan releases a shaky breath, leaning forward to better look at Connor’s face.
“You didn’t.”

“No.”

“I’m glad.”

“Yeah- yeah me too, I think. Mostly.” Connor shrugs. Evan wants to argue that it is a good thing. That there’s no reason not to be glad. He doesn’t, though, because he knows the words won’t mean much more than what he’s already said. Knows saying that won’t do either of them any good. Knows that even when good things happen, it’s hard to feel good about being alive when you wanted- truly wanted- to die.

“Why- what stopped you?”

Connor doesn’t offer an answer, shrugging and avoiding Evan’s gaze.

“You- you’ll tell me if you feel like that again, right?”

“I… yeah, I think so.”

“Okay.”

They’re silent again, and that’s okay. Evan thinks that’s okay. Connor continues to pull at pieces of grass, and Evan processes the admission.

*Today’s a good day and here’s why: you’re both alive. Maybe that should be obvious, it should probably be obvious. That’s a good thing! But life is so stressful and tiring and it’s probably a miracle that both of you survived this long. It’s weird how I knew it was easily possible for something to make that not the case, but until it was actually mentioned I didn’t realize how scary that thought is.*

Evan frowns, deletes the whole thing, and sets his laptop aside. It’s not a bad letter in theory, but it might bring up the question of how often he thinks about not being alive. He really doesn’t want to talk about that.

Alana is handing out fliers for something- Evan isn’t sure- during lunch. She’s standing to one side of the hall, making a big effort to get people to take the fliers, and Evan is considering finally utilizing his ability to go unnoticed at any given time.

He doesn’t get the chance to, since Alana can apparently spot even the invisible, and she calls out to him, flier held out. Evan thinks he can do this: just take the flier and walk away. Just take the flier, thank her, and walk away.

Just take the flier and look at it and thank her and walk away.

Evan takes the flier, looks down at it- it’s for Jazz Band- and wonders why Alana of all people is handing them out. It reads a short explanation that the schools’ Jazz Band will be performing soon, notes the date, and Evan actually wonders if he will be able to go to it. Though his initial interest in Jazz Band may have come from having a huge- and frankly embarrassing- crush on Zoe the year
before, he actually did find himself enjoying the music. Now he sometimes finds himself wanting to listen to it even with that crush gone.

“Um, Alana?”

“Yes?”

“Why are you- are you handing out fliers for Jazz Band?”

“Oh, well I was asked to by the teacher in charge, who also happens to be my English teacher this year, and she’s already offered to write a recommendation for me this year- for college, you know? So it was the least I could do to help out.” Alana looks oddly uncomfortable with her response, something Evan isn’t used to seeing. She’s usually all for talking about all the nice things she’s doing- and how they’ll be good for her when trying to get into colleges- so it’s surprising.

Evan nods, realizing she’s waiting for a response- that, too, is odd- and offers her a smile. “Well-well, uh, thanks for the flier. I- I have to go, though. See you.”

She nods, offers her own goodbye, and Evan rushes away.

“Are you-” Evan stops when Connor turns to him, but Connor just nods, a motion meant to tell Evan to continue- “are you going to watch Jazz Band perform?”

“Why would I?”

“Well- I just thought- your sister?”

“Zoe wouldn’t want me to go, anyway.”

“But if she did?”

“Then- I guess?” Connor shrugs, tugging at his jacket. “She doesn’t, though, so it doesn’t really matter.”

“I- okay. I guess.”

Evan wants to say Connor should go anyway. Wants to say maybe it’d be good to show support, maybe it would help their relationship. He doesn’t, though, because he’s figured out there’s more wrong with it than just that can fix, and that Connor would likely just get mad if he tried to say it in any of the ways he can think to word it.

Maybe he could talk to Zoe, he thinks. Evan sighs quietly. He’s thinking a little too much about meddling in things that aren’t his place to.

Evan forgets to write anything. He isn’t sure what he would, anyway. The day wasn’t very eventful.

Chapter End Notes

the fact that flier isn't spelled with a Y really upsets me and i don't know why.
fun fact: despite having really bad anxiety when it came to school (ok i have it about everything but shush) i still procrastinated a lot. then got anxious about it.

"if one thing had gone differen't" is probably the worst thing i've ever written. and i've written a lot of trash. Connor actually almost mentions this in one of the other chapters (i know i wrote it but i don't remember which since i've been writing so much) but decided against it at the time.
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Evan glances over to Connor, who seem not to be paying attention. At least, he seems not to be at first, but Evan notices the small upwards twitch of his lips when Zoe mentions being personally praised by the bands instructor.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The Jazz Band’s practice room in nowhere near empty, even after practice should be done for the day. Which bothers Evan, but isn’t going to stop him. Evan finds Zoe having a conversation with Alana, which ends only shortly after Evan arrives. With a deep breath, Evan makes his way over just as Alana leaves, prepared to talk to Zoe. The realization sets in that this will be the first time he’s initiated conversation with her, instead of the other way around.

“Oh, Evan, hey. What’s up?”

“This- this might be a weird question- well not weird, maybe out of place? Any- anyway um, would you be bothered if Connor attended one of your performances?”

“What?” Zoe frowns, crossing her arms. “No? I’d be surprised if he wanted to, though.”

“Really? He- he seemed to only be against it since- well since he thought you wouldn’t want him to go.” Evan knows, logically, that it’s not really his place to say this. That he should stop talking. He keeps talking. “Almost- uh- he almost seemed upset.”

“Right.” Zoe’s voice portrays sarcasm, and she uncrosses her arms to drop them to her sides, where she grips at her jacket. “Well, no, I don’t actually care either way.”

She says that, but Evan sees the way she almost, just barely, frowns.

When Evan relays the information to Connor- that Zoe wouldn’t mind him attending- he frowns at Evan for a full minute before announcing that Evan better go with him.

Evan discovers, upon meeting Connor of the day of the performance, that Connor has decided he doesn’t want Zoe to know he’s going, anyway. Or, rather, that’s what Connor claims. Evan watches Connor pull his hair up, as if that somehow hides his identity, and put glasses on.

“Now she’ll never know.”

“You- are you ten?”

“No, Evan, I’m undercover.” Connor rolls his eyes. Evan just stares, wondering if this is really the same person who knocked him over on the first day of school. It’s with that staring, that he notices the glasses on Connor’s face are actually prescription, and his mind starts supplying him with questions.
“You wear glasses!”
“Only sometimes.”

“Which times?”
“When I’m on the computer, usually.” Connor shrugs. “That’s the only time I need them.”

“Oh.” Evan blinks. “They suit you.”

“They ruin my scary, terrible person aesthetic is what they do.”

Evan laughs. “I thought your aesthetic was less scary and terrible, and- and more soft emotionally depressed.”

“Soft.”

“Yeah.”

“How- you’re disowned, I’m leaving.”

Evan laughs. Connor glares, but it holds little actual weight, before walking away and towards their destination. Evan takes a second, before following.

Evan often forgets that the Jazz Band is actually really good, especially when considering it’s a still a school band. The audience is, of course, mostly students and parents, but Evan wouldn’t be surprised if there were at least a few people who weren’t, scattered about.

When the performance is done, is the only time Evan is really reminded it’s a school band and why he’s there in the first place. He can just barely see Zoe breath a sigh- maybe she’s relieved- when the last song is done before the band stands. The band starts to make an exit, and the crowd stands to do the same.

Evan turns to Connor who, he notes, is watching Zoe exit the stage. It’s after a moment that Connor stand, frowning. “I didn’t know how good they- she- was.”

“You didn’t?”

“I never-” Connor stops and looks guilty, glancing at the floor.

“Now- now you have.”

“Yeah.”

It’s not until they’re outside, a ways away, that Connor speaks again. It’s just a small word to get Evan’s attention, which he does, and Evan nods. “Yes?”

“I feel like… I really need to apologize to Zoe.”

“For… what?”

“Being a shitty brother?” Connor sighs, moving to run his hand through his hair before remembering he can’t. “I- look- I’ve known for a while that I owe her an apology, or a hundred.”
“But?”

“But I never have. I don’t apologize, I don’t know how to apologize, and honestly I don’t think it would matter if I did anymore.”

“Connor I’m sure-”

“I said I was going to kill her.”

“What?” Evan can’t find any other words. Shock has to be evident on his face, and Connor looks away. Connor looks almost like he’s going to be sick.

“I didn’t- I don’t think I meant it. I don’t think I was- I know I wasn’t thinking at all. I was angry- not even at her- and I just… kept yelling, and saying worse things, and it’s not like that was the only time. That was just the worst. I just- I keep avoiding anything to do with her because I don’t know how to apologize, and she has every right to hate me now. But I don’t-”

“Then apologize to her.” Evan’s statement is simple and Connor scoffs, expression turning angry. Evan manages to hold himself together long enough to continue. “She deserves an apology. You know that. You just said that. Maybe she won’t forgive you, but that shouldn’t be why- why you apologize for something. You- your anger isn’t always something you can- that you can control, I get that. I know. It’s- but that doesn’t change the fact that you did- you did something bad and need to apologize for it.”

“I know.”

“So?”

“I just… don’t know what to say?”

“Just… be honest. You feel bad, right?”

“Yes.”

“Tell her that! If- if she doesn’t forgive you, then she doesn’t, but you owe it to both of you to apologize. O-oh and don’t try to make excuses. Being- being like either of us are doesn’t- doesn’t change that they- that other people still have the right to be upset.”

“Okay.” Connor sighs, nodding.

Evan and Connor talk about how he’s going to apologize over the next few days. While they aren’t scripting an apology, Connor doesn’t want to go into the situation having no idea what he’s going to say. He wants to make sure he’s acknowledging what he’s done. Evan feels honestly proud of Connor.

Two weeks later, while Evan is getting ready for the night, he gets a text from Connor.

“she didn’t forgive me.”

“Zoe?”

“yea.” Evan is going to offer sympathy, but Connor sends another message before he can. “she accepted it though.”
“Oh?”

“she was like ‘thanks for apologizing but I still hate your guts’”

“I’m sorry.”

“no its probably good she didnt. at least I know she wont go around forgiving people who are shitty to her.”

“are you ok?”

“yeah. I feel better even tho she didnt forgive me.”

“That’s good.”

Evan was fairly determined to never return to the Murphy house again, and live out his life as a vague memory in the minds of the Murphy parents. A friend Connor had who visit three times then disappeared. Unfortunately he’s also terrible at saying no to people. So he ends up sitting in Connors room, doing homework. Evan wants to be surprised Connor is doing school work- willing, too- but he’s too busy being nervous about his location.

It doesn’t help him any that, when Cynthia knocks on the open door, and asks if Evan wants to stay for dinner, he nods. Unable to form a response as quickly as he reacts, his nod is taken as a yes, and she tells them to come down to the dining room in ten minutes.

Evan buries his face in his hands and mutters about how much of a moron is.

“It’ll be fine,” Connor says, laughing at him. “They probably don’t even remember that you called them out last time you were here.”

Evan whisper-screams into his hands. “Don’t remind me.”

“Hey.” Connor grabs one of Evan’s arms, pulling it away from his face. He waits until Evan looks at him to speak again. “It’s fine. They, at most, wont talk to you. You don’t need to worry so much about it.”

“I know but I still do.”

“I know.”

Connor is mostly right. Larry seems to be avoiding acknowledging Evan’s even there, except occasionally glancing over with a frown. Cynthia tries to make polite, simple conversation. However, Evan can’t focus on that because something is different. Something about the atmosphere is very different, and it’s not a bad difference. It takes until Zoe starts talking about Jazz Band, at Cynthia’s bringing it up, that Evan realizes what it is.

Zoe isn’t as tense as she was every other time Evan had seen her during his visits. Evan hadn’t even realized how tense she was, until looking at her now, leaning against the table and picking at the food in front of her with her fork idly. Evan glances over to Connor, who seem not to be paying attention. At least, he seems not to be at first, but Evan notices the small upwards twitch of his lips when Zoe mentions being personally praised by the bands instructor.
“And, hey, if you compare it to Connor, I’m doing pretty well in school.”

“I’m doing fine in school!” Connor huffs.

“When you attend,” Evan mutters, mostly to himself. Connor snaps his attention to Evan, frowning. “I mean-”

“Traitor.”

“Oh, well, you have been doing- doing better? You even willing did homework today.” There’s a pause. “Oh my god you willingly did homework.”

“Evan, you’ve corrupted him.” Zoe gasps. “Good job.”

“Shut the fuck up, I’m right here.” Connor huffs and Evan notices the lack of bite in his voice. Even though he crosses his arms, tapping on his arms, Connor manages to keep from having an outburst.

“Connor! Language.” Cynthia doesn’t seem to believe her words will do anything, even as she says them.


“Why does no one having any faith in me? This is why I never do shit, you guys such make a big fucking deal of it.” Connor sinks down in his seat, bouncing his leg. Evan wonders when Connor started making such an effort to not have outbursts. Is this more usual now? Or is it still not the norm? Evan knows he can’t take the few instances he sees of the Murphy’s household to be examples of it on a normal day, but the fact he can see any change means something, he thinks. It must mean something. If it’s only a small amount, it’s still progress.

“No you never do shit because you’d rather get high then try for higher education.” Zoe grins at the disgusted noise Connor lets out at the comment. “Oh, I know. You’re trying to impress your friend. Make him think you’re responsible.”

“I already know he’s no-” Evan stops, realizing an opportunity, and mock gasps. He puts a hand to his chest, and turns his attention to Connor. “You want to impress me?”

“Shut the fuck up. No.” Connor huffs, glaring halfheartedly. Evan grins. “If I wanted to do that I’d memorize some tree facts.”

Evan lets out a short, startled laugh. “I’m more than just tree facts. I- I can’t believe you think so little of me.”

“I would give you a tree fact, to prove a point, but I’m not a giant fucking nerd, so I don’t know any.”

“That’s mean. I’m hurt. You- you’ve truly hurt me.”

“That’s bullshit.”

“Yeah, but still.”

Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why. Or, it was a good day? I need to stop writing these after the day’s already over.
There’s progress. It’s strange. It’s weird to see so much change. Maybe it’s not even that much change, but he’s taking small steps, and small steps are still steps. Any progress is worth something and it’s really… strange? Good? To see someone make progress.

Evan sighs, frowning at the words in front of him. He’s proud of Connor, for making so much progress, despite not getting the help he really needs yet. He really is.

I wish I could just be happy about it, instead of being jealous that I’m not making progress.

Chapter End Notes

guess who didn't fucking sleep: it's me! (i stayed up 19 hours and slept for only 4 help me)

zoe has a line in the play about connor screaming at her through her door that really stuck with me, okay.

also fun fact: I thought up all of this chapter while lying in bed, trying to go back to sleep because it had only been FOUR HOURS. but couldn't go back to sleep and wrote a whole chapter while lying there. then got up and went to write it and tho i remembered all the events, couldn't remember the details and flow of the- much better- version i thought of while lying in my bed.
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

“Not all of this make an effort to miss school.”

“Harsh.” Connor says it as if it’s a joke, but Evan still feels bad realizing what he’s said. Connor has been making a real effort to show up more, to make his progress obvious.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

There’s something extremely unfair about getting sick when there’s no obvious cause. Evan stares at the ceiling of his room, annoyed. It isn’t like he’d been around sick people, or gone outside in the rain, or any of the other things he could think would cause him to be sick. It’s also not something he thinks is bad enough to warrant his remaining bound to his room. Other than pressure in his head, which isn’t quite bad enough to do much other than be annoying, he only feels the vague reminders of sickness through the rest of his body.

With a sigh, he rolls out of bed and- after a moment where the world spins from his sudden movement- gets ready for the day.

Evan would take the excuse to stay home, but he knows if he mentions being sick his mom will worry. There’s a very real chance Heidi would offer to stay home, too, if he brung it up. He doesn’t want to bother her more than he already does, and she’s likely to make the decision to stay even if he says she shouldn’t worry. So he says nothing and heads to school with the hope he won’t feel any worse.

Evan feels way worse. He’s not even to lunch yet, but he can’t focus on his math class past the pounding of his head. This throat, too, feels like it’s beginning to show signs of soreness. Evan momentarily hopes the schools power will go out, dimming the room, but pushes the thought aside. He wants to go to the nurse, maybe get some obviously needed rest, or be sent home, but actually bringing himself to ask his teacher for permission to leave is a task he’s not up to.

The room is quiet, and if he asks everyone will hear him, and they’ll stare, and he’ll been embarrassed, and he doesn’t need that.

Only a few hours, he tells himself. He can go at lunch.

Alana catches him on his way to the nurse, at lunch. He mentally curses when she enters his vision, causing Evan to stop his trek there. Evan is pretty sure he’s swaying on his feet, and he can’t focus on her words. She pauses, as if realizing he’s not listening, and puts a hand on his shoulder.

“Are you okay?”

“I-” Speaking hurts, Evan sighs- “yes. I just- I was on my way to the nurse.”
“Oh no, are you sick? You do look really red, that’s no good.” Evan isn’t used to the unsure tone of Alana’s voice. Usually she always sounds like she knows what she’s saying, and like nothing she says is up for debate. Evan briefly wonders if she’s concerned, before he pushes the thought away. Why would she be?

“Y-yeah.”

“Here, I’ll walk with you. It looks like you might just fall over if you’re on your own.” The unsureness is gone, and Evan wonders if he imagined it in the first place. Still, he nods.

Evan has to persuade his mother not to leave work early to come pick him up. Heidi offers many times over the phone call Evan makes- at the direction of the nurse- and only gives in when Evan says he isn’t sure he’s up for a car-ride home, anyway.

Since she isn’t coming to get him, Evan asks the nurse if he can stay until the end of the day. With the assurance that he can stay until either the day ends, or he feels better, he lets both Connor and Jared know where he is, and what’s going on, before lying down and trying to get some rest.

He’s not going to fall asleep, Evan realizes after a few minutes, but there isn’t much to do other than lay in the bed and stare at the walls of the nurses office. When the nurse leaves, likely for her own lunch break, Evan reaches for his bag, and decides there’s at least one thing he can do.

*Today’s not a good day. I was hoping it would be, but of course sickness got me.. For no reason too! I feel awful. Everything’s awful.*

Evan closes his laptop, the screens light too much for him, and lays back down having accomplished nothing. It wasn’t even a letter he wanted to actually print out later. His phone buzzes, likely responses from his friends, but he can’t bring himself to look at them.

When the final bell rings, Evan pushes himself up from his laying position with a sigh. He’d spent the past four hours laying there, thinking, and felt no better. Still, he tries to make himself believe he can walk home and be okay. Then, before he can even stand, the door pushes open and Evan has likely never been more glad to see Jared.

“Dude, you look terrible.”

“Thanks.” Evan picks his bag up, frowning. “Why are you here?”

“Okay, wow, do you really think I wouldn’t come see if you need a ride home? Have a little faith in me, man.”

“Oh.” Evan blinks once, twice, then nods. “Sorry- sorry I just didn’t think about it. Wait- isn’t your last class upstairs? How did you-”

“Anyway, let’s go.”

Evan laughs- then immediately regrets it as his head pounds- and follows. Jared does seem a little our
Jared drops Evan off, before leaving with an offhand comment about procrastinating on a project. Evan sighs, dropping his stuff in his room, and fills the largest glass he can find with water. Then he finally checks his texts.

There’s a few from Jared, offering sympathy for Evan being sick, saying he’s lucky to get out of class, and one asking if he needs a ride home. Evan bites his lip, realizing he probably should have checked sooner. “Sorry,” he mumbles, despite the fact his apology doesn’t reach anyone.

There’s some from his mom. Asking if he’s sure he’s okay, saying she’ll be home as quickly as possible. He smiles and shoots back that he’s okay- that he got home fine- and thanking her.

The message’s he get’s from Connor sound less concerned. “wow that sucks. feel better.”

Evan laughs, and again regrets it, before downing some water and responding. “Thanks.”

Evan doesn’t have the energy, nor the want, to open his laptop. So he ignores it and the unfinished letter on it, in favour of sleep.

The next day is a Saturday, so Evan expects to have the weekend to rest, and feel better by Monday. He’s not so surprised when his mother wakes him up, asking if he needs anything. When he tells her he’s fine, she looks like she feels bad about something. Evan sits up, blinks sleep away, and asks her what’s wrong.

“Do you want me to stay home today?” Heidi’s question shouldn’t surprise him, but Evan feels confusion fill him. Wasn’t this Saturday supposed to be her day off, anyway? It take a moment before he remembers she’d agreed, last Thursday, to cover for her co-worker today. “It’s okay, I’m sure someone else can-”

“No it’s fine.” Evan shakes his head. He tries to ignore the pain that just said action causes. “I’ll be fine. If I need anything I’ll call- uh- I’ll call Jared. Or Connor. It’s fine.”

“Are you sure? It’s really not-”

“I’m sure.”

“But you- but I don’t want to just leave you here like this. I can just tell them I’m sick, they’ll never know.”

“Mom, really, it’s okay.” Evan clears his throat, trying to keep from coughing. “I’ll be fine.”

It take a whole hour of insisting he’ll be fine to convince Heidi to leave. Even then she tells him to text her immediately if he needs anything. Evan sighs.

Come Monday, Evan really does feel better. At the very least he’s well enough to be completely
certain he can make it through the school day. It shouldn’t be surprising to have people ask if he’s feeling better. At the very least he sort of expects that from Jared- even if Jared tries to pass it off as a joke- or Connor. What surprises him is when Alana of all people is the first to find him, and the first to ask about his health.

“I’m- no- I’m okay. I feel way better.”

“That’s good.” She nods, offering him a smile. “Well, then I actually need to talk to one of my teachers.”

Evan wonders why she didn’t just do that first, and find him during lunch, when she’s in less of a rush.

Connor finds him next. Evan waits while Connor glances over him- as if appraising his health- before nodding. “You’re better?”

“Yes.” Evan nods, offering a smile.

“You…” Connor trails off, sighing. “Hey, you should take better care of yourself.”

“I didn’t do anything! I don’t- I don’t even know how I got sick.”

“But you came to school like that.”

“I didn’t- it wasn’t like I felt that bad in the morning.”

“Still.” Connor sighs, Evan huffs.

“Not all of us make an effort to miss school.”

“Harsh.” Connor says it as if it’s a joke, but Evan still feels bad realizing what he’s said. Connor has been making a real effort to show up more, to make his progress obvious.

“Sorry. I’m sorry I just-” Evan shakes his head- “no I shouldn’t- shouldn’t try to make an excuse. I’m sorry.”

“Its fine. I’m not upset?”

“No but- you- I’m- you’re making and effort to do- to do better, and I went and said that.”

“It’s fine, Evan.” Connor shake his head. “Don’t worry about it.”

*Today’s not a good day. I’m a terrible friend. Awful. Horrible. I’m the literal worst. I know he’s trying how could I say that? Honestly awful. He’s making progress, you terrible person!*
I don't even know what I should do to make progress.

Chapter End Notes

as someone who is sick literally (like, actually, for real) every day of their life, and who /also/ get's sick really easily, sometimes without obvious reason, let me tell you. it's really annoying. Also! when i was in school asking teachers if I could go to the nurse was, like, my biggest fear? It made me so anxious especially because I was absent so often and they always gave me that look like they didn't believe me but didn't want to accuse me of not being sick.

anyway i'm /really/ tired so I almost didn't write anything today (and almost spent all of today playing fire emblem instead) but I didn't want to not write and then not write tomorrow and on and on until it's a month later and im like "oh shit that's right I have another uncompleted story waiting on me."

edit: i fixed a small typo
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Evan gawks at the whole thing. His questions start with “since when does he want to see me” and end with “when did we stop being Jewish?”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Winter is approaching startlingly fast, bringing with it colder weather, and soon the holiday’s. Evan chooses to focus on that, and some mentions of his new friendship, during his monthly meeting with Dr. Sherman. He talks about the letters briefly, saying that he’s continuing to write them, and that they’re helping. He leaves out that he’s using them to rant more often than to give himself false positive expectations for the days.

It’s when Evan returns home- driven by his mother before she heads to class- that he finds he has an email from someone unexpected. Suddenly he wishes his appointment had been a day later, because his thoughts are filled with things he’d most likely have shared. It’d be nice to complain to someone who is obligated to listen, and he wont feel guilty unloading on.

His father has sent him an email.

That’s rare in and of itself. Evan hardly hears from the man, usually a phone call on his birthday, or an email every few months. Few meaning anywhere from three to six. Reading it over- after a moments hesitation- gives Evan even more things he’d love to talk about.

The lines that stand out the most are very simple, but leave Evan with a dozen questions.

*We’d like you to visit this Christmas. I feel like I never see you, and the kids would like you. I was going to talk to your mom about it, but I think you're old enough to make your own decisions.*

Evan gawks at the whole thing. His questions start with “since when does he want to see me” and end with “when did we stop being Jewish?”

Logic would say Evan should bring this up to his mother as soon as possible. That he should tell her he doesn’t want to go- he really doesn’t- and ask for advice on saying as much. Tell her that his father- Evan hardly feels like he can even use that word- went around her completely to ask him to visit.

So of course Evan doesn’t bring it up. When do anxiety and Logic ever get along? Really, he doesn’t know how he would. Every time he thinks about bringing it up, his mind fills with thoughts about how stressed his mom already is, how he should just say no himself and leave it be, how he really just doesn’t want to talk to her about it.

Instead he ignores it- he still has a few weeks before it’s really relevant- and spends his time trying not to remember it exists. Maybe if he waits long enough he can just say he forgot about it or to respond to it.
“Jared, what would you do if someone asked you to celebrate Christmas with them?”

“I’m Jewish.”

“That’s the point.”

“No, I’m saying that’s what I’d say.” Jared tilts his head to the side, eyeing Evan. “What’s this about?”

“I got an email from my dad.”

“About Christmas?”

“Yeah.”

“What the fuck.” Jared laughs. “I don’t know what to tell you man. Just say no. You don’t even like the guy, right?”

“Yeah but- but he’s- I mean he’s my father.”

“Hardly.”

“And I don’t- I don’t know how to tell him that- tell him I don’t want to go.”

“Want me to write a response for you?”

“No.” Evan responds immediately. Jared look offended, but Evan doesn’t let up even when Jared whines. Evan doesn’t trust him with something like this.

Evan leans against the wall next to Connor when he arrives at school that Tuesday, and breathes a heavy sigh. Connor laughs, crossing his arms. “What’s up?”

“Nothing.”

“Yeah, you just sigh like that all the time.” Connor rolls his eyes, and Evan lets out a small laugh himself.

“Can you pretend to have invited me over on Christmas, or something, so I don’t have to go somewhere?”

“Christmas? I hardly celebrate. I mean, my parents do but it stopped being fun years ago. We have to see distant family, and shit, and they all like Zoe more than me. Oh but,” Connor hums in thought for a moment, before shrugging, “sure, why not? It’s a lie anyway.”

“Thanks.”

“What’s going on, though?” Evan shrugs and Connor shoves him, lightly. It’s not even enough to actually move Evan, but is a sign he isn’t just letting this go. “No, what is it?”

“My dad invited me over on Christmas. He lives in another state, I hardly see him, and I honestly just don’t want to go.” Evan let’s out a sigh. “Also we- I’m- at least my mom and I are- we’re Jewish?! How does he just- just forget that? I know it’s been over- more than ten years but- but seriously?”

“Hey, no offense.”
“But?”

“He sounds like a piece of shit. If you don’t want to see him just fucking say so?”

“I- I’m bad at that though!”

“Say you’re sick.”

“I have to reply before— before then, and I can’t say I’m sick- I’m sick and will be for the next two weeks.”

“Okay, but what if he won’t take ‘my friend already invited me’ as an valid excuse. You know, because shitty parents tend to think they deserve more from your life than they actually fucking do.”

“Ugh.”

“Oh, wow, you actually say that.”

“Yes?” Evan looks over, eyebrow raised.

“I know you type it, but this is the first time I’ve actually heard you use it.”

“Ah.” Evan nods, unsure what else to do.

“Well, anyway, good luck with your dad.”

“Thanks.”

Evan comes home to Heidi standing in the kitchen, leaning against the counter next to the landline phone, waiting. Usually when Evan comes home, and his mother is there, it’s a nice sign. It means he’ll get a little bit of time with her. While he sometimes feels bitter about her forgetting things, or working so much, he knows she’s trying. Besides, when they do talk it’s nice, albeit a bit awkward. So usually he’s at least a little happy to see her.

So it’s pretty startling how quickly he fills with dread when she speaks. “Your father called.”

Evan opens his mouth to respond, closes it, and nods. Clearing his throat—when had it gotten so dry—he gives a small “okay” in response.

“He said he emailed you, and hadn’t gotten a response. Wanted me to tell you in case you hadn’t seen it.”

“Okay.”

“You’ve already read it, haven’t you?” Heidi gives him a knowing, patient smile. Evan nods again, biting his lip. It’s rare for her to catch onto his actions so quickly. Not for a lack of trying—she tries to keep up with him, she really does—but just for lack of being able to relate. She doesn’t understand what actions he’s going to take all the time, because her actions aren’t dictated by the same things as his.

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. What’d he say?” Heidi stands up straight, moving away from the counter.
“He wants me to visit, during winter vacation.”

“Oh?”

“For Christmas.”

“You don’t- since when-” Heidi huffs, shaking her head. “I take it you don’t want to go.”

It’s not a question, but Evan feels the need to answer anyway. “I really don’t.”

“Are you sure? You hardly see him, it might be nice.” Evan is pretty surprised at the words. He looks up, startled.

“Since when do you want me to- to spend time with him?”

“That’s not- Evan I’m just saying you might enjoy seeing him again.”

“You don’t like seeing him!” Evan isn’t sure what it is about the idea that upsets him so much, but he is upset. Raises his voice without thinking about it.

“Yes, but- but that doesn’t mean you won’t. I’m not forcing you to go, Evan, I’m just asking if you’ve really thought about it.”

“I have!” Evan grips the strap of his backpack, pulling on it because he suddenly feels the need to do something with his hands.

“Ohay.” Heidi sighs. “Okay, then you don’t have to go.”

“Okay.” Evan’s voice is louder than even he expects it to be. Heidi nods, frowning at him. He hates it when she frowns at him. “I’m- I’m going to my room.”

“Okay.”

Evan isn’t used to writing emails that aren’t supposed to be for himself, so he stares at his computer screen half-expecting words to form themselves. They don’t, and the email remains blank. With a sigh, he starts typing.

*I don’t celebrate Christmas, so I already made plans for the 25th, involving my friend. I know that seems like something easily canceled, but we have really different schedules so I don’t get to see them that often, already.*

Evan deletes the whole things, groaning. That won’t work. Not just because it’s a lie, but because no matter how little he sees a friend, it would still be more than he sees his father. It won’t work in the slightest.

*Hello yes, I can’t go because I don’t want to, and also don’t even celebrate that holiday what the fuck.*
Evan deletes it again. He definitely can’t send that.

No.

Too simple. Evan sighs.

Why would you honestly believe that I would want to do that? I hardly see you. You know, because you left, because you never want to see me, that isn’t my fault. It isn’t my job to take time out of my own plans to visit you in another state, when you don’t even contact me more than four times a year, if that. Besides, I do, in fact, have plans. Since I don’t celebrate Christmas, anyway- which you should know, you didn’t either last I knew- I didn’t think twice about making other arrangements on that day. I’m sure the kids are lovely, but they aren’t my family, and I don’t have any reason to want to see them. Or your wife. Or even you, for that matter.

Fuck off.

Evan copies it onto a word document, then deletes the email without sending it. If he wasn’t too scared to send a message like that, he’d be really proud of it. Actually, he thinks, he is proud of it, even if he doesn’t send it. So he saves the word document, and sets his laptop aside. He’ll figure a response out later.

Chapter End Notes

fun fact: I actually wrote this chapter right after the other one, before I slept, so i would have something ready when I woke up.

also fun fact: my family celebrates christmas even tho we aren’t christian (or anything, for that matter) because the holiday is made such a big deal of in america. and also as an excuse to see family.

final fun fact (for now): I also sometimes save responses I've written that I either want to remember (bc I answered something) or that I don't send/have anyone to send to, because I want to remember how I felt about something and see if I still believe what i've written later. (is that weird?)
Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

He thinks about being eight, and waking with a pounding heart because his father wasn’t going to visit for his birthday, and he felt so alone.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Alana Beck passed out at school on Wednesday. Evan hears rumors about why and exactly when, but the only thing he pays any mind to is the only part that’s consistent. That she passed out. She’s absent Thursday, so Evan doesn’t get a chance to speak to her, but she returns Friday. He is hesitant to approach her about it, since he wouldn’t want people prying into the situation if it was him, but he wants to make sure she’s okay. Though they’re not close by any means, she’s one of the few people who seems to remember he exists, at least.

So he takes a deep breath, and makes his way over to her during Lunch. “Alana?”

“Oh, Evan, hello.” She smiles, giving a nod of acknowledgment.

“Are- uh, I just- How are you? I heard- I overheard that you passed out? I just- are you okay?”

“Oh.” Alana’s smile falters, but she keeps her composure. “Yes, I’m alright, thank you. I guess I was just overdoing it, a bit, but I’m fine. Just needed a little rest.”

Evan can do nothing but nod, concern growing. How hard was she pushing herself to have passed out? The fact she doesn’t seem to want to talk about it also says a lot to Evan. She’s usually so willing to talk your ear off about what she’s doing, and how much she’s doing. The fact she goes quiet is worrying in and of itself. Evan is going to tell her she should take it easy, but her attention is taken by someone else approaching her to ask about the same thing.

Her smile falls even more, and Evan doesn’t really think his action though, before he speaks again. “If you need help with anything, let me know.”

Alana glances over, surprised, before nodding. “Thank you.”

Evan has been avoiding his email for a few days now, but knows he can’t ignore it forever. It still takes a whole hour after he gets home to open his inbox, at which time he finds he has yet another email from his father. His stomach twists, and he worries his lip as he reads over it.

I got a call from your mother, saying that the two of you have plans that day. Is that true? Couldn’t you have told me yourself?
Evan scoffs.

I’m disappointed you wouldn’t tell me yourself, but I suppose you might be busy. I can’t help but wonder if you didn’t make this choice, though. Evan, you’re old enough to make choices for yourself, if you want to come you don’t have to say no just because your mother wants you to stay.

The sick feeling in Evan’s stomach stops feeling like anxiety, and starts to be angry. How can his father talk as if his mother is at fault for their lack of contact? *He* was the one who left Heidi and Evan in the first place!

Evan nearly goes to find the email he’d already written, but decides to create something new to address the things his father has said.

*She didn’t make that choice, I did. I was going to tell you, but I was so busy I guess she thought I wouldn’t do it in time. I am making choices for myself, starting with not seeing you. You left us, remember? You hardly contact me! If you wanted me in your life so bad, you’d have made an effort. Also, you’re “disappointed” in me? Then you’d be really disappointed if I had gone. You don’t know nearly enough about me to be disappointed.*

Evan forces himself to hit send before he gets the chance to over-think it. Then he is filled with the need to distract himself from his own internal screaming.

“I did something.”

“What.” Connor’s response is almost immediate.

“I emailed my dad.”

“oh shit really? what’d you say”

“I think the most important lines included telling him I didn’t want to see him, reminding him he was the one who left, and telling him he has no right to be disappointed, since he doesn’t know me.”

“Damn.”

“I’m freaking out.”

“why?”

“he’s going to be angry, connor.”

“oh shit you’re really freaking out huh?”

“How can you tell?”

“capitalization.” Evan blinks at the message, eyebrow raised, then looks at his own messages. *Oh*, he realizes, he’d stopped capitalizing.
“How likely is it I could convince you to hit me with your car?”

“No. I thought you didn’t want to die anymore.”

“People live after being hit by a car.”

“Evan Hansen.”

“Oh! Fine.” Evan frowns, then sends another message. “Can we talk about something else?”

“Sure, what?”

“What are you doing Christmas?”

“Well our family is coming early, because Aunt Lidia ruins everything, so on the actual day not much. Zoe even said we should invite you for real when I mentioned you asking if I could pretend to.”

“You and Zoe are talking again?”

“Yeah. It’s almost nice. Even tho we can only talk about like 2 things.” Evan can’t help but smile at that. It’s nice to see Connor getting to talk to his sister again. “I feel like I got my sister back.”

Evan doesn’t know Zoe all that well, not personally, but some part of him thinks she probably feels like that too.

Evan takes a moment to turn back to his computer, ready to close his email, when he sees he’s already got another email. It’s startling how quickly his father replied, and anxiety fills his chest at the thought of reading it. He’s going to be angry. He’s going to be so, so angry.

“Oh god he’s already responded what do I do?!?!?”

“RIP.”

“Connor.”

“You’ll be fine! He can’t do anything to you from states away.”

You know I would contact you more, talk to you more, if I had the chance, Evan. Is it so bad for me to be disappointed I won’t get the chance?

There’s more, but Evan rereads that line over and over until he feels like throwing up. What if his father really did want to know him better, to make up for time lost? Part of him wants to say he’s changed his mind, that he’ll go. The other part says it’s too late for them to know each other. That he doesn’t even want to, anymore.

That he spent years of his life hoping maybe, one day, his father would come back. Or make an effort again. Or at least email him more than four times a year. That his father would want to be just that: his father. It’s bitter, and angry, and wants to scream that he won’t go, that he doesn’t want to go, that his father has no right to ask him to go.

Still, Evan rereads it again. Stares, and feels like he’s going to cry. It’s not worth crying about, there’s nothing he should be crying about. Yet, suddenly, his mind is filled with years of wanting to see his
father again, of hoping he’d get a chance like this. He thinks about being eight, and waking with a
pounding heart because his father wasn’t going to visit for his birthday, and he felt so alone.

*I’m sorry. Today was already really bad, so I was taking that out on you.*

It’s a lie.

*Would you still want me to come? If I changed my mind?*

But he *doesn’t* want to go. But he *does* want to go.

*I would like to see you.*

He wants to feel like his father wants him in his life. Wants to believe that, somehow, they can make
up for lost time.

*Can I go there, this Christmas?*

Evan doesn’t know what he’s doing.

Telling his mother is harder than sending any email was.

His father had immediately responded expressing that he was glad, and that he would get Evan a
plan ticket. Evan wonders how expensive that’s going to be with such sort notice, and being around
Christmas.

When he’d told Connor what he’d done, he just got a simple “oh” and nothing more. Jared didn’t
seem to know what to say, either, and just told him “good luck.” So he’s worried how Heidi will
react. Especially since she took the time to tell his father he didn’t want to go, so he wouldn’t have to.

“Mom.” Evan fidgets with his hands, trying to distract himself when she turns to him.

“Yes, dear? What is it?”

“I told- I um- I told dad I wanted to go there for Christmas.”

“You… what?”
“He- um- already emailed me saying you talked to- talked to him. Then I- I got angry about something he said, and responded. Then- then I, uh- I got another email from him, and I sort of just… I gave in? I think- I realized I should give him a chance, or- I mean- maybe not that I should but I want to? One visit won’t- one time won’t kill me.”

“Okay.” Heidi is patient, waits until Evan finally meets her eyes to speak again. “It’s okay, you don’t have to explain yourself to me, about this. If you changed your mind, that’s fine. I know this is a big deal for you, so I’m just proud of you, okay?”

“Yeah…” Evan nods, not really knowing what he should say. Somehow he doesn’t feel like she should be proud of him for this. “Thank you.”

Friday, December 22nd, Evan stands in an airport. He doesn’t check any bags, only bringing what he needs for five days. Which is mostly clothes. Which should ease some of his anxiety- since he doesn’t have worry about the airport losing his things- but he has too many other worries about the trip. What if his step family doesn’t like him? What if his father is actually awful? What if he has a panic or anxiety attack? What if, what if, what if…

“Evan, are you sure you’re okay?” His mother’s voice reminds him of where he is, and he nods.

“Anxious.”

“Are you sure about this? We can always tell him you got sick, and didn’t want to travel.”

“I’m okay.” Evan is assuring himself more than her. “I’ll be okay.”

Evan can’t bring himself to write a letter to himself all day, even when he’s up in the air and allowed to use his laptop again. He can’t make himself write the words “going to be a good day” and feel like he actually means it.

It’s only five days, he reminds himself. He can do this.

Chapter End Notes

“another chapter today, don’t you have any self control?” the answer is no. I don’t.

fun fact: (i lied it's not fun) my wrist finally stopped hurting, which it was for the past few days. It usually does when I write a lot, but it was especially so yesterday. Maybe playing video games didn't help.

oh evan my poor boy. why do i do this to you? (the answer is im a terrible person but sh)
Evan feels out of place as their conversation continues. He doesn’t belong here. This isn’t right, his stomach twists, and his throat feels wrong. It’s not like dinner with his mom- as rare as that is- where they laugh, and talk, and she’s a comforting figure. It’s not like dinner at Jared’s where they stay up in Jared’s room, eating food between doing other things. It’s not like the Murphy’s, where they don’t force him into conversation, but where he finds himself in it anyway.

Evan’s father is shorter than he remembers. Standing next to him, they’re nearly the same height. It’s a strange realization, a note of how much time has passed, and how much Evan has grown. For some reason Evan doesn’t like it. There are other signs of the passage of time, in his face, signs of age and exhaustion. Outside of the man himself, there’s the kids who have grown into elementary school students, when the last time Evan had really heard of them- when his father had sent him pictures- they were babies.

The whole thing is uncomfortable. Evan doesn’t know how to act, nor what to say. So he just nods along with whatever his father says- saying how glad he is Evan is here, how much the family will like him- and hopes he won’t be made to maintain a real conversation.

Their house is bigger than Evan’s, he can’t help but note. They’re greeted at the door by a woman he barely registers is his step mother. She gives Evan a welcoming smile. His stomach turns, thinking about how this is the woman his father left for, even though he knows it isn’t her fault. Evan forces a smile, too, and denies her offer to help him carry his things. He only has two bags, after all, and neither are very heavy or large.

The kids latch onto him pretty quickly and, in all honesty, they may be his favourite part of the trip so far. They’re asking him questions, which he never likes, but they’re also the questions kids ask, and not serious ones. The boy- ten years old, and with wild hair- grins at Evan with all his teeth when Evan agrees with his opinion on ice cream. The girl- 7 years old and with short, unkempt hair- pouts and calls him weird when he says he doesn’t like sports much, clutching her hockey stick as if he’d insulated it.

Evan’s only distracted from the children’s questions when his step mother- Danielle- shows him to the guest room, where he’ll be staying for the next five days. It’s really plain, the bed is a bit bigger than the one at home, the walls are off-white. She smiles, tells him to settle in, and leaves. He stands in the doorway for a moment, before moving to place his bags on the bed.

He can feel that his whole being is tense, but can’t seem to find any way to make himself be less tense. With a sigh, Evan sits on the edge of the bed, and pulls out his phone. After telling his mom he’d arrived safely, he stares at his friends’ contacts. There’s no reason to, but he hesitates to text either of them. He knows they’re both frustrated with him for complaining about not wanting to go, then going anyway, even after saying no.
Before he can work up the will to message either of them, footsteps come tumbling down the hall. He looks up, and the girl- Mia- stands in the doorway, frowning. “Mom said to come get you.”

“O-oh.” Evan nods, standing. “Okay, thank you.”

Evan takes a deep breath before making his way downstairs with Mia.

“So, Evan, is there anything you like?” Danielle addresses him, over the noise of the kids, at dinner. Evan freezes with both her eyes, and his fathers eyes, on him, and nods. Would anyone said ‘no’ to that?

“I think she’s asking what you like, Evan.” Evan wants to roll his eyes at his fathers words, but stares at the table instead.

“Trees.”

“Trees?”

“Oh, I’ve never heard that before!” Danielle laughs, awkward and slightly forced. “Why trees?”

Evan thinks back to an early conversation with Connor- it hadn’t been that long, but feels like forever ago- and bites his lip. He’d said that they don’t judge you, that he knows a lot about them. This time his mind doesn’t have a response he’s not scared they’ll make fun of, or think is weird. So he shrugs. “I just do. Plants in general, too, I guess. I just- trees are- they’re nice?”

“Nice,” His father repeats. Evan nods.

“I think that’s cool.” Danielle smiles. “Not enough people appreciate nature.”

“Not everyone can run protests to protect forests.”

“Oh, quiet you.”

Evan feels out of place as their conversation continues. He doesn’t belong here. This isn’t right, his stomach twists, and his throat feels wrong. It’s not like dinner with his mom- as rare as that is- where they laugh, and talk, and she’s a comforting figure. It’s not like dinner at Jared’s where they stay up in Jared’s room, eating food between doing other things. It’s not like the Murphy’s, where they don’t force him into conversation, but where he finds himself in it anyway.

It’s just… not right. Evan shouldn’t be here.

Evan lays in bed at night, staring up at the ceiling. He can’t sleep. It’s no surprise, being a new place that he’s not comfortable in, but it’s still annoying. Evan heaves a sigh, turning onto his side and reaching for his phone.

“I can’t remember the time difference, but are you awake?”

“yaeh” Connor replies.

“Incorrect.”

“Yeah*”
“If you’re tired you don’t have to respond.”

“wasn’t sleeping anyway. How’s it there?”

“Awkward. They’re nice, but, shrug.”

“shrug.”

“Yes, Shrug.”

“mhm. If it makes you feel better I have to deal with family 2morrow”

“Oh?”

“They hate me.”

“On a scale of 1 to your sister three months ago, how much?”

“zoe.”

“Oh, sorry.”

“yeah.”

“You gonna survive it?”

“probably. you?”

“I think so.”

Their conversation goes on for another hour, before Connor admits he’s a real human, who needs to sleep. Evan feels a little better, even if he’s still uncomfortable and stressed. Maybe he can get a little sleep.

Evan isn’t going to eat breakfast. He usually does, even if it’s just buttered toast, but Saturday morning, he doesn’t think he will. His father had told him he was free to get himself food, whenever he wanted, but he stands in the kitchen, unsure. What if there is something they are saving? Was he allowed to cook if he wanted? Were there dishes, or pans, he wasn’t supposed to use? What does he do with the dishes after he eats? Do they usually leave them in the sink, or do they put them in the dishwasher immediately?

There are too many worries swimming around in his head for him to even open the fridge. Instead, he sits himself at the dining room table, with his phone, and does nothing. It’s too early, anyway. Only six in the morning. Nobody else is up.

The house smells of something vaguely unfamiliar, like any strangers’ home does. Stranger. Evan look around the room. There’s photos hung on one wall, all of the houses occupants. All of the family that lives here. A family Evan isn’t a part of, one he doesn’t know.

One picture catches his eye, and he stands to get a better look at it.

His father holds a child, who can’t be more than a year old, in his arms. He’s smiling, the baby his waving their arms around wildly, blurring the photo, their small tufts of hair a mess. His father is smiling, back to the white wall that’s all too familiar.
It’s him.

Evan knows his mother kept most pictures of him, his father not bothering to ask for them or copies. So Evan stares, surprised. Any attempts to pick the picture apart for some proof he’s wrong, that this isn’t a picture of him, come up short. His hair is too light, his eyes too blue, to be his either of his step siblings.

Tears well up in his eyes, and he doesn’t know why. Crying doesn’t make any sense, he tries to argue with himself. Of course his father kept a picture of him. Of course, of course. Evan chokes out a breath, throat tightening. It’s on the wall. It’s hanging up in their house alongside the other kids, along with their wedding photos, along with pictures of their parents.

Between the unexpected tears, and the anxiety telling him he can’t bee seen crying in the middle of a dining room, he sinks to the floor. Arms wrapped around his knees, he buries his face in them and tries to regain composure, to breath.

Noah- his step brother- finds him. Shouts in worry, and puts a hand on his arm. “What happened?!”

“No- nothing I’m just- it’s not-” Evan stumbles for words, rubbing his eyes with too much force, causing him to cry more. Noah gasps, seeing his face, and doesn’t listen to Evan’s attempts to stop him from getting anyone else.

“Mom! Mom, somethings wrong!”

“No you don’t need to- I’m not- it’s fine. I’m fine.”

“What’s going on?!?” Danielle rushes into the room, bed head and tired eyes, frantic.

“He’s crying!”

“I’m not- no I’m- sorry. I’m sorry. I’m fine- I’m- it’s- everything’s fine.”

Danielle doesn’t seem convinced, brow furrowing, and kneels next to him. “Do you need anything?”

“N-no I’m fine.”

“Do you want to sit down? On a chair? Or the couch?”

“I- no- yes. Yes, please.” Evan nods, allows her to help him to his feet. He’s lead into the living room, where he collapses onto their couch.

“Noah, will you go get some tissue for me?”

“Oh!” Noah rushes off at Danielle’s request, and she turns back to Evan.

“Now, what happened?”

“Nothing. I just- it wasn’t- it’s dumb.”

“Come on, now, we’re all family here.” They’re really not, Evan wants to argue. The polite side of him- or the anxious part, really- wins out, however. So Evan nods.

“There’s a- one of the pictures on your wall is- it’s me?”

“Oh, right.” She nods. “Joel brought that with him when we got married.”
“It’s the wall.” Evan clears his throat, trying not to sound the way he knows he looks and feels.

“Yes?”

“I thought- I mean I figured- it would make sense for it to be in a drawer some- somewhere.”

“Why?”

“I’m not you’re not-” Evan shakes his head, unable to figure out what he wants to say. How he wants to say that he doesn’t belong on their wall.

“Have you eaten?” Danielle offers a subject change, much to Evan’s relief.

“No.”

“Good, I was just going to get up, and get breakfast started when Noah shouted.” Noah, as if on cue, returns with a hand full of tissue paper. He drops it into Evan’s lap, and Evan can’t help but laugh.

“Thank you, Noah.” At’s Evan’s words, Noah grins, proud. Danielle gets up, presumably to make breakfast, and Evan tries to fix himself to not look like a crying disaster.

*Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why:*

Evan stares at the words. Rarely does he really believe it when he types the words, but now that he does again, he can’t find the words to express why he feels that way. With a sigh, he closes his laptop.

Chapter End Notes

**oooohhh boy. thing's sure do seem nice and good right now, don't they? :)
unrelated note: i tend to be a terrible person.**

**it's technically a different day so I can't say I posted a third chapter in one day, but I haven't slept so it's still the same day to me**

**fun fact: i didn't realize this, but at this point in-story it's been about ten years since Evan has seen is father in person, and now he's visiting and staying at his home. Which is funny to me because after 10 years of not seeing them, i visit some only family friends with my father a few years ago, and it was about this awkward. Except i didn't cry and there weren't any picture of me on walls (but in books there were). anyway that doesn't matter i just thought it was interesting.**

**additional fun fact: I also barely ate when I was there until they sat me down and were like "please fucking eat we're worried about you" bc i didn't know what the rule were in their kitchen.**

**then i stole a bunch of their food right before we left heh.**
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

“I was not!” Evan is surprised by his own voice, flinches at the sound. The silence that follows has his breath catching in his throat. Mia and Noah stare, wide-eyed, at him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dinner on the 23d- Saturday, the same time Evan broke down crying- Evan finds himself slightly more at ease than the night before. Danielle is nice enough not to bring up the incident, at least he doesn’t hear it if she does, and Noah seems more focused on making sure he’s okay than anything else. Evan’s a little embarrassed a ten year old is so concerned for his well being, but then he partially thinks it doesn’t really matter. He’s a sweet kid. They both are, really. Mia may not have seen what happened, but upon seeing Noah’s actions, she followed suit with watching Evan, and occasionally patting him on the arm when he seems uncomfortable.

All in all, Evan thinks, things could be much worse. They’re all… really nice. Somewhere in the back of his mind, Evan had this terrible, demonized version of them in his head. A rude woman who stole his father away from him, and kids of equally bad natures. It’s obvious though, with just a day around them, that this image isn’t who they are.

The only one resembling his mental image is his father. Though older, shorter, maybe even thinner than he pictures him- than he was, all that time ago- his actions are what Evan pictures. Joel speaks with simplicity, and even, dare he say, disinterest. Evan wants to believe his father missed him, even a little. That he invited Evan over because he wanted to see him. That’s hard when Evan can’t make eye-contact with him and, for once, it’s not Evan’s fault.

“So,” His father starts, looking Evan’s direction, but not his eyes, “are you and- oh who was it- Jared? Are you still friends?”

