Chromaticity

by The_Forgotten_Nobody

Summary

He must have touched Hansen’s arm, his neck, something because one second Connor’s living in a monochrome world and the next it explodes. There’s colour everywhere and the once familiar, bland school hallway is now unrecognisable and there, down at his feet, sits Hansen and Connor can clearly see how the skin on his face is so much paler than that of his arm and that his terrified eyes are almost the same colour as the shirt he’s wearing and it’s all too fucking much.

Notes

Chromaticity: The quality of colour, independent of brightness.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Connor Murphy had resigned himself to a colourless life. He was okay with it. In fact, he wanted it that way. What was so special about soulmates anyways? You’d always see it in the news, people killing their soulmates, celebrities cheating on theirs. Then there were the people who just never found them, who would put ads online, desperate for someone to touch them. It was pathetic and Connor might do a lot of stupid stuff but even he would never stoop so low.

Besides, it wasn’t like it was a make or break deal. Take his parents for example. They weren’t soulmates, they’d never gained their colours, but they still got married, got jobs, had kids. They were living the American Dream without all that soulmate bullshit.

(So what if they sometimes shook hands with strangers a little too hopefully. They were fine; they survived. They didn’t depend on it.)

Sure, when they were younger, he and Zoe would talk about their soulmates, discuss what the person who was supposedly their missing half might be like. Zoe would always come up with a long list of traits for hers; funny, charming, intelligent – the perfect person. Connor, on the other hand? Connor just believed they’d be someone who understood him. Who liked him for who he was and didn’t want to change him like everyone else did.

Then they got older. Zoe still lived in her little bubble, where soulmates were the purest fucking thing in the world, but Connor’s belief changed. He became a realist. He’d always known life wasn’t all sunshine and daisies, but he knew now that finding someone who really got him was a one in a million chance.

Connor wasn’t that lucky.

Connor was 14 when he first got busted for smoking and decided that it would just be better if he never met his soulmate. When he got busted for taking drugs, he hoped he never did. Connor may not be one of those sad old people on the internet, but he was messed up in his own special way. He was a boy who couldn’t control his temper, the psycho who none of the other kids liked. Connor was the screw-up whose life was going nowhere and he wasn’t about to drag someone else down with him. He could do that much, at least.

So yeah, Connor was perfectly fine going it alone, making sure he touched no one and no one touched him. There would be no risk of him finding his soulmate, just the way he wanted it. For 16 years, it worked.

Then he had to push Evan fucking Hansen over in the school hallway.

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Connor wants a smoke. No, scratch that, Connor needs a smoke. Who cares if he’d had one just that morning? If anything, school just seems that much worse now the high has worn off. He can feel the stares of the other kids as he shoves his books into his locker, has felt them on him all morning. So what if he let his hair grow out over summer and decided to leave on his nail polish for once? So what if the smell of weed still lingered behind the canister of Axe he’d sprayed on himself? That was none of their business.

He slams his locker shut, his smugness at seeing the girls a few feet away jump not enough to soothe the blood that is boiling in his too tight veins.
“Hey Connor, loving the new hair length. Very school shooter chic.”

Connor grits his teeth. Jared fucking Kleinman. The ass who never knows when to keep his big fat mouth shut. Normally, Connor ignores him but there’s nothing normal about this. Normal isn’t the first day of school after a shitshow of a summer, normal isn’t him already feeling so on edge he could punch someone. Normal isn’t him actually liking his goddamn hair and Jared fucking Kleinman ruining it by telling him he looks like a murderer.

Connor’s never been very good at hiding his rage and though Kleinman’s face falls, a glimmer of fear in his eyes (good), he also looks annoyed. Like he has any fucking right to.

“…I was just kidding. It was a joke?”

Of course. Of course, it was. And of course, Connor can’t take a joke, can he? It’s not like his whole life isn’t one already.

“Oh yeah, it was funny. I’m laughing, can’t you tell?” Connor replies, as nonchalantly as he can manage and yeah, now Kleinman looks worried. “Am I not laughing hard enough for you?”

Still attempting to put on a brave act, Kleinman glares at him through his stupid glasses and with a curled lip says, “You’re such a freak.”

It’s the last straw. Connor’s ready to prove him right and murder this little shit. Maybe that will shut him up-

A noise distracts Connor. It’s not just any noise though. It’s a laugh. Connor swivels and there stands another kid. Hansen? Maybe. It doesn’t matter. What does matter is that he laughed at Connor and Connor’s full of rage that’s ready to combust.

“What the fuck are you laughing at?” He yells at Hansen, ignoring the other students that scatter around them.

Hansen’s wide eyes shoot upwards and Connor doesn’t care that he looks petrified. He deserves to.

“What?”

“Stop fucking laughing at me!” Connor’s not sure exactly if he’s just speaking to Hansen or everyone. Still, Hansen is the one he advances on, the one who’s stuttered excuses he ignores. “You think I’m a freak? You’re the fucking freak!”

Connor’s no touching rule flies out the window as he pushes Hansen to the ground and that’s when everything goes from a 100 to a 100 million real quick.

All that should have happened was that Hansen would fall to the ground and Connor would storm off. Maybe in one universe, a universe that doesn’t like to laugh in Connor’s face, it would have.

But this isn’t that universe.

He must have touched Hansen’s arm, his neck, something, because one second Connor’s living in a monochrome world and the next, it explodes. There’s colour everywhere. The once familiar, bland school hallway is now unrecognisable and there, down at his feet, sits Hansen and Connor can clearly see how the skin of his face is so much paler than that of his arm and that his terrified eyes are almost the same colour as the shirt he’s wearing and it’s all too fucking much.

Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, fuck.
Connor does the only thing he can. He runs. With his heart thumping painfully against his chest and his breaths coming out as sharp, ragged little things, he tries not to think about the fact he’s gone and done the one thing he feared, the one thing he’d vowed never to do. Not only has he somehow managed to touch his soulmate, but he’s hurt them. He’s hurt his soulmate within 1 second of finding them. He’s pushed his soulmate who has a fucking broken arm.

Connor can’t breathe. Isn’t sure he even wants to.

Though he’d intended to make it to his car, the bathroom is closer and at this point, Connor will take anything. He stumbles in there and slams down the lid of a toilet seat so he can collapse onto it, bringing his hands to his face so that he can block out the colours that only serve to remind him what’s happened, what he’s done.

He always knew he’d end up hurting his soulmate but shit, he never thought he’d do it so soon. And better yet, it was Hansen. Fuck, did Connor even know his name? …Yeah, it was Evan. Evan Hansen, the quiet kid who stammered out his words and whom Connor had barely known existed until he screamed at him. Until he’d shoved him to the ground.

And why did he do it? He had no reason, not really. If he was being painfully honest, he’d known Evan hadn’t been laughing. He’d just been angry at Jared fucking Kleinman and Evan fucking Hansen had been in the wrong place at the wrong time and oh god he is so f*cked up.

His hands end up gripping his hair so tightly that he almost pulls strands out of his skull but if anything, the pain makes him tug harder. The pain is good. Something he deserves.

…He still needs a smoke. A smoke would help him calm down. He should have never come to school. Why did he even bother? Why does he even bother to do anything anymore since he always screws it up…

The door to the bathroom opens and Connor jumps, holding his breath. What if it’s Hansen? What if he’s come to yell at Connor, stuttering and quietness be damned? Or what if…what if he’s expecting something from Connor? Expecting the typical ‘courting’ that happens after finding your soulmate, like giggling over colour charts, dates, holding hands…kissing.

Connor feels sick.

“Connor? Hey Connor, you in here?”

Fuck. Zoey. What the hell’s she doing in the boy’s bathroom? Better yet, what’s little miss goody two shoes doing missing class? Slowly, Connor tries to hide by lifting his feet up and putting them on the seat but clearly, he’s not fast enough as Zoe’s converses are quickly there in front of the stall. He remembers his mom saying the assistant told her they were purple and Connor distantly registers that this is the first time he’s seen the colour. It’s…not bad.

He’s jolted out of his musings when Zoe bangs on the door.

“Open up Connor!” He doesn’t. However, his stubborn sister decides not to get the message and the converses remain where they are. “Fine, be like that, I’ll just talk anyway. I know what happened back there Connor. You think I don’t know what that expression on your face meant?”

“You’re talking shit,” Connor bites out, realising he all but confirmed it the moment he opened his mouth. Damnit.

“No, you are if you’re just going to pretend nothing happened,” Zoe replies. “I mean, come on Connor. You’ve just found your soulmate. That’s a good thing. A great thing!”
“Well, since she already knows. “Yeah, I’m sure he’s real happy he got the school freak. Do you know the only reason we found out was cos I pushed him to the ground? So, don’t go telling me to play nice when things are already fucked. It doesn’t matter.”

“Oh my god, you are so annoying,” Zoe groans and Connor rolls his eyes. Takes one to know one. Zoe’s one of those ‘hopeless romantics’, a sucker for those cheesy soulmate movies. She’s probably getting a kick out of playing ‘supportive but ultimately unnecessary sidekick’. “Like I said, I know what happened. And I’m not gonna tell you to go beg on your knees for forgiveness or something because I know you wouldn’t do that. I just think you owe him an apology if nothing else and then you can see where things go from there. You can’t just ignore this Connor.”

“Why can’t I? I doubt he even wants to see me now,” Connor replies bitterly, resting his forehead on his folded knees.

“Can you get your head out of your ass and think about how Evan might actually be feeling? Look, when you ran, I apologised about you to him and okay, he still looked a little shaken up but he also looked like his world had fallen apart and then rebuilt itself. I’m not saying he wants to date you, or that he even likes you all that much after the stunt you pulled, but I bet he’s been waiting for this moment and he might appreciate an apology. Or is the almighty Connor Murphy too proud for that?”

Connor’s fists clench, white at the knuckle. He hates his sister but what he hates even more is that she might be right. “Jesus Christ, Zoe. Fine. I’ll apologise, alright?”

“Good,” Zoe replies. “You might have screwed up the meeting, but you’ve got a whole lifetime to make things right if you just try.”

“I said I’d apologise, okay?! Why the fuck do you even care?” Connor snaps. This is the most he’s spoken to Zoe in months without it resulting in an epic screaming match between the two…or, well, without Connor screaming at Zoe until she finally leaves him alone, frustrated tears streaming down her cheeks.

“Because even if you don’t believe in them, I think soulmates are something to be celebrated, to be cherished. I really think this could be good for you if you just give it a chance. And…and despite everything, you’re my brother and I want you to be goddamn happy for once.”

Connor snorts. Happy.

“Whatever, I said I’d do it. You can leave now.”

He pretends not to hear the sniffle as Zoe leaves. Connor embraces the quiet, then tries to settle the panic arising thanks to what he’s just agreed to.

Apologise. He can do that. He’s not that much of a mess.

Right?
Dear Evan Hansen,
Today I found my soulmate. Who would’ve thought it would be Connor Murphy?

Evan was four years old the first time he asked his mom about soulmates and colours, after his classmate Myles claimed that his babysitter was going to be his. At that age Evan couldn’t quite comprehend what the whole thing was about, only that you met someone nice, like his mom met his dad, and then your sight changed. How exactly it changed, Evan wasn’t able to imagine; which was why he decided to ask his mom about it as she tucked him into bed that night.

“Well sweetie, it’s…it’s like your whole world lights up. Everything becomes so much brighter and clearer and it’s made even better because it means you’ve found the one person who’s made for you.”

Back when he was younger, he’d never grasped the fact his mom’s expression had been a little off during her reply. He had just still been quite baffled by the concept and so he’d followed up with, “Do trees have soulmates?”

Much to little Evan’s confusion, his mom had laughed and then said she wasn’t sure, but maybe.

That was when Evan decided his soulmate was a tree.

So, not a tree then.

Evan’s glad the hallway’s empty when Connor runs because it allows him the opportunity to freak out in private. And freak out he definitely needs to do.

Soulmates had always been one of those things that Evan accepted as a fact of life. Everyone had one - more often than not you found them; sometimes you didn’t. Considering his anxiety, Evan had always thought he would either never meet his or it would be way, way in the future when he might not be such a mess.

Once upon a time, Evan had hoped it would be Zoe Murphy. She’d just been so…so cool and so nice and Evan knew that if he had to have a soulmate, he wanted someone like her. He’d never exactly been sold on the idea of soulmates, unsure who could ever be his missing half, but he’d been
sold on Zoe.

In fact, he thought his dreams had come true last year when he’d had his books knocked out of his hands and Zoe had been the one to help him pick them up. Despite his shaking, he’d carefully brushed his hand against her fingertips and though it had been a long shot, a million to one chance, he was still disappointed when his world remained the same bleak shades.

But then, Evan had consoled himself later, it was probably for the best. Evan didn’t have much going for him, very little at all, and it was good that Zoe, Zoe who loved the idea of soulmates and would have tried so, so hard even if secretly she wished he were someone else, wasn’t stuck with him. She deserved so much more than an anxious, stuttering, pathetic kid.

He wondered what it meant that her brother got lumped with him instead.

And wasn’t that another can of worms.

Evan never expected meeting his soulmate to be perfect, not when he himself was a key factor in the situation, but still, it had to be cruel irony that not only did his soulmate hate him, but it was Zoe’s brother. Well, maybe he didn’t hate him, since he just pushed Evan when he thought Evan was laughing him and Jared had already been mean to him but it still hurt. He knew the whole soulmate thing wasn’t always wonderful, take his mom for example, but even so he’d always held onto that little bit of hope that maybe, maybe, something good could happen to him; that when he only broke his arm during the summer it meant something. That he had a reason to stick around.

Now he wasn’t so sure.

Since he’d hit the ground and the world had, as his mum accurately explained, lit up, Evan has kept his eyes shut and head bent. His attempts at taking deep breathes are managing to stop a full blown panic attack but he can’t be certain that it’ll still work if he tries to look at the new world he’s been given, a world that before all this was already too loud and confusing.

Evan used to dream of this moment, dream of seeing trees and flowers as they were meant to be seen, imagining his soulmate showing the same enthusiasm. The reality? The reality is he just wants it all to stop, to slow down.

A polite cough above him startles Evan into flinging his head upwards and opening his eyes.

Oh.

The breaths he’d been trying to control instantly leave him but Evan barely notices. The brief glimpse he’d got before shutting his eyes had barely scratched the surface of it all. There’s just...so much and his mind instantly tries to connect what he now sees with what he’d been told. The floors hadn’t changed much but they certainly weren’t white. Almost white. Did that have a name? ...Cream? And the walls, they were also close to white but again, not quite. Yet still different to the floor. And the lockers, they were grey, but a different shade to what Evan was used to. Was it still grey or was it called something else?

“Evan?”

Evan’s line of sight focuses on the person above him and it takes him a few beats to recognise that it’s Zoe because she’s so colourful (and a thrum of excitement runs through him at the fact he can use that word now. Colourful.) Everything she’s wearing is a different shade and Evan can’t yet tell if it all matches but he’s fairly sure Zoe wouldn’t care if it didn’t.

“Are you okay?”
Oh no. He’d been staring and now that he looks at her face he can see her expression is a mixture of sad and sympathetic. Does she know? Oh god, what if she knows? Would she tell anyone? Her parents? Friends? Would the whole school find out? Evan can barely handle knowing himself, let alone the rest of the school. Maybe she’d tell him to stay away from Connor because he brother shouldn’t be stuck with someone like him, someone who is-

“Here. Let me help you up. I’m sorry about Connor.”

Zoe holds out her hand and Evan stares at it for a moment, distantly registering that her nails are different to his (nail polish?) and then takes it. He immediately realises his hands are so, so sweaty but instead of recoiling in disgust, she just pulls him upwards, steadying Evan when his shaky legs threaten to collapse under him.

“T-thank you,” Evan stutters, his breath hitching a little. Thankfully, even after opening his eyes he doesn’t seem in danger of an attack and he hopes that maybe now if he acts ‘normal’ then she won’t figure it out but then…she’ll find out from Connor won’t she and then the both of them will tell-

“Listen, Connor’s got…well, he’s got a lot going on. In his head,” Zoe explains after releasing his hand. As she speaks, Evan subtly tries to wipe his palms on his pants. “It’s not an excuse for what he did. Not really. My brother does a lot of stupid things and he shouldn’t have pushed you.”

She’s…apologising for Connor? “It’s—it’s okay. Really. He, um, thought I was laughing so—”

“There’s no excuse,” Zoe repeats firmly. “Just…don’t sell yourself short okay and…don’t let anyone make you feel bad about yourself. Especially Connor.”

She’s speaking as if he’s going to see a lot more of Connor, looking at him like she knows but she’s not explicitly saying it which Evan can’t tell is good or bad. He wants to go with good, since Zoe’s never done anything mean to him, and so he gives her a timid smile and nods. She returns it with a pretty smile of her own. Yeah, Zoe wouldn’t tell.

“If you ever want to talk about…stuff, you can,” she says and with that, she runs off into the direction Connor had fled.

Connor.

He must have got his colours to react the way he did and considering the type of reaction…he must not want it. Or, he didn’t want Evan. Well, that was obvious from the pushing. Was he also supposed to go after Connor. He thinks normally, people would but just the thought of going after Connor who was already so angry leaves him physically shaking.

Maybe he could just…ignore it. For now, at least. He could just pretend that it hadn’t happened, that he hadn’t got his colours and found his soulmate. It would be easy, right?

[Spoiler. It wasn’t easy.]

“You’re twitchier than normal Hansen. What’s up, take a few little pills you don’t wanna tell anyone about?” Jared asks and, proving his point, Evan skyrockets in his seat.

“N-no. Why do you ask?”

Jared raises an eyebrow. “Really man? When I called your name in the hall earlier I thought you were gonna snap your neck so c’mon. Spill.”
“There’s nothing to spill. Nothing,” Evan replies determinedly, choosing to focus on his lunch which is harder than expected considering Evan just wants to grab the colour chart in his draws and discover the names of all these new colours. Though he’s pretty sure he knows what the basics are like red, yellow, green and blue, there are just so many shades of them and he bets they all have names too.

Evan still has yet to see a tree properly. Now that the panic has somewhat died down, he almost feels…excited to go outside and excitement is something Evan hasn’t felt in a long, long while. It also helps from distract him from the fact this is all due to Connor, which isn’t as exciting a prospect all things considered.

“And if you’re not spazzing out your spacing out out! Jeez Hansen, what did you take?”

Evan, once again, snaps out of his thoughts and glances up at Jared. Compared to some of the other kids he’s not changed too much what with his dark hair and grey hoodie. His face looks weird though, just like everyone else’s. It’s pink, if Evan’s correct, and so very different to the light grey he remembered it to be. He can make out so many more things too, like the spot on Jared’s chin that’s a darker pink, maybe light red and he can tell that his ears are also a darker colour than his cheeks. It almost feels like he’s stepped into a parallel universe.

“You gotta give me something here Hansen. Is there something on my face?”


Jared heaves a put upon sigh. “Is this because of the whole Connor thing this morning? Cos you know I didn’t think he’d push you, right? I just thought he’d, you know, shout a little then go smoke or some shit. I, uh, didn’t even know he had till like second period so…sorry man.”

Considering Jared’s only a family friend, a family friend who doesn’t have to be there to back Evan up he just says, “It’s fine,” and goes back to his sandwich with the bright red tomatoes and lettuce the colour of grass.

He’s not sure it is fine.

Dear Evan Hansen,

Today I found my soulmate. Who would’ve thought it would be Connor Murphy?

Evan has a free period last and he spends it in the computer lab, writing his next Dear Evan Hansen because he sure has a lot he wants to get down. It’s a little hard with the cast, but Evan perseveres.

Up until this point, Evan had been sceptical about the letters but now, with so much going on, he’s finding that it helps him make a bit more sense of the thoughts that before he started were a bundle of cataclysmic chaos. And well, writing is actually sort of fun, allows him an eloquence he can’t quite manage in speech.

As he types the final few words, Evan realises that he at least feels clearer, if not better. Now that the thoughts are there on paper, they don’t feel the need to hang around in his head so much. He presses print and bites on a loose nail as he waits. It’s at that moment the door slams open and the nail gets swiftly ripped off. Finger stinging, Evan swivels and his eyes widen.

Evan thought he’d at least have the evening to think about what would happen the next time he saw Connor. For his soulmate to be there in front of him now? It was unexpected and he was far too unprepared. Already, his palms were beginning to sweat.
“Uh, hey,” Connor says awkwardly, shuffling into the room. It’s the first time Evan has seen his soulmate in colour and despite his best efforts to try and not act like a creep, he stares. Connor’s hair is lighter than he first thought, a mixture of different browns like the bark of a tree (they are definitely as amazing as Evan expected. He wonders if Connor thinks so too.) Evan can’t quite make out the colour of his eyes though. Light blue? Grey?

“So…I just wanted to say I’m sorry. You know…for pushing you,” Connor says, staring intently out the window. He’s scratching his knuckles with long, sharp nails that Evan realises are also painted. A much darker colour than Zoe’s polish though.

It suits him.

And huh. An apology. It isn’t what Evan expected but it feels kind of…nice. Nicer than Zoe’s had, almost.

Connor pauses then and Evan briefly flounders. Was he going to mention it? Or was he expecting Evan to? Did he even want Evan to acknowledge it? Or did he just want to absolve any guilt he had then move on?

“Um. Thanks?”

Connor shrugs. He looks behind him briefly and just as Evan thinks he’s going to leave, his eyes lock onto Evan’s cast.

“No one’s signed it,” he observes and Evan flushes. He probably thinks it’s pathetic, that Evan had no friends which, well, that was true but-

“I’ll do it. Hang on.” Connor digs into his bag and pulls out a big black sharpie. He steps towards Evan then hesitates. “…If you want, that is.”

“Uh. G-go ahead,” Evan replies bemusedly. So they weren’t going to talk about the whole soulmate thing but Connor was going to sign his cast? His mom’d be happy, at least.

In big block capital letters, Connor writes his name, nearly taking up the whole length of the cast. “There,” Connor says. “I guess…we could pretend we’re friends now, or something.” And there, there was a glint in his eyes which said we’re not talking about it now but one day…one day maybe.

That was enough for Evan. At least he had time to prepare for that.

“Hey. This yours?”

Connor has turned to the printer, picking up his letter and oh no.

“Oh yeah, it’s m-mine but-”

“Who would have thought it would be Connor Murphy?” Connor reads aloud, his brow furrowed. He doesn’t read anymore, just crumples up the paper in his hand and turns to Evan, his face full of rage. How someone can switch emotions so suddenly, Evan doesn’t know and it feels like he has whiplash.

“What’s that supposed to mean, huh? I know I’m not the best guy around but shit, do you think you’re god’s gift or something?”

Evan’s throat has closed off and he can already feel tears burn behind his eyes. All he can do is shake his head but Connor doesn’t seem to care what his response is.
“Well fuck you Hansen. Good to see where we stand.”

And with that, he storms out, Evan’s letter still clutched in his hand and all Evan can do is watch, his voice still lost and his feet frozen to the ground.

Chapter End Notes

Oh Connor.

Thank you for all the comments, kudos and bookmarks so far. They really make my day :)

Like before, if you want to chat/see snippets for the next chapter, you can find me as scarlett-ice on tumblr! See you next Sunday!
He's Definitely High

Chapter Summary

A strong gust of wind nearly rips the letter out of his lax grip. Oh yeah, reading.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

With Evan’s letter remaining in his clenched fist, Connor doesn’t allow himself think; he just lets his body to carry him wherever it wants to go and, unsurprisingly, it leads him outside to his car. It’s last period and he has a free so it’s not like it’s big deal, he’s basically made it through the whole day. Give him a fucking medal.

He still refuses to think as he steers, running solely on autopilot as he drives around the neighbourhood, practiced at keeping away from places that might have people who’ll recognise him and tell his parents. Eventually, he ends up where he always does, by the old, shut down, apple orchard. He blindly grabs for his tin and heads deep into the woods, sitting in his usual spot by the river. He’s found it’s the best place for getting high and letting his thoughts drift just as lazily as the water by his feet.

It takes a little while for the first drag to hit but once it does, Connor instantly feels better. His fidgety, twitching hands still and as he stares at the puffed out ring that floats upwards a giggle bursts out of him. It’s funny, no, it’s fucking hilarious how his day’s gone. Not only has it spectacularly surpassed his already rock bottom expectations but he’s also managed to do something amazing. He’s finally one upped his parents. They’re both so desperate for a soulmate and Connor, who hadn’t even been trying, who’d been actively avoiding it, has got his. If he didn’t know what a shit show the fall out of telling them would be, he’d do it. He’d watch as they realised what that meant; he’d see his mom try to be happy for him, see his dad stare in disbelief. And when he told them it was a guy…god his dad’s face would be priceless. Connor laughs as he pictures it, the stark redness on his dad’s cheeks, the vein that pops out whenever he’s angry (so whenever he talks to Connor). The best part is, he couldn’t even get justifiably mad over it since it’s not like Connor even had a choice. It’s that fate bullshit so all his dad would be able to do was scream at the fucking sky.

Sometimes Connor thinks about being in the sky, being able to drift along the sky on the cloud with nothing to worry about, nothing to care about.

The sky looks pretty nice, Connor thinks. It’s not just the stark blue colour he’d been fed. The spread out clouds create a swirling gradient and there’s a hint of red…or orange in the distance signalling the arrival of the evening. Connor almost wants to take a picture of it, a craving he’s not had in a while and it occurs to him that nothings stopping him, so he does. He makes sure to include the cloud that sort of looks like a dick.

Ha. Cloud penis.

Connor takes another drag, adjusting so that he’s almost lying down, the rough bark of a tree acting a pillow. Being high is way better in colour. That’s another perk, he guesses. It’s sort of like when his parents upgraded their TV to HD (which was pretty pointless in his opinion but as his dad loved to tell him, it was their money). He can’t decide if it was a better or worse investment than those
couples retreats his mom takes his dad on to ‘strengthen their marriage’.

He then imagines his parents meeting Evan, which is not actually something he wants to go near with a ten foot pole but the thought enters regardless. His mom would love him. Probably swaddle him in a blanket and force feed him 85% organic dark chocolate (which tastes like feet but, again, their money.) Now, his dad? His dad would probably shake Evan’s hand, nod, and then once he’d done was required of him, go hide in his office to ‘work’ when really all he’d be doing was wondering where he’d gone wrong.

Would Evan see through him? See that he wasn’t accepted just like Connor? Even if he didn’t, his mom would still over-compensate for his dad and god, Zoe would probably offer to braid his hair or something, try and get him to gossip about what it was like to have a soulmate, even if that soulmate was her waste of space brother.

He pictures Evan’s hair tied in tiny little braids and suddenly he’s laughing again, which is nice. Laughing’s good. Laughing means you can pretend everything’s just fine and fucking dandy.

Connor blows another ring into the sky. The blunt’s nearly all burnt out now but if he’s lucky, he’ll have another good half hour to hour of this. Sure, his mom will wonder where he is but…that’s an issue for sober Connor. High Connor is having a fucking riot of a time.

Well, he is until he hears a crinkle and, confused, he puts his hand into his pocket to reveal a piece of paper and oh yeah. Evan’s letter. He debates just throwing it into the river, debates not giving it the attention it calls out for; but…Connor’s weak and he wants to finish it. At least then, if he reads whatever shit Evan has to say about him, it’ll just strengthen his conviction that soulmates are bullshit and so is his. He opens up the crumpled paper and starts to read.

Dear Evan Hansen

Connor snorts. Who the fuck writes a letter to themselves? Hell, maybe Connor really did dodge a bullet lashing out. Has Evan ever held a gun? Nah, he’s probably the sort of person who just looks at one and faints. And if he ever did hold one, he’d probably shake so bad that he’d drop it before he fired. Or attempt a shot, miss and then fall on his ass from the recoil. Or just shoot his foot. Connor, on the other hand? Connor bets he’d be a fucking pro.

A strong gust of wind nearly rips the letter out of his lax grip. Oh yeah, reading.

Dear Evan Hansen,

Today I found my soulmate. Who would’ve thought that it would be Connor Murphy?

It’s ironic, I know. Once upon a time all my hope had been pinned on Zoe but instead I got her brother. It’s not what I imagined but I guess I have to believe it happened for a reason. Before all this I wished everything was different, that I was different. I wished that I was a part of something and that whatever I said mattered to anyone. That someone would notice if I disappeared tomorrow.

That’s what a soulmate is, isn’t it? Someone who’s made for you, who matters and who notices you because how could they not? And okay, so finding out who my soulmate is after they pushed me over wasn’t what I expected but then, I was never expecting it to be easy. In fact, it could be considered a miracle I found mine so early. I thought my anxiety would make it impossible. Well, surprise, it didn’t.

Though, just because the situation isn’t ideal it doesn’t mean it has to be all bad, does it? It was all
a misunderstanding so maybe if I got the courage to talk to Connor then it could all be cleared up and...something could happen. Because I have to face that at the end of the day, I don’t know Connor and so, those rumours about him? They could be just that and even if they’re not, people can change. Can reinvent themselves. That’s what I want to do this term so why not Connor? Maybe we could help each other.

I don’t have to end up like mom. At the very least, if I managed to speak to Connor we could perhaps get to know each other. Be friends because god knows I need those. Maybe Connor needs one too. And even if it’s nothing more than that, well, there are plenty of platonic soulmates out there. If it can even be that, then, life goes on. I can just enjoy my colours and focus on myself. On getting better. On being better. Because things have to change somehow. Otherwise...otherwise I’m just a kid stuck in a forest who no one can hear, who doesn’t matter.

So my soulmate may be Connor Murphy, and things might not be great since he doesn’t seem to like me right now, but change is possible. I have to believe that. Zoe said I should forgive him from pushing me and I will, or would, if I don’t get a panic attack.

Sincerely, your best and most dearest friend,

Me

Connor blinks, blinks once more, and then shoves the letter back into his pocket. He’s high. That’s the only reason that Connor had read that to be...almost nice about him, all this considered. He must be delusional or, should the letters on the paper actually be real and not just one long hallucination, Evan was the delusional one. Delusional to think that Connor could change, that they could get to know each other.

(Although what the fuck was that shit about Zoe? For the sake of his sanity, Connor elects to ignore that bit in particular.)

Even better, Connor is now feeling guilty. Again. When he’s fucking high and that’s the only enjoyable thing about living anymore.

Because it’s obvious Evan has issues. Issues just like Connor meaning this isn’t the whole ying and yang situation he’d thought it was. No, they could be able to...relate to each other and Connor hasn’t ever had someone who could do that. Does he want someone who can? Honest answer, maybe. The answer he’s going with? Hell no.

Fuck Evan Hansen. Fuck Evan Hansen and his self-deprecation and optimism.

Oh shit, now he’s thinking about fucking Evan Hansen and Connor bleaches his brain immediately but it doesn’t let up, only goes on to thinking about just being with Evan, kissing him, holding him. Because that’s what soulmates do, isn’t it? They cuddle, kiss, fuck, get married, have babies and reminisce on the ‘good old days’ when they were so young and in love and isn’t that a fucking beautiful story grandkids.

And now he’s thinking about dating Evan Hansen. Would he still stutter, if they spoke more? Would he ever get comfortable around Connor? Could he really see Connor for who he was and accept him, his thousand faults and all? Could Connor accept him? Could they really help make each other ‘better’?

Fuck what was he thinking. It wouldn’t work. He shouldn’t even entertain the idea. This letter was proof of that because it showed that as self-deprecating and despite all the problems he had himself, Evan wanted better. He hoped for better and Connor? He knew the truth. Things didn’t get better,
not for people like him. He’d already proven that by first fucking up their meeting and then going onto yell at Evan *again* because he read one stupid sentence and took it the wrong way. The way he wanted to take it because it made life easier for him.

But what if…what if Connor actually tried? What if he got to know Evan beyond what he knew already, which wasn’t much apart from that he was shy, anxious and apparently wrote himself letters about…about wanting to be heard, noticed. And in the end, didn’t Connor want that too? Didn’t a small part of him hope for that too?

It could be the drugs talking (it was almost definitely the drugs talking) but Connor was now actually *entertaining* the idea of giving him and Evan a shot. Because in the grand scheme of things, getting to know his soulmate, the one person who was supposedly *made* to understand him, didn’t sound so bad. It also wouldn’t be like Connor was going to screw him up too badly since it didn’t look like there was much more that he could do to Evan. He was damaged just like Connor and god, he was sick that that made him *happy*. Could they help each other? Did he want to try? Could Connor be happy for once?

Connor muses over these questions until he begins to come down and reality hits like a sledgehammer like it always does. What the hell had he been thinking? Get to know Evan? What, so Evan can tell him what a fucking joke he is and there’s no way in hell he’d want Connor? Or so Connor can find out that Evan is secretly a serial murderer because that would be the only explanation why seemingly timid Evan got lumped with a soulmate like him. The universe messed with him. That’s what it did, what it always has done.

No. It isn’t happening. He’ll just…ignore Hansen. Ignore his stupid letter. It isn’t like he was going to approach Connor anyway, not after how Connor has blown up at him twice already. At this point it’s up to Connor to go to Evan and he won’t. He just won’t. Evan has his name on his cast. That’s enough. Well, at this point it’s actually too much but he’s not about to tell Evan to get a new one.

He isn’t *that* much of an asshole. Really.

With the letter still in his pocket, for reasons Connor doesn’t want to think too hard about, he heads back to his car and sprays on some more deodorant, frowning at the fact the can is nearly empty. Connor knew he’d been smoking more lately, he just didn’t realise how much more. Oh well, it wasn’t a big deal.

The sky’s only just beginning to turn red as Connor drives back and so he thinks of excuses he can feed his mom. He could try and pass it off that he had some extra school club but that relies on Zoe not ratting him out which Connor doesn’t have high hopes about. More than likely Evan went crying to her again and she’ll exact revenge on his behalf like some avenging angel.

Considering Connor’s expecting his mom to shout at him when he gets in, he’s momentarily stunned when she greets him with a beaming grin.

“Connor! You’re later than I thought you’d be. Was there traffic?” She looks at his hands like she’s expecting something to be there. “I thought you were getting project bits for you and your friend?”

Connor tries to not let his confusion show as he replies, “My…friend? Uh. It’s in the car still?” He doesn’t have a clue what’s going on but hey, his mom’s not yelling which is nice. He’s convinced his ear drum’s gonna burst from her piercing shrieks soon.

“Oh, well…don’t let me keep you! He’s in Zoe’s room. It’s so nice to see you having people over honey!”
Scratch that, he’d take the screaming. With a feeling of dread settling in his stomach, Connor doesn’t bother replying before he runs up the stairs, the loud thumps on the steps matching the erratic beating of his heart. It couldn’t…he couldn’t…

He doesn’t bother knocking, just barges into Zoe’s room which shit is an assortment of enough colours that he could get a migraine. Priorities, Connor. His eyes quickly focus on the two figures on the bed.

Of course. Of fucking course.

Sat beside his sister was Evan fucking Hansen.

Chapter End Notes

Idk why but this chapter was kind of a pain to write. Connor's thoughts are just so confusing right now.

Anyway, I hope you enjoyed it! Comments and kudos are much appreciated and are great for motivation :)

(Also, a lil self-plug. I have a youtube channel where I did a ukulele cover of Sincerely Me so if you wanna check it out, you can here)
How Could You Change The Story?

Chapter Summary

This is the part of Evan that wants to keep trying; the small, hopeful side of him that wants Connor to see him, to talk to him properly, to understand.

To give him...give them, a chance.

Chapter Notes

Somehow this became the longest chapter yet? Idk how.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Evan’s always wished life came with a rule book. In a perfect world there would be a page on how to deal with family members you’ve not seen in years, a section on what to say to cashiers as they scan your shopping, an entire chapter on how to give a presentation without feeling like you were going to throw up.

The answer for what to do when you find your soulmate because they push you, they come to apologise, end up signing your cast, find the private letter you wrote to yourself because your therapist told you to, take the first sentence to mean you hate them and then leave before you have a chance to explain yourself.

Okay, so maybe that is a bit of a stretch and in a perfect world he wouldn’t actually have these problems but the fact of the matter is he does and he’s desperate for a solution to this mess because he doesn’t know what to do. Connor hadn’t even wanted to listen to him, he’d just run off and taken Evan’s letter with him. It was bad enough that Connor had even read the beginning, knew of their existence, and now that he has it anyone could get it and those letters are supposed to be his. He’d just written whatever came into his head so if Connor reads all of it he’s probably going to think Evan is weird, weirder than he thought before and oh god this is very, very bad.

The thing is, small chunk of Evan’s brain that isn’t freaking out about Connor Murphy having his very personal, very private letter, is tempted to let it go. To let Connor read the rest of the letter, see what an idiot Evan is and have him ignore him, have him just forget everything that happened.

But, while Connor may be capable of forgetting everything...is Evan? The letter explains that Evan doesn’t hate him, not really, but Connor realising this relies on him actually reading the rest of it. If Evan was in this situation, he doesn’t know if he would continue to read it...but he’s Evan. He’s not like everyone else, he’s too paranoid about consequences, but would Connor do it? If he doesn’t, could Evan just go on letting Connor think he hates him? Even if he likely hates Evan now.

(Except, a little voice whispers, Connor wouldn’t have apologised and got so upset if he really hated you.)

Soulmates, Evan decides at that moment, are awful. If it hadn’t been for Connor being his soulmate,
if he hadn’t had to have one, he wouldn’t be feeling like this. He wouldn’t have this problem. All this whole thing would have been was just one small minor blip in Evan’s already dreadful school experience. A kid pushed him over, that would have been all it was, nothing out of the ordinary. Now, however, Evan is way, way, way out of his comfort zone. His comfort zone is the computer lab and this situation spanned out to Australia.

Normally, this sort of thing made Evan shy away from the situation, made him retreat further into his ‘shell’ as his mom liked to call it but this time he feels almost at war. There’s a part of him that wants to do what he normally does, wants to bury his head in the sand and disappear, but now there’s another part fighting against it. Another part that wants him to go do something and this is not something Evan is at all accustomed to. Maybe it’s the fact that he had just assumed his soulmate, should he ever get to meet them, would be it for him. Would be the one person who could accept him flaws and all. This is the part of Evan that wants to keep trying; the small, hopeful side of him that wants Connor to see him, to talk to him properly, to understand.

To give him…give them, a chance.

Although, if Connor keeps making assumptions and getting angry it’s not going to be easy and Evan isn’t sure he’s capable of it.

But…Connor is his one shot. He used to think it was Zoe but it turns out it’s her brother.

There has to be some deity up there laughing at him.

The bell signalling the end of school rings and Evan sighs, logs off his computer and shrugs his backpack onto his shoulder. Maybe he’ll see Connor tomorrow and he can explain? Except, the issue with that is Evan would probably just chicken out and then it would become that thing where Evan has to spend a life pretending he can’t see in colour, pretending he’s never met his soulmate, pretending that everything hasn’t just become ten times more amazing and incredible to look at and (at least temporarily) made life feel worth so much more than it had before. Well, the bright side is, even if he doesn’t have his soulmate, he still has his plants. Evan bets he could spend days identifying the new, subtle differences between them.

“Yo Hansen, you got your brain screwed back on yet?”

Evan slams his locker shut in surprise and from where he’s leaned against the ones beside his, Jared raises an eyebrow.

“So…I’m gonna take that as a no. But hey, gracious as I am, I’m gonna ignore how weird you’ve been today and ask if you wanna come over today. Mom’s been busting my ass to see you.”

Because, heaven forbid, Jared actually want Evan around himself. He isn’t really selling this to Evan but honestly, Evan is pathetic enough to agree despite it, just as he normally does.

Except, he does kind of want his colour chart and he can’t ask for it at Jared’s because Jared is suspicious enough as it is and if he finds out that Evan’s soulmate is Connor Murphy then not only would Evan never hear the end of it but it’d probably be spread around school by the next morning which would mean the teachers would find out and then it would probably get to the parents and then…

Okay, so going to Jared’s is a no go. Maybe he can use the excuse he’s got homework or-

“Dude, what the hell?! Did Connor Murphy seriously sign your cast? Have you two been sharing drugs? Is that why you’re acting so weird?”
Evan barely refrains from slamming his head against his locker. His cast. Of course that was going to raise questions. He needs an excuse quick…

“Nah, my idiot brother’s left early again so I’m taking the bus. See you guys tomorrow.”

Zoe. Zoe might know what to do.

Since she’s by far more appealing option, Evan only says a quick ‘sorry, I can’t’ to Jared before he rushes over to Zoe, just as the rest of her group leave. That’s good, he doesn’t want to risk freezing up in front of her friends.

“Zoe. Hey. Hi. Um, hello.”

Because that was so much better Hansen.

