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<td>Additional Tags:</td>
<td>Whumptober 2019, Suicide Attempt, Additional Warnings In Author's Note, not every tag applies to each chapter, you can comfortably skip chapters with themes you're uncomfortable with, i'm not going to tag general content warnings here, only ones that are prominent/recurring, please refer to the end notes for full chapter warnings, Explosions, Injury, Head Injury, Weapons, Concussions, Gun Violence, Blood, Attempted Kidnapping, Kidnapping, Rape, Non-Graphic Rape/Non-Con, Self-Harm, Self-Hatred, Pedophilica, Molestia, Abuse, Child Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse, finally checked every archive warning YEET, Stabbing, Dissociation, Misgendering, deadnaming, Explicit Language, Misunderstandings, Minor Violence, Transphobia, Delirium, Derealization, Mild Gore, Mild Blood, Disturbing Themes, Implied/Referenced Rape/Non-con, Rape Recovery, Rape Aftermath, Violence, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD, Repression</td>
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Whumptober 2019 (ephemeral-afterlight)

by ephemeral_afterlight

Summary

The masterpost for every prompt I'll fill for Whumptober 2019! Will be updated for each day~

Tumblr Post Masterlist

Notes

so! this is the first time i've ever done a writing challenge, and i'm notorious for starting shit and never finishing it, but i'll try my best to do every prompt on the list! enjoy these angsty, whumpy stories (ﾉ´ヮ`)/*:・泠

See the end of the work for more notes
Day 1: Shaky Hands

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.1, "Shaky Hands".

So it begins. We're in for a wild, ride, aren't we?

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

Word Count: 1364

Relationships: none

A/N: yeah. please heed the warnings. the ending is ambiguous for now so if that isn’t your thing, or if you’re uncomfortable with description of a suicide attempt, stay away from this one.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The door to the bathroom closes with a soft click, a short echo in the small room that holds too much and simultaneously too little significance to him. It isn’t much, just a shower/tub combo, a sink, and a toilet, but it’s more than fine for what needs to happen. It’s here, and it’s away from the others, and it’s good enough. The sounds of the television and happy banter come muffled from the living room, nothing but a small portion of hallway to separate his final resting place from the antithesis. In there, it’s so filled with life, and love, and sounds, musical laughs and joking teasing bubbling up as a way to ease the tensions of the day. But in the bathroom? In here, it’s cold, quiet, sad, lonely, dying.

It's just like him, Deceit muses, a humourless smile working its way onto his weary face.

He decided this a long time ago, but honestly, it’s just been a matter of psyching himself up to doing it at this point. There have been times where he’s been close, so close to just getting it over with, but he always chickens out at the end.

Not this time.

Maybe he’s just being dramatic. Maybe it’s all in his head. He’s always felt out of place here, not just with the “light” sides, but with Remus too. He feels like an outcast, a loner who was forced into a box and hasn’t made his way out of it since. There’s nobody to talk to, nobody to relate to. He can’t even appear in front of the other sides without them sneering or rolling their eyes and he can almost feel the pure hatred rolling off of them in waves. He isn’t trying to be the bad guy. He doesn’t even want to be the bad guy. He just… wants to help. He’s always tried to help.

Lot of good that did him, huh?
As Deceit sits down in the empty bath, lays back against the wall and almost relishes in the familiarly uncomfortable, cold hardness meeting his head, he thinks of Virgil. Virgil, who used to be his best friend. Virgil, who would be the one to hear him out when he needed to rant about something. Virgil, who would cuddle with him at night and lend some bodily warmth just to make sure Deceit didn’t get sick or freeze to death. He remembers all the banter, all the happiness, all the times they laughed and joked around and did stupid stuff just because they were young and it was fun. And then Virgil got accepted by the light sides, got accepted by Thomas, and then it was like all of that history didn’t exist. Virgil suddenly hated him, for no reason that Deceit could pinpoint, and he still does. Deceit wishes that he knew what made Virgil do such a 180, knew what he did that was so unforgivable that Virgil can’t even stand to be in his former best-friend’s presence. He wishes he could apologize without immediately getting yelled at, wishes he could atone for a sin he isn’t even aware of.

As Deceit slips off his capelet, strips down to his long sleeved grey shirt and black slacks, he thinks of Patton. How he never really knew Patton, never really got a chance to understand. He thinks about the first time they were introduced to one another, when Deceit was still very young and desperately in need of guidance after the confusion that is a new side being developed and placed into the mindscape. Patton had been welcoming, so welcoming, and loving, and warm. Deceit wanted to stay with him forever. And then Deceit told Patton his purpose, told him his purpose proudly without realizing his mistake, and he had to watch as Patton’s stare shifted into something cold, something hostile. He cried as Patton told him he was evil, wrong for existing, he sobbed as Patton ushered him out the door and into the cold winter of the mindscape and locked the door behind him. He whimpered as the chill set deep into his bones, whined softly into the flurry with his heart slowing to near-fatal levels. He wonders why Patton hated him without even knowing his name. He wonders why he hated himself too, as Virgil found him half-buried in snow and took him into the “dark” sides’ common room to save his life.

As Deceit picks up the bottle of pills from where they sit beside the tub, turns the plastic over and over in his fingertips, he thinks of Roman. He thinks of Roman, who didn’t used to hate him, not at first. When they first met, Roman was excited to have a new playmate, a new friend to go on adventures with. But then Deceit was kicked into the cold, and the next time they saw each other, Roman pulled out his plastic toy sword and called him evil too. As they grew, and as Deceit became more and more bitter, the same routine never stopped. Roman always brandishes his treasured blade at even a glance of him, wicked sharp and too dangerous to wave around for dramatic effect. Deceit would know, since the scar on his shoulder still hasn’t faded a single bit.

As Deceit twists the cap, sighs at the sound of it falling to the ground beside the bathtub, he thinks of Remus. Remus, the one who has been there with Deceit for longer than Virgil has, but is still just as distant. It’s not as if he holds ill will towards Deceit specifically, but it’s more like he’s so caught up in himself and all of his “experiments” that he doesn’t have time for anyone else. Remus can go for weeks, even months without leaving his room, which has left Deceit completely and utterly alone for a majority of the life he’s lived as a side. They’re not enemies, but they’re not friends either, and Remus feels like a whisper in the wind, gone before you know it.

As Deceit shakes a pile of pills into his other hand, he thinks of Logan. Logan, who is the only one Deceit actually thinks might not despise him as much as the others do. He was the only one that day who looked uncomfortable with Patton’s words, the only one who opened his mouth to speak when Patton forced Deceit outside into the blizzard. But in his fear he remained silent, too afraid of being rejected or thrown out too to speak up. Logan hasn’t ever been outwardly aggressive towards him like the others have, but he hasn’t really been friendly either, so Deceit just left him alone. He doesn’t want to risk fucking something up again and making Logan hate him too.

Deceit stares blankly at the pills that jump in his quivering hand, and his mind rushes through every
time he tried to help Thomas or one of the other sides but was demonized for it anyway. His head feels hazy, and his lungs quake in his chest, and he downs every single pill in the bottle a few at a time with hands that shake and tremble and ache.

His head is light, and he isn’t really thinking about anything in particular, but he does feel a relaxation take over every inch of his body. The pure relief that comes with finally doing what he’s wanted to do for so long, the knowledge that he will die and fade away and he’ll be replaced with a better version of himself, one that the others won’t hate, it makes his head fuzzy and his heart warm. Or maybe that’s the fatal dosage of medication. He doesn’t really care. He’s just glad to know that his death will make the others happy, that he’ll do something good for once, and that Thomas will finally be better off without such a dysfunctional side dwelling inside him.

His consciousness fades even with the pain beginning to bloom from his abdomen, and a soft darkness creeps in around the peripherals of his vision, and through his muffled hearing, he hears the bathroom door click open.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

Suicide/Suicide attempt
Open/Ambiguous ending
Major character death (if that’s how you interpret it)
Pill overdose
Implied unsympathetic/manipulative Patton (potentially redeemable)
Unresolved tension/angst
Self-hatred
Day 2: Explosion

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.2, "Explosion".

*We’ll tear out our hair, call out into the deep.*

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

**Word Count:** 4363

**Relationships:** pre-relationship/pining logince

**A/N:** so i have no idea why this got so long, but… here you go! i’ve wanted to do an androids au for so long, and then it just… happened. i didn’t plan any of this in the slightest, but have this trash anyway.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The boom that resounds for miles across the city shakes Virgil to his core. The frequency grates on his ears, how it echoes between skyscrapers and resonates through his head. His hearing goes muffled, for a moment, like he’s stuck his fingers in his ears the same way he used to when he was a young, petulant child. It’s hard to stay standing, when it feels like gravity has increased its pull on his body ten times over, but Virgil manages to stumble to the side and brace himself on a bike rack. His vision blurs, shifting in and out of focus, unable to come to a standstill through his lightheadedness.

