jean moreau's thirty reasons to stay alive
by buvksissteves

Summary

this list began one year to the day of when jean moreau joined the trojans, in his final year of university

(this story takes place after the life and times of kevin day, but you do not need to read that fic to understand the context of this one.)

Notes

this fic is based off my tumblr post: http://juliansalec.tumblr.com/post/158669474357/jean-moreaus-thirty-reasons-to-stay-alive-this
When Jean Moreau woke up that morning, he was aware of the fact that it was the one year anniversary of Riko’s funeral—which was significant to Jean for one major reason. Surprisingly, it had little to do with the fact that Riko was dead, but rather, that it meant it was the one year anniversary since he had joined the Trojans. One year to the day that Jeremy Knox had showed up at Abby’s house and offered himself to Jean. There was no better way of wording it. Even in Jean’s broken state, Jeremy hadn’t let it change his mind. He promised Jean a team that would comfort him, promised him recovery, and promised that he, Jeremy would see to it that Jean got anything he needed. That memory seemed to serve him a lot better than Riko’s death, it was actually something worth remembering. Riko’s death affected him only one way when Kevin had told him about it—pure and utter relief. No shame, guilt or sorrow had come with him when he passed, unlike Kevin.

Poor Kevin.

He knew that later, he would have to call Kevin, and make sure his friend was okay (were they friends again? They were certainly better off than as they were before). As for Jean, he didn’t feel any sense of sadness.

He sat up in his bed, running a hand through his hair before he brought his hands down in front of him, staring at them. Six of his fingers were bent awkwardly, from having them broken when he was at Evermore. There were some terrible scars on his face—his chin scraped every which way, and a multitude of them on each cheek. His nose wasn’t terribly displaced, but enough for people to know that it had been broken. Physical reminders of what he had been through. The mental scars lay deep within him, and although Jean was nowhere near the recovery he so very craved, he knew, after watching Kevin grow and succeed and get the person that he wanted, that Jean could achieve that too.

Jean wasn’t sure Kevin would want to talk to him today, so would leave the decision to him. All he did was grab his phone from his bedside table and turned it on, smiling briefly at the picture of he and Jeremy as his background before he opened up a message to Kevin, contemplating what to write.

As he did, he also contemplated Jeremy.

That photo was taken at the wedding of Wymack and Abby, in which Jean had seen Kevin face to face for the first time in a very long time. He remembered sitting in that chair, astounded at how far Kevin had come, standing there in front of God and everyone, telling the people that he loved, that he loved them. Later on that evening, Jeremy had grabbed Jean’s phone, snapped a selfie of the two of them and placed it as Jean’s background.

Jean had told Kevin that night that he and Jeremy were in a relationship. It wasn’t false of course, but it wasn’t the same kind of relationship that Matt and Kevin had. It was a year later, and all they
had done was kiss. Jean didn’t know much about relationships, but at the beginning of the whole thing, he had assumed that people who were in relationships were supposed to do more than just kissing. Jeremy had told him a million times that such a thing was not the case, but Jean thought he was disagreeing just to be overly nice to Jeremy. He was patient sometimes to the point where Jean yelled at him just so he could get mad at something, and even then, Jeremy never took it to heart.

Jean didn’t know what he had done to deserve Jeremy Knox.

Jean settled on a message, typing out to Kevin, *If you need me today, I am here for you.* Then he cast his phone aside, noting that it was too early for Kevin to be awake anyhow. Jean got out of bed and looked around his room, noting that it was very plain, and maybe he should start to decorate it more. Jeremy had taken to slapping up some photos on the wall of the team, but Jean was still working on ways to feel connected to them. His road to recovery was taking very long, but Jeremy, and his therapist, both reminded him that such things were not easy, and everyone moved at different paces. Apparently just the fact that he had Jeremy in his life in the way that he did was an immense improvement from who he was a year ago.

Jean left his bedroom and went over to the bathroom, washing his face quickly and brushing his teeth, before he cursed himself, noting he should have brushed after he ate breakfast. He sighed and walked over to the kitchen, looking at the food he and Jeremy had for themselves. Their dorm was quite small, compared to what the Foxes had. It was half the size, which meant nights, where the team wanted to spend it together, had to always be done outside the school. Each room was fit just enough for two people, and Jeremy had taken the initiative all that time ago to room with Jean. As a former Raven, he never went anywhere alone, and only in the recent weeks was he beginning to break that habit for very small periods of time, but he did not enjoy it and constantly craved someone by his side. Jeremy had taken to being his shadow at the start, which was why Jean had grown so fond with him with such ease.

He didn’t jump in surprise when the door to their room opened, and a sweaty Jeremy Knox walked in, his semi-orange hair swept away from his face with a headband. He was wearing shorts and a tank top, earbuds dangling from his neck. His California tanned face split into a toothy grin.

“Good morning!” he exclaimed. This was Jeremy’s routine, he went to bed around nine thirty at night, and woke up at six thirty in the morning to do a half hour run before he came back, by which time, Jean was already awake. He took in the sight of Jean’s bare chest, noting the scars as he always did, and like usual, Jeremy’s anger was quietly hidden behind his grin. Jean however, knew him well enough to see it behind his eyes.

“Hello,” Jean greeted him quietly, taking out two bowls and some cereal.

Jeremy waved his hand. “I already have smoothies prepared in the fridge.” He walked over, Jean expecting a kiss, but Jeremy walked right past him to the fridge, opening it and taking out two long bottles with the smoothies in them. He uncapped them completely before handing one to Jean, but Jean didn’t take it. With a frown, Jeremy put it on the counter and tilted his head. “What’s wrong?” he asked.

Sometimes, Jean felt like Jeremy was a cartoon character. He was shorter than Jean by quite a few inches, but just passing his shoulder. His hair was dyed, and yet somehow seemed to work anyhow—it wasn’t really orange at all, it was some strange combination of Jeremy’s natural dark blonde hair and the lightness of the orange tint he added to it—it created a new color that was very specific to Jeremy all on his own. That, combined with his bright blue eyes, and cheery personality pretty much added him up to one of the characters from the anime shows that Jeremy forced Jean to watch.
“You did not kiss me good morning like you always do.”

“Oh,” Jeremy murmured. “Well, I know what today is for you. I know that you also don’t like to be touched when you aren’t wearing a shirt.”

“Oh,” Jean looked down at his bare chest, frowning. He looked back up at Jeremy and said softly, “I didn’t know you had noticed that.”

“What, about your shirt? A long time ago,” he waved his hand in dismissal but then stopped, his eyes curious. “Unless…I mean, are you asking me to? I can, if you want.”

Jean sighed in annoyance. “I don’t want every kiss we have to be a discussion.”

“They aren’t always a discussion,” Jeremy told him. “But I know what today is, so I just—”

“I do not care about today.” Jean interrupted him. “Not in the way that you think.”

“Really?” Jeremy asked.

Jean nodded and held out his hand. Jeremy preferred it when Jean took the first move for touches, it was a clear showing of what Jean wanted and needed. Jeremy was always willing to give, but Jean was not always willing to take, so this system of Jean moving first worked well for them. There was the rule of course, that Jeremy could always say no, but he hadn’t thus far.

Jeremy smiled softly and took his hand, walking with him to his room. “I’m sorry I smell,” he said to fill the silence—Jeremy didn’t do so well with silences. Jean knew that Kevin’s boyfriend Matt Boyd was sunshine incarnate, but dating Jeremy Knox was like dating the sun itself, not just the light the sun gave off. His excitement about life, about Exy, about Jean, his friends, and his family was everlasting. Jean wasn’t sure he would have had it any other way. Kevin had been right, it was a nice change from the life he had known for so long.

“I would like to show you something,” Jean told him, ignoring the comment about Jeremy’s body odor. He honestly didn’t smell at all, but that was apart from the conversation Jean wanted to have. He moved to get under his bed, reaching down and grabbing a diary he kept under it, sitting on his bed and laying it on his lap, taking out the pen that had been in the middle of it.

“What’s this?” Jeremy asked, sitting next to Jean.

“My therapist told me to write down my feelings, if ever I was not in the mood to say them out loud, then she could read them.” He had a lot of trouble with that sometimes, to say how he really felt. Often times, Jeremy was on the receiving end of such confusion, leaving Jean feeling even guiltier about it. He hoped this new tactic, of writing things down would help him to not only get his feelings out, but also work on saying them out loud, even if he had to read them from a page.

“Am I in there?” Jeremy joked.

Jean answered seriously, “Yes.”

Jeremy’s face softened, and he watched Jean write across the page, Jean Moreau’s thirty reasons to stay alive. Jeremy frowned, never someone for anything too morbid, which was ironic considering who he was dating. “That’s deep, love.” Jeremy murmured. “Are you still thinking that much about it?” he asked quietly. Jean didn’t have to ask Jeremy to specify exactly what he meant. Jean had been nearly apathetic when he had arrived at the Trojans, but in one of their early arguments as roommates, Jean had let slip that graduation would be his final day. In that same instance, Jeremy had demanded that Jean stop putting off therapy, and would even go with him if it
that would help.

For the first two months, Jeremy did go with him, because a Raven never went anywhere alone.

For a small moment, Jean wanted to shield Jeremy completely from the reality of his own intrusive thoughts. Jeremy was so good, so kind, so loving and attentive, that maybe he shouldn’t have to deal with any of the darkness Jean kept in his mind. Being in a relationship however, according to Jeremy, meant that he was supposed to be honest about things like this.

“Sometimes,” Jean admitted. “I am sorry if that makes you sad.”

“Don’t apologize,” Jeremy said quickly. “It’s how you feel. Did your therapist tell you to do this?”

Jean nodded. “I think it is a good idea, do you not agree?”

Jeremy put on a tiny smile. “I do agree, yes. I think whatever works, and helps is what matters.” He tapped his knuckle on the paper. “So? What’s the first reason?”

Jean lay his pencil down over the paper and looked at Jeremy significantly, before he told him, very carefully, “You can kiss me.” He swallowed and then added, because Jeremy was right, even though Jean had improved in some ways, he still had very severe restrictions. “Just, do not touch me.”

Jeremy, like always, didn’t argue. He leaned in and pressed a careful kiss against Jean’s mouth.

Jeremy was always very careful with the intensity of his kisses. He had only gotten out of hand a handful of times, and only because Jean had asked him to. Even then, Jeremy still remained careful with every touch he placed on Jean, he was never anything other than gentle. It just varied between soft kissing and more intense make out sessions where Jean craved Jeremy’s body under his, aligned with each other. It never lasted long, but it was always enough. They had done nothing else, and Jeremy never complained—although they had an embarrassing incident in which Jean had walked in on Jeremy relieving himself of certain pressures, which had them avoiding each other for two days.

It was not that Jean was not wanting of it, it was simply, fear. They both knew it, and Jeremy had no problem with the endless waiting, and Jean loved him fiercely for that too.

Oh yes, Jean loved Jeremy, and quite deeply too.

Jeremy had said I love you first, and Jean still hadn’t said it back. Jean was terrified of those words, but as usual, Jeremy’s patience held them both up and he said he would wait as long as Jean wanted. Jean did love him, but the admission of it was part of his fear and just like all other things they would take time.

Their kiss was chaste in all respects, a tender pressing of lips. It was over quickly, but Jean loved the feeling it left on his mouth.

“Today is the day he died. If that had not happened, I would not be here, with you. So for that, I am glad,” Jean said quietly. He traced the scars on his fingers with the pen, smiling sadly at them. “I am glad I never have to be this broken again. I am glad that he is dead.” He looked Jean in his deep blue eyes and asked him, “Does that make you uncomfortable?”

Jeremy shrugged, chewing the inside of his lip. “No.”

Jean raised his eyebrows. “Really?”
“You were tortured, and beaten and…” Jeremy swallowed. He knew that he was about to say "raped" but much like Jean, they both had trouble saying that word. That’s how they both knew it wasn’t the time for them to go any further with their sexual experiences. Until they could talk about it without choking on the word, they would not think about it. “It makes sense,” Jeremy continued softly. “That you would want the person who abused you to be gone.”

Jean nodded. “That is my first reason.” He told him, and allowed himself a moment of tenderness and leaned forward, kissing Jeremy’s cheek lightly.

Jean brought pen to paper once more and wrote on the sheet;

1. *He is gone.*

Chapter End Notes

please comment and give it a like if you enjoyed it :)
Jean was in that unfortunate place between being awake and asleep when he was rudely shaken awake.

“Jean,” Laila Dermott whispered.

“I will murder you.” he told her in response. He knew very well that it was nowhere near morning, which meant that he should not be bothered right now. Jean needed his sleep, he never had enough of it at Evermore, and though it had taken a couple of months, he was starting to fall into a nice sleeping pattern and even enjoyed sleep now.

“Come on you big baby, up.”

“I despise you and everything you stand for.”

“For fuck’s sake,” said Sara Alvarez from the doorway. “He’s more dramatic than Jeremy.”

Jean sighed loudly, to show just how much he was annoyed before he turned over in bed. He almost laughed; the girls were both wearing their clothes, whereas Jeremy was wearing his boxer shorts and his USC jersey, the hood up. He was leaning against the doorway with his eyes closed. Jean looked towards the clock and noticed the unholy hour of 4:45 am.

“Seriously?” he snapped. “Look at him, he’s dead on his feet!” That more than anything made Jean get up. He walked over to Jeremy, and cupped Jeremy’s face in his paler hands. “Mon cher,” he murmured. “Hello, sunshine.”

Jeremy’s eyes fluttered but exhaustion was clear all over them. “Mmmm…” was all he was able to muster.

Jean gave the girls a scolding look. “Why did you wake us up?” he snapped. Usually Jean speaking French to Jeremy was enough to have Jeremy do anything Jean wanted, but apparently not even that could bring him out of the slumber he so desperately craved.

The girls were nowhere near threatened by Jean’s antagonism. They knew it was an unfortunate reality of waking them up early. Though Jeremy rose early, he also went to bed early specifically so he could get a full sleep. Disrupting that routine would leave him jumbled for the rest of the day.

Laila Dermott was as tall as Jeremy, and made of muscle. She was, in Jean’s opinion, the strongest person on their team. As a goalkeeper, she was both fast and sturdy. Her skin was the darkest shade of black, and her hair was wild and curly. Her counterpart, Alvarez, reminded Jean very much of the Foxes very own Nicky Hemmick. They had the same brown skin color and were both lean, but where Nicky hailed from Mexico, Alvarez’ parents were from Brazil. Alvarez had hair that was cut down to a pixie bob and was built better than Jean but not quite as well as her girlfriend. Jean relied on his speed more than his brute strength, whereas the girls were all about force. It was ironic,
considering the fact that the Trojans were about sportsmanship and rarely ever got physical.

“We have a surprise,” Alvarez said. “Come on children!” she said, much too loudly for this time in the morning.

Jeremy moaned again and Jean sighed angrily. He was wearing a t-shirt and shorts, which he assumed would be more than enough. He fixed Jeremy’s hood for him before he crossed his arms and followed the girls, Jeremy coming behind them much too slowly. Jean looked back and rolled his eyes, too agitated with the morning to feel like he had the capacity to comfort someone. Still, in an effort to go beyond himself, he reached out and wound his arm through Jeremy’s.

“Open your eyes,” he murmured. “You look like a zombie.”

“I’m so tired,” Jeremy complained.

“I know—Jeremy!” Jean sighed, slipping his arm around Jeremy’s waist. He had simply resorted to allowing Jean to lead him, which had him tripping over the first step of the doorway to the roof in the process. “Pay attention!” Jeremy mumbled something in response, but Jean couldn’t make out the unintelligible words.

Laila laughed, having witnessed the small mishap. “Come on, come on,” she encouraged.

With nothing else to say, they followed Laila and Alvarez up to the rooftop, Jean mostly dragging Jeremy while he protested profusely with moans and groans. Helping him up the stairs was a fight all on its own, but when they got to the top, Jean sighed in relief.

“Come sit here,” he said to Jeremy softly. He was aware that the girls were looking at him; they cared very much about Jeremy, and at the beginning of his transfer, they didn’t get along with Jean too well. They were friendly enough, but Jean’s coldness and the arguments he picked with the team were enough to put him on their bad side. With time, it got better, and now that Jeremy was with Jean they accepted him a lot more, but they still watched his every move. Jean could not really blame them, he could only assume that was how friends and family were with each other. He could only say he knew how they felt, because every time they took the court, Jean’s eyes were always on Jeremy to be sure he was safe. Not that Jeremy Knox couldn’t take a hit, but someone like Jeremy shouldn’t have to.

Jeremy sat on the roof before laying completely back. Jean shook his head in disbelief while Laila muttered, “He’s hopeless,” but she took a spot next to him, Alvarez on her other side. Jean took the spot next to Jeremy and took Jeremy’s phone from Jeremy’s hood and checked the time—it had taken them nearly twenty minutes to get out of the dorm and onto the roof. That made him roll his eyes again, it was true; Jeremy was completely hopeless if you disturbed his sleep. He chucked the phone to the ground.

“Jean,” Alvarez said. “Get him to sit up.”

Jean sighed, his irritation growing more and more by the second. “Jer,” he leaned down and touched Jeremy’s face lightly. Jeremy stirred but did nothing, so Jean continued to smooth lines over his face—touching Jeremy’s lip, outlining his cheekbone, before letting his fingers dangle down to Jeremy’s neck and tickling him softly. Jean was not so often free with his touches in public, in fact, it made him very nervous most of the time. The nice thing about Alvarez and Laila however, was that they always did the polite thing in these instances and didn’t look at Jean.

A small laugh burst out from Jeremy’s mouth. “I’m up, I’m up,” he sighed, opening his eyes finally. He allowed Jean to pull him up and quietly asked, “Can I?” he motioned to Jean’s shoulder,
and once Jean nodded, Jeremy leaned his head on Jean’s shoulder. Jean almost told him that he didn’t need to keep asking for small things like this, but he knew that would start a serious discussion about them as a couple and Jean’s past and it was way too early to even think about dealing with any of that right now. This was a conversation for a later date and preferably a later time.

Jean looked to Laila, “Why—”

“Wait for it,” Laila shushed him.

Jean sighed again but did as he was told, leaning his head on Jeremy’s hood. Jeremy was curled in Jean’s direction, his legs tucked under Jean's, one arm wound through his boyfriend’s arm, breathing softly as he slowly slipped off into sleep.

“That sound. It was the loudest thing in the world to Jean.

The girls didn’t notice Jean’s body react the way it did, but Jeremy who had learned all of Jean’s fears and triggers, immediately whispered in his ear as he was suddenly, so very awake, “It’s okay, I’m okay,” before he straightened himself. He was about to remove himself completely from touching Jean, but Jean’s arms became iron. He held Jeremy in place where their arms were wound and shook his head. Jeremy was keeping him stable right now, with the sound of the slap still ringing in his ears. Jean had turned his face towards Jeremy, his eyes hard. He knew his face was one of the worse expressions he wore, judging from Jeremy’s tender and sad eyes.

“Hello in there,” he joked around, his hand hesitating to touch Jean’s face. When it didn’t, Jean truly didn’t know if he was grateful, or if the pain would go away quicker if Jeremy did touch him. Jeremy’s exhaustion looked like it had evaporated now that Jean was alert and triggered. “It’s all okay.”

Jean breathed in harshly, his nostrils flaring.

“Love,” Jeremy whispered so the other two could not hear him. “Come back to me.”

Jean did what his therapist told him to do. He counted to twenty-one to ten in French, then again in English. He kept his eyes focused on something—Jeremy. He remembered his body, that he was here, on a roof, not at Evermore. He was with Jeremy Knox and his friends, not with the Ravens.

He cannot touch you.

They were fooling around.

Calm down, Moreau, calm down.

“There we go,” Alvarez said, her voice soft and distant.

Jeremy blinked, and for a moment, turned his gaze away from Jean. Jean watched with fascination as beautiful, golden rays began to light up Jeremy’s face. His tired mouth spread slowly into one of his soft smiles, his eyes brightening. Jean was quite sure this was the most beautiful Jeremy had ever looked. It was pure, raw expression, his hair messy, eyes tired, mouth quirked up with that grin Jean so adored. Sunlight pouring onto Jeremy’s skin like it lived there, as though it found its home in Jeremy’s body.
What a nice thought.

It was Jeremy’s expression that made Jean look. Rising in the distance, over the horizon of California was the sun.

Jean felt it all over his body. It was a very exquisite and particular kind of beauty, to witness the sun rising. To be aware of the slow heat that spread on your body as the rays hit your bare skin. To know that in the end, the human race was so small compared to the largeness that was the galaxy. That, as humans, they were really quite nothing without the sun. Humans took it for granted, on an earth that they also took for granted, when both things were essential for their survival. That basic thought, of knowing the sun was still rising, and that Jean got to see it reminded him of all of that. It calmed his nerves, it relaxed him. It made him so very present in a way that he was sometimes afraid to be.

The snap of a camera disturbed his thoughts, and when he looked over to his side, Alvarez was holding Jeremy’s phone and not looking at all like she was sorry about it. “I’ve never seen you look so peaceful.” She told him, and her smile was kind enough that it kept Jean calm as well. He did not like photos of himself to be taken, unless he was with Jeremy, so again he reminded himself, *this is what friends do with each other.* Besides, he was trying to get better, and he would have to change his habits eventually. Not everyone worked like him, and compromise had to be found where it could. Jean could give them this, a photo.

It took a lot to make Jean Moreau’s body work, and every day he found more and more about what made him and what unmade him. Or how to fix the things that had once unmade him and learn to control them, to take them into his own hands.

Like a photo.

“Come on,” Laila grabbed Alvarez hand, putting Jeremy’s phone on the ground. They walked to the edge of the rooftop and took out their own phones, taking photos of each other and together.

As Jean watched them and the sun, and as Jeremy watched Jean watch them, Jean began to talk, “The last time I had seen a sunrise was when I lived in Marseille. My mother took me to the beach one morning, curled up in all these blankets, and she told me that to see the grand star rise in the sky was a miracle of life. I was so tired that day too.”

Jeremy smiled, Jean couldn’t see him, but he knew that Jeremy was smiling. “Were you glad she had woken you up?”

“Yes,” Jean kept looking. “She was right. It is a miracle to witness it. It is life, and life is a miracle.”

“It makes me happy when you talk like that.”

“Why?”

“A year ago, you wouldn’t have said that. You would have said the opposite.”

Jean shrugged, but he didn’t disagree. He was not a liar. “Things are very different now,” and in so many ways, they were the same. Jean at his core was the same person, he was just learning how to be that person in a healthy way. “I forgot about the sun, how beautiful it was. I barely saw the sun with the Ravens.”

Jeremy, in an effort to keep things light, poked Jean’s shoulder. “Is that why you’re pale?”
“Ha-ha,” Jean retorted blandly.

Jeremy chuckled a low, quiet thing, which meant he was still very tired. Otherwise, his laugh would have been loud enough to wake all of California. “Well, the sun really pales in comparison to you.”

Jean let himself achieve a tiny grin, turning his gaze to Jeremy. “You must be awake now since you are flirting with me.”

“Half awake,” Jeremy corrected him. “Awake enough to say how pretty you are, but not awake enough to stay awake.”

Jean kept his soft smile and patted his shoulder. Jeremy put his head back on Jean’s shoulder, and Jean tilted his head so it was back on Jeremy’s. As the girls walked back over, Jean told Jeremy, “This sunrise is better than the one with my mother.”

Every memory of his parents hurt. Every moment he shared with them was like a knife within his heart. He doubted very much that he would ever forgive them for trading him like he was worth nothing more than cattle. Being used as an exchange to pay off a debt was, in Jean’s opinion the lowest thing his parents could have done to him. Kevin leaving him behind was self-preservation, but his parents were supposed to have loved him more than that. Forgiving Kevin was easy because Kevin left only because he was hurt. His parents should have chosen their child over their own well-being. They should have gone into debt, and live a life on the run, to keep their son safe. Instead, they left him to be nothing at the hands of people who tortured him and brutalized him.

No, there were some things that Jean could not forgive. That did not mean, however, that he was above moving forward from it. Being with the Trojans proved that. Seeing a therapist proved that. Mending the friendship between he and Kevin Day proved that.


“Yes,” Jean agreed. “Thank you for bringing us here.”

That quieted all of them. When Jean said things like that: thank you, or please, or anything that simply meant *more* to them because it was Jean saying it, people around him tended to get quiet. He thought it annoying at the start, but now he knew that they got quiet because they knew he really meant it. When Jean said something, as simple as thank you, it was coming from a genuine place in his heart, rather than the habitual way people said it every day.

They stayed on the roof for half an hour without speaking, before Jeremy’s soft snore brought them back to reality. Jean whispered lovingly in his ear for him to wake, but Jeremy was terribly unresponsive. Sleep had taken him quickly and heavily. So with help from the girls, Jeremy was hoisted onto Jean’s back, and they managed their way down the stairs, helping Jean to bring Jeremy into the dorm. After the girls retreated to their own rooms, Jean brought Jeremy to his own bed and lay him down, as it was closer than Jeremy’s room. He rubbed his neck and smiled at his boyfriend curling up against the pillow, sighing deeply. Instead of climbing in after him, he took out his diary from under his bed and smoothed the page over.

Under his previous line, he wrote,

2. *Sunrises*

Jeremy shifted and Jean looked over his shoulder. He smiled gently and set his diary down, crawling into the bed slowly. The sound of a slap was softly playing in his ears, but the weight of
Jeremy’s smile and the feel of the sun’s rays was stronger, and that would be enough to put him back to sleep. He withheld a chuckle as Jeremy immediately formed himself to Jean’s body, his head moving to use Jean’s chest as a pillow, one arm cascaded over Jean’s stomach.

Jean’s ran a hand through Jeremy’s hair, closing his eyes.

For the first time in a very long time, Jean Moreau, dreamt of the sun.

Chapter End Notes

thank you all so much for the comments thus far, im so glad you are all liking this concept! to the ones who came from the kevin day fic, thank you for coming back and encouraging me here as well

all the comments were lovely to read, i hope you liked this chapter as well! xx
Jean Moreau was in a bad mood.

The night before had been plagued with nightmares. Nothing had triggered him, nothing had happened to remind him of his past. It was simply one of those moments where the universe looked like it had been built to be against him, and had turned his dreams into nightmares. Naturally, they were of Riko.

Depression, Jean thought, was as interesting as it was terrifying. Some days it felt like it was not there at all. When he played Exy with the Trojans, when Jean beat Jeremy at board games and Jeremy’s expression was always one of shock and betrayal.

But then there were the days like this one, where it hit Jean like a brick, and it felt like no time at all had passed from his time at Evermore and his coming to California. It was like it had all happened yesterday.

Yes, Jean was in the worst mood.

“This is ridiculous!” Jean snapped, grabbing the book from Jeremy’s hands. He was laying down on Jeremy’s lap, and up until that moment, he had his eyes closed as Jeremy read Harry Potter to him.

Jeremy reading to him was a very special thing for Jean. It relaxed him on a level he could not explain, sometimes he listened carefully, other times he let Jeremy’s voice wash over him and nearly take him to sleep. When Jeremy read, it was one of the few times where his voice didn’t grow in tone. He wasn’t energetic, or in that hopeful, encouraging way he used with his team to motivate them. He was simply, Jeremy. His voice at its natural tone was like the small waves on the beach during one of the calmer days.

Except they were at the point in the book where Jean thought the words were hitting too close to home, and that did nothing to improve Jean’s mood.

Jeremy raised an eyebrow. “What is?”

“I have heard people talk about this book,” Jean looked at the cover of Harry Potter, and the Order of the Phoenix. “Everyone gets mad at Harry for complaining. It does not sound like he is complaining at all.”

“People do give him a hard time,” Jeremy murmured, his hand running marathons through Jean’s
hair.

“He was neglected, abused, saw people die, and now he is being ignored. I think he has more of a right than anyone to complain.”

“I think people wanted action and didn’t want to read too much about that,” Jeremy said easily.

“Well people are fucking stupid then.” Jean snapped, getting up, setting the book down between them. It was a temporary physical barrier between their bodies, so Jean could sit in his anger. Jeremy glanced at the book, and then carefully picked it up and set it on the floor, closing the space between them. Jean bristled but said nothing, and Jeremy did not touch him.

“Love,” Jeremy said quietly. “Why are you upset?”

Jean sighed, “It is just not a good day.”

“Tell me why,”

Jean clicked his tongue in annoyance. “That is exactly it. I am tired of—,” he grabbed his shirt and pulled it, motioning to his entire torso in the process. “—I do not know…having to constantly feel so strongly about something. Everything. Therapy is not helping quickly enough.”

“You know it works differently for everyone.” Jeremy carefully, ever so carefully, brought his hand back up to run through Jean’s black hair. It was barely a touch at all, a whisper of Jeremy’s fingernails along his scalp. It felt so good, and Jean shivered. “Do you want me to stop?”

“No,” he admitted.

“Do you want to continue talking?”

Jean sighed. “Maybe,” he rubbed his face with his hands. “It has been over a year since Renee got me out of there. There are some things that have happened that stopped before I left too.”

“You mean the rape,” Jeremy said quietly.

Jean, of course, didn’t react so well to that word. He flinched so violently that Jeremy removed his hand. Jean couldn’t look at him and instead buried his face in his hands, bringing his legs up to hide behind. When he felt his body begin to shake, memories coming for him much too quickly, he was vaguely aware of a blanket being thrust around him. He was not cold, but he appreciated the gesture anyhow.

He counted to twenty. One to ten in French. Again in English.

He remembered who and where he was.

“Do you know,” he said slowly, forcing himself to breathe steadily, lifting his face and leaning it on his arm, looking at Jeremy. It was not easy to hold the gaze, to talk about these things, but Jeremy only wanted to help, and today was one of the bad days, and Jean needed to let it out. “How annoying it is, to be with you, but not be with you?”

“Jean,” Jeremy said sadly, his eyes expressing the tone of his voice. “You know I don’t care about that.”

“I know,” he murmured. “But I do. It bothers me that I cannot give that to you. That after a year of us being friends, then being more, I cannot yet be done with what happened.” His voice choked up
at the end of his sentence, and he squeezed his eyes for a moment, trying to force away his tears. It
apparently had the opposite effect, and two fat ones slipped from each eye. “Fuck.” He snapped,
wiping them away quickly.

Jeremy moved closer, their legs touching now. Jeremy’s hand was on Jean’s arm, his thumb
running circles into the skin. Jean opened his eyes and continued softly, “Sometimes I think the
abuse was worse. The hits, the waterboarding, the bruises, the broken bones, but it is not. The…”
he swallowed, another tear leaking from his eye. “The rape was worse.” He whispered.

They had never spoken about it, not in depth like this. Jeremy knew it had happened, just as he
knew about the physical abuse Jean had taken, every bone that was broken, every scar that he
wore. That, they had talked in detail about. Jean had invited Jeremy to one of his therapy sessions
so he would not have to repeat it twice, and they talked more at home. But Jean was not like Kevin;
the worst thing in the world was not a broken hand. He knew Kevin felt deeply about what had
happened between the two of them, and the torture that Jean endured—that Kevin had to be a part
of, but Kevin had dealt with that part better than he had dealt with his hand. Or at least, that was
what Jean thought. He and Kevin had talked about it only a little, but he knew enough about
Kevin’s personal life that he was able to have something more with his boyfriend.

Not Jean.

For Jean, everything on the inside was so much worse than everything on the outside.

“I remember everything,” he kept his voice at a whisper, he was uncertain as to whether or not he
had the energy to put his voice above that at all. “I was sixteen years old. Kevin and I…we were
captured. All we were doing was kissing. I was sixteen years old.” He said again, not bothering to
wipe another tear that fell. “The first time, he made Kevin watch. It was a punishment. I begged
him to stop, like a coward.”

Jeremy’s voice was stern, and that was a tone that rarely presented itself. “You are many things
Jean Moreau, but a coward is not one of them.”

Jean met his eyes and felt his heart drop. “Kevin was forced to fuck me. That was our first time
together. We were both violated,” he snapped angrily, but there was no force to his voice, because
his heart was broken, and he wished he could just go back to bed.

He should have never gotten up.

“I was raped five times.” Jean continued. “The last time, I did not even bother to fight it. Riko
enjoyed pain. I knew if I did not give him a reaction, it would stop. Then at least, I would have to
just deal with physical pain. Pushing down the stairs, breaking my own fingers for his amusement —”

“God,” Jeremy winced, taking his hand away. He ran a hand over his face, and Jean’s eyes
widened when he noticed Jeremy was crying too. He had held it together that time in the therapist’s
office, so why he was being so heavily affected by it now was interesting to Jean.

“Sorry,” Jean muttered.

“No,” Jeremy shook his head. “No, God, no, do not apologize for any of this,” Jeremy wiped his
tears quickly, but more came immediately. He leaned forward and put his forehead on Jean’s arm,
bowing to him. His voice was broken and shaking, and matched perfectly how Jean felt on the
inside of him. “I am so sorry,” he whispered. “I wish I could take this pain from you. I wish I could
bring Riko back to hurt him myself.”
Jean knew what it meant for Jeremy Knox of all people, to admit something as intense as that. Jeremy was not a person to inflict pain, which was what Jean loved so much about him. Jean brought his hand up and ran it through Jeremy’s hair. His strands were so soft, but the orange dye was slowly fading now that Jean was looking closer.

“Every time I think I get better, I end up here.” He said.

Jeremy lifted his face, his eyes red. “I don’t like when your face looks like that.” He murmured.

“Like what?”

“Devoid of emotion.”

Jean shrugged. The crying had tired him out, and after crying he always felt apathetic. Like he had given everything away already, and there was nothing left to do but close his eyes and let sleep take him. “Today is not a good day.” Then he added, “I am very, very tired, of having bad days.”

“I know,” Jeremy whispered, placing a soft kiss against Jean’s arm. He was taking risks today, their past arguments about casual touches and kisses—how Jeremy should take a little more from Jean because that’s what Jean wanted finally getting through to him. Jean was surprised that it was putting it into effect now of all times when Jean was so fragile.

Except, he didn’t mind.

“May I ask you something?”

Jean nodded.

“Why do you think that was worse than everything else? Was it because he had Kevin do it? I don’t mean to sound insensitive, I’m just wondering because your physical wounds had a major effect on you as well.”

Jean almost shook his head but then stopped. He chose his words carefully because while things made sense inside his head, that was not always the case for when he chose to speak out loud. “When Riko injured me physically, it was different because he was not using anything against me. When he passed me around like I was worth nothing more than a dead animal, he was using not only Kevin against me but myself against me. He was using my sexuality against me. For a very long time, I thought I deserved it too. I lost the fight in me.”

“How did you move past that, for this?” Jeremy asked. Jean didn’t have to ask what Jeremy meant, by ‘this’.

“You are Riko’s opposite in every way,” Jean said simply. “You will not hurt me.” He knew it came out sounding like an order, but he couldn’t help it.

Jeremy agreed, “No.”

“You deserve better than me,”

Jeremy disagreed, “No.”

