Never Thought You'd Fall So Far
by sk_elene

Summary

It's their first year in University but life has so many changes for them. Jean's parents are getting a divorce but thankfully Marco, his sweet angel is here for him. His unwavering and sunshine best friend.
But, Marco is not really what he seems.
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Notes

I have had this thought in my mind for a while and after a year of writer's block, I decided that my boys need and deserve this story of theirs to be told.
A fic which Marco has depression and Jean tries his best.
Please, take care while reading it, it can be quite triggering.
The sharp autumn breeze sent shivers down to the black haired boy’s spine but he did little to pick his pace up to avoid the cold. His flannel shirt did a poor job keeping him warm this early on the morning, but he loved this weather more than anything, so the only thing he did was to close his eyes as his favourite music strummed out of his headphones.

He took a large sip from his overdosed-with-cinnamon hot coffee and he let an audible sigh of pleasure. Damn, he loved autumn.

The boy opened his eyes again and stopped at his tracks as he reached the benches where his friend told him to wait. He scanned the perimeter with his chestnut eyes, now almost fully awake. He fought back a yawn as he shrugged, knowing his friend would take his sweet time to arrive and sat down on the closest bench, placing his backpack right beside him.

The boy looked down at his phone screen to change the song and then relaxed to the sound of the new song playing. He took in his surroundings once more. He was on campus just for a week but somehow it felt comfortable to be around.

He looked at the trees that surrounded the park-like spot and smiled to himself as he noticed that few leaves had started changing their colour to a rich orange. The weather was changing to match his mood swings it seemed. But so did his body, the freckles that dusted his face and arms had already starting fading and his appetite had increased. ‘Just like every autumn’ the boy pondered in his mind.

He closed his eyes again after taking a few more sips from his coffee and waited. “Oi! Marco!” the boy’s eyes flung open and he almost dropped his precious coffee as the jerk of a friend he had startled him.

“What the hell, Jean?” Marco groaned as the jerk chuckled. “You are just so easy to scare. I can’t help myself.” Jean snickered as Marco huffed with annoyance and gathered. “Ready to go?” Jean bounced back and forth from the balls of his feet to his heels.

“What’s with all of the excitement?” Marco eyed him as he got up with a nod. “Oh, man. That’s a surprise.” The two-tone-haired boy smiled slyly. “Uh, o-ok?” Marco didn’t question him further and just followed him as he made his way to the campus’ café.

Jean stopped in front of the board that hangs out of the shop’s front door and smiled at Marco as he pointed at one of the announcements. Marco leaned in to see what the thing Jean was so excited about was and as soon as he read it a smile found its way to his lips.

“No way!” Marco whispered. “Yes way, baby!” Jean’s smile widened. “They are screening ‘Donnie Darko’? I thought they didn’t screen old movies.” Marco turned at Jean, his eyes shining.
“Oi, first of all, ‘Donnie Darko’ is a classic and also it’s not that old. So what’cha say?” he pointed at the screening hours.

“We either go to the midnight one or we don’t go at all.” Marco answered and Jean shook his head. “I swear you want us to get murdered or something.” Jean feigned a scowl but it easily cracked into a smile.

“Did you eat breakfast yet?” Jean asked as if he and Marco didn’t share a dorm and did everything together.

Marco shook his head and the lean boy spread his hand to his back leading him inside the café.

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Marco and Jean were friends since the early years of junior high. Marco was the newcomer in Jean’s class and Jean had taken an immediate liking on him, he blamed it on the freckles and to the always present smile.

It wasn’t a creepy smile. Not even close. It was a warm and genuine smile that bore a familiarity to it that Jean couldn’t quite place.

It helped that they shared not only most of their classes but also most of their interests as well. They had bonded over popcorn buckets and shared earbuds.

Marco made puberty and Jean’s anger issues much easier and Jean knew that his mother probably had raised a shrine for Marco, as she was too tired of slamming doors and slurred curses.

Marco was his strength and his reassurance that someone would always be there for him. Jean was forever grateful for the freckled angel by his side. God knows how many times Marco had dragged him out of silly fights and almost drunk bad decisions.

He should raise a shrine to Marco as well.

When high school ended Jean was scared that Marco would be accepted to a different university and they would be forced to part, and dear Jesus, Jean’s social skills were fucking shit. He often came as aggressive and abrasive but he was hardly any of those. Yeah, ok he had short temper but it was short only for those that were begging for it. His grungy-punkish style didn’t help the situation at all.

Even Marco had once admitted to him that he was taken aback when Jean was staring at him the first week at junior high. Amber eyes fixed at him every time he turned around from his seat, a few piercings and bleached hair to add in the intimidation game. And that permanent scowl.
Despite his image, Jean was easy-going and in fact really funny and warm-hearted. But it took one with Marco’s ‘bravery’ and persistence to find this out and pierce the ‘punk’ veil he had set for himself.

It was a shitty way to filter the people that made their way into his life but it worked so far. No more bullying about his plumpy cheeks- which he had lost but still feared the dark days of elementary school- or him being a momma’s boy- like he could help the fact that his mom was the school’s nurse.

Despite his fear, he and Marco were blessed enough to not only be in the same university but in the same dorm as well.

Jean knew Political Science wasn’t going to be easy nor would be Psychology. So he was really grateful for the fact that he and Marco would have each other 24/7.

These four years were going to be unforgettable. That was a thought that never failed to send a smile to Jean’s lean features. A genuine smile, like Marco’s.

“Earth to Jean-bo! Earth to Jean-bo! Do you copy?” Marco’s voice snapped him out of his thoughts. Jean shot his head back and blinked rapidly, making Marco break into a fit of amused laughter.

Jean blushed due to the fact he was caught overthinking, trying to shake it off he shrugged and took a sip from his way-too-sweet coffee and he glared at Marco as he gulped it down but somehow failed and started coughing. This worked as a queue for Marco to burst into laughter again. Laughing while his best friend was facing the death threat of a wrongly gulped sip. What a jerk.

“What?” he finally said after his cough and Marco’s laughter subsided.

“Uhm?” Marco blinked blankly. “Oh, yes. I was meaning to ask you about your schedule. Is it up yet? Did you see if we share any classes? I spoke with Ymir yesterday and she said that we surely share one or two but she couldn’t remember in which semester.”

“Oh, yeah.” Jean sighed and pulled out his phone and searched for his semester program. “I got Sociology and Statistics on the shared subjects. Who’s your professor in those?”

Marco pulled out his own phone and scrolled down to his files, finding his program. “Sociology with Mrs Brzenska and Statistics with Mr Zacharius.” He answered and Jean smiled. “Yup. We got the same ones.”

“Great. You know I can’t stand the small talk alone.” Jean continued and Marco smiled back at him.
“Oh. I almost forgot. Ymir invited us over to her and Krista’s place tonight. She said she wanted to throw a get together before classes start and that other freshman will be there too for us to meet.” The freckled boy explained.

Jean groaned in response. “Come on, Jean. In that way, we’ll get to know other people and perhaps hang around before classes start so we won’t be like fish out of the water the first few weeks. It’ll be fun. Also, I thought you liked parties.” Marco put an amused expression on his face.

“Pffft. Ok, first of all. I thought today was going to be a CoD and pizza night. Second of all, I like parties I just don’t like Ymir’s noogies out of the blue every-like- ten minutes if I am at a 30 feet radius near her.” The ashy-blonde explained with an eye roll.

“Yeah, but what if I told you Jaeger Co. are invited too?” Marco smirked slyly. He knew exactly which buttons to push. Jean’s eyes snapped wider. “You mean-” his voice came out high pitched and Marco hardly stifled his laughter. Jean blushed lightly and cleared his throat with a too- much growl. “You mean, Mikasa too?” he asked with an indifferent tone but Marco saw how his eyes flickered. He took a bite from his croissant, making Jean burn in agony for a little bit. The croissant somehow tasted bitter and Marco frowned.

“Yup.” He finally said. “Fuck, ok. Whatever. Let’s go.” The boy across the table nodded, not able to hide his smirk.

Ymir was just a year older than them and was now a sophomore in Engineering. They were in the same high school and she was a good friend to both of them.

They had met by chance at their high school’s cafeteria when Jean was studying for an upcoming test and wasn’t looking at his way while Ymir had just gotten her first glimpse on Krista. The mesmerized girl banged full force onto Jean and send her tray and its contents everywhere on him.

Marco had found them shouting at each other and he was ready to intervene but the girl suddenly stopped and apologized to Jean when she saw the blonde angel- as she called Krista- approaching to ask Marco what was going on.

After that Ymir stuck around for quite a bit. She was interested only on Krista at first and wanted to pry information about her and the type of the person she could be interested in, but soon she found she shared a few things in common with the boys and their friendship started for real.

Krista was in their class and they hang around sometimes before Ymir joined them. She surely was around much more after Ymir joined them and after a few months Ymir and Krista were official.

They now shared an apartment a little outside the campus, provided by Krista’s father. They weren’t on good terms but she accepted this apartment as a gift for her success getting on the University of Trost.
Ymir and Krista were an odd pair but in a good sense. Krista was small-framed and seemed ethereal and fragile, with her long shiny blonde hair, fair blemish-free skin and those big baby blue eyes. While Ymir was toned, she played football and she took kickboxing classes, after all, her dark brown hair almost always on a messy ponytail, her skin dusted with freckles and some scars here and there, proving her impulsive character, and a pair of dark brown eyes that could shoot glares that would kill.

Ymir was extremely happy when Krista announced she would be at the same university as her, studying Literature. She was more than proud to walk hand-in-hand with her girlfriend around the campus with a stupid smile on her face, showing her off to the world.

Their happiness made Jean tingly and though he would never admit it he had them labelled as “goals” in his mind.

“Ok. What even are you wearing?” Marco eyed Jean as if he was wearing something otherworldly.

“Sus-suspenders?!” Jean sounded unsure. “Whatever, they look good on me.” He said turning to the full-body mirror as he styled his hair back with his fingers and an amount of gel.

“Dude, since when do you own suspenders and why are you wearing them now?” Marco was still confused.

“For your interest, I love suspenders and I own like three! And I am wearing them tonight cause I feel like it.” He said trying to fight back the slight blush that had started creeping on his cheeks.

“Oh no.” Marco finally puts the pieces together. “No, Jean you are not wearing freaking suspenders just cause Eren told you Mikasa likes them.”

“What?” Jean practically squealed. “How did you come up with this? It’s not like that at all.” Marco raised his eyebrow and eyed Jean with a ‘yeah-right’ grin.

“Oof, Fine!” the blonde broke under his best friend’s gaze. “You think he didn’t mean it?” his gaze fell to the floor and his smile turned to a pout.

Marco wanted to laugh at his gullible friend but instead made his way to him, ruffling his hair back to their usual style. “Jean, I am sure that Mikasa will like you for you. You don’t need silly suspenders and gel hair.” He smiled down at Jean and his amber eyes sparked again.

“You are right! I was a fool to listen to Jaeger. She is gonna be charmed, man!” Jean smiled with a silly smile and went to change to his normal clothes.

Marco waited for Jean on their couch while he played with his phone to pass his time. He could feel a tightness in his stomach but he ignored it as he named it “freshman’s anxiety” and continued
tapping his phone.

“Ta-da!” Jean reappeared, now much more recognizable and less ridiculous than before. He wore a white t-shirt with a v-line that fell right upon his collarbone, his light-blue ripped jeans and his loose black leather jacket. He was even wearing the winged pedant that Marco had got him for his birthday. As soon he stepped into the room, his cologne filled the air and Marco felt his hands sweating a bit, “freshman’s anxiety” he reminded himself.

“Uhm, ready to go?” Marco shook his head a bit and got up. “Hell yeah!” Jean agreed, giving Marco a confident toothy grin.

Marco locked their door and caught up with Jean as he pressed the elevator button.

“We should get them something.” Marco broke the silence as the elevator arrived. Jean narrowed his eyes as he always did when he was thinking. Marco waved at Anka, the guard of their building and she waved back at them wishing them a good night.

“We could get them booze but I trust Ymir took care of this. How about we get them like a basket with their favourite treats?” Jean recommended and Marco nodded in response. “We should stop by the convenience store then.” Jean, baffled by the lack of response, looked at Marco who seemed lost in his thoughts. Jean’s eyes flickered with concern, “You okay?” he nudged his arm with his elbow.

“Uhm, yeah sorry. Yeah, we should go. Got my wallet filled this morning so we’ll be good.” Marco nodded and rubbed his hand on the back of his neck.

Jean eyed him again with concern but Marco brushed it off with a wide smile as he picked his pace.

They managed to remember most of the favourite treats of the girlfriends and Marco even found the most perfect basket for them. It was a deep purple one with pink lace around it; it portrayed exactly the mix of their personalities.

Jean didn’t let him pay it all by himself and used his favourite sour candy as a trade for him to pay the half.

They got out of the convenience store and finally made their way to Krista’s place, while they chatted about their upcoming classes and Jean made Marco promise that they would have a “CoD and pizza” or “CoD and tacos” day, Jean didn’t really care, once per week. Marco agreed after some feigned rebuff and Jean jumped up and down with excitement, making Marco giggle.

“I am telling you, dude, only dorks giggle and therefore you are a dork.” Jean explained as they took the final turn for their friends’ house.
“Wow, what a great reasoning, Jean-bo. I am sure you’ll ace Political Science with that.” Marco teased and earned a glare and one raised finger, giving a tongue in return.

The lean boy stopped before they entered the apartment complex. “Marco, how do I look?” he looked nervously at the taller boy. Marco felt his stomach tighten even more to the point he wondered momentarily if he was ill.

“You look good. Don’t worry.” He reassured the other. Jean closed the space between them shoving his neck to Marco’s face. “Smell good, too?” he asked.

Marco felt the heat rising on his face and took a step back and then one more. “Better than usual.” He loved teasing Jean because he always bought it. “Good enough.” Jean didn’t notice the tease and pressed the bell.

Marco sighed silently and followed Jean to the now-open door.

The elevator ride was silent except for Jean’s humming of “Famous Last Words” by MCR. It helped him calm down, he had explained to Marco once.

Once the elevator hit the right floor, Jean was out of the cubicle, leaving a confused Marco behind. The freckled boy shook his head and followed suit.

Ymir was already at the door chatting with his friend. “Good to see you two losers decided to show up tonight.” She snarled affectionately at them and prepared to go for a noogie on Jean’s head.

Terrified he took a few steps back, stopping only when his back was pressed to Marco’s chest. “Please no!” he pleaded. Ymir laughed at his reaction holding her stomach and wiping imaginary tears from her eyes. “I can’t help it, your hair is begging me for a noogie.” She moved from the door, waving them to get in.

Marco pushed Jean slightly and Jean straightened up already making his way inside. Ymir took their coats and Marco offered to help Krista on the kitchen. They were the second to arrive after another pair of boys that neither of them knew.

The blond muscled and intimidating one was a classmate of Ymir’s, Reiner was his name. While the tall, black-haired one that seemed much more reserved than the other, was Bertl, Reiner’s boyfriend and an art student.

Marco joined Krista on the kitchen while Jean joined Ymir and the boys on the living room. “Hey, Krista.” Marco embraced the cute girl who was wearing a lacy pink apron with bows and hearts as she waited for her famous cookies to get baked.
“Marco!” she practically hopped in his arms, embracing him as both of them laughed. “How’s married life treating you?” the boy finally said after Krista let him free from her strong embrace. She might be small but she was by no means weak.

“Oh hush! You tease.” Krista eye rolled but smiled widely. “It’s great. So much more than I’ve expected.” She replied on a lower tone full of affection and love.

The boy smiled at his friend’s happiness and leaned in to kiss the crown of her head. “I am so happy for you.” He whispered.

Ymir and Krista had gone to hell and back but their feelings were unwavering and their love only grew stronger.

They had to fight through Krista’s father despise for Ymir and his attempts to make them break up, through Ymir’s health issues due to some fractured ribs and a shattered knee after a fight she had with some homophobic assholes, they had to fight for their love and happiness for a long time but now it seemed they made it to the top.

Marco admired them deeply.

The moment faded as the bell was heard from the hall and Ymir opened the door to welcome Eren, Mikasa and Armin. They heard the pleasantries they exchanged and soon Armin, Krista’s cousin, joined them on the kitchen.

Armin was a bit above average height; he had medium blonde hair, mostly on a half bun and big blue eyes that matched his cousin’s. He was a freshman to Medical School. He was the first to be accepted in his school with such a high scholarship and he was known for that in the whole campus. Despite his great mind, Armin was very humble and reserved, spending time only with his childhood friends; Eren, an intense dude, who was studying Law and got on Jean’s nerves and Mikasa, a beautiful girl who had a mysterious aura around her, who was studying Business and Economics and was totally Jean’s crush.

The three of them were inseparable, much to Jean’s demise. They had met the three on Orientation when Jean approached Mikasa like she had cast a spell on him, mumbling to her about how beautiful she was. Eren, of course, had something to say about that and then was when Jean decided that if he had an arch nemesis, this would be Eren.

“Hey, Marco looking g-good.” Armin said with a shy smile and soft-blushed cheeks. Marco was wearing one of his favourite flannel shirts, the light caramel one with the dark green and soft grey stripes that fitted him perfectly as it hugged his toned body in all of the right places and a pair of khakis along with his favourite crimson red sneakers.

Marco smiled back and returned the compliment, just when Ymir called for them from the living
The boys nodded and joined the rest on the living room.

Ymir had already placed beers on the coffee table and she was now filling the bowls around with salty snacks and spicy sauces. Marco took the seat next to Jean and Armin sat next to Eren.

Marco zoned out as the others talked in the background as he focused on the way Jean was looking at Mikasa who was sitting across him and was now explaining whatever had stalled them.

The freckled boy’s stomach tightened once more and Marco blamed it on his hunger as he let his hand dive in the crackers and took a large sip from his beer.

Krista soon joined them as she had promised with a large platter of still-steaming cookies that made the atmosphere smell like home.

The night moved on a bit of a boring tone for Marco but he didn’t lose his smile nor he refrained from the conversation Reiner and Bertl started with the freshmen, asking them how did they like it on campus and if they faced any problems. They exchanged phone and dorm numbers as a promise to reach out to them for any difficulty they were facing.

Marco fought back a yawn when his phone buzzed, startling him.

From Jean-bo:

I feel it’s going really good. I am going to ask her out. Please ask me to bring you a beer from the kitchen. *-*

That’s when Marco finally noticed that Mikasa was making her way to the kitchen to fetch some more juice for Armin, who didn’t drink more than a beer.

Marco’s breath hitched and slammed a bit too forcefully Jean’s knee. “Can you bring me some beer as well?” he smiled widely and Jean nodded his head shaking off his surprise from Marco’s hit and quickly got on his feet. “Anyone else wants anything?” Jean put on an act to hide his excitement. But he did a poor job as he practically skipped towards the kitchen when the others nodded no.

“Oh, come on.” Jean groaned, standing exactly on the door frame of the kitchen as his phone started ringing.
“Mama just killed a man. Put a gun against his head. Pulled my trigger, now he’s dead.”

He sighed as he recognized his mother’s ringtone and cursed her timing as he knew he had to answer the call.

Instead of turning for the kitchen completely, he continued straight ahead to the balcony.

“Mom?” he picked up.

The time was passing by and just when Marco got curious about what kind of things Jean and Mikasa could be doing on the kitchen, and specifically on the counter- yes, he had a really imaginative head- Mikasa returned from the kitchen with a mouthful of cookies and Armin’s glass of juice on her hand.

She had crumbs around her mouth and Marco thought she was probably binge eating in the kitchen. No one could resist Krista’s cookies.

But, where was Jean?

Marco looked puzzled and frowned, even more, when he heard the same question from Mikasa’s mouth.

“I thought he joined you on the kitchen?” Reiner asked.

“No, he didn’t come at all.” Mikasa admitted. “Bathroom, maybe?” Reiner offered as everyone looked confused.

“No, the bathroom’s this way.” Ymir pointed to the other side of the apartment.

Marco got up before he even realized it, a strange wave of stress crashing him.

“He said idly, not really caring to listen to their responses.

He passed the surely empty kitchen and continued to that side of the house.

He reached a dead end, as in front of him was only the balcony and he was ready to turn back as he didn’t see Jean anywhere when his gaze fell down. He noticed something moving outside and opened the balcony door.
Jean was there and Marco sighed with relief but then processed the state Jean was in.

He had his legs curled on his chest, his arms wrapped too tight around his legs as he rocked slightly back and forth, tears streaming down his face as he shivered from the cold. He didn’t even realize that he wasn’t alone anymore.

“J-Jean?” Marco asked carefully as he knelt down to his best friend’s side with the utmost care in order not to startle him out of his panicked state.

Jean’s head snapped towards Marco and he looked at him with tears and a painful expression on his eyes that broke Marco’s heart into a million little pieces.

“Marco. Marco. Marco.” Jean’s voice came out with a hoarse tone as he untangled his arms from his legs and wrapped them around Marco. The freckled boy’s heat sending a new shiver down his spine.

“Jean, what’s wrong?” Marco tried again, breathing to Jean’s hair, as his heart was racing from the worry.

“My mom called.” Jean said after what seemed like hours to Marco. Marco held his breath to listen to the rest.

“Mom and Dad. They-they are getting a divorce.” Jean stopped again as Marco let his breath leave his lungs and started drawing soothing cycles on Jean’s freezing back.

“They started the procedures a couple months ago, Marco. But they didn’t have the goddamn balls to tell me face-to-face. Alicia and Ben took it quite badly. M-my family is breaking apart.” Jean finally finished.

Marco sighed as the mental image of Jean’s twin siblings, who were the most energy-filled eleven-year-old kids he knew, came to his mind.

“My family is scattered. Or it will be. And I can’t help it. I can’t do anything.” Jean sobbed on Marco’s shirt as the boy tightened his grip.

“Shh…Jean. It will be ok. I know it doesn’t seem that way now, but it will be okay. I promise.” Marco lowered his lips to kiss Jean’s head before he could stop himself.

His friend sobbed harder but Marco didn’t let go. It would be ok. He would be by his side.
It would be okay.
Jean and Marco sat on the balcony for a while. Jean barely moved and Marco didn’t dare to disturb him, as he calmed down.

His tears were long dry and his shaking had ceased but Jean didn’t let go. Marco knew the boy well and that is why he was shocked he didn’t refuse his embrace and willingly elongated it. He must have needed it more than he would ever admit.

“M-Marco, let’s go back inside.” Jean finally spoke breaking the serene silence and bringing Marco back to reality as he was forcefully pulled out of his ever-running thoughts.

“Uhm, yeah sure.” The startled boy joined the other who was already inside and ready to throw a façade over his feelings and mood.

Marco shook his head and closed the balcony door behind him with a sigh. He heard laughter before he even walked past the kitchen and he knew that the façade was working.

Marco and Jean left the get together an hour after midnight, despite Ymir’s constant nagging for them to crash there for the night.

“So…” Marco trailed off when they were out of the apartment complex.

Jean turned his head almost mechanically, unsure of what it would follow, and waited for his friend to continue as he shoved his hands into his jacket’s pocket.

Fuck, it was cold as a bitch.

“So, how did it go?” Marco started again. “With Mikasa and all?” he trailed off again, but Jean’s face was already beaming and perhaps blushing? Or it was the cold that dusted his cheeks with that soft pink colour. The freckled boy looked away from his friend and picked up his pace a bit.

“It went great, man. I got her number and she stopped Eren from bitching about me, like twice, not that I was counting. Yeah, anyways, I was about to ask her out but mom called.” His voice filled
with darkness but he quickly shrugged it off.

“But, perhaps it’s better that way. It would feel too sudden, you know what I mean?” Jean was now beaming and Marco felt this annoying tightness again. Did he need to go to the doctor? It was getting freaking annoying. Or he could Google it. Yeah, definitely that.

“She seems intimidating and all, especially when she spaces out and looks at the void like a fucking shitty entity is there.” Jean fake-shivered.

“But, she is amazing. Not just her looks. The way she talks, the way she doesn’t give a damn about others. I wish I was like that. That confidence, indifference however you might call it, is amazing. Also, apparently she knows martial arts. Which terrifies and turns me on at the same time.” He continued rambling on and on about Mikasa until they were finally in front of Rose dormitory complex.

“I told you she would like you, Jean.” Marco said and felt bitterness in his tone which confused him, but Jean didn’t even notice. “Indeed. You are always right, dude.” Jean nodded as the elevator ringed to let them know they arrived on their floor.

They changed to their sleeping attire in silence both of them aware of the elephant in the room, but none of them willing to address it.

Marco excused himself to the bathroom while Jean was placing his clothes in his closet.

The freckled boy closed the door and pressed his back on it as he closed his eyes.

He took a long breath and relaxed for a couple of minutes before running his nightly routine. He brushed his teeth as he ran the back of his other hand over his heavy-lidded eyes. He cleaned his mouth with the cold water and stared at the mirror.

His bangs were getting longer and they were starting to reach his eyes but he liked it better this way. He plucked some stray hair from his eyebrows and nodded at himself.

He didn’t remember when was the last time he smiled at his reflection. In fact, the bathroom was the only place he could put that tiring, constant smile to rest and adopt a neutral straight line on his lips.

He opened the door after taking another glimpse at his reflection that still eyed him with disapproval, and left the room.

Jean was already sprawled on his bed but got up when Marco entered their room.

“I am thinking about going home for the week. I mean the lessons don’t start until next Tuesday for me and I suppose Alicia and Ben would want me there.”

“Jean, it’s fine. You don’t need to explain yourself to me or to anyone else. Just promise me two things.” Marco sat next to Jean and placed his hand on his friend’s back, hoping he won’t brush it away. He didn’t. Instead, he looked Marco into his eyes and Marco felt dumbfounded.

“Name them.” His voice barely above a whisper. “Huh?” Marco was still stunned by the sudden eye contact. “My promises, you dork.” Jean smirked and Marco was fully back to reality.

“Oh, yeah. First, you will try your hardest to keep your cool. Second, you will contact me if you feel like losing your cool or if you simply want to talk to someone.” Marco paused for a moment, unsure if he should continue.
“Don’t take this wrong. But, when you are full of emotions, whatever kind they might be, you tend to bottle them up until you explode. And it is not pretty when that happens. Remember Mina?” Jean cringed at the memory. “Yeah, so talk it up, okay? They are family after all. Not a girlfriend.” Marco finished and Jean mumbled his promise. Marco decided he was pleased enough with this as a promise and left for his own bed.

“Goodnight, Jean. And take care.” He said and wrapped himself with his fuzzy blanket.

“Goodnight. I will.” The response soon followed and both of them were fast asleep after a while.

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God knows how much I hate buses. Like seriously, what the actual fuck is wrong with them?

Not intercity buses. Those are fine, with their little cute seats and all. But, Trost’s buses are a fucking hell.

I would take the subway but my neighbourhood was way too off its route so I don’t really have another option.

I cursed all the curses I knew as I waited for the bus in this cold ass weather. Who even needs a beanie on September in Trost? Fucking nobody. And people still regarded environmental changes as a freaking myth.

The bus, that stood now in front of me like the creepy Nekobus, snapped me out of my thoughts and I dragged my feet towards its doors.

Of course, there were no seats for me to sit- not that I usually chose to sit, too traumatized by creepy grannies- so I secured my grip to one of these crappy poles and started tapping my foot on the tone of the song that was blasting on my headphones.

This was going to be a long ride and I was already close to losing it when I saw the number of people that were waiting for the bus at the next stop.

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After one hour and a half, a broken traffic light and two too-slow-for-their-own-good grannies (that was Trost for you), I was home.

Pissed as hell and ruffed up as well.

Sometimes, I wish I could smoke to vent the stress or whatever they said smoking did. This was one of these times.

I used asthma I had as a child as an excuse when I was offered a cigarette but the truth was, I just hated the smell that stained everything and everyone on a 30-meter radius. Even if I didn’t look like it, I was a fairly clean person and I always wanted to smell good.

Also, have you ever kissed a smoker? Fucking gross. I had to drink three bottles of water after a damned dare. Can’t imagine how it is to have constantly that taste in your mouth.

I looked up at the floor my home was and sighed as I crossed the road that separated me from the apartment complex.
I got my keys out and opened the front door, making my way to the elevator, changing my mind as soon as I pressed the button and opted for the stairs instead.

‘Better be tired from climbing six floors, than having the energy to be mad.’

It took me way longer than I remembered and it sure tired the shit out of me.

God, I was losing my fitness. And I used to be a football player just three months ago.

I caught my breath and unlocked the door of my home without thinking about it too much, because I knew I could spend the day just sitting on the stairs, avoiding the unavoidable.

As soon as I opened the door, the voices inside the house stopped and everyone was staring at me. Guess I forgot to tell them I was coming.

“Jean?” Mom was the first to break this awkward silence slash staring contest.

“Hi…” I replied shyly as I ripped the beanie off my head, messing with my hair, as they flew to every possible direction.

“What are you doing here? What about your university?” Mom approached me and closed the door behind me.

“Uhm, welp you dropped that bomb on me yesterday and you expect me to sit around there doing nothing?” I quickly found my voice.

“Jean…” my mom hugged me but I felt a sting instead of the usual warmth.

“Well, I’ll be heading to my room.” I avoided eye contact with any of them as soon as mom let me go and I stormed off the living room.

I was tempted to close the door behind me but I reminded myself why I was here for. For support. For them. Not for me.

I left my bag on the floor and kicked my black vans as I hopped on the bed, still fully clothed with my beanie grasped on my hand and I closed my eyes.

When I opened them again it was dark outside. The light from my siblings’ room illuminated mine and I thought it would be about time to go to them as I groggily sat on my bed, rubbing my eyes with my hands.

After I change to something less hot. Seems like sleeping fully clothed wasn’t one of my best life decisions because now I needed a shower and my clothes needed washing. Who knew I could sweat that much.

I rummaged my closet finding some clothes I left behind that were decent enough and headed to the bathroom.

I ripped my sweaty clothes off and shivered at the sudden lack of any clothing realizing that it was chilly inside the bathroom.

I closed the small window as I eyed it like I could shot it dead because it made me cold and got in the shower.

The hot water touched my skin, sending goosebumps of enjoyment all over my body.
My fingers went through my hair and I started humming whatever song came into my mind. This time happened to be some opening from whatever anime Marco was watching back in our dorm.

Marco. He had been so supportive yesterday. I mean he always was but this dude had his shit together at all times and was ready to help me gather mine together anytime.

Whatever there was up in the Heavens sure liked me enough to gift me with Marco as a friend.

I smiled at the thought as I turned the water off and wrapped my towel around my hips.

When I returned to my room, Ben was already on the bed playing with his 3DS, Pokémon if I had to guess. I ruffled his hair and he groaned in response as I started getting dressed.

It felt so natural and casual that it almost itched my brain with annoyance. But if they wanted to play it that way, I could play it twice as good.

“Supsup?” I sat next to Ben and spread my legs one at each of his sides.

“Not muchmuch.” He replied. Good, he was taking my sass, I smirked. “Where is Alicia?” I asked again.

“Room. Mom and Dad are out to their lawyer and will probably bring Taco Bell with them. They do that almost all week now as if take out will change our feelings to flowery acceptance.” Ben groaned.

This took me by surprise. Guess the act was up only when our parents were around.

Alicia heard us talking and soon joined us on the semi-double bed.

My brother had my mother’s green eyes and my father’s pointy features, while Alicia had my mother’s more rounded nose and jaw and my dad’s amber-brown eyes. They wouldn’t look like twins at all if it wasn’t for their chestnut brown hair and the curvy birthmark under their right eye that they both shared.

“Jean, it is good you came.” Alicia spoke, sounding more mature than all of them combined.

“I am glad I did, Ali.” My arm wrapped around the back of her neck as I brought her to my chest. She didn’t resist despite not liking hugs since she was a tiny baby and simply relaxed to the embrace.

“Mom and dad said it’s going to be a peaceful splitting or whatever.” Ben finally put his Nintendo away and joined the hug.

“Uncontested divorce.” Ali corrected him but he only huffed.

“I just thought we were a happy, bonded family, you know?” Ben spoke again. I could hear him try to fight a snuffle and I started rubbing his back with my hand, trying to soothe him. “There is no such thing as a happy family, it seems. It was all a lie. A lie that continued for nineteen years and lulled us to the delusion of the perfect family.” It was Ali’s turn to break her cool.

“No, no. Ali, Ben it wasn’t a lie. None of them was a lie. You said mom and dad are ending it peacefully, right? That means it was real. All of it. I will talk to them to find out why but-”

“Both of them are in love with other people.” Ali cut me through.

“Wh-What?” it hit me like a train and I felt my mouth going dry. Bad sign. Anger was bottling up.
“Yup.” Ali confirmed. “That is why we’re telling you it was a lie. Apparently, they tried to keep it up for a year but didn’t work out.” Ben added.

I felt them both shifting closer to me until I was forced to lay back for us to be comfortable.

My heart was about to burst. My eyes stung as anger and tears were welling up. No, not now. Not in front of them, I have to be stable and strong for them.

For a year? This has been going on for a year? Under everyone’s noses, they kept their masks held up high and mighty.

Wait. A year? Did they keep it up for me?

I was super stressed last year with university applications, my grades and graduation and all of that.

Did they throw this masquerade party for me? I felt anger growing in my chest.

Anger for them and for me. Anger for everything. I was weak enough to let stress get me and they were stupid enough to let themselves be affected by that. And they loved other people?

I always thought my parents were the perfect couple. They communicated, they still went on dates—well, not anymore, at least not together—, they put up with my shitty anger issues during puberty and they raised the twins to two perfect human beings.

I thought they loved each other to the end and back.

Seems acting skills were Broadway high in this family.

I needed to talk to them. Alone.

We laid there, for hours, until both of them were asleep and I was long lost in the swirl of my thoughts.

By the time I heard the keys in the door I was starting to drift to sleep as well.

I carefully got up, trying not to disturb the twins from their sleep and made my way to the kitchen.

“It won’t take that much to—” Dad stopped talking as our eyes locked.

“Hey, Jean.” He smiled but I knew better than to fall for that.

“We need to talk.” I turned to my mother as she placed her glass of water back to the counter.

They both nodded and motioned me to sit on the kitchen chair.

“So, you told the twins everything but you spared me the details?” I asked bitterly. My parents looked at each other with confusion. “What do you mean, son?” Dad finally spoke.

“Oh come on.” I raised my voice but closed my mouth at the same moment. No need to wake the twins up for more trauma. “They told me.” I opened my mouth again, this time my voice was much lower. “Your act for a year, your feelings towards others, the no-fault or whatever divorce.” I spurred.

“Th-The twins know about that?” Mom was genuinely shocked and it was enough to take me aback. “We never told them more than the type of the divorce, Jean.” Dad rubbed his hand on Mom’s back and it felt sickly casual. As if our family wasn’t ending.
“Are they right though?” I persisted. There was a long pause and both nodded, my mom, avoiding my gaze completely while my dad shifted his own from me to the table back to me.

I inhaled sharply and loudly. “Fuck. Fuckity great.” I said in despair, but none of them scolded me for my language.

“They must have overheard me talking to James.” Dad turned to Mom and explained. I put my hands over my face and fought back the urge to unwind my anger right now and here.

“Why did you keep up the act for a year?” I asked behind my hands. “Was it because of me?”

“Jean-bo, dear. No! We-” my mom started. “Don’t call me that.” I snarled.

“Listen to your mother.” A scold followed.

“We didn’t act. We really tried to keep our marriage alive but it wasn’t going anywhere anymore. You kids have nothing to do with it. We are still a family. Just Dad and I are not husband and wife anymore.” Mom finished and I scoffed.

“Right. And now we get to be rained with all of these divorce clichés. What fucking ever. You made it hard enough for the twins with your running mouth and creepy casual attitude. At least have the balls to speak the truth when you open your mouth.” I knew I went too far but I could have gone even further and I had managed to keep my voice nice and low, with just few vulgarities as well. I was one proud fucker as I got up, my chair grunting by the sudden movement, and stormed out of our kitchen.

I went to my room and grabbed a pair of jeans, my phone and my vans. I wore my clothes fast enough and moved towards the doorway, took my keys and closed the door behind me before my mother’s steps even reached the room.

I opted for the roof instead of the streets since it was past midnight and Trost’s roads weren’t to be trusted when you were on your own and skipped up the stairs.

I opened the door for the roof and that’s when a gust of wind hit me, reminding me I had left my coat at home. Well, I preferred a cold over my parents right now so I just sucked it up and moved further on the roof, finding my usual spot.

I pulled out my phone and looked at the screen terrified.

27 missed calls

15 unread messages

Well, crap. I pressed the password and started scrolling down my call log. Most of them were from Marco, a few for Ymir and- Oh! Oh!! Mikasa called twice as well?

This made me a tad happy and it was enough to break my scowl to a side smirk.

I moved to the unread messages. Ugh, Ymir nagging about us leaving last night. Ymir nagging about us not taking any of Krista’s cookies as we left and what the fuck was she supposed to do now with the leftovers, that was apparently over fifty pieces. And of course she couldn’t send one message or two- no!- she had to send a different message for each new sentence.

I rolled my eyes and returned to the rest of the unread messages.
From: Mr Freckles

Are you ok? How was the trip back home?

From: Mr Freckles

Jean? Is everything ok?

From: Mr Freckles

Jean, you haven’t responded to anyone today. I hope you are ok. Goodnight. Stay strong and positive. :)

The last one was sent just ten minutes ago so I decided to call Marco instead of sending a half-ass response. Honestly, I felt guilty for forgetting about his phone’s existence as well.

“Funeral” from Band of Horses started playing as I waited for Marco to pick it up. I never really understood why it was Marco’s favourite song. It was such a big contrast from his personality.

“Jean?” a husky voice answered the phone. “Dude, how did you manage to sleep in ten minutes?” I laughed as I heard the boy from the other end shifting on his bed.

“Well, I was tired. Anyways. Are you okay? You got me really worried, you know. How did it go?” Marco couldn’t stop talking.

“It-it went fine? I dunno. It’s crappy here and the twins are way stronger than me but I need to be the opposite. I need to be strong for them. My parents are not going to get together again for sure. I mean they both have others. Turns out they were trying to keep it up for a year.” I paused as I heard Marco sigh softly. I could picture him shaking his head and his big brown eyes full of compassion. Not pity, not judgment. Compassion. Gosh, wish he was here.

“So, uhm, yeah. I suppose it’s kinda my fault this happened right now. You know with my stress and all last year. I suppose they didn’t want to tear me apart back then.” I fought back a sob but then Marco talked. “Jean-bo, it’s not like that, I am sure of it. You and your parents are different people, you feel different things and your experiences are totally different at all. This divorce is theirs. Don’t try to make it yours and take the blame or whatever you are trying to do right now.” As soon as his soft voice met my ears I sobbed like a child on their first day at school. It wasn’t pretty, it wasn’t even breathable, but I carried on and on, and Marco didn’t hang up or stopped comforting me for even a second.

“Marco, you should go to sleep.” I finally said after half an hour of ugly and snotty crying as I tried to take a long breath but choking mid through due to the lack of air.

“You should too, Jean-bo. And go back to your room before you freeze to death on your roof.” Marco chuckled. My eyes went wide and scanned the roof for cameras. “I know you too well, dear. You always go to the roof to vent.” He feigned a sweet tone and chuckled again.

I snorted and relaxed again. “Night night, Marco. I don’t know what I could do without you. Honestly, you are like an angel or something. But without wings.” I said.

“So…like a person?” the jerk joked. “You know what I mean, you dick.” I groaned but smiled through it. “Yeah.” He paused and sounded sad? “Yeah, I do. Good night!!” his excited self returned as he hung up.

I got up as my bones cracked and I shivered, just now realizing how cold I was. I moved towards
the door, as I remembered Mikasa’s call. I opened the texts and quickly typed a message.

To: Mikasa ^^

Sorry I missed your calls. Let’s catch up tomorrow?

I made my way down to our apartment and softly opened the door. My mom was waiting for me on the couch and I let out a disappointed sigh. Here goes my hope of going in unnoticed.

“Jean.” She started. “I know that you are angry and confused. But, you don’t have to be. It is still early and the news fresh. But, it will be okay eventually.” She continued when she saw that I was unresponsive.

“Whatever, mom. I am tired. I will sleep on Ben’s bed tonight since they hijacked mine.” I replied and felt a bit guilty as my mom looked back at me with sadness.

This is going to be hellish.

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I woke up after only five hours of sleep and honestly I didn’t need more.

I made my way to the bathroom and took a shower again. I felt a cold creeping up into my nostrils, throat and head so perhaps I could wash it away with tons of warm water.

I took my sweet time in the bathroom until Ali was hammering the door telling me to go to a spa if I wanted therapy.

I chuckled as I dried myself before wrapping the towel around my waist and getting out. My sister glared at me. Making eye contact with Ali whenever she wanted something, was terrifying.

“At didly darlingly last!” Ali fumed making me laugh so hard that I had to hold my towel in order for it to stay in place.

The day went by smoothly. So smoothly it was nerve-wracking. I casually went from youtube video to youtube video when my phone vibrated in my pocket.

I took it on my hands idly and looked at the notification. My eyes shot wide open and my lips pained by the sudden way-too-wide smile.

From: Mikasa ^^

Anytime you want.

‘Why the hell not now?” I thought and pressed the call button with my newfound courage.

“Oh, hey Jean.” Mikasa’s voice made my heart drum louder in my chest. “Didn’t think you could call me right away.” I blushed under her teasing tone, thanking Graham Bell for inventing the phones and reducing my embarrassment.

“So, Marco said you were visiting home this week. Pity, I thought we could get to hang out a bit more before lessons start.” She continued and I couldn’t believe my ears. Mikasa Ackerman wanted to hang out with me. ME! If this was one of Eren’s pranks, I swear to-

“But it’s a good thing we exchanged phone numbers. We can talk from here.” Her soft voice
brought me back to reality.

“Uhm, yeah totally.” I replied like the lame-ass I am. She chuckled and my heart stopped beating for a couple of seconds.

“But, I might not hang around for a week after all. So you know if you wanted…” I trailed off, too flustered and too nervous to find the proper words.

“Yeah, just tell me when you are back.” She replied to my unfinished sentence.

“Mikasa! Eren is going to burn the kitchen again!” Armin’s terrified voice was heard in the background. “Oops. Sorry gotta go. I need to save us from the arsonist I have for a friend. See you.” She excused herself as I laughed and hung up.

See you. Well, that’s a promise to wait for.

“Jean-y, Jean-y, Jean-y. Who were you talking to?” Ali’s teasing voice was approaching my room. “None of your business little ferret.” I shot back and she giggled at my flustered state.

“Oh, I know! Were you talking to Marco? Are you two a thing, yet?” she finally appeared at the door and leaned on the frame with her arms crossed over her chest.

“What the f-heck?” I retorted. “Marco?”

“Well, yeah. Why not? Both of you like each other and share a ton of things. And you both like girls and boys so what’s the problem?” she smiled slyly.

“He is my best friend Ali!” I squeaked and she giggled again. “Ah, you are not up for clichés?” she smirked and I was ready to respond when mom’s voice called us for dinner.

We all sat around the table like we had done a million times in the past. But, I couldn’t fight back the feeling of uneasiness.

The only sound was that of the cutlery and my nerves were skyrocketing.

“Jean” Dad broke the silence and seemed like everyone was just as startled as me ‘cause every other sound ceased and everyone’s gaze was at Dad.

“Uhm, Mom and I were thinking perhaps it’s better for you to go back to the University. I mean, we appreciate the visit but the more you stay there the angrier you will become since we are running the procedures every day. We talked to Alicia and Ben as well and they agreed they will be fine with a Skype call or a text.” He finished and Mom let the breath she was holding.

“So you don’t want me around cause I break this little normal scenery you have laid for yourselves. Everything is fine and the world is not burning.” I almost choked on my bite.

“But, Jean. The world isn’t burning and indeed everything is fine. Nothing will change since Dad found an apartment on the second floor and everyone is fine and moving on.” Mom spoke this time.

My vision got blurry. Anger and disappointment mixed. Disappointment at my parents, at myself, at the whole world.

“We’ll get to talk and I will show you all of my new Pokémon. I swear.” Ben rubbed his hand around my arm. I was shocked.
I-I was supposed to be the older brother. The mature one. But, they were taking it better than me. Sure they were bitter but since Dad wasn’t going anywhere but a few floors down, they could visit him whenever they were fine with it, Alicia explained.

I was the odd one out. I wasn’t welcomed here.

I fucked everything up with my anger and my persistence. I was the one afraid of the change.

I just nodded as my brain overworked itself with a million thoughts and excused myself from the table.

I headed to my room and stood at the doorframe. Staring at the nothingness, listening to the voices that now had returned to the kitchen.

I sprawled across my bed, grabbed my phone and tapped Marco’s new contact name and sent him a message.

To: My Angel

I’ll be back tomorrow.

I put my headphones on and let the blasting music lull me to sleep.

From: My Angel

I hope you are ok.

I’ll be here.

Good night.

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The sun was up later than me the other day. As I rose from my bed, I walked to my closet to find the clothes I was wearing two days before, ironed and folded neatly waiting for me.

I undressed and threw my sleepwear on the floor as I made my bed, picked up the discarded clothes and went to take a shower. Trost buses. Better smell good.

I didn’t sit long on the shower this time. I needed to leave as soon as possible. I needed not to be a burden around here anymore.

I dried myself and wore my clothes, grabbed my bag and beanie and shoved the phone in my pocket.

I was ready to leave.

I made my way to the living room and I was honestly surprised to see my parents there.

“I-What are you doing up at this hour?” I wondered. My mom had a cup of hot coffee on her hands while my dad’s arm was around her shoulders.

“We wanted to say goodbye, Jean-bo.” She smiled but I could see the bitterness behind it.

“I hope you can let this anger go. You are so angry all the time. At us, at yourself, at the world. Let
go and find something or someone that makes you happy. Hold on to them.” My mother said and kissed my temple as I approached for a hug.

My father got up as well, his arm never leaving my mother’s shoulders and his other hand placed upon my right shoulder pressing it affectionately.

“I’ll try. Bye, mom. Bye, dad.” Was all that I could manage. I turned my heels towards them and walked to the door.

The cold air hit my face and I found myself smiling and the numbness it offered. Sure Marco was rubbing off me.

I walked towards the bus stop and as if everyone wanted me gone from there, the bus had just arrived.

The ride was oddly pleasant, with no granny on sight and hardly anyone else but me and the driver. I arrived at the University of Trost in record time and that’s when my stomach, not so kindly, reminded me I didn’t have breakfast this morning.

I headed towards the campus café when I bumped into Armin.

“Oh, my, sorry dude! Are you ok?” I asked and Armin nodded he was fine.

“I was heading at “The Garrison” want to join?” I offered as an apology and as a chance to not give my mind the pleasure to overthink again.

“Uhm, sorry. Some other time, I am heading to the library.” The blonde excused himself. The Library? The lessons haven’t even started yet!

Guess that’s the way you get a scholarship.

“Oh, tell Marco ‘hi’.” Armin said as he picked up his pace and left me behind.

“Okay.” I let him know. Wait, Marco? I brushed it off and walked up towards the café, ordering our favourite breakfast.

As soon as my order was ready, I thanked the redhead behind the counter leaving her a good tip and flew out of the small, cosy café.

It is about time Marco wakes up.

I practically ran towards our dorm, careful not to make a mess of the coffees and waved at Anka behind the security office.

By the time I was unlocking the door, yawns and sleepy footsteps could already be heard from inside our dorm.

“Sweetie! I am home!” I opened the door, startling Marco, who was just out of the shower, enough for him to drop his towel.

Chapter End Notes
Find me in tumblr @ skelene
I'd love to talk to you all.
Fluttering Hearts

Chapter Summary

Jean spends time with Mikasa and Marco spends time with his thoughts...
One of these pairs is not good at all...

Chapter Notes

SO...chapter 3 is here! At this point I would like to thank my precious friend and beta reader @YunoGasai98, who is also the actual reason I continue to write this fic since she has been more than supportive!

Without further ado, I present to you the 3rd chapter of this story!
Please, enjoy!
P.s. Mr Brightside is a lovely companion song to Marco's last pov

As the towel falls my eyes follow its movement. And there goes any dignity I had as I stare at Marco who is now way too red for his own good. I would call 911 hadn’t I been frozen in place.

“Uhm, J-Jean?” Marco tried as he bent to bring his towel back up to cover his quite impressive d-“Jean, the fuck? Come to your senses. JESUS!” my voice screamed in my head and I think Marco was wondering if I was in the middle of a stroke or multiple ones.

“S-so, you are back. Hehe.” Marco tried again, as he laughed awkwardly and rubbed his hand on the back of his neck. “How was it?” he continued and I was just recovering from the shock.

“It was…” I trailed off. ‘Get it together, loser.’ “It was okay, I suppose.” I finally snapped out of it and moved to our coffee table to place the breakfast I had bought.

“Got us breakfast. I’m gonna head to the bathroom and then we can catch up while eating?” I offered and Marco, now painted in softer pink tones, nodded.

I opened the bathroom door and felt the leftover humidity of the shower Marco had taken. I smelled his shampoo in the air and I found myself inhaling deeper.

Don’t get me wrong, it’s a good shampoo.

I got rid of the bottle of water I had chugged while I was on the bus and washed my hands. My reflection didn’t look half as bad as I thought it would be and that was enough to put a smirk on my face. I need to tell Marco about Mikasa.

I made my way back to the tiny poor, excuse of a living room, only to find Marco already diving on the donuts.

“Oi! Couldn’t you wait? Also, how did you manage to get dressed and ready in such a short time?”
I plopped down next to him.

“You were in there for ten minutes. I was just finishing my donut and then I would come to check up on you.” He said with a teasing smile, powdered sugar covering his lips and the tip of his nose. What a dork.

“You got sugar on your nose, dumbo.” I let him know and reached for the spot with my finger, wiping it clean and licking the residue off my finger. I grabbed a donut and started munching, the sweet flavor filling up my senses.

It took Marco a minute before returning on his donut, but I shrugged it off.

“So, Mikasa texted me when I was away and I guess I am going on a date?” I smiled confidently Marco gulped down his coffee loudly and I almost thought he would choke.

“Oh, yeah? That’s great man! It is working well fast, huh?” he smiled back at me. I nodded and got another bite from my donut as told him everything else that happened the days I was away.

Later in the afternoon, we were hungry again and all we had was a half-full packet of Pop Tarts and a probably expired packet of microwave mac’n’cheese.

“How about we grab a pizza on MP?” I offered as Marco’s stomach growled in response. I snickered as he wore his shoes and grabbed his wallet.

“It’s on me tonight.” I said, taking Marco’s wallet from his hand and placing it back on the coffee table. “How so?” he wondered. I was buying food and drinks on three occasions: 1. I was too happy, 2. I was too sad, 3. I was on a date.

“Just feeling like it?” I shrugged, noticing that indeed this wasn’t a situation to be filled under any of these categories.

We made our way to MP with little to no chat at all, just enjoying the freezing cold and talking about what Marco did these days.

We arrived at the famous pizza place and you could really feel the warmth of the cozy pizzeria from two blocks before. I felt my mouth water and then it hit me.

“Oh, I met Armin in the morning. He told me to say ‘Hi’ to you.” I looked at Marco and waited for a response. I could feel something was going on there but I couldn’t quite place it.

“Armin?” he looked as surprised as I was in the morning. “Yup.” I feigned an uncaring look.

“Huh, ok.” He simply nodded as I opened the door and he followed behind me.

We searched for a table, but it wasn’t an easy task.

“Oh, speak of the devil.” I smirked as I looked at Marco and then let my gaze guide him on a table ahead. There were Eren and Armin, chatting and eating pizza. Well, Armin was talking and Eren was practically inhaling the food.

Oh, and there was an empty table next to them. Not my first choice with Jaeger there but well whatever, I just wanted pizza.

“Shall we?” I asked and Marco nodded with a bit of hesitation and disappointment?
As soon as Armin saw us approaching he stopped talking and just smiled. It was a bit unnerving but whatever.

Eren didn’t even lift his head as he gulped down more pizza.

“Hi, Marco! Hi, Jean!” Armin greeted. “I am sure you will love the pizza here. As you can see from Eren, it’s irresistible. I would recommend number 5, 6 and 7. Oh, also number 104 is a good brand of beer.” He talked non-stop.

We nodded and Armin talked some more with Marco while I took a look on the menu.

Hm, let’s see…number 5: Hunter’s meal, number 6: Wild horse, number 7: Divine delight, number 104: Cadet’s chug. Well, they had a damn lot of imagination to come up with these names.

“So, Marco?” I asked him as the waitress, a girl that had her red-brown hair pulled on a ponytail as her bangs fell to the sides approached our table. She seemed cheerful, way too cheerful, as she asked for our order.

“Oh, yeah. I am kinda hungry so let’s get 5,6,7 on titan size. Aaaand...ah yeah, two Cadet’s chugs.” He smiled widely at the girl as she nodded and noted down our order. She took the menus and told us that our pizzas would be ready in a few minutes.

She brought us our beers and indeed it was a good brand that tasted neither as piss nor as metal.

“Oh, look! Mikasa’s here!” Armin said with a cheer and I choked on my beer. ‘Way to react you loser.’

“Oh, hi guys. Jean, welcome back.” She greeted, her face flushed from walking from their dorms to the pizza place and her short hair back on a semi-bun. She looked cute.

“Eren!” she said as soon as she sat down next to him. “You ate all the food!” she complained but the idiot just smiled with his cheese-smeared lips spreading wide.

“You are buying me mine.” She growled and Eren’s smile faltered a bit. “But, Mika you eat more than-” Mikasa punched Eren’s shoulder, successfully shutting him up.

“I can buy you dinner if you want.” I offered. Mikasa almost smiled before fucking Jaeger butted in.

“With mommy’s or daddy’s money?” he smirked and I froze in place. Everyone else stopped talking as well.

“What?” my voice almost broke midthrough. “Well, I was wondering if you get double pocket money now that your family broke in two.” He continued with the same unflattering smirk that only grew wider.

I felt my blood drain away from my body but at the same time I felt it rushing with all its might towards my head, making me feel dizzy,

“Eren!” Mikasa’s voice was terrifying and weighed a ton. “That’s enough.” She didn’t hit him like she had done playfully before. Instead, she opened her wallet and spread some crumbled dollars on the table, grabbed Eren and forced him to get up with her. Armin got up as well, trying to fight back his panic.

The mood had dropped and it felt as if the room was about to explode at any moment. Or perhaps I
was feeling that way. And it seemed that everyone had noticed and walked carefully through the stretched rope Eren had created.

He growled as he got up but Mikasa didn’t ease her grip, she looked at Armin and he shook his head as he was now the one grabbing Eren, leading him outside.

Mikasa turned towards me, her gaze turning from stone cold to something warmer.

“I am sorry for him.” She leaned in and planted a kiss on my cheek. “Let’s have coffee tomorrow? Alone.” She eyed Eren that stared from the window glass, and then returned her look at me as I nodded. She wished us a good evening and left.

Marco was shaken too as he looked at me with wide eyes full of a mix of emotions.

I sat dumbfounded as my mind ran miles. I felt everything. A few words were enough to make me feel broken, embarrassed, guilty, mad, fucking furious. And a simple kiss on the cheek was enough to make me feel flustered.

I was staring at Marco until our food came.

“Jean, are you okay?” he asked, placing his hand on top of mine. “Yeah. Yeah.” I nodded and cleared my throat.

“I thought you would kill Eren on spot.” He bit his lip, still worrying, knowing the hollow meaning of my words.

“I thought so too.” I admitted and grabbed a slice of pizza trying to act as if the past few minutes didn’t ever take place. But how Eren knew?

“Wait!” I shot with an unintended growl, making Marco stop what he was doing, his mouth open and pizza almost in.

“How does he know?” I snarled, my eyes narrowing. “Who told him?”

“Jean…”

I was blinded by the betrayal. “Was it you?” I snapped.

Marco let the slice fall back on the plate as he rocked back with hurt in his eyes.

“No…” he managed, with even more hurt weighing his gaze, making me regret even thinking about it.

“Then who?” my voice obviously less sharp and threatening, after witnessing his reaction.

Silence.

“Y-Ymir, probably. I mean she had good intentions.” He spoke after a couple of minutes.

“I am sure.” I grit my teeth, looking away from Marco.

We ate our meal in silence and Marco headed out first while I went to the counter to pay.

“Here you go.” The cheerful waitress handed me a brown bag with something way too delicious inside.
“It’s garlic bread and cheese stuffed bread.” She explained with a dreamy look on her face as if she could taste them.

“We didn’t order them.” I said puzzled. “Oh, I know! It’s on the house! Since this little goblin that inhales pizza bothered you and your date, I couldn’t think of a better remedy. Now go and enjoy them with your cute boyfriend.” She shooed me outside before I could tell her that Marco was not, in fact, my boyfriend.

“Have a good night! And come again some time!” she waved and went back inside.

Marco was waiting for me on a nearby bench, rubbing his hands together. He looked surprised as his eyes caught the brown bag on my hands.

“Treat because you are cute.” I explained with a laugh but Marco blushed nevertheless.

The walk back was more relaxed than our meal. I asked him who else did Ymir tell and he replied that possibly everyone at her house that night knew.

I felt frustrated knowing that others would now pity me and Eren would spur more teases like those until he gets his well-deserved punch.

“Are you still in for ‘Donnie Darko’?” Marco asked as I unlocked our dorm door.

“Yeah, sure! It’s this Friday, right?” I asked and he nodded with excitement. “In two days, midnight screening, me, you and popcorn.” I promised and he smiled widely.

We both loved that movie but I believe Marco loved it more for some reason that I couldn’t quite place.

“Today was a fucking roller coaster.” I groaned as I changed into my loose T-shirt and disposed of my skinny jeans.

“Yeah, but you got a date.” Marco replied as he laid down on his bed with a thud.

“Oh, fuck. Man, I totally forgot about that! Thanks! Now I won’t sleep all night and I will look like a fucking zombie tomorrow. I will freak Mikasa out and I will remain forever alone since I don’t even know how I got HER to like me.” I whimpered and the jerk dared to laugh.

“Goodnight, Jean!” he sang mimicking a child’s voice and I tossed him one of my pillows.

He just laughed some more.

And with his laughter mixed with the music from my headphones, I managed to fall asleep.

I jolted awake with a bad case of bedhair and a sweaty shirt.

“The fuck is the time?” I asked, only to see that the room was empty, Marco’s bed all tidied up and the blinders drawn.

The sunlight was bright and warm. It was a nice change of the moody weather that had made Trost its home the past few days.

I untangled my legs from my comforter and lumbered my way to the living room. No sign of Marco either. I yawned widely as I knocked on the bathroom door. Nope, not here at all.

I was in the middle of pondering whether I should call him or not when the front door opened and
Mr. Sunshine got it.

“Oh, you are awake?” he asked the obvious. “Duh! Where were you?” I asked and he waved the plastic bags in his hands.

“Shopping. We need resources in case we want to stay in and have an alternative other than Pop Tarts.” He snickered and I cringed at his morning cheerfulness.

“Go and groom yourself to a human being again and I will prepare you breakfast.” He promised. I sniffed myself on the way to the bathroom.

Shower too.

After half an hour, I blamed the soothing feeling of hot water for my delay, I emerged from the bathroom, steam behind me, as I hummed the song that had stuck in my brain since I woke up.

“Did you text Mikasa, yet?” Marco’s voice broke the melody. “Huh? No, I just woke up.”

“It’s noon, Jean. If you want to go on a date today…” he trailed off and I huffed, picking up my phone and dialing her number.

“Jean? Hi!” Mikasa’s stoic voice was filled with a hint of relief. I guess she was waiting for me to call.