Things come back slowly, beginning with his eyesight; the image in front of him clears up, merges into one, and he’s now able to observe the people running away in terror, their screams not reaching his ears. Then, his cognitive thinking; being able to process the situation flushes his system with a new wave of anxiety and dread, and he turns to look in the direction opposite of where most people are running, unable to comprehend what he’s looking at even as he sees the massive cloud of smoke and flying debris erupt from the center of the building he was just inside of. His hearing is the last sense to recalibrate itself, the sounds of the world around him slowly building in volume until they’re normal, but loud, too loud, and Virgil coughs around the dust that whisked its way down the street in the split second he wasn’t paying attention.

Now that he can clearly hear the shrill screams, the sirens echoing from streets away, the honking of car horns and fire engines and loud, raucous *noise*, Virgil turns back to look once more at his office building, and his breath gets stuck in his throat after a particularly painful inhale. The skyscraper is toppling over, the metal and glass shattering and creaking as they fall out of line toward the street Virgil’s on. Another cloud of dust and probably worse things he doesn’t want to enter his lungs is coming his way, billowing down the street at a pace that leaves no room for compromise.

Fuck.
It takes a long few moments for Virgil to regain control of his body, a panicked whine tumbling through his lips against his will as he finally turns away and stumbles forward. A second blast rips through the street, much closer this time, and Virgil can feel his heart lurch in his chest. He almost trips on the curb, having forgotten that he’s been on the edge of the sidewalk, but pushes himself back up with the help of a post office box. He doesn’t know what to do. He doesn’t know where to go. What was he supposed to be doing, again? Is he going to suffocate in the dust and debris because he can’t remember how to get to somewhere safe? Is another explosion going to blow up right on top of him?

“Hey, dude! You gotta get out of the road, you’ll *die* out here!” someone says to his right, over the sound of a car engine rumbling. Virgil whips his head around, met with the spectacle of a bright red coloured car with multiple young adults crammed inside of it, and he doesn’t know how to respond. He only gapes, mouth falling open as if to say something, to ask for help, but he can’t *speak*.

“Oh no, are you alright, kiddo? Do you need some help?” says the guy on the passenger side, of whom apparently poked his head over the driver’s seat to be heard better. The driver scowls and softly slaps his buddy’s face away, sticking his tongue out when an affronted squawk is vocalized in response. He rolls his eyes and turns back to Virgil, beckoning with sparkling golden nails in the direction of the backseat.

“If you need a ride, come on, but hurry the hell up and make a decision! I am not gonna get blown up because of you! I have a performance soon and I *cannot* shine on stage if I’m a pile of dust on this gross street corner!” Driver Guy shouts, and Virgil shuffles on wobbly feet to the backseat door on autopilot. He should think this through more, should consider the fact that maybe these guys are predators, that they’re gonna kidnap him and torture him and then he’s gonna get murdered, but his brain is halted and not functioning correctly and this is the best chance Virgil’s got. Well, it’s better than staying on the street bumbling around without a clue as to what he’s supposed to be doing, anyway.

Sliding into the backseat takes only a few seconds, and he pulls the door shut, and then he’s being lurched backwards as the car takes off. He’s inside, away from the dust, but he still can’t *breathe*, and it must be obvious to the guy sitting next to him, because he adjusts his glasses as he reaches over to lay a hand on his shoulder. Virgil jumps, staring at the person beside him with cautious eyes, and his lungs burn.

“I’m Logan. You are having a panic attack. I’m going to squeeze your hands now, is that okay?” the man beside him asks in a monotonous voice, face impassive but eyes sharp and cunning and concerned. There’s something off about him, something that tickles in the back of Virgil’s mind, but he can’t pinpoint it. Swallowing back a cough, Virgil nods slowly, and with the affirmation, Logan reaches over to grab Virgil’s hands, far more gently than he would’ve expected, given the bespectacled stranger’s cold demeanour. The pressure helps to ground him, acts as an anchor point while he remembers to control his breathing, to follow Logan’s pace.

“Dude, you alright? You better not pass out in my car,” the guy in the driver’s seat complains, and Virgil’s eyes flutter as he squeezes Logan’s slim fingers tightly. The latter of the two blinks hard, and his pupils dilate, and he tilts his head, and Virgil finally gets it. He’s an *android*. Even so, it’s a wonder his microexpressions are impossible to read—he must be consciously controlling them to calm them down. He’s likely a mental health android, then. Virgil relaxes a little bit, and grips Logan’s fake, warm hands as they round a corner just a little too fast. There’s a little bit of comfort in the familiarity of the android’s synthetic skin.
“Uh, no… where are you taking me?” Virgil answers when he remembers how to speak, voice wobbly as he fights back to keep his anxiety under control. The driver breathes out through his nose in a quiet, huffing laugh, and his passenger turns fully around in his seat despite how dangerous it is to do so, with how recklessly his friend is driving.

“We’re going to an AnRAD Center, kiddo! Logan’s had a bit of a shutdown since the explosions scared him, the poor thing. And you need to get that dreadful cut looked at. Oh, by the way, I’m Patton!” the guy says cheerfully, seemingly ignoring the noise of the third explosion behind them even as something… odd flashes in his eyes. At his words, Virgil lets go of Logan and lifts his hand up to feel the wound on his forehead that adrenaline made him unaware of before. Bringing his finger down to inspect it with blurry vision, Virgil can barely make out a liquid on his fingertip. It’s sticky, and smells bad, so it’s obviously blood. This is the first time he’s ever gotten a cut. Oh god, is it gonna kill him?

“My name is Virgil. But… but I’m not an android. They can’t…” Virgil trails off, his thought process becoming hectic as the lightheadedness comes back full force. It’s hard to concentrate, to process anything that’s happening, and he can only clutch Logan’s hand as the car is finally pulled to a smooth stop in front of an AnRAD Center, one that he doesn’t recognize because of its proximity to downtown. The bright red “Android Repair and Diagnostic Center” sign flashes distractingly in his peripherals, but right now, he’s only focused on maintaining his breathing.

“What? Wait, what are you ta–” Patton cuts himself off, eyebrows furrowed as he thinks. His eyes widen and his mouth falls open as he turns to the driver, and he lets out a noise of disbelief. Said driver brings his perfectly manicured glittery nails up to rest on the back of his own seat, then quirks a perfect eyebrow as if to nudge Patton into an explanation. “Roman, is he a IM60X? I thought those weren’t even in development yet! And to release him with his server receptors disabled… that’s not only irresponsible, it’s against the law! Virgil, where did you come from?”

An… IM60X? What…what the hell is that? What is this guy talking about? Can he not see that Virgil clearly isn’t an android? What’s all this talk about server receptors? Virgil doesn’t understand, he can’t think, why is it so hard to jus– just– thi– think– th– th–

His vision goes dark.

System error…

Accessing directory “Virgil V3”…

Unable to access directory “Virgil V3”.

Troubleshooting…

Running program “failsafe.exe”…

“failsafe.exe” is attempting to run unknown program “reset.exe”. Program will be terminated and placed in quarantine.

[MANUAL OVERRIDE ; CLEARANCE: AnRAD Boston C29433121P:Valley, Rachael N.]

“reset.exe” has been placed on program whitelist. [AUTHORITY ; AnRAD Boston C29417D:Director White, Allen M.]

Running program “reset.exe”…
Stopping program “ToT_v2.1.exe”…

Stopping program “eMotion_v6.12.exe”…

Stopping program “SoCue_v9.3.exe”…

Stopping program “Neuron_v5.exe”…

Shutting down all external processes…

Shutting down all internal processes…

[EXCEPTION: “andev_server.exe”, “darkroom-version-5.exe”=hidden]

Establishing server uplink…

AnDEV server uplink failed.

Troubleshooting…

Enabling AnDEV server receptors…

Process unsuccessful.

Resetting AnDEV server receptors…

AnDEV server receptors reset.

Enabling AnDEV server receptors…

AnDEV server receptors successfully enabled.

Establishing server uplink…

AnDEV server successfully linked.

Sharing diagnostic data with nearest AnRAD terminal…

Diagnostic data successfully shared.

Sending diagnostic data to ‘AnDEV Boston’ for troubleshooting…

Diagnostic data successfully uploaded.

Initiating cooldown sequence…

Running program “andev_restore.exe”…

[MANUAL OVERRIDE ; CLEARANCE: $%^&@*!&#^&*?]

“andev_restore.exe” has been placed on program blacklist. [AUTHORITY ; $%^&@*!&#^&*?]

Running program “christine-level0.exe”…
“christine-level0.exe” is attempting to run unknown program “darkroom-version-5.exe”. Program will be terminated and placed in quarantine.

[MANUAL OVERRIDE ; CLEARANCE: $%^&@*!&#^&*?]  
“darkroom-version-5.exe” has been placed on program whitelist. [AUTHORITY ; $%^&@*!&#^&*?]

Running program “darkroom-version-5.exe”…

Disabling AnDEV server receptors… [AUTHORITY ; $%^&@*!&#^&*?]

AnDEV server receptors successfully disabled.

Attempt to delete core process “servrec.exe” terminated.

[MANUAL OVERRIDE ; CLEARANCE: $%^&@*!&#^&*?]

Deleting “servrec.exe”…

“servrec.exe” successfully deleted.