Jean sighed. “Maybe I am permanently broken. Maybe the things inside do not ever go away. Maybe all days are bad, and some days I just hide it better than others.” He hated this side of himself—he knew, from his small talks with Kevin, that Kevin’s struggle was anxiety. It was present at the Nest as well, but not in the drastic way Jean was sure it had evolved after his broken
hand. Jean’s issue was not anxiety, but his severe depression. He was good at getting up and going to practice, getting through the day, but on days like today, he wanted nothing more than to be six feet under.

What he had to tell himself over and over again was,

I am improving.

Today is just a bad day.

Not every day is like this, even if your brain is making you think that.

You are getting better.

Everyone works at a different pace.

You will get there.

You will not die.

Jeremy said quietly, “I don’t want you to leave me.” As though he was reading Jean’s thoughts.

“I will not,” Jean promised, and he felt secure in that promise. It was true, though his thoughts wavered, he had no serious intention to take himself out of the picture anymore. Today was a bad day. He was talking it out with his boyfriend, and tomorrow, he would go see his therapist.

Maybe this was a good thing, even if he was having a bad day, maybe it was better than his worst days because he was choosing to talk about it with Jeremy, instead of putting it off again.

That was a small, nice thought, so Jean held on tight to it.

“You know,” Jeremy said softly, looking at Jean with those incredibly loving eyes. He leaned down and picked up *Harry Potter*. “All great heroes have trouble. Some of them, like Harry, suffer like you do. Harry had really bad PTSD. His dreams kept him up at night, but you know, he always pulls through. Some days are really good, some days are really bad, and some days are somewhere between the two. It’s okay to slip, what matters is that after today, after you feel everything you need to feel, you get back up.”

Jean nodded, his eyes burning, and he said what he had said a million times before, “You are too good for someone like me.”

Jeremy shook his head. “I’m going to have to ask you to stop being so mean when you talk about my boyfriend.” He touched Jean’s nose playfully with his index finger, handing him a small grin. An offer of a smile.

Jean took it.

It wasn’t a real smile, but it was something nonetheless. Although he certainly felt like a certain weight had been lifted, sadness resided in him still. Not wanting to go back to sleep just yet, he motioned to the book, and asked, “Will you read to me?”

Jeremy nodded. “Of course.”

They resumed their previous position, almost. Instead of Jean lying on his back, he lay on his side, curling the blanket around him as he lay his head on Jeremy’s lap. Jeremy’s hand took its place in Jean’s hair, and he was glad it did. It helped Jean work on his training thoughts like he had been
taught to do;

_This is the hand of someone who loves you._

_No one is pulling your hair._

_This is the hand of someone who loves you._

_Jeremy Knox would never hurt you._

He told himself that over and over again because he wanted to improve, and he wanted to be in a better place with Jeremy. He appreciated Jeremy’s patience and knew things would progress slower still, but he wanted these things just as much for himself as he wanted them for Jeremy. It may not annoy Jeremy to not have those things, those physical touches, but it annoyed Jean. He didn’t want something he _wanted_ to be ruined for him forever.

_This is the hand of someone who loves you._

Jean let Jeremy’s voice wash over him. He didn’t pay close attention this time. He let Jeremy’s voice take him under. He let Jeremy read his favorite series to Jean, occasionally interrupting himself to give his opinion on scenes or lines, in which Jean would hum in agreement or ‘tsk’ in disagreement. Within the reading, in which Jeremy read for an hour, Jean slipped in and out of sleep. It was not as uncomfortable as it could have been—that strange place between reality and dreams. Jeremy’s voice seemed to make him hover just enough that nothing bad could touch him within his subconscious, but within reality, his body relaxed from the safeness being provided to him, and his mind seemed to exhale with it.

When Jeremy got up for a glass of water, Jean looked around him, feeling dazed. He had moved into the next stage of his bad day emotions, which was not sadness, or apathy, but just being very tired. He knew that when Jeremy came back to read again, he would likely fall asleep once more, but before he did he got up and walked to his room.

Jean grabbed his diary and uncapped his pen.

Today was a bad day.

But tomorrow, tomorrow could be better.

_I will survive._

_I have survived._

_I will continue to survive._

Jean heard Jeremy humming the Hogwarts’ school theme song from the doorway.

He brought pen to paper and wrote,

3. Jeremy reading _Harry Potter_ to me

Chapter End Notes
wow okay so

this chapter was very heavy. anyone who read my kevin day fic knows that i always have some angst. but i promise happier times are coming for jean moreau

no shock, i cried while i wrote this. writing is therapy in many ways for me, and as i did with my kevin day fic, there are bits of truth of my own feelings and experiences that i have woven into the character. jean being triggered from the slap in the previous chapter is one of mine, and even in here, a lot of what was written is me baring my soul. so i hope i wrote it properly in the context of our boy, in terms of staying true to what he went through.

thank you for the comments, i hope you liked this chapter. comment if you did! and remember,

always keep fighting, because you are not alone.
the fourth reason

According to Jeremy, it was not healthy for a couple to spend every waking moment together. Jean disagreed immensely, and if it was up to him he would spend every moment awake and asleep with Jeremy. Today however, Jeremy was spending most of his day at the coffee shop coming up with plays for the team. They had practice tomorrow, and though they had been going well up until now, Jeremy wanted to spice things up a bit, saying that he was getting bored.

Jean was lounging around in his room, not quite sure what to do. Being alone inside his own room was not as bad as being alone outside. At least in his room, he could do as he pleased and since he wasn’t having to venture anywhere, he didn’t feel the pressure of being alone that Ravens had to often deal with.

Unless of course, Noah, one of their best players, knew you were alone.

Jean knew it was him because of the way he knocked. It was never ending until the door would open, and banging loud, with him sing-songing from the other side of the door. “MOREAUUUU!” he laughed cheerily. “Open up you bastard! It’s past noon, I know you’re awake!”

Jean rolled his eyes and grabbed a shirt, slipping it on and walking to the door, throwing it open. “Noah,” he mumbled.

“Noah,” he mumbled.

“That is not even what I said,” Jean flicked him on the forehead, before grabbing a spot on the couch. He put one leg over the other and leaned his head in his hand, staring at Noah take out the monstrous amounts of junk food. Jean’s stomach hurt just looking at it. “I am not eating any of that.”

Noah shrugged. “Good, starve.” He grinned happily. “More for me.”

“Noah.”

“Move over,” Noah came through as though he owned the place.

Noah was like Jeremy on crack. He was excited about everything, had the stamina of a puppy, and was three times as loud. He had brown hair that, if it was down was up to his shoulders, but he usually kept it tied up in a messy bun. His eyes matched the color of his hair, and he was the skinniest of all of them on the team, even though he ate like a ravenous lion.

Quite frankly, spending an entire day with him exhausted Jean, but Noah was nice enough that Jean didn’t mind it.

“What are you doing?” Jean closed the door softly.

“I brought food.” He motioned to the six bags out in front of him. Jean went forward and peered into the bags, frowning. “What?”

“You did not bring food, you brought garbage.”

Noah sighed over dramatically before he put his hands on his hips and mocked Jean in a high-pitched voice that sounded like him in no way. “All you brought is garbage.”

“That is not even what I said,” Jean flicked him on the forehead, before grabbing a spot on the couch. He put one leg over the other and leaned his head in his hand, staring at Noah take out the monstrous amounts of junk food. Jean’s stomach hurt just looking at it. “I am not eating any of that.”

Noah shrugged. “Good, starve.” He grinned happily. “More for me.”

“Pig.”
“Jackass.”

Jean let himself give a crooked grin as Noah held out his hand, waiting for Jean to fist bump him. When they did, Noah’s smile was bright as ever. This was their relationship, a mess of insults and respect. They were a lot better off the court than on. They argued a lot on the court, especially at the beginning. Noah and Jean were the definition of rivals. They started more fights with each other than they did with other teams. How they had mended that and turned it into this strange friendship, Jean was not altogether sure, but he did not question it. People navigated differently around each other.

“Heard the wife ditched you today.” Jean sent him a dirty look and Noah laughed loudly. “Fine, husband, boyfriend, whatever! Jeez, you’re touchy today.”

“Maybe you are just extra annoying today.”

“I doubt that. I’m a treat.” Noah plopped himself next to Jean and offered him the can of Lays chips. When he shook his head, he shrugged and began to dig in.

Jean scrunched his nose. “That stuff will kill you.”

“Gotta go sometime.” He waved his hand. “So, how did your night end last night, eh?” he wiggled his eyebrows suggestively, and Jean shot him an exasperated glance.

“The same as yours.”

“I doubt that,” Noah capped the Lays and moved for something else, throwing some chocolate on the couch. One of the small bars landed on Jean’s thigh. He looked down at the Caramilk bar and clutched it between his two fingers, flipping it around over and over as he listened to Noah. Last night, the team had gone to a bar for a drink. Jean had abstained, Jeremy only had two drinks, but everyone else got pretty smashed. “I got laid.”

“What?” Jean shook his head. “Who the hell went home with you?”

“The waitress!” he lifted his hand up for a high five, and Jean gave him one reluctantly. “Can’t you tell with my glowing complexion?”

“No, I thought it was the oils from all the crap you eat trying to escape your skin.”

Noah laughed a loud, vibrant thing. “Asshole. So? Did you guys do it?”

“You are, without a doubt, the last person on the planet I want to talk to about this,” Jean said seriously, looking down at the chocolate bar between his fingers. He had no issues hearing about other peoples sex lives if they desired to tell the whole world about it, but Jean would never speak of it in detail outside himself, Jeremy and his therapist.

“This is what friends talk about.”

Jean contemplated that. After his breakdown with Jeremy, and having another one with his therapist, she informed him that no, he did not have to tell the world about what happened to him. That was his business and no one else’s. But his therapist was urging him to open up about something, anything, with his friends, so he could make connections with the team and to come back to himself.

Jean compromised. Sex was something very different than any other subject for him. He owed no one a thing, and if he did not want to talk about it, he certainly didn’t have to. “I am not ready yet.”
He said simply.

That actually got Noah to stop mid-chew. He asked, for once without any humor, “Seriously?”

“Yes,” Jean snapped.

“Why?”

“It is not your business!” he exclaimed hotly.

“Fine, fine,” Noah waved his hand in dismissal. “Can I just say one more thing?”

“I do not know,” Jean felt like being a little bit of a smartass, so he added, “Can you?”

Noah laughed again. “May I say one more thing?”

“I would rather you did not, but I know you will anyhow.”

“Jeremy is a good kid—”

“You are a year below him—”

“Shut up!” Noah chuckled. “If you’re afraid because he’s experienced or whatever, don’t take it to heart. It’ll mean more to him with you because he loves you.” he shrugged after that and zipped his lips metaphorically, bringing his fingers from one side of the mouth to the other. “That’s all I’m going to say.”

Jean pretended like those words meant nothing to him, but they meant a great deal. Instead, he kept his sarcasm. “Thank God.”

“Oh, don’t be rude.” Noah waved his index in disapproval. “I know you like my words of advice.” He slapped his hands together and moved forward quickly. “Hey,” he reached out and ignored Jean’s flinch. The whole team was aware of the fact that Jean had undergone terrible things at Evermore, but no one knew the details of any of it. Still, Noah slowed his advances so Jean had time to adjust. “I have an idea,” he grinned his ridiculous smile and put a thumb over Jean’s tattoo.

“Man!” Noah laughed loudly as they got back to the dorm a few hours later. His arms were wrapped around his torso as he walked in, Jean trailing behind him, closing the door. Gently, Jean’s fingers touched the tape against his cheek. “I can’t believe you actually did it!”

“Why are you laughing?” Jean asked, trying very hard to keep his voice steady. He really didn’t know how he felt about what he had just done.

“Since when do you listen to me?”

Jean pushed him lightly, not enough to actually do any harm before he walked to the bathroom and peered at himself in the mirror. Though the bandage was covering it, it was transparent enough that Jean could see through it. No longer was he supporting the number three. He had taken Noah’s suggestion, and a leaf out of Kevin Day’s book, and replaced it with something that meant more to him. Though he was no king, and no queen, and although he had been a payment, his heart (or part of it anyhow) was with France. So to mask the three, he had put upon his face the fleur-de-lis.
Jean did not care about Riko. He did not love him. He did not feel remotely in the same way that Kevin did about Riko, and so his feelings towards his new tattoo were perhaps not as strong as whatever it was that Kevin had experienced. Jean wondered if he should be feeling guilty or sad that he had covered up the number three, but he couldn’t relate to that kind of emotion. Mostly, Jean felt glad. He was happy with this, with something he cared about on his face. No number to remind him who he belonged to. With this tattoo, Jean could be his own man now.

“Does it look stupid?” Jean asked in a whisper.

“No, no,” Noah assured him. “I’m teasing.” He leaned against Jean’s shoulder in the bathroom and offered him a caramilk bar. Jean took it but did nothing with it. “Is that the symbol of France or something?”

Jean shrugged. “Sort of.” He was not interested in explaining it. “It is bigger than the three.”

“Not by much. I think you look cool.” He looked down at the chocolate bar between them. “Seriously dude, can you eat that fucking bar?”

“I do not eat chocolate.” Jean turned his gaze away from the mirror and walked out of the bathroom, but he didn’t let go of the bar.

“Today is a day of first things!” Noah came up behind him, he was a bit shorter than Jean, so he had to reach to put his hands on Jean’s shoulders. “Come on tough guy, give into one of your basic instincts.”

“I do not think—”

“See, that’s just it, my French friend. Don’t think.” Noah grabbed the bar from Jean’s hands and unwrapped it, jokingly saying, “I bet you never had one of these either.”

“No,” Jean murmured.

“What?” he paused again, looking up. “Shit man, I was joking.”

Jean sighed in aggravation, exclaiming, “I already told you I do not eat chocolate!”

“Well fuck me, dude, I thought you were joking!”

“God,” Jean shook his head, swiping the bar back. “You should really pick some nicer phrases.”

“You should fuck up yours more often.” He pointed at the bar. “So? Come on. Just try it. Jesus, if you hate it that much you can puke all over me.”

“Noah, you are revolting.”

“That’s not what the waitress said last night.”

“How drunk was she?”

“How drunk was she?”

“Don’t be rude!”

Jean sighed. Jean didn’t necessarily have a problem with food, it was just that he was so used to eating a certain way in order to get the absolute best from his body. He never slipped, because his body was always producing results. Jean never ate anything bad for him because there was simply no need. He didn’t think that people ate these things for fun or whatever. Besides, he knew that most people were not Noah. Most people didn’t run around for most hours of the day sweating
everything he ate off. That kid had an insane metabolism, and though he was dedicated to Exy, he worked out at the gym more than any of them and spent his free time between practices and homework swimming. His muscles were subtle, but they were there, people mistook his lankiness for weakness, but his strength on the court was phenomenal.

“Asshole,” Jean said again before he bit into the caramilk chocolate bar.

Jeremy returned to Jean late in the night. “I’m sorry I’ve been gone so long,” he sighed, his stuff all dropping on the ground as he came in. “Jeez, today is a mess. I had all the plays written out but then I split my coffee all over the papers so I had to start from scratch. Jesus, I’m so tired. Plus, my phone died real early in the day which is why I couldn’t answer you if you texted me, so sorry ab —Jean? Your face!” he panicked, running over, tripping over his books. “Ouch, fuck…”

Jean got up from the couch, shooting Noah a look for laughing loudly. Jean leaned down in front of Jeremy and helped him up, Jeremy’s hands finding their way to Jean’s face. “Is it that bad?” he asked, and he actually felt fear prick inside him from the potential of that. Of Jeremy suddenly finding him appalling, of Jeremy thinking less of him.

“No, no,” Jeremy’s fingers were feather light as they ghosted over Jean’s skin. “No, I thought you were hurt. I think it looks great. You look beautiful, as always.” His eyes were taking in Jean’s complete appearance, devouring his face with his eyes. Jeremy knew what this tattoo meant, he knew better than anyone.

His eyes were shining, and Jean knew that Jeremy was proud of him.

Jean smiled, almost leaning in for a kiss, but as usual, Noah killed the mood.

Noah snorted from the couch. “You nearly killed yourself trying to get through the doorway, boss.”

Jeremy seemed to just notice Noah was there. “Wow kid, could you have brought any more food in here?” his hand reached down for Jean’s and their fingers curled tightly with each other as they walked to the couch. Jeremy rubbed his neck as he saw all the wrappers and open bags of chips. “Jesus, Noah, you’re going to get sick.”

“It wasn’t all me, coach.”

“Stop calling me coach I’m not a coach.”

Noah shrugged. “I like to bust balls,” his eyes were stuck on the television. He was fast forwarding and rewinding a soccer game Jean had no interest in but sat through anyway. Noah was very up to date in most sports. “Jean ate some too.”

“Barely.”

“Jean?” Jeremy asked, a slow spreading smile on his face. “Really?”

“Just some caramilk bars,” Jean mumbled. “They are quite good.” He shrugged. Jeremy’s eyes were shining brighter still, and it gave Jean an immense feeling of satisfaction to know that he made Jeremy Knox proud of him for something so trivial.
Except with Jean nothing was really trivial.

The feeling expanded, and Jean realized that he wasn’t just glad that Jeremy was proud. Jean was proud of himself, for the tattoo and for breaking his eating habits. Today was a good day.

Noah grabbed another chocolate bar. “I’ll have him ruined in no time Cap, don’t you worry. He’ll be eating chocolate, and using slang in no time.”

“I wouldn’t call the way we speak, slang, Noah…”

“Whatever, sh,” he said, moving up to the television and turning it up louder. “Shit, look at that goal. Moreau, Moreau, come look at this shit, come here.”

Jean shook his head in defeat and went to the television, listening mindlessly to what Noah was explaining about soccer, while Jeremy cleaned up in the background. After he had, Noah excused himself and bid them a goodnight, ruffling Jean’s hair as he went.

“What’s this?” Jeremy asked, reaching down for Jean’s diary that was discarded on the living room floor.

“Oh, nothing,” Jean said, folding the blanket and putting it on the sofa. “I just added something to my list.”

“Number four,” Jeremy read out loud. “Caramilk.”

“What can I say,” Jean joked. “It is just that good.” Except, they both knew it wasn’t just about the chocolate. It was about Jean getting to do something he wanted to do, without being worried about what would happen to him afterwards.

“Well,” Jeremy sighed, “It looks clean here so—”

“Hey,” Jean grabbed Jeremy’s hand before he retreated to his room. “We barely saw each other today.”

“I know, I’m sorry,” Jeremy explained quickly. “My phone, and the coffee—”

“No,” Jean said. “I am not mad. I was just going to ask if maybe, you wanted to share a bed tonight?”

Jeremy nodded. “I would like that.”

Jean was not exactly anxious, but since his mind was everywhere from the amount of new things he had done, he was not in the mood for anything too physical that night. Jeremy seemed to sense the mood without asking, and so after a small peck on the lips goodnight, they curled up next to each other to fall asleep.

Chapter End Notes

this chapter was all fluff! i know not much happened, but i wanted a filler chapter to set a lighter mood and introduce noah!

the next chapter is just jerejean and it is a happy chapter, and theres kissing and fluff
and all good things so stay tuned

drop me a comment if you liked it! x
Originally, when Jeremy had suggested going to the beach, Jean had refused. He was not one for sitting around and doing absolutely nothing, outside in the blazing hot sun where the day would just drag on for an immeasurable amount of time. It was definitely not his idea of a good time. Jeremy, being Jeremy had obviously convinced him. Mostly because he was good at being annoying. Jeremy walked around the dorm room for an hour and a half speaking the worst French possible before Jean threw up his hands in agitation and snapped that he would go.

It really wasn’t as bad as Jean thought it would be. Since school had only just started, the weather was still excellent in California. Everyone was still at the beach, some people in the water, others playing volleyball on the sand. The sun was beating down nicely on Jean’s shoulders, warming his entire body. His scalp was getting the same treatment, and he found himself propping himself on his elbows that way the sun could stretch all over him. This was different from the sunrise he had seen weeks ago because it was early then and a little cool. This heat was far more pleasant, and it made him wonder why at the Nest they hadn’t made it a mission to be out in the sun more. It was greatly improving his mood. Whatever annoyance he had before was gone. It was like the sun was infecting him.

A few girls were looking Jean’s way as he stretched out on the towel, and he couldn’t tell if it was because of the scars he wore on his body or if it was because they found him attractive. Jean tried not to think about it, and instead, did what he did best and focused on Jeremy.

Jeremy was coming out of the water, and it was definitely not like one of those slow motioned movies. Jeremy was anything but graceful. He seemed to trip on thin air and yelped as he had to catch himself, which he luckily did instead of falling face first into the sand. He was wearing deep blue swim trunks, whereas Jean was wearing black ones, but Jeremy’s had red stripes on the sides. His hair was wet and swept away from his face. He used both of his hands to push all of it back and smiled cheerily as he walked up to Jean, throwing himself on the blanket.

“The water is really nice, you should come in.”

“In a bit,” Jean agreed. “I’m enjoying the sun,” he looked at Jeremy and very much realized that when he talked about the sun, it really could have been a reference to the massive ball of light in the sky, or the one sitting right next to him.

“I’m?” Jeremy asked, and Jean realized with a pang of slight annoyance that Jeremy wasn’t touching him. There was a hand difference of space between them. “Not, I am?”

Jean shrugged nonchalantly. “Noah mentioned I don’t have to be so formal with my words. I’m trying it out.”

“How does it feel?”

“Wrong.”

“Saves time I bet.”

“Jeremy, it saves a millisecond of time at the moment.”
“Yeah but you know, you add those up and you get whole seconds quickly enough.” he laughed at Jean’s deadpan stare.

“You can touch me,” Jean told him, except he was the one who moved closer to Jeremy. Jean felt brave today, and he didn’t know if it was because of the sun, or if because therapy had been going so well, or if because Jeremy was putting him in such a good mood or all three but he didn’t question it. Jean had learned not to question things on the good days. With the distance closed, Jean pressed his lips against Jeremy’s tanned skin, able to see the freckles that danced along his shoulders.

Jeremy knew also, not to question on the good days. Their eyes met, Jean looking at him from under his lashes, and Jeremy’s wide smile the brightest thing on this beach. He lifted his face and their lips brushed tenderly. Jeremy was being careful still because Jean was not wearing a shirt but Jean did not want Jeremy to be so careful today. So Jean took the initiative because he knew that Jeremy would not and he pressed his mouth harder against Jeremy’s. Jeremy was surprised, to say the least, but he responded eagerly now that he could see Jean was wanting. Their lips opened for each other, their tongues melding together easily as they had done so many times before.

Jean whispered, “Touch me,” and Jeremy shivered despite the raging heat.

Jeremy’s shaking hand came down on Jean’s chest, his fingers splayed right over Jean’s heart. Jean kissed him harder just for that because that was a terribly Jeremy thing to do. Jean tilted himself so that he was leaning down against the blanket, slightly under Jeremy, pulling Jeremy down, his hands roaming Jeremy’s body.

They lost themselves despite the fact that they were in public. Jeremy was holding his body over Jean’s so their torsos did not touch, but their hands were taking liberties today.

When Jean accidentally moaned into Jeremy’s mouth, Jeremy pulled away, panting. “Hey,” he smiled sweetly, pulling them back up. His hair was sticking up everywhere—Jean couldn’t even remember running his hands through Jeremy’s hair. That’s how good Jeremy’s mouth was. “Not that I’m complaining, but what’s gotten into you today?”

“It’s a good day,” Jean said. “Does there have to be a reason?”

“No,” Jeremy said after a moment. “I suppose not. Still, I don’t want to do that here. Come in the water with me.” He got up and offered his hand. Before Jean decided to take it, he held up a finger and grabbed his phone that was in his bag, writing a note to remind himself.

Diary entry:

5. The feel of the sun

Jean still didn’t know whether or not he meant the sun or Jeremy, but he figured it didn’t matter, and it could be both. He took Jeremy’s hand and followed him into the water. The sand was hot beneath his feet, and the water was cool to the touch. It was like silk against his skin, and Jean smiled.

Jeremy looked at Jean like Jean looked at Jeremy, and something settled inside of him.

Jeremy did what he always did, and said what he was thinking, “You are so damn beautiful.”

Jean did what he usually did not do, and said what he wanted to say, “You make me never want to stop smiling.” Then, with his smile that felt foreign, strange and beautiful on his mouth, he pushed Jeremy into the water.
Jeremy came up easily, laughing loudly as his hands reached for Jean to pull him in quickly after him. Jean allowed it and fell into the water, his head dipping under for a moment before he came up—you’re not drowning, you’re not drowning—he emerged and wrapped his entire body around Jeremy, shutting his eyes for a brief moment.

Jeremy seemed to realize what had happened immediately, and so he held onto Jean tightly, his lips at Jean’s ear, “You’re okay. I’m sorry.”

“Do not,” Jean told him back. You were not drowning, you were playing with Jeremy. “Just give me a moment.” You were not drowning. You were playing with Jeremy. You were not drowning. You’re in Jeremy’s arms, you were kissing Jeremy, and no one was torturing you. Stay in a good place today. You were not drowning.

Do not drown. He is not here anymore, and you are.

You were not drowning.

Jean counted to twenty, and then pulled away, making sure he smiled softly at Jeremy.

“Are we okay?” Jeremy asked, his eyes curious and fearful all at once. To answer him, Jean leaned in and pressed a soft, but firm kiss against Jeremy’s mouth. Jeremy returned it, and they stayed wrapped around each other. Jean’s legs were around Jeremy’s hips, and his arms around Jeremy’s neck. They were floating easily in the water, neither of them concerned with anyone around them. Jeremy was deep enough that the water floated around their torsos, but not deep enough that he would have trouble touching the floor.

“I think,” Jean said, moving one hand to brush his thumb against Jeremy’s lip. “That you are my own personal sun.”

Jeremy smiled, and Jean felt it reach inside him and take a whole of his heart. “I think, you are my own personal moon.”

“So, I’m the more depressing of the two.”

“No,” Jean chuckled. “No, but you’re the more beautiful of the two. Quiet, surrounded by stars, holding up the night. Night is when all truths come out you know. People are always different at night.”

“You make me different during the day, on a day like this, everything seems okay.”

“Well see, that’s why the sun and the moon need each other. Without one, the other couldn’t exist. Not to mention the earth would completely fall apart.”

“Are you saying that our love is essential to the survival of the planet?”

“Yes,” Jeremy laughed again. “Yes, that’s exactly what I’m saying.” His eyes were bright now, with hope and wonder, and Jean knew it was because he had used the word ‘love’ even though he had not said ‘I love you’ yet. It was not the time, but it was close. He just needed a few more good days, a few more days where his head was set in one way.

“Are you nervous for our first game?” he asked, changing the direction of the conversation.

Jeremy shook his head. “It’s friendly.”

“Maybe,” he agreed. “But we should still play as though it is not.”
“That is where we differ my love,” Jeremy leaned in for a quick peck on the lips before he continued. “Exy is a sport, and only a sport—”

“It is my livelihood. I told you I have to make court after I graduate otherwise all this is for nothing.”

Jeremy frowned, and the motion was strange on his face. “I told you, you are not going to die. You will make court, but that doesn’t mean that the sport is more important than other things.”

“What other things?”

“Exy is never going to love you.” Jeremy said, his smile still gone. “You barely love it yourself. I don’t know sometimes if you play because it’s all you know, or if you play because you want to.” When Jean didn’t respond, Jeremy knew he had it right. There was no point for Jean to disagree with something so very truthful. Exy, meant nothing to him. He was not obsessed like Kevin, didn’t play because he loved it like Jeremy, and didn’t play because the sport was something bigger to him like it was for Neil. Exy was something he had been forced to do, as a payment, from the day he was sold until the day he died.

“So,” Jean said carefully. “You think the friendly match will make me love the sport?”

“I just want you to have fun,” Jeremy told him. “I want you to go on that court and not just own it. I already know you’re an amazing player. I want you to just play without thinking. It’s a friendly match, it means nothing.”

“Okay,” Jean said quietly.

“Okay?”

“I will try not to take our first game so seriously.”

“Well, okay then.” His eyebrows quirked when Jean put both of his thumbs on the sides of Jeremy’s mouth, pulling his mouth up. Jeremy smiled and asked, “What are you doing?”

“I like to see you smile.”

Jeremy lifted his hands and did the same to Jean. “I like to see you smile too.”

“Jer,” Jean said quietly.

Jeremy paused his reading and looked at Jean, who was sitting up on Jeremy’s bed, facing him. “Yes?” he asked, completely smitten with Jean’s sudden deep gaze.

“I would like to try something,” he said carefully, taking the book away and putting it on the nightstand. “If you’re comfortable.”

Jeremy clued in, understanding what Jean was asking of him. He smiled softly, his eyes tender. “What would you like to try?” Jean’s cheeks burned, but he did not back down. It was a firm agreement between them. They were not allowed to do anything physical for the first time without discussing it beforehand. Jean, because he had to make sure that Jeremy knew his limits, and Jeremy because he never wanted Jean to think he was the type of person to take what he wanted
without considering the other person.

“I want to, um, I don’t know exactly what it’s called.” He admitted. “When you kind of, rub up against each other, but with clothes?” he was glad he didn’t feel too embarrassed, it reminded him that he wasn’t because he was with someone he was completely comfortable with.

“Oh,” Jeremy nodded. “Grinding, frottage? I don’t know the lingo, I’m not hip with the times.”

“You’re such an old man.”

“I’m your old man.”

“Jeremy, damn you,” Jean laughed, and Jeremy smiled. “So, can we?” he asked.

Jeremy laughed too and nodded. “Would you like to be on top? If you want to stop, it will be easier for you to pull away.”

“Thank you.”

“Of course.”

Then, with shy looks at each other and a small laugh, they closed the distance between them and kissed. Jean was sure that most couples didn’t have to talk this way before they started to make out, but Jean was extraordinarily grateful that he could have these discussions every time he needed them. It was true, he didn’t want every single kiss to be a conversation, but he was glad that when he did want them, they were at his disposal. It gave him the safety he desired.

Jeremy’s lips were soft, moving slowly, opening gently for Jean under the pressure as he leaned back and allowed Jean to move over him. Jean felt so many things at once; fear of the unknown, excitement, intimidation, love, admiration, and uncertainty. He let every single emotion take over him and direct him. It didn’t matter how good he was at this, what mattered was that he was giving himself to someone who loved him, and even though they were wearing clothes, it still counted, because it was on Jean Moreau’s terms and no one else’s.

“Can I touch, however?” Jeremy whispered.

Jean answered quickly, “Yes.”

Jeremy’s hands began to move, but they were still soft, resting on Jean’s hips, pulling him down so they were aligned. Jean, in his fear and excitement, was kissing quickly and eagerly, making Jeremy laugh, which made Jean laugh and relax more and more. Jean thought that was the best thing about their relationship; that they were able to laugh as they kissed. Jean’s life may have been hard, but he was grateful that his love story was simple.

Jean pulled away, shaking lightly when I asked, “Can I…move?” he whispered.

“Yeah,” Jeremy breathed. “Yeah,”

“Just don’t pull my hair,” Jean said softly before they regained their kisses.

Jeremy’s tongue was a skilled one, relaxing Jean as he grabbed his courage and let it fuel him. Jean’s leg slipped between Jeremy’s, angling his body so that when he pushed down, there was a lovely pleasurable hum that shot through his entire body.

Jean began to move.
Since it was Jean’s first time doing something like this, his concentration overpowered his ability to kiss. So he opted for allowing his head to fall against Jeremy’s shoulder, nuzzling to his neck, pressing lazy kisses there when he could. Jeremy moved under him, his hands ghosting over Jean’s hips and sides, encouraging him in his ear. Every word Jeremy spoke had Jean responding—he shivered or gasped, sometimes he whimpered when Jeremy whispered those three words that made Jean’s heart feel like it was growing three sizes every time.

Jeremy whispered, “You can go—jesus—you can go a l-little harder if you…” he tried to say ‘want’, but Jean tested his ability and pushed down a little harder, moved a little faster, and the moan that fell from Jeremy had Jean’s head whirling with desire.

Jean moved and moved, the sounds of Jeremy’s moans, his own pants, the growing heat in his groin and stomach sending him higher and higher.

He felt so good.

This was his.

He was doing this of his own free will.

Jean moved so their lips met, and they were panting into each other’s mouths mostly, but it didn’t matter. All that matters are the sounds and the kisses, and Jeremy’s bright eyes and sweet words, and Jean feels his gut twist in a strange but gratifying way, and it’s strangely easy for Jean to reach his peak after everything that has happened—but this is Jeremy and everything with Jeremy is real and simple, and easy and loving. Jean rides it out for himself and as he goes slow that’s when Jeremy comes apart, and damn it all if it’s not the most beautiful thing Jean has ever heard.

It started and ended so quickly and by the time it was over Jean was in a complete daze.

Jeremy was holding him, but the first thing he asked was, “Do you want some space?”

Jean, surprising even himself, said, “No.”

He held onto Jeremy until his breathing became regular until Jeremy said a terrible joke in Jean’s ear that made him chuckle. He held onto Jeremy until he felt his entire body fill over with complete and undying love from his head to his toes, repeating over and over in his head, you are safe, you are loved, you are safe, you are loved, you are safe—

When they parted, they each got cleaned up and read in bed for another hour before they kissed each other goodnight. They had to sleep in separate beds that night because Jean did not want to push a good thing. As he settled in his bed, he heard his phone vibrate. He grabbed it and looked at it.

Jeremy: Thank you for trusting me with that. Goodnight Jean Moreau. I love you.

Jean smiled, and whispered the words back to the phone, even though Jeremy could not hear him.

Jeremy, a room away, who could not hear Jean, knew Jean loved him back anyway.

Chapter End Notes

if you enjoyed, please drop a comment :)
“So, I was thinking,” Jeremy said.

“God help us all,” Jean teased and caught the shirt that Jeremy shot at him. He was a hurricane as per usual, running around the room and grabbing things he had left all over the dorm. Jean was much tidier than him, but at least Jeremy was just messy and not dirty.

“Shithead,” Jeremy said happily. He sighed when he completed his task and opened the door to their dorm to, as Jeremy said it, ‘let the air in’. Jean always thought this was a strange thing to do, considering beyond their dorm was just a hall but Jean never argued.

“Would you like to come back with me this weekend, to my family’s farm? You’ve already met them, but at the time, we weren’t really…” he melded his hands together and grinned cutely. “You know, the same.”

Jean nodded. He liked Jeremy’s family very much and was hoping that this time he could actually make a better impression on them this time. Not that he hadn’t been nice last time, but he was quieter and simply observing because he did not know how to be with someone and around their family. It was a terribly domestic situation that at the time, was much too soon for him.

“I would like to come along.” Jean agreed.

“HEY!” a loud, familiar, and much too excited voice exclaimed. Noah popped his head in their dorm. He looked debauched, which meant he just left someone somewhere after having just made out with them. Jean sent him a bored look while Jeremy sent him a happy smile. “We’re going to the farm?!” he asked in excitement.

“No, I am going to the farm,” Jean told him.

Noah ignored him. “I’ll text Alvarez and Laila,”

“Jeremy!”


Jeremy who hated confrontation on every level laughed nervously. “Noah, you know I was hoping —”

But Noah was too far gone to care. “LAILAAA!!!” he shouted, his eyes widening when he saw her coming down the hall. Jean sighed raggedly. “WE’RE GOING TO THE FARM THIS WEEKEND!”