“Hi, Mikasa! Uhm, about that coffee, are you free at around seven?” I asked fiddling nervously with the end of my towel.

“Yeah, seven’s fine.” She agreed and told me her dorm number and building and ended the call with a ‘see you later’ that made me smile.

“It’s a date!” I smiled even wider as I joined Marco in the living room and he offered me a cup of coffee, chestnut flavored too. This boy was spoiling me.

“Great! I hope it goes well!” Marco smiled briefly and brought his mug to his lips to take a sip.

We ate in comfortable silence while Marco occasionally would tell me things about his upcoming schedule, reminding me to see the announcements for mine too.

After our 1 p.m. breakfast, I was too nervous to do anything else but play CoD. Killing imaginary bots worked wonders on my anxiety and Marco soon joined me, turning my competitive side on.

The time passed smoothly and fast and I had to get up to get ready for my date.

I decided to opt for a crimson T-shirt, the one Marco had remarked on how toned it makes me look, and just another pair of skinny black jeans with holes and strings hanging around. I slipped in my Vans and sprayed some good ol’ AXE around my body.

I smiled at Marco who gave me thumbs up and closed the door behind me as I popped a mint or two in my mouth.

‘You got this Jean. It’s Mikasa. A new start. Don’t think about Mina and you’ll be peachy. After all, she likes you. You got it!’ pumped myself up.

Mina was my ex-girlfriend. And the only girlfriend I ever had. She was sweet and great but I was an asshole to her and hurt her with my ways and she cheated on me with another kid, Thomas was his name. That was the bitter tale of my first and last relationship.
I pushed these thoughts away from my mind and put my earphones on, blocking any other thought, quickly making my way to Mikasa’s place.

She waited for me outside instead of her room, mumbling something about her annoying roommate.

“The Garrison?” she asked. “Nah, that’s too mainstream. I am taking you somewhere better.” He smiled at her and she smirked, looking forward to the surprise.

“So, my classes begin on Tuesday. When do yours begin?” I asked, trying to find a conversation topic. I was never good with small talk, Marco though aced the thing.

“Uhm, on Monday I think.” She replied idly. “Is ‘Old Eldia’ the place?” she pointed at the café we were heading.

“Yep, have you been here?” I asked back. “Oh, no. A friend of mine works here, that’s why I know the place.” She replied with a smile and this gave me enough courage to take her hand in mine and guided her inside the café.

She didn’t pull away and I had to turn away in order for her not to see my dorky blush.

“Hey, Connie!” she greeted a short kid with a buzzcut that served the front tables. “Hi, Mikasa!” he waved at her but looked confused. “No Eren around?”

“Oh, no. Not this time.” She replied and let me lead the way.

We sat across each other, our hands finally returning to their lonesome state. “I am sorry about yesterday.” She began.

“No need. It is not you that should be sorry. And I didn’t like Eren from day one so yeah, I don’t care.” I tried to put on a fake ‘too-cool-to-care’ smile but it probably turned out to be an awkward one as she shook her head and sighed.

“He is not bad nor he means ill. He is just too hot-headed and doesn’t filter his thoughts before they become words.” She continued.

“I think you are similar to each other. Perhaps that is why there is this friction between you.” I didn’t speak but I could feel my teeth gritting.

“You are both straightforward, short-tempered and have an awesome black-haired best friend.” She added the last one to lighten up the mood. I chuckled and agreed.

“Yeah, Marco is amazing. I don’t know how he can put up with my shit but I admire him so much for that. He is the sun itself and is always there when you need him. This boy has saved my ass from broken bones and black eyes more times than I am willing to admit. He just has a calming effect. I literally could talk for hours for him.” And that’s what I do. Mikasa and I talk about Eren and Marco more than we do for ourselves but neither of us seems to notice or to care.

She tells me all about their childhood. How Eren and Armin were her neighbors on Shiganshina, where her home is and how the three of them are inseparable since kindergarten. She wore a genuine smile on her face and her features were beautifully highlighted as she talked about their adventures and about how Eren was fixated to catch every criminal on the world ever since they were eleven and someone had broken on Armin’s apartment.

In exchange, I told her about junior high and how Marco was intimidated by my fake punk ass. I
told her about Ymir and Krista and how much they loved each other. I told her about how Marco wanted to become a psychologist and how much I thought it suited him. He was always there to listen and not judge, to help and not to gossip.

We didn’t even understand when the lights dimmed and the café turned into a bar. When it did, it was time for us to go. I paid while Mikasa chatted with Connie. Then I took her hand in mine and waved Connie good night.

“Care for a stroll in the campus park?” I asked, hoping the date wouldn’t end there.

Mikasa agreed, never leaving my hand and I moved a bit closer to her.

The street light enhanced her mysterious aura. Her dark blue dress and her silk black hair made her look like a goddess of the night and she took my breath away.

The park suited her even better and I felt mesmerized as I stole glances of her beautiful grey eyes behind the stray strands of her bangs.

Both of us had stopped talking for some time now and I stopped walking before I could understand what I was doing.

Mikasa stopped too and looked in my eyes with intensity. I felt my breath hitch as my vision was now blocked from my eyelids and my hands were finding their way to the sides of her beautiful face.

She leaned in as well and our lips met. I felt her breath on my face and blushed under the warmth it offered. Our lips started moving in sync and her hands were roaming on my hair, playing with a few loose strands here and there.

We broke the kiss for breath and she buried her face in my chest. I looked at the sky above and sighed with happiness.

But then she said something I didn’t expect.

“Jean…” her voice and breath next to my heart send shivers down my spine. I hummed in response. I couldn’t find any words or my voice to speak with.

“Don’t take this in the wrong way, but I have kissed other people before you and this wasn’t an honest kiss. I believe for neither of us.” She looked up to my puzzled expression and placed her hand on my cheek.

“It wasn’t honest because we didn’t mean to give it to each other, but to someone else. Perhaps you cannot tell yet who this person is for you, but I know who this person is for me.” She continued and hurt spread all over across my face.

“Eren.” I growled as I looked away from her eyes and then closed mine.

“Yes. But, Jean, don’t take it as a loss to him. I like you, I really do. But, I am in love with him. And that kiss helped me realize that I need to stop denying this and face my feelings. I am so afraid of losing his friendship because it's what I have all these years. But, this fear has stopped me from something perhaps greater.” She placed her hand over my heart and waited for me to open my eyes again.

“I hope you realize it for your person too. I hope you do it soon enough and not waste years you could spend together, tormenting yourself over your feelings, like I did. Promise me you won’t shy
away when you realize who this person is.” She looked deep into my eyes as if she tried to find the reply to her plead in my soul.

“I-I…I don’t understand what you mean but if you feel like that, there is nothing I can do to change these feelings to my favour.” I sighed heavily, her hand finding its way to my cheek again.

“Let me walk you back.” I offered and she nodded, taking her hand in mine as if the moment in the park never happened.

We walked in silence but thankfully her dorm building was nearby and I didn’t have to explode with all of these feelings that overwhelmed me.

She kissed my cheek goodbye and before she was lost behind the large metal door, “Promise me.” She reminded me. I huffed but replied, “Okay, fine. I promise.”

She smiled and thanked me as she disappeared into the building, leaving me and my bad fuck of luck alone.

My stomach growled when I smelled the sweet smell of pizza in the air. I followed the delicious scent like the cartoons and found my way to Military Pizza. I opened the front door and the bells chimed above my head.

The girl from yesterday was there again and offered me a big smile, “Did the gifts make it better?” she asked and I nodded at the memory of me and Marco devouring the garlic and cheese stuffed bread as we played CoD this afternoon.

“Oh, I am glad. Armin is here again today. No Eren, I promise.” She winked and let me make my way to a seat. I was just about to sit when I saw Armin sitting alone near the back of the pizzeria. I cursed under my breath as I wanted to forget anything Eren-related right now but I made my way to the blonde.

“Oh, hi, Jean!” Armin smiled at me. “Care if I join?” I asked a bit harshly. He didn’t notice my tone and simply nodded.

“No Eren around today?” I asked the obvious. “Ah, No. I wanted to be a bit alone, to think some things.” He admitted with a frown.

“Shall I leave you then?” I offered but he shook his head.

“Actually, I have something to ask you.”

Jean was supposed to have his date at seven and now it was nearly eleven. Either this was going very well or he had been kidnapped.

I changed channel after channel on the small TV we had in our living room but nothing good was on, or at least nothing looked good for me right now.

I ruffled up my hair in desperation and let out a sigh. I gave up trying to find a proper channel and just let the TV play in the background as I drifted away with my thoughts.

It’s been days now that I have been having this feeling whenever something is related to Jean and most specifically to him and Mikasa.
I had come to terms with that just the night before. I was terrified and I wished I could change it somehow but the truth was one and the same either I ignored it or embraced it.

I was in love with Jean. I must have been for quite some time now, but I never thought about it twice. Mikasa triggered the realization of my feelings and I didn’t know if I needed to thank her or be jealous of her.

I shifted around on the couch and closed my eyes. She was probably kissing him now. Her lips on his. His soft lips, that were a bit chapped on the corners because he bites them when he is stressed. Her hands on his hair. His two-toned rough hair that smelled of his shampoo, like our bathroom did, like our room did, like I wanted my pillow to do.

His passionate amber eyes closed, keeping the flame inside as he left a trail of kisses on her neck.

I felt like screaming. Perhaps I screamed too much inside my head and that is why now it was throbbing and my throat felt sore.

But let’s be realistic here. They look good together and she seems to have her shit together much more than I do. I mean I know of masks when I see them and she doesn’t seem to wear one. She is true and genuine.

She won’t hide her disapproval, her anger, her bitterness. I will wear a smile and wave it off.

I don’t deserve to be with Jean. He is honest and genuine as well, perhaps too much for his own good, but he stays true to himself and his feelings.

I bury my face in the corner of the puffy couch and stay still for a while.

Being with someone like me would crush his light. First and foremost it would shock him if he sees me, not my mask, but the real ugly me that hides in bathroom mirrors and under bed covers late at night.

He would be repulsed and shaken because I would take his strong pillar, of what he thinks I am, away and I cannot do this to him, not now that it would cost him even more given the circumstances, not ever.

I have tried to change. I have tried to be what I fake. To be that happy, to be that optimistic, to be that great of a person everyone else thinks I am.

But I failed each and every time. Each time I fell even further down. Each time I broke in even more pieces. Each time I cried even harder and spent more sleepless nights alone in the dark of my room.

So I stopped trying and gave up any efforts of getting through this.

It’s part of me and it will forever be. I am not delusional to believe it will go away with romance and love, it’s way deeper than any of these feelings because it comes from the deepest corners of my mind.

I can only pray that I will be gifted with a person strong enough to stand and accept the things I cannot accept myself. I am weak, oh I know, but that is why sometimes I secretly hope this person doesn’t come around because I don’t want to torment anyone else with my mind’s plaguing thoughts.

There are other ways to keep yourself going instead of clinging on someone, you know. That’s
what I have been doing. Music for example. It has saved me so many times.

One song is enough to snap you out of the darkest night of your life and make you wear rubber bands instead.

A few notes can soothe you after a panic attack to a dreamless sleep.

Lyrics that hit too close home are enough to remind you of the fact you are not alone in this, even if that means that you walk with the ghosts that these songs offer.

I tried drawing as well, but it quickly turned morbid and dark and it didn’t help at all. Especially if I had adopted this hobby and people would ask to see my notepad. It would be disastrous.

I used to journal for a bit too. But there were days I was too tired to even roll off my bed let alone write. I opted to talk to myself instead. In my head most of the time.

Generally, I was managing to cope with it most of the year. But, winter was always the worst. This why I feared this year’s winter because I would have to keep the mask on all the time since Jean and I lived together.

Perhaps, it would be for the best of both of us for him to find a girlfriend. This would ensure some free hours to breathe for me and some happy hours to do whatever for him.

Yeah, it would be for the best.

I could manage another empty hole in my chest if it was for him to keep shining that bright.

Tears started streaming down my face and I couldn’t stop them coming.

“Pathetic, Marco. Why are you like this?” I groaned, muffled a sob and got up heading towards the bathroom. That’s when I heard the footsteps behind the door and the sound of jingling keys.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck. Not now!” I whispered and ran towards the bathroom, closing the door behind me as silent as I could to appear I was inside some time before.

“Marco?” I heard Jean’s voice echoing in the living room as he fell on the couch with a loud thud and a sigh.

“In the bathroom. I am coming in a bit.” I managed to speak without sobs, hiccups or voice breaks, what a thing to be proud of!

“In the bathroom. I am coming in a bit.” I managed to speak without sobs, hiccups or voice breaks, what a thing to be proud of!

“Kay, Kay, take your time.” Jean replied with his casual tone. I didn’t know if I was a magnificent actor or he was as oblivious as a rock. Either way, I was grateful.

I splashed cold water on my face and brushed my teeth to buy some time for my face to lose its red and wet outlook.

When I was satisfied with the result, I headed out.

Mask: on!

“Hey, how did it go?” I said with a wide smile as I sat next to him.

I was ready for painful details but instead, I got “I-…I thought it was going well. I mean we kissed and it was breathtaking, but she..” he paused looking absentmindedly at the TV. I let him take his time while I burned inside. “Mikasa likes Eren.” He finally spoke looking at me with a glassy gaze.
Ouch! Even if I was in love with him, and like every other person would be happy that the person they are in love with didn’t get with someone else, I felt hurt. His hurt.

“It seems it took her a Kirschtein and a coffee date to finally accept it, but yeah.” He looked uneasy like he did when he was hiding something.

That had me curious. “Is that all that happened? You look troubled. More than that I mean.” I tried.

“Well, she said that like her kiss wasn’t directed to me in the same way she felt my kiss wasn’t directed to her as well. Dunno what she meant with that but whatever. Oh, I met Armin after that and we went for pizza. I got you garlic and cheese stuffed bread.” He changed the subject quickly. Someone else? Who? My dear heart, what’s even going on?

“Oh, really? What did you talk about?” I asked following his queue.

“Uhm, well. Stuff. About medical things and the Library’s schedule. Well, he did the talking and I did the eating.” He looked away again and I knew there was more to the story but he was clearly trying to avoid it at any cost, so I didn’t press further.

“You want your bread now?” he asked and I nodded. He gave me the brown bag and excused himself to our room to change his clothes.

I munched on the cheese stuffed bread savouring its creamy flavour and wondering what the hell was Jean hiding.

Well, knowing Jean I would find out in a day or two, but still, now it would be a better option.

He soon joined me again, his hair ruffled up from the change of clothes, his legs bare as he only wore the pair of his favorite black boxers, and let me tell you he was right to have them as a favorite pair because they complimented his ass just fine. He wore a loose green T-shirt that fell just right after his collarbones, making them pop.

My mouth watered but cheese bread was there to hide that and save me from any embarrassment. God, I hope other parts didn’t get alerted too.

My new found crush teased my body and my senses and I could feel Cupid laughing his ass off somewhere in the background, amused by my demise.

Boner check. Phew, not alerted. Good.

I was so pre-occupied with all these thoughts that I didn’t notice that the subject of my current mess had taken a seat beside me and was now robbing me of my garlic bread.

“Hey, I thought you ate.” I squeaked, yeah I squeak when I am surprised or when my food is under attack.

“Yep, but I got hungry on the way back.” He smirked deviously as he shamelessly took a big bite of the bread.

“Then why didn’t you buy for yourself as well, jerk?” I tried to defend the rest of the garlic bread to no avail.

“I wasn’t hungry then.” There goes another huge bite. Provoking little shit.

I jumped on him and he looked terrified as I tried to take the bread away from his treacherous
Bad luck found my efforts as he remembered how ticklish I was and started his attack on my ribs and stomach. Feather-like touches send shivers and tickles down my spine and stomach. Realizing the position we were in and how much I enjoyed his touch, which now was under my shirt, I retreated, faking that I couldn’t breathe from the tickle session.

Indeed I couldn’t breathe, but it was from my hard efforts to keep my cool.

I flipped him the bird and he laughed, taking the rest of the bread in one bite.

It is just September and I am losing my self-control. Isn’t this going to be an interesting year?

Fuck.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think in the comments! Please don't forget to leave kudos if you like the story so far!!
Avoidance

Chapter Summary

Marco and Jean finally get to watch Donnie Darko!! And Marco gets all the feels afterward…

Chapter Notes

I am back with a new chapter.
Ugh, this is a bit heavy chapter since it has some spoilers for Donnie Darko, a panic attack and some depressing thoughts.
I really hope someone actually reads this fic and enjoys it

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The following morning was hazy and so were we.
Both of us moving lazily in our dorm, not in the mood for anything that was related to the outside world.

Jean was still hurt over Mikasa’s words and tried to occupy himself with his sketchpad. He loved having music playing whenever he doodled so he turned the speakers on, rock music emitting from them and breaking the silence.

I busied myself with cleaning duties, trying to clear my head too. I hummed along to some songs that played from Jean’s phone and I tried to focus on the dust instead of him.

It wasn’t an easy task when the person you wanted to push away from your mind was standing 5 feet ahead, but I was willing to try harder.

Seems like distraction didn’t work for him either as he would tear and crumble page after page and groan louder than the music. He excused himself and locked himself in the bathroom in order to take a shower.

As soon as he was out of the room, I tossed the dusting feather on the coffee table and collapsed ungracefully on the couch. This is a situation I didn’t see myself getting into.

But, it was kind of sweet too. You know I had something else to think, instead of my usual and constant overthinking.

I smiled to myself. Jean didn’t have to know about this and I could cherish our every moment without it being awkward given how close we were already.

A new song boomed and I grabbed the dusting feather, returning to my cleaning with a better mood but not a better singing voice.

“Dude, you should go to the Voice or something,” Jean commented with a tap on my shoulder.
I squeaked and he chuckled in response. “I am not that good, Jean. I am not even good, to begin with.” I rubbed my free hand on the back of my head, trying to brush this topic off.

I wasn’t confident of my singing voice. Well, I was not confident of myself or my abilities at all, so whenever a topic like this came around I tried to avoid it.

“Nonsense, dude. I am telling you, and my mom is a music teacher so take this seriously, you got much potential there.” Jean persisted as his hand traced from my lips down to my neck.

I think I was blushing but Jean didn’t seem to mind. Perhaps he took it as my reaction to his compliment and not to the sudden violation of personal space.

“Just believe in yourself, little Simba.” Jean winked and I rolled my eyes with so much force that I thought they would spin. “How could you even get the words wrong?” I groaned.

“It’s ‘remember who you are’!! It’s the most famous quote!” I corrected him in resentment.

“Yeah, yeah, whatever. Not everyone is a Disney nerd like you.” He waved his hand as if was trying to shoo my annoying remark away.

“But seriously, I could listen to you for days.” He turned his back on me making his way to our room to change. Before he left he looked back at me and gave me a toothy smile of support.

By the time he was gone from the door frame I let the breath I was holding and shook my head. Blushing, I finished cleaning but without much singing this time. My heart could only handle one drumming session at a time.

Later on, when noon came around and our stomachs started a symphony of growls, Jean offered to go out and buy us some food but I persuaded him to stay and let me cook instead.

Now, when I said that, I forgot that our dorm basically lacked a kitchen if it wasn’t for a half-counter and a stove. This was going to take some time.

Not losing any further time, I got the groceries I had bought the other day and contemplated on the dish I would be making.

I smirked at myself and my devious solution as an idea flashed in my mind.

“What’cha cooking? Smells hella good.” Jean tried to pry.

“Did you just say ‘hella’?” I snorted and finished the sauce I was making. “And lunch is ready. Sit right there and wait for your dish.”

“Yes, mom!” Jean faked a child’s voice and snorted as I put food on his plate.

I filled both of our plates and made my way to the puffy couch with a shit-eating grin on my face.

“No, you didn’t.” Jean rolled his eyes and facepalmed.

“Yes, I did. And if you don’t eat yours I am having it as a second helping.” I warned.

“Fucking spaghetti with fucking meatballs and sauce.” He exaggerated. “Disney nerd.” He huffed but stuffed his mouth with the still hot spaghetti.

Jean moaned as he began eating faster. “Jean-bo, you should take it easy or you will have a
stomach ache for a week.” I warned taking a bite myself.

“Mmh, but…’s g soo” he said between munches. I laughed at him, glad he liked my cooking and returned to my food.

After we finished eating, Jean let a long train of burps and then proceeded to stare at the ceiling with satisfaction.

I gathered the plates and got up to do the dishes when I felt a hand slapping my ass, making me squeak.

“You could make such a good hubby.” Jean joked and laughed as he rolled so that he could lay down to the couch.

Now, normally I wouldn’t be alerted since he had done that many times before. Buuuuuut, welp, now it didn’t help the situation and I was forever grateful to whoever was watching over me because Jean had already closed his eyes and my deep blush was safe.

By the time I did the dishes and cleaned the counter Jean was already fast asleep. Soft snores escaped his mouth and I could stare at him forever.

God, I was creepy as hell.

Since the couch was occupied and I didn’t trust my instincts half enough to try and sneak next to Jean, I made my way to my bed for a quick afternoon nap.

“Come on, cowboy!” something or someone shook me in my sleep.

“Wake up!!” whatever it was, it was persistent for sure.

I let a soft growl but it did little to intimidate it as it started shaking my whole body with much more force.

“What is happening?” I finally cracked one eye open and caught a glimpse of Jean.

“You are sleeping like a log, that’s what’s happening.” He didn’t stop with the shaking.

“Fine, fine. I am getting up.” I surrendered. His hands finally left my body and he returned to whatever he was doing.

“It’s seven o’clock. Go take a shower and then we can go and grab some food before the movie.” He instructed.

“Don’t tell me you are hungry again.” I ruffled my hair a bit as I got up.

“I am a growing boy, ma.” He blew me a raspberry and I rolled my eyes in response.

The shower was calming and it happened to be one of those rare ones in which no thought burdened me, no panic or anxiety crept around me. It was just me and the sound of water.

Jean was in the process of getting ready when I entered the room, thankfully I had remembered to take the new pair of boxers along in the shower, and I joined him.

I wore the sweater he had bought me last Christmas. It was a fitted deep royal blue sweater with a pretty deep V line. I usually wore it with a shirt underneath but preppy wasn’t for the movies.
I matched it with a pair of black chinos and my black converse.

Jean wore his dark grey Nirvana sweater that fell a little too big for him as the sleeves covered his long fingers along with a pair of damaged dark blue jeans and his worn out black Vans.

“Let’s go!” he seemed more enthusiastic than usual but all I did was follow him with a smirk. He was cute when he was excited. I mean cuter than the default.

We ended up in the MP again. It was slowly becoming our hangout place and pizza was never out of our appetite.

The usual waitress gave us a cheerful greeting and I heard Jean calling her by her name. Sasha.

We ordered our food and chatted about the movie we were about to see as if we hadn’t watched it a million times before.

“Just admit it already!” Jean challenged me. “You got it bad for Gyllenhaal.”

“No, I don’t!” I argued as he pushed his cheeks with his hands, making a fish-face to mimic a love-struck girl.

“Yeah, you do!!” he laughed “Otherwise it’s unexplainable the fact you watched ‘Accidental Love’ three times!!” he reminded me of my junior high antics.

“And how do you know I watched it three times, you jerk? And to my defence, I was young and stupid back then.” I admitted.

“’Cause you made me watch it along, dork.” He stuffed another slice of pizza in his mouth.

“Mph, fine. Whatever.” I shrugged. “So, you admit it!” he exclaimed in victory.

Yeah, Jean, I like light brown haired boys, with toned arms and bright eyes. Boys that could make me swoon with a smile and with a voice enough to send chills all over my body. Boys like the one across me who was so ungracefully stuffing his mouth with slice after slice but making my stomach flutter by doing so.

‘I wish I knew how to quit you.’ Came into my mind. ‘Cliché!!’ my brain screamed at me.

We paid and made sure to leave a generous tip for Sasha. The cold air hit our faces giving them a pink hue and we picked up our pace as we headed towards the screening room of the campus.

Jean apparently had room for popcorn, the large bucket, and Coke. He was certainly eating way much more than someone would expect, judging from his lanky appearance.

Ironically, we were alone in the screening room. The only thing that was missing was someone in a rabbit suit.

The movie started and Jean’s eyes glimmered under the projector’s light. Oh, damn it. I’d watched the movie enough times already. So, I opted to steal glances of Jean instead.

I adored how his expression changed when Frank appeared for the first time on the screen. He wouldn’t admit it but he was creeped out by the odd rabbit suit.

His initial smile turned into a scowl and he moved deeper into his seat.

I was amused on how Jean cringed when Donnie was induced into hypnotherapy for the first time
and I tried to muffle my snicker when his brows furrowed when he lit Cunningham’s house on fire.

I entertained myself watching Jean and a little bit of the movie until my favourite part came around.

My eyes were fixated on the screen as Donnie had a panic attack on his therapist’s office and they started watering. I wasn’t sure if it was from my intense stare or my intense emotions about this scene and before I could think about it, some tears were already rolling down my cheeks.

Jean was watching with the same intensity as me and that gave me the chance to wipe my tears without him realizing.

The movie carried on and I contemplated taking Jean’s hand in mine. The end was near and it would always get me.

Donnie’s laughter echoed in the dark room and I closed my eyes for the following scene.

Tears were now freely strolling down my cheeks and neck, dampening my sweater. I didn’t care. Jean knew I always cried in that scene.

I broke into sobs when Jean did what I definitely didn’t expect.

He took my hand in his and covered it with his other hand, never tearing his eyes from the screen nor loosening his warm grip.

After the credits starting rolling on the screen, I got myself back together as I got some tissues from Jean and wiped away my remaining tears and the tear stains. Only then Jean let go of my hand that felt cold without his around.

Jean threw away his trash on the way to the exit and we exited the building in silence.

“Do you think he was happy?” I voiced my thoughts after we took a turn towards our dorm building.

“Who?” Jean’s head snapped towards my direction and looked me with wide amber eyes.

“Donnie.” I whispered. His gaze softened and a small smile ghosted his lips.

“I think he made his peace. I think he was content. And he was happy, yes. How else could you explain his giggles at the end?” he said without looking away from me.

I drew my lips together and frowned, taking in his words.

I looked ahead and simply nodded. We didn’t exchange another word on our way back. Both of us heavy from the movie.

We exchanged the usual pleasantries about who would get to use the bathroom first when we arrived at our dorm but other than that the silence was comfortable enough for us this night.

“Good night, Jean.” I said as I brought the covers up to cover my body.

“Sleep tight, Marco.” He replied and put his headphones on.

I tried to sleep. I really did. I tried all the tricks I had whenever insomnia was kicking but nothing worked.
I felt like crying and the suffocating thoughts that swarmed inside my head didn’t help at all.

I laid on my back, as my breath hitched and my vision went blurry. Fuck not now!

Before I could stop the panic attack from overwhelming all of my senses, I was already miles underwater, or at least that’s what I felt.

I couldn’t breathe and I withered in pain. My lungs were stinging. My head was screaming at me and I couldn’t see a thing. My eyes were long covered with thick tears.

And my only concern was not to wake Jean up.

I tried to untangle myself from my covers, in search for some air, something to calm down my senses. But the only thing I managed was to tangle myself even tighter and I felt like I was buried slowly under the earth.

Fuck, fuck, fuck. I knew panicking further when you had a panic attack was equal to a death wish but I couldn’t stop it.

I didn’t have a panic attack for a while now and when they came back after a blank period they were always worse.

Remember, remember, 5 things you see. Come on!

I rubbed my hand on my eyes clearing my vision enough to see a bit.

Ok, five things you see. ‘Ceiling’ I stated the obvious. ‘Jean’ I turned my head around. ‘Headphones’ I focused on the boy. ‘Covers’ I paused a bit. ‘Pillow’

Ok, now 4 things you feel. ‘Drowning, Burning, Dizzy, Pained.’ That was easy.

3 things you hear. ‘The sound of Jean’s headphones, my hitched breath’ I focused on my surroundings trying to locate another sound. ‘Silence.’ I ended up listing.

2 things you smell. ‘Sweat and Jean’s AXE.’

1 thing you taste. ‘Metal.’ Fuck I was gritting my teeth against my cheeks again.

Finally the most crucial and agonizing part of the panic attack passed and I starting sobbing in relief.

That’s when I heard shuffling on the bed across the room.

“Ma-Marco?” Jean’s voice echoed and I felt guilt pang me. I woke him up. My silly antics and my panic woke him up.

“Marco, are you okay?” I heard more shuffling. I had to think of an excuse.

“Ohm, ye-yeah.” My hoarse voice cracked mid-sentence. “Just a nightmare.” I reassured him and I could see his shadow nodding in the dark as his torso fell back to his bed with a thud.

I waited for his snores to begin again and after taking a few breaths I tip toed to the bathroom where I continued my crying, sitting on the floor with my forehead pressed on the cool outer part of the sink. I needed as much coolness as I could find at the moment. And since shower was out of question, I had already wake up Jean once after all, the sink and the floor were the best alternatives.
I couldn’t sleep after napping that much after lunch, so I laid on my side, curled my legs and let music do its wonders as I closed my eyes enjoying song after song that filled my head.

It was the silence after the current song ended and the next was about to begin that let me hear the shuffling to the bed on the other side of the room.

I pressed the pause button on my headphones and softened my breath.

I could hear more of the manic shuffling and wondered if Marco was ok. His breath was heavy and sounded like it barely found its way in and out of his lungs. I could hear soft whimpers along with more shuffling and I was ready to go and check on him when everything ceased.

He took a long breath in and exhaled with evident relief. But then the sobs began.

They were pained, drowned sobs that made me want to rush to his side, hug him and tell him I was there for him.

I sat up on my bed.

“Ma-Marco?” I chose to check up on him before bursting in his bed.

The sobs continued but much quieter this time.

“Marco, are you okay?” I repeated. I heard his long sigh before his response came, almost forced “Uhm, ye-yeah. Just a nightmare.” His voice was hoarse as if he was sick.

I simply nodded and laid back down. Perhaps it was an intense nightmare. But, still it didn’t convince me.

I turned around again and in a few minutes, I was on the verge of falling asleep when I heard Marco leaving the room.

I waited for him to make another move and when I heard the lock of the bathroom turning I got up and approached his bed.

It was a mess. Covers and pillows all around the bed. The sheets were wrinkled and messy. I could smell faintly Marco’s sweat and when I touched his pillow it was soaking wet.

I heard sobs from the bathroom but I knew better to leave Marco alone for now.

I furrowed my brows and returned to my bed. I tossed and turned but I fell asleep only when Marco returned in the room.

The weekend passed rather quickly and soon enough Tuesday arrived.

I was in absolutely no mood to begin the lessons. Marco, on the other hand, was overjoyed and excited.

It was a nice change to see him really happy.
These days, from that night I caught him crying till Monday night, I started noticing things I was oblivious before.

Marco’s smile fell when he thought no one was looking, his eyes darkened as if a cloud, ready for a stormy rain, was above him and he tended to sigh a lot when he was alone in the room as if he had a weight of tons heaving him down.

I didn’t know what was going on but I was certainly worried.

But then on Tuesday morning, same ol’ Marco was around and this made my worries dissolve. Perhaps he was stressed that Uni was beginning. Happens to the best.

Marco and I headed to the cafeteria to grab some breakfast before heading to our separate buildings for the introduction lessons.

He kept talking with an amused tone about the lessons he would have this semester and the only thing I could do was to listen to him and smile widely at his dorkiness.

“I’ll see you at lunch, right?” I asked and he nodded, bidding me goodbye as he entered the building of the Psychology department. Politic Science’s building was a few buildings ahead and inspired by Marco’s cheerfulness I found the will to drag my ass towards it.

The class was a big one and it seemed I was one of the first people around so I could freely pick my seat. Neat!

I picked a seat near the window and towards the back of the class and took my notebook from my back, as I opened it I saw a doodle on the front page. A doodle from Marco.

‘Happy start!’ a ball that was drawn as a cute dog was saying. ‘And pay attention to the lecture.’ Another ball, drawn as a cat this time, hand in hand with the dog, advised.

I snorted and a smile spread wide on my lips.

I doodled on the next page, not wanting to mess with the sketch Marco made until more kids arrived and I was forced to small talk.

I met many kids and they offered to get lunch together but I refused, saying I already had plans for today’s lunch.

I had to listen to Marco gushing; in fact I was looking forward to it.

“You refused lunch but come and grab a beer after afternoon’s class. There will be many others as well. You can bring a friend or two.” The kid behind me offered, Franz was his name.

“Oh, okay.” I nodded. If I refused too many offers, they wouldn’t invite me again so I had to go. Hopefully Marco would come too.

Everyone suddenly stopped talking and I turned my head ahead trying to understand why.

It wasn’t really difficult to find out. A tall, broad man, with a shirt a bit too tight for his muscled body and a smile that could outshine the sun, entered the room.

He wore a pair of black rectangular glasses and he had his hair slicked back. His eyes were steel blue and his gaze was a mix of warmth and judgment. To say he was dashing would be an understatement.
Some girls had already started giggling. His gaze shifted towards them and they stopped immediately as they blushed furiously.

“Hello and good morning. I am really grateful that you all decided to show up for our lesson. I hope you found the building and the class easily and I hope you had a good morning so far.” His low voice echoed in the class.

“My name is Dr Erwin Smith. I will be your professor for ‘International Relations’ for this semester.”

He continued with the formalities and I got the chance to take a better look at him. He looked around his mid-thirties but his features were soft and the few wrinkles around his eyes gave him a wise outlook. As I studied him some more, I noticed a gold band around his left finger. Married too? This man looked like he lived a full life so far.

Oh, shit! I was supposed to pay attention. So, that’s what I did for the rest of the lecture. Surprisingly so, the lecture was really interesting and I could see myself attending every Tuesday from now on. I bet it was due to our professor’s charm, I mean I bet he could make watching paint dry an interesting subject.

I bidded goodbye to the kids I met and headed towards the cafeteria where I was supposed to meet with Marco.

Seems I was first there so I waited for him on a nearby bench.

The time passed and he was nowhere to be seen, so I decided to text him and see if he was okay.

To: My Angel

Marco? Are you ok?

I pressed send and decided to listen to some music as I waited for his response or his arrival.

My phone buzzed after a couple of songs and I turned the screen on to check the notification.

From: My Angel

Yeah, I am fine. Hanging with some kids from my class.

“Really?” I huffed to no one. Despite the fact I was left alone and hungry, I was happy Marco made some new friends, so I headed to the cafeteria to grab whatever I could eat before the afternoon class.

I grabbed a small loaf of bread and an apple and munched on them while I headed back to my building.

Then it hit me that I should probably let Marco know about Franz’ offer.

To: My Angel

A kid invited us for chilling after the lesson. You free?

The response came way faster than I expected and the buzz almost made me choke on my apple.
From: My Angel

_Ugh, sorry I got a thing. You go though._

I typed a half-assed ok and finished my apple, threw away the core and washed my hands before I headed to my new lecture.

This one was much more boring. Professor Pixis, or whatever, was on the verge of sleeping and the fact that his subject was ‘Political Philosophy’ didn’t help his sleepiness.

The two hours passed so slow that felt like two years, but we were finally free to go.

Franz grabbed my arm and asked me if I was joining them and proceeded to guide me towards the meeting point when I nodded in response.

A cute red-head with a low side ponytail was already waiting and when she caught a glimpse of us she ran towards Franz with a squeal. They kissed and kissed and kissed so much I felt like I was intruding, but they stopped when they were about to cross the line of kissing and making out.

“This is Hannah, my girlfriend. She is studying to be an English teacher.” Franz said proudly and Hannah blushed.

“Jean. Nice to meet you. I am on Franz’ department.” I offered my hand but she hugged me instead.

We waited a bit for the others to join us. I was surprised to see Sasha from MP and Connie from ‘Old Eldia’ arriving as well, hand in hand.

“Oh, you are the dude that was out with Mikasa the other day!” Connie said loudly. I cringed at the memory. “Oh, I am sorry.” Sasha said sadly. “I saw her with Eren the other day, seems like they made it official.” She explained.

More cringing came from my side while the others shook their heads feeling sorry for me.

We went to a nearby bar and chatted about our lessons and studies. Turned out Sasha and Connie were together for three years now, both of them were studying to become trainers. Connie's major would be martial arts while Sasha wanted to become an archery coach for young children.

They were both so cheerful and shared a big appetite but Connie whispered to me that no one in the world could beat Sasha.

“And then Sasha came into the room and found me half-naked covered with peanut butter. Lemme tell you, I tripped and fell with the peanut butter by accident, but whatever followed was no accident and it was easily the best thing ever.” Connie was quite light-headed with drinking as he let us all know their ‘escapades’ as he chugged down his third beer.

“Oh, right you idiot. As if I would ever believe it was an accident. Peanut butter doesn’t spread like that by itself.” Sasha added and everyone laughed at a deep-red Connie.

We talked some more about our friends and I told them all about Marco and his awesomeness.

“Dude, I would love to meet him. He seems like the exact opposite of you. I need to ask him how he befriended you.” Connie exclaimed.

“Oh! What do you mean you buzzcut peanut?” I said feigning my offence.
“You know you seem like a really mean person with all of these and the scowl we saw you wearing when we arrived.” He motioned to my multiple piercings and my bleached hair.

“Well, thank you very much.” I stuck my tongue out and he laughed in response.

And when the mood was at its brightest, the door of the bar opened and the two people I didn’t want to confront entered.

Mikasa and Eren, hand in hand as she rested her head on his shoulder.

I felt like growling but I knew no good would come out of it so I dropped it.

Or I was going to drop it but they decided to join us.

I grew uneasy as they sat next to Connie and depriving me of the conversation buddy I had established.

Eren talked and talked and talked. About how interesting his lectures were but no crime related lectures were in for the semester, and about how he was going to capture every criminal and about how he had said that in his class and a girl in front of him had laughed at his remark and he was willing to fight her.

Mikasa tried to make him keep it down but right then a girl approached our company.

“Hey, Sherlock.” She said. Everyone gulped. She fitted the description Eren had given a few seconds before.

“You are going to be a lawyer. Lawyers don’t pick fights, they finish them. And you are willing to fight me? What are you, twelve?” she spat and I could see Eren growing red.

“Oh, you want to try me?” he barked. The girl didn’t even bat an eye as she turned to Mikasa.

“Keep him on his leash for God’s sake. And keep him from barking, we came here to chill.” She gave a glare at Eren and with that, she left.

God, she was my favourite person in the world! Well, after Marco and the twins, but yeah, you get it.

Mikasa was now whispering at Eren angrily and he looked like a kid that was getting scolded.

I was amused!

But, my amusement didn’t last long as Eren eyed me and then a smirk appeared on his face as he noticed my smile.

“Oh, Jean! How are you faring?” he snarled and Mikasa sighed. I wondered what she saw on him.

“Pretty good.” I answered, wishing he would drop it right here.

But it was Eren we were talking about. He tossed his arm around Mikasa’s waist, and she looked surprised by his sudden move.

He then proceeded to take her face in his hands and kiss her, with tongue and all. She tried to fight it for the decency of the situation but she couldn’t resist him for long.

They were practically making out across from me and I was practically puking whatever I had for
the day.

“Well, excuse me then.” I hissed and paid my drinks.

I got up and I hurried out of the damned bar but not before I heard Eren’s laugh and a ‘loser’ accompanying it.

I was pissed and I needed some cold air and a walk. Thankfully I wasn’t even tipsy and my dorm was pretty far from the bar, so I was getting both.

As I made my way to the dorm I passed the campus parking and I was surprised seeing the dashing professor from the morning’s class. Dr Smith was it?

He was in front of, what I assumed, his car and he was talking with another man. The other was much shorter than him, his head barely reaching the blonde’s broad shoulders.

They seemed to talk casually but then Dr Smith was forcefully grabbed by the collar of his shirt and brought down to face the shorter man. Was he getting mugged?

Before I could even finish my mental question the other man planted his lips on the blonde’s and this took me by a huge surprise.

Was he cheating his wife with the shorter, mean-looking man?

But then I saw a golden band on the unknown man’s finger flashing under the parking lights. It was identical to Dr Smith’s.

Another wave of shock took me over. The man was professor’s husband? Wow! I wonder what the girls from class would say if they knew.

I snickered and left the couple to continue their heated make-out session as I picked my pace towards my dorm.

I greeted Oluo that stood behind the security desk and he greeted back with a poised look.

“Marco, you won’t believe what happened…” I started as I entered the dorm but I was met with deafening silence. The dorm was empty.

Right! He got something for the night! But it was getting late and he had morning classes tomorrow.

I moved in our room and I was ready to start changing my clothes before calling him when I noticed that all his things were there, phone too.

A feeling of dread washed over me and I started panicking.

Marco never left his phone behind. Fuck! Where could he be?

Ok, think, think, think.

People we knew around there? Ymir and Krista were too far. Reiner and Bert were in the dorm building across ours so they were worth a call. Armin, well for some reason I didn’t want him to be with Armin, but I would call nevertheless.

I sat on my bed and called Reiner and I ruffled my hair with nervousness.
“You called Reiner. Right now, I am having my sweet time with my boyfriend. Call later.”

Sooooo, they were out of question. Armin then?

“Jean?” he picked up after the second ring.

“Hey, Armin. Uhm, is Marco with you?” I asked trying to sound saner that I was.

“Uhm, no! Is everything okay?” he sounded worried.

“Yeah, yeah. He said he would be out but didn’t say with who.” I brushed it off.

“Oh, ok. Good night then. I hope he comes back soon.” Armin didn’t sound that convinced but little did I care.

Marco was gone and he had left everything behind.

Chapter End Notes

I have more chapters archived (till chapter 9) so I am going to slowly release them all since I am feeling a bit blocked in this story.
This fic started as an outlet for my overwhelming thoughts and now I am doing a bit better, so I dunno, my dudes, I want to continue this fic but my motivation is in the dumps rn. I will continue it and finish it tho! (someday)
All my love to @YunoGasai98 !!
I needed some air to think more clearly. I decided to check out our dorms roof instead of going back down.

I opted for the stairs to get my cold blood to start pumping again. After five floors and one pit stop for breath, I reached the roof.

I pushed the heavy metal door that screeched under my push and a cold puff of air hit my sweaty face.

I stood in the middle of the roof taking in the view and breathing deeply. That’s when I heard the sniffles.

I snapped my head around and spotted someone sitting on the corner of a side wall, metallic cans of beer spread around them.

“A-are you okay?” I questioned and started moving towards them.

It was…It was Marco!

“Ma-Marco?” I mouthed.

The boy across me didn’t seem to acknowledge my arrival as his sniffles turned to violent sobs.

I slowly kneeled beside him and tried to peel his back of the freezing wall. I proceeded to rub his back soothingly.

I was relieved I found him but my heart ached in the sight.

He was drunk and frozen. His sobs came out hitched and pained, a bit different than some nights before.

“Marco, it’s Jean. I am here. I am here.” I hugged him tight and it seemed it helped a little as he
moved a bit to be more comfortable in my arms.

His icy fingers brushed my neck for a moment before they landed on my back as he returned the hug.

“Marco?” I whispered again and Marco moved some more. Suddenly, he seemed to snap out of it and he pushed me away.

I fell with my butt on the hard floor and muttered a curse.

“Jean, go!” he ordered. His voice dark and something even more obscure lingered behind it, something I couldn’t quite place.

“Leave me alone. I don’t want you to see me like this.” He hissed. I tried to move closer to him again but he pushed me again.

“I SAID LEAVE.” He boomed. “Marco, you are drunk let’s get you back.” I decided that questioning him about how and why he got there wasn’t going to work for the time being.

“I AM FINE! Get out of here. I want to be alone. Let me freeze to death and see if I care. I want you to leave. Leave me in my misery.” He whispered the last part.

“Marco, what’s the problem?” I tried but he jumped on me, pinning me down.

“I AM the problem. I AM. And I don’t want you or anyone to know. This ugly mess is what I am. These fevering screams are plaguing my head. This vain battle is what I am fighting.” The Marco in front of me was nothing like the Marco I knew. He was like a wounded animal, trying to lick his wounds to heal, biting any hand of help.

And it terrified me. I didn’t know what his wounds were. I didn’t know why there were there or who caused them. I didn’t know what to do to heal them.

I didn’t know anything and there was my best friend, writhing in pain and agony in front of my own eyes and I was helpless, frozen in place and completely weak.

Marco collapsed on top of me. His weight crushing me but I didn’t care. He hugged my torso tightly and started sobbing again.

“Oh Jean, I don’t know how long this fight will rage on. I don’t know how long I can keep fighting. I am weak and my bones are frail. I cannot take any more hits. I have been broken so many times. I think I am not a human anymore but a pile of ash.” His tears soaked my sweater and I pressed him tighter on my chest.

“Marco, we can fight this together. Let’s go inside now. I will be there for you but let’s get you to bed.” I tried again.

I felt Marco nodding and he got up with a groan. I took his face in my hands for a moment. “Who hurt you that much?” I whispered.

“Myself.” He mouthed and got up, rushing for the door.

I cursed, leaving the beer cans behind and running towards Marco.

We rode the elevator since Marco was by no means in shape to take the stairs for so many floors.

I had my arms around him for the whole ride and he nuzzled his face into my neck. It would have
felt good if it wasn’t for the pain we both felt.

We got in our dorm and I led him to our room.

“Sit here and I will bring you some water. You drank a lot tonight so you gotta stay hydrated, okay? See if you can change your clothes.” I ruffled his hair a bit and he nodded with a pout.

Thankfully he wasn’t panicked anymore but just drunk. I could handle him better that way.

“Here, I brought you some painkillers too.” I offered them to Marco who was already experiencing the physical effects of his over-drinking.

He gulped them down and then groaned as he laid down on his bed. He had tossed his clothes all over the place and I was about to pick them up but his hand gripped mine firmly.

“Stay here. Please. I need you.” His voice weak and his plead made my heart skip a beat.

“Oh, how they glimmer whenever sunlight warms your face or whenever your inner light shines even brighter.” He confessed and well, it was weird hearing Marco saying these things but somehow it didn’t feel like it.

He closed his eyes and brought his lips on my forehead and stayed there until he fell asleep.

I stayed up about half an hour after that. I needed time to comprehend whatever just happened.

Something was seriously wrong with Marco; something was hurting him and concluding from his words, it was hurting him for a long time now. But, somehow my stupid ass hadn’t noticed. I was hurt because my obliviousness hurt him more.

I didn’t dare to move because I didn’t want to disturb him but the truth was that I felt comfortable in his warm embrace. I stayed up thinking, not realizing when I was finally taken by sleep.

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I tried to open my eyes but dried tears prevented me from doing so. I tried to bring my hand to my face to rub them away but an unknown weight wouldn’t move from my arm.

I sighed softly as I felt a headache started coming.

Memories from last night started flooding my fuzzy head.

Oh, no!

I remembered feeling sick after my lectures. I came back here to stay alone after the morning lecture and I did the same after the afternoon’s as well.
Jean was texting me all day but I didn’t have the strength to meet up with him. If I did I would have to mask my ill feelings and the self-loathing I felt since morning. I didn’t have enough stamina for that. I felt as if I was going to break into million pieces with each step I took.

When I returned to our dorm after the last lecture, I talked a bit with my parents and my brothers, thinking it would help to ease off these feelings.

It did the opposite since homesickness and guilt fell upon me like a wall.

I remembered how many times they had to tolerate my mood swings and my odd behavior. Guilt came even stronger.

And that’s when I decided to clear my head on the roof like Jean used to do. Before I rushed out of the dorm I caught a glimpse of our small fridge in the corner of the living room.

I opened it and I was glad it was full of beer. I grabbed a six-pack and slammed the door behind me.

My next memory is blurry. I remember crying by myself, feeling everything million times louder when someone joined me on the roof.

I was too much into my drunken self-pitying state to notice who they were or what they wanted.

The next thing I remembered was bits of memory of me pinning down Jean and yelling at him, of Jean tucking me to bed, of me kissing Jean’s forehead.

Dried tears or not, my eyes flung open as the last bits of memory returned in my head.

I jerked a bit away from the sleeping body wrapped around me.

Jean?

I slept with Jean. Well, I yelled at Jean, almost told him everything, complimented his eyes, kissed his forehead and slept with him?

Dear Jesus, why?

And that’s when I fully became aware of my body. You see Jean was practically pressed on my body. And his knee was pressed on my crotch. It didn’t take more for morning wood to appear and I whimpered at myself.

‘I will never drink again.’ I promised to myself as I tried to free myself from the jellyfish I had for a crush.

Thankfully good God decided I had suffered enough and Jean turned around, unwrapping my body and setting me free.

I stumbled on my clothes on my way to the bathroom and let another whimper.

I made sure to lock the door behind me and I quickly threw my boxers away, jumping into the shower.

Shower did nothing for the problem between my legs though. Seems like there was no other way than taking care of it the usual way.

I palmed myself as I felt my arousal growing bigger. This was probably going to take a while.
I wrapped my hand around my dick and started giving it soft strokes as moans escaped my mouth.

I closed my eyes and started jerking myself faster. Images of my best friend appeared behind my closed eyelids and my eyes shot open.

I stood there frozen in place. My cock throbbed in my hand and I bit my lip. I knew it wasn’t right. I knew.

But, unable to resist it further I closed my eyes again and moaned Jean’s name softly as I played with the tip and imagined a slender and pale hand wrapped around my dick instead of my own. My cock twitched in response.

My heart felt like bursting as the jerking became faster and faster. My mind was now blurry and all I could word was his sweet name. Pleasure dissolved any previous guilt.

“Jean, uh fuck!” I panted as I felt my peak coming closer. I wanted to enjoy these last few seconds so I slowed down. I stroked my hard arousal and pressed the slit with my fingers. I moaned his name again before I felt myself bursting. A sweet river of pleasure ran down my spine, matching the river of the white fluid escaping my cock.

I stayed still for a moment, catching my breath, before turning the tap open again, washing away whatever proof of what I was doing the past few minutes.

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I opened my eyes slightly but I quickly closed them again. Not ready to face the morning yet.

I tried sleeping again but the warmth of the body I had shared this bed with had left. Instead of a pair of muscled, freckled arms, I was met with wrinkled sheets and a mess of pillows.

I sighed in frustration and decided it was about time I got up.

I could hear shuffling from our living room and it was probably Marco getting his stuff ready for his morning lecture.

Glad I had woke up early enough to catch up with him before he disappeared like the day before, I got up and headed out of the room. Marco had his back towards me as he finished gearing up.

“’Morning Marco. Wait for me?” I asked, touching his shoulder softly. Marco jumped from my sudden appearance, “Eh! Good morning, Jean. My class starts in 30 minutes so I need to head-”

“I’ll be ready in 10 minutes. If I am not, then you can leave without me.” I announced and before he had time to reply I was already in the bathroom.

I was ready in 8 minutes. This was a new personal best. I snickered to myself as Marco’s smile fell a bit when he saw me ready to go in such a short time.

The silence between us was suffocating so I took it as my personal mission to make it disappear.

“So, how were your lectures yesterday?” I asked as we got into the elevator.

Marco opened his mouth and then closed it again, considering his answer. Finally, he opened it again “They were fine. I mean not that much as I expected but perhaps it was that way because they are still introductory. But the professors seemed really good and experts in their field.
Professor Lagnar is teaching Cognitive Psychology and I have her lecture again today. The other professor from yesterday is really peculiar but I like him. He has that moody expression all the time, he tells shit jokes and I believe he wouldn’t hesitate to beat down whoever even breathes loudly in his class. That’s Professor Ackerman and he teaches us about personalities and their characteristics. I suppose this lesson is going to be my favourite in this semester.” He spurred and he had such a casual tone and his expression looked relaxed as if it was any other day, as if he wasn’t crumbling into pieces last night. He was so good that he could have fooled me hadn’t I seen him in that state.

“I am glad you liked it!” I smiled widely and I decided to poke the sensitive matter a bit. Or at least I was about to do so when my phone started ringing.

“Mikasa?” I answered the call.

“Hey, Jean. Armin had the idea of having his birthday earlier this year since he will be visiting his grandfather when his actual birthday is. He wanted me to let you know and to ask Marco as well.” Mikasa informed me.

“Oh, ok. Yeah, I’ll ask.” I looked at Marco and the feeling from last night returned. For some reason, I didn’t want him to be near to Armin. And it didn’t make sense since Armin was one of the most decent dudes I knew.

“Will everyone else be there too?” I asked in hopes of reduced embracement and annoyance. Two things that would be constantly present if it was only the five of us in a room.

“Yeah, we already told Ymir and Krista. Eren is calling Reiner now and we will contact Sasha and Connie too.” She answered my prayers.

“Kk, I’ll let you know.” I nodded and hung up.

“What is it?” Marco looked at me with a puzzled look, probably due to my expression at the moment. I shifted my annoyed look to the normal one and he relaxed a bit. “Uh, Armin is having a party and we are invited.” I let him know and he only nodded.

We walked towards the cafeteria to grab a quick breakfast before Marco’s morning class. Now it was my second chance.

“So, Marco…” I trailed off, trying to find the right words.

“Yesterday night. Are you okay? What happened? Did someone hurt you?” I said all in one breath.

Marco’s eyes widened and he looked away, avoiding my gaze which sent a dread feeling down my spine.

“I…I am fine now. Uhm, I am sorry about yesterday. I got you into so much trouble with no reason.” His voice, barely above a whisper, filled with hurt.

“It didn’t look like there wasn’t a reason.” I decided to persist.

He fiddled with his toast, buying some time to think of his reply. “It is nothing important. And I will probably tell you someday. Just not now. I am not ready.” His eyes finally met mine and his nervousness was obvious as he tried hard not to break our eye contact.

“Okay, fine.” I didn’t comment on the uncertainty of his promise and just nodded.
“So, Armin is having his birthday, huh? I wonder what gift should we get him.” He tried to change the subject with a nervous smile as his shaking hand rubbed the back of his probably-covered-with-cold-sweat neck.


Since the day Armin talked to me I couldn’t stop feeling that way.

“Actually, I have something to ask you.” Armin asked.

“Uh, ok. Go ahead.” I nodded as I grabbed a slice of hot pizza.

“I-uhm, well…this is kinda awkward since you are his best friend and all…” he muttered to himself but snapped out of it when he noticed my utterly confused look.

“Hehe…” he laughed nervously clenching and unclenching his right hand around his left. “Well, I like Marco.” He finally said and the crust that rested in my hand fell with a thud on my plate.

“Wh-what?” this was the first time this feeling appeared. It was like a sting to my ribs, a punch in my stomach and a bitter taste in my mouth.

“Ye-yeah. Uhm…I wanted to tell you since you are his best friend and all. And I was hoping to know more about him. Well, you know basic stuff, like which is his favourite colour or how he likes his eggs. Thing like that. And perhaps if he is seeing or if he is in love with someone.” He said and took a deep breath. He stood frozen in place, his baby blue eyes wider than usual and his expression blank with a hint of a blush.

I still couldn’t find any words so I proceeded to finish up my fallen crust.

“He doesn’t like anyone. At least as far as I am concerned. His favourite colour is deep dark blue, so dark that you could mistake it for black. He likes his eggs either scrambled or Benedict.” I replied after a second slice of pizza and five minutes of uneasiness.

“Well, I-look at the time. I didn’t let Marco know that I would be that late. I should get going. Uhm, see you around?” I stuffed another slice in before Armin nodded, probably too happy that Marco was available to listen whatever I had to say.

I paid for our food and bought some more for Marco.

Cold air hit my face but the feeling of uneasiness didn’t leave.

“Huh? Armin? He is cool I suppose. I mean he is probably the most intelligent person I know and he can crack a joke or two.” Marco shrugged.

That didn’t sound that bad. A bit of relief eased my feeling.

“Why do you ask?” Marco wondered. Uh oh, I hadn’t thought that far.

“Uhm, well just wanted to know.” I feigned an indifferent tone.
“Is it because of his crush on me?” this got me by surprise. I winced as hot coffee scalded my tongue.

“How...Wait, did you know?” I asked once I recovered.

“Well, he is pretty obvious.” Marco laughed, was it at me or at Armin’s obvious crush, I didn’t know.

“So, do you like him back?” I asked with caution. “No. No, I don’t. I like him but not in his way.” He shook his head and then took a bite of his toast, letting me release the breath I didn’t know I was holding.

“And?” I tried. “And what?” Marco’s eyes met mine as he waited for me to elaborate. I felt tickles on my stomach and my blood rising to my cheeks.

“Oh, are you asking me if I like someone?” he finally caught up. Sometimes I wondered if he could read my mind. I nodded and he chuckled.

“Well? Who is it?” I moved to the edge of my seat as the back lifted from the floor.

“I am not telling.” His smile dropped for a moment but then returned.

I huffed, “Well, another ‘cannot tell’ for the pile.” My inconsiderate ass blurted out again without thinking.

Marco’s expression changed completely as hurt and worry weighted his features.

“I-I gotta go. I am going to be late for class.” He left before I could stop him.

I stormed out of the cafeteria. I felt like crying and puking at the same time.

I was weak and let my guard down for a night and here we were. My best friend slash crush was already mad at me for not telling him and if I had to trust my gut, things would only go south from here.

I caught my breath when I arrived at the class. I sat down in an empty chair next to the window. I needed oxygen. As much as I could get.

Professor Lagnar entered the room and I spent the rest of the time trying to focus and trying to forget.

“Oh, before I release you. Professor Ackerman asked me to inform you of his extra lesson. Each semester he is having an extra lecture for anyone interested. It will not affect your grades since participation in this lecture is optional. I would advise you to attend only if you are really interested since Professor will not tolerate anyone fooling on his lecture. This semester’s main theme is ‘Different Kinds of Depression’. I shall wait here until all of you that are interested sign it. The others are free to go. Have a nice day.” Professor had managed to grip my attention. But my feet wouldn’t move. What if they understood? What if they learned and pointed fingers at me?
My eyes met Mrs Lagnar’s and she gave me a comforting smile. It was all I needed to finally go to her and sign the paper.

The lecture would begin before my afternoon class. That meant I couldn’t meet with Jean for lunch.

I decided to call him instead of texting him. It would feel more personal and I wouldn’t feel that guilty.

“Marco? Everything alright?” he asked with concern. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath.

“Yeah. Something came up and I can’t come for lunch. I am sorry.” I let him know.

“What came up?”

Seems like since yesterday night Jean asked all the right questions. His veil of obliviousness was lifted and I couldn’t feel worse.

“Do you remember the moody professor I was telling you about? He is having an extra lecture for anyone interested and well I am interested.” I replied.

He hummed in agreement, convinced with my reply.

“What’s the theme?” his question came when I thought I had avoided the fire.


“Different Kinds of Mental Illnesses.” I changed the title just enough for me to breath.

“Oh, that sounds interesting indeed. Ok, then. Have fun? See ya in the dorm.” Jean replied a bit too fast and before I knew he had hung up.

I decided to visit the Library to spend the free time I had before the extra lecture.

I put on my headphones and made my way to the tallest building of the campus with Coldplay as my soundtrack.

As I walked inside I was mesmerized. The smell of old and new paper along with hints of coffee and tea overwhelmed my senses. Books were everywhere, filling bookcases over 20 feet tall. A smile crept onto my lips and I began my journey in this magical place.

I strolled a bit among the aisles of the first floor, trying to find something related to my studies. Lucky for me some other kids from my classes were also there and showed me the right spots.

I stood in front of the Psychology section, trying to take everything in. So many books, so much knowledge. It made me feel so small for knowing nothing of the mysteries explained in these books. But at the same time, it made me feel determined to learn them all.

I traced with my fingers the back of the books and randomly picked one. ‘Bipolar Disorder, Depression, Social Anxiety and other common disorders explained’

The book was big and heavy with a hardcover and as I opened it some CDs fell out of it. Extra material as well.