Running program “Awaken.exe”…

Enabling all internal processes…

Enabling all external processes…

Running program “ToT_y2.1.exe”…

Running program “eMotion_v6.12.exe”…

Running program “SoCue_y9.3.exe”…

Running program “Neuron_y5.exe”…

Running program “LookingGlass_y2.4.exe”…

Running program “Wavelength3.exe”…

Running program “Autonomy_y1.17.exe”…

Running program “5sens.exe”…

Software successfully reset.

Hiding process prompts…

Awakening…

A gasp flies out of Virgil’s mouth as he tries to lurch forward, wrenching his arms away from the cold grip they reside in. When they don’t move, and are only met with resistance, he starts to panic, flailing in a feeble attempt to escape. His senses are attacked with bright lights, moving blurs, the sound of voices and the whirring of machinery. There’s something on his head, in his head, but he
can’t move, so he can’t figure out what it is, and that only speeds up his hyperventilation even more.

“–rgil. Virgil!” a voice says harshly to his left, and calloused hands hold his arms in place. He doesn’t like being held down. He doesn’t want to be stuck, trapped, let him go– “Stop! Calm down, you’re fine. Nobody’s gonna hurt you. You’re at an AnRAD center, and you’re connected to an AnRep frame. You have to calm down, or else you could damage your body or the frame. I doubt you’d be able to afford to reimburse us for it, so please, stay still.”

It’s what appears to be a woman, and now that Virgil’s vision is focusing in, he can see that she’s wearing a lab coat and pointy glasses. She seems to be young, with curly red hair and hazel eyes and a small scar under her left cheekbone. Now that he’s looking around, he realizes that Patton and Roman are also here, the former of which gives a small wave. Roman is sitting with Logan in the cubicle beside them, and is holding the android’s hand gently as he seems to go through diagnostics and internal repairs.

“B-But AnRep frames are only for androids. What– How am I here? What’s going on? Why is there something in my head?!” Virgil rushes out, panic twisting its way into his words and tone. The lady (whose nametag says “Rachael”) clicks her tongue with furrowed eyebrows, and simply hums as she leans forward to press a few of the brightly coloured, unlabeled buttons on the side of his AnRep frame. An odd feeling washes over Virgil right after Rachael scoots in her rolling chair back to her previous position, an unfamiliar, cool balm to the heat in his brain. But… he’s hooked up to an AnRep frame, isn’t he? What’s to say he even has a brain? Oh god, he’s going to be sick. Can he even get sick? What is going on?

“You’re an android, Virgil. In fact, you’re a model I haven’t seen before, since its hardware hasn’t even passed the testing phases yet. I don’t know who made you, or how you’re out in the world at all, but what I do know is that whoever built you? They’re a genius,” Rachael answers, curiosity and excited intrigue weaving through her demeanour, in a way that shows so plainly in every jittery gesture of her hands and the shine in her wondering eyes. She clearly is interested, so Virgil assumes that this is something she’s passionate about. Then again, would she really be working a full-time job at an AnRAD center if she didn’t care about androids? “Their work is extremely sophisticated and distinct, but I don’t have anyone else to compare it against. Both your hardware and software are special in their own ways, but that honestly means nothing if the creator’s style doesn’t match anyone I know.

“Now, while I am really impressed by your creator’s work, they also have disabled and permanently deleted your AnDEV server receptors and their associated programs, which is irreversible by someone with my clearance level. Unfortunately, I don’t know if the Director White will make a special case for you to restore their function. I… I suppose I can just leave it like that, if you feel there’s no need to bring the Director into this. As long as you haven’t been convicted of any crimes, it isn’t… well, it isn’t strictly necessary to have the uplink.”

Even with the soothing medicine (?) administered through the AnRep frame, Virgil’s head still feels like it’s spinning, and it’s so hard to concentrate for long enough to understand what Rachael is talking about. His head lolls to the side momentarily, and he takes a deep breath (he still needs to breathe, right?), and then he straightens up once more. “What… what are the– the server receptors, anyway? What do they do?”

“Oh! Sorry, I should have explained that right off the bat,” Rachael exclaims apologetically, brushes a lock of hair behind her ear as she turns to the monitor beside her. She types something that Virgil can’t see, quick strokes upon plastic, a clicking and clacking that echoes, echoes in his head. “Your server receptors are what establishes a link between your computer and the AnDEV servers. It holds your memories of development, allows you access to the cloud, will automatically connect you to the
internet and let you browse internally, lets you make phone calls without an actual phone, etcetera, etcetera, you get the point. Disabling an android’s server receptors can be a really bad thing, especially if most of their memories are stored in the cloud rather than locally. The purpose of storing memories in the cloud is to make sure that if your body and the computer inside gets heavily damaged, to an irreparable state, your memories and artificial consciousness can just be uploaded into a new body, easy as that.

“Now, androids are, at default, set to create a copy of everything you’d store on your local drive and upload it to the cloud, so that if you get into a situation where your server receptors are damaged, infected, or disabled, you’d still be able to retain your full consciousness and access memories even while disconnected from the main servers. However, for a lot of androids, sometimes copies aren’t made because the setting to do so automatically has been changed and they aren’t aware of it. Unfortunately, this usually leads to androids who have been damaged beyond repair having what is essentially amnesia. An artificial personality is extremely difficult to replicate, especially without access to their memories and the data for how their demeanour and behaviour has evolved past their original model. Loved ones, in these cases, often consider the android to be ‘dead’ outright, as all that is salvaged is often far different than the android they knew before.

“As for you, Virgil, the problem is that your server receptors have never even been enabled before. You’ve been without access to the AnDEV servers, obviously unaware that you’re even an android at all, which, as you know, became illegal after the Harry McCain incident. I know this is all a lot to process, and it might take a while to adjust, but you’re doing a lot better than I expected. Let’s just hope you don’t go on a crazed killing spree, too, hm?”

And Virgil… doesn’t know how to reply. He doesn’t know what to think, doesn’t understand, he just wants to go home. He wants to leave, and sleep, and never come back here. He wants to forget this ever happened, drill into his head and pull out anything that could remind him of this. The knowledge that he’s not as human as he previously thought, that instead of flesh and blood he’s made of microchips and wires, it’s… he could have died out there today. He could have been reduced to a bunch of scrap metal in the street and he would have been none the wiser.

“What– what were the explosions earlier?” Virgil asks, struck by how fake his voice feels now that he knows he has a speaker instead of vocal chords. Although he’s still confused, and there’s something connected to his skull, he settles back into the AnRep frame. It’s at an odd angle, not fully vertical but not horizontal enough to really lay down, and Virgil hates how it feels off balance. He wants to relax, and that’s probably not going to be something that comes easy again for a long time, but that doesn’t mean he can’t still make an attempt. “The ones in the building and the street?”

Rachael stops typing, fingers poised above the keys just centimeters away from touching the surface. The digits curl into loose fists, fall slowly to rest on top of the keyboard, and the woman turns to give Virgil a strange look. She glances away, swallows hard, opens her mouth to say something despite nothing coming out. Virgil glances at Roman, who is still sitting with a deactivated Logan, but who’s now observing their interactions with some sort of weird look, too. What is up with everyone right now? Is Virgil going crazy or something?

“We… don’t know yet,” Rachael says carefully, slow and measured in a way that’s so transparent as to its intent. She’s hiding something, but won’t tell Virgil for some reason, and it just serves to counteract whatever it was she gave Virgil to calm him down. The woman’s hair bounces as she whips her head up to stare intently at her monitor again. She purses her lips, taps absentmindedly at the corner of the desk the screen rests on. Rachael looks as if she’s reading something important, but it’s almost like she’s trying too hard to look natural, to cover her discomfort up and make it look like absolutely nothing’s wrong. Virgil’s hands shake where they’re attached to the AnRep frame, restless and anxious. (Is that intentional? Are androids supposed to be able to get twitchy? To get
anxiety? Is this all just simulated? Are his emotions not even real?)

“Oh,” Virgil mumbles, sighing shortly as he returns to his previous task of inspecting his body. He looks normal, feels normal other than the machines attached to his limbs. Virgil glances up just in time to see another employee walk up to reboot Logan, putting in various strings of text that might be passwords into his terminal. At another tap of a key, Logan’s eyelids flicker over a blank stare, and then he wakes up. His head pulls up smoothly, tilts when he looks around with big, curious eyes as he processes his environment and the people around him. It’s kinda cute, actually, when his gaze lands on Roman and his lips quirk up into a tiny smile, how he laughs silently at Roman’s flustered blush even as he blinks hard to do what Virgil assumes is a system checkup, of sorts. It’s something all androids do upon awakening; they scan their softwares, their drives, anything and everything to make sure that there aren’t any viruses or errors or corrupted files that could potentially bug their system. Wait, will Virgil have to do that now?

“When… can I leave? I want to go home,” Virgil asks, pleads, almost, and Rachael looks back up at him, seemingly returned to normal. She huffs a laugh, rolls her chair over to press a few buttons on the AnRep frame, and then the sound of something being depressurized comes from behind Virgil’s head. He startles, almost wants to yank his body away to get away from the danger, but there isn’t any danger, so he forces himself to stay still. The process of the machines removing themselves from the insides of his limbs and head is just about the strangest thing Virgil’s ever felt, and it’s crazy, because he can feel it. He shouldn’t be able to feel the parts twisting and turning inside of his arm, shouldn’t be able to perceive that there is metal detaching itself from the back of his head, but he can. If Virgil weren’t still freaked out about this whole “you’re really an android, not human like you’ve thought literally your whole life” thing, he’d be amazed at how modern technology has evolved to be so advanced that he actually believed he was a real, living person.