“YES!” she shouted back.

“Well,” Jeremy said in defeat. “I guess we’re going on a road trip.”

That was how Jean Moreau ended up in the front seat of Jeremy’s Honda civic, listening to Alvarez and Noah argue about who was better on *The Walking Dead* while Laila was struggling with the
overflowing bags that hadn’t fit in the trunk.

“Jeez,” Jeremy said with a small laugh. “Maybe we should have taken two cars.” Though he was
doing his best, as usual, to retain his good spirits, Jean could tell he was exhausted. Every once and
a while, Jean wondered if Jeremy’s exhaustion was from his own constant positivity or trying to
keep up with it for the sake of everyone else. Whether his good moods were part of his personality
or something he thought he had to do.

It was a two-hour drive from campus to Jeremy’s home, but the view at least was something
pleasant. Getting further away from the city into the suburbs of California, more trees, and fewer
cars was something Jean enjoyed immensely. He knew a lot of people had preferences between
city and country, and though he found both useful for different things he thought he strongly
preferred the countryside. The entire two hours was a noisy, busy one. Noah and Alvarez argued
enthusiastically about everything on the planet while Laila leaned forward and talked about plays
for the Trojans with Jeremy. Jean was more than happy to stay out of most of the conversations,
sitting back in his seat and staring out the window at everything that passed him by.

The Knox family farm was a very special place.

Jean had thought that the first time he saw that, but coming back was easy, familiar, and special all
at once. They had a nicely sized two-story home, a ranch for the horses and two separate barns.
Since the weather was nice the cows were grazing outside, and there was a sheepdog enjoying the
sun’s rays. As Jeremy pulled up towards the house, the dog, whose name was Rodger, was chasing
it. From the house, Jeremy’s parents emerged, as did his three siblings. The only reason why his
ever sister wasn’t there was because she had gotten married and lived in Vancouver now, working
on a television set.

Jeremy and his father would look exactly the same if Jeremy hadn’t kept dying his hair. The only
difference beyond that was that his father seemed to be a lot better at growing facial hair. His
mother was a touch taller than his father, which is likely where Jeremy’s height came from as he
surpassed both his parents. Her hair was long and braided. Jeremy’s siblings were three strange
things—the eldest of the three, Brad, was boxy. Jean knew he liked to wrestle and fight, but since
the last time he was here he had seriously put on muscles. He was sixteen, and good looking in a
scary way. The two younger ones, both eight years old were twins. Rose and Haley looked slightly
more like Jeremy than Brad did, and definitely, both had their brother’s positivity. Brad was
quieter.

“Hello,” Jeremy put on his best smile, waving at his family.

“Jeremy!” the twins ran up to him, wrapping their arms around his middle. He patted their heads
and smiled fondly.

Mrs. Knox came up to Jean before anyone, just like she did the first time. They kissed each other
twice, one on each cheek before she held his pale hands in her tanned ones. “You look healthy.”
She said, and Jean smiled best he could. He didn’t like the idea of people having noticed how
much skinnier he was before.

“Thank you for having us.” He said, knowing it was a lame response, but the best he could muster
anyhow.

Noah crawled out of the backseat, bags tumbling out with him, the girls swearing at him from
inside. “Hello adopted parents!” Noah joked. He was off immediately, bouncing around. Jean
forgot often that Noah and Jeremy had grown up together, that Noah spent more time at the farm
than he had done at his own home. He ran forward, swiftly kissed both of the adults before he
ruffled the hair of the twins.

“Brad!” Noah called, punching the air. “I’m ready when you are.”

Brad smiled devilishly, Noah always played around with him. “Right now?”

“HEY!” Alvarez snapped at him. “Before you go off on your own, help with the bags!”

Noah snapped his fingers. “Damn,” and he punched Brad’s shoulder. “Alright, alright, give me ten minutes.”

Going into the house was more of a mess than Jean thought it would be. There was only one guest bedroom, so Noah would be sleeping on the couch, while Jean agreed to share a bed with Jeremy. He couldn’t look Jeremy in the eye as he agreed, very aware of the fact that he was saying such a thing in front of Jeremy’s parents.

“Don’t be too loud, kiddos.” Noah laughed, ducking as Laila tried to hit him. Jean was glad she missed. He grabbed Brad’s hand and laughed happily, going with him to the training room that was put up originally for Jeremy, which Brad now used. “Let’s go tough guy!” was the last thing that Jean heard before that door shut.

“Jeez,” Laila sighed. “He never runs out of energy.”

Jeremy’s father clapped his hands together. “Go rest for a bit, all of you. Lunch is in an hour, for now, just get settled.”

Jean walked up to Mr. Knox and said, in his most polite voice, “I would like to help you with some of the farm work.”

“Tomorrow morning,” he smiled. Jean liked the way his eyes crinkled at the side—Jeremy had the same lines. “You can help me with the chickens.”

“Thank you.” Jean believed that when he was a guest in other’s home, he had to treat it better than any place he inhabited. He followed Jeremy to his room, grabbing their weekend bags and walking upstairs. The girls’ extra bedroom was downstairs, so they were set. As soon as they were in the room Jeremy sighed and dropped his bags to the floor, walking towards his bed and collapsing on top of it.

“God,” he mumbled into his pillow. “I’m exhausted.”

Jean could tell. He set his things down and walked over to the bed, getting down on his knees and nuzzling his nose against Jeremy’s hair. Jeremy lifted his head to look to the side, his eyes laced with a sleep that he craved. “You’re not in a very good mood,” Jean noted.

“My family is just…” Jeremy sighed, rolling onto his back. Jean got up from his knees and sat on the bed, leaning over Jeremy, one arm by his boyfriend’s shoulder to steady him as he looked down. “A lot.”

“They seem calm.”

“That’s the thing,” Jeremy chuckled. “My parents notice everything. I love them very much, but they’re very…” he lost his train his thought and simply shrugged. “The first thing my mother did was tell you that you look healthy. Normal people just say, nice to see you.”

“It doesn’t bother me.” Jean frowned, pushing Jeremy’s hair away from his face. It was getting
long enough that he could tie it back at the base of his neck. “I know you’re not really annoyed with that. What’s wrong?” It was rare that they were having a conversation like this where it wasn’t Jean who was the subject. Jeremy did not often feel sad about things unless it was Jean’s sadness, but when he did, it was very difficult for him to talk about it. As though he thought he was not allowed. Jean knew more than anyone, that talking about sadness was the only way to try and get rid of it.

“It’s selfish.”

“I do not care.”

Jeremy frowned. “I wanted a nice weekend, for you and me. You getting to know my family properly. I wanted to kiss you in my childhood bed until I can’t think, and I didn’t want to wake up to the rest of my team like I do every other day.” He had spoken very fast, so when he was done he was breathing sharply. The shame was clear on his face. Jean could tell easily that Jeremy truly felt guilty for feeling something so perfectly normal.

“You are not selfish,” Jean said quietly. When Jeremy rolled his eyes, he said sternly, “You are the least selfish person that I know, Jer.”

“It’s okay. I’ll get over it.” He pulled at Jean’s shirt playfully. He wasn’t smiling still, but Jean didn’t mind. Being happy all the time wasn’t mental health, in Jean’s opinion. You had to feel everything, in order to be fully functioning. “So, farmer Jean, huh?”

Jean grinned crookedly, already knowing what he was referring to. “I thought it would be nice to help.”

“Good training for you too.”

“Oh?”

“I want to own a farm when I’m older,” Jeremy said dreamily.

“Who said I would be helping you?”

“Oh, very funny, Frenchman.” He continued on, ignoring Jean’s small chuckle. “I would have to hire people to help when I’m off playing games, or whatever, but I think it would be fun. I would do it just like my parents do, without killing the animals. Just taking care of them, and getting the eggs and milk, growing vegetables.”

“Your parents do live very interesting lives, for farmers.”

Jeremy smiled softly. “I like being a vegan. All those animals mean something to the world, you know? We’re all connected.”

“Are we going to have a philosophical discussion now?”

“Don’t you think it’s true?” Jeremy asked, his excitement slowly coming back. It wouldn’t reach the kind he had on the court, but Jean didn’t mind. He liked Jeremy however, and Jeremy like this was very close to the Jeremy he was when he was reading to Jean, which he thought was his favorite kind.

“That every human is connected?” Jean asked. “I don’t know. I don’t know if I want to be connected to everyone. Sounds very tiring for the heart.”
“Fine, maybe not everyone,” Jeremy allowed, his hand still in Jean’s shirt. “But, I don’t know. I think every life force is essential, to every other person who interacts with that life force. I don’t know if its energies, or souls, or something God created, or fate, but I like the idea of it. It makes me feel less alone.”

Jean ran a hand through Jeremy’s hair again. “I don’t like the idea of you feeling like you’re alone.”

“Well, it’s not often,” Jeremy said. “I rarely do, now that I have you.”

“But you still do, sometimes?”

Jeremy seemed to struggle with himself, trying to figure out a way to explain it. While Jean waited, he played with the strands of Jeremy’s hair, not at all minding the silence. When Jeremy did speak, his words were soft and quiet as he explained, “I think maybe, it’s because of my mood. I’m so happy all the time, because, I don’t know, I feel like the more people I have around me, the more I’ll feel good about the world, and all that. Sometimes though, it’s like, all my happiness becomes too much, and that none of it is real and that I’m doing it to fill a hole because really, maybe we’re all more alone than we thought we were.”

Jean really didn’t like any of those words. “Jeremy, are you sad?” he asked, and by sad, they both knew Jean meant sad as in the same way Jean was sad.

“No,” Jeremy said immediately. “No, not at all. I just think too fast sometimes, and my brain runs away from me, and then my body feels like…like I feel everything too much, and it exhausts me. That’s why I wanted to come to the farm this weekend. To relax, get away. Instead…”

“Let me make them leave.”

Jeremy laughed, his eyes crinkling in the way that Jean liked, and he shook his head. “No, no. I love you, but no. It’ll be okay. I’m tired. I need a good night sleep.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah,” Jeremy sighed. “Thank you for letting me rant though, I really needed that.”

“Of course.”

Jean leaned down to kiss him, in order to make Jeremy feel better, but what started out as something chaste escalated quickly before either of them knew what was happening. Jean didn’t think too much about it, and Jeremy apparently was needy enough that he didn’t think too much to ask Jean to think about it. Jeremy’s entire body molded to Jean’s above him and Jean pressed himself down onto Jeremy. Jeremy was careful not to touch Jean’s hair, but their arms circled each other, Jean’s hips coming down hard on Jeremy.

Jeremy let out a small breath, the friction pleasing him.

This was good—this new thing they did with each other. It gave Jean confidence, and he liked to make Jeremy feel good, but he was not ready for skin on skin just yet. He had made it clear to Jeremy that there were certain things he thought he would never be able to be comfortable with, or at least for a long time, and Jeremy said that those things didn’t bother him. He would only ever do what Jean was comfortable with.

Kissing Jeremy Knox, Jean thought, was a very particular and special kind of heaven. Kissing Jeremy Knox while he was turned on was another special kind. It was Jeremy’s breathy little
moans, doing his best to continue kissing Jean. It was their tongues against each other with ease. It was Jeremy’s shaking hands refraining from grabbing Jean too hard, and Jean’s hands finding their home on every crevice of Jeremy’s body. They were messy in their movements, but Jean wouldn’t have it any other way. They were forever wanting of the other, and Jean was just grateful that he could want after everything that had happened.

When Jeremy came, Jean smothered up his moans with kisses instead of his hand. That was another big no-no for the two of them. No hair pulling, no hitting, no covering each other’s mouths with anything but the other’s mouth.

It was over too soon, but it left them both feeling high and happy. Jeremy’s eyes drifted shut, exhaustion finally taking him under, and Jean watched him sleep.

By the time night fell on them, they were all enjoying the cool outdoors. The twins were running around with Noah who had the same amount of energy as the dog that was bouncing around with them. Jeremy laughed and got up, running over to them and playing alongside them, Rodger the dog chasing him, tail wagging. Noah shouted something unintelligible, and Jeremy laughed loudly, and his laugh flowed up to the night sky and into the stars where it would live in the universe where it belonged.

Maybe Jeremy was more than the sun. Maybe he was the stars to Jean’s moon. Lighting up the night sky in all the spots Jean could not reach.

“They’re something,” Laila chuckled, shaking her head. She was right next to Jean, her arms hugging her knees.

Brad, who was on the step below them on the porch agreed. “Noah never changes.”

Jean asked, “Does your brother?”

Brad shrugged, leaning against the railing. “He seems…”

“Still,” Mrs. Knox said from behind. “Jeremy seems still.”

Alvarez snorted from the porch swing, next to Mr. Knox. “Look at him. He doesn’t look still at all.”

Except Jean thought he knew exactly what Mrs. Knox meant. It went back to what Jeremy was saying before, about his moods, and how he felt about his body, his mind, and the people around him. He was letting himself feel as he wanted today, without his usual excitement to keep anyone elevated. Noah was able to do more than enough of that anyway. Jeremy was simply in his element, in his home, with his family, blood or otherwise. Still.

The dog jumped hard on Jeremy, tackling him to the ground, and Noah called the girls to action and toppled over him as well. The dog Rodger, the attacker seemed very proud of what he had done, bringing them all together like this against Jeremy in something that was incredibly fun.

Jean made a mental note. In the grand scheme of things, it was so minute, and so unimportant, which is why he thought it mattered more in certain ways. His life was not just his. It was true, he and Jeremy were bound—by what, no one knew, but their lives were connected and Jean was sure
that, that meant something.

So, he wanted to make Jeremy as happy and still as he was now.

In his head, he told himself,

6. *dogs (I think I'll want to adopt one, one day)*

As if reading his mind, Brad said, “You know, it’s weird, Jeremy was always more of a cat person.”

Well, Jean thought to himself, *we’ll just get both.* That promise of a future that he just made to himself sent a magnificent thrill throughout his body, and before he knew what he was doing, he was getting up and running over to the others, to join them in their fun.

Chapter End Notes

thank you for all the lovely and wonderful comments thus far, keep them coming, they literally give me a smile and the energy to continue writing.

i know not much happened in this chapter, but i think its better that way. they have to have some light fluffy moments too, dont you think? the next chapter is still at the farm, jean and mr. knox have a very interesting talk, jean and jeremy switch roles for something, and there will very likely be a runaway chicken (come on noah, get it together)

thanks for the love, im sending it right back. xx
Mr. Knox was a very quiet man, not that Jean minded.

He had gotten up early, just as he had promised, accidentally woke Noah up as a result when he went downstairs, and now the two of them were helping Jeremy’s father tend to the chickens. They were relatively free within their barn, not pent up in the same way Jean suspected other farms had them. That was the thing about the Knox family, they didn’t believe in cruelty, in any sense of it.

Noah was surprisingly tender with the animals, his energy lessening as he sat on the grass outside the barn, closed in by the fence grinning at one of the older chickens that had simply taken to sitting on his lap.

Jeremy was helping gather the eggs, Mr. Knox only a few steps away from him. The elder man looked at home in this place, like he was born on the farm and would die here. He was wearing a worn out cap and was looking at Noah serenely.

“I forgot that he’s quieter in the morning,” Mr. Knox murmured.

“Is he?” Jean had never experienced Noah in the early morning unless it was for Exy, and had just naturally assumed that Noah’s energy was everlasting.

“Oh yes.” He responded. “All that energy is just for show anyway. Noah is the classic archetype of the class clown.” When Jean stopped his movements and looked at Mr. Knox in interest, he smiled tenderly. “He had parents who took very good care of him. Gave him a roof, food, supplies. That’s not the same as love though. Noah is someone who wants to be seen, and so neglect made him loud, proud, and aching for approval.”

Jean wasn’t sure whether or not he should know this information, but said, “Jeremy never said anything…”

“I don’t think Noah and Jeremy think of it as a problem. Noah is a happy person, and he found a home here, in these barns. Whatever is missing from him, he deals with. As a parent though, I see it. The desperation in his eyes, still to this day, when he comes over and sees me and my wife. The kind of love you can only get from a parent. It’s a different kind of comfort, from the one you get with friends or the one you get with my son.”

Jean turned his gaze away, awkwardness tugging at him. “I am grateful, that it does not bother you.”

Mr. Knox laughed. “You know, a lot of people assume that because I’m a farmer, I’m behind on the times.” He chuckled, and his eyes grew impossibly kind as one of the baby chicks came up to his feet and looked up at him. Mr. Knox knelt down and put his finger out, the tiny thing nipping at it. Jean got down as well, doing the same. The bird chirped. “I have lived a very simple life. I have grown in a very strange world. At the end of the day, all we have is each other. What I wanted for my son was his joy. You brought him that.”

“I can’t imagine Jeremy not having joy before this.”

“To be happy, and to have joy, are two very different things, Jean Moreau.” He pointed at Noah,
who was lifting one of the chickens into the air, laughing at God knows what. “Noah has happiness, but no joy. He is very lonely. Jeremy knows that too. Why do you think Jeremy spends so much time trying to get Noah to choose one person to be with? Or why he didn’t expressly tell Noah not to join the two of you, no matter how much he wanted to.”

Jean raised his eyebrow. Clearly, this man knew his son inside and out. “So what is joy then?”

“It’s different for everyone. Noah might not find it with another person, as my Jeremy did with you. I found it with this, my farm.” He lay his hand on the ground, his fingers digging into it. Jean couldn’t quite understand how a place could fill every hole in someone’s body, but then again, his home wasn’t a place, it was a person. Was that joy then? Having a home, in whatever sense it meant? “Have you found yours?” he asked, looking at Jean.

Jean shrugged. “I don’t know,” he said, his honesty surprising himself. “I am happy. Jeremy has helped me a lot with struggles and such…” he trailed off. Perhaps his joy, his entire existence could not be still in the way that Jeremy was the day before. Maybe it would come only after he was completely okay. Would he ever be?

Mr. Knox seemed to know what he was thinking. “It takes others longer than some to find their joy. If you think you’re on your way there, with my son, I could not be happier. Jeremy has told me about your friend, Kevin Day. Exy, is that his joy?”

Jean shrugged. “In ways. He likes being good at it. I think Kevin’s joy was a collection of things, not just one thing.” His father coming back, finding Matt, mending his relationships.

“For most people, it’s like that. Perhaps it will be like that for you too.”

Jean said, “I can’t stop playing Exy.”

Mr. Knox heard what he did not say. He heard it in the bitterness of Jean’s voice and continued on with his kind tone. “You should find other things to fill the spaces between, to keep you happy.”

“Jeremy makes me happy.”

“Son,” Mr. Knox put a hand on his shoulder. “You are allowed to have more than one thing make you happy.”

Before Jean could respond, they heard a shriek. Jean sighed when he looked up while Mr. Knox chuckled, as Noah lost his balance and the chicken fell from his hands over the pen, essentially running off. He swore and jumped over, beginning his chase.

“NOAH!” Jean called, running after him.

Noah laughed, and it shook the world. “LOOKS LIKE WE’RE ON A CHICKEN RUN!”

“NOAAAAAHHH!”

Jean was reading.

In theory, that was a very simple thing to do.
In theory.

But like all things that involved Jean Moreau, this was not such as simple thing. The act of reading, for pleasure and joy, was something he used to experience during his time at the Nest, with Kevin. The few moments they had together, where he and Kevin would talk about books, they would sometimes end up sitting in silence and just reading. Jean had loved to read, and then Kevin had left, and Jean was never able to pick up a book ever again.

It was like he had said a million times before, sometimes the wounds inside were worse than the ones outside.

It had started out with Jeremy offering to bring the twins to bed. That had escalated into the twins complaining that they didn’t want to go to sleep, so Jeremy offered to read to them.

“I can do it,” Jean had said.

The offer was something small to everyone else, but Jeremy knew better, so his smile was ridiculously massive. Jean had read them the book of their choosing, reading slowly and putting effort into the expressions and details. The children were mesmerized, and Jeremy sat quietly on the bed listening. It was over quickly, but Jean felt this new experience fill his entire body. It was no small thing, to try and reclaim the person you were while also trying to form it into the new person you were becoming. His hands shook at the start of it but stopped by the end of it, and when the kids were in bed, Jeremy grabbed Jean’s hand and led him back downstairs, where his teammates were resting. Noah was letting Laila cut his hair to just under his chin, while Alvarez stood nearby with the broom.

“My parents?” Jeremy asked.

“Outside,” Alvarez grinned and followed Laila around, grabbing each piece of hair that dangled down to the ground. Noah was grinning, as usual.

Jean sat on the couch, keeping Jeremy’s hand in his lap. “Why aren’t you doing this in the bathroom?”

Noah asked, “Do you have a problem with everything?”

Jean gave him a face and then motioned to Jeremy’s hair. “You need a trim, too.”

“I know. Laila, do me after.” He pointed at Noah, before he could say anything and quickly added, “Don’t even think about making that dirty.”

“Jeez, you guys are no fun.” Noah sighed dramatically.

Laila was concentrated on the hair, but she gave Jean a look saying quickly, “The kids went to bed pretty fast.”

Jean shrugged. “I enjoyed reading to them.” then he swallowed his fears, and held onto Jeremy’s hand a touch lighter, saying, “I have not read a book, on my own, since Kevin Day left me.”

Laila swore and cut diagonally, Alvarez looked up and Noah shouted, “Laila! Fuck! You better not mess up my hair!”

“Shut up!” she exclaimed, slapping his shoulder. “I’ll fix it afterward.”

Jean gave them a tiny lopsided smile. “It doesn’t have to be a big deal.”
Except it was, and they all knew it. Jean only told Jeremy his personal life, this was the first time since his arrival over a year ago that he had willingly offered up information to his teammates about his past. They were hanging onto every single word as if the words meant something far more important than Jean realized.

Alvarez saw everything in Jean’s expression and said, “You can trust us.”

Jean thought about joy, and happiness, and family. Yes, he thought, he could trust them. So he told them, little by little, not about everything, but about the books. The books he used to read with Kevin, his favorite kind of stories. Then he told them about the fact that he couldn’t bear to pick one up after he had been left behind, and about how he had only been able to really listen to a story properly until Jeremy.

Noah, in an effort to keep Jean light, said, “Aw, you and Cap are so romantic.”

Jeremy chuckled, and Jean was grateful for Noah’s light attitude. “I like reading out loud. It makes me process things better.” Jeremy said.

“Like the sound of your own voice, do you?”

Alvarez shot him a look. “That’s you, dillhole.”

“Hey!”

Except neither of them looked annoyed with the other, and Jean was grateful for that too.

“Anyway,” he finished off. “That’s all.”

“That’s not all,” Laila said, resuming her cut on Noah’s hair. Alvarez stood to attention and began to clear the mess as well. “Tell us more.”

“I have nothing—”

“Your favorite story,” Laila said. “Tell us what your favorite book was.”

“Is.” Jean corrected quietly. “It hasn’t changed.” When he looked at Jeremy, for a reason that he couldn’t quite name, Jeremy shrugged and looked at him significantly.

“I never get tired of hearing your stories,” Jeremy said. “You can tell them whatever you want.” He squeezed Jean’s hand, and then brought it up, kissing Jean’s fingers softly. “You can say nothing, or everything or something in between. I’m here regardless.” It was a strangely private thing to say in public like this, but their friends didn’t seem to mind it in the least.

“Well,” Jean said, looking back at them. “There’s this one series, Kevin had found. It’s called The Wolves of Mercy Falls by Maggie Stiefvater.” He swallowed, looking at his hands as he spoke, the way his fingers curled with Jeremy’s.

“It’s about werewolves, except, not really at all. The boy, Sam, his parents tried to kill him because they thought he was possessed by the Devil. He survived and found love, but for three books even though he’s in love, he’s still so very sad, because there are a bunch of broken pieces inside of him that his parents left there. By the end it gets better, you know, he finds love and whatever, but his adopted dad dies, and I don’t know...you know, the thing that broke him never went away even though he is happy at the end of it. But he survived, and loved, and sang with his guitar.” He breathed out, clamping his other hand over his and Jeremy’s. “My parents used me to pay off a debt. So it’s not quite the same, but...well, you all know the state I was in when I came to the Trojans.”
For the first time in a very, very long time, Jean heard Noah’s voice in a rage. “I’d like to meet your parents so I can give them the shit they fucking deserve.” Knowing what he knew now, about how Noah grew up, he thought very hard into the universe, *Noah deserves good. Give him some too.*

Jean smiled sadly, bringing his eyes back up. Laila had tears in her eyes but was very stubbornly cutting Noah’s hair so she would not let them fall. Alvarez had stopped brooming altogether and was looking at Jeremy. When Jean turned his head to look at Jeremy too, Jeremy was crying very, very softly, but was smiling gently.

“What are these for?” Jean asked, wiping one away.

Jeremy laughed, he sounded tired, like he did yesterday. “I’m just, very glad that you are here.” He said, looking at Jean before he looked at them all. “I’m glad we’re all here. Together.”

Alvarez smiled. “I think that’s why Jean likes that story so much,” she said softly. “The boy, Sam, finds a new family.”

Jean nodded. “He was still a bit broken, but mending.”

Laila brushed some stray hairs away from Noah’s neck. “What matters is that those broken pieces are less than how they were before.” She looked at Jean, hope clear in her tone. “Do you have less of them?”

Jean shrugged. “Sometimes yes, sometimes no.” Depression didn’t work as easily as that. Right now, it felt like he had a lot less, but sometimes it felt like he had so much more that it would weigh him down and bring him under. “Most of the time, it feels less. Lately anyway. You, all of you, bring me joy.”

Laila finally did let a tear fall. “Jesus,” she laughed, and Alvarez swiftly kissed her cheek.

Noah, being Noah, put a smile on his face and exclaimed, “I think that’s the most you’ve ever said to us man! Definitely, the nicest thing you ever said to me.”

“Who said I was including you?” Jean asked, throwing him a tiny smile.

Noah handed him back an even bigger one. “Asshole, you said all of us. You can’t take it back now!”

After that, the conversation descended into something lighter. They talked about nothing in particular, which was how Jean would have preferred it anyhow. Noah’s hair was cut as he wanted, and then Laila did proceed to cut Jeremy’s down to how he usually had it. When the night was over, and sleep tugged at all of them, Jean and Jeremy went to bed, Jean taking his diary out of his bag and writing,

7. *I am reading books again*

Chapter End Notes

i hope you guys liked the fluff!

next chapter is a little heavier, but oddly hopeful too. i really enjoyed the first half of this chapter, and am strangely enjoying writing noah haha. thank you all for the
comments, keep them coming :) x
Their first important game was against the Ravens, and no one was shocked, and everyone was quiet about it. It had been the case last year as well, when they had to play against the Ravens, but Jean still hadn’t been well enough to move at full capacity yet, so he hadn’t played a full game.

Now was when he would play, and he promised himself that he would come out a winner. He put on his Trojan uniform and ignored his team mates, too strung up to really talk to them anyhow. Noah didn’t even look his way, this was not a day to test people’s patience. He looked over at his phone and saw there was a message from Kevin Day.

*Good luck.*

Jean couldn’t bring himself to reply. He swallowed and tried to stand up from the bench, and found he couldn’t. After calling himself a coward repeatedly in his head, he was aware of a touch on his hand. It was barely anything at all, but it was enough. Jean stopped breathing and grabbed the wrist of the person, his eyes glaring at the person who was touching him.

“Hey…” someone said.

“Don’t,” Jeremy Knox said easily, as though his slim wrist wasn’t breakable under Jean’s hand. As though Jean wasn’t looking at Jeremy with so much contempt, as though they were not boyfriends at all but just meeting for the first time. Jean hated himself for this, but he was slipping too quickly and too easily into the place in his head that had him apathetic to those around him. It was the place in his head that he had learned to go to when he had to endure Riko’s brutality. The last time he had been taken advantage of in his own bed was when he had found it, he was able to go to a place in his mind where the pain was minimal, and he maybe didn’t even care about dying after all.

It was a dangerous place to be, and only Jeremy knew how to pull him out. But there was not enough time today.

Jeremy still tried his best. “Hey, *amour de ma vie,*” he grinned crookedly but Jean couldn’t find a smile to give back to him. “Do you want to sit out?”

“No.”

“Okay,” Jeremy left it at that. Everything from that moment on until Jean stepping on the court was a blur. He didn’t hear whatever it was that Jeremy said to the team to motivate them, nor did he care. He wasn’t even sure how he felt—if he wanted to play the Ravens to beat them, or to prove something to himself, or if those two things were the same thing.

When they were on the court, Jeremy walked up to the captain of the Ravens, shaking his hand. Jean found himself moving before he could help it, following Jeremy to ensure his safety. Jean knew his face must be something terrible to look at, but Jeremy didn’t let it show. They shook hands and Jeremy turned around, a steady hand on Jean’s waist, leading him back to the Trojans. It was such a chaste, simple move.

A movement that Jean welcomed, but others did not,

“Same old slut as always then,” said one of the Ravens.
Jean stopped, Jeremy looked over his shoulder with such a deadpan, murderous expression. It was not an expression that Jeremy wore often, but when he did people knew not to cross him. Before either of them could say a word about it, Noah and Alvarez were suddenly there. They were like sidekicks to Jeremy’s main lead. Laila was watching from a distance, her eyes hard.

Alvarez, furious, said, “Same old team as always then?” she then cocked her head, smiling thinly. “Oh, no, of course not. Your Captain is dead.”

The Ravens looked as angry as ever, and Noah grinned wildly from their expressions. “Calm down you assfucks, let's settle this on the court, alright?” He flipped them off, and the referee told him off, and then the game began.

Jean was unsurprised to see that the Ravens were targeting him all throughout the first half, but he fought back and played their game even better. He had grown up there under the hand and eye of Riko, he was not so easy to bring down during a game. He was given the number after Kevin for a reason. Jean was very good at the things he did and was not someone to take a game lightly. The Trojans played hard, less energetic than usual and with each minute Jeremy was growing more and more annoyed. Jean didn’t care that Riko wasn’t on this court, he didn’t care that he was dead. He cared that he was alive. They fought and fought, and held onto the first half hard. Noah had taken it upon himself to have a personal vendetta against each and every Raven, and was stopped twice in the first half for starting fights, but scored five points to make up for it, clacking sticks with Laila as he stuck his tongue out at the Raven goalie.

Jean thanked God that Riko was dead, realizing in that moment that if he were alive, he would have for certain found a way to kill Noah.

When the first half ended, no one spoke. Jeremy’s eyes were hard, and he kept his eyes on the Ravens. Jean didn’t speak to him and instead listened to Noah retell his goal as if his entire team hadn’t already seen it.

Jeremy asked quietly by his side, “Are you good?” he asked. Jean thought it was interesting that Jeremy didn’t ask if Jean was okay likely knowing that he was not. His mind had created the safe place for him, that disregarded the small injuries he was already suffering from. The Ravens’ words meant little to him, bouncing off his skin. No true harm could come to him from them because he would not go home with them. He could not get beaten, he could not be taken apart piece by piece.

And yet Jean was still afraid. Still, he had to reside to that place in his head that kept him safe. That made him apathetic to those around him and his own feelings, just to get through a game against these people.

No, Jean was not okay. He was good though, good enough to finish this game. “Yes,” he murmured.

Jeremy nodded and said nothing more.

They drank some water quickly before getting onto the court for the second half. Jean wasn’t too badly injured, the Ravens were having trouble pinning him down since he was faster and better than them.

The second half, the Ravens had a new target.

Jean saw it a touch too late. He was sure the Ravens were coming for him, but they were more invested in Jeremy now, barrelling into him even before he could make any movement to catch the
ball with his racquet. The sound of their bodies clashing made Jean flinch, and as he made the attempt to regain himself, Noah thankfully was already there—the fastest of them all, sprinted towards them, caught the ball after tripping the Raven and scored a goal.

But that sound echoed hard in Jean’s ears. He saw Jeremy fall to the ground, heard the hard sounds of bodies, the expression Jeremy had under the force of it.

Jean wanted to tear the Ravens apart. His mind burst forth with a new emotion that he recognized—Jeremy was someone he wanted to protect. Suddenly, the game didn’t matter. Jean didn’t care about scoring, or who had the better plays. All he saw in his mind was Jeremy’s tight expression and vowed to protect that person.

The second half descended into madness. The Ravens knew they were losing, and they had decided to hurt instead of trying to take back points. Getting to Jeremy was the best way of getting to Jean, and soon Jean abandoned his post and was doing his best to protect Jeremy. It was the only decision that Jean felt he could live with, and it ended up being in the Ravens favor.

“Get back,” Jeremy snapped. Jean had never heard Jeremy use that tone of voice with him. Jean retorted angrily, “Let—” but their conversation got cut short when a racquet “accidentally” clipped Jeremy’s shoulder, and another got Jean’s knee. He felt pain spark up his entire leg, but all he heard in his head was Jeremy’s shout. There was a sudden yelling match between the two teams, as the two of them fell to the floor, Jeremy swearing from both pain and annoyance as a goal was scored on the Trojans.

That was the game—a mess of hurts, and goals, the Ravens bringing the score closer to them only because they were so intent on hurting the Trojans. By the time it was over, the Trojans had only won two points, Noah’s eye was swollen, Laila’s index finger was bent awkwardly, Jean felt bruised over his entire body, and Jeremy had a dislocated shoulder (which their medic popped back in carefully, and then put him in a sling), and was limping. He had the most bruises of them all and was supporting a split lip. The Ravens had truly not bothered to waste time in hurting him just to hurt Jean.

After they were cleaned up by the medic and bandaged up where they had to be, Jeremy sat with them all in the lounge, looking at them with a tiny smile. It was all wrong on his face and didn’t reach his eyes. “Well, you guys played great,” he said tiredly. “We were against a team that wasn’t out to win but just to hurt us. You held your own really well. I’m proud. Everyone rest and heal, we’ll resume practices after we’ve all regained ourselves.” He nodded at them and sighed, looking down at his stuff.

Jean walked over, ignoring his team and grabbed Jeremy’s things. Jeremy took one bag to hold in one hand, but Jean took most of the bags and walked out with him before the rest of the team. When he saw Jeremy was limping too much, he grabbed Jeremy’s bag anyhow and held it tight in his hands, ignoring his own injuries. Jeremy probably sensed it was useless to argue because he said nothing of it, even though Jean knew Jeremy must be worried over the state of Jean’s newly injured body.

“I’m sorry,” Jean said as they walked towards their dorms.

Jeremy looked over at him, raising an eyebrow. “What for?”

“Costing us so many points. If you think I deserve to sit out, or deserve punishment of any kind, I will be ready to accept it. I didn’t listen to you or your orders, and nearly cost us the game because of it.”
Jeremy looked thoughtful but didn’t say a word. They walked in silence to the room, and Jean felt his anxiety creep over him as the silence stretched. He couldn’t blame Jeremy for not wanting to speak to him—Jean felt he was being realistic. It was true, Jean had focused on Jeremy, assuming Jeremy couldn’t take care of himself. They both showered best they could, Jean taking longer just to feel his muscles relax under the warm water. When he got out, he carefully dressed in his most comfortable clothes and came out into the room where Jeremy was already sitting on the table. He was dressed in sweatpants and nothing more, still supporting his arm. Jean didn’t touch him, even though he wanted to.