I looked for the author. They obviously had made a meticulous research. ‘Professor of Psychology Department in University of Trost, Ackerman Levi. This work came to be with the precious help of Dr Hanji Zoe, Research Associate of Biology Department in University of Trost.’
Seems like this Professor was everywhere I looked.

I decided to give the book a shot. I checked my watch and realized I had spent much more time than I intended in the Library. Determined to read the book, I walked to the self-check counter and borrowed the book to read back in the dorm.

The book was too big to fit into my messenger bag so I wrapped my arm around it, securing it between my arm and my chest and I jogged to the classroom.

I was five minutes late but the professor hadn’t arrived yet and there were more than enough unoccupied seats for me to choose. I opted for a seat next to the window again and as soon as my butt touched the chair the door flung open and the small angry man entered.

“So, I see many of you signed the paper but perhaps not all of you realized that this is not going to be child’s play. Also, no higher marks come from this and there is absolutely nothing else to gain here but knowledge. So, leave.” He ordered and I noticed some kids grunting as they made their way out.

The man sighed and ran a hand through his hair, I noticed the golden band brandishing his finger and I wondered what kind of saint was able to put up with his short temper and bad manners. I snorted as this was similar to what others had to say about my friendship with Jean.

I regretted snorting the moment it left my mouth as a pair of steel grey eyes pierced holes on my brown ones. I only gulped in response and the other man, pleased with my reaction decided to finally begin the lecture.

“Depression is a mental health disorder. It is a mood disorder characterized by persistently low mood and a feeling of sadness and loss of interest. Depression is a persistent problem, not a passing one - the average length of a depressive episode is 6-8 months.” He said with a robot’s voice.

“At least that is what your books or the internet will tell you. They speak of it matter-of-factly. Coldly. Just laying percentages, lists and pie charts. Depression is not marble. It’s not something stable or solid. Depression is lava. It’s cold and liquid and it can engulf you or it can burn you up to no recognition.” His tone changed and I felt warmth behind his words.

“You are here because you are interested. I will not ask why. Some of you just find it scientifically interesting, others might have loved ones struggling with it, while others are here in hope of understanding yourselves better. Whatever your reason is, it’s valid and I want you to know that the door to my office will always be open for you when you need it. I am not your therapist but I am always interested in a good talk.” This man had left me speechless. I felt my throat dry. It was like the universe offered me hope.

He continued the lecture that was more like a talk between friends than the usual one-sided lecture. Through the lecture, I felt my heart beating fast and my palms sweating. It felt really personal.

It felt really personal.

“Well, thank you for today but that’s the end for today. Go and do the stupid things you students do.” He greeted. The other kids starting packing up but I needed some time.

I was the last one left except for the professor. I was about to leave when his voice stopped me.

“Big book you got there.” He motioned on the large book that rested on the curve of my arm.
“I-I was at the Library…” I trailed off.

“Any questions, ask me.” He instructed and left the room.

I shook my head to recover from the unexpected interaction and left too.

As Marco sounded well enough to be alone at the moment, I took the spare time I had to think.

Despite what people thought of me, I thought way too much and I didn’t really have that much confidence. ‘Fake it till you make it’ was the expression that worked for me. This and Marco’s endless support.

Marco.

The current subject of my thoughts.

Yesterday night was terrifying and heartbreaking for both of us. This morning’s attempt for confrontation was no different.

But this wasn’t the only thing that worried me.

The feeling I had was growing stronger and if I had to take guess on what it was I wouldn’t like the answer.

Hey, I don’t mean that Marco was the one responsible for me not liking the answer.

I was. I was not made for that stuff. Or at least I was afraid to try again now that I was twice burned.

And Marco deserved the sun. He deserved the best person in the whole world. They would take him by the hand and gift him the happiness and the love he was destined for.

This feeling was falling in love.

I should have taken the hints my body was giving me for quite some time now.

Like the way my heart picked up its pace when I had seen him with a suit on our graduation. Or how my eyes had dropped right down to his crotch when his towel had fallen. Or how I wanted all the attention he would give me whenever we were with other people.

Ali’s teases echoed in my mind. This little shit realized my feelings before they even took form.

I ran my fingers through my hair and sighed. ‘Jean, you big dumbass, you fell for your best friend. And you are damn lucky he was out of the bed before you woke up this morning with his name rolling from your lips, a soft residue from the dream that was fading.’

I decided that thinking was enough for now and it was time to shut my brain with some food.

And I would think of a way to proceed with this whole fucking issue later.

My brain wouldn’t shut up after food though and I was cursing my own thoughts and my, no lies there, pretty impressive imagination.
I was more than glad when I spotted some familiar faces near my class. Finally, some peace of mind.

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I returned to the dorm late in the afternoon and found Jean in his boxers eating pop-tarts on the couch and watching Doctor Who for the millionth time.

“You will mess up the floor and I did cleaning duty yesterday.” I startled him.

His face turned pink. Was he choking?

“I thought you had classes till eight today.” He replied, tossing the cardboard on the coffee table and disappeared into our room.

What was with him?

He reappeared; his bare torso was now covered with one of my old shirts.

“Is that my shirt?” I pondered and his face returned to pink.

“Uhm, crap lemme change.” He disappeared again.

“Oh, no need. You can keep it. It was a bit tight for me after all.” I placed my bag on the floor and kicked my sneakers off.

“How were your lectures today?” I asked after Jean finally resumed his seat on the couch.

“They were fine. I mean thankfully we have ONE good professor. And a few decent ones. And one that’s worse than Mrs Perlidwide.” He sighed and looked at me, finally noticing the large book I was studying.

“Worse than Mrs Perlidwide? I cannot even begin to imagine that.” I teased. She and Jean had a history. From the moment they laid their eyes on each other mutual hatred was bred. She was perfectly fine with anyone else but Jean.

“Oh, hush. You were the teacher’s pet in every lesson. Anyways. What is that?” he mentioned towards my book.

“Oh, I picked it up from the Library. It’s one of my professors and it is about this extra lecture I told you about.” I informed him and he nodded.

A comfortable silence took place. I was glad he didn’t insist on talking about yesterday night after what happened in the cafeteria.

“Did you meet up with Armin in the Library?” Jean’s voice had a weird undertone I couldn’t quite place.

“No. I enjoyed some time alone. And Armin is not the kindred spirit of the Library, Jean.” I snickered and he huffed in annoyance.

“Did you find a present for him?” Jean asked, his tone was calmer this time.

“Yeah, I suppose. He had mentioned a certain book from a series he wants to read so I was thinking of getting him the first.” I replied not really taking my eyes from the book; professor Ackerman’s
words were captivating.

“Oh, ok. I shall get him the sequel then.” Jean let me know and finally returned to his show.

I was reading for some time now and decided to take a break and change into more comfortable clothes, but then I heard it.

“Love is not an emotion. Love is a promise.” Echoed from the TV accompanying Jean’s sniffs.

“I thought punks don’t cry.” I teased, using the term many people used to describe Jean. We both knew better that he was much more of a dork instead.

“Oh, shut up. She is losing the one she loves forever. Do you know how terrifying that sounds?” he sniffed a reply.

“I can only imagine.” I got up and ruffled his hair on my way to the room.

“I hope it won’t happen to any of us.” Jean’s voice was lower as he made his wish.

“I am sure no one will turn to a robot with no emotions, Jean.” I teased, trying to lighten up the mood.

A cushion met my head in response.

Chapter End Notes

I planned this fic for more than a year and the plot is complete in my head. I haven’t told anyone what happens next but recently many things that will happen later on this fic happened to my irl!! Pretty creepy but in a good way!

Stay around, kids. Things do get better!

Love to @YunoGasai98, my beta reader/editor. Also, love to my three close friends who collectively worked as a "Jean" to my Marco!

Till next time!
Revelations

Chapter Summary

Armin's party, drinking games, and revelations. Oh, boy!

Chapter Notes

Back with a new chapter! This was one my favorite chapters to write, especially the second half of it. I suppose it is a bit heavy but I want to keep it real, so...yeah. I will try to go back to writing, at least in bits in order to move on with the updates a tad faster!
Kudos, comments, and bookmarks are really appreciated!
Please, enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The days went by quickly after the incident that had shaken them both. The boys were more silent than usual, especially Jean. But, Marco didn’t question it. The silence was comforting when he wasn’t alone.

Armin’s party was growing closer, but Jean found himself wanting it to pass or to not come at all. Despite his wishes, time didn’t stop and the party was just hours away.

“I am finishing class in, like, half an hour. I’ll take a quick shower and we’ll be ready to go.” Jean promised Marco from the phone. The freckled boy nodded as he sprawled his clothes all over his bed to choose something nice for the occasion.

“Alright. Sounds good. Have fun in the rest of the lecture.” Marco smiled widely as if Jean was standing next to him and laughed at his annoyed groan. “This goddamn prof. Dawk is too...too bad. Too bad.” Jean huffed and Marco giggled at his friend’s despair.

“Well, see you later. The break is over and so is my life.” Jean sighed and Marco wished him to have fun again before hanging up. The tanned boy remained silent for a few seconds, simply staring down at his phone, where Jean’s contact picture was looking back at him with a fake duck face and two fingers shaping the peace sign.

Marco ruffled his wet hair a bit and returned his attention to his clothes, throwing his phone on the pile. His eyes spotted a black damaged jean among the pile and a smile slowly formed in his features.

“You should wear more of my style, dude. You look seriously good in it. You can keep them. They are loose for me after all.” He remembered Jean checking him out in front of the mirror in his house a couple of years ago. Marco of that time had blushed and now he realized how his blush was a foreshadowing for his feeling nowadays.

He was definitely wearing this pair tonight. He grabbed a crimson shirt from nearby and started
“I think I died twenty-nine times in today’s lecture.” Jean flung the door open and sent his bag flying to the couch before slamming it behind him. “I wonder how this dude is even allowed to teach. He is boring but he is completely ignorant of that fact. He believes he is top-notch or something. If you dare to shift in your chair he looks at you with disgust. Like wtf?” he continued complaining as Marco joined him in the living room.

“Ok, he is bad I got that.” Marco approached Jean and raised his hands to touch the other boy’s shoulders. “Now wash that behind with a shower and get ready for the party.” He smiled softly and Jean nodded but not before shivering under his friend’s touch.

“I’ll be ready in 15’.” He promised and Marco patted him in the back with a pearly smile.

Jean almost jumped in the shower fully-clothed. He blamed it on the long day and not on the pair of chestnut eyes that warmed his annoyance away a few minutes earlier.

He caught himself singing as he rubbed himself clean. He didn’t remember the last time he sang in the shower. There were simply too many things occupying his mind the past few weeks for him to overthink about. But today he felt different. Different in the best way.

Jean sang a bit louder. He would be spending the night with Marco. And, well, other people would be there too, but still, he would be next to Marco all the time. Jean grunted at the thought of Armin being next to Marco as well but he was willing to be civil for his angel’s sake.

He hoped booze would also be present in the party. Marco was so cute when drunk, but he made a mental note not to drink much himself. Jean turned to a very cuddly person whenever alcohol surpassed a certain level in his bloodstream and he didn’t want to make Marco uncomfortable or to snuggle with someone else besides him.

Jean wrapped his towel and gave the mirror a smug smile. Arlert wasn’t standing a chance.

Marco was sitting on the couch reading his book but stole a glance of Jean as he made his way to their room to get dressed. Jean smiled at him and Marco quickly returned to his book.

Jean randomly picked some clothes from their shared closet and started getting dressed. His singing came to an end as he zipped up his tight black pants, finishing up his glow up.

He grabbed his leather jacket and rushed to the living room. Marco took a moment as he finished reading, before looking at Jean.

“You look great! Ready to go?” the taller boy offered and Jean nodded. “Wait!” almost screamed before Marco could even open the door, making him jump.

“What??” Marco replied, panicked. “Are you wearing the jeans I gave you?” Jean pointed a finger to Marco’s outfit. “Uhm, wha…Oh, yeah. You said they suit me, so…” Marco trailed off as he looked anywhere but Jean. “Oh, they definitely do! I just didn’t think you’d still have them.” The boy replied and motioned to the door.

Marco muttered thanks before opening the door and thought of returning the favor. “You look great too.” He told Jean as he locked the door. “I know, dork. You said it before.” He laughed as Marco felt a tingle spreading on his cheeks.
Jean apparently couldn’t stop singing that night as he continued humming and singing softly all their way to Eren’s place. Marco loved hearing Jean’s singing voice. He was in a band back when they were in high school and he looked mesmerizing when he was on stage. The only thing Marco regretted was not realizing his feelings back then so that he could enjoy him under a different light.

“Icona Pop, seriously?” Marco looked at Jean with a teasing look.

“Emergency is my party song, shut up.” Jean paused his singing to reply.

“I put a little twist in my hips. Kiss on my lips. Ice on my wrist ‘cause I’m hot and I’m dancing.” He resumed but this time he added dancing on his performance, sending Marco in a fit of laughter as he shook his hips along the tune.

‘Hot is an understatement.’ Marco thought to himself and smiled at Jean’s antics.

“Freaking fracking finally!” Jean threw his hands in the air as they made it in front of Eren’s house. “We were walking for y-e-a-r-s!” he feigned a dramatic pose.

“Come on, drama king. Let’s go inside.” He grabbed Jean from his jacket and led him to the door.

He rang the bell and waited as he took a good look at his surroundings. Eren’s dad sure had money. He bought this house for Eren so that he didn’t have to stay on the crappy dorms. Marco wondered why Mikasa had opted for a dorm instead of the house as Armin did.

“Oh!! Hey, boys!! Didn’t Mikasa tell you it’s not a themed party?” Eren’s smug face appeared as the door opened. The boys looked at each other confused before returning their gaze to Eren.

“What are you dressed up as? Twins?” he motioned to their outfits and only then Marco and Jean realized they were both wearing a crimson shirt and black pants.

“Pfft. Whatever, just get in. I am freezing just standing by the door.” Eren broke the silence before the boys could even think of saying something and opened the door wider for them to get in.

They left their coats on the hanger and followed Eren in the spacious living room.

Ymir and Krista were already there, along with Reiner and Bertl who sat next to a blond girl with a steely gaze.

“Hey losers!” Ymir greeted. “Did your laundry grow that short that you share clothes?” she was the next to tease.

“Oh, cut it. It wasn’t intentional. I suppose living with each other helped in that.” Jean shrugged it off and sat next to the annoying freckled girl, Marco quietly taking the seat next to him.

“Oh, you are here!” Armin appeared from the doorframe, beaming as he stared Marco, who shifted in his seat with an awkward smile.

“Will you have anything?” the blonde offered. “Are you having anything booze-related?” Jean asked, hoping for the best.

“Yep, Mikasa bought some beers and Eren already has some crappy whiskey in his stash.” Armin poked out his tongue in disgust.

“Two beers it is, then.” Jean replied and Armin shook his head and disappeared again.

“Where is everyone?” he asked. “Why? Are you too eager to see Mikasa?” Eren continued the
teasing and Jean thankfully had Marco to touch his knee with his in order not to jump at the bastard’s face.

“No, you dumbass. I want to see everyone.” Jean snarled and returned his gaze to the others. “Oi! Reiner won’t you introduce us?” he tried to change the subject as he spotted the blonde girl sitting next to the buffy man.

“Oh, yes! This is Annie! She is my cousin and she is in the same department with Mikasa. She is not very social so I had to drag her here and promise her ice cream for later.” He said amused as he moved his hand to ruffle Annie’s hair.

The girl stopped his hand mid through with a powerful grip and Jean could swear he heard a small whine leaving Reiner’s mouth. “It’s gelato.” Was the only thing she said and stared at Jean and Marco to greet them. Both of the boys gulped and smiled nervously.

The moment faded quickly as the bell rang again and Eren ran to the door. As soon as the door was open Connie’s and Sasha’s cheers and greetings filled the house.

They joined everyone in the living room before Eren, evident they had visited before. Their arms were full of snacks, bottles and packets wrapped with a childish paper with animals.

“Howdy, howdy! We brought some premium goodies for y’all.” Connie cheered beside her. They sat down on the floor and spread their stuff all around, handing everyone a bag of salty snacks and a bottle of beer, not the crappy kind. Jean eagerly took his while he wondered how much the couple made so that they could afford all of these ‘premium goodies’, as they called them.

Jean smiled as Marco took a sip of his drink. Cute drunk Marco didn’t seem like a dream anymore.

Jean introduced the couple to Marco and they scooted closer to the boys in order to chat with them.

“Oh, you got beer already?” Armin frowned as he entered the room with two cans in his hands. “Yeah, but we’ll take these too.” Jean offered and Armin just nodded and placed them on the table.

Soon, Armin and Mikasa joined them all in the living room and Armin exclaimed that the party could now begin.

Eren put some music playing and everyone started talking with each other.

“And just after the prof handed us the tests, this girl next to me started singing some anime theme or something. And it wouldn’t be a big deal but Annie, who was sitting behind me, started singing as well.” Mikasa sighed as she shook her head towards Annie.

“Oh, come on! She was singing ‘Unravel’!! It was impossible not to sing!” Annie defended herself. Her reaction seemed out of character, but it was a nice surprise.

“You watch anime?” Armin almost jumped from his seat. “Well, yes. They are fine, I guess.” Annie replied, more controlled this time.

“Oh, no you are not doing this.” Reiner roared at his cousin and he grabbed her shoulders with his big hands.

“This nerd here” he turned to Armin “is the biggest otaku around. She loves this kind of shit. She has marathons upon marathons and her room is a portal to the manga world.” He let the blonde and everyone know.
Annie was rolling her eyes and blushing softly as Reiner shook her, “Whatever, whatever.” She muttered.

“That’s so cool!! I need to see that room for sure! You can come to mine too!” Armin beamed like a five-year-old in a theme park.

“I’d like that.” Annie agreed shyly.

“Ok, enough with this nerdy stuff.” Ymir broke their moment. “How about some good ol’ party games?” she offered and Reiner was already jumping up and down on his seat, cheering for her idea.

“Well, it’s Armin’s party.” Mikasa looked at Armin waiting for his reply. Armin blushed at the thought of the turn these games could take but nodded, nevertheless.

“Let’s open presents first, now that we are mostly sober. And then we can play.” Armin offered and everyone agreed.

Everyone started giving him their presents and when they were all gathered in a big pile, the blonde boy started unwrapping them.

“Oh, Eren.” Armin said with a kind smile as he saw the framed picture and the card along with it. “The three of us against the world.” Armin read and his eyes turned misty as he smiled wider at the picture. The three of them, wrapped in a hug and with huge smiles in their faces.

“Thank you!” Armin looked at Eren who shared his blurry-eyed look. “Anything for you.” The boy muttered and looked away.

Armin moved to the next present, a sweater with a doctor-related one-liner. “Cute enough to stop your heart, skilled enough to restart it” Armin giggled and thanked Mikasa who brought him in a warm hug.

“No way!! You got me the first two books for ‘Maze Runner’?” Armin thanked the boys but smiled wider at Marco. “I remember how much you said you wanted to read it, so…” Marco returned the smile and Armin stared for a bit before Eren nudged his arm to urge him to continue.

“Uhm, Reiner? What is that?” Armin said puzzled as he opened a box containing a nurse outfit. Reiner started laughing and Bertl turned to his boyfriend to eye him menacingly.

“You promised!” he stated but Reiner wasn’t affected by the stare. “Now, Armin, that’s for some action in your room. To spice things up. Take your boyfriend or girlfriend and this box and trust me you will come to uncle Reiner for more.” He promised with a wink.

“For Christ’s sake Reiner you sounded like a drug dealer or something.” Jean snorted as Armin’s eyes grew wider and squeaked as he closed the box, muttering thanks.

“You know I am right. Or you will know when your birthday comes around.” Reiner winked again and smiled. “Stop! You sound like a perv!” Jean said as he scooted away from Reiner. “I just want you all to have a good time like my bumblebee and I do.” The man wrapped his boyfriend with his strong arm as the other tried to avoid his touch.

“Oook! Next gift!” Eren saved Bertl from more embarrassment and their minds from more detailed info.

The next present was from Ymir and Krista. It was a mug shaped like a skull with glasses and a
phone case with stethoscopes all around it.

“Wow! These are amazing girls! Thank you!” Armin proceeded to change his old phone case to his new improved one.

Sasha and Connie had brought him some manga and a pen from his favorite series. Armin thanked them and proceeded to the last one.

The last gift was from Annie. “I didn’t know that you were into anime and manga so I took you whatever I take to someone who isn’t.” Annie explained as Armin tore the paper.

His eyes shot wide open and his expression turned to one of absolute excitement. Jean found it a bit creepy and looked at Marco with a questioning look, Marco returned the confused look and shrugged.

“Annie!! NO WAY!!” Armin squealed as he raised a big DVD case in the air.

“Dude, really? You get this to everyone.” Reiner nudged Annie with his elbow but she didn’t even bother looking away from Armin, who now held the ‘Bleach’ DVD case close to his chest.

“Ok, we got more than enough nerdiness for the day. Now the games!” Ymir again broke the moment for Annie and Armin.

“Yes. Right.” The blonde gathered the presents in his small arms and disappeared from the room. He returned after five minutes with more beer, an empty bottle, and a small cotton bag.

“All ready!” he proceeded to place the stuff on the table and let the others pick the first game for the night.

“Ok, let’s start with an easy one.” Reiner offered to Ymir. They had taken the games as their mission. “Never Have I Ever?” she asked and Reiner agreed.

“Well, I know this game is played with alcohol, but you are free to start with juice or soda. We have a long night ahead kids and Uncle Reiner doesn’t want to be worried about you.” The muscled man offered and all agreed to start with soda.

“I will begin. We will start easy and we can slowly pick up, okay?” Ymir explained and everyone else nodded.

“Good. Never have I ever fallen in love.” She said and everyone took a sip. “And that’s why we save alcohol for later.” She smiled as she took her own sip, bringing Krista closer as the blonde blushed.

Krista was next. “Never have I ever kissed someone.” Everyone but Annie and Armin took a sip.

“Well, we will change that later.” Ymir promised and Armin blushed madly, stealing a glance of Marco. Ymir’s sharp eye caught the move and made a mental note for later.

“Never have I ever kissed someone of the same sex.” Reiner offered. “Come on my gays, drink up.” He laughed as he took a sip from his drink. Surprisingly for Reiner, the result was the same as with Krista’s offer. “I need to hear these stories.” He pointed at Mikasa, Jean, Marco, Eren, Connie, and Sasha.

“Whatsoever dude.” Eren huffed and looked at Berthold whose turn was next.
“Uhm, let’s see. Never have I ever injured myself trying to impress someone.” He looked at Reiner with a meaningful look and Reiner groaned before taking a sip.

“I fell from the first floor and he had to rush me to the hospital in our first date.” He explained as Eren, Jean, and Krista took a sip. “Krista?” Connie asked but the blonde only blushed and hid in Ymir’s arms.

“Never have I ever been rejected by my crush for someone else.” Eren pierced Jean with his gaze.

“Now, that was oddly specific.” Sasha noted as Jean, Connie, and Annie took a sip.

“Of course, it was.” Jean hissed, returning the glare.

Mikasa cleared her throat as she glared at Eren, “Never have I ever flirted with inanimate objects.” She offered with a sassy smile and Eren rolled his eyes as he took a sip. “It was one time and I was drunk.” He explained as Jean and Reiner erupted with laughter.

“I bet that gnome was charmed though.” Mikasa continued the teasing and Eren huffed, crossing his arms in front of his chest.

“Never have I ever slept through a movie.” Armin offered and everyone drank. “My little one, we were supposed to spice it up.” Reiner shook his head in disappointment.

“You want spicy dude?” Connie asked and Sasha was already giggling beside him.

“Never have I ever done it in public.” Connie smiled sneakily and Bertl turned redder than a tomato in ripe. He tried resisting taking a sip but soon joined Reiner, Connie, Sasha, and Eren.

“Ymir and Krista?” Connie asked as he expected a sip from them too. “Close enough, pipsqueak. Close enough.” Ymir shook her head in the memory.

“Never have I ever done it in general.” She wiggled her eyebrows before drinking. Everyone drank but Armin, Annie, and Jean.

Jean turned to face Marco. “Wait, what?” he asked bewildered. “When?” Marco just shrugged as Jean’s eyes pierced his as if he was trying to find the answer there.

Marco didn’t say anything more. “Virgin too, Kirschtein?” Eren mocked as Jean flipped him off.

“Never have I ever done it with someone of the same sex.” Marco offered and Eren, Reiner, Bertl, Ymir, Krista, and Sasha drank up.

“So it was a girl…” Jean trailed off. “Who?” he tried again but Reiner rushed him to play his turn. “Never have I ever done it with a classmate.” He offered and looked at Marco who took a sip after rolling his eyes. “It was the girl from the exchange program, wasn’t it?” Jean persisted. “Is my sex life that interesting to you?” Marco smirked.

With that Jean retorted with cheeks flushed, “N-n-no.” he stammered.

“Whatever. Sorry to ruin the bonding moment but I am bored and you are all obvious.” Ymir spoke and grabbed the cotton bag. She nudged Jean “Put something in. But, don’t let others, except me, see.” she urged him.

“Huh?” Jean looked at her with a raised eyebrow.

“Seven minutes in Heaven. Now, put something in the bag.” She explained and Jean took off one
of his rings and dropped it inside. Ymir gathered things from everyone and closed the bag to shuffle them.

“Let’s start with the birthday boy.” She offered the bag to Armin who closed his eyes and put his hand in the bag.

After some shuffling, he picked an object and took it out of the bag. It was a metal ring pull on from a Redbull can. Armin looked around the room and showed it in the process.

“Well, I suppose that’s me.” Marco raised his hand and Armin felt dizzy from how quickly his blood went straight up to his head.

“Go to the pantry. I cleaned it yesterday.” Eren winked at Armin as the blonde stared at the floor.

“Uhm, Armin. Are you okay?” Marco got up and placed his hand in the short boy’s back, receiving a shiver as a response.

“F-fine.” He managed to mutter as he took Marco by the hand leading him to the pantry as Eren and Ymir wolf-whistled in the back.

Jean had his jaw clenched and he took a full swing from his beer, emptying the bottle.

Marco and Armin. He knew this was going to happen. He gritted his teeth till his jaw hurt as he heard Krista, who had followed the boys, informing everyone that the time had started running.

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Being squished in a small pantry with Armin wasn’t the way I thought I was going to spend my night. But, here we go. Life’s full of surprises.

I felt Armin’s eyes staring at me through the dark. “Armin, we don’t have to do anyth-” His lips cut my words short as he started kissing me. I could feel the excitement in his kiss but I didn’t return it. All I could think right now was another pair of lips. A pair of lips that would probably taste like beer and spicy Doritos.

I put my hands in Armin’s shoulders, pushing him softly. His lips left mine after that and he took as many steps behind as the walls of the small pantry let him take.

“No…” he trailed off and I was hurt by the pain in his voice. “I-I am sorry. Pl-please, forget…” the blonde’s voice faded again.

I felt bad but it would be cruel for both of us had I decided to return the kiss.

“Armin…” I began but his sob cut me through. God, how long seven minutes could be?

“Is it Jean?” Armin managed between his sobs. My eyes grew wider and I felt my cheeks blush furiously. I was thankful for the lack of light right now. It would only hurt him more.

“So, it is. Does he know? Did I talk to him about my feelings while you are together and then you both laughed it off while making out?” Armin’s voice was now different. His tone spew vomit and his sobs turned into a growl.

“Armin, we could never. I could never. He doesn’t know.” I concluded.

“Whatever. I am sorry. Wish you the best.” He said coldly and stormed out off the pantry, startling
Krista who was waiting outside for the time to pass.

“Armin!” I yelled but he was already gone.

“What the hell happened in there?” Krista approached and touched my arm. I shook her hand off and she took a step back.

“Oh, God. I am sorry. I didn’t mean to snap at you.” I quickly apologized and Krista offered me a small understanding smile.

“Armin. He has feelings for me which I don’t return.” I explained and Krista nodded sadly.

“What the fuck, Marco?” Eren stormed in the hall and despite his lower height, he grabbed my shirt’s collar and brought his face right in front of mine.

“What did you do to him? He is fucking sobbing more than when his grams died and he is cursing like a sailor.” Green eyes sent a wave of guilt down my body.

“I-I didn’t…I didn’t mean to…” I tried. It seemed to be a never-ending pattern now. I did something and someone got hurt. I hurt people around me. I was useless and I couldn’t avoid it. I was a hypocrite trying to help the other while the only thing I did was to spread my toxicity and darkness around.

I was a terrible human being that deserved no one and nothing at all.

I was- “Eren, cut it out. He did what a decent human being would do. Armin confessed and Marco was honest that he doesn’t return his feelings.” Krista snapped me out of my guilt trip.

No Krista. Don’t try to defend me. You don’t know how bad I can hurt someone. Don’t do that.

“Where you inside?” Eren didn’t loosen up his grip as he turned to her.

“No, but I know Marco.” Her voice topped Eren’s somehow. “Well, I don’t. Fuck this. Party’s over. Get out of my house.” He turned back to me and pushed me back as he set my shirt free.

The others had joined us in the hall. Jean ran towards Eren as he saw his shove but I managed to stop him. All of these were my fault. I wouldn’t have anyone else hurt tonight.

“Jean, drop it. I’d better go.” I avoided everyone’s gaze and made my way to the door.

I felt everyone’s eyes piercing me. I had hurt Armin, a pure soul. I deserved this and worse. I dropped my head lower and opened the door. I felt a hand in mine as I walked outside.

I turned around for my eyes to meet Jean’s. He held my hand as he walked with me out of the house. He grabbed our coats and closed the door behind him.

“You didn’t have to-” I started. “Shut up! I won’t have any of it. This asshole blaming you like that. Good riddance then. Let’s go somewhere together.” Jean pressed his fingers tighter on my hand.

“And seems like Armin will be fucking fine. Drama lord.” Jean pointed at the other end of the yard where Armin and Annie had their back turned on us as they laughed in sync.

“Let’s go.” Jean repeated as he led me away from Eren’s place. Armin looked much better now. I felt relief washing over me.

I suppose Armin just overreacted and he wasn’t that hurt as I thought.
I stole one last glance of him and Annie before we left and I hoped for the best.

“A stroll in the park for you to get your mind cleared?” Jean offered and I noticed he still hadn’t left my hand. It was selfish but I didn’t mention it and I opted to enjoy the warmth of his hand in mine, as I nodded.

The park was close by and tonight was a great night for a walk. The stars were shining upon the cloudless sky and the cold had toned down a bit.

Jean and I walked in silence, hands wrapped together and puffs of our breath dissolving in the chilly autumn air. I let Jean lead me to an open spot and followed him as he sat down on the grass, only then leaving my hand.

I found myself shivering from the sudden lack of warmth, but didn’t do anything else except to take a seat next to my best friend.

“Marco.” Jean spoke after a while. I didn’t dare to look at him.

“Marco, Armin overreacted back there but there is something else troubling you.” He persisted and something told me that there wasn’t a way out tonight.

“Please look at me.” Jean begged as his hand covered mine again. By instinct, my head spun towards him and I looked at him wide-eyed.

“Talk to me, please. Whatever it’s eating you I will help with any way I can. Just let me in. This. Not knowing. It scares me. It terrifies me. Seeing you crying. Finding you drunk in the roof. Hearing your sobs at night. Please, let me in.” his amber eyes were full of concern which I knew I didn’t deserve.

“You were always there for me. Let me be there for you this time.” He continued as his hand closed around mine.

“Marco, please.” He breathed and I felt tears stinging my eyes.

“Jean. I can’t. I…I can’t burden you this way. You don’t deserve this. And I don’t deserve your sympathy and concern.” I avoided his gaze again as tears fled and wetted my hot cheeks.

“Nothing. Nothing about you is a burden. You hear me? The only thing I don’t deserve is you and your support all these years. But, despite that, you stayed by my side, unwavering and always present.” He whispered.

I broke down to sobs and he quickly shifted closer to me and started rubbing his hand on my back to comfort me. “Let it out. Let it all out. I am here.” He promised. His lips were dangerously close to my ear and his hot breath made me shiver.

I turned towards Jean and buried my head in the crook of his neck. He hugged me but not too tight, just tight enough to make it obvious he wasn’t going anywhere, and he let me cry.

I don’t know how long I cried but Jean waited patiently, rubbing my back and whispering in my ear that he wasn’t leaving.

Finally, I took a deep breath in and scooted away from Jean. He looked at me with compassion as he wiped a few stray tears from my cheek.

“I will not make you promise to stay after I tell you. It would be better if you leave, to be honest.
But, the choice is yours.” I began and Jean’s eyes shone brightly under the moonlight, his relief evident.

“Oh, so…I-well, everything began on the last year of junior high.” I took a deep breath before taking the leap of faith.

“I have always felt low during fall and especially in winter. But, I never paid attention to that. I mean I thought it was normal. As the weather grew colder so did my thoughts and feelings. I thought this was the way it was supposed to be.” I started. Jean took a breath in, letting himself know that this was happening and letting me know that I had his full attention.

“But…Except that year didn’t go away. My feelings and my thoughts. The cold ones, the dark ones. They remained. And…and they grew colder and darker. It was about time I searched it and turns out that all these years I had seasonal depression. But now? I suppose it grew greedier and turned into major depression.” It was hard speaking these words out loud to someone. Especially for someone like Jean.

I decided to close my eyes in order to keep the sanity I had left. Because his eyes upon mine were killing me. I had to continue though. I owed him at least that much. After all, he stayed there.

“I searched it and all, so I decided to tell mom. She brushed it off like it was nothing. She said that everything is in my mind and I was strong enough to beat it myself, the thing I called depression. She told me depression wasn’t what I was feeling. That depression was much more serious and it certainly didn’t look like that. So, I asked her how it looked. She replied that if she told me, I would copy her words into my actions only to persuade her. Despite this failure of a conversation, I tried again and again through the years, but every time it ended in the same way. Her not acknowledging me and myself crying alone, after she was gone, as I wondered where I had gone wrong and what the things I was feeling were if not depression. So, I searched a bit more and I found that indeed there were cases where people would copy symptoms of an illness and I opted for that instead.” I paused again to take a breath and opened my eyes to avoid the memories flooding the back of my eyelids.

Jean was watching me, taking in every move I made and every word I spoke. It felt surreal, it felt too good to be true. Having someone listening to what I was feeling.

His eyes gave me the courage to continue. “But, my mind was too twisted and the feelings grew darker. I…I had to hide it though. I was faking after all. I couldn’t have someone worrying about me when I had nothing at all, right? So, I learned to conceal it. I remember you asking me if I was okay back then. I told you I was just sick and this was tiring me out. You were not the only one that asked why the ‘sunshine kid’, as you all called me, was gloomy all of a sudden. But the answer persuaded everyone so I kept saying it or variations of it; till I learned to fake perfectly the way I used to be. No one asked again and I kept it to myself. The thoughts were becoming unbearable from time to time and then I knew that my mom was wrong. But, again I didn’t speak. I kept it inside where everything was swirling up and down and around in a massive hurricane.” I decided to lie down, I felt dizzy after all this crying and the memories weren’t helping. The grass was cool and it helped a little with the burning feeling through my body.

“I went to some dark places in my mind and all. But, I found ways to fight it back even a tiny bit at the time. A tiny bit was enough to keep me going. And so I kept moving on. Till university came around and I moved in with you. I didn’t want you to know but I couldn’t stop it coming. That is why I was on the roof. That is why I tried to avoid you. That is why…I am sorry. You have problems of your own now with the divorce and all and I keep adding weight on you.” I closed my eyes as hot tears strolled down my face.
I heard Jean shifting before he finally talked. I wished he had got up and left, but he didn’t. He decided to make it harder.

“Marco… I wish you had told me sooner. I wish I was worth more of your trust. And cut the bullshit about weighing me down and shit like that. The divorce isn’t the half of a shit that I make it look. My whole family is really cool about it after all. It will take me some time but I will be good as well. But, Marco…” he paused and I found a chance to speak up, my heart drumming behind my ribcage as tears turned to a river.

“You are worthy of my whole trust. It didn’t have to do with you. You did nothing wrong, Jean. It was all about me. I am the problem. I am the fake. I am the empty one. I am the worst things you can imagine. And you keep calling me an angel. A saint and shit like that.” My voice surprisingly didn’t crack so I continued.

“I am no angel, no saint, no sunshine, nothing happy and nothing lovable. I am dark and twisted and disgusting and my mind scares the living shit out of me and I gotta keep fighting but I am tired. So tired.” I trailed off as I shook from my sobs again.

“Not all angels are perfect and holy. There are angels that have darkness inside but they still have their wings. There are angels that look in the mirror and don’t see the halo burning above their heads but it’s still there. There are angels like you. Fallen angels. But, angels nevertheless. You were, are and always will be my angel, Marco. So, please keep fighting. If not for you, do it for me.” Jean whispered and then I felt it.

His lips, hot and a bit chapped touching mine. He took a moment like that, savoring the sensation before he began kissing me. And it felt so good.

His lips moved upon mine and I soon complied. Our lips moved as if we had kissed a million times before in a million lives before.

He opened his mouth and sucked my bottom lip, rubbing it gently with his teeth. A moan escaped my mouth and I felt the heat rising in both of our faces. I followed his lead and opened my mouth too, letting his tongue explore my mouth.

What I felt was out of this world. I felt my heart beating so fast that I was worried it might burst. My hand, resting upon Jean’s chest, told me that Jean’s heart was in no better shape than mine.

We broke the kiss for breath, a silver strand of saliva still connecting us.

But that break was enough for my mind. It was enough to ruin it all.

“No…” I whispered. Jean looked at me confused as I repeated the two-lettered word over and over again.

“This was the worst thing you could do right now.” I said as I began getting up “I don’t need your pity.” and without a second glance, I ran away from the person I needed the most.

“Marco!” I heard his voice calling me and I ran faster.

“Marco, wait!” his voice sounded closer, he was following me.

I was about to run even faster when I heard a loud crash.

I stopped dead in my tracks and turned around to see what happened.
Jean was laying on the ground a few feet behind me. His face was planted on the hard pavement and I could see shiny crimson liquid around his face.

Another one hurt because of me. Would this ever stop?

“Jean? Oh my God! Are you alright?” I ran towards him and helped him to get up.

“’M fine. Treacherous Vans made me slip in a poodle.” He pointed on the poodle behind him and smiled back at me.

“Do I look that bad?” he asked worried as he saw that my expression didn’t ease. “You look like you had a make-out session with a wall. And you broke your nose. God, let me see if I have a tissue or something. You are seriously bleeding badly. I should call an ambulance. Perhaps you hit your head too.” I panicked but Jean caught my hands in his.

“Stop. I am fine. I have gotten a broken nose before. I can treat it myself.” He promised as he let one of my hands free to search his pocket. He found a tissue, plugged it in his nostrils and made a silly face.

“Jean, this is serious.” I tried. “I know! You turned back for me. It is serious!” he changed the subject.

“Let’s just head back in the dorm.” I offered and he nodded as his smile fell.

We both got up and walked back in silence. It was an uncomfortable and awkward silence, unlike the one that had brought us here.

I looked straight ahead, scared to look anywhere else or at anyone else. Despite my reluctance to look at him, I could feel Jean’s gaze at me at most of our way back. It made me even more uneasy. But, at least he understood my need of space and walked at a safe distance beside me.

I opted for the stairs and Jean took the elevator. I was thankful for that. I knew I couldn’t handle being confined with him inside the elevator nor could I have him following me in the stairs and worrying me because of his injury.

I took my time since I knew that was about most of the alone time I could get for the night. When I arrived at our floor I was burned out but this felt right.

Jean had left the door open for me and I locked after I entered the dorm.

I wondered where Jean was and I was about to start worrying when I heard him calling me from our room.

“Help me out a bit, will ya?” he asked me and I simply nodded. I sat next to him and waited for instructions.

“This won’t do. Kneel in front of me. We gotta straighten this shit.” Jean ordered and I complied. I didn’t want to be around him now but I had to fix the mess I made.

“Ok, give me your hand.” Jean began and I placed my hand in his. He guided my hand on the bridge of his nose. “Now, feel that? The tiny bump?” I nodded and he smiled at me as our eyes met. I immediately avoided his gaze and focused on his nose instead.

“I want you to take this like that and pop it back in like that.” He showed me without applying any pressure, just to explain to me what I had to do.
“Jean we should go to a hospital.” I offered but he shook his finger and motioned me to keep going.

I took a sharp breath and did as he told me, hoping for the best. A tiny crack along with a hiss from Jean was heard and I closed my eyes with my other hand.

“You can take your hand now, Marco. You did it.” Jean’s voice echoed in our room and I rushed to get my hand away from his face, not before he caught it with his thumb.

I opened my eyes widely. “Jean?”

Jean brought his face closer to mine; his knees had made their way around my sides. I was trapped. Sneaky bastard.

I tried to avoid his gaze but it was difficult to do so when his face was practically shoved against mine.

“Look at me.” He ordered and I complied. “I like you. L-i-k-e you. I don’t pity you. Nor I’ll ever will. I didn’t kiss you out of sympathy. I didn’t kiss you to make a fool out of you. I didn’t kiss you for whatever reason your brain’s giving you.” He whispered. His other hand caressed my cheek softly.

“I kissed you because you are amazing. I kissed you because you are so much stronger than me. I kissed you because I am in love with you, dork. And no matter what these thoughts whisper to you, I will continue to be in love with you for all the reasons that you cannot see.” His eyes shined in a way I hadn’t seen before.

“Remember when Mikasa told me that we weren’t meant to kiss each other but someone else entirely? Remember how she told me that she already knew who that was for her? It didn’t take long for me to understand who that was for me, Marco.” Jean’s breath was warming my face along with the deep blush that decorated my cheeks.

“It was and it’ll always be you. Marco, only you.” He closed the tiny space between us and kissed me again.

His lips tasted of blood but I didn’t care. This time my brain wasn’t loud enough for me to hear. The thoughts screamed about how weak and ruinous I was. How terrible and selfish I was, dragging Jean into this hell. But, I couldn’t listen. I didn’t want to listen. For the first time in forever, I was strong enough to push them back from where they came from.

I kissed his lips and Jean smiled in the kiss. He pulled me closer as his hand wrapped around the back of my head affectionately. He let go of my hand and I found the chance to lock my arms around his neck as we dived deeper in the kiss.

Jean eagerly opened up his mouth when I teased him with my tongue and our tongues entwined, as we longed for the touch.

Jean moved from my lips to my jawline and left a trail of wet kisses until he found the way back to my mouth again. My breath was shaky and moans left my mouth so quickly that it was embarrassing.

“I love the way you sound when I kiss you.” Jean let me know as if he had read my thoughts. “God, it took so long.” He pressed his forehead against mine as we caught our breaths, keeping our eyes closed, and content with the silence that wrapped us both.

“Do you believe me now, love?” he asked after a few moments passed.
I hummed in agreement. I couldn’t bear to tell him that this belief of mine was only for the time being. That when depression would hit, it would shake up everything that I believed in. That I would be so difficult if he chose to see it all.

I let the moment be.
I let us be.

We were happy, even if that lasted only a breath, only a moment, only a night or a week. We were happy.

“Sleep with me, love?” Jean opened up his eyes to see me already staring back at him.

“Alright. But, are you sure you can sleep after you broke your nose?” I asked with worry as my fingers traced from the bridge of his nose down to the tip.

“Yeah, I will be fine. Just let me cuddle in your chest. To keep my head elevated and shit like that.” He replied and I nodded madly like the dork I was.

We removed our clothes, remaining in our boxers and t-shirts. This time we didn’t look away from each other. Instead, we tried to take it all in as if seeing the other that vulnerable would help us understand that we were each other’s now.

When I finished folding my clothes, Jean took me by my hand and guided me to my bed. He kissed me again and again, leaving soft pecks on my skin, their trail burning me.

He kissed me with care and love. I could feel it all. I knew he wasn’t lying. I knew he meant it all and that he meant so much more he didn’t speak of.

I hoped my mind could understand too. I hoped my mind could feel it too.

“Marco…” he breathed upon the crook of my neck. “Be my boyfriend, please?”

“Of course, you fool.” I laughed as he dived deeper into my embrace. “I felt like I needed to ask after the reaction you gave me back at the park.” Jean raised his head to look at me, to check my eyes for any hint of doubt or regret.

“Jean, I am sorry about that. But, I mean it. I’d love to be your boyfriend.” I reassured him as I petted his hair and he nuzzled on my hand like a cat.

“I have the best boyfriend I could ever ask.” He muttered as if he was speaking to himself.

Jean looked at me shyly. “Did you really...you know with that girl?” he finally asked.

I started laughing as he sighed and tried to free himself from my grip. “Okay, okay. No, I didn’t. I had a bet with Reiner and I had to lie.” I revealed.

“A bet about what?” Jean looked at me with a raised eyebrow.

“About whether you would be interested in the subject or not. I owe him $20.” I poked my tongue to tease him and to mourn my lost $20.

“Oh, okay.” Jean blushed and he was the cutest creature in the whole world. But, I knew from his tone that he wasn’t entirely convinced.

“Really, she was my first girlfriend but we didn’t do anything else than kissing and making out.
Oh, she touched my butt once.” I teased as I feigned a shocked expression.

“Now, this Bodt-butt is mine!” Jean proceeded to squeeze my butt many times as he laughed with his shitty version of an evil laughter. And then he began coughing from the dried blood in his nose. I petted his head until the coughing stopped. Finally, he rested his head on my chest again, breathing in relief.

“Do you think Armin will be okay?” I voiced the worries that clouded my mind for hours now.

Jean’s head snapped back up.

“Armin…he overreacted. I understand how bad it feels to get turned down but he will get over it. He will understand that he is meant for another. And perhaps he found this person already. You saw him with Annie when we left. He will be fine.” My boyfriend looked deep into my eyes before rubbing his nose against mine, sending a tickling feeling down my spine.

“I just wish Jaeger bastard hadn’t treated you like that. Please, let me tear him apart the next time I see him.” He snarled but I laughed.

“I cannot do that. He was right to worry about his friend. Seriously, I don’t blame him nor hold a grudge on him. I am okay, Jean. I have you.” I promised and Jean’s head dropped back upon my chest, but not before leaving a last peck on my lips.

“Goodnight, love.” Jean wished.

“Goodnight, honey.” I settled for a cliché nickname and with a smile, I closed my eyes and let our breaths lull me into sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Welp, here we go! Our boys are now boyfriends! Dorky ones, too!
Fun facts about this chapter: 1. I love "Emergency" as much as Jean does!!
2. The "Vans Incident" was inspired by me trying to run with my Vans on a rainy day to catch the bus. Thankfully, I didn't fall like Jean.
3. The "park scene" is one of my favorite things I have ever written, I still don't know how it got out of my brain.
Chapters and scenes like this one make me emotional and happy that there is a way out of this. Hold on just a little while longer, everything will be alright! ;)
Much love to @YunoGasai98 who is my lovely beta/editor and much love to her hubby Erwin for his birthday tomorrow!
Find me on Tumblr: skelene.tumblr.com
Till next time!!
Marco and I were supposed to meet in front of the Library for our date. I was super excited and I could barely sit still in class, but now the time was passing and Marco was nowhere to be seen. My excitement was slowly melting into worry to the point I checked my phone every thirty seconds.

He was supposed to be here. He was excited too. Perhaps his class was running late. Or maybe my dork was caught up to his studying so much that he forgot to check the time.

Despite my best of efforts, whatever reasoning I tried to give to his delay this dread feeling was still lingering and my worry was transforming to a throbbing headache.

I paced back and forth in front of the main gate as I looked around with the hope of seeing Marco sprinting towards me but this never happened.

I had already sent him a couple of messages so I tried calling him instead. It went straight to voicemail and his greeting sent shivers down my spine, shivers of the bad kind.

Marco was always available either to message or to call. This was extremely out of character but I didn’t want to worry our friends by calling them.

But I had to do something. Marco could be in danger. Marco could be in need for my help. I had to act. NOW!

I got inside the Library. Marco could appear after all so I had to cover this option too.

“Excuse me.” I approached the woman behind the main desk. Her tired grey eyes connected with me and she simply nodded.

“Uhm, if a boy a bit taller than me, cute, with freckles and black hair and broad shoulders-he also looks a bit dorky- comes around, would you please let him know that Jean is going back to the dorm and he should call?” I asked as calmly as I could manage at that moment.

“I am sorry, kid. I am not a messenger of something.” She tried to brush me off as her eyes returned to the old book she was reading.
“Ma’am, please. It’s important.” I begged, this time panic was obvious in my voice. Perhaps it was too obvious since she looked at me straight away and nodded with a worried look on her face.

I muttered thank you and left in hurry.

Where could Marco be? I would try his class first and then our dorm and then the roof and then the café and then the pizza place and then the convenience store and then…

God, there were so many places. He could be anywhere. Suddenly, I felt so small and weak.

I was panicking. I knew that. I needed to calm though. For Marco.

He kept disappearing and it kept breaking my heart. What if he had ended up drunk again? What if he was that vulnerable somewhere dangerous?

Jean Antoine Kirschtein! Get it together!

I trekked towards his department’s building and scanned the building plan with my eyes. As soon as I spotted the class he had his lesson for the day, I ran to that direction.

The class was empty and the feeling of dread was even bigger when I got inside.

A woman passed the door and I sprinted to her. She might know Marco.

“Miss.” I pleaded and she turned to face me.

“I am looking for Bodt. Marco Bodt. He had his lesson in this class before half an hour or so.”

Before 45 minutes to be exact.

“I don’t know any Bodt. In fact, I don’t think we even ever had someone named Marco Bodt. Looks to me you are looking for a ghost.” She replied with a stoic smile.

Something was awfully wrong. A hunch kicked my stomach and I turned around and ran, leaving the woman behind as her quiet eerie laughter filled my ears.

I let my legs guide me to where my hunch was telling me that I should be. My legs hurt and my lungs stung from the lack of proper breathing. Tears were escaping my eyes and I wanted to collapse, but I kept running. Running for Marco.

When I arrived at where I felt like I was destined to be, I was a mess. My hair was disheveled and I had trouble breathing. I coughed roughly till I tasted a metallic taste in the mouth.

I looked around and then I saw him.

Marco.

I was ready to run to him when I finally took into where we were.

Trost Road Bridge.

We had been there a couple of times before, just the two of us, late at night with a couple of sodas and our dreams that were bigger than the world.

But, this time it didn’t feel cozy and heartwarming. It felt dark and terrifying.
“Marco.” I called for him.

Marco didn’t turn to look at me. Perhaps he didn’t even listen to me. Instead, he walked closer to the edge of the bridge.

My mind went blank.

I called him again. “Marco! Love! I am here. I found you.” At this point, I didn’t know if my body or my voice was trembling. I felt like throwing up. A dark and twisted premonition was suffocating me.

Marco didn’t falter. He kept walking as if he was enchanted. He was now in front of the metal railings. Marco pressed his body on the railings and stood there, taking a moment to consider his actions.

Due to his pause, I found the chance to sprint towards him. But, I wasn’t fast enough.

Marco had already opened his eyes and climbed the railings before I could even cross the empty road.

“MARCO!! LOVE, DON’T!” I screamed from the bottom of my soul. But, my love didn’t listen.

Marco fell.

He turned to me as he fell, his eyes finally meeting mine as I reached the railings.

He had a genuine smile across his lips and his eyes closed after he looked at me.

I was screaming. Screaming and crying.

My Marco…

I had only just found out that he was mine…

My angel…

He fell…

I…I couldn’t do anything.

I threw up on the pavement.

“MARCO!” my eyes shot open as my body flung forward.

Marco, next to me, was looking at me with worry.

“Jean?” he tried. “Are you okay?”

I blinked again and again before acting. I needed to make sure Marco was there. That what I had just witnessed was nothing more than an awful nightmare.

I only dared to move when Marco’s hand touched mine.

“Oh my fucking God, you are alive.” I whispered exhausted.

My hands were roaming on his body, my eyes were blurry with big, fat tears, my breath was hitched and soon I began sobbing.
My boyfriend was just as shocked but didn’t question it.

“Did you have a nightmare?” he dared to ask after I was curled in his arms and pressed against his chest.

I was damp from sweat and tears but my love held me tight.

“A twisted one.” I managed without my voice cracking.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Marco asked again.

Then it hit me. Marco had killed himself in the dream. I couldn’t save him. I was weak when he needed someone. He was alone. He felt alone. He was gone.

“M-Marco?” A thought crossed my mind.

“Yes, baby?” he wrapped his arms a bit tighter around me as he placed a kiss on the top of my head.

“Did you ever…Have you ever…” I paused trying to find the right words. The least painful ones. But there weren’t any words like that. Marco waited patiently for me to recollect my thoughts.

“Are you suicidal?” I finally spoke and the moment the words left my mouth I could feel Marco’s whole body tensing as he let a gasp to escape from his lips.

Neither of us spoke after that. I waited for him and he waited for himself to be ready to talk.

“Jean…I…It’s late and you are exhausted from your nightmare. I…I am not ready yet.” He whispered the last part.

I nodded. The initial relief I felt after waking up and seeing him alive, was now replaced with a feeling of uncertainty and worry. But, he needed time. All he needed was time. And I trusted him.

“Can I sleep in your arms tonight?” I needed to feel his soft skin, to breathe his intoxicating smell, to listen to his lulling breath, to know he was alive and next to me.

“Babe, you can sleep in my arms every night.” He promised and his solacing words made me sigh and close my eyes.

My sleep was dreamless after that. And it was probably for the best.

I woke up with Jean still tangled around me. He had scared me so much last night. He was so scared last night.

I didn’t move. Jean had to wake up and find me there. But now that I was awake my thoughts began running a million miles ahead.

Jean had asked. He had asked what I feared the most in this world.

I never thought I would hear these words leaving his, or anyone’s, mouth.

He had to know but I was terrified of the outcome. He would either hate and pity me or he would hate and pity himself.

I tried to keep my eyes as open as I could, in fear of memories returning behind my closed eyelids. Jean, as if he could feel my discomfort, stirred in my arms and left a cute little yawn as his eyes met
mine.

“Morning.” I whispered and placed a kiss on his forehead. The dork buried his face in my arms and hugged me tighter.

“Morning, love.” He replied, his warm breath against my chest sent shivers down my spine and butterflies to my stomach.

He kept nuzzling my chest and the crook of my neck with his nose as he placed kisses all over. I started giggling, as the feeling of panic dissolved into love and happiness.

“Now, hehe stop, Jean! I need to go to the bathroom and tickling me doesn’t help.” Jean groaned but let me go, not before catching my lips and placing five little kisses across them.

I got up and moved towards the bathroom. It was surreal. Our first kiss was just the night before. Our first night as boyfriends was the previous. Heck, even the ‘title’ was just one day old. But, it felt like we were together since forever. The love I was feeling was ages old. The feeling was as old as the universe itself.

I started my morning routine as I heard Jean fighting with the covers and then proceeding to laugh it off instead of cursing it off.

We were good for each other.

I looked at the mirror and didn’t feel anything as my reflection stared back at me. S.A.D. wasn’t there yet. It was late this year and, however good that was, I knew that it would be worse than before when it was belated.

I shrugged that thought off for the time being. I had my boyfriend and a goodish mental status for now. I could worry later.

I exited the bathroom only to find Jean sprawled across the couch, switching channels with a sigh.

“Nothing good on?” I asked with a laugh.

“No! Today’s kids got shitty cartoons. The fuck is wrong with this pig and why do they all fall down when they laugh?” he replied with a groan earning a laughter out of me.

“Ah, baby Jean-bo doesn’t have cartoons to watch?” I feigned a pout. Jean narrowed his eyes as he looked at me.

“Don’t Jean’bo me. We both know you love this shit waaaay more than me. You were having a goddamned Spongebob marathon just the other week!” Jean got up and proceeded to search around for food.

“For your interest, Spongebob is a classic, plus it’s not really for kids. Uh, try the top shelf. I think we have some cereal bars there.” I offered as Jean tried to climb his way to the top shelf.

I walked there with an amused smile and got the bars down for him. “Don’t you even dare to say anything and why do you even put this shit that high?” Jean mocked a hurt expression.

“I can reach them.” I chuckled and he grabbed the box from my hands. “Yeah, hope your height comes handy to other lengths too.” He stuck his tongue out before realizing what he said.

I gasped and started giggling while Jean flushed red. “Just forget it.” He growled.
“Nope!” I made sure to reply in the most annoying way of saying the word.

“You are an ass!” Jean said with his mouth full and his cheeks still bright red.

“But, you love my ass.” I replied, stealing a bar in the process and Jean turned even redder.

We ate in a comfortable silence as we cuddled on our couch.

“Ok, soooo….Whatcha want to watch?” Jean opened up Netflix as he scooted closer.

“Jean, it’s too early for Netflix. And don’t you have homework to do?” I retorted.

“A. It’s never too early or too late for Netflix. B. I have but I want to spend time with you. And c. It’s either Netflix or CoD.” He replied and kissed the tip of my nose.

I rolled my eyes and opted for Call of Duty, but not before promising to Jean that we would watch Netflix afterward.

“Okay, we are set!” Jean cheered as he pressed his back on my chest and handed me the controller.

“Babe? How am I supposed to play if you are pressed against me?” I asked. Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought that Jean was a big cuddling baby.

We were sitting on the floor, my back pressed against the couch and Jean’s against my chest as our legs were spread and tangled with the other’s.

“You play like a sucker anyways so it wouldn’t make such a difference.” My treacherous boyfriend snorted in amusement.

“Oh! Really now? Prepare for a glorious ass-kicking, Jean-bo!” I pressed the start button and our voices were drowned by the game.

I easily beat him in the first five rounds but then let him do the winning after I saw his pout turning to teeth gritting. Jean was overly competitive sometimes and even though I knew that we wouldn’t fight if I continued my winning strike, his mood would drop.

Like I said a big baby. My baby.

“See, love! 5-12. Who does that? Only champs like me!” Jean squealed and boasted between my arms as I tried to fight back my chuckles.

“But, don’t worry I am in love with you even if you suck on CoD.” He turned and placed a hasty kiss on my lips. “Likewise.” I replied and tore the controller off his hands.

“Enough with this now.” I commanded and Jean looked at me puzzled.

“Netflix?” he offered and smiled widely when I nodded.

I let Jean decide on the movie and I proceeded to make a blanket fort ‘cause we were cheesy as that.

“Really, Jean?” I snorted when I saw the movie he had chosen.

“Shut up, it’s a great movie.” He defended his choice.

“Have you watched it already?” I raised my eyebrow and put on my questioning look.
“Yeah, a couple of times.” Jean rubbed the back of his neck with his hand and bit the corner of his bottom lip, he always did this when he was embarrassed.

“Okay, then. I’ll hold you to it.” I kissed his cheek and he pressed ‘play’.

The movie was indeed good but I could hardly focus on the animated rabbit and fox on the TV screen so I watched Jean. He was truly watching the movie, completely oblivious to my stare. At first, I was content with this but soon enough I grew bored.

This had to change.

A sneaky smile crossed my lips and I put my plan into action.

I locked on my target and started the attack. Jean was ticklish around his neck and me bombarding him with kisses and nuzzles didn’t help with that.

He started giggling like a kid and then he tried to attack back. The movie was soon forgotten as my initial attack unfolded to a tickle war.

Jean was soon overpowered as I was now straddling him as I tickled his ribs. He tried to escape and only then we became aware of our positions.

If you ask me, that was my favorite part and considering how Jean reacted so was his.

We stopped the tickling and just looked at each other. The playful gleam was now replaced with adoration and a hint of lust. Before anyone of us could say anything I leaned in and kissed him.