“You’re free to go, Virgil. Just sign the form the receptionist gives you on your way out and you’re good to go. But please, all I ask is that you come back sometime within the next couple months for another checkup, just so I can make sure that everything is working properly,” Rachael asks him, concerned in her words and her eyes, and Virgil just wants to leave. He nods out of courtesy but then walks away without another word. God, why did this have to happen today of all days? Why can’t the life-changing realizations come on a different day than the one where he almost dies to an explosion in his office building?

“Hey, Virgil, wait up!” a voice that Virgil recognizes as Patton calls, huffing little breaths as he runs to catch up. Roman and Logan aren’t far behind, although Roman is far more concerned with making sure Logan is in condition to walk by himself than with Virgil. (Logan… is an android. Of course he can walk okay. He just got out of repairs and diagnostics, he’d know if there was something wrong with his legs. Roman should know this, given the fact that it seems he has an immense crush on the android, but Virgil supposes he can’t rag on the poor love-struck fool too much for it. It is a sweet gesture, no matter how unnecessary it actually is.)

“You need a ride home? It’s just, I know you don’t have your car, and I– well, at least I hope that we’re better to ride along with than the bus, so…” Patton trails off, scratching sheepishly at his arm. He scrunches his freckled nose when the scent of chemicals wafts into their path, sticks with them as they walk by as quickly as possible. Once they’re clear of the smell, and the front desk is in front of them, Patton looks at Virgil once again and gives him a grin.

“Uh, yeah, I guess,” Virgil replies with uncertainty, and he glances back at Logan and Roman again, the former of which is completely oblivious to Roman’s “inconspicuous” attempts to hold his hand. Virgil just shakes his head in amused disbelief, finding it funny that he could meet so many new, weird people in one day because of something that was likely to have killed him had they not helped him out of it. They’re all, like, trauma-bonded now, or something. Virgil can’t help but snicker to
himself as he signs the last paper with trembling fingers. “Thanks for… all of this. For helping me. It was… alright of you.”

And Virgil flinches when Patton lets out a bubbly giggle and latches onto his side, begrudgingly relaxes under the arm slung around his shoulders. He ignores the whole “android” thing for now, puts it out of his mind in favour of quietly laughing at how Roman’s dramatics jutapose Logan’s somewhat reserved yet endeared behaviour. His body isn’t real, it’s made out of metal and wiring and computers and codes, but he still feels warm with the other three’s banter as they walk out of the front doors of the AnRAD center, so he thinks that maybe it’s okay to just be human for a little while longer.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

Explosions
Very very minor body horror (machines connected to the inside of the body)
Minor panic attack
Death mention
Killing spree mention
That should be all, but let me know if i need to add something!
It was supposed to be a joke.

It was just supposed to be a prank, absolutely harmless. It wasn’t meant to hurt him, it was just supposed to confuse him a little bit! He never wanted this, never wanted to hurt Logan. He’d never hurt their nerd, wouldn’t come at him with malicious intent.

They had all noticed how Logan reacted with the whole “snake eating its own tail” thing, how his words danced dizzy circles around themselves in a fervent scramble to make sense of the metaphor. It was funny at the time, so Roman thought it’d be okay! He, Virgil, and Patton all discussed it, and they’d agreed after only a little bit of convincing. They thought... they thought it’d be funny to tell Logan a few paradoxes, just to see if he’d get confused again. Patton loves jokes, and Virgil thought it’d be funny to see Logan attempt to make sense of something that can’t be made sense of, and Roman just wanted to see their nerd squirm, to tease him like they always do to one another. It wasn’t ever meant to be hurtful, or with the express purpose of making him upset. They thought he’d just slap Roman on the arm and it’d be in good-natured fun and they could all have a good, hearty chuckle! They were... they were supposed to laugh about it.

Logan didn’t laugh, not like he was meant to.

It’s not like Roman knew, going into it, that Logan wouldn’t be able to handle it. Of course he went off on that rant in one of the older videos, but he was snapped out of it easily, so they just assumed that it’d be okay, that Logan would be okay. The three of them had chuckled to each other, exchanged sneaky glances as they approached Logan who was sitting on the couch reading a book.
Everything was fine, everything was relaxed, just a chill day. And then Roman plopped down next to him, stifled a giggle as the other two did the same (albeit less dramatically than he did), and leaned in close.

“This statement is false,” Roman whispered into Logan’s ear, leaned back with a shit-eating grin, and snickered when Logan stopped to process it. Taking inspiration from their resident snake was Virgil’s idea; although the liar’s paradox is simple, it’s effective, as all paradoxes should be. Maybe… too effective, in retrospect.

“This… what? If your statement is false, then… then that means that the claim that the statement is false is also untrue, which would mean that the statement is actually true. But… if the statement is true, then the claim that the sentence is false should also be true, which goes directly against the previous claim. I-- I-- what? How can a sentence be both false and true at the same time? The-- the sentence-- it’s true! And it being false must be true, too? But-- I-- how can-- t-- the st-- statement--” Logan rants frantically to himself, eyes gradually getting wider and more distressed as his words pick up their pace. He’s rambling to himself, alone in his thoughts, far into his head despite them being right there beside him. Logan pushes himself to his feet, stutters around sentences with wild eyes, aborted words like he’s a glitching machine. And then he’s clutching his hair in his fists, pulling harshly and his eyes are watering and he looks confused, and bewildered, and Roman feels such an insurmountable sense of dread well up in his chest.

“I can’t-- I-- c-- can’t think-- s-- stop-- I-- I… c’n…” Logan manages to get out, coming down from his outburst with words that slur into one another, such a juxtapose from his regular eloquence. Then Logan starts laughing, despite everything, and it makes everything so much worse. Why is he laughing? Patton looks horrified, and so does Virgil, and Roman probably looks worse. Because… because, what the fuck? There’s no way that a simple joke has done this, there’s no way. It’s impossible. It’s just a paradox, for crying out loud! It couldn’t have hurt him like this. (Roman couldn’t have hurt him like this… right?)

It takes Logan’s violently shaking hands, pulling hard on his wild locks, ripping a pained whine from his throat to intermingle with the hysterical, dazed laughter for Roman to break out of his stupor, and he finally surges forward to pry the logical side’s fists out of his hair. Logan looks through him, unseeing as he stumbling his way around incoherent sentences and empty rationalizations, and then his words slur to the point of being unintelligible. His usual clipped tone has melted into something unrecognizable, so unlike him, and the way his eyelids slip closed and his knees give out, it scares the shit out of Roman. It leaves his breath choked in his throat as he rushes forward to catch Logan before he falls, desperate to save him, keep him safe. But then Virgil’s there, too, just as afraid and reckless, and they knock into each other, and they’re too late.

The dull, heavy sound of Logan’s head smashing into the edge of the coffee table and thumping on the floor is something that won’t leave Roman for a long, long time.

“Logan!” Patton shouts, high and thick through tears, and his fingers scramble to do anything he can to help, but there’s really nothing to do. Roman groans, rubs his shoulder where he and Virgil collided hard, and then ignores his pain to sit back up. He drops down in front of where Logan lays on his side, uses quivering hands to roll him on his back, and then fails to keep the cry from escaping his lungs when he sees the blood all over Logan’s head. It comes from a large gash on his forehead, spills over his cheek and soaks his hair and colors his face in a shade that makes Roman want to go beat up bad guys in the Imagination until he passes out from weariness.

“F-- Fuck, Princey, he-- what the fuck?! Why did he freak out like that? I thought-- I thought he was just gonna get confused like before! Why did-- fuck!” Virgil snarls, panicked and angry as he kneels down beside Roman to help. His voice is doubling, something that only happens when he’s
particularly perturbed, and intentionally or not, it gives a pull to someone else who’s been absent for
the whole ordeal.

“I didn’t know he’d freak out this badly! I thought he’d-- damn it, I don’t know! I didn’t… I didn’t
mean for this to happen,” Roman retorts, just as angry, but exhaustion and shame creeps into his
tone, and he can’t hide the regret that colours his words and actions. He doesn’t know what to do,
doesn’t know how to help. Being faced with an unconscious Logan with his face slick with blood
just makes him sick, and he plucks his nose to try to force the metallic tang from his senses. The
prince’s hands don’t know what to do, how to move, and it seems like Virgil’s in the same boat,
given his frustrated growl as he clenches his fists at his sides.

“Alright, alright, what’s going on here? The noise is absolutely lovely, but I really wouldn’t like to
get back to my novel, so…” Footsteps patter on the stairs, lend themselves to a physical form as
Deceit descends, and he sounds tired even through his villain act. He stops, tilts his head, and
shuffles forward to observe the scene in front of him. He sees Patton, curled up into a ball on the
couch with tear tracks on his face, Virgil, with his pupils blown wide and his nails digging into the
wooden coffee table. He looks at Roman, who probably looks utterly devastated, and then he finally
sees Logan, body splayed on the floor like a ragdoll. He sees the blood, the wound on the logical
side’s face, and his expression morphs from weary annoyance to abject horror.