“Come sit here,” Jeremy pointed to the couch.

Jean who had descended to this strange place of who he used to be and who he was now, did as he was told, readying his body for whatever it was that was going to happen for him. The more logical part of his body reminded him that those kinds of things would not happen here, but the part of him that had been broken over and over again at the Nest told him that he deserved some kind of reprimand for what he had cost his team.

“I can’t believe,” Jeremy said softly. “That after all this time, you expect to be punished.”

Jean raised his brow. “I nearly cost us a win.”

“Do you think I give a shit about that?” he asked seriously. Jean wished Jeremy would get angry, instead of this annoying calm that he presented again. He was being forever careful with Jean, even now.

“You can get angry with me.”

Jeremy ignored him. “I’m assuming that you were triggered today, which is why I don’t want to get angry.” Jean almost disagreed with him, but then wondered if that’s why he was able to slip into the part of his mind that was making him apathetic. Perhaps Jeremy was right. “I’m hoping that the bullshit you’re saying to me isn’t how you actually feel, or something you actually expect from me, after all this time.”

Jean frowned. “I deserve to be punished.” He said again, but even as he said them, the words sounded wrong in his mouth.

“No, Jean, you don’t. You never did. The fact that you believe you do further proves my point.” He sighed and moved from where he was sitting, taking Jean’s diary out from behind him, pressing it against Jean’s lap. “I added the next number for you.”

Jean didn’t know if this was an invasion of privacy or not but considering Jeremy knew everything about him, including every other number on this list, he figured it wasn’t.

8. riko can’t touch me anymore

Jean traced each letter with his index finger, trying to find a way to how he felt. He looked back up at Jeremy and placed the diary to his side. Jeremy sighed and said softly, “What happened to you then, you didn’t deserve those things. If you were on the Ravens, then yes, probably after the shit you pulled today you would have been reprimanded. I’m not the person to punish you for what happened.”

“I fucked up our game.”

Jeremy sighed, a pinch of annoyance finally showing in his expression. “Jean, none of us played as we should have today. We all took it personally. Do you know why?” when Jean shook his head,
Jeremy put a hand on Jean’s knee. “I love you. The team loves you. Don’t you see that?”

Jean wanted to say it back because he felt it. Jean wanted a lot of things, except he couldn’t say them. His mind wasn’t allowing him. His mind was trying to keep him in the bad place he had adopted for the day, and he didn’t know how to take himself out as quickly as he wanted to. “I’m not worth—”

“Don’t,” Jeremy said, putting up a hand. “Don’t tell me you’re not worth it, or any of that bullshit. It’s insulting to the both of us, quite frankly.” He ran a hand over his face. “I know today was hard. I know some part inside you thinks one way even though I’m telling you that no one is going to hurt you outside of that court just because you made some mistakes. I can’t force you to believe me, but I hope… I don’t know. I hope one day you realize that you are more than anything Riko did to you. That I am not him, and would never hurt you. That those Ravens are worth nothing, and you are worth the world.” He got up, looking tired beyond relief, leaving Jean stunned from those words. “I’m going to go rest, and call Kevin, because I have about ten missed calls from him.”

He turned to move away and Jean’s hand shot out, grabbing Jeremy’s good wrist. “Jer…” he choked, the day’s emotions finally catching up with him. His body reminding him just how tired he was. “I…” I’m sorry. I know you’re not him. It was a bad day. Please.

Jeremy smiled softly, and leaned down, kissing Jean softly on the forehead. “I think you should rest, spend a little time alone and maybe call your therapist okay? I’m going to go talk to Kevin for a bit.”

“Are we…”

“We’re good,” Jeremy promised, but Jean still felt a hole in his heart, and it was Jeremy shaped. He may not have cared about the game, but Jean couldn’t help but feel as though he still let Jeremy down today in other ways, as he watched him walk away.

Chapter End Notes

im sorry it took so long for the update! i hope this wasn't too much sadness, it was actually supposed to be a whole lot worse but i didn't want jean to revert too much to a bad place.

him and jer will be okay, i promise, but couples go through things like this. next chapter is a breakthrough for jean

i hope you guys liked this chapter, if you did please drop a comment, i always love reading what you have to say :) xx
The day following the Raven match, Jeremy and Jean got into their first real fight.

They had arguments like all couples do, but rarely did they fight. Mostly because Jeremy had learned all of Jean’s mind and preferences for all things, and because Jeremy was so hard to actually piss off. Apparently, Jean’s mindset from the day before, paired with the brutality of the Ravens was enough to set him off, even though Jeremy had told Jean that they had been good the day before.

Jean had not been planning on bringing it up, hoping that everything could have fallen into place casually, but that, unfortunately, didn’t look like it would be the case. So he waited until after they had finished eating lunch before he walked into Jeremy’s room, grabbing Jeremy’s laptop from him and setting it on the floor.

Jeremy didn’t look very annoyed, or he was very good at hiding it. He was wearing a smile, but not one that Jean liked.

“Are you alright?” Jeremy asked.

“No,” Jean snapped. Jeremy’s smile fell from the clipped tone Jean was using, and his eyes were hard. “Neither are you, so can we talk about it instead of ignoring each other?”

Jeremy waved his hand to his bed, offering it to Jean. When Jean sat, Jeremy said quietly. “Did you talk to your therapist?”

“Why does that matter?”

“It’s just a question.”

“I did, and she said the same fucking thing that I just told you. We should talk.”

“Fine,” Jeremy crossed his arms over his chest. “What do you want to talk about?”

“You’re mad at me.”

Jeremy’s mouth twitched. “I’m not mad. I don’t feel anger towards you.”

“So what do you feel?”

“Irritation,” Jeremy lay out his hand and began to tick off each finger. “Annoyance, frustration—”

“Those are all words for the same feeling.”

“Hey,” Jeremy said, and Jean was glad for the tone of his voice. It deepened in its seriousness, which is what Jean wanted from the beginning. He wanted Jeremy to say everything he was feeling because it was always Jean doing that, and if Jeremy was mad he was allowed to be mad in the same way that Jean was feeling everything he felt. “Too bad if those don’t suit you. That’s what it is.”
Jean pressed, “Tell me why.”

“What will that do?” Jeremy asked seriously. “So I can say things uselessly, that way you won’t believe me anyhow? Why should I waste my breath?”

*Ah, there it is.* “So is that what it is?” Jean asked, his heart picking up. “You’re finally tired of me?”

Jeremy let out a long sigh and threw his hands up. “No, you complete fool. That right there is why I’m mad. Oh, don’t give me that smug face, so you knew I was mad. I’m mad because it’s been more than a year than we’re together and Jesus, I’m so fucking useless to you. You don’t believe me, ever, about anything I say! So what the hell is the point of me trying to make things better for you if you don’t want to believe me?”

Jean snapped right back. “You’re dumber than I thought if you really think I’m doing it on purpose not to believe you.”

Jeremy sighed, aggravated that his words weren’t coming out the way he wanted. “I know it’s not easy for you, believe me, I know, but I just wonder sometimes if you actually listen to what I say or if you just hear a bunch of words.”

Jean muttered, “That’s low, I feel. I think you know that I listen to you more than I listen to anyone else.”

“Then why?” Jeremy asked seriously. “Why on earth would you ask me to punish you, after that game? Even if you had gone to that bad place I know you have in your head, of all the things to say or do, why would you ask me to do that to you? It’s me, Jean, me! As though I would ever raise a hand against you. That’s why I’m mad. Not because of how you feel, but because you were so casual to assume that I would do that to you.”

Honestly, Jean hadn’t really thought about it that way. He assumed Jeremy’s anger lay more with the fact that Jean had gone to a bad place in his mind after all of this progress that he had made. He knew his asking for punishment would irritate Jeremy, but he did not think it would be to this point.

Jean did his best to explain, but it was not quite easy. “I’m sorry for making that…assumption of you. I know, I knew even then that it was not something to ask of you, but my brain was somewhere else, and I couldn’t distinguish much.”

“I know that,” Jeremy mumbled. “That’s why I didn’t want to have this conversation. I was going to fester for a day and then get over it.”

“Well it can’t be like that,” Jean retorted. “It can’t always be you protecting me from how you feel. I want to know how you feel so this relationship can work.”

“Well, it bothered me that you put me on the same level as Riko.”

“I didn’t—”

“You did. In that moment of time, you did. Whether you think you did or not is something else entirely, but you did. Maybe not in the same drastic levels, but you thought I would punish you, or that you deserved it from me and that put me on the same level as him.”

Jean realized that he couldn’t argue. Every word that Jeremy said was true, and in a way, Jean had to blame it on himself. Even though he had descended into a not so safe place, he also had to admit
that he was more apathetic in those moments than anything, and he was still aware of himself to know that he should have never asked Jeremy to do such a thing. Or he should have at least asked for it in a different way, such as ‘if you want me to sit out on the next game, I will’. Jean had used excuses, but it was true, he hadn’t tried very hard to get himself out of that place, which he knew he was capable of because he had done so before.

He had chosen not to.

Jeremy’s words showed him that he was allowed to not to take himself out in that moment, but that didn’t mean that his words were not hurtful. Both of them were right in how they felt.

“I’m sorry,” Jean said. “You are the last person on this planet I would ever compare to Riko. I didn’t mean it in that way.”

Jeremy stared at him for a very long moment, before his face relaxed into something calmer. He sighed and leaned lower in his bed, his head relaxing in his pillow. “I know,” he murmured. “That’s why I wanted a day apart to calm down. Although, I suppose it’s good that we got it all out in the open.”

No, Jean thought, this is not enough. “Jeremy,” his voice caught but he went on. “I don’t want you to think——”

Jeremy smiled tiredly. “It’s okay Jean.”

“Jeremy——”

“I’m sorry too——”

“I love you.”

Jeremy was mid-sentence, so his mouth was hanging open from the words. He was staring at Jean as though he had never seen him before, staying back against his pillow as though he was terrified of moving. Of course, Jean wanted him to move ever so desperately, because finally, finally, he had said what he had been wanting to say for so long. It didn’t matter that they had fought, well, it mattered but not in the light of what he had just said. Jean could say it now because they had fought, and they were still okay, and going to continue to be okay.

“Do you…” Jeremy swallowed. “Are you serious?”

“Yes,” Jean said, and finally, finally, he felt it all spill over. His apathy from the day before, the soreness of his bruised body, and the emotions that had during this argument and all these days spent with Jeremy finally bubbled up and exploded from him. Jean shed tears easier than he had in a long time, he didn’t bother trying to keep them back. There was no use to hold them back, he had nothing to be afraid of. He could be who he was with this person, knowing Jeremy was always going to accept him. Accept him, love him, and never, ever hurt him.

Jeremy leaned forward and he opened his mouth to ask for permission to touch Jean, but before he could Jean’s hand wrapped around Jeremy’s wrist. For a brief moment, he marveled in the fact that Jeremy was moving so easily as he was still recovering himself, but Jean didn’t think too long about it.

Jeremy was smiling, a real true smile and his thumbs wiped the tears that fell from Jean’s eyes. “Why now?” he asked simply.

Jean laughed weakly at himself, “Because, you’re nothing like him. Every day I’m glad that you’re
nothing like him. I’m sorry, and I just…” he shook his head, moving forward so their foreheads touched, their noses brushing. “I love you. I love you. I love you.” the words felt like freedom in his mouth.

Jeremy laughed along with Jean and nipped at his lips. “I love you too,” he whispered against his lips. Jean kissed him back eagerly, their hands on each other’s faces. They kissed and kissed until Jean felt it all over his body until Jeremy did what he always did and began to laugh into each kiss. They kissed until they wound up in each other’s arms and laying down on the bed together, wrapped up in each other. Jeremy was kissing Jean all over his face, and though the words would not be forgotten of what they exchanged, they were both secure enough in their relationship to know that a fight didn’t have to overstay its welcome either.

This was good too.

This was better.

They lay there together for so long, that Jean forgot what time even was. Neither of them checked their phone or got up for water or a snack. They stayed laying with each other, talking about nothing and everything, their feet overlapped and Jean’s tears being kissed away by Jeremy’s lips.

Jeremy, who was clearly overwhelmed from the declaration he had just received, was in such a good mood now that he was speaking French. He spoke French either when he felt light and happy and at peace, or if he was trying to seduce Jean, or in the rare moments like the day before when he had to comfort Jean and keep the tension on the team light. Jean preferred Jeremy speaking French like this when he was light and happy.

At peace.

This was something that Jean loved.

Jeremy wasn’t terribly good at speaking French, but he was able to say some sentences well enough, even though anyone who was French would be able to tell that Jeremy Knox was not a native French speaker. Still, even at that, Jean would spend hours just listening to Jeremy speak the language that Jean was born from.

They went back and forth.

Jeremy started, “Tu as des beaux yeux,” You have beautiful eyes.

Jean responded, “Tes yeux, j’en rêve jour et nuit.” I dream about your eyes day and night.

“Je ne peux pas vivre sans toi,” I can’t live without you.

“Tu es l’amour de ma vie” You’re the love of my life.

“Je t’aime de tout mon coeur” I love you with all my heart.

“This is it,” Jean whispered against Jeremy’s lips in English. “This is my ninth reason.” He sounded like he was crying, or pleading with something, and maybe he was, he wasn’t really sure what he felt besides all-consuming love right now. “I’m going to write it down after, you speaking French.”

Jeremy chuckled, his eyes half-lidded and romantic looking. “Trying to speak French.”

Jean grinned and traced the number nine against Jeremy’s neck, tickling him briefly. “Number
nine,” he kissed Jeremy softly, whispering lovingly, “Jeremy when he tries to speak French.”

Chapter End Notes

okay so i felt bad about the last couple of chapters being short, so i added another one today (also because school is kicking my ass, so i figured if i could get another one in today, it would make up for it)

i hope you like this chapter! jean finally said i love you, and they had a fight and worked together and through it, something very important to do.

I hope you all understand Jeremy’s point of view. Neither of them was wrong, jeremy was valid in having his feelings hurt and knows jean can’t always control himself which is why he wanted to take the day. But jean knew he could have done his part better. Neither is wrong or right, sometimes things are messy and complicated.

drop me a comment if you enjoyed it! thanks for the comments thus far :) x
The following day, Jean and Laila were in class, waiting for it to begin. They were fifteen minutes early and so were lounging in the back of the class having chosen the seats that hid them best from their teacher. Jean was uncomfortable since his body was still bruised entirely, but he was grateful he wasn’t supporting the injury Laila had faced with her finger.

Jean, of course, was used to injuries. He had been broken and barely put back together more times than he could count, and each time seemed like the worst that it could ever be until it wasn’t anymore. He was not used to injuries like this, from a sport, from nothing more than that. Not used to allowing each bruise to heal, to skipping class that way he could relax and take the time to feel better.

No, Jean had never known what it meant to have bruises just from a game. He didn’t know what it meant to not have them get worse. They usually always got worse. So this was definitely a nice change. Of course, he didn’t vocalize any of this to his team beyond Jeremy.

Jeremy watched Laila wince as she adjusted in her seat, she was slightly bruised as well but her finger was clearly putting her in more pain than anything. “How is it?” he asked, putting his head in his hand as he stared at her.

Laila shrugged. “It’s just a fracture.”

“Just,” he scoffed.

Laila grinned at him. “Listen, I took one for the team. I have one injury, how many do you have?” This team was so flimsy with the things that hurt them. Noah was practically bragging about each and every bruise, telling any cheerleader that would listen how he got them—including making the stories more grandiose each time he told it.

“I don’t count bruises as injuries,” Jean mumbled. “It’s an unfortunate part of the reality that is Exy.” If you weren’t getting hurt during the game, then chances were you probably weren’t playing it properly. It was a bastards sport, after all.

“God,” she laughed softly, reaching in her bag with her good hand to take out her books. “You sound so eloquent all the time when you speak, I feel so ashamed.”

It was not the first time that Jean had heard that. “I speak normally.”

“No, I speak normally. You speak like you’re from another time altogether. You should be a prince, or a king or something…”

Jean flinched lightly, he hated that word. King. He didn’t mind the word queen because Kevin had taken it and molded it to his own, but the word king was one that made him feel like his skin was crawling with bugs. He wasn’t sure if it meant it was a trigger word, his therapist said it was, but Jean wasn’t triggered by it, it just made him uncomfortable. Then again, his therapist insisted that he didn’t need to have a series of flashbacks to make his discomfort valid.

“Hey,” Laila poked his leg. “Are you okay?”
“Yes, yes of course,” he threw her a forced smile, tapping his index finger on his desk. That word, king, made him antsy. His bruises suddenly felt a thousand times more present.

Jean needed to talk to someone.

He cleared his throat. “Excuse me for one second, I’ll be right back.” he got up slowly from his seat so as not to disturb his injuries any further, before walking outside the classroom, taking out his phone and turning it over and over in his hand.

To have a relationship with Kevin Day,

That was a thing that Jean Moreau wanted so badly that sometimes, it ate him from the inside out. He had wanted it at the Nest, as much as he could have, and he wanted it now too even if it meant having it in only a platonic format.

It didn’t matter, really. Jean would take Kevin any way that Kevin would allow it.

It wasn’t that they weren’t friends, but something was missing from their relationship in order to really allow that term to be applied to them. Or rather, Jean hoped the bridge between the two of them would have been completed quicker. He thought that his reveal of his relationship with Jeremy back at Wymack’s wedding would have been enough, or their small trip with the Foxes—but it hadn’t quite closed the gap as Jean was hoping. When Jeremy had suggested at the wedding that they all take a trip, everyone had agreed, but Jean had barely spent any time alone with Kevin.

Kevin called once a week, but their conversations were never long, they were better at sending each other messages. Jean was annoyed that they couldn’t mend their fractured friendship quickly, but just as his physical and emotional relationship with Jeremy, he had to remind himself that these things took time.

Jean sighed and dialed Kevin’s number, putting it to his ear.

Another thing about their relationship, it was extraordinarily rare for Jean to call Kevin first. The fact that he was, he knew would put Kevin in a good mood, and Jean also liked to think it meant he was improving more than he gave himself credit for.

Kevin answered on the second ring, and he sounded like he was mid-laugh. That made Jean’s body lighter, knowing that Kevin was laughing.

“Jean!” he exclaimed, and it was very easy to hear how different Kevin sounded now as opposed to how he did a year and a half ago. In the background, Jean recognized the voice of Nicky Hemmick shouting happily about something, and Matt protesting. It sounded like they were playing a video game. Kevin did as he always did when Jean called and switched to French. “Hello, sorry, one moment, let me just go in my room…” Jean waited patiently until he heard a door shut. “How are you?”

“I’m good,” Jean said softly, leaning against the wall. “I’m good. I actually, I wanted to tell you something.”

“Okay,”

“I told Jeremy last night that I love him.” he felt heat rise up to his cheeks.

Kevin sounded thrilled. “Jean, that’s fantastic!” he then added, “It’s fantastic, right? Are you okay? Did you have a bad dream?” from what Jean understood, Kevin was no stranger to nightmares, even though he had them much less now. Jean would never be comfortable telling his team the
extent of what had happened to him, just as he didn’t feel he could tell Laila this conversation. There were few people Jean kept close to him, and although Noah, Laila and Alvarez got more than others, only Jeremy and Kevin got the rest of him. The real him.

“No bad dreams,” Jean murmured. “I just…I’m glad about it, but I feel as though I can’t share something good with others, even though they would appreciate it. The only person I wanted to tell was you.”

Kevin was quiet for a small moment, before he asked, “Is there a reason?”

“Why I love him?”

“No,” Kevin laughed softly. “Why you wanted to tell me.”

Jean struggled to put his thoughts into words. Normally he didn’t have such troubles, but his relationship with Kevin was nowhere near simple which meant that when he wanted to speak to Kevin it was that much harder to deal with. “We played the Ravens the other day, and we all got injured. I was talking to my teammate about it, and I don’t know…all that talk about injuries and kings…”

“The Ravens can’t hurt you anymore.” By Ravens, Kevin meant Riko but neither of them had to say his name to know that.

“I know.” Jean sighed. “I just…a lot of bad has happened and I suppose I wanted to share something good.”

“Thank you, for sharing that with me.”

“Thank you for wanting to hear it.”

“Kevin,”

“Yes?”

“I got injured,” Jean said into the phone. “I have bruises all over my body, for a game where I disobeyed my captain. Yet none of them were from him. I didn’t think…I really didn’t think I would ever come to this day, where I wouldn’t have to be afraid of someone.”

Kevin understood every word Jean said in a way no one but him ever would. “You know,” Kevin said softly. “I think about you every day. At the beginning, it was painful, thinking of you. Eventually, it got better. Now, I’m glad that the days that follow this when I think of you, I can think to myself, that you are being treated as you should be.”

Jean smiled gently. “You have a lot of love in your heart, Kevin Day. I’m glad to be on the receiving end of it.” He missed him, missed him so much that it tore apart each nerve in his body. There were a million things he wanted to say into the phone, but he knew it wasn’t the time or the place.

Kevin returned the sentiment. “Jeremy is lucky to be on the receiving end of yours Jean.” There was a loud bang from Kevin’s end of the phone. “Oh, for the love of…Jean, I must go, those two complete idiots just broke the lamp.” Except Kevin didn’t sound at all mad about it, which also made Jean smile. They exchanged goodbyes and hung up the phone.

Before tucking his phone away, Jean opened up his notes and smiled to himself as he wrote down a reminder to himself to add to his diary later.
10. *I have not gotten any injuries that are not related to Exy in a year.*

Jean went back inside and sat next to Laila, smiling at her.

This one wasn’t forced.

Laila lowered her voice, as the teacher walked in, but asked, “Are you okay?”

Jean felt ready with his answer, this time,

“Yes.”

Chapter End Notes

hope you guys liked the kevin and jean conversation! this one had a bit to do with my other fic, so for those who didnt read that one, sorry if you were confused!!

also the grades and ages always confuse me--i think by this point, the girls would have graduated, but matt, nicky and kevin would be there with minyards and neil at the school. if not, oh well lmao

drop me a comment with your thoughts and such :) x
hope you guys liked this one. gotta love progress!!!

thank you for the comments, keep them coming please, as they give me energy to write more :) xx

Jean was exhausted.

Practice had kicked their ass the day before, and Jeremy had a really thorough make out session with him right after, which essentially made Jean’s body aching and wanting all at once.

October had rolled around, which didn’t exactly mean the weather in California had dropped considerably, but just enough that Jeremy and Jean were wearing sweaters everywhere they went. Plus, Jeremy liked the dorm to be unholy in its freezing temperature, which meant they were also wearing sweatpants so that they didn’t go around shivering.

The issue with Jeremy wearing sweatpants was that he looked ridiculously good in them, which made Jean want all sorts of things. They were loose, but tight enough around Jeremy’s ass that Jean couldn’t look away. Also, there was just something about Jeremy walking around in them. How when the pants shifted Jean could see the outline of him—

Jean shifted in his chair. He was barely listening to the teacher today. How could he when Jeremy was on his mind like this? When the bell rang it was a saving grace. Jean got out of his seat quickly, throwing his things in his bag and sent a message to Jeremy with his phone.

Are you in the room?

Jeremy’s response took a few minutes, I just finished class, and my other one is canceled. So I’m on my way back now, yeah.

Jean didn’t respond, but hurried to his room anyhow, desire filling him up like he had never known it before. Of course, every time he and Jeremy did something, Jean felt like it was the first time all over again.

When he made it to his room, he was glad to see that Jeremy was already there.

“Hello!” he exclaimed happily, already in his sweatpants and sweater. “How was cl—mmph!” he was cut off by Jean pressing his lips against Jeremy’s hurriedly. Jeremy didn’t protest, he chuckled into the kiss, which was another one of Jean’s favorite things. Their tongues molded to each other, Jean kissing Jeremy harder than he ever did before. Jeremy’s hands were soft against Jean’s body whereas Jean was gripping Jeremy like his life depending on it.

“Hey,” Jeremy pulled back, running his thumb along Jean’s now swollen lip. “What’s going on?” Jean rarely came home in a frenzy like this. He was quieter with what he wanted, taking it after long discussions. It was always Jeremy who was antsy, who tried to hide how badly he needed physical affections by excusing himself or taking long showers. Those moments always made Jean feel bad, but he knew Jeremy would never pressure him or force him and would wait as long as
Jean wanted.

Up until now, they had still just been rutting against each other over their clothes, because the idea of skin on skin was too much for Jean. There were things he still could not do, like blowjobs because his mouth had been bruised almost beyond repair with the hits, and force of other people using his mouth for their pleasure. Jeremy had offered to give one to him, but Jean had turned him down.

Today, was different.

“I want more today,” Jean told him easily.

Jeremy’s eyes were wide, and his voice was doing its best to remain steady. “What do you want?”

“I want to get you off with my hand, and for you to do that to me.” He hoped his voice came out confident. “I can’t be naked, but I don’t mind lowering my pants a little.”

Jeremy swallowed, looking like a deer in headlights. His mouth was twitching, as though he didn’t know if he should grin or not. “Okay. Yes, okay. If you’re sure.”

“I am sure,” Jean promised.

Jeremy nodded and they resumed their kissing. They were standing awkwardly in the middle of the room, so Jean, with his hands on Jeremy’s hips moved him back until they were up against a wall. For a long while, they just kissed. Jeremy was allowing Jean to set the pace, and Jean was grateful for that even though he wanted Jeremy so badly. They kissed until Jeremy had to take a breather, and then Jean kissed Jeremy’s neck, before pulling away and looking down between them.

Neither of them spoke, and Jean was glad for that too. Jeremy usually would have asked Jean if he was okay, but since Jean was still moving, he said nothing.

Jean was determined.

He lowered Jeremy’s pants just an inch, enough to take out Jeremy’s half-hard erection. Jeremy gave a small whine, which made Jean’s heart soar a little, knowing that it took so little to make Jeremy like this. Feeling stupid that he was doing this on his own, he said “Go,” to Jeremy.

Jeremy did the same, lowering Jean’s pants only a little. Jean brought his eyes up to Jeremy for a moment, watching the complete fascination on Jeremy’s face as he took a hold of Jean. It was such a gentle pressure but Jean’s breath hitched, his other hand moving on Jeremy’s shoulder.

“Wait,” Jean breathed, closing his eyes.

Jeremy’s hand shook for a moment before it stilled completely, and Jean’s hand twitched over Jeremy.

_Calm down, Jean told himself, this is Jeremy._

It had been so long since he had been touched there. Never had it been by someone who wouldn’t hurt him. Those emotions overwhelmed him as much as the skin on skin contact did.

“Hey,” Jeremy’s voice was soft. Jean opened his eyes to stare into his. “We can stop.”

Jean shook his head. “I don’t want to.”

“Okay,”
“Just, kiss me,” Jean asked.

Jeremy did just that. They kissed and began to slowly move together, Jean first, enjoying the sound of Jeremy’s gasp so much in his mouth that he wanted more. Jeremy moved easier than Jean did, experience behind him. Jean tried to duplicate it, but then put away his thinking completely and just did what he wanted. He didn’t want to think. He just wanted to feel. Their lips tore away as Jean felt a familiar heat in his belly, and he put his forehead on Jeremy’s shoulder, looking down at their hands moving over each other’s erections.

That sight made Jean fall over the edge. Jeremy’s moans made Jean fall over the edge. Being in Jeremy’s grasp, in his arms, made Jean fall over the edge.

Jeremy came shortly after, and his expression overwhelmed Jean. His mouth hung open and his eyes shut, his thighs shaking.

Oh yes, Jean liked this very much.

It was over quicker than Jean wanted it to be, but he didn’t mind so much. What mattered to him was what he had just chosen to do with Jeremy. They were slowly getting closer, which is what Jean was working towards. He knew that sex didn’t make or break their relationship, but he wanted it because he didn’t want something like that to be ruined forever.

Jean smiled.

Jeremy smiled back. “Let’s get cleaned up.”

They ended up at a Starbucks, and Jeremy was still wearing his stupid sweatpants.

Jean wasn’t doing his homework very well, to say the least. Jeremy was leaning over his books, a pen in his mouth as he tried to figure out whatever was giving him a headache. Jean was taking small sips of his pumpkin spice latte from across him.

Jeremy felt he was being stared at and looked up, frowning. He grabbed his coffee and took a sip of that instead. “That is disgusting,” he said, biting off a piece of his cookie.

“What, this?” he asked, tilting his cup towards him. “You’re dramatic.”

“What?” Jeremy asked, putting a hand on his chest. “Are you joking? I can’t believe you’re even drinking that.”

“You Americans have terrible taste, you can’t be trusted.”

“Oh-ho!” Jeremy said dramatically, and just like that, homework was forgotten. “So is that what you’re doing? You’re pulling the snobby French card on me?”

“I’m definitely not a snob,” Jean said, taking another sip and grinning as he did so. “I just have better taste than you.”

“Oh God, I doubt that.” He offered some of his cookie to Jean who shook his head. “That drink tastes like syrup.”
“As though your tasteless black coffee is so much better, Jer. At least mine tastes like something.”

“Yeah, like shit.”

“No, see, you’re getting mixed up with your coffee.”

Jeremy laughed. “You are such a shit when you want to be.” He wagged his finger at Jean. “This is what happens when you spend too much time with Noah.”

“Noah isn’t the issue, your bad taste is, let’s not forget that.” Jean grinned as Jeremy laughed again, a laugh that made other people notice them, and Jean was glad for that too. He wanted to make sure people knew just how in love he was. He wanted the entire world to hear Jeremy’s laughter and see Jean’s smile.

Jean took out his diary from his bag and lay it on the table, motioning for Jeremy to lean forward. When he did, Jean wrote down with a smile,

11. pumpkin spice lattes (especially because Jeremy hates them)

Jeremy took Jean’s pen and added in the margins, in his own silky handwriting, you're a little shit.

Jean smiled, and Jeremy kissed him.
The Trojan team was out for dinner, and as usual, they were all picking on Noah. Jean was sure Noah didn’t mind because he laughed easily with everything and often encouraged the poking fun. Except ever since the farm, Jean wondered if Noah did this for validation or if he actually enjoyed it. Currently, they were all eating at one of Jeremy’s favourite vegan restaurants. It was not often that they went there, but since it was Jeremy’s birthday, it meant that he got to choose the restaurant. Unlike Jean who was not a fan of birthdays, Jeremy loved them. He liked celebrating with the people he loved, and Jean wanted to make sure it was extra special for him since he couldn’t go home to see his parents as exams were nearing and they had important Exy games to play. So all free time had to go into practicing.

Laila and Alvarez were sitting opposite Jeremy and Jean, while Noah had grabbed the spot right next to Jean. Jean thought it was safe to say that Noah considered Jean to be his best friend. Jean’s best friend, he assumed in ways was Kevin, but in many other different ways was also Noah. He didn’t know if he should feel bad about it, or if Jeremy was supposed to be his only best friend, but Jeremy assured him that it was good for Jean to have best friends apart from Jeremy himself. Jeremy’s best friends were Alvarez and Laila, and he told Jean it made him glad to see him and Noah become closer and spending more time together.

Noah needed joy.

Jean wondered what Noah’s joy would be.

“I like it,” Noah grinned at Max who was sitting towards the end of the table, another one of their players. He motioned to his newly blonde died hair, which he had also decided to keep short now. “I think it matches my bright and sunny personality.”

Jean thought that was ironic since Noah was a person who ached a lot for validation.

Max said back, “I just find it hilarious that you dyed your hair because of an anime character.”

Jeremy chuckled and put another piece of potato in his mouth. “Hey, don’t be rude. I did the same thing.”

Alvarez laughed loudly. “Are you kidding me? I didn’t know that.”

Noah and Jeremy high fived, while Jeremy explained, “There’s this show called Bleach, and the main guy Kurosaki Ichigo is this intense badass, and his hair is super orange which is why I dyed mine that color.”

Noah grinned in response. “That show is epic. I did mine blonde because of Naruto.”

“God,” Laila chuckled. “I can’t believe you two watch anime.”

“Hey, don’t diss,” Noah said. “Cap showed me a bunch of amazing sports anime.”

Jean mumbled into his water, “My life is a sports anime.”
“I’ll figure you mean that as a compliment.”

Another girl on the team, Jess, threw her long brown hair over her shoulder. “We wouldn’t be the Trojans if our Captain was like every other. I think it’s cute that you watch anime, Jeremy.”

Jeremy bumped knuckles with her. “Finally, someone with a brain.”

“Hey,” Noah frowned. “What about me?”

“You too, I guess.”

“Hey!”

Laila grinned across at Jess. Jess glared back at her, but in the kind of way that wasn’t so much threatening as it was ‘don’t even think about saying that’. Jean looked at her, and then looked at Noah, and found that for a lot of the night as it proceeded Jess looked at Noah almost wistfully.

Oh.

“I have to go to the bathroom,” Jean announced. It was not uncommon for Jeremy to follow him, mostly because Jean still didn’t like going places alone. That was a habit that had been ingrained into him for years upon years, it was a habit he knew Kevin didn’t break easily either. Though it was less conscious about it than Jean, Kevin still found comfort in being around people, which was one of the reasons why he had always stuck to Andrew before Matt. Like Jean, the exception was often in the confinements of his own room or walking to and from class—and even then, Jeremy often accompanied him anyhow.

This time, he asked Noah to follow him. Jeremy looked surprised but didn’t say anything and Noah got up eagerly, always ready to be a helping hand.

“Hey,” Jean said, pulling him behind a pillar. “I think Jess likes you.”

Noah looked dumbfounded. “This isn’t the bathroom.” He said stupidly.

“Oh, good going genius. Did you hear what I said?”

“Oh, good going genius. Did you hear what I said?”

“No.”

“I already knew,” Noah shrugged.

“What?” Jean asked, leaning back. “I’m surprised. She seems like she’s your type.”

Noah shrugged again and avoided Jean’s gaze, which was not something that happened often. Noah never had trouble saying what was on his mind. Jean didn’t want to push him, but he did for Noah what everyone had done for him a million times before.

“Hey,” Jean didn’t know how good he was at being comforting, but he did his best. He put a hand on Noah’s shoulder. “What is it?”

Noah looked up at him and smiled sadly. “I like her too. I just don’t think I’m good enough to be in a relationship with her yet. We’ve talked about it, I’m making her wait.”

Well, Jean knew all about that. “If she understands, that’s okay.”
“I know,” Noah ran a hand through his hair. “It sucks, I want to be with her, I just…there’s some things I have to do first. I don’t know. I don’t know if it’s because love isn’t enough or if because I’m not enough.”

“A lot of people don’t need romantic love to complete their life.”

Noah elbowed him lightly, playfully. “Not like you, eh?”

“Ashole, you know what I mean.”

“Yeah,” Noah wound his arm through Jean who rolled his eyes. “I just have to change the world a little, before I get tied down.”

Jean stared at him hard, stopping them from walking back. Noah turned to look at him. “You could change the world with a person. What is it you’re not saying?”

Noah sighed. “Jess likes the idea of me, not really me. I really like her, not the idea of her.”

“You’re underestimating her, I think.”

“How do you know?” Noah asked. “No offense buddy but you don’t really talk a lot with her.”