Zoe giggles. “Hey Evan.” Her smile then drops. “Is this about Connor? Because I told him to apologise and if he didn’t then-”

“No, um. No, he-he did,” Evan’s quick to say and Zoe’s eyebrows skyrocket. She then spies the big block capital letters written on his cast and if possible, they rise even further.

“Oh wow. Good, so…”

“So uh, we also had a…a misunderstanding.” Evan winces. Was Zoe going to think he was an awful person, was she going to tell him to stay away from her brother?

“Evan, I’m sure whatever this ‘misunderstanding’ was, it was probably because of Connor. It normally is,” she mutters bitterly. A bit louder, she adds, “I’m guessing you want to try and fix this misunderstanding?”

Evan nods, twisting the hem of his shirt. “I-I know it sounds kind of weird but yeah. I’d just like to um…clear the air? And honestly, you shouldn’t blame Connor for all this because it was kind of my fault. I think, well, I didn’t mean it as he took it but if I hadn’t-”

“Evan.” Zoe’s expression is soft and Evan’s ramblings trail off. “I get it Evan. Trust me, I know my brother’s not the easiest guy to talk to. You practically need to lock him up to do it.” She frowns and despite the fact that there are barely any kids around them now, she quietens her voice when she carries on to say, “But you guys deserve a chance so…look, why don’t you come over to our house now? That way, when Connor comes home he’ll have to talk to you. I’ll make sure he does.”

Going to the Murphy’s house? Potentially meeting Zoe and Connor’s parents? Surprising Connor by turning up at the one place Evan probably really shouldn’t be? All of it sounds absolutely horrible and not what Evan should do but clearly his brain and body aren’t on the same page because Evan is nodding and before he can rectify his grievous mistake, Zoe is pulling him alone to the bus stop where a bus is just pulling in, swiftly taking the choice away from him. Well, at least it’s not like his mom will worry, or notice, considering she’s been working late most nights these days.

“You can hang out in my room till he gets back. Despite whatever the hell Connor’s doing, I want to get to know my brother’s soulmate.” She whispers the last bit and any fear Evan has about Zoe telling anyone falls away. He musters up a genuine smile for her and follows her onto the bus.

After that, Zoe doesn’t mention the whole soulmate thing again, not even Connor. Instead, she asks
him what classes he’s taking, what he enjoys and what he’s thinking of doing in college. Considering how, for the past few months or so, Evan’s concept of the future had been nothing more than a probable, distant blur that had never felt too real, he doesn’t have much to say but that doesn’t seem to deter Zoe. She’s one of those people who can find anything to say in order to prevent an awkward silence without it feeling like stifling, painful small talk.

It’s nice and, most surprisingly of all, he doesn’t find himself wishing that she was his soulmate. Sure, he wouldn’t have been upset if it had been Zoe, but talking to her like he is now he just feels… content. There are a few butterflies but they’re the kind he always gets when he talks to someone unfamiliar, not the ones he’d get when he was just watching Zoe, imagining what it would be like to talk to her. If he’s being honest with himself, he can’t even be sure it was completely a crush or more a form of idol worship (something he’s sure his therapist would have a field day with). Zoe’s always been so confident, so friendly and nice and Evan wanted someone like that, wanted to be someone like that. Already, Evan knows they probably wouldn’t have been good together. She’s a free spirit, needing someone who can keep up with her and Evan’s been going at a snail-pace all his life and honestly? He’s okay with that. He’s okay with just trying to enjoy the smaller things in life. The little things that help you keep going.

The journey to the Murphy’s house is shorter than it is back to his and Zoe nudges him when it’s time to get off. Evan follows her and then freezes when they finally reach her house. He’s always known the Murphy’s have money but he’s never seen it so obviously flaunted before. Compared to his and his mom’s little bungalow, the Murphy’s place is practically a mansion.

What if they have priceless artefacts that Evan accidentally knocks over? Or a famous painting that he insults? Or a butler who will try and take Evan’s jacket and Evan will refuse since he wouldn’t want to inconvenience him and then he’ll be hot all afternoon because he wouldn’t take his jacket off afterwards in case he made the butler feel bad.

“You coming Evan?” Zoe asks and Evan stumbles on behind her as she unlocks the door. He has his fingers crossed for it being empty but that hope is instantly dashed as Zoe calls out, “Mom I’m home. I’ve brought a friend.”

Evan fights to keep from awkwardly bouncing on the heels of his feet as he waits with Zoe for her mom to appear. As she steps around the corner, Evan’s first thought is that she’s pretty. Evan now sees where Zoe (…and Connor) gets it from. Mrs Murphy has fewer lines crossing her face than his own mom however it does look a bit pinched in a way that Evan can’t tell is natural or from some work. He doesn’t want to assume, of course, because that’s rude and even if she has got some work done it doesn’t matter and it’s none of his business so he really should just-

“Oh hi there!”

“Mom, this is Evan. Evan…mom.”

“Pleasure to meet you Evan,” Mrs Murphy smiles. “Tell me, how do you know Zoe?”

His paranoia might be making him see things, but Evan swears there’s a glint in her eye. Like she knows. But how can she know unless Connor told her but he wouldn’t have, would he? And Zoe, Zoe can’t have…

“It’s nothing like that mom. Evan’s actually Connor’s friend, they share the same class. They’re doing a project together, isn’t that right?” Evan nods, relieved at not having to come up with an excuse himself. “Connor went out to get some stuff for it and I said Evan could come back with me since he doesn’t like shops all that much.”
Though he’s slightly embarrassed at the fact Zoe’s right and she just probably thought it was a made up lie, he nods again. “S-she’s right, I don’t uh, I don’t like check-outs.” Evan bites his lip in order to prevent anything else completely and utterly unnecessary leaving his mouth.

Zoe’s mom face morphs into a weird expression. Almost like she wants to draw him close with her long red nails and squeeze the life out of him.

“Nothing to be ashamed of hun, I’m just glad Connor has a friend over! Oh, did he sign your cast?” Her hand flies to her mouth and Evan’s not sure but he thinks she sounds…emotional? “That’s nice of him! Have you two been friends long? Connor’s never mentioned you but then…he doesn’t talk to us about much. Do you two want some snacks while you wait for Connor? Oh, will you be staying for dinner Evan?”

Evan tries not to flinch under the barrage of questions. “I, um, I’m not sure. I’ll ask my mom but she’s working so it might take a while for her to get back.”

(There is no way, soulmate or not, that Evan is staying for dinner but he also wants to be polite. To manage a social situation without a rulebook.)

“I’ll grab some food later if we get hungry,” Zoe says. “C’mon Evan.”

Zoe draws Evan upstairs, her mom calling out to them to have fun, and she brings him into her room. Evan used to picture this moment. Being with Zoe, going to her house, being introduced to her parents. He never thought it would be like this, waiting instead for her brother instead.

Zoe’s room is…interesting. Even though Evan knows for a fact that Zoe doesn’t hasn’t met her soulmate, all her walls are painted a different colour, with the carpet a neutral white (cream?). One of the walls is completely full of photos, more recent pictures surrounding a collage made of what appears to be old family snapshots. Evan doesn’t want to look like he’s prying so although he’s not able to get a good look, he can tell Zoe and Connor had been cute kids. Happy. Like they liked each other.

Evan absently wonders what happened.

Zoe flops into her bed and Evan stands there, fidgeting with a loose thread on his trousers. Should he sit on the chair by her desk? Or should he join her on the bed? Would that send the wrong signal? Would Zoe think he was making advances on her and betraying her brother if he also sat on the bed? Maybe if he just stands there…or he could sit on the floor. The floor is safe, right?

“Sit wherever Evan,” Zoe offers and when that clearly doesn’t help, she pats the duvet. It’s bright purple, if Evan’s correct. He almost wants to ask if she has a colour chart he could look at, since she knows and all, but…but that’s normally what soulmates do together. A ‘bonding moment’ and even though he and Connor don’t seem to be getting along for that to be a possibility…just in case, Evan wants to wait. Or at least do it alone.

He joins Zoe on the bed and she makes a thoughtful expression before asking, “Wanna watch some youtube videos while we wait?”

That sounds safe enough. “Okay.”

Zoe grabs her laptop, flicking through her feed before settling on a funny vine compilation video. The mindless humour helps distract Evan from his worry about Connor’s arrival and nearly from how conscious he is at how close he and Zoe are sitting and whether he’s moving too much, breathing too loudly. During the half hour they spend watching videos, Evan would almost say he
eventually feels relaxed.

Of course, it’s just as Evan reaches that point that the door slams opens, revealing an incredibly confused, marginally angry, Connor Murphy.

Chapter End Notes

Moral of this: Always go to Zoe. She will not put up with this bullshit.

Thank you for all the support so far guys! All the kudos, bookmarks and comments especially really mean a lot :)
Try To Be More Nice

Chapter Summary

It takes extreme effort for Connor not to smash the door shut behind him.

What. The. Fuck.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It takes extreme effort for Connor not to smash the door shut behind him.

What. The. Fuck.

“What are you doing here?” Connor demands. Evan jerks as if he’s been slapped and from where she’s sat close next to his soulmate, like they’re fucking buddies already, Zoe glares at him.

Connor glares back.

“Don’t be a dick Connor. Evan said you two had a misunderstanding. The least you can do is try to be a decent person and hear him out,” Zoe says and wow, what was that? A day and Evan already has his sister wrapped around his little finger. They really should have been soulmates. Obviously Evan would have preferred it.

“There’s nothing to talk about,” Connor replies. “And why don’t you let Evan speak for himself? Or are you his knight in shining fucking armour now?”

Zoe’s face crinkles into that pinched look she typically gets when Connor’s close to ‘taking it too far’. “Seriously Connor, do you have to be such an ass?”

Connor rolls his eyes and elects to ignore his sister; instead directing his attention to Evan and fuck, getting a good look at him after reading the letter makes this all a whole lot worse. Because now he can’t justify everything he does by believing Evan hates him. He can’t pretend that whole hurt, pitiful expression is just an act. And the thing is, Connor will continue to act like an ass because that’s just what he does. He takes anything that could even be slightly good and turns it into a wreck so monumental that even the fucking President would go ‘oh, probably shouldn’t do that’.

“What do you want Hansen?” Connor ends up biting out. He pretends it doesn’t sting when Evan’s face literally crumples.

“It-it’s like Zoe said. We…I didn’t mean to make you mad. I don’t…I don’t hate you Connor.”

He will though, a voice whispers in Connor’s mind and he chooses to listen to it, rather than revive the hope that’s sat dead within him for the last few years. He snorts. “Listen, you stick around and this is how things are gonna be, how I’m gonna be. I’m doing you a favour here.” He shoves his hands into his jacket pockets, hiding his clenched fists. “I’m not someone you should be around.”

“But we’re soulmates!”
It’s the first time either of them has acknowledged it and Connor’s now glad he shut the door.

“So?” Connor asks, feigning nonchalance. He knows what Evan’s trying to say but he just…he just doesn’t want to face it. He doesn’t want to face reality. Why can’t Evan just let things be easy?

“So things happen for a reason and can’t- can’t we just talk. Please?”

“We are talking.” Connor replies wryly and Zoe lets out a noise of aggravation.

“Okay, so as much as I feel like I need to play the diplomat here, you two need some privacy to properly talk. So I can either leave or you can take Evan to your room Connor. Which is it going to be?”

Connor knows he could put up a fight, say that neither option is going to happen and that Connor’s just going to go to his room alone but he doesn’t trust Zoe not to do something stupid if he tries it. Like tell their parents. And while Connor does still want to rub it in their faces, he wants it to be on his terms and worth the fall out. Right now? Right now Connor doesn’t want to deal with that shit. He doesn’t want to deal with this shit either but considering how it looks like an either or situation, he’s clearly gonna have to.

Fucking Zoe.


“Oh. O-Okay.”

Without looking back, Connor strides out of Zoe’s door to his room, just managing not to slam another door. No need to alarm his mom or whatever. The last thing she needs is her coming up to ‘pop in’ and see-

Oh God, Connor thinks sickly; Evan’s probably already met his mom. She’ll have seen Connor’s name on his cast. She’ll almost definitely have the wrong idea.

Dinner’s going to be a fucking delightful time.

Shrugging off that thought for later on, Connor leads Evan into his bedroom. He’s never felt self-conscious about it; it’s his space so he can have it however the fuck he wants it, but even so he feels uncomfortable as Evan’s eyes roam around it. It’s almost like he’s being exposed, being made vulnerable. Not that his room actually reveals that much. There’s a couple of different nail polishes on his desk sat beside his old laptop, a few scratched superhero stickers peeling off it, and some vinyl records - one of the few luxuries he allows himself apart from weed. Other than that, there’s his school shit but the rest, he keeps hidden away in draws, under the bed, barely touched. Mostly it’s because Connor’s days usually consist of being out of the house as much as humanely possible and when in it, drowning everything out with his music.

Connor stretches out on his bed and after watching Evan flounder in the centre of the room for a few seconds, sighs and says, “Sit on the chair or something if you’re gonna stay.”

Evan bites his lip and does so, looking incredibly awkward even in that brief action. God, he’s shifter than Connor when he’s in desperate need of a smoke.

“So, what do you want to say?” Connor drawls lazily, picking up his vape. Not as good as a proper smoke, but it’ll do. It tastes nicer anyway and the lack of nicotine means it won’t fuck up Evan’s lungs too.
Evan eyes him warily as he starts to speak. “I…I didn’t mean what I said the way you took it. I, um, I don’t know if you read the rest of my letter but all I meant was, was that I didn’t think I’d meet my soulmate in school because uh, I guess you can tell I have really bad anxiety and so I don’t really touch people? Or speak to them. And honestly, I didn’t really know, I didn’t really know you so I just wasn’t expecting it to be you and I know you don’t like me. That’s okay…well it’s not okay okay but I understand. I just didn’t want you to think I was upset to have you as a soulmate because…I’m not. You apologised to me and y-you wrote on my cast so you can’t be so bad and that’s…that’s it I guess. I just wanted you to know.”

Fuck, with his red face and the way he’s tugging incessantly on the hem of his shirt, Evan looks like a kicked dog. Rather than look at Connor, he’s staring at a stain on the floor, the one Connor made when he stole some beer from his dad after one of his ‘let’s piss Connor of talks’. And Connor wants to tell him what he says doesn’t matter, that it doesn’t change anything and he can just leave but that’s not comes out.

“You know, for a quiet kid you can sure talk a lot.”

Evan’s face darkens further. It’s almost impressive.

“I guess I’ll just, I’ll just go then-”

And then, Connor says something even more fucking stupid.

“Stay.”

What the fuck Murphy? Evan looks just as confused as Connor feels. He’s not sure what possessed him to say that word. Hell, Evan was offering to go, offering to do what Connor wanted but still he still he said that fucking word and even as he wants to take it back, wants to say no when Evan asks, ‘Are you sure?’, he ends up following with ‘It’s what I said isn’t it?’ and that’s it. Evan’s staying. Why?

Connor has no fucking idea, but since Evan is apparently staying, he needs to clarify some stuff.

“But it’s not because I’m interested in this whole soulmate bullshit okay? I never wanted one in the first place. It’s…it’s nothing personal.”

It’s Evan’s eyes. That’s what it is. Those fucking eyes which look so sad and pathetic and make Connor feel like his guts are all churned up and going to explode out his stomach.

“That’s fine, totally fine. I get it, I really do,” Evan says and though Connor eyes him critically, he’s inclined to believe him. Evan wouldn’t be able to lie for shit.

“Also, actually, I was, um, wondering if you read my letter? Or, well, if you still have it? I did print another one but they’re for therapy and private and if you do still have then if it’s okay, I’d like it back?”

So it was therapy then. And Connor once again feels like a piece of shit. This has to be a new record.

“Right, yeah. Uh.” Connor digs into his jacket pocket and pulls out the letter, where it’s remained neatly folded. “I did read it…sorry.”

He passes the letter to Evan who briefly runs his fingers over it in relief before placing it in his backpack.
“That’s okay,” Evan shrugs. “I guess it’s…better that you know.” His lip looks red raw now but then again, his worry is justified. Connor’s not exactly done anything to prove he’s not gonna scream at him again.

“Cool…cool.” Connor trails off, realising that he now has to entertain Evan. What do people normally do? They could listen to his music, he guesses, but when he eyes his collection which is mostly metal and hard rock mixed in with some rock opera (so sue him, it’s good), he can’t really see Evan being into it. Should they watch a film? Does Connor particularly want to watch a film?

“Listen,” Connor ends up huffing. “I’m not good at this so seriously, I won’t stop you if you just want to go. This was a bad idea and—”

Surprisingly, Evan interrupts him. He does still look like he’s ready to have a heart attack but it’s progress.

Not that he wants progress or anything.

“I-I don’t mean to keep bringing up the whole…soulmate stuff but um, I was wondering if you had a colour chart?”

Connor had completely forgotten about colour charts. He bites his nail. He did have one. Once. And he’d since burnt it because, you know, he figured he was never going to get a soulmate. Jokes on him apparently but…okay, he is kind of curious himself.

“I, uh, don’t have mine but there should be one online I guess.”

Connor grabs the laptop from his desk and flips it open. He goes on the first link he finds and starts to scroll until he realises that Evan is still sitting on the chair by his desk, too far to see the screen.

“…You want to come over here?”

“Oh, um, yeah. Sure.”

Evan nearly falls on the bed as he makes his way there and Connor, the gracious host that he is, pretends to ignore it (even if he’s thinking that the therapy really does make sense.)

(He’s also wondering if it would make sense for him too but that’s a whole other fish to fry.)

“Here.” He shoves the laptop back a bit and tries not to flinch when Evan’s arm brushes against is. Not that it matters since Evan himself nearly leaps 5 feet into the air. He quickly settles though, as much as Evan seems to be able to, and Connor tries not to dwell on how they’re now mimicking the position he’d found Evan and Zoe in earlier.

“There’s so many,” Evan breathes, his eyes almost transfixed on the screen and Connor silently agrees. He can’t stop himself from trying to match all the colours on the screen to stuff in his room and out of the corner of his eye, he finds Evan doing the same.

(Though, he’s gotta say, some of the colour names are fucking stupid. Pidgeon blue? Squirrel grey? What’s with animals dictating colour? They might as well have shit brown.)

And well…this isn’t bad, Connor supposes as he keeps scrolling down. Connor’s not actually feeling too uncomfortable and considering how discomfort is his typical state of being, it’s a pretty big deal. Except, the silence ends up getting a bit stifling and Connor decides if they’re actually doing this then maybe Connor should give it a shot and try...a bit.
“What’s your favourite?” Connor asks and god, Evan has got to stop jumping whenever he talks. It unnerves Connor (AKA reminds him what a shitty person he is that his soulmate flinches every time he just speaks.)

“Um… I like pastel blue,” Evan admits and Connor searches for it. It’s light in colour, similar to the colour of the sky and…it suits Evan, he guesses. “I like a lot of the blues. I think it may be my favourite colour in general. W-what about you?”

Connor scrolls down a bit more. The purples are cool, he supposes. Even when he was everything was just varying shades of grey he’d always gravitated towards darker shades and it looks like that hasn’t changed. “Pearl green looks okay,” he ends up deciding and Evan nods.

“T-that’s good too, I mean, obviously you like it more, not to say it’s a bad colour, it’s all just personal preference and I’m…I’m going to shut up now.”

Evan deflates and Connor almost feels bad for him. God knows living with his own head isn’t fun and so he wonders what it’s like in Evan’s.

They go through the colours a few more times, making a couple offhand comments about some (they both agree that broom yellow is gross) until they’ve run through it all they can. With little else to talk about, Connor’s eyes get drawn to Evan’s cast where his name sits boldly. Connor kind of regrets just how big he wrote his name as it now looks like he’s made some sort of claim on Evan.

Which. No.

“So, how’d you break it?”

As expected, Evan jerks before replying. Maybe Connor’s just got to stop taking it so personally.

“Oh. M-my arm? I, uh…it was a tree. A tall tree. I…fell.”

Now, normally Connor would say Evan looked way too shifty and nervous for that to be the truth but considering this is Evan…

“Wow. That’s pathetic.”

Well shit, that wasn’t what he meant to say (out loud). Seems like it’s an unwelcome, ongoing, trend. Evan flushes and yeah, Connor knows that was a dick thing to comment, soulmate or not and so he quickly tries to rectify his stupid-ass mistake with, “I mean, you know. Compared to a fight or something. I broke my finger once.”

While Connor hadn’t actually intended to tag that last bit on, it works. Despite his face remaining bright red, Evan looks up curiously.

“What happened?”

“Oh, uh.” It’s not a particularly happy or interesting story but he might as well tell it. He may sort of owe it to Evan. “My dad took me to a batting cage for my seventh birthday. I’ve never really liked sports and even back then I just didn’t try. Good ol’ dad got a bit frustrated and threw the ball when I was taking off the glove. It only got my little finger though, left it nice and crooked.”

Connor lifts up his little finger where, unlike the others, it has a slight curve to it. His dad had been apologetic afterwards and bought him ice cream but it hadn’t been until it was too late that they realised it was broken. Good job too since Connor hated hospitals; basically they freaked him the fuck out. It was also kind of worth it to see his mom lose it at his dad when she found out.
“Couldn’t you get it fixed?” Evan asked and Connor shrugs.

“That would probably mean breaking it again and I’m not into that sort of thing,” he replies and Evan nods solemnly.

A knock at the door makes the both of them jump and Connor slams the lid of the laptop down just as his mom enters. He can tell she notices but she puts on a bright smile all the same, as usual playing blissfully ignorant.

“Hi boys! I just wanted to know if you’d asked your mom about dinner Evan?”

“Oh, um, I forgot. I’ll, uh, check now.”

Evan leans over to get his phone out of his backpack and his eyes widen as he sees the screen. Connor not so subtly peers over and though he can’t make it out too well, he’s pretty sure he sees some texts and missed calls.

“It looks like my mom came home early and I forgot to tell her I was coming here so I’d really better be going home. I’m sure dinner would have been great Mrs Murphy but my mom sounds really worried and she’s not home often so I really should go see her and-”

“Oh honey, it’s okay,” his mom interrupts, probably just in time to prevent Evan hyperventilating. “If you want I could drive you back?”

Evan and his mom alone in a car? Connor hates that himself. Evan might genuinely develop an aneurism.

To Evan’s credit, his stiffening is almost undistinguishable as he replies, “No, it’s fine but thank you. It’s not dark out and it’s not too far to my house. I’ll call my mom on my way back.”

“It’d be no trouble Evan but…if you’re sure.”


Evan gives Connor an awkward half wave before he bolts out the door. Connor can’t help but raise an eyebrow in amusement, a slight upwards curl to his lips.

It instantly disappears when his mom, not following after Evan liked Connor had wished, lets out a happy sigh.

“I’m so glad you’re making friends honey. Evan seems like a really nice boy,” she says, looking like she’s either ready to burst into tears or into fucking song.

“I guess,” is all Connor offers in return, hoping she won’t try and hug him or anything, and thankfully she doesn’t. She just gives him one more ‘supportive’ smile, tells him dinner will be ready soon, and leaves.

Perhaps the most surprising thing of all, Connor realises as he puts on a record, is that empty hole in his chest which has been steadily growing over the years doesn’t feel quite as big as normal.

Chapter End Notes
Fun fact: I also most likely broke my little finger which is now kind of bent since we didn’t realise it was broken. I didn’t mean to give it to Connor to, it just happened.

Here’s a link to the colour chart I used (remove the spaces): http://www.e-paint.co.uk/RAL_Colourchart.asp

As always, thank you for the continued support! It makes me so much more motivated to write :D See you next Sunday! (Also, who has seen the unreleased songs of the soundtrack on youtube? omg they all make me wanna cry)
“So, Connor huh?” His mom grins after she’s served their plates. “Tell me about him. When did you two meet?”

The last time Evan had been in a situation like this, it had been after he’d broken his arm. The only difference was that back then, Evan had had a legitimate reason not to answer his phone – breaking his arm had hurt a lot and honestly, between the pain, panic that he’d failed, relief that he’d failed, calling his mom hadn’t even crossed his mind.

This time? This time Evan doesn’t have a good excuse, not really, and though he’s sure his mom will probably be happy that he has a friend (he was not telling her he had a soulmate and he wasn’t sure ‘acquaintance’ would go down well) she’ll also most likely be mad, especially since Evan doesn’t do this sort of thing. He doesn’t go over to people’s houses which aren’t Jared’s. Not only that, but he did it on a day where Evan only now remembered his mom saying she’d be home early, something that happened so rarely it was considered a Big Deal.

They were going to have tacos.

Evan doesn’t actually call his mom as he leaves the Murphy household, not really wanting to have the beginning of this sort of conversation on the phone and have his mom’s frustrated/sad/worried tone following him home, so he sends her a quick text instead telling her he was okay and on his way back. His mom just sends him one back saying ‘good’ and despite trying not to read into that single word too much, his pace quickens.

Evan’s not too sure when it all started, but his and his mom’s relationship has been…strained for a while now. She means well, Evan knows this, but she also just doesn’t get it. It’s like she expects Evan just to be able to magically get over his anxiety now he’s at therapy, that pushing himself should be easy and even though she never explicitly says it, the ‘you just aren’t trying hard enough’ sometimes feels like it’s there unspoken. His mom hadn’t even batted any eye when Evan had told her he just fell from the tree and though it’s what Evan convinced himself he wanted, because he didn’t want to know that he was even more messed up than she initially thought, a small, secret part of him had hoped that she’d at least noticed something.

After pacing a little in the driveway, preparing for his mom’s reaction (whatever it would be), he decides to just go for it. Just open the door. Like ripping off a band aid.

He’s barely unlocked the door when he’s assaulted by his mom, Heidi colliding with him so hard and abruptly that he lets out a quiet ‘oomph’, his arms automatically coming up around her.

“Evan! I was so worried! I called the Kleinman’s but you weren’t there. Where were you?” His mom holds him by the shoulders and scans him up and down with a critical eye, her face pinched with worry. Evan has to take a brief moment to do the same, nearly memorised by the colours his mom is now bathed in.
“I, uh, actually went to a different friend’s house. I’m sorry. I forgot you would be home early,” Evan replies, determined to do better than he did with Jared and not make it so obvious he’s staring. His eyes fall down to his feet.

“Another friend?” Heidi repeats gleefully, her worry instantly evaporating. She then spots Connor’s name on his cast and his mom lights up even more, her hands squeezing his arms. “Oh sweetie I’m so happy for you! Didn’t I tell you it would be good for you to get someone to sign your cast?”

Flushing slightly, Evan shrugs. He dumps his backpack by the door and his mom pulls him into the kitchen where Taco’s, not quite steaming hot, are waiting.

“So, Connor huh?” His mom grins after she’s served their plates. “Tell me about him. When did you two meet?”

“Uh.” Evan scratches at the back of his neck. What was it Zoe had told her mom? “We’re-we’re partners in a school project.” To stop her questioning any further, Evan’s never been too good at improvisation, tending to just blurt out the first thing that comes to mind, he changes the topic of conversation by quickly saying, “I’m sorry I didn’t call you. I just forgot you were home early today.”

His mom’s shoulders sag. With the addition of color, the pallor of her face and the dark circles under her eyes seem even more pronounced. “It’s okay sweetie. I mean, I was worried sick so next time this happens, even if I’m at work you text me, but I can’t really blame you. I know I’ve not been the best mom at the moment. But I’m trying Evan. I really am.”

“I know,” Evan replies quietly, ignoring the dark voice in the back of his mind that says ‘it’s still not enough’. He and his mom don’t need that voice.

Her tone growing chipper again, his mom asks, “So, did you and Connor have a good time?” and Evan bites into his taco to prevent an immediate answer. If this questioning is bad enough, he can’t imagine how it would be if she knew Connor was his soulmate. What she’d think.

“I guess…”

“C’mon Evan. Talk to me! I wanna hear all about it.”

Evan sighs.

The rest of the evening is spent with the two of them eating Taco’s and despite his mom’s pestering, Evan providing her with the shortest, vaguest answers he can get away with. He knows his mom is desperate for more information, considering this is Evan’s first friend in years that isn’t a ‘family friend’, but she ends up relenting, just relieved that he finally has something to tell her. By the end of the meal, her eyes, though still tired, appear to have more life in them. Whether that’s just because Evan can now tell their colour (green, maybe reseda or beige green), he can’t be certain but he’ll take it. Just because they don’t always agree on stuff, Evan still wants his mom to be happy.

After the meal’s finished, Evan declines his mom’s offer to watch some TV, giving the excuse he’s tired, which actually, is true for once. Evan’s not had such an emotionally and socially draining day in a long time.

Even though Evan can tell she’s disappointed, she still gives him a hug, a bit more praise on ‘how well he’s doing already’ and finishes by telling him that Connor is welcome over whenever he wants. Knowing that Connor probably won’t be coming over to his for a long time, if at all, Evan just says okay.
Evan’s dreams that night are a mix of explosions of colour, Zoe, Mrs Murphy and most prominently, Connor. He can’t remember the specifics of any of it, only that each time, Connor was different. Sometimes he was nice to Evan, sometimes he was angry. In some fragments they were friends, in others Connor was running from him or shoving him once again. He wakes up feeling confused and it doesn’t leave him as he enters school the next morning, wondering where he and Connor stand now. Could they be considered friends? Or would Connor want nothing to do with him? Maybe he’d just been polite the previous evening, or, as polite as Connor could get.

When Evan reaches his locker, he’s surprised to find Jared there, the other boy acting as if he hadn’t been waiting for Evan despite the fact he was resting straight upon Evan’s locker. Knowing what’s coming, Evan just debates leaving his calculus book where it is but the possibility of needing it and having to explain to his teacher why he hasn’t got it in front of all the kids ultimately has him standing in front of Jared who only moves when Evan says hi.

“So…,” he drags out, watching Evan pull out his book. “Are you gonna explain what happened yesterday?”

Pretending that he needs something else, Evan practically sticks his head into his locker, blocking out Jared’s face as he replies, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“See, no. I’m not buying that anymore. First you act all weird and ‘stare-y’, then you have Connor Murphy’s name on your cast and then you voluntarily go and talk to Zoe Murphy and from what I could see, follow her onto a bus which you don’t take?”

“-T-There’s nothing strange about it Jared. Nothing, so I don’t know why you’re making such a big deal over it. I spoke to Zoe, she’s nice and Connor signed my cast because he just, he just wanted to since no one else did, including you, so I-I don’t think you have the right to demand answers!”

Evan accidentally slams his locker shut and the both of them flinch. Jared folds his arms against his chest and Evan can feel his face heat up. He really hadn’t meant to say all that but well…at least he hadn’t spilled any of the important stuff.

“So that’s what this is? Connor Murphy felt bad for pushing you and signed your cast and now you’re gonna be a little puppy following the Murphy’s around? Dude, you know they’re not your friends, right?”

That hits a little too close to home and Evan snaps, “Well I guess I don’t have any friends then!”

And while he feels slightly smug at Jared’s expression of surprise he mostly feels sort of shitty because yeah, he’s used to Jared not always being the nicest but to actively tell him that other people he doesn’t even know aren’t Evan’s friends…it hurts.

It also doesn’t help that Evan doesn’t see Connor or Zoe that morning so he can’t even try to prove Jared wrong. Maybe they really aren’t his friends and yesterday really was just one big exception. Evan had at least thought, hoped, that Zoe could at least become his friend.

When lunch time rolls around, Evan’s not sure what to do. Normally he sits on the corner of whatever table Jared’s pick that day (considering how he picks on Evan for not having friends, Evan’s not sure how many of the people Jared sits with are actually his friends or just people he forces himself onto in order to look cool). Today, however, Evan really doesn’t want to sit with Jared because he’ll probably either ignore Evan completely or keep questioning him until the resentment that Evan tries to tamper down gets blurted out and he potentially reveals something by accident. Neither option seems particularly appealing so Evan decides to give the cafeteria a miss.
Although, this does raise the question of where he will sit.

The toilets are off-limits, there are way too many germs in there for Evan to feel comfortable even opening his lunch bag, and so are the classrooms. There was always the hall but that would only be a viable option if he actually did want to be gawked at by all the kids passing by. In the end, he’s left with only one option – outside.

Thankfully, since it’s only early September, the weather isn’t too cold; in fact, the sun is shining brightly. Evan looks at the bleachers first but there are a few kids sitting there, kids Evan doesn’t recognise, and since he doesn’t want to risk them coming over to him he heads further away. A short distance from some of the outside tables there’s a cluster of trees and Evan walks towards them, coming to the conclusion that spending his lunch surrounded by trees in the peace and quiet sounds kind of nice.

It turns out someone else had the same idea.

Evan hovers for a moment and it’s as he’s trying to come up with yet another place he might be able to claim as his own that he realises he recognises the hoodie the other kid is wearing.

It’s Connor’s.

That…actually doesn’t help matters at all. In fact, it makes his indecision worse because should he acknowledge Connor is there, say hi and then leave? Or should he try and initiate a conversation, work out what’s going on between them. Or maybe, and this is the option that is rapidly becoming more appealing the more Evan’s anxiety gets ramped up; he should just pretend he never saw Connor and leave.

“Are you gonna sit down or just keep staring?”

That answers that then.

Before he registers what he’s doing, Evan’s bolting across the remaining distance and sitting down with a thump beside Connor, the curvature of the tree meaning he’s facing away from the other boy, only able to see him out of the corner of his eye. Connor quietly snorts but doesn’t say any more, instead going back to eating his sandwich. Not entirely sure how to start a conversation, Evan chooses to think about it while he begins eating his own lunch. He’s got ham this time, a pinkish colour that for some reason makes him feel slightly uncomfortable. He ends up diverting his gaze to the trees above that provide a nice sanctuary for him…and Connor. Evan subtly glances at his soulmate but Connor doesn’t even seem to notice he’s there; he’s just leaning back with his eyes closed, finishing off the remains of his food.

Eventually, Evan finishes his lunch and he still hasn’t come up with what to say to Connor. Usually, Evan would prefer this, prefer simply relaxing over lunch in silence but now, the insecurities Jared highlighted earlier are at the forefront of his mind and he finds that he needs to speak to Connor. He needs to know what’s going on between them so Evan doesn’t risk getting his hopes up again for no reason. In the end, the stress gets overwhelming and all Evan ends up exclaiming is a high-pitched ‘hi’.

While he’s mentally berating himself for being so lame, Connor slowly turns his head to the side and opens one eye. “Hey,” he replies back, almost bemusedly and that’s something, Evan will gladly take bemusement over anger and annoyance.

“I, um, do you always come here for lunch?” Evan ends up asking and Connor shrugs.
“Sometimes. Sometimes I go off campus,” he replies.

“Are you allowed to do that?” Evan asks, instantly feeling stupid when Connor raises an eyebrow.

“No,” he answers bluntly. He then seems to take pity on Evan because he carries on with, “Does that bother you?”

“Uh, no. I don’t think so. I mean, I wouldn’t do it. Or, at least, I don’t think I would. Because I’d probably get really nervous and call my mom and then she’d call the school so-”

“Okay, I get it Mr. Goody Two Shoes,” Connor interrupts, almost…laughing? No, it’s not quite a laugh, it’s a bit too rough and short for that, but it’s something, even if it sort of is at his expense. “So you’ve never done anything bad? Never broken the rules?” Connor asks, a hint of a smile tugging at his lips.

“I…I don’t think so?” Evan scratches his neck, trying to remember something but…he’s honestly always been too scared of being caught to do anything bad. Although…”I stole some sweets when I went shopping with my mom?” He’d been seven and they’d been walking past the pick and mix. It was shortly after his dad left and his mom was more harried than usual, meaning that when Evan asked if he could buy some, she’d just said a sharp ‘no’. And Evan at that time had been angry, really angry. Sad too, but at that point, mostly angry at everything. His dad, his mom, himself. So he’d decided if his mom wasn’t going to buy him some he’d just take it himself. When his mom wasn’t looking, he’d shoved a handful of Reeses mini cups into his pocket. At first, Evan had felt fine about it, satisfied with his little crime but it hadn’t taken long for the guilt to come, eating away at him on the drive home until he’d had to come clean to his mom. Even though she’d told him off, Evan remembers the tears that had gathered in her eyes and the hug she’d given him afterwards. He’d not stolen sweets again after that.

“Woah there Hansen, chill out,” Connor says, smirking, and Evan, not wanting to go into the detail behind his petty theft but also not wanting to be seen as old boring Evan Hansen, then says something very stupid.

“I stayed in the parkland after closing hours,” he says and quickly slams his mouth shut because, as vague as that statement is, it’s going to lead to questions that Evan really, really, doesn’t want to answer. Why had he said that? Maybe this was what his mom meant about the problems of peer pressure.

“That’s the forest, right?” Connor checks and Evan nods, wishing he could take the words back.

“I worked as a park ranger over summer. I was supposed to go home and…I stayed.”

“Was that where you broke your arm?” Connor asks and even though Evan knows it’s not such a big assumption to make, he gets worried that Connor knows and then he remembers. His letter. Otherwise…otherwise I’m just a kid stuck in a forest who no one can hear, who doesn’t matter. Connor couldn’t know what he really meant by that, could he?

“Y-yeah,” is all Evan offers and maybe Connor senses that Evan is holding back, closing off, because he doesn’t say anymore apart from ‘okay’.

Evan needs a bit of time to recover after that which he spends trying to identify all the different flowers around them from color. He can see some daisies, not as interesting because they’re mostly white, but there are also a couple of orange flowers which Evan thinks could be Butterfly Milkweed. There are a few more flowers scattered around them that Evan can’t really identify
without his book but just looking at them calms him down enough to eventually ask, “So, um. We’re keeping this whole thing a secret aren’t we? Well, us and Zoe.”

Connor begins biting on a loose nail. “You don’t want to tell anyone either?”

“Not particularly. I-I don’t really want my mom to find out, even though I don’t really like keeping secrets from her. I’m not too good at it but this one’s important and what-what I’m trying to say is, I don’t want anyone else to know, not yet, and I’ll try really hard to make sure it stays that way.”

Connor stops biting. “Good,” he says affirmatively. “So...our secret, yeah?”

Evan nods. “Yeah.”

And okay, so maybe they haven’t really discussed everything they wanted to, Evan’s not been able to broach the subject of what they are to each other but with the two of them sitting under a tree, getting to know each other a little more, Evan feels it.

Hope.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed it! Let me know what you think :) If you’re interested, I posted a cover of Good For You on my youtube channel which can be found here

(Also, I assumed American’s have pick and mix? If they don’t do they have an equivalent?)
A Little Perseverance

Chapter Summary

"I'm not dumb, you know. He’s your soulmate, isn’t he? Connor Murphy’s your soulmate!"

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It takes Connor 3 days to realise it’s become a Thing, him and Evan sitting outside by the trees together. He also realises that he’s not…unhappy about it. Normally, anyone who dared venture near there got freaked out just from seeing Connor ‘lurking’ there. Evan’s the first to actually sit with him. The first to not get scared away.

Even better is that Evan never really pressures him to talk. He doesn’t try to get Connor to ‘open up’ and in return, he doesn’t pry too much into Evan’s life. He knows there’s stuff the other boy is hiding from him (Connor has noticed his right eye twitches when he says something he doesn’t mean to) but hey, Connor’s guilty of that too so it’s not a big deal. Anyway, that sort of shit is reserved for when you get close and he and Evan aren’t close. They’re…acquaintances. Acquaintances who just happen to be soulmates.

That works.

(And so what if Connor hasn’t actually missed a day yet because he sort of maybe kinda enjoys being around another person. It doesn’t mean a thing.)

As he’s taking out his pasta (whole grain with pesto because apparently the whole family’s not being healthy enough so his mom’s feeding them all like they’re fucking rabbits), he spies Evan taking a bite of his sandwich and grimacing.

“Wanna swap?” He offers and, okay, he is sort of proud of the fact that Evan no longer jumps when he speaks.

“Um, are you sure? It’s tuna. I-I can eat it. It’s just, uh, I don’t like it all that much but it’s all we had left since my mom has been busy and hasn’t had time to go shopping…”

“Whatever dude,” Connor shrugs. “You like pesto?” Evan’s rambling, which Connor found pretty tedious the first couple of days, isn’t actually all that annoying now. It’s just how Evan operates. Also, hidden between the jumble of words that flies out of Evan’s mouth tends to be the truth and Connor can appreciate the honesty.

“Uh, yeah, yeah I do.”

“Then here.” He shoves his Tupperware pot in Evan’s direction and receives a cling film wrapped sandwich in return. Connor’s never been too picky about what he eats since at the end of the day, food is food, and as much as he hates all that rabbit shit, he can stomach it (apart from asparagus. That can fuck off.)
“Thanks Connor,” Evan says with a little smile and that’s also something that still weirds Connor out. No one smiles around Connor but these past few days, they’ve been becoming more and more common with Evan. Connor has to wonder if anxiety is the only thing wrong with the kid.

