Uplifting

by littlemiss_m

Summary

Prompto gets help and with said help, he finally gets better.

Prompto spends two days in the hospital before he's moved to the clinic – Riverside Retreat and Rehab, not actually built riverside – acting petulant and defiant but so close to giving in. Cor and Clarus are there for him whenever they're allowed to be, which isn't always but almost, but their presence is only a small glimmer of light in the nerve-wrecking mess that is his life. For forty-eight hours (and some), Prompto sleeps on a hospital bed and tries to understand how he got here.

At the hospital, he has his own room because he's under suicide watch. At the clinic, he's still watched every second of the day, but the reason they give him his own room is because that's simply the way of the place. The room is large and airy, bathed in soft lights; it's designed to be calm and comforting, and it shows. It's still a prison all the same.

Clarus brings him a suitcase full of clothes and personal items. The staff goes through every single item, but they let Prompto keep his clothes – after pulling out the drawstring from his sweats – and all the other things, including his chocobo plushie. Then they ask for his bracelet – too many sharp little bits – and if he had the energy for it, he'd have a panic attack on the spot. He doesn't; Cor holds his shaking form while Clarus explains the situation and slaps an extra NDA on the table.

Prompto sits on a bench between Cor and Clarus and doesn't look at the nurse who explains things to him. He shies away from the doctor who does his physical and feels lost even when his own therapist shows up to talk to him, like they hadn't already met a few hours prior at the hospital. He eats lunch in his room with Cor and Clarus, wanders the building clinging to them, and then it's
suddenly dinnertime and the end of the visiting hours. No matter how he pleads and begs, they have no choice but to leave, and then he's alone again.

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He's not allowed to keep his phone but he's allowed to ask for it, so as the first evening comes to a close, that's what he does. The nurse who brings him his medications hands him his phone and sits herself in the corner while he pulls up the messenger and ignores the startlingly large number of new texts blinking at him.

Prompto (21:37 p.m.): come take me away from here please
Noctis (21:40 p.m.): you know i cant do that buddy
Prompto (21:41 p.m.): please
Noctis (21:43 p.m.): i love u so much prom, u dont even know
Noctis (21:44 p.m.): im sorry
Noctis (21:45 p.m.): goodnight
Noctis (21:45 p.m.): (chocobo sticker)

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The next day, Clarus and Cor show up for the two hours of family time allotted in Prompto's schedule. The staff say it's just for now, sweetheart, more guests will be allowed when he's settled in and a bit better, but he's in a dark mood and doesn't have it in himself to give a shit. Clarus hands him a black sweatband for his wrist and a stack of letters from the others. Prompto curls up on his bed and refuses to face them until it's time for them to leave, which is when he starts crying and begging them to stay. It still doesn't work.

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The building is large but the patients are few; out of the twenty-four available spots, Prompto is number twenty. On day three, a young woman with a vaguely familiar face leaves - "let's hope I never come back, eh!" - but Prompto wastes no time in trying to figure out her identity. The guy who sleeps three rooms down from his is one of Insomnia's most famous child actors, ten years past the peak of his career, and at least two of the others are nobility. They're nice enough, when Prompto finally gets the courage to slip into the common areas, but he's already missing his own friends.

They immerse him slowly, which means some of the things on his schedule aren't yet mandatory. They ask him to choose between one-on-one and group therapy, and he goes for the former without a second of hesitation. The clinic has its own army of therapists and doctors of all sorts, all of whom he'll meet sooner or later, but the familiar face of his own therapist is what brings him the most comfort during those first few days when everything is still new and strange and scary.

On day four, the nurse assigned to him starts to pester him about joining in on group therapy. He won't be punished for not attending (the 'not yet' hangs unspoken in the air between them), but he'll be rewarded if he does go. "I'll think about it," Prompto mumbles, not really looking at her, and then lets the meeting time pass by. Day five, he makes it to the hallways but turns around not a moment later, asks the staff if he can call someone instead. They give him permission but once he has his phone in his hands, he realizes there's no-one he'd like to call right now, when he doesn't really have anything to say, so he slinks back to his room to read the letters Clarus left with him three days earlier.