Evan nods, trying not to frown. Even if Jared was his only friends, even back then, that doesn’t mean his father has to remember his name. Maybe not hearing it makes it harder to remember. Evan would like to believe that’s why. Tries not to think about the fact that he knows he’s mentioned Jared in emails sent, just this year. “Yes.”

“Oh? Are you close?”

“He’s-” Evan doesn’t know what, actually. Since their fight, their status as friends as been reaffirmed, but he’s not sure they’re best friends yet, or anymore- “my best friend.” Better to just stick to safe answers.

“Jared?” Mia asks. She and Noah have ceased their intense debate about which type of noodles were better. She’s for shells, personally.

“Jared- Jared is my friend. Was- he’s- since I was younger than you.”

“How long is that?”
“More than ten years.”

“Noah is ten!”

“That’s a long time!” Noah gasps. Evan nods.

“He was always a bad influence, when you were kids.” His father’s voice startles Evan, drawing his attention back away from the kids. “Always getting into trouble. I remember you saying he kept dragging you along, and that you didn’t want to break the rules.”

Evan vaguely remembers something like that. Crying because they’d gotten in trouble for stealing cookies, and saying Jared made him do it. Evan bites his lip, frowning at the memory. He’d lied. Jared had suggested it, but Evan remembers being the one eagerly leading their quest into the kitchen. Jared had been really upset at him for that. “Well I- I mean I wouldn’t- wouldn’t say that.”

“Oh, were you a really good kid, Evan?” Danielle smiles, resting her arm on the table. Evan can only nod, it’s his default when he’s questioned.

“Evan really was a really good kid.” His father laughs. “Honestly, with how often his friend got him in trouble, I was surprised they stayed friends. Evan probably would have been better off not getting involved as much as he did.”

Something doesn’t feel right, Evan thinks. Something about the phrasing doesn’t feel right, and Evan finds himself with a tinge of anger in his chest. “I wasn’t- I was not that- that good a kid.”

“Oh? Well, at least, you’re really polite now.” Danielle tilts her head, and Evan frowns. She seems to be trying to draw the conversation away from young Evan. Though it’s not much of a change, he sort of appreciates it.

“I’m only- I’m not really that polite.” At least he wouldn’t be if he wasn’t anxious all the time.

“Nonsense. You always were, anyway.” His father laughs. “You were probably a good influence on the other kids, if anything.”

“I was not!” Evan is surprised by his voice, flinches at the sound. The silence that follows has his breath catching in his throat. Mia and Noah stare, wide-eyed, at him. “I wasn’t- he didn’t get me in trouble I lied. I lied all- all the time to get out of trouble, and he just- just let me. I was the bad influence.”

“Evan.” His father’s voice is weirdly distant. Evan tries to breath in, to take a deep breath, but it ends up shaky.

“Well,” Danielle starts, trying to fill the tense silence with something, anything, “I guess you were really good at playing the good kid, huh? I was like that too, when I was younger. My parents always thought my sisters were responsible for all the broken things and stolen snacks, but it was me.”

“Oh,” Mia draws the word out, hand coming up to her mouth. “Mom was a bad kid!”

“That’s not fair! She always knows which of us it is!” Noah pouts, crossing his arms.

Evan would like to be relieved about the warmer tone of the room, but his breath is still uneven. Everything seems just slightly… wrong. Something- something he can’t place- isn’t right with anything about him. It’s way too cold, his face feels warm, and he can’t focus.
“Evan?” Noah’s voice sounds off, unclear, despite him being right next to Evan. Evan stands, shaky, and mumbles an apology before stumbling out of the room.

Evan is surprised he makes it up the stairs, and to the guest room, but he does. Collapsing next to the bed, and pulling the sheets off of it, he tries to focus on what’s around him. He wraps the sheets around himself haphazardly, burring his face in them.

When he regains his composure- after briefly telling Danielle that he needed to be on his own when she came to check on him- he pulls out his phone, hoping Jared isn’t busy.

“Hey, Jared, you busy?”

“dose losin at vid gmes count”

“No.”

“then no.”

“Want to hear a fun fact?”

“not if its a/b trees.”

“It’s not about trees.”

“k.”

“My dad thought you used to be a bad influence on me.”

“im a model citizen. also didnt u 1 time convinced me 2 steal cookies.”

“Yep. Funny, right? I had them super convinced.”

“wats wrong?”

“?”

“u dont call things funny like that unless ur upset.”

“You’re onto me.”

“Ev”

“He kept talking about how good a kid I was? And after calling you a bad influence.”

“ok?”

“So I may have, just a little, raised my voice and said that I was the bad influence.”

“nice”

“Then ran away while verging on a panic attack.”

“oh. u ok?”

“Now.”
“feel better. steal cookies.“

“I’m not a thief.”

“Kindergarten would say otherwise”

Evan makes his way downstairs, mentally preparing himself to apologize for raising his voice, and running from the room. He takes a deep breath, a step forward, but stops when he hears conversation. For a moment he considers announcing his presence, so he’s not eavesdropping, but then thinks he’s already confessed to his kindergarten crimes, why not add a eavesdropping to the list of bad things he’s done?

“You should really learn to read the situation, Joel.” Danielle sighs, and clicks her tongue.

“What does that mean? His outburst was out of nowhere.”

“It really wasn’t. He was clearly uncomfortable with all your praise about him being a good kid. Hell, he probably didn’t like how you were talking about his friend, either.”

“Most kids would love to be called good.” Joel huffs an annoyed breath. “Even if they weren’t.”

“Most kids shouldn’t be your basis for how your child acts. Most kids don’t like math, are you going to tell Noah he doesn’t like math because most kids don’t?”

“That’s different. I know Noah li-”

“You know Noah.” Danielle doesn’t let Joel finish. “How is it that, when it comes to Evan, I seem to have a better understanding here? He was uncomfortable, you should have stopped talking. I’ve known the kid a day- if you don’t count meeting him, like, twice briefly- and I could tell.”

“That’s not-”

“If you don’t want to try, why’d you invite him?”

“Last I checked that was your idea.” Evan falters at the words, barely managing not to make a noise when realization hits him.

“I thought you’d want to know your son. He’s practically an adult, now.” Danielle sighs. “Mia and Noah love you, and you love them. Would you just stop talking ot them if something happened between us? I thought maybe, perhaps, you’d want to at least talk to your other child.”

“I do talk to him.”

“You’re making excuses.”

Evan quietly steps away, until he can’t hear them anymore, and returns to the guest room. He wants to throw up.

“He didn’t want me here.” Evan texts Connor without even second guessing the action.

“what?” Connor responds after two minutes. Evan briefly remembers Connor might be at a family gathering, and feels bad.

“Sorry, are you busy?”
“no. familys talking, ignoring me, its fine. whats’ going on?”

“Joel didn’t want me here.”

“who?”

“Oh right, fuck, my dad. He didn’t want me here.”

“What happened?”

“I’m an eavesdropper, but don’t judge me for this. I overheard a conversation with my step mom and she was the one who thought this was a good idea. He didn’t think of it.”

“is who thought of it really important?”

“If he really wanted to be a part of my life, to be my father, then he wouldn’t have needed someone else to tell him to invite me to visit.”

“good point.”

“I’m stupid.”

“youre not.”

“I am though! I said no at first, too! I should have listened to you and Jared and my mom and everyone! I shouldn’t be here. I don’t want to be here. I want to go home.”

“shit evan are you going to be okay?”

“Yeah. I mean, probably? I just need to survive a few more days, I can do that.”

“you sure?”

“Yes. I just don’t want to. Here, I mean. Not in general. I still want to survive in general.”

“good. hey im not busy, remember, so u can text me whenever you need to.”

“Thank you. You’re a good friend.”

“well that’s new.”

“You are! You’re my best friend and I love you.” Evan realizes a second after he hits send that there are non-platonic assumptions that can be made there. He hopes Connor doesn’t, because they aren’t the intention.

“thanks. you’re not a half bad friend yourself.” Evan breathes a sigh of relief.

Today’s not a good day. Tomorrows not going to be a good day. In fact we can write off the whole week. I don’t know why I ever actually believed anything else. I shouldn’t have come here. I should have stayed home or gone to the Murphy’s or Jared’s or something else. Not this. No matter how nice my step-family is, the whole reason I came here is gone and I hate this.
Evan goes another night with minimal sleep.

Chapter End Notes

save my boy

fun fact: certain parts of this i thought of chapters ago (before i even knew for sure he was going to go to his dads) and was suddenly filled with the need to tell my best friend i loved her. (which i did. i went "hey you're my friend and i love you") honestly??? telling my friends i love them is so nice???? especially when they're like "love you too" platonic "i love you"s are really nice, is what i'm getting at. this isn't the start of anything is what i'm also saying, don't get you're hopes up (yet?) also? i wrote this before i slept but actually managed the self control not to post it. wow.
Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

At dinner Evan focuses on conversation with Mia and Noah, to avoid talking to his father, or even Danielle. Mia found a spider at the park, apparently, and was very excited. Noah got scared and crushed it, much to her dismay.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Sunday- Christmas Eve- is awkward beyond belief. Evan’s forced politeness reaches new levels and he can’t look at his father at all. It’s Danielle- because of course it is- that suggests a trip to the park. Mia and Noah seem excited, asking if they can invite their friends, and Evan is too stuck in his own head to do anything but agree.

One step outside has them faced with the winter cold. It’s cold enough that it would be snowing, if not for the complete lack of moisture in the air. Still, Evan’s breath comes out as smoke, and he’s faced with the reality that he didn’t bring warm enough clothing. He wraps his arms around himself, shivering. Danielle laughs, having just gotten off the phone with the parents of one of Mia’s friends.

“Would you like to borrow a jacket, Evan? I’m sure one of Joel’s will fit you.” Evan wants to deny the offer, but he’d rather not suffer the cold. With a small nod, Evan steps back into the house while Danielle goes to get him one. The jackets proper owner decided not to come, claiming he’s going to cook- Evan has never seen Joel cook- while they’re out, so they have something to come back to. Danielle had suggested Evan stay back and help, but he argued that he should see the town at least a little bit, since he’s never visited before.

Really Evan just doesn’t want to be left alone with that man.

While the kids- and their friends- run about the park, under Danielles watch, Evan occupies himself with taking pictures of the winter-stricken trees that litter the park. They’re pretty, though not very tall, and part of him wants to climb up one and hide for the rest of the day.

Instead he texts tree pictures to Connor, who responds with poorly done drawings that Evan almost doesn’t realizes are recreations of the pictures he sends.

Evan laughs when he get’s a picture of a piece of paper, covered in scribbles, and the words ‘fuck this’ written at the bottom.

“A masterpiece.”

“im an art genius, give me a scholarship”

Evan laughs, feeling better now that he’s on his own, and texting Connor. Evan takes one last tree picture, before looking up at said tree and climbing up onto the lowest stable branch.

“Guess where I am?”
At dinner Evan focuses on conversation with Mia and Noah, to avoid talking to his father, or even Danielle. Mia found a spider at the park, apparently, and was very excited. Noah got scared and crushed it, much to her dismay.

Christmas morning Evan wakes to the tumbling footsteps of the children. Along with Noah shouting for his mom to wake up, so they can open their presents. Evan rolls over, groaning. Because he’s feeling vaguely sick from his lack of sleep, he wonders if he can sleep through all of their noise. Knowing, realistically, that he can’t, Evan rubs his eyes and sits up.

“Yes, yes, calm down. I’m up. You’ll wake Evan.” Danielle’s voice reaches him, and Evan lets out a short laugh. Too late for that. Evan dresses as quickly as he can, and stuffs his phone into his pocket.

“Oh no!” Mia gasps. Evan reaches the door, footsteps sluggish.

“What is it?” Evan makes his way to the stairs.

“There aren’t any boxes for Evan!” Mia sounds genuinely distressed. Evan smiles, slowly stepping down to the first floor.

“Oh, dear, that’s not—”

“Santa must not have known!” Noah’s exclamation is followed but him putting his fist against his palm, as if he’s solved a something. Evan enters the room just in time to see this. “Since he doesn’t live here.”

“Yes, that must be it.” Danielle smiles, and turns her attention to Evan. “Good morning, did they wake you?”

“Yeah.”

“Sorry about that. Kids love Christmas. Well, assuming they celebrate it.”

“Yeah.” Evan nods, taking a seat on the floor next to Mia. He looks at their presents. “Are they going to open them?”

“Once Joel gets up.” Danielle nods, then turns her head to shout down the hall. “Get up! The kids are only so patient!”
“I’m coming!”

“Oh, right,” She turns back to Evan, “we weren’t sure if you were coming, and then I wasn’t sure what kind of things you liked. I thought you wouldn’t want us giving you something you’ll never use, or don’t like, so I hope what we did is okay.”

“What… you did?”

Danielle reaches over to a side table by the couch, opening a drawer. From inside she pulls out an envelope, decorated in children’s drawings. Evan can’t help but smile at the sight. “It’s just money, but at least this way we know you’ll get something you want.”

“Thank-thank you.” Evan doesn’t want to admit he didn’t expect to get anything at all. For all the reasons she’d said, and the fact he usually doesn’t celebrate Christmas, the idea hadn’t really occurred to him that he would get anything.

“I drew those!” Noah points to the flowers decorating the front side. “Mia did the cats.”

“Thank you, Noah. Mia.”

“You’re welcome!” Mia gives him a thumbs up, and he laughs. She and Noah are bouncing where they sit, trying to be patient.

“You’re- both of you are pretty talented.”

“Really?! I want to be an artist!” Noah grins, and Evan only just notices he’s missing one of his canine teeth.

“Alright, I’m here.” Joel’s voice startles Evan back into a tense state. Mia and Noah look up between their parents until Danielle nods, and they each reach for a present in a matter of seconds. “Oh, I see you already gave Evan his present.”

“The kids were worried since… Santa didn’t know Evan was here, and he didn’t have anything. So it seemed like a good time for it.”

“I see.”

“Oh- thank-thanks for the- for this, dad.” Evan hates the way the word feels wrong on his tongue. Joel nods.

“Baseball!” Mia holds the box, containing said object, above her head, grinning. “Nice!”

“Oh!” Noah gasps, pointing to the box in his hand. “Mia look! It’s a puzzle! Thousand- a thousand pieces!”

“Boring.”

“You’re boring!”

“Hey, neither of you are boring.” Danielle sighs.

“You’re just saying that because you’re our mom!” Mia huffs.

“She’s right,” Evan offers, and Mia frowns at him.

“Humph. Fine.”
Evan jumps at the sound of his phone going off, alerting him to a text. He puts a hand to his chest, letting out an annoyed huff. His father looks over at him, eyebrow raised, and Evan purses his lips. It would be rude to check it, wouldn’t it? Danielle breaks the already forming tension with a wave of her hand. “You can check that, don’t worry.”

“Oh- okay.”

Connor’s message is very simple. “help me.”

“What’s wrong?”

“our cousins stayed bc of some reason I wasn’t paying attention to. anyway theyre braiding my hair, so im trapped while zoe plays christmas songs on loop. she doesnt even like christmas music?? I’m dying.”

“RIP.”

“evan please.”

“Take pictures of your hair, I’d love to see that.”

“youre mocking me.”

“Yeah.”

“evaaaan”

“How old are your cousins?”

“like ones 12? and I think the other two are 6?”

“Aw.”

“What?”

“It’s just a cute mental image.”

“How dare you call my suffering cute.”

“Sorry, is adorable better?”

“Fuck you.”

“Connor! There are children present!”

“dying. I have be sober too.”

“I’ll miss you. But sober?”

“is ‘not-high’ better? also shut up.”

“This isn’t a verbal conversation, I am shut up.”

“in the words of my dear friend evan hansen ‘ugh’”

“Sounds like a great guy.”
Evan laughs, shaking his head at Connors message. “No you don’t.” 

“:(

“:)”

Evan is brought from his thoughts by Joel clearing his throat. “Is that Jared?”

“No?” Evan feels almost offended that his father assumes it is. As if he couldn’t possibly have any other friends. Which, sure, he didn’t until recently. That doesn’t make him assuming so hurt any less. “My friend, Connor.”

“Oh, you’ve never mentioned him?”

Evan wonders how he’s expected to mention anyone when they never talk. “We- uh- only became friends recently.”

“Is that so?”

“Yeah…”

The only thing saving the room from silence is Noah and Mia sharing excitement about their presents.

The rest of his visit ends up being fairly uneventful. Between texting Connor and spending time with his step siblings- he’s really starting to like them- he doesn’t do much except avoid talking to his father. Until he’s standing in the airport, ready to go home.

Unfortunately for Evan, his step family stayed behind, after waving him goodbye, so he’s alone with Joel. There’s a uncomfortable silence sitting over them, until Joel breaks it. “It was good to see you.”

“Yeah,” Evan lies, nodding.

“Well…”

“Yeah…”

Their goodbye fills Evan with a completely different emotion than the last one they had said goodbye to each other. He’s not desperately trying to figure out a way to believe this is a lie. Not scared it means more loss that goes on until he’s on his own. It’s a relief. A bitter, sad relief, but one none the less.

Evan stares out the plane window, frowning. He has a lot to write to himself about when he gets home.

Chapter End Notes
fun fact: i don't have any fun facts shit uh.... the last time i was only a plane i was like 5 or 6. That was actually the only time, I think.

also i just love the mental image of connor trapped sitting on a couch as kids braid his hair, Zoe grinning evil as she hits the repeat button on a christmas music playlist and then put earphones on so she can listen to something else.
Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

“I don’t- I don’t want to call him dad any- anymore or- or father, or anything. He isn’t.”

“Okay. That’s your choice.”

“I- thank you.”

“Evan, you don’t have to thank me for anything.”

“I love you, mom.”

“I love you, too.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The first thing Evan does upon getting off the plane is hug his mom. Heidi seems caught off-guard, before she returns the embrace. “Something wrong?”

“I missed you.” It’s true, though Evan only realizes it now. He’d been so caught up in what was going on at the moment, that just how much he wished he was at home with his mother didn’t hit him until she was in front of him again.

“I missed you too.” Heidi smiles, pulling back and placing her hands on his shoulders. “How was it?”

“I-” Evan shakes his head. “Can we go home first?”

“Of course, honey. Let’s go.”

Evan collapses onto his couch, tension finally leaving his body, and heaves a big sigh. Heidi laughs, setting his bags aside. Once Evan has sat up, moving so his mom can sit down, she sits next to him. “So?”

“So…” Evan glances at the floor, to his hands, to the wall, back to his hands. “I- Danielle is really nice. I guess I expected to hate her, because- because of everything, you know?”

“Mhm.” Heidi nods.

“But she- she’s really nice, and the kids! They- Mia and Noah- they’re really great, too. I actually really liked talking- talking to them? Is that weird?”

“Not at all.” Heidi smiles, then meets Evan’s eyes. “Evan, you’re avoiding something here.”

“I don’t- I don’t think I ever want to see him again.” Evan holds her gaze even as shock forms over her face. “He doesn’t know me at all and- and acted like he did! And- and I- I overheard something
about- about them inviting me. It wasn’t his idea.”

Evan can feel his eyes forming with tears. He’d already known for days now, but it’s as if it’s only just hitting him fully. Reaching up to rub his eyes, he involuntarily lets out a sob, and his face feels much too warm. Worry and sympathy flow from Heidi’s voice. “Oh, Evan.”

“I really- I wanted to believe- to believe he- he wanted to see me. That- that he missed me or- or something.”

“It’s okay, honey, I’m sorry.” Heidi’s arms wrap around him and Evan sinks into them, hands against his face.

“Why doesn’t- why am I not- why doesn’t he want me? Why am I not- not worth his attention anymore?”

“Evan, it’s not… you know this isn’t your fault, right?” Heidi’s voice is soft, comforting. Despite the winter cold, Evan feels much too warm.

“I know- I know but I- I still feel- it still hurts. I know it shouldn’t. I know- I know- I’m not- this isn’t because of me. It’s his fault so why- why do I still- why can’t I just be angry? I want to- I want to be mad at him! He left us. He- he hasn’t made an effort so why can’t- why can’t I Just be mad?!“

“It’s… It’s normal to want your parents approval, even if you know it doesn’t matter.”

“He isn’t!”

“Evan?”

“He’s not- he’s not my parent!” Evan’s words barely force their way past the lump in his throat. “I don’t- I don’t want to call him dad any- anymore or- or father, or anything. He isn’t.”

“Okay. That’s your choice.”

“I- thank you.”

“Evan, you don’t have to thank me for anything.”

“I love you, mom.”

“I love you, too.”

Exhaustion floods Evan when he’s finally back in his room. Flopping onto his bed, face first, Evan reaches into his pocket for his phone before rolling over to face his ceiling. Quickly he texts his friends that he’s home, then kicks at his blankets until he can climb under them without standing up. By the time he’s managed this, Jared has replied a small “welcome back” and Connor has sent him a picture.

“here, you wanted this.” Connor had sent, followed by a picture of what Evan assumes is the back of his head. There’s a messy braid, covered in unnecessary hair clips, resting against Connors shoulders. Evan smiles at the sight, mental image of Connor sitting there for the duration of it happening more than a little amusing to him.

“Wow, nice. Where do you get your hair done? You should recommend the place.”
“oh ha ha.”

“It doesn’t look as bad as I was expecting, with how much you were Suffering because of it.”

“they broke a hair brush.”

“Impressive.” Evan yawns, rubbing his already sore eyes. “Sorry can we talk later? I just got off a plane and got done crying. I feel like my body is giving up on me here.”

“crying?”

“Stuff just finally hit me about what happened with Joel.”

“oh. alright yeah,. yeah, good night.”

“Goodnight!”

Evan wakes to a text from Connor asking him to reply when he’s awake. Evan sits up, sluggish and feeling dehydrated, and decides not to reply until he feels less like he’s dying. Once he’s dressed- something which generally makes him feel less like a human disaster- and fed, and hydrated, he replies.

There’s no answer for twenty minutes, and Evan wonders if maybe Connor had fallen asleep after having sent it. Or perhaps he wasn’t near his phone. All thoughts pause when there’s a knock on his door. Heidi isn’t home, so Evan has to steel himself and open the door.

The sight that greets him is Connor, holding a box container, following Zoe, who apparently was the one who knocked.

“Oh- um- what are you- why are you two here?”

“We brought you cake,” Zoe answers, shrugging.

“No I brought him cake, you just drove me here.”

“Why did- why didn’t you drive?” Evan asks, glancing past Zoe at Connor.

“You shouldn’t drive when you’re high, Evan.” Connor shrugs.

“That’s true but you usually- usually do anyway.”

“Hey, dude, don’t call me out on that when Zoe’s right here.”

“No, go ahead and do.” Zoe grins. “I’d love as much blackmail as possible.”

“You already have plenty.” Connor huffs, rolling his eyes. “Can we come in or?”

“Oh!” Evan nods, stepping aside. What’s happening is a mystery yet to be solved in his mind, so he watches them, confusion written over his face. “Why did you bring cake?”

Zoe is the one who speaks, shrugging again. “There was a bunch of cake left from Christmas-”

“This is why we usually have pies, they get eaten-”

“Don’t interrupt me, Connor.”
“Don’t tell me what to do, Zoe.”

“Anyway!” Zoe sends a pointed glare at Connor, who just grins in return. “Our mom said we should bring some to you, since we had so much left. So here’s a box of, like, half a cake.”

“And yes, we’ll tell her thank you, because I know that you’re going to ask us to.”

“Maybe I wasn’t!” Evan pauses, then nods. “But I was, thank you.”

“Hope you like chocolate,” Zoe says, shrugging.

Chocolate is Evan’s favourite.

If Evan had been told a year ago- hell, four months ago- that he would be sitting in his living room watching a movie with the Murphy siblings, he would have assumed he was being messed with. Yet, here he is, sitting on his couch between them. It had been Zoe’s idea, and Evan had glanced between Connor and her before nodding. Now he found himself as a barrier between them.

Unfortunately, Evan couldn’t really focus on the movie, nor his company. The remains of having hardly slept for almost a week, two plane rides, and crying multiple times catching up to him even despite the sleep he’d gotten upon getting home. Six hours, it seemed, wasn’t enough. Evan tries to stifle a yawn, sinking back into his couch.

Connor seems to notice, tapping Evan’s arm to gain his attention, and raising an eyebrow in silent question when Evan turns to him. Evan shakes his head, offering a smile. Connor doesn’t seem to find his response to be enough, based on his expression, but nods anyway. Attention back on the movie, Connor rests his head on his hand, elbow on the armrest. Evan covers another yawn, pulling his knees up to his chest.

Evan wakes, curled up on his couch, to Zoe shouting some obscenity at his TV. On screen the movies antagonist holds the main characters love in a way that denotes an interest in them. Evan hasn’t been watching- he realizes he doesn’t know at all what’s going on- but he figures this is a bad thing by Zoe’s huff of annoyance.

Shifting, Evan lowers his legs back over the couch and turns to Connor. Connor’s eyes are half-closed, and he glances at Evan through his peripheral vision before shrugging. So he wasn’t paying attention either, Evan realizes.

After the movie- which Evan passes out three times during- Evan sees the Murphy siblings off before returning to his room. He considers dropping into bed and sleeping the rest of the day away, but decides there’s something else to do before he does that.

\textit{Today’s a good day, already, and here’s why; because you’re home. I think I really wanted to believe that everything I felt before was wrong. That Joel missed me, that he wanted me in his life. It was stupid to believe that in the first place. I can’t even be angry, at least not with him. I want to be, I want to send him another email about how awful he is, but I just can’t manage it.}
Still, I’m supposed to be talking about why today’s a good day, so here it is. I’m home. I’m home where, when she’s actually here, I can see my mom and know at the very least she’s trying. At least she says she wants me here. I’m at home where my oldest friend is. Even if he’s sort of a jerk, and sometimes I hate him. I’m at home where my new-best-friend is, and where people want me here.

They say they want me here. Even if it’s hard to believe, that’s something.

Evan closes his laptop and crawls back into bed, determined to sleep until tomorrow.

It’s something.

Chapter End Notes

guys im so fucking tired and idk why?? i slept?? i don't understand???

anyway i don't have any fun facts today sorry.

oh also i love heidi a lot she’s A+
“IT SNOWED CONNOR!”

“YES I SEE THAT”

“Be excited!”

“dont tell me what to do”

“Please attempt excitement?”

“yay, snow.”

“Thank you.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

His clock reads 11:00pm when Evan wakes, finally feeling well-rested. He tries to go back to sleep, but eventually has to admit he’s slept enough and his body won’t allow him any more rest. So, he rolls out of bed mourning his sleep schedule. A glance out his window has him blinking sleep away, trying to prove what he’s seeing is incorrect. It’s not. There’s snow.

There hadn’t been any clouds last he checked- then again he was asleep for nearly a whole day- so this revelation comes as a shock. Still, the night sky’s darkness is a contrast to the light reflecting snow, making the outside visible despite being dark enough where it normally wouldn’t be.

“Today’s going to be a good day,” Evan says, thinking aloud. He laughs to himself, before reaching for his phone. For a second he debates opening his window, but his room is cold enough without allowing more cold air in. Instead, he takes a picture through his window, managing an angle that keeps most of his phones reflection out of it. Most. It’s good enough.

For a second, he considers sending it to someone, but decides it’s late enough for that to not be a good idea. If they aren’t already asleep, his friends should be trying to get sleep. Should be. Evan isn’t sure he actually believes they are, but he’s not going to be the one to keep them up if they are.

Six in the morning is a far more appropriate time to text people, Evan decides. Jared seems to disagree.

“Jared it snowed!”

“is 6 fck off”

“:(“

“later”
Connor, seems equally as unhappy with he time of day, though he continues to reply after complaining about it. A fact which amuses Evan.

“It snowed!” Evan sends the picture, and approximately eight smiley faces.

“cool.”

“IT SNOWED CONNOR!”

“YES I SEE THAT”

“Be excited!”

“dont tell me what to do”

“Please attempt excitement?”

“yay, snow.”

“Thank you.”

“yeah whatever. You know what snow means?”

“It’s winter?”

“no nerd, aesthetics.”

“Winter aesthetics!”

“yea, aaaaaand?”

“Oh! Winter tree aesthetics.”

“yeah.”

“YOU HAVE TO DRIVE ME SOMEWHERE. Somewhere meaning the orchard.”

“im impressed.”

“???”

“You’re not even asking or apologizing.”

“Oh, sorry.”

“no you ruined it.”

“Sorry.”

“Evan.”

“Sorry.”

“now youre fucking with me”

“Sorry.”
“Okay yeah a little.”

“maybe I don’t wanna drive you now”

“Please Connor, you’re my only friend with a license.”

“thats a lie i know jared can drive.”

“Oh shit yeah you know that. But still!”

“Fine fine. Later. When its not 6 fucking am.”

“:(

“when did u wake up?”

“11”

“pm?”

“Yep!”

“dude youre so fucked when school starts.”

“Don’t remind me.” Evan huffs, not wanting to think about school. “Anyway I’ll leave you alone for now since you’re tired.”

“No I’m up, but its still 6am.”

“You are?”

“yeah since 4.”

“What the fuck.”

“!! Evan, language.”

“Shut up.”

“Rude.”

“Sorry.”

“DO NOT.”

“:)”

“but i gotta wait for zoe to wake up so I can steal her car.”

“You have a car???”

“not anymore.”

“What happened?”
“remember when I got grounded?”

“Yeah.”

“since they decided I didn’t really get punished by being trapped at home. especially since you visited. they figured out what to do finally last month so they took my car until next week.”

“Oh, I’m sorry.”

“it doesn’t do much, since I don’t go anywhere usually. and zoe let me borrow her car.”

“That’s surprising.”

“I think things are better?”

“Better?”

“with zoe. lately.”

“Oh! That’s great!”

“you know what I hear?”

“???”

“water running. someones up.”

“Okay?”

“I’ll let you know when I get the car.”

“Okay!”

Evan never particularly saw himself as someone who had any real interest in aesthetic things. That doesn’t mean he wasn’t, but it never occurred to him that he was. Which is why he exclaims suddenly, in the middle of conversation with Conner, “oh my god I’m an aesthetic loving nerd.”

“Yeah?” Connor snorts, laughing at him. Between his face being buried in his large coat, his hands in his pockets, and his laughing, Connor appears as a vaguely human-shaped, neck-less, puffy blob. One which is shaking with mostly-quiet laughter. This sight makes Evan laugh, and then they’re both laughing. It’s nice.

Laughter dies down, and Evan refocuses on Connor. The black of Connor’s clothes contrasts with the snow-covered ground, as well as the particular brown of the trees around them. Evan pauses, blinking, before he lifts his phone and takes a picture of Connor. Connor makes a startled noise, hiding more in the collar of his jacket. “What? It’s a good picture!”

“Warn me next time!”

“What, would you strike a pose?”

“No, I’d hide.” Connor huffs, lifting his head and regaining the form of someone with a neck.

“Cruel.”
“Why would you want to take one, anyway?”

“You- you contrast well with the snow and trees!” Evan pulls up the picture he took, and takes quick strides over to Connor. “Look!”

“Huh, guess you’re right.”

“So-”

“No.”

“Please?”

“No way!” Evan frowns at the response, but nods. He’s not going to push Connor too much, he knows better than that.

“Okay. Was- it was worth a shot.”

Connor sighs, relieved, and Evan’s smile returns as he goes to find another good tree to take a picture of. “One.”

“Huh?” Evan stops mid-step, spinning back around.

“You can… take one more.”

“Of you?”

“Yes.” Connor huffs, again, breath turning to smoke. He avoids Evan’s eyes. Evan grins, spinning around.

“Thank you! I’ll- I’ll make sure it’s flattering.”

“Don’t know how you’ll manage that, but sure.”

“It- what do you mean? It’s not that hard. You’re pretty enough to- to take pictures of.”

“Pretty?”

“Sorry do you- does that word bother you?”

“No… it’s just surprising.”

“Oh.”

“Thanks.”

“I’m just telli- yeah. No problem.”

Though it’s cold, and logic would dictate Evan shouldn’t, laying on the ground is generally how he spends his time at the orchard, normally, and is how he ends up again. Connor stares at him, frowning, and Evan raises an eyebrow. “You’re going to freeze.”

“I’m wearing a coat.”

Connor makes a vaguely disgusted noise in the back of his throat. “You’re one of those people that
like cold more than warm weather.”

“Yeah?” Evan shrugs, making a shoulder-shaped dent in the snow around him. “I don’t like being cold, but it’s better than being too hot.”

“I’d rather it be hot.”

“At least when it’s cold you can put more layers on!” Evan grabs a handful of snow, sitting up.

“Whatever.” Connor shakes his head, face finding it’s place in the collar of his jacket again. Evan laughs, running his hand over the snow he’s grabbed. “You better not fucking throw that at me.”

“I won’t.” Evan laughs. “Don’t worry.”

“Hm.” Connor doesn’t seem to fully believe him, so Evan drops the snow into a pile next to him. Appeased, Connor nods. “Good.”

Evan rolls his eyes. It’s quiet, thought not uncomfortably so, as he glances around them. Their footsteps leave a clear path to where they are, from the entrance. Evan crosses his legs under himself. Connor remains standing, Evan assumes because he doesn’t want to sit on the cold ground.

“Are you- do you ever- are you ever standing in a place-”

“Yes.”

Evan glares halfheartedly, and Connor holds up his hands defensively, nodding for Evan to continue. “Are you ever standing somewhere and go ‘wow there are like ten different movie cliches that could happen in this fairly generic environment’?”

“No?” Connor shakes his head. “Why? Ready to reenact some cliches? Want me to hold your hand, and give some great confession?”

“No!” Evan huffs, glaring again. “I’m just saying!”

“Okay, okay, I’m kidding.”

“Besides my hands are freezing and you’re- and you’re big baby who can’t handle the cold.”

“You take that back.”

“No.” Momentarily, Evan tenses. Anxiety creeps in, telling him he’s being too rude, that Connors going to be angry, that he’s messed up.

Connor stares for a moment, before he laughs. Evan breaths a sigh, relieved. “You know I noticed something.”

“What’s that?”

“You stutter less now. When I see you, at least.”

“Oh.” Evan blinks. “I don’t think that’s- is that true?”

“I mean, mostly.” Connor shrugs. “Obviously you still do, but you used to barely get out a single sentence without stuttering.”

“I didn’t even- I never realized.”
“You’re also-” Connor kicks Evan’s legs, lightly- “less tense.”

“Oh.” Evan can’t think of anything to say back to that. Was that true? Had he not noticed? Why was Connor bringing this up now?

“I thought about it.” Connor’s words draw Evan’s gaze back up to him. “When I started trying to be less- fucking- to not snap as much at people. Or to apologize for shit? You always- you looked really proud of me? I don’t know, maybe I’m just making shit up, and you weren’t, but I thought so, and- fuck- I don’t know? I guess, I wondered if you knew that you were doing stuff too? Like my- I’m trying to get better, but all my steps to do that are really obvious so…”

“So?”

“But yours aren’t and I wondered if you noticed- I guess- that you were improving too?” Connor ends his rambling with a shrug. Evan can only stare, wide-eyed.

For a moment Evan wonders if Connor has secretly been telepathic this entire time. Though he hadn’t thought about it in a while- able to distract himself with his family stuff- Connor had pinpointed all these thoughts Evan has had. Thoughts he wished he didn’t, because they were always laced with bitterness. He was proud of Connors progress, but also upset at his own lack thereof.

How had Connor noticed that?

“I- um- thank you.” Evan clears his throat, suddenly feeling like a lump has formed in it. “I didn’t- I was worried about- I thought I wasn’t making progress so I- I’m…”

“Are you- fuck- are you crying?! I’m sorry. Shit, Evan, I’m sorry.”

“I’m- no- I’m happy!”

“Happy?”

“I- you- I’m not the- the same right?”

“What do you mean?”

“When- as when we- when we became friends? I’m not- something has- there’s a change right?”

“Well, yeah. People grow, or whatever.”

“I thought- I didn’t think I was!”

“Oh.”

“Thank you.”

“Yeah, sure, but… can you stop crying?”

“Sorry.”

“It’s fine, just…” Connor shrugs, and Evan nods, rubbing his eyes. Connor seems unsure what to do, and Evan understands that.

“I was- I really hoped I wouldn’t cry again this week.”

“Sorry.”
“Today’s going to be a good day, and here’s why,” Evan starts, pulling at the hem of his jacket. “I’m making progress. How’s that sound?”

“Aren’t your letters supposed to be longer than that?”

“Not really? And, well I didn’t say that was all! Just the first part.” Evan huffs. Connor laughs, nodding without looking at him. Connors eyes stay on the road as he drives Evan home.

“Sounds fine, then. I don’t know. I’m not your doctor.”

Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why: I’m making progress. I honestly didn't think I was, I have former letters to attest to that, I think. But I am! How didn’t I notice? I guess people tend not to notice small changes in themselves, but still! You’d think I would have, while looking for them. You’d think I would have been able to see and be proud of myself for it, but I just thought I was the same. I still... don’t know if I’m that different. But this is something. I want to believe this means something.

I don’t think any number of “thank you”s are enough for how much being told I’ve changed by someone means to me. I’m really glad Connor’s my friend.

Though I really was hoping not to fucking cry again. Honestly! What the fuck.

Evan deletes the last line, deciding it’s unnecessary, and smiles. Progress, huh. Evan closes his laptop and sits back in his bed. Dr. Sherman is going to be happy for him, he thinks. He finally has a positive letter about himself to show.

Chapter End Notes

oooh boy i have a lot to say, strap in kids. thus ends the week of crying. (i'm so sorry evan i didn't mean to make you cry so many chapters in a row)

fun fact: I love the snow. I only ever rains here in the winter, and i am a sad human. I /also/ am a cold weather person. my parents constantly accuse me of freezing myself to death bc they think its way colder than I do.

anyway: just in case someone thinks Connor bringing up Evan's progress is rushed, it likely feels that way because we only see things from Evans perspective. (yes its third person POV but it's a /biased/ third person).

Connor noticed Evan was improving and that Evan didn't /know/ he was improving already.

He first thought this when Evan stood up for him at dinner, but wasn't sure if was a fluke or something. He noticed again during the chapter when he (Connor) was apologizing to Zoe, and Evan's reactions to that. (pride and jealousy). He was sure about it after the chapter where Evan was sick (when he mentioned Connor trying, and the
fact Evan accidentally said something mean.)

so yeah, from Evans perspective it seems random, but Connors being trying to find a good chance to bring this up for a while.

I know when something important is up with my friends, I have a hard time deciding when a good time to mention it is.
Chapter 19

Chapter Summary

“Cool. Want to- do you- I don’t ever do this but would you- can we skip school?”

“I already am.”

“Right now, together.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

New years passes without anything eventful happening. Evan is almost relieved. Outside of a few people setting off fireworks illegally- a fire waiting to happen, that never does- there isn’t much to remind him that it even is new years.

Evan doesn’t even hear from Connor. He expected not to hear from Jared, who spends the day trapped at a party his parents are throwing. Heidi and Evan were invited to it, but Heidi had to work, and Evan is glad for any excuse not to spend more time around large groups of people. Though he does get a text saying “happy new years” from Jared, that’s about it. He even hears from Zoe- who apparently had gotten ahold of his number- though it’s only the same thing he gets from Jared. Well, and an explanation of who she is when Evan responds to the unfamiliar number confused.

Nothing from Connor, though. Evan tries not to think too much of it, even when he sends Connor a message and gets nothing in return. He feels bad asking Zoe to do something from him, especially since they aren’t really friends, but asks her to see if Connor is okay. Apparently Connor just told her to leave him alone when she knocked on his door.

So, Evan spends new years uneventfully. Uneventful and full of worry that something might be wrong with Connor. That he might have relapsed into his angry shell, or that he might have decided he hates Evan. Evan tries to push any of those thoughts aside.

It’s probably fine.

Even though Connor didn’t tell him he wanted to be alone, and un-bothered, like he promised Evan he would.

It’s not until 4:00pm on January 1st that Evan hears from Connor. When he does it’s a text message apologizing for not responding. “sorry I got high as fuck and then ate like 6 sandwiches and slept for 12 hours”

“It’s fine. How are you?” Evan is sort of disappointed in him, but he knows he shouldn’t be.

Though, they’d never actually talked about Connor’s drug use- Evan was just glad it isn’t something worse like crack- Connor has still been getting high less often. Evan was aware he was still smoking, but he was smoking in smaller amounts, and less often, so Evan figured he didn’t have to bring it up. Now he thinks it’s been too long to bring it up, without it seeming out of place. So it’s not fair for him to be disappointed, he thinks.
“fine? I just didn’t want to say something fucked up while I was high, you know?”

“I guess.”

“Are you… mad at me?”

“No.”

“Evan.”

“im not.” Evan realizes his mistakes only after he sends the message.

“You are! What did I do? I said I was sorry for not texting you.”

“I’m not mad.”

“I thought we talked about this. you gotta tell me when I fuck up.”

“I’M NOT MAD AT YOU.” Evan takes a deep breath, annoyed. He isn’t mad at Connor. At least, he wasn’t, until Connor started saying he was.

“Are you sure about that?”

“I’m not mad at you okay?”

“But you are mad?”

“At myself.”

“Why?”

“It’s not important.”

“Hansen you gotta talk about shit.”

“ugh.”

“look at that you didn’t even capitalize it.”

“Yeah. Okay. So just remember when I’m saying this I’m not mad at you and this isn’t your fault.”

“Ok.”

“You didn’t respond yesterday and Zoe said you just told her to go away when she tried to check on you, so I was worried?? I don’t know what I thought was going on but I thought something was going on and that you had decided you hated me or everyone or something. And that you weren’t going to talk to me again and then I’d only have one friend and he’d stop trying so hard without you around and I’d be back to square one and die alone.”

There’s a pause, where Connor must be reading the message, before he responds. “Evan holy shit.”

“I know I’m sorry I’m terrible.”

“Youre not terrible.”

“But I am.”
“no. you've got anxiety and I didn't do the one thing we established. which was telling you when I just can't talk to anyone so you know it's not bc of you.”

“Still.”

“no.”

“Okay. I'm sorry.”

“Evan.”

“Okay, I'm not sorry because it's fine. Better?”

“yeah. im sorry I was a bad friend.”

“You're not a bad friend.”

“debatable. But thanks.”

“Nope. You don't get to argue with me about being terrible and then do the same thing. You're a good friend.”

“eh”

“CONNOR”

“Fine. I'm not a bad friend.”

“Good.”

Today's going to be a good day and here's why: because your best friend is willing to accept your flaws, and it's okay, and you're still friends, and one little thing doesn't mean it's ruined. You need to stop being so quick to jump to conclusions. You are friends. That isn't going to change so suddenly, without warning. It's okay.

Evan knows he has to return to school in only two days, but that doesn't stop him from allowing his sleep schedule to continue to be offset. He groans, rolling over in bed, and glancing at his clock. It's just past midnight, yet he's totally and completely awake.

Evan returns to school on the third of January feeling like he's dying. He couldn't sleep at all. Leaning against his locker, the cold a relief too the warm sickness he feels, he lets out a sigh. When he decided not to stay up all day on New Years to reset his sleep schedule, it may have been his greatest mistake.

“You okay there? Are you dying?” Jared's voice is too loud, Evan has too much of a headache, and he's not in the mood for being teased. So he reaches out in Jared's general direction to smack him, without looking up. He doesn't manage it, and Jared laughs at him, but it was worth the attempt.

“Seriously what's wrong with you?”

“Sleep is for the weak, and I am the weakest person here.” Evan sighs. “Save me, I haven't slept.”
“Wow, that’s too bad.”
“You’re not- you’re no help.”
“I’m doing my best.”
“You- you’re not doing anything.”
“That’s my best.”
“Shut the fuck up.”

“Shit, Evan, I didn’t know you had it in you.” Jared laughs, and Evan suddenly realizes he hasn’t sworn in front of Jared in a long time. If ever. He can’t think of a time he has, but he figures he must have at some point. To be fair, he can’t think of much of anything, with a pounding head.

“Hey guys- why is Evan dying?” Zoe’s voice startles Evan, but he still doesn’t look up.

“He hasn’t slept, apparently.”

“Hey, same.”

“But you seem fine.” At that Evan looks up and, sure enough, Zoe seems fine.

“I feel like I’m dying, but I’m a good actress it turns out.”

“Congrats,” Evan offers, gaining a laugh in return.

“Thanks.”

“Where-” Evan stops himself, and wonders if it’s rude to ask where Connor is. It’s not as if he dislikes Zoe’s presence, or that he only wants to talk to Connor. He’s just curious. Still, he doesn’t know if it would seem like he didn’t want to talk to her. That would be rude. He’s too busy worrying his lip while thinking about this, and jumps when Zoe speaks again. She seems to have easily figured out what he was going to say.

“Sitting in my car, asleep.” She sighs, frowning. “Connor’s only as bad as either of us, except there’s a real chance he’ll just skip school because of it.”

“Lucky him.” Evan sighs. “I don’t- I can’t- I don’t think I can bring myself to skip.”

“Yeah, me too.”

“Am I the only one not suffering?” Jared’s reentry to the conversation reminds Evan he’s there. Evan feels a little bad for having forgotten, but blames his lack of sleep.

“Apparently.”

“Oh!” Alana’s voice has Evan suppressing a groan. His head can’t take so many voices. His anxiety can’t take so many people. All in all, he’s not having a great morning. “Good morning everyone, how are all of you?”

“Dying,” Evan mutters.

“Also dying.” Zoe smiles, though Evan can see just a bit of her exhaustion seeping into her expression.
“I feel great. Don’t wanna be at school, but hey, at least I’m not them.” Jared motions to Zoe and Evan, grinning.

“Oh I see.” Alana nods, frowning. “I’m sorry you’re not feeling well. I hope you aren’t getting sick. Don’t wait until you’re too bad off to go to the nurse if you need to. I did, and that was a big mistake. You can’t push yourselves too much, okay?”

“Yeah, thanks.” Evan nods.

“We’re all just tired,” Zoe adds, smile faltering just slightly. Evan wonders if she also caught on to implied mention of Alana passing out before vacation.

“Are we ignoring that I’m perfectly fine? Nobody here happy for me?” Jared huffs.

“Sorry, Jared. Congrats on not dying,” Evan offers. Jared does not seem pleased with the response, but the bell rings before anything else can be said. Evan groans, yet again, at the bell’s volume.

It’s going to be a long day.

Evan is not the kind of person to skip school. He has never been the type of person to skip school. It’s just not something he wants to do. He’d said as much just this morning.

That doesn’t stop him from making his way out to the school parking lot during lunch. He doesn’t feel well enough to eat, so he hunts down a car holding an occupant. Connor, it seems, really had stayed in the- Zoe’s- car, and slept. Evan slams his hand against the window, next to Connors head, and watches Connor jump back. Connor blinks, looks around, and then finally looks up at Evan.

“What the fuck?” It’s muffled, but Evan can still hear it.

“I’m dying.” Evan’s reply must not be heard, because Connor tilts his head and his eyebrows scrunch together. “Open the window!”

Connor does roll down the window, as requested. “What?” Connor asks, crossing his arm over the window frame.

“I’m dying.”

“Why?”

“I haven’t- I didn’t fucking sleep is why.”

“Wow.”

“Do you- you don’t- uh- have keys to this car do you?”

“Yeah. I have the spare key.”

“Cool. Want to- do you- I don’t ever do this but would you- can we skip school?”

“I already am.”

“Right now, together.”

“Sure.” Connor laughs. “Never expected this from you though.”
“Neither- I didn’t either so I’m kinda freaking out.”

“Yet, here you are.”

“My health is worse than my fear.”

“That bad, huh?”

“How do people not sleep? How do they do that? What’s wrong with them?”

“I’ll take that as a yes.”

“Yeah.”

Evan generally doesn’t want to worry his mom, or get in trouble. Which is why, when he gets home, he’s immediately filled with guilt and dread. Heidi looks him over, checking for signs something wrong with him, and sighs. “I got a call from school.”

“Oh.”

“You missed half of your classes.”

“Yeah…”

“Evan, what’s going on?” She’s worried, and upset. Evan wills himself not to break down over this. He’d done enough crying for a few months.

“I- skipped school with Connor so we could sleep at the orchard like a couple of weirdos. Evan can’t say that, he knows, even if he’s thinking it. So he avoids her eyes. “I was really exhausted, so I- at lunch- sat down where I- I thought I wouldn’t be bothered. Then I- I didn’t wake up until after school.”

Heidi eyes him, disbelieving. Probably because it’s not true, Evan thinks. Still, she sighs, nodding. “If you’re that exhausted, please just go to the nurse. You worried me.”

“I’m sorry.” He really is.

**Today was a good day and here’s why: because at least you didn’t get in any trouble. One act like this isn’t going to ruin my entire life, and I can accept that. I need to accept that sometimes small things aren’t as big a deal as I expect them to be.**

*I’m never doing it again* though, mom was way too worried and I felt terrible.

Chapter End Notes

I'm exhausted and I don't FUCKING KNOW WHY

fun fact: I once left school on the last day before winter vacation and never came back. (well, i went back once to return my laptop and math book, and stuff, but i never went
back to attend classes or anything.) I transferred into online school because of my poor health.

also fun fact: I didn't swear until i was like 16 bc i didn't want to get in trouble. I barely ever swore outloud until i was 18 and my parents were like "you're allowed to swear please stop cutting of your sentences" anyway, point is, i still don't swear unless im sure the people around me wont mind. which is why I make such a big deal of the times when ev swears in this story. that and the fact he doesn't ever (as far as im aware) in canon.

also, yes, the people get hungry when their high thing is real it's not just a stereotype im serious. but maybe connor is just like me and eats a ton anyway. or both. probably both. I wonder what kind of sandwiches they were.

unrelated but everyone is nice comments have made my days and i'm !!!! thank you guys love you all
The Survey Intermission

Chapter Summary

Alana stares, blinks once, twice, then nods and takes it from him. “You filled one out?”

“Is that bad?”

“No! No it’s great, I’m just surprised.” She laughs, but Evan recognizes the fake quality of it. It’s the same one he gives when he says something self-deprecating, but doesn’t want people to take it too seriously. “Thanks, Evan.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Before winter vacation, Evan told Alana that if she needed anything, he would help. In all honestly, he expected her to forget this, or at the very least to never ask. Clearly, he realizes, he was wrong. Alana approaches him one Wednesday morning, with arms full of papers. Evan finds himself with half of the stack- they’re a survey for the schools students- that he barely catches an explanation for.

“Can you help me pass these out? Just get people to take them from you.” Alana shoots him a smile, and Evan always was bad at telling people no.

He’s even worse at trying to communicate with other people. Evan stumbles over greetings, paper held out to the nearest student, and is passed by. Mostly he’s just ignored, as if he’s not there, but a few students look at him as they walk away. That’s almost worse. Still, he’s more scared of going back to Alana with all of the papers, so he stands there his entire lunch break.

Alana passes him when the bell rings, and offers a sympathetic smile, before sighing. She doesn’t seem to have had any more luck than him.

Evan finishes his work in English only halfway through the period, leaving him to do whatever he wants. What he ends up doing, instead, is picking up one of the papers from the stack of surveys he’s set on his desk. If he’s going to pass them out, he might as well take one himself, he figures.

It’s about the student council and their actions. Or, rather, their lack thereof. Evan frowns, fidgeting with his pencil. With a sigh, he fills it out.

Evan honestly hasn’t payed much attention to the student council. The only person remotely involved with it he knew the name of was Alana herself, and even then he didn’t know what she actually did. Though she talked about it a lot, he tended to be unable to keep up with her. Apparently she hands out surveys, but there was a good chance that was completely unrelated. She was involved in a lot of things at the school, anyway.

Once he fills it out he folds it up, and sticks it into his bag. Alana must be working pretty hard; he doesn’t doubt she made the survey herself. He highly doubts the student council as a whole cares nearly this much about peoples opinion on them. Especially since most of them are graduating this year. Likely they all just want something to put on college applications.
With new found determination, Evan stands as soon at the bell rings, picking up his stack of surveys. “Hey- uh- excuse me!” Evan reaches out to the nearest person in his class, who looks up, confused. “Can- um- please take this survey.”

“Okay?”

One down. Evan sighs once they’re out of sight. That wasn’t so bad, he thinks. They probably didn’t even realize how sweaty his hands were.