“It’s…whatever,” he mumbles. He deliberately focuses on the tuna sandwich (which is actually kind of a gross colour) until it’s all gone and there’s nothing more to distract him from Evan beside him. He actually seems to really enjoy his mom’s cooking, taking large fork fulls at a time. His eyes dart to the side towards Connor and Connor quickly averts his gaze.

Connor wouldn’t say he’s been trying, exactly, but he’s done a pretty good job at not pushing Evan away and it’s not turned out to be such a bad thing. Maybe high Connor had actually been onto something.

Maybe this could be okay.

Optimism’s not something Connor’s used to but he tries to take it in stride and not just freak out about it like he typically would. In fact, when Evan doesn’t instantly join him the next day, he decides to go looking for his soulmate. He knows Evan’s somehow friends with Kleinman, that he’s not obligated to sit with Connor, but Evan had specifically said see you tomorrow and that was the sort of thing Evan got worked up about – same with being late, which, he was to their spot.

Now, Connor’s not worried. To be honest, he’s only really known Evan for 5 days so maybe he didn’t care much about what he told Connor. Maybe he’d just forgotten. Which would be fine. Totally fine.

Connor just needs to check.

(And no it’s not because he’s fucking worried.)

A quick glance into the cafeteria (which Connor is never setting one foot in again after the disaster that was last semester) informs Connor that Evan’s not there. Neither’s Kleinman, though, which means that they must be hanging out together then. That’s cool. Connor will just go back outside. Alone.

His mood souring more than he’d like to admit, Connor slinks back to the trees. However, just as he’s about to turn the last corner he hears voices. He pauses when he recognises Kleinman’s voice.

“-ly dude. You really thought I wouldn’t notice? C’mon, first you have Connor freaking Murphy’s name on your arm. Then you stare at everything like it’s come to offer you salvation and after that you voluntarily go to speak to the all mighty Zoe Murphy and get on a bus with her! Ooh but that’s not all. If all that wasn’t enough you start hanging out with Connor like you’re friends all of a sudden and at first I thought, it’s definitely a pity thing but then it clicked. I’m not dumb, you know. He’s your soulmate, isn’t he? Connor Murphy’s your soulmate!”

“Jared! Be quiet! Please. It’s…it’s true okay but you can’t tell anyone! It’s a secret so please, please don’t tell your mom or my mom…”

“Oh my God. You know, even as I said it, I wasn’t a hundred percent sure but it really is true?” Kleinman bursts out laughing and Connor’s fists clench. He wants to punch Kleinman’s fucking face in. Again.

He should go. He should just go because it’s all been ruined now thanks to Jared fucking Kleinman but shit he must be a masochist because his feet remain planted to the ground. Some part of him
wants to hear what Evan’s got to say about him when he’s not there.

“It’s not funny,” Evan hisses. “Connor’s…Connor’s not so bad and you shouldn’t be so mean to him because you, you shouldn’t be like that to people!”

…Interesting.

“Jeez Hansen, what shit has he been telling you? Lemme guess, he’s been pretending to be all nice and friendly but face the facts Evan, he’s gonna screw you over. That’s just the kind of guy he is. I mean, who knows what ‘dastardly’ scheme he has up his sleeve.”

“I-no, he doesn’t have a plan Jared! We’re soulmates, what sort of ‘plan’ would he have?!.”

Kleinman snickers again but it’s not a pleasant sound. “So that’s it, huh? You find you’re soulmate and suddenly you’ve got tunnel vision? You forget us little people? C’mon Evan, you can’t be that blind. You can’t have forgotten what Connor’s like, the stories. You can’t seriously think this’ll work out, can you?”

“What are you trying to say Jared? T-that we can’t be family friends or whatever now? Or that I should just forget Connor and go back to sitting on the corner of whatever table you’ve found?”

“I wasn’t saying that but hey, if the shoe fits. I’m just doing you a favour dude. Who wants to be stuck with that psycho Murphy?”

The wall under Connor’s fist causes a sharp pain in his knuckles. He sees Evan and Kleinman look over but he’s gone before they can do anything about it. Connor can’t listen to this anymore. He can’t listen to Evan choose that piece of shit over him. He just can’t. Even if Evan doesn’t choose Kleinman then, he will eventually.

God fucking dammit.

“W-wait! Connor!” He can hear footsteps following behind him, Evan’s already worn out voice calling out after him but Connor keeps running, almost knocking over a teacher in his path and though the old dick yells at the both of them, they ignore him (which, huh, what a time for Evan to grow some balls.)

Connor makes it outside but the brief moment of hesitation he spends deciding which direction to go gives Evan the chance to catch up to him and he latches onto Connor before he can escape again. This time, it’s Connor’s turn to flinch and Evan’s hand retracts quickly. His face is bright red, a few droplets of sweat running down his face. Not wanting to give Evan a heart attack or anything by continuing to run, Connor decides to remain where he is and give Evan the chance to speak whatever he has to say.

“I-I don’t know how much you heard but Jared…well, Jared’s not always the nicest but I bet I-I’m sure if he really got to know you then he’d stop saying all that bad stuff because I don’t believe it, you know. You’re not a psycho and if…if I had to choose between you both then right now I choose you.”

Fuck that was too big a declaration but…Connor kind of likes it, as pathetic as it is. He still feels jittery, still has to urge to do something be it escape from all these fucking emotions or head back to give Kleinman what he deserves but Connor contents himself with bouncing on one leg, hands shoved deep into his pockets, clenching and unclenching rapidly.

“Why are you friend with him anyway?” Connor asks.
Evan shrugs. His face is gradually going back to normal. “He’s…a family friend. His mom pays for his car insurance if he’s nice to me so uh, he’s not a proper friend I guess but he’s all I’ve got…or at least had…um.”

Oh shit. He’s looking at Connor with those eyes, the kind of eyes Connor bets he had when he was writing that damn letter. And Connor knows what he should say but whether the words will actually find their way out is another matter. He swallows. Thinks about what to say, wills it to come out and…

“Well, you’ve got me and I know I’ve got problems but…I’m not gonna act like asswipe Kleinman.” I might be worse, might be better, who fucking knows.

“I’m…I’m glad,” Evan says softly and damn, now Connor can feel his own cheeks heating up and he can’t blame it on the run. This is why he doesn’t have friends, doesn’t do people. All this sappy shit makes Connor feel uncomfortable, like he’s gone to Taco Bell.

“So…what now?” Connor questions, kicking at a small stone.

“Wanna go sit by the trees?”

Connor nods and they go to their usual place, just chilling as they eat. Connor doesn’t feel that much like talking after everything that went down and they would have spent the remainder of their break in silence if not for Evan speaking up at the very end.

“So, I was wondering, and feel free to say no because you definitely don’t have to do this, but I was just wondering, just thinking, more of a passing thought really but if you wanted to, and only if you wanted to, I thought maybe you could-could come over to my house after school? My mom’s working late so you wouldn’t even have to see her and it’s a Friday so we don’t have to do homework and…I think I have food?”

Connor blinks, slowly piecing together the sentence Evan had tried to get out. “…You want me to come over to your house?”

“Like I said, you really don’t have to. In fact, it was stupid to even bring it up. Why did I even bother? Please just ignore I said anything.”

“No uh, it’s…it’s cool.”

Why is he agreeing to this? Connor can’t say. Maybe it’s because Evan’s so clearly anxious, as if he’s about to shove his head into the dirt like an ostrich to avoid Connor’s judgment. Maybe it’s because after what he said to Kleinman, how he defended Connor, Evan doesn’t really deserve Connor being an ass to him.

Yeah, that’s it. He’s just repaying a favour.

Nothing more.

“Oh! Great! So, um, I’ll meet you by the bus stop?”

“Oh yeah. Sounds good.”

Evan smiles at Connor just as the bell rings and against his own wishes, Connor feels his own lips pull up to match.
“It’s not much, I know, especially compared to your house but uh, we can’t really afford more what with my mom working. It’s enough though…I guess…”

“It’s nice,” Connor says, having never been particularly materialistic. Sure, Evan’s house looks a bit worn down, a little small, but the mismatch of furniture which is so different to the immaculately decorated rooms back home makes it feel more…cosy. “So, it’s just you and you’re mom?”

“Um. Yeah. My dad…he left when I was 7.”

“Oh, were they not…” Connor trails off because really, it’s not his fucking place to ask and Evan doesn’t have to tell him shit…except, off he goes.

“Well, it’s uh, it’s a funny story. Or, well, actually it’s not but…anyway. My mom and dad met when they were in college. They were in a bar and both pretty tipsy, or at least, my mom was. According to her, they’d both been at the counter when my dad’s arm brushed against hers. That was when she got her colours. She’d been so happy,” Evan smiles a bittersweet smile. “She’d grabbed my dad’s arm in excitement but instead of him looking just as happy he’d looked…confused. That was, uh, that was when they realised that even though my mom had got her colours, my dad hadn’t got his.”

“Shit,” Connor breathes. There have only been a few other documented cases of the appropriately named ‘One-Sight’. It’s something that’s only really been prevalent in the last decade or so with the increase in media. There were likely more instances of it occurring than documented but it wasn’t the sort of thing people wanted broadcasted. Typically, it was seen as embarrassing. After all, what did it mean that the person supposedly made for you wasn’t made for you back?

Some people said it was for people in a polyamorous relationship but that theory had been debunked by those who were actually in that sort of relationship. According to them, they got half or less of their colours from each person involved. Of course, that didn’t mean it was that way for everyone but to Connor, it seemed like they were grasping at straws.

Put simply, there was no logical explanation for it. It was just another way life could suck for people.

“At first, my dad just figured there was something wrong with his eyes,” Evan continues. “No one really knew what ‘One-Sight’ was back then, you know? The doctor couldn’t find anything though so…he just ignored it. My mom and him dated, got married and then-then they had me and it was great. Almost perfect even.” Connor knows what’s about to come and frowns; subconsciously moving so that his knee knocks against Evan’s where they’re sat on the slightly stained threadbare couch. “And then, when I was 7, my dad went on a business trip. He met a waitress there and he must have, must have touched her hand or something because that’s when it happened. My dad got his colours and despite promising my mom it didn’t mean anything…within a week he was gone. He moved in with her and I think I’ve got a couple of step-sibling. I…I haven’t really spoken much to my dad since so I don’t really know anything about them.”

“Man, that’s fucked up,” Connor says because what else can he say? Sorry? It’s not Connor’s fault the universe apparently messed with his mom too.

“We’re okay now though!” Evan quickly reassures him, as if Connor is the one who needs it. “I mean, mom’s just happy she got her colours and it…it isn’t necessarily the be all and end all, soulmates. Not that I, uh, mean that in a bad way like I hate the fact I’ve got a soulmate, or that it’s you, I just…,” Evan runs a hand anxiously over his mouth. “I’m gonna shut up now. In fact, I
“You…you don’t have to act so nervous around me, you know,” Connor says a bit awkwardly, not liking how Evan looks like he’s mentally hitting himself. “I get that things haven’t been…great so far but I’m not—I’m not gonna bite your head off.” Connor knows he’s got anger issues, he knows, he just…sometimes doesn’t know how to deal with it. But he is gonna try around Evan, whatever good that’ll do. “And don’t worry, I won’t tell anyone. Who would I tell?” He adds wryly. “Besides, I know how bullshit this whole soulmate stuff can be. Take my parents. They’re not soulmates, you know.”

Evan stops fiddling with his shirt and hesitantly looks up at Connor. “They’re not?”

“Nah, it was just what was expected of them, you know? They both came from wealthy families who expected them to marry young, soulmate or not. Their careers were what were important, at least at first, and then it was create that perfect nuclear family.” He almost tacks on ‘my arrival ruined that’ but he stops himself. This sort of conversation doesn’t need Connor’s self-deprecating remarks, especially since Evan would probably stumble his way through trying to console Connor. “They always say that soulmates don’t make happiness or success but I’m pretty sure they’re just bullshitting themselves so they can sleep easier at night. I bet if one of them found their soulmate they’d be off just like your dad…shit I shouldn’t have said that. Sorry. But…it’s that sort of thinking, that sort of wishing that society feeds which is fucked up.”

Evan nods. “I guess it is kind of nice knowing that you have someone but not so nice that you don’t get to choose yourself and if you do you get penalised for it, you don’t get to experience the world in the same way.”

“Yeah,” Connor sighs. Even though he’d sort of known it already, it’s a relief to know that Evan shares his views on the whole soulmate situation, on societies idea that you can only be happy with your soulmate, that you can’t lead your own path because of some stupid eye biology. “So…just so we’re on the same page, we’re not…going to be together? Like, you know, romantically.” Connor internally cringes at the word. “Because I’m not, I’m not ready for that and if it ever happens, it’s gotta be organic and shit, you know? Not because of this,” he waves his hands around, “cosmic fuckery. Although I’m…I’m happy to try and be friends but just know I’m not like, good at it, or anything.” God, if Connor did have a therapist they’d probably be jumping for fucking joy with all this ‘communicating’.

“Friends is fine,” Evan rushes to say. “I’m not too good at it either, if you couldn’t tell.”

“Cool,” Connor says firmly. “Friends then.” And well, isn’t this reminiscent of the computer lab incident which feels so long ago, when it had barely even been a week. Although, this time, there’s no letter for Connor to blow up about, no way for him to purposely misconstrue the situation. Instead, Connor holds out his hand which Evan, after a brief moment of staring at it, takes. Their eyes catch for a moment and Connor looks away, taking back his hand as wills his irregularly beating hear to sort itself out.

And then, after all that serious shit, there’s silence.

“…I might have lied about having food.” Evan admits. “Do you want to order take-away?”

Connor shrugs, relieved at the change of topic. “Whatever. I don’t mind.”

“I-I can order it but, um, would you mind getting it?”
He’s mumbling the question, turning his face away in embarrassment and it’s probably not healthy or conductive to Evan’s ‘progress’ but Connor finds himself nodding, despite the fact he too hates that sort of thing.

“Sure.”

Unthinkingly, Connor claps Evan on the shoulder and well, if he lets his hand linger until Evan turns to face him, his lips upturned into a tiny, grateful smile, that’s nobody’s business.

Chapter End Notes

I promise I don’t hate Jared! He will have his time to shine. He’s just like everyone else, pretty crap at expressing his emotions.

I’m not too sure about this chapter, it was pretty hard to write for some reason :/ I’d love to know what you guys thought, it really helps me write!

See you next Sunday :)
Keep Getting Burned

Chapter Summary

Dear Evan Hansen,

It’s funny how much things can change in a week.

Chapter Notes

The tags have been updated for this chapter.

ALSO, there will be no update for 2 weeks because I am going on holiday on Friday with no internet access. To unintentionally make up for that, this chapter is slightly longer than the others :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Evan gathers the courage to order pizza, he normally gets the smallest amount possible (so he doesn’t have to worry about dropping it when the pizza guy hands it to him) that will have the least amount of change (self-explanatory, really.) Therefore, the spread of food in front of him is the largest Evan’s seen. Connor had demanded he pitch in for the pizza and therefore not only have they got two large pizzas, but they’ve also got a 1.25 litre bottle of coke, a side of garlic bread and ice cream. He compromised by having Connor pass him the items where the delivery man couldn’t see him. The best thing about it all is that Connor hadn’t even raised an eyebrow. He hadn’t made Evan feel weird or useless. Not like his mom sometimes did.

They’ve just finished watching an old episode of Brooklyn 99, the both of them dumping their spoons into the now empty ice cream tub, when Connor’s phone vibrates. Grimacing, he digs it out of his pocket.

“My mom wants me to come home,” he mutters.

“Oh. I guess it is kind of late.” Evan doesn’t know where the times gone. All they’d been doing really was eat pizza and watch TV but Evan can’t remember the last time he’d enjoyed a Friday night so much. His mom would be so…

He hears the door open.

“Evan honey, I’m—Oh, I didn’t realise you were having someone over! You must be Connor.”

Connor looks like a deer in headlights and Evan’s not fairing any better.

“Uh yeah. That’s me. I, um, I was just leaving…”

Heidi frowns and starts shrugging back on her half off jacket. “Walking? It’s dark out now. You shouldn’t be going out alone. Let me drive you.”
Connor’s hands squeeze into the sofa. “I’ll be fine. But, er, thanks.”

Evan bites his lip because he knows the expression on his mom’s face. It’s the one she gets when she has a day off and is determined to make the most of it with Evan. The face she pulls when she wants to have a ‘serious talk’.

Right now, it’s an expression that says she is not letting Evan’s first friend in years leave without giving him the Spanish inquisition.

Evan would really like the floor to swallow him up right about now.

“How could I ever meet your mother knowing I sent her son out alone at night? Please Connor, it would put my mind at ease. And hey, Evan can come too!”

The world doesn’t grant Evan’s wishes and so that’s how he finds himself in the car with his mom and Connor, the two boys squished together in the back with Heidi’s textbooks.

“So did you boys have fun tonight? It sure looked like you’d had a good dinner!”

“It was good,” Connor says quietly, before Evan can die of embarrassment. “You have a nice house Mrs Hansen.”

“Aw thank you Connor! And please, call me Heidi sweetie. Which way should I turn now?”

“Oh, right here.”

They head into the nicer district and his mom says, “So, Murphy huh? Didn’t your dad used to own part of the Smith and Co. Law Firm?”

Evan winces at the shortly delivered, “Yeah.”

“You can probably tell from all those books but I’m doing some law classes in the evenings. It’s so interesting, don’t you think?” At Connor’s non-committal noise, his mom wisely changes the topic.

“So how’re you finding school? Evan barely tells me anything…”

In between directions, his mom tries to get more stuff out of Connor but has about as much success as she does with Evan. Evan tries to pitch in himself but he’s scared of saying something stupid. After having Jared figure it out, he’s worried that his mom will too. Thankfully, the drives not too long and they reach the impressive Murphy household relatively painlessly.

“Thanks for the ride Mrs H-Heidi.”

His mom’s mock glare softens into a warm smile. “You’re welcome sweetie. Feel free to come over any time. It’s so nice to see Evan getting out there and making friends.”

“Mom,” Evan whines, his face hot.

“Oh it’s a good thing sweetie! Now Connor, you get yourself inside, it’s cold out.”

Evan chances a look at Connor who, surprisingly, has a small, amused smile on his face. “See ya on Monday Evan.”

Able to muster up a smile of his own, Evan says bye himself and Connor goes in his house.

Evan pretends not to notice the moisture glistening in the corners of his mom’s eyes
Later that night, as Evan’s preparing to go to bed, he receives a text.

My mom wants to meet yours now. Wth

Evan smiles, warmth thrumming through him at the fact Connor texted him. Apart from his mom, he doesn’t get texts. There’s never been anyone else who’s really wanted to talk to him.

She liked you. I think she’d love to meet your mom.

Connor had been all his mom would talk about on the drive back. If this was how she acted when Connor was his friend, he’d hate to think about what she’d be like if she knew he was his soulmate.

NOT happening

...

No offence. My mom would be the worst. So embarrassing

Evan snorts. Were he and Connor in the same car earlier?

Don’t worry; my mom doesn’t have much free time.

Well fuck, now I feel bad saying good.

Evan laughs out loud, quickly stifling it when he hears movement on the stairs. Even in text, Connor is just so…Connor.

It’s okay. I know what you mean. Goodnight.

Evan keeps his phone on him long enough to wait for a reply and he’s glad he does because a minute or so later he gets the reply, You go to bed early and then Night.

Soulmates, Evan decides at that moment, really aren’t so bad after all.

Dear Evan Hansen,

It’s funny how much things can change in a week.

Evan’s never been excited to write a Dear Evan Hansen but this one he writes before school even starts. He’s just never been so happy before. He and Connor had texted more over the weekend, just stuff like ‘This essay sucks’ and ‘I actually think Brilliant Blue is my favourite colour’ but it’s something that Evan’s never had before and he feels like he’s hit a milestone, like he’s no longer dragging his heels in the marathon that is life. Just like with his letters, texting gives Evan the chance to think, prevents him from blurtling out the first thing that comes into his head. Not only does it help his anxiety but it makes him feel normal for once, that he’s just a normal teenage kid.

And now, not only was Evan excited to write his letter (now freshly printed and put into his binder) but he’s actually looking forward to school. He’s not done that since fourth grade and he was bringing in a caterpillar cake that he’d made to school. Even his mom comments on his good mood, dropping a big kiss on his head and giving him a thumbs up before he gets on the bus.

He should have known it was too good to last.

Evan knows he can be paranoid but even so he’s certain that everyone’s staring at him. Whispers
follow him around like he’s surrounded by ghosts and there are looks. Evan’s always been invisible, a fly on the wall, but now it’s like he’s centre stage. Finally noticed.

He didn’t want it to be like this.

Evan’s just got his books out of his locker, his shaking hands causing him to almost drop his books twice, when a burly shoulder brushes against his. It’s only the solid support of the cool metal that stops him from getting slammed to the ground.

“Heh, oops,” a guy sneers. Evan twists around and finds himself face to face with a familiar blue jacket. It’s a jock. Evan’s never been picked on by a jock before. He’s never even been on their radar.

A sick feeling grows in his stomach.

“Guess I shouldn’t be surprised you like to take it up the ass. What is it they say? You should watch out for the quiet ones? Have you been perving on us, huh?”

The jock’s friends laugh and Evan feels sweat bead down the back of his neck, feels his heart beat painfully against his chest. No one’s even trying to be subtle anymore, pointing and talking loudly. God, is this how Connor feels? Because it’s horrible. It’s horrible and awful and scary and oh God Evan’s struggling to breathe.

“Can he even talk?” A kid laughs and the same jock that shoved him before pokes his arm.

“I bet he’s not saying anything cos it’s true, isn’t it? Figures he’d be the soulmate of that freakshow.”

All Evan can do is let out a choked gasp before he’s running, his actions so sudden that no one even thinks to try and stop him as he squeezes through the small circle that surrounded him. He’s not had a panic attack in school for a long while. Normally, he’s able to recognise the symptoms before they get too bad, excusing himself so he can find somewhere quiet to ride it out. This, this is a whole other level, the warning far too brief for him to have any control over the situation. He goes for the first place he can hide. Typically, Evan would go outside, the boys bathroom if he was truly desperate. Now? Now Evan’s crouched in the janitor’s closet, head squeezed between his knees.

(Evan’s hidden in there one other time, during which he’d been found by the janitor himself. He’s nearly had another attack then and there but the old man just smiled warmly and offered Evan a mint.)

He feels like he can still hear the laughter, the jeers, as he tries to suck in air. Logically, he knows that he’s not having a heart attack or anything but it sure feels like he is with the way his heart is threatening to burst out of his chest and black dots dance in front of his vision. He just, just has to focus on controlling his breathing because that’s the most important thing otherwise he’ll suffocate and pass out and-


He repeats the words like a mantra as he slowly starts regaining control. Although, the moment his mind wanders, the implications of it all hit him. Everyone knows. Everyone knows he has a soulmate. But how, how can they…Jared. It had to have been Jared. Evan’s pretty sure that apart from Connor, no one else had overheard them which means, it means that it’s all Evan’s fault because if he hadn’t been so stupid, so obvious then Jared never would have figured it out. He should have been better at keeping the secret, like he promised he would, because now he’s just gone and screwed it all up. Connor was going to hate him. All the progress they’d made was going to be
shattered and it’s all Evan’s fault.


Evan’s bare hand grips his shirt tightly, grazing the skin above his heart. He feels like a vibration switch has been pressed because he can’t stop shaking. Any control he’d gained is lost once more as he squeezes his eyes shut, trying to filter out the thoughts that keep swirling around his brain. He can’t faint in the janitor’s closet, he can’t because what if they don’t find him, or, what if they do and then they have to call his mom and then she has to leave work and they fire her and-oh no, he’s getting dizzy. The fear is overwhelming Evan like he’s sinking deeper and deeper into a black tar sea, the darkness smothering him.

“Oh fuck. Shit. Are you okay? Wait, that’s a fucking stupid question. Are you having a panic attack?”

…Connor? Was that Connor’s voice? Evan lifts up his head and the dim light from the lightbulb hanging above allows him to see it is definitely Connor who’s lowering himself to crouch beside Evan. Unintentionally, Evan’s stomach clenches, his body automatically preparing for the worst.

“Shit. Um, breath Hansen. Evan. You’re okay…okay?”

He’s…trying to help Evan? He should be yelling at him. Of all the situations they’ve been in where Connor’s yelled at him, he thinks this one would be the most justified.

“I don’t know what the hell I’m supposed to do, fuck.” Evan’s pretty sure Connor’s talking mostly to himself at this point, though his soulmate does reach out a hand. Evan though, not expecting it, flinches and it immediately flies back. Evan wants to say sorry, that he didn’t mean it like that, but words are hard to come by right now. He’s not even sure what he needs right now so he thinks to what his therapist suggested, to what his mom’s done in the past. Usually, she hugs him, combatting the darkness with her familiar warmth, the scent of her perfume, her soothing voice telling him to count to 10. He and Connor aren’t at that point yet so he goes for the simplest thing he can think of.

“Just…just talk,” Evan wheezes.

“Talk? Shit, about what? I…fuck. Okay. You know Mrs Milton, she – wait, shit no. Okay, when I was like, 7, I loved Spiderman. Like, hardcore. I was obsessed. I had action figures, comics, videos, even a costume which I’d dress up in all the time. And…and I’d pretend to have his powers too. I nearly broke my neck once jumping off the bed. And then Zoe, Zoe started dressing up as Black Widow, cos spiders, you know, and she even asked for one as a pet. I dunno how she managed it but for her 6th birthday she got a tarantula called Tilly and even though she begged for one for ages she got bored of it quickly. It turns out they can’t do shit. At least, she couldn’t get her to do tricks or whatever. First she tried to give it to me but unless it could give me powers I didn’t give a fuck. So, one night, she just let it loose. Didn’t even tell our parents she’d got lost.”

Slowly, Evan can feel his heart-rate return to normal, his muscles relaxing back into the shelves behind him. Connor’s barely even looking at him now, engrossed in the story he’s telling, his eyes alive and shining.

“That night, that night I heard a scream. The loudest, most high pitched scream I’d ever heard. But, it wasn’t my mom. Heh, it was my dad. Turns out Tilly had managed to get into their bed. She’d hidden behind my dad’s pillow and went for his face just as he was about to go to sleep. God, it was hilarious. I could hear a load of crashing as my dad screamed at my mom to get it off him. The best part is, they totally bought it when Zoe said Tilly just escaped. And of course, Tilly had to go after that. My mom said it was because that Zoe just wasn’t old enough for a pet of her own yet but we
all knew that was a bullshit excuse. My dad was just a massive fucking wimp.”

Connor’s laughing a little as he finishes and Evan finds he’s able to join in. Though he feels like he’s run a marathon the most important thing is that he can breathe again. So long as he focuses on Connor, he can keep the lingering panic at bay.

“Y-you know. I used to dress up as Wolverine at Halloween. I had all the comics for him too.”

“Wolverine huh? I bet Spider-Man could kick his ass.”

There’s a lilt to Connor’s lips and Evan grins.

“No way, Wolverine would rip Spider-Man’s webs to shreds.”

“He’s got more than his webs, Wolverine would be fucked before he even threw one.” Connor suddenly grows more serious. “…You feeling better now?”

Evan nods, feeling anxiety start to creep back in, but thankfully not so bad that he’s worried about a relapse.

“Yeah. Thanks I…thanks.” He considers what to say next. “I…didn’t expect you to come find me. I thought you’d be, I thought you’d be angry at me.”

Connor tenses and takes a deep breath before replying. “I’m not angry at you. I’m angry at everyone else. At your ‘friend’.”

The thought of Jared leaves a bad taste in Evan’s mouth and so he doesn’t comment on it. Instead he asks, “How’d you know I was here?”

“…I heard other people talking about it. Looks like we’re famous Hansen.” His smile is bitter and Evan’s gut twists at the expression.

“I’m really sorry I-”

The bell ringing cuts Evan off and he realises that not only has he missed homeroom but if he doesn’t get going he’ll also miss his maths test. As much as he wants to hide away from everyone with Connor in the closest, he’d only send himself back where he started again when he inevitably started worrying about missing class.

“I have to go. I’ve got a test. Thanks again Connor. I-you really…really helped.”

It’s not enough but he can’t waste time figuring out the right words. Despite knowing maths class will be hell, wondering whether his teacher will have heard, whether anyone will say anything out loud, Evan quickly stands up. He ignores the brief dizzy spell.

“I’ll-I’ll see you later?”

Distracted as he is, Evan completely misses the troubled look on Connor’s face.

It only hits Evan that Connor never replied when he’s sat at their usual spot at lunch alone. He’s hidden further in the gaggle of trees than usual because, while no one else has tried to physically hurt him, he’s heard what they’ve all been saying. The disbelief, the derogatory comments. Considering how no one could choose their soulmate, you’d think homophobia wouldn’t be so common but this was just proof how it still hung around. If there was something that humans could hate each other for then, more often than not, they would.
Even now, alone and secure as he is in the small alcove, it still feels like his still is crawling, as if he has some sixth sense that reminds him that people will continue to speak about him even if he’s not there. Evan ends up taking out his phone for a distraction. Even if Connor’s not here with him…just talking to him would help.

Assuming he replies.

His fingers twitches ever so slightly, Evan eventually manages to type out, **Are you okay?**

The response takes longer than normal, so much so that he gives up hope, but just as he’s listening out for the bell to start ringing, his phone vibrates.

**I’m fine. Sorry**

Evan wants to ask more, wants to know what exactly Connor’s sorry about, whether it’s because he’s missing lunch or whether, whether it’s because despite what happened earlier he can’t face him anymore, can’t deal with what them just hanging out has brought, but call Evan a coward, he’s not exactly sure he wants to risk finding out.

The logical side of Evan knows that’s probably not the case, not when Connor had told him he wasn’t angry with him and had helped him during one of his worse panic attacks but...his logical side often gets overruled by his anxiety and this is no exception. His mind finds ways to flaw seemingly good memories, finds ways to tell Evan that he’s wrong and pathetic and how could he think Connor would still want to be friends with him after all this?

The bell goes and the **Are we alright?** Evan has typed out on his phone sits unsent.

After spending the night distracting himself with his old Wolverine comics, the next morning is fortunately less eventful than the last. Although he does find Zoe waiting for him by his locker, looking like she’s taking something stuck on it down. Evan pretends not to have noticed when he clears his throat behind her.

“Oh, hey Evan!” She hides the scrunched up piece of paper behind her back. “I’m not sure if Connor texted you or anything but I wanted to let you know that he’s not gonna be in school today. He’s still sick.”

“Still sick? Was that why he wasn’t in school yesterday afternoon?”

Zoe’s shoulders slump. “So he didn’t tell you. Well-never mind. Apparently he came back during first period. I’m not actually sure if there’s anything wrong with him, he hid in his room all evening, but…I get it. Considering everything that’s happened. It’s good too, I think. Normally when he’s like this he just...he goes off the grid. So thanks Evan. I don’t know what magic you’ve got but whatever it is you’re doing, it’s working.”

“Oh, uh, I-I’m not doing anything.” At least, he thinks he isn’t?

Zoe smiles. “Well, you’re doing more than you think and if you want, feel free to hang out at my table at lunch. We’d be happy to have you.”

While Evan appreciates the offer he doesn’t know Zoe’s friends, doesn’t know if they’ll just put up with him because Zoe said to be nice, and so he thanks Zoe and chooses to eat alone again.

Not that he remains alone for very long.
He’s just sent off a text to Connor saying he hopes he feels better when a shadow looms over him, making him jump. He’s already preparing to flee when he realises it’s not a jock come to beat him up, but Jared.

To be fair, Evan’s not too happy to see him either but he settles with ignoring the other boy, playing on his phone as he hopes for a reply.

The shadow doesn’t move.

“…So, is Connor not around?”

Evan stabs a little to viciously at a block and the home page appears on his screen. He huffs.

“Why do you care?”

Jared doesn’t look surprised at the hostility, he just looks resigned. Good. If Jared had just stayed quiet, if he’d just been nice then everything would still be fine. Connor would be here with him and they’d still have what had become their new normal. Not…not this.

“Look, I didn’t mean for it to get spread around the school,” Jared defends himself. “I was just—it came out accidently.”

“Is that supposed to make me feel better?” Evan’s fist is clenched, his anger at Jared, at the whole situation, beginning to bubble outwards, a boiling pot desperate to realise some steam. “Because—because it doesn’t Jared. You don’t even have to be ‘family friends’ to know that what you did was really—it was really shitty. You knew we didn’t want it out and f-for good reason! Because kids are mean Jared, they’re mean just like you are! And—and I had a panic attack. Is that what you wanted? I know you’ve never really wanted to be my friend but that doesn’t give you the right to do what you did so just…just leave me alone. Please.”

Wordlessly, Jared leaves. Evan wants to feel victorious, he wants to feel proud for standing up for himself but he doesn’t, he can’t. He just feels tired.

A reply never comes and with his phone sitting as heavy in his pocket as his heart does in his chest, Evan heads back to class, ignoring the whisper of a Junior saying to her friend ‘Imagine getting him for a soulmate.’

Chapter End Notes

The Spider-Man and Wolverine stuff comes from the songs not on the soundtrack. If you haven’t yet, I recommend listening to ‘Bedroom down the hall’ (which, incidentally, I did a cover of on my youtube channel) and ‘A little bit of light’.

Thank you so much to those of you who offer your support for this fic. I’d love to know what more of you think :)}
What Else Can I Do?

Chapter Summary

Look where caring has got him. Them.

Chapter Notes

Warning for suicidal thoughts.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Connor knows he wasn’t the one who told the school about him and Evan being soulmates but that still doesn’t stop the feelings of guilt, of blame, when he looks down at Evan struggling to breathe. Connor’s used to feeling helpless to his mind but he’s not used to feeling helpless when it comes to other people. In fact, that’s one of the few things he’s been able to control. By not caring, he was never vulnerable, he never had to watch out for anyone but himself.

And now look where caring has got him. Them.

When Evan runs away to do his test or whatever, Connor wants to do the same. So, he does. He fucking does because that’s all he’s good for, it’s all he knows what to do. Except this time, this time Connor doesn’t want to go to the river. He doesn’t want to deal with the school calling his parents, the texts, the anger that would just be waiting for him back home.

The truth is, Connor’s tired. He’s tired of the kids at school, tired of their bullshit and tired of the fact he can’t catch a fucking break. He’ll just pretend to be sick which, at this point, won’t be too difficult. He does feel sick.

When Connor gets home, he’s not surprised to find his mom’s car there. Through the window, he can see her working out to one of her million DVDs though she comes running when he opens the door. Her face is an interesting mixture of concern, exasperation, confusion and frustration. Eventually it settles on concern, meaning Connor must really look as shitty as he feels.

“Hey mom.”

“What are you doing home Connor?” Connor dumps his bag before responding. He wants nothing more than to just barge past her so he can get to his room but since the whole point of this is to not fight, he forces himself to stay still.

“I don’t feel good,” he mumbles, not needing to fake the weakness of his voice.

His mom’s forehead crinkles and he can physically see her regress back into the mom who’d put band aids on his knee when he’d fallen off his bike, who’d held his hand when he was given shots. “What’s wrong sweetie?” Connor fights back a flinch when she brushes his hair aside so she can rest the back of her hand against his forehead.
“My stomach,” Connor says first because it’s churning like crazy, spasms rippling through it like it wants to eat him from the inside out, “and my head,” which is swiftly growing into a dark cloud of intrusive thoughts and memories of that morning: the looks, the hisses, hearing look who he got stuck with, the freak.

“You don’t feel like you have a temperature,” his mom says, frowning. “But you do look a bit peaky. Why don’t you go lie down sweetie and we’ll check it with the thermometer to be safe. I’ll bring you up a drink.”

It all feels like it’s going way too smoothly but Connor’s not about to start questioning his fortune. He nods but before reaching the stairs he adds, “Not one of your gross healthy smoothies.”

His mom laughs. It’s an unfamiliar, high pitched sound.

“I wouldn’t dream of it Connor, I know just how you feel about those.” The corners of her lips then downturn slightly. During their many arguments, Connor likes to bring up how his mom tries to fill her life with purpose and joy with her fads, including those stupid smoothies.

With that lovely reminder, Connor turns away from his mom and climbs the stairs.

Though he doesn’t undress completely, Connor trades his jeans for some comfier pj pants and slides into bed. Despite the fact a smoke would help take his mind off things, or at the very least make it easier to deal with, Connor finds he can’t even be bothered to do that. It’s not even like his mom would notice, especially if he did it out the window, but somehow, the energy of just getting out of bed again seems monumental. He just…he just wishes everything would just stop. That he didn’t have to deal with any of this because if he thinks too hard then…he doesn’t know what he’ll do. All he knows is the moment he thinks that maybe he’s got a good thing going, it gets screwed up spectacularly. He doesn’t know why he’s surprised.

They’d barely even begun this…this friendship and it was already ruined. Already the kids knew. Already Evan was going to suffer, not just by Connor’s hand but everyone else’s too. Because Connor knew it wasn’t all just focused on him. No, along with the sympathy for Evan, the disbelief that he’d get Connor for a soulmate, there were people like that dickbag jock, the kids out for good gossip and rumors, not caring who they hurt along the way. Connor knew he wasn’t a saint but even he had more decency than some of those asses.

This wouldn’t have happened if Connor had just done what he should have and stayed away. He knew it would have been better if he did, he knew it, but Evan had been so damn persistent, so nice that Connor had just let it happen. He’d taken a chance and was now paying the price, biting the proverbial bullet so hard that shards were shredding him from the inside. Evan was going to regret trying so much, wasn’t going to want to associate with him anymore because now he knew what it really was like, being the soulmate of someone like him. Connor might be able to help with those panic attacks (which was a fucking fluke or miracle in itself) but that meant nothing if Connor was the reason they were happening. No, Evan would realise his mistake.

“Here’s your drink honey. It’s just orange juice. I also brought you some crackers.”

Connor removes himself from his burrow and takes the offerings.

“Thanks.”

Suddenly, Connor wishes things were back when it used to be, when he was little and caught a stomach bug. His mom would bring him juice and toast and then lie with him, cradling him in her arms. She’d stroke his hair and tell him it would be alright. And Connor believed her.
But, Connor reminds himself as his mom busies herself taking his temperature properly, that’s back when things felt more real, not fake like the color of his mom’s skin, the nails on her fingers. When she saw him for who he was, not who she wished he would be.

“It’s not high but I think to be safe you should stay home.” She presses her hand against his forehead again, more out of habit than anything, and if Connor closes his eyes he can pretend that he’s 5 again, that he still has a functioning relationship with his family. That there’s more than the superficial care.

“You call me if you need anything else, okay Connor? I’ll call the school and let them know you’re sick.” Connor feels like she’s waiting for something, but Connor doesn’t know what that something is so he just nods and returns to his den of blankets. At the very least, he can take refuge in sleep.

Connor’s thought about killing himself. He’s thought about how he might do it and what would come afterwards. He knows his family would be upset but whether they’d be upset because Connor died or because someone with the last name Murphy did, he can’t be too sure. He knows Zoe would be better off for it. A lot of their parents attention is devoted to him and his ‘behaviour’ so if he was out of the picture, it’d go right back to her. He didn’t have friends, so that wouldn’t be an issue either.

On that day, the first day of school when everything had changed, Connor had been thinking about it because, really, what did he have to live for? Days being forced to go to the same black and white hell hole they called school so what, he could just get an education for an even more mind-numbing office job later on? That wasn’t a life he wanted but it didn’t matter what he wanted because nothing he did would change it. If he was lucky, he’d hit 20 before going to prison. Connor wasn’t smart. He wasn’t ambitious. He was just floating aimlessly along in a grey river and it wasn’t enough.

And then Evan came along and suddenly, he had color, he had change, he had someone there who wanted to get to know him. For a while, that had almost felt like enough.

Connor knows that when you die your soulmate loses their color and even before that thought had cropped up, Connor had felt…better. At least, in the sense he’d had distractions, his thoughts weren’t stuck in that endless loop of ‘who cares’ and ‘never good enough’. Those fleeting intrusive thoughts had been just that, fleeting, but now his distraction was gone. The thoughts were back with a vengeance, reminding Connor that if he’d just done it that day, if he’d disappeared, then none of this would have happened. Sure, Evan would never have got his colors but he would have been okay. It would have been a small price to pay for never getting close to Connor Murphy.

The question is though; could he leave Evan as not only the soulmate of psycho Connor Murphy, but the soulmate of the guy who killed himself? He’s not so sure.

A knock on his door breaks Connor out of his thoughts and then it’s Zoe calling his name. Of course it is. She would have heard all about it.

Able to come up with a multitude of things he’d rather do than face his sister’s frustration once again (or worse, her pity), Connor pulls his pillow over his head to drown her out and escapes back to sleep once again.