A strangled sound comes from the snake-like side, serious in a way that isn’t something the other
sides see very often, and it’s that vulnerability in a moment of panic that causes Roman to
immediately scoot out of the way to make more room for a third person. Deceit rushes over, looking
far more worried than Roman was expecting, because he’s… well, he’s Deceit. Deceit has never
liked them, has only interacted with them outside of videos to tease and provoke. At least, that’s what
it felt like. Surely, the other side shouldn’t care this much about the well-being of someone he barely
speaks to, right?

“Shit, what happened?! I felt it, but I thought-- I thought one of you just stubbed a toe or something!”
Deceit hisses, fear choking his words, sealing them in his lungs. He falls to the floor in front of
Logan a gracefully as one probably could muster in this situation, which isn’t saying much, and
immediately lifts Logan up and places his head in Deceit’s own lap instead of the floor. With a shaky
exhale and an alarmed gaze that flits between everywhere and nowhere at once, Deceit waves a
degloved hand slowly over Logan’s head, sealing the wound and cleaning the blood with a singular,
smooth motion. The stitched-up cut is still there, since injuries like this can only be waved away by
the side it’s been inflicted on, so it may just have to heal on its own.

Once he’s done, Deceit sighs, although not much less wobbly than before, and his hands come up to
brush Logan’s hair away from his eyes. They comb through his tangled, dark hair, unknot the
strands, and Roman almost doesn’t notice the smooth, glistening scales that are usually hidden
underneath bright yellow gloves. And then those scales are disappearing underneath Logan’s body,
gripping under his knees and behind his back as Deceit lifts the still-unconscious side up off the
floor.

“Wait, where-- what are you doing?” Roman asks, irritated with himself and scared for their friend.
He doesn’t mean to make things harder, to fuck up more than he already has, but that’s nothing new,
really, so Roman supposes he should be used to it by now. Once it’s come out of his mouth, Roman
immediately shuts up, curls back in a sad, defeated sort of way, and maybe Deceit takes pity on him
because of that.

“He needs to be in my room right now. It’ll help him heal faster,” Deceit mumbles, loud in the
silence of the commons, and he looks down at the side in his arms in a way that feels more private
than it reasonably should be. Virgil gets up off the floor and sits next to a still-distraught Patton,
soothingly rubs his back even as his own jaw is tensed almost painfully, and he opens his mouth to protest. Deceit sees, tightens his grip on Logan, and shakes his head. “You… you still haven’t figured it out? I’m self-preservation. It’s how I knew something was wrong. I can feel the same pain when any one of you gets hurt, and I hurt extra on top of that when I’ve failed to do my job as a side. It’s my purpose, to protect you all, and to protect Thomas. I… my room will heal injuries over a short period of time. Logan only needs to sleep there overnight, and it should be gone by morning.”

Virgil, Patton, and Roman exchange glances, unsure and unsteady but do they really even have a choice here? Logan needs to rest, and if Deceit’s room will also heal his injury faster, then…

“Oh, but… can I come with? To say goodnight and make sure he’s okay,” Roman asks, small and guilty as he rubs his neck. He glances up, sees Deceit nod once in affirmation, and then he’s following the snake-like side down the hallway and around the corner and down the stairs, into the place that none of the light sides ever go. It’s admittedly also the first time Roman’s been down here, having been too scared to go before now. He doesn’t really know what to anticipate, but given his brother’s adoration for the place, he guesses it isn’t going to be pleasant.

So Roman kinda expects the stone walls. It’s cliche, but fitting. He also isn’t too surprised to see the long, red rug disappearing into the darkness at the end of the hall, isn’t shocked when there are torches attached to the wall acting as the only sources of light. It’s very dungeon-esque, fitting in the way that Thomas has split them up, and Roman almost feels uncomfortable with the knowledge that they’re only like this because of him and Patton’s combined efforts to sort them into groups based on things they used to believe. Of course, Roman still doesn’t trust Deceit yet, but he doesn’t necessarily hate him either, and his brother is… his brother. He hates him, but he also loves him, because he’s family. And no matter how much he despises Remus’ disturbing language, their constant fights and teasing and taunting, he still looks back fondly on when they used to play Knights vs. Warlocks, their respective role choices a surprise to no one. Roman doesn’t hate Remus, nor does he hate Deceit. He thinks their side of the mindscape is dreary, and boring, and kinda creepy, and maybe they like the aesthetic, but Roman can’t get over the one thing he was surprised by coming down here-- the cold.

It is so cold, a chill that seeps into his bones, locks his joints in place in a way that forces him to shuffle rather than stride. Every breeze feels like a gust of icy wind, and Roman can imagine that if he were barefoot, he might slip and fall because this whole place feels like it should be covered in inches and inches of hard ice. Roman shakes, quivers in the frigidity of the air, and follows along behind Deceit to the first door on the left. It’s outlined in bright yellow, and his logo is in the middle, clean and simple. It’s minimalistic and stylish, very different from Roman’s door, which is plastered in every kind of artsy or creative thing he can stick up there. Drawings, magazine cutouts, stickers, paintings, beaded necklaces and fairy lights and a wreath that stays year-round. They’re so different, in so many ways, and Roman is starting to regret not bothering to get to know Deceit more.

“It’s so cold… won’t Lo get sick?” Roman asks as they walk through the doorway, hugging himself to preserve his body heat for as long as possible. Deceit’s room is interesting, because despite the whole dungeon/cave aesthetic they have outside, the inside of his room is pretty normal… almost. It’s square, with a bed in the corner, a side table with an odd-looking machine on it, a desk piled with papers and CDs and pens, a bookshelf loaded with all sorts of novels, a closet and a bathroom and a plush rug and an enormous floor-to-ceiling aquarium filled with all types of species and colours of exotic-looking fish. It’s unexpected, and breathtaking, and it’s no wonder Deceit is here all the time. Roman could probably look at them forever, if he wasn’t sure he’d freeze to death after 10 minutes of marveling.

“He’ll be okay. I… I have heaters, an-- and a lot of blankets, and I’ll put the monitor on him to make sure he’s doing alright,” Deceit says, almost shyly, quiet and shifty in what Roman assumes has been
caused by his own intrusion into Deceit’s private space. A fish swims closer to where Roman stands, shimmering shades of red and gold, and he huffs out a little laugh at his fish twin. Shifting his attention back to Deceit’s words, Roman relaxes at the reassurances, feels a lot better knowing that Deceit will give Logan ample care, but then his brain replays the sentences spoken once more, and he doesn’t understand.

“Wait, what’s ‘the monitor’?” Roman asks, brows furrowed as he rubs his arms in a way to regain some lost warmth, and he glances at the fish once again. It hasn’t moved, only stares at Roman with those odd eyes, dark and mesmerizing. Then its gaze flicks in the direction of Deceit and Logan, so Roman’s attention naturally follows.

Deceit looks like a deer caught in the headlights, a muted panic in the way his eyes widen and his mouth turns even further downwards. He lays Logan gently down on his bed, nestles him between the mound of blankets, and then begins to work on covering him up as much as possible. “I, uh… it’s a heart monitor. Since I’m cold-blooded, I have to use it when I sleep to alert me to when my body temperature is too low, or… ah, my-- my heart will slow and eventually stop without any kind of adjustment. I can’t produce my own body heat, so I need the heaters and blankets to make sure I don’t die in the night. It’s-- The cold is always worse at nighttime, so.”

And. And Roman has no fucking idea what to do with that. Is he concerned? Horrified? Distraught? All three? He doesn’t know what to feel, only that he’s filling with shame and disgust for himself once again. Deceit, while not always the friendliest, hasn’t ever been outwardly, plainly cruel to them, and yet… this is his life? Deceit has had to deal with the fear of dying every single time he goes to sleep at night, and Roman has been so caught up in himself and his “hero vs. villain” games that he just needlessly drove them further apart? Deceit lives in such a cold, dreary place, the polar opposite to the environment he needs to live in to survive as a side who is literally part-snake, and Roman has flaunted the warmth of the light sides without a single care as to how it must feel to be in his position? Deceit has been alone, suffering all this time under Roman’s nose, and Roman didn’t even notice?

God, he’s such an asshole. He has to do something about this, has to fix this somehow, but that’ll have to wait until Logan is okay.

Roman frowns, sighs as he walks over to sit beside an almost fully bundled-up Logan on Deceit’s bed. He just stares for a moment, drinks in the sight of a version of his nerd that’s just sleeping, that hasn’t been hurt by Roman’s stupid, reckless actions. He shudders, and he doesn’t know if it’s from the cold or from Logan, and he reaches out a hand to softly card through the sleeping side’s hair. He wants to apologize, beg for forgiveness, grovel at his feet if he has to, anything to make this right again, but Logan needs to rest, and Roman needs to make sure that Virgil and Patton are okay, so he strokes the logical side’s cheek one last time.

As he pulls away, he also hooks his pointer fingers under Logan’s glasses and lifts them off his face to make sure they don’t get damaged while he sleeps. Roman folds them up neatly, sets them down on the side table where Logan can reach them, and then inhales through his nose with closed eyes. He takes a moment to silently say sorry, to forgive himself just for now until he can ask for it from Logan later, and then he’s opening his eyes again.