“No,” he agreed. “But I know enough about this team to know you should place greater faith in her. I gave my game, my back, my injured body to all of you, including her. All of you helped put me back together, some more than others, but all of you just the same. Whatever it is, be honest with her. Nothing else will work if you don’t do that.”

Noah looked stunned, but then he smiled lightly. “Thanks, man,”

Jean nodded. “Of course. By the way, I think the blonde hair looks nice.”

His smile widened. “I knew you were the smart one!”

They walked back to the table, Jean returning to his plate. Jeremy was talking adamantly with the other goalkeeper Fatima about the upcoming Marvel films and DC films. If this team had its way, Jean thought, they would all be in the business of movies and shows. They talked less about Exy the more Jean spent time with them as a whole, and he suspected that was for a good reason. Jeremy had said more than once that Exy was fun to play, and he wouldn’t mind going pro—and that he actually wanted to go pro, but it was not his life. His family, his friends, and Jean was. Jean felt the same. He had to play Exy, but he was learning that there were a bunch of other things worth his time as well.

Ever since the farm, he was reading books again eagerly. He caught up on series that had been made into films, classic books that he never got around to reading, books by local authors, and books that he wouldn’t have otherwise read.

Jean thought he might want to write a book one day. Maybe something about a superhero. That’s what his team was, he realized, full of different kinds of heroes. They did their best to give good to the world, were good people, happy and excited and played a game the way it should be played, and helped everyone they could in the ways that they could.

Alvarez was getting heated up in the discussion. “I can’t believe what I’m hearing. Batman invented being a badass, are you insane?”

Fatima sighed in exaggeration, fixing their cap in annoyance. “You can’t believe me? You just said
Batman would win against Wolverine in a fight!”

Jeremy laughed. “Seriously Al,” he shook his head at her. “Have you seen Logan fight? Batman may have gadgets but he’s nothing compared to The Wolverine.”

Laila who was not interested in comics very much said, “Why does it matter, don’t they never meet anyway?”

Max said from his spot, “If we didn’t argue about crossovers, there’s really no point.”

Fatima said loudly, “Not that it matters anyway because if you’re not team Superman I don’t know what to tell you.”

Alvarez looked shell-shocked. “Superman? God, he’s such a goodie—”

“Don’t even think about finishing that sentence!”

Jess snorted. “I don’t read the comics, or whatever, but I can tell you all this. The best heroes are Bucky Barnes and Steve Rogers,” Noah got up from his seat to shout his approval loudly over all their heads, and Jessica beamed at them.

“Sit down!” Jean told him. “Jesus, you’re so loud.”

“And proud.”

There was a quieter person on the team, Brian who got Jean’s attention and asked, “Do you have a favorite, Jean?”

“Superhero?” Jean asked. “I don’t know. Cyclops, maybe.” Jean wasn’t too into comics, but he watched all the movies with Jeremy who was religious about them and preferred the X-Men to the Avengers or the Justice League. “He’s a good person, doing his best. His power is nothing spectacular, but his personality is, I feel, better than the others. He has morals, and does his best for people.” He looked over at Jeremy and said, “He reminds me of you, which is why I think I like him so much. He is a leader, not the strongest, but the one that the team needs.”

The whole team said the obligatory ‘awwww’ but Jeremy was looking at Jean as though the rest of the team wasn’t there, with such a tender expression. “That’s very sweet.”

“That’s my way of saying happy birthday, I think.” Jean grinned. “Since I didn’t write you a card.”

Jeremy chuckled and leaned forward kissing him softly, the team whooping in response. “Does that make you my Jean Grey?”

“That works, she’s insanely powerful.”

“And hot,” Laila said. Alvarez nodded in agreement.

Noah continued the conversation about the X-Men, adding, “I like Wolverine. He kind of takes in all the strays. A father without being a father.” He smiled lightly, and Jean felt his heart go out to Noah. “Actually, um,” he looked around the table grinning. “I actually enrolled in those big brother programs.”

Brian was the first one who spoke—he was known on the team for contributing to a number of charities. He was the kind of person who believed every single person could change the world, something Jean doubted on his bad days, but something Brian believed enough for all of them.
“Noah, that’s a wonderful thing to do.”

“Yeah,” Noah grinned, and Jean watched Jess look at him with such a soft expression. “I think kids need older people to look up to sometimes. I may not be the smartest or whatever, but it’s something I can do.”

Brian nodded. “I’m very proud of you.”

“Thanks, shorty.”

“Hey—”

Jean chuckled, turning away and engaging in conversation elsewhere, deciding to speak a lot to Jess, getting to know her better. The dinner lasted for another hour, the waiters joining the table in singing happy birthday to Jeremy, who took the icing on the cake with his index finger and smeared it on Jean’s nose. When they would return home that evening, Jean would give a hot make-out session amongst other things to Jeremy as a birthday present (along with his actual birthday present, which was all three Thor films on DVD) and then would write the next entry in his diary.

12. the trojans

Chapter End Notes

i hope youre all enjoying the pace of these kinds of chapters. nothing important is happening kind of, but in other ways this is what is important. the every day little things that make jean realize he wants to stay alive. there will be talk soon about how jean used to feel, and how he has come through, and part of it might be touched upon next chapter in which...

the foxes pay a visit!!!! trojans vs foxes!!

xx
Between the games, the Trojans and the Foxes had decided to have a practice together. It was not something that was common, but Jeremy and Kevin apparently had a conversation on the phone that allowed them to believe their teams could both learn from each other. The Foxes had changed only in that the three girls who had been with them were gone now, replaced with a younger generation. Beyond that, they were the same.

Jean had little patience for half the team, but he was more than glad to see Kevin Day.

In the end, Jeremy and Kevin were not wrong, really.

Their practice, in many ways, had been an absolute mess, mostly because the Minyard twins were insufferable with anyone who wasn’t directly close to them. Their team had someone named Jack and Sheena who blew their mouths off enough that it even started to get Jeremy annoyed, but as a whole, once they passed the halfway point of the practice, they were actually working well together. They had only managed to have the practice because it was winter break, and Kevin and Matt weren’t going back to New York, and apparently, the prospect of California sounded a lot better than going home. The only addition to their crew beyond the Foxes, was Erik, Nicky’s boyfriend and Katelyn, Aaron’s girlfriend.

Jean and Kevin practicing friendly with each other was like a breath of fresh air. Jean had been more than nervous about it to begin with, but as it turned out they needed this practice more than anything. Towards the very end of it, the court turned into something of a battle just between the two of them, and everyone just stood to the sidelined and watched. Of course, no one could beat Kevin Day, not really, but if anyone could match him it was Jean Moreau. They played with muscle memory, their bodies moving against each other so nicely it was as though it was choreographed. They only stopped the practice and their little game against each other when their sticks clashed in front of their faces like swords, and after realizing neither of them would back down, Kevin grinned and let his racquet fall.

This had been the Foxes’ welcoming. They hadn’t met before the practice to spend time together. That was for later. The best way to greet a team like the Foxes was to greet them with Exy.

“Kevin Day,” Jean said, allowing his racquet to fall to the ground.

Kevin smiled wider. His hand was scared still, but Kevin didn’t look like the man he used to be. He was glowing. “Jean Moreau,” and with a nod from Jean, they embraced. Jean was not one for public physical displays of affection, but somehow, for some reason, this one felt too important to pass up.

Being surrounded by Kevin’s body like this was familiar, and everything Jean needed. It was very different from being hugged by Jeremy because this one was from a different home, a place where they were each other’s only safety. When they pulled apart, Jeremy walked up to them, the next to pull Kevin Day in a hug.

“Welcome to my court, my friend,” when they pulled apart, Jean chuckled at Kevin’s face. He had a very soft spot for Jeremy Knox. Jean knew that Kevin used to have a crush on him, and also knew that even though he was hopelessly in love with Matt, Jeremy would always be his favorite
player.

It made Jean very proud.

“You dyed your hair,” Kevin said, touching the tips of Jeremy’s hair.

“A little, you can see the dark blonde better in the sunlight.” He put his hands on Kevin’s shoulders and stood back. “You look well.”

“So do you.”

Jeremy put one arm around Kevin, and another around Jean and shouted to his team. “Everyone shower! We’ll all meet…uh…” he looked around for help, remembering that their rooms weren’t exactly big enough for all of them.

Kevin told him quietly, “The young ones won’t hang out with us. They already decided to tour.”

Jeremy nodded. “Alright, well, whoever feels like eating with us, can follow Jean and me to our room afterwards! We’ll do take in.” he looked at Kevin fondly. “How do you feel about pizza?”

“Vegan?”

“Duh.”

“Then great.” And he high fived Jeremy, and Jean’s heart swelled.

Jeremy did what he knew Jean would want and let him walk with Kevin alone. Instead, Jeremy jogged towards Matt, clapping him on the shoulder and waving at Neil who was nearby. Jean watched him for a small moment, but he and Kevin both let the team walk a bit ahead of them before they went to get their things, talking to each other softly.

“You look good,” Kevin told him with a tiny smile. “Healthy.”

Jean would have felt uncomfortable with that comment from anyone else, as he had with Jeremy’s parents, but this was not just anyone. “You look good too. You look the same, but different.”

Kevin nodded, understanding what Jean was saying. “I am different now. I’m very, very happy.” He looked at Matt’s back fondly from in front of him. “I have everything I want. Do you?” he asked, and Kevin looked between their hands but hesitated.

From what Jean understood from their texts and phone calls, was that Kevin had become very good at accepting physical intimacy whether it was platonic or romantic. He and Nicky Hemmick, in particular, thrived on platonic things such as hand-holding. Jean suspected that’s what Kevin was asking for now.

Jean gave it to him.

When their fingers laced together, Jean released a breath he didn’t know he was holding and Kevin smiled so angelically that Jean remembered why he had fallen in love with him at the Nest.

“Almost,” Jean said. “I almost do. It’s strange. I don’t know what it is that I am missing for everything to fall into place. I’m happy, but something is just…missing.”

“Is everything okay with Jean?” Kevin asked.

“More than okay.”
Kevin nodded. “You’ll find it. Whatever it is.”

“When did you know that you were okay?”

“My God,” he sighed, shrugging. “It happened slowly, you know? When all my relationships were mended, I mean, they’re still not perfect, at all, but I guess, knowing that I would eventually fix things with everyone was when I was able to get better.”

Jean sighed in annoyance. “I only have you to fix a relationship with.”

Kevin frowned. “Have you let go of Riko?”

“Of course,”

Kevin looked at him. “Have you really?”

Jean contemplated. He still had occasional nightmares, and sometimes the days were bad, but he had made a lot of progress. But Jean wondered if letting go meant everything had to be gone. Maybe he hadn’t let go as much as he had thought. He didn’t care that Riko was dead, but the hurt was still there, and until it was gone, Jean could be happy, but not happy in the way Kevin was. Jean wanted that more than anything.

“Hey,” Jean said, ignoring Kevin’s question. “What do you think about the word joy?”

Kevin contemplated that for a small moment. “Well,” he sighed. “I think joy is when you are at peace with who you are, and where you are.”

“Have you found that, then?”

“I like to think so. Life isn’t easy, I’m not naïve. However, I’ve also experienced enough darkness to know the difference between how I was and how I am. Happiness is a burst of emotions, which can fade. Joy is in here.” He pressed his hand to his heart. “Where I can look at my hand without flinching. Where I can say my nightmares have faded. Where I can hold Matt, my team, my father, and you.”

Jean stopped walking, and because he was holding Kevin’s hand, Kevin stopped with him.

“Kevin…”

“You don’t have to say anything,” Kevin shook his head. “You don’t even have to return the sentiment. People heal at their own paces, Jean.”

Jean looked at this person who he had come to know for so long now and was shocked by how different Kevin was. This was someone who was standing on his own two feet, who was his own person even though he had other people behind him to help. He was complete, and whole, and happy and smiling. Kevin Day was not known for smiling so much.

Jean smiled lightly. “I’m glad for you Kevin.”

Kevin nodded. “Thank you. Come on, let’s go shower. Our boyfriends are probably already done and waiting impatiently.”

Jean followed and chuckled because it was likely true. “Us with boyfriends, who would have thought?”

“We have come a long way, Moreau.”
“Indeed we have, Day.”

“Jesus Christ!” Matt exclaimed. “I can’t fucking believe we’re having this discussion.”

They were all sitting around in Jean and Jeremy’s room. Of the Foxes, the Minyards, Neil, Matt, Nicky, and Kevin were all present, and of the Trojans, Noah, Laila, Alvarez and Jess were there. Since it was winter break, and since the Foxes would be leaving, a lot of the Trojans had left after practice to spend it with their families. Laila, Alvarez, Jess and Katelyn were on one couch, Nicky and Erik sharing a one-seater—Nicky’s long, slim body relaxed over Erik’s. The rest of them were on the floor—Aaron sitting against Katelyn’s legs, Andrew and Neil closer to Nicky and Erik, with Jeremy and Jean sort of in the middle of it all with Noah lying on his back on the floor.

Kevin was looking smug by Matt, leaving the crust of his pizza on his paper plate, and leaning into Matt who sat behind him. Matt was against the wall, his legs open nicely for Kevin to sit between.

“I told you, idiot.” He said and turned his face so he could kiss Matt’s jaw.

“I’m being attacked!” Matt said in disbelief.

“Nah man,” Noah turned over on his stomach, grabbing a pillow that Jess threw at him to tuck underneath his chin. “I’m with you. Fast and the furious are classic films.”

“Jesus Christ thank you.”

Alvarez nodded. “I can’t believe I’m agreeing with Noah, but I do enjoy them.” Noah blew her a kiss, and she flipped him off.

Jess crossed one leg over the other, grinning. “Those movies have terrible acting.”

Matt sighed dramatically. “That’s the point, oh my God.”

Nicky, from where he sat, threw an arm over his eyes, being even more dramatic than Matt. “God, for how many years are we going to continue having this conversation?”

“Until I get the respect I deserve.”

Aaron mumbled, “Good luck with that,” but from what Jean was coming to understand (from Kevin’s calls) was that Aaron’s remarks were becoming less hateful, and more sarcastic, and Kevin was working to get it down to a lower level beyond that.

“Can we change the subject?” Andrew asked, his tone bored. “We talk about this stupid movie franchise every damn day.” Jean was surprised that he was here in this room at all, participating, even if it was in a bored tone. But apparently, Neil was working on him too.

“I can’t believe the classics aren’t appreciated in their own time.”

Jess smiled brightly at him. “Look at it this way, Matt, classics become classics after their time. So there’s hope for you yet!” she exclaimed, and Matt smiled back at her.

“I like the way you think, girl.”
“Why, thank you.”

Kevin leaned his head against Matt’s shoulder, who wrapped his arms so casually around Kevin. Jean ached, and Jeremy must have sensed it, because he reached out and took Jean’s hand, holding it tightly and placing it in his lap.

“Well,” Kevin said, changing the flow of the conversation. “I’m hoping we meet you at finals.”

Finally, a sentence that suited all of them. Jean was confident in his abilities as much as Kevin was.

“You will, don’t doubt us.”

Andrew snorted from where he sat. “I think Kevin has more faith in the Trojans than he does in his own team.”

Kevin threw him a dirty look. “I believe in both.”

Nicky grinned, his smile lopsided. “I have to take Andrew’s side on that one buddy, sometimes I actually wonder who you would rather have win.” He laughed.

Erik Klose’s voice was calm. “I don’t know terribly much about Exy, but I enjoy the games. I feel as though watching you all go against each other in the finals would be the most interesting.”

“We did it last year.” Neil looked at Jeremy. “We won, remember?”

Jeremy smiled at him. “Don’t fret Neil Josten, that won’t happen again.”

Laila looked over at Katelyn. “What about you, honey? What do you think?”

Katelyn patted Aaron’s hair affectionately, but Jean did not miss the look Andrew sent the both of them. “I will always support the Foxes.”

Laila laughed softly “That’s not what I asked.” When Katelyn blushed from being caught, Aaron turned on her and exclaimed (mostly in fake hurt) that he was shocked she would betray the Foxes like that. Laila came to her defense quickly without helping the situation at all by adding, “She just knows real talent when she sees it!”

“Real talent?” Aaron scoffed.

Alvarez slipped an arm around Laila. “You bet.”

Jeremy was actually the one who disagreed. “Well, we all have talent. But the only one here with anything real is the queen,” he sent a look toward Kevin, who beamed at him.

Matt chuckled. “God, his head is already big enough Jeremy, don’t add to it.”

Nicky shouted, “That’s what she said!”

Erik responded quietly. “How is that what she said?”

“Language barrier,” Nicky waved his hand in dismissal, making Erik chuckle and shake his head.

Neil, ever the realist about all things Exy said, “Well, Jeremy isn’t wrong in a way. We’re all very good in different ways, but Kevin is the best out of all of us.”

Matt groaned, his mouth tilting into a smile that he was trying to hide. “God, this is definitely feeding into his praise ki—”
“Matt!” Kevin exclaimed, clamping a hand over his mouth.

Alvarez’ eyes went wide and she smiled. “The legend has a praise kink?”

Kevin glared at Matt, but Jean could see from here, there was nothing mean about his gaze. “I do not.”

“Oh you do too.” Matt took Kevin’s hand away from his mouth.

Jeremy brought Jean’s hand up to his mouth and kissed it tenderly, grabbing the attention of many people in the room—even Noah, who always had some trouble paying attention. “My kink—”

Jean frowned. “I hate that word.”

“Would you let me finish my sentence?” Jeremy sighed, and looked at Jean with a terribly loving expression. “My ki—fine my turn on, is soft love, adoration and trust.”

Jean was moved immensely by the sentiment, knowing probably that Jean didn’t know how to interact in conversations that spoke about sex so freely. He smiled back and his thumb brushed Jeremy’s chin, as it was still by his face, and Jeremy smiled wider still.

Until a pillow hit Jeremy in the face, the room erupting in laughter. Noah shouted, “Jeremy Knox, the world’s biggest sap!”

Jess shook her head. “I think it’s romantic.”

Jeremy shot the pillow back at Noah, who shoved it under his chin again. “Well that’s what happens when you date a Frenchman.”

Noah snorted. “That makes no sense, bro.”

Jeremy shrugged, and looked back at Jean. Jean leaned closer to him, their shoulders bumping together, closing the space between them. Conversation flowed easy again, Jean choosing to observe rather than participate, his eyes once and a while going between Jeremy to Kevin Day.

He had never seen Kevin look so free with himself, in the arms of someone he loved, no tension in his shoulders, an easy smile on his face, laughing happily at something Matt was saying.

More than once throughout the night, Kevin would catch Jean’s eye and wink at him, and Jean would smile and something would flutter in his chest. A little bit more of that joy.

In his head, he made a mental note for his diary:

13. *Kevin Day and I are slowly becoming friends once more*

Chapter End Notes

i hope you liked that chapter :) it was fun to write, even though they didnt all spend a lot of time together, i liked the first part with kevin and jean

for those of you confused, im sorry lol, this takes place after another fic i wrote, and so
it bled into this fic now.

thank you for the comments thus far, please keep them coming! i know i dont reply, because theres a lot and i feel bad only answering to a few and not others, so if you want to talk to me somewhere where i will guaranteed reply you can find me on

twitter: mycoveriscas
tumblr: juliansalec
Renee called right on schedule.

Jean didn’t realize that it was her though, despite the fact that every three days at the same time, she called. He only hadn’t realized it because he had been doing homework, so when he picked up his phone, he was tired and annoyed.

“Hello?”

Renee Walker’s voice was a very lovely sound, like wind chimes; musical and otherworldly. It immediately relaxed Jean’s pose, “Hello Jean,”

“Renee, hello, sorry,” he sighed, throwing his pen down on his book. He got up from the floor, stretching himself out and walked over to the couch, throwing himself on and laying comfortably on it. “I’m doing homework, and it’s just an absolute nightmare.”

“Would you like me to call you back?” she asked sweetly.

“No, I could use the break, really.”

“How are you?”

Jean sighed. When Renee asked about Jean, she was never asking in the normal way that people asked but didn’t really care. She was very much like Jeremy. When she asked how someone was doing, she wanted to truly know about their well-being because she genuinely cared.

“I’m okay,” he mumbled. “I’ve been a bit annoyed and testy lately, but it’s all because of school. It’s driving me insane.” Since he had just been living that nightmare he said quickly, “Tell me about you, what’s going on?”

Renee sighed also, and Jean heard the small dip in her tone. She also sounded very tired. “Well, we’re all trying to decide what to do. Our year off is going to come to an end eventually, and we all have to get jobs. Not that we don’t want one, but I don’t know if I should be doing that.”

“What do you mean?”

“I was thinking about the Peace Corps,” she admitted, and from the way she spoke, Jean figured she hadn’t told anyone about this yet. “But, that means I’ll be gone from Allison and Dan for quite some time. I don’t know about it, I suppose. What do you think?”

Again, like other people, she didn’t ask out of habit and then choose to do what she wanted anyway. If Renee was asking for an opinion, that was because she was asking for help—something Renee did not often ask for. As far as Jean knew, she was more than capable of taking care of herself. This, however, wasn’t a physical thing she could protect herself from. This was something she wanted to do which meant she might be apart from the people that she loved. It was something very difficult to deal with.

“I think that Allison and Dan are the kinds of people who would not appreciate being the reasons why you are not doing something that you want to do.” He cringed at his own sentence, not liking
the way it sounded. Sometimes his tongue ran away from him when he was trying to explain something, but Renee seemed to understand what he was trying to say just fine.

Renee chuckled from the other end. He imagined her nodding her head and giving him that smile that he liked, the sweet, almost shy one. “You are definitely right about that.”

“I think they would encourage you.”

“I know.”

“That’s one of the problems, isn’t it?”

“It is,”

So often it was Jean talking to Renee about his problems and his recovery, it felt good to talk about Renee. Not that he liked that Renee was having issues, but he was glad that she felt that she could turn to him for help. “You can say it.”

She sighed again. “I am afraid to leave them.”

“Because…”

“We all finally have families,” she sounded exasperated. “Everyone has finally got what they wanted, including the three of us. We have something so good going. If I leave…”

“If you leave,” Jean said easily. “They will be waiting for you when you come back. Nothing will change.”

“Are you sure?”

“If there’s anything I’ve learned about all these strange people that you and Kevin have thrown in my face the past two years, it’s that they are unfailing. That includes you. They will not leave you because they will be waiting for you. It will be tough, and you’ll probably even get lonely, but I do not think that means that your relationship will change.”

“My, my,” Renee laughed from the other side. “When did you get so wise?”

“It’s Jeremy, probably,” Jean chuckled. “His good moods are finally rubbing off on me.”

“I don’t think so. I think you’ve changed because you want to change.”

Jean shrugged. “Maybe it’s both.”

“Maybe,” she agreed. “How is he?”

“Jeremy? He’s Jeremy. Same as ever. As happy and bright as the sun.”

“It makes sense that he comes from a place like California. You two…you’re the sun and the moon.”

“Yes,” Jean responded. “I often feel like that myself. It used to depress me, but I suppose you can’t have one without the other.”

“Very true. I think, with all these relationships I’ve seen evolving around me, it seems none of us can exist without the other. Or rather, we can exist, but not really live.”
Jean pondered that before asking, “Is it so wrong to depend on other people?”

“I don’t think so. None of us have made it our sole reason to continue on. We’ve all chosen to get back up because those people have given us reasons, but we take the rest of the steps with them by our side, as equals. Not as someone dragging us against our own accord.”

Jean, who didn’t want this conversation to take a deep or depressing turn, jokingly said, “Lucky you, you have two people to help with that.”

Renee laughed softly in response. “It’s true, I did get the good end, better than others.”

“I’ll say.”

“Well,” Renee sighed. “I should get going.”

“Yeah,” Jean said, smiling as he spoke. “Thanks for the call.”

“You know,” she said, her voice quiet again. “I won’t be able to call much, maybe, when I’m there.”

Jean wasn’t as sad as he expected to be. Of course, Renee had been vital to his recovery. In all honesty, she saved his life by getting him out of the Nest and with the Foxes. He owed her. It was true though, now, it was not so much that she was dragging him, but walking alongside him as an equal. A partner.

“You can write me,”

“That sounds nice.” She murmured.

“Renee,”

“Yes?”

Jean told her the same thing she had been saying to him, every conversation they had been having on the phone since he had come to California. “Everything will be okay.” He closed his eyes, overwhelmed with exhaustion—mostly from homework, but also how intense this conversation had been without really being intense at all.

“Thank you, Jean.”

“You’re welcome. I’ll speak to you in three days.”

“Three days.” She agreed, and they hung up.

Jean let his phone drop to his chest, his eyes heavy and closing, bringing him under. His last thought before he let sleep take him was,

14. Renee calls every three days

Chapter End Notes

im sorry this one was short--im studying for an exam but really wanted to get something out anyhow.
Four days ago, Jean and Jeremy had gone to a florist.

They were going because Jess, who was a drama major was going to be in a play that evening, and she insisted that everyone should bring her flowers, otherwise there was simply no point of them coming. She said it as a joke, but Jeremy was terrified of her enough that he had insisted that he and Jean go together to get her a bouquet of roses.

Jean had never been interested in florals really, but he had tagged along anyhow. It was better than spending the day alone in the dorm, with nothing to do and no one to talk to. It was a tiny place, just about twenty minutes away from their campus from walking, but the windy weather had not been desirable that day, which resulted in Jeremy and Jean taking a bus rather than walking.

The florist shop, of course, had a very distinct and potent smell as soon as they walked in. Behind the counter were wreaths that you could have customized with a message, and there was a backroom that Jean could not see very well. There were fridges lined up against the walls that were see-through, with certain flowers inside. Right over the counter on the low ceiling was a cross, with a rosary dangling from it.

Jean stared at it. He had no idea how he felt about God. Then he looked away and grabbed Jeremy’s hand to make himself feel better.

“Hello,” the old woman said from behind the counter. Jean, who always suspected everyone to have a problem with his sexuality, tensed, but she didn’t bat an eye at their twined hands. “How can I help you?”

“Hi!” Jeremy grinned. “I’m actually just here to get some roses for my friend. She’s in a play, and she’s going to throw an absolute fit if I don’t get her anything.”

“Sure thing honey. Just red roses?”

“No, I think I’ll leave that to Noah…” he mumbled, looking around him.

The old woman obviously had no idea who Noah was, but she continued talking as though she did. “Would you like your color to symbolize something?” When Jeremy nodded, he pulled Jean along with him, enjoying his observances as they walked towards the roses. “She’s in a play, you said?”

“Yeah,” Jeremy nodded, leaning down to smell some of the roses.

Jean quickly took out his phone with his free hand and snapped a picture. When that got the attention of both of them, his cheeks heated and he mumbled, “Sorry…”

Jeremy didn’t look like he was bothered, he smiled grandly, and even the old woman said, “Don’t bother honey. Love is the most beautiful thing in the whole world. I know that better than anyone.” She showed him her wedding ring. “It’s the only thing that lasts, even when someone is gone.”

Jean bowed his head lightly, “I’m sorry for your loss.”

“Thank you.” she patted his shoulder affectionately, which was a reach for her considering she was
half of Jean’s height. “He was a good man too, ran this place much better than I do.”

Jeremy smiled at her warmly. “I doubt that.”

“You’re sweet honey,” she chuckled. “Well, I think yellow roses might be the way to go for you.” she motioned to them. “In Victorian times it meant jealousy, but nowadays it has to do with friendship and joy.”

There was that word again. Joy.

Jeremy brought up his and Jean’s hand to scratch the side of his nose before he said, “I’ll take a dozen!” kissing Jean’s knuckles, letting them fall between their bodies again.

“I’ll go prepare that for you,” she said kindly. “Have a look around, I’ll be a few minutes.”

“Thanks!”

She walked away, and Jeremy and Jean began to walk around aimlessly. Jean’s eyes moved over each flower without much interest, until he nearly bumped into a long-standing vase with an interesting looking flower coming from it. It was a rather large flower, with six massive petals protruding from it, with the roots (Jean didn’t really know if they were roots, but he didn’t have a better word for it) coming out long from the center of the flower. They were a brilliant white, so white that it felt like it was bursting through his eyes.

He leaned down, and though the smell was not very potent, it was almost creamy. It relaxed him, reminded him of vanilla even though it smelt nothing like vanilla.

“So you like the lilies?” the old woman surprised him, making him jump back.

Jeremy chuckled. “He must have. He doesn’t get surprised very easily.”

Jean shot him a look, but Jeremy just smiled back. “They’re quite beautiful,” he acknowledged, looking at her. “Are these not suitable for a friend’s play?”

The old woman touched one of the petals. “Not really honey. They mean a lot of things, but they’re known now for funerals. They do mean friendship as well, but most of the time they’re for sympathy.”

“Oh,” he mumbled, crestfallen.

“They say that a lily is the symbolization of the soul, departing and that when it goes to heaven, it is pure and innocent once more.”

Jean felt his body tense again, and Jeremy must have felt it in the grip of their hands, because he moved closer, pressing the side of his face against Jean’s shoulder. Jean almost let his head drop on Jeremy’s head, but since they were in public he just took this physical affection and held it deep in his heart.

“Is that the only way then?” he asked her. “Can a soul only be okay, once it passes?”

The old woman must have seen something in Jean’s face that he didn’t know he was expressing because she smiled so softly at him that it pulled at Jean’s heartstrings. “You see that?” she pointed to the cross, but Jean didn’t look at it, he only nodded. “For me, that’s what makes my soul okay. I pray every night before I go to bed, I pray to God, my husband, all my people up there. I know my soul will be okay because I have faith.”
“I don’t think I have that…” Jean told her.

“You don’t need it. Everyone has different things, honey. This boy, right here,” she patted Jeremy’s chest, who beamed at her. “He’s looking at you like he’s never seen anything as pretty as you in his whole life. You chose the one flower in here that has to do with a pure soul. It means you’re healing, honey, and your soul is going to be just fine.”

“How do you know all that from just a flower?”

“Because good people always have a good soul.”

Jean smiled sadly. “How do you know if I’m a good person?”

“I don’t think your boy here would be hanging off your arm like that if you weren’t.”

When Jean looked at Jeremy, Jeremy grinned and reached up to kiss his nose. Jean let out a chuckle, and Jeremy said to the old woman, “We’ll take one lily too.”

That was four days ago.

When Jean walked into his dorm in the present, he stopped in his tracks.

“Um, Jeremy?”

The dorm was completely filled with lilies. There was not a safe space to move freely, it had to be strategically and carefully so as not to knock over any of the vases, or bowls (because some of them had been cut so close to the flower that he had them floating in bowls of water). Although they didn’t have a potent smell, since the entire room was filled with them, the smell hit Jean like a brick. It was not unpleasant, and so he smiled.

That’s what he would write later, he thought;

15. *I have come to realize I like the smell of lilies. My dorm with Jeremy is filled with them now. He took it a little out of hand. I smiled.*

Jeremy came out of his room, grinning like he always was.

“What do you think?”

“Did you buy the flower shop?” Jean asked, closing the door and dropping his bag on the floor.

Jeremy chuckled, coming over to kiss him hello. It was soft, as usual, but there was something different with Jeremy’s lips this time. Something hungry and eager. “I just wanted to do something nice.”

“And?” he asked, pulling back, looking at him with a raised eyebrow.

Jeremy sighed and pulled Jean down to the couch with him. “And I wanted to ask you something.”

“Okay,” he said.

Jeremy smiled tenderly and took a lily, brushing back Jean’s hair and placing it behind his ear. Jean smiled softly, and Jeremy’s smile expanded so much that it took over his whole face. “You can say no to me, okay? I’m just going to ask, and if you say no, then that’s okay.”

Jean swallowed, his heart skipping a beat. “Okay.”
“You know what we’ve been doing, with giving each other handjobs? Well, I was thinking—or hoping, but I mean, like I said, we don’t have to, and I won’t ask again if you don’t want to do it, but maybe, we can try to be naked? I just think that you’ve been doing really, really well, and maybe we can try it. If it doesn’t work we can stop at any time. I just thought I would ask because…well…yeah.” He finished lamely, chuckling softly to himself. That laugh was clearly to make himself feel better because Jean saw the discomfort and hesitation in his eyes.

Jean didn’t have to think about it for very long, which was something that surprised him deeply. He thought coming to the answer would be harder, but he had also been thinking about this for a long time—and though he was not ready for anything more just yet, he liked the idea of trying to get naked with his boyfriend. Besides, the end result could only be brought about if he took risks, and chances, and tried to move forward. He trusted Jeremy to catch him if he fell.

“So, okay, yes, we can try that.”

“What?” Jeremy asked. “Seriously?”

“Seriously.”

“Okay, okay, cool. So should we—”

Jeremy’s anxiety was worse than Jean’s, so Jean leaned forward and grabbed his lips for a kiss. They kissed until they both left their fears behind them, but the act of undressing, they both agreed in quiet whispers, should be done with their eyes on each other. If Jean could get through that, then they would proceed. He didn’t want to be distracted by kissing, he wanted to be seen by his man, and to see Jeremy in return.

Jeremy undressed first, standing up to remove each article of clothing. Jean sat back, stunned, trying to tame his heart. He waited for the fear to get him but it never came. He kept calming himself by saying things like, you’ve seen him shirtless a hundred times, you’ve kissed him a hundred times, you’ve felt his hand on you a hundred times, you’ve done all these things separately, now you’re just doing it together at once.

Jeremy was beautiful. He was all lines and muscles like Jean himself, but with tanned skin, freckles scattered across his shoulders, and a toothy smile. Jean’s eyes took him in, and he counted to twenty; one to ten in English, one to ten in French, before he stood up and began to undress.

Jean could hear how fast Jeremy was already breathing, and once he was completely naked, he took Jeremy’s hand and put it over his heart.

“Wait,” Jean commanded him, and Jeremy listened.

They waited until Jean’s heart regained its normal speed because anxiety nipped at him even though the fear was not truly present. Once it was gone, once he was truly connected with his body, he touched Jeremy.

Their bodies moved towards each other, and Jeremy whimpered from the skin on skin contact—something he was used to getting but hadn’t gotten in so long. Jean, who had never been naked with someone who loved him, nearly choked out a sob.

Just that, just being wrapped up in Jeremy’s arms was enough to turn him to a shaking mess.

So this is what it is like, to bare yourself in love.

Jeremy was so hot, or maybe it’s because Jean felt so cold, but his skin was electrifying. He kissed
the freckles over Jeremy’s shoulders, thinking that they looked an awful lot like stars, and they sat on the couch together.

Without words, they molded to each other.

Jeremy beneath Jean, Jean taking his sweet time and very, very slow time to have his hands roam the crevices of Jeremy’s body. Jeremy was very careful, he didn’t touch Jean until he was told he was allowed, and even when he was allowed, it was only to roam the familiar places that his hands had gone thus far. His chest, his back, his erection, but nothing beyond that. Jeremy’s hands stayed away from his backside and away from Jean’s hair, and when they started to get each other off, Jeremy’s hands remained soft and gentle with him.

They took their time with each other, the slowest they had ever gone. It was a very beautiful thing for Jean to experience, to come apart like this with the person that he loved holding him naked. To be naked in general since the Nest. To kiss someone’s bare chest, to have someone say ‘I love you’ and then kiss a scar on his body, and know in his heart that yes, this person does love me, this person loves all of me.