The look Connor gives him almost has Evan retreating. Still, he wants to help, and Connor avoids Alana ever since the tutoring discussion, so she won’t be able to give him one on her own. “Please take this survey.”

“What?”

“Please- please take this survey.”

“I heard you. I just mean… what are you doing?”

“Helping Alana. Please? I need to get rid of all of these.”

“Throw them away.”

“By giving them- giving them to people!”

“They’ll just end up there anyway.” Connor shrugs, taking the paper from him. Evan glares, though it holds little weight, and sighs.

“Can- can we just be positive for a second, and believe that people will actually take them?”

“Why are you so invested in this?”

Evan pauses, blinks, and thinks about it. Why is he? “Alana is working really hard. I just- I don’t want to hear she passed out again because she was over- over doing it and I was- and I could have helped. You know?”

“Here, give me some of them.”

“What? Why?!” Evan clutches the papers closer to his chest. Connor raises an eyebrow at him.

“What do you think I’m gonna do with them? I’m going to help, weirdo, hand them over.”

“Oh.” Evan hesitates, before splitting the papers up, and giving Connor half of the stack. “Thank you.”

“Yeah, sure.” Connor shrugs, avoiding Evan’s eyes, likely embarrassed. Evan bites his lip to hold back a laugh.

The school is mostly empty, aside from people staying for clubs or detention, so Evan can’t do anything with the papers that remain by the time four ’o clock arrives. Evan sighs, glancing down at the- slightly smaller- stack.
“I don’t think we’re gonna pass anymore of these out today.” Connor sighs.

“I’ll try again tomorrow.” Evan nods to himself. “Here I’ll take what you- you have left back.”

“No.”

“What?”

“I’ll help tomorrow too.”

“Really?”

“Yes.” Connor shrugs. Evan doesn’t quite know what to say to that. “You’re still not- uh- don’t take this the wrong way? You’re still not great with people you don’t know. I don’t wanna hear you got overwhelmed with this, okay?” The ‘okay’ comes out a little harsh, like Connor is trying not to sound like he cares as much as what he’s saying makes it sound.

“Thank you. You’re a good friend.”

“You keep saying that.”

“It’s true.”

“Thanks…”

When Evan is down to only two Survey’s left in his stack he shoves one into Jared’s hand, and refuses to take it back. He plans to give the other to Zoe, but she apologetically tells him she already got one from Connor. Jared laughs at the disappointment that forms on Evan’s face, before taking the last one from him, and walking up to the nearest student. Evan doesn’t hear what Jared says, but he gets them to take it much more easily than Evan thinks he could have.

It says on the papers themselves to turn them into the student council room during lunch, or after school. However, Evan is far too nervous to go anywhere near the room, so he goes directly to Alana. “Hey I- I know I’m supposed to take this to the- uh- the student council room, but I hope this is okay. Oh- I guess I don’t know if- if it’s okay I filled it out in the first place. I hope this is okay?”

Alana stares, blinks once, twice, then nods and takes it from him. “You filled one out?”

“Is that bad?”

“No! No it’s great, I’m just surprised.” She laughs, but Evan recognizes the fake quality of it. It’s the same one he gives when he says something self-deprecating, but doesn’t want people to take it too seriously. “Thanks, Evan.”

“I- I’m sorry if- if this is rude but…”

“Yes?”

“I’m sorry people aren’t more- more interested. They tend- everyone just ignores things they don’t- don’t want to put energy in- into and I- I know that probably makes things hard for you.”

“No, it’s… not that bad when it comes to this.” Alana shrugs.

“When it comes to this?”
“Yes, well, I guess I’d rather know they’re ignoring the survey than ignoring me as a person, you know?”

“Yeah.” Evan nods. He knows all too well. Despite being scared of people, being ignored by them still hurts. Evan can only imagine it must feel worse when you’re making a real effort to reach out. “Oh.”

“What?”

“Nothing! Nothing, just thinking- um- thinking aloud.” Evan waves off her question. “Anyway I should go!”

Alana must be really lonely, Evan thinks.

Today’s going to be a good day, and here’s why. Actually, I don’t know about today specifically, something good happened in general? I realized something. Sometimes it’s really hard to see things in other people. I’d like to believe I’m great at it- after I made friends with Connor the way I did- but sometimes they’re better at hiding it. Alana is good at hiding it, I think. She’s not the same, I know that, but I can still see something familiar there.

The point I’m getting to, is I’m going to try. I want to be her friend! Thing’s have been looking up in the friend department, and I’ve managed this much, so I’m going to try!

We can both be less lonely, with more friends. I expect Jared and Zoe would be her friend too, if they just talked more. I mean, if they can both be my friends- is Zoe my friend? I’m going to say she is, it’s not like she’ll see this letter and get mad at me anyway. Anyway! If they can be my friend, they can handle anyone. Connor’s been avoiding her, but I think he’ll be fine too.

So yeah. Good day, I guess.

Evan nods to himself, looking the letter over. He thinks he managed more positivity than he has in a while. Part of him doesn’t fully believe everything he’s written, but he knows that’s technically not the point of the letters anyway. They’re supposed to be positive, not necessarily truthful.

“This is probably more how they’re all supposed to be.” Evan sighs to himself. “This is progress, then.”

“Evan? Are you okay?” His mom’s voice startles him, and he shuts his laptop.

“Y-yeah!” Evan sighs. “Note to self: don’t talk to yourself… wait.” Evan sighs.

Chapter End Notes

I couldn't fucking think of a title for this chapter. It's Alana's intermission (like the insanely cool one was jareds) but I just... couldn't think of anything that made a good title for her, so i just named it after the survey that it also centers around. Sorry Alana.

Fun fact: I have no clue who anyone on the student council at my schools were. I also...
don't know if they ever did anything???? what did you do, you mysterious people???
Actually wait, in middle school i think one of them was also in tech academy so I knew
them a little. eh, anyway.

hey look at that evan managed to be positive for once. It's been a while hasn't it?

secondary fun fact: part of me didn't really like alana for a while. but the more I thought
about her character and her actions compared to her line in the live version of good for
you, the more I was like "I get you" and started to like her more.
Chapter 21

Chapter Summary

Jared rolls his eyes. “Give me your phone.”

“What why?!”

“I’m going to install the messenger app I use, and you can add everyone to a group chat.”

“But—”

“Fine, I’ll do that for you too. Just calm the fuck down.” Jared holds out his hand, waiting for Evan’s phone. After a moments pause, Evan sighs and hands it over. “I’ll let you know when I’ve got everyone in a chat.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Evan has more time to think about how to make friends with Alana than he’s had with any of his other friends. Which, in theory, is a good thing. In theory. However, that just gives him time to overthink it, and that’s never good for him. Over-thinking things means it gives him time to figure out all of the worst possibilities.

So, he asks Jared for help. “I don’t think I can manage to hold a conversation with her by myself, so I thought I could try and get everyone together at once. Except, how do I figure out when everyone is free, and what everyone would not hate doing together? Help me.”

Jared pauses, raising an eyebrow at him. “Who?”

“Oh, Alana.”

“Ah. Okay, why don’t you just invite everyone to a group chat, and make plans together? It’s foolproof.”

“I don’t- how- I can’t make a group chat. And- and then I’d have to invite everyone to it!”

“Oh my god.” Jared rolls his eyes. “Give me your phone.”

“What why?!”

“I’m going to install the messenger app I use, and you can add everyone to a group chat.”

“But—”

“Fine, I’ll do that for you too. Just calm the fuck down.” Jared holds out his hand, waiting for Evan’s phone. After a moments pause, Evan sighs and hands it over. “I’ll let you know when I’ve got everyone in a chat.”

“Yeah… great…” Evan doesn’t like the idea of a group chat in concept alone. Multiple people, all
talking. Plus he says things easier via text form than he does out loud, so what if he says something stupid because of it? It’s a disaster waiting to happen.

It’s also the best way to do what he wants, even if he doesn’t want to admit that.

Jared apparently doesn’t let jokes go, because he named Evan’s account- when installing the app- **AcornMan**. Evan breathes a annoyed sigh when he sees this, but has to remind himself Jared could have done much worse. Especially since he’s the same person who names the group chat “**The Meme squad**” before adding everyone to it.

Evan puts his hand on his face, shaking his head, before he actually checks the chat. As it turns out Jared- **TheInsanelyCoolDude**- made him an admin, and Evan is genuinely surprised to realize this. Immediately he changes the chat’s name.

**AcornMan** has changed the chat name to **Sycayour shit Squad**.

**TheInsanelyCoolDude**: Rude.

**TheInsanelyCoolDude**: wait is that a FUCKING TREE PUN

**You**: Yes.

**WalkingOnStars**: We shouldn’t be surprised

**You**: Uh, question.

**TheInsanelyCoolDude**: Shoot.

**You**: Who’s who? I only know who Jared is because he made this and added me.

**SoftEmotionallyDepressed**: guess.

**WalkingOnStars**: Don’t be fucking rude. That’s connor.

**You**: Oh, yeah, I figured. It’s the aesthetic I mentioned.

**SoftEmotionallyDepressed**: it stuck with me.

**SoftEmotionallyDepressed**: also thats zoe

**You**: Hey, Zoe!

**WalkingOnStars**: Hey.

**PurplePresident**: I would just like to say I didn’t name myself.

**PurplePresident**: -Jared- >.>

**PurplePresident**: But, I’m Alana. Hello, everyone.

**TheInsanelyCoolDude**: hey its not my falt u and ev didnt have accounts already

**You**: Fault* Accounts*
TheInsanelyCoolDude: don't do this to me

You: That's what you get for naming me ACORNMAN
You: Why.

TheInsanelyCoolDude: would u have preferred acornboy

Evan huffs, sitting against his headboard, and rolls his eyes.

You: That's besides the point!
You: Why does everyone have such long names.

WalkingOnStars: you can change them for you?

PurplePresident: Yes, if you tap on our names, you can set them to something easier to look at, for you. We wont see the change, though. ^_^

You: Oh! Thanks guys, hold on.

You have set WalkingOnStars's name to Zoe. This change is only visible to you. To change it back click here.
You have set PurplePresident's name to Alana. This change is only visible to you. To change it back click here.
You have set SoftEmotionallyDepressed's name to ConArtist. This change is only visible to you. To change it back click here.
You have set TheInsanelyCoolDude's name to Jerk. This change is only visible to you. To change it back click here.

You: Done! Much better. :)

Jerk: whatd u change them 2

You: Oh, just your names.
You: Well, Connor is ConArtist.

ConArtist: why

You: Felt like it.

Alana: Not that I don’t want to be here, but why are we?

Jerk: Evan. tell them

You: Don’t do this to me.

Jerk: he wants us all 2 hang out
Jerk: the nerd
Jerk: this way we can organize w/o stressin him out
**ConArtist**: makes sense, i guess

**Zoe**: Its actually a good idea.

**Jerk**: it was mine.

**Zoe**: I take that back.

**Jerk**: D:

**Alana**: All of us?

**You**: Yes.

**Alana**: I’m sorry, I just feel a bit out of place, aren’t you all already friends?

**You**: So?

**You**: I want to be your friend too.

Evan grabs a pillow and muffles a scream into it. That’s awkward. He shouldn’t have said it so bluntly. He should have said something else. He should have- another message from Alana cuts his thoughts short.

**Alana**: Oh.

**Alana**: Okay, then. Thank you.

“That worked?” Evan breathes a relieved sigh.

**Jerk**: okay so lets talk time

**Jerk**: when r u free guys

**Zoe**: After school everyday except Tuesday and Thursday. And weekends.

**ConArtist**: im a very busy man

**ConArtist**: but everyday

**Alana**: Sorry, I only really have free time on the weekends.

**Jerk**: and ev has no life

**Jerk**: so how about this weekend

**You**: I want to be mad, but you’re not wrong.

**ConArtist**: hey, hansen has a very exciting life full of taking tree photos

**You**: Thanks Connor.
It takes a full two hours to actually figure out plans. When they do, it turns into a simple mall trip. Plans to get food, and then just hang out. Like friends do. By the time they managed to organize these plans, and how everyone is getting there- Connor is picking Evan up, Zoe is picking Alana up, Jared is driving himself- Evan feels like he’s had enough group chats for the month. Or the next six months.

They’re stressful.

When the weekend rolls around, Evan mentally prepares himself for group conversations, and a public setting, before rolling out of bed. Glancing at his laptop, he comes to the conclusion that this would be a good letter opportunity. He still has a few hours before he leaves, anyway.

Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why. Friends! You’re going to hang out with your friends and you won’t embarrass yourself and they’ll all stay- or become- your friend and it’ll be fine. You’ll be fine. Jared and Connor both already know you’re a giant weird nerd. Zoe and Alana probably won’t mind you either.

You can do this!

Evan frowns at the words. He doesn’t believe them. With a sigh, Evan gets up to get ready for the day. He doesn’t need to believe it. “Just be positive. You can do this.”

btw I debated putting Evans username instead of ”you” but figured we're reading what evan is seeing, so he's seeing that instead of his name.

fun fact: Every group chat i've ever been a part of has been muted pretty quickly, and I ended up leaving them bc i always feel like im over contributing or not at all. and you know, anxiety. the only ones i remained a part of were for cards against humanity (one of which i created. CAH saturdays how i miss thee)

Funner fact: ev called him ConArtist because his name is connor and he drew terrible replicas of the tree photos ev sent him during winter vacation.

even funner fact: i for some reason heavily associate alana with purples and maroon. dont know why.
Chapter 22

Chapter Summary

“How late did you expect me to be? We left at the same fucking time.” A passing mother covers he child’s ears and Evan hides his face in his hands.

“Connor there are children around.”

“Oh shit right.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It takes until Evan is sitting in Connor’s car to realize that Connor has gotten his car back. When he brings it up Connor shrugs, saying he was going to get it back Monday, anyway, and that his parents were petty easily convinced.

“Between saying I just wanted to help you out, by giving you a ride, and Zoe taking my side, they couldn’t say no.”

“Zoe backed you up.” It’s not a question. Connor glances at Evan in his peripheral vision for a split second before turning back to the road.

“Yeah.”

“That’s good.”

“Yeah.” Connor smiles. “I’ve been… trying really hard. So I’m glad.”

“I’m happy for you.” Evan means it. For a while he was jealous at all of Connor’s progress, but since their conversation about it, Evan has felt a lot better. He’s more easily able to feel fully, honestly, happy for Connor.

“I- uh- actually started doing something… dumb.”

“Dumb?” Evan turns his head to face Connor, trying to read his expression from just one side of his face. Connor bites his lips, shrugging. “Connor.”

“I started… keeping a journal.”

“That’s not dumb.”

“I- yeah, right. You’re right. I shouldn’t have said that.”

“It’s okay, Connor. You don’t have to be… embarassed?”

“I’m not-” Connor stops himself with a sigh. “Right, right.”

“Is it okay to ask what you write about?”
“Everything that pisses me off, mostly.” Another shrug. Evan nods, before remembering Connor isn’t look at him.

“Oh, why’s that?”

“Trying not to snap at people was just making me angrier and I couldn’t do anything with that anger. So I just- I don’t know. I wanted somewhere to complain about how fucking terrible everything is.”

“I get it. I’m glad you’ve found something that helps.”

“Thanks.” Connor shrugs yet again, and Evan smiles. “By the way how… are your letters?”

“I think… I’m getting better at writing them. I’m supposed to be positive in them, even if I don’t believe what I’m saying. So I- I’ve been trying not to be negative in them. Which is really hard. I didn’t- I hadn’t realized how negative I was until I had to try not to be.”

“Makes sense.”

“Does it?”

“Yeah. Shit like that always happens. You don’t realize how much you do something until someone tells you not to. Like me trying not to swear around my cousins. Did you know I swear all the fucking time?”

“I noticed, yeah.” Evan laughs. He can see a smile form on Connors face, too.

“We’re almost here.”

“Oh!” Evan glances out of the window, only just realizing where they are. The mall looms, filling Evan with dread. There are a lot of people in the mall, especially on the weekend. “Oh god.”

“You okay?”

“There are so many people.”

“You’ll be fine. If you really need to, we can leave whenever.”

“But- I can’t make you leave, too, just-”

“Evan. If you need to leave, we can leave whenever.” Connor sighs, leaning forward in his seat to search for a parking spot. “It’s not that big of a deal. I’m not going to mourn the loss of social interaction either.”

“Okay. Okay, thank you.”

“No problem.”

Zoe and Alana are already there by the time Evan and Connor make it to the food court. Apparently they’ve been there long enough to have already acquired milkshakes. Normally Evan would think this means he’s late, and be filled with stress over it, but Jared hasn’t arrived yet which means he can’t be too late. At the very least, they can be more mad at Jared for being late. Evan curses himself mentally for thinking that.

Connor flops into a seat at the round table they’re sitting at, crossing his arms. “Yo.”
"You’re not cool.” Is Zoe’s greeting in return. “Hey, Evan.”

“Hi.” Evan sits between Alana and Connor. Alana offers a smile in greeting and Evan returns it.

“Four down, one to go.” Alana takes a sip of her drink. “I suggested we get something for both of you, but Zoe didn’t know what either of you liked.”

“Or that you would be here before they got warm.”

“How late did you expect me to be? We left at the same fucking time.” A passing mother covers his child’s ears and Evan hides his face in his hands.

“Connor there are children around.”

“Oh shit right.”

“Wow, that’s so much better.” Zoe’s sarcasm is added to by the rolling of her eyes.

“Guess who’s here!” Jared’s voice reaches Evan before he sees Jared. Likely because he arrives from the direction Evan is facing away from.

“By process of elimination, Jared.” Alana glances at Jared as he sits between Zoe and Connor, completing the circle around the table.

“You should recognize me without process of elimination.”

“Should I?”

“Harsh,” Zoe says, laughing.

“You hurt me.” Jared puts a hand to his chest, shaking his head.

“Anyway,” Zoe starts, drawing everyones attention to her. “What should we do today? Besides eat, that’s obvious.”

“Explore, cause trouble, be rebels.” Connor shrugs.

“I can’t be a rebel Connor.” Evan huffs.

“Why not?”

“He’s got anxiety.”

“Thanks Jared.” Evan crosses his arms. “But I was going to say because I have an image to maintain.”

“The image of a giant nerd?” Connor glances at Evan, eyebrow raised.

“I can’t- I can’t believe the both of you.”

“It’s okay, Evan, I don’t want to be a rebel either. I also have an image to maintain, with school and all.” Alana offers a smile and Evan returns it.

“At least somebodies on my side.”

“Nerds,” Jared says, shaking his head at them.
“Leave them be. It’s cute.” Zoe laughs at the affronted expression that forms on Alana’s face.

“Cute? No, it’s mature.”

“Sure, sure.”

“You don’t have anything to say to that?” Connor turns away from them, back to Evan again. Evan shrugs.

“I’m okay with cute.”

“Anyway!” Jared holds up his hands, gaining everyones attention. “How about we see a movie, or something?”

“Works for me.” Zoe shrugs.

“Oh! There’s a horror movie that just came out,” Alana suggests, grinning. Evan tenses at the thought, for multiple reasons.

“I guess we’re all in, then.” Connor glances around the group, to confirm this.

“But I-” Evan clears his throat, reminding himself not to mumble- “I don’t have…”

Evan isn’t sure he brought enough money with him for both food and a movie. He’d expected them to just hang around the mall- a foolish thought, in retrospect- and hadn’t wanted to ask his mom for more money, anyway.

“Did you not ask Heidi?” Jared asks, as if reading Evan’s thoughts. Or perhaps he’s just known Evan long enough to know what he’s going to say.

“I didn’t want to bother her.”

“I’m sorry, are we missing something? What’s wrong?” Alana glances between Evan and Jared, eyebrow raised.

“He probably didn’t bring enough money,” Jared shrugs. Evan frowns, embarrassment settling over him. He really didn’t want to admit that. It’s not like he was ever particularly bothered by being poor, in most cases. Though it caused it’s fair sure of problems, it wasn’t embarrassing per-say. Mostly he just didn’t like talking about it, or admitting he didn’t have, or couldn’t afford, what everyone else did.

“Is that a problem?” Zoe’s voice is startlingly unconcerned. “We can cover you, don’t worry about it.”

“But I-”

“Better yet, Connor can.”

“Why me?”

“At least this way you’re not spending it on drugs.”

“Fuck you.” Connor huffs. “But… yeah don’t worry about it, Evan.”

“Are you sure-”
“Yes.”

“Well, now that that’s settled.” Jared claps his hands together. “How about food.”

“I’m always on-board for food,” Alana says, softly, nodding.

“Horror movies are awful. Everything is awful. Except popcorn. That’s okay,” are the first words out of Evan’s mouth upon leaving the movie. Jared presses himself into a wall, hand on his heart.

“Same.”

“Are you two okay?” Alana asks, genuine concern in her voice.

“They’re probably fine.” Zoe laughs when Jared flips her off. “Jared, there are kids around.”

“Who cares.”

“Evan, you alive there?” Connor puts a hand on his shoulder, which has Evan jumping.

“Great! Fine! Perfect!” Evan takes a deep breath, before sighing. “Can I leave?”

“It is getting late.” Alana glances at her watch- she’s the only one wearing one- and nods to herself. “We probably all should be heading home.”

“Alright.” Zoe nods. “You going to make it to your car okay, dude?”

“I’m fine.” Jared huffs. “I’ll be fine.”

“If you say so.”

“See you all at school!” Alana waves as she and Zoe turn to leave.

“Yeah!” Evan calls back, turning to Connor. “You ready to go?”

“Yep.”

“Jared, you sure you’re okay?”

“I’m fine!” Jared huffs another annoyed breath, before turning to leave. “What do you take me for?!”

“Be safe!”

“Yeah, of course!”

The ride home passes in relative silence, and Evan nearly forgets why he dislikes horror movies so much. Then he’s got to make the walk from Connors car to his door, and his heart starts racing.

“Evan?”

“Nothing!”

“What?”

“I mean- I’m fine. Totally.” Evan swallows, nervousness likely clear in his entire being. Slowly he opens the car door, and bolts towards his door. “Bye Connor!”
Evan struggles to unlock his door. He’d totally be dead if this was horror movie, he thinks. He’s going to die. “Are you okay?” Connor’s voice is too close, Evan hadn’t noticed him get that close. With a startled yell, Evan presses himself against the door.

“Don’t do that!”

“Sorry!” Connor holds up his hands. Evan can tell he’s biting his lip to hold back laughter, and frowns. “Are you going to be okay?”

“I’ll be fine once I’m safe inside my house. By myself. In my room. Next to the window- oh god.”

“Evan?”

“I’m going to die.”

“Do you- do you want me to stay?”

“No!”

“Are you sure?”

Evan hesitates. His mom won’t be home until morning, and he’s already freaking out. What will he do in a house by himself? With a sigh, he shakes his head. “Is that okay?”

“Yeah.”

“Thanks.”

It’s luckily a Saturday, because neither of them get much sleep. Evan is a little too freaked out, and Connor spends most of the night laying on the floor, talking to him. As he thinks it would be rude to write a letter while Connor is there, he doesn’t write one, but he thinks the one he wrote that morning is enough to suffice.

“Today was a good day. You know, except for my inability to watch horror movies.”

“Honestly you seemed less freaked out than Jared.”

“Oh, yeah, there’s a reason I’ve managed to avoid them. If he wasn’t scared of them, he’d definitely make me watch them all the time.”

“Well, good for you then?”

“Yeah- oh no.”

“What?”

“I just realized,” Evan starts, sighing, “the whole point of today was to talk to Alana more, but I hardly did that.”

“Small steps?”

“I… yeah I guess.” Small steps. Evan breaths another sigh. “Anyway, we should probably sleep.”

“Probably.”
They don’t sleep for another two hours.

Chapter End Notes

As a really fucking poor person: asking people for stuff is the worst and I feel guilty for like a year after the fact.

anyway fun fact: horror movies don’t do anything for me. mostly they just make me frustrated bc the characters are awful people and/or make really senseless choices. but they aren’t really scary???? i’ve been more scared by my friend dropping her pen than horror movies. I do tend to be a little paranoid about certain things following them, though.

additional fun facts: i never sleep for more than like two hours at friends houses, only half because i have a lot to say and half because i can't sleep in unfamiliar places.

anyway this chapter is hopefully a bit lighter. i feel like i’ve been packing in EMOTIONS pretty heavily lately
Chapter 23

Chapter Summary

ConArtist: this is very distressing news

Zoe: Hes crying.

ConArtist: that’s a lie we aren’t even in the same room shut up

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Morning light doesn’t reach into the room until past nine in the morning, but when it does, it wakes Evan. The floor is not a comfortable place to fall asleep, even in his carpeted room, and especially not when he didn’t even bother to grab a pillow. Groaning, Evan sits up and rolls his neck to try and relieve the stiffness of it. After blinking, trying to remove the blurriness of his half-awake mind, Evan glances over to where Connor is also asleep on his floor.

They must have fallen asleep past midnight, at least, but he can’t remember a specific time. Still, he doesn’t feel so poorly rested that he can’t go about his day, so it must not have been that late. For a second he considers waking Connor up, but decides to leave him be. No need to take away from his rest.

Heidi is in the kitchen, hands around a mug of what Evan can only assume is tea, likely about to get ready for her day. She looks up from her drink, and smiles. “Good morning.”

“Morning, mom.”

“You know, at least a little warning would be nice.”

“What do you mean?”

“Being told we had a guest before I found him in our kitchen at six in the morning, is what I mean.”

“What?” Evan glances around, as if somehow he’ll get answers from the kitchen itself. “I- I mean I’m sorry I didn’t warn you but- when- he was up?”

“Yes.”

“Oh.” Evan has to wonder why if Connor woke up on the floor, left the room and then returned, he laid back down on the floor. He would have figured, since it’s empty anyway, he’d take the chance to take the- much more comfortable bed- instead.

When Connor wakes he denies the offer of breakfast- from Heidi- instead gathering himself to go home. Evan can see the exhaustion on his face, so he doesn’t bother with attempts at conversation, or questions, and waves him off with a small “thank you.”
Monday morning has Alana joining the circle of people—friends—that gather around Evan’s locker. Though she only shows up one other day that week—being busy with too many things in the morning before school—Evan can’t help but think of how different his mornings have become. At the beginning of the school year, he hadn’t even had his only friend at the time to talk to in the mornings. Now he finds himself overwhelmed by the change.

Evan would like to believe he’s gotten better at handling people, if only a bit. That doesn’t make group chat’s any less stressful. Nor does it mean he’s any better at keeping up with them. Evan glances at his phone, which has been alerting him to messages for the past hour. He’s trying to do homework, and it isn’t helping him complete that task. With a sigh, he decides to just mute it, and glances at the chat.

**Jerk:** so rly i was a good kid & ev was the bad 1

**ConArtist:** nobody asked

**Alana:** It’s hard to picture :|

**Alana:** Oh, guys, I have to go.

**Alana:** Student council, you know how it is.

**Zoe:** Bye, alana

**ConArtist:** bye

**Jerk:** see ya

**You:** Have a good day.

**Alana:** Bye guys! ^_^

**ConArtist:** wait when did evan get here

**You:** I’ve been trying to do homework, but you guys are distracting.

**You:** Or, the alerts are, I mean.

**Jerk:** did u miss my story

**You:** Yes?

**You:** Should I scroll up and read it?

**Jerk:** no

**You:** Suspicious.

**Zoe:** Apparently you were a rebel who stole cookies. What a twist.

**You:** Oh

**You:** Jared why?
Jerk: its just the truth

You: That doesn’t mean I want people to know.
You: I have a reputation.
You: That’s a lie nobody has any expectations of me.

ConArtist: i expected you to be a good kid
ConArtist: this is very distressing news

Zoe: Hes crying.

ConArtist: that’s a lie we aren’t even in the same room shut up

You: Sorry to break it to you.
You: Actually Jared was the one who did that so I’m not.
You: He should apologize.

Jerk: nope

You: Worth a shot.
You: But I really do have to do homework so,
You: Bye.

Jerk: what? dont think we could help

You: No.

Zoe: Offended. I have great grades.

You: You’re in the year bellow us.

Zoe: Thats fair.

ConArtist: yeah its probably for the best not to ask us for help
ConArtist: well maybe alana but shes not here

You: Exactly!
You: Anyway! Bye, guys!

Evan mutes the chat and returns to his work. As it turns out, the chat isn’t the only reasons he wasn’t getting work done, because he continues to be unable to focus. Evan breathes out an annoyed sigh, resting his chin in his head.

You: Okay never mind I can’t focus someone help me

Zoe: rip

You: Thanks.
ConArtist: just do what i do and don’t do it.

You: No.
You: College will be hard enough to get into without letting my grades go
You: Can’t chance it.

Jerk: i havent done my hw either

You: Okay????

Jerk: come over here nerd
Jerk: we can do our hw and my mom will stop harassing me a/b if were friends

You: I know you hate apostrophes but were and we’re are two very different words

Jerk: nvm stay there and suffer alone

You: I’m sorry!

Jerk: hm

You: Besides, think about your car insurance.

Jerk: fine come on.

Zoe: Ah yes, friendships should always revolve around car insurance
Zoe: You two are weird

Jerk: hey
Jerk: our friendship is based around more than that
Jerk: we also stole cookies 2gether

You: The only real basis for friendship
You: Also I’m on my way

ConArtist: damn then we need to steal cookies
ConArtist: so we can be real friends

You: I am not a thief.

Zoe: Thats probably for the best

The Kleinman household is a fairly familiar place to Evan, but that doesn’t make him any less uncomfortable in it. When he knocks on the door, to be greeted by Mrs. Klienman, he’s told- for the millionth time- that he doesn’t have to knock. Nervously, he nods, and heads up to Jared room. He’s going to knock on the door no matter how many times he’s told he’s always welcome, but he appreciates the sentiment.

Jared himself is laying on the floor, headphones in, and on his phone. Likely still in the chat.

“I’ve arrived,” Evan announces, dropping onto the floor next to Jared and setting his things down.
“Yo.”

“I really do need to do homework.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Jared rolls his eyes, sitting up. “I do too. Let’s get this over with.”

When Evan returns home, he stares at his laptop and sighs. He has no idea what he would even write about such an uneventful day.

Chapter End Notes

Progress report: local boy has friends.

listen im just really fucking exhausted guys. but! I do know what's going to happen next chapter. it was just that this one I wasn't sure about and honestly was too tired to think of much else than just ~friendship~

i also never actually planned on using the group chat again but it make having conversations with more than two people WAY easier to write. since I don't constantly have to worry about who's speaking being clear.

Edit: for some reason AO3 keeps un-italizing the chat when it's 3 responses in a row, and i don't know why???? anyway, i fixed those.
Edit 2: I fixed a typo

fun fact: I try to make sure everyone types a specific way.
Jared- no capitalization, hardly uses things that aren't letters or numbers. uses tons of shorthand
Connor- doesn't capitalize, usually doesn't use apostrophes, mostly good grammar
Zoe- only capitalizes the beginning of sentences, doesn't use apostrophes usually, only occasionally uses shorthand
Alana- proper grammar and capitalization, lots of smilies/emoticons
Evan- mostly proper grammar, capitalization, and such. maybe overuses exclamation marks. or punctuation in general.
“Okay.” There’s a silent, comfortable pause before either of them speak again. “So, you’ve decided to go to therapy?”

“Yeah.”

“That’s… good?”

“Yeah,” Connor shrugs, “I guess.”

Of all the questions Evan expected from Connor “how do you choose a therapist,” was not one of them. This doesn’t change the fact it’s the one he asks. They’re seated in Connor’s room, noise drifting up from the kitchen, when Connor stops staring blankly at his school work- which Evan has convinced him to do, this time- and asks Evan this. Evan looks up, blinks, and cocks his head to the side.

“You’re going to therapy?”

“If I can convince my parents, yeah.” Connor sighs. “I figure the more prepared I am the easier they’ll be to convince.”

“Well, I guess start by looking for ones who deal with your personal- uh- for lack of a better word, issues. Then it’s- you sorta just- just have to talk to them and figure out if you can- if they’re right for you, I guess.”

“You don’t sound very sure.”

“I really didn’t- there wasn’t much shopping for therapists for me. Which- I guess- isn’t too bad, since Dr. Sherman is pretty nice, and I only see them monthly, anyway. It just means I don’t really know what to tell you, sorry.”

“No, thanks. That’s more than I knew before.”

“Well.” There’s a silent, comfortable pause before either of them speak again. “So, you’ve decided to go to therapy?”

“Yeah.”

“That’s… good?”

“Yeah,” Connor shrugs, “I guess. I just… I’ve been doing better, right? Except, sometimes I just- shit, I don’t know. I just feel way angrier than usual, and the best I can do is avoid people because I know I’m going to do something stupid. I don’t know if this will help, but maybe I can figure out better… coping mechanisms? With someone who knows more than us’ help.”
“Maybe.” Evan shifts in his seat. “Connor can I…”

“What?”

“Hug you?”

“Why?” Connor makes a startled noise, turning fully to face Evan.

“I don’t- there’s not really a reason. I just… feel like it?”

“Sure, okay, I guess.”

To say the whole thing is awkward would be what Evan considers an understatement, but still, he does it. Wraps his arms around Connor’s shoulders, and squeezes him. “Thanks.”

“Okay?”

“You’re doing- you’ve been doing a lot better, you know? I don’t want you to- like- pretend you’re fine, if you’re not, but it’s nice to see you doing better. I guess… if you’re angry I don’t want you to lie about it, but it’s nice to see you not be angry all the time.”

“Yeah. Well. I’m glad to not be angry all the fucking time, too.” Connor pauses, sighing. “I’m still angry a lot, but…”

“Yeah.”

“Okay, that’s enough. Let go of me.”

“Okay.” Evan laughs, releasing his hold. “Thank you.”

“Yeah, sure, I guess.”

Three days later, Thursday, Evan gets the rundown from Connor.

Connor waited until dinner on Wednesday, when everyone was already gathered together so they couldn’t claim to be busy. Then he waits for a lull in conversation, to address the idea of going to therapy. Cynthia is immediately on-board, happy Connor wants to get help. Zoe is silent, but he didn’t expect anything from her anyway. It’s Larry- because of course it is- who doesn’t seem to see the point.

From what Connor says, the conversation becomes an argument very quickly. Cynthia is on Connor’s side, but Larry doesn’t give in. He claims that Connor has been getting better all on his own, so there isn’t a need. Connor yells something vaguely about possibly relapsing- Connor doesn’t remember any exact words spoken up to this point- but is mostly dismissed.

It’s Zoe who’s words get Larry to give in.

“she said ‘you should let him get help’ and larry is an asshole and was like ‘hes doing fine on his own’”

“That’s horrible.”

“right? anyway then zoe said ‘im only just starting to feel safe at home again because you wouldnt let him before even though he was getting worse’”
“Oh wow.”

“that got him. well he gave up at least. Im pretty sure he still doesnt agree, but he said ok, so”

“I’m glad.”

“so am I”

Evan doesn’t have many guests, and usually has plenty of warning before they show up, so he’s genuinely startled by the knock on his door. It’s a Sunday afternoon, and he was watching TV, not really thinking about anything. After catching his breath, he breaths a sigh and goes to answer it. The sight he’s greeted with is Connor, standing in his doorway.

“Hey.”

“Hi?” Evan moves aside, motioning Connor inside, and closes the door behind them. “What’s up?”

“I just- I don’t know.” Connor sighs. “I had my first appointment with my therapist.”

“O-oh okay.”

“It was…” Connor drops onto Evan’s couch, and Evan follows suit. “Nice? We were really just establishing what I want out of therapy, you know? But, still, I guess I’m just relieved he didn’t take one look at me and go ‘yeah I got nothing to help you get out’ or something.”

“I don’t think anyone would have.”

“I never said that was a rational fear, Evan.” Connor rolls his eyes.

“So are you going to see them again?”

“Yeah, later this week.” Connor leans back, sighing. “For our first real session. It’s weird, ‘cause-like- I didn’t really know what I wanted from therapy until he asked me, and I had to really think about it.”

“But you- you figured it out?”

“Yeah. I don’t want him to compare anything I say to anything else. I don’t want to hear about other people at all. If I wanted someone to relate to ,or hear about, I’d go to you. I just want to tell someone what’s wrong, and be given solid facts, or advice, or whatever. I don’t want to know anything about him, I guess.”

“Make’s sense, I guess.” Evan nods, to emphasize his words. “So, I guess that’s what you established.”

“Yep.” Connor nods. “So Dr. Freedman will be my therapist assuming nothing dramatically changes.”

“Congrats? Sorry. I just, don’t really know what to say. Except I’m glad? For you?”

“Thanks.”
Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why. These get harder to write the more of them there are. Can’t I just leave it at “it will be” and be done with it? I guess, Connor’s getting help, and I’m happy for him. It might not be something good for me specifically, but that still makes it a good day anyway?

Evan feels like he sighs a lot when he writes the letters, but finds himself doing the same thing again anyway. With a sigh, he closes his laptop. He never thought they’d be hard to write because he didn’t have anything to say, rather than just feeling too negative to write them.

Chapter End Notes

I love zoe a lot just so you know.

also I couldn't resist naming the therapist that okay sorry.

yeah i don't have any ~fun facts~ today bc tbh i'm just really exhausted. It's not even like i've been sleeping less than normal (which to be fair normal for me isn't much, but still) i just am tired. Mentally, more so I guess.
The Shining Intermission

Chapter Summary

“Good because I was going to make you come with me anyway.”

“You can’t make me do anything.” Connor rolls his eyes.

“Yet you’re here.”

“That’s-” Connor cuts himself off with a glare. Zoe grins.

“That just means Connor wanted to be here, right?” Evan smiles, and Connor shifts his glare to him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Evan never really saw the point of school dances that weren’t homecoming or prom. Nor does he expect anyone he’s personally acquainted with to care about them either. Which makes his current situation even stranger than it already was.

January came to a close. Evan had just started putting the right year on assignments first try, and was beginning to get used to the presence of his four friends. Connor had been acting strange, but Evan hadn’t the chance to bring it up over the ongoing conversation of their friends, one Monday morning. Jared was complaining about all the posters pasted to the walls, which were abrasively pink and reminding students of the next school dance. Alana mentioned not being able to stop the rest of the student council from making everything so pink. Zoe just seemed genuinely excited for the dance.

“I didn’t take you for the type.” Alana turned to Zoe, expression conveying her surprise.

“I’m not. But, I thought we could all go, and complain together.” Zoe grinned and gave a small laugh under her breath. “Besides, you’re all seniors, and the only dance after this left this year for you will be senior prom. Which I can’t attend.”

“Oh, that’s right, I always forget you’re not in our grade.”

It wasn’t until later that day that Evan got a chance to talk to Connor, which revealed the reason for his behavior. Apparently Zoe had already mentioned everyone going together- which they all agreed to after her mentioning it- and had asked him to help her go dress shopping.

“Is that bad?”

“No just… I don’t understand?”

“It seems like- like she’s trying to reconnect with you.”

“Yeah, but this is a whole day ordeal we’re talking about here.” Connor sighed, running a hand
through his hair. “I’ve barely been managing hours alone with her, we’re still not… totally okay yet. I’m trying. Hell, she’s trying too, but we both still remember how things were only a few months ago, you know?”

Evan nodded, surprised by how well thought-out the response sounded, before speaking again. “You could try to- well, I don’t know- maybe try to get one more person to go with you. Like a buffer.”

Maybe he should have expected Connor’s recommended person would be Evan. He probably should have expected that. However, he didn’t think that was an option until Connor brought it up again, two days later.

And how could Evan say no when Connor seemed so set on the idea. When this was one more step for the Murphy siblings to be, well, siblings again.

Thus he ends up sitting in a dress shop next to Connor as Zoe is in the changing booth. In all honesty, Evan hadn’t expected her to buy that into the idea of dress shopping, but she seems to be having a pretty good time. Though she also spent most of the trip thus far joking about how much the situation would fit into a stereotypical girls movie.

Connor seems genuinely uncomfortable in the shop, likely because the workers keep looking at him strangely. Evan doesn’t know why, though he has a few guesses. He himself is uncomfortable, mostly because he took one look at a price tag and was forcibly reminded that the Murphy’s were much better off than he is.

“You okay there?” Evan whispers- he’s not really sure why he’s whispering, but feels the need to be quiet- to Connor.

“Yeah.” Though he says that, Connor’s grip on his crossed arms tightens.

“If you say so.”

Before a response can be given, Zoe comes out of the changing booth, frowning. “This looks weird, doesn’t it?”

The dresses purple is a soft shade, that Evan thinks is the same as the one she’d once dyed her hair. Not something he’s going to admit he remembers, but something that immediately pops into his head. Connor next to him shrugs. “It’s fine.”

“Gee, thanks.” Zoe rolls her eyes. “Fine, huh. So that’s a no.” She turns back around, shutting the booth behind her, and Connor breathes out a sigh.

“Connor?”

“This isn’t where I thought I’d be now.”

“Oh.” Evan is going to say it isn’t where he thought he’d be, either, when Connor speaks again.

“Then again, I thought I’d be dead, so I guess this is a good thing.”

“Y-yeah.” Evan nods, and mutters a small, “same.”

The whole thing goes on for another twenty minutes, before Zoe huffs out a sigh, and chooses one of the dresses that she’d expressed not being sure about.
“Good enough.”

“If you’re not happy about it you shouldn’t fucking buy it.” Connor crosses his arms.

“I don’t want to spend anymore time on it. Beside, it’s not that important.”

“Whatever you say.”

“Alright, losers,” Zoe turns around to face them, while the cashier stuffs the dress into a bag, “how about we get lunch?”

“I’m in.”

“Sure.”

“Good because I was going to make you come with me anyway.”

“You can’t make me do anything.” Connor rolls his eyes.

“Yet you’re here.”

“That’s-” Connor cuts himself off with a glare. Zoe grins.

“That just means Connor wanted to be here, right?” Evan smiles, and Connor shifts his glare to him.

“I did not.”

“Aw, that’s so nice.” Zoe puts a hand to her heart, faux touched expression on her face.

“Yeah, whatever, weren’t we going to eat?”

They stand in line in a fast-food restaurant, Evan wringing his hands as he stares at the menu. It’s not hard to tell them his order- he’s been staring at the cheapest thing he could for the entire minute they’ve been standing there- but he has this immense feeling that he’ll mess it up. Though it’s a pretty common feeling, that doesn’t make it any easier to deal with.

They’re next. Evan takes a deep breath, realizing he hadn’t even had the time between panicking over his order to think about how they were actually paying. Connor knocks elbows with him, gaining his attention. “What do you want?”

“Huh?” Evan blinks, confused.

“Tell me your order.”

“Oh, okay,” Evan mumbles, before reciting his order. Connor sighs, seemingly annoyed. Evan can’t pinpoint why he’s annoyed, but dread fills Evan’s stomach.

“Come on, let’s sit down.” Zoe’s voice draws him out of his thoughts, and back into confusion. “Connor’s gonna buy everything for us.”

Evan wants to argue, but Zoe pulls him away, and to one of the booths before he can. “He doesn’t-”

“Don’t.” Zoe shakes her head, crossing her arms over the table. “I already told him he didn’t have to pay for my food, and he ignored me. I doubt you’re arguing would do anything either.”
“Oh.”

Evan watches Connor walk up to the counter, motioning with his hands as he orders. Turning, he looks back to Zoe, who has taken to tracing patterns in the glossy wood of the table. Her idle expression is a frown, but she doesn’t look upset. It’s a similar expression to the one Evan has seen on Connor’s face when they’re sitting in the orchard, doing nothing.

He never really noticed how similar they looked. It was pretty obvious in hindsight, they are siblings, after all. Yet, the differences in their personalities made it hard to notice.

Zoe looks up at him, and raises an eyebrow. Evan stumbles for words, realizing he’s staring, and just ends up apologizing. She shakes her head, sitting up and leaning back in her seat.

“Evan.”

“Yes?”

“Thank you.”

“Huh? For- for what?”

“Well, coming with us, for starters.” Zoe shrugs, looking to the side. Evan isn’t sure if she’s just avoiding his eyes, or looking at something, but doesn’t turn to check, trying to pay attention when she continues to speak. “That and, being his friend? I know I thanked you before, but… I think you’ve been helping him a lot. I have- I’ve gotten my brother back. He’s trying again. So… thank you.”

Evan doesn’t know what to say to that. ‘You’re welcome’ and ‘No problem’ aren’t the right responses. Evan can’t honestly say he deserves her thanks, in the first place. Connor’s effort, even if Evan helped prompt it, isn’t something Evan should be thanked for, he thinks. “I wouldn’t- I don’t think that I- that you should thank me. I haven’t done anything.”

Zoe snorts. A disbelieving laugh. “If you say so.”

Connor joins them, dumping a tray of food, in bags, onto the table. “I ordered to go, just in case.” He drops into the space next to Evan. Evan frowns at the realization that Connor has ordered larger sizes for Evan’s food. Which means it was more expensive. Evan huffs, realizing why Connor had looked annoyed earlier. That he must have realized Evan was just trying to be as cheap as possible.

“Thanks, bro.” Zoe grabs her food.

“Don’t call me ‘bro’ it’s weird.”

“Sorry… bro.” Zoe dodges a french-fry when Connor throws it at her, and Evan covers laughter with his hand.

‘I’ve gotten my brother back’ Evan thinks about Zoe’s words, and the change between this situation and the first time he’d really seen them together. To the dinner where they were at each others throat. He smiles. Connor had said something similar, about having Zoe back.

They really are alike, huh. Evan sips on his smoothie, once he’s sure they aren’t about to do something that will make him laugh again.
Today’s a good day and here’s why.

Mostly I’m just happy. I’m happy to see my friend regain a relationship with his sister that isn’t just being angry at each other. I’m happy that he’s happy.

I know I’m not responsible for it, but if I could have helped that in some way, then I’m glad.

Evan is in a good enough mood to nearly forget he agreed to go to a school dance. Where there will be lots of people. Evan sighs and mutters to himself as he sinks into bed. “Shut up anxiety, I’m trying to be happy here.”

Chapter End Notes

it’s called the shining intermission bc stars shine as does happiness and im a cheesy fuck

Fun fact: I started working on this pretty immediately after the last chapter, but i was too exhausted to finish it. besides, I lost interest temporarily. (which happens all the time! I dive into stuff a lot, and feel lots of inspiration, then lose interest for days or months, and then get obsessed again. It’s not a bad thing, i promise.)

also fun fact: I hate shopping, so writing someone be excited about it is difficult. I didn’t want to make Zoe seem out of character, but i know lots of people that usually aren't the type who seem like it, but that really like clothing shopping. idk.

"then again i thought i'd be dead now" honestly the most self-indulgent line i've ever written bc same???

also that feel when you're lying in bed and start being anxious and you're like "hey can we not"
Chapter 26

Chapter Summary

Connor looks back at him again, and Evan can only nod assurance that he’s okay. Satisfied with the response, Connor turns back to sit properly in his seat. Evan breathes a quiet sigh of relief, and wipes his hands on his pants. Jared knocks his knuckles against Evan’s elbow.

“Calm down.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Evan’s dress shirt is slightly off in size, leaving him uncomfortable. He’s vaguely aware he’s dancing with someone, but his vision is blurred as he stares at his feet. Looking up, he blinks until the form in front of him shifts into someone recognizable. For a moment he’s almost certain it’s Alana, but in another second he’s faced with Jared’s annoyed expression. He doesn’t want to be here. Yet they continue to slowly circle around each other.

Something’s off. Evan can’t seem to move his arms, restrained by the tightness of his sleeves. Glancing at his arms, he frowns, and his grip on Jared’s shoulder tightens. Why are they dancing, again?

Evan turns to meet Jared- no, Connor’s- eyes. He blinks, once, twice. When did he start dancing with Connor? Wasn’t it Alana- no, Jared- before?

Evan wants to leave. The dancing forms around them seem to constrict, suffocatingly warm. Connor seems to notice, and they circle around in a continuation of their dance, until they reach the edge of the crowd. Evan breathes a sigh, glad to have the chance to leave without drawing attention to himself. He takes a step away, but falls. His arms and back sting, the ground is cold.

Eyes turn to him; he can feel them. There’s a noise that settles over everyone. They’ve noticed. They saw him fall. Everyone saw him fall, and they’re laughing at him.

And he can hear Jared’s voice, and Alana’s, and Zoe’s. Distant, and agreeing. They noticed too. He looks up to Connor. Except Connor isn’t there. He was never there.

Evan had been dancing by himself.

He fell by himself.

When did he get outside?

Evan stumbles to his feet, eyes shifting around. Colours fade into gray, and suddenly he’s in a house. It isn’t his. Jared’s mother speaks to him, words unclear. Evan shakes his head.

“Are you and Evan still friends?”

Oh, Evan realizes, he’s not Evan. Evan- Jared- shakes his head. He speaks before he can process
his words. “Of course not.”

He shrugs. She frowns at him. Beeping sounds, filling the space around him.

Evan opens his eyes.

Evan blinks up at the ceiling from his place on the floor. With a deep breath he sits up to turn his alarm off. When had he ended up on the floor? He has a pretty good guess, actually. The dream is vague, and blurry, but he remembers it. It’s weirdly not as distressing as his thoughts are. Even if the contents are the same.

It’s the Friday following Valentines day, since the day itself was in the middle of the week, and the cafeteria is already suffering the effects of the dances preparations. There won’t be much time between the end of the school day and the start of the dance, so the student council is trying to get as much done as possible. At least that’s what Alana tells them.

Evan hasn’t eaten lunch in the cafeteria in a while. He’s fairly content avoiding it all together, actually. So, really, he just hasn’t been in the cafeteria at all in a while. However, when Alana tells the group that the student council is a mess, due to rushing to prepare and having so few members, Evan feels a thought worm its way into his head.

“Should we help Alana- I mean the council- with setup?” It’s lunch, they have forty minutes, and Evan isn’t planning on eating lunch anyway. Jared groans in response, clearly not up for doing anything that requires effort. Connor nods, in agreement with Jared.

“Guys, come on.” Zoe rolls her eyes at them. “Well I think we should help.”

“They’ve got it covered,” Jared argues.

Evan shakes his head, while Zoe responds. “Well I’m going to go offer to help. What about you, Evan?”

“Y-yeah. Right. I will- also- I’ll do that.”

They end up pinning ribbons to walls until the bell rings. Jared and Connor end up helping, too. Alana smiled, surprised, when she saw them.

Evan goes home, and eats in an attempt to drown his anxiety. It doesn’t work, but the sickness from skipping lunch fades away. It’s not until fifteen minutes after he gets home that he forces himself up to his room to change.

True to his dream, his dress shirt doesn’t fit quite right, but it’s too loose instead of too tight. He can deal with that, he tells himself. Most of his clothes are a little too loose, anyway. Evan fiddles with the hem of his shirt, before tucking it in, then wondering if he should un-tuck it, and debating with himself until his phone beeps.

He glances at it, takes a deep breath, then checks his messages.
“Guess where I am” Jared’s texted him, followed by a picture of the inside of a car. “The Murphys are f*cking rich did u no that? this car is so nice dude”

“I’m aware. That means you’re on your way?”

“Yea”

Evan stuffs his phone into his pocket, and heads towards the door. Jared’s house isn’t that far from his, so he doesn’t expect he’ll be waiting long.

Evan stands at his door, debating if he should wait for them to come to the door to get him, or just go outside. He heard the car pull up, he should just go. But what if they think he was just standing there, waiting? They’ll think he’s weird.

“They already know you’re weird.” Evan assures himself. They wont mind. He jolts at the sound of a knock, and goes to open it. It opens before he can, though, and Jared raises an eyebrow at him.

“Come on loser.”

“Oh- yeah- right.” Evan follows Jared to the car, fidgeting with his hands. He nearly forgot Jared usually just lets himself in. Except when something’s wrong. Evan drops into the back of the car, next to Jared, and exchanges greetings with Connor and Zoe. Zoe is driving, and Evan comes to find she’s a more reckless driver than Connor is. It’s a surprising realization for him.

It also sort of freaks him out. Connor looks over the passenger seat at him, before turning to face Zoe. At the very least she keeps her eyes on the road when he speaks. “Zoe can you chill? Your driving is scaring Evan.”

“He’s fine. You’re fine, right?”

“Y-yeah I’m- this is okay- it’s fine don’t- no need to worry about me.”