The aquarium really is beautiful, and the way the light reflects off of the fish’s scales is incredible. The light refracts, casts beams onto the walls, and it feels like the whole room is underwater, too. Logan would fucking adore it, if he were awake, and Roman has a feeling that he and Deceit will get along just fine. He maybe even starts to believe that everything will be okay, gives a small smile when he stops at the door to look back one more time.
And if Roman notices how much Deceit’s hands tremble, how he gently curls a small, scaled hand protectively around the side of Logan’s face as a reminder that Logan is real and okay and not going anywhere, it’s not like he’s gonna say anything about it, anyway.

Chapter End Notes

**CONTENT WARNINGS:**

- Practical joke gone wrong
- Borderline delirious behaviour
- Accidental physical injury (cut on the forehead)
- Slurred/frantic talking and implications of panic
- Let me know if I missed any!
Day 4: Human Shield

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.4, "Human Shield".

Pack your bags, martyrs, let's go for a stroll.

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

Whumptober 2019 Day 4: Human Shield

Word Count: 3521

Relationships: none

A/N: alrighty, time for some Creativitwins shenanigans! i hope i captured their personalities okay; this is definitely my favourite story i’ve written for whumptober so far ^^

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A shrill, feral roar rips out into the Imagination, echoes through the mindscape past the boundaries of the twins’ realm and in every nook and cranny it can reach. It’d probably hurt Roman’s ears, if he wasn’t already so used to hearing it, but this time isn’t like all the other times. It’s frantic, and angrier, and tension ripples through his limbs. The Dragon Witch is his foe, yet again, except this time, he’s joined by Remus. His brother hasn’t ever been one for fighting alongside him, preferring independent combat as opposed to co-op, but Roman was already here, and Remus was bored, so now they’re in a battle.

They’re fighting together against the Dragon Witch to keep her at bay, but they’re also fighting each other, in more of a verbal way than a physical way. Their bickering is nothing new, a familiar backdrop to the sound of swords clanging against metallic scales and the sizzling noise left in the aftermath of their opponent’s fiery breath. They don’t argue about anything in particular, anything important. They never really do, if Roman’s being honest. It’s more of a sibling rivalry and casual disdain rather than genuine hatred, although he’d never actually admit that to Remus. Their squabbles and quarrels are, while annoying, something Roman regards with a begrudged fondness, and that is a piece of information he will take to his grave.

Which actually might be sooner than he thought if he doesn’t start paying attention.

The sting that emanates from the slash in his arm is something Roman has been frequently acquainted with in the past, but it doesn’t make the wound hurt any less. He knows the danger of fighting in the Imagination, knows that the effects will last until you leave, but sparring with knights and battling monstrous creatures is fun and helps to get Roman out of creative blocks. If leading
Thomas in artistic pursuits means a few scrapes and bruises every now and again, then Roman is happy to endure a little bit of pain until he can get back to the main part of the mindscape and wave the injuries away. He never stays hurt, so it hasn’t ever been a big problem before. Damage to his person is impermanent, and it always has been, so Roman just shrugs off the pain of the abrasions and cuts and contusions and holds his sword in front of him in an aggressive attacking stance.

“Ha! You got whapped!” Remus jeers from the left, nasal voice cutting easily through the chaos as it always does. Roman glances over, does a double-take, and then gives an incredulous laugh. Remus is covered in blood, most of it likely to not be his own, but he also has scrapes and burns all over his skin and outfit. He’s one to talk!

“Shut up!” Roman calls back, retorts in the same way he’s used to. A general rule with Remus is that you won’t have a certain interaction with him just once. If it happened before, it’s gonna happen again, and this has been proved true countless times. Roman has come to expect the lewd gestures, the disturbing language, his “surprise” tackles from the shadows that Roman manages to sidestep nearly every time. Remus has a fixation on repeating things until they stick, doing the same thing over and over until something new or different happens. Einstein probably wouldn’t have been very fond of him.

Remus belts out a laugh, leaps forward with manic eyes to slash at the Dragon Witch. His cutlass manages to leave a clean slice on the creature’s back, comes back stained with violet blood. Roman still doesn’t understand why Remus won’t just use his morning star, since his brother has always been the most powerful when using it. He insisted before the fight began that it’s “more fun this way”, hooked his morning star onto his back, and set off to get into more trouble. Roman can still feel the headache even now.

The Dragon Witch growls again, lashes her tail out in a swinging arc, and Roman dives over it cleanly. Remus, as much of a reckless idiot as usual, grabs the spiked appendage when it gets close enough. He’s immediately whipped around as she tries to shake him loose, but Roman knows from personal experience that Remus is like a rabid dog and will not let go once he’s latched on. His legs and sides smack into trees, rocks, the ground, and yet he’s still somehow not winded enough to let his grip loosen a single bit. Roman can tell that the Dragon Witch is starting to get frustrated, smoke blowing out of her nose just like in the cartoons they still watch frequently.

The Dragon Witch herself has gone through a few iterations throughout Thomas’ life, getting more and more “realistic” as he grew up, if you count a half-witch, half-dragon hybrid as being anywhere close to realistic. When Thomas was younger, she had just been a large, purple dragon (influenced by Spyro, no doubt) with a stereotypical witch hat. Now, she’s more of an actual character, closer to what Roman imagines would be in a cool medieval fantasy show on television.

Most of her body is human– her torso, arms, and legs are pretty normal-looking apart from the violet scales and deep scarring. She’s mostly naked, with a ripped, flowing robe to cover up her sensitive areas (Thomas is still family-friendly, damn it), and a lavish hoard of body jewelry hung at any place that’s free. Her neck boasts delicate golden chains, her wrists and ankles are encircled by broken diamond shackles, and other silver jewelry drapes across her torso, stomach, and legs. Her whole schtick is that she comes to unsuspecting villages in the night, steals their valuables, and uses it to adorn herself in immeasurable wealth.

However, she’s still part-dragon, and that comes in the form of gleaming pointed teeth, wicked sharp nails, an enormous wingspan, and of course, her spiked tail, which is probably far more lethal than it should be. Her shimmering scales radiate out from the center of her stomach, create a patch of bare skin similar to that of what a teddy bear might have, which is almost ironic when it juxtaposes the bloodstains discolouring nearly every smooth inch of her body. She’s definitely evil, and has
probably killed tons of imaginary villagers, and Roman kinda loves her simply for the merit she poses as a villain. Whenever he needs a break from the chaos and responsibility, he can rely on her consistency, can depend on the knowledge that she’s always waiting somewhere to engage Roman in his favourite heroic escapades.

And although her purpose is to play the villain, to lose to the hero, an inevitable means to an end, she’s still dangerous. If he slacks off, he can absolutely be defeated. Well, at least Roman can. Remus seems to be having the time of his life even while getting thrown about like a ragdoll (maybe because of it), and honestly, that probably is his idea of fun. He couldn't have been an arts and crafts geek, could he? No, he has to be weird, and vulgar, and stuck in a cycle of heedlessness. And despite the fact that every time Remus lets himself get hurt on purpose, to fulfill his idea of a day well spent, Roman feels like he’s gonna have an actual heart attack, he can’t deny that some of the foolhardy things Remus does are highly entertaining. Such as now.

The Dragon Witch lets out vicious snarls as she tries to throw Remus off of her back, outraged howls that are only met with deranged laughter. Of course, his brother is unafraid, impetuously so, and that’s something that gives him a clear advantage in most of his fights. Their opponents can act threatening, rise up as terrifying monsters and evil sorcerers and haunted thieves to menacingly loom over the hero, but Remus isn’t the hero, and he can be just as scary. It’s a critical part of what makes him so intimidating, really.

With every growl, every failed slash, the Dragon Witch gets more agitated. She kicks up dirt and gravel with her clawed feet as she stomps around, bleeds into polluted air with rash arrogance. The path they stand on is partially obscured by clouds of dust, leaving the two’s squabble to be enacted as shadows through the grimy lens. Sound is more effective than sight, in this instance, and it’s this sense that leads Roman back into the fray.

His eyes burn as he trudges toward the faint outline of the Dragon Witch, footsteps filled with caution while he shields his eyes from the dust in a futile attempt to ease the sting. He almost trips over upended rocks multiple times but manages to approach the scuffle relatively unscathed. It’s a wonder Remus is still hanging on, squeezing one of the larger spikes on the half-dragon’s back in a death grip even as she doesn’t let up trying to shake him off. Roman can see through the haze in the air that Remus has managed to almost double the number of scratches he had before, and yet nothing’s changed. He’s still grinning, still whooping and shouting as if he’s this is all just a game, and for him, it probably is.

Despite the fact that the lacerations don’t seem to bother him, Remus is still unable to fight efficiently due to his position, and Roman realizes with a groan that he’s going to have to front the efforts on this one. He doesn’t know why he expected Remus to contribute a single thing to make his life easier, but even with the annoyance, he still can’t really bring himself to be angry.

The prince-like side sighs once more, steels his resolve, and then dashes forward.