The sensation of his lips felt new, but also like home, like love, like the universe.

He was quick to kiss me back; his lips were hungry for mine as he pressed them against my skin. I let out soft moans to reply to his soft purrs. Our lips opened and our tongues emerged to embrace each other.

I felt the heat rising on my face and on other body parts of mine.

“Je-Jean…” I tried between shaky breaths.

“Mhm, what is it love?” his reply more composed than mine but his state was not.

“If we continue, I…to hold back.” He cut me through with sucky kisses on my neck.

“Do you want to hold back?” I admired how he kept it together when I was melting in his arms.

“Do you?” I found some of my logic back, enough to give him a lusty gaze and get one in return.

“Fuck no.” he replied as he placed his hands on my ass, making our crotches rub together. Our arousals were there for sometime before we decided to act upon them.

I began moving back and forth after I listened to Jean’s moan the first time.

“I want more of you.” He managed between moans. This gave me the queue that he wanted this as much as I was.

I kissed him again after I tossed my shirt on the floor next to him. Jean’s eyes flashed with surprise before melting into the kiss. His hands roamed on my body, each move making my already hard dick harder.
“I want you, Jean.” I breathed to his ear and I felt him twitching under my straddle.

My hands dove underneath his shirt as I helped him free himself of his clothes.

“This is becoming more…fuck, Marco.” Jean was now the mess. I kissed down his body and began sucking his nipple. He was as sensitive as he was with his neck, much to my amusement.

He moaned heavily as his fingers were tangled with my hair, my name leaving his lips as he tried to fight back moaning louder. I needed to change that.

With a sneaky smile, I got myself busy with his other nipple as I fondled the already aroused one. “You…ah fuck…the death of me…God, Marco. More.” He pleaded and, well, I aimed to please.

After I decided I was satisfied with his nipples, I brought my hand upon his boxers. Jean’s back arched and he growled.

“Seems like you want more.” I chuckled.

“Shut the shit up and just let us free.” Jean snarled and I laughed at his impatience.

I rubbed his dick a bit to tease him, before I removed his boxers. His dick sprang out, precome already glistening, and let me tell you, seeing Jean as a whole in this state was surely a delight.

I removed my own boxers and I found Jean staring at my length. “Good thing I was right.” He murmured as he began stroking my cock.

“Tsk, tsk. Jean, lemme do this for you.” I teased and as soon his hand left my cock I took his in my hand and began with soft strokes that send him flying.

“Shhhhhhhhit.” He breathed as I got both of our cocks in my hand and rubbed them together. Jean was unable to do anything and I was too satisfied with my skills and his state.

I began rocking back and forth as I picked up the pace of my strokes. Jean’s hips rolled underneath mine and his cock twitched with every move. “Marco, faster.” was all he could manage as his fingers grabbed the blankets around us.

I dropped my weight towards Jean and stroke faster. I left kisses on his torso, remembering to pay extra attention to his nipples and collarbone.

I could feel Jean was close to his release and, God, so was I.

The friction between us was more satisfying than anything else I had ever felt and that’s why it caught me by surprise when Jean’s hand touched mine.

“Let me…yours. Let me finish you.” He said behind closed eyelids and swollen lips.

I released my cock but continued satisfying his.

Jean defiantly knew what he was doing. His bony fingers rubbed and stroked my throbbing dick in all the right places. He teased me as he softly played with the head but I was more than sneaky to tease him back.

Our names echoed, breathy and full of satisfaction in the room as we came closer and closer to the end.

“Ma-Marco, I am…” but before he could finish both Jean and I were coming. Warm sticky liquid
covered our hands as our backs arched. Our voices united in a chorus of our love and after we became undone I collapsed on his chest.

We stayed like that for a bit with only our heartbeats and pants to fill the room.

“This.” Jean began and sighed before his lips turned into a smile. “This was awesome. Mindblowing.”

“Better than Zootopia?” I teased as I raised my head to meet his eyes.

“Do you want a rerun to believe me?” he threatened and I shrugged with a smirk.

We stayed like this, naked and pressed upon each other, until our stomachs began growling.

“I don’t wanna get up!!” Jean whined and I laughed. “Then you get no food, you big baby.” I replied amused.

“And we gotta clean up.” I motioned on our state.

“Yeah, ok. But we need to watch Zootopia again.” Jean winked as I moved off him.

“Anytime, babe.” I kissed him and grabbed my boxers to clean us up.

“Shower together?” he offered as he placed his arm behind his head so that he could have a better look at me.

“Are you going to become a nymphomaniac now?” I shook my head as I got up to gather the rest of our clothes.

“More like a Marcomaniac.” He got up to and squeezed my ass as he kissed my shoulder.

“I like the sound of that.” I hummed in agreement.

I let Jean head to the shower as I cleaned up our mess. I put everything in the basket for the laundry and waited for him to finish. Except he didn’t come out.

I walked to the door and knocked to check if he was alright. “God, Marco. Are you coming or not? I am freezing my dick off here and I don’t think any of us wants that.”

His witty remark sent me laughing before opening the door.

Jean was indeed in the shower waiting for me.

“It doesn’t have to be naughty, you dork. Even a simple shower is more than perfect.” He beckoned me and I soon joined him in the shower.

My boyfriend sang silly songs as he spread his bubbly shampoo on my skin and I decided to sing along too as I washed him clean.

We traded wet kisses with the faint taste of shampoo and we rubbed each other’s backs while drawing hearts and nonsense shapes on them with the extra bubbly foam.

It was sweet and it made my stomach flutter.

“You look really cute with your hair back like this.” I admired Jean.
“And you look dashing with your hair ruffled up like that and that fantastic bubble beard I gave you.” Jean snickered and I grabbed his shoulders, placing kisses all around his face and leaving bubble traces.

We spent a whole more time than needed in the shower and we only got out when our fingers were mushy and soft.

We made our way to our room in order to dress up and grab lunch.

Being able to ogle at each other while we dressed up was something entirely new for us and we were happy to explore this with every chance.

“God, I love your broad shoulders and your butt freckles.” Jean said from across the room. He had stopped dressing up and had opted to stare at me instead.

“And I love the ‘v’ line before your hips and your collarbone.” I returned and joined the staring contest.

Easily enough, Jean broke the eye contact as he resumed getting dressed in a flustered state.

I snickered and finished getting dressed as well.

The gloomy feeling from last night’s incident was now gone for good.

We headed out as we decided to crash MP again. Jean was explaining to me how much one of his professors sucked when we met her.

Annie.

She was heading towards the opposite way than us and she stopped as soon as she spotted us.

“Oh, hi guys. Out for lunch?” she greeted. Jean began the small talk but all I could do was stare at the ground, a feeling of nausea crossing my stomach.

“Well, see you then.” She waved goodbye and I could finally breathe again.

“Love? What happened?” Jean turned to face me. “You are pale as hell. Are you sick?”

“No. I am fine. Really.” I forced my eyes up to meet his.

“It’s about Armin, isn’t it?” he figured it out. I nodded and looked away again. There was still this unresolved subject.

And, God, while we were having fun Armin was probably crying in his room. While I was happy with my boyfriend he was heartbroken with no one around.

I felt tears blurring my vision.

“Marco…Come on, sweetheart. Didn’t you listen to Annie?” Jean cooed me as his warm hand touched my cold cheek.

I shook my head and he sighed. “She said Armin is doing fine. She was heading to his place to have an anime marathon.” Jean let me know and as soon as his words met my ears I felt a weight being lifted from my heavy chest.

This gave me enough courage to look Jean in the eye as he smiled at me.
“He just overreacted as I told you. Now, about that pizza…” He entwined his fingers with mine and rocked our hands back and forth. He managed to make me laugh and we began walking again to the best pizza place.

The weekend passed quietly as I was in Jean’s arms most of the time.

Today it was the first of our shared lessons and we were both pretty excited about that. We left the dorm holding hands and made our way to the cafeteria.

“I heard that this Zacharius dude is really good and a bit odd. So we’ll prolly like the dude. Mrs Brzenska, now, is a bit strict and cold but I am sure your smile will win her over.” Jean informed me over his munching and I simply nodded, blushing at his compliment.

“Well, I think we’ll both be fine with Sociology though. Statistics are a bit tougher. I need to revise what we did last year in High School to catch up.” I explained as Jean rolled his eyes.

“Yeah, of course, Mr. Walking Mathman.” He snorted.

“Math-man? Really, Jean?” I laughed loudly, turning a few heads from the nearby tables.

“Oh, shut it. You know I am right. You always stress over shit and eventually they work out way too perfect.” He kicked me softly under the table.

I couldn’t deny the truth in his words so I let it drop.

We made our way in the big amphitheater for our Statistics class with a smile. Thankfully, the room was close to empty since it was fairly early and we found a spot to sit. We held hands and began talking.

More kids arrived but we were too caught up with our conversation about the new video game Jean had ordered to notice. But, they made us notice.

“Hey, fag-boys, the gay club is on the next building.” A loud voice interrupted us.

I could feel my heart rate going up and my breath was caught in my lungs. Jean held my hand tighter and in a protective way.

Our heads turned towards the intruder as he made his way to us. He was a tall blonde boy with a mean look on his face. I could feel Jean tensing under his gaze and I swore he was about to jump on the kid.

“Is there a problem?” another voice was heard. It was much calmer but much more intense than the boy’s. All three of us turned to look towards the man.

“Those fags are having it.” The boy talked in barely proper English. The man, a tall blonde with a scruffy beard and piercing grey eyes approached him. He eyed us with compassion and turned his gaze to the boy.

“What is your name?” he asked the kid. “Floch.” The boy replied with overflowing confidence.

“Well, Floch. I want some things from you. First, apologize to the couple you offended. Secondly, find a seat so I can start putting a thing or two in this empty head or yours. Lastly, go and educate yourself before you hit the streets again, for God’s sake.” Professor Zacharius ordered.

Floch’s eyes widened but didn’t lose it just yet. “You can’t have them here doing disgusting shit
like that. They are fags.” He pointed to our hands that were wrapped together.

“Kid, I can’t have you here offending them. All they do is holding hands. And if I were you I could fix my idiotic vocabulary in front of a man whose best friend is married to another man.” He pierced Floch’s head with his gaze.

The kid was now officially dumbfounded and all he could do was to mutter a half-hearted apology and head to his seat.

“Talk to me after the class.” Professor nodded to us before moving to the center of the room to begin the lesson.

“The fuck was that?” I finally breathed as I whispered to Jean.

“An asshole and his slayer.” Jean mouthed back and we returned our attention to class, hands never unwinding.

The class was indeed easy as Jean had promised and I found myself relaxing a bit as I let my tense shoulders drop and truly enjoyed the lesson.

“This is it for today, kids. If you need me for anything, my office is 111.” Professor wrapped the lecture for the day and moved towards our seats as he waved the other kids goodbye.

“Did you like the lesson?” he asked and we both nodded. “I am glad.” A faint smile appeared on his lips.

“Please, do not let incidents like this scare you or make you feel wrong. They are the wrong ones. Feel free to reach me whenever. I happen to know how difficult things can get when dumb people are involved. So, please, do not hesitate. Also, another advice: try to avoid conflict beyond words. The moment you hit them first, you lose your defense. Now, go and do cutesy stuff couples do and leave Floch to me.” Professor greeted us and left to meet Floch who was waiting for him outside.

“I like him.” I finally spoke. Jean snapped his head toward me. “I hope not the way you like me.” He joked.

“No, Jean. You are the only one I have the hots for.” I stuck my tongue out.

“So eloquent.” Jean admired and the proceeded to lick my tongue.

I pulled away with a shocked expression earning a loud laughter from the dork I called my boyfriend.

We got up and headed towards our Sociology class. The lecture would be about to start and we had to sit down before the professor arrived. Much to our dismay, the room was packed. People were sitting on the floor and on the stairs while others opted to leave the room.

Jean greeted another couple. Hannah and Franz, he explained to me later.

“Hiya, Jean. We are giving up with this class today. Want to sit there with your friend instead?” Franz offered as he got up from the floor with Hannah.

“Boyfriend.” Jean corrected him before thanking him for the seats.

“You look cute together.” Hannah whispered to us before giggling as Franz dragged her along.

Our faces were now bright red but we didn’t have time to let it melt down since the professor
arrived.

She was a petite young woman with ashy gray hair and glasses. Her look looked professional and mature. I could see why Jean said she had the rumor of being cold. She introduced herself and explained the way her lesson would be carried on.

We would have to form pairs and write an essay about one of the social experiments she offered in a list. Jean and I looked at each other and smiled, already knowing who each other’s partner would be.

I made sure to keep notes while Jean just doodled instead.

“Look! It’s us.” Jean whispered as he showed me his notebook. He had drawn us sitting on a bench in the park. We were both sleeping. Jean was resting his head on my shoulder while I rested mine on his head.

The resemblance was striking and it made me blush. “Whee. Look at you. I need to draw your blushing face too.” Jean cheered and I shook my head in an attempt to get rid of my blushing.

“Okay, okay. Pay attention to class now. I don’t want my boy to fail the class because I flustered him.” Jean nudged me with his elbow as he sent a kiss to me. So, I followed his advice.

Even if the professor seemed cold at first she made sure to crack a joke or two that managed to send the audience laughing.

The lesson ended and we got up to exit the room. “I am going to miss you so so much the next four hours.” Jean said before kissing me as if the ‘Floch incident’ didn’t even take place today.

“I am going to miss you too. Text me?” I offered with a smile. “Of course!” he beamed as he waved me goodbye.

I received several messages from Jean telling me how amazing his ‘International Relations’ professor was and how much the others sucked compared to him. While I sent messages in reply and to encourage him to pay attention to his classes.

The day finished up easily and despite our lengthy schedule, neither of us felt especially tired as we headed towards our meeting point to see each other again after our separate classes.

I added to the dramatic effect as I sprinted towards Jean and he stopped to his tracks to play along.

I jumped in his hug and he tried his best to swirl me around, our height difference was obviously not helping him.

I giggled and he laughed with me. He let me down and kissed my lips, his longing obvious from the moment our lips touched.

His hands found their way on the back of my head and on the small of my back as he drew me closer. I placed mine on each side of his face as I deepened the kiss by opening my mouth.

We broke the kiss for breath and pressed our foreheads together as we looked at each other.

“You are beautiful.” Jean whispered. “You-” I was ready to reply.

“No need to reply. Let this be your compliment. You are so beautiful, love.” He repeated.

I smiled sweetly to him and closed my eyes for a second, taking the moment in.
“Let’s head back home.” Jean offered. ‘Home’ didn’t ring too badly instead of 'dorm'.

Our hands met and we began walking to the dorm when a familiar face appeared in our way.

Eren.

Chapter End Notes

@YunoGasai98 is my bestie and my beta send her love as I do! If she hadn't nagged me to post, I would have forgotten how long ago I updated this fic. I need to work more on my updates for sure.
Till next time!!
“Shit, shit, shit.” I heard Marco hiss as he tightened his grip around my hand.

Eren hadn’t noticed us yet since he was standing just outside of his classroom, the wall in front of him blocked his field of view.

“Jean, I cannot do this.” Marco’s trembling voice was close to my neck as he hugged me tightly. This sent shivers down my spine but short-lived since Marco was in such state.

“Jean, I can’t. Please, let’s go from the other side. Jean, I..” Marco was panicking more and more as he was now gripping my coat for dear life.

“Marco, love. It’s ok. We will go the other way. It’s ok.” I tried to soothe him as I rubbed his back gently. He was a shivering mess.

Marco didn’t seem to snap out of it and Eren was finishing up his talking. I needed to act before things went south. Well, more than now.

I placed my hands on Marco’s shoulders, securing him in place and I started walking with a fast pace towards the opposite direction.

“I can’t do this. I can’t d-I fucked up again. I am a mess. No, no, fuck.” Marco was lost in his mind as he chanted the same things on my coat’s collar.

Of course, I knew he was having a panic attack! But, I needed to get him somewhere ‘safer’ than 30 feet away from Jaeger.

I carried Marco a few steps more before I spotted a sign, ‘WC’.

Thank God!
Seeing my boyfriend, my best friend, my love in such state made me want to cry. But, I had to be strong right now for him. For Marco.

His shivering body was no covered in sweat and his tears had long escaped his eyes and they were now wetting his beautiful face. His eyes were puffy and glassy a huge contrast from the lively and sunshiny eyes I was looking at a few moments ago.

This shook me even more as the realization hit me. Marco had been through this kind of panic attacks again. He had been through them alone. With no one to hold him. With no one to warm his trembling and cold body. With no one else but the ghost he became when he panicked that much.

He was so strong. So strong to go through this alone for so long.

“Marco, love.” I tried talking to him again as we entered the, thankfully, empty room.

“Sweetie, it’s me. It’s Jean. Your Jean. You are safe. No one else is here but me.” I whispered as I pressed my lips on his burning forehead.

This seemed to bring him a bit closer back to reality and out of his hunting thoughts.

But this took a toll on him. His body was snapping out of the attack slowly and therefore it realized how much energy it had spent on it.

Exhaustion was coming into waves and Marco’s knees weakened and bent. I was glad I was strong in my hands as I managed to keep him standing long enough for us to sit properly on the floor.

When I learned Marco dealt with depression I decided to look it up. After all, I admit I was pretty ignorant before. I thought it was a thing that it touched only others. I never knew that it would try to claim one of my loved ones. Especially my Marco.

So, I searched. I searched on the internet and in the Library. I wanted to be prepared for it when it comes harder and I wanted to help Marco instead of ignorantly hurting him.

That’s when I found out about panic attacks. I didn’t know if Marco was having them but I decided to learn more about them ‘cause you can never have too much knowledge, right?

I hugged Marco properly, just warm enough for him to feel safe and not tightly in order not to panic him more.

I tried to recall the techniques I had read about. “Marco, dear. Hear me out, ok?” I whispered against his temple. I felt a weak nod and this gave me the courage to go on.

“Focus on my voice, ok? Now, love, tell me 5 things you see.”

I felt Marco shifting a bit under my embrace and clearing his throat.

“Your coat, the necklace I got you for your birthday.” He started with a raspy voice.

Marco raised his head to find more things to list. “Sinks, mirrors that need cleaning, a cockroach?” he continued.

“A cockroach?” I shifted a bit to look around only to see the creature staring at us from the corner of the room. I tried to push back my utter distaste about bugs and focus on the next step.

“Ok, you are doing amazing, love. 4 things you can feel?” I focused on Marco again.
“The fake leather of your jacket, a cold sweat all over my body, the warmth of your body, panic.” Marco replied faster this time. This was definitely a good sign.

I starting rubbing his back with my hand again as he sighed. “Great, sweetheart. Now, three things you hear?”

“Your voice, the tapping water, footsteps from outside.” Marco replied almost automatically as if he knew what I would ask next. He must have used this method too. But, he didn’t rush it through and let me do the questions in my own pace.

“Perfect. Two things you smell?”

“You and the university toilets.” Marco’s voice was now livelier and his humor was back as he faked a gag.

Good God, my boy was back.

“Just one thing left, dear. One thing-umph”

His lips crashed on mine. Marco kissed me passionately and despite my initial surprise, I was quick to kiss him back with the same burning passion.

“You.” He broke the kiss for a few seconds, just enough for him to reply to my unasked question.

Marco was now free from my embrace and he was straddling my legs. I could feel the love on his kiss. We’d kissed so many times since that night but I was always overwhelmed with his love. I was happily afraid of it consuming me whole.

Our lips parted and our eyes fluttered open, meeting each other’s right away.

“Thank you, baby.” Marco whispered as his forehead connected with mine and a soft smile found its way on his features.

“Everything for you, love.” I whispered back as I placed a peck on the tip of his nose.

“Let’s go back home.” I hugged him again and Marco nodded with a small laugh.

We got up and decided to burn the clothes that touched the toilet floor once we were back in our dorm.

With our hands held together and silly smiles in our lips, we made our way back.

We both knew that there were lots of things to talk about but we also understood that the coziness of our dorm was a much better setting to discuss them. So our walk home was a quiet one.

We undressed and joined each other on Marco’s bed. I loved how perfectly he fit into my arms. I loved how his warmth sent tingles on all the right places in my body. I loved how his soft breath woke me up every morning. I always woke up earlier than him. It was as if my body knew how much I loved him and woke me up just to see him sleep peacefully in his rightful place, in my embrace.

“Jean.” My freckled wonder’s voice snapped me out of my thoughts for him.

“Yes, love.” I replied as he tangled our legs together.

“I need to talk. I need to talk about it all. You deserve to know and I need to let it out. But, I need to
ask something first. How did you know how to handle me in such state?” Marco’s chestnut eyes met my amber ones and sent a wave of warmth on my stomach, even in the dark.

“I looked it up. I wanted to be ready and there for you whenever you needed me.” I offered him a small smile.

Marco hummed in response and buried his head on my embrace again. “I am going to talk but I cannot look at you when I do so.” He explained and I could sense the sadness in his voice.

“Honey, you don’t have to talk to me at all if it hurts that much.” I kissed the top of his head and he squirmed.

“I need to and I want to, Jean. For both of us. Just try to promise me you will not pity or hate me.” He sounded like a hurt and scared child. He was so vulnerable in my arms. I wanted to fight the whole world for him.

“I could never.” I promised. “Cross my heart and hope to die.”

Marco sighed and nodded as he tried to recollect his thoughts and start.

“I am going to start with what you saw today. I-Sometimes, I panic a lot. There is not always a real reason in someone else’s eyes but for my mind there is. I panic so much that my vision goes blurry and my lungs burn as if I am underwater. The method you used usually works but sometimes when the panic is more I don’t know how to snap out of it. There were methods that I used in the past but they were not right. Not healthy. So, I found alternatives. These rubber bands help. I try to focus and snap them on my arm when the panic attack is on its worst. The pain is momentary, unlike the previous methods I used. But, it’s enough to floor me back to reality. I know it’s not the right way to deal with this shit but since no one would acknowledge it back home, I tried to find my ways out of it.” Marco paused as he fiddled with his rubber bands.

“I tried to pour purpose on them. This one is for ‘peace’. Peace of mind. This one is for ‘love’. Love that I hoped of having one day. Love that I have now. And this one is for ‘death’. Death is always there. Looming over us. But that’s why we need to live our best and most of our lives. It’s also for ‘the end’. The end though is not always bad. The end of this can lead to peace of mind that the first one symbolizes.” He explained them to me as I looked at him with so much adoration.

This boy was fighting his own self for so long but he hadn’t lost his real essence. The thing that made him who he is. He fought it with positivity and sunshine, with colorful rubber bands and their meaningful purpose. He fought it with his magnificence.

Marco was silent for some time now and I knew that he was preparing himself for the memories that were about to come.

“Jean” he took one shaky breath.

“Remember what you asked me after your nightmare?”

I couldn’t find the strength to reply so I just nodded, my breath was already held.

“I…I have tried…I have been there.” He paused and I felt his hot tears upon my shirt. I was still fighting back mine.

“Twice.” My angel finally broke the heavy silence with even heavier words.

“I…The first time I was in the bridge. That’s why your nightmare shocked me that much. I was
much younger then and I thought I couldn’t fight it. I remember that I felt like the world itself was suffocating me and my thoughts were only focused on the hell I was going through and how it will never end. It was after I tried to tell mum for the first time.”

Marco plugged his earbuds on his ears as he left home. It was pretty late but he had told his mom that he would meet Jean and spend the night on him for a school project. If it was about school projects, his mother believed it all.

His father offered him a ride but Marco denied as he lied that Jean would meet him a few blocks away. He left with a ‘goodbye’ and hugged his little sister for ‘goodnight’

Marco felt tears threatening to fall from his eyes as he closed the front door of his house.

He wore his hoodie and pressed ‘play’ on his playlist. There was no turning back from this.

He paced fast to reach his destination as soon as he could. He walked so fast that his calves hurt and his lungs stung from the cold air, but he didn’t reduce his pace before he saw the road bridge.

The boy let out a shaky sigh as he felt the chill of the open road. A shiver crossed his body and he tried to push his hands deeper in his pockets.

‘None of these would matter in a few moments’, he reminded himself.

Marco approached the railings and stopped. Cars raced past him and music blasted from his earbuds but he didn’t listen to any of it. His eyes were fixated on the road below. He stared and stared, frozen in place as his grip on the railings grew tighter and tighter, turning his knuckles white.

‘This is it.’ He thought to himself. ‘The end.’

‘You chose this path. Now you get to finish it. This is the finish line, Marco. All you have to do is climb. Gravity will do the rest and your burden of existence will cease from this world. Everyone will live better off without you and you’ll get peace and silence.’ His thoughts ran into his mind once again.

Marco shut his eyes tightly as tears roamed freely down his face. He huffed and he gripped the railings even tighter as he was ready to climb.

But then…

A familiar ringtone brought him back to reality as it killed his hearing with its loudness.

"Your eyes are swallowing me. Mirrors start to whisper. Shad-"

"Jean?” Marco, startled from the sudden call, tried to hide the waves of emotions that were drowning him right now.

"Heya, loser. I am super freakingly bored wanna come over for video games and shit? Or just come over and be bored with me.” His friend’s voice echoed from his earbuds and Marco had to sit down the pavement in order not to collapse and break into violent sobs.

“You still there?” Jean’s voice demanded and Marco nodded. “Are you nodding again instead of replying like a normal person, dork?” Jean was now chuckling.

“Uhm, yeah. Sorry.” Marco tried to talk without his voice sounding raspy. “So, you coming?” Jean
offered again and Marco sighed as he rested his back on the railings.

“Yeah. Give me an hour.” Marco offered and Jean seemed content enough to let this call end.

I felt Marco shivering “You called and offered to play video games. It was enough for me to stall this. And after the video game night, I found courage. Enough to last me for a little longer. So, I stayed alive.”

I didn’t dare to speak. Not only because I was shocked to my bones and soul, but also because Marco had used the word ‘twice’. There was another time left to tell.

I could feel the exhaustion wrapping Marco’s body after telling me this and I was about to tell him that was enough for the day and he could rest. He could tell me another time or no time at all if it was that painful. But then he broke the silence.

“The second one…I was…It was about a year ago.” He revealed and I tightened my embrace.

He tried to take his life away from me, from his family, from the world a year ago.

It was so recent.

So threatening.

So terrifying.

“I tried-I was about to try with pills.”

Marco had chosen a day when no one was home. His father was at work and his mother had driven his sister to her dance lessons.

This week his nerves were off and he was angry all the time.

He had made his sister cry and his mother hate him. He was lucky his father worked these hours or he could have let another person down.

He had even been to the point of breaking a fight with Jean but he was saved by the bell.

Marco knew he was being consumed by his emotions and he couldn’t let this happen.

The stress of the upcoming change in his life was heavy and suffocating. University.

He couldn’t do it. He was already a wreck. He didn’t know how much he would change the following years. And he definitely could let the others see that. It was time to go. Now that he was still himself.

He had sneak ed some sleeping pills from Jean’s bathroom. He knew his friend was insomniac and that fact was offering him the easy way out.

The only thing he regretted was that his family would be the ones to find him. In their home. Lying there, cold and still.

The image would be burned in their eyes and his ghost would loom over their heads whenever they approached his room.

He was selfish and a coward and he knew. God, he knew. But, he was being crashed each day even more.
Marco put some dumb music on his laptop. He didn’t care what he put. It was loud enough and that was all he wanted.

He sat on the edge of his bed. He had made sure to tidy his room and make his bed before…Well, before leaving.

He held the orange bottle in his sweaty palms and looked at the glass of water to his bedside.

“Let’s say goodbye, Marco.” He muttered to himself.

The boy unscrewed the lid and shook the bottle so that the pills fell on his palm. They were met with sweat and already started leaving a residue to his hand.

Marco took his phone out of his pocket and put it on his bedside. His hand grabbed the glass and he was determined to end this.

But, then his phone vibrated.

Weird, he could swear he had it on ‘silent mode’.

He focused on the melting pills on his hand again but another vibration came from his phone.

Marco cursed and let the glass back to its place and picked up his phone.

From: Jean-bo

Heya! I found some good music and I thought of you.

It seems like the music you’d enjoy.

Here you go: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCeBNwBUkcI

It’s a bit old but I got some new stuff if you’re interested.

Marco huffed and turned off the music he had on and pressed the link.

“Now the night is coming to an end
The sun will rise and we will try again”

The first notes and lyrics flooded the room and Marco felt a pain on his chest.

“Stay alive, stay alive for me
You will die, but now your life is free
Take pride in what is sure to die”

The fuck was that?

Why did Jean send him this right now?

The song continued as Marco broke into violent sobs and fell on the floor.

Pills scattered all around him, the notes hunting down his decision and in the middle there was Marco.

A scared child. A child that just wanted for this to end. A child that was tired of this fight. A child with scars too many to count and darkness too much to cast away.
He cried and cried as pressed the replay button a million times before he heard the keys on the door. He rushed and closed his door and collapsed again as his back slid violently down the door.

“You sent me that song.” My love whispered.

“It was perfect. Too perfect. It made me believe that something wanted me here. Alive. That’s why I devoured the rest of their music. The older it was the best it fit. I felt like dying and being born again. It made me feel like you do. It made me feel like home.” Marco let out another sigh.

But it was softer this time. Quieter. More peaceful.

As if a burden had been lifted from his chest and he could breathe normally again.

“You saved me twice.”

“Marco, I didn’t know. I am so sorry. I am sorry I couldn’t be there more for you.” I finally let my own tears fall.

“You were there more than I could ever ask for. You were there because you wanted to and not because you knew how broken I am. You were there for me and not my problem.” Marco’s courage was back as he lifted his head in order to meet my eyes.

I couldn’t quite place what I saw in those eyes that night. The dark didn’t help as well but I think to know what I saw.

His eyes that night were the most beautiful thing I had ever seen in my life. It only matched three more gazes. But, that moment I didn’t know that yet.

“Thank you.” We both whispered in unison and leaned in for a kiss.

It was bittersweet but also it held a promise that we both felt just as strongly in our souls.

‘I’ll always be there. Forever. No matter how many lifetimes we’ll live.’

Sleep hugged us both tightly that night and lulled us on a dreamless state.

“Cause if you like the way you look that much, Oh baby, you should go and fuck yourself”

I groaned as the goddamned phone kept ringing. Fuck!

I tried not to interrupt Marco’s sleep but he was already stirring underneath my arms.

“Ugh…” Marco stretched. “Who is it?”

“Jaeger.” I hissed and Marco half-chuckled. “Did you seriously put that song for his ringtone?” his drowsy eyes met mine with a hint of mischief.


“Won’t you pick it up?” his tone changed to a worried one as the phone started ringing again.

“No?”

“Jean perhaps it’s important. Please?” Marco pecked my cheek and I huffed.

“Damn ya puppy eyes, love.” I reached for the device as Marco snorted.
"What is it, Eren?" I picked up the phone.

"We need to talk. You, Marco and I. The Garrison at 19:00?" the jerk offered.

As if, bitch. Marco had suffered a panic attack just by seeing him 30 feet away. I wouldn’t even imagine what would happen if he sat across him.

“No can do.” I replied.

“Come on, Jean. I was an ass on Armin’s party. I need to apologize.” Eren huffed in annoyance.

“Mikasa’s making you do this?” I offered.

“No. I mean yes partly. I mean I just wanted to drop by but she said I should better let you know before.” He explained.

Thank you, Mikasa. Eren on our front door would be too bad.

“Wait.” I said after a long pause.

I covered the phone with my hand and turned to Marco. “He wants to meet to apologize.” I let my love know.

“Fuck!” Marco buried his head in the pillows.

“Yeah.” I nodded.

“Well, fuck it. It’s gotta happen sooner or later so it better be done now.” Marco punched the pillows.

“Ok.” I returned on the phone and let Eren know. “See you later, then.” He said and I hang up before I could hear more of his annoying voice.

I tossed the phone on my bed across the room and returned to my sweetheart. I hugged Marco and started leaving a trail of kisses down his spine.

“It tickles.” He laughed and I rubbed my nose on the small of his back.

“Love you.” I let it slip. Fuck! Now, it was not the time. It was too early. It was-

“Love you too, baby.” Marco eagerly responded as he turned to face me.

“And no, it’s not early or whatever it’s crossing your mind right now. We’ve been friends so many years so there was love before it just evolved to something greater.” He kissed my lips and I smiled like the loser I was.

“I don’t mind saying it again then.” I said after his lips parted with mine. “Good! Because you looked like Jean.exe has stopped working after saying it.” Marco laughed and shook his head.

“Come on, you jerk. We have classes to attend to!” I offered as I tried to hide my deep blush.

“Oh ho! Jean Kirschtein wants to go to class!” Marco continued his teasing and I tossed a pillow on his giggling face.

The day went by quite easily and I found myself admiring Dr Smith more and more each lesson. He was definitely ‘goal material’.
“So, each year I pick ten students as my interns for the year and if they want they can continue the next year as well. The selection will be through two parts. First, a test and second an interview. Many of you ace the test but fail the interview. The test will be upon what we have discussed in class but the interview will be about your interest in Political Science in general and your ambitions on the subject.” Dr Smith let us know and he sure knew how to pick someone’s interest.

The whole class was now buzzing with excitement.

“The exam will be held the following Friday and it’s not compulsory. Just write your name on this list if you are interested.” He gave the list to a kid on the front row to pass around.

I wanted to participate but I felt that I lacked what he asked. Ambition. Knowledge. I knew many kids in here that surpassed me in these. So when the paper came to my desk I hesitated for a moment.

Fuck it! It’s better to fail than not to try at all.

With determination, I scribbled down my name and passed the list along.

The lesson ended after that and I found Marco waiting for me outside.

His smile was there but I could see it was forced. Nevertheless, I didn’t say anything and just wrapped my arm around his broad shoulders.

“Ready, love?” I asked.

“As much as I can ever be, baby.” He replied and I kissed his soft cheek.

We walked down the road to ‘The Garrison’ with Marco telling me about his classes and me telling him about the internship.

“Jean! That is amazing! You signed up, didn’t you? Because if you didn’t I am going back to sign you up myself!” Marco’s face lightened up.

“Yes, love. I did. Not confident about it though.” I let him know.

“What? Why?”

“I lack what he asks, sweets. There are kids in there much better than me. They got the whole package ready.” I looked away to avoid his heartwarming gaze.

“Jean, you don’t appreciate yourself and your passion enough.” Marco replied.

“You got first in your Department.”

“Shh, I don’t want anyone to know.” I looked around.

“Jean, stop! You love this! You don’t lack a single thing, baby. Stop being a defeatist and rock them with your awesomeness.” Marco’s fingers found their way on my jawline and turned my face towards him.

He gave me a soft glance before kissing my lips with a smile.

Unfortunately, we had reached our destination.

And so did the prick.
Eren’s back was visible from the glass walls of ‘The Garrison’ and we both huffed.

Marco got my hand on his and led the way.

I cringed as the bells rang from up above as we entered the café.

Eren’s head bobbed up and his fiery green eyes met us. No turning back.

He shifted awkwardly on his seat and motioned us to come closer. Our feet walked towards him and our hands stayed together.

“Hi.” He offered and Marco replied while I shot him a glare.

“Thank you for coming. I wasn’t sure you’d come to be honest. I need to apologize and-”

“Oh, Jaeger! I hope you are not bullying more people than you already do in class.” A girl cut him.

“Oh, shut it. I am here to apologize.” Eren snapped at the smirking girl.

“Good for a change! If he gives you trouble, I am here.” She said and patted my shoulder as she left to join two other girls.

“Pff, ok back to the point. I…I was an ass on Armin’s party, Marco.” Eren said and lifted up his gaze to meet Marco’s eyes.

Marco was uncomfortable and I could feel it by the way his hand grew colder as I held it.

“Armin. Well, he over-reacts in many things despite how collected he seems to be. Once he is faced with something he is unprepared for, he freaks out and becomes overemotional.” Eren continued and as he saw that he made Marco uncomfortable with his usual piercing gaze, he looked at me instead.

“I am sorry I hurt his feelings.” Marco spoke and his voice startled both Eren and me.

“Marco, it’s not-You didn’t do anything wrong. Armin told me what happened and honestly, he could be much chiller with all of this. You didn’t hurt his feelings or him. You tried to let him down easily but he wasn’t prepared for that. Don’t blame yourself for not returning his feelings while you obviously have feelings for someone else.” Eren replied and glanced at our hands. He seemed more mature today. His words were chosen carefully and his childlike behavior was left behind.

This bugger was not making me like him. Absolutely not!

“And I attacked you. I attacked you when you did nothing wrong. I was a serious ass and I mean more than usual. Shut it, Jean!” Eren snapped at me and my just opened mouth. I closed my mouth and swallowed my remark for another day.

Eren being an adult was not a usual occurrence so we’d better appreciate it.

“And look at it from the bright side, Marco! Two relationships flourished from that rejection.” Eren took a sip from his tea and smirked. We both looked at him with a puzzled look.

“Well, yours for starters. And hopefully, Armin’s with Annie. I mean they are still very good friends but I am willing to bet they will be a thing before Thanksgiving.” Eren placed his head on the top of his hands and smiled sneakily.
“Eren, I don’t know what to say.” Marco began.

“Uh, Mikasa said you’d be that way.” Eren huffed. “Look, Marco. It’s all our fault. Armin’s for over-reacting and mine for, well, also over-reacting to Armin’s over-reaction.”

“Ok. But-”

“No, buts. Seriously, we ruined the night and made you sad and guilty for no reason. I am sorry. And I bet my ass Armin is too but he is taking his time before gathering his gut to come and see you.” Eren took another sip and looked at me as if he waited for my approval for his apology.

“Thank you.” Marco finally said.

“Well, don’t look at me, Jaeger. If my sweets is fine with you, I am fine with that.” I replied to his gaze and Eren shook his head.

“And Marco, my dude. Don’t let the others force their shitty attitudes to you. Fight it back. You are a great dude and you gotta let them know. You won’t be bad or evil or anything like that if you let them know that they are treating you even an inch less than you deserve.” The brunette advised and Marco cracked a small smile.

“In that you are right. He is the best but doesn’t believe it.” I kissed Marco’s cheek and I could tell he was going to blush a few seconds later.


We stayed a bit more with Eren and talked about shit in general. It was good for a change, to converse with him and not having to shout or to taking painkillers later.

We bid each other ‘goodbye’ a couple of hours later and we were left alone again.

Our hands hadn’t left each other and we barely even noticed.

“He is right you know. You are one of the best people on earth. And perhaps your mind is not letting you see this but it’s true. If you cannot see it for yourself then take this the other way. Would it be a lie if so many people said it? Would we all collectively lie about something like that?” I began and Marco’s eyes met mine.

His gaze was soft and hurt at the same time. It was as if he was battling himself right now. As if his mind tried to kill my words by whispering to him his insecurities.

“Fight whoever tells you otherwise. Even your own self. Even your own mind. Prove them wrong with your magnificence.” I faced Marco completely as we stopped walking.

My hand left his only to meet his warm cheek and my lips stopped making words only to kiss him. The kiss was brief but felt like it lasted a lifetime. It was sweet because I needed to show him the truth and also bold because I needed to let him know how much I believed what I said.

We parted and Marco let out a small sigh as his lips formed a smile. “Ok.” He whispered.

“Ok.”

We returned back home with my crappy singing and Marco’s laughter.

“Jean?” Marco’s voice echoed in our dorm as I was in the bathroom.
“Wha luv?” I replied with my mouth full of toothpaste.

“I really appreciate it what you did today.” His voice was cheery and I narrowed my eyes at my reflection.

He was up to something.

“Gla to halp.” I replied in the best English I could master with a toothbrush in my mouth and returned to brushing my teeth.

“And finished! Ready to cuddle?” I entered our room and the sight shocked me.

And turned me on.

Like I had a hard-on in approximately 0.002 seconds from the moment my eyes met Marco’s.

He was sprawled on my bed with only his briefs on. He had one of his arms behind his head and the other close to his mouth. His legs were spread open and he looked at me with the sexiest expression I had ever seen in my fucking life.

If Jean.exe had stopped working after telling him that I loved him. Now Jean.exe had gone to Heavens with so many malfunctions this sight had given him.

“Fuck, Marco.” I tried to whisper but I am sure my voice cracked in the process.

“Yes, Jean. Fuck.” His voice had dropped an octave and God this was going straight to my cock.

“You sure about this?” I offered but I already knew the answer.

“How does it look to you?” his voice was still low and let me tell you I could come just by him talking to me.

That big of a loser I was.

“I want you to take me all the way.” Marco whispered as I approached my bed. My cock was too sensitive for that as I felt it twitch under the fabric of my underwear.

“Marco, you are lucky I didn’t search only for panic attacks.” I offered back as I helped him out of his briefs and discarded mine too.

I climbed on the bed and started kissing him. Marco tried to move but I motioned him to stay the way he is.

I kissed his inner thigh and Marco squirmed.

I kissed him again but this time closer to his cock that twitched in response. His hard-on was amazing and my ass might have been thankful that he wasn’t fucking me tonight.

I placed a kiss on the tip of its head and Marco moaned my name in response. I smirked and continued. This lil fucker had taken me back the previous time but now it was my turn.

I kissed his stomach and the middle of his chest. I kissed his neck and finally his lips.

Marco was a flustered mess after my kisses and I couldn’t be more pleased.

“Stop teasing, you fucker.” Marco moaned as I nipped his jawline.
“I am going to be a fucker, but you need to wait. You blew my mind that last time so I need to blow yours this time. And being such a tease waiting for me in such state, oh Marco, you deserve a good time.” I breathed on his neck and he let out a sound that made both of our cocks even harder.

“I swear these sounds you make work like Leon-O’s chant to my dick.” I snickered and this sent Marco into a fit of laughter.

“Did you just use a Thundercats reference as sex talk?” His laughter was short-lived as I licked and teased his nipple with my teeth.

“Oh, shit! Jean, if you continue with the teasing I am going to come before we even do anything.” Marco pleaded but I was determined to make the most pleasure for him.

“Lemme play with them a bit. I know it makes you even harder.” I replied and focused on sucking the other nipple.

He was sensitive to my touch and this sent waves of pleasure to my whole body.

“Marco, open your legs a bit more for me.” I whispered after his moans ceased.

The sexy mess in my bed followed my words and spread his legs open and I reached for my drawer. A bottle of lube and a packet of condoms were inside. Ymir’s gifts when she learned we got into Uni.

I opened the bottle and spread a great amount on my fingers.

“It’s going to be a bit cold.” I warned Marco. “Baby, I am burning already. ‘S fine.” He replied and I nodded.

I brought my finger on his entrance and teased him a bit. When my teasing was met with a deep moan, I took it as a good sign and proceeded.

Marco’s back arched as my finger entered him. “You ok, love?” I asked.

“Never been better. It’s ok you can go on a bit faster. I can take a bit of pain.” He hissed with pleasure.

I slid a second finger in him and my name left his lips many times before the third finger entered him.

He was so tight and warm on the inside and the way his body responded to my touch woke something primitive inside me.

“Marco…” I moaned in response.

“Fuck me, Jean. Please.” He begged behind closed eyes as he bit his bottom lip.

That was all my cock needed to go so hard it almost hurt.

I removed my fingers from Marco’s inside and I spread lube on my cock after wearing a condom. Once I was content and confident I wasn’t going to hurt Marco, I looked at him.

Marco was a panting mess and simply nodded.

“I am going in.” I warned. “About fucking time.” He snarled with a smirk.
I leaned over him to position myself better.

“You are even hotter when you swear, love.” I said amused and placed a chaste kiss on his lips as my cock entered him slowly.

“Ngh. Fuck!” Marco closed his eyes and wrapped his arms around my neck.

“Don’t you dare to think of stopping now.” He warned as if he sensed my worry.

And so I moved deeper. “I am almost here.” I let him know as he moaned loudly.

“Jean!! Fuck, just finish it already!” his frustration made my cock twitch inside him and Marco let another long and loud moan.

I pushed myself all the way in and waited for Marco to adjust himself to my size.

“You can move now.” His full of lust and hunger eyes opened only to close seconds later when I started moving.

“Oh, fuck, Jean!!” Marco moaned and his fingers spread on my back. His nails clawed my back and I hissed in pleasure. Who knew Marco was a wild one?

“Fa-faster.” He commanded.

I leaned in and kissed him as I moved faster. “Marco…God, you are so tight and warm. You are going to give me a heart attack.”

“Jean, shut up and kiss me more.”

I moved my hips faster as I sucked his soft neck. I bit his neck and moved on his collarbone. Our moans making a mind-blowing symphony.

Marco’s hips aligned to my movement and he wrapped his legs around the small of my back.

This sent new waves of sensations in my body and I cursed loudly as he moaned.

“Jean, faster! I am about to come.” Marco opened his eyes to meet mine and I swore my heart stopped beating for a few seconds.

“I am about to come too.” I kissed his lips and prepared for the final pace.

And then it happened…

“Jean!! Oh my God, fuck!! Do this again.” Marco was moaning louder now.

I followed his orders and moved faster hitting the spot that had made him scream like that.

We both moaned in unison as Marco came first. The white liquid was already spreading on his stomach as I came after him.

“I fucking love you.” I whispered as I moved a bit more before collapsing on the top of him.

“I love you too.” Marco kissed the top of my head.

“This was even better than the other day.” I whispered after a long pause.

“No kidding.” Marco let out a sigh of exhaustion but I felt him smile midthrough.
“Did you really look it up?”

I lift my head to meet his gaze. “Dude, you blew my mind the other time. I needed to be freaking ready. I looked up many things and it was awkward as fuck. But, at least it paid off.” I blew a raspberry on his collarbone and he giggled.

“Yeah, it did. I might have looked it up as well before the other time.” He avoided my gaze as his cheeks turned red.

“You totally had it planned then!!” I got up and straddled him.

“Well, I hadn’t set a date, but…” he trailed off and I found the perfect chance to kiss him.

I took his soft cheeks on my hands and placed a puckering kiss on his lips.

“Thank God for the internet!” I smirked and he kissed me back.

“Let’s clean you up.” I offered after we parted for breath.

“You used a condom?” Marco said amused.

“I didn’t want to make a mess out of you so yeah.” I replied as Marco sat beside me.

“You are seriously the best boyfriend someone could ask for.” He nuzzled his face on the crook of my neck.

“I am pretty sure this title belongs to you, angel boy.” I kissed his forehead and got up to fetch some tissues.

I cleaned us up as Marco giggled when I wiped his stomach clean.

This was how I wanted to see him every day. Being happy with a sunny smile as a proof on his lips. That would be my purpose for now on. I was determined to make him the happiest I could and to hold him the tightest my arms could do when his mind gave him poison.

“I want to see how you will move these sheets on the laundry room for washing up.” Marco teased with a smirk as he grabbed his briefs from the floor.

“With a red face and a blank stare, I wonder?” he snapped me out of my thoughts and my face flushed red.

“Oh, already halfway there.”

“You are the housewife, love. You’ll do the laundry.” I offered with a smirk.

“Hah, like shit I am, baby. We either are both or none of us is. After all, laundry is your thing.” He retorted.

“I still don’t know how you manage to make your clothes smell so good for so long.” He smiled and got up from the bed.

“Family secret. You get to know once you marry me.” I promised with a wide grin.

“I’ll hold you to it, then.” Marco kissed me and started wearing his briefs.

“Let’s shower before sleeping.” I offered.
“Oh ho! Round two already, Mr. Kirschtein?” Marco nipped my earlobe and kissed my neck.

“If you are ready, Mr. Bodt.” I moaned in his kiss.

Chapter End Notes

As this is my final week of lessons in Uni I will continue writing new chapters through the holidays! So the new year will bring more of our favorite boys!! 2019 will be their year *wink* *wink*

Endless love to my bestie and beta @YunoGasai98
Today was Professor Ackerman’s day. He had arranged their schedule in that way so that they would have one day free. On this day his extra class would take place.

Marco headed to his class with a cup of steaming coffee in his hand and a soft expression on his face.

Tiny drizzles had begun falling but Marco didn’t care about getting wet.

He loved the rain. It was a reminder that even nature needed to cry sometimes.

He had read a few pages from his professor’s book and he was genuinely intrigued. His professor’s tone was not scientific but hit close to home. It seemed like he was writing from experience. Marco was not sure if he was overthinking about it but he thought that he could see the pain behind the words professor Ackerman used.

This was another thing that made him so interesting. He didn’t seem nor act like someone so sensitive and understanding as he seemed in his book. It was as if the book’s writer and his professor were two different people.

Marco briskly followed the familiar path to his classroom. He noticed that only five people were there before him. That fact was both satisfying and unnerving. He could pick whichever seat he wanted but he would be more prone to his professor’s glare and deep stare.

As he sat down to a random seat, he took in his surroundings. He didn’t know four of the kids there but he was sure he had seen the fifth one, which sat next to him, around.

He stared at the girl a bit more as she was scrolling down her phone.

But of course, she was the girl that had sassed Eren at MP’s. It couldn't hurt to be friendly with
someone in there so he decided to put on act his great small talk skills.

“Uhm, hi!” he greeted the girl, but she didn’t look up from her phone.

“Lovely day today, don’t you think?” Marco tried again a bit louder than before.

The girl seemed to finally understand that he was talking to her and looked up with a swift movement as she blushed lightly.

“Oh, sorry. Were you talking to me?” she averted her gaze from his chestnut eyes.

She seemed a bit out of character. She had been so confident and sassy that night, but now Marco was in front of a shy and easily flustered girl.

It was cute though.

And it seemed like Marco was not the only one who put on a mask when he was around people he knew.

“Yes!” Marco replied. “I asked you what do you think about today’s weather.” He repeated.

The girl looked behind his shoulder to the now raging rain.

“I love it.” She answered dreamily, not taking her eyes from the window.

“You must think I am weird, though.” She was quick to laugh. “Who the hell loves rain that much, right?” she smiled.

Marco smiled back at her while shaking his head. “No. Not at all. I love it as well. It’s nice seeing Nature lashing out now and then. It’s like a human in a way.” He explained.

The girl’s eyes lit up. “Exactly!” she gifted him with a wider smile.

They chatted a bit before Mr Ackerman showed up.

She was studying Law with Eren, but their Department offered the option of an extra lesson from another Department. She admitted she was always fascinated by Psychology.

They talked about Eren as well. She told him how much he had changed now that he was with Mikasa.

She really leveled him down.

“He is still a jerk though.” She laughed.

Marco told her about his studies and about Jean. He could feel himself smiling widely and he felt his stomach flutter.

“You sound super cute together.” She whispered as the professor entered the room.

The lesson was just as interesting as every lesson of his. He asked them to call him Levi since he viewed them as his elite group but warned them not to expect any special treatment in his other lessons.

Levi explained to them the different types of chemicals that worked themselves to form the depression or the depressive episodes in one’s brain.
“For centuries people believed that depression and other mental disorders were a hoax. Or even demons or God’s punishment for someone or their parents’ sins.” Levi let them know.

“But this is all a bunch of bullshit and a half.” Marco heard some kids giggle but they ceased as Levi continued.

“These disorders are chemical imbalances. Just like any other illness. You are not cursed. You are not trapped. You are not being punished. Your brain is just a little bitch and decided to imbalance some chemical currencies.” The short man sighed and sat on his desk.

“It is fightable. It is endurable even if it seems it is not. Just reach for help. Just trust the people close to you.” Levi’s gaze met Marco’s and the boy averted his gaze to look at his notes as if they were the most valuable thing in the world.

“That is what we are going to learn here. You will by no means be psychologists just by this lesson but you will surely be able to offer help either to yourself, to someone close to you, or to your future patients who battle depression.”

The man got up and stretched and the whole classroom, which consisted of twenty people, followed his every move.

“Ignorant pricks will tell you many things to belittle the condition you or someone you help is battling. They will talk about the word you are using. ‘Battling? This is not a fictional novel, dude. Wake up and live life.’ They will tell you. But they will be wrong. Battling, yes. Fucking battling and fighting and kicking and punching. These douchebags know jack shit about how it is. They know nothing about how hard it is to live in your own skin. ‘But this is not some fucking dragon luring around the corner, mate. It is in your head. Just don’t think about it.’ They will continue.”

Levi made a buzzing sound.

“Wrong. Bull crap again. It is a fucking dragon, a witch, a chimera or even a fucking unicorn. I don’t know. But it is something that scares the person who is suffering from it. Attention to my words! ‘Suffering’, as in suffering a cold, a sore throat or even a broken heart. But, suffering, nonetheless. So, no, this person cannot ‘snap’ out of it and not to think about it. Their own brain brings it up with little things and small triggers.” Levi sounded so angry and Marco wondered about how many times he had discussed this matter with people who didn’t understand how his Science worked.

“No dickward is allowed to belittle someone’s suffering. And you are going to be the guardians of those who suffer.” He sounded calmer as he looked at the ground and chuckled dryly.

The lesson proceeded and Marco felt a fuzzy feeling blooming in his heart.

Maybe he could get better.

“Class dismissed for today. Thank you all for coming and for your attention.” Levi smiled genuinely and Marco felt himself smiling back.

He was ready to leave the class when the man stopped him.

“What did you think of it?” he asked as his steel grey eyes stared into Marco’s soul.

When the freckled boy didn’t answer, “Of the book? Or you didn’t even read it?” the man explained.

“Oh.” Marco finally snapped out of it.
“No, I did. I really like the way you write, sir.” He smiled.

The short man huffed. “Cut the ‘sirs’. In this classroom we are equals. Did it help you?” he asked again.

“Uhm, yes I understand the theme a bit better now.” Marco nodded but the man’s gaze didn’t let him move.

“No. Bodt. I meant if it helped YOU.” He emphasized and Marco’s smile dropped.

The boy opened his mouth but words fell dry so he opted to close it again.

“Kid.” Levi sighed.

“It’s ok. I didn’t mean to intrude but I care for every snotty brat I have in my classes.” He finally stopped staring at Marco.

“I am sorry, sir. I need to go.” Marco took advantage of the man’s retreat and left the classroom at a quick pace.

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

Was he that obvious?

See through?

He was a fucking ghost for all that mattered.

How was he supposed to step back to this damned classroom now?

Marco could feel his shame form into tears as he fought back his sobs.

He had to reach home.

The boy began running through the campus, not caring who might see him in such a state.

He finally reached their dorm and unlocked the door.

Inhale, he was inside. Exhale, the door closed. And sob.

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I reached our dorm with a dozen donuts and two milkshakes in my hands. I was whistling the MISSIO’s “Middle Fingers” as I was unlocking the door.

Everything was dark inside their home.

This was odd. Marco had finished his lessons earlier in the evening. I turned on the lights and that’s when I saw him.

Marco.

My boy was lying on the couch. He was curled into a ball, hugging his knees and snoring softly.

He was clutching one of my shirts and I could see that he had been crying.

My jaw clenched and I almost dropped our donuts to the floor.
My angel.
My sunshine.
My boy.

He was alone and he was crying.

As much as I wanted to wake him up I decided it was for the best to let him rest. Crying could really wear someone out and I could only imagine who or what could have the power to make him cry like this.

I placed our milkshakes in the fridge and our donuts on the coffee table.

I smirked at Marco’s beautiful sleeping form. I wondered if sleep was the only place he ever found peace of mind. If he did. I decided against on ruffling his hair and only placed a soft kiss on his tear-streaked cheek.

I moved to our room to change to something more comfortable.

Once I was ready, I grabbed Marco’s soft blanket from his bed and returned to my sleeping love.

I placed the blanket softly upon him and smiled again.

“Oh, my boy. How you shine.” I whispered.

“If only you could see how you shine. How you affect the people around you. How you have the power to change the world if you only open up.”

I took a deep breath and kneeled on the carpet. I placed my elbow to the empty space Marco had created when he uncurled himself and stared at the boy before me.

Marco had 298 freckles on his face. Oh, 300. Two more had bloomed.

He had long almost black hair that fell on his eyes but he liked it that way.

He had three freckles on his left eyelid and two under his right eye.

He had a perfect smile and only two of his bottom teeth were a little bit closer than the others.

He always smelled of cinnamon, sandalwood, and jasmine.

His scent was home to me now.

Maybe it always had been.

I wish I could help him more. But, I knew this wasn’t my battle to fight. It was his. I also knew that he was strong. He could win this. He just needed time.

And support.

I was here for him.

But, he needed all the support he could get.

I thought of something. A dangerous idea.
But, Marco was worth the risk.

I just hoped that the universe would let me be lucky and make this work for once.

I got up and reached for my phone. I dialed a number I had to use for quite a bit but knew by heart and pressed the call button as I moved to our bedroom.

When the call was over, I returned to my angel and to my previous seat.

I was caressing his hair when sleep overcame me.

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Marco shifted and opened his eyes groggily.

Jean.

His boyfriend was fast asleep next to him and Marco cursed himself for making Jean worry that much.

He tried to release himself from his sweaty blanket restraints but he realized that he could not do that without waking Jean up.

He sighed and the other boy raised his head with a silly smile.

“Hi!” Jean greeted and kissed Marco’s chapped lips.

“Hi.” Marco replied.

“How was your day?” Jean asked with a half smile.

Marco chuckled dryly and motioned down to his body. “A mess.” He finally admitted.

Jean smiled softly and placed a kiss on his boyfriend’s forehead.

“Why?” he finally asked.

Marco rolled his eyes and let himself plop back to the cushion.

“Hm…let’s see.” Marco feigned recollecting his memories as he stared at the ceiling.

“My favorite professor cornered me since he realized my situation and I ran away through the whole campus before coming here, missing the rest of my classes and opting for crying like a baby while clutching on your shirt.” He said all in one breath.

Jean rested his forehead on Marco’s arm.

“You could have called me you know.” He tried.

“And risk you losing your classes as well just for my whims? No, thank you.” Marco sighed. He was tired and angry. A rough mix and he didn’t want to snap at Jean.

He really didn’t. But, perhaps…Perhaps keeping his distance or even better-letting go of Jean was the best he could do for the boy.

He was poison. He, his thoughts, his sick mind, and his brittle broken heart.
And he didn’t want Jean to perish.

The lean boy must have noticed his deep thinking and decided to snap him out of it.

“I brought us milkshakes!” he got up but not before kissing Marco again.

“The Garrison has a cinnamon-flavored milkshake which made me think of you.” He offered the brown drink to Marco.

“Mine is dark chocolate and orange if you want to try.” Jean replied to Marco’s curious look at his own dark brown drink.

The freckled angel shook his head ‘no’ and proceeded to slurp down his.

“It’s really nice.” Marco finally spoke after some hour had passed. He felt like his anger melted along with his milkshake and his tired features were now lighten once more.

“Thank you.” He said with such a serious and genuine tone that took Jean aback.

“Re Welcum.” Jean replied with his mouth still full. He gulped it down and grinned.

That’s when Marco knew. Jean was supposed to stay. His idiotic mind was poisoning him again.

Jean and Marco deserved each other. They were each other's halves but also wholes. Overthinking had really taken a toll on him, but he swore that would be the last time he let his mind bother him with such thoughts about Jean.

“How was your day?” he offered and Jean told him how boring his day was but how excited he was that the internship test was coming up.

“Do you want to tell me more about what happened?” Jean tried as he was now curled into Marco’s strong arms.

“Professor Ackerman realized I am depressed. Don’t know how don’t know why. But, he did. He tried to ask me if his book helped me personally but I fled the classroom.” Marco sighed.

“How am I even supposed to attend his lessons again?”

“Marco?” Jean’s voice chimed up.

“Yeah?”

“Have you thought about getting some medical assistance for this? You know going to a therapist and all. Even behind your parents’ backs.” Jean was curious.

“I…Yes. But, decided against it.” the boy sighed and tightened his grip around Jean to feel him nearer.