“See,” Connor says, sighing. Zoe nods, shifting in her seat, and slowing the car to the speed limit. Connor looks back at him again, and Evan can only nod assurance that he’s okay. Satisfied with the response, Connor turns back to sit properly in his seat. Evan breathes a quiet sigh of relief, and wipes his hands on his pants. Jared knocks his knuckles against Evan’s elbow.

“Calm down.”

When they manage to get Alana to stop freaking out over the dances details being in order, the group gathers together in one corner of the cafeteria; which as been cleared to fit the students. Not much of the situation is different from their normal time together, just idle conversation. The only real differences is the music and lights. Finally, Zoe huffs.

“One of you dance with me.”

“Why?” Connor scoffs. “Don’t you have other friends here anyway?”

“Yeah, probably. But I came with you assholes. So.” Zoe holds out her hand, waiting for someone to take it. Connor smacks Jared’s hand before he can try to. While he pulls his hand away, laughing at Connors reaction, Evan shares a look with Alana, before the latter takes Zoe’s hand.
Zoe glance at her hand, shrugs, and pulls Alana away, the different purples of their dresses a contrast as the twirl around each other. Evan sighs, relieved, though he’s not sure why he feels relieved. He doubts Zoe would want to dance with him, but the thought still brought nerves back to the forefront of his mind.

In all honesty, he isn’t so keen on dancing, despite being at a dance. Part of him didn’t want to be here in the first place.

“I wanna dance with someone,” Jared announces, sighing. “Evan-”

“No.”

“Dude.”


“Fine. Connor-”

“No.”

“You both suck.”

By the time they leave everyone is tired. That much is clear in the way they all slump into Zoe’s car. Evan thinks it’s sort of strange, considering most of them didn’t even dance. Jared- who nearly falls over trying to get into the car, ends up in the passenger seat, slumped against the window, and Connor takes his place in the back of the car, Alana next to him. Evan sits behind the drivers seat, trying to sink as far into the door as possible, so as to not be in Connor’s personal space.

Zoe stifles a yawn, starting the vehicle. “On a scale of one to ‘let’s fucking do it’ how much do you guys wanna just come over to our house, so I don’t have to drive to everyone’s house.”

“But we’re all dressed up.” Alana’s voice is quiet, eyes drooping.

“We have extra clothes.”

“I’m in.” Jared mumbles. Connor sighs, likely thinking about lending his clothes out.

“Well, I guess it does seem like a good idea. I mean, you seem tired you shouldn’t be driving us all home.” Alana nods, pulling out her phone. “I’ll text my parents.”

“Evan?” Zoe looks at him through the rear-view mirror, and he nods, mumbling agreement. He doesn’t want to be the one to say no, and make her drive more than she wants to.

“Y-yeah, that’s fine.” Evan takes a deep breath when Zoe turns her attention to leaving the parking lot. Connor glances at him, raising an eyebrow. Evan shakes his head, before shrugging. Connor sighs, nodding, and crosses his arms.

Evan texts his mom, letting her know what’s going on. By the time they make it to the Murphy household, everyone but Zoe and Evan have seemingly fallen asleep. Zoe honks the horn, and Jared jumps, looking like he’s nearly died. Connor makes an annoyed noise, not opening his eyes, and flips Zoe off. She laughs, getting out of the car.

“Come on nerds, at least fall asleep in the house.”
Jared, Evan, and Connor end up in the living room, after debating how much floor space Connor has. Alana and Zoe end up in the latter’s room. The Murphy parents seemed genuinely surprised by the presence of their guests, and Cynthia had rushed to get everyone blankets.

Now Evan lays on the couch- which he had managed to take while Jared and Connor fought over it- staring at the ceiling. Despite how tired he was, he couldn’t seem to fall asleep. A common side-effect of being in someone else’s house.

“Today was a good day,” Evan mumbles, to himself, closing his eyes. It takes another few hours for sleep to reach him.

Chapter End Notes

I could say so fucking much about evan's dream and why i wrote it and what every line in it means but nobody wants that.
also chapters of this story that include a letter makes me Anxious bc they're a way to connect the disconnect writing of this story, and without them im worried it seems more like a mess.

fun fact: i only went to one school dance in my entire life, in middle school.

second fun fact: I dream in third person (and remember things but that's much weirder) so i imagine evan's dream is in pseudo-third person perspective, where he's sort of looking at the back of his own head, but is aware of all of his surroundings and can still somehow see the person in front of him. bc dreams yo.
Chapter 27

Chapter Summary

Jerk: ok
Jerk: why do the murphys have so much fcking cereal
Jerk: theres so much
Jerk: where r their bowls
Jerk: WHERE THE FCK ARE THEIR SPOONS
Jerk: what is this kitchen

You: Jared, what the fuck

Jerk: hey ur awake

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

_Jerk: sleeping on armchairs is shit_

Evan blinks, eyes adjusting to the light of his phone. He glances to the empty space where Jared had been sleeping in one of the armchairs. He’s no longer there. Another glance tells him that Connor is still asleep in the other chair. Evan turns his eyes back to his phone.

_Jerk: ok
Jerk: why do the murphys have so much fcking cereal
Jerk: theres so much
Jerk: where r their bowls
Jerk: WHERE THE FCK ARE THEIR SPOONS
Jerk: what is this kitchen

You: Jared, what the fuck

Jerk: hey ur awake

You: Yes. May I repeat: what the fuck.

Jerk: I woke up, I was hungry.

Zoe: Drawer closest to the fridge.
Zoe: Don’t break anything.

Jerk: no promises.
From the next room Evan can hear clanking that tells him Jared found what he was looking for. Evan sits up. Exhausted, but knowing he won't be able to go back to sleep. Jared walks into the room, bowl in hand, and plops into the chair he'd previously been sleeping in.

“Morning.”

“Good- good morning?” Evan shifts, throwing his legs off of the couch. “How long have you- were you up?”

“Like, an hour.”

“Shut up.” Connor’s voice is slightly muffled by his face being buried in the chair, but still gets their attention.

“Well good morning to you to, asshole.”

“Shut- the fuck- up.”

“Nah.”

“Jared.” Evan sighs, shaking his head.

The sound of his phone- the messaging app- draws back his attention.

Zoe: If you finish the cheerios I'll murder you, btw.

Jerk: no 1 likes cheerios

Evan glances over at Jared, who’s holding the bowl with one hand and his phone with the other. Frowning, Evan rolls his eyes.

You: I do.

Jerk: u dont count

You: :( 

Alana: I like them, too.

Jerk: im being ganged up on

Zoe: You brought this upon yourself.

TheInsanelyCoolDude has changed the chat name to Stop The Bullying 2k19

You: it's not 2019

Jerk: preemptive

Alana: :/
Zoe: Same.

**AcornMan** has changed the chat name to *Cheerio Squad*

Jerk: fuck you

Zoe: Lmao

Alana: Wow.

**TheInsanelyCoolDude** has changed the chat name to *Cheerio’s suck*

ConArtist: i hate to say it but im on jareds side here

You: Betrayal

Zoe: Is that true?

Alana: That’s a bit rude.

Jerk: CHANGE IT

Zoe: You guys are in the same room why don’t you do it yourself jared
Jerk: nah im eating

Alana: Lazy.

Jerk: duh

ConArtist: “just your names” huh evan

You: :( 

AcornMan has changed the chat name to Evan is terrible but not sorry

You have changed Jerk (TheInsanelyCoolDude)’s name to Jared. This change is only visible to you. To change it back click here.

You: But I did change it

ConArtist: now change the chat name again

You: This one is fine.

Alana: “but not sorry”

Alana: That’s new.

Zoe: Oh my god.

Zoe: True.

You: Sorry.

ConArtist: no

You: Sorry.

ConArtist: don’t

You: Sorry

ConArtist: DON’T DO THIS AGAIN

Jared: again?

You: Sorry.

You: Okay I’m done.

ConArtist: nothing dont worry about it.

Alana: Not to be rude,

Alana: but you guys are weird. :0

Zoe: I second this.

Jared: them right?

Zoe: You also.
ConArtist: ha. hows that feel.

Jared: not great thanks

You: It’s true, though.

TheInsanelyCoolDude has changed the chat name to Jared Is not Weird

ConArtist: untrue. im leaving the chat

TheInsanelyCoolDude has changed the chat name to Meme Squad

Jared: i missed that name anyway

You: :( 
You: You could have changed to back to my brilliant tree pun

Alana: No.

Jared: omfg

You: Alana why.

Alana: Sorry :)

Zoe: Has anybody else thought about the fact we’re literally all in the same house and could be having a verbal conversation?

You: Verbal conversations are for nerds.

ConArtist: youre a nerd so I don’t think thats true

Jared: get recked

You: Yeah, but so is Jared.

Jared: HEY

ConArtist: good point

Jared: fuck you

“Oh, you kids are up.” Evan jumps, fumbles with his phone, and ends up on the floor. Jared snorts, laughing at him. Connor gives a small, startled, laugh which he tries to cover. Seeing all this, Cynthia stares, surprised, over the group. “Oh, dear, I’m sorry.”

“S-sorry.” Evan clutches his phone, pulling himself back onto the couch.

“Good morning.” Jared raises a hand in greeting, trying to clam his laughter.

“Good morning.” Cynthia smiles. “It’s been a while since we’ve had so many guests-” Connor groans- “so I was going to offer too cook you all breakfast.”
“O-oh that’s- uh-” Evan stops himself from saying no, remembering there are other people staying over who might be up for the offer. Jared frowns at him.

“Cool, thanks.” Jared sounds genuinely appreciative, and Cynthia nods, smiling. Connor rolls his eyes, and Evan tries to smile.

“I wonder if the girls are up.”

“They are.” Connor sighs, sitting up. Apparently he’s finally given up fully on going back to sleep. Cynthia turns her attention to him, surprise evident on her face. Evan isn’t sure what she’s surprised about, but Connor frowns. With another sigh, Connor stands. “I’m going to change.”

Connor leaves the room before anyone else can speak. Only a small number of words are exchanged after that, before Cynthia goes to cook breakfast. Connor returns, with presumably fresh clothes on, and drops back onto the chair.

“Dude.”

“What?” Connor raises an eyebrow at Jared. In turn, Jared pulls at the collar of his borrowed shirt. They’re- the clothes- much too big for him. “If that doesn’t fit right none of my clothes will.”

“Seriously? I thought you just gave me this because I’d be sleeping in it.”

“No. I gave you that because I never wear it, and wasn’t worried you’d ruin it.”

“Don’t be fucking rude.”

Connor frowns. “But that’s like my entire personality.” Jared opens his mouth to respond, but is cut off by Connor small, quiet laughter.

“You do have a point,” Jared says, after a pause. Evan glances down at his own borrowed clothes. He hadn’t been paying much attention before, but he looking at them now they are fairly worn, and probably old. He tugs at the hem of the shirt, small frown on his face.

“I expect that back.” Connor points at Evan, who looks up, startled.

“O-Oh, yeah, of course- of course I wouldn’t steal- take it.”

“No one’s accusing you of being a thief.” Jared rolls his eyes.

It would probably be an understatement to say breakfast is awkward. The only person who seems as uncomfortable as Evan is, would probably be Larry. The man seems lost, unable to grasp the group of teenagers in front of him. Evan, on the other hand, just can’t find a balance between how he usually acts with his friends, versus his need to act overly polite in front of the Murphy’s. Connor is close behind, in terms of being uncomfortable. He’s sunk back so far in his seat Evan is pretty sure he’s going to slide off of it, and has his arms crossed.

Alana has taken up conversation with Cynthia, in between eating. Jared and Alana seemingly have infinite stomachs, because Evan is pretty sure they’ve both eaten twice as much as he has. Zoe is focused on her food, occasionally adding comments.

All in all, Evan can’t say he’s disappointed when breakfast is over.
Alana and Jared live in the same direction, while Evan lives in the other. In order to save time- and likely Zoe’s gas money- Zoe takes Alana and Jared home, while Connor takes Evan.

When they arrive, Evan gathers himself together, and glances at Connor. For a second, he plans to say his goodbyes, and head inside. Yet, Connor’s eyes are tired, and Evan wonders if he got anymore sleep than Evan’s own mediocre amount. Thoughts of Connor falling asleep at the wheel, or any other catastrophe that could be caused by driving while tired pop into Evan’s head all at once. He finds himself speaking before he thinks.

“Want to- well- hang out? Inside? My house- I mean, obviously my house because I said inside, and that’s where we are, and it wouldn’t make sense to go back to your house. We just left. So of course I mean my house. That was weird, I’m sorry.”

Connor stares at him, blinking. “Evan.”

“Yeah?”

“It’s been a while since you’ve rambled like that.”

“Oh- well- I guess so.”

“Yeah, let’s hang out. I don’t want to fucking drive home anyway.”

Evan excuses himself for a moment, after trying to explain what he was doing- Connor just shrugged and waved him off, dropping onto the couch- to change, and write himself a letter. It had been a few days since he had, and somehow he felt weird not writing them. Before he’d hated them, didn’t want to write them, but the more in the habit of it he was, the more he had a hard time not writing them daily.

Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why. Yesterday went well, your dream didn’t come to fruition, and everything was fine. You did fine. You’re at home, and are going to hang out with your friend, and that’s a good thing. You’re happy.

I honestly believe today’s good.

Evan saves the letter, and smiles to himself. He feels like- knows- he’s gotten better at writing them. At being positive.

He heads back to the living room to find Connor passed out on his couch, and quietly laughs. Evan thinks he probably should have expected that.

Chapter End Notes

I haven’t slept so if there are any typos i missed in my last edit of this (of which there were multiple) please let me know.
fun fact: i had this one friend and whenever me and my best friend slept over at her house, we had to play rockband the next morning and play Check Yes Juliet. we had to.

Sorry SycaYour shit pun, you were my most brilliant creation but I had to sacrifice you for the sake of this chapter.

also why are other peoples kitchens so confusing there are like 30 drawers and/or cabinets WHAT DO YOU NEED THEM FOR
Chapter 28

Chapter Summary

Maybe he should have.

Evan shakes the thought away, trying to ignore it. He was doing better. It’s not fair for it to come back for no reason.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

*Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why.*

Evan stares at the words, hands on his keyboard, and shakes his head. He has to leave soon, he reminds himself. He has school to get to. A normal, Tuesday morning. Nothing’s particularly bad, or good, and yet…

Somehow he can’t bring himself to believe the words in front of him.

It’s frustrating. Because he’d been doing so well. Only a few days ago he’d written the words, and believed them, believed it was going to be a good day. A good week. A good year. Believed that he was doing better, that things were better.

And nothing has changed. Nothing’s different from then, or the past few weeks. So why can’t he write?

Evan closes his laptop with more force and necessary and gathers himself to leave.

Halfway through the day he has a simple, idle thought, that brings everything together. What if it had worked? What if he died?

*Maybe he should have.*

Evan shakes the thought away, trying to ignore it. He was doing better. It’s not fair for it to come back for no reason.

Evan doesn’t want to go home. Usually it’s nice to be at home, where he’s comfortable, and knows where everything is. There’s an itching in the back of his mind, though, telling him not to go home. Not to be by himself.

So he ends up in Connors room, again. They sit on the floor, not speaking, but Evan is okay with that. It's okay.

Running a hand over his left arm, Evan looks at his hands. The colour has returned to his arm; the
cast long-since gone. All traces of evidence are gone. Evan grips onto his forearm, tightly. That itching thought in the back of his head grows into a burning, and he sighs.

“Connor?”

“Yeah?” Connor looks up, tries to meet Evan’s eyes, but can’t because they’re downcast. “Evan?”

“I- why- I know things have been better. I’ve been better. I should- I shouldn’t want- thing’s are better. I’m not- there are people, and I don’t feel the same so-”

“Evan.” Connor’s voice is soft, a reminder that he’s avoiding saying what he actually means.

“Am I a bad person? I should be- I should be happier. I am! I’ve been happier I- I swear I have. I just… sometimes I wonder if… what if it had worked?” Evan pulls at his wrist, not hard enough to hurt himself, but he needs to do something with his hands. “Sometimes- I just- sometimes I still wish it had.”

Connor is silent. Evan doesn’t look up from the floor. His right hand is being pulled away from his arm. Connor’s hand around his wrist forces Evan to bring his attention to Connor’s face. He’s frowning, eyebrows furrowed, but he doesn’t look mad. “We both know it isn’t that easy.”

“I just…”

“I know.” Connor moves closer, sitting right beside Evan. “I do too. Sometimes I get angry. Sometimes there’s no reason for me to be angry. And I get caught up in this thought that maybe I should have tired.”

“I’m- you know I’m glad you didn’t?”

“Yeah.” Connor nods. There’s a silent pause, before Connor sighs. “I’m glad it didn’t work.”

“Thank you.”

Evan is home, laying in bed, when his phone lights up. For a moment he debates ignoring it, but decides against it. It could be important.

“Im bad at things,” Connor texts. Evan blinks. “but I wanna say something so give me a minute?”

“Okay.” Evan waits, watching the dots indicating Connor is typing. His eyes nearly fall closed- and he barely resists sleep- until Connor’s next message lights up.

“i know i could have said this in person but i didn’t know how to. you know? anyway, this is easier for both of us. i usually prefer talking but i can think it out this way, you know? ok so the first day of school remember how I said I was going to do that thing. (im pretty sure larry reads my texts so im trying to be vague). well remember how I said something like “if one thing was different” I would have?”

“Yes.”

“you talking to me and specific things you said were the difference.”

Evan stares at the words. He rereads them. Over, and over, until they blur with his tears. Maybe it’s because of the words themselves, maybe it’s because he’s tired and emotional. Whatever the cause, he starts crying.
“you made me fucking cry connor. I n like a good way? happy you kno ?”

“youre crying right now?”

“yes”

“sorry evan.”

“its ok. Thank you.”

“yeah, well, it’s true.”

“Really.”

“really?”

“I love you and I’m glad you’re here.” Evan is too emotional to over-think if that’s what he should have said, for once.

“thats cheesy”

“Shut.”

“yeah yeah. me too.”

“Goodnight, Connor.”

“night.”

Evan breathes a sigh, tired of being woken by his phone. A glance at his clock tells him that it’s just before his alarm goes off. Grabbing his phone, Evan rubs the sleep from his eyes before checking it.

_TheInsanelyCoolDude_ sent you a private message.

Evan sits up. He thinks confusion would be clear on his face, if someone was looking at him.

_Jared_: dude my man
_Jared_: im gonna drive u 2 school

_You_: ?????

_Jared_: pretend it was a question

_You_: Okay. Sure.

_Jared_: good
_Jared_: also
You: Also?

Jared: after school
Jared: come ovr to my house

You: Okay?

Jared: connor 2

You: I don’t control him

Jared: ask

You: You can do that?

Jared: ye but hes more likely 2 say yes 2 u

You: I don’t know about that

Evan puts his phone down, giving into being awake, and rolls out of bed. Yawning, he stands, and makes sure his alarm is off. His Laptop sits on his bedside table. He runs his hand over the top of it, before sitting back on his bed, and pulling it onto his lap.

Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why.

Your friends are still around, and you can hang out with them, and they want to spend time with you. Someone is happy you're here.

Maybe, sometimes, that’s enough to be happy about. Even if it’s hard to believe it.

Chapter End Notes

Every once in a while i wake up and i'm just like "wow i wish i was dead" and tbh i'm just like "wow brain can we fucking not" bc there's no reason for it. anyway.

#relateable
(why am i like this)

fun fact: i listened to the cut song (little bit of light) a bunch and felt Emotions.

Also friendship. I still get nervous every time i tell friends i love them, even though we both know i mean platonically but you know, anxiety man. what an asshole.
Chapter 29

Chapter Summary

"Want me to fight him?"

"Yeah fucking right. You can’t fight anyone."

“But I have this weapon, and everything."

"Weapon?"

“My cast, remember?” That gets a small laugh from Connor.

“Thanks, but I don’t think you’d win. No offense."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

February passes too quickly, and suddenly it’s March. Weeks are uneventful, which is almost relieving. Evan couldn’t take it if everyday was eventful. Though it makes writing letters more difficult, he can at least use the lack of things happening to be positive.

Dr. Sherman has only seen a small number of them. Only the ones Evan selects, thinking they’re worth showing to his therapist. They look over them before their next session. Evan fidgets in his seat when they bring the letters up.

“I noticed something.”

“O-oh?”

“You’ve been writing a lot less about trees.” The statement catches Evan off guard. He remembers over the summer- his letters being filled with trees at the source of his “why the day will be good” reasoning. They were the only positive of the summer. Of his life. Evan nods.

“I guess I have.”

“Do you want to talk about that?”

“I don’t- I don’t know? I guess we can- it wouldn’t be bad to talk about.”

“Okay.” Their voice is patient, as they nod. “Why do you think this is?”

“They- I have- there’s other things?”

“Other things?”

“I really- I guess the only good thing I could see over the summer was trees.” The only good thing there was. The only thing keeping him alive. Which is sort of ironic, he thinks. Considering what he tried to use them for.
“But you can see good things, now?”

“Well… yes.” Evan nods. “I mean- I have- my friends are pretty great. I’ve been- I mean- schools okay, too.” Evan shrugs.

“School is?”

“Yeah. I- I don’t think about it as much as I probably should but- but it doesn’t stress me out, as much as- as it did when it was the only thing to focus on.”

“And your friends?”

He has them now. “I feel more- I’ve been comfortable with them. And- uh- more honest?” He’s lying. Except for Connor, there’s still plenty he’s keeping from his friends.

“Honest?”

“I- uh- just in general? Like when they ask how I am I don’t- I don’t just say I’m okay because that’s what I think they want to hear.”

“That’s good, Evan.”

“Yeah.”

Honesty. Evan stares at his left arm, and then looks over to where his cast his set on his dresser. He’d never even told Connor on purpose. It had come out in his rambling while trying to prove his sincerity in wanting to be friends. Since then he’d never explicitly said it. In fact, had he ever? When he said it, he never said why he’d done it. Sure, it was obvious. Implied as most discussions about it are, but not outright said.

Evan startles when his phone goes off.

WalkingOnStars has sent you a private message.

Zoe: Don’t ignore me asshole

You: ???????
You: I’m sorry?

Zoe: Oh shit sorry evan.
Zoe: That was meant for my brother

You: I have questions

Zoe: He locked himself in his room and is ignoring me
Zoe: In fact if you can talk to him, let him know hes a jerk

You: Oh, okay.

Zoe: (And ask if he’s ok?)
Evan is going to message Connor, asking if he’s okay, when he’s startled again. This time by a knock at the front door. Somehow, he has a pretty good guess of who it is. As he expects, the person at his door when he opens it is one Connor Murphy.

“Connor.”

“Yo.”

“You could have- have warned me you were coming over. Zoe, too. She tried to message you, and asked me to see if you were okay.”

“Shit, really?” Connor pulls his phone out of his pocket, turning it on. Oh, Evan realizes, he had his phone off. “Sorry.”

“I though you were locked in your room?”

“That’s just how I avoid my parents.” Connor shrugs, eyes not leaving his phone. He taps at the screen, probably messaging Zoe. “I climbed out of my window.”

“That’s dangerous.”

“Not as dangerous as climbing a- what was it- forty foot tree.”

Evan hesitates, before nodding. “Right, yeah. I guess you’re right.”

Connor hasn’t actually been in Evan’s room much. When he was, it was hardly at time where he felt like taking a good look around it. This time, though, Connor avoids explanations by taking interest in the room. “I didn’t realize you were a comic reader.”

“I’ll have you know I’ve had very intense internet debates on weather or not Magneto is actually a villain.”

“Nerd.”

“Y-yeah well. X-Men and Spiderman comics got me through elementary school with, like, almost-friends. So.” Evan shrugs; though Connor’s back is too him.

“I once dressed up as Spiderman for Halloween.”

“I once dressed as Wolverine.”

“Nice.” Connor picks up Evan’s cast. “Why’d you keep this, anyway?”
“I’m sentimental as fuck. Can’t- can’t you tell?” Evan laughs. Connor turns to him, eyebrow raised.

“I’m still not used to actually hearing you swear.”

“I’m not used to it either, so- uh- we have that in common.”

“Well, I guess if someone broke into your house you could use this as a weapon. It’s pretty heavy. You really carried this thing around for months, huh. Are you sure you’re not secretly really fucking strong?”

“Doubtful.” Evan sits down on his bed, while Connor returns the cast to it’s place. “Connor… are you okay?”

“I just fought with Larry. Don’t wanna talk about it. I honestly don’t even really remember what the hell we said. Just that he was being an ass, and I couldn’t keep it together.”

“Sorry.”

“Thanks.” Connor drops down next to him, but takes to laying down instead of sitting. “You okay? You seem out of it.”

“I had therapy today. No- wait- that makes it sound like therapy makes me like this. I just- I was thinking about something that I said.”

“Oh?”

“I sort of- a little- lied? It was sort of true because- like- I have been being more honest about when I’m not okay but… I still… I haven’t told anyone but you- even then only sort of, so I can’t even count that- I haven’t told them what I… did.”

“You aren’t- fuck, uh, words, how- obligated to tell them anything.”

“I want to. I mean… I don’t want to tell them, I guess. I just. I feel like I should? I don’t like knowing that- knowing I could slip up, and accidentally say it. Or I just… I wish I could just tell them, you know? More than I want to, I wish I could. That I could tell them, and not worry about it.”

“Yeah, I get ya.”

“Shit- no- I’m sorry. You’re upset, and I turned this into-”

“Evan. I asked you. I don’t wanna talk about me, so this is fine.”

“Okay. Sorry.” Evan takes a deep breath. “So I never really told you. I mean it was implied heavily, and we both know you know but I… I want to say it. For real. I want to tell someone the truth with- with full intention of making it clear.”

“Okay,” Connor starts, sitting up, “go ahead.”

“When I- on the day- fuck.” Evan sighs, running his hands over his face. “Okay. I got this.”

“Mhm.”

“When I broke my arm it wasn’t an accident. Well, okay breaking my arm was an accident. Falling wasn’t, though. I didn’t fall. I- I- um- I let go. I tried- I was going to-”

“Hey…” Connor offers one of his hands, and Evan takes to because he needs to focus on something
Explaining other than the fact he can’t breathe. “It’s okay.”

“I tried to kill myself.” It’s not a surprise. It’s something they both know. It’s something they’ve known since their friendship started. Still, finally saying it is somehow relieving. Evan takes a few deep breaths, counting them off, until he calms down.

“You good?”

“I feel better. Way better. Thank you.”

They sit there, in silence, of a while. Connor shifts, and speaks, after a moment. “Can I have my hand back?”

“No. I’m keeping it. Say goodbye to your hand.” Evan lets go of it, despite his words. Connor rolls his eyes, flopping back into his previous laying position.

“Good luck with that.” Connor closes his eyes, and for a second Evan wonders if he’s planning on falling asleep there. “Remember when I said back- shit, how long- a few months ago, that I don’t think Larry thinks I’m sick?”

Evan nods, before remembering Connor can’t see him. “Yeah?” Evan lays down, next to him.

“It seems like- I don’t fucking know- like he’ll never believe me? Even now, he still acts like it’s just-like I’m just inconveniencing him.”

“Want me to fight him?”

“Yeah fucking right. You can’t fight anyone.”

“But I have this weapon, and everything.”

“Weapon?”

“My cast, remember?” That gets a small laugh from Connor.

“Thanks, but I don’t think you’d win. No offense.”

“I am pretty frail.”

“I can’t believe you actually fucking said that.”

Evan doesn’t remember falling asleep. What he remembers is his room becoming hard to focus on. Remembers his breathing evening out, in turn with Connor’s, and finding himself in school. Remembers suddenly being on the floor, next to his locker, and wondering when he got there.

So he’s very confused when he wakes up.

Blinking, he tries to clear both his blurry vision, and his mind. His legs dangle over the edge of his bed, sore. Evan huffs out an annoyed breath, stretching his legs before sitting up. Connor- next to him and still asleep- rolls over in his sleep. Evan internally debates with himself about moving Connor. Eventually he settles on moving him, and picks Connors legs up, turning him be laying down properly.

Then he grabs his laptop, and his phone, and heads to the living room. He drops off his laptop on the
coffee table, before going to the kitchen to retrieve a bowl of dry cereal. Then he returns the living room, sits on the ground in front of his couch, and sets the bowl next to his laptop. While the computer starts up he shoves a small handful of cereal into his mouth.

_Today's going to be a good day and here's why. You were honest._

_Sometimes it's really hard to admit something, even if you already know the other person knows. And they probably don't need you to tell them? They aren't waiting for an explanation because you both already know that they know and there's no need. But it's still hard._

_I guess properly admitting it to myself, putting it into words, made it harder than it should have been. Putting it into words is just... really difficult. Because that makes it real._

_It was real. I have to know that. I think, probably, I had to admit that._

_So, honesty. I was honest, so today's going to be a good day._

Chapter End Notes

_I promise i'll stop slow the angst train next chapter_

_I just have Feelings. And I know i'm focusing a lot on the whole 'falling' incident, but let's be real it's not the kind of thing you just move on from, you know?_

_fun fact: im really tired. like, physically. my sleep schedule sucks, but i cant sleep during the time i usually would (during the day) bc it's SO HOT and i'm DYING._

_this is why i like cold weather._

_evan stutters a lot in the chapter, which he hasn't been doing this much of in a while (except last chapter?). I actually had to be like "why am I doing this" before i realized, it's because he's thinking so much about that incident- that subject matter in general- that he's caught up in how he felt then, and his mannerisms came with it._
Chapter 30

Chapter Summary

AcornMan has changed the chat name to Fun Fact Trees Are Actually Dead Inside
Jared: evan wtf
You: It’s true!
ConArtist: same trees, same

Chapter Notes

I made the book mentioned in this up, by the way. It’s actually a book I made up to be in the comic i’m making. Though the names of character in it in this are different from what they are in that story. Yes i’ve thought about this a lot.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Evan can’t say he’ll ever have a full picture of the Murphy family. He has this fuzzy, incomplete image based on his visits, and Connor’s words. Yet, he can’t say he’ll ever know what kind of person Cynthia is. Nor can he say he fully knows what kind of father Larry is. All Evan has as a basis is Connor, and a dinner where Evan himself got angry at the man.

So Evan can’t wholeheartedly say that Larry is a bad person, or a bad father. However, he can think it.

There’s an anger- a hurt- in Connor’s eyes whenever he brings his father up. Whenever he says he got into an argument with him. It’s something Evan can’t push out of thoughts. It’s something he can’t ignore. So it’s hard to believe that the man can be considered good.

And when Connor calls Evan from a nearby park, once again not wanting to go home, Evan feels inexplicably angry.

“Come here then; you have before.” Evan’s hands twitch. He’s never been good with phone-calls. Being angry only adds to his unhappy mood. Connor makes a noise of agreement, and hangs up.

When Connor shows up, they sit in silence watching a terrible- so bad it’s good- movie. Slowly tension leaves Connor, and he relaxes, but Evan can’t release his muscles, stiff with anger.

They aren’t comparable, but Evan get’s thinking about his own father again. There’s no real similarity, other than Evan and Connor’s distaste for them. Nothing to compare between strict obliviousness, and blatant ignoring. Between absence and arguments. Yet, Evan finds himself trying to compare anyway.
Thinking of his father reminds him that he hasn’t checked his email in a while. Evan brings up his inbox on his phone, with disdain. He doesn’t really want to know if he’s gotten anything. Assumes he probably hasn’t, anyway. Then he’ll be disappointed, despite not wanting an email anyway. Evan sighs.

To his surprise, he has an email. From Danielle. His step-mothers name is a startling sight. In all honesty he expected to never hear from them again.

Hello, Evan. I got your email from your father, because he was too busy to email you himself. See, Noah really wanted to make sure you saw this! (He says he misses you, by the way. I was also wondering if there was some way the kids could contact you? Perhaps we could arrange a video call with you for them, sometime?)

Anyway, the picture attached is of Noah and what he has named Evan. Which I thought was really cute. Don’t worry, lots of research is being done about it. Noah is a very serious kid when it comes to his interests. It seems you’ve made quite the impression!

Attached is a picture of Noah holding a small bonsai tree. Noah’s new tooth is starting to come in, which is evident by his big smile. Evan can’t help the smile that falls onto his face, too. He replies telling her he has a skype, and he could video call with the kids if they set up a time, as well as giving up his phone number. Then saves the picture to his phone.

Then he immediately sends it to the Meme Squad group chat.

You: {Uploaded Noah.jpg}
You: THIS IS MY STEP BROTHER

Zoe: What a cute kid
You: Actually I guess he’s my half-brother
You: I only just thought about that.

Jared: cool
You: ANYWAY HE NAMED THE BONSAI EVAN
ConArtist: adopt him
Jared: i cant believe even ur step/half family kno ur a giant tree nerd
You: The kids are literally the cutest, nicest kids in existence.
Alana: I wasn’t aware you had half-siblings
Alana: or a step family?
You: Oh, right.
You: Joel- my father- remarried and they have kids.
Evan raises an eyebrow at his phone when Jared sends him a private message.

**Jared:** jeol?

**You:** Yeah?

**Jared:** evan

**You:** I'm not sure what you want me to say.
**You:** I'm not calling him dad for sure

**Jared:** whend that happen

**You:** After Christmas.

**Jared:** u ok w/ that

**You:** I prefer it.

**Jared:** k

Evan switches back to the group chat. Silently, he wonders if Jared would have noticed something like this, had it been last year. A bitter part of his mind says he probably wouldn’t have.

**Alana:** Well, he is a cute kid! ^^

**Alana:** And it’s cute he named the tree after you. Are you close?

**ConArtist:** they just met.

**You:** But those four-ish days were enough to know I would die for the kid

**Zoe:** Thats saying something

**You:** Not really.
**You:** But, yeah, they’re cute kids.

**Zoe:** “Not really”? 

**You:** Oh

**ConArtist:** ive heard him say he would die for a sandwich

**ConArist:** so
That’s not true. Evan breathes a relieved breath.

**Jared**: dont throw ur life away 4 a sandwich ev

**Alana**: Idk, sounds worth it

**You**: I would die for a lot.  
**You**: So “not really” “saying something”

**ConArtist**: same

**Zoe**: Dramatic

**ConArtist**: or life just isn’t that valuable

**Zoe**: Thats morbid.

**Alana**: That’s… worrying.

**Alana**: Are you okay?

**ConArtist**: yeah

**ConArtist**: its a joke chill

**You**: Yeah

Evan frowns.

You have sent SoftEmotionallyDepressed a private message.

**You**: Remember how I said I wanted to be honest?

**ConArtist**: mhm

**You**: I don’t wanna be honest if it will draw attention to you, that you don’t want.

**You**: But

**ConArtist**: go ahead its fine.

**ConArtist**: but you wanna do that now?

**You**: I don’t know.

**You**: No probably not. Not in a group chat over a joke.

**ConArtist**: Okay.

**You**: But seriously: Noah.

**ConArtist**: YES HES A CUTE KID I UNDERSTAND

**ConArtist**: youre like a proud parent I swear
You: I’m just… really surprised and happy, you know?
You: I figured I’d never talk to them again, to be honest.

ConArtist: well im happy for you?
You: Thank you!

Jared: I would die for an A in english
ConArtist: trade you lit notes for history notes
Jared: deal

AcornMan has changed the chat name to Fun Fact Trees Are Actually Dead Inside
Jared: evan wtf
You: It’s true!
ConArtist: same trees, same
Alana: They are?! :O
Alana: I’d like to hear more about that.
Zoe: Why do you know that
Zoe: Is what i wanted to ask. But its you so
You: Strap in kids it’s time for a tree lesson.
Jared: what have u done alana

Dinners with the Murphy family are always really awkward, but Evan finds himself able to be more comfortable, most of the time, because Connor and Zoe talk to him like normal. Dinners with Heidi, however, are even more awkward.

Especially when he hadn’t expected it, and Connor is there.

Heidi had cheerfully come home, saying when managed to get the night off. She knew Evan was home, of course, because he texts her whenever he isn’t. She didn’t know, though, that Connor was there. Connor’s face filled with distress- an expression similar to one Evan would wear, usually- and he stood, ready to leave. Heidi’s “would you like to join us for dinner,” is what stopped him.

“Oh… sure.” Connor nodded, sitting back down. He followed it up with a very Evan-like assurance that he could leave if they wanted him too. Part of Evan wanted to laugh, wondering if he’s rubbed off on Connor, and the other felt bad for him, recognizing the discomfort. Heidi had assured him he was welcome to stay. That he was welcome any time.

Evan doesn’t know what to say. Neither does Connor. Heidi seems to be the only one running the conversation. Of course Evan should expect his mother to take any opportunity to talk about Evan. “He’s always been a pretty good writer, you know?”
“I hadn’t heard.” Connor hasn’t met her eyes once.

“W-well.” Evan shrugs, flushing with embarrassment. Reaching for anything to draw attention away from himself, he does something he regrets immediately. “Connor is probably better, with all the books he reads.” How much Connor reads is something Evan only discovered through context clues, and the battered books Connor owns. Not something Connor ever actually told him.

“Reading and writing are two very different skills, Hansen.” Connor shakes his head. Evan wonders when he started being able to draw extra meaning from Connor’s words, based simply on which name he used.

“You like to read?” Heidi’s voice is soft, likely realizing their discomfort.

“Yeah, I guess.”

“Do you have a favourite book?”

“Oh- it’s- a book called *Sunset Ruins*.” Connor shrugs. Evan has never heard of the book, but decides to look it up later. His mother, on the other hand, smiles.

“Ecilla and Ciela’s reunion was quite touching, wasn’t it?” Heidi retains a small, patient smile, while Connor looks up, startled.

“Yeah.”

Evan feels confusion work it’s way into his mind. He wonders when his mom read the book, and why it’s Connor’s favourite, and why Connor looks so worried about it. “What- what’s it about?”

“Oh, it’s just a typical ‘save the world’ kind of story.” Heidi hums in thought. “It’s more about the characters than the story, you know?”

“They’re all assholes who don’t want to do it- except Ciela who’s in it to save Ecilla- and-” Connor cut himself off, shrugging. Heidi gives a small laugh behind her hand and Evan looks between them, eyebrow raised.

“Am I missing something?”

“No, no. You’d probably like the book, though. I think I have a copy somewhere, if you want.” Heidi’s offer is immediately met with Evan’s nodding. “I’ll try to find it, then.”

And while Ciela can only dread the coming journey, her heart doesn’t waver, filled only with thoughts of the last time she’d seen Ecilla. Her hands reach for the ring hanging from her neck, running over the opal stone, and she thinks of Ecilla’s promise. Thinks of the pain in her voice, eyes shooting wildly between her subjects.

Smoke fills her lungs, reminding her time is short. A curt nod is given, and Koren seems satisfied with it. Ciela takes a step, the first of many, and makes her own promise. There’s no way, none, that she can just leave Ecilla to live with the same pain she herself has felt her entire life.

“Wait a little more.”

Evan frowns at the words, in thought more than any emotion. “Who’s in it to save Ecilla,” Connor
had said. Evan guesses he thought that meant something more literal. Yet, after only the first two chapters, he’s come to find it’s not so simple. Saving really mean freeing. It’s much less literal than that, even, and Evan can only think of one thing.

The books main antagonists, at least as far as he’s aware in the chapters he’s read, are Ecilla’s parents.

Chapter End Notes

So i said this in the beginning notes, but now that you have context for it, here's some additional facts about Sunset Ruins.

Idk if that's a real books name, so sorry if it is that wasn't intentional. The title, and basic plot, where created for the sake of being something that my character (Neall Lenal Rey) wrote, and published, in my original comic. (which has it's own blog and i'm technically supposed to be working on the second chapter for but shush.) The book itself was incredibly over-thought. I haven't even mentioned it in the comic yet, but I know a lot about it's creation and plot and meaning, ect. ect. However the names used in this stories version of it, are actually the names of Neall's grandmothers (both on his moms side. well and one of his other grandparents) in the comic bc I was too lazy to come up with new names.

ANYWAY. yeah. i over think really small details is what im saying.

I loved Danielle, Noah, and Mia way too much to never include them again, even though i had originally created them to just fill space during evans visit, i ended up really liking them.

10 points to anyone who can figure out which intermission will be next. Idk it's probably obvious, but there are two choices i see as being reasonable assumptions.
The Blind Intermission

Chapter Summary

“I just feel like I’m blind- or deaf- you know?” Evan doesn’t. “Like I can’t see my son, anymore.”

There’s something in his words that strikes Evan, and he finally fills in a puzzle of his mind. Larry doesn’t get it. He doesn’t know what he’s doing. Connor is being hurt because of it, and Evan can’t let that go just because there’s a reason for it, but suddenly it makes sense.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Hey you know how we were talking about being more honest?” Is Connor’s greeting after school, on a Thursday afternoon. Immediately worry fills Evan, and he fumbles to get into the other’s car. Had he been caught in a lie? Was he lying about something? Did Connor think he was lying about something he wasn’t? What if- “because I haven’t totally been.”

“What?” Evan’s voice is louder than he intends for it to be. The car jolts; the only real evidence of Connor’s surprise. Connor takes a deep breath, before driving them out of the parking lot. Evan almost expects him to take a right- the way to the orchard- because that’s where they usually go. Instead they go left- the way towards both of their houses- and Evan wonders where they’ll end up.

“I didn’t lie, specifically? ‘Cause I said I didn’t try, and that’s technically true, but only about one specific incident. Like, I never technically lied, but I didn’t tell the truth you know? Then here you are, telling me shit you’ve done that you didn’t want to fucking admit to- like- yourself, even. So I feel like I’m not being honest, you know?”

Evan takes a moment to process what’s been said, before he speaks. “I understand. You know you don’t- it’s not that I don’t want to know but you don’t have to tell me anything? You’re not obligated to.”

Connor gives a small, not happy, yet not unhappy, laugh. Maybe because Evan was using his own words on him. “Yeah I know.”

“Okay.”

Silence.

More silence.

“I want to tell you, though.” Connor nods, more to himself than Evan.

“W-well, I’m listening.”

“I said that I didn’t try to- shit- I didn’t try to kill myself. Which is true… about the beginning of this year.” Connor sighs. Evan tenses, realizing what Connor is trying to- going to- say. “But I have… before.”
“Oh.”

“Oh? That’s it?”

“I- I don’t know what to say, really. I guess- It’s not- not that I expected it, but it’s not surprising. Not that I-”

“Got it.” Connor moves his head, as if he’s rolling his eyes, but Evan can’t really tell if that’s what’s happening from the side.

“Can I- no, never mind.”

“Ask about it?”

“Yeah.”

“Let me take you back, the year is two years ago.” Connor sighs. “I was angry, and felt alone, and like everyone would be better off, and honestly? I just couldn’t bring myself to give a shit if someone would have been hurt by it because I was just so fucking… unhappy.”

Alone. Evan can’t really say anything, but he doesn’t want to leave the car in silence, so he gives a hum of acknowledgment. Connor turns to look at him, questioning expression on his face, and Evan fills with mild panic. “The road! The road!”

Connor snaps his attention back to the road. It’s a straightaway, and they’re the only ones on it at the moment, but that doesn’t make his moment of distraction any less scary. Evan breathes a relieved sigh.

When they pull into Evan’s driveway, it’s like all tension has left the air. In it’s place, they sit in comfortable silence for a moment. Connor is the one to finally break it, only to get out of the car, and Evan follows.

“Thank you for telling me,” Evan says, quietly. Then he opens the door it his house and barely hears Connors response.

“No problem, I guess.”

It takes a minute for either of them speak again. “Okay, so, I know we just got done talking about something serious, and we usually take a while to chill the fuck out before we bring something else up, but…”

Evan can’t help the small laugh that escapes him. Connor seems unphased by this. “It’s fine, I ramble enough of my problems at you. It’s- well- only fair.”

“The first time, my mom found me. I was hospitalized. My dad said I was doing it for attention, and it took a lot of convincing to get me into therapy the first time.” Connor sighs. Evan wants to comment on Connor’s use of “dad,” remembering that Connor always calls the man Larry. Yet, Connor continues, and Evan doesn’t want to interrupt him. “When medication didn’t immediately help, he put a stop to that, too.”

“I’m sorry.”

“What an prick.”

Connor laughs. “I know.”

Evan isn’t sure in which universe he believed this wouldn’t be an uncomfortable position, yet here he is. Standing in the Murphy’s garage with Larry. Zoe was in her room, Connor had gone to the bathroom, and Evan had been left alone with Cynthia in the kitchen. He offered to help, and had been stirring pasta when she asked him to tell Larry food was nearly ready.

And when does Evan ever say no when he’s in this house?

So there he is, standing in the doorway while Larry looks over old belongings. “Uh- sir- your- Ms. Murphy said that- that dinner is nearly done?” He doesn’t intend for it to come out as a question, and Larry looks up with a quirked eyebrow. “So- uh- dinner is nearly done.”

“Thanks.”

Evan doesn’t know what possesses him to do so, but he makes his way over. A glance at what Larry is looking at, tells him that he’s looking at baseball related items. At the very least he can recognize a glove. “What-” He stops himself when Larry turns his attention back to him, nerves setting in.

“See this?” Larry hands the glove over, frown on his face. Evan takes it, running his hands over the stiff material. “I bought it for Connor, oh, some years ago. He never used it.”

“He doesn’t seem that- that into sports.”

“Yeah, I guess not.” Larry turns his attention back to the box for things in front of him. Evan shifts his weight, trying to find words to say. Larry mutters. “I hadn’t realized at the time.”

“Do you know anything about him?” Evan can’t say he doesn’t fill with dread at the realization of what he’s say. It sounds accusing- maybe it is- and Larry looks over, surprised.

“No, I guess not.” He sighs, gripping onto the table in front of him until his hands pale. “I really don’t understand that kid.”

“He’s- I don’t- I noticed, yeah. Uh… he likes books, you know?”

“I didn’t, really. I guess he has a lot of them…”

“Well, now you do?”

“I just feel like I’m blind- or deaf- you know?” Evan doesn’t. “Like I can’t see my son, anymore.”

There’s something in his words that strikes Evan, and he finally fills in a puzzle of his mind. Larry doesn’t get it. He doesn’t know what he’s doing. Connor is being hurt because of it, and Evan can’t let that go just because there’s a reason for it, but suddenly it makes sense. “You.”

“Yeah, well, maybe if you weren’t obsessed with looking for a reason to blame me for that, you would.” Connor’s voice makes Evan jump, and he drops the glove onto the ground. Larry glances at Connor. They both look so… tired. They’re silent, before Connor turns to Evan, and makes his way over. He grabs Evan’s arm, pulling him away. “Come on, Cynthia’s waiting on you… both of you.” Connor gives one last glare at Larry, before they leave the room.
Dinner is approximately as awkward as Evan expects it to be, and he realizes halfway through it that he’s been bouncing his leg. Connor knocks his own leg against Evan’s, getting his attention, and raises an eyebrow. Evan mouths an apology, and tries to still his leg. Connor frowns, shaking his head.

“Are you two okay there?” Zoe’s voice startles Evan, and- much to his dismay- he throws his fork across the table. “Holy shit, Evan.”

“I’m so sorry.” Evan takes the utensil back when Cynthia offers it back to him. She gives him a small, comforting smile. In a way, she sort of reminds him of his own mom, if a bit less direct.

“Evan mentioned,” Larry starts, changing the subject, “you like books?”

Connor glances between Larry and Evan, as if that can solve the questions in his mind. Connor seems to be having a hard time processing that he’s being spoken to. Evan is as surprised as he is by the mention, even if he had, in fact, said that. Connor’s response comes out harsh, guarded. “Yeah? What about it?”

“It just reminded me, you have a lot of books.”

“Well no shit.”

“And,” Larry’s voice is strained, like he’s trying not to get angry. Evan can almost see a resemblance between Larry and Connor, for the first time. “I realized: your books shelf is fairly small. Didn’t you say it was having a hard time fitting your books?”

“I don’t think I said that.” Connor frowns. The statement is still true, though, Evan had seen it. There were almost more books on top of the small shelf than in it.

“I told you that,” Zoe says. Connor turns to glare at her. “Last time I was in there, it was a mess.”

“We should get you a new one.” Connor doesn’t hide the suspicion on his face, at Larry’s offer. Larry, however, turns his attention back to his food. Evan glances at Zoe and Cynthia, who both look as confused as he feels.

“i just feel like I’m blind.” Larry had said. Evan wonders if, maybe, he’s trying to look. Evan doesn’t feel like that’s enough to be forgiven for what he’s done, but wonders if it’s a start. Maybe Connor- who has taken to glaring at, and stabbing, his food- wont ever be able to forgive him, either. Maybe Connor wont want to. But, maybe, something will change.

Evan hopes something changes.

_Even today was a good day and here’s why. You understand a little better, now. And, sure, understanding doesn’t mean there’s an excuse. Doesn’t mean things are okay, but it’s valuable in and of itself. Understanding is something to value, I think. Connor may never forgive him- and he has every right not to. Hell, I might never, because I can see what the things he’s said have done to Connor, but at least I understand, now. I think that’s something._

Chapter End Notes
oh, hey, it's this asshole.
Listen I don't like Larry, but I still knew he would need an intermission, so this seemed like the most fitting thing to give him.

I know why Part Of Me (the song that used to be in place of You Will Be Found) was replaced, and I definitely think that was the right choice for the play, but man do i love part of me.
the lyrics "Was I blind and deaf and dumb / I didn’t know how bad it had become / Or how to save you" were the inspiration for part of this chapter.
I know exactly what order the intermission will come in, now, so I already know which one will be next, even though I don't know exactly when I'll get there.
also i don't like to break in a glove, but how could i resist the reference to the actual play, you know?
Chapter 32

Chapter Summary

Alana: Gray-Romantic
Alana: /And/ bi.

Zoe: Hey I’m bi too!
Alana: ^^

AcronMan has changed the chat name to Bi Squad (And Jared)
Jared: EVAN

Chapter Notes

warning: personal head canons ahead.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It’s the middle of the afternoon on a Saturday, when Evan is startled out of blankly staring at his wall by the sound of his phone going off. Needing any distraction from his boredom, he immediately pulls up the group chat which the alert was for.

Jared: holy shit
Alana: What is it?
Jared: I’m…………..
Jared:…………..
ConArtist: i swear to fucking god
Jared: a….
Jared: gay
You: Yeah, what’s new?
Jared: dude
Zoe: Congrats?
Alana: You’re coming out… like this?
Jared: I was never not out.
Jared: but I guess I never mentioned it

You: (Except that one time you broke into your parents liquor cabinet and got drunk and cried about how pretty boys were)
You: Why bring it up?

Jared: i just remembered
Jared: (also that nvr happened & u cant prove anything)

Zoe: Ok?
Zoe: (holy shit though is that real)

You: (Yes, it was a bonding experience)

Jared: anyway!!!!
Jared: sup heteros

ConArtist: how dare you

Zoe: ^Same

Alana: Actually....
Alana: Yeah.

Jared: omfg
Jared: ok then

Zoe: Wow all of us, huh
Zoe: I guess its true that we gather together

Jared: i cant believe evan is the token hetero

You: No.
Zoe: No?
You: I’m not.

Jared: WAIT SINCE FUCKING WHEN
Jared: u didnt tell me that

You: It never seemed like a good time to mention it?

Alana: Well, this has certainly been an experience.

ConArtist: you can say that again

Alana: Well,
Alana: this has certainly been,

ConArtist: I WAS KIDDING
Alana: ^_^

Zoe: Btw i’m not out yet so don’t tell anyone

ConArtist: also same.

You: Technically same? I mean I don’t really care that much, and I doubt my mom would care but…

Jared: guys im still caught up in the fact that
Jared: NOBODY HERE IS A STRAIGHT

ConArtist: yeah

TheInsanelyCoolDude has changed the chat name to Gay

Zoe: Dude

Jared: what

Alana: But I’m bi
Alana: Well, sorta.

Jared: sorta?

Alana: Gray-Romantic
Alana: /And/ bi.

Zoe: Hey I’m bi too!

Alana: ^^

AcronMan has changed the chat name to Bi Squad (And Jared)

Jared: EVAN

You: It’s more accurate now.

Zoe: you too huh?

You: Yes!