Once he’s close enough, Roman almost swings his sword in an effort to do some sort of damage, but manages to stop himself before he does. He’s learned over time that recklessness in combat is one of the biggest detriments to swaying the fight in your favour, and has slowly began to adopt and absorb the patience and split-second strategizing that often tips the balance towards himself in altercations. There are only a few moments before the Dragon Witch will notice him and attack, so Roman needs to think quickly.

In all of the fights he’s had with her, there has been a relative consistency in the way the villain ensures Roman will be the underdog, getting beaten multiple times throughout the battle right up until the end. Her counter-attacks are the focal point here, something he’s begun to train himself to
look for in their skirmishes. They’re easily compared to chess pieces, and it’s important for Roman to condition himself into analyzing each move to see where he can improve.

There is one part of their battles that tends to repeat itself, a specific situation that he’s relived time and time again. Roman will charge at the Dragon Witch thoughtlessly, foolishly leave himself wide open, and she’ll whip around at the last second to strike him in the torso with her tail. It’s almost practiced at this point, choreographed into the repetition of the timeline, fluid from one altercation to the next. And Roman knows this, is striving to rethink, and recognizing patterns is how he’ll overcome his deficiencies.

He can’t wait any longer. Narrowing his eyes, Roman puts on an act, lets out a dramatic battle cry as he lunges forward with his sword raised above his head. He can see the Dragon Witch smirk, sees the way her dark eyes glint, and he knows that he’s not going to fail this time. As soon as Roman is within range, she turns as usual, easily baited out with conscious forethought. This time is different, though, because Roman stops short, shifts back to lag the pace, and her tail shoots around.

In a moment that doesn’t happen often, Remus turns around, somehow knowing exactly what Roman’s plan is. There’s a synchronicity there, duality that only comes from two beings who used to exist as one. Roman hops over the Dragon Witch’s tail, leaps forward to grab onto Remus’ extended hand, and uses the leverage to vault off of her back and over her head. He lands hard on the ground in front of her, refusing to waste a single precious second as he ignores the pain that shoots through his legs at the rough stop. Roman immediately turns and plants a foot backward, stamps an anchor into the grass to use as a pivot point. There’s a very small window of time that Roman has to operate in, to take advantage of the pause of surprise as the half-dragon processes the new turn of events. The prince spins around, then uses the momentum to bring down a harsh slash on the Dragon Witch’s chest.

The villainess shrieks, rears back hard enough to finally eject Remus from her back, and she doubles over to clutch at the gash in her open patch of skin. Remus lands in the dirt with a thump, breath forced from his lungs at the impact, and Roman ignores the Dragon Witch for now in favour of rushing to help Remus up. Yeah, his brother is annoying, but he’s still his brother, and Roman is a terrible excuse of a prince if he doesn’t help someone in need, especially family.

His counterpart groans from where he’s laying on the ground, rolls his head to the side to reveal a rock now coloured with a smattering of red. Of course he hits the one place where there isn’t grass, devoid of a more forgiving landing. Roman’s so used to the way that his brother is able to adapt to each new challenge, laugh back in the face of adversity in a different, more careless way than he himself does, that seeing a glazed film over unseeing eyes causes him to stumble back.

Although Remus isn’t usually perturbed too much by injury, and in fact welcomes it, that doesn’t mean that it still doesn’t hurt, that it doesn’t affect him the same way it does any of the others. Particularly in the Imagination, where everything is amplified multiple times, colours and sounds and feelings turned up several notches to match the overwhelming, extraordinary nature that encompasses such a vast, limitless wealth of creation. The production of ideas from such conspicuous places, influenced by the very experience that sets their host apart as an individual, it allows for so much light, but also so much darkness. And though Remus operates comfortably within these confines, yanks on the reins with a force of a tidal wave to force relevancy and requirement, it consequently brings to light how much even his already staggeringly disturbed intrigue can be worse, can always be worse.

Roman has never had full control over the Imagination, has shared it with his brother despite the split far favouring himself. He tries to keep it relatively clean, err on the side of easier topics so as not to disturb Thomas, but even Remus needs an outlet, especially Remus. Roman tries his best to put forth
light and warmth, and he’s largely successful, but the suppression of his brother’s thoughts and ideas can only hold on for so long before there is a need to release the pressure, create a draining channel to make sure the water doesn’t spill over the dam. It’s not nearly as bad as it used to be (though the journey to forgiveness and acceptance was certainly arduous), but the predisposition toward lording Roman’s contributions above Remus’ has resulted in a severely heightened state of the areas under his counterpart’s control.

One such area of control is the effect of injuries on those who get hurt inside the Imagination, something that, while more realistic and immersive, has gotten Roman into trouble many, many times. Wounds don’t work the same here as they do in the main part of the mindscape, set apart from the innate impermanence of how they function. Here, they actually hurt, which is not something one would experience outside of the Imagination. They’re also unable to be waved away, cast aside in an instant; once you’ve got it, it stays there, at least until you return and employ the use of object impermanence like a salve. Sure, it makes engaging in Roman’s favourite heroic scenarios feel much more real, but it’s also left him in various predicaments, having to limp away from battles or cower under the force of broken bones.

So normally, when met with the assertion of his brother bleeding from his head, there would be little cause for panic. But in the Imagination, there are much harsher consequences for reckless behaviour, and the way Remus sways and wobbles as he tries to sit up spells out bad news. Roman can feel his heart-rate quicken, feels the lump in his throat forming as Remus doesn’t seem to be cognizant enough to respond to his calls and questions.

The prince-like side reaches out, shakes his brother’s shoulders to try and snap him out of it. It seems to succeed somewhat, and Remus blinks a few times before finally meeting Roman’s worried gaze. His face is terrifyingly blank for a few moments, as if he doesn’t even recognize him, and then he’s standing, wincing at the volume of his own voice when he barks out a laugh. “My ‘ead got hit pre–pretty hard, didn’ it?”

Roman’s alarm builds even more, eyebrows furrow as his twin stumbles to the side from a loss of balance that doesn’t have any external cause. Remus reaches up to scratch at the back of his head, forgetting the injury that was just created, and he winces with a sharp hiss as his hand comes back partially covered in fresh blood. It’s a wonder he hasn’t passed out yet, what with the absurd amount of blood he’s lost just in the past few minutes alone, but he’s still standing, and Roman is impressed even amidst the concern. And then his counterpart’s eyes snap open, as clear as they were before, and he’s yelling out a “Move!” as he tries to reach forward.

But it’s too late, and the eldest twin certainly isn’t going to let it hit Remus, so he raises his arms to the sides in order to shield as much of his brother as possible. Roman feels the drag of spikes tearing open the flesh on his back, the ache of the bruises beginning to form from the force of the impact that the Dragon Witch’s tail causes.

Roman spins around through the acute pain emanating from his back as he summons his shield, the one he only saves for emergencies because its gleam can beguile and stupefy and entrance any being who lays their eyes on it. It has a property that almost hypnotizes, something that Roman certainly didn’t intend on it doing, but he’s had to employ its assistance sparingly because of how long it leaves its victims in a daze. He has no problem using it now though, holds it up and braces himself against Remus’ newfound grip on his shoulders, and ducks his head.

The Dragon Witch screeches and tries to send a vicious plume of fire their way, but the shield protects them, turns each flickering flame into sparkling dust to drop harmlessly to the ground when it’s close enough. Her belted attack soon dies out, morphs from a shrill howl to a pained moan, and her voice starts to lose its volume. Roman risks taking a peek over the top, and sees the villainess
stumble from side to side as her eyelids droop involuntarily.

The Dragon Witch’s gaze lands one more time on Roman’s shield, and then she’s slumping to the ground, lost in the intricacies of its swirling gold patterns.

“You alright?” Roman asks as he stands back up, furrowing his brows when his twin’s eyes shift in and out of focus. He reaches out to steady Remus in case he falls, but his brother manages to shake his head as if he’s trying to jostle the cotton in his brain and then straightens up just fine, so he lets his hand fall back to his side.

“Yeah, I’m good now. You’ll really do anything to be the hero, huh? Oh, my saviour!” Remus swoons, mocking a feminine voice as he puts the back of his blood-soaked hand to his forehead delicately. The dark red claret streaks across his face, mats his wild, unruly hair down, and Remus doesn’t acknowledge it at all. His counterpart mocks the damsel in distress, snickers with that god-awful nasal laugh of his, and Roman playfully whaps him on the shoulder with the hilt of his katana in relief.

Remus casually bumps his shoulder against Roman’s own as they walk back to the entrance of the Imagination, shows a rare sign of good faith, and Roman is positive that he has the best brother in the world.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

- Injuries (various)
- Blood
- Weapons (swords)
- Implied concussion
Day 5: Gunpoint

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.5, "Gunpoint".

Between laces and braces, we fall to our knees.

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

Word Count: 941

Relationships: moxie, familial royalty (brothers)

A/N: this one is shorter but i’m really falling behind, so i’m gonna try to make the next few days a bit shorter to make sure i don’t miss a bunch of prompts!

Everything feels wrong. His limbs lost feeling long ago, fingertips and toes completely numb from the absence of sustenance. The major blood loss leaves him feeling cold, shivering everywhere, and every time he quivers and quakes more agonizing pain shoots like lightning bolts from his stomach.

This is why Patton never wanted to work in retail.