Connor wakes up to a text from Evan, which honestly, is unexpected. He prepares himself for the worst, only to find he’s asking if Connor’s okay.

Which, well, no, he’s not but maybe, maybe Evan’s not so done with him yet.
But he should be, Connor tells himself, when he feels that fucking hope again. Just because Evan’s stupidity is lingering, doesn’t mean that Connor has to make the same mistakes himself.

Although, as he doesn’t want Evan to worry (isn’t that a novel concept?), Connor gives him a brief reply.

(He hopes Evan doesn’t text back and when that wish comes true, Connor convinces himself it really is what he wanted.)

Connor gets to miss dinner that night, instead receiving more crackers and toast with low-fat butter, which means he also manages to avoid Larry. He isn’t, however, able to avoid hearing his parents talk in what they probably thought were hushed tones but in reality were loud, agitated, whispers.

“He’s taking advantage of you again Cynthia! You said yourself he doesn’t have a temperature.”

“You haven’t seen him Larry, he doesn’t look good. And it’s not like when he’s been out drinking or…smoking.”

“That doesn’t mean anything Cynthia apart from he’s becoming a better actor. You’ve got to start being harder on him or he’s never going to learn!”

“Because yelling at him has done such a good job so far?! He doesn’t trust us Larry, he barely even talks to us. I think…I think he’s getting better. He has a friend now!”

“A friend?” If Connor hadn’t struggled to accept it himself, he’d almost be offended at Larry’s skepticism.

“Honestly Larry, I told you about him! Evan, remember? I really think Connor could be on the right track with him. Connor even wrote on the poor boy’s cast! When was the last time Connor did something nice like that?”

Though their voices are finally returning to regular whispers, Connor can just make out what they say.

“I…don’t remember.”

“Exactly Larry. And think, he came home today. He normally skips school, even when had pneumonia he left here. Today he didn’t.”

“…I suppose.”

“Why don’t you go see him? Just say hello. Maybe…maybe he’s ready to talk to us again.”

“Even if he is ill, I doubt Connor wants to talk to me.”

His mom sighs. “You never know if you don’t try Larry.”

Connor hears footsteps after that and he stiffens. He and his dad don’t talk. They shout, scream, occasionally throw things (okay, Connor throws things) but they don’t talk. Any attempt to just leads to the list previously given. Because Larry, just like his mom, has this image of what he wants Connor to be and when Connor can’t live up to those expectations, he gets disappointed. They both do. They want the neurotypical son, the kid who plays baseball after school, watches football with his dad, helps his mom make dinner. But instead, they’ve got Connor. Connor who would rather paint his nails, who would rather take photos, who wants his parents to ask him what he wants, not
tell him what they think he needs.

He sees the shadow of his Larry’s feet just below the door and Connor slips further under the duvet. He’ll just pretend to be asleep when Larry comes in. He waits a few moments and then holds up the covers a sliver to see Larry is still hovering. He stays there long enough for Connor to get unnerved, like prey that can sense the predator and is frozen as they wait for them to make their move. Larry’s foot moves, Connor tenses, and then there’s a single knock, so quiet that if Connor hadn’t been listening in, he never would have heard. Connor waits for more but instead, Larry just remains there a few beats longer then leaves.

Connor’s long gone past the point of disappointment with Larry but that doesn’t stop it creeping in all the same.

Connor ends up getting the next day off, with him once again missing dinner, and Zoe almost makes it in his room until Connor leaps to barricade it with his chair. An old school tricks, but it worse, and even better is that Zoe doesn’t even hang around much either. The only person Connor who ends up in his room is his mom and even then, it’s mainly for food and her taking his temperature. Sometimes, she tries for more, but the one time she’d tried to card a hand through his hair, he’d jerked back and hit his head against the headboard.

She didn’t try again after that.

However, Wednesday morning she hangs around.

“You still don’t have a temperature honey so unless you want me to take you to the doctor you have to go to school,” his mom says, her hands on her hips.

And well, Connor doesn’t want to go to the doctor, so skivving it is. With any luck, the school will just assume he’s still sick.

Although, that doesn’t turn out to be so easy. With his mom’s supposed progress of his, she tells him to drive Zoe to school and considering how Zoe is literally sitting in his car when she says this… Connor makes sure to slam his door when he gets in.

“Evan’s missed you, you know.”

Connor laments the days Zoe would sit in the back, a mute presence.

“Has he,” Connor says dryly as he pulls off the driveway. The silence says differently and maybe that’s not fair since he’s hardly putting himself out there but it’s better for everyone this way. It might have died down now with his absence but the moment he returns, it’ll all blow up again. Fuck, what if someone tried to beat Evan up over it? Connor himself would deal with it, could probably fight back, but a guy like Evan? He’d be a polo shirt wearing lamb to the slaughter.

“He has,” Zoe replies firmly. “It’s been…hard. And I know it’s been hard for you two but I bet it’d be better if you were going through it together.”

“You know it’s been just a little over a week right?” Connor reminds her. “I doubt he’s become that attached so soon.”

“Attached to your soulmate, what a novel concept.” Connor presses down on the accelerator, jerking the both of them forward. Zoe ignores the hint and carries on. “I don’t even think you realise how different you are around him.”
Connor’s hand stiffens on the steering wheel. “What the fuck are you talking about?”

“Can you not swear for one minute or is it now an ingrained part of your speech?” Zoe fires back. “Anyway, you get…softer. Happier. More like you used to be, when you didn’t hate everyone so much.”

“I grew up,” Connor sulks.

“You’ve not just been growing up Connor, you’ve got to admit you’ve been become distant too. Meaner.”

“You’re hardly perfect,” Connor snaps back.

“I know but you just make me, you make me so mad sometimes! And I hate it because I remember what it was like when we were kids. I remember when we used to be friends and when you’re with Evan, I see the old Connor coming out. The brother I liked. What happened Connor?”

Connor can’t pinpoint the moment everything changed. It started with the little things, like getting angrier than normal when his dad tried to take him to a baseball game, tried to get him to cut his hair short and into a more ‘manly’ style. Then he started to find his mom cloying, saw that she was more interested in her own short-lived hobbies than Connor’s interests. With Zoe? He’s not sure. Maybe it was the fact that as Connor drew away, became more resentful, she grew. She grew into a functional human, having interests that their parents could be proud of, overshadowing her brother and not understanding why Connor hated it, hated that all their relatives would rather hear about Zoe than him. Grandma Petal had been the one person who’d understood Connor, who’d told him that he could do whatever he wanted and damn anyone else’s expectations. Then she’d gone and died when Connor was 12, leaving her words forgotten by everyone else and his heart harder.

“I dunno,” Connor mutters and Zoe just sighs. Connor wants to be happy that she’s shut up but he can’t prevent the memory of when things were good between them cropping up; the two of them sitting in the back of the car on family trips, whispering to each other and finding it hilarious when their parents asked them what they were giggling about. They had been friends once, that was true, and then Connor decided he didn’t need them.

He wonders what it could have been like between them.

“You not coming in?” Zoe asks once they’ve reached the school and Connor shrugs, leaning back into the driver’s seat.

“I’m gonna wait till the bell almost goes,” he lies. “Less chance of seeing anyone.” As expected, getting Zoe’s pity works.

“It’ll die down soon. Anyway, thanks for the ride. I hope you have a good day Connor.”

Connor stares at Zoe’s retreating form, leaving the music off as he starts the car back up, each mile feeling longer than the last.

Connor had intended to turn off his phone and so it’s a shock to his system when he feels it vibrate in his pocket. With slightly bloodshot eyes, he holds the phone in front of him consideringly before deciding that it doesn’t matter if he looks. It’s not like reading his mom’s text is going to make a difference.

Except, it’s not a text from his mom. Evan’s name flashes on the screen and looking at the time, that does make more sense. If the school is going to call his mom, she won’t pick it up until later. She
has a yoga class this morning, followed by ‘lunch with the girls’.

Now sort of wishing it had been his mom, Connor opens the text.

**Zoe said you were supposed to be in school**

Connor checks the time again and sure enough, it's 10.30 meaning Evan should be in class right now.

Slowly, he types back, **Being a rebel?**

He must have really worried Evan or something if his soulmate was talking to him in class. Connor wants to feel proud but...actually, nah, he decides to just feel proud.

**Are you coming back?**

Deflecting. Just like Connor. Connor’s not high enough for an entire conversation but his stash is dying down quickly so unless he wants to seek out his dealer (a shitty guy who deals out good shit), he has to use it sparingly and since Connor plans to spend the whole day here…

He sighs, indulging himself with one last, long drag.

**Probably**

Connor’s not sure what he will do. He can’t skip forever but then, he also can’t face the school.

**I miss hanging out with you**

Connor takes a deep inhale. Goddamnit Evan fucking Hansen.

It takes Connor an hour later to respond, high as a fucking kite as he does so, which is why the following text leaves his phone.

**I miss you too**

He doesn’t get a response.

It’s the vibration in his pocket that wakes Connor but it’s the face above him that has him yell in surprise.

“What the fuck?!”

Above him, Evan winces.

Chapter End Notes

Evon’s hidden power – tracking down Connor. Thank you for all the support guys! I loved seeing your emotional reactions to Jared XD

I wrote a fair amount over the holiday and I really hated not updating so have one early!
All goes to plan I will also update Sunday ;)
Evan hadn’t woken up with a plan; all he’d intended to do was focus on getting through the day, keeping his head down low and himself out of any trouble. Texting Connor during class, therefore, is a completely spontaneous decision that happens after Zoe finds him that morning to tell him even though her brother had given her a ride to school, he’d driven out again straight afterwards. He’s not sure what possesses him to do it, but worry is a strong motivator. Evan knows that Conor isn’t a happy person and he has first-hand experience what those sort of negative emotions can lead you to do. Not that he thinks Connor is going to climb up a tree and…anyway, he’s just worried, that’s all, and it’s not even something he can blame on his anxiety. His anxiety makes him nervous about irrational, stupid things. His concern for Connor is neither of those and so the desire to be the quiet, good student is overridden and he sneaks his phone out of his pocket to hold under the desk. Thankfully it’s only English with the 80% blind Mrs Kapinski.

The buzz of a reply has Evan slumping in relief but the message itself makes the edges of his lips curl down.

**Probably**

Connor might not mean anything by it, might only mean that he doesn’t know how long he’ll be skipping for…but even then, he could have written eventually. Probably means that there’s the possibility he’ll never come back and Evan feels fear building up at the thought. It isn’t just that they’re soulmates; it’s the fact that in such a short amount of time Connor has become important to him. He no longer knows how he’ll navigate the still unfamiliar school halls without him. Evan may have once been used to being lonely but ever since Connor, he’s not sure he knows how to cope with it anymore.

After a brief interlude of panic and terror, where Mrs Kapinski’s rendition of Shakespeare is nothing more than white noise, Evan types back the truth to Connor - that he misses him. Because he can’t force Connor to come to school, Evan doesn’t think anyone can get Connor to do anything he doesn’t want to, but he can tell him how he feels. And Evan does miss him. More than he probably should.

The lack of a reply hurts and so in order to distract himself, he throws himself into the lessons, essentially writing down word for word what the teacher says despite how much it makes his wrist hurt. It helps, for a little while, but the thoughts are always there in the back of his mind. *Connor*
doesn’t miss you. Connor doesn’t care. No amount of writing, or wrist pain, can drown them out.

Except, then Evan gets a text. A text from Connor saying he misses him too and that, that is worth everything because it means there’s hope. Hope that Evan can get through to Connor.

And that’s when Evan makes another spontaneous decision. He decides that if Conor isn’t going to come back to school, at least, not in the foreseeable future, then Evan is going to go to him. Again. Maybe. The whole plan depends on whether Evan can actually find him because as much as Mrs Murphy was nice the last time they met, he wants to speak to Connor alone, which means finding out where he goes when he skips. Also, he doesn’t think she’ll be very happy with Connor when she finds out what he’s done. He still remembers the look on Zoe’s face when she’d told him that morning, how she recounted turning around only to see his car out of the gates. If that was Zoe’s reaction, he couldn’t imagine Mrs Murphy’s being any better and she might not be as accommodating to having him around. And if there’s one thing Evan absolutely hates, it’s being places where he clearly isn’t wanted (which happens to be often.)

“Evan? Hey, did you want to come over and wait for Connor again? Because my dad’s coming home early today and I really doubt him or my mom are gonna be in a good mood…”

“No, I-” Evan takes a deep breath, recovering from running over to Zoe at the bus stop. Evan knows he can’t go blindly into this, all he’ll end up doing is walk around aimlessly and, figuring that Connor wants to be left alone, he won’t be right outside any bus stops. “I just wondered if you knew where he goes when he skips. Because, I was thinking, if I found him there it might be easier to talk to him. More private.”

Zoe bites her lip. “Well, I remember this one time we found him by the apple orchard. The one that shut down. He’s always liked it there. Other than that, I’m not too sure. I guess he could be by the skate parks but Connor doesn’t like any of the other stoner kids there.”

Well, it’s a start. “Okay, thanks. Um, I’ll check it out.”

“Text me if you find him? Not because I like, care about him, or anything,” Zoe is quick to say. “I just want to make sure you’re not wandering around that abandoned orchard for ages on your own.”

“I will,” Evan promises and takes a look on google to find the bus that stops closest to the orchard. There aren’t any stops right by it but there’s one that goes to the school and stops about 15 minutes away on foot. While Evan hopes that Zoe’s right and that Connor doesn’t plan on leaving the orchard any time soon, if not then at least he’ll be getting some fresh air.

(And an excuse to look at trees.)

On the bus, Evan drops a text off to his mom that he’s going around Connor’s. She’s not meant to be home until late tonight but he doesn’t really want a repeat of last time and he figures it’s best to be safe, especially when he’ll be even further away this time.

Despite the fact it’s been closed for years, there’s still a fence surrounding the orchard and a padlock on the gate meaning Evan’s forced to climb over. In theory it shouldn’t have been too difficult, but Evan doesn’t have an athletic bone in his body and so, while his pants thankfully remain rip free, he ends up with a long trail of grime on the back of them. But at least he’s in, faced with rows and rows of trees, some still surviving without the care, other’s not doing so well. While a piece of him is soothed by being surrounded by so much nature, he suddenly feels a lot less optimistic about finding Connor and he hadn’t had that much to begin with.
Maybe he should have texted Connor, asked if this was okay, checked whether he was actually here. Except, Evan’s pretty sure that if he had done so, Connor either wouldn’t have replied, would have deflected or would have given him the wrong place. Evan likes running from his problems but Connor takes it to another level.

One good thing about his search, however, is that all the trees are pretty thin so there’s no way Connor could be completely hidden by one. He wanders around mindlessly for a bit until he spies a river running along the edge. Evan thinks that if he were the one coming here to relax, to hide, then the river would be a nice place to do it by and so he decides to follow it.

As it turns out, he and Connor think alike because there, at first a tiny speck in the distance, is his soulmate. He doesn’t even stir as Evan approaches and when he gets closer, he realises it’s because Connor is asleep.

Evan quickly shoots a text off to Zoe saying, ‘Found him’ and then uses the opportunity given to observe what Connor’s like asleep, without any barriers. His first thought is that he definitely looks different. When awake, Connor’s face always seems to betray the anger and frustration that’s lurking within him in the form of tense, sharp lines. Even when he smiles there’s a rigidness to him, like visible walls that have yet to crumble down. Now, though, there’s nothing for Connor to hide behind. The lines are smoothed out and his expression is peaceful. There’s even a slight upturn to his lips, like the will to smile is there, but Connor just constantly suppresses it. Evan almost doesn’t want to wake him. He commits this image to memory so that even if Connor ends up yelling at him, he can remember it.

Of course, it’s during this that Conor wakes up.

“What the fuck?!”

Evan winces and takes a step back. Connor scrunches up his shirt over his heart and glares at Evan while he waits for his heart rate to slow down. Evan can see that his eyes are red and there’s the ends of what Evan guesses are blunts surrounding him.

“Sorry,” Evan apologises. “I was just…I was worried. I mean, I know you texted back so that meant you were okay but you just said probably and even though you probably meant nothing by it I couldn’t stop thinking, what if he does and then, then you sent that last text and I…I guess I just wanted to see you,” he finishes off lamely.

Connor digests Evan’s ramble and his expression of annoyance dwindles into something Evan thinks might be resignation. “Well, you’ve seen me. I figure that’s not gonna be enough to get you to leave?”

That stings but Evan tries not to let it show. Instead, he shrugs. “I thought we could talk about…stuff.”

“Stuff,” Connor sighs. He looks around him before apparently finding what he was looking for, lifting his lighter in victory. He pulls out another joint and then hesitates. “You mind?”

Evan shakes his head, not actually sure if he does mind since he’s never been around anyone high before, and Connor lights it up. He takes a drag and then asks, “You wanna try?”

Evan’s…tempted but he’s heard reactions can go either way and with the medication he’s on…he’d just rather have a clear head for this, even if Connor’s not of the same opinion.

“I figured. So, how’d you find me?” He takes another drag, this time puffing out a few rings.
Though Connor doesn’t look like he’s trying to show off, Evan’s impressed nonetheless, watching the rings gradually disperse as he comes to sit beside the other boy.

“I asked Zoe and she said they found you here once. Did you used to come here when it was open?”

Connor begins to pick at his chipped nail polish. “Yeah, a lot when me and Zoe were kids. It was…nice.”

“Tell me what it was like?”

Connor opens his mouth but then his eyes narrow. “Why’d you wanna know?”

Evan bites his lip before replying. “Why not? Because you don’t seem to have many good memories and maybe it’d do you good to think about them. Because I’d like to hear that you did used to be happy, that things weren’t always so bad for you.

Connor huffs, reclining with one arm pillowed behind his head, the other holding onto his blunt. “We used to come here every summer and pick apples. A tradition, you know? It used to be a big deal because it was the one day, excluding holidays away, that my dad would turn off his phone. Me and Zoe used to have competitions about who could fill their basket the fastest and once we’d done that, we’d go hunting for four leaf cloves.”

“Did you ever find one?” Evan asks with a smile.

Snorting, Connor replies, “No. Maybe that’s why I have such shitty luck. Zoe used to pretend she had though. Would rip a leaf off one and try to stick it on another.”

Evan chooses to ignore the first bit when he says, “That sounds like it was fun.”

“I guess.” He flicks the ash onto the ground and though Evan briefly gets concerned, thoughts of forest fires flashing in his mind, the embers die instantly.

“Why do you do it?” The question has been lingering around in Evan’s mind for a while now and it pops up unexpectedly. Connor raises an eyebrow.

“You want the real version or the PG version? I wouldn’t want to ruin whatever misguided illusion you have of me,” Connor says, bitterness colouring his tone and Evan finds that he’s frustrated too, though he’s not sure exactly why. He wants to say it’s because of Connor but that’s not true because Evan knows he can’t control it, whatever it is. Maybe he’s frustrated because nothing’s been done to help. Even Evan has help – his therapist, the medication. How much it helps could be debatable but it’s something. He doesn’t think Connor has that something.

“I want the honest answer Connor,” Evan replies firmly, if quietly. “You’re not…you’re not going to scare me off.”

“You say that…” Connor mutters. “Smoking makes it all,” he waves a hand around him, “go away for a bit. The world sucks. Sure it has its moments where you think, oh, maybe it’s not all bad but then shit happens that reminds you, oh yeah, it’s a fucking disaster that caters to the rich and the ‘normal’. This,” he shakes the blunt, the wind blowing the smoke in his direction and Evan fights not to wrinkle his nose at the smell, “This makes it seem better. Helps me forget for a bit. If you haven’t
realised yet, I fucking hate a lot of things, including myself. I’m not a good guy. I’m a self-destructive pessimist who can’t even use the self-acknowledgement to help. I’m a fucking weirdo, a waste of space who burns everything he touches. So, congrats, there’s your soulmate. Aren’t you glad?”

“I’m still here,” is what Evan says first because, honestly, he knew all this and he knows that the only way he can prove to Connor that he’s not everything he says he is, is through action, through actively showing him that he’s staying, that he’s worth it. Because Evan has seen moments of light in his soulmate, moments where a healthier, happier, Connor shines through. Everyone has their darkness, maybe Connor more than most, and maybe he’ll never completely change or get better but Evan doesn’t care. Nobody’s perfect. He himself has his own problems and he doesn’t think they’ll ever completely go away either.

“Have you…have you ever considered therapy?” Evan broaches delicately.

Connor glares at him briefly, looking as if he’s offended, but then he takes a long drag and his expression becomes more neutral again.

“I went to rehab once. Last summer. They had a councillor who tried to make me talk about my problems but she was fucking awful. Focused on the effect it had on my family and would always talk about how they felt. The only reason I got clean then was so I could get the fuck away from her. I think my mom considered an actual therapist but my dad said no, that this was just ‘behavioural problems’ that I’d grow out of.” He laughs. “That’s worked well so far.”

“…Maybe you should try and bring it up again?”

“You’re being awfully persistent there Evan. Realising that you can’t stay with me like this? I fucking told you,” he huffs.

“It’s not that Connor!” Evan exclaims, his loud voice surprising even him. He thinks about what his own therapist has told him, words that at the time had gone through one ear and out the other but he now understood a little better. “There’s no shame in admitting you need, or want, help. Just…just because someone can’t see what’s wrong doesn’t mean that there isn’t something wrong. I go to therapy and it…it does help. My letters have helped. A bit. I don’t want to change you Connor, I just want you to like yourself the way I like you. I want you to be happier. Don’t you want that?”

An uncomfortable expression comes over Connor. “Do you like yourself?” He asks with quiet curiosity and Evan bites the inside of the cheek. He considers lying but it won’t end up doing any good. “Not really but…I’m trying to. Like…my hair is good and um, my ears. They’re pretty okay and I, uh, I have good manners and um…actually, just ignore me.” Evan blushes, remembering his first attempt at a letter where he’d written all this down before. Saying it out loud doesn’t make it any less lame and now Connor’s just staring at him.

“Yeah, you do have pretty good ears,” Connor says lightly and Evan doesn’t know whether to laugh or not. “Hey. Do you, or did you, ever get-”

Whatever Connor’s about to say gets cut off when he swears and Evan looks to the side to see him pulling out his phone. It’s vibrating loudly in Connor’s hand and his soulmate squints at the screen with blown out pupils.

“Fuck that,” he says and chucks his phone. Evan just manages to stop it from rolling down into the water. He sees ‘Mom’ flashing up on the screen.

“Uh, it looks like you have a voice message,” Evan tentatively says and Connor snorts.
“Of course I do. It’ll be all teary and ‘oh Connor where are you? I thought you were doing better! How could you skip school?’” Connor’s high pitched imitation of his mom makes Evan cringe. He wishes he knew what was going on between Connor and his mom. To him, she’d seemed nice.

Evan doesn’t think Connor will appreciate him saying that.

“So, are you gonna come to school tomorrow?” Evan asks, trying not to sound too desperate.

“I’ll probably have to,” Connor mutters. “You still want me around?” He then checks and Evan’s certain when he nods his head.

“I do. I’m not changing what I said earlier. I want to stick around if…if you’ll let me.”

Evan’s prepared for the challenge, the self-deprecating remark and though it looks like it’s on the tip of Connor’s tongue, all he ends up saying is ‘Okay’. There’s still a hint of disbelief and bitterness in his tone but Evan will work on removing that. It’s hard, knowing that there’s a guy who does secretly care about stuff, who might even care about Evan, but so clearly doesn’t care about himself. Evan’s not going to become his self-appointed therapist or anything but…he can be there. That’s the one thing in all this that Evan can actually do.

“Do you wanna skip rocks?” Connor speaks up suddenly and unprepared for the question, Evan simply nods dumbly. Serious conversation apparently over, they go hunting for the flattest stones they can find, the two of them trying to skip them across the short distance of the stream. Evan’s never done it before so he isn’t surprised when he continuously fails, all the stones falling straight through with a splash. He can’t even blame the water because Connor himself is a natural. He gets in on average 3 skips before his pebbles hit the other side of the stream.

“How do you do that?” Evan asks him and Connor shrugs.

“I dunno. I guess it’s in the wrist action. Lemme watch you do it.”

His cheeks burning slightly, Evan throws one of the stones of his collection. With Connor’s eyes on him, he does even worse than usual, the stone veering off to the side before landing in the water with a soft ‘plop’.

“You’re just using your arm. You’ve just gotta flick your wrist. Like this, see.” Slowly, Connor mimes the action and Evan tries to mimic him, really he does, but all that happens is the stone doesn’t even make it to the water. It flies to the side of him, skipping pretty impressively on the ground.

Connor makes an odd huffing sound. “Here. I’ll help.”

And then Connor’s beside him. Close. Evan attempts not to freeze or flinch as Connor’s hands come up to him, one lightly gripping his right wrist, the other resting on his knuckles. So incredibly aware of Connor’s breathing, he almost misses what the other boy says.

“So you’ve got to start of strong and then go gentle so you get the power for it to skip but it doesn’t go to the side like it did before. Here.” He passes Evan another stone. “So, like this. Throw when I tap my finger.”

Under Connor’s careful guidance, Evan flings the stone. He watches with bated breath as the stone flies to the water and unlike all the previous times, does one little hop across it before sinking down.

“I did it!” Evan exclaims and in his excitement, catches Connor’s hand in his. When he realises what he’s done, he instantly releases it and while he refuses to look at Connor, he sees out of the corner of his eye that his soulmate’s cheeks are also tinted a soft pink.
“Yeah, you did,” Connor replies, once he’s recovered, a light smirk on his face. “Wanna try it on your own now?”

Evan nods and soon the two of them are competing, seeing who can get the most skips in. More often than not, it’s Connor, but Evan does better than he expects and he might not be the high one but he sure feels like he could be. Eventually, it all comes to an end when they realise they’ve run out of rocks.

“Do you want to get some more?” Connor asks.

Evan checks the time on his phone. “It’s getting kinda late. I should probably head back,” he admits, not really wanting to leave because this whole skipping rocks thing with Connor? It had been a lot of fun. It had been nice pretending, if only for a moment, that the outside world didn’t exist, that there were no problems. Just the two of them skipping rocks.

Connor sighs. “I guess. Want me to drop you off?”

“O-oh no, I don’t want to bother you-”

“Trust me,” Connor interrupts him wryly. “You’d be doing me a favour. Not only do I get to stay away longer but who knows, maybe I’ll win some brownie points. Also, I’m not high anymore, if that’s what you’re worried about. At least…I’ve driven worse.”

That’s not exactly reassuring but Evan still says, “Okay then. If you’re sure.”

Much to Evan’s alarm there are lights on when he gets back but instead of the reprimand he’s expecting, his mom just grins at him when he enters.

“Was that Connor dropping you off? He’s a nice kid. Did you boys have a good time?”

Evan can’t stop the smile on his face when he replies, “Yeah. Yeah we did.”

Chapter End Notes

Because we needed a cheesy bonding moment okay.

Let me know your thoughts :)
Let The Sun Come Streaming In

Chapter Summary

As such, he’s surprised to find that douchebag at their spot again, waiting for them. He’s like a flea - tiny, annoying and in need of someone to flick him the fuck off to Australia. That’s if they don’t crush him first, like Connor’s real tempted to do.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

His mom’s hands are tight on the steering wheel, her face pinched as she drives. Considering how his mom had barely said a word to him the previous evening, Connor’s hoping the silent treatment will continue and keeps his gaze focused out the window, his shoulders hunched close to his ears.

Sadly, they’ve barely made it a few feet before his mom opens her mouth.

“You’ve got to stop doing this Connor,” she says tersely. She then takes a deep breath, as if preparing herself. “You abused my trust. Again,” she continues, as if it isn’t recycled material and he hadn’t had it all yelled at him from his loving father, who’d finally gathered the balls to step into his room. Oh, he knows exactly what ‘your mother and I are going through Connor.’

What a hard life it is for the both of them.

“I was ill the first few days,” Connor mutters sullenly because he might not have been ill in the ‘traditional’ sense but there was no fucking way he’d have made it through Monday without a psychotic breakdown if he’d stayed in that hell-hole. When Connor had attempted to explain this to Larry (with the minimum detail required because hell if he was going to spill his fucking dirtiest and darkest secrets to the asshole), he’d just scoffed, not even considered believing him for a second, and proceeded to list of the rest of the ways Connor had screwed up his, and the rest of the family’s, lives.

As if he didn’t already know.

“I want to believe you Connor, I do,” his mom replies and for a moment she sounds so desperate that Connor feels…not bad, per say, but sympathetic almost. “But how can I when the next day you tell me you’ll be in school and then I have them call asking me if you’re still sick? I lied for you Connor, because I don’t want to be known as the parent who can’t control her child, it’s bad enough as it is, but I won’t have it happen again. Do you know I almost called the cops? I was that worried Connor! And then you tell me you’re late, late hah! That you’re late because you drove Evan home? I like that boy and I hope you’re not being a bad influence on him.”

Connor snorts. “He’s immune to my demonic powers,” he replies sarcastically and his mom swerves a little abruptly on the next turn.

“This isn’t a joke Connor!” She snaps. “I thought…I thought you were getting better.”

Ha. Better. “Well surprise mom, there’s no magic cure for me being a shitty son.”

“You’re not a…‘shitty son’!” His mom cries and it’s the swearing more than anything which stuns
him. It’s one of the things she used to be most on his case about in the early days, before Connor eventually desensitized her to it. “You’re not,” she repeats quieter. “You’re my son and I want to help you. I just…I don’t know how to. I don’t…what’s wrong?”

Connor shifts in his seat. He can think of a lot of things that aren’t right, like how his brain seems to be hardwired different to everyone else’s, how he’s been known as the school freak ever since he threatened to throw a printer at a teacher who’d made one of the few friends he’d had back then cry, how he can never live up to what everyone expects him to be.

Connor’s already tried explaining this to his parents, back when it hadn’t been so bad, when it hadn’t been the anvil threatening to crush his very existence. It hadn’t worked then so there’s no point trying again where the possibility of a quick fix now is fucking hilarious.

In the end, all he says is, “I don’t know.”

School is the shit show he expected and he’s got a private fucking balcony for it. Now that he’s back, whatever whispers Evan said had died down are back at full force. He notices the turned heads, the concealed mouths behind hands. He knows what they’re saying about him, how they’re judging him when the reality is they’re all probably just jealous of him. He’s heard the girls fantasize about their soulmates and well would you look at that, Connor Murphy fucking beat them too it. It must be real hard for them. Connor feels for them. Really.

He tries, for both his and Evan’s sake, to pretend that it doesn’t get to him but it looks like all the emotions he’s been trying to desperately suppress these last years have finally broken free because they’re a constant presence and they all fucking suck.

As he’s on his way to math, a kid looks like he’s about to approach and Connor ends up baring his teeth, letting out a fuck off so quiet and vicious that even if the kid hadn’t been coming towards him he sure decided to find a different route quickly. The urge to skip again is there, to just run out of school and ignore anyone who tried to stop him, run until he was far, far away from this place but he’d promised his mom.

More importantly, he’d promised Evan.

Connor doodles in math, dozes in business and actually focuses in art, the one elective he’d been allowed to choose himself. That doesn’t mean he’s good at it, or that he follows the rules, but Miss Sellar – a long haired, brightly dressed woman who acts like she’s permanently high – is a pretty cool teacher.

“That’s a very interesting piece of work there Connor,” comes Miss Sellar’s lyrical voice to his right. On his A3 paper is a water color picture of space, with purple, green and blue swirls mixed in with the inky black background, stars of gold and silver dotted around and imaginary planets floating in between. It’s not perfect, but anything he does now is a helluva lot nicer in color.

“Try to stay on topic next time, hm?” So, the actual brief of today’s class was to do something inspired by a famous building or landmark. Connor had deemed that dull as fuck.

He doesn’t tell her that though, he just says, “Sure Miss Sellar,” as he often does and she offers him a brief smile before drifting off towards the next student. With 10 minutes left to go, Connor thinks about what else he could add. After a moment chewing on the inside of his cheek, Connor paints Pluto in the corner, a tiny not planet that got fucked over just because a bunch of insignificant humans decided so.
If it’s colored Evan’s favorite shade too, well, that’s just a coincidence.

He and Evan don’t share many frees together, but they happen to have one together that morning which they spend hidden away in one of the emptier study rooms. Evan works on some biology homework and Connor, not understanding what the hell it’s on about and not wanting to, chooses to take a nap, hiding his face in his folded arms. It’s relaxing, almost, the hushed, innocent, murmurs of the two nerds on the other side of the room and the scratch of Evan’s pen against paper. It’s quiet moments like this that aren’t so terrible.

Then, of course, someone has to go and ruin it.

“Oh Evan, Connor, I was hoping I’d find you two!”

Connor muffles a groan. He doesn’t actually hate Alana Beck, not like he hates the majority of the school population, but he was so close to sleep that it physically hurts lifting his head back up again, the white shine of the lights above making him wince.

“A-Alana. Hey. What did you want to see us about?”

There’s the scrape of the chair as Alana sits down opposite them, her pile of books, folders and random bits of paper landing on the table with a loud thud.

“So, I heard what happened, it’s pretty hard not to, but I just wanted to confirm with you guys that you are soulmates, right?”

Both he and Evan flinch. “What of it?” Connor asks harshly.

Alana’s eyes widen. “Oh, I’m not judging you or anything! I think it’s nice, finding your soulmate so young. The chances are incredible. …Anyway, as you can guess, that’s kind of the reason I’m here. It’s horrible, what some of the kids have been saying, how they’ve been acting and I’ve been thinking about how I can try and improve things because…it’s not right. You shouldn’t be ashamed nor should you have to put up with it. I’ve noticed that as a school, we’re less a community and more a collection of cliques. People are only friends with those in their group, very few people branch out. So, I’m having a party, a party where people won’t be able to rely on people of their groups so much, where they can talk to people they might not otherwise talk to without the pressures of the school setting.”

“A party?” Connor says skeptically. “You sure that’s a good idea? Parties usually consist of booze and people doing shit they regret the next morning, not kids making cute buddies with each other.”

“I’ve got a select guest list,” Alana replies promptly. “Only people I know and trust will come and it just so happens I have quite a broad range of friends. I’m not part of a social group myself.”

No shit, Connor politely refrains from saying.

“And you want to invite u-us?” Evan asks.

Alana shrugs sheepishly. “Well, you guys were my inspiration for this whole thing. I just think it’s awful how you’ve been treated and I know it could be a long shot, I’ve, um, not actually thrown a party before, my first thought was actually some kind of campaign, but if there’s a chance it could be good, good for you and a few other people in the school then it’s worth a shot, right?”

Connor snorts. “Sorry to burst your bubble but I’m grounded. Indefinitely.”
“Oh,” Alana frowns. “Well, I’d set the date for this Saturday but since you guys are the first I’ve come to about it, I can always postpone it. I’d really like you guys to be there.”

A moment of silence. And then-

“We’ll go!” Evan bursts out and both Connor and Alana turn to him in surprise. “I-if Connor’s allowed to.”

Alana beams. “Great! Let me know, yeah? And I’ll work around it. I really hope to see you both there.”

With that, she flies out the room and Connor turns to Evan with a raised eyebrow. “We’ll go, huh?”

Evan flushes. “Sorry, I just panicked and when I panic I tend to say whatever and sometimes it’s what the person wants to hear and…Alana just looked so disappointed and it-it was nice, her wanting us there.”

Connor sighs. He can’t even find it within himself to be even slightly annoyed. What is the world coming to? “I didn’t take you for a party person,” he says.

“Oh, I’m not.” Evan scratches the back of his neck. “I’ve er, I’ve never actually been to a party before, apart from when I was little. No one’s ever invited me.”

Well shit. “Do you actually want to go?”

Evan all of a sudden gets real interested in labelling a diagram of an ear. “Well, I mean, I’m not sure what parties are really like, like I said I’ve not been to one but, uh, I guess if I had to go to one, a party at Alana’s house wouldn’t be so bad. And I suppose…I’ve always wondered what it would be like. I just never figured I’d ever get invited to one.”

“That doesn’t really answer the question,” Connor says wryly and Evan pauses, picking at his cast. “I wouldn’t mind,” he says quietly. “But-but if you don’t want to go, that’s fine! And of course your parents might not let you go so I-I could just go alone. I could do that.”

God, Connor can practically see the anxiety that thought is causing Evan to experience. He sighs, settling back into his folded arms.

“I’m not making any promises,” he says, “but we’ll see.”

Evan doesn’t answer but when Connor quickly glances up, he sees a small, pleased smile on his face. Letting out a quiet huff, Conner wonders what the fuck is wrong with him, even considering talking to his parents about this.

As he finally falls into a nap, the image of Evan’s smile is burnt into his brain.

Evan told Connor how Kleinman had tried to ‘apologize’. While he hadn’t got much detail on Evan’s response, it had been enough for him to realize that Evan’s spine was growing. Connor almost feels proud.

As such, he’s surprised to find that douchebag at their spot again, waiting for them. He’s like a flea-tiny, annoying and in need of someone to flick him the fuck off to Australia. That’s if they don’t crush him first, like Connor’s real tempted to do.

“What are you doing here Kleinman?” he spits out, his body unconsciously shifting in front of
Kleinman holds out his hands in a pacifying gesture. “I didn’t come here to fight. Listen, I know I fucked up and I did a shitty job of apologizing for it on Tuesday. So, here I am, trying again. I’m sorry. To you Evan and to you too Connor…but mostly to Evan. You didn’t deserve the crap you got for my stupidity.”

“Why did you do it?” Comes Evan voice behind him, quiet and ever so slightly broken. It makes fire burn through Connor, fire he wants to use to get Kleinman’s ass away from their spot but fuck, Evan deserves an explanation, even if it is a pile of stinking bullshit.

Jared weakly shrugs. “I guess…I was mad, okay? I know we’ve never talked much, at least, not about the serious stuff, but you were always there and…and a part of me figured, hey, at least if I was alone and soulmate-less then at least Evan was too.”

“Wow, what a fantastic excuse. You know, I didn’t think it was possible for you to become more of an asshole,” Connor says and Kleinman briefly glares at him.

“Let me finish, okay? So yeah, I get that that’s a fucked up of me to think, when haven’t I fucked up these days, right, but it might come as a surprise that I’m not always the confident, amazing Jared Kleinman. Turns out I’m more the desperate, pathetic Jared Kleinman who couldn’t handle the fact that his only friend found his soulmate before him and finally had a reason not to put up with him anymore. So, the truth is I was jealous okay? I knew that no matter what I’d always have you to fall back on but then suddenly, I didn’t.”

“…You’re not just saying all this because your mom’s stopping paying your insurance, are you?” Evan asks and Kleinman briefly glares at him.

“My mom doesn’t even know yet so, no. I’m doing this because I’d like to think that we were sorta, maybe, kinda friends before I pulled that shit and what I’m saying is, it would be cool if we could go back to it. You know. Being friends.” Kleinman shoves his hands into his pockets and Connor secretly delights in how pained and uncomfortable he looks. And he deserves it. He can’t wait for Evan to-

“Not just family friends?” Evan says and Connor spins around, expression incredulous.

“You’re not seriously considering being friends with him again, are you? He’s a dick!”

Evan raises his shoulders weakly while Kleinman barks out a cough that sounds suspiciously like ‘Pot, kettle.’

“I’ve not forgiven you Jared, not yet,” Evan explains quietly. “What you did, it really hurt, but if you are sorry then…I guess I’ll think about it. I didn’t mind how it was before so much but it’d be nicer if we were actually friends. And I guess I’m sorry for ignoring you, even though it was because I was worried you’d do what you did.”

Kleinman folds in on himself while Connor silently seethes. How could Evan forgive this piece of shit? Then again, that was just Evan. He wasn’t like Connor. Fuck knows what this would have been like if he had been.

Evan’s kindness is a double edged sword that’s pierced through both Connor’s and Kleinman’s hearts.

“You don’t have to apologise man. Listen, I’ll leave you to your…whatever and I won’t, like, interrupt you again or anything. Hit me up if you wanna talk or something Evan. See ya.”
“See you Jared.”

Kleinman finally leaves then (thank fuck) and when Connor turns back to Evan, he finds that though there’s a slump to his shoulders, he doesn’t look that upset.

“You really thinking about talking to him?” Connor asks, trying to keep the judgement out of his voice and failing just a bit.

“It’s like my mom said, I don’t have many friends. I may as well keep the ones I can.”

“Better to have no friends than asses like him though,” Connor points out as they sit down.

“I know but…I’ve known Jared my whole life, almost,” Evan begins. “When we were little and things like social status and being cool didn’t matter so much, it was good, fun. He was my best friend. He was there when my dad left and everything. And…and in the whole time I’ve known Jared, he’s never apologized. This is the first time.” He pauses then and picks a bit of dirt off his cast. “I think he’s changing for the better and I wanna be around to see it because I remember how things used to be. …Does it bother you? I know it wasn’t just me he hurt.”