Day six, he hovers outside the meeting room until the therapist shows up and gently leads him
inside. What awaits him is not the kind of a set-up that movies led him to expect, but a smallish, comfy room with various types of chairs in a vaguely circle-like formation. Prompto sits in a corner, hiding in Noct’s old hoodie, and when the therapist looks at him with a silent question he keeps his chin down and doesn’t speak a word. The next day marks the end of his first week and Prompto just – crashes, in a way, spends the day crying and sulking and hiding as much as he’s allowed to.

Day eight, he attends group therapy once more. He sits in the same corner, wears the same hoodie, but the discussion around him drifts first to families and then to abuse, and all of sudden there’s a sudden need to speak bubbling in Prompoto’s throat, words pleading for a chance to be heard. In the room, there's a boy not much older than him, who glowers and spits curses at a man whose hands used to wander into secret places. A young woman hums, shrugs, says ”yeah, so mom never hit me or anything, but I almost wish she had, 'cause then she'd at least have acknowledged my existence, you know” and in the corner, Prompto tenses up.

The therapist catches his eye and asks a silent question. A dozen heads turn to look at Prompto who flushes and fumbles but answers all the same. ”My dad used to hit me,” he murmurs to the room of people who aren’t really strangers but who probably understand things a lot better than any of his friends do, and instead of heartbroken faces, he's met with nods and soft little *uh-huhs.*

”Yeah, that shit sucks,” someone says.

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The thing is, the clinic isn't actually that bad. Prompto just isn't anywhere near the point where he'd be able to accept that involuntary hospitalization is hospitalization and not a prison sentence.

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The second week passes. Prompto no longer cries when Cor and Clarus leave him, and better yet, he's actually able to enjoy the visiting hours. He gets used to living at the clinic, makes some friends and learns the 101s of communicating one's troubles. It's not all easy – he's spent nearly a decade trusting no-one but himself, and that's not something fixed overnight – and there are setbacks, nights spent sleepless and days when waking up takes all his energy. Then there's the one night when he lays in bed scratching at his arm, pinching and pulling at reddening skin, none of which is enough to quell the electric buzzing in his brain or the hollow numbness in his heart, so he hits himself and bangs his arm against the bed rail, over and over again, until the night nurse hears the commotion and rushes in.

It's not easy but somehow he makes it through each day. When day fourteen, Judgement Day, rolls in and he sits down between Clarus and Cor to hear the verdict, he's not surprised. The staff call him stabilized, at least somewhat, and praise his progress to his down-turned face; at the same time, they don’t think he’s ready for discharge. He’d just crash again, revert to his old ways, spiral all the way down to where he was two weeks before.

Clarus and Cor leave but Prompto stays.

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He's finally allowed guests outside of his family, which means Noctis. They haven't really talked much during the past fourteen days, only the texts Prompto sent his first night in, and then an ashamed apology a few days later. When Noctis shows up, Ignis in tow, Prompto is pacing nervously in his room, anxiety rising fast and high.

”Hey,” Noctis murmurs the second he sees Prompto. A soft smile spreads on his face and he steps
Prompto falls into the arms and then they both fall into a bean bag chair on the floor, holding tight onto each other while everything somehow, miraculously, falls back in place. He doesn't notice Ignis disappearing until a moment later, when he hears the door click shut.

"We brought you some food," Noctis explains, grimacing. "Your favorite soup, a truckload of chili and veggies. Blegh."

Something warm blooms in Prompto's chest. "Really?" he asks, hopeful. The food they serve him is great – expensive, healthy, tasty – but a simple fact of life is that nothing will ever compare to Ignis' cooking. "Green curry soup?"

"What else?" Noctis grins. They laugh together and then a silence falls. Prompto hides his face in Noctis' neck, sees little else but black hair and white skin, but he feels the environment like a second skin over his own.

"I'm sorry," he whispers. "About the texts. I shouldn't have asked that from you."

Noctis sighs. "No, I – I get why you sent them, okay? Like I understand you had to be really scared and stressed out that day." He pauses for a moment. "But I didn't really know how to respond, since I obviously couldn't actually come get you out. And I was – I was really scared, that I hurt you when I just – brushed you off like that. I was worried I made you feel like I was ignoring you, or that your feelings weren't important, shit like that."

Prompto did feel those things, but then again, he was a huge mess at the time. "I mean, I did get kinda upset back then," he says, causing Noctis to flinch, "but the next day or the one after that, I kind of... cooled down, I guess, and realized what a dick I was, asking you for something you obviously couldn't do."

Noctis hums. "I get it, I really do," he says, turning to smile at Prompto. "No hard feelings, okay?"