“Perhaps your professor was only trying to help you with that.” Jean turned to face his precious boy.

“You think?” Marco met his auburn eyes and Jean nodded.

“Why else would he ask that?”

“But, Jean. He is my professor, not my therapist. I am not…I don’t think I would be comfortable
with that.” He explained and Jean shook his head.

“Ok. But perhaps he could suggest a good friend of his or something like that.” Jean insisted.

“Jean.” Marco began.

“Marco. I know I am pressuring you but it is something I cannot control. I cannot help you by doing something and I am trying to find other people who could offer the thing that you need.” Jean smiled sweetly as he cupped Marco’s cheek.

Chestnut eyes stared into auburn ones and Marco felt at home.

He knew Jean was right.

“And after all, you said that there is pain hidden in the way he writes. Perhaps he has lived it too.” Jean added a point.

“I said I think there is pain.” Marco corrected.

“Same difference, Marco.” His love chuckled.

“I am just scared, Jean. Everyone looks at me like I am a special snowflake. So different and so pure. But I am no snowflake. I am hail. I am the storm before and not the rainbow after. Do you know why I broke up with the girl from the exchange program?” Marco tried to prove his point.

Jean shook his head ‘no’.

“She was too tired of me, Jean. Her program was only six months long and we were together for only four months and she was sick and tired.” The boy sighed as he tried to fight his sniffles back.

“I seem strong. I seem. I am not though. I am a tiring person in constant need of reassurance and approval. You think you can handle me but you haven’t seen the real me.” Marco’s eyes were like the ocean before the storm.

Jean did only one thing.

He hugged him.

Tight and warmly.

“I have, Marco.” He whispered after some time.

“These days you have been real with me, haven’t you?” he released the boy to look into his deep brown eyes.

Marco nodded with a pout.

“Then I know I can handle this. I can handle you. Because I love you and I want you. You. Not every person is the same and you shouldn’t judge people just by one bad example. This girl couldn’t handle it but it is not your fault and not hers either. We were simply meant for other people.” Jean explained and waited for a response.

Tears streamed down Marco’s face.

“The universe has a person or more for every single one of us, Marco.” He kissed his boyfriend’s nose.
“We just have to stay around long enough to meet them.”

Marco hugged Jean and his sobs slowly ceased.

“When did you become so wise?” he teased.

“Oi! Marco! I was always a wise old soul you know!” Jean kissed him.

“Mikasa helped.” He admitted. “Her views on life and the universe and how this whole scheme works are really interesting so I did some research as well.”

Marco nodded and let Jean explain.

“Oh, so….The universe is this big, big particle. It is like a great bubble. And it is always expanding and expanding.” Jean started.

“The planets and the rest of the things in the universe are smaller bubble-worlds. They are lonely and apart from each other so the bubbles do not know what is happening to the others. Heck, they even ignore their existence sometimes. Our bubble, Earth, is one of them. And upon it, there are us. Now, imagine tiny little humans walking, strolling and running all around this bubble. You would think this is chaotic, right? But it is not. Like the proteins and cells in the human body, each of us has a destiny to fulfil. The child that blew this series of bubbles is the one that assigned us these roles. And with the roles, we were assigned partners to help us reach our goal. To boost us in order for us to reach our best selves. They can be friends, family, lovers, pets…Literally anyone! You see no one is really alone. They have someone even if they cannot see that at the moment. But they are there. Donnie. He was wrong. Every creature does not die alone. For they live in the minds of those who love them. Even if you are physically alone, you cannot let this delusion fool you! You have every person who loves you by your side. Always.” Jean concluded.

“Je-an.” Marco’s voice cracked. His eyes were wide open and tears had started rolling down his cheeks again.

Happy tears. Jean could tell.

“So, Marco. No matter what your brain is telling you. You deserve us around you. Me, your professor, your family, your friends. We are your people and you are one of ours. We just want to help your sky to clear. We just want to help the clouds disperse.” He continued.

“And I am willing to repeat that as many times as you need it. As many times you need it to understand, to believe and to be free.” Jean kissed him again and Marco was a mess of bitter joy.

“Understood?”

Marco nodded and kissed Jean passionately. Jean was quick to pick his pace and soon their soft kisses became sloppier but lustful.

Their shirts were flying away from the couch and their pants followed soon after.

“Marco. Please, have me.” Jean moaned and Marco could feel himself becoming harder under his tight boxers.

“Are you sure, honey?” Marco whispered as he nibbled Jean’s ear.

Jean shivered and slipped his tongue into Marco’s sweet mouth as he nodded.
He reached for the lube and the pack of condoms from their coffee table drawer and he marveled at the leaner boy’s form beside him.

His eyes half-lidded but his pupils full blown with lust and love.

He freed his boyfriend from his boxers and decided on an even better approach as Jean closed his eyes.

Marco lowered his head to meet Jean’s crotch and opened his mouth taking him all in. He heard Jean gasping and he felt his grasping his hair from the surprise.

Marco smirked as he continued. He groped Jean’s ass to position him better and sucked harder. “Fuck…” Jean moaned and Marco picked up his pace as Jean’s hips buckled.

Jean moved his hand to the back of Marco’s neck and Marco moaned around him. “Marco. Marco. Marco.” Jean hissed as Marco played with his hole, entering a finger.

“Fuck, you are lovely.” Jean moaned and whispered Marco’s name continuously.

And that’s when Jean’s tip hit Marco’s throat and he gasped from pleasure, unable to even think of forming words.

Jean clutched Marco’s hair as he moved his head up and down to match his thrusting hips.

Jean opened his eyes and looked down only to see Marco looking back at him as he took his length all in.

The warmth of Marco’s mouth made Jean buckle his hips up and hit Marco’s throat again, sending a new wave of pleasure on his body.

“Fuck, Marco. I love you so…ngh!” he couldn’t even finish his sentence as he felt a familiar warmth coiling below his stomach.

“Shit, I am going to come if you keep going, love” Jean managed.

Marco released him from his mouth but only to smirk and lick around his head as he took him all in again.

Jeans’s fingers tightened around Marco’s hair and he felt the sweet release as Marco moaned again.

“Fuuuuuuck.”

“Shit. Shit. Fuck.”

Jean opened his eyes, his vision blurry, and watched as Marco gulped him down and licked his lips.

“You are going to kill me, you know.” The boy warned as the other chuckled.

“I am only giving you small deaths, honey.” Marco whispered as he kissed Jean’s stomach, his warm breath sending goosebumps in his body.

“Turn around for me.” Marco ordered and Jean followed his orders like a good soldier.

Marco began grinding his hard length on Jean’s ass, teasing him as he nibbled his ear once again. Jean moaned and his voice cracked.
Marco took the bottle of lube after witnessing the result of his teasing with a smile of satisfaction.

Slick fingers entered Jean and he could feel his legs trembling from the excitement and pleasure. Marco began to move his two fingers in and out and to curl them into Jean’s tight warmth.

“Jesus, fuck me already.” Jean cursed but Marco was feeling cocky.

“Only if you ask nicely.” He sucked his boyfriend’s neck and bit the pale skin.

“Please. Fuck, please. Fuck me, please.” Jean was quick to respond and Marco was even quicker to oblige as he entered Jean with a swift motion.

“Yes. Marco. Please, more.” He hissed.

Marco started moving, thrusting his hips softly but after seeing how much of a tease he was to Jean, picking up his pace.

Now his thrusts were deep and quick. Jean was moaning his name and Marco was cursing under his breath.

“You are so tight, Jean. But, you fit me so, so well.” Marco groaned as he felt Jean’s hole twitching in response.

Marco’s lips met Jean’s as both met each other’s pace.

Marco could feel his peak closing and fucked Jean harder.

“So” Jean whimpered. “Good.”

“Ngh...Jean!” Marco growled.

“Marco!” the boy screamed in response.

Marco worked his hips harder and the only sound in the room was their flesh becoming one.

Moans joined in as Marco came and so did Jean. Again. Jean’s spills soiled Marco’s boxers but neither of them cared.

“Are…” Marco panted as he tried to catch his breath. “Are you ok?”

Jean let out a weak laugh.

“What the fuck do you think? Look at the mess you’ve made out of me.” He motioned to his body and their couch. “And guess.” He laughed again.

“No, I mean…did I hurt you?” Marco asked again.

“You could never hurt me.” Jean planted soft kisses on his boyfriend’s face and Marco giggled.

He let his fingers trace his lover’s body only to see that bruises had already started forming on the boy’s hips.

“Shit. Jean, I am sorry.”

The other only eyed him in response as he leaned in for another kiss.
“You are indeed lovely, you know.” Jean whispered.

“You are my lovely, sad, sunshine boy.”

Chapter End Notes

Three Days Grace is such a great band since their songs are powerful, but they also hide some kind of sadness and anger in the lyrics. I kinda hc Marco like that. He has depression, yes, but he tries and beats it however he can. He is angry that he suffers and that sort of motivates him to move past it. Always remember, you are not your illness. It cannot control you if you fight it. And always seek professional help if it gets heavy. You are fighting it, yes, but you don't have to fight it alone. All my love and gratitude to @YunoGasai98! She is one of the people who are like pillars in my life. Much love to the rest of these people as well. Find me on Tumblr: skelene.tumblr.com
Till next time!!
Chapter Summary

Self-discovery, amends, reunions, and domestic fluff.
Things seem to go a bit better for the boys since they have each other, and hope.

Chapter Notes

Here we go! The 10th chapter!! Things might seem a bit slow but we are up for some good and nice angst in the next chapter!
Enjoy the fluff!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Marco woke up by Jean’s hair tickling his nose. The boy smiled sheepishly and kissed Jean’s forehead before untangling himself from the other and heading to the bathroom. He felt something.

He felt something different inside him. Perhaps it was the relief. After all, he had something he always dreamed of. He had someone he could talk to and they would understand, they would not judge him but they would not baby him as well. He had Jean.

And when Marco made these thoughts he felt invincible for a moment, even if it was a tiny moment in the chaos of his mind, it was there. And that spelled hope in Marco's mind. He could fight this like he did all these years but only better since he had Jean.

Marco got in the shower and wondered if he could tell more people. Jean showed him it was not something he should be ashamed of. Perhaps more people would be like Jean. He didn’t want to tire him out with his outbreaks and he would sure feel better knowing he had more people around.

Mikasa seemed like a nice and understanding girl from what Jean told him and Marco didn’t feel the hint of jealousy he felt some weeks before. He could talk to her. Maybe.

Or that girl from Levi’s class. She seemed to be in the same situation, or kind of, like him. Perhaps they could get to know each other better. Jean would really like her for sure since they shared the same taste in music and in style.

Levi.

Marco’s mind fell back to yesterday’s awkward situation. He had definitely over-reacted and made a fool of himself. But, the man seemed like he wanted to help so maybe he understood.

Maybe he should talk to him. Openly and with courage.

Marco, his friends, and his family deserved to see him getting better.

Marco could get better.
For once life seemed more bearable than usual. Marco smiled at his reflection. This was really a rare sight to witness.

Marco dried his hair while humming a familiar tune and exited the bathroom.

Jean had just woken up and yawned loudly when Marco returned in their room.

“Morning, hon.” Marco kissed the bridge of his nose. His boyfriend placed his hand around his neck and pulled him further down to kiss his lips. “Morning, love.” his husky morning voice sounded like a melody in Marco’s ears.

“Ready for today?” Jean shifted and fought with the covers. Marco giggled and helped his helpless fool. “Yes. I really think I am.” He revealed with a wide smile and Jean immediately stopped moving.

“What happened?” Marco turned to face Jean.

“I haven’t seen you that bright and happy for a long time.” He confessed and reached for Marco’s cheek. “It really is such a great look on you.”

“It’s your doing.” Marco kissed his lover’s hand.

“No, love. It is all you.” Jean got up and hugged him tightly, making him melt under his soft touch. Jean released Marco and tickled his ribs making him giggle. “Love you.” He whispered.

“Me too.” Marco ruffled Jean’s hair.

Jean finally decided to get up as Marco finished dressing up and of course opted for “annoying” Marco as he hugged him from behind and leaned to kiss his neck.

“Jean!” Marco whined and then giggled.

“Hm…who me?” Jean kissed his neck again but this time more tender.

“Jean, I know what you are trying to do and I really appreciate it but we have lessons to attend to.” He panted as he tried to pry his neck out of Jean’s reach.

“I dunno, Marco. It seems like it’s working.” He smirked and looked down as Marco’s eyes followed his gaze.

“Asshole.” Marco stuck his tongue out and Jean laughed as he raised his hands up.

“Okay. Okay. You won.”

“You are like a horny teenager, I swear.” Marco tried to relax a bit.

“And you love it.” Jean winked and clicked his tongue.

Marco hummed in response and returned to getting ready for the day and so did Jean.

When they were ready they still had some time left and decided to go to the Garrison for breakfast. Walking hand in hand they reached the café and choose a table to settle.

“Coffee, shake or smoothie?” Jean asked Marco.
“Coffee shake.” He replied with a smile.

“Is there such a thing? Wow, only you order the craziest things.” Jean shook his head and grabbed his wallet.

“Coffee shake is not crazy, Jean. It is just you that lives in the past.” Marco raised an eyebrow. “And it’s very good too. Try it yourself.”

“Nah. Coffee is coffee. I am not going to defile this sacred potation with impure shakes.” He raised his head high and placed his right fist on his chest. Marco erupted in laughter and Jean left, satisfied with the result of his antics.

Marco took in his surroundings and sighed in satisfaction. The weather was getting colder as Thanksgiving approached and Marco could not wait to wear his soft sweaters and cuddle next to Jean while drinking hot cocoa or warm wine.

“Here we are.” Jean snapped Marco out of his thoughts as he placed his beverage in front of him. “Your abomination.”

Marco took a bit of whipped cream with his finger and smudged it on Jean’s nose. The boy laughed and wiped it away. They ate the cookies Jean bought for them and talked about their lessons for the day.

“Will you be ok today, love?” Jean asked before they parted.

“Yeah. I believe I will be.” Marco smiled. “Your test. Isn’t it today?”

Jean shifted his weight to the other foot as he chewed the inside of his cheek. “Yup.”

“There is no need to worry, hon. You will ace it. You deserve to be in this team more than anyone else.” Marco promised.

“Thank you.” He gifted him with a small smile and they parted with a kiss.

Marco watched Jean as he left and then moved towards his class.

From the corner of his eye, he noticed Professor Levi. As he turned his head to greet him he noticed that he was with another man, holding hand in hand, much like Jean and himself had done earlier in the morning while walking towards the Garrison.

This made Marco smile. Only then did Levi notice him and lifted his head to greet him. Marco waved at him in response.

The man next to the professor offered him a side smile and the two continued their walk.

Marco finally arrived in his class and picked a seat. Mrs Lagnar entered after some minutes and the lesson began. He was glad he could focus more this day since the lesson was really interesting and he really liked the way this professor taught. He kept notes and occasionally he would doodle smiley faces or other silly things on the margins of his notebook. Mrs Lagnar ended the lesson with a small assignment.

“I want you to write with as few words as possible, using only the primal emotions, how you have felt during your life so far. I want you to go as back as you can and recognize the most significant emotion during a period in your life. For example as a small kid perhaps it was love, happiness or even curiousness but for as a teenager, it was anger or satisfaction. You have to recognize them and
name them. Then you will place them in a timeline and see with which emotion you have led your
life so far. This can help you reflect your life and decide if you are satisfied with it or if you want to
change something. This exercise is really important. You should do it whether you feel ok or not
with your life because it will help you see clearly your path until now.” The professor explained.

“Remember to use only the primal emotions: love, happiness, satisfaction, excitement, anxiety,
fear, anger, guilt, grief, disappointment, curiousness, surprise, awkwardness. It is really important
to break it down to these basics.” She dismissed them.

Marco liked this assignment. He was really curious to see how his timeline would turn out to be.
He decided to relax in the Garrison since his next lesson was in two hours. He could eat something
and begin to work on his timeline.

He texted Jean a “good luck” since it was almost time for his exam and promised him many kisses
as he walked towards the café. Marco began to hum this morning’s tune once again and a soft
smile formed on his lips.

The bells softly chimed as he entered the café. Marco spotted the girl he talked with yesterday and
decided to go and greet her.

“Oh, hi!” she smiled at him as he walked towards her.

“Hi to you too.” Marco smiled back.

“How are you? I didn’t get to greet you yesterday.” She asked.

“I am fine. Interesting day so far. Yeah, yesterday was a bit weird, sorry.” He replied and shifted
his gaze.

“Nah, don’t apologize. It is fine. I am glad this day is going better.” She patted his shoulder.

“I have to go, but it was nice seeing you. See you tomorrow at Levi’s class. I can’t wait to hear
more silly stories about Jean.” She winked and Marco chuckled.

“I’ll hold you to it.”

“I most certainly hope so.” She patted his shoulder again before leaving.

Marco shook his head and moved to the counter. After placing his order he turned around to see
which table was free for him to sit.

That’s when he saw him.

Armin.

Marco took a deep breath and let a sigh.

He had to do that. He had to do that now that he was feeling ok. Otherwise, he would never do it
and Armin was a cool kid to hang around with. It would be a shame to let this chance go.

His name echoed in the café and Marco turned around to grab his coffee as Armin lifted his head
from his notes.

“Marco!” he greeted him.

The freckled boy smiled a bit awkwardly and moved to Armin’s table.
“Hi, Armin.”

“Hi! Do you have some time to chat?” Armin asked as he closed his notebook and capped his pens.

“Uhm, yeah. Sure.” Marco pulled the chair across Armin and sat down.

The boy smiled and stuffed his things into his backpack. He took a large sip from his strawberry-flavored cocoa “Uhm, ok. First things first. I really need to apologize for my behavior. I overreacted for sure and I am really prone to do that which is bad. Really bad. Because I push people away but I am working on it. I promise.” He let out.

“I am sorry as well, Armin.” Marco sighed.

“You don’t have to be. You did not do anything wrong. You are allowed to have feelings of your own. You are allowed to like someone else. You are allowed to be who you are. You have been nothing but kind to me and I hurt you. I am the one who is at fault here.” He placed his hand upon Marco’s, deep blue eyes meeting chestnut ones.

“Ok.”

“I mean it.”

“I do not know how to express myself sometimes. I struggle with my emotions. I feel like I am experiencing everything to extremes. I…My parents died in a car crash when I was six. I wasn’t talking for two months after that. My grandpa raised me the best he could, he taught me a lot of things and I am proud of that. But, I didn’t spend much time with people. I do not know how to act in some situations because they are a first for me. I know that this sounds like an excuse but it is not. I promise.” He admitted.

Marco eased under Armin’s touch and just nodded, letting Armin continue.

“Eren and Mikasa were by my side, but there are some things that I have to experience on my own. When I met you it was like my system overloaded. I haven’t met such a kind person ever before. You are really mesmerizing. I haven’t felt this kind of feelings before and I didn't know what to do. I had to let you know, I had to have you, I had to…”

He took a sip from his cocoa and continued “I was obsessed. These feelings were distorted into something I could not control. I hurt you with my behavior and I will always regret it. I am sorry. But, I really mean what I said. I find you unique. If you agree, I would like us to keep hanging out.”

Marco was at loss of words so Armin closed his hand around Marco’s.

“I…I understand if you don’t want to. But, I promise I am working on my emotions. My obsession has left. I only admire you. I like you too but not in that way. I really like Annie, though.” Armin blushed.

“Right now I feel regret and guilt but also hope.”

“Armin.” Marco smiled softly.

“It’s ok.” He promised.

“We can hang out, yes. And don’t beat yourself so much. We all make mistakes. Let it go.” He turned his hand to wrap it around Armin’s.
The boy looked at him wide-eyed and then smiled back.

“Thank you.” He whispered.

“Don’t mention it.” Marco sipped some of his coffee. “Now. Tell me more about Annie.”

The boy’s face brightened and Marco wondered if his face did the same when he talked about Jean.

“She is really amazing. We both like anime and she too had a difficult childhood. I feel that we can talk about anything, really. She may seem a bit cold but this is just because she has been hurt and she tries to prevent that from happening ever again.”

“We have been on some dates now and I am thinking of asking her to be my girlfriend. Do you think I am rushing things?” he asked worriedly.

“No.” the freckled boy shook his head. “You seem to like her a lot and since you have been on some dates it seems like she feels the same.”

“I really hope so! She really understands how it is to not be able to express yourself. She really…” he trailed off.

“It feels nice being understood.” Marco agreed.

“I am worried.” Armin admitted.

“What for?”

“That I will push her away. That I am using her. That I am too clingy.”

“Armin. Don’t. Thoughts like these are poison. Trust me I know. But do not let your mind command your heart. You are a good person. You deserve to find your place in the world.” Marco promised.

“Did you find yours?” he sighed.

“I am trying. People around you, people who love you, they help. You need them as much as they need you. Don’t worry. Let it happen. Let life happen without overthinking that much. It kinda feels pretentious for me to say that but I, too, am trying to pave this path.”

“So Jean helps? Having a significant other. Does it help?” Armin sounded like a child. He really did not know how things worked. He was really struggling himself.

“No, having a significant other does not help. Having people around you does. Being in a relationship does not matter if they are not the right person for you. Everyone tends to romanticize how relationships help your mental health but it does not always go this way.”

“Whether you are in a relationship or not, does not matter. Sometimes it just makes things worse. Relationships are not magic to solve your problems and struggles. That magic comes from inside of you. Only. People are so used using others for what they name support but in fact, they drain them. True support means that you trust that the other person will be by your side, you cannot demand them to be there. You have to trust them. We tend to ask everything from the others, blaming them for our worsening state. We forget to get better and we drain the others.”

“Annie will help because she is a person who likes being around you and not because she will be
your girlfriend. Eren and Mikasa are helping because they love you. Your grandpa as well. Romance is not the key. Love and support are.” Marco felt his heart beating faster.

“When did you become so wise?” Armin looked at him with wonder.

“I am hardly that.” He chuckled.

Armin’s phone vibrated and Annie’s picture appeared on the screen. She had her hair down and she was sipping a vibrant red smoothie.

Marco felt happy seeing the picture and how Armin’s face lit up when he answered the call.

“Hi, Annie! Oh, yes. I am on my way.” He chirped.

“Thank you, Marco. I really needed to talk. I need to go now but I hope we can meet again soon.” He smiled widely as a blush formed on his cheeks.

“I hope so as well. Good luck with Annie.” He waved “goodbye” to Armin.

Marco was now alone, enjoying the silence on his table and the soft buzzing from the tables around him. The café was almost full and this emitted such lively energy. People were talking and laughing. They were with their friends or alone in their tables studying or enjoying their free time. The aura of this café was calm and warm. He really liked it here.

Marco decided he should work on his assignment and took his notebook out of his bag.

His life. Hm…

His life started with happiness for sure. He loved his big brothers and they made a great team together. They were older than Marco but always took him along on their walks and their adventures. Arthur taught Marco how to swim and Jerome loved telling him stories about myths and legends.

Marco remembered fondly his childhood. It was one of the happiest periods of his life. His sister was born when he was around seven and the happiness in his life doubled. He loved his baby sister and his mother let him name her. Aimée. Beloved.

Marco wrote down “happiness” on his timeline and then “love”.

He remembered spending time with his family as he was growing up. But then Arthur had to leave for college and Jerome followed the next year. Marco was twelve and had never felt so alone. Aimée was there and so were his parents but he felt weird. He started having fights with his mother and he really felt so angry that his brothers weren’t around.

“Disappointment”

“Anger”

He then began understanding that the problem was neither his mother nor his brothers but himself. And so his guilt and self-loathing took form.

“Guilt.”

“Sadness.”
“Fear.”

Those were the emotions he had been feeling the last years. Sure “happiness” and “love” were there too. But when he was alone, all he felt was guilt.

But, this year. This year has been so eventful so far. He moved from “guilt” and “sadness” to “anxiety” and more “guilt”. But then “love” returned and “happiness” and “surprise” and “hope”.

Marco really had a difficult time picking the right emotion to represent these three months. So he only wrote “love” and “hope”. He knew that his teacher insisted on picking from the primal emotions but “hope” was important so he noted it down.

Marco knew what he needed to do next.

He really needed to amend with his family. Arthur and Jerome were now working in another state and Arthur would get married after Easter. He really needed to have them close once again. He missed Aimée.

He also missed having conversations with his father and long walks with his mother.

Thanksgiving was just around the corner and he knew that it was the perfect timing for his plan.

He smiled at himself and gathered his things. Once he was ready, he grabbed his coffee and left for his next lesson.

Jean was already waiting for him outside their class and greeted him with three soft kisses.

“Here is my boy.” Jean smiled and hugged him.

“Uh, Jean?” Marco was caught off guard.

“Are you ok? How did it go?”

Jean buried his face in Marco’s embrace and sighed.

“I think it went well. I dunno. It seemed too easy, Marco. Way too easy.” He confessed.

“That’s a good sign, isn’t it?” he kissed his hair.

“Probably…” Jean let go of Marco and they entered the class as Jean started telling him about his day.

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Jean entered Professor Smith’s classroom while still wearing his headphones. He used music to help him unwind and he really needed that right now.

He picked a desk to sit and he took his stuff out of his backpack while humming along to the song he happened to listen to at the moment.

He still had ten minutes left until Mr. Smith would arrive and debated whether it would be helpful to take one last peak on his notes.

Finally, he decided against it and put them away along with his headphones. The class was now almost full and Jean’s leg began bumping up and down.
“You really are the best. Don’t worry about it.” Marco had texted him and this made Jean smile. He had this. He really did.

“Good morning class.” A booming voice echoed and everyone fell silent.

“It is the first time I see so many people willing to take this test. I must say I am honored. Now, let’s begin. I am going to answer questions as far as they are not giving away any answers and let me say these questions are really limited.” The professor explained and Jean fiddled with his pen.

He began spreading the sheets and when Jean got his, he raised an eyebrow. These questions were far too easy.

He looked around and tried to see the others’ reactions but they were already buried in their papers.

“Well, it doesn’t matter.” Jean thought and began writing.

He finished really early and made sure to double check his answers and to reread the question in order to be certain this was indeed the test. Then he decided that there wasn’t anything else he could but to turn his paper in. He packed his stuff as quietly as he could and moved towards his professor.

“Done already?” he whispered and Jean raised his shoulders.

Steel blue eyes scanned his paper and Jean tried to figure anything out but the man’s poker face was strong so he walked towards the exit.

Jean checked the time and realized that he had time to meet Marco before their shared class. As he put on his headphones, he decided to check the Garrison first and then the Library.

When the boy arrived at the café, he easily spotted Marco through the glass. Armin was sitting across him and they both seemed to enjoy their talk. Jean smiled proudly and decided to grab something to eat and let Marco have this conversation at ease.

He felt really happy. Marco was feeling guilty about the situation between him and Armin. Seeing them together talking and hanging out could mean that they resolved it.

Jean bought a sandwich and ate it quickly while walking across the campus. He hadn’t really eaten well this morning and plain coffee wasn’t good for his stomach nor his head.

He checked the time again as he threw the wrapper away and began walking back to his class.

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Now, he was sitting next to Marco doodling and writing down whatever seemed important from their lesson. Marco was really focused on the lesson but Jean could see that he was doing better. This made his heart flutter with joy.

The time passed rather quickly and soon the prof dismissed them. The asshole that had bothered them the previous time was sitting behind them and passed them quickly as they packed their things away.

Good. One less problem.

“So, I was thinking.” Jean began.
“Things are moving nice and this made me think of the future.”

“I thought you don’t like planning things out.” Marco chuckled.

“Normally, yeah. But, the test today made me wonder when…if we will find our place in the world, you know?” he sighed.

“Jean…We will. It is just too early to think about this kind of things.” Marco promised.

“You will pass your test and you will enter the intern group. I will get better and talk to Levi. We will be together and our friends and family will be with us as well. I have been overthinking in the last years of my life. Trust me, I know how easy it is to fall into this spiral but it is not worth it. You don’t know what the future holds. So sit back and enjoy the ride.” Marco kissed his half-opened mouth while smiling.

“When did you become so wise?” Jean chuckled while rubbing his neck.

“Funny choice of words. It is the second time I hear it today.” Marco lifted an eyebrow as he motioned Jean that he was ready to go.

“Oh, really? Who else did you enlighten?” Jean took his hand in his.

“Armin.” He replied with a smile.

“You reconciled?”

“Yes! We also talked for a bit. He is really smitten with Annie. It is nice seeing him happy.” Marco admitted.

“And it’s nice seeing you happy as well.” Jean added.

Marco’s phone vibrated in his pocket and reached out to get it.

“It’s Armin. He says that they are gathered to “the Basement” and we can join them if we want.

“Ok. What do you think?” Jean offered.

“Let’s go.” Marco smiled and his boyfriend nodded.

The bar was not far from campus and when the couple arrived, Eren, Mikasa, Armin, and Annie were already there.

“Long time no see.” Mikasa greeted them and got up to hug them both.

“How are you?” she asked Marco.

“I am really great.” He smiled and she smiled back, it was a rare and beautiful sight.

“I am glad you chose to come.” Armin said. Marco looked at the boy and then at his hand. He was holding Annie’s and she was tracing soft circles around his hand. He looked at him again with a knowing smile.

“Sasha and Connie are coming in a bit and knowing Reiner and Ymir they will eventually appear as well.” Eren let them know and stuffed his phone in his pocket.

Mikasa asked them about their lessons and then Eren asked Jean about an upcoming concert it was
really nice and calm until the mischief arrived.

“Hello!! We are here! I hope the party didn’t start before us.” Sasha ran towards their table.

“Woah, Sasha, be careful.” Annie stopped her before she fell on Marco.

“Thanks for that.” She winked at her.

“Where is your shorter half?” Eren asked as he looked around.

“Ah. He is greeting some new friends we made. They are from Japan and they are the fastest swimmers I have ever seen. It’s a shame that they are only here for another three months.” She explained and she waved goodbye at the two boys Connie was talking with.

Connie soon joined them and they caught up while laughing and giggling.

“Reiner! My boy!” Connie suddenly shouted and he got up, almost knocking their drinks in the process.

“Howdy, fellow kids.” Reiner greeted them and Bertl shortly followed.

Reiner talked about a big project on his School and Bertl chatted with Annie about a new paint he had bought.

“It is really nice being with you guys.” Reiner admitted. “I feel like knowing you since forever.”

“I feel the same.” Sasha raised her glass as if she was making a toast while the others shook their heads.

“I quit my job.” Connie changed the subject. Everyone turned to look at him. “It is unfair…” he continued.

“Sasha gets to eat all the pizza whenever she wants.” He feigned the drama in his voice.

“Imagine this. Being in the heaven of pizza and pizza rolls. I cannot take this injustice anymore.” He bowed his head.

“So now we both will be together!” he finished and Sasha gasped.

“Really?” her eyes sparkled.

“Yup. I just got a text from your boss saying it is fine as long we don’t eat too much and we keep it quiet for the clients.” He smirked and Sasha drowned him in kisses.

“You know the truth can be a weapon
To fight this world of ill intentions”

Eren’s phone rang and he cursed after seeing the caller’s ID.

“Dad.” Eren replied and everyone stopped talking. They knew that Eren was struggling with his father and with the attitude towards his brother. His mother tried to keep the family together with the best she could but their temper didn’t help her efforts.

“Yeah... No, I don’t... How the fuck should I know? It’s not like he ever talks to me about that shit... I dunno, two weeks?...Fine.” he hung up and got up.
“I need to leave.” He growled under his breath and Mikasa understood as she gathered their things and joined him.

“I am sorry, guys. We will make it up to you another time. I promise.” She offered a smile but it was not that believable as her first one.

The group was silently sipping their drinks after they left until Reiner offered to go to another bar where one of his friends worked in.’

“Porco is a good kid. Even if he is a bit bitchy like Eren.” He promised.

“Nah. We are good, Rei.” Marco replied and Jean nodded. “We are going back to relax a bit. It’s been a long day.”

Reiner offered them a raised eyebrow and pursed lips.

“Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do.” He patted Jean’s back.

“Rei, I believe this leaves them with a kinda big list of what they can do.” Bertl chuckled and Reiner blushed while he eyed Bertl affectionately.

“That is true.” He admitted and kissed him deeply.

Marco and Jean found their chance to leave and waved the others ‘goodbye’.

“A rather eventful day today.” Jean admitted as they walked back to their dorm.

“I agree.”

“But, now let’s do something only for us.” Jean stopped walking and turned towards Marco.

He seemed puzzled as Jean took out his phone and put on the song Marco had been humming to all day.

*I’ve been hearing symphonies
Before all I heard was silence
A rhapsody for you and me
And every melody is timeless

“I heard you humming this morning and I couldn’t stop listening to it all day.” Jean admitted as he put his phone back into his pockets.

“Now. Let’s dance.” He took Marco’s hands in his and began swaying along the rhythm.

*Life was stringing me along
Then you came and you cut me loose
Was solo singing on my own
Now I can’t find the key without you

Marco giggled and followed Jean’s lead.

They slow danced in the empty park and time seemed to stop.

Jean was touching Marco’s back and he leaned in to rest upon his chest. Marco hummed along and rested his cheek on his love’s head. He felt at peace.
He felt hope.

Chapter End Notes

The music of this chapter: Eren's ringtone is "Legendary", by Welshly Arms and the song the boys dance to is "Symphony", by Clean Bandit ft. Zara Larsson (the acoustic version).

Much love to @YunoGasai for betaing and supporting this fic <3
Find me on Tumblr: skelene.tumblr.com
Till next time!!
Give In To Me

Chapter Summary

Thanksgiving is time spent with family...

Chapter Notes

The new chapter is on!!
I really recommend listening to "Chalk Outline" in the beginning and "Give In To Me" by Three Days Grace, as you reach to the end of this chapter.
Pretty important chapter as it's what Marco needed in order to push forward from now on

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Marco woke up from the screams that echoed from Jean’s alarm, he loved the boy but waking up to Bullet for My Valentine was really…something else.

“Jean!” he murmured and the boy jolted up to turn the alarm off.

“I was certain that I changed the song…Sorry about that.” Jean apologized, his voice still raspy from sleep.

“’S fine.” Marco yawned and spread his arms for Jean to settle in. The boy almost jumped right in and hugged Marco tight while he was burying his face in Marco’s chest.

“Jeeaan, stop!” Marco giggled as Jean rubbed his nose on his chest. “It tickles!’

Jean lifted his head and faced Marco, a sly smile was spread on his lips and then he attacked the boy’s lips with soft kisses.

“I am going to miss you sooooo much.” Jean stopped kissing Marco and looked into his eyes.

“Me too. But it is only for a week…and we also have Skype, Snapchat and many more.” He reassured him and planted a kiss on Jean’s forehead.

Jean nodded and unwrapped himself from Marco, allowing the boy to begin preparing his stuff for his trip to Jinae.

“I am going to take a quick shower while you prepare, so take as much time as you need.” Jean let Marco know. He only hummed in agreement as he was searching for his favorite shirt around the room.

He was a bit nervous to return to Jinae. He really wanted to mend things up with his family, but he didn’t know how his family would take the things he would reveal. Jean. His mental state. Wanting to seek professional help for this. It was sure a lot and knowing how his mother had reacted to his previous attempts…he felt a bit disheartened.
But, it was not only his mother. Arthur and Jerome would also be there. They would understand. Right?

“Ready, love?” Jean disrupted him from his thoughts.

Marco glanced back to his things and he saw he had packed everything up while he was having these thoughts.

“Huh. Seems like it.” He replied and Jean smiled at him.

“How is your family? Will Arthur come as well?” he asked.

“They are good. At least the last time we spoke. Yeah, he will. Jerome, too. I think it’s been two years since we were all together for Thanksgiving.” A small smile formed in Marco’s lips as well.

“This is great! Tell Arthur that he still owes me a bubblegum slurpie.” Jean joked and Marco chuckled.

The boy noticed how Marco was a bit out of it since they woke up but instead of addressing the fact he decided to cheer him up. He did not want to add even more pressure on him.

“Where will you spent Thanksgiving?” Marco asked.

“Welp, my dad lives super close so he will join us for dinner. I think Ali said they might introduce us to their new partners but I still think it is kinda early for that. I dunno if I am ready for this kind of interaction.” He admitted as he packed his clothes and zipped his bag.

“We, both, are going to need a bit more courage as it seems.” Marco smiled sadly and Jean nodded a bit worried.

“We are going to make it though. We still have each other.” He reminded him and Marco kissed him.

“Yes. Yes, we do.”

“Do you want me to accompany you to the train station?” Jean grabbed his bag and looked at Marco.

“No, it is fine. I am a big boy, and after all, it isn’t on your way.” He winked at him as he wore his jacket.

“It doesn’t matter. If you want me there, I will come.”

“Thank you, baby. But, it is fine. Really.” Marco smiled and Jean knew he was telling the truth.

“Ok, then. Shall we?” Jean motioned towards the door and Marco began walking towards it.

“Why the hell are you taking the 6 a.m. train, though?” Jean asked when they got outside. “It is still goddamned pitch black.”

“I just want to be there asap. I missed Aimée so much! I want to surprise her.”

Jean chuckled with how happy Marco looked about reuniting with his little sister. He would miss his smile so much.

“Give her a million tickles from me.”
“Oh! Oh, I will!” he smiled even wider.

Marco’s bus arrived earlier so they parted with a tight hug and soft pecks.

The boy entered the bus and found an empty seat. He sat down and plugged his headphones on his phone. He searched a bit in his playlist and he finally settled with a song.

_She always takes it with a heart of stone_
_Cause all she does is throw it back at me_
_I’ve spent a lifetime looking for someone_

Marco eased on his seat and enjoyed the drive to the train station. He loved traveling at hours like this. It was so peaceful. Rarely someone was around and he would enjoy his music while thinking about anything at all.

Jean found it weird and a bit unnerving. The loneliness scared him. But, to Marco, it was like home.

He finally arrived at the station and walked towards his wagon. He had done this trip many times and it was like routine to him. They lived in Trost but they always returned to Jinae for the holidays.

His parents loved the salty sea breeze and the rustic air of Jinae.

It was really as if you were in another time when everything was easier and you could breathe fresh air.

Marco moved towards his sit and settled. He resumed listening to his music and the train started a few minutes later.

As the train covered kilometer after kilometer a familiar sensation flooded his body. Anxiety. He knew that with every minute that passed he was closer to Jinae. Closer to confrontation. Closer to rejection.

He knew that things would not be ok. He could feel it.

But, it was something he had to do.

He needed to tell them about Jean. About the love and acceptance he had brought in his life. How he had found a home into his eyes and shelter in his arms.

How his life changed for the better ever since they were a couple. How he had never imagined being loved this much by someone.

For sure they were best friends all these years but this…being one…it was unimaginable until he really lived it.

He needed to tell them how he helped him with his depression or whatever this was. Because, yes, Marco was not ok. Either they wanted to accept it or not, he was not ok. He needed help as well. He was fighting this thing all alone and while living in denial.

Their denial and his as well had cost him so many things throughout the years and it almost cost him his life.

Twice.
He could get the help he needed either they accepted this or not. He could begin working if they decided to cut his allowance in order not to let him reach out to someone.

He was determined to get better and nothing could stop him.

He knew that the only thing he would regret is leaving his siblings behind. He had to find a way to let them know that he was not mad at them.

But, perhaps…Perhaps, they already knew. He glanced at the picture Aimée sent to him the previous night.

It was her, smiling widely while holding a drawing of hers. She had drawn Marco and herself eating ice-cream on their balcony.

Her teacher assigned them this drawing as homework, telling them to draw their most treasured memory.

Her drawing was in the five best and she was the proudest Marco had ever seen her being.

No.

He would not lose his siblings.

Marco surprised himself sometimes.

And this was certainly one of these times.

He could see how much he had matured from the beginning of this school year to now. He was much more determined. Not the shell of himself anymore. He was truly doing better.

A small smile formed in Marco’s lips as he softly drifted into sleep.

The train came to a halt and Marco jumped awake.

A look from his window and he already knew he had arrived.

He stretched and grabbed his things. Mom and dad were probably waiting for him outside the station, ready to drive him home.

Marco got out of his wagon and looked at his phone.

“Did you arrive?” Jean had sent him a text message a few minutes ago.

“Just.” He texted back.

“Have fun. Love you!”

“Love you, too.”

“Marco!” His mother’s voice brought him back to Jinae.

“Hi, mom!” Marco spotted her and approached his parents.

“How was your trip?” his dad asked as Marco hugged them.

“I fell asleep to the most of it. So, it was really relaxing.” He joked and his dad chuckled.
“Shall we?” his mom ruffled his hair and Marco nodded with a smile.

The ride home was filled with light conversation about how Aimée was doing at school and how beautiful Arthur’s fiancée was. Her name was Irene and she was a vet. Arthur met her when his puppy was a bit sick and they have been inseparable ever since.

Marco already knew all of these but he liked how his mother was so excited about Arthur getting married and about how his father seemed so content seeing her like this.

When they finally arrived at home, Marco noticed Jerome’s car was already parked outside.

Marco grabbed his bag and followed his mother to their home while his father locked their garage.

“Marco!!” Aimée’s cheery voice echoed as the door opened.

“Hey, little one!” Marco greeted her as she hugged him tightly.

“I missed you so much!” she admitted and Marco gave her a soft kiss on the top of her head.

“Me too, Aims. Me too.”

“Marco! You are here!” Jerome appeared, holding Aimée’s favorite breakfast and a coffee mug.

“Hi, Jerry.” Marco smiled and Jerome frowned and stuck his tongue out. “Jerry.” He muttered and Marco chuckled.

“So how’s the college life been treating you?” Jerome placed his mug and the plate on the coffee table and helped Marco with his stuff.

“It is nice. Lots of stuff happened and I certainly met a lot of people.” Marco replied as he thought back to his new friends.

“Oh!! I’d love to hear everything about it!” he took a sip from his coffee and a sly smile spread on this face.

“Did you meet someone interesting as well?” he winked at Marco.

“Not exactly how you mean it but yeah.” Marco smirked and sat down next to Jerome and Aimée.

“What is her name?” Jerome asked.

“Tsk, tsk. Leave that for dinner, boys. Now, Aimée will you show Marco your drawings and your essays?” his mother interrupted them and Marco just shrugged back at Jerome who shook his head with a chuckle.

The morning passed easily and Marco really felt at ease and happy to be back.

Arthur and Irene arrived around five and they all gathered in the living room.

Arthur was telling them about his job while Irene and Marco were helping his mom to set the table.

Marco really liked her. She was so…herself. She was the type of person that would be the first to dance when a song she loved was playing. She would not hesitate to speak her mind and when she was smiling you could really see how true was the happiness she was feeling.
Marco was really happy about Arthur. She was really unique.

“Dinner is ready!” his mom announced and the rest of the family arrived in the dining room.

Everyone sat down and his mom joined them at last. Everything smelled so deliciously that Marco almost forgot the knot in his stomach.

The sound of forks and knives and his family talking snapped him out of his thoughts. “So, Marco…what is her name?” Jerome returned to his previous question as he looked at Marco from the rim of his wine glass.

“Uhm…yeah. It’s Jean.” He stuffed his mouth with some salad.

Jerome choked and then coughed. “Wait!! You mean your best friend?” he managed and that’s when Marco noticed that everyone was looking at him.

Marco shrugged and nodded as he avoided eye contact with everyone.

“Oh my!” he heard his mother muttering.

“See? I told you they would be together by Christmas break!” Jerome gulped down some more wine.

“What?” Marco was now the one to stop eating and he looked at everyone.

“You knew?”

“Marco…” his dad began.

“We didn’t know-know. But, Jean was and is the only person that you talk about. And likewise, this boy loves you as much. It was evident that it was more than a friendship. The look in your eyes…” His mom confessed and Marco inhaled sharply.

“I think we knew before you two even thought about this possibility.” Jerome winked and Marco felt…relaxed.

They accepted him being in love with Jean. Being with Jean.

They could accept him having mental health issues, right?

“Uh, there is something else I want to say.” Marco took advantage of the rush he was feeling and put his fork down to his plate.

Again everyone was looking at him. But, now he had more courage than before.

“I am attending a course at college about mental health issues and I am almost certain that I have depression, probably seasonal, but yeah…Uhm, anxiety also.” Marco paused and tried to understand how everyone was feeling and what they were thinking after his revelation.

“Mom, I know we have talked about this in the past. But, I am really not faking it nor over-reacting. I really struggle. And I need help. From a professional.” He stopped again and inhaled.

“No.”

“What?” Marco looked at his mom.
“Marco, no. Not this again. We are having such a great time and you still insist on this nonsense. Love, that is not how depression is. You get a bit sad, we all do. There is no person who is 24/7 happy and cheery. You just tend to overthink your emotions and you live in your head. I thought being with Jean would change that but it seems that I hoped too much.” Her tone revealed her disappointment.

“You knew about me and Jean?”

“Yes. He called home one evening and he wanted to talk to me. I was so worried that you were hurt or worse but he told me about this. About you panicking and stressing out. You scare the boy, you know. He doesn’t deserve this kind of anxiety, Marco. Come on, get it together. You are a perfectly functioning human being. Why do you insist on this, I don’t know. You are lucky enough to find love and you really are willing to scare him away with this drama?”

Marco could not breathe. He was underwater. He was drowning.

Every word was one more stone tied around his ankles, driving him deeper into the ocean of his thoughts and anxiety.

He felt tears streaming down his face but he was frozen. It was like he was witnessing the scene unfold in the TV. He couldn’t feel a thing but pain.

“Marco.”

Someone was calling his name.

“Marco.”

It was Arthur.

“Marco!”

“I have issues!” Marco got up from his seat, his chair falling behind him.

“I have problems and I am goddamn tired of fighting them alone. And exactly because I have Jean I want to get better. He deserves me in the best way I can be. He deserves to be happy and in order to give happiness to him, I need help. I need to sort things out and to learn how to fight this effectively.” He shouted and he regretted seeing Aimée looking at him with tears in her eyes, but he needed to do this.

“I am going to get the help I need. With or without your acceptance. It makes no difference. It was foolish of me thinking you could ever accept it.” He left the dining room

“Yes, it was.” The response hit him and he rushed in his room.

He smacked the door behind him and collapsed on the floor.

He let an empty scream and he began crying.

He could not let his mother’s words get into him.

He couldn’t.

He was getting better.

Better.
Jean.
Jean deserved better.
Better than a battered heart and a sick mind.
Was he faking it?
Marco felt like suffocating and he raised his head towards the ceiling trying to find his breath again.
Raspy and pained, his breathing was the only thing that echoed in the room.
He felt so alone.
So, so alone.
Coming here was a bad idea. He should have stayed in the dorms.
He wouldn't have collapsed like that.
He wouldn't have ruined all the progress he had made by crumbling into this ugly mess of a person.
Marco lowered his head again and rested it on the floor.
He closed his eyes.
The pain would last forever.
Marco woke up from the tapping on his window.
His tears had dried on his cheeks and he felt dehydrated after crying this much.
The tapping continued and Marco got up and approached the window.
Jean?
Jean!
What was he doing there?
Marco stood there, looking at the boy he loved the most tapping his window at…
He searched for a clock.
1 a.m.
What the fuck?
Marco opened the window violently.
“What the hell are you doing here at this hour, Jean? Do you have a death wish? Don’t you know how dangerous it is?” Marco’s throat was still sore, giving him a husky voice.
Jean seemed unaffected by his scolding and slipped in Marco’s room with ease.
“I came for you.” He simply said but the affection was so evident in his voice that Marco’s heart
skipped a beat.

“Jean.” His voice trembled as his lips did the same.

“Shh…love.” Jean hugged him and kissed his shoulder.

“How?” he whispered.

“Aimée.” Was all that he said and Marco began crying again.

“I am poison, Jean.”

“I will rot you. I will…You deserve so much more than a mess like me.”

“Hey. Hey! I am not going to let you talk about yourself like that. Ok?” Jean sounded angry as he took Marco’s face in his hands, making him face him.

Marco stopped crying and looked at Jean.

“But, I…” he began.

“Listen, Marco. Have you ever tried boxing?” Jean caught him off-guard with his question.

“No.” Marco admitted, he sounded so vulnerable, his voice like a little kid’s.

“Alright. Lemme tell you something, ok? I have been in a couple of fights and I have been hit a million times. When you get hit, you are in the bottom. That is how it feels. Like you are at the bottom of the deepest lake. And you get hit, more and more. And you panic and you freeze and you do nothing. You are really letting the water shallow you down.” Jean sighed.

“And bruises star to form and blood starts to gush out.” Marco’s eyes never leaving his.

“So your brain needs to rewire and to restart its thinking. You have to realize that the only way to go is up. Up, even if it is just a meter up. Even if it is just your eyes that look up. You still need to go up.” He took his hands in his.

“And then it happens. You have had enough of beating. Enough of pain and bruising. You react…you don’t throw a punch or a kick, no. The first thing you do is to defend yourself. You block the punches. You avoid the kicks. You regain some strength, enough to stand up on your feet.” Jean tightened his grip around Marco’s hands and looked even deeper in his lover’s eyes.

“And then…en guard. You position your pained body and you place your wrapped fists in front of your face. You frown and you inhale.”

“And then…you punch!”

Marco gasped and Jean took the chance to kiss him.

Marco quickly kissed him back and grabbed his soft hair, pulling them gently.

Jean groaned and Marco pulled away.

“We need to be quiet.” He warned and Jean rolled his eyes.

“Under one condition.” He lifted his eyebrow.

“You will never talk about yourself like that, ever again. I am by your side, Marco. I will never
fucking leave. Understood? There is no better for me than you.” He cupped Marco’s face with his hand and placed a soft kiss on his lips.

A tear escaped Marco’s eye and rolled down his cheek as he nodded.

“I am sorry,”

“You are not the one that should be sorry, love.”

“I love you.” Marco placed his forehead on Jean’s.

“I love you, too.” Jean smirked.

“So, will you be a quiet boy?” Marco smirked back.

“Ohhh! I dunno, do you accept my condition?” Jean wrapped his arms around Marco’s neck.

“Most definitely.” Marco kissed him.

Jean opened his mouth and let Marco in. It was going to be difficult to stay silent if he continued like this, but he was up for the challenge.

Marco moved on Jean’s neck sucking and biting it softly, he knew how weak Jean was about neck kisses. It seemed that the challenge would be even greater than he initially thought. But, so was everything with Marco.

He didn’t think he could love someone so much, yet here he was. He didn’t think he could be in such pain about someone, but his heart bled when Marco was down like that.

And that was another challenge he undertook. Making Marco love himself. Making him see how lovely he goddamn was.

Jean gasped as Marco freed him from his shirt and began sucking one of his nipples.

“You are not going to make this easy, are you?” Jean whispered and gasped.

Marco’s hearty laugh was the only response he received.

Jean took Marco’s shirt off and lowered his body to his bed.

“It is not fair. Being the only one doing the teasing.” Jean kissed Marco’s ribs and the boy grabbed Jean’s hair with a gasp.

“You reacting like this just by me kissing your body makes me wonder how you will react when I’ll have you in my mouth.”

Marco shivered when Jean muttered these words and he could feel his erection growing as it was painfully restrained from his boxers.

Jean took off Marco’s pants and then his.

Marco found the chance to hug Jean from behind while he was taking off his pants and he quickly placed his hand on Jean’s erection.

Jean groaned softly, wishing the irritating fabric that separated his dick from Marco’s hand could just vanish. Luckily for him, Marco didn’t tease him anymore and slid his hand in his boxers.
“Fuck.” Jean bit his bottom lip as Marco grabbed his dick and rubbed it tenderly.

“We will.” Marco promised and finally removed Jean’s boxers, taking his erection fully in his hands and while rubbing his crotch on Jean’s ass.

“Now.” Jean whispered, sounding desperate.

Marco only bit his neck and Jean let a soft growl.

“Shhh.” Marco teased as he began rubbing Jean’s cock up and down, his pace slow but steady.

Jean could feel Marco’s cock twitching behind him and knew he had to act now.

He began rubbing his ass on Marco’s erection and slowly Marco loosened his grip on his cock, soft moans already escaping his mouth.

Jean turned around, his hand replacing his ass as he continued to rub Marco’s crotch.

He sucked and bit Marco’s nipple and Marco tugged his hair again.

Slowly Jean began lowering himself towards Marco’s boxers and with a swift movement, he lowered them to his ankles.

Marco’s length sprung out and Jean was quick to take him in.

“Fuck, Jean.” Marco felt his knees giving in.

Jean released him and let Marco sit on the bed. “You are going to wish you could scream.” He promised and licked a stripe on Marco’s dick.

The boy could see he truly meant these words and his cock twitched as Jean’s tongue swirled around his head.

He grabbed Jean’s hair in his hand as Jean took him in and began bobbing his head up and down.

Marco had to use all of his willpower not to cry his name out and not to thrust hard.

Jean grabbed his ass with his free hand, bringing him impossibly closer. Marco was already seeing white as Jean used his fingers to play with his balls, his head never stopping coming up and down, taking more and more of him each time.

Marco could not control himself and thrust hard as he gasped.

Jean seemed unaffected and placed his fingers on the inside of Marco’s thighs, drawing circles as he hummed on Marco’s dick.

He really couldn’t hold back anymore. He could feel the knot on his stomach getting tighter and his cock getting harder.

“Jean, I am going…”

But he continued sucking him, using his tongue to tease his tip each time he went up.

Marco thrust again and again and Jean planted his fingers on Marco’s buttocks, grabbing him closer.
Marco thrust one last time before he finally met his release.

Jean gulped down and removed Marco from his mouth, and began trailing kisses from his crotch towards his stomach.

He couldn’t feel anything else but complete euphoria.

“Fuck, Jean.” He finally panted and the other chuckled.

“That is the point.” He replied.

“Oh, trust me. I know.” Marco’s finger approached Jean’s entrance and Jean suddenly dropped his smirk.

Marco reached to his drawer with his other hand and took out his lube and condoms, as he teased Jean.

“Already round two?” Jean joked when he saw the bottle.

“Baby, we are just getting started.” Marco left Jean’s body to add some lube on his fingers.

The boy shivered and Marco lifted him up to join him on his bed.

They cuddled, facing each other while Marco fingered Jean with his right hand and rubbed his cock with his left.

Jean was panting and small tears of pleasure were forming in his eyes.

Marco loved stimulating him this much and attacked his neck with his mouth.

Jean left a groan and then cursed.

“Be quiet for me baby. I need to fuck you just right.”

Jean whined as he heard Marco’s words and felt Marco’s length getting hard again.

“Please.” Jean panted as Marco dug his finger deeper in Jean’s ass.

“I need you inside me.” He whispered. “Marco.” He placed his hands on Marco’s chest and kissed the other deeply as he added a second finger.

“You are almost ready, baby.” Marco rubbed Jean’s dick again and Jean thrust in Marco’s hand, desperately searching for some kind of release.

Marco added a third finger in Jean and increased his pace.

“Marco. Harder!” Jean commanded and he complied, as Jean’s thrusts and his pace became one.

“Marco.” Was all he could whisper as he came, his pleasure showering him in waves and his heart beating faster than ever.

He didn’t realize that Marco was already curling his fingers inside of him until he placed a soft kiss on his lips.

“You are ready if you still want this, babe.”

“Fuck. Fuck, yes.” Marco chuckled and Jean got on his fours.
Marco placed a condom and approached Jean. He added some lube and teased his entrance, making Jean inhale sharply in anticipation.

Marco slowly began entering him while letting Jean adjust to his size.

“Marco, if you go any slower I will fucking die.” Jean whisper-shouted.

Marco laughed and entered him completely, earning a moan from Jean. Marco smiled and began moving while watching Jean’s body reacting to his lovemaking, his muscles clenching and unclenching, his back arching and he could hear the soft gasps and the curses that escaped Jean’s lips.

He began moving faster and Jean groaned again, softly but reassuringly to Marco.

“Marco, harder.” He begged and Marco bent down to bite his shoulder to avoid growling as he picked up his pace and thrust deeper with every move.

He began seeing stars as Marco kept going while his hands explored Jean’s body. The boy thought his knees would give out but he felt Marco was close so he gathered his strength resisting the urge to come undone for a little longer.

Marco thrust hard and Jean cursed. “Marco.” And just like that, he came.


Finally, his legs gave out and Jean’s face met Marco’s pillow. Marco removed himself from Jean and collapsed on the top of him.

Both of them were panting, speechless and blissful.

After some minutes, Marco moved to Jean’s side and placed a soft kiss on his lips. He removed and tossed the condom and covered Jean up.

“Goodnight, Jean.” He whispered.

“Goodnight, Marco.”

“Thank you for coming tonight.”

“Everything for you, love.” Jean ruffled up his hair and they fell asleep in each other’s arms.

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The November’s soft sunlight hit Marco’s eyes as he woke up.

Jean was by his side, snoring softly. Marco smiled and placed a kiss on Jean’s knuckles.

He got up and grabbed a new pair of boxers from his drawer and wore his sweatpants. The boy looked at his boyfriend’s sleeping form and dread washed over him.

He left the room and headed to the bathroom.

He was clinging too much to Jean to recover and he feared he would take him down too.

What if they broke up one day? Marco couldn’t handle it. He had to live his life with Jean and not on Jean’s back.
He splashed some water on his face and exited the room.

“Marco.” A voice called him before he could return to his room.

He turned around to see Arthur standing in the hallway, a coffee mug in his hand and a weary smile on his lips.

“Marco, can we talk a bit?”

Marco just shrugged and followed his brother to the living room. There was another mug resting on the coffee table, Marco’s. Arthur was waiting for him.

“Marco, there are some things I would like to tell you.” Arthur began.

“Yesterday…I am sorry you feel this way. But, I am even more sorry that you had to face this alone all these years. Mom didn’t let us know and I cannot even imagine how painful it was for you.” Marco grabbed his mug and took a sip of coffee.

“Did you know Irene is bipolar?” Arthur continued and Marco glued his eyes on him.

He opened and closed his mouth, letting Arthur continue.

“She…she is the best person I know and she has been there for me these years, and…she is bipolar. You see her mental state does not determine her value. She is doing therapy and she takes some pills but that does not matter. And it shouldn’t matter. She is the person I love and she loves me as well. That is enough. Mom deprived you of getting help but you can always count on me and Irene or Jerome for that. Irene could talk to her therapist and ask her to recommend one for you.” He reassured him and rubbed his shoulder.

“Jean. It is great having him. Having someone to understand you at such a profound level. He even came for you last night.”

Marco felt his cheeks redden and tried to hide behind his mug.

“Did we wake you?” he asked and sipped some more of his coffee.

“No, not at all. We were talking with Irene when I heard his voice last night. Did you tal-” Arthur stopped in realization.

“Marco!” he looked shocked and laughed.

Marco tried to hide even more but a mug is not a good hiding spot.

“You, sneaky one! Good for you!” Arthur punched lightly Marco’s shoulder as Marco rolled his eyes.

Sweet silence comforted them for a while.

“Go to your boy, now. Cuddle in and I will prepare some breakfast.”

Marco thanked him with a hug and returned to his room.

Jean stirred as Marco took him in his arms but quickly returned to his sleep.

He was not alone. He could understand that now. Perhaps he was never even estranged with his siblings.
It was all in his head.

But now, the clouds were dispersing and the sun shone down on him.

Marco closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

All my love to @YunoGasai98 for beta-ing and encouraging me to continue this fic. I really like how it is evolving, so thank you for that.
Lots of love to everyone who helped me through my thoughts and to everyone who believed in me when I didn't.
A small step at a time it is enough and it doesn't have to be for you, you can make that step for the ones you love or for the ones that you admire.
Please don't hesitate to contact me about anything at all.
Tumblr: skelene
Till next month!!
Beautiful People, Beautiful Problems

Chapter Summary

Confrontation is the beginning of a big change...
Make a step and the world will follow...
Just smile, it will be ok...
I promise!