“I don’t like him, but I’m not gonna stop you doing shit. That’s not cool,” Connor states bluntly. “Although, if he ever pulls a stunt like that again I will fuck him up and there will be no holding me back.”

To Connor’s surprise, Evan laughs. “Got it.”

Wondering if Evan got hit in the head when he wasn’t looking, he mutters, “Good.”

The leaves crackle beneath Connor’s hands as he pulls out his lunch, becoming redder now that Autumn has finally settled in. Soon, they’ll be surrounded by leaves and that thought triggers a memory, a memory from years ago of him and Zoe building piles of dusty red leaves only to immediately jump into them afterwards. It had been fun, right up until they’d built a pile in the wrong place and Connor’s knee had hit a rock leaving a gash that was only just shallow enough to not need stitches. It’d had been okay though, because even though it had hurt like a son of a bitch, his mom had immediately taken care of it, cleaning it gently and wrapping it up securely. Even though Connor had been adamant he was too old for it, his mom had pressed a kiss on the wound and then one of his forehead, calling him her brave boy.

Connor’s not brave anymore. He’s a coward. There’s Evan considering giving his trust back Kleinman and Connor can’t even find it within himself to have a decent conversation with his sister, can’t tell his parents how he’s more fucked up than either of them think.

He needs a distraction, pronto, and before Connor realizes it, he’s got his phone out.

“What’re you doing?” Evan asks and Connor takes a moment to answer, debating on the best angle before settling on a position that keeps out the glare of the sun but has it hit the leaves in a way that you can clearly see the blend of green to auburn, something he’s never before been able to appreciate.

“Taking a photo. I used to be really into that shit.”

He snaps the picture and away goes his phone. He then realizes Evan’s looking at him weirdly.

“What?”

“Nothing. I just…I guess I don’t really know anything about your hobbies.”
For some reason, Connor’s cheeks burn. “It’s not a hobby. At least, not any more. I had a camera, a good one, a few years ago and then…then it broke.” He doesn’t say it’s because he broke it but he gets the feeling Evan knows. “And I guess after that I didn’t see the point in keeping it up.”

“Don’t you still enjoy it?” Evan asks and Connor shrugs.

“I guess?”

“Then even if you just use your phone it’s still a hobby. You don’t need a fancy camera.”

“Looks better though,” Connor says quietly. Sure, the quality of phone cameras had improved but they never got close to that old Canon camera he’d had. Fuck, the crispness of those had been incredible. At the time, all he’d had to play with were shades of grey and positioning. He wonders what sort of shots he’d have been able to get with it now, with all that color. It’s been a while since Connor had regretted destroying the one present he’d been excited to receive but it hits him now like a sledgehammer.

“I like trees,” Evan exclaims spontaneously. Or, maybe not so spontaneously, as he follows up with, “That’s my hobby. Trees, looking at them, studying them. And…and I like writing too. I think maybe one day I’ll write a book about them.”

Though Connor silently wonders who would read that apart from Evan (and okay, fuck it maybe him if Evan asked) he says, “Why not? Don’t people say you can be whatever you want?” Apart from an actor, an artist, a singer…a photographer.

“It’s scary sometimes, thinking about the future,” Evan admits quietly and Connor nods.

“It’s why I don’t,” he lies.

Chapter End Notes

Woo Alana's here! And look at Connor trying to pretend he doesn't care.

Thank you so much for all the support you guys have been giving me and this fic! It makes me so happy and I'm so grateful for it :)

(also, I promise this is the last time I do this but I posted a cover or waving through a window on my YouTube channel if you wanna check it out here https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=EH3fUfwmhc !)
“So, this Saturday’s a no go,” Connor tells Evan the next day. “Unsurprisingly.”

“Oh, well, that’s okay.” It had been a long shot, like Connor said, and it’s really not a big deal as he can always, maybe, possibly, consider going alone or he can always just forget about it since he’s lived without going to a party so far and he can continue to-

“But she’s agreed to next Saturday…so long as Zoe comes with.” Connor’s nose crinkles. “Apparently I need a fucking babysitter.”

“That wouldn’t be too bad, would it?” Evan asks, secretly glad since not only can Connor go, but there’ll be another person he knows there.

“Guess not,” Connor grumbles. “Should probably just be glad my mom compromised.”

“I haven’t told my mom yet,” Evan says. “I think she’ll be so excited that she’ll try and dress me. She’s always wanted me to be a ‘normal’ kid. If I ever got drunk I bet she wouldn’t even be angry.”

Connor snorts. “Lucky you,” he says dryly. “Anyway, normal’s overrated. And imaginary. It’s different for everyone so how can you define what it actually is? You can’t.”

That was…strangely reassuring. “I guess. Though…I suppose I would like to be different, a bit, at least. Not worry so much. Not make my mom worry so much. Being her idea of normal wouldn’t be so bad.”

“Listen Evan,” Connor sighs. “At the end of the day, you’re you. And everyone’s got faults. I’ve got a fuck ton of them. And some of them, yeah, you can work on, if you want to. Some you can’t. You just have to find the people who are willing to stick ‘em out, take you for who you are. So…,” he huffs. “Basically, what I’m saying is, don’t go trying to change things too much, okay?”

Evan bites his lip, hoping to keep back the smile that would probably just embarrass Connor, whose now fallen silent, engrossed in a game on his phone. Sometimes, Evan thinks he’d like to know what goes through Connor’s mind. Enough to get a better understanding of him, but maybe not enough to hear all the bad stuff. Or the nothing. Evan’s had a mind full of nothing before. It happened a few times over the summer and was at its worst when he was by the old hickory, the one that had almost been tall enough.

The bad thoughts are just that, bad, but the nothing is worse. The nothing makes you feel like you’re not really there, like reality has just disappeared and anything that had matter before doesn’t so what’s the point of staying around? Thoughts of consequences are gone and you don’t think about what’ll happen if you fail, if you only end up with a broken wrist.
Evan had almost wished for the nothing after his panic attack, when Connor was sick and he was dealing with it all alone, but his brain must have some self-preservation because it had stayed clear.

Evan wonders if Connor’s ever experienced the nothing and if so, how much.

He also wonders whether he should broach therapy again but then…Connor’s been doing better. At least, he thinks he has and even Zoe said it too, and she’d know better than him, right? She even said it was because of him and heck, Evan may not ever amount to much but he’ll take making his soulmate feel a little less crappy as a success.

The weekend passes with a few more texts sent to each other, most of them Connor complaining to Evan about his parents. It sounds like they’ve been giving him a hard time over him skipping school and though Evan can sort of understand it; he doesn’t say that to Connor, just offering sympathy when he’s sure Connor won’t misconstrue it as pity. The next week is also pretty quiet; though there are a few instances to remind him to never lower his guard completely.

It’s on Wednesday that they get confronted by the same jock who had sent Evan running to the janitor’s closet. Up until this point, Evan has fled (if possible) whenever he even thinks he’s seen one of those blue jackets but this time he’s distracted by Connor, as he tends to be these days. He doesn’t even notice he’s there until Connor yanks him backwards, preventing him from directly colliding with the jock. Evan nearly runs there and then, his heartbeat already ratcheting but just as the jock’s face crinkles in disgust and he looks ready to spit out another derogatory comment, Connor grabs him by the lapel, giving him a hissed threat so quiet that not even Evan can make it out. The jock’s face pales and though he gives them one last glare, he moves him and his friend along, telling him they’re ‘not worth the effort’.

When Evan asks what exactly he’d said, Connor smirks and says, “When we were little our mom’s used to be friends. I know they’ve not moved and his bedroom is on the bottom floor.”

He doesn’t say anything else after that and while Evan wants to feel worried, he finds he’s mostly in awe.

It’s then that Evan realizes that walking with Connor is almost like walking with his own body guard. At any mumbled mean comments, Connor loudly shouts ‘What was that?’ and everyone shuts up instantly. If anyone dares to look at them for longer than what Connor deems necessary, then, well, flipping the bird is one of his tamer responses.

It’s also kind of amazing how Connor manages to do it all under the radar. According to Connor, his teachers were beginning to notice his ‘improved behavior’, which Evan gathers to mean as actually turning up and doing some of the homework.

“She actually congratulated me and like, it wasn’t sarcastic,” says Connor after his business class. “Though it was fucking embarrassing. And patronizing.”

He may have sounded annoyed but Evan can tell there’s also an element of astonishment in his tone. It’s not just Connor and his parents that had issues, Evan has realized, but Connor and adults in general. Well, Connor and most people really but at least with the other kids, he had easier methods of dealing with them.

That thought probably should make him concerned for the party, but it becomes too late for that when he finds himself in his room, getting ready for it. Although, getting ready might not be the right term for it, unless staring at his open wardrobe completely and utterly lost counts. For all that he’d joked about his mom wanting to dress him up, he’s glad when she pokes her head around the door to ask if everything’s okay. She ends up sitting on his bed, offering suggestions while he rifles
through his wardrobe.

“What about that nice shirt I got you last year? For Uncle Ben’s 70th.”

Evan ends up digging in a drawer to look for it. Already he’s found so many clothes he’d never remembered buying, or having bought for it. It only occurs to him now how he has a habit of going for the same outfits. Really, he’s just a step away from labelling his outfits with days of the week.

(But, a small voice reminds him, they’re safe clothes. No one’s made fun of him for them yet.)

“This one?” Evan asks, pulling out a red shirt. He hadn’t liked it much at the time, the stripes looking too bold in monochrome but now in color it doesn’t look as bad. Still though, he’s not sure about it.

“Oh. What’s that one there, that was underneath it?” Evan pulls out the shirt she’s pointing at. It’s purple, maybe bordering on indigo. Evan doesn’t have a clue when it was bought for him. He should probably be happy he hit his growth spurt early.

“That would go nicely with your dark jeans. You didn’t throw them away, did you?”

“I don’t think so.”

He finds them, eventually. Evan’s not a big fan of jeans, finding them tight and restrictive, although he does have to admit that they go well with the shirt. Whether they go well on him is another but… his mom seems to think he looks okay.

“Perfect honey! Now, let me go see if we still have some hair gel…”

Evan winces. “Please don’t.” Never mind him and his clothes, his mom and hair don’t go well. He still remembers his mom cutting his when he was little, only stopping when his dad had to gently break it to her that it had looked awful. Evan can still remember the laughs of the parents, still remembers hiding in the car right up until the bell was about to go.

Thankfully, she halts in her tracks but his relief is short lived.

She’s getting emotional again.

“I’m just so proud of you sweetie,” she tells him, smoothing out his shirt. “I know it’s been hard on you and I’m so happy to see you putting yourself out there, making friends, going to parties. Just don’t do anything I wouldn’t do, huh kiddo?” She nudges him conspiratorially and Evan lets out a strained laugh.

“Oh, sure mom.”

“And who knows, maybe you’ll meet someone at this party.” She winks and for the first time, Evan feels kinda bad about keeping his secret and thinks about telling her. He’s not surprised she’s not found out yet, his mom doesn’t really have time to get involved with the school and it’s an unspoken rule that anything that happens in school, stays in school. It’s not the school policy to get involved with anything to do with soulmates. In theory, it’s a private matter.

“Maybe,” he says, trying not to sound as if he has a secret that just waiting to burst out of him, and then fortunately, he hears the sound of the doorbell. “I guess I should go.”

“Is it weird if I want photos? No, I should wait for prom. You’re going to prom, right?...Oh, don’t give me that look Evan. Remember, I want you back by twelve and you call me if there are any and
I mean *any* problems. Okay Evan?"

Evan’s nod ends up being crushed against his mom’s chest. She’s been giving him a lot more hugs lately. He’d forgotten how nice they could be.

“You have a good time, sweetie,” she says and finally, Evan’s allowed to leave, feeling a little out of sorts. Is this what things would be like all the time if he didn’t have anxiety? Or is it only like this now *because* of it?

Evan grabs his jacket and opens the door to find Zoe there, an excited grin on her face.

“Ready to go?” She asks and Evan nods, following her outside where the car is waiting. Connor inside it leaning back, his fingers tapping against the wheel. As Evan shuts the door, he looks over, giving a small wave and before Evan can even worry about where he should sit, Zoe subtly guides him towards the seat next to Connor while she goes for the back.

“So, Evan, you’re looking good tonight,” Zoe says as they buckle in and the tips of Evan’s ears warm.

“Thanks Zoe, so do you. A-and you Connor.”

It’s true. Zoe’s got color in her hair, pink, and it contrasts starkly with a green, cute blouse and jeans. She’s even put make-up on, somehow making her blue eyeshadow work with the other assortment of colors. But, as pretty as Zoe looks, Evan’s attention gets stuck on Connor. Gone is the hoodie, the old jeans. Evan doesn’t want to be insulting but it looks like Connor’s really tried (or been forced to). Connor’s shirt is also green however it’s darker than Zoe’s and the top button is undone revealing an array of necklaces. His hair is down, washed and…bouncy, framing eyes that have smoky eyeliner around them. He’s also pretty sure he can see an earring poking out beneath his hair. He didn’t even know Connor had his ears, or ear, pierced.

A blush starts to spread up Connor’s neck and Evan realizes with a blush of his own that he’d been staring. He almost gives himself whiplash with how vehemently he twists his neck to look out the front.

“Uh, thanks. You too.”

Evan’s convinced he hears Zoe coo at that and he keeps his gaze determinedly focused at the scenery outside and *not* on the way Connor’s necklaces dangle lowly as he drives.

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Evan shouldn’t be surprised Alana’s house is big, just like Connor’s, since it’s common knowledge her parents are a lawyer and doctor respectively, but his first response is still to feel daunted. It’s both better and worse than when he’d first faced the Murphy’s house. Worse in that it’s bigger, more intimidating and the darkness it’s bathed in is kind of scary, but better in that it’s not like all the parties he’d heard about and seen on TV. There are no drunk kids yelling outside, no one destroying property and the sound of music is faint.

And it’s his first party. His first ever party.

They’ve barely left the car when Zoe announces; “Right, before you two go hide in some corner, it’s photo time!”

“It’s really not,” Connor says dully and Zoe happily ignores him, looping her arm through Evan’s while she pulls out her phone.
“Fine then, you can take one of me and Evan.”

She wraps her arm around Evan’s waist and Evan momentarily short-circuits on what to do. He’d just fended off his mom’s advances of a photo, he hadn’t thought he’d need to contend with Zoe’s.

“If that’s okay,” Zoe then adds, seeming to notice Evan’s discomfort and her asking permission ends up easing some of his tension. Maybe a picture wouldn’t be so bad…if he could just figure out on what to do with his arms.

“Yeah, it’s fine,” he says once he’s settled with having his good hand in his pocket and his casted arm hidden behind Zoe’s back.

“Say cheese,” Connor drawls, having been given Zoe’s phone and Evan tries to clear his mind as he smiles. He’s never been photogenic since he always overthinks it and it shows plainly on his face. Also, the flash makes him blink and he worries about what if he blinked when it was took and what if they retake it and he still blinks and it becomes an endless cycle of-

“Cute!” Zoe says decisively. “I’ll send it to you Evan. So Connor, sure you don’t want one with Evan?”

Knowing that one of just him and Connor could either make things incredibly awkward or cause Evan to spontaneously combust, he ends up trying his luck and quietly saying, “A group one would be nice.” And maybe Zoe was right about him having magic powers because, despite the fact Connor just shut the idea down a minute before, he grudgingly agrees.

“Great! You can hold the phone Connor since you have longer arms.” She then rearranges them, Evan put to Connor’s left, Zoe his right and then Connor takes over, the photographer in him coming out.

“We are not doing fucking faces Zoe. If we’re gonna do this then we’re doing it properly. Lift your chin Evan.”

Bemusedly, Evan follows his directions and once Connor’s arm has finished waving about, he barely gives a warning before the picture is taken.

“You’re meant to say 3 2 1,” Zoe complains. “Well, let’s see.”

Rolling his eyes, Connor brings up the picture.

“Zoe.”

“Oh c’mon. You just said no funny faces!”

Evan can’t help but grin at bunny ears behind Connor’s face. He trails his eyes over the rest of the photo. As expected, even without warning Zoe still looks pretty, dimples on her cheeks and her chin resting lightly on Connor’s shoulder, not quite leaning on it. Evan thinks he looks a little squished in comparison but it’s not the worst he’s looked, especially since this time he didn’t have the chance to worry so much. The one okay photo of him he has had been a school photo that had ended up being taken 5 times because it was one of those ones parents spent a ton of money on.

It’s Connor though who really catches his attention, unsurprisingly. He’s not smiling, at least, not obviously but Evan can see the minute quirk to his lips, the brightness of his eyes. There’s even the slight tilt of his head towards Evan, which he can almost pretend is intentional.

“Send me that one too?” Evan asks and Zoe nods.
“You got it.”

He’s always meant to change his phone wallpaper from the stock photo it’s had since he bought it.

“It’s okay, I guess,” Connor shrugs and Zoe smirks.

“Don’t worry, I’ll send it to you too.”

“Fuck you Zoe.”

They continue to ‘fight’ as they head to the door, Evan trailing behind them content to watch them, and Alana greets them when they ring the bell. She’s traded her trademark jeans and sweaters for a nice black and white dress.

“Evan, Connor! I’m so glad you guys could make it. And you must be Zoe, right?”

“That’s me! Sorry for gate-crashing,” Zoe replies, taking the hand Alana offers her.

It’s like the world freezes.

Alana’s mouth is open in shock and Zoe’s knees, which had locked up so suddenly, begin to shake.

Oh.

“Do-are you-I-”

Evan’s never heard Alana stutter before.

“You’re my soulmate,” Zoe breathes and her eyes begin to take everything in, roaming over Alana, Connor, Evan, the house, the garden…Evan remembers what it was like, how strange everything had looked, the disorientation. Evan had been overwhelmed but Zoe, Zoe looks amazed, like she’s been waiting for this moment all her life, like she’s prepared for it all already.

“Please tell me this hasn’t just happened,” Connor deadpans beside him and Evan holds back a grin. For all he’s trying to sound grouchy, Evan knows he’s not as unhappy as he pretends.

“Fuck you,” Zoe says but it’s quiet, distracted. Most of her attention is on Alana who’s now looking at Zoe like she’s the only person in the universe.

“I-you should come in. Um, do you want a drink?” Alana draws Zoe into the house, Zoe herself needing no encouragement to follow, and leads her away while listing off all the drinks she has on offer. Evan pauses to lock the door behind him and when he heads further in he finds that Alana and Zoe have skipped the kitchen to go straight to the living room where they’re sitting on the couch, animatedly talking with excited voices that can barely be heard over the music. While a part of Evan wants to see it unfold, wants to see how a true Meeting is supposed to go, when Connor suggests they head to the kitchen he goes along with him. This is their moment; Evan’s not going to intrude.

Much like the living room had been, the kitchen is also full of kids and he and Connor artfully navigate around them to the drinks which are set out on the counter. Though Evan recognizes some of them from around school, thankfully none of them are ones who’d been actively mean to him and Connor. Some even offer them nods as they pass which Evan responds to with hesitant smiles. His insides are churning with a mixture of nervousness and excitement and the bass of the music pounds in time with his blood pumping around his body. Displayed out are some bottles of soda, fresh lemonade and a bowl full of cherry red liquid. In front of all of them are labels and in bold beside it all is a sign saying DO NOT SPIKE. Evan wonders how successful that’s been so far.
Evan decides to go for the fruit punch (which apparently has vodka in it) and for his first taste of alcohol since the glass of wine that was given to him by his grandma (which Evan took 1 polite sip of then left beside his mom), it’s not too bad. It burns a bit down his throat, making him wince, but the fruity taste makes up for it.

“So, uh, how long does it take you to get drunk?” Evan asks and okay, maybe he could have been more subtle as Connor smirks and replies with, “You’re not gonna get drunk off that Evan. Not unless you down a load of cups. Trust me, this is weak as shit. Probably should have brought beers or something.”

“Beers? I have beers. Oh wait, wasn’t supposed to be talking to you yet. My bad.”

Jared looks ready to slink back into the darkness he’d suddenly emerged out of but Evan catches him before he can. “What are you doing here Jared?” Despite the low lights, Jared’s pupils are dilated and there is the faint scent of alcohol lingering around him.

“Alana invited me! She likes me. I think-I think I saw her with Zoe Murphy. Holding hands.” He lowers his voice, but instead of whispering like Evan think he intends to, he just ends up shouting in Evan’s ear, “Sorry man, I know you like her.”

Evan glances over at Connor who’s facing away from them, taking long sips of punch and pretending not to be listening in. He can’t help but smile softly as he replies, “That’s okay Jared. I’m happy for Zoe.”

“So-,” his eyes dart around them. “So they are soulmates? Man, everyone but me.” He frowns, blinks and then appears to have a moment of clarity. “I’m gonna go now. Sorry for talking to you! My beer is in the fridge.”

Feeling a little bit bad, Evan watches as Jared heads back into the living room. He guesses it’s not that early, and he doesn’t really know party ‘etiquette’, but Jared seems to be the drunkest of everyone. He considers going after him but there’s still some hurt there, some betrayal stinging like a healing wound. Maybe later, after a few more drinks.

“Wow. For a second there I almost felt pity for him,” Connor snorts before he goes to the fridge, triumphantly pulling out a can of bud-light. At Evan’s look he says, “What? Better me than him. Looks like I’m saving him from liver poisoning at this point.”

Evan can’t really argue with that. He takes a look at the blue can, unfamiliar with it since his mom never drinks it.

“You wanna try?” Connor offers and curious, Evan takes the can. It turns out that beer is even worse than wine and Connor laughs at his expression.

“I think I’ll stick to the punch,” Evan says weakly.

Contrary to what Connor said, Evan’s definitely feeling something a half hour later. It might be the fact that Evan had been taking continuous sips, content to stay in the kitchen beside Connor, observing and avoiding talking to the other people still flooding in. Evan never realized Alana had so many friends, or acquaintances, whatever she called them. Although, he found the more he drank, the less he minded being surrounded by so many people. And with him and Connor standing so close together, he didn’t flinch every time their arms brushed. It was kind of nice.

Really nice.

Evan knew he should be concerned about that, worried about what that meant, but right then he
couldn’t be bothered to figure out why. Deciding that maybe he should take a breather, Evan chooses to then to go find Jared, the happy, bubbly feeling in his head making him feel confident he can handle it. He asks Connor if he wants to come and his soulmate just snorts and shakes his head.

“I’ll just take another of his beers. Find me if he’s an ass.”

With a smile wider than normal, Evan says, “Okay.”

Evan heads outside first, the fresh, cool air clearing his head a bit and it’s there he immediately finds Jared, being cheered on by some other kids Evan think are in chess club to chug. It looks like this is their first party too as their cheers are a mixture of lackluster and exuberant, as if they don’t exactly know how this works. Jared finishes and proudly shows off the finished bottle before dumping it on the ground. Evan’s pretty sure if Alana wasn’t so distracted by Zoe and saw, she wouldn’t be too impressed so he picks it up as he goes over.

“Heeeey Eeeevan!” Jared sings when he sees him. “Do you wanna chug. It’s fun! Oh, that bottle’s empty. Want a new one?”

Evan shakes his head. “Can we talk?”

“Hey guys, Evan wants to talk to me!” He sounds just as proud as when he’d finished his drink and the other three cheer again. Evan gives them a little wave before drawing Jared away.

“Are we cool Evan? Cos I’d really like to be cool now,” Jared says casually, pushing up his glasses from where they were sliding down his nose.

“You promise you wanna be friends? That you actually like me?” Evan checks.

Jared nods enthusiastically. “Evan. Evi. I know I’m drunk. Like,” he quietens his voice, “really drunk. But what I say is a hundred percent correctomundo. I like you Evan Hansen and I’d like it if you liked me. Cos, you know, sometimes it felt like you didn’t like me and then it was easier to be like ‘hah I don’t care!’ But I do care. I don’t have any friends. You were right. Everyone just puts with me.” He looks crestfallen and now Evan definitely feels bad.

“We can be friends again Jared. I do like you, the real you. Uh, but Connor still doesn’t really like you.” Better to be honest, right?

Jared claps Evan on the shoulder. “The feeling is mutual my friend. But…he’s good for you Evan. I respect that. I’m happy for you. And sorry.”

It might be the alcohol but Evan feels lighter all of a sudden.

“Thanks Jared.”

“Now, I have to ask, have you and Connor tried to get it on and if so-”

At first Evan’s relieved Jared gets cut off, because even with the alcohol he does not want to answer that sort of question, but that instantly dissipates when he realizes it’s because there’s shouting coming from inside the house. He and Jared share a look and with a sinking feeling growing in Evan’s stomach he ignores his instinct to flee and follows Jared inside to the living room. His eyes find Connor automatically - he’s stood in front of Zoe and Alana, who are still sat on the sofa, and he’s facing a guy who looks very big and very angry. Around them, the rest of the guests watch in silence.

He arrives just in time to see Connor get punched in the face.
I really need to stop writing long chapters because later ones will probably not be this length ^.^'. But heeey we have some Zoe/Alana! This will not be added to the tags since I want it to remain a surprise for new readers :)

(Also i have no idea how american house parties work. I never really went to any English ones myself so i basically took inspiration from Spiderman Homecoming XD)

Comments are wonderful motivation if you wanna leave one :)
What We've Got Going Is Good

Chapter Summary

“Who would have thought it,” Kleinman exclaims dramatically. “Connor Murphy, using his powers for the greater good.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The last ‘party’ Connor had gone to; it’d been the previous year at some crack house one of his dealer’s friends was squatting in. He’d gone for the free weed and snacks and had therefore spent the majority of his time there high as a hot air balloon. He remembers lying on the piss stained mattress, amusing himself with watching some of the other idiots snort up some of the harder shit, and later getting chucked out for smacking a guy who’d decided to try his luck getting handsy with him. High as he’d been, the hour walk home hadn’t felt so bad.

The next morning was an entirely different story.

Despite the fact he’s been banned from smoking, Alana’s rules, he finds this one is actually bearable without it. He’d either underestimated how much of a light weight Evan is or the ethics of these nerds when it comes to spiking, but whatever it is, it’s entertaining watching Evan get progressively drunker as the night goes on. Not that Evan’s on his way to getting white girl wasted however, he just gets happier, looser. Not so worried about the shit that comes out of his mouth. In fact, Connor quickly discovers that Evan without his self-imposed filter is pretty damn funny.

It kind of makes Connor want to get Evan high but only if Evan asks. He’s not that much of a dick. To Evan, at least.

Connor himself has drunk more than his soulmate but while he’s not quite at Evan’s level (he’s had a few years of building up his own tolerance), he feels a pleasant buzz that relaxes him enough to not glare at anyone who gets close. It also means he doesn’t care so much when Evan ends up leaning against him as someone brushes past, his body heat merging into one with Connor’s.

It helps that it’s Kleinman’s booze, too. Free alcohol should never be turned down, even if it comes from a total asshole. He hopes Kleinman is groveling on his knees right now. While he doesn’t want to get on Evan’s case about Kleinman, he wants him to make the guy work for that coveted forgiveness. Maybe then Connor can lessen the absolute hatred to enormously strong dislike.

With more and more people heading in the kitchen to refill their drinks and making the atmosphere claustrophobic, Connor decides to wander a bit. He’s just reached the hallway when he hears Alana’s voice loud over the music.

“How invited you?”

Curious, Connor peers around the doorframe to the living room.

“Does it matter? You should be glad I’m here. Now, why don’t I show you two lovely ladies a good time?” Connor doesn’t recognize the guy but with that way too styled platinum blond hair,
preppy pink polo shirt and leering smirk, Connor identifies him as the ultimate, entitled, posh boy douche bag. He’s leaning over Alana and Zoe, trapping them on the sofa with his glistening, muscled arms.

“I think I’d like you to leave.”

A guy beside posh boy appears, his lip bitten as he places a hand on the douche’s shoulder. “C’mon Aaron, you promised you’d be cool here.”

Aaron ignores both his weak-willed friend and Alana, swaying a bit as he dives in further so he’s right in Zoe’s face. “I promise you it’ll be fun,” he smirks. “I have a very extensive knowledge of what girls like you-”

SLAP

Connor’s eyes widen in admiration. He can see the red imprint left behind as Aaron recoils back. Though the music still plays, the sound was loud enough that everyone quiets down and looks over.

“Why you little bitch…”

Without even registering what he’s doing, Connor there and grabbing Aaron’s fist in his hand before it can get close to Zoe’s face, who flinches so violently that Alana puts a protective arm around her.

“Didn’t daddy dearest tell you it’s not polite to hit girls? Or is he too busy fucking the maid to give you a second thought?”

Connor will later blame the alcohol for what happens next because even though he still has a hold of Aaron’s right hand, he forgets the left, only remembering it when it slams into his face.

“Connor!”

He distantly hears his name being called. Zoe? Evan? Connor reels slightly, blinking an eye that is definitely going to be swollen later but fuck if he’s going to let that asswipe get in the final shot. He lunges, head bent and it connects with the posh fucker’s chin. The collision hurts like a bitch but causes Aaron to stumble backwards into his friend, who finally decides to do something useful and loops his arms around Aaron’s to hold him back. He feels hands grab him too but realizes just in time that they’re gentle, one of them bulked out. A cast.

“What’s going on?”

Yeah, definitely Evan but before he can answer he’s being wrenched back and before Aaron can get another hit in, there’s a body leaping in front of his, taking hold of the arm that has managed to get free. An elbow lands in the kid’s chest and it’s from the yelp of pain that Connor realizes it’s Kleinman. Aaron’s resorted to yelling obscenities, his friend pleading for him to cool down, and then all of a sudden everyone’s pitching in their fucking two cents. Connor, still feeling out of it and growing progressively more annoyed with the assault of voices, decides to focus on Evan who’s turning him around, his bare hand hovering in front of Connor’s face as if he’s afraid to touch.

“Are you okay?” He asks worriedly and Connor notices how shallow and quick his breathing is. He looks a second away from hyperventilating and Connor grabs onto the proffered wrist in what he hopes is a reassuring gesture because the last thing they all need is Evan dissolving into a panic attack.

“Been worse,” he mutters. “S’not a big-”
“Enough!”

Blessed fucking silence. Everyone turns to Alana, who despite her pale face, is standing strong, her expression a combination of furious and determined.

“The party is over,” she announces. “If you don’t leave within the next 5 minutes, I’m calling the cops.” No one moves. “I’m serious.”

Evan lets go of Connor just as everyone starts to scramble out, though the posh dick is more dragged out due to the combined effort of his groveling friend and Kleinman. Alana heads out to repeat her orders to the remainder of the guests and Connor waits because Zoe is, and Evan waits because of Connor and then Kleinman returns because…well, he clearly can’t stand not being the center of attention.

“Well…that was fun,” he says, rubbing his chest like the drama queen he is but at least he’s managed to sober up a little. In fact, so has Connor. Turns out pain is a good motivator.

“Are you okay?” This time the question’s from Zoe, who looks like she’s in a mild state of shock.

Connor just shrugs in response, embarrassment curdling within him. He’s never done this sort of shit before. If he’s in a fight, it’s because someone attacked him first.

“You defended us,” Zoe says, pointing out the obvious that doesn’t actually feel too obvious to Connor. He hadn’t meant to defend them. He’d just heard the shit Aaron was spouting, seen that angered intent in his eyes and…reacted. He hadn’t thought about it, hadn’t gone out with the mindset that he needed to rescue Zoe. It’s not that he regrets it; no one should get away with that fucked up way of thinking but…now they were going to expect things of him. They were going to treat him differently.

“He was a dick,” Connor replies sullenly, his pulse beating a painful melody behind his eye, his forehead adding a bass to match. It’s not his first black eye but that still doesn’t mean it doesn’t hurts like a motherfucker.

“Thank you for what you did Connor, it really means a lot,” Alana says, having finished removing the stragglers, and her sincerity makes him feel like his skin is itching all over, as if this niceness is infecting him like a disease. He can handle it from Evan, he’s sort of obligated to be nice as his soulmate, but Alana’s not. Zoe’s not. Kleinman certainly fucking isn’t.

Everyone’s eyes are on him and he can see the image they’re forming of him in their heads, like he’s now a pure white knight in shining armor. Which, he’s not. That’s Zoe’s job and shit now she’s looking at him like Alana is. “Like I said,” he says, wanting to go, go get the hell out of there, leave, “it was nothing.” He takes a step back but collides with Evan who puts a steadying hand on him as if he needs it.

“It wasn’t nothing,” Zoe says and now she sounds angry. Good, Connor can deal with angry, the familiarity is almost comforting. “Listen, I don’t care how you’re trying to excuse this but you stood up against a disgusting piece of shit for me and my soulmate and that means something, okay? It means something good and I don’t-I don’t want you playing it off. I want you to admit you care and fuck it I want to care about my big brother!”

And then she’s hugging him. Connor freezes and, since there’s no other option available, ends up loosely wrapping his arms back around her.

“Fuck, I’m crying,” Zoe mutters into his shirt and maybe Connor has some brain damage because he
“Why,” Zoe sniffs. “Why are you laughing?”

“It’s just hilarious hearing you, the golden child, swear so much.” Oh if only their parents could hear her now…

“Shut the fuck up,” Zoe says, letting out a wet laugh of her own and she lightly punches him on the arm as she pulls away. “But seriously, please don’t say it isn’t a big deal.”

Though Connor’s jaw clenches briefly, the words eventually find their way out. “Fine, I won’t.”

“Thank you.” Zoe rubs at her eyes, smudging her mascara even more. She sees the dark stain on her hand and groans. “This is why I don’t wear make-up.”

“I’ll get you a wipe,” Alana offers. “And I’ll get you something for your eye Connor. And your chest Jared,” she adds, when Kleinman begins to wildly gesture to his torso. When she comes back, both Evan and Jared get their gratitude from the girls (with far less fanfare than him, he notes) and Connor gives a thank you of his own to Evan that might also extend to Kleinman.

“What actually happened? Who was that guy?” Evan asks when they’ve begun to help Alana clean up. It’s not the easiest thing, what with holding a pack of frozen peas over his eyes, but he knows if he sits back than Kleinman will take that as an excuse to be a lazy fucker himself.

“Aaron Cooper, cousin of Daniel Cooper who I tutor,” Alana explains grimly. “He’s visiting Daniel for the weekend and he assured me Aaron was a good guy. Clearly, he’s not seen him after a few drinks. Anyway, he came up to Zoe and I, first asking if we were soulmates. Seeing no reason to hide that, I said yes. At first he seemed nice, asking innocent questions but then he quickly started saying lewd, inappropriate things. According to him, he’d never had ‘two chicks who were soulmates’ before. And then, when he started getting worse, Zoe slapped him. Hard,” she grins at Zoe with obvious admiration and his sister preens. “As you can guess, he didn’t like that and just when he was about to try and hurt Zoe, Connor came in and stopped him.”

“Wow Connor, that was brave,” Evan says and shit now he’s looking at Connor the way Alana looks at Zoe, like he’s hung the fucking sun with his bare hands.

“It’s…,” he catches Zoe’s stare. “I guess.” He presses the bag of peas harder on his eye, needing the relief of the cool, dull ache.

“Who would have thought it,” Kleinman exclaims dramatically. “Connor Murphy, using his powers for the greater good.”

“Oh, you’re still here?” Connor says dryly, glaring.

“Hey,” Kleinman yelps. “I helped save your ungrateful ass and I’m cleaning now! And me and Evan are cool now, aren’t we?”

“Yeah,” Evan affirms with a small smile. “We are.”

“There.” Kleinman sticks his tongue out childishy and yeah, he has to have a concussion or something because he mirrors the action.

They finish the cleaning and Connor looks at the time to find it’s only 10.30.

“So, um, I know it’s not really a party anymore, again, thank you for helping me tidy up, but if you
want I still have snacks and drinks left. It’s not too late yet either so if you guys want to stay…”

“We totally want to stay, right guys?” The look Zoe aims at the rest of them dares them to say no and considering Connor’s her ride home…he sighs.

“Totally,” he draws and though she rolls her eyes, she gives him an approving nod. “You cool with that Evan?”

Evan nods and Alana claps her hands together. “Great! Do you want to stay too Jared?”

“Well, I was gonna head off to another party half-way through but…,” he notices the dry expressions everyone’s giving him. “It’s probably lame anyway. This is where the good times are happening people!”

“Hey Alana,” Zoe speaks up, almost shyly. “You wouldn’t happen to have a color chart, would you?”

Alana perks up. “I do! Uh…you guys don’t mind, right?”

Of course, Kleinman can’t go one minute without opening his mouth. “Sure, taunt poor old Jared who’s going to be forever alone…”

“Are you always like this?” Asks Zoe and Kleinman shrugs.

“I am what I am.”

“Huh,” Zoe nods, as if she’s figured something out. “It makes sense now.”

“What makes sense exactly?” Kleinman asks suspiciously.

“Why Connor wants to punch you so much.”

Connor’s mouth gapes.

“I thought you were supposed to be the nice one!” Kleinman whines.

Zoe grins sharply. “Wherever did you get that idea?”

Holy shit. He likes his sister.

While Connor gets to grips with that revelation, Evan intervenes in an attempt to keep things civil until Alana comes back, color chart in hand. While she and Zoe begin looking over it, Evan obviously feels guilty and keeps Kleinman distracted, giving Connor full opportunity to lean back and subtly observe the girls. This, Connor thinks, is how it’s supposed to go, with shy glances every time their elbow’s graze, nervous laughs when they bump heads looking at a new color. It’s excitement, hope, the promise of a lifetime learning each other. Something he robbed Evan of because who he is and who he can’t be.

There’s a sudden silence to his left and finds Evan glancing over at him, Kleinman having managed to insert himself beside Zoe and Alana, trying to get them to describe what colors are like to him. “It’s nice,” he murmurs, joining Connor on the sofa. “I think they’ll be good together.”

“Mmm.” Is Evan thinking the same as him; that Connor took this moment away from him? Does he wish he’d got Zoe after all? Does he realize how much he’s forced to settle, just by having Connor as his soulmate?
When Zoe giggles at something Alana says, he notices Alana pause and take a moment to simply look at Zoe, to see the crinkle around her eyes, the dimples their Aunt Rosemary always used to grab. Connor knows that after a couple of days, she’ll know Zoe better than he will because all he knows is the kid who used to follow him everywhere, the teenager who hates…hated his guts.

Zoe and Alana will probably go on dates. Shit, Alana will get introduced to his parents. What will Larry think? Will he be horrified or will he approve of Alana considering she’s, well, Alana. Then again, Larry actually likes Zoe, approves of her life choices. He’s happy to pay for her music, watches the recordings mom takes of her recitals.

It’s then that Connor realizes that Larry is a better father to Zoe than he is a brother.

Fuck.

“Are you okay?” Evan asks, jolting him out of his thoughts. “Is it your eye?”

“Huh. No, it’s okay.” Honestly, Connor had almost forgotten about it, his eye practically numb by this point. It’ll leave a nice bruise behind but he’s been through worse. Knowing how quickly word travels, he figures he’ll either be rumored to have put the other guy in hospital or outright killed him. He’s already been called Lucifer incarnate once. Nothing can top that.

“It really was good, what you did,” Evan repeats quietly and fuck, can they not just forget about it? “I wish I could stand up to people like you can.”

“You don’t want to be like me, trust me,” Connor replies, a half-smirk on his face. “That sort of thing, not always a smart move.”

“Sometimes doing what’s right isn’t always smart,” Evan points out before turning back to watch Zoe snatch back the chart from Kleinman’s grip. “Sometimes you just have to…not overthink things.”

There are fairy lights strung up around the top of the walls, the last remnant of the party and Connor notices how they hit Evan so his face is illuminated, leaving shadows an artist would be proud of. A trail of moles is also highlighted, reaching from Evan’s barely exposed chest upwards to his neck, almost like a dot to dot that could be trailed with a fingertip.

The flash startles even him and everyone jumps, turning towards him as he quickly shoves his phone away.

“What?” Connor snaps. “It was an accident. I was checking on my eye.”

“Uhuh, sure you w-ow! Injured man here she-demon!”

Zoe rolls her eyes while Kleinman morosely rubs his stomach.

“How about we play some games?” Alana suggests and grateful for the change in topic, Connor nods. While everything’s getting set up, he takes a second to look at the picture. Hell, he might not have wanted a soulmate but Connor can appreciate nice looking things and that photo is pretty damn nice.

If he’s being brutally honest, Connor expects it to be lame, since they end up playing kid games, but it actually ends up being…kind of fun. Kleinman beats them all at cheat, his smart-ass comments turning into an effective distraction and then Zoe demands they play Pictionary, glancing at Connor as she does so as if he doesn’t remember Christmas’ spent playing it at Grandma Petals’, the old
woman beating them all no matter who she was partnered with, her drawing skills unmatched.