Jeremy kissed away a tear that fell from Jean’s eye as he came.

They lay there, naked and together, Jean on top of Jeremy, with the smell of lilies surrounding him, and Jean felt like his soul was maybe pure after all.

Chapter End Notes

i hope you all enjoyed this chapter

im a baby and i cried a bit when i wrote it, because i want everything good for my boys drop me a comment if you enjoyed it!

we have hit the half way point my friends, so fifteen chapters left. :) xx
Jeremy and Jean were waiting for Jean’s therapy session, and Jean was deeply annoyed.

“Relax,” Jeremy told him softly, but with an edge to it. This was a conversation they had been having all day and it was finally starting to take a toll on Jeremy’s otherwise calm demeanor.

“I can’t relax,” Jean snapped. This place made him stupid anxious, the white walls, the nice blue flowers in the vase. He hated everything about it. He hated that he was still here, after all this time. He wanted to be done. He knew he couldn’t rush it, but he was tired.

“Jeez,” Jeremy shook his head, and grabbed a magazine from in front of him, flipping through it without much interest. Jean watched him do so, Jeremy turning each page without a care in the world, not at all bothered that he was here, once again, next to Jean, waiting for Jean to go to therapy for an hour. When it would be done, Jeremy would do what he always did; he would get up, stretch, smile and ask where Jean wanted to go for lunch.

The whole thing, their situation as it was now and the idea of what would happen after it was done just pissed him off to such a wild and extreme extent. He knew he was being completely irrational, but he couldn’t help himself. He was not angry Jeremy was being nice, but because Jean did not feel like he really deserved it.

“Would you stop staring at me?” Jeremy asked.

“Stop being so irritable then,” Jean replied.

“I’m being irritable?” Jeremy looked at him, astounded. “You’re in such a sour mood today, and you’re taking it out on me, I can’t believe you.”

“Well, we can’t all be sunny and happy all the time, or bright and shiny.”

“Oh, don’t quote Grey’s Anatomy to me, you little…” but Jeremy, who was so unlike Jean in every way, held his tongue and breathed in and out slowly. “Jean, why are you upset? Well, I know why you’re upset, but maybe you should say why you’re upset.”

Jean crossed his arms angrily. He hated that too, just in this moment, that Jeremy knew him inside out when Jean was still figuring it out half the time. “I thought that was what fucking therapy was for.”

“That is what fucking therapy is for,” Jeremy said, the word ‘fuck’ sounded so strange in his mouth, in a context like this. “But I’m a good listener, I think you know that. So on with it, what is it?”

Jean sighed. “I hate that you have to be here,” he said easily. As angry as he was, it was very easy for him to say how he felt, in this place, in front of Jeremy. His anger didn’t precisely fade, but Jeremy somehow always stoked it just enough for him to say as he felt.

Jeremy, for a moment, looked hurt. “You don’t want me here?”

“No, I want you here, but I don’t like that I need you here.” He explained, feeling tears burst in his
eyes. He refused to let them fall, and so he pressed the heels of his hands to his eyes and said through clenched teeth, “The fact that I have to still come here with someone. The fact that I can’t go anywhere alone. I should be enough on my own by now, shouldn’t I? I shouldn’t have to still be like this. I want to be able to go on my own to places.”

Jeremy sighed and patted Jean’s knee tenderly, and because Jean was sad, angry and frightened all at once, he grabbed Jeremy’s hand and held it tightly, breathing out harshly through his nose. “It’s okay,” Jeremy told him softly.

“It’s not,” Jean whispered.

“It is,” Jeremy insisted. “These things will get easier.”

Jean sighed and looked at him tiredly. “You always say that.”

“I say it because it’s true.”

“You don’t know—”

“When we first met you weren’t even able to be in the dorm on your own, do you remember that?” Jeremy asked, and waited for Jean to nod in embarrassment before he continued. “But with each week that passed, you got better and better, until you trusted me enough to realize that just because I left, it didn’t mean that you would be unsafe. Just because I left, it didn’t mean I wasn’t coming back. Now I could leave you for hours in the dorm, and when I come back you’re perfectly okay.”

“But—”

“You and I can get naked now. You are an open book to me now. You have improved so incredibly much Jean, whether you choose to see it or not. This,” he motioned to the therapist office. “Me, coming with you, it’s nothing. It’s minimal to everything else. I know to you it doesn’t seem that way, but it’s true.”

Jean sighed sadly, nodding. “I’m just tired, I think.” He meant tired in his brain, and Jeremy knew that very well.

“I know, my love, I know.” Jeremy’s hand swept through Jean’s hair, over his face, his thumb touching Jean’s bottom lip. “You are so strong and so brave. I know you suffer, but you have come so far.”

Jean sighed and moved forward, claiming Jeremy’s lips. They moved fluidly against each other, soft and familiar. It was nothing fancy, nothing more than that, lips on lips. Jean remembering himself. When they pulled apart, Jean put his head on Jeremy’s shoulder and closed his eyes. They still had another seven minutes before Jean’s appointment began.

“I don’t think that I deserv—”

“We deserve each other,” Jeremy interrupted him. His tone was not harsh, but it was absolute and final. There was no room for disagreement with him. Considering his light and cheery personality, people often forgot just how stern Jeremy could be. Just how much of a leader he actually was. He knew when to take control, and when to give in, and how to take his place in every situation. Jean envied him for that.

Jeremy’s lips brushed against the top of Jean’s hair. In French, he whispered, “Tu es tout pour moi,” you are my everything.
Jean smiled but kept his eyes closed. His mouth would never forget French words, no matter how much he had come accustomed to speaking English. One day, he would return home, holding Jeremy’s hand and speak to the people of his town, breathe the air, and show Jeremy his town. Everything would make sense.

Jean responded, “Tu es ma joie de vivre,” you’re the joy of my life.

“Je ne peux pas vivre sans toi,” I can’t live without you.

“Je veux être avec toi pour toujours,” I want to be with you forever.

Jeremy took Jean’s chin in his hands, lifting his head up. Jeremy stared deep into his eyes, and there it was again—that absolute look, that look that meant there was nothing anyone could say to him that would make him think otherwise.

“We will be,” Jeremy promised. “It’s you and me, forever.”

“Forever,” Jean rolled the world around in his mouth, in his heart, and in his head. That was something that definitely did not scare him. He couldn’t really imagine a future without Jeremy at this point. “What does it look like to you, our forever?”

Jeremy smiled, his eyes lighting up with just the idea of it. Jean’s eyes swept over Jeremy’s mouth and how it looked in a smile. It was like he brought his own personal light. “The future, my love, is bright. You and I are on the same team, I am obviously a captain—”

“God,”

“Sh,” Jeremy chuckled. “We travel a lot on our time off, I think that suits us. Then when we retire, after playing and winning our final match, we get a farm,” he looked at Jean from the side of his eye. When Jean smiled in response from that, Jeremy continued. “Maybe on the countryside, maybe even in Canada. Or France. I don’t care, really. As long as I’m with you, I’m more than happy.”

“A farm,” Jean nodded. “That sounds quite nice.” The idea not just of that, but of having a future in general, delighted him to no end. The fact that he would be good enough to make a pro team, and even live out a long life and make it to retirement.

He remembered a time where he couldn’t think past graduation.

Jean smiled, “Forever, huh? You’re willing to stand by my side for all of that?”

Jeremy nodded. “You bet. You can’t get rid of me that easy, pal.” And he smiled his light up the world smile, and Jean chuckled in response because only a crazy person would try to rid themselves of Jeremy Knox.

Jean went into his bag and took out his diary, uncapping his pen and writing in it,

16. I still cannot go anywhere alone but Jeremy always comes with me. He says it will get easier. I find myself believing him.

Jean looked at him tenderly, and asked softly, “Would it be alright with you if I told my therapist about this?” he motioned to the two of them before tapping the knuckle of his list, and the line he had just written.

Jeremy nodded. “Do whatever you need to do.” He said, the door opening with a lovely woman
stepping outside to smile at them. “I’ll be right here waiting for you when you’re done.” And he kissed Jean’s hand.

Jean smiled.

Yes, it would get easier, but for now, this would do just fine.

Chapter End Notes

i hope you all liked this soft short chapter :) exams are a bitch so im doing my best lol

drop me a comment if you liked it, thanks for the ones so far! :) x
Today was one of those days which was not quite good and not quite bad, but that moment in between where there was no real feeling to attribute to it. It was the kind of day where Jean felt his heart was heavy, but he had nothing, in particular, to be sad or angry about, which left him feeling strangely apathetic. There was only one cure he knew for such things like this, where the days were hard even though there was no reason for it to be that way.

His cure was Jeremy Knox.

He was planning on saving his current thoughts for one of his good days, but Jean had learned that he should try and do things like this especially when the days were hard, so he could improve.

“I think we should talk,” Jean said, standing in Jeremy’s doorway. He had his diary and pen in one hand, holding them loosely. If everything worked out right after this, he knew what he would write it in at the end of it all.

“Uh-oh,” he joked. Jeremy was getting dressed, having just showered after a very successful game. His hair was swept back and still damp from his shower, whereas Jean had dried off and changed before him. “Are you breaking up with me?” he joked.

Jean rolled his eyes. “As though I ever would.”

“Well then talk away,” Jeremy waved his hand around, going to his closet and grabbing a shirt. He threw it on and then grabbed a sweater to put on top of that. Jean didn’t talk immediately but watched him go over to his bed and crawl in, relaxing on it and pulling back the covers for Jean to join him.

“You know,” Jean mumbled, smiling tenderly as he got in, placing his diary and pen on the floor. “You wouldn’t be so cold all the time if we turned on the heater.”

“I like it though, it makes things like this easier to ask for.” Jeremy shifted closer to Jean their legs tangled with each other, their hands crushed and folded between their bodies. Their noses touched.

Jean, for a moment, forgot what he wanted to talk about. Their lips brushed and that’s all it took for him to get distracted. They kissed and kissed until it made Jeremy exhausted, panting from the lack of oxygen reaching his lungs.

Jean pulled away to let Jeremy breathe and curled one of his fallen strands behind his ear. “So, I would like to talk to you about something.”

“Go ahead,”

“I was thinking,” Jean said slowly, pushing away the bad thoughts and heavy feeling in his chest, “That we should try having sex.”

Whatever smile that was on Jeremy’s face was gone now. This was not a lighthearted conversation to have, this was something intense, and fragile. It was something Jeremy would treat with the utmost of care, and he even pulled away a bit that way he could see Jean’s face better. Jean felt like his chest was constricted; he couldn’t breathe, except he was breathing, and he couldn’t look at
Jeremy, except he knew that he had to look at Jeremy.

He could do this.

Jeremy asked, “Why do you feel that way?”

Jean thought that was a strange question to ask him, especially worded in that way but he did his best to give an appropriate answer. “I feel that we have waited enough time.”

Jeremy shook his head, already not satisfied with that answer. “There is no we. It is not me who has to be ready. This cannot be about me.”

Jean sighed. “So much, is about you.”

“Hey,” Jeremy said, touching Jean’s face tenderly. “Don’t be sad. Just talk. Say as you feel.”

Jean turned his face so he could kiss Jeremy’s hand before he looked back into his eyes. If Jean could, he would spend the rest of his life just doing that, looking into his eyes and getting lost in them. Not caring about anything else that had happened before, or whatever would come after. All that would matter would be that moment.

“I know that it might not work,” Jean told him. “I’m more than aware of that, but I don’t see how we’ll know anything anymore if we don’t try.”

Jeremy pondered that for a small moment before he chose to respond. “I respect that, but I don’t know if I can sleep with you if you’re not fully ready. Are you trying just to try and get it over with, or trying because you want to try?”

“I want to try,” Jean said immediately. “I don’t want to just get it over with. Never, not with you, not for something as important as this.”

“What changed your mind? I didn’t know you were thinking about it…”

“You and I have been able to get naked a lot together, and I’ve gotten more comfortable. You’ve touched my hair and my ass, which for a very long time you weren’t able to do.”

“Jean,” Jeremy’s eyes were sad, and that made the weight on Jean’s heart expand. He knew Jeremy wasn’t doing it on purpose to make this way, but that he just did not want to rush and was clearly trying to unravel Jean’s mind so they can come to a complete understanding about something before agreeing to it or disagreeing. “I did do those things, but only briefly.”

“I know,” Jeremy said quietly. “But I think it still counts.”

“Of course it does, I just mean…I really, really, don’t want to push you or have you thinking you have to do this for my benefit. I mean, we’ve given each other handjobs yes, but you know, there’s been no other foreplay or experiments, so I’m just worried.”

“I know you’re worried, and I know maybe we should have done other things, but somehow…” Jean struggled to explain it. He sighed in annoyance at his own thoughts. “I know it is strange, but I need to try having…making love to you, before doing those other things. I know up here,” he motioned to his head. “That all those other things we could do are not dirty but my body just…I can’t…” he sighed angrily.

“Relax,” Jeremy said. “Breathe, tell me.” He whispered.
Jean did breathe and did his counting as he practiced. “I would rather work backward. Sex is complicated, I know, but it’s, it can be simple. It would be me and you, two bodies, doing something because they wanted to do it. Those other things are more complicated, and I have to do it right, or you have to do it right, and I just don’t like the idea of my mouth being put to use that way.”

“You think sex will get you there?”

“I don’t know,” he said honestly. “Maybe, maybe not. I just know I want to try that first because I want it, I want you more than I ever thought I could want anything or anyone ever again.”

Jean’s truth had the effect he was hoping for. The hesitation vanished from Jeremy’s eyes, and they were replaced with something incredibly caring, gentle, and soft. He smiled, tiny and tender and Jean took the moment to kiss him again, all chaste and loving.

“Okay,” Jeremy said when they pulled apart from each other. “We can try it.”

“Really?”

“Yes, if it’s what you want.”

“Yes, definitely.” Jean nodded. “I do have some…conditions? Or requirements, actually.”

Jeremy kept his smile. “I figured as much.”

“I think that I would have to be on top,” Jean admitted. “I don’t know if…it might never change, that part. I don’t know, maybe it will, but right now, I don’t think it will work if you are on top.”

Jeremy was in full agreement. “I don’t think so either.”

“I don’t want to talk about it when it happens. If we feel like doing it, not today, but with time, then we should just do it. Please? This is our talk, and now, when it happens, I need you to just let it happen.”

“Okay, that sounds fair.”

“I think that is it then.” He murmured. “I don’t know about my hair, or any of that until it happens. For now, though I’m happy just knowing that you agree.”

“I agree and I’m honored.” Jeremy kissed Jean’s nose. “If you’re ready, then I am ready.”

Jean, hoping to bring the conversation somewhere lighter said, “I think you’ve been ready for a while.”

Jeremy laughed, a booming thing in this quiet tiny room. “Hey, don’t judge me. It’s not my fault that my boyfriend is just so pretty.”

“I think you’re a little biased.” Jean shook his head, turning around and leaning over. Jeremy tried to pull him back so Jean chuckled and slapped his hand away softly. He reached down and grabbed his diary and his pen, getting back comfortably in the bed, fixing the pillows so now he was sitting up and had his back against them.

“Gosh, making me move around so much,” Jeremy complained with a grin, shifting so his head was leaning on Jean’s shoulder.

“I had my next number planned since this morning,” Jean told him as he opened the page. “I
thought it would be nice to write it with you since I was waiting for you to agree.”

Jeremy chuckled. “What would you have done if I didn’t agree?”

“Probably just wait until you did?” he grinned at Jeremy who let out a slightly louder laugh. “Sh, don’t you want to see what I’m going to write?”

“Sure, sure,” Jeremy chuckled. “Is it how much you love me?”

“I don’t need to write that down, you already know it.”

Jeremy took Jean’s chin and turned it towards him. “You can say it again.”

Jean leaned forward and against his lips, said, “I love you.”

“I love you too.”

“Now, stop distracting me,” Jean tapped the pen on Jeremy’s forehead. He put pen to paper and wrote,

17. every day is hard, but I am breathing and that is enough of a reason

Jeremy looked at it, and to Jean’s surprise, he wasn’t frowning. Jean thought it was kind of morbid to write such a thing because it seemed like the bare minimum expected of a person. He told that to Jeremy, explaining it quietly, but Jeremy didn’t see it the same way.

“That’s nice and hopeful,” Jeremy said. “You used to not care if you were breathing and now you do. The bare minimum used to be nothing to you, and now it is.”

Jean stared at his words. “I didn’t think of it that way.”

“Well that’s why you have me,” Jeremy said cheerily.

Jean smiled and claimed his lips again. “You must be right.”

Chapter End Notes

please comment if you enjoyed it!
Chapter Notes

trigger warnings:

mentions of rape, abuse and suicide, jean experiences a very intense episode concerning his depression please take care of yourself!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Graduation.

They were months away, and yet already having a long discussion about it. Jean was doing what he thought was best and not participating too much in the conversation. Noah was leaning against Jean’s legs, flipping a magazine in his lap on the floor. Jeremy was out with Alvarez, already having decided on what they wanted as a graduation ring and had gone to the office to hand in their papers. Laila was sprawled out next to him, her feet touching his thigh.

Jean thought it was stupid that anything beyond high school got a grad ring, but Jeremy had explained briefly that the sports teams were known for getting them, because they looked different and could have their number, and team name on it with the school symbol. It was classier looking, the simplest version, but of course, people could make adjustments.

“Are you going to get one?” Laila poked his thigh with her toe.

Jean looked at her and shrugged, not altogether sure that his voice was working. Since she was looking at him, she raised her eyebrow, but thankfully Noah spoke. “See, here’s the issue,” he slapped his hand on the magazine, making Jean’s hand twitch. “I could get something really showy, like this one, or just a band like Jeremy is getting.”

Since Laila noticed Jean wasn’t speaking, she answered, “Why are you doing what other people are doing? Do what you want to do.”

“Dearest Laila if only it was that simple,” he sighed dramatically, throwing the magazine away. he stretched himself out and crawled on the couch, but when Laila grinned and didn’t move her legs, he looked at Jean’s lap and smiled. “Can I?”

Jean sighed, rolling his eyes and nodded. Despite himself, one arm wrapped around Noah who curled up on his lap. It was easy for him to do, being quite short.

“I’m thinking,” Noah said, looking at his hands. “I might just do the band. The gems are all those gross colors, and maybe something simple might be better. Or, maybe I’ll have the whole band be a different color instead of silver.” He snapped his fingers and smiled. “That sounds right.”

“What color?” Laila asked.

“Maybe red? I like the color red. What about you?”

“Mine is a surprise, I gave my paper to Alvarez to hand in with hers.” She took out her phone and glanced at it for a moment, grinning. “They’re bringing us back Starbucks!” she showed the text to
Jean and Noah. Noah grinned back and grabbed it, texting something quickly and throwing it back to Laila.

Then, Noah turned to Jean and put his finger on Jean’s nose.

Jean frowned at him, staring into those deep, light eyes. “Stop.”

“Why are you so pissy today?” Noah asked, taking his finger away.

Jean tensed under Noah but didn’t say anything, and instead looked down at the space between them, refusing to speak. There were hushed sighs and whispers, and he assumed that Noah and Laila were glaring at each other—naturally, Laila was likely telling Noah to be quiet, and Noah was probably shaking his head repeatedly.

“Jean Moreau,” Noah’s voice had changed lightly. Jean looked up and Noah was smiling ever so lightly, nothing at all like his usual one. “You know, it’s not just Jeremy you have to talk to.”

“I know that.”

“Do you?” Laila asked softly. Jean looked at her, and though she looked very uncertain, she also looked like she wasn’t going to back down from it. “I mean, you don’t really tell us anything.”

“I appreciate that you both want to listen,” Jean said slowly, keeping his voice controlled. “But it’s my business, and I should be able to choose who I speak to without feeling pressured.”

Noah snorted so rudely, that Jean glared at him. “Bullshit.”

“Excuse me?”

“You’re afraid to tell us, just like you were afraid to tell us everything you have told us. In your brain, its like you still don’t think, after all this time that we won’t love you anyway, but we do.” He finished grandly, shaking his head. “I won’t force you to speak, but you have to stop assuming the worst, too.”

Before Jean could say anything back to him, Laila spoke to back him up. “This is what friends are for Jean,” she explained quietly. “I tell Alvarez more than I tell the team, but I still tell the team things.”

Jean sighed, exasperated. “I thought you weren’t forcing me!”

“Are we?” she asked honestly.

Jean wanted to say yes. He wanted to pretend that they were making it more difficult for him, but all they were doing was reassuring that they would never leave him or back away. They were doing what friends were meant to do, and he was just so scared to take it that he didn’t know how to react.

“I just…” Jean sighed, and although Noah was not Jeremy, he found himself tightening his hold, and even leaning forward to use Noah’s shoulder as something to rest his cheek against. “It’s not a good day.”

Noah who was not used to the physical affection coming from Jean patted his head awkwardly. “Not every day has to be a good day.”

“No,” Jean struggled with an explanation. It was a very annoying thing, to explain one's
depression, or how a simple word could bring up so many terrible memories and feelings inside of him. “No, but today is just worse.”

“How come?” Laila asked.

He couldn’t tell them, he wouldn’t tell them. not about this, not about the deepest darkest parts of himself. It was not that he didn’t trust them, he trusted them immensely, it was just that these parts of himself were for only himself, Jeremy and his therapist. Talking about it with other people, Kevin Day being an exception, rarely helped him. Or maybe it was his fault, who knew.

He was so tired.

“I just didn’t think I was going to make it to graduation,” he offered them, it was as much truth as he could give them without telling them the whole thing. “I thought I was going to die in that place. Sometimes...” no, I can’t say that either, so instead he said, “It seems like a dream that I am not allowed to take, sometimes.”

Noah’s hand dropped down to Jean’s hand, and he held it tightly. “I’m sorry buddy,”

Laila nodded. “Me too, you’re such a good person, you don’t deserve to feel this way.”

This was why he couldn’t tell them the rest, and he knew it was mean and selfish, but this was exactly the reason. Their pity was the worst of it, them feeling sorry for him. Jeremy’s sadness was already too much, it was too much for Jean to add to the rest of him.

He was so sad today, he hated that word, he hated everything about himself in that moment. It made no sense since he had come so far, but everyone talking about it so casually like it meant nothing made his mind race with anxiety.

He really wanted Jeremy back.

“I hope,” he swallowed, closing his eyes. “I hope you both get everything you want out of this life.” He didn’t open his eyes because he knew that if he did, he would cry. He also hoped that if his eyes stayed close he would fall asleep because it was better to be asleep than awake on days like this.

He felt a brush of lips against his head, and he didn’t know if it was Laila or Noah, but he did know that he felt her body against his and Noah still on top of him. He was suddenly surrounded by two people who loved him.

He may not have told them how he was really feeling, but, judging from the tears he felt splash on his hand, Jean had a feeling that they had figured it out on their own.

“You stupid slut, you like this—”

“Jean, I would like you to break your fingers for me.”

“What happened Jean, hahaha?” “I pushed him down the stairs again.”

“Kevin, fuck him.” “W-What?” “You heard me,” “No, please, Riko—no—”
“Please don’t do this to me.”

“Please.”

“I’m sorry,” Kevin told him. “If I would have taken you with me, I would have gotten you killed.”

Jean was never one to lie, so when he spoke, he knew that Kevin knew he was telling the truth. “Do you know I have a plan to kill myself anyway?” he said bitterly. Admitting it was almost like a breath of fresh air. He had not told anyone this, but it made sense to tell Kevin.

Kevin stilled and moved closer to Jean, ever so gently touching his face, turning so that they were staring into each other’s eyes. Kevin’s eyes were still something beautiful to Jean, even now, when they were laced with pain. Jean felt that pain, he felt it every day. It was a part of his life now. A companion, almost.

“Jean,” Kevin shook his head. “You must not.”

“Do not tell me what to do.” Jean put his hand over Kevin’s and gently lowered it. “You gave up that right when you left me there.” He knew it was uncalled for, and mean, but Jean had died a thousand times inside when he woke up that morning knowing Kevin would never come back to him. The punishments he had gotten from Kevin leaving him were beyond what Jean expected.

“If you do not think I did not miss you, or regret that every day, you are sorely mistaken,” Kevin told him. “Would you be that selfish to take yourself away from me?”

Jean’s expression went from apathy to pure rage. “Do not talk to me, about what is selfish, Kevin.”

“Please do not leave me,” Kevin begged. “Don’t.”

“Give me a reason to stay.”

“You have to find your own reason, Jean. Let Jeremy help you. Let Jeremy give you a reason, let him give you Exy back.”

Jean didn’t realize it very much, but he had been drifting in and out of sleep since his small talk with Noah and Laila. Or, maybe it had been that he had been awake but so out of it for the rest of the time that his closed eyes made it seem that way. All he knew for certain was that the next time he opened his eyes, he was in bed, and the room was dark. It was already night time.

He had lost a whole day.

He felt Jeremy’s breath against his neck, so Jean turned around. It was unsurprising to find him awake. He didn’t look tired, but Jean had never felt more tired in all of his life.

“Hello,” he said.
“Hey,” Jeremy responded softly.  

Quiet. Then, because he couldn’t stand it, he whispered, “I’m sorry.”

“You don’t have to be sorry.”

“You shouldn’t be in here with me, you shouldn’t have to.”

“I want to.”

Jean sighed and lifted a hand, putting it on Jeremy’s face. “The others?”

“I sent them off hours ago, I knew when I came back you weren’t feeling well.”

Jean shook his head. “I’m being dramatic.”

“No,” Jeremy disagreed quietly, taking Jean’s hand and holding it to his mouth to kiss. “You’re sad today, and that’s okay.”

Jean felt his throat close because no, everything wasn’t okay. He thought that maybe, nothing ever would be. Every improvement he had made, every good day felt so small compared to this moment, this moment of terrible, terrible darkness that was enveloping him from the inside out.

“I must disgust you,” he whispered.

Jeremy’s eyes widened. “Jean…”

“My body has been used over and over again. Those knuckles you’re kissing are misshapen because I’ve broken them myself. My face—”

“No, no, stop,” Jeremy said, moving closer, and before Jean could object, he felt his entire body flush against Jeremy’s. if Jean would have started to shake, Jeremy’s body would have held him together. “Today is a bad day, I know that, but you cannot say those things, not after everything, okay? You are healing, and you will keep healing, today is just a bad day.”

Jean said into Jeremy’s chest, “Graduation was supposed to be the day I killed myself.”

Jeremy tightened his hold. “Things change. It’s just a bad day, your mind is just loud today, but I promise things will get better. I promise, okay? Jean—”

Jean couldn’t stand it, he couldn’t stand hearing those things because he knew it was true in the back of his mind, but he didn’t want to hear it. His brain was too loud and everything Jeremy was saying was coming too fast and all he wanted to do was sleep. “Jeremy,”

“Yes?”

“I’m so very sad.”

“I know my love.”

“Will you stay with me?”

“Always.”

Jean nodded, and they repositioned themselves, Jeremy lying so he was comfortable and Jean moving forward, his head tucked Jeremy’s chin, and Jeremy’s arms and legs twined lightly and
tenderly with Jean’s. Jean had his eyes closed, but he could hear Jeremy’s soft noises. It broke Jean’s heart.

“Please don’t cry,” Jean whispered into the darkness.

“Please don’t leave.” Was Jeremy’s response.

That seemed fair, and Jean just wanted to sleep, so he said the only thing he could think to say, the one thing that remained true and real even in this dark place.

“I love you,”

Jeremy’s reply was the last thing Jean heard. “I love you too.”

That was the last thing Jean heard, but not the last thing that happened that night. Jeremy ended up getting out of the bed and taking out Jean’s diary, and he took the pen, balancing it between his teeth for a moment.

In his nice handwriting, he wrote the next number for Jean,

18. graduation

- you are allowed bad days. What matters is when you get back up. When you wake up tomorrow morning, that is getting back up. When you graduate, that is you, getting back up.

Then, Jeremy crawled back into bed with Jean and stayed with him until the day came for them.

Chapter End Notes

i hope you liked it! it was a very intense chapter to write, and dont worry, this doesnt mean that jean wont be happy. sometimes people fall, and thats okay

the part with kevin and jean in case anyone is confused, is from my other fic, the life and times of kevin day! if you want to read their whole interaction, their chapter is called "moreau"

always keep fighting because you are not alone

xx
Jeremy was sick.

He had caught the flu so terribly that they hadn’t been able to make it out of the dorm to go back to the farm for Christmas and New Years. He was still recovering, he had passed the worst of it, but his body was still weak. All that meant was that he was as depressed as he was sick, especially since he and Jean had not really been able to touch each other for what seemed like weeks. Since Jeremy had been taking the bench for games, they couldn’t afford to have Jean get sick as well.

In terms of games, they were doing well, and the way things were looking, it would seem as though they would meet the Foxes once again at finals. Jeremy seemed to be working towards that goal, calling Kevin every other week to be sure they were training hard. They each had one trophy under their belt, and Jeremy said he wanted his last game of university to be against Kevin Day.

Kevin seemed to want the same thing, and Jean really wanted that too.

Jean walked into the room and saw Jeremy huddled under his blanket, looking sad and annoyed. Jean hated seeing him like this, but he was nearly done with the remains of his cold, his flu long behind him, and had some plans for this evening to make the night more interesting.

“God,” Jeremy said, his eyes droopy as he watched the television. “This sucks.”

Jean brought him some tea and sat next to him, going under the covers with him. He pulled Jeremy closer to him, so their sides were aligned.

“It’s not so bad,” Jean disagreed, his arm moving around Jeremy’s shoulders. Jeremy sniffled and sipped some of his tea, before making a face that made Jean laugh. “God, you put honey in it again didn’t you?” he stuck his tongue out and tried to hand it back to Jean.

“No, no,” Jean laughed, gently pushing his hand away. “It’s good for you, come on, you’re healing.”

“I hate honey in my tea,” Jeremy moaned.

“You’re such a baby when you’re sick.”

Jeremy stuck his tongue out at him and did not hide his distaste as he took another sip of the tea. “I am not a baby.” He mumbled.

“You are,” Jean patted his head like a child before he laughed again and swooped in to kiss his cheek. “This could be worse. At least we’re together.”

“Mr. Positivity all of a sudden.” He mumbled.

“Well one of us has to be since you’re down and out.” He grinned, running his hands through Jeremy’s hair.

Jeremy leaned into the touch, sighing nicely. He glanced at the clock for New Year’s, seeing they still had three minutes until the ball dropped. Then he looked back at Jean, smiling softly. “Did you know you have the most beautiful laugh I’ve ever heard?”

“You’re sick and delusional.”
“First of all, I don’t think those two things could be correlated.”

"I think they can be."

“Hey, I’m just speaking the truth. I am totally unbiased.”

Jean snorted. “Really?”

“Yes!” Jeremy exclaimed, wincing when he felt pain in his throat. Jean’s hand slid down to his throat and rubbed a circle into the flesh with his thumb. He wasn’t sure why, because he was sure such a thing wouldn’t help, but he did it anyway. That touch was enough to catch Jeremy’s attention, his mouth parting and his eyes on Jean, intensive as Jean looked at where flesh met flesh.

This was happening often.

After Jean’s terrible depressive episode, it took a week for things to get back to even a semblance of something normal. Jean was understanding better now that there was no cure for depression, but there were ways to constantly cope and that it was okay if every once and a while the sadness took him, because, as his therapist pointed out, the time between depressive episodes was getting more and more apart. Even though it might not always feel like it to Jean, he was improving, and constantly, and much more than he gave himself credit for.

So, ever since he felt more like himself again, he was making up for it with Jeremy—right before he got sick, anyhow. Their touches were lingering a lot more often, their hands would take time on their bodies, and they had continued to get naked with each other, suddenly Jean’s need for him skyrocketing. There had been one night in particular, that Jean had felt like he was in some kind of frenzy, they hadn’t stopped until they had both climaxed twice. It had left Jean’s body oversensitive and he loved it.

He moved his hand up and tapped his thumb against Jeremy’s bottom lip.

Jeremy kissed it.

Jean told him, “I think, once you’re better, we should try. No more waiting.”

Jeremy nodded. “No more waiting.”

Jean moved forward, and Jeremy almost moved back, but Jean whispered a tiny no because he didn’t care about any of those things—if he got sick. He wouldn’t, Jeremy was barely sick anymore as it was, and he wanted to kiss his boyfriend after so long of not kissing him.

Their lips brushed, and as soon as they did, Jeremy laughed. “Is it bad luck if we kiss before midnight?”

Jean frowned. “Maybe,” he chuckled and pulled away. “Fine,” he looked at the screen, seeing that there were only thirty seconds left.

Time sure did fly when you were thinking about your boyfriend naked.

“Hey,” Jeremy lay his palm out in front of Jean. “Can I hold your hand?”

Jean nodded. “You don’t have to ask.”

Jeremy shrugged because they both knew that he would never stop asking. Jean grasped Jeremy’s hand, and like he felt before, everything was heightened. The skin on skin, every nerve, wrist to
wrist. He wanted to kiss every inch of that hand.

So he did.

He brought it up to his mouth, smiling against it as he kissed every finger, every knuckle, tracing the lines with his lips. He didn’t want to stop, he couldn’t stop really. When Jeremy started to count down, Jean felt wicked enough to play with him.

“Ten,”

Jean kissed the inside of Jeremy’s wrist.

“Nine,”

Jean pressed Jeremy’s hand to his mouth.

“Eight,”

Jean put one of Jeremy’s fingers between his teeth.

“S-Seven,”

Their eyes met.

“Six,”

Jean put one finger in his mouth.

“Fi—Jean,”

Jean sucked. Jeremy didn’t make it the rest of the way.

The mug dropped to the ground, and apparently, neither of them cared that Jeremy was still a little sick. They attacked each other, their arms wrapping around each other, their bodies molding. They were awkwardly placed, and apparently, that didn’t seem to matter either. Jean was between Jeremy’s legs, their kisses were hungry and desperate. Somewhere between them, Jeremy whispered a happy new year, but Jean was too far gone to answer back. He began to rut desperately against Jeremy, who held him in his arms, moving his hips best he could under the weight of Jean’s body. It was hard for him, one leg crushed between the couch and Jean’s body, the other hanging off it. Still, neither of them cared.

Jean chased his pleasure, rutting hard. Usually, he was a little more self-conscious about the sounds he made, but he couldn’t be bothered. He was loud, moaning against Jeremy’s lips, who was sighing in pleasure under him.

Jeremy whispered, “Can I….,” but he couldn’t say much else.

Jean said, “Anywhere,”

Jeremy moaned from that word, his hand grasping Jean’s backside, pushing him own harder. They both moaned into each other’s mouth, Jean holding Jeremy’s hand crushed between their bodies.

“Harder,” Jeremy whispered. “I’m almost….”
Jean did as he was told because he was almost there too. There was so much in the way, and Jean wanted so much more, and his head was whirling and whirling and “Oh, Jeremy....”

Jean kept moving until Jeremy found his release, and then instead of collapsing on top of him, he leaned back against the couch so he was lying down, pulling Jeremy on top of him.

Jeremy chuckled. “You’re going to get so sick.”