Jared: man
Jared: conman pls tell me ur not also bi

ConArtist: dont call me that

Jared: please

ConArtist: i mean im not but
ConArtist: i dont really care about the chat name

Zoe: What are you then
ConArtist: hmmm

Zoe: Hey i just came out to you
Zoe: Even playing field

Alana: I don’t think that’s how it works

Zoe: It’s not
Zoe: I’m joking

You: That doesn’t come across as well through text.
You: probably.

Zoe: Yeah.
Zoe: Sorry.

ConArtist: you're fine I was finding something
ConArtist: {Uploaded PanMan.png}

Alana: That's just a picture of you.
Alana: Oh. Oh I understand.

Jared: why r u so extra

ConArtist: (also demi-ro but)
ConArtist: (shrug)

You: Shrug.

ConArtist: yes shrug
ConArtist: wait was that a joke

You: About that time you said the same thing when I said Shrug? Yes.

Jared: I can’t fucking believe this.

TheInsanelyCoolDude has changed the chat name to Coming Out Hour

You: But you were already out?

Jared: shut the fuck up evan

You: I am shut up
You: This isn’t a verbal conversation.

ConArtist: is that just like a joke u make all the time?
ConArtist: because you said the same thing via text to me once

Zoe: I cant believe you used the word via

ConArtist: shut up zoe

Zoe: I AM shut up.
Evan jumps at the sound of a knock on his door. When he goes to open it, he finds Jared standing in front of it. “Jared?”

“Is Heidi here?”

“No?”

“Okay, good.” Jared takes a deep breath. “I can’t believe you’re bi and didn’t tell me!”

“S-sorry?” Evan pauses. “Wait, did you drive while in the group chat?!”

“No! Who the fuck do you take me for? I walked.”

“Oh. Oh, that makes sense.”

“Let’s celebrate!” Jared’s topic change- or return to the original topic, really- has Evan struggling to keep up.

“Okay… sure…”

Evan is suddenly reminded of when he and Jared were originally closer friends. Before Jared started being more of a jerk, and Evan stopped being able to talk to him without fumbling over his own word. Jared turns around, and raises an eyebrow at him, when Evan doesn’t follow him into the kitchen. Evan shakes his head, smiling.

“You probably don’t have booze, huh?”

“No. Even if I did, mom would notice if- if we took some.”

“That’s fair.” Jared hums in thought. “Wanna order pizza? Well, I’ll order it because you’re… you.”

“Thanks. Sure, why not?” Evan, for a moment, considers making this honesty hour go even further, and telling Jared about his arm. Then he thinks better of it. They’re being happy- being friends, spending a good time together- and he doesn’t want to bring that down with something sad.
“Ev? You okay there?”

“Yeah, yeah. I was just… thinking.”

“That’s never good.” Jared throws an arm over his shoulders, which has Evan leaning forward to accommodate their height difference. “So how about a Hawaiian-”

“Get out of my house.”

“Okay- Jesus- Pep and olives good?”

“Pep.” Evan repeats, smiles forming on his face. “Pep.”

“Pep.”

“Pep.”

“Pep.”

“Pepperoni.” Evan laughs, shaking his head. “Yeah, that works.”

“Pep and olives it is.”

“PEP!” Evan laughs again.

“Pep!”

“Why are-” Evan clears his throat- “why are we like this?”

“I don’t fucking know, man.”

*AcornMan* has changed the chat name to *Pep*

*ConArtist*: what the fuck does that mean

*Alana*: Pep….si?

*Zoe*: Pep…e?

*ConArtist*: you’re dead to me

*Zoe*: WHAT

*Zoe*: IT COULD BE RIGHT

*Alana*: :0

*Alana*: >:0

*Zoe*: :O

*ConArtist*: what the fuck

*You*: Pepp

*ConArtist*: pepp…er?
You: **PEPPER**  
You: No, it’s not pepper.

**Jared:** **PEP**  
**Jared:** pep and olives is ordered btw

You: we are literally standing right next to each other. You didn’t need to type that

**Jared:** yeah but what’s the fun in that  
**Jared:** dont give me that look evan

Zoe: I’m still trying to figure out Pep

**Alana:** Me too. :I

**Jared:** its pep

You: Pep is pep

**ConArtist:** Pepperoni

**Jared:** shit hes figured us out abort mission

You: We’ve been compromised.

**ConArtist:** what is happening today

You: I have no clue! But I think It’s funny, so it’s okay to me.

**Jared:** I ordered 2 peps  
**Jared:** so if any1 wants 2 join the pep party

You: Oh!  
You: We’re at my house.

**ConArtist:** pep  
**ConArtist:** yeah sure why not

Zoe: **WAIT FOR ME ASSHOLE IM COMING TOO**

**Alana:** I don’t know where you live, evan. :(  

**Zoe:** We’ll come get you first alana don’t worry

**Alana:** Thank you! ^^

You: **PEP PARTY**

**Jared:** **PEP PARTY**

**TheInsanelyCoolDude** has changed the chat name to **PEP PARTY**
In the end the “pep party” is rather uneventful. Although Alana does point out halfway through her third piece of pizza— that they could have called it a “pep rally,” and Evan is disappointed in himself for not making the joke. Jared immediately changed the chat name again. It’s not very eventful, but it’s fun. Evan doesn’t think his self of a year ago could have possibly imagined eating pizza with a group of friends that actually want him there.

Heidi come home at one point— after class, before work— and smiles brightly when she sees Evan with his friends. He feels embarrassment fill his face, while she expresses said happiness, but it doesn’t last long before she has to leave. “Love you. Oh, and be good, kids.”

A chorus of “yes Ms. Hansen,” fills the space a she leaves.

Evan can’t help but think about how different things are now. How the people around him he never would have imagined at his side.

How Zoe— who used to be so far away, and unreachable— sits in with her feet up on his coffee table. How she sticks two pieces of pizza on top of one another- toppings towards each other- and announces, “this is a sandwich,” before eating it. How she’s talking to him, and being his friend. Something he never would have imagined.

How the Alana who used to seem uninterested in what he had to say, who used to intimidate him, is now someone he believes will listen to him. At least, most of time. She ignores his warning that she’s going to make herself sick when she reaches for her fourth piece of pizza.

How Jared— his oldest friend— went from acting disinterested in Evan’s existence, to coming over all of his free will. Without even mentioning his car insurance. Evan didn’t think that would ever happen again. Yet here he is, fighting with Alana over the last piece of one of the pizza’s. Which the two of them have consumed all on their own.

Not to mention Connor, who went from being intimidating, and someone Evan hardly thought of, to his best friend. To the person he’s entrusted with more than anyone else, and, above all, the person who yells, “that is not a fucking sandwich!” while making a face that can only be described as disgusted.

Today’s a good day. I feel like I should have a lot to say, like I should find something really specific to point out but…

I’ve got nothing. Today was a good day. I’m happy.

So much has changed, and I knew that. I’ve thought about it a lot, but it’s hard not to look around me and go “holy shit when did this happen.” It’s a good disbelief though, an amazed one. I’m not the me of a year ago. I still have his issues, and I can’t pretend I’m so much better that I’m ”fixed” but…

Today was good. This week was good. Hell, the past few months- a few days aside- were good. I’m happy.

Chapter End Notes
Me: ML you can't just shove all your head canons into this story other people might not head canon-
Me: *shoving all my head canons into the story* Sorry what was that?

Why am i like this? I wasn't even tired writing this i just genuinely think calling pepperoni pep is funny. which is why you guys really shouldn't trust me with this story.

Fun fact: I've never come out to anyone directly. it's always just sorta me mentioning it in other context and my friends being like "cool." in fact they've never come out to me, I usually find out based on other things and/or them complaining about someone not acknowledging they exist.

btw is it fucked up i wanna draw fanart of my own fucking story? that's probably weird.

I considered naming this chapter "the coming out intermission" but last chapter was an intermission and all this isn't intermission material tbh.

Hey guys.... how does connor know he's demi-ro.........
hmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm
Chapter 33

Chapter Summary

“Alice is my wife, not my friend.”

Evan makes a startled noise. “Yes, but she can be both.”

“She can?!”

“Friend wife!” Noah gasps.

“Friend and wife!” Mia copies his gasp.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Evan settles on the floor in front of his couch, laptop on the coffee table in front of him. He crosses his legs, and takes deep breaths. It had taken days of working himself up, before the Wednesday in which he was supposed to have a video call with his half-siblings came. It isn’t like they intimidate him, but it’s the method of communication, and the possibility of seeing Joel that bothers him. Of course, he doesn’t actually expect Joel to show up, but that doesn’t erase his fear of the possibility.

As soon as the call pops up, asking him to accept it, he reaches out towards his laptop. Evan hesitates for all of two seconds, before hitting ‘accept.’

Noah’s face pops up, grin stretching over it. Mia’s a littler further from the camera, and she reaches out to tug her brother away, then sticks her own face in the camera. Danielle breathes a sigh from off camera. “Hello, Evan.”

“Hi, Danielle. Noah, Mia.” Evan raises a hand, waving at the kids. Noah waves back enthusiastically, and Mia raises both of her hands to wave. It’s hard to hold back a laugh at the two, but Evan manages it. “How are you?”

“I’m on a baseball team!” Mia gives a small, proud, giggle.

“Softball.” Danielle’s correction is soft, and goes ignored.

“I solved a milk puzzle!” Noah pulls a box up. The whole thing is white, with text saying it’s a five-hundred piece puzzle. “All the pieces are white!”

“Oh.” Evan has heard of the puzzles, and is nothing but impressed that Noah managed that. Evan is fairly sure it would take him over a year to solve it, if he could at all. “That’s… wow. That’s super impressive, Noah!”

“Thank you! It took three- no four- months.” Noah crosses his arms, nodding. Evan gives a smile in return.

“I have to get Mia’s things together for her practice today, so I’ll leave you to it.” Danielle’s voice
reaches him, as does the sound of footsteps making their way away. Evan vaguely remembers her mentioning they would only have an hour before the kids had to leave.

“I’m going to be a star player, just you wait.” Mia points at herself, and Evan nods.

“I believe it.”

“Oh! Mia, I’ll be right back. Distract him!” Noah stands, suddenly, and takes off. Mia’s eyebrows scrunch together, and her expression turns confused.

“What?”

“Mia?” Evan draws her attention back. “You’re in second grade, right? How’s that?”

“I have a lot of friends! School is- it’s boring. But! But I have lots of friends, and Alice said when we get older she’ll marry me, and then become president.”

“Sounds like she’s got everything figured out.”

“Not more than me! I’m- I’ll be a baseball star, and everyone will love me way more than anyone else!”

“I’ll support you, all the way.”

Mia nods, laughing. “Thank you!”

“I’m back!” Noah slides into frame, falling back into a sitting position. He’s brought with him the bonsai tree Evan had seen in the picture they sent him. “This is Evan Bon, he says hi.”

“Hello.” Evan’s voice wavers, laughter evident in it, but neither kid seems to notice.

“Tree’s can’t talk,” Mia states, bluntly. She crosses her arms, and Noah looks over at her in abject horror. “What?”

“Mia! You can’t just ruin dreams like that!” Noah huffs, clutching the tree’s pot harder.

“Oh!” Mia gaps, turning back to the screen. “I’m sorry Evan!”

“I’m alright.” Evan puts a hand to his chest. “Don’t worry.”

“Phew.”

“Hey, hey, have you ever seen a willow tree?” Noah leans forward, chin touching the tree in his arms. Evan nods.

“I have. They’re really pretty and cool, especially when you let their branches grow. They look like curtains, sort of? I really like them.”

“Me too!”

“I- I like tree’s too!” Mia exclaims.

“But you said they were lame.” Noah looks genuinely confused, which makes Mia smacking his back all the more distressing.

“Don’t hit each other!” Evan holds up his hands, an attempt to defuse the situation.
“I didn’t do anything.” Noah pouts, scooting away from his sister. Mia’s expression turns guilty, and she crosses her arms.

“I know, I know. Mia, what do you like, besides baseball?”

“Oh, uh.” Mia hums, thinking. Noah raises his hand, as if he’s in class. Though he speaks before Evan can make any move to ask him what he wants to say.

“She likes bugs!” Noah puts his hand down. “I think they’re gross.”

“Bugs are cool.” Evan leans back on his hands. “And spiders, too.”

“Spiders aren’t bugs?”

“No!” Mia huffs, shaking her head. “They’re arachnids?”

“Arachnids,” Evan corrects, and Mia grins.

“They’re so cool!”

“Mhm.” Evan nods.

“Have you ever seen Charlotte’s web? One day I’ll find a spider like that! They’ll be my best friend.”

“Is- uh, what was her name? Your friend- um- Alice? Is she not your best friend?”

“Alice is my wife, not my friend.”

Evan makes a startled noise. “Yes, but she can be both.”

“She can?!”

“Friend wife!” Noah gasps.

“Friend and wife!” Mia copies his gasp. Then they both laugh, and Evan finds himself laughing with them.

“Evan?” Heidi’s voice startles Evan, and he makes an audible noise of surprise. “What are you laughing about- oh.”

“Hey, mom.” Evan shifts, suddenly uncomfortable. The kids have gone quiet, leaving the room mostly silent. He hadn’t expected his mom to be back yet. Not that it matters she’s here- it’s not as if he’s doing something wrong- but not knowing she was going to be there makes her appearance startling.

“Who’s this?” She sits on the couch, next to him, and leans forward so she can see the screen.

“Mia, and Noah.” Evan motions towards them, they both wave. “Jo- Dad’s other kids.” He probably shouldn’t use Joel name in front of the kids, he realizes.

“Hi!” Mia greets, loudly. Noah puts a hand over his ear closest to her.

“Hello.” Heidi offers a smile. “Nice to meet you both.”

“Nice to meet you, Ms. Evan’s mom.” Noah grins. Heidi gives a small laugh.
“You’re home early,” Evan says, quietly. He’s not sure if the kids can hear him, but doesn’t think it matters since it isn’t directed at them.

“Professor got sick, so class was canceled.” Heidi shrugs. Then, quieter, so the kids definitely can’t hear her, “I bought ice-cream on the way home, but I see your busy at the moment.”

“They have to leave in-” Evan glances at the time- “forty minutes.”

“I’ll leave you too it, then.” Heidi smiles, and turns to wave at the kids. “Well, I have to go do something, but it was nice to meet you.”

“Yeah.” Mia nods furiously. Noah waves back.

Danielle returns, this time coming into frame, just to tell the kids they need to leave and to say goodbye. Mia waves, doing just that, while Noah frowns. Noah, after a moment, joins her in waving at the camera reluctantly. Evan’s goodbye is to tell them he’ll talk to them soon, which he can’t say for sure is true. He hopes it is.

Today was a good day and here’s why. Honestly I never expected to talk to my (half) siblings again. I’m glad I have. That I was wrong. They’re such sweet kids, and I honestly like seeing them. Of course I don’t think I could handle them on a regular basis; they’re still energetic kids and I’m a whole seventeen years old- I know, I’m so old- and an introvert.

Still, it was nice to talk to them.

Oh! And mom bought a pint of ice cream, and we ate that together, and talked. That was nice, too. I didn’t realize how much such a small tradition- we used to do that whenever I got my grades back and they were A’s, I miss that- would bring back such a flood of happiness. Yet here I am.

Evan decides to leave out the fact that he feels like he’s had too much ice cream for the rest of the year, and feels slightly sick. It was still a good day.

Chapter End Notes

After the.. uh, comedy of the last chapter, and the emotions of the few before it, I think i needed to write something simple and nice.

and some of you really liked noah and mia, so.

Fun fact: I seriously overthink the lives of character who weren’t ever intended to have big roles, so there are a lot of small details about Noah and Mia's lives that i know.

If you ever wanted to hear those, here they are: Noah is in High-Cap (the highly capable program) and is best at math and writing. He really likes math, because he's good at it, and it makes him feel smart. He's currently doing 7th grade math, despite being in 5th grade (bc, as i said, he's in high-cap) and will brag about it if you give him the chance. Though he's good at writing from a content standpoint, his spelling tends to be fairly inconsistent.
Mia is really popular in her second grade class, and is really good at P.E. and Science. She likes when they talk about animals the most. Mia also tries to help her parents cook whenever possible, she says if she can't be a baseball player- "injuries happen! I want to be prepared" - then she'll be a chef. She's a very attention hungry kid, but she doesn't want other people to be left out of things, either.

If they fight they tend to make up pretty quickly, when they don't Danielle will sit them down and help them talk it out with each other. They're pretty good kids, and don't get in trouble much. Except occasionally Mia will break something or Noah will say something too mean.

When Mia cries Noah will hug her and put his head against her chin and tell Mia she's "The best sister in the world" until she stops crying and then he'll ask their mom to give Mia fruit snacks because she loves those. When Noah cries Mia will promise to fight whatever made him cry- if she didn't do it- and tell knock knock jokes until she can make him laugh. Usually what get's him is "who's there" "your sister, you can see me" Noah really likes doing puzzles. Mia likes playing video games. Mia has an entire shelf in her room dedicated to pokemon stuff- including literally every episode on disk, because she really, really likes pokemon. Noah has a wall in his room where he puts up drawing, report cards, pictures of things he likes, anything he wants to remember later. Mia constantly calls Noah a nerd. Noah doesn't mind this.

anyway. yeah.

(the highly capable program isn't all that special in all honesty, just... for the record)
Chapter 34

Chapter Summary

She looks over them, small smile on her face.

“I wonder if I could convince them to do the same for me,” She stage-whispers. Connor rolls his eyes.

“Maybe later…” Connor’s voice is quiet enough Evan almost isn’t sure he’s heard it. Cynthia’s growing smile, though, indicates that Connor really had spoken.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Evan doesn’t think he’s been spending that much time at the Murphy’s house.

This is disproved by Connor pointing out Evan has spent every night for a week straight at their house. It’s strange, he thinks, how comfortable he’s become in a place he once thought he could never return to. Larry has long since stopped glaring at him at every opportunity, and Zoe is his friend- and has a better relationship with her brother- now. Not to mention Cynthia has always been fairly inviting.

It’s pretty easy to spend time there. At the moment- the last Saturday of March, in the evening- he’s sitting on Connor’s floor as the Murphy siblings try to convince Evan to let them paint his nails. His poor, bitten down, and uneven, nails. “Come on, we probably have remover if you’re that worried about it.”

“Probably?!” Evan’s head snaps to Zoe, who shrugs.

“Yeah… probably.”

“Connor, help.” Turning his attention to Connor immediately dashes his hopes. Connor waves a bottle of nail-polish in front of Evan’s face. “Guys…”

It’s not that he’s particularly against the idea. Mostly he just doesn’t trust them, specifically, to do it without messing with him. “Zoe’s got lots of colours.”

“Fine, fine.” Evan huffs. “But I need you both to- to promise me you’ll be serious about it.”

“I’m always serious about this.” Connor nods.

“No worries, I promise.” Zoe gives him a thumbs up, and Evan sighs. “So, Colour?”

“I’ll… let you guys figure that out.”

At first, Zoe settles on painting his right hand soft blue and purple, alternating. Then Connor, not wanting to break the pattern, does the same on Evan’s left, with the opposite distribution. So, he sits there, while they each paint one of his hands. Zoe suggest multiple coats, and Evan can only shrug and nod in response. In the end, he’s sitting there for a good hour and a half. During which time,
they have idle, meaningless conversation.

It’s nice.

Evan is lucky that, by the time Cynthia calls the group down for dinner, his nails are dry. He’s less lucky that he realizes they somehow got polish on his palms. When he questions this, Zoe looks down at her own hands, and finds her fingertips with smudged polish dried on them. Connor laughs at them, his hands undamaged.

A wave of self-consciousness falls over Evan when he sits down at the table, and he can’t stop glancing at his own hands. It’s pretty, and he like’s the job they’ve done, but that doesn’t make him feel any less worried about other people’s reactions to it.

Larry makes a small comment about how they’ve “gotten Evan too,” which has Cynthia weaving a tale of the younger Murphy siblings.

“Connor bit his nails a lot, and Zoe wanted someone to practice on.” Cynthia laughs. “Well, as you can imagine Connor fought the whole way, not wanting to let her near his nails. He gave in eventually, though. She wore him down.”

“She used to have kicked puppy eyes,” Connor mutters.

“I was very cute.”

“Brag about it.”

“Anyway,” Cynthia cuts them off, shaking her head. “After that I guess he really liked having his nails painted. They both got very good at it, too. So they needed a new subject. Now, I had recently gotten my nails done perfunctionally, so…”

“They were both cute kids.” Larry sighs, shaking his head.

“We didn’t even have to beg, he just gave in.” Zoe grins. “He was easier to convince than you were, even.”

“I painted his left hand pink.” Connor laughs, and Larry sighs again. “I thought it suited him.”

“Of course you did.” Larry shakes his head. “Zoe was more kind, with green.”

“They did a pretty good job!” Cynthia lets out a small chuckle. “I see they’ve only gotten better since. May I see them?”

Cynthia motions for Evan’s hand, but gives him chance not to hand his, well, hand over. Still, he has trouble saying no to people, especially when that person is his friend’s mom, who’s been nothing but nice to him. So he does, and she looks over them, small smile on her face.

“I wonder if I could convince them to do the same for me,” She stage-whispers. Connor rolls his eyes.

“Maybe later…” Connor’s voice is quiet enough Evan almost isn’t sure he’s heard it. Cynthia’s growing smile, though, indicates that Connor really had spoken.
“What’s your Hogwarts house?” The question is random, and Evan looks up at Connor, confused.

“What- what?”

“I was just thinking about it.” Connor shrugs. “I’ve been going through my books again recently, and realized it had been a while since I read the HP books. So I started re-reading them- I was bored- anyway, I’ve just been thinking about that. I’m guessing Hufflepuff.”

“I’m… not.”

“You’re not?”

“No- well- I’m uh- I’m actually… a Slytherin.”

“You are? You. Evan Hansen. Seriously?!” Connor laughs, likely because of the mental image of Evan being from the house known for having dark wizards. “How.”

“W-well I don’t know.” Evan shrugs. “I took the quiz? Not the- not the official one. Well, sort of the official one? Because the real one chooses a few of the many questions at random and- uh- someone put together all of the questions for so your result is more accurate and… Slytherin.”

“I. can’t fucking believe this. You’re breaking my whole world view.”

“Sorry?” Evan shrugs. Then, a beat, and Evan speaks again. “Wait, what about you?

“…Hufflepuff.”

“You’re lying.”

“No.”

Evan gives a startled, choking laugh. “How are you not a Slytherin?!”

“I know right! Yellow isn’t my colour.”

“That wasn’t the- the thing I thought was weird, but okay.”

“What? Do you not think I’m Hufflepuff material? I’ll have you know I’m the most fucking Hufflepuff person in the universe.”

“Sure, alright, if- if you say so.” Evan tries to cover a laugh. “I guess- I guess I makes sense we’re friends, then.”

“What.” It’s more of an expression of confusion, than an actual questions, but Evan feels the need to respond anyway.

“Haven’t you heard? Hufflepuff’s and Slytherins make really good friends.”

“Never heard that.”

“it’s true!”

The door to Connor’s room swings open a surprising amount of force. “Yo, assholes, it’s like eleven at night.”

“It’s what?!” Evan fumbles to reach for his phone, and lo and behold, Zoe’s right. A mild about of
panic sets in- he should be home by now, or at least have told his mom- about the situation. Connor continues to stare at his door, as if he’s trying to figure something out.

“Either go to sleep, or shut up, I have to band practice tomorrow! The walls aren’t that thick!” Her annoyance doesn’t seem entirely genuine, but Evan doesn’t argue.

“S-sorry, Zoe.”

“It’s okay.” The annoyance quickly fades from her, her act falling away. “I’m only half joking, though, so please be quiet.”

“My door was locked.” Connor finally speaks.

“It swung right open? Are you sure it was-” Zoe reaches over to look at the handle- “wait; why was your door locked?”

There’s a significant pause, before Connor shrugs. “Locked it out of habit.”

“Are you two doing something weird?”

“No. What the fuck do you take me for?”

“My brother.”

Connor rolls his eyes. “Fine, what do you take Evan for?”

“Someone who has a hard time telling people no.”

“Hey!” Evan frowns. “I mean- okay so you might be right, but I’m still offended.”

Zoe shrugs, unapologetic, and gives one last, “be quiet,” before heading back to her room. Connor glances at his door, still frowning, then at Evan. “Are you staying here, then?”

“I- uh- is that okay?”

“Sure.”

“Then- well- yes. I just- I gotta text my mom.”

“Okay.” Connor shrugs, standing to look at his door while Evan does that. Evan hears Connor mutter a small, “fuck the lock is broken.”

They end up playing video games- with the volume all but muted- until three in the morning, at which time Cynthia leans into the room, and begs them to rest. She looks tired, as if she’d just woken up. Evan wonders what woke her, but doesn’t ask. He doesn’t think they were being very loud.

*Today’s a good day and here’s why.*

Evan sighs, eyes tried and drooping. He doesn’t have his laptop, it’s now three-thirty in the morning, and typing an entire letter on his phone seems like a bad idea as soon as he starts it. Connor kicks him from where he lays above Evan- who’s on the floor- and Evan makes a halfhearted, annoyed noise.
“God, go to sleep, you weirdo.”

“Goodnight to you too.” Evan’s words turn to a mumble at the end of his sentence. With one last, purposefully loud, sigh, he sets his phone aside, and tries to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter is really self indulgent.

Listen you can pry Hufflepuff Connor from my cold, dead hands. (And slytherin evan, for that matter.)
I made a post on my deh/bmc tumblr (howdochill) about my headcanons for the whole group as soon as i realized what i was going to do with this chapter.
blue and purple are good colours. Too bad three colours would have messed up the evenness of distribution or i would have added pink.

APPARENTLY, connor's room has an xbox controller in it, in the musical. what a nerd.

I tried to do this as quickly as my mind would allow after the last chapter, because the last chapter was mostly Evan + oc's and I felt the need to make sure I posted some stuff for anyone who may not have cared about the sib kids.
The Accepting Intermission

Chapter Summary

Cynthia shakes her head. “You know I love you both, right? Nothing will change that.”

“Nothing,” Connor repeats, quietly, staring at his hands.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

April first passes without anything terrible happening, much to Evan’s relief. Jared briefly makes an attempt at a joke, but Evan manages to mostly avoid anyone he expects pranks from by hiding in the Murphy household. Connor has no interest in holiday, and Zoe is absent- at band practice- so Evan expects nothing to happen.

The only prank that gets him is when Cynthia offered them chocolate chip cookies, which turn out to actually be raisin. Evan tried not to react, face scrunched up involuntarily, but Connor spit his out in shock, coughing. Cynthia’s apologetic laughter was followed by her giving them actual chocolate chip cookies, and leaving them be.

Evan is sitting on the floor, next to Connor, and doing homework. Connor seems determined not to do any homework at all, and has been on his phone the entire afternoon. Evan sighs, kick Connor’s legs, and motions to the books. He only gets kicked in return, and Connor turning back to his phone.

“This is why your grades suck.”

“This is why you’re a nerd.”

Knocking startles them out of their conversation, and they find Cynthia standing in the doorway. She has a basket under her arm, and offers a small smile. “Connor, if you have anything you want washed I’m doing laundry.”

Connor pauses, frowning, then makes his way over to his desk chair. Said chair is pilled up with clothes that may or may not be clean. Evan watches as Connor takes an armful of clothes from the pile- at random- and walks over to drop them into Cynthia’s basket. She frowns at him, shaking her head, and turns to leave.

“Thanks, mom…” Connor mutters, quietly enough both Evan and Cynthia do a double take, to make sure they heard him correctly. Then Cynthia smiles, pats his shoulder, and leaves the room. The whole interaction is strange to see, especially for Evan, who’s used to only seeing Connor and his mother interact at dinners. Connor turns, raises an eyebrow at Evan- probably for staring- and crosses his arms. “What?”

“Nothing, nothing.”
The whole thing is an accident. In fact, Evan believes he has absolutely no responsibility for what happens.

It’s a Friday afternoon. Larry is at work, Cynthia has gone to the store, apparently, and Evan and the Murphy siblings have taken residence in the living room of the Murphy home. One joke turns into a back and forth between Zoe and Connor, with faux insults that are entirely jokes. They both know better than to say anything the other would actually be hurt by.

So Evan sits there, listening to them trade these, laughing quietly to himself.

“Dandelion smoker!”

“I don’t smoke dandelions you unless bicycle.”

Zoe mock-gasp, and then there’s significant pause before she laugh. Probably realizing bicycle is a bi joke. “What- whatever you say, pan fucker.”

“I don’t fuck pan’s you…” the door opens, but neither Zoe nor Connor seem to notice. Evan opens his mouth to speak- to warn them- but Connor’s voice comes to quickly. “You… shit I can’t think of any more bi jokes. What other words have bi in them…”

“Guys your mo-”

“Ha, I win, you useless pansexual.”

“-m is back.” Evan’s words have both of them freezing. Slowly, as if it’s a horror movie, they turn their heads to find Cynthia standing there. She’s holding grocery bags, and her eyes are wide.

“Oh no,” Is Zoe’s muttered response.

“Shit,” Is Connors, significantly less than muttered, response.

“Well…” Cynthia clear her throat. “I’m sure this isn’t how you wanted me to find out, was it?”

“Son of a-”

“Connor!” Cynthia sighs. “Would one of you help me put things away? Then we can discuss this, if you want.”

Neither of them look particularly like this is a discussion they want to have. In fact, neither of them move to follow her into the kitchen, either. Instead, they both drop onto the couch, faces in their hands. Evan, unsure what to do, follows Cynthia into the kitchen.

“Oh, Evan?”

“They’re both a little… distraught.” Cynthia nods at that. “So… can I help somehow?”

“Oh, thank you, but you don’t have to.” There’s a pause, where Evan just shifts awkwardly on his feet, before Cynthia points to one of the bags. “I suppose you can help me put things in the fridge before they get warm, huh?”

“Okay!”

When things are put away, Cynthia glances into the living room, and finds Zoe and Connor haven’t
moved. They don’t look any more ready to have the coming discussion, so Cynthia shakes her head, and turns back into the kitchen. Evan, unsure of what to do, stands to the side, and picks at the hem of his shirt.

“Well,” Cynthia starts, humming in thought, “something tells me hot chocolate wont help on such a warm day. I suppose we can make use of that ice cream I just bought.”

“Um.” Evan has to take a breath and force words past his tongue. “Should I- should I leave?”

“No, you’re fine.” Cynthia’s voice is soft, comforting in a way Evan believes only a moms can be. “They’ll probably feel better if you’re here.”

Cynthia hands each of her kids a bowl of ice cream before dropping into a chair and waiting. She has the patience Evan guesses could only come from dealing with two children, who spent many years fighting with each other and their parents. It’s Zoe who finally speaks.

“So you heard… how much?”

“Enough to have both of my children accidently come out.” Cynthia shakes her head. “You know I love you both, right? Nothing will change that.”

“Nothing,” Connor repeats, quietly, staring at his hands. Evan really feels like he shouldn’t be here, like this isn’t a moment he should be allowed to see. Moving to the door, leaving, would just bring attention to him, though. He’s pretty sure he wouldn’t be able to handle that. So he stays, even though he doesn’t think he should.

“Nothing.” Cynthia emphasizes the word. Connor nods. Some part of Evan doesn’t think Connor is thinking about the discussion at hand, when he repeats the word once again, to himself.

“Could you not tell dad?” Zoe clutches the bowl in her hands tighter. Evan’s pretty sure he’s never seen her this nervous. “Even if he wouldn’t care I don’t- I’m just not ready for that, okay?”

“Okay.” Cynthia nods. “Even if I wanted to talk to him about it, I wouldn’t do it without you both being okay with it. If you don’t want him to know, I don’t see any reason to say anything.”

“Thanks.” Zoe nods. “Well, that’s all, right? I’m going to my room then.”

“Okay…” Zoe leave the room at a startlingly quick pace, taking her bowl with her. Connor continues to sit, staring down at the ice cream in front of him. “Connor?”

“I don’t-” Connor sighs, running a hand through his hair. “I don’t get you.” Then he stands, before Cynthia can respond, and leaves the room, too. Evan stands there, unsure if he should follow. “Evan?”

“Huh?” His head snaps quickly in Cynthia’s direction.

“Aren’t you going with him?”

“Oh! Right, yeah.” Then Evan follows.
“Okay… you okay?”

“I don’t get her.”

“Yeah… I- uh- gathered that.”

“I just-” Connor sighs, seemingly frustrated. Evan sits down next to him, silent. “I’ve been so… shitty. Zoe’s just starting to be able to stand me again- you know- and I just don’t… I don’t get how the hell she can say that. As if I didn’t treat her just as bad as the rest of them. Hell, at least I was arguing with Larry and Zoe. I just got angry at her for shit that was mostly my fucking fault I don’t-”

“Connor.”

“How can she love me?” The question surprises Evan. Maybe more than it should.

A memory bubbles up, reminding Evan of standing at the top of a tree and thinking, “how can my mother even stand me, I’m such a mess.” Of thinking she’s be better off without him. He knows it’s not the same. Evan isn’t disillusioned about their situations. Still, he can understand the feeling- even just a little- of not understanding their parents. Not knowing how their mothers haven’t just… given up on them yet.

“I just don’t get it.” Connor sighs again, shoving another spoonful of ice cream into his mouth.

“Well…” Evan shrugs. “She’s your mom. Moms are weird.”


“Thanks, I try.”

“But why’d she give us ice cream?”

“She- uh- said it was too warm for hot chocolate?”

“Oh.” Realization forms over Connor’s face, though Evan isn’t sure why. Maybe he’s missing something. “You know… I think I owe Cynthia- my mom- an apology, too. I mean- I already apologized to Zoe, so.” Connor ends his sentence with a shrug, and Evan nods.

“Okay.”

“So I apologized to my mom and she was like ‘i know connor its ok’ what the fuck”

“That’s good”

“yeah but what the fuck”

“???”

“idk i guess i just keep expecting shit to go wrong, you know?”

“Yeah, I get what you mean.”

Chapter End Notes
don't accidentally out yourself's guys.

FEAR

okay so, yeah, that was just an excuse to get the line "nothing will change that" in there

sue me (don't sue me i have like 5 bucks to my name)

Listen the moms in DEH are good and i love them both.

fun fact: this intermission and the one before it have the shortest number of chapters between them of any intermission.

guys (in the story) it's already april. it started in september. can you believe it?

Edit: I FORGOT THE SUMMARY FOR THIS CHAPTER GDI
Chapter 36

Chapter Summary

Evan is looking through his folder of letters to himself, for ones he can show to Dr. Sherman to try and appear as if he’s a functioning human being. There are a lot that he considers just throwing away- or burning- because they’re too negative, and take him back to a bad place. One, in particular, brings him back to the beginning of the school year.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Evan is looking through his folder of letters to himself, for ones he can show to Dr. Sherman to try and appear as if he’s a functioning human being. There are a lot that he considers just throwing away- or burning- because they’re too negative, and take him back to a bad place. One, in particular, brings him back to the beginning of the school year.

Today’s not going to be a good day. It’s not going to be a good day, or a good week, or a good year. Why would it be?

Evan sighs, frowning.

I’m so stupid. I don’t know why I even bother. Who goes up to someone and says “hey I’m sick let’s be sick together” what was I thinking? Why can’t I just act like a normal person for once in my life. Oh, right, because I’m a disaster.

Why do I even bother? Nobody wants to be my friend, I should have figured that out years ago. I should have figured that out when my only friend made sure to remind me that he didn’t want me around. I should have figured that out when talking to people started making me sick to my stomach.

I can’t do this. I could never do this.

So it won’t be a good or amazing or even worthwhile day. Or year. Or life for that matter.

I mean, let’s be honest. Nobody even knows I’m here. I’m not part of anything, I’m not worth anything. No matter how much I want to be. The only person who might care is my mom, and she’d be better off without me. Hell, everyone probably would be. No… actually, that would require they notice me at all. Which they don’t. They never will.

Let’s face it. Nobody would even noticed if I just disappeared.
Evan stares at the words. Just stares and processes. Part of him want to keep the letter, a sign of all his progress, but…

Evan rips the paper in half. Then again. And again. Until he has nothing but shreds of paper—far too ripped up to put back together—that he throws away. *He’d made progress*, he tells himself. He’s made too much progress to dwell on the thoughts of his past self.

Thoughts he had internalized. That he now has someone to share with, without fearing judgment. Evan takes a deep breath and releases it, along with the tension he’s built up while reading the letter. He’s started being honest. Started not to keep that stuff behind thinly veiled lies. *He’s doing better.*

*Honest*, he thinks. “I still haven’t…”

Evan doesn’t want to tell his mom. She’d cry, and he’d cry, and she’d cry more, and the whole thing would be a mess. Really, he’s not sure he could face her with the information. Doesn’t believe he can bring himself to tell her what he did.

But he wants to be honest with people. He wants to tell them. Wants to admit what he did, and what had changed since then. Telling himself the truth was hard. Admiting to himself that he hadn’t fallen was probably the most difficult thing he’d ever done, but he’d known the truth already. Telling Connor wasn’t nearly as hard, because the other already knew, and Evan had just wanted to say it. To, for once, say it with intent.

The thought of telling anyone else makes fear swell up in his gut, but he wants to. He wants to be able to. So he considers his friends, considers what he would say to them.

Evan briefly considers texting Jared, “Hey guess who lied about how they broke their arm.” However, he reconsiders this as soon as he thinks it. That’s probably not the best way to start the conversation. Evan isn’t sure if he’s more scared of having the conversation in person—where he can’t throw his phone away immediately after the conversation—or over text where he can’t really see the reaction to it.

In the end he asks Jared if he’s busy, and—upon being told he isn’t—asks Jared to come over by saying something really important happened. It’s technically not a lie, since something had happened. Except that the thing in question had happened months earlier. While waiting, Evan anxiously texts Connor.

“I’M GONNA DO THE THING I’M SCARED.”

“can you be more specific”

“The thing is about my arm.”

“oh. your scared? but your doing it?”

“Honesty is scary. What if I tell the truth and Jared goes ‘wow you’re too fucked up to be friends with’ and then hates me.”

“evan. you know that wont happen.”

“Probably.”
“hes an asshole not heartless”

“Yes, I mean, I know that but…”

“if he does say something like that ill kick his ass”

“Thanks. But please don’t.”

“no promises.”

Evan looks up from his phone- and ceases pacing around his living room- when the door open. Evan sighs. Jared should really learn to wait for Evan to let him in. As is, Evan is still not mentally prepared. He told himself he would do this, though. He refuses to keep this a secret from everyone anymore.

“Okay what happened?!?” Are the first words out of Jared’s mouth. He slides into the living room, expression worried. For a second, Evan considers that maybe his choice of words could have been better. That maybe he shouldn’t have said something had happened.

“Nothing- well- nothing new happened.” Evan sighs. “I just… I need to tell you something? I lied about- about something I did, and I think- I want to tell you the truth, now.”

“Okay?” Jared breaths a sigh, and moves to sit down. Evan follows. “Go ahead, I guess.”

“So… what do- what do you remember about what I- uh- told you about my arm?”

“Your… arm?”

“When I broke it?”

“You fell out a tree? I think you said the branch broke, or something?”

“Y-yeah that’s… what I said.” Evan nods, biting his lip and avoiding Jared’s eyes.

“You’re gonna have to fill me in here, because I have no clue what you’re so worked up about.”

“That’s- uh- I’m-” Evan fumbles to build sentences, but nothing forms.

“Jesus.” Jared gives a small sigh. “Can you just, take deep breathes or something. You’re freaking out.”

“I’m not freaking out!”

“Evan.”

“Fine!” Evan throws his hands up. An argument is not what he’s trying to accomplish. “Well… I lied to you.”

“Then how-”

“No! Wait I- It was sort of true.”

“Sort of? How is it sort of true? Did you fall out of a tree or not?”

“I didn’t… fall.”

“So you didn’t fall out of a tree? What happened then? I don’t understand.”
“I fell out of a tree but I didn’t… fall…”

“I don’t- I don’t get it.” Jared begins wringing his hands together. Evan has no doubt, from the look on his face that Jared does get it. Maybe he just wants Evan to admit it, or maybe he wants Evan to say he’s wrong. Either way, Jared stares, waiting.

“I let- I let go of- of the tree, Jared.”

“No you-”

“I was- I just- I felt so alone.” Evan’s voice cracks and he curses. He doesn’t want to cry. There are too many words lodged in his throat, trying to escape, for him to cry. Evan knows if he starts crying he won’t be able to breathe, let alone talk. Jared shakes his head.

“That’s- Evan you didn’t…”

“I thought- I figured- I didn’t think anyone would care. If I just… let go everyone would- would be better off, or not notice so I… let go. I tried to- I’m sorry- I really just… I assumed I would die.”

“I would have cared!” Jared stands. His voice shakes, and he mutters something incoherent.

“I didn’t think that!” Evan wraps his arms around himself in the hopes it won’t be obvious he’s started shaking. It’s probably still obvious, he thinks, seeing Jared’s concerned look. “We- I mentioned before- we talked about how your jokes got- got to me. How I didn’t think- I thought you weren’t really my friend. That you didn’t want to be. I thought nobody would notice, and- and they didn’t! I laid there for minutes, and nobody ever came. I had to get myself up and- and find my boss myself.”

Jared stares. He doesn’t speak just… stares. It’s unnerving, and Evan can feel his attempts to stay calm unraveling. With them, his arms loosen from his frame. His hands shake- his whole body does, actually- and he has to tear his eyes away from Jared. Away from that look, he can’t quite place.

“I’m sorry-”

“I’m so sorry, Evan,” Jared says, interrupting Evan.

They’re both silent. Jared sit back down, next to Evan, and they’re silent. He wraps an arm around Evan, once assured he can, and they’re silent. Evan breathes out, shakily and audibly, but they’re otherwise silent.

The silence just makes the whole thing worse. Silence leaves him with his thoughts. Silence let’s Evan think about how much he wouldn’t have believed this would happen months ago. Silence is bitter, and hurt, and reminds him of the end of spring. Of thinking, “it’s not like he would miss me,” and giving up on a friendship long past even being called one.

“I really didn’t… I never thought that- that you cared. I’m sorry. I know- it isn’t- I don’t want you to-”

“If you’re trying to avoid making me feel guilty, it’s a little late for that.” The words are harsher than Evan expects. Based on Jared’s expression, though, they’re harsher than he expects, too. “I… listen, I know I’m sort of- a little- maybe- an asshole. I get that. But- you- you’re my friend okay? I’d care if you- if you died. Back then I would have, too, okay?”

“Yeah… okay… thank you.”

They’re silent.
Jared pulls out his phone, purposefully making sure Evan can see it. He pulls up the messaging app, goes to Evan’s name, and changes it from AcornMan to BonsaiBoy. Evan isn’t sure that’s much better, but it has less of a falling connotation.

“I can’t change your username itself, but I can do this.”

“Thanks.”

“Besides, this one has alliteration, and I’m all about that.”

“Wow- wait a second did you change Zoe’s name to JazzSolo? Really?”

“Yes.”

“Why?” The only response Evan gets is a shrug.

---

Today was- is- a good day and here’s why. Honesty! Yeah I’m bringing that back, fight me. (Can I fight myself? Would that create a paradox? I got off topic.)

I know honesty I have to work on still. (Still work on? future me- revise this) Because rather than being honest, I know I tend to try and avoid awkwardness or (god forbid) confrontation. So, yeah, I’m still working on that, and I can’t say “I’m totally honest now so everything is great.”

I can, however, say that I’ve added another person to the list of people who know about…. “the thing.” and honestly? I feel a lot better. It feels like a really long time, since my issues with Jared were “resolved” but…

I think I was still holding onto some bitterness. Bitterness that would have been much easier to get rid of had I… you know… been fucking honest. Go figure. But hey! I have been now, and honestly? (get It) I feel way better!

Maybe I woke up really early because I was stressed. And maybe I stayed up way more than needed because I was happy. And MAYBE I’ve been up 20 hours but, like, emotionally? I’m doing pretty great.

(future me- fix this mess so you can give it to dr sherman)

Evan passes out approximately two minutes after setting his laptop aside. Future Evan does not, in fact, fix the letter.

---

Chapter End Notes

Guess who got some fucking self control and didn’t post this the second it was done? It's me!

Yeah, i had this done last night, but figured i could wait until a more reasonable hour to post it. on that note, there might be another chapter today, but i'm not sure.
Me @ Myself: whew, this angst break has been pretty great
Me: uh... about that
me @ myself: don you fucking dare
me: so I wrote this chapter
me @ myself: GOD DAMN IT ML

basically every angst chapter.
Chapter 37

Chapter Summary

“Mhm. Love you too.” Evan waves as she backs away from the door, concern still evident on her face. “Bye! Oh, and, also I like boys.”

Then Evan slams the door shut, and runs back to his room.

He thinks thing’s went pretty well.

Chapter Notes

told you there’d be another chapter today!

Nothing changes, and that’s fine. Honestly Evan would have been distressed if something had dramatically changed. Things are going good- for the most part- and he doesn’t want to lose that.

Though he considers telling more of his friends, or his mother, he doesn’t. Zoe and Alana are both great people, and he trusts them, but he’s not prepared to tell either of them. As far as his mother…

Evan doesn’t want to worry her. Heidi has plenty of worries on her own, or because of him. Besides, a bitter part of his brain supplies, it’s not like she’s ever around. He hasn’t seen her hardly at all since early March. Though he doesn’t want to be upset about this- she’s trying, for his sake, he reminds himself- it’s hard not to be upset that he never sees her.

So, Evan doesn’t tell anyone else. At least, he decides not to, yet.

There is something, though, he wants to be honest about. Evan knows he doesn’t have to, that he’s not obligated to, that it’s not something he’s lying about. Still, he wants to.

So when his mom is leaving for class, he walks her to the door. This is the first time in weeks he’s actually been home and/or up when she left, and he finds himself avoiding her eyes the entire time. Which get’s her suspicion levels through the roof, but he tries to ignore that. Hopes that knowing she’s leaving will make saying it easier.

“Is everything okay?”

“Yeah, yeah. Nothing’s wrong.” Evan nods, but Heidi doesn’t seem convinced.

“Okay… well I’m going to class… love you.”

“Mhm. Love you too.” Evan waves as she backs away from the door, concern still evident on her
face. “Bye! Oh, and, also I like boys.”

Then Evan slams the door shut, and runs back to his room.

He thinks thing’s went pretty well.

While his mother texts him- saying how she loves him, and nothing has changed- Evan sits on his floor in what he has deemed ‘extreme embarrassment without panic’ mode. A rare state for him to be in. He texts Jared what amounts to three paragraphs of screaming, before he manages a coherent message.

“On a scale of 1 to telling your mom you like boys and shutting the door in her face, how bad do you think my coming out went?”

“jfc evan O_O”

“Why that face”

“felt right”

“I’m not even like? Panicking? Or worried? Like I knew she wouldn’t care its just embarrassing that I did it liKE THAT”

“that is p embarassing”

“Embarrassing*”

“dude”

“I knwo I know I’m sorry”

“know*”

“fuck”

“.O that wasnt capitalized who r u”

“Embarrassment man. BonsaiBoys sidekick.”

“what”

“Actually bonsaiboy sounds more like a sidekick name doesn’t it.”

“r u ok?”

“Yeah, no, I'm okay.”

“mnhhmmmmmm”

“I am!”

Evan’s next conversation with his mother isn’t nearly as eventful as he assumes it will be. After working up the courage to face her, he prepares to answer questions he expects to happen. Except…
she doesn’t ask much.

“So, you like boys?”

“Yes…”

“Okay.” Heidi nods, offering a smile. “Do you also like girls? Or has that changed? Or maybe it was never the case?”

“No I- I also like girls. I’m bi.”

“Okay. Thank you for telling me.”

“Yeah…” Evan nods. “Is that… all?”

“Unless there’s something else you want to tell me?”

“No, that’s it.” Evan shakes his head, Heidi nods, and Evan finds himself being pulled into a hug.

In the end, it doesn’t change anything. Which is relieving. Evan feels like he’s finding himself being honest about things that, inevitably, don’t change much, lately. Which is fine; he’s actually glad to keep things going how they have been.

There’s something to be said for being able to sit in a room with someone else and not talk to them. In being comfortable with that. Which is why Evan sits on the floor- because somehow that’s always the case- of Connor’s room, while they both pay attention to their phones rather than each other. Occasionally, they’ll look up to point something out to each other, but mostly it’s just nice to sit there. Nice to not be alone.

It’s also why Evan hesitate for a good three minutes to bring up the question that has popped into his head. He looks down at his phone where he has tumblr open- which is unfortunate because he’d managed to avoid it for a whole three weeks- and is only further reminded of his question.

“Hey remember when we both confessed to having tumblrs?”

“Is confessed really the word you want to use there?” Connor glances up at him, but otherwise doesn’t move.

“Yes. We both know that it’s a confession worthy admission.”

“True.”

“W-well, uh, I never actually asked what yours is.” Evan shrugs, as if that somehow makes it less of a terrible question. Connor freezes, horror dawning on his face. Evan would laugh, if he wasn’t the one who caused it. As is, he just feels sort of bad. “You don’t have to tell me!”

“I’m not going to.”

“O-okay.”

Evan turns back to his phone. Silently he wonders if it’s just general embarrassment, or if Connor posts about something specifically he doesn’t want Evan to see. Either way, he’s going to respect that, but it does make him curious.
Dinner with the Murphy’s is only about as awkward as it usually is. However, the past few times, it’s been added to by the fact that everyone except Larry is aware of something, and it seems as if that has somehow affected the dynamic of the family. Which doesn’t make that much sense, since no one’s mentioning it, or going anywhere near the topic. Yet, it still feels like somethings off.

Which is probably why Zoe sighs and drops her spoon. It clanks against the dish bellow it, and everyone turns their attention to her. “Alright, I have something to say. I know I don’t have to, and I sort of don’t want to, but things are weird and I want them to be… not weird. I guess. Whatever. I’m trying to say I have an announcement to make.”

“Zoe…” Connor is quiet, but his tone says a lot for how against her current actions he is.

“Nope. This is only about me, so it’s my choice, you don’t get to give me that look.”

“Whatever you say.”

“Zoe, dear, you don’t have to do this if you aren’t sure you want to.” Cynthia’s assurance doesn’t stop her. Larry looks increasingly confused, and Evan almost feels bad for him.

“What’s going on?”

“I’m about to tell you.” Zoe takes a deep breath. She almost seems clam, if Evan ignores how tightly she’s taken to gripping the table. Evan has a very intense feeling that he shouldn’t be here. Part of him wonders how he always ends up around when this stuff happens. “I’m a bisexual.”

Nobody reacts- most having already known- and all eyes turn to Larry. He just sits there, surprised, for a good minute. Zoe frowns, waiting. Finally, Larry clears his throat and nods. “Well, okay then.”

“Okay?”

“I don’t know what you expected from me, Zoe. I just want you to be happy, I don’t care who you like. Unless they’re dangerous people.” Shock is evident from most of the table.

“Well… okay then. Cool.” Zoe picks her spoon back up, and there’s palpable relief from everyone else. Evan glances at Connor, who shakes his head and shrugs. Evan breathes out a relieved sigh. He’s not sure he could handle any more of being around for people coming out. In fact, he’s not sure how he ended up being there for any besides his own. All in such a short time, too.

*Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why.*

Evan stares at the words, one Wednesday morning, and sighs. It’s not that he doesn’t think it’s going to be, but he’s been trying not to just repeat himself over and over again. There’s nothing specific he expect to happen, so he has noting to focus on. Instead, he writes something generic, and doesn’t feel happy about the letter’s state.

*And hopefully there will be no more confessions for a few days because I’m sort of losing my mind trying to keep track of who knows what.*
Hey guys i feel the need to say that 1) all of the coming out instances that have happened in the past few chapters were not intended to happen well... some at all but mostly just, not so close together.
and 2) if you don't want to/don't think you should/aren't sure if you should/don't feel safe, you don't have to come out. Like... i don't want people to think that my intention with the past few chapters is that you need to.
Heck, I haven't come out to my parents either! (although i don't think they'd care)

anyway on a less serious note I cooked for myself today and was like "wow im almost like a functioning adult human."
which im not but hey i did a pretty good job.

also that #tumblrFeel when someone asks what your tumblr is and your like "fuck"
im kidding nobodies ever asked so i don't worry too much about it.
but i wonder
what connors tumblr posts
are
hmmmmmm :)

also i spend so much time on tumblr but i???? hate it???? why can't i escape
Chapter 38

Chapter Summary

“'You know you’re my best friend, and I care about you?’”