Kleinman charitably places himself on Alana and Zoe’s team claiming he’s sorry but ‘I’ve seen your drawing skills Ev and I am a winner,’ but jokes on him because, while Zoe’s not bad, she prefers to be more creative with her interpretations, stating it makes the game more interesting. It’s something that Alana and Jared begin to struggle with, not that it really puts them at an advantage. Evan…well, he tries but his King Kong looks more like a hobo who’s been having some hair issues.

It ends up being a tie and Alana says they should switch teams which means Connor suddenly finds himself partnered with Zoe and there’s a glint in her eye that Connor knows is reflected back.

They’re going to fucking dominate them.

And they do.

“What the hell?! How is that Titanic?” Jared cries when Connor guesses it from the depiction of two stick figures standing on a long line in water, arrows pointing all around them.

“It’s a reference to the fact they both could have got on that plank and Rose was just a selfish bitch,” Connor explains.

“Obviously,” both Murphy’s say at the same time and they pause. Zoe offers him a timid smile and Connor finds his own lips quirking upwards.

“Well, c’mon guys. Our turn next. Jared, you’re up,” Alana says and fuck, Connor’s not felt…he’s not felt this alive in ages. He’s never been all that competitive, or at least, not for a long time but now he wants to win, he wants to have fun. He’s not even been drinking more, not wanting Evan to freak if he has alcohol before driving them home. He’s just…he’s just living and everything’s actually alright.

Though, just because he’s not been drinking doesn’t mean the others haven’t started again. In fact, he’s pretty sure sober Alana wouldn’t have unearthed her old Wii from the depths of hell.

“These are all girly games,” Kleinman complains, digging through them and then Zoe, a mischievous grin on her face, pulls out Dance on Broadway.

“I was eleven!” Alana cries but it doesn’t matter. When Zoe’s got her mind on something, it stays there until she gets what she wants, which is the game flashing up on the TV. Connor, employing all of his practiced manipulation skills, plays up his eye and spouts some shit about a headache and he gets free reign to sit back and enjoy the show. Kleinman, once he’s downed another shot for ‘luck’, obviously chooses ‘Just Can’t Wait To Be King’, but he’s only close to laughing when he watches Zoe drunkenly perform ‘Bend and Snap’ to a bright faced Alana.

He’s not close to laughing when it’s Evan’s turn next, gathering the courage after doing a shot of his own and having Alana join him for it. They pick All That Jazz, because it’s one both of them know, but almost instantly, Connor finds his throat dry. Not only is the dancing just as flirty as Zoe’s was, but Evan’s fucking amazing. He didn’t know a guy’s hips could move the way Evan’s does and considering how Evan’s concentration is fully on the screen (probably the only way he’s getting through it), Connor’s able to stare at him in amazement and try not to focus on those fucking dips he does. Who the fuck designed this game?

If it’s any consolation, Zoe’s eyes are stuck on Alana, who’s also doing a pretty decent job, even if it’s not at Evan’s standard. How Evan, shy, stuttering, awkward Evan can dance like this, he doesn’t know. They receive the largest applause and even though he looks like he might keel over from all
the blood in his face, Evan’s got a shy grin on his face and shit, Connor might need a shot of his own because he can’t help but think how fucking adorable it looks, such a contrast to how shamefully he was moving his body before.

“You’ve been holding out on us,” Connor manages to say once Evan’s sat back down.

“Oh, I-I’m not that good really.”

“Evan,” Kleinman crawls over to hold Evan’s hand in his. “You’re my bro and I am not gay for you but I am gay for your moves. You moves are smooth.”

“Oh.”

“You are really good Evan,” Alana compliments. “Have you ever thought about joining a club?”

Evan looks petrified, as if he believes Alana’s going to force him into one (which, considering how she’s already spoken about college applications and the importance of being a ‘well rounded individual’, she damn well might) and since he’s making a habit of saving damsels in distress, he says, “So, I guess it’s Kleinman’s turn again? Unless he can’t face going after that.”

The challenge works and soon everyone’s distracted again…apart from Evan, who’s smiling at Connor in a way that has his insides do somersaults. Although, he doesn’t smile for long as halfway through his next song, Kleinman stops, face crinkled in pain.

“I think I’m going to barf.”

He doesn’t, much to the relief of Alana’s pristine white carpet, but it does bring an end to the little party of theirs, not a bad thing since it is getting close to curfew and he’d prefer not to spoil this evening with his parents yelling at him. Alana calls a taxi for Jared and Connor and Evan wait in the car for Alana and Zoe to say their goodbyes.

“Best. Party. Ever!” Zoe exclaims as she slams the door shut.

“It was alright,” Connor says, all the while thinking the same exact thing.

Chapter End Notes

Now, just imagine Ben Platt dancing to this. Also, you should totally check out his performance of a little priest with Uzo Aduba here. You’re welcome.
Chapter Summary

Evan’s never really thought of himself as greedy, or particularly selfish, but he must be now because he’s no longer content keeping that bridge between them. He finds himself wondering what it would be like to kiss Connor. Would he like it? Would he do it wrong?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Saturday morning, Evan experiences his first hangover. At first, he doesn’t know why his head is pounding and why his mouth tastes a lot grosser than normal but when the memories of the previous night come back it all makes sense.

As much as he’d said his mom might congratulate him getting drunk, he’s grateful that she’s working a morning shift.

It’s not so bad though, recovering in bed when he feels so light, so happy. It looks like everything’s finally working out. He and Jared are friends again, Zoe and Alana found each other and he and Connor…things are just good. Really good. He’s never had as much fun as he had at the party. Sure, remembering the whole dancing thing kind of makes him want to hide under the covers but, for once, it’s a pleasant kind of embarrassment.

It helps that he can still recall Connor’s face from when he’d sat back down.

Speak of the devil, Evan’s phone chimes with a message and though the bright light in his dim room makes his headache spike, he still grins when he sees Connor’s name flash up.

How’re you feeling lightweight?

Even with no one else around, Evan finds himself burrowing his flushed face under the pillow.

My head’s a bit sore. How are you? Is your eye okay?

Instead of a text, Connor sends a picture and Evan opens it to see Connor’s shut eye, the skin around it mottled purple and red and swollen slightly just beneath his lower lashes.

Looks worse than it is. Should’ve seen my mom’s reaction.

Evan dares to ask the question.

Are they mad?

The triple dot symbol taunts Evan as he waits for the reply.

Not once Zoe explained. Larry was even alright, told me he was ‘proud of me’ and some shit. Probably the only time I’m gonna get congratulated for fighting.
The tense breath Evan had been holding in slowly relaxes at the words. It looks like things might be looking up for Connor too.

Monday lunchtime, Evan sits with the largest group of people who actually liked him since…well, forever. He hadn’t even been expecting it; he’d just assumed things would be similar to how they’d been before but when he and Connor reached their spot it was to find Alana and Zoe already sitting there, Jared turning up five minutes later. At first it’s kind of awkward without the alcohol to act as a buffer, their group is a mismatch of people who by all accounts shouldn’t (and with Connor and Jared, definitely don’t always) get along, but it quickly becomes a good kind of imperfection.

After that, it ends up becoming a thing of theirs, almost. Sometimes, the girls and Jared will join Evan and Connor outside and with the weather getting colder, they even occasionally venture into the cafeteria, claiming a table all of their own (not that it’s an easy feat to get Connor in there). They don’t always sit together, there are times where Alana is busy or will sit with Zoe and her friends, other times Evan and Connor just want to spend a lunch in peaceful silence. Jared even hangs out with the people he met at the party (much to Alana’s smugness). But even so, it’s nice knowing he has other friends to fall back on, nice not to feel so alone anymore, to have eyes he can catch in the corridor without him flinching away. His anxiety is that much better for it meaning his sessions with Miss Daniels have become less daunting. He no longer has to try and come up with sensible, rational reasons for why he would spend every day alone and weekends shut away in his house.

The week after the party, they’re all outside taking advantage of one of last sunny days before the icy chill properly sets in. Zoe and Alana are huddled together resting against the same tree, Jared is sprawled out like a cat on the one sunny patch and Evan and Connor fill the remaining space to form a tiny circle. Alana’s telling them something about how she’s trying to get the kitchen staff to provide more vegan options and while Evan’s really trying to listen about the problems of secret dairy, his attention is stuck on watching how her and Zoe interact. It’s barely been more than a week and already Alana has been introduced to the Murphy’s (‘Please make them stop giggling’, Connor had texted) and Zoe is going to go around Alana’s that weekend for her own introduction. They have in-jokes, casual touches, and even now, their hands are so close together that they’re an inch away from touching. Despite knowing that it isn’t like this for all soulmates, that for a majority of them it takes much longer for them to really get to know each other and feel comfortable, he can’t help the pang of…jealousy? Longing? Evan isn’t sure what it is; only that it’s starting to keep him up at night.

He likes Connor, that’s a given, but he’s beginning to think that he doesn’t just like Connor but he…he like likes him and he knows how lame it sounds, like he’s a pre-schooler, but it’s becoming a real issue. Connor had told him at the start that this wasn’t going to be a typical soulmate romance and that had been fine with Evan; in fact he’d wanted the same. But now, after getting to know Connor, everything’s changed. He can’t ignore the little things that makes Evan think that maybe Connor likes him…more too but this whole thing is so new to them, so new to the both of them, that Evan has to wonder if he’s not just making things up, reading into things more than he should. Anyway, they’d struggled enough being friends, why should Evan even consider ruining that?

It’s hard though. It’s hard when Connor suddenly decides to keep wearing eyeliner, the thin layer of black just unnoticeable enough that the teachers don’t bother to call him out on it. It’s hard when it frames blue eyes that reveal all the emotions Connor tries to lock away. It’s hard when that small, content smile of his starts making more of an appearance. Connor may not say he’s doing better but the signs are there, in how his hair is always clean and brushed, how his nails are going through a rainbow of colours, how he and Jared can have conversations without one of them threatening bodily damage.
How he and Zoe can now tease each other, even if the hesitancy is still there.

He wants to hold onto Connor’s hand, just like Zoe does with Alana’s when she finally crosses that short distance, wants their eyes to catch, for there to be that almost visible connection between them, that spark. Evan’s never really thought of himself as greedy, or particularly selfish, but he must be now because he’s no longer content keeping that bridge between them. He finds himself wondering what it would be like to kiss Connor. Would he like it? Would he do it wrong? It shouldn’t be difficult, just placing his lips on Connor’s, but he hears all the time about how you have to get the right angle otherwise you just bump noses and what if he forgets to breathe and ends up accidently hyperventilating? Then there’s the issue of his hands. Would he put them on Connor’s hips or would one go in his hair? Connor’s hair looks so soft now that sometimes, Evan gets the urge to run his fingers through it, to see if he’s right.

God, he’s so weird.

“Hey, earth to Hansen. For a guy who’s into nature you’ve sure mutilated that poor innocent flower.”

Evan jolts, dropping the now petal-less flower to the ground. At least Jared caught him doing that and not staring at Connor.

“Sorry. Um, lost in thought.”

“That’s okay Evan,” Alana says patiently. “I was just wondering if you were going to the school concert? It’s two weeks on Friday and the tickets cost $4. I’m helping organise it and Zoe’s playing and….” she ducks her head shyly. “I thought it would be nice if we were all there.”

A plan with friends? How could Evan turn that down?

“I’ll come,” he replies.

“Great!” Alana clasps her hands. “I can get you all tickets tomorrow if you’d like. I think they’ve printed them out but if not I can always push things along...oh, speaking of; I should really see if the schedule has been sorted out yet. I’ll go check now.”

In official ‘planning’ mode, Alana distractedly heads off and Zoe grins, getting up as well. “I should probably go and make sure she doesn’t terrorise some poor teacher. See you guys.”

“What do you think the bets are of Alana bagging us some free food?” Jared wonders once she’s gone and Connor snorts.

“You? None.”

Jared slaps a hand to his chest. “Ouch. Rude, dude. Just for that, I’m not inviting you to my house this afternoon. Evan, you up for it? My mom misses you.”

No longer feeling insecure, Evan decides to tease Jared when he says, “I guess she’s threatening your insurance again?”

“What? No!” Jared’s scandalised look makes Evan laugh and his friend’s face falls into a mock unimpressed look as he lightly thumps Evan’s shoulder. “You’re clearly hanging around Murphy too much. He’s a bad influence. It’s just…,” he turns a bit more serious. “It’s just been a while and I miss playing games with you man.”

Connor raises an eyebrow. “From what I heard you don’t even let him play.”
“Hey, Evan likes watching me play, isn’t that right?”

“It’s true,” Evan admits shyly. He’s never been that great at video games, difficult levels and boss battles making him far too anxious, so he’s always preferred watching Jared show him how it’s supposed to be done.

“There,” Jared sticks his tongue out at Connor. “You’re extra uninvited now.”

“Oh no,” says Connor dryly. “Whatever will I do?”

“I don’t know how Evan puts up with you.”

“Ditto.”

Evan rolls his eyes. For all that it’s like watching a pair of toddlers, Evan’s pretty sure there’s some friendship there somewhere. It’s just their own unique version of it and really, it would be weirder if they did start being nice to each other.

“So, what do you say Ev? You coming?”

“Yeah, I’ll be there,” he answers and though he pretends to ignore the triumphant grin Jared shoots Connor, he can’t help the quiet laugh.

Yeah, this is definitely the best kind of imperfection.

Mrs Kleinman envelopes him in a warm hug when he enters Jared’s house and the warm scent of cinnamon surrounding her brings him back to afternoons spent sampling her famous home-made apple pie. He melts into the hug, only realising then how much he’s missed the other woman who, at one point in his life, he’d almost considered a second mom.

“Evan, it’s been too long! How’s school? Oh, look at that smile, things must be going well.”

“They are Mandy,” Evan just manages to get out before Jared’s dragging him away by his arm.

“While I bet we’d all really love a nice catch up we’ve got important stuff to do, right Evan? See you for dinner mom!”

Mandy shakes her head, an exasperated sigh leaving her lips. “You have fun boys.”

“You’re welcome,” Jared says as he pushes his door shut. “You know my mom, we woulda been in that hallway until dinner, which would’ve been at midnight by the time she finished grilling you.”

“I don’t mind talking to your mom Jared,” Evan replies amusedly.

“Which is weird and something I am not willing to analyse. No,” he grins sharply, “I wanna analyse you and Connor.”

Evan freezes. “W-What do you mean. There’s nothing to analyse,” he hastily replies.

His beetroot face contradicts him.

“So you just happen to be looking at Connor like a love-sick puppy when I glance over. It’s just coincidence that your face lights up like a Christmas tree every time someone says the guy’s name. C’mon, you guys are totally boning, right?”
If Jared continues, the blood is going to explode out of his head.

“We’re just friends!”

“Uh-huh and I’m…,” Jared trails off, a thoughtful expression forming on his face. “You’re telling the truth, aren’t you? You haven’t done the dirty deed? Not even a teeny weenie kiss?”

“Just friends,” Evan repeats forcefully.

“Huh…and you’re cool with that?” He asks and Evan nods, lying through his teeth when he replies with a firm, “yes.”

Unfortunately, he’s not a very good liar and Jared’s more perceptive than he lets on.

“You’re not,” he breathes. “Dude, don’t worry. Secret’s totally safe with me this time. Scouts honour.”

“You were never in the scouts,” Evan points out and Jared waves a hand.

“Technicalities. Point is; I got your back bro. Now. What do you want to do about it?”

“What-do you mean?”

“Well, do you want to kiss that douche or do you just want to keep on secretly pining?”

“I don’t, I-,” Evan huffs. “When we started hanging out we had…conditions.”

Jared raises an eyebrow. “What, did you guys make a contract or something?”

“Not exactly. It’s just…at the beginning Connor said we weren’t going to be together, you know, like that so obviously there’s no chance of it even happening. Connor doesn’t even like me that way, it’s not like there’s that much to like anyway so-”

“I’m gonna hold you there Ev,” Jared interrupts. “Ignoring your pity party, because you’re a great guy and Connor’s lucky to have you, that dude is definitely into you. I don’t care what he said way back whenever because these eyes,” he whips a finger to and fro in front of his glasses,” see everything. Trust me; if you’re not looking at Connor then he’s looking your way, though he’s more subtle about it. You could learn a thing or two.”

“You’re wrong,” Evan says because if anyone’s always acutely aware of other people, it’s Evan himself. He knows the moment someone enters the room, notices their mannerisms, their tone of voice. In some ways it’s a burden, in others, a safety mechanism. It allows him to keep an eye on the situation, know if people are just humouring him, how they really feel about him. He’d know if Connor felt the same way about him, wouldn’t he? Sure, there were hints he did but…it was probably just Evan’s wishful thinking, nothing more. Right?

“You don’t sound so sure about that,” Jared comments.

“I don’t—it’s just…he said himself that he’s not ready for that sort of thing. I should just be grateful we’re friends.”

“Now, are you saying that because Connor’s not ready or because you’re not?”

Was he ready for a relationship? Evan’s never been one to watch romantic films, never looked past the cover of the ‘steamy’ books his mom likes. He knows, in theory, what a relationship is supposed to be like but he’s never really factored himself into the equation. He doesn’t know how he’d fit in
it, what dates with him involved would be like. And the unknown is one of the scariest things with Evan. Could he get over it enough to be with Connor? Connor who never sets out to make Evan feel bad about himself, who already knows about his anxiety, most of his problems.

There would be a steep learning curve but Evan thinks maybe, just maybe, he could get through it with his soulmate.

**Not** that he should even be entertaining these kinds of thoughts.

“I don’t know but it doesn’t matter. Can we just play your game?”

Jared’s face droops. “Sure we can. Just remember dude, I’m here for you and if you *do* decide you wanna do something about this then I’ll help you out with my infinite wisdom and experience. I’ll be the wingiest wingman to ever wing.”

That draws a smile out of Evan. “Not to be mean but, um, what experience *do* you have?”

Jared smirks. “You remember Kelly Gram?”

“Oh, from second grade? Didn’t she move?”

Jared’s glasses get dipped down his nose. “And what a farewell it was. I still have the candy ring she gave me. And then there was Alice from a holiday in Canada, Randalf when we went to visit dear old Grandpa…I’ve been around the block.”

Considering how much Jared likes to boast, he’s surprised that this is the first he’s heard about any of this. Also surprisingly, Evan’s pretty sure Jared’s not making them up.

“But you never dated any of them?”

Jared shrugs. “Me and Alice did a few activities together,” realising what he said, he wiggles his eyebrows before continuing, “But otherwise, there wasn’t really the time. Different states and countries and all that. Also, I’m not gonna limit myself to a LDR. I gotta…keep my options open.”

“You mean find your soulmate?”

“No,” Jared instantly fires back. “Well, not exactly. I just don’t wanna be tied down. I’m young, I’ve got this hot bo-day. I shouldn’t deny myself simple pleasures. Anyway, point is I have some experience of getting with people that I am more than willing to impart to you my young padawan. Just listen to wise old Obi Wan.”

Evan bites his lip. “…Can I get back to you on that?”

Jared shrugs. “Whatever you want. Now, do you wanna watch me play Skyrim or Legend of Zelda?”

Evan picks Zelda (he likes the story and the recently turned bright colours) and it’s while Jared’s in the middle of being brutally attacked (Evan’s *really* glad he’s not the one playing), he asks, “If I *did* decide to, I don’t know, hint to Connor that I, uh, *liked* him more than, you know. Um. H-how exactly would I do that?”

“Stupid. Fucking. Hang on Evan, I gotta, no stop blocking, don’t you dare you creepy motherfucking pervert, *don’t you dare*. Shit.”

The Game Over screen flashes up and Jared glares at the TV briefly before giving Evan his
undivided attention. Evan suddenly wishes Jared would keep playing while they had this conversation.

“So, say again?”

“How would I, um, get Connor to, you know…notice that I like him, like that, and not uh, scare him off or anything?”

Jared folds his legs under him and faces Evan, thumb and index finger rubbing against his chin.

“Well, previous behaviour has shown that your soulmate has a thing for running away so it’s gotta be done delicately. You guys go over to each other’s houses, right?”

“A couple of times, yeah.”

“And you what, ate food and watched TV?”

Evan nods.

“Hm, we could work with that.”

“Wh-what do you mean?”

“Can you cook?” Jared asks unexpectedly and Evan flushes.

“I can cook frozen food?” His mom once bought him a cookbook for his birthday, in the hope he’d feed himself better when she was working but the one time Evan had tried, he’d been so paranoid that his chicken would be undercooked that it was burnt by the time he went back to it. The book was probably still gathering dust on the top shelf.

“Well, I know how to make bolognese but him, no, everyone knows you don’t eat that on a date so what about…fajitas.”

“Date? Fajitas? What?”

“It’s not too difficult. You just need to stir fry some veg, bit of whatever meat you’ve got lying around, buy some salsa, gauc, wraps and hey presto, you just impressed Connor Murphy with your super awesome cooking skills.”

“What do you mean by date?”

Jared blinks. “Well, why else would you cook him food? Listen, I’m not saying this is gonna happen straight away, it shouldn’t. You’ve got to be like the ocean, creeping up, enticing him, then pulling back, creeping up a little more, go back and then BAM.” Evan jumps as Jared pounds a fist into his palm. “You get him right where it hurts. Or doesn’t hurt. You know what I mean. So, you’ve got to give hints of your own, see how receptive he is and then, once all that sexual tension has built up, you plan a date. But, you don’t tell him it’s a date, so then if things aren’t looking so hot you can keep things normal. If it does go well, then hey, you do what feels right. You stare at each other over those steaming hot plates of fajitas and then go in for a steaming hot kiss.”

Evan shakes his head. “Ignoring…ignoring everything else, I don’t know how to cook fajitas.”

“Well, you’re looking at your new cooking master. In fact, I’m not Obi Wan, I’m Gordon Ramsey.” He places his hands on Evan’s ears. “I promise I will not make you an idiot sandwich.”

Evan laughs, shaking Jared off him. “You’d really help?”
Sighing, Jared says, “God, this is the last of the mush I have in me, okay? Yes I will help you because goddamn it we need some more happiness going around, especially after everything I put you through. I’m your bro and I help you show just what your soulmate’s missing out on. Now, sit back, listen and learn.”

Chapter End Notes

Man, I thought Connor was fun to write? Jared is even better – all the references! (Also, I’m curious, does anyone know which boss Jared was fighting against? :P)

I’d love to know your thoughts! :)
Take Deep Breaths

Chapter Summary

“Fajitas?” Connor repeats dumbly.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Connor’s no stranger to bad days; however, he’s been doing pretty well for the past while, all things considered and as such, his guard was finally starting to recede a bit.

He should have known that the universe was just saving it all up for one colossally horrific day. It had started off shitty, followed through with some epic bouts of fuckery and finished with a nice dousing of self-hatred.

First, he’d woken up late. His phone had finally decided that the nice long crack in its centre was the last straw and was on a mission to screw Connor over. By the time he was ready (which wasn’t really the correct word to use – more that he’d managed to shove on the bare minimum amount of clothing deemed socially acceptable) Zoe had already left for the bus. The bright side of that, however, was that he could drive as recklessly as he damn well wanted which was necessary because Evan, after leaving in a rush the previous night to avoid Larry, had left his essay at his house and of course, it was due in that morning. He’d made it (after hastily avoiding a cop just coming onto duty) but with only seconds to spare and if he hadn’t been so highly strung already, some punk then decided to comment on his hair which, yeah, he hadn’t had time to brush but it was still better than that fucking bleached mop.

That kid was literally saved by the bell.

Second period, he’d got marks for a test back. Normally, Connor didn’t put much stock in those, tests were simply a grade on how well you remembered shit and therefore a waste of his time, but for this one he’d actually worked for it. Evan had helped him revise and everything. The reward for that? A D. Not even a pass, a fucking D. As if that wasn’t insult enough, the old bat Mrs Rell went on to say ‘I expected better Connor, especially with your increased attendance,’ like she wasn’t just shitting over all the effort Connor had actually put into it. And now, now his parents have to pounce on him when he’s scarcely made it through the fucking door. Figures Larry would use his afternoon off to make Connor’s life hell.

“How have you sent off that application yet?” Larry asks but it’s with the tone of voice Connor recognises to mean it’s not a question and that there is no good outcome of this conversation.

This all started when Alana came over for dinner. At first, it was alright. So far, Larry hasn’t been the homophobic piece of shit Connor expected and it helped that Alana mostly spoke about her parents, rather than giving details on her and Zoe, which Connor gets enough of an idea about from their painfully thin walls. It makes Connor want to throw up sometimes.

In fact, things had been going so smoothly that Connor had even been debating bringing up Evan to them. Zoe’s been casually hinting he do so ever since their reaction to Alana went down so well and with the five of them sat around the table, that one extra space made so glaringly obvious, he’d
actually seriously considered it.

Then his parents had to bring up fucking college.

“Oh, I’m applying for government and politics,” said Alana. “As cliché as it sounds, I really want to be able to change our country for the better.”

Larry nodded approvingly. “A bright girl like you should have no problem. Say, maybe you can give Connor some tips. With his lack of motivation, I’m not sure how he thinks he’ll get into business school.”

All the attention turned to Connor and he froze; his fork halfway up to his mouth. Knowing that an argument was on the horizon, that dig had already stirred up not a small amount of fury, he stuffed the lamb in his mouth, hoping Larry would drop the topic.

He didn’t. Rather, Alana didn’t but he was more inclined to blame his dear old dad for bringing it up in the first place.

“Oh, you want to go to business school? You never mentioned that before Connor.” Which had been on purpose. Whenever Alana brought up the subject to their small group, he’d decided that was the perfect moment to take a spontaneous nap. “What sort of career would you like in the future?”

Connor tried to chew for as long as possible but then Larry’s hand slapped his back. It was all he could do to not spit out the piece of meat in Zoe’s face. “Well, should all things go according to plan you’ll follow in your old man’s footsteps. Isn’t that right?”

Connor knew he should have lied and said yes. It would have been the easier, peaceful option, the one his parents wanted to hear so they could carry on with this lovely family dinner.

Too bad Connor’s never been one to hold things back, no matter the situation.

“No.”

“What Connor means is that there are a lot of options available and it would be silly to focus on one so soon-”

“Actually mom,” Connor interrupted, tone icy cold. “I don’t want to study business full stop.”

Larry briefly frowned, then seemed to remember Alana was there, and turned it into a pained smile. “We’ve spoken about this Connor, that art school fantasy of yours will never lead to a prosperous career. I mean, you’ve even given up your photography hobby now so-”

Zoe subtly drew Alana into a different conversation, allowing Connor free reign. “Well maybe I don’t give a shit if I don’t get some fancy ass job,” he said, ignoring his mom’s sharp inhale. “Maybe I want to do something that could actually make me fucking happy for once instead of having to see your face at work every fucking day.” Then he took a deep breath, carefully placed his fork and knife next to each other on the plate, and ground out, “May I be excused mother?” Even Zoe and Alana had paused then, the silence almost deafening before his mom cleared her throat.

“Connor Lawrence Murphy, you do not-”

“Thanks.”

With his mom trying to stifle her outraged spluttering, Connor shoved his chair under his table and
escaped to his room, knowing full well that his parents wouldn’t come running after him until Alana left. Which, of course, they did. What first started as an lecture over Connor’s attitude (‘especially in front of your sister’s soulmate Connor, how could you?’) led to an argument over college at which point Larry set a deadline for Connor to send in his first application or there would be ‘consequences’.

That deadline is today and Connor is really not in the mood to play nice. He wants to hurt his parents just like he’s hurting.

“Oh yeah,” Connor says. “It was some place in Arizona. Figured it was the furthest away I could get from you.”

“Connor,” Cynthia gasps and wow, is that waterworks already? Must be a new record.

“What did I say about that disrespect of yours Connor?” Larry asks, attempting to assert his dominance as the patriarchal fuckwad by placing his hands on his hips. “I know you didn’t send any applications.”

“Hacking my emails again Larry? That’s low,” Connor says, picking at his nail polish. “Why bother even asking me then? Thought you were against ‘wasting time’.”

“Connor, you do not speak to your father like that,” his mom hisses but it lacks any severity what with how her voice shakes.

“I’m just being honest mom,” he replies with faux innocence. “Isn’t that you wanted from me, honesty?”

“That’s it!” Larry thunders. “You are grounded Connor. You are not going to Evan’s, you are not going to the concert and you are not allowed out of this house except for school. We are going to work on your applications this weekend and there will be no getting out of it.”

Connor raises an eyebrow in challenge. “I’d like to see you try and make me.”

Before Larry can say anything more, his mom is pushing past him. “You go to your room this instance Connor. You can tell your sister why you won’t be coming with us on the way.”

“Wait, Connor’s not coming?” Zoe’s voice calls from the top of the stairs, head reaching over the banister. “Is that what you’re fighting about?”

“Connor’s grounded,” Larry replies firmly.

“But we’re all supposed to be there!” Zoe cries.

“You’ll have more concerts in the future sweetie,” his mom soothes. “It’s just this one can’t.”

“Ergh, I knew something would go wrong! What did you do this time?”

Connor can’t tell if it’s the frustration or the resignation which hurts more. He’d thought things were good between them now, more like they’d been when they were younger.

Clearly, Zoe’s just been waiting for Connor to ruin it all again.

“I did what I do best, fuck everything up,” Connor bites out and as his family’s voices become one big overwhelming mass of judgement and criticism, he bolts upwards, nearly shoving Zoe into the wall as he bounds past her. Since he doesn’t have a lock, he slides his chair under his door but it
turns out he didn’t have to bother. No one comes after him, all there is, is the muffled sounds of continued yelling going on outside. Connor drowns them out, drowns everything out until they leave. Considering how rare it was that Larry was going to one of these concerts, they were going for an early meal out beforehand.

Not that Connor had been planning on going with them anyway. Evan had asked him if he wanted to go to his before the concert and even if his soulmate had looked pretty sketchy when asking him, it was guaranteed to be better than dinner with his parents.

Evan’s been acting…not weird, exactly, but definitely not normal for at least a week now. He’s been more attentive, more…nice. Not that it’s like he wasn’t nice before but it’s become more noticeable to Connor, as if Evan was initially operating at 50% and has now upped it to at least 80. He started helping Connor with his art project, gave him more compliments, wouldn’t stop talking until he drew a smile out of Connor when he was feeling low.

Connor doesn’t know what to make of it all.

And then, when Connor had said he’d go to Evan’s, he’d look so excited. Now Connor is just going to ruin that too, going to have to tell him what happened and hear Evan tell him it doesn’t matter when it so fucking clearly does…unless.

His family is out. He still has his car keys. Just because he’s disappointed his family doesn’t mean he has to disappoint Evan. Fuck the consequences.

Since he’s already supposed to be on his way, Connor drops Evan a text that he’s going to be a bit late and then takes the time to have a smoke before heading off. No matter how much Connor wants to dive into his stash (fuller than normal considering he’s actually been too busy with actual friends to get high) and smoke it all, he sticks with nicotine. Evan wouldn’t appreciate him turning up stoned and like he said, he’s not about to disappoint him.

The problem is that it doesn’t make him feel much better. Sure, his heartrate might have slowed down but it does nothing for his brain which is continuing to operate on overdrive, asking him what the point of everything is, why he should continue bothering to try when it so clearly doesn’t matter. By the time Connor reaches Evan’s house he realises his knuckles are white from how tightly he’s been gripping the steering wheel and he forces himself to take a breather before knocking on the door. Just because his brain’s decided to have a meltdown doesn’t mean he has to make it obvious and worry Evan. He controls his breathing, relaxes his muscles until his hands are a normal colour again. There’s nothing he can do about the deep rooted tension running through him but he’ll take what he can get.

The glint of his tin, taken with him on a spur of the moment decision, catches his eye and once again he considers just one little smoke, one long drag just to take the edge off. Evan wouldn’t even notice…

No. He can do this. He can be a fucking functional human being for once without it.

Connor winces as his knocks sound more like bangs and when Evan opens the door; his first thought is that his soulmate looks different. In fact, his clothes are similar to what he wore for the party but instead of jeans, he’s got smart trousers on, probably old since they cling to his legs far too much to be appropriate. Seriously.

“You changed,” he says stupidly after briefly glancing down at his faded jeans, the same he’d worn that morning.
“Oh, uh,” Evan flushes. “For the concert.”

Oh yeah, the concert. The concert Connor’s effectively banned from. The concert Connor might turn up to anyway because fuck it, he promised Zoe, he’s got a ticket, what are his parents going to do? Worst comes worst he could always hide in the back.

“I, um, you wanna come in?”

“…Sure.” Maybe it’s because Connor’s so off-kilter that he’s projecting, but Evan looks nervous, way too nervous for just having Connor over. It’s almost like they’re back to the beginning again, when Evan was terrified off him, wary in case of setting him off. Had Zoe texted him? Was he worried that Connor was going to blow up on him?

That thought almost makes Connor want to do it, to fulfil those expectations but…no, Evan doesn’t look scared of Connor, not exactly. It’s more a general sort of nervousness. Maybe his own anxiety was acting up. At least that meant Connor wasn’t alone in having a fucking wreck of a brain.

“I made dinner,” Evan tells him nervously as they sit in the living room and Connor tries, really he does, but he can’t keep the disbelief off his face. Every time Connor’s been over they’ve had take-out and from what he’s gathered, Evan’s cooking expertise extends to ready meals and sandwiches. “Uh, fajitas. Is that okay?”

“Fajitas?” Connor repeats dumbly.

“Y-yeah. I thought, you know, we have college next year and I don’t want to be stuck eating unhealthily or not-not at all so I thought now would be a good time to practice, maybe. I-if you don’t want it we can just or-”

“No,” Connor interrupts. “It…it smells good.” Again, he tries to keep the surprise out of his voice.

“Oh. Good,” Evan says and fuck, now he’s blushing and making Connor feel even weirder about this whole thing, because that’s what he’s decided. It’s not Evan making this weird, it’s Connor. It has to be.

“TV?” Connor suggests in an attempt to regain some semblance of normalcy and though Evan keeps darting backwards and forwards out of the kitchen, always giving panicked assurances that everything’s fine when he asks, it does help a little bit. By the time the shows ends and dinner’s ready, he finally feels like he can breathe without feeling like something in him is gonna snap.

Not that it doesn’t come back when, rather than eat in front of the TV like usual, they end up eating on the kitchen table. That in itself wouldn’t so bad but there, sat on the table…

“Is that a candle?” Connor asks, eying the purple stick of wax suspiciously.

“Oh, um, my mom. My mom’s kind of into them and I thought, um, that it would be nice for when she gets home?”

God the lie is painful to listen to. “You’re allowed to like candles you know,” he says and there comes that fucking blush again. Evan hasn’t blushed this much in ages.

“Uh, yeah…I guess so.” He gives Connor a shy smile (at least Connor knows how to deal with those) and then they dig in.

“Fuck, these are really good,” Connor says in astonishment after the first bite. Evan’s face hasn’t even had time to recover before he’s beet red again, this time the flush reaching the tips of his ears
and spreading down below to those damn freckles.

“Thanks, I’m happy you like them,” he says softly and when his eyes lift up just in time to catch Connor’s, it hits him how, under any other circumstances, this could be a date. Cooking dinner, the candle, the fucking blushes…if it wasn’t him and Evan, it could be. But since it’s them, it’s not, it can’t be. Evan blushes at anything and just happens to like candles. He just wants to be prepared for college.

That’s it.

Fuck, now he can’t get it off his mind. Every little glance Evan gives him now, with those wide, innocent brown eyes of his, they seem to hold too much. His hair shines in the candle light like he’s got product in it, like he’s trying to impress. He hadn’t even had that for the party.

“Are you sure you like it?” Evan asks, drawing him out of his thoughts and it dawns on Connor that he’d stopped eating after that first bite. As if to compensate, he takes a huge mouthful, practically stuffing his face with manners that would turn his mom white. There, it can’t be a date. Dates don’t eat like fucking Neanderthals. At least it’s not really a chore – Evan’s cooking is pretty damn good. Who knows, maybe Evan could be a chef.

The image of Evan in Gordon Ramsey’s kitchen strikes him and he nearly snorts out his food. He ends up telling Evan and his soulmate actually makes him laugh out loud when he looks Connor dead in the eye and says, “I could take him.”

Evan bursts out laughing too and after that, he doesn’t feel so much like breaking anymore. He eats his dinner at a more reasonable pace and once they’re finished Evan once again brings out some ice cream, the two of them sharing it straight from the tub like before. The icy chocolate helps soothe the tingling of his tongue from the spices but it does nothing to help the surges of heat every time Evan’s hand collides with his.

Connor’s ridiculously relieved when they reach the bottom and with his stomach so stuffed, he never wants to move again. He’s glad when Evan, wanting to do the dishes before his mom gets back, tells Connor no when he asks if he wants help. Truth be told, he’s a lazy fucker and knowing his shitty luck recently he’d probably smash some antique cutlery.

It’s after they’ve traded some comments back and forth about the film on TV (Connor’s pretty sure that it’s a Disney one but, fortunately for his sanity, not one of those sappy romance ones) that his eyes end up drifting around the room. Connor’s now certain he likes Evan’s living room more than his own, hell he likes Evan’s whole house more. His home feels artificial, as if it’s just one massive show-off. Like his parents. They want to be seen as the nice, doting parents but they’re as transparent as the house. The house is for his mom’s ‘girlfriends’ to praise, for Larry’s colleagues to admire when his dad hosts a dinner. They can’t actually like the pristine, hospital-like walls, the fake plants sat beside incense to provide the sickly scent of flowers.

His parents act like they care for him but the moment he does something they don’t approve of, the truth comes out.

Connor’s gaze brushes the old computer, past the picture of a pre-teen Evan (kind of adorable in that awkward giraffe way) and then over the coffee table where a folder is sat, along with a newspaper and magazine. He almost doesn’t give it a second thought when he sees a sheet of paper sticking out of the folder but then his eyes automatically hone in on it and yep, that’s his name on it. Immediately, Connor knows what it is, how private it is, but fuck, can it be considered private from him when his name is on it?
This had all started with a letter, he thinks absently, and looking at it now he has the same urge to read it all as he did last time. Evan’s letters are his truth; they’re the words he struggles to get out all nicely articulated in print. From the kitchen, Connor hears the sound of clanging cutlery which means he still has time, has the chance to look and God his fingers are itching with the need to know. Surely Evan would have taken better care of his letter if he didn’t want Connor to see. He’d nearly had a heart attack when Connor had taken the other one. If it was there, peeking out so tantalisingly, it had to be intentional. Therefore, he should read it, right?

He grabs the piece of paper before he can become a decent person and talk himself out of it. As he dislodges it, he finds that not only is there this one letter, but this is Evan’s therapy folder. Inside it in Evan’s tiny handwriting is his name and the name of some Miss Daniels. He resists the urge to go through the lot because, not only is there not enough time, but he should probably just try and stay a half-shitty person, not a complete one. Disregarding the rest of the folder, he looks at the letter in his hand, noting that the date at the top is today’s.

Once again checking that Evan’s still busy, he begins to speed-read.

Dear Evan Hansen,

Today, I’ve got to be brave. You know I’m not a very brave person, not like Connor. Where he fought off that guy, my first instinct was to run away, to avoid the danger. I couldn’t even protect him, I just held him back while I let Jared get involved and back then, he didn’t even like Connor.

So, I’ve never been brave but today I want to be, I need to be. I want to put myself out there, like my mom always tells me to do, because if I never do it then things will never change. Miss Daniels is always talking about risk and reward and today I need to start focusing on the reward. I need to stop over-analysing the risk.

Ever since school started Connor’s been featured in my dear Evan Hansen’s and it’s while reading through them that I’ve confirmed I really, really like Connor Murphy. I like the way he cares so deeply, even though he tries not to. I like the way he laughs when he forgets he shouldn’t. I like the way he looks at me like I’m important, something I’ve only noticed recently.

Most of all, I like how he’s changing for the better and I hope he notices it too, I hope he feels better about himself. That he begins to see himself the way I see him.

I’d never thought much about what would happen when I found my soulmate. I almost didn’t want to; I found the idea of being in a relationship like that terrifying. The expectations of being with someone who the universe apparently matched you with felt too high because what if it didn’t work out? What did that mean? Then there was the chance I could end up like my mom. Soulmates, in general, were just scary to me.

But now, with Connor, I don’t feel so scared. Of course, it’s easy to say that when I’m alone and in front of my computer but I can admit now that I want everything I was scared of. I’ve always heard the kids of school talk about their firsts. Their first crush. Their first date. Their first kiss. They’re milestones I never used to consider going through myself and I never understood how these kids could have them with someone who wasn’t their soulmate.

Now I think I understand. Even if Connor wasn’t my soulmate and we still managed to cross paths, got to know each other, I think I’d like to experience them with him. I want to take the risk.