Jean laughed with him, staring at the television without much interest. He was more fixed on his hands, now running through Jeremy’s hair, and the other on his back. Jeremy snuggled close. “I don’t care,”

“You should care.”

“You know,” Jean murmured. The hand on Jeremy’s back moved to take one of his hands, holding it tight. “This was the other thing on my list.”

“What was?”

“I wrote it in a couple of days ago. Number nineteen, Jeremy asking to hold my hand.”

“Really?” he felt Jeremy’s laugh against him, vibrating against his entire body. Jean hoped Jeremy would laugh when they made love, to make things easier and also because he wanted to know what it felt like to feel that against him at a time like that.

“Yes,”

“How come something as simple as that?”

“I don’t know, I guess because it became habit. Something so simple, that started so long ago, you just ask because you want to give me the option to say no. I never would, but I don’t know, I suppose it’s sweet of you.”

“Well you know me, my man, I’m all about being sweet.”

Jean snorted. “You might be sick, but you still have a smart mouth.”

“Hey, you love my mouth.”

“I do, you got me there.”

Jeremy got up, straddling Jean’s hips and smiled down at him. The blanket was over his shoulders, and he pulled Jean up to meet him, their lips brushing.

“Hey,”

“Yeah?”

“Happy new year.”

Instead of saying it back, Jean said, “I love you, Jeremy Knox.”

Jeremy grinned. “Aare you trying to get into my pants again?”

“No,” Jean laughed softly. “Your heart, maybe.”
Jeremy traced the lines of Jean’s face. “I love you too.”
Jean wasn’t quite sure how it had happened.

He was thinking about the new words he wanted to write as a part of his list, looking over at the whole thing. His thirty reasons. The sun was set long ago, and sleep would either take him quickly or draw it out, there would be no in between today. It was strange, he supposed that he should feel worse, considering what had happened, but he was oddly calm. Perhaps because it had been handled so well, and because he had gotten what he needed from it all.

Or rather perhaps it had been because he knew after he had calmed down that he would be okay after something like that had happened to him.

Slowly, he wrote on the page,

20. yes means yes now, and no means no

Jean sighed, remembering.

Not long prior to that moment, it had begun.

It was a normal night, except it wasn’t at all. Jean and Jeremy were lounging about in Jeremy’s room, doing nothing but watching a movie on his laptop. It was not an evening that required anything grand, and perhaps that was why they had descended into it in the first place.

It was a brush of their lips that had them spiraling.

The laptop was placed on the ground, and with hushed whispers and quiet laughs, they began to mold to each other. They kissed until Jean’s hands stopped shaking—because somehow, they both knew that it was tonight, they would try, and everything was in place.

They both moved down on the bed, lying by each other, kissing hotly. Jeremy was a touch louder than Jean, which made him smile but more importantly to Jean was that he was patient. He let Jean take his time, straddling him, taking off Jeremy’s clothes all first before he stared at him.

Jean paused, running his hands over Jeremy’s torso. Jeremy shivered from under him and Jean grinned.

He wanted Jeremy so badly, which was so strange to him. It was strange because all that want was spinning inside of him, trying to make its way out. Jean thought these feelings would be calmer, but instead, his mind, his body, felt like they were moving fast, almost apart from him, except not quite that either. If there was a name for this feeling, Jean did not know it.

“Jeremy,” he whispered, leaning down. He kissed him with as much emotion as he could muster, with everything that he had. Jeremy responded eagerly of course, and his hands moved to Jean’s pants.
“Can I?” he whispered.

Jean shook his head. There were things he had to do on his own. “I have to,” he told him.

Jeremy smiled like the sun, easing Jean's aching chest a little. “Okay,”

Jean sat back and pulled off his shirt, taking the time to kiss Jeremy again. Jeremy seemed to be aching quite badly, judging from the fact that he was leaking, but he did not complain. He did not move faster, he was practically still under Jean who was doing his very best to proceed as well as he could.

They were both clean and checked out, Jean had been checked long ago, and Jeremy as soon as he got into a relationship with Jean. They were not the mess that Jean imagined they would be together, this was interestingly serious, but Jeremy was still smiling.

“I love you,” Jeremy told him, as he watched Jean’s hands still over his pants.

Jean closed his eyes and then opened them. “I love you too.”

“We can stop if you want.”


He got off the bed to take off his pants and his underwear, grabbing the bottle of lube from Jeremy’s nightstand and placing it on the bed. He moved over Jeremy, hovering over him.

This time, he was the one who asked Jeremy, “Are you sure?”

“Oh yes,” he laughed.

Jean swallowed that laugh with his mouth, taking the opportunity to kiss him until his lips were numb. Jeremy’s shaking hand slipped between them and began to tug at himself. Jean tore his lips away and looked down, his eyes blown as he watched Jeremy get himself off.

Jean liked that very much, knowing that he was enough to get Jeremy like this. To know that Jeremy Knox of all people, wanted someone like him. Oh yes, that made Jean happy.

“I’m sorry,” Jeremy whispered. “I just need some relief,” he winced when Jean’s hand replaced his own, moving across it tenderly. Jeremy sighed and lay back, and Jean took his hand away and stared at them. He grabbed the lube and poured it over his fingers.

“Are you okay?”

Jeremy nodded. “You can go.”

Jean swallowed and pushed one finger inside Jeremy. The moment Jeremy tensed, Jean stopped. Like someone caught in a trap, his nostrils flared and he looked at Jeremy’s face, about to remove his hand when he saw Jeremy's tight expression.

“No, Jean don’t,” Jeremy curled upward immediately, letting out a groan—pain or pleasure Jean did not know and put his hand on the side of Jean’s face. “I’m okay. You knew, you knew it would hurt a little. It’s okay, I’m okay, okay?”

Jean did not move, and Jeremy sighed, moving down on his hand. When he let out a moan this time, moving his hips in a way that made Jean’s entire body thrum in excitement. He watched Jeremy even help him, sliding a finger alongside his. He winced once more but continued to move,
Jean eventually began to move his finger too, kissing Jeremy deeply. Eventually, Jeremy removed his own finger so Jean could replace it with his, moving up to three, making sure to move and stretch Jeremy as well as he could. The entire time Jean watched Jeremy, watched his body, his torso clench, the gasp in his breath and the way his chest stopped when Jean hit that spot inside Jeremy that made him twist in joy.

“I’m ready,” Jeremy breathed.

Jean’s heart was thrumming—excitement? Fear? He wasn’t sure which. His mind was spinning, it was happening, really happening, and all coming down to this now—

Jean coated himself, feeling very outside his body. Jeremy’s body was so hot, it was like their skin was burning where it met each other. Jean watched carefully as he pushed in, seeing Jeremy tense, tense too much, and the heat surrounded Jean, and everything was so, so, tight, and no, no, no this didn’t feel right, Jean couldn’t breathe and Jeremy’s face didn’t look like it was in pleasure at all—

“Jean,”

“No,” Jean spat, pulling out. It was too fast and that definitely shot a look of pain across Jeremy’s face. He whimpered, and Jean felt dirty all over him. He had hurt Jeremy. Actually hurt him, he was disgusting, a monster, as bad as them—

“It’s okay,” Jeremy was up and close, taking Jean’s face in his hands. “Hey, hey, baby, mon amour, hello,” he hugged him tightly and Jean did not move. He was not a part of his body. “Hey, everything is okay. I’m okay, you’re okay, and we don’t have to continue. We’ll be okay. Calm down, shhh,”

If Jeremy was telling Jean to calm down, it must be because he was shaking, but his mind was so far away from him that he hadn’t realized it until the end of that sentence. He knew Jeremy was in pain—pain from the lack of pleasure, pain from what Jean had done to him.

“You tried,” Jeremy whispered in his ears. “You know we don’t have to do anything. You said no, so it’s no.”

Jean replayed those words over and over again in his head, until he could make sense of them. Until his body stopped shaking. Until he remembered that those before Jeremy did not listen to Jean’s ‘no’, but Jeremy listened.

Yes meant yes now, and no meant no.

Jean opened his eyes and cast his diary to the side, wrapping his blanket around him, feeling colder than usual. He walked towards Jeremy’s room and opened it, feeling his chest closing in on itself. Jeremy’s head lifted sleepily from the pillow and he squinted.

“Jean?” he murmured. “Are you okay?”

Jean nodded. “May I come in?”

“Of course,” Jeremy said. “Come to bed.” He moved towards the side and allowed Jean to crawl in,
a cocoon with his blanket, inside of Jeremy’s safe arms.

Jeremy sighed and brushed his lips along Jean’s cheek. “Are you okay?” he asked again.

“I am now,” Jean whispered. “I’m—”

“Don’t apologize,” Jeremy sighed, their noses brushing against each other in the darkness. “It’s okay. We can try again another time, that’s all.”

Jean whispered back, “Is it truly that easy.”

“Of course,” Jeremy answered. “We love each other, that doesn’t mean everything is meant to go perfectly. We’ll try again another night, for now, sleep. I’m tired, and if I’m tired, you’re tired.”

Jean was about to remind Jeremy that, that was not necessarily true considering he went to bed early most of the time anyhow but instead he smiled in the darkness and closed his eyes.

“Je t’aime,”

Jeremy sighed softly, Jean could hear the smile in his voice. “I love you too Jean.”

Jean, who expected nightmares that night, slept soundly, knowing that he was safe, and that his words meant something to Jeremy. That made him sleep quite well, keeping him from going anywhere dark. That was what Jeremy did for him, he kept him sane, even in the darkness.

Chapter End Notes

sorry to disappoint you guys lmao, but come on, did we really expect it to go well the first time? dont worry though, it will happen and when it does, it will be beautiful

i hope you all liked this anyway, i think it was important to show how much this meant to jean anyhow

thank you for the comments, its my great joy to see how happy this fic makes you!

xx
“Here you go,” Noah said, sitting down in front of Jean at the Starbucks. He handed Jean his drink.

It was just the two of them today, a week after Jean and Jeremy’s failed attempt at having sex. Naturally, Jeremy had been reminding Jean over and over again that it didn’t matter, that they could try again, they could take all the time in the world. Even though Jean believed him, he couldn’t help but feel bad about it just the same. He hated that he was still not yet able and that even though he thought he had healed enough for it, he was not quite there.

Jeremy had a group assignment to do today, and homework was starting to pile up on Jean which reduced him to leaving the dorm, asking Noah to come with him. He would have asked Laila and Alvarez to join but decided that since Jean was closer to Noah he wanted to have this talk one on one. He wasn't so sure when he had even really decided to talk to Noah about this, or if he should at all, but figured having an outside eye from the relationship might help Jean put some things in perspective.

“Thank you,” Jean murmured. He tapped his thumb on the mug, looking back down at his homework for a second. He was retaining nothing at all.

Noah only stood in that silence for so long before he chose to break it. “So I asked Jess out,” Noah said suddenly.

Jean looked up, throwing him a tiny smile. “That’s great,” he said softly. “I’m glad for you.”

“Yeah,” Noah was looking at me curiously. “I think I get it now, that I don’t have to be completely okay in here,” he motioned to his chest. “In order to be with her.”

That was likely the biggest piece of Noah’s true self that he had ever offered to Jean. Jean stared at him with wide eyes, astounded that Noah was actually talking about it, knowing that there were things he liked to keep very private. Jean was in fact under the impression that Noah had nearly no sense of self-awareness when it came to that validation he craved that Mr. Knox had told Jean about. Perhaps though Jean had not been giving Noah enough credit at all.

“She must understand that,” Jean said.

“She does,” Noah confirmed. “I mean so what, I’ll never have a mom and a dad—“ he looked away from Jean’s eyes now, they never spoke about this. He sat there stunned. “I mean I have a mom and a dad, but they don’t...anyway, I have Jeremy, a great team, and you.” He looked back at Jean, smiling so cheerily that it astounded him. “Right?”

Jean nodded. “Of course.”

“Great,” Noah smiled in triumph, and he took a sip of his sugary drink, before glancing smugly at Jean. “You have me too, so why don’t you tell me what’s got you so down?”

Jean sighed, setting his own mug down. “So that’s why you told me that.”

Noah laughed. “Yes and no. I told you because you’re my friend, and friends tell each other things,
Jean sighed. “It’s nothing.” The lie was not convincing in the least to either of them. Jean put no effort into hiding his less than happy mood, and Noah was too good of a friend to go on with the day knowing that Jean was feeling this way.

“It’s never nothing with you.”

Jean considered that. He really did want to tell Noah, because he did consider Noah his best friend in a lot of ways. He had already called Kevin about it, but upon hearing Kevin’s voice and just how happy he was, Jean could not bring himself to tell Kevin about his problems. He didn’t want to bring his old friend down. Instead, he had chosen to ask Kevin a million and one questions about his life and blooming relationship with Matt, happy in knowing that at least for Kevin things were smooth. Kevin was enjoying a very healthy recovery, which was something Jean wanted badly for him.

Besides, Jean trusted Noah, he had proven his loyalty to Jean over and over again. “I tried to have sex with Jeremy,” he admitted, looking at Noah carefully, waiting for him to grin or laugh but thankfully Noah did neither.

His face was rather sympathetic. “I’m taking it didn’t go well.” He didn’t ask: you hadn’t done it already? Jean loved him for that.

“No,” Jean murmured. “No, it did not. I did...well what I always do. I freaked out. I hurt him Noah, and I don’t want to ever do that.” That expression Jeremy had worn, no matter how short of a time it had lasted seemed to have burnt itself into Jean's head. He had no idea how to get it out.

“Hurt him how?” Jeremy stared at him obviously until Noah understood. “Oh. Well, I mean, isn’t that kind of normal? I mean even girls need to be properly prepared and stuff.”

“My head knows that, but seeing the pain on his face just brought back the worst kinds of memories.”

Another reason why Jean loved Noah was because he didn’t ask what those memories were. “You know man, Cap loves you. I’ve known him my whole life, and I’ve never seen him this happy. I mean the guy always had energy, but you bring him somewhere else entirely.”

Yes, Jean knew that. Joy.

“It doesn’t change that I did that to him.”

“Well if I know Jeremy, which I do, he probably didn’t mind, and it probably only hurt as much as it did because it's been a while for him.”

“But I—“

“Hey,” Noah touched Jean's hand, smiling softly at him. “You’re a good person man. My best friend apart from Jeremy. You didn’t hurt him on purpose. Next time, you both just take even longer, use more lube or let Jeremy prep himself a little before too. There’s always a way to make it better, okay?”

Jean felt very tired all of a sudden, knowing Noah was right but not quite there in his brain just yet. Instead, he squeezed Noah’s hand back softly and nodded.

Noah smiled tenderly and changed the subject to something light, which was another reason why
Jean loved him. Jean liked discovering that about his friends on the team. Even though he had known them for quite some time, since their development had taken so long, he was continuing to discover new and amazing things about them all the time.

“Hey, do you remember this past summer when we went camping?”

Jean would not forget such an event. It was one of his favorite memories of the Trojan team. It was their first trip altogether. All it has been was a road trip until they could see nothing but stars. They had sung songs, roasted marshmallows, had a water gun fight, and curled up with each other under the night sky looking up at the sky. For them, it was an annual trip, passed down through generations of the Trojan team. For Jean, it reminded him he was a present player in his own life. That his world was massive again, and he was small, and maybe, just maybe, the universe would take care of him. He had looked at the stars and wondered if that’s where he would have ended up if he had chosen to leave the world as he had once planned.

That night, a touch of Jeremy's hands reminded him that as pretty as the stars were, it was much better to be here, on earth.

“That was a beautiful weekend,” Jean recalled smiling gently, lifting his mug to his mouth for a sip of his latte.

“It was the first time you and I ever really spoke, do you remember?” Noah grinned. “You wanted to go for a walk but Jeremy was cooking so I went with you.”

Jean remembered that too. “You were really annoying that day.”


Jean rolled his eyes. “You kept asking me questions about my life.”

“Well, you started dating my best friend I had no choice.”

Jean grinned, a tiny thing, but his mood instantly lifted with it. “I think I am glad that you bothered me so much that day. Otherwise, my life would be quite boring if you were not my friend.”

Noah pretended like the sentence didn’t hold much sentiment, waving his hand in dismissal. Jean, however, could see how his affection and praise made Noah’s eyes soften. The way his hand twitched. The way his shoulders tensed and then relaxed like he was uncertain he deserved it but then accepted it anyhow.

“We should go again,” Jean said. “Except this time, without the water guns.”

“You’re just saying that because you lost.”

“I didn’t lose of my own accord! My shot was fine, it was my team that was not.”

Noah snorted. “I am so telling Laila that you said that, she’ll just kill you.”

“I’m faster than her.”

“She’ll find a way man, I never bet against her or Alvarez. Chances are they can kick anyone’s ass.”

“Except at a water gun fight.”

Noah laughed. “Man, you keep digging yourself in deeper and deeper.” And with that, their moods
were considerably better, and they returned to their homework, Noah getting up again to go get himself a cookie.

Jean did his homework too, a lot better than he thought he would. At the end of it, as a reminder in the corner of his page, he wrote

21. *the Trojans taking camping trips so we could see the stars*

Chapter End Notes

next chapter i have a really, really, really sweet jerejean moment

thank you for the comments thus far, keep them coming, no joke the two last comments made my eyes water from the last chapter haha

xx
Jean was sore all over.

Practice had been twice as difficult that day for some odd reason. Probably because they were getting so close to finals, but still, even Jeremy was on edge which was something that so rarely happened. Jean didn’t care either way, he was exhausted and was looking forward to ending his evening in nothing but relaxation.

He had showered and changed in the locker rooms but he felt as though his muscles were still wound tight, aching for relief. He contemplating asking Jeremy for a back rub but Jeremy was barely able to hold a pencil after working himself so much, so Jean settled on plan b.

Normally, Jean was not a fan of baths, but tonight he craved it. He stripped down and waited for the water to fill up the tub and turned it off before settling into the warm water.

Almost immediately his entire body went slack. It felt so good, he was tall so the water didn’t go all the way up his chest, but he scooted lower and dipped his head under so that for a moment the warmth had captured him all over.

When he emerged there was a tiny knock at the door, and Jean called out “You can come in,” rolling his eyes at Jeremy who poked his head in with a shy smile.

“Room for one more in there?” He asked, hesitantly.

Oddly, Jean realized that they had done many intimate things together and yet had never really just been intimate in a simple way as this. Being naked without making it about something sexual.

“Yes, of course.” He straightened himself, watching Jeremy’s smile relax as he undressed, climbing in. For a moment he just stood there, grinning at Jean. “How do you want me?”

“How do you do that?” Jeremy asked him. He felt so warm against Jean; he wrapped his arms around Jeremy, his hands splaying on skin, kissing Jeremy’s neck.

“How do you do that?” Jeremy asked him. He felt so warm against Jean; he wrapped his arms around Jeremy, his hands splaying on skin, kissing Jeremy’s neck.

“Do what?” He asked, they repositioned themselves only slightly so that they could look at each other—Jeremy leaning down enough so his head was on Jean’s shoulder.

“I can’t say stuff like that.” Jeremy grinned. “It sounds stupid.”

“I do not think so,” Jean disagreed quietly. “I like when you say those things to me.”

“You sound better saying them.”

Jean rolled his eyes, his mouth tilting up in a smile. “I know what you are thinking, and it’s not because I’m french.”
Jeremy laughed softly. “Well come on there’s a reason why Paris is the most romantic city in the world.”

“And yet I am not from Paris so your argument holds little validity.”

“I’d like to go someday,” Jeremy said, his fingers dancing up Jean’s arm. Water dripped down his skin like a dance. “To France with you. Would you take me?”

“I will take you anywhere.”

“Do you think...do you think you’d ever want to see them again?”

Jean didn’t have to ask Jeremy who ‘them’ was. He also didn’t have to think about his answer. “No.” He said. “At least, not this point that I am at, no. I cannot speak for the future but as it is, I cannot imagine looking them in the face and forgiving them for using me as a trade-off.”

“I can’t imagine it,” Jeremy said softly. “Using your own child like that.”

Jean hesitated before asking quietly, looking at Jeremy seriously. “Is that something you want?”

“What? To meet your parents? Not really, unless you wanted me to.”

“No, children.”

“Oh,” Jeremy smiled guiltily like he had been caught doing something bad. “Yes. I want what my parents have you know? Big family, lots of love and smiles around me. Bunch of kids to chase Noah around when he visits.” Then, adding softly with sad eyes as though he expected nothing less, “If that’s not something you want because of everything that has happened, I understand. We don’t have to have that.”

Jean shook his head, he would not stand for that. For Jeremy to immediately let go of something just because of the possibility of Jean’s state. “I don’t think that’s fair.”

“What?”

“It’s something you want, so it should be discussed. It’s not something to be treated carelessly.”

“But am I right?” Jeremy asked with a sad smile.

“The future can change,” Jean pressed. “How I feel now is no indication of how I will feel later on.”

“It’s my own fault,” Jeremy murmured. “My mind runs away with me for stuff like that, I think about it too much.”

“How do you mean?” Jean asked, more to soothe his own curiosity more than anything. It made him happy in a way, to know that Jeremy thought about these things. Jean thought in the present because thinking in the future for someone like him gave him too much un-needed anxiety. One day at a time.

“Just, you know, how our house would look. All the stray cats running around, with a dog too because I know you like dogs. Maybe three or four kids.”

“Four?” Jean mumbled, just the idea making him dizzy. “I don’t know how much of a good father I would be.”
Jeremy didn’t miss a beat. “I think you would be a great father.”

“Why do you think so?”

“Well, you know how it feels to be on the receiving end of abuse. I think you’d do everything you could to make sure you love your child.”

Jean was not so sure. Children scared him, the idea of caring for someone else’s well being when sometimes he could barely take care of himself. It was a very large commitment that he was uncertain he could handle.

“I think I’d fuck up a lot,” Jean disagreed.

Jeremy shrugged. “All parents fuck up sometimes. I know you, you’d be good.”

“I forget that you put too much faith in me.”

“Wrong again big guy. I have just enough.” He smiled lovingly and kissed Jean’s jaw. Jean leaned down and kissed him back tenderly before they settled back.

“Do you know,” Jean murmured by his ear. “Sometimes I think I am so in love with you that it will be the thing that ends me.”

“That’s depressing babe.”

“I know,” he kissed Jeremy’s cheek. “Before it was just me and Kevin, and then it was just me, and finding you has given me more than I could ever imagine.”

“Would you step in front of a zombie for me?”

Jean chuckled. “You really needs to stop watching the walking dead so much it can’t be good for you.”

“Oh hush, you don’t know good television.”

Jean grinned. “I would die for you.” He confirmed. “Apparently all my self-preservation has gone out the window.”

“Good thing no one is asking you to die then, huh?”

“Good thing,” he agreed. “How else should I try and prove my love?”

Jeremy contemplated, a grin spreading across his face, lighting up his eyes. “I’m thinking mint ice cream and watching anime with me until my eyes bleed.”

“That’s not very romantic.”

“Romance is in the eye of the beholder.”

Jean kissed him again. “One day, I will bring you to my home. I will show you everything I left there.” He ran his hand through Jeremy’s hair and kissed his forehead. “I think it might feel like home again if I bring you with me.”

“As long as you don’t tell Noah where we’re going. You know he’d follow us.”

Jean laughed because it was true and Jeremy, who loved Jean’s laughter so much, kissed him
because to kiss someone who was laughing was a strange piece of heaven that one could hold on earth.

“This is another one,” Jean whispered.

“Hm?”

“Number twenty-two. Baths after practice.”

“Well yes,” Jeremy said obviously. “You have me naked in here, I’m not surprised.”

Jean rolled his eyes, but that was kind of true anyhow, so he let Jeremy have it.

Chapter End Notes

drop me a comment if you enjoyed :)

xx
They were one game away from the final game—and of course, as expected they would be playing the Foxes. The game was only in two weeks, giving the team ample time to rest and practice before it took place, and enough time for fans to make their online bets, and for the press to harass them every chance that they got. Luckily, Jean’s deadpan expressions did very little to ever spur them forward, so he never had to deal with them often. Although, he did pay very close attention to Kevin’s team. Kevin was handling the press differently now, he was much more real, and Jean could see the happiness from where he sat.

His diary was laying open next to him with the words already etched out.

23. *when I sprained my hand, Jeremy allowed me to sit out the next day to heal*

He had written that two days ago, and was supporting his left hand on his lap, bandaged tightly. It was nothing major and would heal quickly, and since it was not his right hand it did not worry him as much. Although, he had to appreciate the irony of it being his left hand, especially now that he was looking at Kevin Day’s face through the television.

The injury came from Jess, and it was accidental which was why Jean didn't take it so much to heart. Jess would never hurt anyone on purpose anyhow, as she was easily the nicest and calmest person on the team. Which was why she was such an easy person for Noah to be around.

The hit had come after the practice, which was why it had taken everyone by shock. Their practice had gone very well, the drills had gone through without so much as anyone tripping. They were all on cloud nine, and when Jess had lifted her stick to clack it against Jean's in excitement, she got a little too happy and moved too fast, hitting his hand instead. They were lucky that his hand was not broken, and even though Jean had nearly had a breakdown as a result of his injury he had calmed down enough to tell Jess not to worry.

Of course, she worried anyway. So Jean had to tell her over and over, that it was not her fault, it was just an accident. He was okay now, anyhow. Besides, he had to admit that staying home was quite nice, even if his hand was throbbing delicately.

Watching Kevin was definitely a plus.

He was on a talk show, and not to his surprise, Matt was next to him. They were everywhere together now, the press loved them. According to Kevin’s phone calls, it had started out with Kevin not wanting to do press together, not wanting to exploit his sexuality like that, but after a photoshoot together it all went out the window, and Kevin had grown into himself even more.

They had a cover shoot together about three months ago, and the magazine ended up using a candid shot of Matt saying something in Kevin’s ear and Kevin with his head back laughing, Matt’s arms twisted around him, his eyes shining.

From that moment, Kevin had decided to handle the press, instead of the press handling him. A smart decision as far as Jean saw it because Kevin was owning the world. It was truly what he deserved too, probably more than anyone. The world owed Kevin Day, not the other way around.

“So, everyone knows you’re coming to meet with the Trojans for the final game.” The interviewer
man said. “It’s not an easy game, you two, Jean Moreau and Jeremy Knox are all graduating. The stakes are high.”

“I believe in my team,” Kevin said with a smile. “I have faith.”

Matt Boyd grinned alongside him. “It will be a tough match. Jeremy Knox is an excellent player, and he knows our team’s style.”

“It will be interesting to see Jean and Kevin up against each other once more!” the interviewer pushed.

Kevin shrugged. “Jean Moreau is not my rival. He never was. He is my friend, and we will play as we always did. If they win, then I’ll be glad to lose against a team as strong as the Trojans.”

Matt chuckled. “Sometimes I think you’ll switch teams.”

The interviewer saw the moment and said, “As if Kevin Day would leave you!”

Kevin pinched Matt’s knee. “I don’t know, he can be pretty annoying.” Matt smiled at him, and for a moment, they were just staring at each other and nothing else existed. Jean nearly got lost in itself, the moment so private that it shouldn’t have been allowed on national television.

Then Jean came up with an idea.

On this particular show, they took questions from fans, be it from social media or from the phone. Jean knew that if he called, his number would be seen and everyone would know just how important it was. So that’s what he did, with a smile on his face.

Jean dialed the show's number and barely made it through the second ring before the phone was answered. “Jean Moreau, calling for Kevin Day.” He said to the person who answered. He barely listened to their response, but the person on the other end seemed relatively flabbergasted.

He waited a moment before he grinned, watching the interviewer on the show announced, “The next caller, is none other than Jean Moreau!” he exclaimed.

Kevin’s face brightened. Jean smiled in response.

“Hello, Kevin,” he said.

Kevin’s hand stretched out to Matt’s, their fingers touching. A movement that every fan on the internet would catch, and one that Jean did too. He was sure that by the end of the hour there would be a million different gifs with that moment, all over twitter and tumblr. The very thought made Jean smile because Kevin's happiness made other people happy, and that was something strangely wonderful.

“Jean Moreau,” Kevin said, his eyes shining. Jean memorized every line of Kevin’s face, the sparkle in his eyes. He folded it up and placed it in his mind, so he could look back on it every time he would need to smile as well. That’s how beautiful a person Kevin was.

“Have you been training your Foxes so they are ready for me? I still only trust you on that team.”

Kevin laughed softly, while Matt rolled his eyes. “Sorry,” he looked at Matt apologetically. “Jean, don’t let your guard down. My Foxes will give you a run for your money.”

“I’m injured, and I’m sure I can still run circles around you,” he said with a smile.
Kevin, bless everything about him, who knew Jean so well, said, “You’re smiling, I hear it in your voice.” Matt was looking at Kevin like he had personally hung all the stars in the sky. It made Jean’s heart *burst*. Then, the rest of Jean’s sentence seemed to settle on him. “You’re injured?” he watched the way Kevin’s eyes widened, the way he straightened, the way his smile left him and for a small moment, Jean forgot he had to calm Kevin down but—

Matt’s hand moved more now, their index fingers curling around each other. When that settled Kevin’s intense gaze, Jean remembered he had to speak and said, “Just a mild sprain to my hand.”

Kevin frowned. “No sprain is a mild sprain.”

Jean chuckled, and that eased Kevin’s anxiety further. “Don’t worry Kevin Day. I will be more than fit to fight you on the last battle.”

“But our last,” Kevin reminded him with a small smile. “We’re going pro.”

“Yes,” Jean murmured. “We are. Goodbye.”

“Bye,” Kevin smiled softly.

Jean did not just turn off the phone. He shut the off the television and looked down at his hand. There were no scars on it, no real damage, but here it was injured. Back in the day, he would have had to play every single day with his hand. He would have had to make it worse even.

Today he got to sit in his dorm while his team practiced.

Today he got to sit out from practicing, to heal his hand. It was a new feeling to him, to allow his body to heal, and Jean thought that he liked this change very, very much.

Chapter End Notes

i know not a lot happened in this one, but every single chapter after this one is big

especially the next one
really big
the biggest probably of all of them
:)

xx
They had lost.

Their final game for university and they had lost.

Jean didn’t know how he should feel about it. If he should feel more anger about what was happening, but oddly, all he felt was relief. That it was over, that they had made it to this point at all.

Not one Trojan however, seemed remotely sad about it. Not even Jeremy, who was crying tears of joy anyhow and moved forward to rip off Jean's helmet, kissing him furiously on the mouth. Each team member had played their hardest, and their best, and the Trojans considered that a victory in and of itself. Jean would be forever astounded at their ability to take a loss and turn it into a win. He did not know if he would ever be able to do such a thing, but he supposed that his ability to not feel anger in this moment might be a good start.

“Look at him,” Jeremy said, pointing. Jean looked at the center of the court where Kevin was standing.

Kevin looked like an angel.

His racquet was dropped to the ground and he had his helmet in his hand. His head was tilted up towards the sky, and he was smiling. No, laughing—

Laughing and crying.

Jean couldn’t help it. His emotions spiralled and burst forth from him, like water from a dam. He walked up to Kevin, who looked at him with shiny eyes and a bright smile. Jean felt so much in that moment, his tears streaming freely now too. He was not much of a crier, but somehow the moment seemed to call for it. His emotions were overwhelming him, he wanted so much, and finally understood what it meant to have so much love in him that he didn’t know what to do with it.

Kevin was a part of that love.

Kevin looked at him, and god his eyes looked so colorful with the water shining them. “Jean,” he whispered. “We made it.” Not I. Not you. We. They had got to this point, apart and together at the same time. They couldn’t have done it side by side, but their healing had to do a lot with each other, and if one hadn’t healed properly the other wouldn’t have made it this far either.

Jean grabbed his hand.

He had Jeremy, Noah, Laila, Alvarez and Jess. But he would always have Kevin. This boy was his family too.

Jean told him, “I love you, brother.”

Kevin’s tears only increased. “I love you too,”
And they hugged.

Jean wrapped his whole frame around Kevin, the crowd erupted into cheers, both teams were applauding, but Jean didn’t pay them attention. Everything was Kevin. Of course, the Foxes had to win, because this game was always more important to Kevin than it had ever been to Jean. It made sense this way, it could have only happened this way.

They parted, Kevin with his hands on Jean’s face. “Are you all heading back right away?”

“Yes,” Jean said sadly. “I would stay if I could but—”

“We’ll talk,” Kevin assured him. “I promise. Thank you for giving me this game, Jean.”

“Thank you for giving me you.”

Kevin laughed softly. “At least come do dinner with me and Matt yes? Jeremy as well. We will celebrate.”

“Anything you want.”

“Fantastic,”

That was how their evening descended, their final night in Palmetto. They were flying out to California in a couple hours, so their meal with Kevin and Matt ended up being at some terrible fast food placed that ordinarily Kevin never would have eaten at before Matt Boyd. All the time up to that, Jean and Jeremy handled an easy press, and they watched Kevin soak in the glory that he so deserved. Their meal together was quick but not without much laughter. Matt and Jeremy got along better than Jean expected but of course, that’s what made sense considering they were cut from the same cloth. Kevin was talkative too, speaking to Jeremy with so much enthusiasm that it got Jean tired, but in the best way.

Jean didn’t want to leave, but he had a plan, and leaving was the first step to that.

Three days later, Jean stood in front of a door.

It was not a special door really, in any way, but Jean was in the process of making it special. Months ago, he had climbed this staircase to watch the sunrise with Laila, Alvarez and Jeremy. He remembered it with perfect clarity, the way the sun had risen over the skyline, warming Jean’s skin. Jeremy sleeping on his shoulder.

Now, he stood there alone.

He had never gone anywhere alone before.

Jean breathed in and out slowly, confidence rising in him. It as a new feeling, but one he couldn’t get out of his body since he had seen Kevin on the court. That look of pure bliss on his face, knowing that Kevin got to that point, it encouraged Jean to do this.

He opened the door, and took the stairs two at a time, smiling as he did. He wasn’t sure what it was—adrenaline, or fear, but he didn’t think he minded either way. When he got to the top he burst onto the roof, just in time to see the sun begin to rise. Jean smiled, his chest expanding as he
watched it, walking to the center of the roof and mirroring Kevin’s movement. He put his head back and closed his eyes, smiling and spreading his arms out.

That’s when Jean felt it.

A feeling he didn’t understand before, but understood now, with the heat pulsing through him.

_Joy._

He had done it. He had gone somewhere on his own. For the first time, he had taken the initiative to go somewhere without Jeremy, or Noah, or anyone to back him up.

Jean felt a tear slip from his eye, and he laughed. He understood the feeling that Kevin had on the court. Jean laughed softly again, going into his pocket and taking out his phone. Jeremy didn’t know that he was here, but he thought it would be a happy surprise for both of them. He snapped a picture of the sunset, and sent it to Jeremy, writing _you know where I am._

Then he sat on the roof, and waited, crying and smiling.

Jeremy apparently didn’t wait. He woke an hour later, and Jean heard him running up the stairs like a madman, opening the door and smiling wide.

“Jean,” he breathed.

Jean looked over at him. “I feel…” he looked at the city, California highlighted by the sun. “Everything.” He murmured, shaking his head. He couldn’t explain it any better than that. He wasn’t sure that he wanted to explain it. Maybe this should be just for him.