“I know.”

“I’m serious. I love you. I don’t want anything bad to happen to you. I know stuff happens, and sometimes you feel like shit, but-”

“I know. God. I love you too, but please stop trying to comfort me.”

Chapter Notes

what the fuck is a self control
edit: I FORGOT TO ADD A CHAPTER SUMMARY FUCK IM SORRY

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

There’s an ignored stack of papers next to Evan’s bed. The stack consists entirely of potential scholarships- essay topics- that Heidi has left for him. They’ve been there quite a while, now, and the deadline for turning them in is only a month away. He stares at them for a moment, before grabbing them as he sits on his bed. He might as well take a look, he guesses.

Aside from the purely fact-based ones, topics range from “If I Could Change One Thing About Me,” to “How Do You Define ‘Family?’” Evan can only frown as he sorts the topics- trying to give himself something to do beside actually think about them- and wonders how many of these he’d actually need to do, to get into college.

A distraction presents itself, when his phone alerts him to a message.

Zoe: hey have you heard from connor?

You: No?
You: Did something happen?

Zoe: I don’t know.
Zoe: He’s not home, and he won’t answer his phone. I assumed that meant he was with you.

You: He’s not, but I’ll let you know if I hear from him.
You: or I’ll make sure he contacts you directly.

Zoe: thanks.
There’s something vaguely off in the way Zoe’s typing that has Evan more concerned. Still, he messages Connor, and waits. Usually Connor will show up. Usually he’ll hear from Connor Evan expects to hear from him.

It’s harder to keep that hope up after two hours.

Relapses happen. It’s not something anyone wants to think about, when they’re trying to get better, but that they know. Evan knows. He’s had his own moments, where he feels like all his work is unraveling, and like he should be dead. He knows. That doesn’t make the thought that Connor might be doing worse any less scary.

The recovery process isn’t a road. It’s a journey full of mountains, and roads, and oceans, and no matter how many poetic analogies Evan can come up with, that’s scary. So one simple text is enough to have Evan rushing out of his door.

“park”

No amount of asking which park get’s any response, so Evan tries to search any that he’s been to before. Any that he knows Connor has been to. A moment’s thought has him informing Zoe, too, but he ignores her response in favor of running from one place to the next, looking for Connor.

Somehow, he’s rather calm. Evan’s worried about Connor, of course, but that worry can’t seem to sink in. His mind is weirdly clear, and he’s not having any trouble breathing. Vaguely he wonders if he’s somehow become so stressed he no longer feels it, but decides that’s not the thing to focus on.

It shouldn’t be all that surprising, Evan thinks, when he finds Connor at the orchard. There’s a moment of relief. Because despite being unconscious, he’s breathing. Evan doesn’t think he believed Connor wouldn’t be, but it’s still a relief.

What’s less of a relief is the fact he is, in fact, unconscious. Or that his phone is off, and sitting next to him. With a sigh, Evan sits down next to Connor, and messages Zoe that he’s found him.

“Connor.” Evan lightly shakes him, hoping not to startle Connor too much. Connor’s eyes open, slowly, and immediately form into a glare. “This isn’t a park.”

“Does it even fucking matter?”

“Yes, we were worried about you.”

“Con-fucking-grats.” Connor’s eyes shift away from Evan, and Evan shakes his head. “There’s no need for that.”

“So, you’re here because everything is fine? Connor, what- what happened?”

“Nothing fucking happened I’m just- I’m messed up, okay? Nothing happened I just can’t- fucking-do anything right.”

“Well that’s- that’s just not true.”

“Right.” Sarcasm practically drips from the words, and Evan wants to argue. He knows, though, that Connor isn’t in the mood- or state of mind- to listen. So he sighs, and leans back against the tree
behind them.

“You didn’t- you haven’t done anything, have you?”

“Are you trying to ask if I hurt myself? Is that what you’re getting at?”

“I- no- yes.”

“No.”

“Okay. Okay that’s good.”

“Yeah, well, I wanted to but….” Connor shrugs. Then, when Evan doesn’t speak, he pulls up his sleeves to reveal his arms. They’re covered in drawings, and Evan nods. “Where’s that fucking art scholarship, right?”

“You joke, but you’re a good artist when you try.” Evan offers a smile, and Connor shrugs.

“I guess.”

“Hey did you know there’s a tree that legally owns itself?”

“What the fuck.”

“So want to see some cool tree pictures?”

“Sure, why the fuck not? I don’t want to go home yet, anyway.”

“Are you going to be okay?”

“When am I ever?”

“You know you’re my best friend, and I care about you?”

“I know.”

“I’m serious. I love you. I don’t want anything bad to happen to you. I know stuff happens, and sometimes you feel like shit, but-”

“I know. God. I love you too, but please stop trying to comfort me.”

Evan get’s multiple worried texts from his mother that night, when he isn’t home. It hadn’t even occurred to him, when he left, that he should text her. He hadn’t thought she would come home while he was gone, anyway. Still, he assures her that he’s fine and apologizes.

When he gets home, he collapses. His worries from earlier finally hitting him. As tension leaves his body, he finds himself crying.
The next few days pass mostly uneventfully. Though Evan does find Connor high significantly more often for the first two days. There’s not really anything he can do, though, because Connor doesn’t want to talk about anything with him. Then again, he doesn’t see him much at all, that following weekend. Which worries Evan enough that he contacts Zoe, who informs him that Connor is fine. Or, as fine as he can be.

“guess fucking what”

“You’ve discovered your suppressed love of trees.”

“no luck, tree fucker, thats not ‘what’”

“I can dream.” Evan decidedly ignores the ‘tree fucker’ comment.

“im in the hospital.”

“What happened are you okay.”

“im good. not that anyone believes me”

“???”

“fun fact: your therapist is legally required to inform your parents if they think you might kill yourself if you're a minor.”

“Oh.”

“i lied it wasnt a fun fact.”

“Usually fun facts are things the person wont already know.”

“i knew too. i just wasn't thinking.”

“Is everything okay?”

“i wasn't gonna, for the record. nobody is trusting me though. but yeah im okay.”

“How long are you there?”

“2 more days? i think. i don’t fucking know. but hey i have a real excuse not to be at school.”

“I’l bring you notes.”

“DONT”

“:)

Evan does, in fact, bring Connor notes for the classes they share, much to the latter’s dismay. Even more to Connor’s dismay, Alana gives Evan notes for the class she and Connor share, and he brings those as well.

He finds that it was more than just words that concerned Connor’s therapist, but Connor refuses to talk about any of it. So he doesn’t ask. Just makes sure Connor knows that he can talk about it, if he
wants to.

*Today's going to be a good day and here's why. Connor is out of the hospital!*

Chapter End Notes

me: i should wait to post the next chapter until tomorrow-
me, also: *posting this chapter* what were you saying?
Me @ myself: MARY-LYNN WHAT THE SHIT

fun fact: sometimes when you're in bad situations you won't have breakdowns until they're over and you finally get a chance to process.

shout out to tumblr for providing me with a surprising number of tree facts.

anyway. yeah. i couldn't just ignore the fact that sometimes, even when things are going well, they come crashing down and you feel like everything is terrible and it sucks because you were /making progress/ and yeah. that's happened before in this story- with evan, mostly- but i wanted to focus on connor this time, especially because aside from talking about his family, attention hasn't directly been on him in a while.

are you a "i need comfort right now" kinda depressed or a "don't comfort me lets talk about something else" depressed? (I hope the answer is that your not depressed at all, tbh)

irrelevant fun fact: guess who had a pep and olive pizza today?
Chapter 39

Chapter Summary

“What- why?”
“I wanna sign it.
“My arm’s healed, Jared. You’re a few months late.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

“How would you define ‘Family’?” is one of the essay topics that stood out to him. So, Evan tries to write.

Family is a bunch of absent people

Wrong.

Family is a collection of broken friends

Closer.

A collections of desperate friends and a mother who tries-

Cliche. A mess.

People I hardly know in a physical sense. Yet in reality

No.

The definitions one can give you for family vary from person to person. A word as widely defined as a “home,” by people desperate to find a meaning that will tell them they aren’t alone. When both
words can be defined purely by how the heart feels, what becomes the distinction between a family, and a home? Is there any? Or, are we- as humans- trying to fit words into places they aren’t meant, in the hopes that we wont disappear. Family is a word defined differently, but by one thing: the want to feel as if you have a place, somewhere you’re meant to belong. Yet, that’s a messily complicated explanation.

So how do we- how do I- define it?

Better, but… Evan huffs out a breath. He has no idea where he would go with that, and certainly not into an entire essay. It’s not as if other potential subjects give him any more to work with, though. Some of them aren’t specific enough. Some are much too specific. Evan isn’t sure what to do. If he can’t even complete one, what is he going to do about the fact one wont be enough?

Connor’s return to school had been met by stares. Usually no one would have questioned his absence, but someone had overheard Alana talking to Evan, and spread some outlandish rumor. Though that had died down since Connor’s return, there were still people whispering about how Connor got assaulted, and nearly died.

Connor seems fine with them thinking that, as long as the real reason stays far, far behind closed doors. In any case, he’s has taken to drawing more often. Evan can’t say the correlation and causation match up, but he likes to believe Connor may have found another outlet for his feelings.

Said outlet comes tumbling out of Evan’s locker. He blinks, staring at the paper that’s fallen in front of him. Evan can see the shadow of whatever is on the other side, but can’t quite make it out. With as much gentleness as he can manage, he picks it up, and turns it over to look at it.

Most of Connors’ drawings thus far have been flowers- really pretty, detailed ones- and copies of tree picture’s Evan has shown him. So the person- Evan himself- staring back at Evan from the paper, is surprising. It doesn’t take an art expert to see the skill that went into the- startlingly real-picture. Evan wonders if Connor has secretly been drawing for years at this point. He must have.

Evan is pretty sure, though, that the flowers growing from his head- and one of his eyes- are not, in fact, a realistic interpretation of him.

“HOLY SHIT CONNOR”

“dst”

“HOLY SHIT”

“thanks man.”

“You really should get an art scholarship.”

“Yes, yes, thank you. dont tell anyone though. I still have three more of these to do before you can show it to anyone.”

“Three? YOU’RE DOING ONE OF EACH OF US.”

“Yeah.”
It’s late afternoon when Jared burst through the door, startling Evan. Evan sighs, clutching his chest, barely having managed not to drop his cup. Jared glances around, eyebrow raised. Evan allows confusion to form on his face.

“Is your mom here?”

“No. When is she ever,” Evan says, shrugging. Jared seems shocked, and Evan can’t help but feel like he should have tired harder to hide the bitterness in his voice. “Why do you ask that every- every time you show up?”

“Because-”

“Actually! Whatever the reason is, I don’t want to know.”

“Dude, what do you think I was gonna say?” Jared shakes his head. “Anyway, you still have your cast, don’t you?”

“What- why?”

“I wanna sign it.

“My arm’s healed, Jared. You’re a few months late.” Evan raises his left arm, to emphasize his words.

“No shit, Evan. I know it’s healed, but I was thinking-”

“Shocking.”

“And!” Jared glares. “I thought about how the only person to sign it wasn’t even your friend- well, back then. You know what I mean.”

“I guess so…”

“I just, you’ve still got it, right? This way every time you look at it you’ll be reminded of the coolest person you know.” Evan thinks he’s gotten better at understanding Jared. That he isn’t just imagining the ‘so you wont be reminded of how alone you were’ in his words.

“It’s really not- it’s not that big a deal.”

“Nah man, I’m gonna do it. Or I could sign your real arm-”

“It’s in my room.”

Another day, another trip to the Murphy household. Evan would like to argue he doesn’t spend that much time there- an internal debate which he’s constantly losing- but he does have to admit that the trip has become something he can make without any real thought. The day isn’t particularly odd, then. However, an unusual situation happens, when his mother returns just as he’s going to leave.

Heidi stops short, as she opens the door just when Evan is reaching for it. She raises an eyebrow, and Evan shifts on his feet, hands coming up to the hem of his shirt. “You’re home early.”

“You’re… leaving?”
“Well, yeah. I- I’m uh, going to Connor’s.”

“Again.” Heidi steps inside, and closes the door behind her. A silent way of telling Evan she has something to say, so he shouldn’t leave yet.

“I was going to text you on the way there.”

“Evan. It seems like you’re spending all your time at their house.”

“I- didn’t you want me to have friends? To get out of the house?”

“Yes! No, listen. Evan, of course I do. I just feel like I never see you.”

Evan holds back what he wants to say. Instead going with something safer. “Yeah, well, it just makes sense for me to go there since two of my friends are there and- uh- it doesn’t make sense to force them both to come here.”

It’s not a lie, either. Even if, truthfully, he isn’t going there specifically to see Zoe. In fact he wasn’t even sure if she is there, right now.

“Why do-”

“And!” Evan’s voice reaches his ears before he’s had the chance to process his words. “I promised to do homework with- with Connor. He was absent a lot recently, and is still catching up. So I- I really need to go. Can we- can we talk about this later?”

Heidi look genuinely surprised- likely because Evan spoke over her- and sighs. “Fine.”

“O-okay.” Evan turns, rushing out of the door as quickly as he can. He thinks back, months ago, when he’d had a conversation with Connor about not saying the mean things he thinks. About how Connor usually does, and how Evan internalizes them.

He keeps back the words, “you don’t see me because you’re never here,” and the words, “I’m doing what you wanted, making friends, why aren’t you happy,” until he feels anger boiling in his chest. He tries to tell himself he’s being irrational. That Heidi is doing her best. That he shouldn’t feel like this.

He all but slams his bag- his books- onto Connor’s floor. “Whoa- shit- are you okay?”

“Can I borrow this for a second?” Evan picks up one of the pillows from Connor’s bed, and when the other nods, he buries his face into it. Then he screams.

“Fuck, what happened?”

Evan drops the pillow back into it’s original place, and takes a deep breath. “I’m internalizing my angry thoughts again, and making myself angry, in an endless cycle of stupid nonsense.”

“I don’t know how to respond to that.”

“Don’t. We have homework to do!”

“No.” Connor groans, spinning around in his desk chair.

“Yes. You need to do some homework sometimes.”
Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why.

Evan sighs. He’d been so good at this. Had been able to leave out every negative thing he’s thought in the letters. It had taken a while- he’s still trying to weed out all of the old, negative, ones from his folder slowly- but he’d been doing so well.

Instead Evan opens another document, and doesn’t address the contents to himself.

Is it completely unfair of me, to feel so bitter towards someone trying so hard? I feel like I’m a bad person, and feel guilty, for every thought. But I keep thinking them. And the worst part is, I mean it. It isn’t some intrusive thought that I can dismiss because it isn’t true. I’m actually, wholeheartedly, upset. About things I shouldn’t be. About my mother, who’s doing everything she can, for my sake. About how empty this house is. About how much being here, by myself, takes me back and I just feel so alone again.

I don’t know what I’m supposed to do.

I don’t want to feel this way.

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact: I once got a B on an essay never really wrote. bc we were supposed to write an essay, create a visual aid, and then present it to the class. I did two of those things. I just memorized the entire essay, and never wrote it down. It was about Dextrocardia and Situs Inversus. of which I was already pretty knowledgeable about.

Also Connor- in this story- has totally been drawing since he was like 5 but not showing anyone and becoming AMAZING at it.

that feel when you don’t want to be angry but you are and it's awful.

EDIT: I FORGOT TO MENTION THIS BUT I DREW NOAH A MIA: http://faraandmera.tumblr.com/post/162504693491/
Chapter 40

Chapter Summary

“Going to confess your undying love for me?” The joke catches Evan off-guard, and he nearly chokes. “Shit- dude- I’m sorry.”

“No!” Evan huffs. A quiet part of his mind says ‘but what if you did’ and Evan ignores it. He also ignores the small ‘would that be a lie?’ He’s in no mood to question his feelings for his friend, brain. Thank you very much. “I was- I was going to tell you that I… I- uh- found your Tumblr.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It’s an accident, in the end. Evan is looking at tree pictures- at this point just to send them to Connor- when he sees a drawing that looks vaguely familiar. Upon further inspection- and bringing up the blog that posted it- Evan finds out why it’s familiar. The same picture is saved on his phone. A drawing that Connor had sent him.

He’s certain by the description- “I’m pan, pissed, and sometimes draw shit. [obligatory blaze it joke]” that he’s not just imagining the whole thing. For a moment, he considers scrolling through it, sure that there’s more than art on the blog- he can see the beginning of a text post bellow the drawing- but thinks better of it. Connor purposefully didn’t want him to see the blog, and that feels like an invasion of privacy. Even if the blog is public.

So he closes it, and pretends he doesn’t remember the URL.

Connor is completely caught up with the classes he missed due to his absences. In fact he’s even willingly done his work for the current week. Which has just ended. When questioned about doing work for once, his only response was, “anger productivity.”

Thus, Evan doesn’t actually have an excuse for his actions, this time. Yet, he finds the words falling from his mouth before he can stop them. Heidi doesn’t argue with him about it, just agrees before she has to hang up and return to work. Evan feels guilty for the lie, but that doesn’t stop the relief that floods him at his excuse not being questioned.

So he spends another day, and another night, at the Murphy household.

Evan is used to not getting much sleep while over at someone else’s home. A mix of being uncomfortable with his surroundings, and usually sleeping on a chair or the floor, make it rather difficult. It doesn’t ever help that Connor starts talking to him more often at night. Insomnia keeping Connor up, and Evan being uncomfortable, slowly has them giving up on the illusion of sleeping normally.

Which only further emphasizes how much time he spends there, when he finds himself being able to
fall asleep easily that night.

Nobody seems surprised to see Evan that morning, as if it routine. There’s a sinking feeling in his gut, like something’s about to go terribly wrong. Something’s not right. He shouldn’t be here. He shouldn’t be here.

He shouldn’t- Evan closes himself in Connors room. He’s only somewhat aware that he ran from the dining room, likely looking panicked. The door clicks as it’s opened, and again when it’s closed.

“Evan?” Evan expects Connor’s voice, so he jumps at Zoe’s. She sits on the edge of Connor’s bed, while Evan sits next to it, on the floor. “Are you okay? Do you need something?”

Some part of him is happy she’s trying to help, but he can’t get the words he wants to say out of his mouth. He doesn’t know what’s wrong, anyway. He doesn’t know why he suddenly feels like everything is falling apart around him. Like the floor is sinking under his weight.

“Should I leave?” Evan shakes his head, hoping that’s enough. Zoe gives a small nod- he can see it in his peripheral vision- and leans back on her hands.

The door opens again, and Evan sucks in a breath, suddenly feeling trapped. Connor’s voice reaches him, but he can’t really tell what’s being said over the pounding of his heart in his head.

He sits there. Breathing. Trying to sort his thoughts. More breathing. Pulling at the hem of his shirt.

Evan breathes a sigh, closes his eyes, and puts his head against his knees. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay.”

“I don’t- I really don’t know what happened.”

“Don’t worry about it, it’s no big deal. Well, for us, I mean.”

“Thank you.” Evan leans back, and stretches his legs out. “Where- uh- where did- where’s Connor?”

“Outside the door. You seemed more freaked out when he came in, so he left.”

“Oh.”

“Want me to get him?”

“Yeah- I- uh-” Evan doesn’t know how to say ’please don’t come back when you do’ without sounding rude. He just doesn’t think he can handle more than one person at a time, right now.

Zoe stands, though, and leaves the room.

When Connor enters, Zoe is nowhere to be seen. Evan breathes a relieved sigh, and fixes his gaze on the floor. With some amount of hesitation, Connor sits next to him, silent.

“I don’t know why…” Evan says, quietly.

“Yeah, I heard.” Connor shrugs. “It’s fine.”

“I didn’t- you weren’t-”
“If you’re trying to say ‘I didn’t freak out when you entered the room because it was you specifically’ I get it.”

“Okay. Thank you.”

They sit there, silent, until Evan’s stomach throws a fit about the lack of food, especially with the exhaustion now covering him. When they go down to the kitchen, Connor seems pretty determined not to let him get anything for himself. Evan would argue that he’s a functioning human being who can take care of himself, except that he believes zero percent of that. Instead he lets Connor unceremoniously drop a bowl of Cheerios onto the table in front of him.

“I though you said Cheerios were bad?”

“Yeah, but you like them, and you’re the one eating them.” Connor shrugs.

“Hm. I guess so.” Evan nods. After a few spoonfuls of cereal, he stops, and turns to Connor. “Hey, I feel like I should tell you something.”

“Going to confess your undying love for me?” The joke catches Evan off-guard, and he nearly chokes. “Shit- dude- I’m sorry.”

“No!” Evan huffs. A quiet part of his mind says ‘but what if you did’ and Evan ignores it. He also ignores the small ‘would that be a lie?’ He’s in no mood to question his feelings for his friend, brain. Thank you very much. “I was- I was going to tell you that I… I- uh- found your Tumblr.”

“What?!” Panic rises to the surface, being clear on Connor’s face.

“I didn’t go through it!” Evan’s words don’t seem to calm him any. “I saw one for your drawings, and recognized it, but I- I didn’t look past your description.”

“O-okay.”

“Is whatever you post really… that bad?”

“No just- I- it’s embarrassing.” Connor shrugs, in a unsuccessful attempt to seem unconcerned. The horrible, evil part of Evan’s brain that loves to make him suffer offers that maybe Connor posts about how bad a friend Evan is. Evan doesn’t really believe that, he tells himself. He doesn’t.

“Okay.” Evan nods. “But, doesn’t it bother you that ‘sometimes draw shit’ doesn’t start with a ‘p’ like the rest of the descriptors?”

“Uh- well, yeah. I guess.” Connor shrugs, again. “Why, have a suggestion?”

“Perpetually- uh- something with drawing.”

“Thanks. That helps.”

“I see why it doesn’t, now. I can’t think of anything.”

“So… I promise this is the last time I’ll ask,” Connor assures him. Evan raises an eyebrow. “You really don’t know what messed you up this morning?”
“I don’t… it didn’t make any sense, I guess. I was fine, and everything was really… normal. I guess I was just thinking ‘wow I’m really used to being here’ and my brain went ‘No bad, this is bad’ on me.”

“Huh.”

“Yeah.”

I’ve taken to writing these more than my letters, because I don’t know what to be positive about, right now, and I’m trying to avoid going back to the way I wrote them before. It’s really strange, but I think I figured out what freaked me out so much this morning.

It was that another home felt more… comfortable, than mine has in a while. That I spend so much time there. That I feel like I’m slowly spending less and less time here. That even when I can, I’m not seeing my mom.

But I don’t even know where to begin addressing this, you know? I don’t what to do.

Evan saves the document to a folder he’s labeled ‘anxiety factory’ and sighs.

Today was a good day, and here’s why. Everyone was understanding when I freaked out, even if the reason didn’t make sense. And I had a good discussion with Connor. Sort of. And most of my day was fine.

Chapter End Notes

So uh... was that chapter summary misleading about the tone? I just didn't want to go "HERES THE ANGST TRAIN CHOO CHOO" so anyway: it begins

anyone else get productive when they're pissed off? like i get angry and that stresses me out so certain disorganized things/ my health/ ect. piss me off and i have to DO SOMETHING about them or i'll get more stressed and thus more angry.

Fun (irrelevant) fact: today i watched my turtle eat a worm and it was COOL AS FUCK (also the smaller a worm is the more gross it is. im cool with earth worms but ugh smaller worms disgust me.)

So, I think it's pretty obvious that next chapter will be Heidi's intermission (i've already written the unedited draft, too!) but the question is... what will I name it?
The Missing Intermission

Chapter Summary

“I lied- lied to you because I thought if you knew you’d- you’d be more upset, or angry with me. Or you’d hate me.”

“I could never hate you.” Evan feels a wave of understanding, feels like repeating the word ‘never’ because he can’t quite understand it. Wonders for a moment if this is how Connor felt about his mothers ‘nothing,’ but draws himself back to the moment at hand, quickly.

He holds back the ‘you should’ that wants to climb out of his throat.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

In the end, the lead up to their inevitable argument is a blur. All Evan knows is that his mom is angry, and that he, himself, feels a years worth- more than, even- of bitterness bubbling to the surface. All he knows is that when his mother levels him with a glare- something too uncommon to not unsettle him- he doesn’t feel the guilt that usually settles in his chest.

“I feel like you’re never here Evan!” She sighs, hand going to her temple. “I feel like I hardly know you, like your just some stranger I see every once in a while in passing.”

“Well it’s not my fault you’re never here, either! How- how do you expect to see me like that?! Sorry if I’m not here to just- just sit by myself all the time!”

“Evan!” She stares at him wide-eyed and hurt. Evan instinctively curls into himself. He’s messed up. He shouldn’t have said that. Not like that. He can’t be here. “I’m trying- I know it’s been rough for both of us but I-”

She doesn’t seems to know what to say. Evan fumbles in an attempt to find words.

“I-” The space between them feels suffocating. Evan takes a step back, Heidi moves to speak but Evan just… runs. He closes himself in his room, pressing himself against the door so she can’t open it, and lets his words hang in the air.

Eventually Heidi ceases trying to get him to open the door. She stays home, however. Eventually he can hear her returning to her room. Evan wants to explain himself- his feelings, his guilt- to her, but his throat feels tight. If he tries to speak he’ll just end up in tears. Finally managing to stand, Evan grabs a pen and paper- deciding not to bother with the need to print anything he may write on his laptop- and decides he can explain himself in another way.

He starts writing.
I want to explain myself. Or, apologize and explain, really. I’m not sure I could manage to speak, though, so I wrote this and I’m really sorry.

I know you’re trying really hard- a lot for my sake- and I know you’ve struggled a lot. I don’t want you to think I don’t appreciate that. I just… sometimes feel really upset that you’re never here. And I don’t want to feel like that. I don’t want to be angry at you because it isn’t your fault. I know you’re doing the best you can. (I’m really sorry that I’m angry)

I should, probably, have talked to dr.sherman about this but I couldn’t help the fear that somehow you would find out? I know that doesn’t make sense (patient confidentiality and all) but I still did. So I bottled it up and told you things were okay when they weren’t- which was a lot, I’ve lied to you a lot- and let things keep going as they were in an endless cycle of self-built anger. I’m so angry and I don’t’ want to be, because I shouldn’t be. Because you don’t deserve that.

There’s no excuse for my snapping at you like that. There’s no excuse for my lyinging (that I was scared isn’t good enough reason). there’s no excuse for, well, anything.

So, I just, I feel terrible about it. I’m so sorry. I know you try, I know you’re doing your best, but I just...

I don’t like being here, by myself, all the time. I can handle it usually, at least I could. I thought I was able to. I don’t want you to drop everything. That isn’t what I want at all, because that’s selfish and you do enough already- hence why I didn’t tell you how I was feeling. But not telling you just made me feel worse and maybe I really just… needed to say it?

I feel like I’ve started repeating myself.

I don’t know. I’m really sorry.

And, there’s something else. There’s more I never told you. But I think. This one thing. I need to tell you in person, so I’ll wait.

I’m just. I’m sorry.

Evan doesn’t sign the note. He doesn’t see the need. It takes a while, too, to make himself stand. To walk down the hall do his mothers’ room. It takes many deep breathes before he slowly- cautiously- opens her door.

Heidi is still up. She sits up in her bed, book in her lap. She doesn’t seem particularly focused, until she looks up at Evan. Evan stills, then his hands begin to shake, drawing her attention to the paper in his hands. She stands, and makes her way over. “Evan?”

“I can’t- I just- I’m sorry, please read this.” Evan all but shoves the paper into her hands, before running back to his room again.

Evan sits on his bed, trying to calm himself, for the minutes it takes her to read and process his words. When his door opens, he doesn’t look up. Heidi doesn’t speak until she’s sat next to him, and then she places a hand over his.

“Evan… I had no idea.”

“Well- yeah- I never said anything.”
“I should have noticed.” Evan shakes his head at her words. They’re too soft, comforting, in comparison to how they both sounded earlier.

“I know you’re- that you’re doing a lot and I- I don’t want to-” Evan shakes his head. He’s repeating himself. Heidi’s grip on his hands tightens, a silent reassurance that she understands.

“You said there was something else?” Heidi seems hesitant to ask. Evan is hesitant to respond. He glances across his room, to where his cast sits. With a shaky breath, he nods.

“It’s about- about my- about how I broke my arm.”

“You arm?”

“I lied- lied to you because I thought if you knew you’d- you’d be more upset, or angry with me. Or you’d hate me.”

“I could never hate you.” Evan feels a wave of understanding, feels like repeating the word ‘never’ because he can’t quite understand it. Wonders for a moment if this is how Connor felt about his mothers ‘nothing,’ but draws himself back to the moment at hand, quickly.

He holds back the ‘you should’ that wants to climb out of his throat. “I just- I felt so alone even- even not- even when you were here.”

“Oh, Evan…” Her grip tightens, and he realizes how tense she’s become.

“I thought that- well- I was pretty high up, so.” Evan continues to stare at his hands. Heidi leans against his side, a comforting pressure.

“Evan.”

“And you’re never here so I- I’m sorry. I was scared if I- if I told you the truth you wouldn’t- I don’t know…”

Heidi pulls her arms around Evan, and he sinks into her embrace. Guilt for worrying her, for feeling the way he does, gnaws at him. He tries to push it aside. “Do you remember when your dad left?”

Though surprised by the question, Evan nods into her shoulder and mumbles a small, “yes.”

“There was a big moving truck, and you were so excited. I though you didn’t really understand what was going on, so I let you have your fun. Then, that night, you sat up, and grabbed my arm to stop me from leaving. You asked- you seemed so scared- if another truck was going to take me away. Even then, you were scared of being alone. I should have realized. I should have known that hadn’t changed.”

“I’m sorry.” Evan forces the words through the tightness of his throat. He isn’t really sure when he started crying. When Heidi pulls back, cupping his face in her hands, she’s blurry.

“I’m not leaving. I’m sorry I’m not here as often as I should be, but I love you and I’m not going anywhere. I could never, never hate you. It’s okay for you to be upset, too.”

Evan collapses, arms wrapped tightly around his mother. She rubs his back, in comforting circular motions. For a moment, he nearly forgets that he’s not the same small child from the memory Heidi spoke of.
Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why. Things are finally out in the open with mom. It’s... sort of hard to force myself to leave my room, now, because of everything that happened. But! I’m going to. Things will be okay, I think. I want to believe that.

I’ll keep telling myself that at least.

When Evan does finally leave his room, he finds Heidi having made pancakes. The whole thing is a bit surreal, if he’s honest. They don’t really talk about what happened, they’re both exhausted after the previous day, but that’s okay.

And, when Heidi leaves for work, and Evan leaves for school, he feels... better, somehow. Evan feels like a huge weight has been lifted from him- as cliches as he thinks that may sound- and he finds himself okay with knowing that things likely wont change much.

For the moment, he’s just happy to have finally been honest about the whole thing.

Chapter End Notes

shout out to GimmeCoffee for the intermission title

I didn't have a seamless transition into an argument but like, all arguments with /my parents/ start from things that have NO REASON to become arguments. so it always seems out of nowhere when a fight starts.

I didn't edit evan's letter to his mom much, because I felt like the more I edited it, the less natural it would feel. so, if there are any big mistakes in it, thats why

why can't heidi be my mom

there will be significantly less angst next chapter
Chapter 42

Chapter Summary

Evan wouldn’t say he avoids Connor the entire day. He wouldn’t say that. That doesn’t mean it isn’t true, but he certainly wouldn’t admit it if asked.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Evan wakes on the last Wednesday of April with one, very prominent, thought. Which he mutters to himself, staring at the ceiling. “Damn it, subconscious.”

The dream he had that night had been a convoluted, irrational mess that left him with many questions. Starting with why he had been undercover in a werewolf prison; knowing he was, also, a werewolf for some reason.

It only got more confusing from there: breaking out to stop an evil witch, remembering he was a spy and/or secret agent, fighting with Connor in a sewer and gaining his help, Jared being an evil, former friend who had attacked Evan’s partner, Alana- said partner- leaving him behind to capture Jared, and ending with him breaking back into prison with Connor.

Or the fact that, upon waking, Evan hadn’t at all questioned the fact that at some point- between pushing Connor into the unrealistically clean sewer water while stealing his lighter, and Connor listening to him about his plan when Alana refused to- they had started a romance.

Evan finds himself rather annoyed at his brain for that. He’s even more annoyed that he doesn’t mind the thought.

Evan would like to have a conversation with his brain about why it can’t just randomly bring those thoughts up without any reason. Questioning his feelings for one of his closest friends is not what he wants to be doing with his day, honestly. Unfortunately his brain is awful, and mean, and wont let it go.

Evan wouldn’t say he avoids Connor the entire day. He wouldn’t say that. That doesn’t mean it isn’t true, but he certainly wouldn’t admit it if asked. It’s not as if his feelings have changed, he doesn’t feel any different about Connor. It’s just that he doesn’t think he could face Connor while thinking about the dream.

A question settles in the back of his mind, when he turns a corner to avoid Connor during lunch. Is he sure he doesn’t feel any different because he doesn’t like Connor, or is it because he already did, so the thought isn’t new so much as just more direct?

Thinking about that, Evan tries to reflect on his relationship with Connor, but finds himself unable to pinpoint any distinct times where their relationship changed. Connor had- many months ago- been someone Evan hardly thought about, someone he didn’t know at all. Connor a few- but less- months ago was his friend who he was just starting to be fully comfortable around. Connor, now, is one of
his closet friends, who he cares a lot about.

Evan honestly isn’t sure if, maybe, he somehow developed feelings without realizing it. Maybe he had while thinking of them as platonic feelings he’d been missing for years. Or, maybe, he’s just trying to find way too much meaning in a dream where he got trapped in a grocery store for days because Jared was evil and tried to kill him.

There’s something very relaxing about crushing and chopping something until it’s destroyed and unrecognizable. So, being designated as the ‘garlic destroyer’ is a rather relaxing role for Evan to have been given. He isn’t really sure how he ended up in his current situation- having crushed, and chopped, at least three cloves of garlic, while Jared cooks ground beef, and his mother makes spaghetti sauce- but it’s really nice, he thinks. Jared had been an unexpected addition to the cooking session, but Heidi hadn’t at all been put off by his presence.

In all honesty, Evan is glad for his friend’s presence. There’s no guarantee Heidi won’t be called into work last minute, and Evan thinks it’ll be easier to deal with if Jared is still there. Jared is fairly good at keeping his mind away from things Evan doesn’t want to think about, assuming he isn’t purposefully drawing attention to it.

He’s slightly less glad when- as his luck, or lack thereof, strikes again- Heidi asks, “so, Evan, is there anyone you’re interested in?” She does so in a very mom-like way. Which, Evan thinks, might not be a descriptor that makes sense, but that’s how he thinks of it. The tone that indicates wanting to know more about her child’s life, but trying not to freak him out.

Her tone doesn’t change his reaction, though. Evan, in his shock, presses his knife down on the garlic- to crush rather than chop- too quickly, sending a chunk directly at his face. He tumbles back, then glances at Heidi, horrified. “What?!”

“Dude.” Jared laughs at him. “Wasn’t it Zoe-”

“Not- not in months.” Evan clears his throat, trying to collect himself.

“So no girls or-” Heidi pauses, glances at Jared as if that will somehow tell her if it’s safe to finish her statement. Jared finishes her sentence for her.

“or boys?“

“Why- why are we talking about this now of all times?” Evan wonders if, by having that dream, he somehow triggered a change in the world that would bring questions like this to him. Maybe some higher being is trying to smite him purely through embarrassment.

“Oh, we’re just teasing.” Heidi shakes her head, straining the now-cooked ground beef.

“W-well I don’t-” Evan sighs. “I don’t know.”

“Don’t know?” Jared sounds less joking that Evan expects him to, like he’s taking this conversation seriously. Maybe, Evan tells himself, he shouldn’t be so surprised that Jared is taking it seriously. Jared had been making more of an effort- since Evan’s confession about his arm- to not joke about things that make Evan uncomfortable. He doesn’t always do a great job at it, but he has been trying.

“I just- I hadn’t thought about it? I had a dream where I was in love… but I’m not sure if that was a sign I actually like hi- this person, or just my subconscious being mean to me.”
“It’s okay to not be sure. Feelings are difficult.” Heidi turns her attention back to Evan, having set the sauce on a burner. She hands Jared the spoon. So Jared, taking the hint, stirs the sauce. Evan nods, collecting and handing over the crushed garlic to add to it.

“I guess.”

“So- be honest with me here- is it Connor?” Jared asks, without looking up. Evan makes a startled noise, involuntarily, and clears his throat.

“No! I- I don’t- I don’t know. Yes. You can’t say anything!”

“I wont. Have a little faith in me,” Jared promises with a shrug.

“Wait- why- why did you guess Connor?”

“Process of elimination. It’s not Zoe anymore, I know it’s not me, Alana intimidates you too much in a not-caused-by-romantic-feelings way. Unless it’s another person you’ve never talked to, but if that was the case you wouldn’t be this worried about it.”

“Oh.” Evan hadn’t expected such a well thought-out reason. “Yeah.”

Today was a good day, and here’s why. Despite my disruptive and sudden dilemma, it wasn’t a half-bad day. I mean, I got to have dinner with my mom- and Jared- for once! That was nice. Generally it was a pretty relaxing day, if you ignore my internal screaming about my dream.

Though I do feel a bit bad that I avoided Connor all day.

After lying in bed, trying an failing to sleep for hours, Evan sits up at approximately 12:34am. A sudden realization dawns on him. “How the fuck did Connor know he was demi-romantic.”

Chapter End Notes

“Damn it, subconscious.” is like my constant state of being tbh.

Fun fact: that dream is actually a real dream I had. I mean, with different people, because this was LONG before deh came out. but like concept wise. I have a tumblr post about it, somewhere, but in that post i left out the part where I romanced the guy that I initially fought with during my prison escape because unlike in this story where it was someone he knew, in my dream it was someone i just... made up. and that seems rather strange to focus on.

secondary fun fact: i once realized that i liked someone i claimed to dislike /more/ than some of my friends after I had a dream where we were a thing because I was like "wait a fucking second this person isn't actually that bad" when i started thinking about them more. though it was rather annoying that it happened at all.

that feel when you're lying in bed and you suddenly realize something and go "WAIT A FUCKING SECOND"
guys i actually... slept... pretty well today. isn't that odd? Even odder, i managed to have some self control and not post this chapter as soon as I finished it.

EDIT: I FORGOT TO FUCKING GIVE THIS CHAPTER A SUMMARY IM SORRY (fixed it)
Chapter 43

Chapter Summary

“Well,” Zoe starts, setting her hamburger down, “do you want to- like- hold his hand or something?”

“I- I already do, sometimes?”

“Oh my god.” Zoe shakes her head. “That’s gay.”

“Zoe!”

“I’m kidding! Platonic hand-holding is a thing.”

“Maybe you aren’t any more help than Jared.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A year ago Evan would have had a hard time getting out a sentence while talking to Zoe. Now, he finds himself thinking about that time. Trying to find a comparison between how he felt about her, with how he currently feels about Connor. Unfortunately there isn’t much of a one. Zoe was a distant idea in his mind. One that has long since been shattered, and replaced with a more realistic and comfortable one.

In fact, his thoughts about all of his friends exist within such a large range, that finding out of Connor is on the spectrum of “friend” or not is rather difficult. Jared and Alana, especially, are so far apart in his mind, yet are both his friends, that Evan can’t figure anything out.

What possesses him to go to Zoe, specifically, he isn’t sure. Yet, he finds himself in a fast-food restaurant- in his attempts not to be found out by Connor- with her, talking about this very topic.

“So… you like Connor?”

“I don’t know!” Evan huffs out a sigh, dropping his head into his arms. “That’s the problem.”

“How do you not know?”

“I- I’ve only had one crush that really… lasted more than a few days. I barely knew her, so it- so I didn’t really feel the same as I do now. I don’t know if what I’m feeling is… romantic, or just a different platonic feeling that I don’t understand.”

“Huh.” Zoe hums in thought. “Why’d you come to me about this?”

“I-” Evan shakes his head, sighing again, and sits up straight. “I just- I don’t know… Jared tries to help, I guess, but it usually devolves into teasing because he doesn’t really know what to do, I guess. Besides, he and Connor are hanging out without me.”

“What?! They are?”
“Yeah. Jared said he had to talk to him about something? I don’t really know.” Evan shrugs. At first he’d been nothing but suspicions about that, but Jared assured him it had nothing to do with Evan. “I still have trouble talking to Alana, so.” Another shrug ends his sentence, and Zoe nods.

“Well,” Zoe starts, setting her hamburger down, “do you want to- like- hold his hand or something?”

“I- I already do, sometimes?”

“Oh my god.” Zoe shakes her head. “That’s gay.”

“Zoe!”

“I’m kidding! Platonic hand-holding is a thing.”

“Maybe you aren’t any more help than Jared.”

“Probably not.” She shrugs, before picking her food back up. “What about kissing?”

Evan makes a startled noise, and Zoe, unperturbed, takes a bite of her food. “I don’t- I mean- not really?! Oh god now I’m thinking about it. Why would you do this to me?”

Evan is fairly certain his face is red, if the amusement on Zoe’s face is any indication. “Hey, if you’re going to make me talk about my brothers potential romantic endeavors, I’m going to make this as difficult for you as possible.”

“Fine, fine. Let’s talk about something else?” Evan offers, sighing.

“Sure.”

“Hey I- I know we got off of this topic, but… how do you think Connor figured out he was Demi?”

“Shit, man, I don’t know.” Zoe rolls her eyes. “He’s only had three friends in, like, eight years.”

“…So do you think it’s Jared or Alana?”

“Evan. No offense but what the fuck is wrong with you?”

“What?!”

Evan doesn’t know why he says it. Zoe drives him home, and before he leaves the car he stops, turning to face her. She raises an eyebrow, their goodbyes already having been said. Evan takes a deep breath, before speaking. “Somehow it never gets any easier to tell people this. I- you- you’re one of my closest friends, you know? So I want… I want to tell you something.”

“Okay? What’s up?”

“I just- I’m not trying to- I don’t want this to change anything. I just- it’s probably good for me to admit it. I guess I also- I want you to know that you’re also part of the reason I no longer- that this isn’t how I feel anymore. All of you are.”

“Evan, I really can’t figure out what you’re trying to tell me, here.”
“Remember how my arm was broken, at the beginning of the year?”

“Yes?”

“I- I broken it while- while trying to… kill myself.” His voice becomes quiet, barely audible, near the end of his sentence. Evan doesn’t look up to meet her eyes. *This isn’t the time for this confession,* part of his mind reminds him. He isn’t sure *why* he brought it up. Yet, he found himself *wanting* to say it.

Maybe having told almost everyone else important to him- excluding, now, Alana- made him feel like he was excluding her. Maybe he felt like she deserved to know, even though nobody *really* has any right to know it, if he doesn’t want them to.

“You… you what?!?” Zoe takes a deep breath, likely trying to calm herself after her exclamation. “Why would… no. You don’t have to tell me.”

“Things just… weren’t great for me, I guess. I was really… alone.” Evan sighs. “But- but things have been a lot better, lately, you know? So I’ve started to… feel comfortable telling people close to me, right?” Evan gives a small shrug.

“Okay.” Zoe nods. She unbuckles her seat-belt, in order to reach over, and pull Evan into a hug. “Thank you for telling me.”

“Y-yeah… uh, thank you for… not freaking out, I guess.” Evan doesn’t know what he expected out of her reaction, but he guesses this is probably what he *should* have. Unlike Jared, or his mom, Zoe hadn’t really known him back then. She likely doesn’t feel the same… *guilt?* He thinks that’s what they felt, when he told them, even if it wasn’t his intention to make them feel guilty.

“Freaking out would just make that harder for you, wouldn’t it?” Zoe, pulls back, hands on his shoulders. Evan can only manage to nod. “Now get out of my car. My parents are going to give me shit if I’m not back when I said I’d be.”

“O-oh, right.” Evan nods, before getting out of the car. “Thank you, Zoe.”

“No problem, I guess.”

Evan waves as she drives away, before going inside.

“Wait… did she imply that it was me?!?” Evan stops in the middle of his hallway. “No… Connor doesn’t… well, he *was* pretty against me seeing his tumblr. I wonder…”

Evan shakes his head. Even if he *is* right, he has no right to betray Connor’s trust and check.

Evan doesn’t know why he wakes to Jared, of all people, having sent him a picture of Connor. He does, however, feel vaguely like he’s being made fun of.

“*Jared what the fuck.*”

“*im just being a good friend <3*”

“*Stop.*”
“embrace ur gay, evan”

“Did you use ‘your’ because the last time you said ‘embrace the gay’ I hugged you?”

“u cant prove that.”

“Hey, I have a question for you.”

“yea?”

“How do you think Connor realized he was Demi?”

“probably the same way I realized I was gay.”

“How did you realize you were gay?”

“....”

“Jared”

“i realized when we were in middle school right?”

“Okay?”

“but it was bc of u”

“WHAT”

“it was a shameful point in my life.”

“Should I be offended.”

“no”

“Wait… are you implying….”

“omg u dense idiot yes i think connor likes u”

“You think so?”

“considering he doesnt shut up a/b u when ur not there yea”

“Oh.”

“now figure ur shit out.”

“You say that as if its easy”

“/shrug/”

“D:”

“good luck”

Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why. I don’t even know, things have been good lately, I
think, so I like to think they’ll keep being good.

Evan sighs. He had no idea that not having anything to say would be such a common issue with his letters.

I’m not sure how to feel about everyone implying- or less than ‘implying’- Connor’s feelings, but I guess that’s a good thing? At least, if I really do like him? I sort of hope I do, just so this can be considered a good thing.

Is that a bad reason?

Chapter End Notes

Another chapter In one day? it's more likely than you think?

Was Zoe finding out underwhelming? I just don't think, with everything she's dealt with in her life thus far, that she would have an immediate, dramatic reaction. If anything, i like to think that what he's told her hasn't even really set in, yet. She probably went home and then went "holy shit" and then it hit her. I also can't see her ever making a big deal of it, because Evan clearly doesn't want to talk about it more than he already has. Also just for the record she does buckle her seat-belt again before she drives away. just... you know... for the record.

Oh, and the thing Jared had to talk to Connor, was actually to apologize to him for his actions at the beginning of the school year. Jared, master of taking half a year to apologize for things. It's okay, he's trying, there's no smooth way to put this anywhere in the story, but yeah, that's what's going on in the background of this story.

ALSO you can't tell me that evan wasn't at least part of the reason he realized, right? In this story, that didn't amount to much long term. (is my shipper showing?)
Chapter 44

Chapter Summary

“Want to do homework with me?” Evan sets his work down on the coffee table. Connor raises an eyebrow, as if to say ‘who do you think I am?’

“No?”

“Will you?” Evan asks, sitting down in front of the table. Connor gives a drawn-out sigh, before nodding.

“Sure, fine.” With one more sigh— for good measure— Connor drops down next to the end of the table, and drops his bag next to him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Evan has, admittedly, not been thinking about school as much as he should. Not to say that he hasn’t paid any attention to it, but he finds himself suddenly hit with the realization that there are only one and a half months left. May’s warm weather leaves the school days to blur together, stress of one class fading into the next. Not to mention, he’s running short on time to turn in those essays. The ones that he… hasn’t written.

There are free-topic essays, with vague themes, that he’s given more thought to since the last time he looked at them, but for the most part he isn’t sure he’s going to manage to complete any of them. If he does, he’s not sure he’d have time between all of his homework, and personal stress, to proofread them. The more he considers his future, the more he thinks there may be a bigger wait between high school and college than he expected.

That’s… fine. Evan isn’t that eager to give himself more school-time stress. However, he’s stuck in a younger mindset. His mindset was that he would go to school, get a job, then be able to relieve his mother of some of the stress his existence has put on her. An idea that seems much further away, now.

So, Evan thinks, that’s probably why he has a stress-induced breakdown one Monday afternoon.

There really isn’t anything anyone can say, or do, to stop it, either. School won’t suddenly be less work, just because he’s overwhelmed, and Colleges certainly aren’t in any hurry to lower tuition.

He doesn’t go to school Tuesday— much to his friends concern— and does every English assignment he can, while he’s at home. Multiple times during the day he finds himself in tears, but he’s not at school, so he doesn’t feel nearly as worried about that as he probably should. Nobody can see him, so he allows it to happen without any real thought as to how bad that is.

Luckily, his English teacher has put up all of their assignments for the rest of the year, on their page of the schools website, for the purpose of not surprising any of their students with a bunch of work. Evan doesn’t like many of his teachers, but this is one of the ones he does, for that reason.

Connor stops by with notes from the classes they share— as well as the ones Evan shares with Jared,
apparently from the latter- after school. Though he questions why Evan looks like he’s been crying, he let’s Evan dismiss his question without any more.

“Want to do homework with me?” Evan sets his work down on the coffee table. Connor raises an eyebrow, as if to say ‘who do you think I am?’

“No?”

“Will you?” Evan asks, sitting down in front of the table. Connor gives a drawn-out sigh, before nodding.

“Sure, fine.” With one more sigh- for good measure- Connor drops down next to the end of the table, and drops his bag next to him. “What are we doing?”

“I’ll help you with your math homework if you proof-read my book report.”

“Deal.”

“So… Evan.”

“So… Connor?” Evan looks up from Connor’s math homework, eyebrow raised. “What is it?”

“Did you… avoid me the other day?”

“What?! No I didn’t- I’m not- uh.” Evan sighs. “Sorry, yes I just… needed to think about something.”

“It’s fine. If a little hypocritical.”

“Huh?”

“You know, since we established I should tell you, whenever I need time to myself. Yet you didn’t tell me.” Evan shrinks down under the glare Connor’s giving him. It occurs to him that Connor has probably been trying not to get angry at him for this, and is just now losing that restraint. “So, you know, what the fuck.”

“I- I just- I didn’t-” Evan stares down at the table. “I didn’t really… intend to avoid you. I just… when I got home I realized that I had, and at that point it was a little late to say anything.”

“It wasn’t. If you had said anything at all, even late, that would have been better than, you know, not fucking telling me anything.”

“I’m sorry.”

“That doesn’t change anything.”

“I know! I’m sorry.” Evan sighs. “I know apologizing doesn’t change the fact I did it, or mean you have to be okay with what I did, but I am sorry.”

There’s an uncomfortable silence that fills the air, before Connor sighs. “Okay, fine. It’s fine.” His tone is surprisingly clam, which convinces Evan he actually means it. They go back to their work, and the tension that had fallen over them disperses.
“Connor… how did you realize you were Demi-romantic?”

“What?! No. None of your fucking business.”

“Okay…” Evan frowns. “When did you realize-”

“No.”

“Fine, okay. No Demi-ro question.”

“Does it matter?”

“I… guess not.” Evan doesn’t look up at Connor. Then, quieter, mutters to himself. “Probably not.”

Evan, that night, stares up at his ceiling, and finds himself once again cursing his mind. How dare it keep him up with, of all things, thoughts about how pretty Connor is. What the fuck?

Today is going to be a good day and here’s why. I think I finally figured out if that dream was just nonsense or not. Well, it was nonsense. But not baseless nonsense. Only like, 90% baseless.

Anyway, I guess I have a crush on my best friend. So that’s a thing. I’m not sure if it’s a good thing, but it certainly is a thing. Wonder when that actually happened. How did I not notice? It seems really unfair that it happened without me even KNOWING it.

Chapter End Notes

Hey look at that I didn't post this chapter the second it was done (bc i wasn't sure if i would be rested enough to write today, and didn't want to leave today chapter-less)

Fun Fact: I once cried doing (easy) history homework because I was failing all of my classes (bc my health is AWFUL and chronic). Also, i never had a dream about school until after I stopped attending. At which point I had stress-dreams where I was back at school not knowing what classes i had/ where they were and people making fun of me bc i used to be in advance classes but was now a year behind (or several). So, thanks for that brain, what the fuck.

blah. is it too soon for a confession? when will that happen? Who knows, not me. (oh shit wait i have to write it I should know-)

EDIT: GDI ME AGAIN WITH THE NOT PUTTING A CHAPTER SUMMARY GET IT TOGETHER
Chapter 45

Chapter Summary

Yeah, Evan thinks, not that he would. Not like that’s something he would do. He sighs, annoyed with himself. So much for being honest.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Realizing something doesn’t mean he’s ready to admit it. Knowing you have feelings for someone-and that they likely do, for you, too-doesn’t mean you’re ready to tell them, either. It’s a lot more complex than that, Evan thinks.