Noctis does. Holding onto Prompto, he twists tales of his days at the school and evenings spent immersed in a growing list of duties. He sounds lonely, a bit, like he's missing more than his best friend-slash-boyfriend, and Prompto finds himself worried because he's Noct's only friend aside from Gladio and Ignis, and once again he's managed to hurt someone he loves by not loving himself.

This is maybe something they should probably talk about – growing too dependant on each other – but Prompto is tired and warm, and then Ignis is there with three bowls of steaming-hot soup, and the scent of chili and garlic is enough to flood his mouth with saliva, and that's that.

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Three weeks in, the staff is still praising him but reluctant to let him leave just yet. They do let him out, though, for a short few hours every other day, and Prompto goes grocery shopping with Cor and watches sports marathons with the Amicitias, lounging on a couch with his feet in Gladio's lap and his back braced against Clarus' side. At the end of the fourth week, Noctis takes him to the arcade, and they have fun, so much fun, yet as the crowds begin to grow and the lines at the games get longer, Noctis' mood begins to crash.

It's bedtime when he returns to Riverside, but one of the house therapists is waiting for him all the same. "I won't take too much of your time," the man says, waiting while a nurse takes Prompto's
outdoor shoes and his phone. Once in his room, Prompto plops down on his bed and buries his face in a pillow, groaning.

"How was your evening?" the therapist asks, taking a seat nearby.

Prompto takes a moment before answering. It's all he can do to keep his eyes open, yet he knows this is important, has learned at least that much during the past month. "Good," he mumbles, then twists his head to the side so he can see the therapist. "At first, at least. I had a lot of fun with Noct."

The therapist smiles. "That's great to hear. Did something change, then?"

"I dunno," Prompto says, attempting a shrug. "I just got – tired, all of sudden, even though I was having fun. Almost fell asleep at the dinner table."

"Both depression and anxiety are known to deplete energy reserves," the therapist comments almost offhandedly. The thing is, Prompto knows as much; he's lost count of all the pamphlet and booklets he's read through, never mind the therapy sessions where he's learned to dissect his entire being into symptoms and personal characteristics. He knows, yet...

"Is it always going to be like this?" he murmurs, a touch of sadness seeping past his fatigue. The therapist's smile mirrors his melancholy; they both know the answer. They look at each other, a boy too tired to breathe and a man trying to instill the joy of life in him once more. Prompto craves touch all of sudden but knows he'll find none here, where rules forbid physical contact unless absolutely necessary. At home, Cor would sit down next to him, offer his quiet support and give whatever Prompto needed, but Clarus would wrap him in a hug without even being asked to. These are things he's only now beginning to truly appreciate, to actually accept that others giving him comfort and love is not something to feel bad about.

The therapist stands up. Instead of offering the hug Prompto so desperately needs, he slaps the foot of the bed with his palm and smiles. "I've got your medications here," he says, and Prompto forces himself to sit up even though he barely has the energy for it.

* * *

He gets better.

At the end of week five, Clarus and Cor show up to hear the words that have Prompto grinning shyly with a smile wide as his face: they'll start working on his discharge. It'll take time, a week or two or three, but the staff slowly increases his outside time until he's allowed first a full day and then a full weekend away from the clinic, and that's just the beginning. They forward him to a partnership clinic that offers outpatient care and then, all of sudden, comes the long-awaited day when Prompto packs up his bags and walks out of the Riverside Retreat & Rehab, hopefully for good.

He gets better, but it's not all over. By the time he's discharged, enough time has passed that there is snow on the ground and the promise of winter holidays sparkling in the air, and he's so far behind in school that there's no point in him even trying to attend the rest of the fall semester. He'll have to spend the spring catching up, the summer cramming for exams his classmates will take at the end of the spring semester. If all else fails, he'll repeat the entire year, but he's hopeful and believes he can still catch up.

He gets better. Sometimes his arms still itch for the slice of a sharp blade, and sometimes his anxiety gets so bad he works himself into a panic attack. He has nightmares and bad days and even
a couple bad weeks, but he's learned to deal with them and fights his way through with the support of his friends and family. Every Sunday, he arranges the week’s medications into a pill dispenser under the watchful gaze of either Cor or Clarus, and then gives away the orange bottles until the next week.

It's not easy, but he gets better. He still struggles but now, for the first time in a very long time, Prompto has hope.

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