Chapter Notes

Here is it!! New chapter for more feels!
This one is quite music themed as well.
Enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Marco’s eyes fluttered open as a familiar smell touched his nostrils. His favorite food, chicken alfredo, for sure.

He closed his eyes again and wrapped his arms a bit tighter around Jean who was lying sleeping on his chest. The freckled boy rocked his boyfriend gently and placed a kiss on his hair.

“I am forever thankful for you.” He whispered and rocked him side to side once more.

The boy closed his eyes again and a small tear rolled down his left cheek but a smile took form in his lips.

“Wake up, babe.” Marco rocked Jean once more and the boy groaned softly.

“I don’t wanna.” He huffed. “Let’s stay like this forever.”

“I would love that, Jean. But, there is chicken alfredo waiting for us downstairs so I’ll have to bail this time.” He chuckled as Jean’s now-fully-opened eyes met his.

“Oh! It’s been so long since I ate a nice warm meal from your mom!”

“I know, babe. Wanna have a shower and then join the others downstairs?” Marco ruffled Jean’s hair as he scrunched his nose.

“Separately, though. I don’t want to give Aimée a sight she won’t forget.” He added and Jean’s cheeks turned to a soft pink.

"Uhm, yeah. Good thinking. Definitely. Ok, you go ahead. I am going to find some clothes to wear. Hope you don’t mind me borrowing a t-shirt and a pair of boxers from you.” The blushing boy said as he stood up, already missing Marco’s warmth.

“No, I don’t mind at all. You might want to look at the second drawer for those.” He pointed to the
other side of the room and Jean nodded.

Marco also got up, wore his pant and grabbed the clothes he wore the night before.

“I will be back in 10.” He promised with a kiss.

As he closed the door behind him, Marco could now hear the voices coming from downstairs. His family was probably gathered in the living room, chatting or playing chess. He could hear his mother’s voice scolding his father because he stole another slice from the charcuterie plate and his fake evil laugh as he probably stuffed the slice in his mouth.

He could hear Aimée singing a song and Irene humming the tune along. He could hear Arthur protesting to Jerome that he was cheating in their game.

Marco felt a pang in his chest. It was like his family existed without him. Perhaps….

“Did Marco wake up?” his dad asked.

“No, I don’t think he did.” Jerome replied.

“He woke up earlier and we talked a bit, but I sent him back to bed.” Arthur’s voice was heard.

“Sweetheart, you need to talk with him.” His dad said.

“I…I will.” His mom replied but Marco could feel it wasn’t promising.

Nevertheless, the boy sighed and entered the bathroom.

Marco took a quick shower and returned to Jean.

“You will have lunch with us, right?”

“Uhm, won’t it be uncomfortable? I don’t want to make things worse.” Jean scratched the back of his neck and looked back at Marco.

“No, Jean. Not at all. You are my boyfriend. You are the one I love. I wasn’t feeling well yesterday and you came to see me. It is wonderful what you did, why hide it?” Marco approached Jean and kissed his lips softly.

“Do your parents know you came to see me?”

“I told them, yes. I am going to text them and let them know I am staying for lunch.” He typed quickly on his phone and kissed Marco’s cheek.

“See ya.” He smacked Marco’s butt and chuckled.

The door closed as Marco was giggling.

The boy decided to change his sheets as he waited for Jean in order to avoid thinking too much.

He had to talk to his mother. He had to let some things out of his chest. It was what he needed to do before moving on to the next step and seek professional help.

He would talk to her after Jean left. He had gotten all the courage and assurance that he needed, he could do this. They had to talk and not to yell for once.
“Ready!” Jean opened the door and Marco nodded, following him downstairs.

“Oh, hi Marco!” Irene greeted them as they entered the room and everyone turned to look at them.

“Jean?!”

“Oh, hi Mrs. Bodt.” Jean waved awkwardly.

“How…?"

“He came to see me last night.” Marco explained. “He is going to lunch with us, is that ok?”

“Ye-yes, of course.” Marco’s mom nodded and Jean smiled widely.

“So, you are the famous Jean.” Irene approached them and looked at Marco with eagerness, waiting for him to introduce them.

“Yes. This is Jean. My boyfriend.” Marco smiled and looked at Jean who was red but was also smiling.

“This is Irene, Arthur’s fiancée.”

The young woman smiled widely and hugged Jean tightly.

“I am so happy to meet you.” She confessed.

“Lunch is ready!” Aimée let them know and the three of them joined the rest of the family to the dinner table.

Everyone ate the food eagerly while chatting with Jean. Arthur and Jerome were really fond of the boy and they had to catch up for the time they hadn’t seen each other.

Marco looked at Jean and how wonderfully he felt like he belonged to his family. He was part of it, for sure. He smiled as he chewed a bit of chicken and his gaze met his mother’s. She smiled at him as she looked at Jean and then back at him.

At least she understood how happy and safe Jean made him feel.

And for that Marco smiled back at her.

The lunch soon finished and Marco stayed in the room to help his mother and Jerome with the dishes as Jean was abducted by Aimée and they were most likely scheming something together.

“Mom.” Marco said as he dried one dish with the kitchen towel.

“I-Can we talk when we are done with the dishes?” he said a bit too strongly than he wished.

“Yes, we can.” His mother’s reply was more like a sigh.

Jerome soon left the room as Arthur called him for another round of chess and Marco was found alone with his mother.

He felt terrified. She was one of the people he loved the most, but right now he felt it would be better if the earth would swallow him whole.

As he finished drying the last dish, he could feel a tight knot forming in his throat and his hands
shaking a bit.

He was panicking.

*It is ok, Marco.* He tried to reassure himself. *It is just talking. She is your mom. It is ok. You will be fine. You will be fine.*

And then his mother’s hand touched his and he almost dropped the plate he was holding.

“Marco.” His mother looked at him and he looked back at her terrified.

“Let’s go outside. Some fresh air might do you good, love.” She placed her hand on his back rubbing it softly. The only thing Marco could do was to nod and trust his feet to lead him outside.

He followed his mother as she sat down on their porch and let the gravity do its work as his knees buckled as he sat down next to her.

As he touched the wooden floor he let a deep sigh and his mother looked at him but he couldn’t find the strength to say anything yet.

So they both waited in silence while the soft breeze of early afternoon blew gently.

“Mom.” Marco began, his voice hoarse and raw and he could feel his eyes already watering.

“Before we talk…Before you speak, can you please just listen to me? I know you don’t believe the half of the things I say but…” he paused and tried to bring himself to look at her.

“I need you to listen to me.”

“Or else I don’t know if I will ever be able to find the strength to speak for these things again.” He felt the first tear escape and he hated how his mother looked at him.

She was so hurt.

“Mom.” This word felt like medicine in his lips. It tasted so bittersweet for a word for someone he loved so dearly.

“I am not okay, mom. I feel…I feel too much sorrow, I feel too much loneliness. I feel too much hurt. I feel too much.” His voice cracked and he fought back the sobs.

He could cry, yes, he allowed this to himself. But not sob. He had to keep it under control.

“There are times I feel like a black hole. Empty, full of nothingness and yet full of everything at the same time. I feel I am going to burst. My thoughts… They are terrifying and I cannot control them. They get the best of me and they lead me to dark places. I… I want to be here. At least that is what I think. But it gets so unbearable sometimes.” His mother was not looking at him anymore. Her gaze was fixed on their garden but he could tell she was listening. Her expression was sad and hurt and he could see her questioning herself and what she did to Marco to feel this way.

Perhaps, that was the reason for her denial all these years. She thought it was her fault, while Marco thought it was his.

“Sometimes it feels like a war is waging in my head and I worry that I won’t get out of it alive, mom.” The tears were now running freely down his cheeks.

“The world is so bright but I feel gray. I feel like I am stuck into an old silent film and no matter
how much I scream no one listens, no one cares.”

He heard his mother sigh but she didn’t say anything.

“You know I…” Marco felt regret instantly but he had to speak.

“If it wasn’t for Jean…”

“So we mean nothing to you?” she broke her silence.

“It is not like that, mom. And you know it. His timing was just right. You all mean the world to me.”

“Then I cannot understand you, Marco. How can we mean the world but you are so eager to leave it behind?” she demanded. Marco couldn’t tell if she was angry with him or with herself.

“I don’t anymore. Now, I am just unbearably sad. I doubt myself for everything. I don’t deserve neither you as my family nor Jean as my boyfriend, or at least that is how I feel.” He sighed and turned to look at his mom.

“I don’t know why. And it kills me. Because if I don’t know the source then how can I fight it even longer?”

“But, why fight something, Marco? Everybody gets sad. Just try not to think about it.” His mom tried.

“Mom, I am sad all the time. And I cannot just stop my thoughts because they are taking my shape and my voice and they are whispering to me my fears. And they make me feel so small, mom. So small.” He could not fight the sobs anymore.

“But, Marco. You can’t have it. You can’t be depressed.” She muttered in disbelief.

“Why?” he whispered-shouted as his voice broke.

“Because that is not how depression looks.”

“How does it look then, ma? Do I have to fit your stereotype in order to be allowed to suffer? Does what I describe to you have a name or am I just making everything up for attention?” he felt rage and hurt filling up his veins as his vision continued to blurry.

“Marco, you can’t…I didn’t…We raised you to be happy.” She tried to find the right words but to no avail.

“Mom, we are not robots. We feel things. I know and I appreciate how you and dad raised us, but this is something that my mind does. Not you, not dad. Me.”

“Baby, I didn’t want this.” She placed her hand on his and he covered it with his other hand.

“I know, ma. I know.”

“Please, let me get help.” He begged.

“Marco…are you sure?” she looked at his red and puffy eyes.

“Please…”
“Okay.” Merely a whisper but it worked like oxygen for Marco’s lungs.

“Thank you.” He smiled weakly, but a smile was a smile, no matter how small.

“Let’s go inside.” His mom took him by his hand and he let her take care of him.

She dried his tears with a handkerchief and looked him deeply in the eyes.

“You did your best, ma. It is not your fault. I promise.” He kissed her forehead and she hugged him tightly.

“Take good care of Jean. He loves you dearly. Do it for him if it helps.”

Marco nodded and returned the hug.

They joined the others in the living room and Jean looked at Marco with worry. Marco smiled in return and Jean’s expression softened.

“It is time for me to go, now.” Jean got up and without thinking, he approached Marco and placed a kiss on his lips.

Only then did he realize but Marco’s family was already cheering for them and Marco chuckled in return.

“Let’s go, babe. I will wait for the bus with you.”

Jean nodded and followed Marco as he waved to his family.

Just right after Jean closed the door behind him, he jumped before Marco “So, how did it go? You got puffy eyes. But, this could be good. You know happy tears. But, you don’t cry that much when you are happy. Or do you? Love, please tell me something cause I am losing my mind.”

Marco started laughing as Jean’s expression shifted to one of surprise.

“What?” Jean tried, but Marco only cupped his face with his warm hands and placed a soft, perfect kiss on Jean’s lips. The boy’s eyes fluttered in response and before he could give in, the kiss was over.

Jean opened his eyes with a soft whine and met Marco’s affectionate gaze.

“I love you.”

“Me too, Marco. I love you, too. But, is everything ok?”

“Yes. It is. Or at least it will be. My mom agreed to me seeing a therapist.” Marco smiled shyly.

Jean then jumped up and down and wrapped his arms around Marco, lifting him up and swirling him around. The freckled boy giggled so much and he would for sure never forget this moment in his life.

Even Marco’s mother who was watching them through the window of their home couldn’t keep her lips in a thin straight line. A soft smile formed on her face as she shook her head with Jean’s antics.

The bus soon arrived and the boys had to part but not before giving each other dozens of small kisses and promising to meet again on Monday.
Marco waved at Jean and waited for the bus to leave before returning inside.

His mother opened the door before he even knocked and he looked at her surprised. “You are both so lucky you have each other.” She caressed his cheek and went inside the living room.

Marco stood there for a bit, stunned by his mother’s words and her soft caress. Things were really changing after all. He closed the door and nodded to himself.

He really had done so much progress today and it was the only afternoon.

Marco decided to go to his room for a bit. He needed to make a phone call that he had postponed for far too long.

He quickly ascended the stairs and closed the door of his room as soon as he entered.

Marco searched for Levi’s book inside his back and he opened it on the last page. There it was. Levi’s number.

“At any case. At any hour.” Was written under it.

Marco inhaled deeply and began tapping the number on his phone.

The adrenaline and the progress he had done were fueling him and he didn’t have much time to think it over. He only realized what he was doing when a deep and unfamiliar voice was heard on the speaker.

“You have called Professor Levi Ackerman.”

“Uhm, yeah. Ughhh, hi?!” Marco gulped hard.

“Levi!” the voice demanded and soon enough a familiar huff was heard.

“Yes?” Levi’s voice demanded.

“H-hi. Professor Levi?” Marco gulped again.

“Uhm, Bodt, was it?” Levi replied.

“Mmh, yes sir.”

“What happened?” his voice had now a tone of worry.

“I was wondering sir if you could…uhm, if you can recommend me someone…a therapist, I mean.”

A long pause followed and Marco could hear Levi walking. After a door closed, Levi spoke again.

“Kid? Spill.”

Marco let out a sigh and sat down his bed. “I believe I have s.a.d or perhaps depression. I really cannot tell, but I think I could use some professional help. There are so many times I feel I cannot take it anymore and it really, really scares me. Because there are people I love and care about and I can’t-I don’t want to leave them behind. I am tired of fighting this alone.” Marco let it out all in one breath.

Levi inhaled and exhaled with a sigh.
“I…I am glad. Not about your mental health, kid. But, for reaching out. You know…”

Another pause.

“My mother…” He sighed and Marco understood.

“I am sorry, sir.” He could only whisper.

“Levi. Call me that.”

Marco nodded before remembering he was on the phone so he let out a hum of agreement as well.

“This book is for her. She…she was taken from me so early. Too early. I’d hate to lose someone else to this battle. And believe me, kid, each and every one of you brats means something to me.” He confessed.

“How did you know?” was all Marco could think about.

“Your eyes, kid. Eyes are the mirror of the soul, don’t they say that? There are students in this class who are there for them and others for people they love. I can tell them apart. Perhaps it is my experience, maybe my intuition. I really don’t know.” He admitted.

“I saw something in you. Something I can’t really explain. Sometimes people speak to you in ways other than words.”

“Now…of course, you can speak to me whenever and about whatever you want, but let me recommend you one friend of mine. She is a really great therapist and a kind person, too. You are going to like her, I am sure. I am going to give you her number and let her know that you will call her. Tomorrow, is that good?” The man asked and Marco agreed.

“Her name is Felicity. Heh, pretty fitting now that I think about it.” Levi chuckled and Marco smiled. Now his hope had a name.

“Thank you, Levi.”

“I thank you, Marco, for trusting me. Enjoy your time off.” Levi wished and Marco could feel the man smiling as he hung up.

The boy remained in his room for a little longer as he couldn’t take his eyes off the small paper with the array of numbers.

This randomly generated line of numbers seemed so fascinating to Marco. He smiled and put the paper in his notebook.

Tomorrow.

The boy left his room and joined his family downstairs.

The evening passed calmly and Marco could finally feel how much he had missed this. He found himself smiling so much. All that from a promise for a phone call.

He really couldn’t imagine how things would change when he would start his sessions.

One by one, his family left the living room to sleep and soon Marco was left only with Irene.

He was sipping his hot cocoa when she sat next to him and placed her head on his shoulder.
Marco stopped drinking and looked at Irene.

“Hi.” She greeted.

“Hi.”

“I am proud of you.” She confessed.

Marco’s eyes widened and turned his head even more towards her. “Why?”

Irene lifted her head from his shoulder and looked at him deeply. “It was not an easy task what you did. It took me much more time to talk to my parents about my state and even more to decide to visit a therapist.” She admitted.

“I am really proud of you, Marco. Because you deserve to be happy, you deserve to feel loved and wanted. You have Jean and you will have a therapist, too. You will see how much things are going to change for you. I promise.” She rested her head again on his shoulder.

“I am scared, Irene. About Jean. What if I am only putting a burden to him? What if I am becoming too attached to him? I am worried his light will fade out in order for mine to shine.”

“I know, Marco. It is very scary when you begin, but you will see that this won’t be the case. You are scared but inside of you, I believe you know you are not taking advantage of him. Nor he is taking advantage of you. Do you know what I saw today?”

Marco shook his head.

“I saw two boys, young and full of life. Two boys in love. Two boys so kind that the world should be jealous. You look at each other with so much adoration and so much respect. Marco, he is the one, you will see!” she promised and Marco chuckled.

“Do you know that Jean called one afternoon?” she asked.

“Here?” Marco was now curious. Why did Jean never mention it?

“Yes. Arthur and I were visiting and the phone rang. Your parents were helping Aimée with her homework at this time, so Arthur picked it up.”

“Jean explained to him what you are going through and hoped he could speak to your mother about it.”

“He really cares about you deeply and profoundly. I am really glad you have each others’ back no matter what. Like Arthur and me. Together through every weather.”

“I am glad Arthur has you.” The boy admitted.

“Me too. He is the best thing in my life.”

She took his hand and placed it on her belly.

“At least for now.” She looked up to meet his gaze and smiled softly as Marco’s eyes widened and his mouth opened.

“Irene! Oh my! I am-Oh my!”

Irene giggled and wrapped her arms around Marco.
“You see, Marco? Despite everything, love still prevails.” She got up and placed a kiss on his nose.

“I am so happy for you!” Marco also got up, left his mug and gave her a proper hug.

“And me for you, Marco! And me for you.”

“Let’s go to bed, now.” She placed her hand on Marco’s back and guided him upstairs.

“I am always here for you, Marco.” She promised.

“I am always here for you, too.” He replied.

The pair parted with a hug and a smile.

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The rest of the days passed in such a hazy and cozy way that Marco could really miss it.

He had called the therapist and he had booked a session for the following week.

Everything seemed peacefully ok.

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Monday arrived and Marco was ready for his week to begin. Jean’s results would be released at any time this day and Marco swore he felt giddier than Jean.

He looked out of the window as his family drove him to the train station and closed his eyes in contentment as the soft November sunlight hit his eyes.

Marco swirled Aimée around and hugged tightly Arthur and Irene. Jerome simply ruffled his hair to which the boy feigned annoyance, earning a chuckle from his brother. His dad smiled and hugged him as well, making him promise to call them often.

It was now his mom’s turn.

Marco stood before her and she half-smiled, affection and a hint of sadness shining her eyes.

“It’s gonna be ok, ma. I am gonna be okay.” He promised only for her to hear as he leaned in to hug her.

“I love you, Marco.”

“Me too, ma.”

“And thank you. For everything.” He added as the voice in the speakers called for his boarding.

He waved ‘goodbye’ to everyone and left to catch his train.

As Marco sat down and arranged his things under his seat he let out a sigh of relief.

And then he started laughing softly.

Laughing out of disbelief, out of happiness, out of relief, out of hope.

A soft buzz of his phone made his laughter cease and the boy checked his messages.
It was Jean.

*Waiting for you…*

Marco felt his heart skip a beat and he opened the picture Jean sent to him.

His boyfriend was already in their shared dorm, shirtless and surrounded by milkshakes, cookies and pizza boxes. Jean had a smug look on his face as he sipped seductively (?) from one of the milkshakes.

Marco rolled his eyes at his dork’s antics but blushed nevertheless.

The trip was a bit boring so Marco took a quick nap until they reached Trost.

He arrived on the dorm floor and opened the door to their room.

Jean was standing on their coffee table, his hands covering his mouth and his eyes wide open looking at his phone which laid down on the floor.

He wasn’t sure if Jean was even breathing at this moment.

Marco tossed his things and rushed to Jean.

“Jean? Jean?” he shook the boy but Jean stood still and frozen.

Marco picked up Jean’s phone and quickly read what was displayed on its screen.

“*Mr. Kirschtein.*

*I am glad to inform you that you have succeeded in your writing exams for the internships. Your results were exemplary good, and therefore your interview will take place in two days, as you are considered one of the elite candidates.*

*Please be in my office on Wednesday at 18:00 sharp.*

*Congratulations! I look forward to getting to know you better.*

*Cordially,*

*Professor Erwin Smith-Ackerman.*”

Marco’s eyes now matched Jean’s.

The boy turned around to look at his boyfriend with pure joy. “Congrats, Jean! You made it! You did so so well, I am so proud of you!”

Marco removed Jean’s hands from his mouth and cupped his cheeks, lowering Jean’s face so he could plant a thousand congratulatory kisses on his lips.

Only then did Jean snap out of his shock and responded to Marco’s pecks by deepening their kiss.

Marco let himself be dominated easily and opened his mouth releasing a soft moan.

Jean moved to his neck, attacking all of his weak spots and making Marco’s knees almost buckle.

Jean got off the coffee table and resumed his making out with Marco.
He placed one of his hands on the side of Marco’s neck as he kissed the other side, leaving a trail of little red marks on his boyfriend’s skin.

And that’s when Marco’s phone rang.

Jean growled a curse and Marco chuckled as he tried to even his breath in order to answer the call.

“Annie?... Oh, yeah sure. Lemme ask Jean.”

“Annie is asking if we want to join her and Armin in the evening. They are going to a karaoke bar not far from the campus.” Marco informed a still-kinda-pissed Jean.

Jean simply shrugged and Marco rolled his eyes with a smile and let Annie know they would meet them after their classes.

As soon Marco hung up the phone, Jean curled around his torso and pushed the boy down their couch.

“Jean?”

Jean hummed in response.

“We have classes, babe.”

“Screw the classes. I want to stay like this forever.” Jean buried his face in Marco’s chest and Marco kissed the top of his boyfriend’s head.

“Come on, babe.”

Jean sighed and lifted his head to face Marco.

“Ok.” He smirked and kissed Marco’s nose.

They grabbed their milkshakes, packed the cookies for later and left hand-in-hand.

Jean kissed Marco three times before letting him go and departed for his class.

Marco continued walking and soon arrived in Levi’s class. Thankfully, he still had some minutes left before Levi would arrive. He didn’t want to appear ungrateful to Levi.

The freckled boy scanned the room and spotted the girl he had talked with the previous time. He chose to sit with her again since she was the only person in the room with whom he felt comfortable with.

“Hi!” he greeted her.

“Oh! Hi!” she greeted him back and took her stuff from the chair next to her.

“How are you? Did you have fun these days?” Marco sat down next to her.

“Yeah, I did.” She smiled. “And you?”

“I…Yeah. It was different than usual, but I really enjoyed these days off.”

She nodded and looked out of the window.

“Winter is coming.”
“Yeah. I can’t wait.” He replied.

“Uhm, do you think that things will get better?”

“Sorry, what?” Marco was surprised by how much her tone had changed.

“Sorry. I know it’s a bit off since we don’t know each other that much, but…I am in a bit of a dark place now and…do you think it’s going to be okay?” she finally met his worried gaze.

His expression softened.

“I am, too.” He confessed. She was the first person he ever told about it after Jean. It didn’t feel bad nor like a weakness admitting he felt off.

“And yes, I really believe things are going to be okay for us.” He reached for her hand.

“I really hope so.” She gave him a half-smile. “Makes you glad that you have people like Jean around you, huh?”

“Oh, unimaginably so.”

They stayed with their hands touching for a bit. They both found comfort in silence and each other’s warm touch brought them peace for the moment.

“You know…” she trailed off.

“Yeah?”

“I wouldn’t mind being here for you. You know…if you want and all. Like, you can let me know if you want to rant or anything. Let it out and all. Perhaps it is a step too much but…I don’t know. I mean you seem like a good guy and…” she started rambling and Marco cut her with a smile.

“Yes, of course, I wouldn’t. If only you let me do the same for you.” He winked and she nodded.

Levi entered the class and they nodded once more to each other before focusing on his lesson.

After the class ended, Marco let Levi know how his phone call went and bid him ‘goodbye’.

Jean was already waiting for him outside and quickly placed his arm around Marco’s waist.

“Hi, love.”

“Hello to you, too. Ready to be a rock star?” Marco joked.

“Ugh, do we really need to sing?” Jean scratched the back of his head and rolled his eyes.

“Yup.” His boyfriend simply confirmed, and Jean huffed.

They soon reached the center of the campus where Annie and Armin were waiting for them.

“Hi, guys! Ready to go?” Armin rocked back and forth as he held hands with Annie.

“Yes, let’s go!” Marco confirmed and the two couples walked down the trail for the karaoke bar.

Armin let them know how Annie, had spent the Thanksgiving break with him and Eren and Mikasa in Eren’s house in the mountains. Annie added small comments to everything Armin said, making Jean and Marco laugh.
“We are here.” Annie let them know and got inside.

It was a nice cozy bar and each group was given their own booth to sing.

Jean’s nervousness melted down a bit as soon as they entered their booth and Annie closed the door behind them.

Armin soon arrived with two microphones and the drinks they ordered. He placed everything down to the table and took a large sip of his drink.

“I am going to go first!” he said in excitement.

Annie chuckled at her boyfriend’s antics and relaxed on the couch.

He chose to sing Bastille’s “Anchor”, dedicating it to Annie who smiled kindly to him.

He had a pretty decent voice and Jean felt even more at ease now that Marco trailed soft circles on his thigh.

The night carried on as they chatted and caught up.

Jean hadn’t picked a song yet and Armin was cheering for him.

“Come on, Jean! It doesn’t matter if you sing it a bit off. It’s all about the delivery and having fun.”

“I am going to sing a song and then you are next.” Annie patted Jean on the back as she got up and Jean rolled his eyes.

“The street's a liar
I'm gonna lure you into the dark
My cold desire
To hear the boom, boom, boom of your heart” she sang and the boys’ looked at her with wide eyes.

She really had a magnificent voice.

“This is a bad town for such a pretty face
This is a bad town for such a pretty face” she walked seductively towards Armin and fell in his arms.

“You’re my kill of the night.” She almost whispered to Armin as she finished the song.

All three of them started clapping and she got up and bowed before them with a grin on her face.

“Welp. Imma gonna suck either way.” Jean inhaled deeply and got up.

Jean searched the song he had in his mind and when he finally found it he closed his eyes and prepared himself.

Loud music echoed and Jean began singing.

“ I can't tell if I'm dreaming
I'm not sleeping anymore
Am I falling to pieces?
Will you wake me when it's over
Nothing makes sense anymore” he opened his eyes and looked at Marco.
“I won’t dwell on tomorrow
’Cause it feels like such a waste of time
And it cuts me from the inside
But I know I’m gonna be alright” it was like he was singing it directly to him.

Marco’s breath hitched and Jean reached the chorus.

“My eyes are wide open
Build me up, build me up to tear me down
Sick of going through the motions
You’re the gravity that keeps me falling”

Marco had never listened to Jean singing like that again. He felt his heart racing as Jean continued.

It was for him.

He was Jean’s gravity and Jean was for sure his. But, this song was also about feeling broken, feeling like you are failing but choosing to fight, choosing to hope, and choosing to carry on.

Marco felt his eyes watering a bit as his boyfriend rocked the song.

“Can’t tell if I’m dreaming
I’m not sleeping anymore
Am I falling to pieces?” Jean approached Marco and planted a kiss on his lips after finishing the song.

“Your turn, love.” He handed the microphone to Marco.

Annie and Armin were quick to clap for Jean’s performance.

“Why the hell were you so nervous?” Annie teased.

“Ugh, I have to sing in front of others for years. I was unsure if I still got it.” He confessed and sat down as Marco took his place in front of the screen and started singing.

“Blue is the color of the planet from the view above
Long live our reign, long live our love
Green is the planet from the eyes of a turtle dove
’Til it runs red, runs red with blood.” Marco’s voice startled them.

He had his eyes closed, like Jean, and his voice had dropped to a smooth husky tone.

“We get so tired and we complain
’Bout how it’s hard to live
It’s more than just a video game”

Jean shivered and shifted his body so that he could admire Marco better.

“But we’re just beautiful people with beautiful problems, yeah
Beautiful problems, God knows we’ve got them
But we gotta try
Every day and night” a smile formed in Marco’s lips and continued singing.

Jean stole a quick glance at Armin and Annie. Armin stood still and enjoyed how Marco sang softly while Annie swayed in the rhythm of Marco’s song.
Jean returned his full attention to Marco and followed Annie’s example, swaying as the song progressed.

“Beautiful problems, God knows we got them
So beautiful” Marco finished and Annie got up as she clapped for his singing.

Marco blushed under the blue light of the booth and returned next to Jean.

“This was breathtaking, love.” Jean promised with a kiss and Marco gladly kissed him back.

After singing some more, everyone grew a bit tired so they decided to part.

“It was really great hanging out with you, guys. We should definitely do that again.” Annie proposed and the couple agreed.

Jean rested his head on Marco’s shoulder as they walked through the campus to their dorm.

“Marco?” Jean’s voice was just above a whisper.

“Yes, babe?”

“Can you…will you sing to me again the first song you sang tonight?”

Marco lowered his head a bit so that it touched Jean’s and started singing.

Chapter End Notes

A big thank you to everyone supporting me and this fic! And an even bigger thank you to my @YunoGasai98 and happy birthday to you, love! You make this world much more bearable and fun.
Till next time!
Blackbird

Chapter Summary

Jean's interview, Marco's therapy, and fluff boyfriends

Chapter Notes

Heyo!
I am back and I am going to write more chapters soon, as well!!
It's been a long long year, but finally vacations!!
I drew the cover art of the fic but I will have to digitize it as well! (https://sk-elene.tumblr.com/post/185625034708/cover-art-for-my-fic-never-thought-youd-fall-so)
Enjoy, my dears!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Everything around me was pitch black.
I could sense the cold air and the subtle smell of the sea.

But I could not see a thing…

I don’t know how much time had passed, but then I heard it. The sound of flapping wings. Frantic and panicked. No chirp, no cry, just the sound of the wings.

It sounded like they hit something, perhaps a wall or a window. I didn’t know better. My sight had yet to return, so the only thing I could do was to sit and listen to the poor bird trying to escape.

Escape?

From where?

Where was I exactly?

When my thoughts trailed down this path a bright flash blinded me, but then the brightness ceased and I could see around me perfectly.

I was inside a room. A room with large brick walls all around me, no doors, no windows. Just me. The sound echoed again and I looked up.

Just me and the bird.

It was a pretty one, small yet you could see how strong its wings were. It didn’t stop for a moment, crushing around the walls as it tried to find an exit out of our brick prison.
“There is no way out.” I told the bird.

“Please, stop before you hurt yourself.”

The bird flew an inch away from the wall and stood almost still. As if it needed a breath, a moment of rest. Was it giving up its vain venture?

Then it turned its small head and our eyes met. I felt as if I was the bird and as if the bird was me. The connection stunned me so much that I didn’t even react when it spoke.

“There is always a way out, Marco. We just have to find it.”

And then it flew down to me, its left wing stroking my cheek…No, wiping the tears from it.

Was I crying?

“Find it.” It whispered and I gasped.

My eyes shot open and my body jerked forward as I fought for air.

A dream.

It was all a dream. I thought as I tried to even my breathing.

The sun was out and crept slightly through our window. It was almost winter but yet the sun shone brightly almost every day.

I turned around to see if my darling was beside me, but Jean’s side was now long cold.

I scratched my head and yawned. I had uneasy sleep for the last few days. Probably, because of my upcoming visit to my therapist. It was reassuring and unnerving at the same time.

I inhaled deeply and my senses flooded with the smell of cinnamon.

Now, I had to check what Jean was doing.

I untangled myself from our blanket and walked towards the living room.

Jean was wearing his headphones, lip-singing, and dancing as he pulled a batch of cookies from our microwave oven.

I rested on the doorframe, taking it all in.

I loved having memories of him like this. He was himself, no one in the world existed but him.

He was so free. So beautiful. He was radiating.

It was really no surprise I had fallen so hard for him. I wondered how it took me so long.

Or perhaps it took me long to actually admit it.

If I could pinpoint the exact moment when my heart first panged in my chest in his sight, it would be a summer that had long passed. He was sitting in his front porch with his sketchbook open and his hair a bit longer than how it was now.

He had his earphones on once again and he insisted on wearing tight skinny jeans even if it was boiling hot.
His hair fell on his eyes but it didn’t bother him as he continued to draw.

We were to meet in an hour but I arrived earlier to surprise him. I had been in Jinae for almost a month and we had missed each other so so much.

One look at him and I knew I could not tear my eyes away. The sunlight hit the crown of his head and it made it seem like he was indeed wearing a soft translucent crown.

His face was now a soft pink, probably from sitting under the sun for too long. His arms were exposed and I noticed that he had probably begun exercising in my absence since I could see the fine lines that started appearing under his skin as he moved.

“Marco?” I thought I heard.

“Marco??” I shook my head and saw Jean. Present Jean. My Jean. He was looking at me with a puzzled look in his face.

“You ok, babe?” he approached me.

I blinked and an unattractive “ughhh” escaped my lips.

Jean laughed and kissed my lips softly. Almost too softly.

“Daydreaming?”

“Always. About you.” I returned the kiss.

Jean giggled and offered me a cookie.

“How so?” I took one and raised one brow.

“I am hella stressed! I always want to cook or to clean up when I am. Otherwise, I feel like I’ll explode.” He admitted.

“Wait? Is that why you cooked that much before your acceptance letter arrived?”

“Oh, yes! And I cleaned so much that my parents didn’t have to clean up for a month after!” he chuckled and got a cookie for himself.

I bit into mine and its strong cinnamon flavor brought a wide smile in my face.

“Damn.” I muttered.

“That good?” he smirked.

“Almost as good as you.” Our kiss tasted like coffee and cinnamon and I was sure that’s how dreams and home smelled like.

“Is it about the interview?” I asked as I looked into his hazel eyes.

“Is it about” Jean’s voice was high pitched “Of course, it is about the interview!”

I kissed his nose. “You are going to ace it, hon.”

Jean rolled his eyes in my response but didn’t protest further.

“Prof. changed the time a bit since some people canceled so I am going earlier.” He let me know as
we munched down the cookies.

“Oh, okay. Want me to join you?”

Jean inhaled and looked into my eyes.

“It’s a thing I have to do alone.” He said with a deep voice and grasped my shoulders.

“But your thought will always accompany me.” He tossed his head to the side and his hair flopped up and down.

I started laughing and soon he joined me.

He was going to be fine. He was going to do great.

I knew it.

After our breakfast and silly antics, I got ready and bid my darling “goodbye”.

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Marco had left for about an hour now and my façade of the cool boyfriend was slowly melting away.

Oh, who was I kidding? I was never cool. For no one but him.

Anxiety was taking the best of me, so I decided to get ready in order to avoid thinking.

It was a formal interview so I chose my pine green shirt and a black tie to wear.

I tied the tie a bit too tight, so I fixed it as I was leaving.


I inhaled and thought of his sleeping face this morning.

My mind relaxed.

This could work!

And then the bus arrived.

You know how much I fucking hate Trost’s buses, right?

But, this was so freaking worse.

My interview was in my Professor’s real office and not the university one. In his firm or whatever.

So I had to fucking cross the whole city!

And my date was right after the rushing hour…So guess which poor damned boy had to use the buses at the rushing hour?

Yup, me.

The bus opened its doors and people sprawled from it as if they were thrown up.
So many people.

Fuck.

And before I could start even thinking of entering, people from behind me pushed and pushed so I had no option to flight.

Fuck.

I closed my eyes as I found a somewhat empty spot on the bus and reached for my headphones.

I needed to seclude myself from the world. To be in my bubble. **“Now I think I understand How this world can overcome a man”**

I exhaled and eased.

*You got this.*

More and more people entered and none of them seemed to get off the freaking bus. Shit.

Some of them were now protesting and shit like that. I had to stay in. I still had a long way to go.

*Come on, you shit. You got this.*

I clenched my jaw so hard that my teeth gritted together.

I was sweating. It was almost December and I was sweating!

Fuck.

I had to…

I really didn’t think anymore and jumped out of this hellhole as soon as the doors opened on the next stop.

I bowed my head and rested my hands on my knees, catching my breath and my racing thoughts.

When the dizziness subsided, I looked where I was. Hmm, I lasted long enough for this to be walkable!

Sweet!

The cold air would be good for me and my state.

I straightened my coat and huffed.

“Off we go.” I muttered.

The rest of my trip was far more peaceful and I found myself enjoying walking around the town.

I had much time ahead of me, so I didn’t rush. I spotted a nice flower shop and I thought of buying a plant for our dorm upon my return.

I approached the shop window and admired the flowers and their colors.
I remembered how much Marco loved their meaning.


It was my time to go.

I walked a bit more and then I saw the large building in which I was supposed to be interviewed. I gulped and I let my feet guide me inside, not really thinking.

When I entered I was mesmerized. The ceiling was high and almost mirror-like. The walls where a red-brown marble and the floors were of polished wood. The elevators where see-through cubicles and when they stopped their light changed depending on which floor they landed.

A redhead was sitting in the reception and greeted me with a smile. Her large desk was from black marble and dark wood. I could smell the professionalism from far away.

I could see why people wanted to work there so much. It was so perfect as if it wasn’t even real.

“I am Anka.” She introduced herself. “How can I help you?”

“Uhm, hi! I am Jean. Kirschtein. I am here for Professor Smith.” I let her know and she clicked and typed something on her computer.

“Kirschtein. Yes.” She spotted my name and looked back at me. “You are going on the sixth floor. Mr. Smith’s office is the one with the jet black door. He has almost finished with the candidate he is interviewing and then he will take you in.” she smiled and her eyes formed half crescent moons.

I thanked her and moved towards the elevator.

“Best of luck, Jean.” She waved as I entered the cubicle.

I smiled at her and pressed the button for the Professor’s floor. Forest green.

The elevator began moving and I enjoyed looking the floors we passed.

People working, talking, laughing. They all seemed so friendly and hard-working. They were really all hand-picked by him.

The cubicle arrived and its doors turned forest green as well as they opened.

I took a deep breath and exited the elevator. His door was really hard to miss. It was jet black as Anka promised and had a golden plate on it that read “Erwin Smith”. It was in calligraphy but it was really simple. No titles, no decorative. Just his name.

I sat down on one of the leather chairs and waited for him to finish. I really didn’t wait that long. As soon as my mind tried to begin spiraling, the door opened and a girl exited. I recognized her from the class but her face was hard to read. Had she passed? Did the interview fluke?

Before I could ask her or think any further, she had left and Professor Smith was calling me in.

I took a deep breath and let it out in a sigh.

That’s it, Jean.
“Shine.”

I heard Marco’s voice in my thoughts.

I smiled and walked into the office, closing the door behind me.

“Mr. Kirschtein.” Prof. Smith greeted me with a straight face.

I gulped and returned the greeting.

“Take a seat.” He commanded and I couldn’t find myself to hesitate.

“Let’s begin.”

“Let’s see. Oh, yes. I remember your test. I honestly haven’t seen anything like it for the last few years. You make yourself a strong candidate and a promising asset Mr. Kirschtein.”

I could feel myself blush. I wasn’t used to someone speaking like that for me and my capabilities except Marco.

“I hope I won’t stress you, but I have many expectations from you and this interview hopefully will only make them bloom.” He admitted.

I almost cursed under my breath.

“In this interview, I want to meet you better. Whatever this internship will provide or demand you can learn. But, your character, your thoughts, and your beliefs cannot be learned or be overwritten. I am searching for a specific mindset, Mr. Kirschtein. We can only work if you have it. Do you?”

His compliments had worked like a miracle to my mind. “Yes. I do.” I replied with my newfound confidence.

I swear I saw a smile but Prof. Smith returned his gaze on his papers.

“What do you think of the world?” he asked simply as if he was asking about the weather or about my favorite color.

“Of the world…” I echoed and he nodded.

“I believe it’s flawed. Deeply. People are suffering and there is much evil all around us. I believe people seek to profit from the others and then toss them away. I believe that only the sneaky and the sly advance and I really think that we need to press the restart button as soon as possible.” I paused, weighing in his gaze, searching for a reaction, but I found none, so I continued.

“But, this world is also beautiful. No, we make it beautiful. If one person finds the right people and surrounds themselves with the right things, I believe that the world can be easier on them. Of course, loss, pain, and heartbreak are part of the game, but you come back stronger. Each experience carries out a lesson and helps you grow as a person. You just have to see it. You have to be open and try to understand what you were taught. Once you do, everything makes sense. It’s as if there is part of a bigger plan.”

“Fate?” he asked.

“Fate, God, the Universe itself? I don’t know. And I don’t think it matters how we choose to call it.” I replied.
“So, the world is naturally bad and we choose to make it better?” his blue eyes burned into mine.

“No.” I paused.

“The world is beautiful and good. We twisted it. Now, we only have to find its beauty again.”

Prof. Smith hummed.

“Do you have regrets?” he continued.

“I used to. I used to think every choice I made over and over again. But then, I understood there is no use to it. Why regret something you once wanted? The only regret is found in not chasing a chance. I have been guilty of that but I learned my lesson. I wouldn’t be here if I hadn’t.” I admitted.

I tried to understand how this was going but he had an excellent poker-face and he wasn’t keeping any notes…I fidget with my fingers and waited for his next question.

“I am glad you did, then.” He replied and raised his head again.

“Are you willing to follow someone blindly? Someone who asks you to devote your life on something?”

“No.” I said a bit bluntly.

He raised an eyebrow, so I understood I had to explain this denial to him.

“I am not following anyone blindly. I am going to ask questions. To search the reason and their purpose behind their fancy words. I am not a clockwork soldier. I am not doing anything before I know why.”

“I only trust my family and my love blindly.”

He smirked. He seemed fascinated by my answer and I almost smirked myself.

“Love?” he had a sneaky look on his face.

I felt myself blush. “My boyfriend. My best friend. My soulmate. I cannot even begin to describe how much he means to me. He has my heart. Now, forever and always.”

He nodded and I saw him touch his wedding band as if it was something sacred and he feared he would soil it.

“I see.” He finally said and looked at me again. Every time he looked at me, I felt small. Not this time.

This time I knew.

“I usually don’t announce the results right away since it takes me some time to think about it. But, this is not such a case. I think it is obvious.” He paused and I understood that he only did it for the drama.

“Congratulations, Mr. Kirschtein! I am more than glad to have you aboard.” He extended his hand to me with a warm smile.

“Thank you, sir!” I shook his hand firmly.
I greeted him and turned to leave.

“You should let him know. Every day that passes is a miracle for you both. You never know when this cruel world will demand him.”

“Love him every day, even more, Jean.”

I turned around and met his eyes. “I will.” I promised and felt the determination burning in my heart.

The road back was easier, lighter in my heart and mind. I had passed. So simply, so easily. I was someone…I was exactly someone that another person wanted. But, perhaps I should get used to it. It was not the first time after all.

Marco’s smiling face came into my mind and I found myself smiling from ear to ear as I made my way to the florist.

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I looked at my phone’s screen as the lesson finished. The time had passed and I thought I would have news from Jean by now. But other than the reminder of my therapy session in a few days, no other notification was there.

I huffed, worrying a bit. I knew Jean had all that it would take and I knew he would pass with flying colors, but I was worried still. He didn’t look that stressed this morning but I knew better than to trust the image he tried to pass into others.

Heck, I even started liking him more and more because I was able to see through him.

I passed my hand through my hair as I made my way through the campus to our dorm. My hair was now much longer than any other time before, I almost could catch it in a mini bun and this made me so happy. It felt like I was slowly becoming the version of myself that I wanted, that I felt more comfortable in being.

With my fast pace, it didn’t take long to reach the dorms and soon enough I was opening the door. A rich smell hit my nose and I could feel my mouth watering.

Jean was cooking again.

Before I could fully open the door Jean was running towards me. He threw his hands around my neck and buried me in sweet kisses and nuzzles.

“Congratulations, sweetheart. You deserved it! You really did!” I smiled in between the kisses.

“Ahh, thank you, love. Thank you, thank you, thank you.” He hummed as he kissed my neck.

I let out a moan and closed the door.

“What did you prepare?” I asked as his kisses ceased and he was now sweetly cradled in my arms.

“Lasagna and I bought some wine as well.” He admitted and looked at me. I could swear my heart fluttered so hard that I thought it would escape my ribcage.

“You should have called me. I would have bought you a congratulatory gift or something like that.” I scratched the back of my neck as he nuzzled me.
“I almost did but for another reason.” His smile dropped and I understood why.

“Buses?”

“Buses.” He sighed and his shoulders dropped too.

I embraced him tightly and his cologne and the spices from the food he made filled my senses. I could feel how small he felt when his claustrophobia was at its peak and the times he had actually called me or texted me while he was suffocating were more than he would like to admit.

I had asked him about it once. Why hadn’t he gone to someone for it…It could be much worse from time to time and I was so worried.

He admitted he had in the past. But sometimes he was too panicked to remember what he had to do in order to calm down. So I took this place easily, without him asking me to. I just felt like it was the least I could do for my beautiful boy.

He told me he believed that it had something to do with a previous life or something like that. He was softly blushing when he said that, embarrassed to share it with someone else. But, I understood. I, too, sometimes felt as if I had met someone or done something before. A long, long time ago.

Like the time we went for bungee trampoline…Both of us felt like it was something we did again. Something we did to our deaths.

We agreed to never go again.

“I bought you flowers as well.” He pulled me out from my thoughts.

“Flowers? Why me? I should buy you some.” I chuckled.

“Ehhh…I felt like it.” He stuck his tongue out and showed me a bouquet he had placed in one of our mugs.

“Do you know what they mean?” I asked him as I approached the flowers to smell them.

“I do.” He smiled proudly. “But, tell me yourself too.” His hands cupped my face and I felt the blood rush to my cheeks.


His lips, heavy and hot, pressed mine and I melted.

I kissed him back, feverly, without holding back. I missed him.

I missed him so much.

His fingers trailed down my chest and lower to my belly and then he found the end of my shirt and started pulling it upwards. I smiled softly and helped him free me from it as he discarded his as well.

His chest was warm and his breathing was already uneven and sharp.

I let my lips trail down his neck and sucked softly his favorite spot, earning a moan and a tug on my hair.
"Your wish is my command" I thought.

I continued my descent to his pecks and lower down to his stomach.

I could feel him shudder underneath my tongue and I was happy.

After we were both satisfied, we got ourselves cleaned, and then ate in comforting silence.

The days passed peacefully and before I knew it, the day came.

Jean kissed me harder that morning.

He cuddled me warmer.

He gave me strength and courage.

Asking for her number from Prof. Ackerman, calling for an appointment, even waiting for days to pass was easy.

Much easier than dragging my stubborn feet to my session.

My mind was stubborn as well.

It tried to persuade me I didn’t need this. It tried to make me believe this was only a whim.

But, Jean kept me focused and reassured me a thousand times.

My love.

I bid him ‘goodbye’ and he gave me a thumbs up and a wink.

Dork.

I put on my headphones and I pressed the ‘play’ button. Music flooded my ears and I felt invincible.

I could do this. I deserved this. I was going to get better and my mind couldn’t stop me.

Not this time.

I took the bus and sat next to the window. The town was buzzing from people walking and driving to their errands and their jobs. I used to think they were sort of hostile and distant when I had first arrived in Trost. But, now I could see they were only focused on their lives alone.

Each one of them seemed like a snob back then but now they were like individual protagonists in my eyes.

The traffic was low today so we arrived much earlier than I expected. I decided to skip the next bus and walk a bit.

Walking.

It was so relaxing to me.
Walking with my headphones on, leaving the noise of the town behind and only allowing the pictures of everyday life in. Even the smallest thing could make me smile.

A flower blooming in the pavement, among the cement and the passing people who were careful enough to avoid it and let it grow even more.

A girl petting her dog and her dog “attacking” her for cuddles.

A boy making sounds as he played with his rocket spaceship toy.

I arrived soon after and I felt my heart drop a bit as I passed the building’s door.

I paused the music and placed my headphones in my backpack.

I took a deep breath and pressed the elevator’s button.

I opened the door to her floor and got out. I scanned the doors and when I finally found hers I took one last glance in my notification to make sure I was there in the right time and day, despite having checked it a million times before.

I rang the bell and waited.

Soon the door opened and I was greeted by a pretty woman. She was about Prof. Ackerman’s age and she had a smile in her face.

“You must be Marco.”

“I am.” I nodded.

“Do you need anything? Water, juice, some coffee?” she motioned but I shook my head.

“Okay, then. Shall we begin?” She moved in her main office and I followed her close behind. That’s when it downed me. I was dressed in total black. Such a cliché I was. I huffed.

“Close the door and take a seat wherever it feels better.” She said and sat in her chair.

I sighed softly as I closed the door and almost flopped in her couch but chose to sit a bit straighter in the end.

“I am Felicity as Levi told you and as we spoke from the phone.” Her features were soft and kind. She did this gladly and I could tell she was exactly how Prof. Ackerman promised. “Pleased to meet you, and thank you for choosing me for this adventure of yours.” Her catty eyes shined with a playful gleam.

“Adventure?” I chuckled.

“But, of course. You won’t be the same after that. I mean you will of course still be you…with your values and your beliefs and everything that makes you...you. But, you will also have more tools in you. You will be able to control the greatest beast.” She paused.

“Your mind.”

I liked her.

I could see why Levi recommended her to me. They had the same theatricality in their way of speaking. Levi talked about dragons and she spoke of adventures and beasts.
“You know, Marco.” She continued. “In the years of my experience in this job, I find that it’s easier sometimes if you take it all a bit lighter. Like a fairytale or a game. It makes it easier for you and more bearable.”

“I can see why.” I admitted.

“Oh, why?”

“Well, fairytales and adventures are taught to us from our childhood. We know that the hero always wins, no matter how badly the odds are against them. Therefore we name ourselves the hero of our own tale and we know we will win in the end. No matter how long this will take us. We will get there.” I still could not find the courage to look at her for long.

I could see her nodding “You get it.”

“So, Marco…from where would you like us to begin?”

And so I told her everything I had told Jean about my childhood and about my past troubles. I told her everything about Jean as well.

I was glad that our first session was two hours instead of the classic one-hour therapy because I couldn’t find myself to stop talking.

I was so anxious when I first arrived but now it was like I was talking to an old friend.

“So, why do you think all of this began? Do you think you know the root of these feelings?” she asked.

“During my life…” I paused. I knew what I wanted to say but I had to put it in the right words, to let it out of my chest in the right way.

She waited and I was glad.

I fidgeted with my hands and began again. “During my life, I was always dubbed as perfect. I was hearing it from everyone…my teachers, my friends, my family. Everyone.” I closed my eyes and inhaled sharply.

“At first, it made me really happy. I was perfect. Who wouldn’t be happy about that? I was perfect. I was accepted. I was helping others to reach perfection as well. I was whole.” I felt my lips trembling as I reminisced these times of my childhood.

Happier times. I thought to myself and my heart banged in my chest.

She slid a packet of tissues close to me, but I was not crying…I don’t think I was.

“But, then, when my first missteps came along, I was lost. Confused and stunned.” I looked at her, deep in her green shining eyes.

“I was perfect…how could I fail?” I asked her.

“How could I mess up?” I asked again as if I expected her to know the answer. She didn’t answer nor did she take her eyes from mine.

“It didn’t make any sense…It was like I was frozen inside my brain and forced to watch myself making mistakes and ruining things.” I sniffled as memories of me shouting to my mother came to my mind. Memories of me in my room crying, not being able to understand why I was acting like
that. Why I was angry all the time.

“All I could whisper was ‘why’…” I tried to swallow but my throat felt sore as if I was screaming from the top of my lungs, so I decided against it.

“When you are told all your life how much perfect you are and then life happens…it really takes a toll on you, you know?” I frowned and rubbed my hands together. I felt so small. So vulnerable. Like a newborn infant.

But, she didn’t speak. So, my turn wasn’t over yet.

“You become hyper-aware of every little mistake that you make…Even if it is choosing the right words in a conversation or talking in the right tone to a stranger…”

“It’s…It’s a nightmare, really.”

“It’s like you are an exposed nerve in a world of constant stimulation. You could make a mistake anytime, at any place! Oh, maybe you already did while you were busy thinking all of these!” I huffed loudly and I felt the knot in my throat tightening again.

Fuck.

A glass of water was found next to me so I gulped some down. I needed air but water could make a do for now.

“And of course…” my voice sounded hoarse but I was on a rant now.

I didn’t care.

“You cannot let others know! They believe you are perfect, remember?? For some weird fucking reason, they don’t see your flaws, your imperfections, your mistakes.” I was angry and I could feel it boiling down in my stomach, aching in my heart.

“You…you persuaded them somehow that you are pure…and perfect.” I spat the last word as if it was poison.

“So, you gotta keep it that way…You have already disappointed yourself…You can’t afford to disappoint others as well…But, eventually…you do.”

“Cause all of this stress and anxiety of not making any mistake, they keep piling up inside of you and they take even uglier forms.” I bit my lip in embarrassment. I remembered my lashing outs, my hoarse throat and me slamming my door.

“For me it was anger.”

I closed my eyes and tried to keep the memories away.

In vain.

“God…I was so angry. So angry.” The word felt like a sin in my lips.

“To myself…Perhaps, I was angry with the others who burdened me with this perfection and their expectations...who wouldn’t let me be my own damn flawed self.”

Expectations go to hell. Or send you to it.
“But, I took the blame. Like I always do…So, I turned the anger to myself and began hating me with a burning passion. After all, I was my best critic…I was the only aware of my imperfections, so I was the only one able to beat myself up for it.” I breathed in and let myself feel the moment.

Those words have never been spoken to anyone before. Not even myself.

I felt so strange. Guilty, and yet lighter at the same time.

“I became a shell of myself. I was like a landmine, really. The wrong kind of pressure could make me erupt and when I did…it was ugly and messy.” My eyes stung but I carried on.

“I made my baby sister cry once…you can only imagine the self-loathing afterward.” This memory hurt me still.

“The ‘perfect’ label is a damn heavy burden to carry.”

“And a burden I don’t WANT to carry. I want to be me.” My voice cracked and I felt five again… searching for my mother and her embrace that could hide me from the world and its cruelty.

“My stubborn, flawed, imperfect self.” This sounded like a cry for help, and it was. “I want to be able to breathe again.”

There was a long pause, I think. But, again, she waited. I decided I really liked her for that.

“But people keep dubbing me as perfect and therefore the vicious circle carries on.” I chuckled with a sad smile.

“You know…sometimes I warn them. I tell them that I am not perfect and they shouldn’t believe I am, because they will be disappointed eventually.”

“Because I can’t bear to see the look people give to you when this realization hits them. And I know this kind of look much too well.”

“Much too well…I’ve seen it from everyone around me…Friends, family…Family…Fuck, that really messes you up.” I closed my eyes again for a moment before looking at her again.

“Hell, I’ve even seen this look from myself. It’s the look I was seeing in the mirror for all these years…”

Then she spoke.

“But, not anymore?”

Her question surprised me but I found myself answering with a smile “…Not anymore.”

I touched my cheek and found it wet. I didn’t even realize I was crying after all.

“Because of Jean?” she pulled me out of my thoughts.

“Yes. But, because of me as well. He would huff at me and shake his head if I dared to give him all the credit.” I chuckled and ruffled up my hair.

“You know…I believed that by saving the others I would atone for my own sins. I believed that by saving them I would prove to myself that I had some kind of worth. I believed that even if I sacrificed my own sanity or, well, whatever left of it, I would be a martyr lost in a good cause.”
“Cause what’s better than losing yourself to save another?”

She didn’t answer.

There must be better causes then.

“But, of course, this battle with the demons of other people only added up to the battle with my own demons…”

“That…” I cracked my knuckles.

“That broke me.”

“Now, sometimes this old habit of mine comes up to my mind again and makes me wonder ‘Do I care enough about anyone anymore?’…”

“Do you know the answer?” she startled me and gave me an apologetic smile.

I returned the smile “No” I shook my head. “I didn’t know myself…but he whispered it to me one night…and I believed him.”

I met her eyes again.

“He told me ‘Even by this thought you show you care…if it didn’t matter to you, your devious mind would let it drop.’ I remembered this night fondly and I would treasure it forever.

“You care, Marco.’ He told me. ‘Still, you care so much…Having limits and protecting yourself in the process doesn’t mean that you don’t care…It means you learned to care about yourself as well.”

“He’s right you know.” Felicity tilted her head and rested it in her hand, looking at me fondly.

“I know…”

It was almost time now.

To go.

I didn’t want to. Not yet.

“He sounds lovely. He sounds exactly how a person by your side should be, and he sounds mature as well. I am glad you have him by your side, Marco.”

I only smiled in response. My eyes fixed on the clock behind her.

“Until next time, Marco, please remember: allow yourself to feel. Anything. It shows you are human. Whether it’s pain or sadness, anger or despair. It’s a feeling nonetheless. Don’t be ashamed of feeling.” Her eyes had such a soft look I felt like she spoke directly in my heart and in my brain. Soothing them, reassuring them that they did well. I did well.

“And like a physical wound, when you can locate the place from which it bleeds you can begin to heal it. Let yourself feel in order for you to let yourself heal.” She expected an answer I figured.

“Okay.” I smiled softly, truly meaning it, and I think she realized it too as she gave me a wide smile.
“Next week?” she got up and walked me to the door.

“Next week.” I promised and closed it behind me.

I pressed the button for the elevator still in a trench from my session.

It was only when I was outside and the cold December air hit my face when I realized what had just happened.

And I laughed, raising my eyes to the sky, thanking whoever watched over me for letting me live to feel this moment.

Relief.

I felt like I had just conquered the highest mountain or as if I had broken my long worn shackles.

Something caught my eye.

Flowers.

Seems like it was a theme this week. I smirked to myself and approached the bench.

Sunflowers.


I bought myself one and returned home with a smile on my face.

Chapter End Notes

Much love to everyone reading this fic!
I appreciate it, for this is like a rite of passage for me and adulthood, more mental stability and trust in myself.
I was afraid I lost the rawness of the first chapters, but now I see I just got softer and thus my voice mellowed, just like Marco learns to heal.
Much much love and gratitude to @YunoGasai98 who is my beta and my dearest friend and has been supporting this fic since the very beginning, and to @Jerza who gradually becomes more dearest to me as well.
Thank you
Till next time,
sk_elene
Midterm exams.

Aka one more reason to be stressed as hell and to consume gallons of coffee without being judged, and of course with the caffeine you become even more anxious and jittery. A vicious circle, really.

Jean’s exams were a bit easier since his professors would also count the projects and exercises he had done throughout the semester and he had already passed the two of his six lessons only by writing the mandatory essays. Of course, he passed! My boy had a gift for writing.

But, I …well in my eyes I was pretty much fucked. My books were huge to read and my leg hurt from all that bouncing up and down. Nevertheless, I pressed on.

We were studying in our dorm for now. Jean was sprawled on our couch, papers, books, and notes all around him. He had his half-finished coffee resting on our coffee table and his headphones were lowered around his neck as he scratched his head and mumbled something to himself.

I was taking a break but that was only an excuse to have the chance to ogle at him all I wanted without him noticing. Not that I would mind if he noticed, but it was something intoxicating in watching him working and being himself.

I loved how he was biting his lower lip, worrying it a bit when he was in deep thought. Or how he always passed his hand through his hair and then ruffled them a bit and sighed softly, when he did not understand something. But my favorite expression of his was when he finally figured it out- he always figured it out in the end- he would crack his knuckles and then leave a victorious huff as he smirked.

“More coffee?” I asked after getting up from our desk. I stretched and made my way to Jean.

“Nah, I am good for now. Thank you, darling.” Jean raised his eyes and looked at me smiling.

I leaned in and kissed his forehead before leaving for a refill.