There are a lot of factors. Like figuring out if- assuming Connor really does return his feelings-they’re actually ready for a relationship. Maybe he’s thinking too far ahead, but he doesn’t want to go into something doomed for failure just because he couldn’t think through things logically.

Logic has never been friends with his anxiety-riddled mind, though. Thus, instead of thinking logically, he just ends up mentally screaming because, quoting his thoughts, “holy shit, holy shit, holy shit.”

Evan feels guilty as soon as he does it, but he opens Connor’s tumblr. He doesn’t scroll past the first post- it’s a drawing- before what he’s doing hits him, and he remembers that he promised not to do the very thing he’s doing. Unfortunately one post- one drawing- is enough to have already seen something he probably wasn’t meant to.

The picture itself isn’t all that strange. Though Evan wonders if the subject- Evan himself- has ever actually looked as peaceful as he does in the drawing. If he has, he guesses it would be while sitting in a tree, so that being where drawing-Evan is, is accurate at least. It’s the caption, that he feels not only he wasn’t supposed to see, but that is also likely the reason he wasn’t supposed to look at the blog at all.

look at this pretty boy. what an asshole. unfair.

With guilt gnawing at his lungs, Evan feels the need to do something- anything- to somehow make up for it. Without actually saying what he’s done.

“Hey, something occurred to me.”

“ok?”

“I know your url and could- not that I would- look at your blog.” Yeah, Evan thinks, not that he would. Not like that’s something he would do. He sighs, annoyed with himself. So much for
“being honest.

“i don’t know what your point is evan”

“SO my url is anxietreeboy and it is, in fact, more than just tree pictures. But it’s mostly plants, sue me.”

“evan…”

“Yeah?”

“did you do something?”

“What?”

“you’re over explaining.”

“That… what I always do?”

“you forgot an apostrophe.”

Evan swears to himself, and doesn’t respond. There’s really nothing he can do to argue with that. Especially since he, always, re-reads his messages at least twice before sending them. Usually even more than that. Forgetting to is a clear sign, to them both, that something’s up.

Evan actually isn’t avoiding Connor, this time. Though he doesn’t respond to Connors last text, it’s just because he’s preoccupied. That’s it. Evan sighs.

He feels bad for Alana. He’s, for the first time since they’ve really become friends, spending time with her, and without the others. Which, thus far, has just meant that they’re doing homework together, and pretending Evan isn’t glancing worriedly at his phone every six seconds.

“Evan?”

“Huh?!”

“Is something wrong?” Alana asks, eyebrow raised. “You keep looking at your phone. Are you expecting something? If something’s happening you can tell me. I’ll help, if I can, too.”

“No it’s nothing.” Evan shakes his head. “I just haven’t responded to something and- and I’m not sure if I should have. I guess… I should have but I don’t know how I would have.”

“Hm.” Alana frowns. “If you think you should respond, why don’t you? Or are you worried what they’ll say in response to your response.”

“Something like that.”

“Ah.” Alana nods. “Unfortunately, I don’t have any advice for that.”

Evan can only nod in response. He glances at his phone again, then at Alana. There’s very big differences between all of his friends, he’s realized a while ago. Yet, there are some things which are similar, in- at least- how he became friends with them. The way it happened, the situations, are completely different, but his reasoning for starting friendships with Connor and Alana are both rather similar. He saw something in them that was familiar, that he couldn’t ignore.
With Connor it was pain. An easy thing to recognize in his face, Evan noticed it, and pushed through all instincts telling him not to, in order to talk to him. To make sure he knew there was someone else dealing with the same thing.

With Alana, it wasn’t so easy. It took him a long time to see something there- the familiar loneliness that comes with knowing nobody is looking at you, not really- and when he did, it still took a while to form a friendship with her. Yet, he had. Because neither of them should have to be alone.

“Alana have you- this isn’t really on topic but- I’m sorry- have you ever felt like… you could disappear without anyone noticing?” Evan watches her face, the shock that forms on it, and her head snap up to face him.

“I-” She stops herself, shakes her head, and then nods. “Yes. I guess… I suppose that’s part of why I involved myself in so many things, you know?”

“I think I get it.” Evan nods, frowning. “I just- I’ve told everyone else. I’m not obligated to, but I… I think I want everyone closest to me to know.”

“Everyone… closest to you?”

“You’re my fr- we’re friends. You’re one of my closest friends. I mean, to be fair, all of my friends are. I only have four, but that’s besides the point.”

“I am? No- I mean- thank you.” She smiles, and he thinks she’s genuinely grateful. Part of him wonders if, maybe, he seemed the same way when he gained friends who would admit they were, too. “But… what is it?”

“Do you- you probably don’t, but do you remember when I broke my arm?”

“You mean before school? You came back on the first day with a cast.” She pauses, but Evan waits because she seems to have something else to say. “I interrupted you talking about it, and never let you really talk about it to me. I’m sorry, about that. It’s not like I meant to but I- I just- can’t stop talking, sometimes.”

“Don’t worry- it’s fine. I understand.” Evan takes a deep breath. “I told- well- everyone… Told them that I fell out of a tree, when climbing it. Which isn’t entirely a lie but… I didn’t… fall.”

“Oh.” Realization falls over her face. “You tried to- Evan, why- I’m so sorry.”

“I felt… really alone, you know?”

“Yeah… I’m… sorry you felt like that.” Alana bites her lip, seemingly trying to hold back more words.

“It’s okay to bring something else up.”

“I don’t want to make this about me.” Alana sighs. Evan nods.

“It’s okay. I’d… I mean… the less I have to talk about myself, the better, really.”

“Just… I want to say that I know how you feel. I never- I hadn’t tried, but I’d thought about it. More so, I thought that nobody would… notice. It’s sort of why I- well- why I can’t seem to stop talking about all of my accomplishments? I know I’m doing it. I even know that it’s annoying, but I can’t seem to make myself stop. I just- maybe if I make myself important, people will care that I’m here. So… I know how you feel, and I’m sorry you felt like that.”
“I’m sorry too. That you’ve felt like that.”

They’re silent for a long moment, before Alana reaches over and puts her hand over his. “Thank you for telling me.”

“Thank you for listening.”

He returns home, later that day, feeling somehow lighter. Everybody important to him knows, now. He’s not hiding anything from them anymore. They all still care about him, despite learning the truth. Evan isn’t sure why, but he somehow expected telling them would make them leave. Like he’d be too broken, to be worth their time, but they’re still here.

Evan takes out his phone, sighing.

“evan i swear to god if you’re ignoring me again”

“I’m not. Sorry. I was telling Alana about… the thing.”

“oh.”

“And I… I’m a pretty bad friend. To you, I mean.”

“Why?”

“It wasn’t just because I know your url that I gave you mine.”

“What did you do.”

“I… looked at your blog again. Only the most recent post, before it occurred to me what I was doing. But that was still a shitty thing for me to do, after telling you I wouldn’t. So I understand if your mad at and/or hate me.”

“don’t hate you but am a little pissed off”

“Understandable.”

“What did you see?”

“Just a drawing? Of me??? (Or my brain has somehow become way too full of itself.)”

“You are your brain.”

“Technically true but you know what I mean.”

“It was you.”

“I also saw its caption… so…”

“don’t”

“I was just going to say thank you?”

“why”

“It called me pretty, why else?”
“it also called you an asshole.”

“Yeah, but that part is true.”

“both are”

“Aw”

“shut the fuck up.”

“Hey I need to talk to you, about something, later.”

“ok?”

“In person, I mean.”

“sure. hey by the way, do you remember what *your* last post was?”

“no?”

“to quote ‘I’m a moron wtf why are my dreams so fucked up’ so like. what does that mean.”

“That’s actually semi-relevant to what I need to talk to you about. (also how do I fight my past self?). But in short: I had a dream that was really weird and made me realize something.”

“what?”

“I need to mentally prepare myself for this conversation, so. Please wait.”

“sure.”

Evan forgets to write a letter to himself, the next morning, too caught up in his thoughts about what he’s going to say.

Chapter End Notes

Remember all that self control I had? Yeah, what the fuck.

Note: (well these are the notes so-) yes i did give evan a (one of my) url's bc it didn't flow right without him saying is. having it go "so here's my url," evan sends, followed by another text with his url." just didn't work. Besides, "how do chill" is a pretty fitting url for someone with anxiety. (fun fact my blog title on howdochill is "anxiety boy")

EDIT: hey wait a second did that url change? Yes! it's no longer howdochill (which was a blog of mine), but anxietreeboy, because a very lovely person asked if they could make a blog for evan, and there it is!

now alana knows!

fun fact: the only person i’ve ever confessed to, i did over a skype message (bc we never saw each other in person after i left the school we went to) at like 12am about how i had a crush on them for 5 years and "whoops sorry its ok if you hate me" and then they
were like "i like you too, should we date?" and then i cried.
and then 7 months later we broke up right before christmas. then we proceeded to play
video games against each other. so that was a thing.
why am i mentioning this? be that's my only basis irl of a confession, and im trying to
taper expectations.

ohhhhhhhhhhh and guess what's happening guys :)

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video games against each other. so that was a thing.
why am i mentioning this? be that's my only basis irl of a confession, and im trying to
taper expectations.

ohhhhhhhhhhh and guess what's happening guys :)
Chapter 46

Chapter Summary

“Oh.”

“Yep.”

They stand there, awkwardly not meeting each other’s eyes. “So… should we- uh- date, or something?”

“I mean, I guess, if you want to?!?” Connor’s voice raises at least an octave, and Evan finds himself laughing.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Later ends up being three days later, because Evan can’t sort through his feelings enough to confess. Connor is surprisingly patient, when he says he can’t explain just yet, but Evan still feels bad. Alana recommends he just get’s it over with. Zoe rolls her eyes at him, when he explains the situation, and assures him he shouldn’t be worried. Jared is no help, either, but gives him a reassuring pat on the back.

As it is, Evan realizes that he just has to get it over with.

Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why. You’re going to confess. Likely- if everyone else is right, though I still have a hard time forcing myself to believe it, darn you brain- your feelings are returned. So, it’ll be fine. Today will be a good day.

Maybe I’ll delete this part later, but: I think it’s hard to believe anyone wants anything to do with me, still. I’m just… made up of broken pieces. Ugh, no amount of pretty analogies makes that any less fucked up. There’s so much wrong with me, stuff that will likely never change. Accepting that I have friends- that they care about me- was hard enough. Even if it’s someone who already likes me, who’s my friend, who loves me (at least platonically, I mean) it’s hard to picture anyone wanting me.

So, maybe, I’m still scared.

But today’s going to be good, I think. I’m going to force myself to tell- well- myself that.

It doesn’t take any convincing or careful planning to get Connor to drive Evan to the orchard. Somehow, it feels like a long time since they’ve been there. Which is sort of sad, Evan thinks, and not just because he likes the place. It’s where a lot of their time together was spent, at the beginning.

Evan huffs out a sigh, realizing he’s being sentimental.
“You okay, Evan?”

“Y-yeah, I’m okay.” Evan closes his eyes, takes a deep breath, and turns around to face Connor. “I- uh- remember how I needed to tell you something?”

“Now’s the time, then?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay, go ahead.” Connor actually looks nervous, Evan notes. Maybe Connor thinks it’s something bad. Evan has the thought that, perhaps, he should have clarified it wasn’t anything bad. Unless being confessed to is bad, which he guesses it might be, if you don’t feel the same way. Anxiety creeps into his mind, but he tries to push it aside. He’s going to do this.

“I-” Evan pauses, realization hitting him. If he’s going to think sentimental things, he might as well go all out and be cheesy. “I- when I say this, please don’t interrupt me, okay?”

“Sure. Okay. I won’t.”

“You’re really important to me. I- I mean that should be obvious, you’re my best friend. You’ve done a lot for me, sometimes just by being here. I don’t know what I would be doing without you, right now, but I can’t imagine being in nearly as good a place. That’s not all, though. I- maybe- I think in the beginning I claimed to want someone who understands, but really I was just desperate for someone to… notice me. To listen to me. And you did. So selfishly, I told you a lot of things that, maybe, you didn’t need or want to hear. About my, well, pathetic life. Yet, you didn’t leave. I can’t- can’t tell you how much that- that means to me. So… so I think with all of that, it was hard for me to realize when my feelings… changed.”

“Changed?” Evan doesn’t mind Connor’s interruption, because it gives him a chance to take another deep breath.

“I have feelings- romantic feelings- for you. Now. Maybe for a while, even, without realizing. So, yeah. That… is a thing.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah.” Evan can’t meet Connor’s eyes, or look at him at all. He’s hit with a wave of worry over his confession, before Connor speaks again.

“That was really cheesy, you know that?” Connor sighs. “But I… also… have feelings for you. Of a romantic nature. Go figure.”

“Oh.”

“Yep.”

They stand there, awkwardly not meeting each other’s eyes. “So… should we- uh- date, or something?”

“I mean, I guess, if you want to?!” Connor’s voice raises at least an octave, and Evan finds himself laughing.

“Well obviously I do!”

“Good, let’s do that then. I mean- fuck- I also want to go out with you.”
The ride to drop Evan off at home is awkward, but somehow nice. Warm. Evan doesn’t feel the usual nervousness that comes with awkwardness. Maybe because they both feel awkward, or maybe because they’re comfortable with each other. He isn’t sure, but whatever the reason, he’s glad.

“So… like… now can I look at your Tumblr?”

“Jesus fucking Christ Evan, why are you so obsessed with this?”

“Curiousity, I guess. Why? Do you talk about me? Enough that you don’t want me to see?”

“Enough that...” Connor sighs, then mutters. “At least one of my followers ships us.”

“Oh my god!”

“I’m sorry.”

“We should post a picture, together.”

“Don’t fuel them.”

“You’re no fun.”

“You just want an excuse to take another picture of me.”

“You’re onto me.” Evan laughs. “What can I say? You’re pretty.”

“Get out of my car.”

“It’s moving!”

Connor rolls his eyes. “Fine, you can stay.”

“Thanks.” Evan laughs.

Today was a good day and here’s why. MUTUAL FEELINGS HOLY SHIT I NEVER THOUGHT THIS WOULD HAPPEN.

I don’t know what else to say, I’m just really happy. Today was great! 10/10. Would remember fondly.

Evan drops onto his bed with a sigh, happy and grinning. When his vision blurs, he’s startled, and reaches up to his face to find himself crying. Which makes him laugh, because of course this would make him cry. They’re good, happy, tears. Still, they make his throat tighten, his nose run, and his breathing become uneven. He gets up to go get tissue, when he runs into his mother.

“Evan?” Heidi’s voice is soft, concerned. He shakes his head, trying to indicate he’s fine. “What’s wrong?”
“Nothing! I- I’m this is- I’m happy. These are happy tears.”

“Oh.” Heidi pauses, surprised. “What happened?”

“I- uh- me and Connor started dating.”

“What?!” Heidi clears her throat. “I mean- that’s great! Sorry, I shouldn’t be so surprised.”

“It- it’s okay. I’m surprised too.” Evan would normally be offended that she’s so surprised, but he can’t bring himself to be.

**AcornMan** has changed the chat name to **GUESS WHAT**

**Jared**: what

**ConArtist**: ARE YOU REALLY TELLING THEM LIKE THIS

**Zoe**: Does it have to do with why Connor came home with a cake and no explanation

**You**: He what

**ConArtist**: listen

**ConArtist**: I needed to celebrate somehow

**You**: Hey, it’s okay, I cried- happy tears- when I got home.

**ConArtist**: YOU CRIED?!

**Alana**: I’m sorry, but will we be told what happened?

**Alana**: Or are you planing on dancing around it forever?

**Jared**: wait i have a guess

**Jared**: U STARTED DATING

**You**: YES

**ConArtist**: yeah

**Jared**: DUDE NICE

**Jared**: told u he had feelings for u

**You**: I guess you did

**ConArtist**: you were right

**You**: WAIT

**ConArtist**: JARED

**Jared**: fuck whoops i g2g

**Zoe**: Congrats fuckers.
**Zoe**: Bro get in here we gotta celebrate for you

**ConArtist**: concern

**Alana**: I'm happy for the both of you!
**Alana**: I hope you know I feel the immense need to give you both hugs, when I next see you

**You**: !!!

**ConArtist**: just this once

Chapter End Notes

"I wont post again until tomorrow" I said, lying to myself.

SAVE ME

okay so...oh boy. I really considered making this the connor intermission but... that didn't seem fair to him, you know? since the focus was more on their confessions that on connor himself.

Connor: *buys a cake and tries to eat the entire thing himself* this is how i show im happy
Evan: *crying* nice dude im happy too

save them.
Chapter Summary

PLATONICALLY YOU FUCKING SHIPPERS

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train

Chapter Notes

HERE IT IS

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Of all the things he expects from Connor, giving Evan permission to look at his Tumblr, and even going so far as to tell Evan what his personal posts are tagged as, was not one of them.

“Why all of the sudden?”

“Look I’m not- you said some really sentimental shit when you confessed, but I don’t really know how to say how I feel so- just- take a look if you want a trip down the sentimental road, or whatever.”

After avoiding it for so long- excluding that one time- Evan hesitates to pull up Connor’s Tumblr. It takes a while to bring himself to, but then it’s fairly easy to bring up the tag- in chronological order- to look through.

as it turns out im embarrassing as fuck so im changing my personal tag and not updating the old posts. lets pretend they didn’t happen okay?

Tagged: i would delete them but who has time for that, connors big dumb angst train

just in time for my new personal tag shit went all off the charts. so fun fact im depressed as fuck. apparently enough that some guy- who I PUSHED TO THE GROUND- was like ‘hey dude same lets be friend’ and honestly what the fuck is that??????

Tagged: he acts like hes scared of everything how the fuck, connors big dumb angst train, i guess were friends now?

this guy likes trees so fucking much i swear if it was legal he’d marry a forest. Is he okay?? what is going on???
also apparently he pronounced neopolitain as nepolian for his entire childhood and honestly same

**Tagged:** i didn’t tell him that though, connors big dumb angst train

**WHY DOES NOBODY BELIEVE THAT I CAN HAVE A FRIEND FUCK YOU**

**Tagged:** i know you hate me but holy shit, connors big dumb angst train

This just in my dads an asshole. (this isn’t new but wtf)

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train

“have you told them you want therapy” NOoooo

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, evan why would you ask me that

evan is the friend i mention btw so don’t ask

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train

evan: my mom wants to meet you
his mom: *doesn’t show up*
we: well ok

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, DUDE what the fuck, he seemed so sad i was sad what is this, is this empathy, fuck that

i was informed of the term “fatalistic humor” by evan and ive never identified more with a type of humor than now

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, its like my entire life dude

My parents grounded me but my friend was like “I feel the way I did that one time I wanted to die” and I was like “fuck being grounded my friend needs me” and honestly im the picture of character growth.

**Tagged:** im kidding, connors big dumb angst train, i don’t give a shit about being grounded anyway

Evan realizes he never actually thought about it, but in hindsight it was a bit strange that Connor had even bothered to mention being grounded back then. Maybe he was trying to seem responsible, but
Evan can’t imagine why.

**IM AN ASSHOLE**

*Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, evan deserves better tbh*

**god hes so nice to me what the fuck**

*Tagged: connors big dumb angst train*

SO apparently i gave my best firend an anxiety attack and honestly somebody punch me in the face

*Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, HE APOLOGIZED TO ME FOR IT WHAT IS WRONG WITH HIM, save him honestly*

evan is friends with his (previously only) friend again which is great and all except that guys an asshole and i don’t know how im going to deal with him

*Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, hlep me, hashtag do it for evan, (I cant hashtag in the tags so shut up)*

“connor are you skipping school” fuck he found out

*Tagged: connors big dumb angst train*

Holy fucking shit have you seen anything cuter than someone textng you a picture of their cast-which you and only you signed- and saying “it’s you!” like holy shit

*Tagged: connors big dumb angst train,*

hey this just in: connor is fucking aro stop asking me if I have crush on evan

*Tagged: connors big dumb angst train*

HOLY SHIT. have i ever mentioned that evan is scared of like, everyone? (anxiety and all that) but he literally straight up told larry- my dad- that he wasn’t listening to me and I have never been so fucking shocked in my entire life

*Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, i would die for this kid, whos the same age as me but shut up*
when you beat someone at a videogame you’ve never played before but they have

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, get fucked kleinman, is that even how you spell his fucking name idk

evan woke me up at 4 at the fucking morning and like yeah I could have ignored his texts but what if he was dying??????

Anyway im annoye dso theres that

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, the things i do for FRIENDSHIP

Evan finds himself laughing. He feels a little bad, seeing this post, but he’s more happy that Connor would be worried about him than anything

**being angry is like my constant state of being but usually theres a fuckign REASON FOR IT**

**Tagged:** kill me/, connors big dumb angst train

evan convinced me to go watch my sisters band concert and I nearly cried bc I had no idea she was so good????

i’ve been an awful fucking brother to her and like i already knew that but i was just thinking- she has a bright future and like she doesn’t need me???

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, what am I even trying to say here, i just owe her apologies and shit

I apologized to my sister for being a piece of shit and she was like ‘yeah okay’ and tbh I dont know what I expected

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train

evan got sick and honestly what the fuck universe

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, he didnt deserve that, probably, he did say something mean but like he immediately was like ‘wait fuck no’ so

Evan sighs, shaking his head. He’s not entirely sure he didn’t deserve it, but he’s happy Connor didn’t think so.
evans dad is an asshole

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, how do you forget your own son is jewish??

when your friend tells you they’re going to go see their dad- whos an asshole- even though they kept saying that they didn’t want to and they had every chance to say no and not go and you’re like ????
dude what the fuck

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, is it bad im angry at him?, bc like evan what the fuck

Evan huffs out a sigh. He was angry at himself, too. So its not like he can judge Connor for being angry about it.

save me from my fucking family honestly they all hate me why do i have to be here again?

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, at least theyre mostly ignoring me

somebody fly me to colorado (is that the state? fuck I cant remember) to fight evan’s dad. or to give evan a hug or something just do

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, WHAT A FUCKING DICK

Laughter escapes Evan. He wasn’t aware Connor has been so angry, for his sake, about the whole thing. He’d seemed fairly calm about it, when talking to Evan.

i drew purposefully shitty drawings of trees for evan and he was still excited about them and like ???
holy shit dude

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, i love him

PLATONICALLY YOU FUCKING SHIPPERS

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train

save me from my cousins.

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, actually save my hair
evan: i cried
me: i would kill for you

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, listen-, i cant explain this post honestly

zoe offered to drive me- MY CAR GOT TAKEN AWAY- so like who says we arent good siblings anymore

Tagged: we brought evan a cake, connors big dumb angst train

don’t text me at ass-o-clock in the morning to tell me it snowed what the fuck

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, ok but i’ll allow it when it bc its evan

so like is normal to want to kiss your best friend in a non-sexual way?

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train

ive been informed that usually implies romantic feelings so uh what

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, hey brain i thought we were aro what the fuck

god im an awful friend

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, new years was a mistake

skipped school with best friend, resisted urge to kiss

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, good job connor

i don’t think im gray-romantic bc it didn’t happen until months after knowing him so like

Tagged: demi???, connors big dumb angst train, more at 10

i hope everyone appreciates that I waited until 10 to post this: yeah im demi-ro

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, damn it now i have to change my about page
passing out surveys is not what I wanted to do today

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, the things I do for evan

evan apparently changed my name to ConArtist in a group chat and what the fuck does that mean?

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, OH ITS BECAUSE i DRAW, okay thats cuter than i thought

i’ve been informed I might just think everything he does is cute but have you considered: shut the fuck up

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train

Evan isn’t sure if he’s flattered or embarrassed that Connor has called so much related to him cute.

god he was scared to be home by himself after watching a horror movie so i stayed bc im a good fucking friend but man

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, HES SO FUCKING CUTE

kleinman: evan used to steal cookies
my gay ass: i would steal cookies for him any time

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, stop me

Evan snorts, and has to take a moment to collect himself. He’s fairly certain his face is red, which is rather embarrassing, considering he’s just reading text posts.

guess whos going to fucking therapy. Why did I want to do this again????

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, ugh being healthy is so much fucking work, you knwo what be easier than this?, killing myself, but i don’t want to right now so thats new

I actually spent time with my sister and didn’t fight with her.

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, I don’t know im happy
School dances suck but....

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, im so gay guys

Okay so apparently evan named kleinman ‘jerk’ in the group chat and I’ve never been prouder of him.

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train

How do you tell your friend that they are literally one of the most important things to you in the entire world?

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, its a good thing youre not dead how do I say that

someone pointed out ive been capitalizing words and: fuck you’re right better fix that

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, damn it evan your proper typing is rubbing off on me

evan offered to fight larry and i nearly died

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train

evan: look at how cute my brother is
me: must run in the family

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, god what if i actually said that

larry said he was gonna buy me a new bookshelf (bc mine is long past overflowing) and ??? who is he

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train

LITERALLY NOBODY IN MY FRIEND GROUP IS STRAIGHT HOLY SHIT

Tagged: on that note I came out, connors big dumb angst train

also one of my friends is gray-romantic and i wonder if i should talk to her about that

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, aro specturm crew/, remind me to never say that again
2 things: evan let me (and zoe) paint his nails and !! & he’s a slytherin???? what

**Tagged:** it feels a little backwards that hes one but im a hufflepuff, connors big dumb angst train

I accidentally came out to my mom and I’ve never been so scared in my entire life

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, also she cares about me way more than i deserve

:(

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, im lonely but there are more important things going on rn

evan asked what my tumblr was and I had a heart attack

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, quick gotta delete my blog

Evan almost wants to apologize to Connor again, for that. He wont, of course, but he does consider it.

guess whos in the fucking hospital. wow. nobody fucking believes in me. im not gonna kill myself jfc. i hate everyone

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, except evan

i gave ev that drawing and he freaked out and my heart tried to escape from my chest so today was okay

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, lmao maybe i should start writing letters too

WHAT FUCKING IDIOT MAKES A JOKE LIKE “are you going to confess your love to me” TO THEIR CRUSH

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train, me im the idiot, kill me, i nearly killed him he was eating

zoe asked me to braid her hair and i have no idea when she stopped hating me so much she couldn’t look at me but this is cool

**Tagged:** connors big dumb angst train
Evan is avoiding me and I have no idea what I did

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, I keep switching between being pissed off at him, and being scared he hates me, this suck everything sucks, why cant i be emotionally stable fuck this

Guilt wells up in Evan’s chest again, but he tries to push it aside. They’d already been over that, talked about Evan avoiding Connor. It’s okay, he tells himself.

Klienman apologized to me for being an asshole and i don’t know how to feel about that

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, in other news EVAN IS STILL AVOIDING ME

okay so the avoiding is over and everythings fine and i probably overreacted

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train

IS HE IGNORING ME AGAIN EVAN IM GONNA FIGHT YOU YOU FUCK

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train

oh god hes looked at my blog. I knew he knew what it was but he SAID HE WASN’T GOING TO LOOK AT IT

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, don’t fucking read my blog Evan you fuck

AHHHHHHHHHHHHHH

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train

HE CONFESSED TO ME

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train

IM DYING

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train
I love him??????

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train

Cheesy, Tree-loving, motherfucker how dare you bring this on me all the sudden

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train

hes like the only reason im still alive right now and he likes me and im CRYING

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train, disclaimer not actually crying, instead im stuffing my face with cake like a nerd, I should buy him cake

Anonymous: Dude the ship is real

I FUCKING KNOW RIGHT

Tagged: this is the only ask i’ll put in the main tag bc its really relevant, connors big dumb angst train

Okay so: Evan is really important to me and like i gave him permission to look at my blog so you fucks better not say anything weird

Tagged: connors big dumb angst train

“Evan?” Evan looks up from his phone, to Heidi, who’d spoken. “Uh… you’re really… giggly. What’s going on?”

“N-nothing!” Evan is sure he’s red-faced, and smiling. He can’t really bring himself to care. “Just-uh- Connor?”

“Oh.” Heidi laughs. “Okay, I see.”

Evan, looks down at the page in front of him. It shows that he’s reached the end of the tag, and he decides he needs to write a letter to himself right away.

Today was a good day and here’s why: HOLY FUCKING SHIT CONNOR
It briefly occurs to him that he can’t give that to Dr. Sherman, but he’s too happy to care.

Chapter End Notes

There's at least 1 post for every chapter of this story there is. So, that's why this chapter is so fucking long.

also it was a lot of fucking work to edit with all the italicization and bolding.

anyway Connors a giant fucking dorks so there's that.

idk guys.

i hope someone likes this chapter bc I do.

EDIT: so uh.. i made... a blog for Pain-Verse Connor (https://softhemotionallydepressed.tumblr.com/) where you can ask him things if you wanted to??? also where im posting all of this chapters posts so thats a thing.
EDIT2: Evan now has a blog as well (anxietreeboy.tumblr.com) where you can ask him things. and also there are tree posts.
Chapter 48

Chapter Summary

“So…” He draws out the word, which has Evan worried about what Jared is going to ask. It’s never good when Jared does that. “Have you… kissed yet?”

“We literally just started dating!”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Evan isn’t sure if he and Connor are going to act differently around each other. He’s even less sure if, assuming they did, they would act differently in public. It isn’t that he didn’t see Connor at all following their mutual confessions, but it hadn’t really set in yet, at the time.

Now- at school on a Monday morning- Evan wonders if it would be a problem for them to be obvious in their status as a couple. Would holding hands be weird? At school, at least, it might be a bad idea. Evan isn’t sure the general populous of their high school is very accepting. Then again, it wasn’t like they’d ever paid much mind to Evan- or Connor, in most cases- before.

Evan is broken from these thought’s by Jared, who loudly announces his presence. “Yo, Evan! How are you, best friend?”

“Jared what-”

“You know, since you and Connor are dating now, I can be your best friend again, right?”

“I- uh- guess?” Evan raises an eyebrow at Jared, who grins. He expected teasing. He did not expect to affirm Jared’s status as his best friend. Besides, don’t some people have more than one best friend?

“So…” He draws out the word, which has Evan worried about what Jared is going to ask. It’s never good when Jared does that. “Have you… kissed yet?”

“We literally just started dating!” Evan knows the sound he lets out- a squeak of surprise- is fairly loud, but is embarrassed enough already, that he nearly doesn’t care. Nearly.

Jared laughs, and Evan sighs. He probably should have expected this, if he’s honest with himself. “Dude, chill out.”

“You- you chill.”

“Evan… Evan, no.” Jared laughs again. Evan tries to look mad, by crossing his arms, but Jared doesn’t seem to notice. “Oh, hey, speak of the devil. Hey, Connor!”

“Kleinman.”

“Why don’t you call me by my first name?”

“He doesn’t call people by their first names when he’s annoyed. Or trying to seem like he is.” Evan
doesn’t realize what he’s said, until they’re both looking at him. “Uh- I mean- at least from what I’ve noticed.”

“Gay,” Jared states, simply.

“You’re gay.”

“Yeah?” Jared raises an eyebrow, and Evan gives another sigh. He didn’t think that response through. Connor, at his side, rolls his eyes.

The bell ringing is the only thing that stops Jared’s continued teasing.

They don’t, in fact, hold hands at school. Evan shouldn’t be disappointed- because it’s likely for the best- but since realizing his feelings his ‘hold hands’ urges have skyrocketed. However, once it’s after school, and while Connor drives them to the orchard, he takes one hand off the wheel- much to Evan’s dismay- in order to hold Evan’s hand. The latter part of that, has him smiling. As well as it has Connor going red. If his ‘scary’ image hadn’t already been long since destroyed, for Evan, this would certainly have gotten rid of it.

“So- uh- how’s school?”

“Connor.” Evan mock-gasps. He laughs when Connor groans in embarrassment. Evan is just glad that, for once, he isn’t the one being awkward. For the most part, at least. “I don’t want to talk about school. It’s awful, I’m suffering, and I’m probably going to have to take a year off before college. Which is stressing me out.”

“What happened to those essays?”

“I didn’t turn in a single one.” Evan sighs, grip on Connor’s hand tightening. “There’s not enough time, now.”

“Well… if it makes you feel better, I’m not going to college next year either.”

“No offense…”

“But?”

“You skip so much school, that’s not surprising at all.”

“That’s fair.”

“What- uh- what are you doing, then?” Evan glances to his side- to Connor- as they reach the orchard.

“Technically taking a year off. That’s what I told Larry and Mom. Really? I’m going to try and make something off my art, and see how that does.”

“That’s a great idea!” Connor looks over, at that, while raising an eyebrow. “What?”

“You’re really excited about that.”

“It’s a good idea.” Evan shrugs, looking away. “Besides, you like doing that, so…”

“Thanks.”
Evan pulls his hand away approximately eight times within the minutes it takes them to get to the largest tree- and thus the best shade- they know of. Each time it’s to wipe his hands on his pants in the hopes of not sweating on Connor.

“Evan, I don’t care about your hands, please stop.”

“But- they-”

“They’re fine. Mine are… probably just as bad.”

“Oh.”

“So you- uh- saw my blog right?”

“Oh, yeah.” Evan nods, small smile forming on his face, and goes red. It’s probably more embarrassing for Connor, but Evan is still embarrassed too. Reading someone’s feelings for you- what they thought you would never see- is a little strange, and embarrassing. Especially with how many times Connor called him cute. “Why?”

“Well, after I… told people about us, the shipping only got worse.”

“To be expected, but- uh- hey, it’s canon.”

“Jesus fucking Christ. It’s canon, he says.”

“Well it is!”

“You’re such a nerd.”

“So are you.” Evan rolls his eyes. Connor tugs on Evan’s arm, bringing him closer so he can knock their shoulders together.

“Whatever.”

“God. We became a really stereotypical couple, didn’t we?”

“Don’t point it out, I’ll get self conscious.”

“You will? You?”

“Yes. Shut up.” Connor huffs, and Evan laughs.

“Usually it’s me who does that.” Evan smiles, Connor shrugs. “Well, I still think we should post a selfie together.”

“Don’t fuel them.” Connor plops down onto the ground, pulling Evan down with him. Evan sighs, trying to be annoyed with the action, but quickly adjusts to sit properly on the ground.

“Okay, I just want an excuse to have a picture of you. So please? We don’t have to post it even.”

“Fine, fine!” Connor rolls his eyes. “But in that case; we might as well post it.”

“Who’s fueling them now?”

“Shut.” Connor pulls out his phone, twirling it around awkwardly in his hand. When Evan squeezes
his other hand, and gives him a questioning look from the side, Connor shakes his head. “I don’t like
taking pictures of myself.”

“Why?” Evan frowns, turning his head to fully face Connor.

“It’s just… weird, I guess. Seeing myself. I can’t make myself smile on purpose, and I’m usually not
in a good mood, so it never looks good.”

“You don’t have to smile to look good,” Evan says, without any hesitation. Connor turns to him, and
stares, and stares, and stares. “You okay?”

“God, you’re way too nice to me.”

“I’m just- it’s just the truth.”

“Fine, let’s take this before I change my mind.”

Connor doesn’t smile, in fact purposefully frowning, which makes Evan laugh. He tires to cover his
mouth to stop his laughter, but doesn’t manage it before Connor snaps the picture. It leaves Connor
looking over at him, surprised, while he laughs.

They decide to post it.

“Wait should we- like- go on a real date or something?”

“Shit, Evan, I didn’t even think about it. Want to go on a date with me?”

“Sure.”

“By go on, I hope you know I mean staying at one of our houses, and watching a movie.”

“Oh thank god.” Evan breathes a relieved sigh. “I’ve had enough public places for a the next year,
with the mall trip and the dance.”

“Same.”

“Connor, did you know you post like every other Tumblr user ever?”

“Evan, did you know you’re a giant fucking nerd?”

“Yes.”

“Shit. Didn’t think that through, did I? Fine, yes.” Connor sighs. “I can’t help it.”

“I mean- it’s not a bad thing.”

“Wrong.”

Evan drops onto his bed with a content sigh, upon returning home. For a moment, he just lays there,
eyes closed. Then he sits up, and reaches for his laptop.
Today was a good day and here’s why. Not much has actually changed between us, but it’s really nice. I don’t think I wanted much to change. Obviously things will change, romantic relationships have their own unique aspects that friendships don’t have, but I think if everything suddenly changed, I wouldn’t be able to handle it.

Though, we’re a bit… too happy. Not that being happy is bad, but it feels like we’re both so caught up in the excitement of it, that we’re acting well… very stereotypical of a new couple. Which probably isn’t bad, but it’s a little embarrassing in hindsight.

Either way I’m happy enough to not mind that small amount of embarrassment.

Hey, does that count as progress? I’m going to say it does!

Chapter End Notes

Look at them, they're so giggly and cute... it would be shame if something happened (THIS IS 100% A JOKE! I AM GOING TO LET THEM BE HAPPY I PROMISE)

fun fact: for anyone who didn't read the last chapter AFTER i had done this, I actually made connors blog: softemotionallydepressed.tumblr.com it's an askblog for this universes connor, but there will also be posts alongside chapters so, there's that. (nothing on it is /important/ but it is there)
also I drew (badly) their selfie, which i'm posting there, as well, so there's that. (https://softemotionallydepressed.tumblr.com/post/162718817873/)
Chapter 49

Chapter Summary

“Are you going to go to your senior prom?”

“O-oh- uh- I- don’t know?” Evan shrugs, as if the octave of his voice doesn’t give away how flustered he is, thinking about the answer to that question.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Evan finds out, Wednesday afternoon, that Dr. Sherman is moving to Florida, for family reasons. Meaning they’ll only have one more session with Evan, before they move. Somehow, despite not thinking he had any attachment to his therapist, this fact worries him. What if his next therapist is really different? What if they don’t think he’s making enough progress?

Once Evan forcibly pushes those thoughts aside- he has a few weeks before his last sessions with Dr. Sherman, anyway- he get’s to thinking about his letters, again. There are a lot he never gave to Dr. Sherman. Some he’s gotten rid of- all of the ones from summer, as well as most from the first few days of school- but he still has quite a few he never felt safe handing over. It was as if admitting to what he’d done months ago in a letter, would make them think he was still in that mindset. So he didn’t think he could.

He knows they’re going to go over his progress during his last session, so he tries to find evidence of it. Tries to find a good comparison so he can go, “see I’m getting better,” when he sees them. Instead, he just ends up reading old letters and remembering what was happening at the time.

In the end, Evan does manage to pick out two letters, and prepares exactly what he’s going to say about them.

Heidi is smiling. Which wouldn’t be that strange if she didn’t look like she was about to ask something embarrassing. Evan steels himself. No matter how many years pass, the special brand of embarrassment that a mother brings- maybe parents in general, he isn’t sure- is never any easier to deal with.

“So, sweetheart,” She begins, as Evan internally groans. It’s never good when moms use the word ‘sweetheart.’ It means extra embarrassment. Evan feels like he’s using the word embarrassment to describe his life way too often, already. “Are you going to go to your senior prom?”

“O-oh- uh- I- don’t know?” Evan shrugs, as if the octave of his voice doesn’t give away how flustered he is, thinking about the answer to that question. “Why?”

“Aw, well, I was thinking we could go buy you a suit!” Heidi reaches over, pinching his cheeks. He’s fairly certain she’s doing this on purpose, now. It’s not common for her to be this level of typical mom. “You’ve grown up so fast, and it would be a chance to spend time with your old mom.”

“You’re not old, mom.”
“Well, thank you dear.” She laughs.

Evan finds himself rolling his eyes. “I- uh- I’ll let you know, if I decide to go.”

Senior prom is a once in a lifetime opportunity. One that Evan isn’t sure he wants to experience. It’s on the last day of finals- that evening- and he’s already going to be exhausted by that point. Not to even begin on the fact that he can’t go with his friends, unlike the last dance.

Alana is going to be too busy. Though she may spend some time enjoying herself, it’s already been confirmed they’ll be short-staffed for prom, so the student council volunteered to help during the actual event. Evan doesn’t think that’s fair to the seniors on it, but he really doesn’t have any say in the matter. Zoe isn’t a senior, and is thus, not going. Jared- apparently- has an actual date. He refuses to tell Evan anything about them, or how they met and decided to go together, but he’s confirmed he’s going with someone. Meaning he won’t be going with their- his and Evan’s- friend group.

That just leaves Connor and Evan. Though he isn’t against going with Connor- they are dating, after all- the idea of actually going as a couple is… scary.

Besides that, Connor hasn’t asked him, and Evan’s anxiety still likes to rear it’s ugly head, enough to not allow him to bring the topic up.

Rather than focus on that, Evan decides to focus on the last few weeks of school. He’s got a lot of work to do, in order to assure he has a good GPA come the end of the year. Sure, he’s going to take at least a year off before college, but that doesn’t change the fact that he wants to have good grades when he does go. Though, he’s also started considering community college, at least during that time, so he doesn’t feel like he’s falling behind.

Checking his email has become a slightly less daunting task, ever since he started having regular communication with his siblings. It’s still not something he enjoys, but at the very least he knows he’ll occasionally get pictures of his siblings being cute, and that’s enough to force him to check his email. Today- while he’s technically supposed to be doing homework- he checks it to find he has an email from his step-mother.

_Hello, Evan._

_Sorry to say I don’t have any pictures of the kids, this time. I actually have a question (or three) for you, if that’s alright._

_This is your senior year, right? When’s your graduation?_

_And, most relevant: would it bother you if we-all four of us-came to your graduation? I know there may be reasons you don’t want us to, I feel like it’s safe to say we’re both aware of your feelings about your father, but it would be a good chance for Mia and Noah to see you, and even if he doesn’t show it, I’m sure Joel is proud of you._

_I know you might not believe me, but this was actually Joel’s idea. Sure, I brought up the fact-question of if- you were graduating in the first place, but he was the one who wondered if you would want him- or all of us- to go._
Evan doesn’t just not believe it. He finds himself needing to calm down after he reads it. Anger isn’t the thing he should feel towards the words, he tells himself, but any mention of his father actually wanting anything to do with him is unsettling.

He leaves the email be, and returns to his school work. Though his mind wanders back to it, dwelling on if he should respond at all, let alone agree. If he didn’t respond, he could later claim to have been too busy with finals to check his email, perhaps. Shaking his head, he tries to keep himself focused.

Maybe he should talk to his mom about this.

Evan asks for many opinions, about whether or not he should invite his father to his graduation. The responses vary from Connor’s, “no fucking way,” to Alana’s, “it will most likely be the last time you see him, considering your relationship, why not have this one experience?”

In the end, Evan brings his own thoughts, as well as the opinions of his friends, to Heidi, and asks for her opinion. She stares at him, surprised, before sitting down on their couch, and motioning him to sit next to her.

“So, do you want to?”

“I don’t know.” Evan sighs. “I know that I said I never wanted to see him again, but… I guess it didn’t- last time I saw him didn’t feel like… closure.”

“Hm,” Heidi hums in thought, before wrapping one of her arms around Evan’s shoulders. “You’ll most likely be so caught up in other things, you won’t really see him. Then again, he might want to have dinner with you, or something. Graduation is going to be an exciting day for you, so if you don’t want that additional stress, you might consider not inviting them.”

“I guess you’re right…”

“But!” Evan turns his head to face her. “If you really need closure, and if you think you can handle it, maybe you should.”

“Now I’m just- now I’m even more unsure.”

“I know. I’m sorry, but I don’t have any easy answers. Take more time to think on it, if you need. Or go with your gut. Whatever you do, I’ll be here, supporting you.”

Evan nods, leaning into her side. “Okay. Thanks you.”

Rather than thinking about that, Evan finds himself spending time with Connor, yet again.

“Hey let’s go to prom together.”

“What?!” Evan stops, mid-step, in the middle of the orchard, and spins around to face him. “You can’t- you can’t just say it so nonchalantly, all of the sudden!”
Connor shrugs. If it wasn’t for how red his face is, Evan might think he really is nonchalant about it. “Okay, then, will you go to prom with me?”

“I mean- well, yeah.” Evan sighs, shaking his head. “Of course I will.”

“Cool.”

*Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why. I’m going to spend the day with my mom, for starters. Secondly: we’re going suit shopping. For me. For prom. I’m going to prom. That’s such a weird thought. I didn’t think I’d be here, now, but look at me. Going to prom, spending time with my mom, loving life.*

*Okay loving may be a strong word, but thing’s have been going pretty good, so I can accept it.*

Chapter End Notes

i had written a bunch of notes but this i posted this to the wrong thing and nearly had a panic attack so uh...
whoops...

anyway, see i let them be happy...

Okay I think i remembered most of what I said:
firstly: this will probably be the last time we (directly) hear from/about his step&half family. 1) because they're OCs and they were never meant to have so much screen time and 2) their purpose is served. they were meant to show that it was not distance that was at fault for Evan and his fathers relationship (or rather the lack thereof)

also: there wasn't enough heidi in this story, so i added more Heidi

Also: prom
Chapter 50

Chapter Summary

“so what are you gonna do about your dad?”

“I don’t even know what I’m having for dinner. So I have no clue about anything serious right now.”

“youre probably gonna have pizza”

“Probably.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Evan can’t remember the last time he really went shopping for clothes in a place that wasn’t selling second-hand clothing. Any clothing he owned that was not gotten from one, was from his mother buying them for him as a birthday gift. She is surprisingly good at getting things in the right size. If she had a superpower, it would probably be being able to eyeball clothing sizes.

The last clothing store he was in, was a dress shop, when he and Connor went with Zoe to get her dress. At the last dance, he’d just worn the fanciest clothing he already owned. So Evan has to mentally prepare himself for an entire day, before Heidi takes him shopping for a suit.

It’s a little over two weeks after Evan found out he was, in fact, going to prom, that they go shopping. Leaving them nearing the end of May. Their first- and he comes to realize, only- stop is a shop too nice to not make Evan anxious. He glances at his mother, as she moves to open the door, face filling with worry. Heidi looks back at him, holding the door open, and he grimaces. “Mom.”

“What?”

“Why are we here?” Evan emphasizes the word as much as he can, while whispering.

“What do you mean, Evan?”

“This place is- we can’t- I didn’t think-”

“Hey, hey.” She sets a hand on his shoulder, guiding him to step into the store. “It’s fine.”

“But we can’t afford-”

“Evan.” She maintains a soft tone in her voice, but still manages to stop his argument. “It’s okay for us to splurge every once in a while. Especially when it’s been years.”

While technically true, Evan wants to argue the costs of his medical bills- after he broke his arm- were enough excessive spending for the next three years. Still, he nods, because he can see the hope his Heidi’s eyes. When her face lights up, and she smiles, he can’t bring himself to argue any more. She does a lot for him, and she’s stood by him even when they were arguing, so he can’t bring
himself to let her down. Even over something so small.

Besides, assuming he doesn’t grow, this will save him the trouble of buying a suit for any future occasions.

They begin with normal, typical, black suits, but Evan finds that they don’t suit him, very well. Not to say they look particularly bad- even Evan can admit that they looked fine on him- but he didn’t feel quite right about them. So they move to slightly different cuts, as well as colours.

“How, don’t be upset,” Heidi begins, while Evan stares down at the slightly red-tinged suit, frowning, “but maybe we should try something blue?”

“Why would- why would I be upset by that?” Evan looks up, eyebrow raised.

“I just didn’t want you to think I was only saying that because most of your clothes are blue.” Heidi shrugs. Evan manages a small chuckle at that, smiling.

“They’re blue because I like blue,” Evan says, shrugging the red suit jacket off. “And I think you’re right, about- about trying blue, I mean.”

In the end Evan settles on a dark blue suit jacket, and pants, as well as a black shirt. Heidi wastes no time laying on the compliments, which have him sputtering out responses. “Mom… please…”

Evan is relieved, when he get’s home, to be out of the store. Everything about the place, as well as their reason for being there, had his tension at incredibly high levels. Upon getting home, and dropping onto his bed, he can feel that tension leave his body, and releases a sigh.

Then he pulls out his phone, realizing he’s been ignoring it all day. His only messages are from Connor. Bellow a conversation from early that morning, where Connor asked if they really needed to wear suits to prom, are two new messages.

“so like should our suits and/or ties match or,” Connors first text says, followed by, “like is that really a big deal”

“They don’t have to. I already have mine, anyway, so that would be more work for you. Don’t worry about it.”

“you did?! what it look like?”

“Like a suit? I don’t know. It’s (dark) blue.”

“of fucking course it is. okay well i hope you know im going with black.”

“To be expected.”

“so what are you gonna do about your dad?”

“I don’t even know what I’m having for dinner. So I have no clue about anything serious right now.”
“you’re probably gonna have pizza”

“Probably.”

“or”

“Or?”

“you could come here and have dinner with us again.”

“Aren’t you tired of having me at your house all the time.”

“no. do i seem like i am?”

“Guess not.”

The Murphy’s are having chili, apparently. Evan is surprised to find it has real meat in it- to which Zoe informs him that Cynthia has given up forcing vegetarianism on her family- but not unhappy. A sort of routine has become commonplace when Evan is there, and dinner is usually easy to get through because of this.

So Evan isn’t sure why Connor keeps bouncing his leg like he’s ready to bolt from the room. Evan doesn’t have any chance to ask, because Cynthia gains his attention. “So, Evan, what are you going to do once you graduate?”

Evan doesn’t mean to, but he audibly groans at the question. Connor laughs at him. Then he crosses his arms on the table in front of him, and leans forward to get a better look at Evan’s face. Zoe hides a smile behind her spoon, while Evan’s face goes red. “I- uh-”

“He’s taking a year off, too,” Connor says, for him. Evan resists letting out a relieved sigh, silently thankful.

“Yeah I- I want to collect some funds, first. Maybe go to community college.”

“Oh, well, it’s good that you’re thinking this through.” Cynthia offers him a smile. “Too many people rush in, and collect debt, for it to not be worth it.”

“But when I said I wasn’t going you both just look disappointed,” Connor mutters, rolling his eyes. Evan sends him a sympathetic smile, which gets a poor attempt at a smile in return.

“For now I’m just going to- uh- focus on finals.” Evan shrugs, and Cynthia nods. Zoe glances between Connor and Evan, before speaking.

“At least one of you is thinking about them.”

“Zoe!” Connor huffs. “I’ll study when I have time.”

“You literally spend half the day sitting in your room on your phone.”

“Don’t call me out like this.”

Evan laughs. “You should study, Connor. I’ll even study with you.”

“I know you would, but that doesn’t mean I want to.”
“Wont you enjoy prom more while not worrying about your grades?”

“I’m not worried about my grades.”

“Connor, you’re going to prom?!” Cynthia’s gasp has the table turning their attention to her. “You should have told me sooner! We need to get you a suit.”

“I- well- yeah.” Connor shrugs. “I was going to try and convince Zoe to help me with that, actually.”

“I’ll do it for twenty bucks.” Zoe holds out her hand, expectantly.

“Deal, but I don’t have it on me right now.”

“Are you going with a group of friends, again?” Larry asks, speaking for the first time this dinner. Connor tense up, not looking at him. Zoe shakes her head at Connors reaction, but her expression is sympathetic.

“Well… no. I’m not.”

“Connor has a date.” Zoe’s tone turns slightly teasing, and Connor glares halfheartedly at her, going red. Evan lets out a nervous chuckle, trying not to go red, himself. Connor glances worriedly at him, eyebrow raised. In turn, Evan shrugs, tilting his head. Connor nods, but his expression remains worried.

“It’s fine.” Evan sighs. Connor nods, then glances in Larry’s direction. Evan nods.

“My- I’m- my date is Evan.” Connor motions to Evan, as if they somehow need a reminder of who he is, while turning to face Larry.

Cynthia remains un-surprised, nodding with a smile on her face. Evan had nearly forgotten she knew Connor was pan already. Zoe smiles, and offers Evan a small pat on the arm in reassurance. He gives a nervous smile to her, in response.

“Well,” Larry starts, clearing his throat, “when did that happen?”

“When did what happen?” Connor asks, eyebrow raised.

“You two. Together.”