I want to be in a relationship with Connor Murphy and even though it’s a frightening thing to write down, let alone think, I feel good. Now I just have to see what he thinks.
Sincerely, your best and most dearest friend,

Evan Hansen

The sheet of paper falls from Connor’s grip and he slowly looks to the side to find Evan standing there, his hands wringing together.

“I-I wasn’t sure you’d find it,” he admits quietly.

“But you wanted me to,” Connor says, not accusingly. Just like before, everything is adding up but this time, there’s no way he can deny it. He can’t pretend it’s just his imagination.

Evan shrugs. “I thought…I thought I’d leave it to chance since I couldn’t find the courage to give it to you. It…says everything better than I could out loud.”

Evan’s legs are trembling so hard that it looks like he could fall at any moment. He doesn’t choose to sit though, he just determinedly stays upright and despite his scared shitless expression, he just keeps on taking deep, stuttered breaths.

He’s being brave.

“You are good at writing,” Connor says, because that’s the easiest thing to focus on. “You know, if this whole cooking thing doesn’t take off then yeah, you should write a book.”

Evan’s smile is strained. “Thanks. So, um, what—what do you think?”

If Connor chose to really think about it, there’d be a lot of things he could say. He could say Evan’s wrong, that he’s not getting better, that he’s not the person Evan sees him as because today is proof that he’s swirling in a downward spiral that will eventually drag Evan down with him. He’d say that Evan’s making the biggest mistake of his life, falling for Connor, because he’ll ultimately end up disappointing him. Friends they could recover from. More than that? He doesn’t know.

So, Connor decides to not think about it. He just stares at Evan, Evan in his tight trousers, with those traceable moles, with those shining eyes and takes some of that bravery that’s keeping his soulmate on his feet. Rather than answer Evan verbally, Connor stands up, cursing when he bangs his leg on the side of the coffee table and just as Evan’s asking if he’s okay, always so fucking caring and concerned for Connor, he lets his body take over.

When his lips touch Evan’s, in that moment, everything suddenly feels right.

Chapter End Notes

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Evan’s first kiss is…dry. Connor’s chapped lips are rough against his own, moving in an uncoordinated, primal way that Evan isn’t initially sure how to respond to. He can only take what Connor gives and just as he thinks he can try and match it himself, maybe even take it further in a way he’s not exactly sure about, Connor’s gone. All there is is the sound of their laboured breathing over the soft noise of the TV.

It was by no means the perfect kiss, if it could even be called that, but Evan still has to resist the urge to touch his tingling lips. It was with Connor and that’s what matters. Maybe, if Connor wanted to, they could always do it again…

Except, Evan realises when he finally lifts his eyes to hone in on his soulmate, Connor doesn’t look happy. In fact, his stunned expression is starting to darken into something like horror, like regret and Evan’s heart threatens to leap out of his throat at the sight.

“You-no, shit.” Connor grasps tightly at his hair and when Evan tentatively reaches out to try and get him to soften his grip; it looks like he’s hurting himself, his soulmate flinches away from him violently, the pure agonised look in his eyes freezing Evan’s outstretched arm in place. “I can’t-I can’t do this. I shouldn’t have-I have to go. I’m sorry. Fuck.”

By the time Evan’s regained the ability to move again, Connor’s already flown out the door and he can hear the sound of an engine revving outside. Just as Connor pulls away from the drive, Evan’s legs snap like twigs beneath him, collapsing under the weight of his despair, and it’s only through luck that he manages to land on the sofa. Not that Evan feels lucky. His shaking hands press against his face and he bends his head bent as he struggles to comprehend just what happened.

He thought…he thought it had worked. That everyone had been right, that Connor like him in that way and…and Connor had been the one who kissed him, why would he do that unless…Evan bites his bottom lip hard and a metallic tang hits his tongue. Unless Connor had simply felt pity for Evan
or maybe he even felt pressured by that stupid Dear Evan Hansen. Through the gaps of his fingers Evan sees the offending piece of paper and overcome with a sudden, blazing feeling of hatred for it he snatches it from the ground and brings it to that ridiculous candle he’d lit. He quickly realises what an idiotic move it is when the flame erupts up the sheet and he has to quickly dump it into the sink, sending a cascade of water pouring over it before it burns his fingers. It’s only when he turns off the tap that he realises the moisture on his face isn’t from the splashes but tears, thick heavy tears that only fall down harder with recognition. His blocked throat hasn’t even had the chance to recover and he’s already struggling to breathe through his nose.

Would it be so bad to just stop?

Evan tries to hold back the sobs but he can’t. He falls into the kitchen chair, the very one Connor had sat on when he was enjoying Evan’s fajitas, and succumbs to the pain. He hates this; he hates how everything he’d thought had gone so well is now tarnished in his mind. He’d been so stupid, thinking that it all could have gone right and he can’t blame anyone but himself. Jared had just wanted to help; it had been Evan who’d asked for it, who would have probably come up with something worse if he’d been left to his own devices. He should have just done what he does best and have forgotten about his pathetic crush. He should have done the one thing Connor asked of him and never allowed his heart to get away from him.

The heavy burden of Evan’s mistakes crushes against his chest and he shouldn’t be surprised by the panic attack, he should recognise it for what it is and know he’s not going to die, but every time feels like the first with them and now he considers just letting it consume him. What’s the point in trying to fight it? He’s ruined everything.

The worst part of it all is that he just doesn’t understand where exactly it all went wrong. Sure, he’d thought Connor had been acting a bit strange at first but then he’d relaxed and seemed…receptive. When Connor found his letter he hadn’t even looked mad, more confused than anything else, and then he’d complimented Evan and got up to kiss him. Why did he just leave after? Had he done it out of an act of kindness, only to realise how disgusting it was? Had he repulsed Connor so much?

A low, pained whine makes its way out of Evan as he struggles to get a hold of himself. He stumbles his way back into the living room, falling onto the sofa in a near foetal position. He’s still struggling to breathe and he can barely focus on controlling it past all the dark thoughts and heartache that’s ripping him from the inside out. Maybe if he could just talk to Connor it could all get sorted out like it has done in the past…but he can’t forget that look on Connor’s face. The horror, the regret. Maybe anger, Evan could have dealt with, but not this. There’s no way Connor would give him the chance to explain, especially considering the pitiful state he’s in now.

A buzzing noise slowly makes its way through the storm in Evan’s head and he turns to find his phone sat on the coffee table, texts from his friends flashing on the screen. When he opens them, he finds they all say similar things. Where are he and Connor? Are they late? Are they even coming? The time tells him he…they should have left Zoe’s recital 10 minutes ago and ignoring the fact Connor had been his ride, Evan can’t face going there. He can’t face showing up late and having to tell them what happened. Unless Connor ended up going there without Evan and now they already know, they already know how badly he screwed up.

He can’t reply back to them. All he can do is try not to dissolve back into the panic that’s fighting to bring him back into its clutches. At least his tears have reduced down to long, steady drips down his red cheeks. Nothing has changed when his mom comes home five minutes later, finding him stuck in a self-imposed, oppressive silence only broken by the hitches of his breath.

“Evan, honey, what’s the matter?” His mom drops her bag, and runs to a crouch by his head,
kneeling until he lifts himself up enough for her to slide in beside him. Her arm comes up automatically to wrap around his shoulder and the worn smell of her familiar perfume and her comforting touch causes the dam to break once more. Evan clings to his mother, feeling all of 7 years old as it all comes spilling out of him.

“He-he left,” he chokes out as his mom begins to stroke his hair. “He k-kissed me and left.”

Her hand stalls. “…You mean Connor?” She checks and Evan nods, letting the truth finally be free. He doesn’t care about hiding it anymore.

“I-his my soulmate,” he hiccups and god, he’d imagined telling his mom a thousand times but never had he pictured a scenario like this. Even at his most pessimistic, it had never been this bad. “We f-found out when school started. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.”

“Oh baby, you have nothing to be sorry about,” his mom rushes to say and he wants to tell her she’s wrong, that he’s as awful a son as he is a soulmate but he can’t, all he can do is cry into her shoulder, the wet patch under his cheek uncomfortable enough for him, let alone his mom. She doesn’t seem to care though; she just takes it all in her stride and makes reassuring shushing sounds into his hair.

“Why don’t you start from the beginning, huh?” She prompts gently.

She may have just meant this evening but what Evan ends up getting out is a fragmented version of events beginning with the start of the semester. Though it likely doesn’t make a lot of sense, his mom never asks him to clarify or speak more clearly. All she does is give him her undivided attention, something he feels like he’s not had in months and wishes he could have got under better circumstances.

Just as Evan’s gets to Jared’s plan of helping, he trails off when he notices that his mom’s shirt appears white briefly before flickering back to pale blue. Evan blinks, hoping to convince himself it was a trick of the mind, but before he’s even got back to the story, it happens again and he snaps his head up to find the room is dissolving into greys and white before suddenly reboots back to colour. Terror like Evan has never experienced before grips him and he stutters out, “M-mommy. My colours, they-”

His mom’s hold on him tightens instinctively before she lets go and rests her hands on his shoulders, forcing Evan to look at her. “Evan, try not to panic. Tell me what’s happening.”

“My colours, th-they vanished. They’re back now but they keep-keep going away and-” He can’t finish the sentence. They both know what it means.

Unlike One-Sight, Monitum has been recorded many times in the past and comes from the Latin word for warning. It’s relatively self-explanatory – the intermittent disappearance of someone’s colours, or rather, the sporadic malfunction of an individual’s cone cells, act as a warning for soulmates, allowing them to know when their soulmate is in danger, typically life-threatening. Much like the concept of soulmates themselves, there’s no scientific explanation for it, only that it clearly exploits the otherworldly connection between certain pairs. Essentially, it is another method of survival, potentially an evolutionary trait as it doesn’t occur for all soulmates. Those with loved ones in the army can sometimes experience it on a daily basis and for others; it can happen only the once and mean saving their loved one before it’s too late. Stories of it with happy endings make magazines all the time.

Unfortunately for Evan, that doesn’t make him feel much better. For every happy ending there’s always an unwritten sad one.
His mom’s voice becoming little more than white noise, Evan scrambles for his phone again, desperately calling Connor’s number. It goes straight to the automated voicemail.

Maybe that means he’s at the concert, safe. He probably turned it off to be considerate and it’s just Evan’s eyes and there’s nothing wrong…

No, he knows that’s not it. He has to be realistic, even if being realistic makes him want to throw up.

“Baby, breathe,” his mom commands. “Can you call someone else? His parents?”

“I don’t have their number. I-I have Zoe’s but—” Zoe’s probably performing right now, nowhere near her phone and everyone else’s will be off or on silent too, just like Connor’s. Even so, he tries calling all of his friends but as expected, no one picks up. Alana would have made sure nothing like an unexpected phone call would disrupt the concert.

He almost cracks his mobile with the pressure of his hold.

“Would Connor go back home? Can we check there?”

Evan starts to nod then stops. When Connor’s upset, when he’s…not well, he doesn’t go home, not when he doesn’t have to. And maybe it’s the Monitum, maybe it’s just his gut instinct, but he thinks he knows where Connor is. Where he has to be because he can’t lose him. Not now, not like this.

“The orchard. The one that shut down near out of town. He-I think he’s there.”

“Are you sure Evan?”

With far more certainty than he feels inside, Evan says, “I’m sure.”

Before they leave, his mom calls the police. If Connor isn’t at the orchard then they need as many people looking for him before it’s too late. Evan hears very little of the details, more preoccupied trying to get through to the rest of his group and he continues to do so when they begin driving. The repetitive action of pressing on each of his friend’s names in turn acts as a method of keeping hold of the last shred of his control, control that is slipping further and further away with each temporary loss of his colours. It’s only when they’ve nearly reached the orchard that he finally gets through to Alana.

“Evan? What’s wrong? Where are you and Connor—”

“Alana,” Evan interrupts. “I-Connor left my house. We,” he pauses. “He got upset and left and now my colours keep vanishing and I need help looking for him because I don’t know what’s happened. M-my mom and I are going to look at the Orchard and w-we called the police. They’re out looking for any accidents. I-I think one may have gone to his house.”

He can hear Alana’s breathing over the phone, the shaky sound of it threatening to make his own mimic it.

“I’ll get everyone to look, as many people as I can,” Alana promises with quiet determination. “I’ll get his family back to the house and my parents and I will help, I’m sure Jared’s will too. We’ll—we’ll find him. We will. I’ll call with any updates. You do the same.”

“Yeah, I will. Bye,” Evan croaks out and then as he hit the hang up button, he repeats Alana’s words in his head. As worried as she’d sounded, she’d also sounded confident, strong, and Evan
wishes he could be that. He wishes that he could just forget how perilous the situation is and have that unfeeling belief that they’ll find Connor. There isn’t a time limit for Monitum and it doesn’t distinguish between physical and mental health. It’s saved more than one person from their own self and Evan wants to believe that it’ll happen again now, that it’s not that Connor’s in an accident, alone and in pain with no one knowing where he is. It has to be Connor’s mind causing this, it has to be, and Evan has to reach him in time.

“Breathe sweetie, deep breaths in and long breaths out,” his mom reminds him while she parks beside the old gate Evan had once climbed over, dirtying his trousers. He does it again but this time cares far, far less, even when he hears a ripping sound. His mom follows suit and then directs him the opposite way to her.

“Yell or call if you find him, okay?” She says, cupping her face in her hands. “Just stay strong baby.”

Not trusting his words, Evan nods and then they’re off.

Under other circumstances, the rich auburn sky with its swirls of blue and purple and spattering of stars would be considered pretty. As it is, all Evan can see from it is fire; the flame of a candle which is running out of wax, a reminder that darkness is impending, encroaching into his heart and feeding his fears. Around him are the shadows of the trees, like tangible monsters, convincing him at every turn that Connor’s there only for it to be a trick of his imagination.

Any second now, Evan’s positive that his colours will just go. That he’s following a useless, unfounded trail and that he’s too late and it’ll be all his fault. Everyone will blame him, will hate him, but not as much as he’ll hate himself-

A splash.

Evan bolts towards the river. It could just be some kids playing around, it could just be an animal.

But it could also be Connor.

Evan runs along the side of the water, his gaze looking out over it, but with the dark shade of the trees and the murkiness of the water it’s difficult to see anything. He should have brought a torch, he thinks, but then, maybe his phone will work just as-

Evan nearly slams to the ground, his feet catching on something. He manages to find balance on a nearby tree just in time.

Down by his feet are a pair of shoes, Connor’s shoes, and there scattered around them are the rest of his clothes, along with the container he uses for weed. Or used. It’s both open and empty.

“Connor?!” He yells again, nearly hoarse from how much he’s been calling his soulmates name non-stop but there’s no answer, no sudden emergence of his soulmate from the water. Evan’s begins pressing on his phone, already sliding into the water when his mom picks up.

“Mom I think he’s in the river. I’m getting in to look.”

“Evan wait-”

He disconnects before she can try and talk him out of it. His colours are almost gone and he knows this time it’ll be for good. If Connor is in the river he doesn’t have long and Evan tries his best to use the light from his phone to search around. It’s made difficult because not only is the river deeper than he thought, nearly up to his shoulders, and thus making the angle he holds his phone at
awkward, but the stones below make balancing a struggle. Slipping on them would be easy and he wonders if that’s what Connor did. He had to have because this, this couldn’t be Connor giving up. This can’t be how he wants it to end.

The cold infiltrates Evan through his clothes and right down to his bones. The water is dense as he wades around in it and the quiet, almost detached part of Evan’s brain notes that he shouldn’t be getting his cast wet like this. Then again, it’s scheduled to come off next week.

Every second Evan spends in the river feels like hours. He tries to be faster, tries to push through the freezing water that encompasses him but the river is merciless, trying to drag him down with every minute step he manages, almost succeeding because he’s weak and a failure and oh god Connor’s going to die-

Evan spies the flash of skin just as his leg collides with a lump. As he brushes away the surface grime, he sees a figure down below and, using all the strength he can muster, Evan throws his phone to land and pulls out the body which is inarguably Connor Murphy’s unconscious, almost naked, blue-lipped body.

“No, no, no,” Evan repeats as he drags Connor firmly onto dry land. He tries to still his shuddering hands as he runs them along Connor’s body but to no avail. “You’re okay. You’re okay. Please.” His fingers reach Connor’s neck and maybe he presses harder than he should but it’s not there, he can’t feel the thump of a pulse.

Evan begins screaming for his mom but barely has his call left his lips that she’s there, pushing him efficiently to the side. She dips her head close to Connor’s face and then put her fingers against his wrist. His mom’s expression tenses and before Evan can ask what’s wrong she’s telling him to call an ambulance and starting compressions on Connor’s chest, every few seconds pausing to breathe into his mouth.

The artificial pump of Connor’s chest sends Evan numb as he mechanically calls for help, his words not even stuttered as he speaks.

There’s no time to worry about phone calls, not when his soulmate is dying in front of him.

Connor has to be okay, Evan thinks dimly as his colours flicker around him.

He has to be.

Chapter End Notes

Warning for near-drowning.

I call this chapter – the author uses artistic license (and is also very very sorry plz don’t hurt me.)
Fun fact. Up the ante isn’t actually a lyric but it’s what I initially thought they sang in ‘You will be found’ and it fits.

(Also, I'm back at uni now which means I'll be very busy. I'll try very very hard to get these updates out on Sundays but if for some reason it's not - real life is why.)
Share The Hurt And The Heartache

Chapter Summary

Funny, how one event can change so much and yet you can still end up where you started.

Chapter Notes

Warnings at the bottom.

The last time Connor found himself in hospital; it had been after a drug-fuelled fight that left him with a concussion. Connor had been pissed, in pain, and the sight of his parents with a reprimand on the tip of their tongues had done nothing to help. They’d had an argument right then and there in front of the doctor and Larry had called it one of his last chances. Otherwise what, Connor’s still never really found out. He’s probably on number ten at least.

Now, with the memory of freezing water clinging to his shivering skin, Connor simply feels numb when faced with the stunned silence presence of his parents. He knows words are being spoken to them from beside him but he doesn’t have the ability or the will to distinguish them. Since reaching the hospital (after a ride in the ambulance which Connor holds very little recollection of) he has gone through the tests and questions with a body that will do the minimum of what’s asked of it but with very little input from Connor himself. His brain is mostly switched off since to think now would be far, far too painful.

At some point, his mom dares to touch him and while Connor’s not surprised as such, he’d had enough warning, his body still flinches at the first brush of her fingertips. His mom immediately collides backwards into Larry who, ever since hearing whatever the doctor had to say, is looking at Connor as if he’s a stranger.

So, not much different than usual then.

Neither of them attempt to touch him after that and more talking occurs, throughout which Connor feels like he is asleep with his eyes open. His mind is aware, to a certain extent, but reality feels more like a dream. Near the end, he catches the words ‘observation’ and ‘psychiatric evaluation’ and though he knows they should draw out some sort of reaction from him, he merely blinks. At least he knows the general idea of where his life is heading now.

After that, the conversation seems to be over and Connor is led to a different room and, considering how unresponsive he is, his parents don’t stay for too long. There are tears, Connor is aware of that much, and eventually his mom hugs him, unable to resist enveloping him close despite how his body shrivels inwards at the contact. Even Larry takes Connor’s shoulder and gives it an uncharacteristically gentle squeeze.

Their words, which fly through one ear and out the other, don’t mean much to him then but perhaps
they will in the morning, when the numbness has worn off.

Although, that when might be an if. Maybe Connor would even prefer that.

Initially, Connor remembers Friday evening the way he remembers his sixth birthday. He knows it happened, that he was there, and there are vague impressions of emotions that linger. Then, as he begins to awaken fully, in more than one sense of the word, more and more details trickle in and Connor becomes helpless to their assault.

The fight with his family comes first. He remembers how it had only exacerbated how shitty he’d felt and how Zoe’s disappointment, her expectance of him to revert back to the awful brother, had almost felt worse. Connor knows that he’s no saint, that he deserves her condemnation for all the truly fucking disgusting stuff he’s said to her for no real reason, but it still left a gaping wound in his chest. Still has, in fact.

He’d hoped going to Evan’s would help and initially, it had. No matter what, Evan stuck around and just being with him had helped keep away the dark thoughts. But then he’d seen the letter. For one, blissful, second Connor had thought maybe he could get what he wanted and he’d gone for it. He’d thrown away all his concerns for that moment and let his body take over. He kissed Evan.

Reality had hit swiftly.

Here on out, remembering doesn’t get harder exactly, but it certainly gets more fucking painful. The moment his lips disconnected with Evan’s it was like everything else in his fucking brain connected right back into place. No matter how good or how right it had felt, Connor knew he couldn’t do it. That day had been proof enough that for all things could seem like they were going okay; the universe could screw him over again in an instance. Kissing Evan, trying to build something with him, it just couldn’t work. Not with Connor in the equation. Not with how he was.

He couldn’t articulate any of that to Evan, however. All he could do was see the worry, the fear, and a good man would have tried to explain what was going on to Evan, would have tried to tell him he wasn’t the problem but Connor is not a good man. He is a weak, fucking awful person who ran. He ran because staying any longer would mean risking losing himself again to the temptation and in the end; that would only make things worse for everyone.

The initial push of his foot against the pedal had felt like freedom. The rest had felt like spikes were digging into his feet. He knew what he was doing wasn’t right but he was helpless to stop it. He was allowing the dark corner of his brain to take over and no longer wanted to try and fight it. It was his penance for his actions, his punishment for every little thing he’d ever done wrong.

He’s pretty sure he drove around aimlessly for a long time, briefly debated storming into Zoe’s recital just for the hell of it, before he eventually ended up where he always does – the orchard. It was predictable, sure, but he knew no one would be coming after him. His family were busy, so were his friends, and Evan wouldn’t want to come after him this time, not after that look of absolute devastation he’d put on his face.

There’d been no point to restraining himself anymore and so Connor grabbed his tin and began to smoke. After that, things begin to get hazy. The thoughts continued, reminding him what a fuck up he was, how he’d managed to crash and burn every single relationship he’d only just managed to form. Maybe it’s a good job Connor can’t remember every little detail here. The ones that come back are enough to make him want to claw at his head, to give himself any sort of relief from their burning remains.
Evan might have tried to call him at some point. He has vague recollections of picking up his phone and looking through his gallery, scrolling through all the pictures he’d taken since meeting Evan. The penis cloud, the autumnal trees...Evan himself.

He’d begun deleting them, one by one. He knows this because he can recall with almost worrying clarity how he’d been laughing hysterically as he did it, how he considered it an act of cleansing. He’d convinced himself that by purging himself of the last few months, purging himself of Evan, it would make it easier for him to forget.

To move on.

Connor knows he smoked some more after that and that’s when he can only recall fragments. He remembers looking at the river and then, the next thing he knows, he’s almost naked and sliding into it. Connor can’t quite recollect his motivation for it apart from that he’d likely considered it another act of cleansing, the water purifying him. He doesn’t know if he intended to kill himself in that river and while Connor would like to think no, with how he feels now, he wouldn’t be surprised if the answer had been a ‘hopefully’.

There’s no way he can forget how cold the water had been but at the time, he hadn’t cared. He’d kept dredging through it and with his twisted mind he’d thought the colder the better. What better way to remove any heat Evan had ever made him feel, any warmth he’d felt for his soulmate, than with icy water?

Connor thinks he tripped in the river but he doesn’t know if that’s just wishful thinking, a way to assure himself that he hadn’t been so fucked up as to think drowning would be a delightful way to go. All he knows is that one moment he’d standing on sharp pebbles and the next he’s staring up at the evening sky. It hadn’t been such a bad view but even so, he’d shut his eyes and when the water began to lap over his cheeks, creeping up over his eyes and nose, it hadn’t occurred to him to fight it. It hadn’t occurred to him what not doing anything would mean. His mantra that night had been fuck the consequences and it carried on then as well.

Maybe Connor hadn’t been looking to kill himself but there’s no denying he hadn’t been looking to survive either.

Connor’s never been under suicide watch before but he is now, with some other unconscious kid and a watchful nurse in a chair. With all the memories that are coming back, he can understand why. He might have been high as a fucking rocket back in the orchard but even now, clean, warm, sober, he knows he’s not in a good place. He’s back where he was the beginning of the semester and he’s sure, had he not met Evan then, he probably would have just ended up as another statistic. Nothing more than a number on a page.

Funny, how one event can change so much and yet you can still end up where you started.

Doctor Richards is a fucking pretentious ass and Connor doesn’t bother to say a word to him. In his pristine suit, with his carefully trimmed white facial hair and expression that says ‘I’ve dealt with a hundred kids like you, I know your type,’ Doctor Richards is a man who tries to empathise with Connor with hollow words. He says he knows just how Connor’s feeling when there’s no way he can. The only person who knows how Connor’s feeling is Connor himself and he is not about to believe that this ostentatious grandpa knows a single fucking thing about him.

Doctor Odili, on the other hand, Connor can see himself getting on with.

She’s young, for one thing; has probably only had the job for a couple of years maximum, and she
doesn’t begin with asking Connor to recount that night and getting frustrated when he doesn’t. Instead, she asks him how he’s doing and then simply…tries to get to know Connor. He says tries because Connor quickly finds that apart from the stuff he isn’t strong enough to think about (EvanZoeAlanaJared) there just…isn’t that much to him. He talks a little about his photography but even that leads to unwanted associations and so more often than not, he just sits in silence.

Since it’s part of her job or something, she eventually has to broach the subject of the previous night but unlike Dr. Richtf**ck, she doesn’t pressure him and since she isn’t looking at him with anger or, god forbid, pity, he slowly starts to tell her. He doesn’t tell her about the date and Evan, because that’s none of her business, but he tells her how everything went wrong and how he’s not sure if he’ll ever feel right again.

It turns out the standard time for someone being under observation after an apparent suicide attempt is 72 hours.

Connor wouldn’t be surprised if he stayed longer.

When his parents visit they bring clothes, toiletries and the one book Connor owns that he’s pretty sure was sat gathering dust under his bed - Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone.

Connor’s never seen his parents looked so drained before. Both of them have dark circles under their eyes and even though it’s barely been a day since it all happened, they look as gaunt as zombies. Once they’ve stepped into his room, no one knows what to say. Larry’s puffed eyes wander towards the other kid, still unconscious for reasons Connor chose not to listen to, before they return back to Connor.

His mom breaks first.

She drops her bags to the floor and, with more caution than he’s ever seen her exhibit before, slowly cups his face in her hands, caressing one thumb along his cheek. Connor doesn’t lean into her touch but neither does he pull away. Instead, his gaze just falls to his hands, still pale against the crisp white hospital sheets. Dr Odili knows a bit about his relationship with his family, given how she asked how he would feel when they next visited him, and when he replied, she advised him to just listen to them. To let them say their peace, to not assume, because at the end of the day, assumptions serve no good purpose.

As the king of jumping to conclusions, Connor knows it’s not going to be easy but right now, he’s willing to give it a shot. He’s too tired to fight.

“İ am so, so sorry Connor,” his mom whispers. “I knew…I knew you weren’t happy but I didn’t, I never thought…”

As if he were made of porcelain, his mom draws him into a hug and rests her palm against the nape of his head, stroking wispy strands of hair.

“I don’t know what I would have done if we lost you,” she whispers thickly and he can feel her tears running down his neck. “I love you so much Connor. No matter what. That will never change.”

Connor shuts his own burning eyes and breathes deeply. He can’t believe her, not yet, but god does he want to.

He stiffens when a hand is pressed gently to his head and he lifts it up just as Larry quickly retracts his hand, an unfamiliar expression on his face.
“I’ve been doing a lot of thinking,” Larry begins gruffly. “And I know… I know that you being here is at least partly my fault and like your mother, Connor… I’m so damn sorry. For everything.”

Larry pauses, shakes his head a little, then continues. “I’ve never been as scared as I was last night. And… I’m not going to make you write that damn application. I don’t care if you don’t join me at the firm. All I care about is that you’re alive son. And… and happy.”

Though the words don’t fix things between them; they barely scratch the surface of years of resentment and disconnection, they’re an olive branch. A chance. The thing is, despite them having so many issues it’s not even funny, Connor wants things to improve. Otherwise, the alternative is…

When Connor looks in Larry’s eyes and sees nothing but the truth reflected in them, he finds his voice and says, “Thanks dad.”

It hits Connor on Saturday night that he could have died.

Now, considering how he’d concluded that death wasn’t as off the cards as he would have liked, it shouldn’t come as a shock to him but even so, he finds himself escaping to bathroom to splash cold water on his face which, ultimately, only serves to throw him back to that night when he’d been submerged in the water. If he’d been down there any longer, at best, he would have got brain damage.

At worst, he would never have woken up again.

If it wasn’t for Evan, wasn’t for Evan’s mom, who knows where he’d be? For all that Connor’s thought about death, he’s had to conclude that he has no fucking clue what comes after. He doesn’t have the will to believe in one thing for certain. There could be heaven, there could be nothing. All Connor’s ever been able to decide on is that whatever comes next, he wants it to be peaceful.

With how things went, he’s not sure he would have achieved that.

It might have worked out better for everyone, no more Connor Murphy to taint everything he touches, but Connor can’t be so sure about that. Not after how many people apparently went searching for him. If they hadn’t cared what happened to him then Connor might still be at the bottom of that lake.

Though Connor never asked, he vaguely knows what happened through conversations he’s overheard. He knows that Evan found him through Monitum. Monitum which only occurs in truly desperate moments. Monitum which only occurs for strong bonds.

So far, no one’s spoken to him about Evan which he’s mostly grateful for. He’s sure he would know if something bad had happened to him, after all, his own colours are perfectly fine, and as long as Evan’s okay, he can convince himself he’s okay too staying away. After everything Connor’s put his soulmate through, he wouldn’t blame Evan for high tailing it out of the fucking state. Better to have no news, he supposes, than hear for certain that Evan wants nothing to do with him.

He’ll tell himself that as many times as he needs to until it feels true.

On Sunday, Connor tentatively opens up more to Doctor Odili. He mentions to her that he’s having nightmares, pretty fucking obvious from the bags under his eyes, and from there it leads onto what the nightmares are about which eventually leads onto the root of their formation.

“I’m sure you’ve heard Evan is my soulmate,” Connor says after describing a dream in which Connor had watched Evan run from him through a barrier of water. It was actually one of his tamer
dreams. Friday night, he’d had a dream where he held Evan underwater, powerless to stop his hands which held his soulmate’s choking form in a death grip.

“While I have spoken to your parents, most of my knowledge comes from you Connor. I was made aware that Evan was the one who found you.”


“I gather you kept your relationship a secret?”

Connor snorts. “There was no relationship and there won’t be, not after I-” He cuts himself off.

“Soulmate relationships don’t necessarily have to be romantic,” Doctor Odili reminds him gently. “There are many platonic soulmates out there and it doesn’t mean their bonds hold any less value.”

“I know, I just-” Connor sighs in frustration. He’d wanted it. Still wants it, however fucked up that sounds. He was the one to ruin it and he still claims he fucking wants it. Because that’s what he does, he takes what he wants and then just destroys it-

“You’re allowed to be confused. Feelings don’t always make a lot of sense, even to the best of us. If you’d like to, you could tell me a bit about Evan?”

Connor’s not sure he would like to. It almost feels wrong, talking about Evan when it hurts just to think his name, but after the silence stretches out too long, he starts to. He only tells her the basic things; what he looks like, the cast on his arm, how nice he is. He doesn’t mention the anxiety, the way Evan would light up when Connor asked him over, when he finally gathered the courage to ask Evan if he could take a photo of him.

A photo that’s now deleted, lost forever.

Things between him and Evan have felt private for so long that Connor struggles to get it out. When he begins to wonder what the point of it all is, why the hell he’s telling Doctor Odili this stuff, she just tells him that he doesn’t need to say any more. Relieved, Connor sits back.

Sure, it might have felt okay letting out the stuff he’d been keeping bottled up for so long but it’s also reminded him how much he fucking misses Evan.

They decide to keep him in longer than the mandatory 72 hours and even with Doctor Odili saying there’s no deadline for this sort of thing, he still feels like a failure when his parents come to visit him next. He knows they’re just waiting for Connor to come home, to be normal, and as usual, he can’t live up to their expectations. It’s after his mom tries to force a jumper on him, adamant that he ‘looks cold’ and should be focusing on keeping up his health, that he snaps.

“Stop pretending that you care!” He shouts at her, causing the nurse in the room to glance over.

“Pretending…Connor, we’re not pretending,” his mom answers, hurt evident in her voice but Connor ignores it.

“You always do this,” he mutters. “You act all nice and nurturing and then, when it’s gone on too long to handle, you stop again, faking it to keep up your image. Well, this isn’t gonna be a quick fix. I’m not going to come home and just be happy! Sorry to burst your fucking bubble.”

“Connor.” It’s Larry, but this time he doesn’t sound angry. Not even long-suffering which is his usual default when Connor acts like this. In fact, he sounds like he’s in pain.
“Son, we know this isn’t going to be a sudden change. We’ve…you’re mother and I are going to see someone, someone to help us better understand where we went wrong and how we can change, how we can help. I’m not saying that there’s not blame to share but at the end of the day, we are the adults. We’re your parents and we’re going to try and do better by you. Doctor Odili said you’re already making such good progress and we’re going to put in the effort as well. We just need to talk Connor. I…I need to get to know you because I don’t. I don’t know you.”

The words should hurt but they don’t. They’re the truth. They’re finally the fucking truth.

“Your father’s right Connor,” his mom adds quietly. “We’ve been so focused on what we want for you that we didn’t trust you to be confident in pursuing what you want for yourself which is our mistake. In our attempt to give you the things we thought you needed, we’ve only been giving you the opposite. I swear Connor that we’re going to try to listen to you and I mean really listen. I can’t promise we won’t fail, that we won’t mess up, but we’re going to try our hardest. Because you’re our son and you’re worth it.”

Connor doesn’t reply to them but he thinks the tears that begin to fall down his cheeks say enough.

On Monday afternoon, Zoe comes.

It sans parents, since they came to visit him earlier while she was in school, and Connor’s first asked if he would like to see her and whether, if the answer was yes, he wanted Doctor Odili to sit in with them.

Despite wanting to go hide in his room, Connor chooses not to turn her away and goes with the ‘private’ option. It’ll be like ripping off a band aid. He has to see her at some point and he might as well get it over and done with.

Even with the brief warning, Connor doesn’t realise how unprepared he is for this conversation until his sister’s right in front of him.

Initially, they just stare at each other in silence but then Zoe’s right fist clenches and she takes a purposeful step forward. “I’m mad at you,” is what she starts off with and then, after she’s stood there bereft for a few moments, she continues with, “but mostly I’m mad at myself. Shit Connor, I’m so sorry. I get,” her voice trembles and she pauses. “I understand if you blame me.”

The first bit Connor gets. The last bit, not so much.

“Blame you? Fuck Zoe. Why would I do that?”

“B—because I saw how you were when you ran to your room and I knew it was partly because of me, because I was angry at you and yeah, maybe I sort of expected something bad to happen, for you to go back to how you were, but I still should have talked to you first. You deserved that but I didn’t do it because I was so stressed about the concert and—”

“Zoe,” Connor interrupts. “I don’t blame you. I’ve treated you like fucking shit these past few years and I know the past month can’t erase that. You were,” he hesitates, deliberating over his words before speaking. Something he’s quickly learning is that getting out the truth, as painful and as difficult as it feels, actually helps. He owes it to Zoe to have a genuine conversation with her. “You were justified in how you felt. And listen, I’ve never apologised for how shitty I acted to you so here it is. I’m fucking sorry. Everyone’s been saying they’re sorry to me when I should be the one saying it. You never deserved what I said to you and look, I’m probably still gonna do it, I’m a fucking basketcase but I’m telling you now, if I ever do it again feel free to fucking punch me or
Connor probably should have expected Zoe to burst into tears.

He really, really prefers it when she’s mad at him.

With a thump, Zoe collides with his chest and Connor wraps his arms around her. Unlike his mom’s hugs, there’s nothing tentative about Zoe’s. Her grip on him is tight, as if she’s worried about him disappearing right then and there.

“I was so scared,” Zoe says through the tears. “I don’t want to lose you, not when I just got you back.”

With little else he can say, Connor just apologises again. “I’m sorry Zoe.”

“Please, just…if you ever feel that bad again, talk to me? I don’t know what goes on in your brain, I probably never will, but please, don’t keep it bottled up. I want to help. Please.”

Connor presses his forehead against Zoe’s shoulder. “I can’t promise anything but…I’ll try.”

“That’s all I want,” Zoe whispers and Connor’s not sure how long they spend clinging to each other, how long they both end up crying for, but by the end, he actually feels that little bit lighter.

On Tuesday, Zoe brings Alana, who of course brings fucking homework.

“I know it’s probably not what you want to see,” Alana admits, “But when you get out of here I wouldn’t want you struggling to catch up. Also, I thought it might be a good distraction.”

Even though he wants to burn the sheets of paper Alana gives him, he can’t help but be grateful for his sister’s soulmate. For all that he hates homework with a burning passion, she is right that it will help keep his mind of certain stuff and her strong conviction about him getting out of there and back to normal life again is reassuring.

They don’t mention Jared, and they definitely don’t mention Evan, but Connor actually has a good time with them all the same.

Wednesday, Connor finally gathers the courage to look at his phone. He has a single text.

_Glad you’re okay asshole_

By Thursday, the big guys finally decide he’s unlikely to do something stupid if they let him go home. It probably helps that Connor’s inclined to believe that’s true too.

However, like all things, there’s a catch.

“There’s still one last person I think you ought to see,” Doctor Odili, or Sara as she’s said he can call her, tells him. “And we thought a neutral environment might help.”

It doesn’t take a genius to work out who she’s talking about.

“You don’t have to see him right now,” Sara says gently, noting the look of terror on his face he’s unable to hide. “But I thought you might want to do so here. There are no expectations or you to do anything and I think you should know that we didn’t contact Evan, he came himself. Like I said, if
you would rather not, you don’t have to. The ball is in your court, so to speak.”

“Would you let me go home if I said no?” Connor asks and Sara smiles.

“You’ve been doing very well Connor and even if you choose not to see Evan, I believe you would continue your progress.”

“He took his time to come.” Connor bites out. Not because he believes it, because Evan has full right to never want to see him again, but because he’s scared. No, he’s fucking terrified of seeing Evan.

“It was a very stressful situation that you both went through. Evan needed his own chance to recover just like you.”

He knows she’s not trying to make him feel bad but fuck he does. Guilt mixes in with the fear and god, he’s not got butterflies in his stomach. He’s got fucking leeches.

“We could bring him here, if you’d prefer,” Sara says. “Give you some privacy. This room isn’t booked out again for another half an hour.”

Connor looks down at his hands and resists the urge to pick at his newly painted nails, the new polish a gift from Larry of all people. He knows he should take this opportunity, and he’s missed Evan like crazy, but he isn’t sure if he’s ready to be rejected once and for all. To know that he’s finally done what he used to think he wanted, and driven his soulmate away completely.

Linking his twitching fingers together, Connor takes a deep breath and says, “He can come here.”

Chapter End Notes

Description of a suicide attempt.

I tried to do my best with researching how a scenario like this would play out, especially in America, but since there are many conflicting answers, I primarily had to rely on other people’s accounts on the internet. I apologise for any inaccuracies. I once again have to rely on artistic license.
You Are Not Alone

Chapter Summary

It’s not until later, when Evan has an older, more familiar blanket wrapping him and a mug of hot chocolate in his hands that he realises that it’s not just the hospital itself that Evan was so set against.

It’s Connor too.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

There’s a brief moment on Friday evening where Evan is convinced that not only have his colours gone, but his heart has stopped too. His mom has just leant back, an encroaching look of defeat in her expression, and Evan knows with certainty that if Connor has died then a part of him has gone with his soulmate because this, this is something he can’t imagine recovering from, can’t imagine moving past and what if-

When Connor suddenly starts to throw up water, Evan nearly passes out.

However, despite how much his brain urges him to go to Connor, to feel and touch the body that’s now returning to miraculous life, he can’t. He remains frozen as his mom props Connor upwards and gently questions his spaced out soulmate. He can only turn his head when the sound of sirens approach, paramedics on their way to do what his mom can’t. When they ask if he’s alright, Evan only has eyes for Connor and he distantly hears the words ‘shock’. A blanket falls on his shoulders and just as Connor gets taken away, his gaze frantically following his soulmate, his mom appears in front of him, her hands cupping his cheeks.

He gets the option to go to the hospital, especially since it’s entirely probable he may end up needing medical attention himself, but Evan surprises himself with the vehemence with which he declines the offer. It’s not until later, when Evan has an older, more familiar blanket wrapping him and a mug of hot chocolate in his hands that he realises that it’s not just the hospital itself that Evan was so set against.