I poured the warm liquid in my cup and let the aroma fill my lungs. Ah, the simple pleasures in life.
Winter came second in my favorite seasons. I loved staying in as the snow-covered the town, cuddling and watching shitty films on TV. I had a feeling that this winter was bound to be one of my favorite winters as well.

I sneaked another glimpse of Jean and then returned in my desk.

My patience and concentration were now refilled for sure, coffee was just a bonus.

I didn’t even realize how the hours passed until the smell of freshly cooked food reached me and after one deep breath I knew I was starving.

I looked back on my notes and books and smiled triumphantly when I saw I had almost finished what I wanted for that day. I quickly read the rest of the pages and then slammed the book shut.

That was more than enough for today.

I almost closed my eyes and let the smell lead the way.

Jean was in our kitchen pulling a tray out of the microwave and I felt my mouth watering. “What’s that?”

“Oh! I finally lured you out of your desk-cave.” Jean left the tray on the counter and pulled off his kitchen gloves.

“Desk-cave?” I snorted and he reached for my neck, pulling me a bit lower so our lips could meet.

“I bought a soufflé and some cheap wine.” He motioned to the counter.

“When?” I looked at him with wide eyes and he laughed.

“Oh, my! Marco? You didn’t even realize I left the dorm?” he shook his head.

“I could have been abducted by aliens and you wouldn’t have noticed a thing!” Jean faked a pout and I lowered my head in embarrassment.

“I love my deeply concentrated boy.” He kissed me again and took my hand, leading me to our table.

I sat down and he soon followed, bringing the plates and then the wine with him.

“Enjoy!” he sat across me and he placed his hand on mine with a smile.

“Thank you, sweetheart.”

We ate in comfortable silence and I treasured the moment. Little things like these, memories like this… I feel I could fill a whole room with them, and yet, all of them fit into my heart perfectly.

I offered to clean up the table to thank Jean for the meal and he mumbled something about watching a movie.

I let him to his own devices and began cleaning up as I sang whatever song came into my mind.

After a while, I joined Jean who had, in the meantime, built a blanket fort and chosen a movie for us to watch.

“Are you sure about this?” I wondered after claiming my spot under the blankets.
“Sure! It’ll be fun.” Jean smirked and I shrugged.

‘Annabelle: Creation’

After all, it was Jean who was scared by horror films, not me.

I found my way in his arms and he pressed ‘play’ as he cuddled me.

“Oh, great!” Jean startled me as the movie played.

“Little girls! Swear horror films with little children are the worst!” he cuddled me closer. The scary parts hadn’t even begun.

I smiled at him and shifted my position so I was now holding him in my arms.

‘You are my sunshine’ echoed in the film and I felt Jean shiver under my arms.

“How much are they going to ruin this song?” he muttered and I let out a chuckle.

The girl in the film unlocked the room where the freaky doll was in and Jean let out a groan.

“We can always choose a different movie.”

“Nah, nah. ‘S cool. Wanna watch it.” He buried his head in the crook of my neck and placed a bunch of kisses.

I mentally shrugged and continued watching the movie.

The spirit was now chasing a girl down the hall and then the stairs and Jean almost shrieked.

I started laughing. Hard. So hard Jean had to raise his head from my chest.

“Not funny!” he pouted and I kissed him softly.

“You said it is going to be fun! Well, it is!” he stuck his tongue out to me but I only caressed his cheek and scrunched my nose.

Jean sighed and returned his gaze to the film but I could see his smirk forming.

We spent the rest of the time fooling around and laughing instead of really watching the film.

I don’t even know or how we found ourselves tangled between the blankets, kissing and cuddling.

But that’s how our night ended, with us tangled on the floor between blankets and each other.

Our backs were sore the morning after, but it was totally worth it.

The exams began and slowly the days passed. Slowly my sanity faded away, too.

I grew restless and impatient, I could not focus and everything tasted like nothing. Coffee was now no more than boiled, colored water and meals were tasteless like sand.

Jean had noticed my change for sure, but he felt like it was better not to pressure me further by asking me and for that I thanked him.

“Wanna go study in the library for today?” he said one day.
“You know I can’t concentrate around loud people.” I replied, never prying my gaze off the book I was studying.

“Loud? It’s the library! And we are going during the exam period!” he tried again.

I rolled my eyes. He wouldn’t let it drop. So I gathered my stuff and I followed him.

I couldn’t explain to him how every little sound was super loud for me when I was at this kind of state. I would seem paranoid.

We made our way to the library without exchanging many words.

I could sense his nervousness and I felt guilty about it, but I didn’t know how to defuse this landmine inside of me.

The sessions with felicity were going fine and I was learning more about myself and how I should let out my feelings and my thoughts, but anger…this restlessness…this was something that was still clinging from me.

The library was packed! I hadn’t seen that many people since the concert Jean had dragged me along.

So much for peace and quiet.

I huffed but followed Jean all the same.

“We need to find just a little corner and we’ll be fine.” He whispered and I nodded.

The lesson I would study wasn’t that hard after all…I might as well try to relax…for him…and for me as well.

Jean took my hand in his and entwined our fingers. I loved how perfectly they fit together.

He led the way around the library but our luck was short.

“We can try the upper floor.” He turned around and let me know.

“It’s mostly for the seniors, but I think they could make an exception.”

I nodded, obviously more relaxed than I was when we entered, and let him guide me. Jean must have sensed the loss of my nervousness and gifted me a smile.

I smiled back at him and we found the stairs leading to the next floor.

As soon as we arrived, we were dumbfounded by the difference. In this floor, there were only a few students and silence ruled the place.

Now, that’s much better!

Jean looked at me with a ‘see?’ look on his smug face and I stuck my tongue out, making his smirk wider.

He walked further in the floor, his hand never leaving mine.

He scanned the place but wasn’t satisfied with the seats available and therefore he opted for the desks between the large bookcases.
Then suddenly, he came to a halt and I almost bumped on him.

“Jean?” my voice was more like a sigh than a whisper.

He turned around and looked at me with a mildly horrified face and he brought a finger in front of his lips, motioning me to keep silent.

I was worried now and took a step towards whatever was the thing that had spooked him that much.

And then I saw them.

To say that this image will be forever burned in my mind would be an understatement.

“Quit fooling around and just finish it, old man.” Professor Ackerman mouthed and a burst of hearty laughter followed.

I guessed this was Prof. Smith that Jean was telling me about.

They were in the middle of a heavy make-out session it seemed…but it also seemed that it wouldn’t remain just a make-out session.

I saw Prof. Smith unbuttoning his husband’s shirt and I still don’t know how I managed not to shriek.

Jean joined me, not less horrified than before.

Uh, pants were unzipped now and soon Prof. Smith’s followed.

Were they really going to…?

“Mhm, Levi. Hard so soon? Five years of marriage and I still discover more kinks of yours.” The blonde smirked and Levi huffed, half in annoyance and half to hide his panting.

“Says the man who cornered me in a library full of brats. What if one of our students saw us?”

Jean and I quickly ducked and hid behind the bookcase. But, the couple was so captivated by each other that the warning was only to add in the foreplay.

“I bet you’d love that.”

We returned in our previous positions and…God! That was too much.

Just when the blond started pulling down Levi’s boxers, I had my hand in Jean’s wrist, leading him away.

He didn’t fully follow until I yanked him and began walking.

Of course, after what we had witnessed there was no way we could concentrate in order to study! And definitely not on the same floor as our professors. Not while they were…

“It was so fucking weird to watch it!” Jean said as soon as we were out of the library.

“It was like watching your uncles getting some action.” He admitted and I groaned.

“Jean?!? Gross!” he only shrugged.
“And you little perv, you couldn’t stop looking.” I looked at him and raised an eyebrow.

“It was weirdly captivating.”

“Please, stop talking.” I begged and we burst into laughter.

We spent the rest of the day in the Garrison, half studying and half fooling around. It was much needed.

The sun had set for a long time when we found ourselves returning in our dorm.

We arrived and changed into our night clothes and settled in our bed in each other’s arms.

This was my first sleepless night.

Three of them followed.

One even worse than the previous.

I wanted to scream and my head hurt like it had a beehive inside it.

But no matter what I did, I could not sleep!

Noon naps kinda did the trick but my restless body and mind were quickly taking a toll on me.

Fuck insomnia!

The fifth night of my sleepless horror, Jean woke up in the middle of the night. His hand was numb and needed to shift his position.

I could almost see his eyes widening when he realized I was not sleeping. Sure, he knew I wasn’t sleeping well the last few days, but he didn’t know I was not sleeping at all.

“You are awake.” He stated.

“Apparently.” I mocked.

“Can’t sleep tonight?” he rubbed his arm to shake the numbness out of it.

“Tonight, and the day before, and before, and be-”

“Why didn’t you say anything?” he cut me short.

“Didn’t want you to worry and even if you knew, what could you have done?” I huffed.

“My mom is insomniac, too. I know some tricks.” His voice sounded hurt.

“Kay, next time, then.” Why was I lashing out at him?

“Marco…I just want to help.” He placed his hand on my chest, right above my beating heart.

“Well, you can’t right now…So you’d better sleep for both of us.”

“Marco…” his hand was now trailing down to my stomach and found its way under my shirt. He knew how relaxing it was for me to feel him trailing my body, to feel his soft hands following the shape of my torso and my love handles.
His touch had so much power over me. But, tonight his magic was not quite working.

“Feeling better now?” he whispered after his hands had trailed my body more than enough times to put me to sleep any other night.

“I feel empty and hollow. My head is fucking hurting so much I’d rather have it split into two, so no!” I spat and his hands were drawn away from my body.

Aaand I had fucked up.

Jean got up and shuffled around our room.

Was he leaving?

“Get up!” he ordered.

Was he kicking me out?

“What?” my voice was now much softer. So much of being a cranky bully now, eh Marco?

“I said” he paused and added more firmness in his voice. “Get up!”

He tossed me a sweatshirt and a pair of jeans.

I followed his order and got up; quickly wearing the clothes he had tossed me.

“Come on.” The sound of his keys echoed in the room. “Let’s go.”

“Huh?” I was still worried about whatever we were doing right now.

“You are spiraling and you are cranky as hell. You need to empty your head.” He let me know.

“Spiraling?”

“Yeah. Don’t think I haven’t seen how anxious and stressed you are. I thought it’d be better not to address it since, you know, you have Felicity and therapy, but she called to let me know you canceled for this week because of the exams. I knew that was the last straw.” He sighed.

“Sorry.” I mouthed.

“What for?” I could sense the surprise in his voice.

“For lashing out, for canceling therapy, for being an obnoxious dick.”

He laughed and reached for my face in the dark. He placed one hand on my cheek and the other on my chest.

“Don’t be silly, love. It’s fine. I was an obnoxious dick through the whole high school and yet, you still stood by my side. I can handle a few days.” He kissed my lips and smiled in our kiss.

“As for Felicity, she was only checking up on you and making sure you are okay. I told her you are handling it and she admitted she knew you would.”

“But I am not?!”

“Nah, you are doing fine! And we only have a week left!” he kissed me again.
“So, let’s go!” he ordered again. “You need to punch something.”

I let out a surprised sound “And where are we going?”

“To Eren’s.” he simply said.

“Jean, I know you dislike each other, but I am not punching Eren!”

He burst into laughter and I stood there dumbfounded, waiting for him to explain.

“No, you dork! Eren has a training room full of punching bags in his house!”

I let a silly “Ah!” in understanding and he chuckled some more.

I glimpsed at the alarm clock. ‘3.00’ it showed.

“But, it’s the middle of the night!”

“I just texted him and he said it’s fine.” Jean’s hand found mine and we were off to Eren’s.

Let me tell you something.

Punching things is either some sort of a spiritual experience or I was too sleep-deprived that it felt like it.

I don’t know how much time had passed, but I was a sweaty, panting mess when my knees buckled and I knew that my body had enough.

Eren let us stay for the night, fearing I would catch a cold if I tried to reach the dorm in my state.

“We have much more rooms than we need, after all. It won’t be a problem.” He let us know and showed us to our room for the night.

“Let me help you shower.” Jean hugged my sticking torso and I tried to shoo him away…to no avail.

“Okay.” I finally gave in.

We stripped from our clothes and he entwined our fingers as we made our way to the bathroom.

Jean filled the bathtub and sat inside. “Uh! The water is fiiiine!” he motioned me to join him, and I gladly did.

He reached for the shampoo, pouring some in his hand and then he began softly massaging my throbbing head.

I relaxed under his touch and let him take care of me.

That night I had the best sleep of my life.

Thankfully, the rest of the midterms passed quickly or at least that’s how it felt like to me. I cannot even begin to describe how different it was having Jean by my side like that. It made me wonder if things could have been totally different if I had trusted him with my struggles earlier on, when it wasn’t that dark in my mind yet and when my heart wasn’t that heavy and clouded.

I knew that these thoughts didn’t matter, but I always loved daydreaming and the scenarios, which
sprawled around me, were infinite. I was glad I told him. I still am glad for everything he has done for me and he makes sure to remind me he feels the same.

I trusted the timing in my life. The way I see it, every hardship and every joyful moment, every failure and every success shaped you for the next step in your life. We were puzzles, collages, of all of our moments and memories and each one of them fueled us further in life.

I smiled as I finished packing my things for the winter break. I was so deep in thought I didn’t even realize I had gathered everything I wanted.

We would spend some time with our families, but the New Year’s Eve we would be alone in Jean’s family cabin in the woods outside Trost. To say I was giddy and excited would be an understatement.

“Ready to go, love?” Jean asked from our living room and instead of replying I grabbed my bag and joined him. He had his back turned on me so he made my ambush even easier. I snaked my free hand around his waist and pulled him towards my body. Jean let out the cutest sound of surprise as he felt himself tumbling backward. I wasted no time and began my attack! I nuzzled his neck and pressed many kisses on his flushed cheeks. When I was satisfied with how flustered he was, I graced him with a reply, “Now, I am.”

“Is that so? You sly lil shit.” Jean chuckled and ruffled my hair.

We said our ‘goodbye’s and then we parted. It felt weird returning home after what happened the last time, but I was glad that both of my brothers were coming as well.

The trip to Jinae was so tranquil that almost reminded me of the haziness of a dream. Everything was covered in soft snow and everyone was inside their houses enjoying the warmth of the fireplace and their family’s gathering.

When we reached the shore I was mesmerized. The golden-brown sand was now bright white that almost hurt to look at, and the sea was deep gray-blue but calm and only now and then a small wave crashed on the shore, blue melting into white.

My parents picked me up and I felt like I was 5 years old again; me on the backseat and my parents in front of me. My restless soul kept me fidgeting from one window to the other as I tried to take in every decoration in Jinae, the same old Christmas songs playing from the radio and my parents talking about gift wrappings and marshmallows. Bliss.

There were moments in life that felt too good to be true. I was deeply thankful for them and I cherished every passing second.

Imagine how happy I was, how truly happy and loved I felt when this feeling followed me home and carried on for all of my staying.

Irene was the first to greet me home, her belly now was showing a little and she pressed my hand upon her bump. “Feel it! Oh, Marco! Can you sense the little one?” her eyes were a bit misty and I guess mine were too. She always got emotional when she spoke of her “baby bean” as she called her baby.

Arthur followed soon after, the look on his face had changed…I believe I could see how proud he was to expect the baby, how proud he was to be a father. But, the mischief I loved so much on my brother, shone deep in his eyes still.

That night Aimée asked me to sleep in her bed. It was something we did when she was little and
our brothers had just left for college. She didn’t like feeling alone…nor did I. So, I spent almost every night of their first semester away in her bed, under the blurry yellow stars in her ceiling.

“What’s the occasion, squirrel?” I asked her as soon as we were deep under the covers, she laughed and I realized how much I missed this sound.

“I missed you, silly. Also, I wanted us to talk. You know, as we did before.” I couldn’t see her face but I bet she was looking at me with a wide smile and starry eyes. She was like a ray of sunshine, my sister. Her freckles only added in her charm.

“Oh, I missed you, too.” I found her nose in the dark and pressed it softly, her giggle made me smile. “Do you want me to tell you a story as we did?”

“No. I love your stories, Marco, but tonight I am the one to tell a story.” Her little arms snaked around my waist and her face was buried in my arms.

“There was once a boy. A lovely boy. He was charming and he was like the Sun. Everyone loved him and he was so kind and helpful to the others that it really came as a natural to like him. He had the night sky in his face and for that the evil spirits envied him.” She paused, but when I didn’t react she carried on.

“They sent their best soldiers to cloud the boy’s mind, to confuse him and to make his starry face wither.”

Was she…?

“The boy was taken aback from the darkness in his mind. He was stunned and the spirits thought they won. His eyes filled with darkness and his soul was now afraid as the spirits whispered lies to him, making him believe he was unlovable, unworthy of good and a burden.”

How did she know? Did mom tell her?

“But, the boy was strong and he had his people around him, too. And so he fought and fought. He earned his wounds but he earned his freedom, as well. The boy grew brighter again and he started believing his loved ones, he started believing in himself again.” She nuzzled me and embraced me tighter.

“But, the spirits’ work always left some residue behind. He would have some darkness inside of him forever. But, little did the boy care now that he knew how loved he was. He knew and trusted that when the time came to face it again, he could count in himself and in his loved ones to prevail once more.” her tone was cheery and she meant every word.

We stayed in silence for a while. I didn’t know what to say to her.

Should I apologize for making her worry? Should I thank her for her love? Should I promise her I would always fight?

I didn’t know.

So, I kept silent.

“Marco.” When she spoke I gasped. “We are here for you. I am sorry we didn’t pay attention earlier. I am sorry mom didn’t believe you. But, I am glad you fought and keep fighting. I love you, silly. Always and forever.” I melted in her embrace.
“Thank you.” was all I could muster…but, it was enough.

How the days went by I still didn’t know. It was like a dream indeed.

My mother was at first cautious around me. As if she was treading in a landmine. But, day by day she saw how much my therapy sessions had paid off so far and she was happy we could speak again like when I was a child. That’s when I understood how much I had missed her.

“Did you pack everything?”

“Yes, ma.” I smiled, wearing the straps of my bag and kissing her forehead.

“And be careful! Will it be secluded? Will you have others around?” she was worried as if we hadn’t gone through this so many times the past few days.

“Mama! It’s a cabin just out of Trost! The closest supermarket is just 1km away and the cabin itself has every comfort! Do not worry! We will be more than fine.” I promised.

“Oh, of that I am sure.” She wiggled her eyebrows and I hoped that earth would swallow me whole.

She laughed and let me go.

I kissed them all ‘goodbye’ and entered the train station.

Jean was waiting for me inside; he insisted on traveling all the way to Jinae so we could enjoy the trip together.

“Baby!” he rushed to me and kissed me many times. “Hey.” My voice was lower than usual so I could tease him.

“I missed you so much! Alicia and Ben send their greetings!”

“Oh, me too, sweetie. Aims missed you too and Irene sends warm hugs.”

Jean’s face brightened when I mentioned these two. “How is the little chipmunk? And the baby?”

I let him know as we made our way to our wagon.

“How are things at home?” I passed my arm around his shoulder and brought him closer.

“Better than I could have ever thought! My parents brought their partners at the Christmas dinner so we could meet them. They are actually pretty cool. It was a bit weird at first but my parents are content and their partners are more than understanding. Alicia and Ben told me how bizarre this whole thing is but I think they got used to it by now. For me, it will take some time but I will get there.” He let me know and I kissed his cheek.

“I am glad! Now, let’s head to our winter wonderland”

Jean fell asleep on my shoulder as soon as the train started moving and I enjoyed having him so close, taking in as much of his warmth and scent I could. I must have fallen asleep as well, only waking up when the train reached its destination and Jean stirred underneath me.

His eyes fluttered open and smiled sheepishly at me, “Shall we?” he offered me his hand after grabbing his bag. I nodded and our fingers entwined as he led the way.
When we got outside I marveled the view…

It felt like stepping into some fairytale! Trees, so tall that looked like they touched the sky, were all around us, heavy under the snow that covered their branches. The train station was made of stone, giving off a warm picturesque feeling. “You like it that much, love?” Jean kissed my cheek and I realized my mouth was gaping open. I closed it and felt my cheeks warming up, “I really do.”

Jean’s cabin was close to the station so we walked in silence, hand in hand, as I took everything in. “Your childhood holidays must have been a dream.” I returned my gaze to him and caught him looking. His gaze to me was matching the look I gave in our surroundings, stunned and amazed. I felt a floating sensation in my stomach and to add to the effect, his gaze didn’t shift or change. “They were.”

“Not as dreamy as you though.”

Cheesy and flirty as ever. I chuckled and Jean smiled innocently.

We reached the cabin which matched the fairy tale tone of the rest of the place, as it was made of wood and stone and although it was fairly new it seemed like one of these old, kind of mystical cabins a lost hero would find in their adventures deep in the woods.

I imagined Jean as a druid living in the cabin and brewing his herbs and feeding the animals of the forest. It would really suit him.

“I feel I could live here forever!” I exclaimed as soon as we were inside.

“Then, we should!” Jean was quick to answer and I looked at him with eyes wide open.

“Really?”

“Yeah! I mean, I cannot imagine me being with anyone else but you…and I like it here. It is peaceful and we are surrounded by nature. You love it here and you love me as well. I really can’t find a catch in this.”

“Oh, okay.” I felt my cheeks flush once again and Jean chuckled.

“What did you think, silly? We are going to spend our lives together.” He promised with a kiss.

“I didn’t know your mind rushed as much as mine does.”

“I am not rushing!” he feigned being offended. “I just know it.” He returned to his flirty tone.

“Okay, then, smooth talker. What’s in the program for today?”

“Uhhh, there is a lot of snow out there so walking around might be a bit difficult. We can take a warm bath, the tub is pretty big! Or I can see if I can get the fire burning.” He motioned to the fireplace behind me. “We got central heat of course, but it just adds in the winter-y cuddly feeling.”

“How about we take that walk anyway?” I offered.

“You really fell for this place, didn’t you?” he gave a tug to my sleeve, motioning me to follow him further down the cabin.

“I think you wear the same shoe size as my dad…Lemme find the boots.”

He soon handed me over a pair of boots for the snow and he wore his as well. They were very
uncomfortable because they felt as if my leg didn’t bend under the knee but I could manage the weird feeling if that meant I could enjoy time with my sweetheart.

“Ready?” he hopped up, probably being used to the feeling after all these years spending his holidays here.

“Yup!” I tried to get up but I wiggled and plopped back to the couch to the sound of Jean’s laughter.

“I forgot how weird it must feel to try them for the first time.” He walked towards me and offered me his hand.

I gladly took it and his other hand found its way to my waist, offering me the support I needed to get up.

“Theeere you go!” Jean smiled triumphantly.

“You think you can try walking?”

I nodded and took the first step. I could do this…weird, but doable.

I took another step and then more and soon Jean let me go and I tried walking by myself, quickly taking the hang of it.

“Yay, baby! You are a natural!” he cheered.

“Jean! They are only shoes.” I rolled my eyes and he stuck his tongue out in response.

“Let’s go!” Jean walked to the door, and opened it, waiting for me to walk outside.

The cold air hit my face and I felt so alive I could almost scream. This is why I loved autumn and winter so much. Rain, snow, cold air. All of them stimulated my senses in such a way that reminded me I was alive. Alive and still breathing.

I took a deep breath and smiled at the snow-covered scenery.

Jean’s hand got mine and we made our way around the cabin.

I quickly took the hang of it and managed walking by myself in the snow too. But, Jean’s hand never left mine as he showed me around the woods.

I closed my eyes, trying to burn everything of this day deep into my brain so I could never forget not even a second of it.

When I opened them again, Jean was nowhere to be seen.

Oh, I knew.

I quickly scanned my surroundings, but of course, he could hide really well.

Okay, then. It’s on.

I crouched down and took a handful of snow, shaping it into a snowball, my eyes never stopping looking all around me.

And then something shuffled.
Gotcha!

I made two big steps towards the bush and then one third to the left. Of course, the bush was a distraction!

I threw my snowball two bushes next to the one that had moved and heard an ‘oof’, to that I started giggling and Jean emerged from the bush with his snowball in hand.

I ducked when he threw it, avoiding it successfully. I got up but then a new snowball was making its way towards me, this time hitting me straight to my face.

Jean began laughing hard and I soon joined him.

I ran away from him so I could make more snowballs, but he followed, and soon the fight was abandoned and we were chasing each other instead.

I trailed a bit farther and then it’s when I felt the ground giving in and the snow sucking me whole.

“Fuck!” I screamed and Jean quickly ran to me.

“You okay, sweetheart?” the worry obvious in his voice.

“Yeah, I’m fine. I didn’t hurt anything by falling but my pants are soaking wet.” I shivered.

“Come on! Let me help you.” He passed his hands underneath my armpits and started pulling me out of the hole I had fallen into.

We were soon lying in the snow, both suddenly very tired from our trip and our antics.

“This calls for the hottest bath!” Jean groaned and got up. I moaned in agreement.

We made our way to the cabin by continuing our snowball fight and racing each other back in.

“You go get cleaned and warmed up, and I will prepare the fire and some food for us to eat.” Jean took off his gloves and helped me take off my boots.

“Alright.” I gifted him a kiss on his red nose and made my way upstairs.

I stripped off my soaking wet clothes and I grimaced in disgust as the wet cloth stuck on my skin. But, soon I was under the steaming hot water and everything was much, much better!

I enjoyed my shower and joined Jean in front of the fireplace.

“You took a shower, too?” I looked at his damp hair in disbelief.

Jean just shrugged “Yeah, we have two bathrooms. You know, how else could my parents manage with three really dirty kids?”

I chuckled and found my way beside him.

“Here is our gourmet dish for today, my dear!” Jean offered me my sandwich.

“Thank you, love.” I kissed his cheek and began eating. God! I hadn’t even realized how hungry I was!

“You are not cold or anything, right?” Jean managed between his munches.
“No, no. That shower was all I needed.” I reassured him and he smirked.

“All you needed, huh?” he got up and got our plates.

“So, I guess I better cancel what I had in mind for later.” He walked away feigning disappointment but unable to hide the mischief in his eyes.

“Ugh, yeah. Sorry for being a bummer but after that shower…I don’t know what could be better.” I played along.

“Oh, you don’t?” Jean returned with two glasses of wine.

“No…?” I took a sip of my wine.

“Perhaps, I could show you then.” He placed his hand under his chin as if he was deep in thought.

“Perhaps, you should…” I lowered my voice since I knew how crazy it drove Jean, and there he was, his head snapping towards me and his eyes looking at me, pupils full-blown with lust.

He grabbed my hand and I barely got to leave my glass on the table before my butt was hitting the floor.

Jean was already straddling me and to say I was stunned would be an understatement.

“Jean…” his lips were on mine, preventing me from further interrupting and I eagerly complied.

He moved to my neck and he found my weak spot. He gently sucked it in and a moan escaped my lips as my whole body shivered.

“God! You make the most beautiful sounds.” He whispered and sucked the spot again now adding a bit of a bite.

“Je…Fuck! Jean, if you continue…we won’t…”

He chuckled and his lips returned on mine, at the same time tugging my shirt. I broke the kiss and we quickly discarded our shirts.

“I wanted to get some action on the faux fur carpet in front of the fireplace since I was a snotty teen.” He confessed and I laughed.

My hands trailed on his body, his warmth making me shiver. I placed kisses all around his torso and now it was his turn to squirm under my touch.

“Marco…” was more like an exhale than a word; my name was so natural to him like a breath.

I felt my dick twitching, still covered under too many layers to be comfortable. Jean, as if he had read my mind, moved and the friction made me wince in pleasure.

“Less clothes, now.” I growled and Jean looked at me, pleased at the mess I was.

“Feisty, aren’t we?” he got up to his knees in order for us to get rid of our pants, too.

“I want you.” He whispered to my ear as he returned to his previous position.

“You want to drive me insane, tonight.” I was in despair…and he was teasing too much.
He only smiled and made me lie down as he touched and kissed all over my body.

I felt euphoric and closed my eyes as I finally felt my whole body being exposed to the warmth of the room.

“I love you.” Jean reminded me and he rubbed our dicks together, our moans echoing in the room.

“Jean…stop teasing.” I managed and he finally let me have it my way.

He curled up next to me as we shifted our positions, giving me the upper hand.

But, I was much more merciful than him or much more desperate...

I reached for the lube that had now appeared on the table and covered my fingers in it.

I pressed a kiss on Jean’s stomach as I entered the first one. He twitched both from the coolness of it and the pleasure.

“Keep…keep going.” He let me know and I entered a second finger, now curling and uncurling them inside him.

“Shit!” his dick was already dripping and I leaned in and licked the head. Jean’s hips involuntarily bucked up as he moaned my name. My dick was by now throbbing and I entered the third and final finger quickly as Jean practically sobbed underneath my touch.

“I am ready. God, I am ready! Just get inside me.” He begged and I couldn’t keep my sweetheart waiting.

I raised his hips and rested them on my thighs, so I could have better access to him and then I guided myself in him. We both gasped in unison as he took me fully in, staying still for a moment as we enjoyed the new wave of pleasure.

I leaned in and placed my forehead upon his, as I started moving. His eyes were closed and his breath hitched. I placed my hand on his cheek as I picked up my pace.

His eyes fluttered open and met mine. He smiled and then moaned again. I felt him clenching my dick “Jean…”

His arms found their way around my shoulders as he pulled me closer, our eyes in a never-ending gaze.

“I love you, I love you, I love you…” he mouthed as I moved and I could feel his dick becoming harder after my every move.

“I...ugh...I love you, too.” I gripped his hips and started thrusting harder and faster, forcing him to close his eyes and scream my name.

“I...fuck...so close…”

At this point I was losing it too so I let my body take control. I thrust once more, a bit harder than before and his gasp followed.

There was no coming back now just a mess of screams of pleasure and pants feeling the room.

We both came undone and I swear I could see stars as we rode down our high.
I got up to throw the condom and cleaned Jean up before plopping down beside him, still breathless and flushed dark red.

“So much better than my shitty teen fantasies.” He confessed and I rolled closer, kissing him softly.

“You should keep that pace, too. You almost fucked my brains out.”

“Almost?” I cocked an eyebrow. “I guess I’ll have to try again.”

“Oh, definitely!” his arms pulled me closer and I rested my head on his chest.

“We should get a blanket or move upstairs…” I shivered after a while.

Jean pointed a blanket resting upon the armchair and I quickly covered us up, settling again in Jean’s arms.

We let the sounds of the wood burning and the fire crackling lull us to sleep.

I woke up to the sound of Jean washing the plates and making coffee. A smile formed in my lips as I got up.

“Oh, you are up!”

“Morning!” I reached his hand and pulled him close.

“Good morning to you, too!” he kissed me.

“Go get dressed and then we can exchange our gifts!” he let me know and I nodded.

I moved upstairs and shuffled through my stuff to find his gift and new clothes. I finished my morning routine and joined my boyfriend downstairs. Pancakes were gracing the table and so was warm coffee and hot chocolate.

“You are spoiling me.” I admitted to the sight of his preparations.

“Nah, you deserve it.” He smirked and his eyes shone brightly with satisfaction.

“Thank you.” I sat down and placed the wrapped gift on the table. There I saw a small wooden box in front of Jean’s seat.

Curiosity peaked inside of me.

“Is that my gift?” he asked pointing at the packet and I nodded.

“Happy holidays, love.” I held it to him.

“Here you go!” he handed me the box. “Happy holidays to you, too!”

I waited for him to open my gift and I was glad to see how much he liked the shirt I had picked for him.

“Since you are an intern now, I figured you will have to wear shirts quite a lot.”

“Oh, indeed. It will be a pain but if they come from you I will gladly wear them every day!” he brought the shirt on his chest and hugged it tightly. “Thank you!”

“Now, open yours!” he said excitedly.
I untied the ribbon and then slowly opened the box. No!

“No way!” I whispered and his eyes shone even brighter, matching his wide smile.

“Jean…” I looked at it and then at him “I love it!”

Inside the box rested a locket.

A beautifully carved locket. It’s exterior was carved like a compass and in the middle, there was a shiny blue stone. I had always wanted a locket and I didn’t even know Jean would remember this.

“Open it.” He sounded impatient and so I followed his urge.

Inside there was one of my favorite photographs in the whole world!

It was us! When we were in high school, a band Jean liked a lot was touring in Trost and of course we had to go! Right next to the arena they were going to perform, there was a fair. I had earned Jean a pin of a lion’s head, which he always wore in his jacket and he had earned me a star rubber keychain which I always kept in my keys.

Before the concert began, there were fireworks at the fair. We both had our arm over the other’s shoulder and looked at them mesmerized. After the firework show ended a photographer approached us and gave us two copies of the photo she had taken of us enjoying the show.

This picture was now inside my locket. Our smiles making my heart skip a beat and the memories making my eyes watery.

“Thank you!” I mouthed and Jean was scarlet by now

“I… I am glad you like it…” he scratched his neck and flashed me a smile.

“I love it! I will never take it off!” I reached out to wear it but Jean was already beside me to help me.

“And the compass, too. Always leading my heart to you.” I marveled how beautiful it looked around my neck.

“To us.” Jean added and kissed me deeply.

“To us.” I promised back.

Chapter End Notes

Much love to my dear @YunoGasai98, who now knows the whole plot and gives me more ideas on how to enhance it! According to my plans, the fic is going to be 20 chapters long + 1 epilogue so we have a sweet bumpy ride ahead of us! Till next time!!

sk_elene

p.s. Marco with his locket: https://www.instagram.com/p/Bz2PHKZIS1u/
Waves

Chapter Summary

“Healing comes in waves
and maybe today
the wave hits the rocks
and that’s ok,
that's ok, darling
you are still healing
you are still healing.”

― Ijeoma Umebinyuo, Questions for Ada

Chapter Notes

We are entering our final arc now! I honestly can't believe it!
Enjoy!
Song for the Chapter: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKlgCk3IGBg

I had been an intern at Erwin's company for almost a month and a half now. To say I knew the whole building like the back of my hand would be an understatement. He had taken an instant liking to me for some reason I couldn’t even imagine, but I didn’t complain. I enjoyed it. He trusted me, and that’s why he chose to send me to the other floors to check if the tasks he had given to the others were complete or if I could offer some insight to my superiors.

It made me feel important…well, it made me feel worthy. I never knew that a day like this would come. When you are told ever since you were a child that you need to focus more, not to let your mind run wild and to just do whatever task you are given…it makes you feel like you are stupid. Why can’t you just focus? Why have you been reading the same paragraph…No, scratch that…the same sentence for over an hour?

But, even your distraction levels are not enough for them to diagnose you with anything that will explain your lost train of thought and your lack of persistence on focusing on anything. So, you must be stupid, really…

So you keep doing you…You read what you want to read, you learn what you want to learn and you only try a bare minimum at school…Marco helped, I am not going to lie. He and his study sessions, his deep belief in me and my abilities. Sometimes a person is all it takes…And yeah, my family was always by my side ect., ect., but when someone else, someone who is not bound to being with you by law and who doesn’t have to love you unconditionally, believes in you the way he believed in me…That changes you.

I don’t think he even understands it. How much he has helped me through these years…hell, maybe even I can’t grasp completely his importance in my life.
Oh, look at me! I was only thinking how well I have adapted in this place and my thoughts trailed completely off their railings…What a surprise!

But, yeah…having others seeing your worth brings a fluttery feeling in your chest and then swelling pride. Pride not that much for yourself, well, yeah, that too, but most importantly for the others who believed in you from the beginning.

Every evening I returned from the office…look at me, all adult and stuff…Marco was waiting for me and he gladly listened to my venting or my stories. He would smile and his eyes would be filled with stars as he told me how proud he was for me and how much he loved me between our kisses.

My anxiety ceased a bit as well…Perhaps, I got used to buses and to people so it doesn’t phase me that much anymore. I still get panicky when I have to catch the bus on the rush hours, but music helps, Marco helps, even my own thoughts help sometimes.

I often think back to the beginning of this year…Hell, so many things happened and we are still halfway here! I am no longer the scared kid I was when it all begun, I am not that self-centered as well. My parents’ divorce seemed like the end of the world back then, but now I casually have dinners and brunches with them and their new partners. I was thinking about how my life would change and how much it would suck, while I ignored how much better their lives would be. When they smile, now, I can see the sincerity behind it. It makes me happy too.

The world…the future…doesn’t seem that terrifying anymore. Not with Marco by my side. He changed too, and that’s another thing I don’t think he understands or notices. Perhaps, because for him this process is highly internal, but I can see he is doing better. My brave boy.

A smile graced my lips as I paced towards our dorm and then a poster caught my eye.

“Medieval Fair In Trost”

Well, wouldn’t that be interesting! It would be a good opportunity to catch up with the others as well. It’s been at least two weeks since we all saw each other.

And as if in a creepy queue my phone rang.

“Well, well, well! To what do I owe the pleasure?”

“Cut the bullshit, Kirschtein.” Ymir’s voice boomed to my ear and I only laughed in response.

“I don’t know if your ass saw that a Medieval Fair will take place in the Old Castle on the weekend…”

“I was just-”

“DON’T cut me off, Kirschtein! Ok…so my sweetheart loves these kinds of things so we are obviously going…”

Ymir sounded…nervous? Was that even a thing?

“Ymir?” her silence was becoming awkward now.

“Iamgoingtoproposetoher, okay?” she blurted out and my eyes widened and then a chuckle escaped my lips.

“Ohhhhh….”
“Please, shut up.” Ymir was probably a flustered mess in the other line and honestly only Krista had this effect on her.

“You need any help?”

“No, no. I got everything covered, Jean. Just…just be there. You and Marco both. Don’t make me bully you into being there, ‘cause honestly, I have much better things to do. But, you two…just come, okay?” Wow, even Ymir had changed. Love does that to you, I suppose. Love and hardships overcome.

“Of course, Romeo. We are going to be there. We wouldn't miss it for the world…” I promised and her huff was enough to let me know she believed me.

“And Ymir…”

“What?” she barked, waiting for me to tease her.

“You know she will say ‘yes’, right?”

“This is what terrifies me…” she sighed and hung up.

I quickly ran up to our dorm and unlocked the door.

“You will never believe-Marcos?”

He was sitting on the couch, his phone clutched in his hand, with his eyes misty.

“Hey, hey. Baby, what happened?” I quickly made my way towards him, taking his hand in mine.

“Did Ymir call you?” he only asked to which I furiously nodded.

“I am so happy for them!” he gave me a bright smile and that’s when the pieces got together.

“Oh, sweetheart, I know. Me too, me too.” I hugged him tight and he chuckled.

“We need to plan what to wear as well.” He let me know as I cupped his cheek and placed soft kisses on his face.

“Whatchu mean? A pair of jeans, a jacket-”

“Jeeaan! It’s a thematic fair!” he cut my listing of the perfect outfit.

“So?”

“So, we need to dress up as Medieval people would. Ymir told me she will dress up as a black knight and honestly it would suit her perfectly! Krista is going as a princess or a queen, she hasn’t decided yet…So…what about us?” he smirked as my expression shifted to one of annoyance.

“You know I don’t like to dress up.”

“Yup!” his smirk turned into a grin. “But, you promised Ymir.”

“Fuuuck. Come on!” I threw my head to the side and Marco laughed heartily.

“It’s okay, big baby. I bet you’ll look stunning in Medieval clothing. You could go as the Master of the Horse and I could go as a herald.” He proposed.
“Really, Marco? Master of the Horse of all things?” I snorted and Marco giggled.

“No, no! I promise I am not mocking you! It was a really important role as well! And I bet you’d rock the outfit.” He retorted and I only shook my head.

“’Kay, fine. You pick the roles and I will oblige, milord.” I half-bowed and he pulled me down on the couch with him.

Ymir had let us know what her plan to propose was...It was very in her style and I couldn’t wait to see it before my eyes.

I fastened the belt of my costume and moved to the living room to see if Jean needed any help.

“Everything okay?” I asked and Jean quickly met my gaze with a desperate look.

“Do I really need the cape?” he whined.

“It adds to your flair.” I rested my arm to the counter and admired him in velvet green.

“It’s fucking heavy!!” he huffed, looking even more desperate, and the sight made me laugh.

“Alriiiiiight.” He gave in after a few minutes. “Only for you to continue to look at me like that.” He winked.

“I always look at you like that.”

“Don’t floor my arguments, dude.”

I laughed and moved closer to Jean in order to help him button up his cape, it was indeed heavy.

“Shall we?” I offered my arm to him and he rolled his eyes but gave in with a smirk.

The Fair was in the Old Castle of Trost, one of my most favorite places in the town...It was really as if you were walking back on time with each step you took. The walls were well preserved and they still bore the coats of arms from the Medieval Times.

Trost was one of the three fortresses of the area back then and despite the wars and battles it had faced, the castle had endured them well. There were some missing pieces and some ruins around the now-empty moat but overall it still was as imposing as the old times.

The Castle was not far away from the campus and often the students visited the small themed pubs in the old town or made out in the empty corners of the stone-paved streets.

“So, who else is going?” Jean broke the silence between us.

“I think Ymir persuaded everyone to come. She wants to go big and she wants everyone to see.”

“Persuaded is a kind word, Marco. It’s Ymir...she either bribed them off or threatened them in this.” Jean chuckled.

“Or they simply wanted to come, as we did.”

Jean dismissed my proposal with a wave of his hand and we kept walking for the Castle.

“Hey! Marco! Jean!” we heard a voice calling behind us and we turned around.
It was Armin along with Annie and a rather distracted Mikasa.

“Hey, Armin. Good to see you! Annie, Mikasa, you too!”

“It’s been quite a long time, hasn’t it? How are you, guys?” Armin asked.

“Oh, just peachy…Uhm, is Mikasa okay?” I whispered the last bit leaning close to him.

Armin sighed, but a small smile formed on his lips. “We lost Eren somewhere around here and Mikasa believes he is going to get himself in a fight…But, he is really looking for an anniversary gift for Mikasa, so don’t worry.” He winked and I nodded.

“Let’s continue our walk to the Castle. It’s almost seven and Ymir wants us all to be in the main square in half an hour.” Armin offered and we all agreed.

Armin was dressed much like Jean in velvet. But his velvet clothes were a deep blue that matched his eyes and it made him look like a prince. He had his hair braided to the side; probably Annie’s work and his eyes glinted underneath the light of the lampposts. I could tell he was really excited about what was to come.

Annie was much more composed but she was smiling as she talked with Jean. Her dress was a soft tone of deep pink or purple with embroidered flowers that sparkled as she walked. She had her hair down and her bangs to the side, clipped with a flower-shaped brooch.

“Annie’s dress is a real dress from the Middle Ages.” Armin let me know as if he had read my thoughts. “Well, not the actual dress, but the pattern. Her grandmother had a portrait of one of her distant relatives from back then and she loved this dress since she was a little child.”

“Wow…this is amazing, really! It really suits her as well!”

“Don’t I know?” Armin replied dreamily as he looked at her and I smiled at the sight.

Mikasa was wearing a dress made from chain mail and she looked badass as ever, with each step the chain rattled and her boots thudded, she was really a head-turning sight.

I mouthed ‘wow’ to Jean and he nodded in agreement.

The Castle appeared before us after we took the last turn and we easily spotted Sasha and Connie in the nearest canteen. Connie was dressed…colorfully. I could see on his clothes colors I didn’t even know that existed and I was sure that if I stared long enough I would get myself a headache.

“Guys!” Sasha waved, her mouth half-full, but not for long, as she shoved more food as soon as she finished her phrase.

She was wearing a simple white dress with long bell-sleeves and a brownish-red chemise that tied in a crisscross in her chest. She had her hair pulled back in a French braid which was decorated with some flowers along its length.

“We were waiting for you and since we got there a bit early we thought it’d be better for us to wait for you while eating.” Connie gulped down his last bite and wiped his hands clean. “Ready, babe?”

Sasha practically inhaled the last bits of their meal and then linked her arm with Connie’s.

We passed the main entrance which was illuminated with hundreds of fairy lights that flowed down like a waterfall, and we found Eren waiting for us inside.
“Took you long enough.” He chuckled and moved to Mikasa’s side. She began scolding him, and he kissed her in return. She didn’t continue her scolding, but she frowned with the look ‘I know you are hiding something, Jaeger’ in her face, to which he only caressed her hair in response.

He was wearing all black and his cape had feathers in its outline. His boots reached all the way up to his knees and he bore a coat of arms in his chest pocket. “My family line is old as this city, that’s why we have our coat of arms. I think we were barons or something. You should see how my brother geeks out when he talks about that.”

We had ten minutes left to reach the main square so we quickly paced towards the center of the old town, promising to return later to actually enjoy the fair.

As we rushed to our meeting point we caught a glimpse of Prof. Levi and his husband. Even they were dressed in appropriate costumes. Professor was wearing a deep purple knight outfit while Mr. Smith was fully dressed in armor and he even had a, hopefully fake, sword seethed in his belt.

We soon spotted Krista in the middle of the square, looking around a bit panicked.

“Hey, Krista! Everything ok?” Connie asked as soon as we were closer to her.

“Uhm, hi, guys. Everything was great, but then Ymir vanished and I get a bit…uhm, upset, when I am in a crowd.” She explained, relaxing a bit now that we were there.

“Do you want us to look for her?” Annie offered, but Krista shook her head. “No, no. I am sure she is just around the corner or pulling some prank.”

“I am glad you found me though. I was on the verge of panic.” She laughed nervously and smiled gratefully. She was wearing a beautiful pink dress with embroidered green vines and a beautiful necklace with a shining red rose.

“Isn’t Reiner and Bertl with you?” Eren piped in.

“No…we were to meet here, but they got late…If you ask me, it’s probably because of the costumes.” She winked and I swear I saw Armin blush at the innuendo a bit too harshly.

And then, a guy dressed in full knight armor tapped Krista’s shoulder. The girl jumped and turned around to face him. He was much taller than her and his wide shoulders went up and down as he talked. “My fair lady, your astonishing beauty stole my heart. Could you please be mine for the night?” his voice boomed behind his helmet.

Krista took a step back and waved her hands. “I-I am sorry…I am here with my girlfriend actually. I am fl-flattered though.”

“I don’t see her around. It’s a pity leaving a radiant flower like yourself unattended.” He insisted.

“Oh, no!” Krista mouthed and took more steps back, knowing what was about to happen.

“That’s MY girlfriend you are talking to. Leave her alone, before I whoop your ass.”

“Oh, is that so? We will have a duel, then. For the fair lady’s hand.” His feet thudding with every
step he took towards Ymir. He was soon towering over her and Krista ran to prevent them from causing even more ruckus than they already had.

“There…there is no need. I am with Ymir. Please, leave.” She tried but Ymir’s eyes were illuminated by her anger and the other dude didn’t budge to give in to Krista’s pleading.

“It’s on.” Ymir hissed and the guy laughed.

We all gave them space to duel and poor Krista was begging us to do something to stop this madness.

The guy drew his sword, but Ymir didn’t have one. Neither of them seemed to care as they both screamed to each other and charged forward.

The knight lunged his sword forward and Ymir avoided him with ease. She used his speed for her benefit, as he lost his footing, she climbed his back and linked her arms around his neck. “Yield” she screamed.

“Never.” He snarled.

“You will regret it, bitch.” She yanked him backward and I swear if he lost his balance she’d be crushed underneath his weight.

“Please, stop!” Krista begged. “Why aren’t you doing something, damn it!” she turned to us, but we didn’t dare to move.

Ymir released the guy’s neck and got back to her feet. She was faster than him and she kicked his back, making him drop his sword in order not to fall face-first on the ground.

The sword clattered and Ymir jumped towards it. Quickly taking it in her hands and pointing it in the guy’s neck.

“Yield.” She said again, this time pronouncing each letter with extra venom.

The guy growled and Ymir moved the sword closer, frowning even more.

“Fine!” he finally spat and Ymir smirked victoriously.

Krista ran to her as she waited with open arms. “Ymir, you idiot! What the hell was that?” she punched her arm with all her might.

“Ouch, babe.” She pretended her punch hurt as she rubbed her arm.

“I was defending your honor.” She dropped the sword, making Krista wince at the clattering sound, and whipped her off the ground.

“As I will always do.” She promised as she looked at her girlfriend in her crystal blue eyes with a smitten expression.

She kissed the blonde and then let her back down, this time kneeling on the ground before her.

“Ymir? Are you hurt?” Krista tried to help her back up, but then she saw the box that Ymir held.

“Babe. My love. Light of my darkness. Angel of my dreams. Will you be mine forever? Will you marry me?” Ymir’s voice was in the sweetest tone I had ever heard and I could see that she was fighting back tears.
Krista gasped and Sasha grabbed my arm in anticipation.

“Ymir…” she knelt down before her and buried her head in the crook of the brunette’s neck. No one dared to move or breathe.

“A million times yes.” She finally replied, cupping Ymir’s face with her soft hands and planting as many kisses as she could.

Sasha was by now sobbing and Armin was wiping the tears away from his eyes. Everyone hugged their significant other as the girls before us glowed with happiness.

“Did you get it?” the knight asked towards the bushes and a red-eyed Bertl emerged.

“Oh, God. I did.” He knelt down to the knight and Krista looked very confused.

“Ymir! You didn’t!!” she patted her now fiancée’s head as Reiner removed his helmet.

“Did you all know?” she turned around and we all nodded. “Oh, God. You really are an idiot, Ymir. You know I’d take you even if you proposed me with a ring around a corndog stick, don’t you? You didn’t need to go Broadway level.” She said as they touched their foreheads and smiled at each other.

“I swear if you don’t propose to me with a corndog stick, I am not marrying you, Springer.” Sasha nudged Connie, making us all laugh.

“So…I booked the square just for us for the rest of the night, so just dance, eat and do whatever.” Ymir let us know. “I will be enjoying my sweet time with my future wife.”

Music started playing as she motioned the band to begin and took Krista by the hand.

“Let’s practice our wedding dance, babe.” She smiled her most genuine smile, and Krista nodded. The rest of the couples followed and even though I was overjoyed for my friends, I felt a strange wave of sadness washing over me.

“Do you want to-” Jean began. “Marco? What’s wrong? Are you feeling well?” he pressed his hand on my back and looked at me.

“No, not well. I feel tired.” I admitted I knew better than to fight this.

“Okay, let’s go.” He took my hand in his and led me wherever he wanted. The feeling was stronger now and I honestly didn’t care where we were going.

We arrived on a spot where there was a hole in the walls, the view of the city expanding before us. There was a bench there and surprisingly no other people around.

“Do you want to sit?” he asked softly and I nodded, feeling my knees weaken in every step. I think I barely made it to the bench…or perhaps I did because Jean held me.

“What’s happening, love?” he asked after some time.

“I don’t know…”

“What do you feel?”

How could I even begin to describe to him how I felt when the rush of every feeling I had ever felt
drowned me? Felicity called them ‘depressive episodes’. I called them ‘suffocating’.

“Marco? Does it hurt?” I could hear his hurt on his voice. I bet he was panicking inside. It’s been a good few weeks since I felt low and Jean hadn’t witnessed any of these episodes so far. The last time that happened I was drunk, freezing my ass off on our rooftop and he only found me when it had almost passed.

I felt as if guilt had clawed a deep cut on my heart.

“It…It does.” I had to let him know. I had to let this out, Felicity said I didn’t have to go through this alone and I had to trust the people around me. But, fear was constant in my mind. What if all of this got too much for them…for him?

Felicity told me it was unlikely, that I fought it well and that I didn’t show any kind of toxicity in our relationship. She told me we were just two human beings helping each other to stand on their feet. We had something profound and true.

These words were meant to console me, but they scared me even more.

But, despite my fear, I chose Jean. I chose to trust him and his strength.

“It feels like heaviness in my chest. Like I have a black hole instead of a heart, and it consumes everything around me. I feel everything and nothing all at once and it feels bad. My stomach ties in knots and I feel guilt washing over me without even knowing why I feel guilty for. For not being strong enough to hold it back? For not being able to fight it off? For how I will affect those around me with my mood swings? I don’t really know, but it’s there and it’s pulsing. I feel sadness. Sadness…no, that’s not quite it. I feel despair, and sadness and emptiness weighing me down, like an anchor around my heart.” I sobbed and Jean hugged me.

I had high hopes of being able to handle the next episode better after therapy, but the waves crashed the same against my soul.

“I am here.” He only whispered.

“I know.”

“Do you want to tell me more? If that helps…” one of his hands was rubbing my back soothingly and the other was interlaced with mine.

“I am scared of voicing these things out…I feel them, and, damn, I feel them deeply…but, actually forming the words with my lips, letting their sound out with my voice…it makes them real. It gives them importance and substance and now they exist in the outside world as well…” my voice would crack if I continued so I stopped, dragging a rasped breath.

“Maybe that’s what they need, Marco. Maybe, they need to be voiced and to be expressed. This emptiness, this void…it sounds dangerous to keep it all for yourself. You are my strong, beautiful boy but you don’t need to suffer so much nor alone. Let me listen to your darkness. I am not afraid of it. Hell! It’s a part of you, how could I ever be afraid of you?” Jean paused and I looked at him. He had tears in his eyes, but not out of sadness. I think he was angry. Not at me, I don’t think so…I think he was angry I had to face this.

He took the compass of my locket in his hands.

“Let me know you. Fully know you.” He looked at me. “Maybe all they need…all you need is to be listened to. I told you already and I will repeat it as many times you feel like you need it, love: I
am here. I am not leaving.” He pressed the compass on my chest, softly but firmly. As a reminder.

“Not now, not ever. You saw Ymir and Krista back there, right? They got through rough shit in the past, but they got through them together, didn’t they? We will do the same, love. I promise you for the both of us.”

“Jean…” I started.

“Marco…” he shushed me with a kiss. A simple soft kiss, to remind me of his everlasting presence, to seal his promise, to warn my darkness that he would fight as well.

We kept our silence for a while…it was a full moon tonight.

“You know…” I inhaled and sighed. “After therapy, I know all the tricks and the affirmations… and I know I need to take my vitamins and to sleep more than five hours. I really know what I need to do. And most of the times it comes off easily, like a routine. Sometimes it’s even working subconsciously…” it was hard admitting how tired I felt. Jean called me strong, but I yielded so many times.

“But…it’s so much easier to let it cover me, especially in times like this, when it comes like a wave, flooding my senses and my brain. It’s much more familiar to float on this numbness, and it’s not that tiring as actively fighting it out off my brain.” I heard him sigh…was he disappointed in me?

I faced him in order to understand. “When the waves are calling me, Jean, it’s so much easier to dive than to swim.”

He broke down in tears then, hugging me and clutching my shirt as his body rocked from the sobs.

I stood there, unable to move, to speak, to feel. I didn’t know what to do…It was like I was no more than a statue, I felt like this as well. Cold, unemotional, frozen in time and space.

“I am so, so sorry, love.” He finally managed.

I breathed in and out, in and out, and waited for him to continue.

“It’s so hard seeing you having to go through this. I am so proud of you for fighting this. I am so proud of you that you are trying your best.” His eyes met mine. He was crying his anger out, I could tell. He was so frustrated about being unable to do something. He hated feeling helpless and useless and that’s what I was making him feel.

“Marco…” he knew my thoughts.

“Don’t you ever blame yourself for me crying right now or I will beat your ass.” His sobs had almost ceased now.

“But, Jean…”

“Baby, understand this, please…you are not your mental illness. You are not what your mind tells you. I know you are a fighter and laying back a few times it’s fine because you gather more strength to move forward, okay? As you said sadness comes in waves…but, so does healing. Even if they hit the rocks some days, it’s okay. You are still healing. It’s a bumpy road, but you are still driving.”

“Okay.”
“Okay?” he blinked his tears away.

“Okay.” I promised back.

“I’m sor-”

“Marco Bodt! If you dare to apologize for feeling, I will not kiss you for the rest of the night!” and to that, I laughed.

“Thank you, sweetheart.”

“Anytime, silly.” He booped my nose and I smiled.

The feeling was still there, of course. Depression and the guilt it carries don’t disappear magically underneath the moonlight after a true love’s kiss like it does in Hollywood. They remain. They come back. And some days they take a break. But, at least having someone by your side made this a bit lighter. They helped to carry the weight.

“Marco?” Jean’s voice was now deeper; he was looking at the moon as he spoke. He did that when he felt the need to say something profound and raw to me. He took the courage from the sky and then he braved himself to look at me.

“Being with you feels natural, effortless as if my place was meant to be there, by your side. It feels…I know I am cliché as shit, but that’s how I feel…” his eyes burned, their amber color came alive like flames. “It feels like I have loved you since forever. Like we were part of the same star.”

“It does.” I kissed him.

“And I want you. I want you by my side until the sun bursts and consumes us all.”

“Until the end of the world, then. I will be by your side even longer, too.”

We kissed and kissed and kissed. These kisses fueling my will to fight, my will to make it better. I was doing better already and I could do even better for us.

“Let’s go back, now. Or Ymir will tell everyone we are banging.”

“But we are.” I shot back with a smirk.

“Not right now!” Jean blushed.

I laughed and let him guide me back to the party.

“Oh, look at that!” Ymir spotted us first and with a few big steps, she made her way to us.

“Our best men! They finally came back.” She easily placed her arms around our necks and pulled, bringing our faces way too close to hers, she was surely drunk.

“Best men?” I wondered.

Ymir’s eyes shot wide and her smile faltered…yep, she was wasted.

“Won’t you be our best men?”

“Are you seriously offering or you are so drunk that you make everyone your best man, Ymir?”
Jean tried to escape from her death grip…in vain.

“Jean, my dude! You are hurting me! I am not even that drunk! But, no, I am really offering and I’d want you as my best men as nothing else in the world…well, except marrying Krista, but these things will happen at the same day, so lucky me I guess.”

“Alright, then.” Jean accepted and looked at me. I nodded and Ymir finally let us go.

“That was…wild.” I said rubbing my neck.

“Understatement.” Jean laughed.

“I am going to get us some wine.” I offered and Jean nodded as he moved to the side to find an empty table for us to sit.

“I’d recommend the Bordeaux.” Annie surprised me as I was looking through the bottles.

“Oh, thank you!” I smiled in response and took the bottle in my hands.

“Ymir really outdid herself.” Annie was now facing the square, where Ymir ordered the band for Krista’s favorite song.

“She finally managed to make amends with Krista’s father. He kinda let her do her thing with this.” I motioned to the décor and the large buffet.

“I am glad!” she admitted. “I don’t know them as well as you do, but I can tell they deserve happiness. We all do.” She took a sip from her wine.

“Agreed.”

“We all do.” She repeated and placed a hand to my shoulder, pressing it softly, her warmth sending shivers down my spine, and with that, she left.

I shook my head and moved to the table Jean had chosen.

“Your wine, good sir.” I handed him his glass and he chuckled.

“Thank you very much, dear darling.” He faked a British accent…horribly.

I shook my head in disapproval and took a sip. Annie was right, it was delicious.

“I was going to give it to you later, but same difference, I guess.” Jean shuffled down his pockets and pulled out a folded paper. “Love you.”

I took the paper and unfolded it. It was…me. He had drawn me. I knew I had been the subject of many of his sketches, but it was the first time he showed me one of them, without me trying to peak as he sketched or because he had left his sketchbook open, but out of his own free will.

“Wow.” I muttered as I took every little detail in. He had softly connected the freckles on my chest, making it look like it was once broken and now it was slowly coming back together. Rays of light escaped from the inside of my chest and down in the right corner Jean had scribbled something. I moved it closer to the light and a gasp escaped my lips.

“Even if you have some cracks along your soul…” Jean began.

“That’s how your light comes out” his note read.
He brought our foreheads together and looked at me for some time until the need to kiss him became unbearable and I gave in eagerly.