“A few days ago- or- actually a few weeks now?” Connor glances at Evan for conformation, and gets a nod in return.

Then, Larry nods. “I’m happy for you, then.”

“Then?”

“Well it would have been a little worrying if that was the case during all the nights he spent here, and we had no idea.”

“What do you think we would have- nope. Never mind. Don’t answer that.”

“Nothing, but as a parent-”

“Yeah, yeah. I get it.”

“I don’t think you’d have to worry about that.” Zoe grins, in a way that worries Evan. “I mean, I’m
pretty sure they haven’t even kissed yet.”

Evan buries his face in his hands. “Zoe, why?!”

“It’s my job as a little sister to embarrass my brother, you just got dragged along.”

“I hate you.” There’s no weight behind Connors words. When Evan peaks out from behind his hands, he can see Connor has gone red, too. “If you get a significant other I’m going to throw all of this back at you, I hope you know that.”

“Who says I don’t?”

“What?”

“What.”

Evan finds himself laughing- which he tries to hide behind his hand- as attention is turned to Zoe.

Connor drives Evan home that night, both thoroughly flustered by the attention their relationship had gotten. Evan waves as Connor drives away, before heading inside to get some rest. Tomorrow is his last session with Dr. Sherman.

Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why. Besides the obvious things, which continue over from my last few letters- excitement about my new relationship as well as prom- specifically today, I’m going to have my last session with Dr. Sherman. Who initially started me writing these letters.

I can’t say I’m glad about this, or even that I’m unhappy about it. It’s just sort of… something that’s happening. Change is scary, and that just might be what’s got me worried about it, but I think making myself face it, and making myself see it as a good thing, might help?

So today will be good! I’ll handle this change like a functioning adult- or, pretend to at least- and everything will be fine!

Chapter End Notes

the suit pun was intentional i promise

I never go shopping so, like, sorry there wasn't more shopping but idk what i would have done

i just woke up so i don't know that i have anything else to say, whoops.

side note: everyone is so nice and im !!!!!!!!

who's zoes s/o? who knows not me. but i bet the shippers do
Chapter 51

Chapter Summary

"I realized I can read them, and see my progress, which made it feel more… real. So thank you for having me start them, and for trying to help me for the past few years."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Evan fiddles with the folder in his hands, sitting across from Dr. Sherman. He’s been trying to work himself up into saying what he wants to for minutes now, and he’s cursing wasted time. This is their last session, after all, and if he doesn’t say this now, he’s never going to.

“Evan, it’s okay for you to say what you want to.” Their voice is soft, and they offer a smile. Their eyes shift to the folder momentarily, before shifting back to Evan’s face. Not his eyes, because they know he has a hard time with eye contact. “We’re here to discuss your progress, and it seems like you want to say something about that?”

Evan nods, clutching the folder tighter. “I- uh- I knew we were going to be talking about my progress, so I wanted to share this with you. Well, not the entire folder, but two things specifically.”

“Okay.” They hum in acknowledgment, and Evan opens the folder, reaching for the two letters he’s placed in the front.

“So- uh- I’ve been working on being more honest lately- which... you already knew- and I feel like you’re the- the last person I have to be honest with about this. At first I didn’t think the letters would help, really. So I- I may not have done exactly what I was supposed to with them. Usually I’d deleted them when I didn’t, and wrote something else in case I needed to show you them, but, uh, I kept a few of the bad ones. This one is from right after I got my cast off. I think I was already getting better about them, by then, so it stood out to me.”

Evan hands Dr. Sherman the first letter, which they take. After another glance at Evan, they look down at the letter, and begin reading to themselves.

*Today was a good day and here’s why. I got my cast off! Now not only do I have my arm back, but that reminder is gone. Well, I actually kept it. I was surprised with how attached to it I was, actually, but I guess part of me doesn’t want to let go of what I did. It’s also a reminder of the beginning of my friendship with Connor, so I guess it’s a weirdly negative and positive reminder at the same time.*

*Sure, it reminds me of how alone I was and how terrible things were. That it was bad enough that I… fell.*

*But it also reminds me of starting a friendship with the first person who really… understands.*

*So, it’s both.*

*I’m glad to have it off of my arm, either way.*
Dr. Sherman looks up, expression surprisingly neutral. Evan should be used to that, by now—since they don’t ever show much on their expression— but at the moment he’s worried. “Evan? You seemed to focus a lot on the words ‘fall’ and ‘understands.’ Is there something about those?”

“Y-yes. That’s actually… even months after I broke my arm, I was scared that if I brought up what—uh—really happened you would think I was getting worse, or tell me I hadn’t made any progress, and then I’d feel bad, or you’d tell my mom what I did, and I- I was really scared of that.”

“What you did?”

“I lied about how I broke my arm. I mean I didn’t fall on accident, I let go of the tree.” Evan clears his throat. “I didn’t want everyone to lose faith in me, or keep closer watch on me, or hate me, so I never mentioned it. I don’t think I wanted to tell myself either? But—uh—that’s why, I think. I want to believe I’ve made a lot of progress, you know? Because I can admit what—where I was back then, and because I’m not there anymore. I mean— it’s not as easy as just ‘being better,’ but that mindset isn’t there usually, and if it is I can— I feel like I can talk to people.”

Dr. Sherman, who had remained silent and nodding as Evan spoke, smiles at him. “That’s good, Evan. Thank you for being honest with me, I know it’s hard to admit when you have thoughts like that. I’m glad you’ve reached a point in your life where you can see where you were, admit to yourself you were there, and see a difference in yourself. It hard to see changes in yourself, a lot of the time, so it’s wonderful that you can.”

“Right!” Evan can’t help the smile that forms on his face. Knowing something yourself is one thing, but having someone confirm what you know, means a lot. “Also—well—this one is more recent. Not the most recent, but it’s the best example I—uh—I had for what I wanted to show you. I’m sorry about the language I used, I really wasn’t planning to show you this one.”

“It’s fine, Evan.” Dr. Sherman gives a small smiles, taking the second letter from Evan.

_Today’s a good day. I feel like I should have a lot to say, like I should find something really specific to point out but…_

_I’ve got nothing. Today was a good day. I’m happy._

_So much has changed, and I knew that. I’ve thought about it a lot, but it’s hard not to look around me and go “holy shit when did this happen.” It’s a good disbelief though, an amazed one. I’m not the me of a year ago. I still have his issues, and I can’t pretend I’m so much better that I’m “fixed” but…_

_Today was good. This week was good. Hell, the past few months— a few days aside— were good. I’m happy._

They look up, now slightly bigger smile on their face. Evan tries to smile, too. Evan finds himself fidgeting with the corner of his folder, still, though. He speaks before they can. “I don’t know if the letters made it easier to be positive or not, but looking at them I—well— I realized I can read them, and see my progress, which made it feel more… real. So thank you for having me start them, and for trying to help me for the past few years.”
Usually Evan wouldn’t say anything even close to admitting that he was thinking what Dr. Sherman
told him to do wasn’t working, but they nod, and he feels like it’s okay this time. “You’ve done so
well, Evan. A lot of the time, it’s hard for people to see their progress, or they think they’re not doing
enough. *Now,* that doesn’t mean that they *aren’t* doing better, because they can’t see it, but it’s a
really good thing that you *can* see your own progress. You’ve made a lot, clearly. If I could help
you, even a tiny bit, then I’m glad.”

Evan leaves after his last session, with a weird sense of relief. Though he didn’t have any specifically
negative expectations, he had been worried about it all the same. Once relief fades, he’s faced with a
sense of dread at the thought of needing to find another therapist. Meeting new people is still a fear of
his. Which, he supposes, makes sense. Anxiety didn’t just disappear because he’s in a better place
mentally. Still, it’s annoying.

“I had my last session with my therapist- they’re moving- and I told them how I broke my arm.”

“oh shit really? why?”

“1) I finally feel comfortable admitting it (to some people at least). 2) It was a good way to show I’ve
made progress, by pointing out how bad off I really was.”

“ok. so, how do you feel?”

“Weirdly relieved? I guess realizing that admitting it to my therapist wont make everything fall apart
feels good.”

“ok, good.”

“Hey, you okay?”

“multitasking, sorry.”

“It’s fine. What are you doing?”

“trying to remember how to tie a fucking tie. Screw this, who needs a tie even.”

“???”

“suit shopping.”

“Oh! Have fun.”

“.:(

“.:)”

“it sucks. and”

“And?”

“Sorry, evan, connors busy text back later :) -Zoe”

“Oh, okay.” Evan laughs. Connor and Zoe had come to an agreement about her helping him pick
out a suit, he remembers. Shaking his head, he goes to his kitchen in search of food. The clearly best way to occupy his time.

Chapter End Notes

I wrote the first letter for this chapter, but the other was in a previous chapter. I was going to make both letters from past chapters, but I couldn't find a good one for the first part, that Evan didn't delete.

so yeah.

oh also...
Okay guys so, fair warning: there might not be a chapter tomorrow. If I write one today, there will be, but I might not be able to do that. I just... don't have any energy. Between not sleeping right, barely eating, and a few other things, I have no energy to write. I wrote this chapter 2 days ago (the same time as i wrote yesterdays), so, yeah.
If i manage to aquire food and.or get more fucking rest, you might get one tomorrow. you'll know when it happens, I guess, but just... don't expect it.
Chapter 52

Chapter Summary

ConArtist: and french?

You: I’m not fucking with their counting system.

Alana: That’s fair.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

With all things related to prom taken care of, everyone adjusts their attention to finals. Luckily for Evan he has one less class to study for this year, than the others. It’s the one good thing about waiting as long as possible to take P.E. courses. That still leaves him with plenty to study for, however.

AcornMan has changed the chat name to Suffering

Jared: same
Jared: but why?

You: Finals

ConArtist: wheoifwhei

Zoe: Same.

Alana: Perhaps a study group would help?

Zoe: Different grade here

ConArtist: but aren’t you taking some advanced classes?

Zoe: A few.

Jared: but have we considered....not

You: Please

Alana: Alright, how about this? What are your best subjects?

You: Science. Math that isn’t SIN related

Jared: how do those even work again

You: I don’t know. Fuck sines
ConArtist: English.

Zoe: History is my jam. Math is ok

Alana: Math and History, as well.

Jared: so like
Jared: anyone taking spanish?

ConArtist: didn’t take a language
ConArtist: it’s *technically* not required

Jared: fuck

Zoe: First year spanish, sorry
Zoe: Waited till the last minute to start a language

Jared: still probably know more spanish than me tbh

Alana: I took French, sorry.

Zoe: What about you, evan?

You: Took Korean.

Jared: that as an option?!

You: I was surprised too.
You: But I can’t roll my R’s so Spanish scared me

ConArtist: and french?

You: I’m not fucking with their counting system.

Alana: That’s fair.

ConArtist: ok so language aside, other chosen classes?

Jared: drama
Jared: im a star

You: you make sets

Jared: FUCK YOU shut up

Alana: Anyway
Alana: Ceramics

ConArtist: hey me too

Zoe: You took ceramics?!

ConArtist: yeah. i hid everything i made in my locker
ConArtist: which is the only thing i use my locker for

Alana: We must have it at different times

ConArtist: it’s my 5th period

Alana: Ah, i have it first thing in the morning.

Jared: i also took gym but nobody needs to study for that

You: Me too.

Zoe: Band.
Zoe: might as well milk my talents as much as possible for As right?

Alana: That leaves whatever Connor’s last class is?

ConArtist: Cooking

You: WHAT

Jared: for real

ConArtist: yes?
ConArtist: is that hard to believe?

You: No, I guess not.

Alana: Alright, so I guess we should just focus on required classes?
Alana: Should we start with one, with the person who’s best at it leading us, and go from there?

Jared: wouldn’t this be easier in person

You: No

Zoe: Actually i have to agree.
Zoe: We tend to get off topic around each other

Alana: This way whoever is in the lead, can keep us on track!

ConArtist: fine but i vote we start with English.

Jared: sure why not

You: Okay!

Alana: English it is.

The study digital study group quickly descends into chaos. Connor isn’t very good at keeping them on track, especially when he makes a joke related to a book they were required to read, and Jared doesn’t get it. Connor goes from trying to keep them on track, to questioning if Jared payed any attention at all in class.
Moving onto other subjects doesn’t do them any good, and Evan begins to wonder if there’s any hope of the lot of them passing. He doesn’t doubt Alana, at least, but he worries for the rest of them, himself included.

*You:* Guys, I hate to say this, but this isn’t working.

*Alana:* I have to agree

*ConArtist:* i dont know what any of us expected

*Zoe:* For us to not get into an argument about the required reading

*Jared:* its not my fault ur brother is a giant fucking nerd

*ConArtist:* fight me

*You:* See.

Evan sighs, glancing at his books. Maybe he should resign himself to studying himself, and hoping for the best.

*PurplePresident* has added *AcornMan* to the chat *The Responsible Ones*

*PurplePresident* has added *WalkingOnStars* to the chat *The Responsible Ones*

*You:* Alana???

*Alana:* Listen, I know this is rude and unfair,

*Alana:* but it seems those two are incapable of focusing.

*Zoe:* You’re not wrong

*You:* Still…

*Alana:* I’m not saying we should abandon the other chat entirely,

*Alana:* but that we keep focused here.

*Zoe:* Okay.

*You:* …

*You:* Okay. I don’t like it but, okay.

Connor and Jared seem too preoccupied with their petty argument to notice the lack of other participation right away. They notice, eventually, and there’s no talking their way through excuses. Alana takes the blame- technically she is the one who did it- but they quickly descend back into chaos.
Evan buries his face in his hands. This whole thing is a mess.

Finals week is the second to last week of school. It’s also the last full week. Most electives have finals the week before, so that the required classes can each have a day to themselves during the actual week. Evan has a fitness test- which he does well enough in to even surprise himself- on Monday, and a Korean test on Thursday. He’s pretty sure he did okay at that, as well, if he ignores forgetting which character was O and which was U halfway through. He figured it out, but then rushed through the rest of the exam.

The actual week of finals follows a weekend in which Evan stresses himself into calm, and embraces his fate. Connor visits, with the offer to go over English again, with just him, but Evan had decided to swear off studying by then, and they end up just spending time together.

Monday morning, Evan is greeted by the unhappy faces of his friends. Jared and Connor both seem to have resigned themselves to death- or failure at least- while Zoe has taken to pacing in front of the lockers. When Evan tries to speak to her, she shakes her head and otherwise ignore him. Alana is the only one who seems at all confident, though Evan can also see the exhaustion covering her face. None of them are anticipating this week.

History, Math, and English’s days each pass with different levels of stress for the group. Connor actually seems fine on the Thursday- Wednesday was a break- of the English final. For the most part, though, everyone is stressed out. Evan can’t even bring himself to feel any calmer about Science. In fact, he’s almost more stressed about it. Perhaps because it’s the one thing he expects to do well at, and if he does poorly, he’ll feel even worse about it.

When the school day, that Friday, comes to an end, all they can do is wait. They wont get their grades back until summer. For the moment, they have prom- everyone except Zoe, at least- to think about.

Really, though, Evan wants to just go home and sleep. In fact, as soon as he get’s home, he considers doing just that. He still has a few hours, he tells himself, before he really has to think about doing that.

First, he grabs his laptop.

Today’s going to be a good day, and here’s why. Do I still need to write these? I guess technically not, but I sort of want to. Maybe I’m just used to them. Anyway... Finals are done, now, and prom is in a few hours, so I can relax a bit. Even if I did poorly, there’s not much I can do at this point. I just have to wait.

For now, I’m going to rest, and mentally prepare for social interaction.

“A nap.” Evan nods to himself, setting an alarm, triple checking it, before laying down.
today sucks my life sucks here's a chapter
so, i woke up really early today, to my power being turned off! without warning! right
after we FINALLY BOUGHT FOOD what the fuck
(this is the second time this EXACT SAME thing has happened.)
I already felt like shit, too, so this is great.

/sigh/

anyway, on a more positive note, the chapter! I finally finished it because I didn't have
internet (i only do now because our neighbors are allowing us to leech power from them
temporarily)

the line about O and U is because ㅗ and ㅜ confused me for a really long time.
sometimes I still read them wrong (note: i can't speak korean. I can read/write it, but I
don't have enough vocabulary or setence structure to understand or form my own
sentences)
But it has the EASIEST WRITING SYSTEM
i wish it, rather than japanese, had been a language option at my highschool, if only for
that reason. (I also took like 2 months of french before i had to drop it and, no offense,
fuck french.)
I can't roll my R's so what little spanish I had learned- from my neighbors, mostly, since
a majority of the people who live here speak it- i forgot quickly after I realized the
language intimidates me.

also: somehow i passed algebra (what was it, 2?) without at all understanding sines. so.
there's that

I can barely see my screen (because the windows are open to give us light) so if I missed
an error please tell me so I can fix it!
Chapter 53

Chapter Summary

“You- uh- look nice.”

“Thanks. You… also look nice.”

“Okay, this is awkward we both know it.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Evan wakes twenty minutes after his alarm was supposed to wake him, to the sound of his alarm. It had been put on snooze about four times, none of which Evan remembers waking to do. He figures he must have been really tired. Still, the realization that he hadn’t woken up on time, has panic setting in.

Evan jumps to his feet, rushing to get ready, despite still having forty minutes before Prom- and thirty before he actually needs to be ready, theoretically.

His phone chimes, distracting him as he pulls on his suit jacket, and he rushes to grab it.

“how likely is it that you could be ready in like two minutes,” Connor had texted him. Evan, reaches for his tie and frowns.

“That’s a little last minute, but I am so…”

“cool want to go to dinner- read get fast food- before the dance.”

“Sure.”

They both should have expected it. Yet Evan- and Connor, too, it seemed- was surprised when, as soon as Connor arrived, Heidi motioned them into the hallway to take pictures of them. The whole thing is awkward, and Evan knows he must look awkward in the photos, but Heidi seems happy. Connor rushes out an excuse about having to leave or they’d be late, and grabs Evan’s hand to pull him along before Heidi can ask for a fifteenth picture.

Evan breathes a sigh of relief as soon as they’re in Connor’s car, and turns to finally look at Connor properly. In turn, Connor raises an eyebrow at him, before turning to back out of the driveway.

“Nothing.”

“You- uh- look nice.”

“Thanks. You… also look nice.”

“Okay, this is awkward we both know it.” Connor sighs. “Oh shit, I just remembered, open the glove box.”
Evan does what he’s told, and finds a box inside of it. “This is?”

“A boutonnière. I’m pretty sure that’s the things fucking name?” Connor shrugs. Evan opens the box and lo and behold there it is, a blue flower meant to be put on a suit. “I know I’m supposed to pin it to you or whatever, but do either of us care?”

“No,” Evan says, laughing. “not really.” Evan pulls it from the box, before pinning it to himself.

“So, here’s a fun fact, someone on my Tumblr told me you could dye actual flowers, which I did.”

“That takes a lot longer than- I don’t know- buying a fake flower?”

“Yeah, well.” Connor shrugs, again, making a turn into the parking lot of a fast-food place across from their school. “I though you’d like this more.”

“Thank you.” Evan pauses. “They didn’t even occur to me, though, so I didn’t-”

“It’s cool. I figured as much.” Connor shrugs, yet again, and Evan laughs.

“You’re shrugging a lot.”

“It’s my thing.”

“Ah, finally got a second thing, huh?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well- remember- uh- my things were being nervous and falling. You said yours was being dead inside, but we never came up with a second thing. So, here it is.”

“Ah yes, I’m a shrugging expert. I’ve mastered shrugs of everything from indifference to annoyance. I could teach a class.”

Evan laughs, nodding. “So, uh, food?”

“Right, food.”

Food is the expected mediocre, but it takes up the twenty minutes between when they left, and when prom actually starts. Evan isn’t sure why, but he doesn’t at all feel prepared for prom.

They arrive to be greeted by Alana, who smiles at them. “Hey, you two should head over there.” She motions towards where couples are having their pictures taken. Connor levels her with a halfhearted glare, and Evan shakes his head.

“We- uh- my mom took pictures of us.”

“Yes, but does your home have the lovely background that the student council painted?” Evan has the distinct feeling that by ‘student council’ she means herself. He’s also pretty sure she’s been assigned to get people to go get their pictures taken- something that people are paying for- so he can’t fault her insistence.

“Well- we- I didn’t bring any extra money, so, it’s a no go.” Evan shrugs, hoping that will get her to let it go. Alana nods, sighing.
“Okay. Sorry, this is just my- um- job tonight. Or, until the end of the hour. Then I’m free.” Alana breathes another sigh, stretching her arms out. “Anyway, I hope you have a good time! I have students to greet.”

As she walks away, Connor tightens his grip on Evan’s hand, getting his attention. “I did.”

“Did?”

“Bring extra cash.”

“Connor, no.”

“You’re mom doesn’t have any pictures of you with this thing.” Connor tugs lightly at the flower. Evan frowns.

“What made you change your mind?”

“Well…” Connor gives a noncommittal shrug, and Evan sighs.

“Fine.”

Evan feels even more awkward about having his picture taken now, but nobody seems to pay any mind to him or Connor. When it’s over, he breathes a relived sigh, and retreats with Connor to a corner.

“So… I don’t know what I expected, but prom is basically the same as every other dance, right?” Connor says, stuffing his hands into his pockets and leaning back on his heels. Evan nods.

“Just with less of our friends.” Evan glances around. He can spot Alana talking to more arriving students, forced smile on her face. He feels really bad for her, not being able to enjoy her time. Jared is nowhere to be found, which is sort of disappointing. He was hoping to tease Jared about his date, as a small form of revenge for Jared’s own teasing.

“Yeah.”

Neither of them seem very keen on actually dancing, much to Evan’s relief. Standing in the corner, however, becomes less and less interesting the longer it goes on. Usually their conversations come fairly easily, but the addition of other people around them, other students, has Evan on high alert, and unable to relax.

“Evan?”

“Huh? Yeah?”

“Do you want to leave as much as I do?”

“Yes, definitely.” Evan breathes a relieved sigh, nodding. Connor gives a small, barely audible laugh in response, before taking Evan’s hand, and pulling him out of the building. It’s dark outside, and colder than Evan would have expected from the summer night. They make their way to Connor’s car, silently, and hand in hand.

“So-” Connor clears his throat, as they reach the car- “feel free to, like, stop me.”
“From…what?” Evan raises an eyebrow to emphasize his question, but Connor avoids his eyes, red-faced. Evan frowns, confused. “Connor?”

His answer comes in the form of Connor’s free hand on his face. Realization sets in, and Evan himself turning red as well. Evan doesn’t stop the kiss from happening. It’s nothing more than a small peck, but they’re both embarrassingly red.

“Well,” Evan starts, without actually having anything to say.

“Yeah.”

“We’re practically adults.” Evan finds himself laughing. “But we’re acting like little kids about this.”

“Yep.” Connor smiles, shaking his head. “Anyway, where to?”

Unsurprisingly, they end up in the orchard. Evan convinces Connor to allow Evan to take a few pictures of him, which Evan personally thinks turned out really well, even just being done with his phone. They wait until it’s a reasonable time for most people to have left prom, before heading home.

Once home, and back in his room, Evan flops onto his bed and buries his face into his hands. After a deep breath, he mumbles into his hands. “A good day.”

Chapter End Notes

Here it is.

The hardest chapter for me to write in this entire thing. Excluding reasons i haven't been able to write in general, I just didn't know how to write this one, so it took quite a while. but uh....
guys were nearing the end. there are only 3 chapters left, and that's /including/ and epilogue so.
it had been a ride.
The Evan Intermission

Chapter Summary

Something about graduation has me wanting to reflect. Actually, I think I've been reflecting a lot lately in general. I can't help but think about how different a place I am in now, mentally. As well as how different my relationships are, now. I'm also in a writing mood, so I might as well reflect, right?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

With prom out of the way, the only thing that remains to worry about is graduation. Which Evan isn’t actually that worried about. He thought he would be. Thought that it would be another thing to fill his gut with anxiety, but it’s not. He’s dealt with everything that he needed to- even replying to Danielle’s email- so there isn’t much to do but wait.

Evan goes through to motions of rehearsals without much thought, and before he knows it, there’s only a few hours until he’s officially graduated, and released into the adult world. In order to fill some time, Evan decides to write a letter, as an ‘end of the (school) year’ conclusion. Something he can look back on later.

Dear Evan Hansen,

Today’s going to be a good day and here’s why. Today’s graduation! Though the fear of being out of school and into the world is a little- very- stressful, I’m actually glad it’s happening. I know my mom is a little disappointed I didn’t enter any essay contests or apply to colleges, yet, but that’s okay. I have to make my own choices, I think.

I don’t know if I actually need to write these anymore, but I think since I’ve started trying to be positive, they actually have started to help. So I’m going to continue them. It’s strange to think, but not long ago- or maybe, quite a while, depending on how you think about ten months- I was writing horribly negative things in them. I mean, something along the lines of “nobody would notice if I disappeared,” was, in fact, not the most positive thing I’ve ever written. (shocking, I know.)

So, back to graduation. I decided to invite Danielle, Mia, Noah, and- even- Joel. When I left their place after Christmas, I had said that I didn’t want to ever see Joel again. That he wasn’t my father, and there was no point. I haven’t changed my mind. I still don’t really want to see him, and I don’t think he’ll ever be my “father” for real. But I want better closure. Besides, my step/half family aren’t half bad- I love them, let’s be honest- and I think that will balance out the negative I’ll feel about Joel.

I want closure, so this will be good for me, I think.

Something about graduation has me wanting to reflect. Actually, I think I’ve been reflecting a lot lately in general. I can’t help but think about how different a place I am in now, mentally. As well as how different my relationships are, now. I’m also in a writing mood, so I might as well reflect, right?
Since I was already talking about my family- kinda- that’s a good transition to mom. Maybe. Whatever it’s my letter who’s going to stop me? No one, that’s who. (Man I’m embarrassing. Was I always like this? The answer is probably yes. Middle school memories can attest to that)

I don’t feel bitter anymore, usually. It still sucks that I don’t see her that often, but I know my mom is trying, and getting that out in the open helped a lot. We’re both trying, more, now. I’m still not home a lot, when I know she’s not going to be either, but I’ve stopped avoiding her in fear that I’ll let how I feel slip. It’s nice, to feel like I can honestly talk to her. I mean, after admitting what happened last summer, there isn’t much I can say that I’m afraid will make her upset with me. None of the things I could say for that to happen are things I want to say, anyway. Nothing I would ever mean.

Months ago, I thought she’d be better off without me. That there wasn’t any way she could possibly still love me. But I was wrong. I sometimes have to remind myself of that, and it’s not so simple as knowing, but knowing is the first step in believing, for me.

Actually, a few months ago I thought everyone would be better off- assuming they noticed, which I didn’t think they would- without me. I hate thinking about it, and remembering how I felt. Sometimes it’s not good for me to think about, because it just get’s me thinking negatively again, but right this second I’m okay. Right this second, I can think about it.

I’m glad I survived. That shouldn’t be so hard to say anymore, but it’s still difficult to tell myself. I’m not sure I ever really wanted to die, but being alive, and being happy I am, was still difficult. Especially when I felt so alone, and my only friend didn’t seem to want anything to do with me.

I know better now, and Jared has made a real effort to not be as much of an asshole. He still is one, but it’s a lot easier to talk to him, and not believe that he’d be happy if I just disappeared. I honestly believed, less than a year ago, that he would have been fine had I died. It’s hard to remember that feeling, in a weird way. Like I know I felt it, and I remember the thoughts I had, but that feeling is so distant, I can reach it anymore. Which is probably good. That’s improvement. Knowing that we’re really friends, is good.

Speaking of friends (master of segues, Evan Hansen), I have them! That’s new. Actually, now that I think about it, it’s not all that new. It still feels new, because of the time between the last time I thought I had friends, and this year, but I’ve had them for a while now.

Alana always intimidated me. She seemed like she had everything figured out, like she was so well put-together, and that was scary. Not to mention how hard it was to get a word in during “conversations” with her. I was so caught up in other things, mostly my own anxiety, that it took much too long to realize that she wasn’t as put-together as I thought. Instead, she was just high-functioning, and good at pretending everything was fine.

I like talking to Alana, now. Sure, it’s still difficult sometimes, and I’m never entirely sure when she’s going to fall back into her usual habits, but understanding her better- and the opposite being true, too- has done a lot to make our conversations, at the very least, comfortable. I think that’s enough, for now. Things can still improve, but I cant go back to ignoring the progress that’s already been made.

Then there’s Zoe. Who I, admittedly, had put on a pedestal for a really long time. She’s not prefect or unreachable, but a real actual person. In some ways, she’s way better than the image of her I had in my head. A real person, I guess, is always better than whatever perfect, flawless husk of a person you imagine. Sometimes she still intimidates me- in a different way than Alana does- but I can talk to her and not be as scared as I would have been before.

Zoe is understanding, but blunt, and she doesn’t avoid things as much as I would. That lack of
avoidance, is probably the only reason we became- and are still- friends. I really appreciate that quality, it makes it easy to talk to her. Something I would have never imagined a year ago.

I never would have imagined a lot of my life now, a year ago.

Being happy- even if that’s not consistent, and I can’t ever expect it to be- much more often than fleeting and small moments. Having friends. Being able to talk to my mom. Being able to talk to anyone, without over-thinking every moment. (I still over-think a lot, and I have to know that I won’t ever stop. It’s not that easy, but the fact I can do anything at all without over-thinking it is a big deal).

Its all pretty unbelievable.

And being in a relationship? Unrealistic, 0/10, try again. Except it is real? I’m still having a hard time processing, and realizing, that. I never thought that someone would want me. It’s really strange to think that is the case. And that being Connor Murphy of all people? Especially unbelievable.

Who would have thought saying something like “hey are you sick? Because so am I, and I think we could be friends,” would not only work, but lead to this?

It was a pretty dumb thing to do, in retrospect. I know I regretted it pretty immediately. Except, now, I don’t regret it. Not just because of things I’ve learned since then- about his plans, and my actions effects on them- but because I gained my best friend out of it. My best friend, and now partner.

I don’t think I would have minded if the later part of that never happened, either. He’s important to me, in whatever way he’s in my life, and his impact on my life is really significant. I don’t know what would have happened, had we not become friends, but I know what happened because we did. I know that I’ve gained some vague sort of confidence, that I’ve started to believe in my ability to make progress and recover. That I feel like I can do something about the moments when I’m at my worst. Because those will continue to happen, and I know that, but I don’t feel as alone.

I don’t feel like I could die without anyone noticing or caring.

And, sure, maybe something would have changed with or without him. But he’s here, and I’ve come to those realizations because of him.

I owe a lot to Connor.

And Now I’m graduating, and my life is moving forward, and I’m not scared of it moving forward.

So, here’s my last letter as a high schools student.

Sincerely,

Me.

Evan nods to himself, re-reading the letter he’s just written. A lot has changed.

“Evan! We have to leave now, or you’ll be late to your own graduation!” Heidi’s voice calls from another room, and Evan jumps to his feet.

“Coming!”
The last intermission!
This is the first time i've added the "dear evan hansen" and "sincerely me" bits to the letters. I never did before, because I always felt redundant. We all know how the letters start. But it felt important to do that for this chapter, because this is also the last letter of the story! (I think.)
I considered just making this chapter a letter, but added the beginning and end to make it flow with the rest of the story better.

Also I know Evan didn't talk a lot about connor in this chapter, but sometimes the most important things, are harder to put into words.

EDIT FUCK I FORGOT:
I drew a prom picture. and put like, real effort into it.
Chapter 55

Chapter Summary

“Jared?”

“We’re graduated! High school students no longer.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Evan finds himself ushered to his seat almost as soon as he’s arrived and ready. He fidgets with the tassel on his cap, unable to remember which side it’s supposed to be on, and getting no hint from looking around the other students around him. A deep breath is his attempt to calm himself, but he finds he is buzzing with extra, anxious energy as speeches happen. Evan doesn’t really process anything that’s said, or that happens, until his name is called. Then all of his focus is on walking up to take his diploma without tripping. He can’t even force himself to look into the crowd of parents and students.

It’s not until the ceremony is over, that he’s able to calm his racing heart. It’s strange, because he hadn’t at all been worried about it, until it was happening. He scans the area around him, as parents fall to the sides of their graduated. He can see the Murphy’s gathered around Connor, who seems surprised by the positive attention. Alana is hugging two people who Evan presumes are her parents. Jared is at his side, grabbing his arm and drawing his attention. “Jared?”

“We’re graduated! High school students no longer.” Jared’s grin is somehow comforting, and Evan finds himself smiling, as he nods.

“We are!” Evan clutches the diploma in his hand tighter. “Hey, I feel like I haven’t seen you at all since finals.”

“I mean,” Jared shrugs, “I guess you haven’t.”

“Not even at prom.”

“Probably because I didn’t go.” Jared gives another shrug, ignoring Evan’s surprised- and concerned- expression.

“You didn’t? What happened? I thought you had a date.”

Jared places a hand on Evan’s shoulder, looks him in the eyes- deadly serious- and simply states, “I lied.” Then he laughs.

“Why?”

“Didn’t want to go. I knew you’d try to make me go, and get the group- sans Zo- together, but I didn’t want that. Alana was busy, I knew you’d have a date before even you did, and frankly? I was exhausted after finals.”
'Oh.'

"Don’t give me that look.” Jared points at Evan’s face, accusingly. “I’m not sad, don’t be sad for me. I didn’t want to go. Everything is fine.”

“Okay, okay. If you say so.”

“I do say so.” Jared huffs out a sigh, shaking his head. “Can you believe we’re graduated?”

“Not at all.” Evan laughs. “I was pretty sure I’d be dea- uh-”

“Dude.” Jared levels him with a concerned expression, which has Evan frowning.

“Sorry.” Evan tilts his head away from Jared, avoiding his eyes. “I just mean, I didn’t think I’d be here. It’s pretty great that I am. You know?”

“Yeah.” Jared nods.

“Where are your parents?”

“I escaped them.” Jared grins. Then he shakes his head. “Actually, they’re arguing about restaurants to retreat to after this. Where are your-” Jared stops.

“Jared?”

“Is that... Joel?” Jared looks past Evan, and Evan spins around. He’s right. There’s Joel- as well as Danielle, and the kids- talking to Heidi. Probably about Evan. Heidi looks somewhat uncomfortable- Evan can’t blame her- but she, as well as Danielle, and even Joel, are trying to remain polite, it seems.

“Yep, that’s certainly him...” Evan sighs.

“You invited him?”

“I wanted… closure.”

“Jared!” Ms. Kleinman’s voice rings out, and Jared audibly groans. Evan laughs, patting him on the back.

“Go have your family dinner.” Evan sighs. “And I’m off to... whatever’s going to happen over there.”

Jared nods at Evan’s vague motion towards his parents, before turning around to head over to his own.

The walk to over seems much longer than it actually is. He almost dreads arriving at their sides. Still, he reminds himself that he invited them, and forces his footsteps forward. When he does reach them, he can’t bring himself to announce his presence. Luckily, Evan doesn’t have to. Mia immediately notices him, and rushes over to cling onto one of his legs. Noah, on the other hand, gives a small exclamation of his name, while waving.

“H-hey, guys.” Evan manages a smile, directing it at the kids. “Thank you- uh- for coming to my graduation.”

“You’re- like- and adult now, huh?” Noah asks, eyes wide. “That’s so cool.”
“Not as cool as you would think.” Evan chuckles, shaking his head, the turns his attention to the adults. “Hi, Danielle, and- uh- dad.” The word still feels wrong in his mouth, but he isn’t prepared for the confrontation that would come with calling Joel by his name.

“Hello, Evan. It’s good to see you.” Danielle offers a smile, but keeps her distance, seeing how uncomfortable Evan already is.

“Hey, kid.” Joel gives him a small, awkward, pat on the shoulder. “Congratulations.”

“Thanks.”

“We were just,” Heidi starts, shifting their attention away from Evan, “talking about having dinner together.”

“O-oh.”

“Of course, our showing up was sort of last minute, so we understand if you had other plans.” Danielle offers Evan a way out, which he’s grateful for. All eyes are back on him again, and he has a panicked internal debate about what to say. He doesn’t get a chance to respond, though.

“Evan!” Evan jumps at his name being called, and turns just in time for Zoe to throw an arm over his shoulders. “Congrats on graduating, blah, blah. You know the drill.”

“Oh, thanks, Zoe.”

“Honestly, I’m still in shock about Connor graduating. Maybe Jared too, but.” Zoe shrugs, and Evan nods, holding back a small laugh.

“The- uh- the only one I’m not surprised about is Alana,” Evan says, quietly. Behind Zoe, he sees Connor making his way over, too. There are way too many people around, Evan thinks, but he has no real escape from all of them.

“Good point.”

“Hey, you can’t just f- uh- run off like that.” Connor crosses his arms, glaring at his sister. Evan smiles, noticing that Connor manages not to swear. He must have noticed the kids.

“Yeah, yeah, whatever.” Zoe rolls her eyes, turning her attention to the family on Evan’s other side. “Oh, hey. I’m Zoe, this one’s friend-” she motions to Evan, then to Connor- “and that one’s sister.”

“Nice to meet you?” Joel raises an eyebrow, clearly unsure what to think of the new arrivals.

“And you, must be Noah, and Mia?” Zoe glances down at the kids, smiling.

“How’d you know?” Mia gasps.

“Evan talks about you guys.”

While Zoe engages in conversation with the kids- apparently finding it easy- Evan turns his attention to Connor.

“We’re obligate- by virtue of our parents insistence- to remind you, that you have an offer to join us for dinner.” Connor monotones his way through the sentence, sighing. Then, quieter, adds, “that includes your family, too.”

Evan nods, not really sure what to say. Connor stares at him, tilts his head, and raises an eyebrow.
Evan shrugs, frowning. Connor sighs, rolling his eyes. Evan huffs, crossing his arms.

“So is that a yes?” Zoe’s voice draws them out of their silent conversation, and Evan glances at Heidi, who just nods. Then he glances at Joel, and Danielle, who give different degrees of silent agreement.

“I- uh- I guess so?”

“Cool.” Connor nods, uncrossing his arms. There’s a second of awkward silence, before the group starts to make their way towards the Murphy parents. Evan and Connor share a look, unsure how they should act, with the addition of people who aren’t totally familiar. Connor silently offers his hand, out of the others sight, and after a moment of hesitation, Evan takes it.

Joel and Danielle are only here for a couple of days, anyway. He doesn’t want to be worried about them. And he’s not worried at all about the kids.

Dinner is, shockingly, *slightly* less awkward than Evan expects it to be. No one comments on him or Connor, and Joel seems to have resigned himself to being mostly silent. Heidi seems to use the Murphy’s as an excuse to not talk to Joel at all, too. Zoe appears content to give Evan’s half-siblings her attention, only joining other conversations when she interjects embarrassing tidbits about her brother, or Evan.

At the very least the number of people gives Evan plenty of reason to avoid speaking. Connor’s content to stay silent, as well.

Evan gather’s all of his courage, and asks to speak with Joel before he heads back to his- and his families- hotel. Evan spends a second, shifting awkwardly on his feet, before he manages to speak.

“I think we both know that- well- that we don’t really *know* each other. Um- so- we shouldn’t pretend like we do? It’s okay to- to admit that we’ll never really be family, again, so… yeah. What I’m trying to say is that we should both know this, but I just- felt the need to say it.”

Joel stares at him, surprise etched onto his face, before nodding. “Okay. I… understand what you mean.”

They don’t speak again. Joel, Danielle, and the kids leave. Evan finds himself feeling relieved.

“You okay?” Connor asks, coming to stand beside Evan. In turn, Evan nods, breathing a sigh.

“Yeah. I don’t know why I thought it wouldn’t be, but today’s been pretty emotionally draining.”

They’re silent for a while. It’s a nice silence, comfortable and understanding.


“Neither did I.” Connor shrugs, taking Evan’s hand. Evan smiles, leaning closer.

“How did this happen?”

“I believe it started with you running after me at school, and asking me if I was okay. Right after I pushed you to the ground, too.”
“Ah, yes. Clearly the most logical choice.”

“I know you said it was because you thought I was sick, but I still don’t get why the fuck you did that.”

“You…” Evan hums, thinking back. “I thought you… looked like you were in pain.”

Connor’s grip on Evan’s hand tightens, and he tenses momentarily. It’s only a second, before he loses that tension, but Evan still glances over, worried. Connor shakes his head. “I guess that makes questioning if I was okay, make sense.”

“Yeah, well.” Evan shrugs.

“Thank you, for that.”

“Thank you for signing my cast, and offering to be my friend.”

“I’m pretty sure I just accepted your offer.”

“No, I’m pretty sure you offered to be my friend. Or, did you offer to pretend to be my friend? Something like that.”

“Whatever.” Connor bumps his shoulder against Evan’s.

“Hey- uh… I love you?”

Connor sputters. “I- I mean… same?”

“Same, he says.”

“Shut up. I love you too.”

“See, was that so hard?”

“A little, yeah.”

Evan laughs.

Chapter End Notes

Only one more left! and that's just the epilogue. And i've already written it so... it's just a matter of if i want to post it today, or not.

Side note, for anyone who read the last chapter before I remembered it, I drew a prom picture: https://softemotionallydepressed.tumblr.com/post/163286342875/

if you guys have an extra/side things you want to see, I might add more things to the pain-verse before I mark the series complete, but this story is pretty much done.

"mary-lynn why is there so little alana?"
me: *sweating* totally not because i don't actually know how to write her and am scared of making her horribly out of character. definitely not that. (sorry alana)
Epilogue

Chapter Summary

“It’s close it his college, apparently, and he said, I quote, “I learned enough plant facts from you, I might as well use them.” Which I tried to deny, but.” Evan shrugs.

“Relateable.”

“Shut.”

“Up?”

“No up, just shut.”

“You’re a nerd.”

“Wow, you’re over a year late realizing that. Plot twist, I’ve been a nerd the whole time.”

Chapter Notes

It’s the end.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It’s early morning, Evan doesn’t have work for another two hours, and the fall weather is just cold enough to be comfortable, but warm enough to not gain complaints from Connor. A teabag is dropped into Evan’s cup, as he listens to Connor mumble complaints about not sleeping well.

“Then, maybe, you should sleep at your own house?” Evan glances over his shoulder, to where Connor his sprawled over Evan’s couch. Connor shrugs in response, which gets a sigh and eye roll form Evan. Evan adds sugar to his tea, stirring it as he walks over. Connor doesn’t need to be prompted, and sits up so Evan can sit beside him. “Get a job.”

“I have a job.”

“Ten bucks a month is not a livable wage, nor minimum wage.” Evan takes a sip of his tea, while Connor groans.

“I’m fucking working on it, okay.”

“I know.”

“Besides, it’s still better than working your shit job.”

“My job is not that bad.” Evan rolls his eyes. He’s fairly certain they’ve had this conversation before. Sure, Pottery Barn wasn’t exactly the best, or most exciting, job in the world, but it payed, and Evan
could manage it.

“Whatever you say.”

“Anyway,” Evan starts, ignoring the eye roll Connor gives, “how are you?”

“Today’s a good day-”

“Don’t.”

“And here’s why.” Connor grins.

“Don’t mock me.” Evan elbows Connors arm, which gets little response other than laughter. “I’m serious.”

“I’m fine.” Connor shrugs. “I got… a medication change.”

“Oh?”

“After my last relapse Doc. Freedman decided to take another look at my prescription, since it didn’t seem to be working.”

“Hm.” Evan hums in acknowledgment. “How do you feel about that?”

“Don’t analyze me, asshole. It’s fine. Whatever helps, I guess.” Connor shrugs, again, and Evan nods.

Connor’s last relapse had been really scary, especially since Evan had been at work when it happened, and hadn’t found out about it until hours after Connor had gone to the hospital, by recommendation of- by being forced by- Zoe. Luckily, it had been a weekend, so she hadn’t been at school.

That was a little over three weeks ago. They’d both been doing fairly well for a month prior to that, so Connor had gone on about how terrible he was for not managing to stay happy. To which Evan had reminded him that it wasn’t that easy, and that Evan himself was still struggling with the occasional relapse.

Evan is drawn back to the present when Connor takes Evan’s tea from him, sipping it. Evan gives a halfhearted look of annoyance, which goes completely ignored. Connor turns, leaning his back against Evan’s shoulder. “Anything else good happen?”

“Nope.” Connor shrugs, handing the cup back, over his shoulder. Evan takes it with a sigh.

“Okay.” Evan stirs the tea idly, needing something to do with his hands. “Well I heard Alana joined the GSA at her college.”

“Sweet.” Connor nods, which Evan feels more than sees. Alana had pulled back on all the extra work, since she started college. Elected not to join anything, and focus on her school work until she was confident with her time management. Evan had received a message from her just yesterday, about her finally joining something. “Good for her.”

“And Jared got a job.”

“He did?!?” Connor shifts, laying down with his head on Evan’s lap, so he can look at his face.

“Yep. Three guesses where.”
“Lush.”

“I.” Evan huffs out a sigh, rolling his eyes- “no. No, not lush. What is it with you two, and the lush jokes?”

“Memes, my dude.”

“I hate you.”

“You do not.”

“True, but also: shut up.” Evan sighs. “Two more guesses.”

“Some shitty fast food place.”

“No.”

“Hm.” Connor frowns, shrugging. “Flower shop.”

Evan pauses, before laughing. “Yeah.”

“Seriously?!?” Connor laughs. “Holy shit.”

“I was surprised too!” Evan takes another sip of his tea, before handing the cup to Connor, and motioning to the coffee table.

“Why?” Connor puts the cup down, before turning back to Evan.

“It’s close it his college, apparently, and he said, I quote, “I learned enough plant facts from you, I might as well use them.” Which I tried to deny, but.” Evan shrugs.

“Relateable.”

“Shut.”

“Up?”

“No up, just shut.”

“You’re a nerd.”

“Wow, you’re over a year late realizing that. Plot twist, I’ve been a nerd the whole time.” Connor laughs at that, and Evan smiles.

“Shit, man, you fooled me. I can’t believe you. Lying to me this entire time. I had no idea you were a nerd.”

“I know. I’m terrible. The worst.”

“Evan, this is awful!” Is Connor’s greeting, when he shows up just as Evan is leaving work. Evan raises an eyebrow, tilting his head in silent question. “They’re building a mall!”

“Okay?”

“Where the orchard is.” Connor’s statement catches Evan off-guard, and he frowns.
“What?” It’s not a question he actually needs answered. Evan doesn’t mean to look as visibly upset, but he must, if the look on Connor’s face is any indication.

“Yeah.”

“That’s… I mean, the land wasn’t being used so… that’s good.” Evan sighs. It’s not fair to be upset about unused land being used. And yet... “I’m sad.”

“Yeah.” Connor nods, taking Evan’s hand. “I was too. Zoe told me- not sure how she found out- and then offered me cake. As if that somehow makes it better.”

“Don’t- don’t insult the healing properties of cake.” Evan’s attempt at a joke gets a small laugh from Connor. Their smiles are somewhat strained, and they lean against each other. “It’s just… we spent a lot of time there? I practically became your friend there. I literally became your boyfriend there.”

“Yeah,” Connor says, again. They’re silent for a bit, but Evan is okay with that.

“When- uh- do they start tearing the trees down?”

“Don’t know, sometime next month?”

“We should go there before that happens.” Evan nods to himself, deciding he’s going no matter Connor’s response.

“Okay. Good idea.”

“We should- let’s see if we can get everyone together, too?”

“Sure thing.” Connor nods. “Sounds good.”

_AcornMan_ has changed the chat name to _Sad Times with EH_

_Jared:_ dude wtf

_Connor:_ they’re building a mall on the orchard and evan is a sad man

_You:_ You were sad too.

_Connor:_ true.

_Alana:_ That sucks, I’m sorry.

_Zoe:_ Cake offer still sounds guys.

_You:_ Cake offer accepted?

_Zoe:_ On my way.

_Connor:_ THE POINT
_Connor:_ was that we wanted to try an arrange a hangout with you assholes there before that happens

_Jared:_ rude blocked
Connor: im okay with that

Jared: :( 

You: Children, please.

Connor: D:

Alana: I’m pretty busy, but I have some time this Sunday, if you’re all free then? ^^

Zoe: Works for me.
Zoe: For the record i’m not driving yet. Just, so you know I’m not texting and driving. I’m responsible.

Connor: the more you say it the more suspicious it is

Jared: im in i want to see where all the gay magic happened

You: The magic of “hey I like you so that’s a thing”? 
You: It was pretty gay.

Connor: who made you like this

You: You did.
You: Maybe Jared too, a little.

Jared: i take no responsibility 4 this

Alana: Is that all? 
Alana: I have a lot of work to do. Essays to write, you know.

You: Yeah, that’s it.
You: Good luck with your essays!

Alana: Thank you! :) 

The orchard hasn’t changed much. Neither have the people joining Evan there.

Alana looks more visibly tired, like she’s given up pretending she’s not, but there’s still a smile on her face. Zoe’s dyed her hair, this time with a streak that fades from pink, to purple, to blue. She had done it to avoid doing school work, one week in September, and redone it recently. Other than that, she seems pretty much the same, maybe even more energetic. Evan sees Jared often enough that if he’s changing, Evan hasn’t noticed it. The same is true of Connor, as well.

They have a nice, calm, picnic near the biggest tree in the orchard, and discuss their lives. Alana and Jared bond over their shared college suffering. Zoe talks about how she’s already applying to colleges. Connor complains about the lack of appreciation his art gets- to which Jared responds by saying that he should try drawing more, instead of just posting memes- which is something Evan is used to hearing. Evan laments on how long it’ll actually take to save enough money for college.

While conversations go on, Evan finds himself starting up at the tree next to them. He glances around, finding them caught up in conversation, not paying attention to him. Evan sets down the
sandwich in his hand, before standing.

“What are you doing, Evan?” Jared asks, glancing over. Evan offers a shrug in response, before reaching for a low branch. “Hey-”

“I’m going to climb it.” Everyone around him stills, and he sighs, pulling himself up. “I’m not going to fall.”

“Evan.” Connor frowns.

“Or climb high enough to get hurt at all.” Evan leans back against the tree trunk, looking up above himself. “I just- I want to-”

“Then hurry up.” Zoe’s voice cuts him off, and he glances down at her, confused. “I’m climbing it too, move over.”

Evan laughs, nodding, and pulls himself up to another branch. Zoe climbs onto the one he was previously on. The others stay bellow, but Connor seems to have relaxed, laying on the ground. “If you two get hurt, I’ll kill you both.”

“Noted, but not considered.” Zoe laughs when Connor flips her off in response.

“Somehow, this doesn’t surprise me.” Alana sighs, shaking her head.

“Somehow meaning because of who it is?” Jared offers, and gets a nod in response.

By winter, the orchard is no more, and construction has begun. It’ll be years before there’s a finished building, Evan knows, but he’s still sad to see it go. He and Connor get ice cream to mourn it, together, and end up reminiscing about the place. About all their time spent there, and the results of that.

When new years rolls around, Evan searches for his old folder of letters, and looks through them. When he runs out of letters to go through, he lays down, and texts Connor.

“You ever think about how much is different than a year ago?”

“yes. you remind me about it all the time.”

“I’m a sentimental guy, okay.”

“I know. you just cant stop going on about how different things would be if you didn’t notice my ‘sorrowful eyes’ that day.”

“I have not said that.”

“may as well have.”

“Whatever. Goodnight, asshole.”

“goodnight. love you too. asshole”

“:/”
“:)”

“Love you.”

Chapter End Notes

-END-

Me: *writing connors dialogue*
me, @ myself: not enough swearing
Me: shit you're right.

also that "ten buck a month isn't a livable wage" joke is because that's how much money
i currently make (bc im a loser).

I couldn't find a good place for heidi here, but shes still around being the Best Mom, i
promise.

-Real talk: this has been quite the thing. I mean, this was supposed to be a oneshot! and
that slow burn, dude. the slow burn. I was super amazed by the amount of support you
all have given me (SO MANY COMMENTS! KUDOS! THE BOOKMARKS) and
I'm just??? really thankful. I just... I don't have a lot of words, but thank you for reading!
and thank you to everyone who has/will comment! I tried to reply to most comments,
but sometimes I just didn't know what to say. Still, I read and appreciated them all, I
promise you!

Thank you, again. I hope you enjoyed ^^

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!