It’s Connor too.

That thought, more than anything, is what terrifies him and Evan stays up late, late into the night thinking of its implications.

When Evan wakes, the room is submerged in darkness and still caught in the throes of his nightmare, his brain can’t comprehend what’s going on, meaning he quickly dissolves into a panic attack. It’s only 10 minutes later, body aching and thoughts still a turbulent jumble, that he remembers he’s not lost his colours, that he got there in time. The room is simply dark because Evan has apparently only managed a couple of hours sleep at most.

Evan’s hands shake as they go to rub his strained eyes and though he would love nothing more than
to go back to sleep he knows, especially after that attack, it won’t come easy at all and Evan doesn’t really want to give his brain the undivided attention it craves. So, instead, he creeps downstairs and puts the TV on, doing his best to concentrate on the undemanding show but failing miserably.

Every time he thinks of Connor, his mind conjures up the image of his lifeless body stuck in the water. Even though he knows Connor is alive, that his mom brought him back, it doesn’t stop him worrying that it could happen again, that his colours could once again vanish with no warning and this time, Evan won’t be able to stop it.

Logically, Evan knows that shouldn’t happen and also, his thoughts probably wouldn’t be so bad if he’d just gone with Connor, gone to see him get medical help. The thing is, however, Evan is terrified of seeing Connor. He will admit to have been frightened of Connor before but it’s never been like this. Angry Connor, he could just about handle. Connor being so desperate to get away from Evan that he’d drown himself? It makes Evan want to throw up.

His mom has told him it’s not his fault and while the sensible side of Evan’s brain tries to agree with her, it’s constantly overridden by his irrationality. By his insecurities.

Evan doesn’t realise he’s picking at his cast until the white shreds get trapped beneath his nails and as stupid as it sounds, he thinks, ‘I don’t want the doctors to notice this’ and his fingers instead find his lips. He’d bitten the bottom one during the night and the scab there is too tempting for Evan’s nails and before long, he’s got blood dripping down his chin, the first drop on the couch spurring Evan to hide the evidence before his mom finds out. His efforts turn out to be for nought however as while the kitchen tap is running, he hears soft footsteps pad down the stairs, his mom arriving just in time to see him wipe away the last glob of blood.

“Oh Evan.” Once again, his mom draws him into another hug but this time, Evan can’t find any comfort from it. He doesn’t deserve her care. He nearly killed his soulmate.

“I’m—I’m fine,” Evan mutters, pushing away from her and when he hurriedly goes to turn off the tap, his mom’s hands covers his.

“You know you can talk to me bud, right?” She asks him softly, her unkempt hair falling over earnest eyes and Evan simply nods. However, unlike before when Evan’s tried to avoid these conversations, his mom’s not willing to just let him go to his room. The one time he wants her to act like she normally does she doesn’t and why can’t she just understand that he deserves what he gets and that—

“Baby please. Talk to me.” A thumb brushes against his cheek and Evan realises he’s crying. Considering how long they’d lasted before he managed to fall asleep, he’s surprised he’s not all dried out yet.

“I just—I can’t sleep. I hurt him, I hurt Connor and it’s all my fault. Y—you don’t what I’m really like, I—I’m so messed up and it’s because of that, Connor, he,” Evan cuts himself off. He doesn’t even know what he’s saying. He just feels like an endless well of emotions, of blame, guilt, frustration and sadness and he doesn’t know what to do, how to get rid of them.

“Evan, honey, what happened was not. Your. Fault,” his mom says firmly but not unkindly. “It was Connor who made his decisions that night and likely the drugs played a part too. The decision to take those drugs was Connor’s too.”

“But if I hadn’t, maybe if I told him I could’ve, he could’ve…”

“There’s no use in wondering what could have happened bud. All you can do on focus what did
happen and how you can move on. What do you say to me booking you an earlier appointment with Rachel? I bet she’d be able to help.”

“Y-you don’t get it!” Evan says, suddenly angry. “Connor, he always thought we were so different, that he would never get better, never get the kind of help I did. I thought- I thought he was getting better, that I was enough to help him, but I was wrong and Connor’s wrong too because he goes and tries to kill himself just like I-”

Despite Evan freezing and not finishing his sentence, his mom tenses. He tries to escape again but his mom stands in his way and short of pushing her to the side, which Evan doesn’t want to do, he has to stay and face her blank face. With only the sound of the clock ticking, they stare at each other until his mom’s eyes widen a fraction and her lips part.

“Evan,” she starts slowly. “Did you fall out of that tree? Or did you let go?”

Evan wants to lie, wants this whole conversation to be over and done with but there must be a disconnection between his brain and lips because what comes out in a raspy, broken voice is, “I let go.”

At first, there’s nothing and Evan’s left to wonder what’s going through his mom’s mind. Is it disappointment? Anger? Resentment? Just as he’s mentally berating himself for being such a worthless son, that’s when his mom breaks. Her expression shatters into one of pure horror and guilt, emotions Evan knows far too well. Before Evan can reach out to her, try to catch the pieces that are falling, she seems to collect them herself, lifting up her shoulders and gritting her teeth behind thin lips.

“You know, when your dad left I was so scared,” his mom begins, only the faintest quiver in her voice. “In just one day, our whole lives got turned upside down. Suddenly, I was a single parent left with this amazing, confused son and I-I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t know how to go it alone. And then, then you asked if I was going away too and hearing that, I knew it didn’t matter if I didn’t know what I was doing, I just had to do the best I could. I told myself I would always be there for you and back then, I thought it was the truth.”

For a brief second, any composure his mom gathered is gone and she’s bringing Evan into her arms, stroking her fingers through his hair a fraction too fast to be completely soothing.

“Mom, you…” Evan realises there are no words he can say that wouldn’t, at least partially, be lies. Sometimes he didn’t mind his mom’s distance, her long hours at work, her disconnection. It meant there was no one to judge him, to criticise his behaviour or push him to go outside more. But other times, where the only one who could wish him goodnight was himself, he missed her. He wanted his mom back. He wanted her hugs, her support past encouraging thumbs up, her understanding.

“I know bud,” his mom says and Evan can feel her self-deprecating smile. “I knew I’d have to make sacrifices to try and give you everything you needed but I suppose in the end, I just got lost in them. I forgot why I was doing everything in the first place and that was you Evan. I love you so much baby and I’m so sorry I didn’t notice how much you were struggling.”

“It’s like you said…all we can do is focus on the here and now,” Evan tells her quietly, still mushed against her shoulder. Evan’s not even told Rachel about that day and telling his mom now…he actually feels better, something he didn’t think would be possible. And now, maybe, maybe he ought to tell Connor too. Not right away but…soon because even if Connor hates him, hates what he did, he ought to know he’s not as alone as he probably thinks.

At the end of the day, there’s nothing worse than feeling completely alone.
Though he and his mom don’t speak about it again, not properly, the after-effects of that conversation are immediately evident. Saturday morning, his mom calls for the day off work and even gets Sunday off in advance too. They don’t do much on Saturday, the both of them running on very little sleep and so they spend the day watching kids films, the ones they used to put on when Evan was feeling ill and remind him of mornings spent snuggled into his mom’s side, a steaming batch of ginger biscuits on the table.

Sunday follows a similar fashion and though his mom has to go to work on Monday, it’s for a shorter time and after he’s come back emotionally drained from his appointment with Rachel, he finds Jared waiting for him, comic books at the ready. Especially after talking to Rachel for hours, Evan’s not feeling very conversational but Jared takes it in his stride, keeping happy and animated as he tells him about the new Logan film which is going to be coming out. It makes Evan grateful that even if he ended up losing Connor, everything that happened still meant he got Jared back. No longer has he just got a family friend but he’s got a proper friend.

A best friend.

Going back to school on Wednesday, in the middle of the day since he had to go get his cast of that morning, it feels like Evan is walking on eggshells. Jared had warned him that the school knew most of what went down, unavoidable really since it had all started while the concert was on, but unlike before where there had been whispers and stares, there are only stares and even then, it’s not the ones Evan is used to. Some burn with a desire to know that isn’t really malicious, and others even hold pity. Evan doesn’t want pity but he’ll still take it over the anger, the judgement that Evan almost got his soulmate killed.

However, just because no one dares come up to him, it doesn’t mean he and Jared don’t find an empty classroom to have lunch in.

And really, when the door suddenly flings opens, causing Evan to nearly drop his sandwich, he should have expected the people to come through to be Zoe and Alana. He’s been ignoring their calls and texts for the last 4 days, after all.

Evan didn’t mean to be cruel when he ignored their texts but it’s the same situation with Connor’s parents, who were and probably still are desperate to talk to Evan and thank him. Evan doesn’t want thanks; he doesn’t want praise for his actions because they wouldn’t have been necessary if it wasn’t for him in the first place. When he’d given a half-hearted lie as to why he didn’t want to see the Murphy’s they’d ended up writing him an email instead. An email that’s still sat unopened in his inbox.

Evan knew that going to school meant probably seeing Zoe but he’d still held onto the slight hope that he might be able to avoid her and, because she’d likely tell Zoe where he was, Alana.

“It’s good to see you back Evan,” Alana says softly. “Mind if we join you?”

Beside her, Zoe looks like she’s downed multiple cans of red bull but is trying to keep the energy contained. Her heels bounce up and down and her face, which holds a look of barely concealed desperation and hope, is twitching slightly, along with her fingers which hold her books. Looking at her, Evan can’t refuse. With a slump to his shoulders he nods and Zoe takes that as permission to practically throw her body upon Evan’s in a tight hug.

“I know you probably don’t want me to go on about it so I’ll just say it once. Thank you so much for saving my brother. You have no idea how much that means to me. I’ll never forget what you’ve
Evan doesn’t say how he wishes she would, nor does he ask how Connor is, if she’s seen him. All he does is awkwardly pat her back which makes Zoe pause for a moment.

“Your cast!” She exclaims in surprise and her delight quickly morphs into horror. “But now that’ll ruin your authenticity as a mummy at Halloween!”

“How long did you think he’d be wearing it for?” Alana asks amused, pulling out a chair.

“I don’t know,” Zoe pouts and maybe it’s because he’s so close, Evan can see that for all Zoe’s acting normal, it’s a façade that has it’s cracks in the way Zoe’s eyes aren’t as clear as normal, how her hand still holds his arm probably harder than she means to. Realising they both don’t want to think about Friday, Evan musters up his best resigned smile and says, “You never told me I was going to be a mummy.”

“Because I said it was a laaaame idea,” Jared says. “See, I think you’re more of a batman.”

“That’s just because you want to be Robin,” Alana says, rolling her eyes and as the two of them begin to bicker, he and Zoe sit back and watch, her hand drifting down until theirs are linked together.

As much as Evan can’t forgive himself, he realises he’s also struggling to forgive Connor.

Evan doesn’t blame Connor for the lies his brain feeds him, can’t, not with how his own acts, but even so, Connor had almost left him. He’d almost sent him back to the dull, lifeless world he’d lived in before, where every day felt like a chore, where he rarely had a reason to smile. It’s stupid, really, because Connor doesn’t owe Evan anything but along with the anguish that comes with thinking of that night, comes the anger that Connor would do that to him, would leave him with just the memory of his dead body.

Evan knows that he would probably feel better if he actually went to see Connor but it’s only Thursday that he gathers the courage to ask if he can. Jared offers to come with him, as do Zoe and Alana, but Evan knows that as much as he would appreciate the company, this has to be a conversation between just the two of them.

He tries to ignore the voices in his head that remind him it could be the last.

They’re especially loud when he’s finally standing right in front of his soulmate.

At first, neither of them know what to say and so Evan takes the opportunity to just…look at Connor, override the last memory he has of him. While he still looks a little pale, this time it’s not from sinking to the bottom of a freezing lake but more the pastiness that comes from being inside a lot. His hair is dry and brushed, resting with a bounce against his shoulders and his nails are painted again, a new colour that Evan’s not seen on him before.

(Evan’s never going to take advantage of seeing colour again.)

Physically, Connor looks better, but most telling of how he’s doing inside are his eyes. Though they’re bright with worry, something Evan doesn’t quite understand, the most important thing is they’re bright. They’re alive in a way Evan didn’t see on Friday and when his eyes drift to his chest, rising and falling all on it’s own…

“Please don’t cry Evan,” Connor says quietly and Evan tries to muffle the sniff that follows.
“S-Sorry,” he says, wiping a hand under his nose. He’s done enough crying, he tells himself, and though a few more tears escape he manages to hold them back before they turn into full-fledged sobs. Feeling lightheaded, his eyes catch the spare seat beside Connor and following his gaze, his soulmate weakly gestures to it. Evan takes it, grateful to provide relief to his shaking legs, and when he becomes conscious of how close their knees are he angles his away. His need to touch Connor, to feel his warm alive skin is immense but he can’t spoil this, can’t give Connor reason to turn him away. If this is going to be the last time he sees Connor, he has to make it count.

“You don’t have to apologise you know,” Connor eventually says, eyes downcast to his hands. “You saved my life.”

Evan can’t tell if Connor sounds upset by that and even though he still feels terrified being in the same room as his soulmate, the anger that lingers in a small corner of his heart starts spreading throughout him. Before it had been a quiet pot beneath a simmering fire but with Connor’s words, a fan begins to blow against it, creating a blaze.

“Did you want me to?” Evan asks, sharper than he intended, and Connor’s eyes snap towards him. He opens and closes his mouth a few times before a wry, almost painfully desperate smile crosses his lips.

“Do you want the real version or the PG version?” He asks and whereas the last time Evan had been relatively calm, now he feels anything but. There’s no time for games now, no time for half-truths or diversions. He doesn’t want Connor to think of him as delicate, fragile Evan who couldn’t possibly understand the intricacies of his mind.

“I want the truth,” Evan replies, tone stern and resolute.

Connor’s quirked lip drops and he almost looks scared. “I…at first I would have answered no,” he says and Evan shuts his eyes, trying to shield them from the burning. “But now, the answer’s yes though it’s not that easy. I can’t give you the honest answer about what went through my mind that night because I don’t actually know. At least, not all of it. What I do know is that I didn’t feel worthy of you. I still don’t. I’m going to ruin you Evan and I think you know that too. I can’t be around you, at least, not now. This…this isn’t something you should have to deal with. You’ve already had to deal with too much shit because of me.”

Evan wants to be relieved that Connor doesn’t seem to be angry with him, that there might be hope for the conversation not being the last after all, but everything Connor says just reminds him of his own failure. He may not be able to reverse time, be able to talk about this with Connor sooner, but at the very least he can do it now and take whatever repercussions there are.

With his eyes still shut, Evan takes a deep breath, preparing himself. “There’s something I need to tell you,” he says, using extreme effort to keep his words from stammering. “You think I don’t know what you’re going through well…I lied to you, before, when I said I fell out of a tree.” He almost gestures to his arm, remembering just in time that it’s bare again, but the small jerk draws Connor’s eye to it regardless. His eyes widen a fraction and Evan has to refrain from concealing it, since the skin still looks kind of gross from being confined in the cast for so long. “When I went up the tree, it was an accident that I fell off the branch but…when I had the choice of holding on and letting go…I chose to let go. And-and I hoped that, maybe, it would be enough.”

“You…Evan…shit,” Connor breathes. His arm begins to shift but Connor quickly aborts the movement, catching his elbows in his hands.

“I should have told you earlier,” Evan admits. “But…but it never felt like the same thing. Compared to you, I just felt…weaker, that my problems weren’t so bad really. I hate myself for not telling you
because then-then maybe it wouldn’t have happened. We wouldn’t be here and I can’t, I just wanted,” Evan lets out a noise of frustration. Despite planning everything he would say the night before, the words refuse to come out as he’d wanted them to.

“…It wouldn’t have helped,” Connor says, scratching the side of his nose. “At least, I don’t think it would have. I figured this sort of shit wasn’t for me, you know and…it’d been a while since I thought about that sort of thing, at least until that night.” He pauses. “But I guess we’re not as different as I thought.”

He doesn’t sound happy about that revelation and when Evan points that out, Connor huffs. “Sorry I’m not over the fucking moon to hear you tried to kill yourself too,” he bites out and Evan’s impressed he doesn’t flinch. Instead, he stares knowingly at Connor and his soulmate once again drops his gaze.

“Guess I deserve that,” he mutters. “Is…is that all you wanted to tell me?”

Fear begins to creep into Evan. “D-do you want me to leave?” He asks, hoping to keep it out of his voice.

“Yes and no,” Connor admits. “Even with everything you said, I still think I’m going to ruin you. Shit Evan, I don’t even know why you’re here, why you’re still fucking putting up with me. I kissed you and I ran, not even that but I went to fucking drown myself and yet you’re still here. God, you should be asking for a restraining order or something.”

As patiently as he can, Evan asks, “And the no?”

“Because I’ve fucking missed you!” Connor explodes. “Because even though I ran I wanted to be with you, I want to be with you. You changed my life Evan and I’m fucking grateful you saved it. You’ve given me this opportunity and shit, maybe it won’t work but I’ve got it thanks to you. I can actually try and hang around in a world with you still in it.”

For once, the tears that want to escape aren’t born from sadness.

“I think we’ve also established I don’t want to live in a world without you either,” he says. Quieter, he adds, “S-so you really don’t blame me for what happened? I thought that if, maybe if I hadn’t given you that letter or, or if I hadn’t just pretended you were getting better without help, or if I hadn’t kissed you then…”

“Jesus Evan, weren’t you listening, I want to be with you. Everyone wants to blame themselves for what happened and yeah, maybe it did all add in some cosmic bullshit kind of way but Evan, you didn’t drag me to that orchard. The fucked up thing here did.” He points to his head. “That day, I wasn’t in a good place and even if I never went to your house, I can’t say it all wouldn’t have ended up the same. Look I fucking enjoyed that kiss, okay? But right then, it just felt like I was going to explode with everything I was dealing with and I didn’t want you to get caught in the blast. Instead of dealing with my emotions like a fucking sane person, I shut down. I went into overload and ended up dealing with it in the shittiest way possible.”

“…You did enjoy it?”

Connor lets out a startled, rough laugh. “Trust you to focus on that. Yeah Evan, I know everything I did makes it looks like I didn’t but…it was good.” His brief smile drops. “But…I can’t. I can’t do that kind of stuff, be your boyfriend or whatever. I can’t hurt you like that again and right now, I can’t promise I won’t. At least, not while…not while I’m trying to get better.”
Connor’s body shrinks into himself, as if expecting a blow, but any anger Evan had before has melted away, the fire fizzled out. Instead, Evan’s proud. He hates what got them to this point but hearing Connor now, hearing him talk positively; about getting better…he wouldn’t care if Connor never wanted anything romantic with him ever. Just having him there, feeling good and happy, that would be more than enough and Evan will help in any way he can.

If Connor wants him around for that, at least.

“Would it still be okay if I was there for you?”

Connor rolls his eyes but the action contrasts with the relief shining in them. “Of course I want you around Evan. Fuck, I don’t know how I would do it without you.”

“You seem to have done well so far,” Evan tells him, wincing a little internally about how long he’d actively avoided Connor for; when it turns out he was hurting just as much.

“Maybe,” Connor shrugs, “but every single moment I still thought about you, even as I tried not to. I regretted how I left things. Even though I was scared you’d hate me, I still missed you, more than I ever thought I could miss someone.”

“I missed you too,” Evan says. “I haven’t said this yet but I’m so glad you’re alive and…I know you can do this Connor.”

Connor’s lips tilt upwards. “I’ll just follow your lead, huh?”

Evan lets out a short laugh. “I’m still not perfect, you know that. I-I’m sorry I didn’t come to see you sooner. I guess I was…scared and…and angry.”

“Like I said, I wouldn’t have blamed you for not wanting to see me again,” Connor says, not looking insulted by Evan’s words like he’d feared. “So, where do we go from here?”

Evan lifts his head hopefully. “Friends?”

Connor nods, and then holds out a hand. “Friends.”

Evan means for that to be it but finally feeling Connor’s hand in his is the last straw for it to really hit home that Connor is here, he’s alive and Connor still wants Evan in his life. He’s not going to go away. He’s crying again before he can even process the fountain of emotions that have sprung up and suddenly, he’s engulfed in Connor Murphy’s arms.

“Everyone’s been giving me hugs, figured I should finally return the favour,” Connor says, his voice muffled in Evan’s shirt. “…This okay?”

Smiling through his tears, Evan ducks his head in the space where Connor’s neck meets his shoulder. He feels the soft tickle of hair against his cheek and the warmth of Connor’s palms on his back. This, in a way, feels more special than that kiss, more significant and in response he tightens his own arms around Connor, revelling in the fact he can finally touch him properly with both hands. No more barriers.

“It’s more than okay,” he whispers.

In fact, it’s the most perfect kind of imperfection.

Chapter End Notes
So, even I didn’t realise how much of a slow burn this fic would turn out to be. There will be either 1 or 2 chapters after this, both of them epilogues. I don’t have much written for them yet and I’m very busy at the moment but I promise I will try and get something out on Sunday.

I also need to say again thank you so much for the support you’ve given me and this fic. It’s been so long since I’ve done a multi-chap fic that I wasn’t sure I could do it. Thanks to you guys, I have! It’s been such a wild and emotional ride writing this fic and you guys have made it so worth it.
Recovery is not an easy process, not that Connor expected it to be. A week isn’t long enough to remove all the pent up anger, frustration and hurt that’s been burning within him for so long he can’t always contain it. No one is immune from him then; not his parents, not Zoe and especially not Jared. Even Evan and Alana get caught in the crossfire and for all that they say they understand, it doesn’t mean they always just sit there and take it.

During one especially bad day, where Connor even starts to regret that Evan saved him, he ends up spouting the most hurtful things he can come up with to drive his soulmate away. In the end, it works. After the two of them shout words they don’t mean to each other, most of them born primarily from feelings of helplessness and fatigue, Evan storms out of his house. He even slams the door. That, more than anything else, is what flips the switch in Connor. All the rage and righteousness instantly drains away leaving behind the bitter, familiar, taste of guilt.

Then there are the nightmares and it’s not just Connor’s he’s concerned about. It turns out that Evan gets to experience those delights too, something Connor finds out when his soulmate accidently falls asleep in his room. Connor had thought he was being conscientious for once, moving Evan so he doesn’t wake with a crick in his neck, but instead he sends his soulmate springing upwards, Connor’s name leaving his lips with a horrified gasp. It takes at least 5 minutes for Connor to get through to Evan that yes, this is his bedroom, no, he’s not a ghost and fuck no, Evan did not kill him.

That last part strikes a nerve in Connor and Evan’s not the only one who suffers a disturbed sleep that night.

It’s not all bad though. In fact, for every painful moment there’s a good time to counter it, such as Connor sneaking out to throw rocks at Evan’s window so that he could apologise for being such an asshole and making him leave.

The window opens, but Connor in his infinite wisdom, got the wrong room. However, instead of send him sprinting away, Evan’s m-Heidi invites him inside and the next thing he knows, he’s drawn into an impromptu late night movie marathon with both Evan and Heidi. By all means, Heidi should hate Connor for what he put her son through but instead, she only ever has a smile for Connor and… she’s just always makes sure he knows she’s there for him. That she cares. And it’s not in a patronising way or anything, but just that Connor knows if he’s got an issue he’s not happy telling his parents (basically most of the shit he goes through), he can easily go to Heidi.

He’s taken her up on that offer more than once.

There’s also the whole college thing. His dad hadn’t been lying when he said he wouldn’t force Connor to do that fucking application but the funny thing is, Connor’s now sent off two of them.
They’re not for business though, but fine arts. One even has a special focus on photography. Though Connor tried to appear as nonchalant as possible when he pressed send, that night he’d had to call Evan. The mixture of worry, excitement and disbelief was something only his soulmate could begin to understand, having sent off his own applications a few weeks earlier.

He and Evan may not have applied to any of the same college’s but some of them are pretty damn close. Connor knows he should just pray that somewhere accepts his lazy ass but he can’t stop himself hoping for a small miracle. Just because Zoe and Alana are completely happy and disgustingly logical about the idea of maintaining a long distance relationship doesn’t mean Connor is. He doesn’t want to have to look at his soulmate through a screen for months. He’s tired of keeping distance between them.

In fact, with how well things have ended up going, he finally wants to get rid of that last stretch too. Problem is though, because it was his idea in the first place, it falls to him to make the move and so far he’s been too chicken shit to do anything about it. He only started up coming up with a plan when Zoe forced him to after exclaiming that she was sick of listening to him ‘angst’ (AKA listening to heavy metal music without headphones in an attempt to drown out his problems.)

Every year the Murphy’s hold a New Year’s Eve party. When he was younger, Connor used to hide in his room and when he got old enough to climb out his window, he found somewhere dark, quiet and unavoidably grimy for a smoke. This time, things are different. This time, the guest list isn’t limited to his dad’s associates and his mom’s girlfriends. Now Evan and his mom get an invite, as do Alana and her parents. Hell, even Kleinman and his whole extended family end up getting passes too. Whereas before Connor remembered hearing quiet titters and faux compliments, the house is now packed and full of laughter and yelling (mostly from Kleinman’s two six year old cousin’s who’ve made it their mission to get each and every guest onto the makeshift dance floor Zoe set up.)

However, as much as he’d grudgingly enjoyed the atmosphere downstairs, Connor’s got a plan and so when it gets close to midnight he nudges Evan and asks if he would like to head up to his room. While there are going to be fireworks playing on TV, live from New York or something, Connor knows that the house over the road always does their own fireworks and though the view’s a little obscured by trees, nothing can beat a live show.

That’s the excuse he gives Evan, anyway. Not that his soulmate really needs it, happily obliging immediately. As they creep away from the rest of the exuberant, drunk partiers, Zoe catches his eye and flashes a thumb’s up.

Even though he feels anything but confident, he gives her one back.

It doesn’t start off well. Since he’d forgotten to tidy his room before the party, he has art supplies and portfolios scattered everywhere and he almost falls flat on his face making the ridiculously short trip to the lights. Thankfully, Evan doesn’t laugh, just helps stabilise him with a hand on his elbow and those fucking blue eyes that Connor can’t get enough off anymore holding the faintest hint of amusement.

As Connor and Evan settle on the bed, they hear everyone down below begin to gear up for the countdown. Prosecco gets handed out and the TV is turned up extra loud. From this distance, it’s nice to listen to and Connor feels his own anticipation begin to increase as he and Evan relax against the headrest, shoulder to shoulder like they’ve sat multiple times now.

What they haven’t done multiple times, however, is what Connor plans to do soon and he fights to keep his body loose and natural as they turn their gazes to the window.

“So, they’re cutting down my therapy sessions again,” Connor mentions as the noise downstairs
dims with growing eagerness and Evan turns to Connor excitedly.

“That’s great news! Wait, how long have you known?”

“Since my last session,” Connor admits with a small grin, Evan’s mood affecting his own. “Looks like we’ve finally found a combination that works.”

“I’m really happy for you Connor,” Evan says genuinely and god, the hand on his thigh is supposed to be innocent, but Connor’s throat is as dry as the Sahara when he responds.

“I couldn’t have done it without you, you know.”

If his throat is a desert, Evan’s smile is the fucking sun. “I guess we’re soulmates for a reason.”

“Yeah, I guess we are,” he replies softly and then, suddenly, the sound of the countdown can be heard sending Connor straight into a panic. “Shit. Speaking of that, I was meant to. If you were still…”

It’s a good job they’ve got to the stage that words aren’t always necessary between them because it means that, miraculously, Evan is able to understand his fucking rambling. Somehow, despite his planning, he still hadn’t left allowed enough time to ask it nicely.

“…You think you’re ready?” Evan asks him, biting his lip afterwards, eyes full of hope.

“If you are too,” Connor is quick to say because they’re reaching the end and just because Connor wants it doesn’t mean Evan does too-

3, 2, 1

“Happy New Year!”

Connor had been completely prepared to kiss Evan but it ends up that Evan kisses him instead; catching Connor’s startled lips with his own. Unlike before, where the feeling of rightness had been combined with thoughts like ‘what the fuck are you doing’ and ‘you don’t deserve this’, now Connor can only revel under the feeling of Evan’s slightly frayed but otherwise unnaturally soft lips. He can smile when Evan’s fingers wind through his hair, not tugging but lightly brushing through it. In return, he can run his palms down Evan’s sides, stopping just as they reach that small fraction of skin revealed between his shirt and trousers. Both of them still might not know what they’re doing but it doesn’t matter. The fireworks going off outside have nothing on the fireworks in his head, in his heart. He hopes Evan didn’t actually want to see them because now he’s finally allowing himself this, finally ready to give himself to Evan, he’s not sure he’ll be able to let his soulmate go.

When they part for air, he sees the moment that fear hits Evan no matter how hard he tries to conceal and Connor can’t fucking have that now, can he? He darts in for another peck, strokes a finger along Evan’s hip and grins at the adorable blush that graces his soulmate’s cheeks.

“I’m not running away this time Evan, not again,” he says before pausing. He’s said the following words in the mirror multiple times, woken with them on the tip of his tongue, fallen asleep holding onto them until the right moment.

Connor’s no stranger to fear but for once, he’s not actually scared.

“I love you Evan Hansen.”

His soulmate might not be the prettiest crier but shit, neither is Connor and he’s not against kissing
Evan through the tears, especially when he holds Connor’s hands tight in his own and says, “I love you too Connor Murphy.”

Connor does end up running from Evan again, unable to completely escape all his little demons, but it’s never after a kiss and he always comes back.

Connor will always come back to Evan.

Chapter End Notes

Just to let you guys know, there should be one more epilogue coming out. However, since I am extremely busy at the moment, I don’t know when exactly that will be, hence I will mark this story as complete (since, honestly, it basically is). Thank you so so much for all the support for this fic. You have all made my day multiple times with your comments and kudos.
Ten Thousand Reasons

Chapter Summary

Epilogue 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It feels strange being in Connor’s room without Connor himself there. However, unlike when Evan first stepped foot into this room, when it had been as lifeless as Connor admitted he’d felt back then, it’s now bursting with personality. There are rough sketches strewn about Connor’s desk, pencils scattered everywhere and sat on his shelves are the variety of knick-knacks he’s acquired over the last year, including the harmonica Zoe bought him as a gag gift at Christmas. Connor had decided the best revenge would be to learn how to play it, simply so he could perform songs Zoe hated on it.

He’s actually got pretty good.

However, Evan’s favourite part of Connor’s room by far, is the wall that’s now covered with photos. It’s similar to Zoe’s but whereas hers are primarily selfies mixed in with some from her childhood, the majority of Connor’s photos are just from the past year, circling around almost like a visual time-line. They’re all taken with the polaroid camera Cynthia had bought him upon his return from hospital and so beneath each picture is a date, not that Evan really needs them. This is maybe the first school year he’s not wanted to write off, delete from his mind, and so it’s like his brain has overcompensated with how many memories he now treasures. With a gentle smile, Evan trails his gaze along each photo in turn.

He starts on Halloween; one of the first pictures Connor had taken with his new camera. Rather than go through the stress of finding a last-minute costume he decided to help everyone else. Of course, help was a term Evan used loosely since instead of offering constructive opinions, he’d mostly spent their ‘dress run’ jibing Jared about his bright red underwear.

Which, well, when Evan himself saw Jared’s Robin costume on he’d been incredibly glad most of his face had been hidden beneath a Batman cowl.

The photo is of him, Jared, Zoe and Alana posing in their costumes. While Evan and Jared don’t actually look so bad, especially with Jared striking the traditional hero pose and Evan ‘broodily’ folding his arms, they are undoubtedly beaten by the girls. Running with the DC theme, they’d gone as Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy. It had been quick thinking on Alana’s part since Zoe had been initially convinced they should go as ketchup and mustard.

At least Alana still got to use the red wig.

However, even they hadn’t looked the best that night. Deciding to compromise with extra thick eye liner, red tint to his lips and a borrowed long black coat, Evan had privately declared Connor the most stunning of them all. It had taken Connor a few months to realise just how much Evan enjoyed seeing him wear eye-liner and he now exploits at every given opportunity.

Not that Evan’s complaining.
In order to stop all the blood rushing to his face, Evan quickly moves onto the next photo – the last day of winter vacation. This is one of the few on the wall that weren’t actually taken by Connor and it’s evident in how hastily it was taken. Alana just succeeded in capturing the moment that one of Evan’s snowballs finally made contact, after many failed attempts. In fact, he somehow managed to aim it right at Zoe’s face. In the photo there is Evan’s rosy cheeked face drawn in shock, Zoe’s face on the verge of morphing into shock just as the snowball collides her nose and there, in the corner, is Connor’s face alight with laughter. It was one of the first times Evan had ever heard Connor laugh like that, so loud and unguarded, and it was he himself who ended up putting that photo on Connor’s wall.

He slides his gaze over more photos. There’s one of Zoe during a recital, one of Alana when she did an assembly on mental health that had ended up in the newspaper, another of Evan drawing on Jared’s face during a sleepover in retaliation for Jared trying it on him first, a selfie of Connor and Evan when Connor had suggested they go star-gazing…

A noise from downstairs jolts Evan out of his thoughts and a quick glance at the time informs him just how much time he’s wasted reminiscing. With the decorations Zoe had convinced him were a great idea still sat in the plastic carrier bag, he quickly begins throwing them around the room, in the middle of chucking heart shaped confetti over Connor’s desk when said soulmate opens the door.

“Evan?! What the hell are you doing he-what are you doing?”

Evan freezes, hand outstretched over Connor’s laptop. A few stray bits of confetti fall from his sweaty palm.

“…Surprise?”

Connor blinks and then lets out a snort of laughter, eyes glittering with amusement. “Only you Evan. Fuck, come here.”

Connor draws Evan’s frozen form into his arms and Evan instantly melts into the hug, pressing his face close against Connor’s neck. He smells like the cologne Evan had bought him for his birthday, earthy but with a hint of floral.

“I thought we agreed we were gonna save celebrating for after midterms,” Connor says as they part and Evan gives a helpless shrug.

“We did but you’re not starting until next week and I don’t need to worry about assignments yet. I wanted to surprise you and then Zoe convinced me to get decorations which I’m kind of regretting now and-”

Evan will never get tired of Connor stopping his rambling with a kiss. He clutches loosely on Connor’s arms, aware of the confetti still stuck to them, and tilts his head back. This is also something that’s improved over the past months, once they both stopped overthinking things, and now every kiss leaves Evan breathless in the best possible way.

“You know I don’t need this shit, right?” Connor says softly against Evan’s lips. “I’m just happy to have you here.”

It feels like Evan’s heart is going to beat right out of his chest with how full it is and goes in for another quick kiss. “Maybe I like giving you things you don’t need,” Evan replies.

Connor rolls his eyes fondly before they widen. “Shit. Fuck, I’m so glad I got your present done early.”
“You know I don’t need that sort of stuff, right?” Evan teases and Connor rolls his eyes once more before he runs to the door.

“I’ll be right back,” is all he says before he goes thumping down the stairs. There’s the muffled sound of Connor and Cynthia talking and moments later he returns, holding something hurriedly wrapped in some bright pink tissue paper.

“Didn’t think to wrap it early though,” he admits. “Happy anniversary,” he says, before almost shoving it in Evan’s direction, a gesture that happened both Christmas and Evan’s birthday, meaning he’s worried over Evan’s opinion. That Connor’s nervous too makes Evan feel a little better and after taking his own gift he hands Connor’s his.

“Happy anniversary.”

Unable to watch Connor open his own gift, Evan focuses on carefully unwrapping the tissue paper. Once done, he takes a moment to digest just what he’s looking at.

It’s a picture frame and as much as Evan is obsessed with nature, he can’t be sure of the type of wood he runs his hands along. Pine, maybe, and it’s completely smooth apart from the added detail. Both at the top and the bottom is the outline of a rose, tinted yellow and knowledge from a summer’s work experience at a florist rushes back to Evan.

Joy, friendship and a new beginning.

And there, either side in pale blue are forget-me-nots. Not only do they, as the name implies, indicate remembrance but they also represent true love.

Tears burn the corners of Evan’s eyes. Now he knows what this special project Connor had been working on his dad was, why he’d been so adamant that Evan never even enter the garage. He’d been making this. He’d been working with his dad, despite their relationship still being rocky, to make a frame for Evan.

“I fucking love you too,” is all Evan hears before he’s once again got an arm full of Connor Murphy, his soulmate’s lank frame deceptively strong. Though the frame digs a little uncomfortably in his chest, he doesn’t care; he just frees one arm so that he can twine his fingers in Connor’s hair – even softer now he’s using a new product. He can feel Connor’s lips upturned in a smile against his shoulder and, well, at least he’s not the only one struggling not to cry.

“Let’s go now,” Connor then says and in a flash, Evan is being dragged outside by his hand, Connor holding Evan’s present in the other hand. Evan had hoped for a good reaction for his gift but this exceeds it, Connor’s excitement infecting him as they get into the car.

They have a new spot now, the orchard holding far too many painful memories for the both of them. It’s a park about 20 minutes away by car but it’s so out of the way that it’s rarely inhabited, in fact most of the wildlife has been left to grow. It’s for that reason Evan doesn’t feel so bad when Connor begins digging at the grown with his nails, in his rush having forgotten to get a trowel. He digs a small hole and then looks up at Evan.

“Uh, is this right?”

Evan goes back to what he remembered when he bought the maple tree seed. He hadn’t been sure what type to get at first but ultimately, it had been the easiest option, especially with the both of them heading off to college. Together, they make the hole a little wider and then set the container with the seedling within it, using a water bottle as they begin to fill it back up. One done, they’re left staring
at the little seedling.

“Now what?” Connor asks.

“We wait,” Evan replies. “Until the second spring after planting.”

“That’s so long,” Connor complains but Evan smiles, grabbing Connor’s dirt covered hand with his own.

“We’ve got time,” he replies and Connor’s eyes soften.

“Yeah we do.”

An idea springs in Evan’s mind. “Can you take a picture? I…I know what I want to go in my frame.”

Connor grins, having heard Evan’s detailed enthusiasm of his frame on the drive there.

“Sure.” He digs out his phone, since the frame’s not made for a Polaroid photo, and holds out his arm. Evan squeezes close beside Connor and grins when an arm gets flung around his shoulder. He winds his own arm around Connor’s waist.

However, instead of counting down, Connor turns his face to Evan and intently says, “I love you Evan Hansen.”

“I love you t-”

The picture that ends up in Evan’s frame is the two of them kissing, the seedling in front of them. Evan never changes the picture in that frame and he never wants to. With the accidental tilt to the photo as Connor got distracted, it’s imperfectly perfect. Just like they are.

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**Dear Connor Murphy,**

*One year ago I found out you were my soulmate. ‘Who would’ve thought it would be you?’ I still ask myself that now because I never thought I would deserve someone like you. We may not have had the best start but with where we are now, I’m not sure I’d change much. It’s made me realise just what we can get through so long as we’re together.*

*Our relationship is like a tree and before you say anything, please bear with me. It started off small, a sapling going to amount to nothing unless it got water, the nutrients it needed to keep growing. It needs effort and we put that in for us, and now we’re growing. You’ve grown so much Connor and you don’t know how proud I am of you.*

*So, that’s why I bought you a seed for our anniversary. Well, it’s more of a seedling since it had to go through a lot of treatment beforehand and stratification…but that’s not what’s important. What is important is that this will be ours. It will grow with us. I thought we could plant it in our spot and who knows maybe one day, another kid will be sat there having just found their soulmate and not knowing what to do. Their soulmate may come looking for them and then…then they’ll talk. They’ll get to know each other. They’ll become friends and eventually, maybe more.*

*They’ll realise there was a reason the universe put them together.*

*I love you Connor and I can’t express to you how happy I am to have you as my soulmate. This has been an amazing year and I can’t wait to spend many more with you.*
Sincerely,

Evan Hansen

Chapter End Notes

Did someone order some extra cheese?

(There has been some butchering of gardening here but I decided getting this out was more important that losing my sanity over research. Sorry Evan, I do not share your passion.)

Anyway, this is finally done! I’ve had the start of this on my computer for so long but I really wanted to get this out before Christmas for a holiday gift. I am so grateful to all of you who’ve read this, commented and bookmarked. This has been the best fic to write because you are all so wonderful. If you haven’t already seen, I do have some other DEH one-shots you can read and maybe one day I’ll write a new story for this fandom. If there are any scenes from this verse you may want to see let me know. I can’t promise I’ll write them or if I do, it’ll be soon, but I have loved writing this ‘verse so much.

Thank you so very much for reading!

(Also, if anyone has maybe ever done fan-art or something like that just let me know?)

End Notes

I hope you enjoy it! Consider leaving a kudos or comment if you did :)

I will likely post snippets and things on my tumblr (my second, more active blog is scarlett-ice) so if you wanna you can hang out there!

Edit! My musical side blog is ‘ivegotthedreams’ :)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!