Chapter End Notes

Oh, dear!
I...Thank you if you are still reading this story. It really means a lot!!
I will try to finish writing the remaining chapters before my Uni starts again so I can upload them at their time.
When I started writing this fic, I was in the process of healing an important amount of who I was and how I felt about myself. This started as an outlet for my thoughts and feelings because I have difficulty expressing them in real life. So I tore my soul in two and made these versions of Jean and Marco.
As the chapters continued, so did my life and I healed and healed and got hurt again. At one point, I felt this fic had lost its rawness, its honesty. It was all too domestic and easy. But, then I realized...so is life. It's not always hard to carry on either by yourself or with others by your side. Life is not always painted with tragic undertones and a storm of emotions. Life gets easier, more peaceful. These periods make the hard times bearable.
A huge thank you to @YunoGasai98 who is my amazing beta and best friend, and to the rest of the important people in my life!!
Till next time!!
Hostage

Chapter Summary

"Breathe
Keep breathing
Don't loose
Your nerve
Breathe
Keep breathing
I can't do this
Alone" - Radiohead, Exit Music (For A Film)

Chapter Notes

Here it is! The update of the month! I hope you like it as much as I do!
tw guns, robbery, shooting, blood
Enjoy!
Songs of the chapter: "Exit Music (For A Film", by Radiohead and "Hostage, by Billie Eilish
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50rlHVe6g9Q
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9sUkJry_XA

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The wedding preparations were moving so smoothly that it almost seemed like it was a casual get-together for the whole group.

Krista knew exactly what she wanted since, as she let me know, she started planning this moment after her third date with Ymir, back on our high school days; and Ymir was more than happy to let Krista have it her way. She only put one condition, to wear black. Krista had agreed and winked at me, letting me know she had also predicted this.

Krista’s dress was the same dress her mother had worn. Pastel pink with embroidered flowers, true princess style. Ymir had chosen one black dress that reminded me of a greek priestess, as its sleeves hung loose around her arms.

Their big day was not even two weeks away. It would take place in Krista’s cottage near the ocean. They would get married in the barn and we would all celebrate by the waves under thousands of fairy lights. Perhaps, I was getting too excited, but there is no such thing as an exaggeration of good emotions.

They had chosen the night of the full moon of April, the Pink Moon. Everything was meant to be perfect.

I smiled as I picked up my phone, seeing Ymir’s name on the ID.
“What can I do for you, future Mrs. Lentz?” I feigned my retail voice and she chuckled, she was getting happier each day.

“Freckle-boo, do me a favor and drop by the jewelry shop. I need to make sure these idiots got our sizes right…” she paused and I could tell she was making sure Krista wasn’t around. “And ask them to see the engravings. If they get them wrong…I swear.”

It’s my turn to chuckle. “Oh my, Ymir! You have become mushy soft, haven’t you? Caring for engravings and Pink Moons.”

“Oh, shut up, Bodt! I just want my Krista to be her happiest.” She was definitely doing heart-eyes right now. I stifled another chuckle.

“I know, Ymir. And she is going to be, I am sure of it. Hell, she would be her happiest even if she was getting married to you by a fake Elvis in Vegas in a fake chapel.”

She let out roaring laughter “Oh, you bet.”

“Get some rest, okay? And no more wine tasting! I am going to text you when I get there.” I let her know and she thanked me with another laugh.

I had barely put my phone in my pocket when it rang again.

“Need me to go to the pastry shop as well?”

“No, Bodt.” chuckle “I need you to listen.” Welp…definitely not Ymir. I gulped as Levi carried on talking.

“Look, I know you aced my lesson and all. But! I hope we get to continue meeting and talking even after that. You know I am not your professor anymore, so: first, call me Levi at all times. Second, you are going to be my new assistant. Third, I hope you don’t mind nerdy weird people cause you are about- Hanji put that down or God help me!!- to get rained by them. And fourth you begin on Monday at seven o’clock in my office.” He stormed all of the information out and I could only open my mouth and then close it again.

“Bodt…you there?”

“I…I…am. Why me?” I shook my head trying to get it together.

“Why not? I liked you as a student, you were interested in my lesson, you aced it. There is no reason not to pick you for my new assistant.” He clicked his tongue.

“Oh, ok.” I rubbed the back of my neck as I let it down me. It was okay, I deserved it.

I deserved good things. Felicity had made sure I understood that phrase down to my core.

“Look, Marco…don’t even believe for a second I am doing you a favor or that I am picking favorites. You have potential, Marco. You just don’t know it yet. So, this is a chance for you to learn about it and to develop it even more. Alright?” his voice soft, like months ago when I had called him from the quiet of my room asking for help.

I nodded, forgetting for a moment he couldn’t see me. “Yeah, ok. I understand.”

“Good! Monday, at seven o’clock, my office. We’ll be waiting.” He let me know and hung up, his tone giving away the fact he was probably smiling.
I let out a breath as I stared down at my phone’s screen, making sure I was not dreaming.

Levi Ackerman didn’t do assistants. Everyone on the campus knew it. I could not believe it!! And no other person would believe it either.

And as if in queue, a message from Levi.

Ok…I needed to sit down. This was happening! For real!

This day was getting even more surreal each passing second…mushy Ymir, Levi being proud of me and making me his assistant…what was next?!

I messaged Jean letting him know I would drop by the jewelry shop and picked up my pace. I could only imagine his reaction to the rest of the news…

You see people can compliment and empower you in many different ways. “I like your style.” “You did a good job.” “You are so strong.” “You are so kind.” But, when someone said these five words…”I am proud of you.” these were the words that sent me flying.

Don’t get me wrong. I could take a compliment and every good word was welcome…but, praises about your good job, your kindness, your strength…that’s just how people perceive you in their lives. “You did a good job and this was helpful to me.” “You are kind to me and this helps me through the day.” “You are a strong character and you give me courage as well.” that's the full story.

But, “I am proud of you.”

That’s them accepting who you are for you.

They are proud of you. The whole package. The traits and the flaws. No matter how you helped them in their lives if you did at all.

I am proud of you.

Of who you are. Of what you had to face. Of what you have become. Of what you will be.

I am proud of you.

And that’s how you turn the greatest sin to something completely selfless and wholesome.

I smiled widely and began whispering-singing the song that had stuck in my brain since I woke up.

The jewelry shop was just around the corner when Mom texted me, asking me if I wanted to visit on Sunday along with Jean for lunch. Irene was now in her eighth month, her belly fully round like a balloon and her smile wider than ever. Arthur was already crazy with joy for their baby and he had prepared everything in detail for its arrival.

They didn’t want to know whether it was a boy or a girl, so he had painted the room a pastel purple shade and every piece of clothing they had bought was a different color. If they named the baby “Rainbow” would be understandable. Names were another of the things they didn’t want to plan ahead. Arthur was sure that they would know the baby’s name from the first look they’d lay upon its squishy face.

I texted mum that we’d love to and entered the shop. It was so clean and shiny that it made me blink a few times.
A young woman with a high bun and big smile motioned me to come closer. I nodded and followed her queue.

“Hello! How can I help you, sir?” her voice was chirpy, the kind that makes you smile too.

“Hi! I would like to see a custom made pair of wedding rings, under the name Lentz.”

“Right away, sir.” She turned around and disappeared behind a large velvet curtain.

I tapped my foot, still humming my song, and took a look around. It wasn’t a big shop, but it was beautiful. Crystal flowers decorated the light-moca walls and the sunlight hit perfectly the windows, making rainbow light hit the ceiling.

A couple was on the other counter, picking earrings. A man was looking for a new watch. Two teenagers searching for the best gift for their mom.

“There we go!” the saleswoman interrupted my thoughts as she reappeared; now holding a dark blue box in her hands.

She cleaned the counter, placed the box on it and opened it.

I almost gasped at their beauty. The band was carved as if it was two twigs entwined and it ended up in a beautiful crystal flower. I remembered Ymir picking up flowers for Krista and making rings and crowns from them and a smile formed in my lips.

“The one is size 7 and the other 8.5. Is that right?” she asked me and I nodded.

“Yes. They are as they were ordered.” Ymir would jump out of her joy and Krista would probably cry. Rings were Ymir’s little gift and surprise.

“That would be all. Thank you!” I smiled at the woman and she nodded.

I turned around and began pacing to the door and then it hit me…the engravings!

“Uhm, sorry miss. Could I also check the engra-”

A loud boom echoed in the shop as the door flung open. I heard loud footsteps before I could turn around.

“Everybody down! We are robbing the place!” a voice equally loud with its footing made my ears ring.

What?

Robbing?

“I repeat! For the last fucking time! On your fucking knees!”

I let my body take control and my knees buckled, hitting the ground more forcefully than I expected.

I think I started shaking. Or perhaps that was the young girl by my side who was hugging her brother for dear life.

The next moments were blurry…as if I was watching them from afar.
God, I wish it was a bad dream.

Wake up, Marco!

…. Nothing.

Not a dream…

Shit!

Ok, Marco, this is not a time to panic. I mean it is, but we gotta keep focus. Come on.

“Alright, you people.” The man was tall, and two others follow him. One of them was pretty short and limping a bit, but the other was equally tall and even more well-built than their leader.

“We really don’t want to hurt anyone, okay?” the guns they held tightly in their hands didn’t make it seem like that way.

I started thinking about Monday and about Levi. I started thinking about how I was going to be his assistant and about how much I was going to learn by his side.

“We just want you to place your phones on the bag that my associate is holding and then place any kind of jewel in the bag that our lovely girl behind the counter will provide us.” He let us know, huffing behind his gas mask. They were all dressed in military clothing, gas masks covering their faces and large military boots stomping on the floor. Each step draining more courage from our souls.

My brain was racing by now. It always had a talent for that.

I caught myself thinking about Jean and how he was waiting for me back to our dorm. Our little home. Our sanctuary. In our dorm where his anxiety couldn’t reach him and where my thoughts were brighter and more vibrant.

Ok, Marco…there is no place or time for a panic attack.

I tried to picture Jean telling me this but I could already feel my mind slipping away.

I dared to look around without moving my head, just to check on the others. Just to start following the steps to snap out from the impending panic attack.

Five things you see.

The siblings were hugging each other tightly. The boy, who seemed to be the youngest, had his head buried in their embrace. They were both shaking, tears threatening to fall from their eyes, their jaws clenched from fear.

The couple was sitting on the floor. The man looked about to faint while the woman had her brows furrowed as if she was angry, I could tell she was just trying her hardest not to panic. Their hands were entwined.

The guy on my left was still clutching a watch in his hands. He was on his knees, forehead down, touching the floor as if he was praying.

Ok, this was not helpful at all. But, I had to carry on.
Four things you feel.
My rising blood pressure.
The cold marble floor.
The smooth glass case on my back.
My locket resting on my chest.
“This can’t be happening.” The man on the floor repeated over and over.
I had to block him out.
But, three things you can hear was next.
The man...his pleading...
The leader of the gang began moving toward me and the seller. I could swear I could hear my heartbeat ringing through my ears…or perhaps it was only his footsteps.
Two things you can smell.
My sweat and the cleaning product the woman used to clean the counter.
It’s artificial lemony scent was seeping all around me, making me sick.
“Will you be a sweetheart and grab me everything, dear? Leave the money. Don’t have time for pennies.” He leaned on the counter right next to me, waiting for the woman to comply.
The shorter robber began moving around demanding our phones, everyone dumping them in the bag in silence. Except for the watch guy…
I had to block him out again. He was making me panic even more. I think he was making everyone panic even more. Even the robbers.
He was a dead man walking if he continued like this.
Come on, Marco. One thing you taste.
“Please, good sir. I-I have k-kids. My w-wife might call anyt-time. They are f-five at h-home. I won’t t-tell them anything. Just l-let me-” he began pleading and I felt the man next to me shifting as he huffed.
Shit. Shit. Shit.
The leader straightened his back and cracked his knuckles.
One thing you can taste, Marco!
“Now, now, now.” He was walking towards the man.
“We only asked you two simple things, didn’t we?” the man on the floor squeaked like a mouse and placed his forehead on the floor again as the leader moved closer and closer.
“Phones and jewels. Only! And you get to have your precious phone after we leave! Package deal don’t you think?” he growled as he kneeled next to the man, who was now shaking like a leaf.
“P-please…” he tried and he pressed his phone home button to show him his family.

“Do you want your life?”

I couldn’t tear my eyes from the screen. The man who was now a trembling mess next to me, looked so different in the photograph. He seemed younger but I could tell it wasn’t an old picture. He was surrounded by small children with smiles so big that I felt a pang in my heart.

“Y-yes.” He gulped as the screen turned black again, but I still couldn’t look away.

“Then gimme your goddamned phone.” He yelled and snatched the man’s phone from his hands, tossing it violently on the bag.

The leader turned to face me and I felt like my heart stopped beating.

“Any protests?” he spat but I shook my head and offered my phone.

“Good. Good.” He said more calmly. “We don’t want no dead heroes, do we?”

I could only think of my own family and Jean.

I needed to stay focused and on the moment, but the tall one’s hand twitched on the trigger and the leader was unstable.

I was scared.

So scared.


I needed to focus.

I felt my breath becoming more shallow, but I couldn’t fight it.

I think Felicity helped me with this, but now my mind was way too fuzzy to recall her words.

Jean. Mom.

Focus.

Aimée. Dad.

Breathe!

Arthur. Irene.

For a moment the robbers worked quietly and I thought that this might be it. I would be ok. We all would.

I started imagining the wedding and how dashing Jean would look in a tux.

But, everything is temporary, even peace.


“Shit! WHAT?” the leader turned around again to face the man who’s causing them trouble.
“I need…” he was trying to breathe and I knew what it was. “My inhaler.”

The man gaped his mouth open and then he closed it again like he was drowning in an invisible lake.

“Your inhaler…?” the man snapped and with two steps he was standing in front of the man who was untlying his tie, trying to help oxygen reach his lungs.

The man was now in some kind of shock so he didn’t respond…he was only wheezing. Such a terrible sound.

“Asthma.” I whispered and the leader’s head is now turned to my direction.

“What was that smartass?” he growled in my face.

Breathe.

“Asthma attack. He needs his inhaler to breathe.” I explained. I am sure my voice was trembling as much as I was but at least my ears weren’t ringing anymore.

And as if the guy snapped out of his trench…or delved even deeper to it, he reached for his jacket’s pocket.

“Hey! Hey! Hey!” the taller robber started shouting and reached for her gun. The shorter one was scanning the room with her gun, the barrel pointing at all of us in turns.

Fuck. This was going to get messy. It had already begun.

Wheeze.

I feel my eyes watering.

The guy finally reached his pocket.

“Drop it!” they warned him.

He didn’t listen. His eyes, blank, were not even blinking.

“If you pull your hand out of your shitty pocket I am shooting.” She kept the warnings coming, but it is crystal clear he won’t budge.

Wheeze.

“It’s ok. He only needs his inhaler.” I tried, but no one seemed to listen.

And then it happened.

His hand started coming out of his chest pocket and I could hear her finger sliding on the trigger.

My mind formed the image of five big smiles and shining eyes.

I thought back in Mum and Dad and me and my siblings. I imagined us crying like little unprotected baby birds in a parentless nest.

It was stupid…I knew it. But, my mind couldn’t stop showing me their bright smiles and no one deserved to die.
I felt my back leaving the glass case where I was resting, making me feel a little cold.

I felt my feet stepping firmly on the ground and then my body jerking to the left.

And then I heard them shooting fireworks like it was the 4th of July.

Twice.

They say when your life is about to end, everything goes in slow motion.

But for me, it was exactly the opposite. Everything happened in one second.

I was sitting on the floor and then I was covering the man from the shoot.

I was whole and then I had a hole in my chest and one on my leg.

I think I hit the floor hard.

I think someone screamed.

I think I was dying.

My mind was too slow to understand. So I kept lying down…

They also say that your life passes through your eyes.

And that is true.

Jean. Mum.

I didn’t want to die.

I was doing good. I was getting better.

I would be Levi’s assistant. I started thinking of the countless conversations we would have. I started thinking of me petting his dog and of him shouting at it for shedding.

Aimée. Jerome.

Felicity was laughing at my jokes. Levi was proud of me.

Arthur. Irene.

I had to meet my nephew or my niece. I knew they would get the Bodt’s eyes. No one would escape their charm.

I didn’t want to die.

That was a past me. That Marco was no more.

I began thinking back to all the times I thought I had enough of this world...or the world had enough of me. My mind showing me all the sleepless nights I spent crying. It felt like ages ago. Like a completely different lifetime.

I wanted to live.
I had decided this for quite sometime now. Life was rough on me, my brain was rough on me, but I had my people and I had my whole life ahead of me. I was not alone. I never was. I’d never be.

I wanted to live.

But my blood was soiling the marble floor.

People were moving around me and I surely had my eyes wide open, but my surroundings were nothing more but a blur.

I could only see Jean, smiling, kissing me, sleeping by my side.

I felt sleepy.

I didn’t want to die. Jean was waiting, he would be cuddled up on our couch drawing and I would open the door and he would greet me with a hundred little kisses.

And I would tell him what I did and he would say, “That was so silly of you, Marco! What if you got seriously hurt?” and he would pout and cross his arms. But, I would kiss him and kiss him and kiss him, and he would begin to giggle. He would tell me “You silly angel boy.” and he would kiss me again.

Aims. Eating ice cream, cuddling me, her pretty face under the sun.

She would scold me too, but it wouldn’t last long. We would stroll through Jinae during the spring break and she would drag me around every ice cream shop so we could taste every flavor before anyone else. They didn’t stand a chance before us.

I was numb.

I couldn’t remember how pain felt like.

Did I have legs? And arms?

I must have had them. Maybe a long time ago, like my veil of sadness.

It didn’t matter. They didn’t matter.

Now I was only floating.

Jean…is that how being one with the universe feels like?

Jean...

I didn’t want to die.

I could see Jean mouthing to me “I love you” but the sound of his voice wouldn’t reach my ears.

The only thing that flooded my senses as I lied there on the perfect and shiny marble floor was the sound of my heart…opening, and closing…

Opening…

And closing…

One thing you taste...blood.
Phew! That was intense, wasn't it?
Just you wait before you see the next couple of chapters!
Thank you my dear supreme senpai, @YunoGasai98, for being an amazing beta and friend! And a great thank you to my sweet, sweet group of friends who is always by my side!
Thank you all for sticking with this story and for reading it, commenting on it, and liking it!
Till next time!!
Chapter Summary

We Only Go Backwards

The sharp autumn breeze sent shivers down to the black-haired boy’s spine but he did little to pick his pace up and avoid the cold. His flannel shirt did a poor job keeping him warm this early in the morning, but he loved this weather more than anything, so the only thing he did, was to close his eyes as his favorite music strummed out of his headphones.

He took a large sip from his overdosed-with-cinnamon hot coffee and he let an audible sigh of pleasure. Damn, he loved autumn.

Wait…

This felt familiar…

The boy opened his eyes again and stopped at his tracks as he reached the benches where his friend told him to wait. He scanned the perimeter with his chestnut eyes, now almost fully awake. He fought back a yawn as he shrugged, knowing his friend would take his sweet time to arrive and sat down on the closest bench, placing his backpack right beside him.

The boy looked down at his phone screen to change the song and then relaxed to the sound of the new song playing. He took in his surroundings once more. He was on campus just for a week but somehow it felt comfortable to be around.

Chapter Notes

Here we go! This month’s update served to you hot and fresh!! Enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
This didn’t feel right…

It was as if I was watching myself from the corner, like a puppeteer ordering around his toys.

_He looked at the trees - The trees flickered…- that surrounded the park-like spot and smiled to himself as he noticed that a few leaves had started changing their color to a rich orange. And now they were turning to a rotten black. The weather was changing to match his mood swings it seemed. But so did his body, the freckles that dusted his face and arms had already started fading and his appetite had increased. ‘Just like every autumn’ the boy pondered in his mind. A weird sense waved through me…this was my last autumn._

_He closed his eyes again after taking a few more sips from his coffee and waited._

I could see myself sipping the coffee, but I could only taste metal.

I was waiting for Jean…Jean…my best friend…no…

Jean was more than that…was he…my boyfriend?

I couldn’t recall correctly as my memories were fuzzy and I felt heavy…I needed sleep, I needed rest…

I felt my eyes closing, a warmth surrounding me, making me feel safe.

Humming of a song long forgotten.

A voice so sweet that made my eyes water.

Mom.

_Edelweiss, edelweiss_

_Every morning you greet me_
I tried to open my eyes, but the warmth of her hug was too comforting for me to try to resist it. I felt five years old once again.

Small and white
Clean and bright
You look happy to meet me

I sniffled as she cradled me in her arms. I took in her perfume, her cozy scent that only meant ‘home’.

Then I remembered dad, Jerome, Aimée and Arthur…Arthur and Irene...

Arthur and Irene who were expecting! A cute little baby that would make me an uncle and that would be showered in love and affection by everyone around them.

How could I forget?

Blossom of snow
May you bloom and grow
Bloom and grow forever

A wave of uneasiness shot through my body and I decided it was for the best that I buried myself even further in my mom’s hug. I had really missed her holding me like this. The longing was too much to make me worry about blanking out the rest of my family.

Mom sang some more before placing soft kisses on my forehead, on my nose and then on my chin. Just like when I was little. I would giggle and she would smile brightly.

I shifted a bit as I remembered that I had to tell her something.

I needed to tell her not to worry. I would come home this spring break and she would love the news of me being…
But, wait! Why should she be worried?

Oh, yeah! I was shot!

I was shot...right through the chest...Last time I checked I was bleeding out on the jewelry shop’s marble floor.

Panic rose through my chest and it tightened right where the bullet had pierced my skin.

‘Breathe in, breathe out! Come on, you’ve got this!’ I tried to persuade myself, but the only thing I could do was inhale sharp and shallow breaths. Only inhaling, never exhaling.

I was getting dizzy and lightheaded. I could tell I was close to fainting. My mother simply shook me, oblivious to my panicked state.

Was I dead? Was this some sort of afterlife?

Had I left them all....had I left mom....Jean....Aimée...behind?

Suddenly the setting changed. I was ripped off my mother’s hug and her warmth was replaced by a cold and humid breeze. A wave slapped my face as I fell into dark waters, now my eyes wide open and my limbs flailing around, as I tried to find something to grasp onto in order to save my life.

But, everything around me was fluid and I could only feel being swallowed deep in the dark sea.

Fuck, fuck, fuck!

I needed to swim, I needed to stay on the surface, damn it!

Come on, Marco!
Swim.

Fight it!

I tried to remain calm, but the waves kept on coming, sending me below the surface each time they hit my face.

I tried with all my might to stay afloat. My arms and legs moving and moving and moving, kicking and fighting the water, hoping that the setting would change once more and I would be in my mother’s hug again…but, to no avail.

My limbs were starting to get sore and numb. My legs were burning and they were so close to cramping. Tears escaped my eyes as I screamed for help…but, no one came.

I didn’t know for how much more I could hold on.

A new wave sent me further than any other before it and I felt the sea calling me down to her watery embrace. I was already panting, but now hiccups bubbled their way up to my mouth, making my breath hitch and my eyes sting.

I cried, my tears becoming one with the water surrounding me, as my limbs were now too tired to act and they were letting me being dragged down to the rock bottom.

Oxygen was getting shorter in my lungs, I could feel them straining, searching for some kind of source of air. But, there was none around. And at this very moment, I could feel myself gasp. I shot my eyes wide open as I tried to close my mouth as fast as I could. But, the mistake could not be erased.

Water was now filling my lungs and a stinging feeling made me jolt underwater.

My mouth wouldn’t close and the water only increased inside of me.
I felt it.

It was all inside of me.

Inside my lungs.

**It burns.**

Inside my stomach.

**It burns.**

Inside my head.

**It burns.**

My vision got blurry and I could see a million white stars in the corners of my eyes.

But, soon the stars were all snuffed out as I mouthed a name I loved dearly before letting the water engulf me.

Fluttering…

I didn’t move; my limbs were still sore and my clothes were sticky and wet, clinging on my body, making my stomach churn.

More fluttering…

How much time had passed? It felt like a second and like a century at the same time.
How was I alive?

Fluttering…

I knew that flutter. It was the bird!

Marco

It felt as if it called for me, waiting for me to open my eyes. I tried to comply with its wishes but my eyelids were heavy and salt had dried all around my eyes. Opening them stung and brought new tears in my eyes.

It took me time to finally brave the stinging and to decide to open my eyes, the impatient fluttering urging me to hurry.

“I am tired.” My voice was croaky and my throat still burned from my fight with the waves.

The bird turned its head to look at me, as I laid down, a wet mess of numb limbs and rags for clothes. I heaved and coughed, expecting water to come out but only air came out and then got in again.

The bird was still looking at me.

I tried to avoid its gaze and looked around me. We were in a glass cube-like room. Everything, from the ceiling to the floor was made from green-tinted glass. Outside our room, light and darkness alternated with each other like a lava lamp.

The bird grew impatient and before I could call for it, it drove headfirst to the nearest wall, its wings followed right after and it began fluttering them again against our glass prison.

My head started hurting as if it were I that had hit their head on the wall and my arms felt as if they would drop off my body any time now.

What was happening?
“Stop.” I tried, but the bird flew against the wall once more and this time I screamed.

I could feel bruises starting to form on my arms and I was sure my head was bleeding.

“Stop! Please! You are hurting us!” I gasped and the bird looked at me again.

It didn’t seem to care about my state. It kept looking at me as it flew high and slammed its body to the ceiling; I was sure now that a couple of my ribs were broken. I hissed and whined as the pain grew unbearable.

“Please!” I yelled in pain and the bird halted a bit. I could see that blood was smeared all around its beak and its wings were kind of hanging around its body.

Its eyes flickered and it gathered its remaining strength.

No

Please, don’t.

It began flying with all of its might toward the wall.

I started screaming and I could hear the cracking. Did it do it? Did it smash its little head and had it fallen down lying dead?

Reluctantly, I opened my eyes.

I… the bird was nowhere to be seen.

Only a small crack on the wall, a small feather hanging there, as a ray of light went through the small hole.
It made it.

It fucking made it!

I started laughing, but my ribs were still hurt and I was still panting from all the screaming I did.

I hissed as my body felt more like a borrowed coat than my actual skin and bones.

The bird made it…but, I was still trapped inside. Alone and beaten up.

I crawled towards the spot where the ray of light landed and I wrapped my arms around my legs, laying there like a baby.

The ray was warm and I was already shivering from my cold, wet clothes. I welcomed the warmth and I felt myself drifting away to sleep.

*I see my soul flying*

*Alone and it's terrifying*

*I'm crying to the skies above, to the skies above*

*All I need is a little love, just a little love*

Hm?

*Wake up in an empty bed*

*No shoulder to rest my head*

*No energy to move my legs*

*I know that all I needs a little love, just a little love, just a little love*

Jean?
I am sure it was him singing.

But, the bird and all the beating up took its toll on me and I really couldn’t open my eyes. So I let the voice keep singing.

It sounded broken. Jean sounded sad.

Perhaps I oughted to open my eyes and see what’s wrong.

But, sleep was much more comfortable, it required no energy I didn’t have and there was some kind of peace in closing my eyes for a while, worrying about nothing. The only sound would be of my own breath.

Jean’s voice drifted away and I sighed in relief.

I didn’t like it when he was sad, and it was even worse now that I was unable to help, unable to wrap my arms around him and reassure him everything would be ok, unable to even open my eyes.

I stirred as I tried to fall asleep again.

This time I heard laughter. Jean was laughing because I had lost again at the video game we were playing…his laughter echoing sweetly in my head and I was certain I was smiling too.

“Marco…” a moan of my name and the feeling of me being ready to burst at any moment washed over my body.

“Marco…” it was heard again and then a choked cry. I was flustered and I felt dizzy.

I felt as if I was moving and I felt my stomach knotting.

“J-Jean…” I muttered.

“And I want you. I want you by my side until the sun bursts and consumes us all.”
“Until the end of the world, then. I will be by your side even longer, too.”

Jean?

Where was he?

I missed him.

I wanted to hold him one more time before I left.

A bloodcurdling scream made me jolt, “MARCO!” my eyes were now wide open and the rest I so much longed for was now long forgotten.

“JEAN?” I offered back as I stood in complete darkness.

A spotlight turned on and shone directly on me, blinding me in the process. Silence; I couldn’t hear Jean anymore.

“Hello?” I offered.

More silence.

“NO!” a deep voice boomed and the spotlight turned off as the ground disappeared and I was again thrown in the cold waters that started to feel like home.

I knew there was no point in fighting it again. It would only result in more pain and weariness.

I let the waves toss me around like a ragdoll.

Would this end?
Water started to make its way into my body again.

How would this end?

The familiar burning sensation in my lungs made me want to scream, but then more water would fill me up, so I pursed my lips into a thin line.

I was tired.

I felt cold hands grabbing me from my ankles and my body being submerged in the black water.

Why wouldn’t they let me rest?

The surface was now lost from view and the darkness was surrounding me.

I only wanted to live my life with the people I loved.

Why did I have to go through this hell over and over again?

I wanted-No, I NEEDED this to end.

My lungs filled with water once more and the stars returned in front of my eyes as I dove deeper and deeper....

Chapter End Notes

Thank you my dearest @YunoGasai98 for beta-ing everything I write and thank y'all for reading this story!!
Till next time,
sk_elene
Truce

Chapter Summary

The news reach Jean and so...he comes apart

Chapter Notes

tw throwing up, injuries, blood mention, mental breakdown

See the end of the chapter for more notes

My phone started ringing, startling me from my drawing. I was expecting to see Marco’s name in the ID but instead, it was Marco’s mum. Perhaps it was Aimée who was calling as she did when she could take her mother’s phone without her noticing. I picked it up as I fumbled with my pencils, making my papers fall to the floor and spread everywhere.

“Hello, Mrs. Bodt! Is everything okay?”

Silence. Did she dial me up by accident?

“Uhm, hello? Marco isn’t here right now…Do you want me to call him for you?” I tried again, for some reason uneasiness spread in my body and I felt my muscles stiffen.

And then was when I heard the first sob. My heart clenched and my stomach tied into a tight knot.

“Mrs. Bodt?” more sobs “Is everything okay?”

“Je-Jean…Marco…Marco, he…Oh, Jean…” Marco’s mother cried from the other end and I could swear I would faint if I got up right then.

“Marco what?” I knew it wouldn’t be good news but I had to know how bad it was.

“He was shot…my boy, he tried to save someone and he got…Oh my God!”

And at that moment all the blood was drained from my body and I doubled in pain, clenching my stomach as I felt bile rising to my now-sore throat. I wanted to scream but no sound made its way to my mouth and no air would reach my lungs.

“He is in Central Hospital…They need to operate him to see if he has any chance of survival. But, I know Marco, he is a strong kid, he will get through this.”

It was now Marco’s dad who spoke to me, letting me know where to meet them and what would be needed for the hospital. I didn’t know if I thanked him, I didn’t know what happened from this moment on because my vision was blurred, my head was aching and my heart was close to shattering into a million pieces.

I think I heard my name from the phone but I was now rushing to the bathroom to vomit the
contents of my stomach, still in hopes this was a sick, sick joke and Marco would open the door anytime soon and I would scold him and then give him a hug so tight and so warm that he would never leave my arms.

I couldn’t cry and this made me so angry. It made me furious. I couldn’t scream, I couldn’t cry, I couldn’t move. All I could do was lay limp and pale as a ghost, blinking and wishing Marco would return.

But, the time passed and I was still alone with my head hanging above the toilet and my body like a broken doll sprawled all around our small bathroom.

I didn’t remember getting up or changing my clothes or leaving the dorms. All I could remember was my feet guiding me to the ER of the Central Trost Hospital and seeing his cart being handled by a dozen doctors and nurses, rushing him to the operating room.

Only a glimpse of him was enough to destroy me.

Marco was pale and his clothes were soaked with blood. A bullet had pierced his favorite jeans and had lodged itself in his right leg…A bullet had pierced his new shirt and had lodged itself in his good heart.

I stood there gaping and shaking.

“Sir? Sir, you are not allowed to be there. Please, follow me.” A nurse with silver hair and striking blue eyes which bore into my soul guided me in the waiting room.

I was disassociating, I could tell. Seeing Marco like that took its toll on me…and that toll was big.

I didn’t even notice his mom coming towards me and hugging me.

As she closed her arms around me, I felt my emotions boil up and by the time she was resting her head on my chest, I was a sobbing mess. All the tears I couldn’t shed back home were now multiplied and released in waves.

“Marco.” I could only whisper and his mother caressed my head as she understood my pain.

“Jean, my son.” Marco’s father placed his hand on my shoulder and rubbed it as he tried to comfort me…to no avail.

“They took him about ten minutes ago, the operation might take six hours or it might take even more. We can only pray for him now and not lose our faith in his strength. Marco will get through this. We all will, you’ll see.” He promised. But, promises at times like this are dangerous things, they fill you up with hopes and expectations and they can shatter you worse than before.

I simply nodded, not trusting my voice to appear at this point and even more forming coherent words.

So, I sat down with them and waited. Marco’s dad was constantly speaking; I think he was just trying to be strong for his wife and for me; for himself too. There was no way someone that was on the verge of losing their child would speak that much. I appreciated his efforts of trying to distract us, but for more than the half time, I was fazing in and out, catching only mere fragments of his words.

Marco’s mum was hanging from my clothes and she cried and cried and wailed about her baby. But, I stood limp again, only looking at my hands as they became wetter with every tear I shed.
Arthur and Irene rushed in as Marco’s dad was telling us about Jerome and that he was on his way too.

I think I was crying still as I got up to greet them. Irene stood in front of me, wiped my tears and cupped my face “Jean, my dear, don’t cry that much. He is still with us and fighting, isn’t he?” she hugged me tight and I let my body fall in her embrace.

Her round belly between us added a weird feeling in my brain. These babies were about to begin their lives and Marco was fighting to keep his.

For some reason, the feeling of losing him…the feeling of being close to losing him felt familiar and its sting was like an old wound that aches when the weather shifts from warm to cold and humid.

I don’t know why, but the thought “I don’t want to lose him again.” formed in my brain and it made the pain insufferable.

“Where is Aimée?” Arthur suddenly asked and all of us looked to his parents.

“We…she is still in school…” Marco’s dad replied.

“We left in a rush and it was still so early. Her lessons are about to finish in an hour or so.” He added as he looked at his watch.

“We should go and pick her up.” His mom begun picking their stuff up.

“Let me do it…” I placed my hand upon hers and looked at her bloodshot eyes. “Please…”

“Okay…Are you sure, Jean?” she placed her other hand upon mine and her hands warmed my cold and rigid fingers.

“I am.” I tried to smile but something between a smile and a scowl came out so I stopped any effort of forming expressions and picked up my things.

“Do you want me to bring her here?” I asked when I was ready to go.

“We don’t have anyone to look after her, so even if it’s probably not right…yes, please. It’d be better for all of us to be here together.” She let me know.

I nodded and left.

I needed some fresh air. I couldn’t stand hospitals and their smell. Super clean and sterile while people were sick and dying. It was so ironic it made me want to throw up again.

Jean! Get it together! Aimée needs you now. You need to support her and comfort her and be strong for her…and for Marco, too.

He is still fighting, as Irene said. He is always fighting.

We promised for forever, and forever had moments like these. We couldn’t let it severe our forever that easily.

I tried to think like that all my way to Aims’ school, but my defeatism took the best of me and I promised myself I would be strong for her sake and then I could crumble to the hospital’s bathroom all I liked.
Buses were out of the question in my state. I would not only have a panic attack in the middle of a sea of people who only knew how to push and curse, but I would also pass out and then everyone would have to worry about me too— that’d be unfair for Marco.

I was walking faster with every step, covered in sweat and dread, as I tried my hardest not to choke on my spit each time I swallowed, as I felt my throat closing more and more each minute passing.

I reached her school as soon as the final bell rang and a hundred kids run from their classes. I spotted her easily, despite my state and waved to her. Her face brightened up as she saw me but then she frowned and cocked her head to the side, she must have picked this up from Marco. Pain panged my heart and I stumbled but quickly I found my footing once again.

God! I was a mess.

“Jean?” she was now in front of me and she leaned for a hug.

I hugged her back and tried to smile but she noticed my puffed eyes fast.

“What happened?” she tugged my shirt and looked into my eyes, making me want to scream.

“Uhm, Marco… he was in a robbery incident and he is now in the hospital.” I tried to explain as calmly and fast I could. Pauses and worry didn’t help when you delivered news like these.

Aimée’s eyes widened as she gasped, her hands dropped from the ends of my shirt to cover her mouth and tears started forming in her eyes.

“Will he be okay, Jean?” her voice was muffled from her hands as she lost her brightness and color.

“It’s Marco that we are talking about. I am sure he will be fine!” Oh, now it was my turn with the promises I couldn’t keep or control. It was easier than it seemed or than I thought it would be.

Aimée seemed to believe a part of my promise, knowing her brother and how badly he knew how to fight every hardship in his life.

She took my hand and she began guiding me away from her school.

I dug my hand in my pocket and fished some cash. “I have enough for a taxi drive.” I let her know, but she shook her head.

“I prefer walking if that’s okay.” Her voice was soft as always but as her small hand wrapped tighter around mine I understood it wasn’t a matter of preference, but a matter of need.

And so we walked in silence.

“Do you think we should buy some flowers for Marco?” she broke the silence as we passed a shop brimming with colorful flowers and plants.

“It’d be lovely, Aims. But, I don’t think they are going to let him have flowers in his room just yet.”

If he gets to have a room at all… I think, but I don’t dare to even think about saying something like that aloud.

She nods sadly “Another day then.” She insisted.
Hopefully, you will be able to give him the flowers you so much want in person, Aims.

I should stop this kind of thoughts, but when the beam of light in your life goes dim; your life is bound to look grimmer and pitch-black.

By the time we reached the Central Hospital, my feet were sore and my knees were hurting. I was on the verge of collapsing. All I needed was to sit down.

I led Aimée to her parents and left again as her mother hugged her tight and Irene begun asking her how her day was as if they weren’t in the ER wing of a hospital waiting to see if her brother would survive.

It was too bright and fake for me.

So, as soon as I made sure that Marco’s surgery was still in process and that we didn’t have any other news, I took off.

I was in the hospital’s exit when my phone rang.

Ymir.

“Hey.” I picked up and my voice croaked.

“Jean, hey. Uhm, I saw something on the news and it made me worry.”

Was Marco on the news now? Of course, he’d be. He was a hero after all. It was thanks to him that the man was saved and thanks to the distraction that he caused the manager managed to press the button to alert the police.

“They are showing the jewelry shop from which we ordered our rings…uhm…is…Is Marco okay?” she swallowed thickly and cleared her throat.

“Ymir…Marco is in surgery right now.” I managed with one breath.

“He was the one…oh, fuck…oh, fuck, of course, it’d be him…fuck, fuck, fuck. Jean, I am sorry. I am so, so sorry.” I had never heard Ymir so desperate before.

“Why are you sorry, Ymir? I don’t understand.” I stood still and expected her answer.

“I…” she stopped and gulped again. “I send him there, Jean. I wanted him to check the rings and I was such a lazyass to bother going there myself. Fuck, Jean. It should have been me.” I think by now she was crying. Marco made Ymir cry…Ymir, one of the toughest people I knew, was now bawling her eyes out for Marco.

“Ymir…how can you say this. How could you have known? Please, stop this bullshit and fucking guilt.” I yelled, startling her.

“Jean, if I had gone, none of these would have happened. You know, I wouldn’t have given two shits about the bitch and no one would have been shot.” She bit back.

“You wanna blame yourself so badly? Then fucking do it, Ymir! But, you had nothing to do with what happened. If it wasn’t for Marco, the man you just called bitch would have been dead, so shut your mouth.” Everyone around me was looking at me and a couple of nurses motioned me to move further away from the hospital’s exit.

I huffed and left, moving to the hospital’s parking.
“Jean, fuck you for trying to make this better for me and for being somehow right. Fuck you, I needed to take the blame to explain this. How can a person like Marco be in such a state? He deserves nothing like that.” She went back to crying.

“Like shit I know, Ymir! But, there he is! And taking nonexistent blame will do no one any good, understood? Take your ass and come to Central Hospital ‘cause I need all the people I can get. Is that fucking clear?”

“Understood, crystal clear.” She said so softly that I almost thought that Krista had responded. “Want me to call the rest of the guys?”

“Good. No, that’s something I have to do. Just..come. See you soon.” I hung up.

“Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.” The feeling of dread hit me again and I felt my knees giving up. I knelt in the ground and grabbed the hand I was holding my phone with. How could I do this? How could I repeat this array of damned words so many more times?

Mom was now calling me and I tried to pull myself together to answer.


Thank God I wouldn’t have to tell her myself.

“How are you holding up? We are waiting for the twins to return from school and then we will join you there.”

“I am not. I am a ruin. A mess. Mom…” I sobbed and choked.

“Oh, love.”

“Mom, I can’t lose him. If he…” I couldn’t form the words, because then it would be in the real world instead of my mind and then it would carry the danger of becoming real too.

“Jean, baby. He is a strong boy and he loves you so much. I am sure he is fighting his best. Have faith in him.” She comforted me and I could only swing back and forth, hugging myself.

“Okay.” I only responded, more to let her know I hadn’t passed out than to let her know that I believed her.

“Okay.” She repeated. “We’ll be there as soon as we can. Do you want us to bring anything?”

“No, mum. I don’t need anything.”

“Stay strong, baby. See you soon.” She promised.

I stood there, looking at the screen of my phone as it showed that the call had ended and then switched off to black as my brain.

My hands were drained from all the blood, they were cold and my fingers ached as I tried to move them to tap Mikasa’s number.

It was a miracle that I managed to press the call button.

After two rings, Mikasa picked it up. “Jean! I was just about to call you! They just showed Marco in the news. Where are you?” her voice was still calm as always but I could say she was shaken up too.
“Central Trost Hospital. He is being operated right now. When they are done, we will have more information about his state and chances of...yeah.”

“We are coming then. You just need to call Sasha and Connie, Bertl and Reiner are here with us and Krista just texted Armin that she and Ymir are on their way.” She let me know.

“Will do.” I nodded.

“Jean? Remember what I told you in our date, the universe knows what it is doing, it won’t take Marco from you...” she promised

“Not again.” I think I heard her whisper but perhaps it was just my thoughts projecting in her words.

I dialed up Connie’s number, got up from the ground and dusted off my jeans.

“Jean-bo! My dude, we just saw what happened! We are going to bring you some comfort snacks and lots of juice ‘cause knowing you, you are going to starve and dehydrate yourself.” I was suddenly so thankful that I didn’t have to mutter these awful words about Marco again. I felt thankful for my friends as well, they meant well, even though we all knew that I wasn’t going to eat anything anytime soon.

“Alright, Connie. We are in Central Hospital. I guess everyone is coming, so I’ll be waiting.”

I hung up and pushed my phone deep into my pocket after turning it to silent, and begun running.

I didn’t know where to and what I’d do when I reached there, but I had to run.

Oxygen burned my lungs and my breaths were becoming swallower, but I kept running.

I had passed the limits of Trost now since the hospital was close to the end of the city, but I couldn’t bring myself to stop.

My legs were shaking and I would lose a step now and then but still kept running as my body began hurting more and more.

I ran harder and faster with every step and I felt like I passed miles and miles. I realized I left my jacket back in the hospital and I began to shiver as my sweat began to evaporate from the cold wind and my shirt turned into a wet and sticky rag.

I ran faster than my thoughts but they still caught up with me.

*Marco would be alright.*

*Marco would live.*

*Marco would hug me again.*

*Marco would kiss me again.*

*I would see him smile again.*

*I would hear his voice again.*

*I would count his freckles again.*
We would create more memories together.
We would build our lives together.
We would grow old together.
It’d be alright.
It’d be okay.
It’d be fine.

Marco.

He won’t leave me behind.

I suddenly spotted the seashore running by my side. I wondered how far I had run, but still, I wouldn’t stop.

One misstep was enough though to bring a halt to my absurd running. I stumbled and fell on the asphalt. I managed to bring my hands forth just in time to save me from smashing my head. My knees and palms were torn and blood began rushing from the scrapes.

“FUUUUCK!” I yelled and tears began streaming from my eyes again, their salt mixing with my blood, making my wounds sting.

I heard a car stopping and someone was soon approaching me.

I could barely look up as a hand landed on my shoulder.

No way!

What kind of game was fate playing on me?

“Jean! Son, let’s get you home.” Mr. Smith’s smooth and comforting voice made my heart fill with even more pain.

There is no home there for me anymore.

“Jean…what’s the matter, son?” he rubbed my back as he tried to persuade me to get up from the dirty road.

“Marco…Marco…Marco…” was all I could mutter.

I heard the door from the car opening again and someone making their way to us.

“What about Marco, Jean?” I thought that was Mr. Ackerman, but I was too tired to bother looking up again.

“He got shot.” Each word was tearing my heart to even more pieces than it already was.

“Shit.” The raven cursed. “Was it him in the jewelry shop?” he asked and I simply nodded, already feeling my head lighter than it should be.

“Let’s get you in the car, you are freezing.” Mr. Smith tried again, but I couldn’t move. Even if I tried, I had used up all of my strength to run.
When I met his gaze, he knew. “I am going to pick you up. Okay, son?” he let me know as he steadied his arms around my legs and back, lifting me carefully as if I was made of glass.

“Did you run all this way from Trost?” Mr. Ackerman asked as he followed us to their car.

I only nodded and felt my eyes closing as Mr. Smith’s warmth melted on my frozen skin.

Marco’s professor opened the door and Mr. Smith gently placed me in the back seat and went in the front to turn up the heat.

I heard them talking as they closed the doors and left me to warm up. Soon, they returned and tended to my wounds as I laid there half-conscious, unable to do anything but breathe.

“Jean, I am going to take your phone, to let your family know we are going to bring you to them, okay?” Mr. Smith asked and I only mouthed “Central”. The only place I needed to be right now.

I heard him talk to the phone and then Mr. Ackerman joined me in the back seat.

He placed my head on his lap and pressed his hand on my forehead.

“No fever, thank God. Let’s drive him to the hospital, Erwin.” He let his husband know and as soon we were all buckled up, Mr. Smith began driving.

“Sleep. You need it.” Mr. Ackerman instructed and I didn’t have the strength to protest.

My sleep was dreamless. Like my life would be without Marco.

I only understood I had fallen asleep when Mr. Ackerman shook me awake as we reached the Central Hospital.

“We are here.” He let me know as Mr. Smith parked the car.

“Your friends were worried sick. You had many missed calls and text messages. Your family didn’t know you were gone yet, but they were relieved we happened to find you. You can thank this big romantic soul right there, for insisting on taking the more scenic route to our hotel. It was a miracle we found you. You could have died from exhaustion or you could have fallen to your death. Do you realize how close to the cliff were you running?” Mr. Ackerman scolded me and I felt shame washing over me.

“Sorry.” He muttered.

“Fine, kid. Just…try to pull yourself together a little bit more, okay?” his voice was now tender and his eyes kind. He knew pain just too well.

“Let’s go inside if you are ready.” Mr. Smith let us know and I nodded.

They helped me out from the car and both of them were by my sides, supporting me and my twisted ankle.

My parents rushed towards me as soon as they saw me and I felt even worse for making everyone worry.

“Oh, my dear boy. You are safe.” My mum cupped my face and planted a kiss right on my forehead.

I smiled weakly “Just wanted to go for a walk.” I averted my gaze.
“I know, dear. It’s fine. It’s all good since you are safe.” She took hold of my hands and brought them together, as she used to do when I was a kid to let me know I wasn’t in trouble.

“Okay.”

Ali and Ben soon joined us and we all hugged for some time.

“Thank you for being here.”

“Of course, Jean-bo.” My father kissed my temple and smiled at me.

“We’ll be there for as long as you need us.” Ben let me know and Ali nodded in agreement.

“Thank you.” I repeated, meaning it to my core.

Soon, my friends approached and we began talking. I offered a few words here and there but they all knew that was the best I could afford for the moment.

Marco’s surgery was still ongoing and slowly some of them began leaving, knowing there was no way they could help more.

Bertl and Reiner were the first to leave, Annie and Armin following soon after.

Ymir vowed not to leave at least until the surgery was over and Krista agreed to stay by her side as well.

Sasha and Connie were trying to force-feed me a sandwich, but to no avail, so they settled with making me drink a homemade smoothie and making me guess the ingredients.

It was nice, having people there to distract me. But, my mind wouldn’t leave Marco and the image of him I saw a couple of hours ago.

Sasha and Connie left eventually for their jobs, although, to their credit, they offered to take a leave for today to stay by my side.

When most of our friends and my family had left, Mr. Ackerman approached me and sat next to me. I hadn’t even noticed that the couple had stayed.

“Jean, I am sure Marco is trying his best and knowing the kid, his will to live is only second best to his love for you. In times like this, in times of hardship and despair, you need to try your best to be the best person you can be for him. You are already trying your hardest and I can see that. Just… don’t lose faith in him.”

“I feel like you know too well of what you are talking about.” I turned to look at him and it was the first time I noticed how piercing his gaze was.

“Oh, I do. Erwin…he was enlisted back when I met him…He was one of the best war strategists our country ever had. He went to war for four tours and came back unscathed…well, physically at least…but, I could always help him ease the pain, share his worries and nightmares…” he paused and looked at his hands, his wedding band shimmering underneath the dim hospital light.

“But, on his last tour…they were ambushed. He didn’t lose his calm and led everyone to safety, but he did lose his hand. The military wouldn’t spare me with any details and back then, us being together was a secret, since things were different back then, so I had no right to know according to them. It took them two weeks to bring him home and it took a month to let him leave the military
compound. We could only speak from the shitty hospital phone and only for an hour or so each day. It was hard and I thought I would fall apart each second passing, but he needed me, so I stayed strong. Thankfully a friend was able to help and with their breakthrough experiments in prosthetic members, Erwin had a new arm and less pain to deal with.”

I was left stunned, but Mr. Ackerman laughed, which left me even more overwhelmed.

“Come on, kid. Brighten up! We all have to deal with difficult shit. Yeah, some people have it worse sometimes but remember that diminishing your pain is doing no one any good. So, yeah, we went through hell and back, but we were and still are together, with our cats and dogs and whichever animal Erwin thinks of bringing home. We got through this and I can feel that you will get through this as well.”

“Mr. Ackerman…” I started.

“Mr. Ackerman-Smith…but, that’s a mouthful. So, just Levi is fine.” He smirked.

“Levi…thank you so much for today. For everything. Thank you for being on Marco’s side when he needed the support I couldn’t give him and for believing in him so much.” My vision blurred and I hugged him.

Levi’s body stiffened but finally eased into my hug and wrapped his arms around me as well.

“We’ll be going now, but I saved both of our personal numbers on your phone while you were asleep. So if you need us, just call, kid.” He patted my back and let go.

“Sorry for ruining your trip.” I offered a sad smile.

“Nah, worry not. All is good. Hotels and trips will always be there. You needed people around you, so it was more than a pleasure making sure you were alright. See ya.” He waved and approached Mr. Smith. He hugged his waist and whispered something that made his husband smile. They shared a brief sweet kiss and waved me good-bye.

I let my back fall on the uncomfortable hospital chair and spread my aching legs.

And of course, Eren had to pick that moment to arrive from his trip to the canteen and sit next to me.

“Jean, I am sorry, dude. Marco is really the best of us.” He settled, handing me a cup of lukewarm coffee.

“I know.” I grabbed the cup from his hand and took a sip.

“And…you know, even if he doesn’t make it, at least he’ll die a hero. His sacrifice won’t be in vain.”

I didn’t even wait for him to finish talking.

All I saw was red!

Marco...

Marco’s sacrifice…

Marco dying as a hero…
Marco dying…

I tossed the cup of shitty coffee aside and jumped on Eren with all of my might.

“WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?” I yelled to his face, his green eyes widening and looking right through me.

“Marco is not dead, you fucker.” I pinned him on the floor. “He won’t die, do you understand?” I raised my clenched fist in the air.

“He can’t die, you hear?” I continued yelling as I felt anger and despair rising inside me.

I lowered my fist with my whole strength and winched at the ugly sound it left as it hit the tile next to Eren’s shitty mug. I kept raising and smashing my fist on the hospital floor until Mikasa tore us apart, my knuckles were by now soaked in blood and bruises and my vision was blurred from the tears and the pain.

“How can you say such things at this moment, Eren? He could smash your face and albeit it’d be your fault.” Mikasa scolded Eren and bumped her forehead to his.

“Leave.” She mouthed and Eren, still wide-eyed and not believing his luck of still having a face, nodded and left after muttering an apology to me and her.

Mikasa waved him off and turned to me.

“Fuck, Jean. Your hand! We need to get a doctor to see it!” she took my hand on hers and made me follow her around to find a doctor.

“How did this happen?” a nurse asked as he offered to call a doctor for us.

“I got angry.” I avoided his gaze as Mikasa explained the situation with more detail.

“Oh, I see.” The nurse nodded. “But, kid, I heard they are about to finish the surgery, apparently it was like his whole body cooperated with the doctors so perfectly that it was like his own will to live guided them all these hours.” He let me know as he disaffected my knuckles making me hiss in pain.

“Thank you, for telling me.” I offered him a smile that came from my core.

“Of course! Let me know if you need anything else, I’ll be happy to help.” He returned the smile as the doctor arrived.

She put me in the x-ray machine and then examined my hand.

They let me know it was pure luck I didn’t have any broken bones apparently, but it seemed that luck was on my side today, so I just brushed it off. The doctor finished up bandaging my hand and wished me well. We thanked the doctor and the nurse for their care and left.

“You know, I get why you got mad on Eren, but please take care of yourself Jean!” Mikasa hugged my arm from my unharmed side as we returned to the waiting room.

“I know how much you love him, but remember that he loves you as much, so please take care of yourself for his sake.” This girl had her way with words. She knew where to hit.

“Fine.” I huffed and apologized for scaring Eren.
“Nah, it’s fine. Perhaps, he will think before speaking from now on.”

She walked with me to my seat, the mess I had created with the coffee and blood was now all cleaned up, leaving back the distinct hospital odor behind.

I suppose I asked for it.

“I am going to head home, okay? Let anyone know if you need anything at all whenever the hour. Alright?” she didn’t let me go until I looked at her and promised.

“Good! You should rest as well, Jean.” she kissed my cheek and left.

And so I remained alone with Marco’s family, waiting for further news.

After learning the news about Marco, I felt like I wasn’t whole... like I was even less than half of a person.

I knew how much Marco meant for me, but I didn’t think I had even begun to realize how living in a world without him would be.

It’d be such a scary and dark place. Full of ugliness and cruelty.

I only wanted to live in a world where Marco shined his brightest.

Otherwise, I would live in Hell all the same.

Another hour passed and finally, the nurse that helped me out with my hand arrived with the good news.

“Your boy is sure a strong one! We will move him to a room in ER for a couple of days or more just to make sure he is stable and healing, but judging from today’s surgery and his performance, I believe he’ll be in a normal hospital room by the end of the week. The surgery was a success and the doctors are positive about him not only surviving this but also healing up pretty quickly.” He let us know and everyone began crying.

But, not me.

I only laughed.

We could only see him from the window of his room for now, but that was enough for my heart to flutter and to persuade even my deepest thoughts that he was alive and resting.

His chest rising up and down with the help of the machines and the constant beep of his heart rate brought some peace to my mind.

Only Jerome and I wouldn’t leave the hospital or the chairs outside of Marco’s room.

“You know…I was really scared for the past few hours. Marco and I have to speak…you know, really speak for some time now and even after learning about his mental state, even though I made a promise to myself to try and reach out, I was always putting it off. I was so scared of the word we left unspoken, of the feelings we left unshared and the smiles we didn’t exchange.” Jerome let me know after some time as we sat alone and tired.
“I felt the same. All of the memories we still haven’t created…”

“Yeah…so, I thought about it and I am going to move closer to Trost, I even had a proposition to lead a branch of the company’s offices around here.” Jerome smiled at me.

“That’s great news, Jerome! I am sure everyone…I am sure Marco will be overjoyed to have you closer to him.” I reassured him.

“Thank you, Jean. You know you are both so lucky to have each other! Even back then, when you were in high school, I admired your relationship.” He smirked and straightened his body on the uncomfortable chair, crossing his arms and closing his eyes to get some rest.

They let us visit him after he stayed three days to the ER and they had made sure he was stable enough to breathe on his own and to accept visitors.

His family let me be the one to see him first, bless their hearts, and I almost fell to my knees when he finally laid before me, no glass keeping us apart.

My hands were shaking as I traced the pattern of his freckles on his hands and my lips tasted salty as I pressed a soft kiss on his lips.

The doctors let us know that Marco was stable, but in a coma, which was both good and bad. Good, because his body was taking its time to properly heal in peace and bad because if he remained in coma for too long, things would be complicated and his survival would be again on a pedestal.

I couldn’t bring myself to leave him more than a quick trip to the bathroom or for a quick shower in Eren’s house that was the closest to the hospital.

A week passed and Marco always had some visitors other than me and his family.

Ymir and Krista visited rather often as well as Sasha and Connie to make sure I was eating properly.

Levi and Erwin also visited almost every other day. They were so interesting and despite it being a bit weird at first since Erwin is my boss and Levi would be Marco’s, we quickly bonded over music and embarrassing stories about our other half.

I learned all the names of their dogs, cats, bunnies and their horse and promised them to visit with Marco as soon as he was back on his feet.

Eren had apologized so many times it was annoying, but I guess he was alright, letting me use their shower and all. Mikasa and Armin force-fed me. I am sure it was all part of Sasha and Connie’s scheme, and that’s why I loved them all so dearly.

I got to know Marco’s family better as well and even if my mother found it unfair and cruel that they let me pick up Aimée from her school that fateful day because that was her parents’ duty and they weighted too much on my shoulders, she visited quite often with my dad as well.

Despite my friends’ best effort I still managed to eat even less than they believed. My stomach was simply a tight knot and nothing would go down for long at least.
All I wanted and could do was sit by Marco’s side and sketch him for hours end.

“I see my soul flying

Alone and it's terrifying

I’m crying to the skies above, to the skies above

All I need is a little love, just a little love”

I found myself singing, a song I loved dearly and Marco would always ask me to sing it to him. Even now, I swear his heartbeat raised a bit…

“Wake up in an empty bed

No shoulder to rest my head

No energy to move my legs

I know that all I needs a little love, just a little love, just a little love”

My voice was hoarse and I couldn’t stop it from cracking but I still continued.

“It’s time to wake up, my love.” I held Marco’s hand in my own. My knuckles still looked like shit, since I couldn’t stop picking up the crust that formed, making them bleed all over again.

My stomach rumbled but I ignored it and cuddled up next to Marco, my body aching from sitting in this crappy chair for far too long. I was far too tired to even bother getting comfortable so I let the soft sound of Marco’s breath lull me to sleep.

My eyes opened with great difficulty, the light was blinding me and forcing me to close them again.

I tried to raise my hand to cover them, but I felt a weight stopping me from moving.

I used my other hand to shield my eyes and when my vision finally adjusted to the light I looked at
my side.

Jean.

Oh, my God. Jean!

He was so thin and frail and pale that it brought tears in my eyes.

His hands were around mine, his knuckles a bloody mess and his fingers smudged with graphite.

But, he was there, by my side.

And I was alive.

Chapter End Notes

Another chapter has come to its end!! Not long now and our story will end! What did you like the best up to now?
Let me know in the comments or in my tumblr (@skelene)
A million and one thank you to my lovely beta @YunoGasai98 and every person by my side!
And of course to every one of you who continue reading this story!
Until next time!
sk_elene

End Notes

Kudos and especially comments are appreciated!!!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!