Jeremy sat next to him and kissed Jean’s cheek. “I am so proud of you.”

Jean smiled back. “I am proud of me too.” His forehead hit Jeremy’s and he breathed him in. “Kiss me,” he whispered—yes, he wanted that, right now, while he was feeling like this. “Kiss me and don’t stop.”

Jeremy obliged.

It was a soft kiss, all of Jean’s love pouring out of him and into that kiss. He gripped Jeremy, his hands running into Jeremy’s hair, their tongues pushing against each other. _God_, Jeremy tasted like heaven. Jean felt that new feeling in his body continue to grow and expand, and soon he was whispering,

“Now,”

“What?” Jeremy asked, dizzy from the kiss, pulling back.

“Now, I want you now.”

Jeremy smiled, breathtaking and lovely. “We can go—”

“No,” Jean whispered. “Right here.”

Jeremy seemed to have enough sense not to argue. He leaned forward and kissed away a tear that fell from Jean’s eye, and they undressed each other, taking their time, much slower than the last time. Jean’s hands ran like rivers over Jeremy’s body, before he took the time to place their clothes underneath them so they could be comfortable. Jeremy moved so he could get under, but Jean shook his head.
“No,” he whispered. “No,” he held Jeremy’s naked body close to him, brushing his lips over Jeremy’s shoulder. “Like this. Sitting, so I can see you, and the sun. You can set the pace.”

Jeremy did not argue, but he smiled and kissed Jean once more.

They took their time.

They had left the lube downstairs, so it took a very long time, Jeremy sucking on his own fingers before preparing himself. Jean just watched, he watched and waited, kissing Jeremy’s chest, his collarbones, his cheeks, his lips. Whispering against his skin that he was beautiful, and how much he loved him. The sun highlighting Jeremy in the most intense, beautiful way.

Jean smiled, “You can put your hands in my hair.”

Jeremy knew what that trust meant, and so as he did it, he kissed Jean passionately. As they kissed, he lowered himself onto Jean, and Jean had to break the kiss to breathe, but this time it happened. Jeremy was shaking against him, and Jean’s arms wrapped around him.

His brain was quiet.

Jeremy wiped away his tears. “I love you,” he told him.

Jean smiled breathlessly. “I love you too.” And he began to move.

Jeremy moved with him, Jean sitting and holding him tight. They took their time with that too, Jeremy’s hands curling in Jean’s strands and never leaving, and Jean holding Jeremy so tight that he thought this is where he would die, just like this, holding Jeremy.

Jean came apart at the same time Jeremy did,

Joy, joy, joy.

Jean whimpered, half sobbing as they held each other in the aftermath of it. He brought his hands up to cup Jeremy’s face and said to him,

“I get to heal.”


“That’s my next reason to stay alive. I get to heal. You’ve touched my hair, I came here alone, and I’ve given all I have to you. I get to heal. You allow me to heal.” His almost completely healed sprained wrist cradled Jeremy’s face. “Thank you, for giving me that.”

Jeremy kissed him again. “I’m so proud of you, my love.”

Jean hugged him again, his head pressed against Jeremy’s chest. “You are part of my great joy, Jeremy Knox.”

“You are a part of mine too, Jean Moreau.”

They got dressed after that, but didn’t leave the roof right away. Instead, they looked at their city for ten more minutes before they held hands and went back to the dorm together, to take a very long bath together.
I HOPE YOU ALL LIKED THIS CHAPTER

OUR BOY MADE IT!!!! I hope you all liked it, i hope it didn't happen too fast, but anyway, felt like an eternity to me haha. here he is, finally at the spot he wanted to be at. so there is officially no more angst, only good things ahead from here on in, still important things, but all good things

xx
“Are you ready?” Jean asked, looking down at Jeremy.

They had just finished practice and they had both showered and changed, but Jeremy was stalling. The rest of the team had filed out, and he was slowly putting his things away, looking contemplative.

Jeremy nodded, and then laughed softly. “Actually, no,” he grabbed Jean’s hand and pulled him to the bench.

Since they had finished championships, they had only this practice to do. It wasn’t so much of a practice as a fun sparring between the team. It was a goodbye, because it was their last practice together with Jeremy as their captain. Though a few of them were graduating, Jeremy leaving the team was a huge deal. The practice had Jean laughing more than anything.

“I need to speak with you.” Jeremy said, putting his hands over Jean’s.

Jean stared at him. “You’re making me afraid.”

“It’s nothing bad,” Jeremy promised him. He looked around the practice, his eyes glassy. There was a tiny smile on his face.

“Hey, amour de ma vie,” Jean whispered, brushing away a tear that slipped. “What troubles you?”

Jeremy laughed softly. “Nothing. Nothing at all. I just can’t believe it was our last practice, I guess.”

“You gave a rousing speech to the team. I’m glad you made Jessica captain for next year. I think she will lead them well.”

“Thank you,” Jeremy looked back at him. “She’s soft, but tough at the same time.”

Jean waited for a moment before he asked again, “What is it, love?” he asked, running his hands along the side of Jeremy’s face. Jeremy took Jean’s hand and kissed it, then his wrist.

“After the championship game, a scout came to talk to me. They offered me a position on the team, the national team of California.” He looked uncertain of what he was saying, like he was afraid Jean would not approve, but Jean leaned forward and pressed his lips against Jeremy’s mouth.

“That is wonderful!” he exclaimed, smiling. Jeremy’s smile grew with it. “Why do you look so sad?”

“I don’t know,” Jeremy chuckled. “I’m weirdly sad about everything ending. University was difficult but I have loved my time here. I’m glad to continue playing, but I am sad to leave all of this. This is where I met you. This is where I found my place.”

Jean nodded, he could understand that. It was like his heart was somehow breaking and growing all at once. It was a very strange thing to feel so sad and happy at the same time, but yet somehow for
something like this made it make sense.

“I know,” Jean smiled softly. “This is where I found my home as well…Jeremy?”

“Yes?”

“Did you say yes to them?”

A tear fell. “Yes.” His smile grew, split across his face like sunshine. “They offered you a position as well. They said we worked well together.”

Jean’s heart was beating faster now. “They are not wrong.”

“I told them my yes was contingent on whether or not you joined me.”

Jean laughed weakly. “You lovesick fool. Where else would I go? You are my home, and I will follow you anywhere.” He didn’t realize it before, but really, it made sense. He wouldn’t be on a team without Jeremy. Sure, he could go places alone, but now, he didn’t want to. He didn’t need it, but he wanted Jeremy around him always.

Jeremy moved forward, and their lips met once more. Jean kissed him back passionately, their hands reaching up to cup each other’s faces, run hands through each other’s hair, grasp each other’s shoulders. They kissed like it was their last kiss and their first, and in a way it was. Soon they would be graduating. They were weeks away. It was the last kiss they would have in this room, and their first kiss of a new beginning.

When Jeremy pulled away, he had tears running rivers down his face, but his smile suggested nothing besides happiness. Jean wiped his tears and kissed his nose.

“Number twenty-five,” Jean whispered, brushing his lips over Jeremy’s. “I can’t stop looking at Jeremy’s smile.”

Jeremy laughed softly. “You think I’m the lovesick fool?”

“When do we start practice?” he asked.

“Late July.”

“So?” he asked, smiling at him tenderly. “Where do you want to go?”

“What?”

“When we graduate. I was thinking that perhaps we can take one last trip with the Trojans, and then travel. Maybe we can go to Spain, or Italy.” He didn’t say France, and that was enough for Jeremy to know that he should not suggest it to him.

Jeremy’s smile never faded. It didn’t lessen. It stayed on his face and burned into Jean’s mind, and he doubted that it would leave his mind. He knew one thing for sure, he would never want it to leave his mind either.

“Italy,” Jeremy said immediately.

Jean nodded. “It’s a romantic country.”

“Just in general?”
“That’s what the Italians say.”

“By the way,” Jeremy told him, finally getting up and grabbing his things. “I’m not sleeping in a hostel. I want a nice hotel. I want to be treated like a king.”

“You and me both,” Jean grabbed his bag, and then took Jeremy’s hand as they made their way outside of the locker room. “I want you to see Italy properly, and be relaxed before we work ourselves to the absolute bone.”

Jeremy laughed. “I cannot wait!” he exclaimed, that smile mending every single scar in Jean’s body. The door of the locker rooms shut behind them, leaving the Trojan court long behind them.

Chapter End Notes

im sorry this one was short! but i hope you liked it anyhow. school is kicking my butt, and i wanted to update something anyhow.

xx
the twenty-sixth reason

Graduation.
You are alive.
Graduation.
You made it.
Graduation.
You healed.
Graduation.
Jean Moreau, you magnificent man.

Jean let a tear fall, Jeremy’s words running miles around in his head. They were hugging, Jeremy holding him close. Their hats were tilted from having brushed against each other, and Noah, Laila and Alvarez were somewhere in the distance, yelling their heads off in congratulations. Mostly, Jean could just focus on this. Hugging Jeremy.

“We did it,” Jean whispered.

Jeremy nodded, pulling back and putting Jean’s face in his hands. “We did it,” he sighed. “We graduated. Holy fu—”

“GUYS!” Noah bounded up to them, his arms snaking around their sides. He had allowed Jess to dress his hat in glitter, and was smiling broadly. The girls were coming up behind him, all teary eyed and hugging each other. Jess was dressed to impress, and holding car keys in her hand. “Come on,” he kissed Jean on the cheek and then Jeremy. “I have a surprise planned.”

Jeremy looked at him in confusion. “What?”

“If I told you, it wouldn’t be a surprise.” Noah winked. His hands slipped into both of theirs, and he pulled them away.

Jean followed, the happy expressions on his friend’s faces wrapping around his heart and filling him with ease. He couldn’t believe it. After all this time, he had come to this moment, and it turned out to be such an easy thing for him. There was a moment in time where he would have thought he wouldn’t have made it to this day. He was supposed to die today.

He was supposed to die.

No, he was supposed to live.

He was always supposed to live.

He looked at Jeremy’s tear-streaked face and knew in his heart that it was true. Of course, this was the only thing he could have done. There was nothing else but this. Holding his friend’s hand, and
They had driven up to the mountains.

They had hiked up as far as they could before Noah started to complain, and before Alvarez shot him a glare. They had walked until Jess was holding the stitch in her side, and Jeremy and Jean had to use each other to hold onto. They had walked until Laila had reached the halfway point, put out her arms and tilted her head back, feeling the sun on her skin.

They had all walked in their graduation gowns, hot and sweaty, and they wouldn’t have had it any other way. There was enough wind that by the time they had stopped, they at least felt a little better.

Jean looked down at his city. He couldn’t remember why he had been so afraid. He couldn’t remember why he had ever thought he wouldn’t have come to this moment. Now that it was here, he couldn’t imagine being anywhere else.

“Jean,” Jess was the one to bring him out of his daze.

He looked over at her, and her smile was as bright as the rest of them. She had tears in her eyes too. Jean couldn’t blame her. They were all leaving, she was going to be the new captain. She was losing things and gaining them. She was proud of her friends and sorry they were leaving.

Jess held out her hand.

Jean took it.

They were not close friends by any means at all, but her hand felt like home, because this was his home. California. The Trojans.

Jeremy Knox.

“We have a present for you.” she told him, and then looked over at Jeremy. “We have one for you too.”

Jeremy grinned. “What do you mean?”

Jess fixed Jean so he was standing right next to Jeremy, while she, the girls and Noah all stood in front of them. Jess took off her bag, it was large, but her bags were always large, so Jean hadn’t really thought much of it. But now that she was opening it, his heart thudded against his chest, anticipation eating him.

Laila was smiling. “We got in contact with your new team. With a lot of persuasion—”

“—and a little bribery—” Alvarez added.

“—we managed to convince them that we would assign your numbers.” Laila finished, pointing at Noah.

“For our Captain, my Captain, the only Captain I could ever imagine having,” Noah went inside of Jess’ bag and took out a jersey. It was nearly identical to the Trojan one, which was partially why
they were so happy to continue playing for California. It was red and gold, the shoulders were black, and the crest was a design of three stars for the number of championships they won, over California’s national flower the poppy. On Jeremy’s jersey, the number one was in gold, with Knox over the top.

Jeremy laughed. “You bribed them to give me the number one even though I’m not a captain?”

“Nah,” Alvarez laughed. “We just bribed the truth out of them.” she took the jersey and shot it at him. “You’ll be captaining a new team.”

Jeremy looked at her with wide eyes. “Are you serious?”

“Very,”

Jeremy looked down at his jersey, feeling it. Jean kissed his shoulder, because of course this had to happen. It made complete sense that right away, Jeremy would become captain.

Noah went inside of Jess’ bag again. “For Jean Moreau,”

Jess said, “We figured you were tired of being number three your whole life.”

Alvarez shrugged. “Especially since you were never really number three at all.”

Laila looked at him softly. “So we thought it was about time you got a number that actually meant something to you.”

Noah took Jean’s folded jersey and walked over to him. For a moment, Jean just stared at Noah, who stared back. “I’m going to miss you,” he said softly.

Jean nodded. “I will miss you too, my friend.”

He looked down, and smiled softly. “Number twelve,” he whispered.

Noah’s hand brushed his. “One for Jeremy, two for Kevin. We thought it was nice symmetry.”

Jean looked back up at him, the fabric under his hands whispering you are starting, this is your beginning, this is yours, and you deserve it.

Jean closed his eyes, tears dripping out from them. “Twenty six,” he said out loud. “I am not number three anymore. It is just a number. I am more than a number. The Trojans know that.”

Saying it out loud meant something important to him, in front of these important people, next to his boyfriend, overlooking the city.

Jeremy’s hand was on his cheek. Jean opened his eyes, and they looked at each other. Jeremy kissed him tenderly. “You were never number three.”

Jean knew that now.

So did his friends.

Jean smiled and looked at his friends. “You are all my family,” he told them. “No matter what happens from here, we will always be family.”

Noah was gripping Jean’s hand tightly. “Right back at you man.”

Laila, Alvarez and Jess came closer, and as they all wound arms and enveloped each other for a
massive hug, Jean told them, “I love you all, thank you for giving me this.”

Laila said, “I love you too.” Then Alvarez repeated it, then Jess, then Noah.

Jeremy said it twice. Once to them all, and once just to Jean.

Jean felt the sun on his shoulders, the world at his feet.

*You healed.*

*You made it.*

*You are alive.*

*You are number twelve.*

*Jean Moreau, you are alive.*

Chapter End Notes

i hope you all liked this chapter!! the next chapter its just jerejean andddddd they are in an apartment living together! so the last four chapters will all outside of the university!
Jean has noticed that when Jeremy slept in a new place, he often spoke in his sleep. It had been the same when they traveled for games. Jean didn’t know why it happened, but he suspected that it was simply due to the fact that Jeremy was a little anxious about being in a bed he was not used to, in a new place. He spoke when he was restless in his sleep. It was thus, not something that happened often, but when it did, it kept Jean up.

Jean didn’t even really mind.

Jeremy talking in his sleep was something quite hilarious to Jean. He spoke about such strange things, having dreams of ghosts and dinosaurs to situations that involved something as strange and minuscule as a pickle fiasco. Jean never asked what the dreams were about when morning came. It was never as funny and it ruined the mystery of whatever it was Jeremy was dreaming about.

He was speaking tonight because he was in a new bed. Their new bed. In their new apartment.

Though they hadn't finished unpacking, they had moved all their stuff in and gotten the biggest things finished. They were living in a condo, had painted and furnished and thus were able to sleep for the first time in their new home. It still astounded Jean that he had a home at all, with this person that he loved so dearly. That such a thing had been attainable after all this time.

Ever since graduation, things felt so easy. Jeremy said he deserved it. Jean found himself believing him. They had gone on their camping trip with the Trojan, and had gone to Italy as they had planned. They had gone to Rome, Florence, Venice, Verona, and Milan. It had been beautiful, they had eaten more than Jean thought he would ever be able to eat, had (almost) accidentally gotten married on a boat (they didn't know captain's actually could marry you), and then had come home, tanned, refreshed and happy. They started practice in a week, and Jean felt good about it.

But, right now, Jean was just focusing on Jeremy.

Tonight he was mumbling about Noah, and what made it better was that not only was Jeremy speaking in his sleep, but he was giggling too. Jean smiled, because of how unsurprising it was to him that Jeremy Knox would be laughing even in his sleep.

Jean chuckled and at the same time, Jeremy laughed a little louder, and his eyes blinked open tiredly.

Jean couldn’t stop grinning. “Jer?”

Jeremy looked beyond dazed and confused. Jean knew he was tired, he never slept well when he spoke in his sleep and it was barely near morning.

Jeremy murmured. “I heard myself laughing.”

Jean laughed at that, his voice sounding like thunder in the darkness of the room. “Of course you did.”

Jeremy yawned tiredly. “Noah was being a little shit,”
“That is unsurprising.” Jean murmured, moving forward to kiss him softly. “You must be tired.”

“Exhausted,” he corrected him smoothly. “You?”

“Very awake. Although I know of a way in which you can tire me out.”

Jeremy grinned, and immediately took Jean in for a kiss.

Considering it was dark, Jean thought that they did quite well for themselves. They removed their clothes and only bumped their heads once in the process. They laughed into each other’s mouths as they continued to claim each other, their kisses tired and wild all at once, never losing their desire for the other.

Jean fumbled in the dark looking for the lube, accidentally squirting some on Jeremy’s chest.

“Whoops, sorry,” he scooped it up with his fingers as Jeremy shivered and they smiled with stupid happiness as they kissed each other, Jean slipping a finger inside of Jeremy.

They had learnt how to make love to each other. They had learned that even if Jeremy was ready and prepared, they always had to wait until Jean was the one who was ready and prepared. Usually, that came after a lot of coaxing and encouragement from Jeremy, but he never complained.

Jean loved him for it.

Jean worked him until three fingers went smoothly in, and worked him for some time after that too, Jeremy working him back in the process, kissing him and whispering romantic nothings in his ear.

When Jean prepared himself he pushed in, Jeremy’s gasp sending a shiver down his spine. He began to move immediately, Jeremy moving with him, his hips pushing down and meeting Jean every time he moved forward.

Jean preferred when they made love with the lights on, because he liked to see Jeremy’s expression but this had a strange effect on his body as well. The darkness made it hard for him to see, it was just touch. Their hands roaming freely, like discovering each other for the first time all over again. Their lips missing their spot and landing on a cheek, or an ear, or a neck, but dragging their way up to each other after that.

Jeremy laughed, and moaned as Jean hit his prostate. “It’s like we’re blessing the apartment. Breaking in the bed.”

Jean hit he same spot again, grinning from Jeremy’s continuous moan. “If you want me to break the bed, I can do that.”

Jeremy laughed again and tightened—he was very close. “Maybe next time tough guy.”

Jean chuckled and pushed Jeremy over the edge, following him shortly after. To the best of his abilities, he grabbed whatever piece of clothing he found first and cleaned them up before laying back down.

Jeremy sighed and curled up to Jean. “Thank you.”

Jean chuckled again—Jeremy would sleep soundly now. “You’re welcome, roomie.”

“I think we’re a bit more than that.”

“A bit,” Jean agreed. He brushed his lips over Jeremy’s hair and whispered. “Sleep, my love, a
dreamless sleep.”

Jeremy gave a happy sigh, and it matched the contentment in Jean’s heart. “I love you.”

“I love you too.”

It took very little time for Jeremy to fall asleep, judging from the sound of his labored breaths. Jean stayed up for a bit longer than him, his hands running marathons through Jeremy’s hair. The last thought he had before he fell asleep was,

27. jeremy talking in his sleep

Chapter End Notes

hope you enjoyed this chapter! next chapter kevin day returns! he makes a pit stop in cali :)


okay so for those of you who havent read my kevin day fic you might get confused but i hope you like it anyway!

“I can’t move,” Jeremy collapsed on the couch. Jean fell right next to him, laughing tiredly. They were fresh from their shower but it was too early to crawl into bed.

They had finished a particularly brutal game, ending in a win and apparently the complete destruction of their muscles. Jean couldn’t ever remember having worked himself so hard.

Jean rubbed his hand on Jeremy’s thigh, “You played well today.”

“Thanks,” Jeremy winced as he tried to move. “I didn’t think we were going to win.”

“That’s why you’re captain,” Jean reminded him. “You spurred them forward with your spirit. We won because of you.”

“We won because of the team.”

“That you inspired.”

Jeremy chuckled, putting his hands up in defeat. “Okay, okay, I give,” he groaned as he heard the buzzer to the condo ring. He looked at Jean who shook his head and laughed. “You’re lucky I love you.”

“Don’t I know it.”

Jeremy threw a pillow at him and got up, walking slowly over to the door to unlock it, buzzing the person up. He looked back at Jean as he waited. “What?”

“Aren’t you going to ask who it is?”

Jeremy shrugged nonchalantly as Jean gave a small laugh. When there was a knock on the door Jeremy opened it, and in unison, his and Jean’s mouths fell open.

“Kevin?” Jeremy asked, bringing Kevin in for a hug. “What are you doing here?”

Jean suddenly did not feel so tired. “Are you alright?” He got up from the couch and walked over, hugging Kevin.

Kevin nodded. He didn’t look like anything was wrong. In fact, he seemed a little bubbly, playing with his hands and smiling crookedly.

“I need to speak with you,” Kevin told Jean, looking only at him.

Jean nodded. “Do you want to come in?” He couldn’t fathom what had been so important that Kevin had flown all the way to California without Matt but he would find out soon enough.
Kevin shook his head. “Let's go for a drive.”

That was how they ended up at a pound. Jean didn’t want to go in but Kevin didn’t ask him to, they just sat in the parking lot, staring at it. The silence was making Jean nervous.

“Kevin—“

“Matt wants a dog.” Kevin said softly. “Well, we both do. But Matt is already kind of like a dog.”

“I’ll let him know you said that.”

Kevin smiled softly, a small chuckle leaving him. Then he was silent again.

Jean frowned. “Kevin where is Matt?” He asked.

“In Germany,”

“Germany? Why are you here and he’s in Germany?”

“He’s going back home tomorrow, I just had to leave early when it happened. I had to come see you.”

“Kevin, see me for what?”

Kevin looked over at him, his eyes soft and shining with tears. But his face wasn’t sad, he looked overjoyed. Out from his pocket he took out a simple, slim silver ring, and slipped it on his left hand.

“Matt has proposed to me.”

Jean sat there, stunned. It was not that he was unsurprised that Matt had done such a thing, but rather he was surprised that even after all this time he still got a little shocked when something good happened to them.

Jean’s face broke out into a smile, and in turn, Kevin's face lit up with it. He gave a happy laugh and they hugged awkwardly over the gearshift.

“I’m french, so it meant more to Kevin, Jean said, “I’m so happy for you, brother.”

Kevin pulled back and replied in French, “Thank you.” He sat back and wiped his eyes. “I wanted, I felt like I had to tell you in person.”

“You could have phoned.”

“No, I couldn’t have. I wanted to see your face, remember that we’re alive, and we made it. And we get to have all this.”

Jean smiled and took his hand. “We do Kevin, and you deserve it.”

“So do you.” He threw him a suggestive glance. “When’s that going to happen?”

“Jeremy and I?” He laughed softly. “I don’t know. Jeremy is waiting for me to do it, and I suppose
when it happens it’ll happen. I don’t want to think about it, I’m hoping I’ll just...know.”

“You better fly out to New York and come and see me when it happens.”

Jean laughed before asking, “Why did you though? I mean why Germany? Why make the decision to come now? You could have come down with Matt.”

Kevin was looking at Jean with such absolute love that it almost broke Jean’s heart. But in a strangely good way. “Nicky moved to Germany, and Matt wanted to propose there with him. Nicky and I are very close, and he wanted to make it special. Except without my brother there to tell, it wasn’t the same.”

Jean smiled lightly, squeezing Kevin’s hand fondly. “So you flew to California.”

“I did. Matt understood, so did Nicky. I just had to see you, because you know me, you’ve known me forever. Seemed like the thing to do. Plus I wanted you to find out from me, not the press.”

“I’m glad that you did,” Jean said quickly. “I should send a message to Jeremy, I’m sure he’s well into his fifth panic attack right now.”

Kevin stilled Jean, “Not just yet.”

“But—”

But Kevin was looking at the pound. “Matt wants a dog.” He reminded him.

Jean laughed.

Jean ended up adopting four cats. He couldn’t help it, not really, and the German shepherd seemed to really like the cats anyhow.

Jeremy had been over the moon for Kevin’s new and had sent Matt a million and one text messages in congratulations. While Jeremy prepared dinner, Kevin and Jean went out again for food for the animals, while Kevin called the airlines to set something up for his flight home with his new found friend, Bandit.

Jeremy was not at all mad about the cats. He was already acting like a proud mother.

Jean realized right then, as he looked at Kevin and Jeremy laugh about God knows what. He and Kevin were, he could safely say, back to how they used to be. No, better, they were how they always should have been.

As they sat there, Jean reaching down to pat one of the cat’s heads (they had been named: Flower, Dusty, Cuddles, and Coco) Jean thought about his next reason. It wasn’t even really about him. But somehow that made it better.

28. *kevin and i have been talking regularly, and he is happy. that is a good reason.*

Chapter End Notes
i hoped you liked this chapter!!!

two reasons left! thank you for all the comments and making me smile :) xx
Game nights meant one thing and one thing only:

Competition.

Jean was not a huge fan of games to begin with, but he always joined in on them anyhow. But with the whole team at his apartment, he took the time to mostly observe, even though he was participating within the games. He observed, because he wanted to make sure that the team was in a good place.

The team.

The Trojans were not his team anymore.

In a way though, they would always be.

Jean listened and learned, and his heart was full knowing that everyone who he loved was doing so well for themselves.

Jess was handling the new Trojans fairly well, but she had admitted to calling Dan Wilds of the Foxes to help her control the more rowdy new Trojans. Then she had called Neil, but Jean quietly advised her to maybe take Dan’s advice rather than the blunt force of Neil Josten. Her relationship with Noah was advancing nicely. Noah had taken Jean aside and told him (in a little too much detail) that he had finally “closed the deal” with Jess.

Thankfully, Noah was more invested in the emotional stability between he and Jess and not just the sexual stuff. For which Jean was glad, mostly because Jess had always liked Noah a little more than Noah liked her at the beginning. They did both deserve happiness, and Jean was more than happy to see them working together.

Noah was simply glowing, and it wasn’t just because of Jess. He was absolutely in love with his little brother from the Big Brother program. He had gotten a job with an organization that helps adults with disabilities to manage their life. Noah said the work was hard, but there was nothing else he wanted to do. It gave him joy to help others, and more than anything, Jean wanted him to have that.

Alvarez and Laila had chosen that night to announce their engagement. They had both signed teams, and their life was falling together. Jean was thrilled for them, his head whirling with the fact that everyone seemed to be getting engaged, but Jean was glad for it.

The other Trojans of the team were all doing well, those who were still at the school praised Jess as their new Captain, and those who were getting ready to graduate where asking Jean and Jeremy for life advice.

Jean’s only piece of advice was one word: try.

Without trying, without making the effort, nothing would ever come through.

As the night continued, the talking diminished and the yelling escalated. Noah and Jean were
battling it out over a video game, to which Jean swore and gave up, and Jeremy took his place (and still didn’t end up beating Noah). Laila had convinced everyone to end up playing cards against humanity, to which they ended up laughing so much that Noah ended up with some of his water coming out of his nose.

By the end of the night, most of the Trojans had passed out from their drunken state or a state of exhaustion, and Jean couldn’t tell which it was anyhow. He wasn’t too sure that it mattered regardless, and in all honesty, having the Trojan team scattered around his house gave him a warm and fuzzy feeling inside.

At the end of it all, no matter where they would go, no matter what team that they would play for, it would always come down to this. The Trojans. The Trojans, Jeremy and Jean. In one place, under one roof, fighting with each other, either over Exy or board games.

As far as Jean saw it, there were a lot of far worse things they could have been doing. After a lifetime of suffering, years of pain that Jean would not wish on anyone, sometimes it paid to have nothing but a board game night to help fix all the problems inside.

But every day that passed, those problems were becoming few and far between. Jean could feel it all inside him, how eventually, there would be nothing but good times for him.

Jean chuckled as he watched Jeremy walk around the room with a camera, taking photos of all the passed out Trojans. When Jean gave him a look of disapproval, Jeremy chuckled and said,

“What? This is definitely a Kodak moment.” Then he had added, after a moment of thought. “This should be number twenty nine. Game nights with the Trojans.”

Jean didn’t think hard about it. Jeremy was right.

He usually was.

Chapter End Notes

i know this one was short, and there was no talking, but i always thought jean tended to live in his head a little bit, so this chapter was always going to be like that

as for the shortness im not feeling too well, but i wanted to put this out anyhow.

last chapter coming up, thank you all so much for joining me thus far x
nearly a decade later

**Jeremy + Jean from Kevin’s group chat : HAPPY BIRTHDAY KEVIN!! HAVE A LOVELY DAY!!**

**Jean :** Happy birthday my friend, I hope to see you soon. I will call you later, whenever Jeremy decides he’s had enough touring my home town.

**Jeremy :** hey, I’ve never been to France, let me have my fun.

**Jean :** well, you didn’t have to send him five selfies of us in any case.

**Jeremy :** they were happy birthday selfies!!

“Are you finished now?” Jean asked, taking Jeremy’s phone away.

The sun was shining nicely on the two of them. Jean felt good. He felt good because he had made the decision, after all this time to come back home.

Marseille.

France.

Jean did not return to go see his parents, because even after all this time, there were some things he did not want to forgive. He was not angry about it, or sad either, but he did not think that he owed them anything. Jeremy never pushed him, because Jeremy knew better, and so they were more than okay with doing just this. Touring.

Coming home felt like becoming whole. Jean felt that missing piece slot into place, because of all the things he wanted to be sure he was okay with, he never wanted to be afraid of coming home. It had taken time, but now that it was here, he was glad.

Marseille was a beautiful place, sheltered and surrounded by hills that had taken over the suburbs. The Old Port lay along the rocky coastline, a tidal lake along the western part before the shoreline flattened out. The city was magnificent, the people were genuine, and the food was glorious.

“Much better than American food,”

“You barely eat American food as it is.” Jeremy pointed out, as they walked along, holding hands. Jeremy was really trying to involve himself in having the realest French experience possible. He looked ridiculous, a beret on his head, clothes that were far fit on him than he usually wore them,
and a baguette bagged in his hand.

“Because fried food is disgusting.” Jean reminded him.

“Whatever,” he bit right into the bread and smiled toothily and Jean rolled his eyes but did not bother to hide his smile.

He had no reason to do so. “Would you like to know something?” he asked.

Jeremy nodded. “Always,”

“I think that bringing you here is the best decision I ever made.”

Jeremy was more than on board with that. He tightened his grip on Jean’s hand. “When we retire we can move here.” He offered, and just the notion of it, the possibility, and the idea that Jeremy thought about something like this during his free time. Even after years of being together, it continued to make Jean feel like he was on top of the world.

“Retire from Exy,” Jean snorted. “I never thought there would be a day where I could say that.”

“Well you also never thought you would be married.”

Jean rolled his eyes, but smiled, bringing their twined hands up to kiss their wedding bands. Their wedding had been a very quiet, small thing. It had been done at Jeremy’s house, in the backyard, with Kevin, Matt, Jess, Laila, Alvarez and Noah as the only other attendants. Jean did not think he would have wanted it any other way. They had vegan cake for dessert (which Noah pretended to like, but gracefully ate anyway. It was small and quiet, existing only for them.

It was a very Jean Moreau kind of wedding. He was shocked that he had even wanted one, but after Matt and Kevin had gotten married, Jean wanted nothing more than to tie himself forever to the person he loved the most.

“May I ask you something?” Jeremy pulled him to a bench, one that was right on the edge of the small cliff they were on, giving them a look over the city and the sea. Jean felt his heart warm.

Home.

Jean turned and looked at Jeremy, outlined by the sun. Or maybe he was the sun. Jean still got confused. “Yes,”

“Do you remember that list you wrote? You’re thirty reasons to stay alive?”

Jean smiled. He had finished that list quite some time ago. “Yes.”

“What was the last reason? I don’t think I ever saw you write it down.”

“You were asleep,” Jean said quietly. “I remember that day very, very clearly.”

“What happened?”

Jean laughed softly. “We got into a fight. A big fight, because of the game we had lost. It started out small but escalated into something enormous, and we were both being impossible. We got into a fight and both went to bed angry, and I never fell asleep.”

Jeremy looked very confused. “I don’t think I’m seeing the good point here.”
The point is we still went to sleep, in the same bed, after a fight. That after every argument, or trial, we still went to bed. You never walked away from me, you never thought of turning away. So I got up from bed and went to my diary, and wrote this…” he trailed off, taking out his phone. “I keep a photo of it on my phone, you know, just in case…”

There was the entire list, laid out for them:

Jean Moreau’s thirty reasons to stay alive

1. he is gone
2. sunrises
3. Jeremy reading Harry Potter to me
4. caramilk chocolate
5. the feel of the sun
6. dogs
7. I am reading books again
8. Riko can’t touch me anymore
9. Jeremy when he tries to speak French
10. I have not gotten any injuries that are not related to Exy in a year
11. pumpkin spice lattes
12. Trojan team
13. Kevin and I are slowly becoming friends once more
14. Renee calls every three days
15. I have come to realize I like the smell of lilies. My dorm with Jeremy is filled with them now. He took it a little out of hand. I smiled.
16. I still cannot go anywhere alone, but Jeremy always comes with me. He says it will get easier. I find myself believing him.
17. Every day is hard, but I am breathing and that’s enough of a reason
18. graduation
19. Jeremy asking to hold my hand
20. Yes means yes now, and no means no
21. The Trojans taking camping trips so we could see the stars
22. Baths after practice
23. When I sprained my hand, Jeremy allowed me to sit out the next day to heal
24. I get to heal
25. I can’t stop looking at Jeremy’s smile
26. I am not number three anymore. It is just a number. I am more than a number. The Trojans know that.
27. Jeremy talking in his sleep
28. Kevin and I have been talking regularly, and he is happy. That is a good reason.
29. Game nights with the Trojans

Then, written over and over again, the words spiraling over each other until they were darkened so much it looked like bold print, was the final line:


Jeremy kissed Jean’s cheek, and said, “Even though we had fought?”

“It made me remember that two people in love don’t give up, no matter how hard things get. If we did, we wouldn’t have ended up here.” He waved his hand over at the city below them. “There is
nowhere else I would rather be.” He moved his hand to Jeremy’s face, his thumb running over Jeremy’s bottom lip. He moved forward and kissed him softly. “I love you, Jeremy Knox, more than I have ever loved anyone in this life.”

Jeremy’s eyes were shining, he was such an easy crier. Jean loved that too. “I love you too, and I’m glad you chose to live.”

Jean, with such finality in his tone, answered, “I am very glad too.” And they held hands, and kissed softly, with Jean’s home beneath them.

Chapter End Notes

I HOPE YOU ALL ENJOYED THIS FIC

thank you for all the comments, for the love, and encouragement. thank you for sticking with it :) xx

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