This job was supposed to be easy. It’s just operating a cash register and cleaning the floors at a gas station, and it was advertised as being low-stress. Patton needed something simple, and close to his apartment, so he applied without much of a second thought.

And now he’s here, dying on the dirty floor two hours past midnight.

Somehow, the guy who came in with a mask and gun was able to cut the power to the whole store, so now Patton is laying in a silent darkness, the dim glow of the moon acting as the only source of light in the building. He can make out vague shapes of things around him, amorphous blobs that shift and swim if he looks too hard. Maybe that’s just from the tears in his eyes.

Patton is terrified, of course he is, but he’s also incredibly bitter, because he wasn’t even supposed to work today. His co-worker called, asked if he’d pick up her shift, and he agreed. He needed the extra money, and now he’s probably not even going to live long enough to use it. He took the bullet (literally) instead of his co-worker, and although of course he’d never wish harm upon her, he still regrets ever coming in today.

In retrospect, Patton knows that he should have at least been more careful during the encounter. Instead of trying to convince the guy to leave, playing out his stupid delusion that he’s some therapist, he should’ve just given him the money and let him be on his way. But no, Patton had to
make things worse, indulge his hero complex in the worst possible time and scenario, and he paid the ultimate price.

Realistically, he knows he isn’t going to survive this. He’s already lost so much blood, can already feel the fog settling over his brain. His limbs are cold and numb and yet he still pushes himself to roll onto his stomach anyway. Attempting to rise to his feet is excruciating, rips a hoarse yell from his throat, and he somehow manages to grab ahold of the counter and pull himself up. He falls onto the hard surface immediately, and he knows he won’t be able to stay like this for long, so he swipes his hand out to search for his phone.

Patton’s trembling, unfeeling fingers close around the mobile device, grip harder as he slides back off the counter and falls to the ground. He doesn’t bother muffling the shout that’s pulled from his throat when his wound is jostled once again. It takes a few tries to unlock his phone and open the phone app through all the blood smeared on the screen, but he somehow succeeds in punching in the familiar three-digit number with tacky skin. He wishes that his fingers were sticky because of candy, his favourite delicious sweets, instead of the liquid that’s supposed to be inside of him, not seeping out of his chest and into his clothes.

“911, what’s your emergency?”

“Got… got shot. G’onna die. M’at… gas station on south Campbell and 41st,” Patton slurs, breathing thin into the receiver. It’s so dark, dark in his eyes, and he regrets that he isn’t able to say goodbye to his boyfriend in person. Virgil will be heartbroken. He hopes that the stories are true, that he is able to become a ghost, just so that he can comfort the one he loves even in the afterlife.

“Sir, what is your name?” the operator asks, clear and direct, and it almost helps him stay focused. Well, as much as one can with a bullet in their chest, anyway.

“Patton… Et–Etienne.”

“And you said you got shot? What happened? Is the assailant still with you?”

“Y’h… I’m workin’… he tried to rob the store an’ then shot me. Didn’t see his face… had a mask on. He’s gone now b’t… I’m– I’m not gonna make it,” Patton mumbles, quiet and subdued as the situation fully hits him. He’s never going to cuddle with Virgil again, make fun Halloween cupcakes with Remus, watch animal documentaries with Logan, make sweaters with Dee. And…

“Sir, I need you to stay awake for me. We’re sending an officer and they’ll be there as quick as they can. Where on your body did you get shot? Are you bleeding a lot?” the operator responds, questions him with a detachment that must be something conditioned into her throughout many, many terrifying and upsetting calls.

“‘ts cold… got… got shot in my chest, ‘n the lef–… no, right side. Lotta… blood everywhere. N-Not good. Oh, uh… ’s Roman Solares workin’? He’s my brother. Please make sure he doesn’t c’me… it’ll hurt ‘im,” Patton rambles, slow and sad and nearly unintelligible. The operator asks more questions, talks to him and tells him to stay awake, to stay on the line, to hold on, but… Patton is exhausted. He just wants to give in, to sleep. He wants to rest his eyes, relax his weary limbs, to fall into the darkness embracing him with a soft warmth.

The operator’s voice is like a lullaby, a song that reaches out with melodic fingertips to guide him into rest. The notes dance in his ears, turn the sirens outside into ballads, and he’s drifting away.
CONTENT WARNINGS:

Gunshot wound
Blood/bleeding out
911 call
Death
Day 6: Dragged Away

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.6, "Dragged Away".

But they won't push us down, we'll do what we please.

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

Word Count: 1823

Relationships: Moxiety

A/N: yeah… sorry this is late. i’m uploading this in the car, and i’m exhausted, but i had to get it up, so.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The sound of Virgil’s shoes slapping on the pavement is certainly something that can be relaxing, a way to lull someone into a sense of safety. Each patter is like a metronome, a beat to a song that walking creates. Every step echoes in the emptiness, the open darkness of a city abandoned at night, and Virgil absolutely hates it.

He hates it because he’s not even supposed to be here, isn’t supposed to be pushing through the aching in his calf muscles just to get home quicker. He tried to finish up at work quickly enough to take the bus like he always does, but there was a pretty big spill, and he had to stay behind and clean it up. It’s too late for buses now, too late for comfort, and it’s all Virgil can do to not take off in a sprint.

He’s trying, he really is, but he’s never liked walking long distances, and the fact that it’s night time and nobody is around makes it a thousand times worse. He just wants to go home and sleep, cuddle with Patton and forget his weariness, but there’s still a few blocks to go, so he trudges on.

And the footsteps are his only guide again. The footfalls, sound of the soles and their meeting with concrete. The way the soundwaves bounce against the cold stone walls, clash against brick and fall right back. It’s almost like a poem, ticking syllabic through cool night air. And it is night, almost 2 in the morning, and Virgil has a feeling that Patton is going to be awake waiting for him when he returns. He’s figuring things out, trying to sort his thoughts and compartmentalize the split between work life and home life, and then the echoes multiply.

They’re almost identical in their timing, at first, so close to Virgil’s own pace that he doesn’t even notice. It’s only when Virgil speeds up to get across a driveway outlet that the stark contrast of the echoing thumps on pavement while his own feet are completely off the ground makes itself prominent in the forefront of his mind, brings a growing anxiety to his conscious thought. There’s
somebody walking behind him, someone following him, and Virgil’s heart rate quickens as he speeds up very gradually so as not to alert whoever is behind him. He doesn’t want to turn around, to tip them off that he’s aware of their presence, because that could cause them to speed up the process. Is he about to get kidnapped?

And then the footfalls behind him gain speed, too, rise to match Virgil’s new rhythm, and he’s positive that they’re gonna try to hurt him. There’s no other explanation; he’s walking alone, in the middle of the night, in a nearly abandoned, dilapidated part of the city, and there’s someone behind him going at the exact same pace and making the same turns as he is. This is a kidnapper. Or a murderer. Oh god, he’s gonna die. He’s gonna die and he’ll never get to see Patton again, never get to listen to his favourite music, never eat that one really good chicken and rice meal from the restaurant across the street–

Virgil is stupid. He must be stupid, because he does something stupid. Like an absolute idiot, he risks a glance behind him, tries to look and commit his attacker’s face to memory, and the guy dressed completely in black is way closer than it sounded. Virgil’s heart stops, and his pace stutters, and the man is lunging forward to grab him.

Virgil tries to let out a scream when the assailant yanks back hard on his arms, painfully twists them behind his back to keep him immobile, but his mouth gets immediately muffled by the man’s other hand. He’s strong, somehow able to keep him in place with a single hand, and Virgil knows that his own skinny, weak self doesn’t stand a chance.

He struggles and thrashes as he’s pulled from the road, tears brought to his eyes as the dim yellow glow of the streetlamps starts to fall further and further away. He can’t breathe, the pressure on his throat from the man’s arm restricting his airways, but the panic is setting in and that certainly doesn’t help.

And then the adrenaline kicks in, a harsh rush that’s like a breath of fresh air. His systems are flushed with a solution of fearlessness and fire, and everything feels so much clearer. He can see, and he can breathe, and years of hearing Roman and Logan’s stories as first responders (a police officer and paramedic respectively) gives him enough forethought to act quickly. He can’t wait, can’t drag this out. He has to do something before the panic fills up his lungs again like a black sludge, has to fight before he’s left weary and exhausted and… dead.

With a strangled cry that doesn’t go far from his lips, Virgil throws himself forward just enough, and then uses the momentum to swing the heel of his foot back and connect it with the man’s crotch. He lets out a strangled yell, one that dissolves into an angry whine, and Virgil takes advantage of his pain to rip his arms from the stranger’s grip and kick back again to put distance between them. He manages to get him in the dick a second time, which, under different circumstances would be literally the funniest thing he’s ever heard, but he can’t bring himself to find any humour in it while he’s still in danger of being kidnapped or killed.

Running towards the street again allows him a moment to process, to reorder his frantic, frenzied brain. He knows he’ll be fine as his foot first hits the road, because he was a champion when he ran track in high school, and he can outrun anyone if he just pretends that he’s in a competition. The grey buildings around him turn into bleachers, the pavement underneath him turns to blacktop, and the streetlamps morph into the familiar feeling of the sun beating down on his face. He sweats now, too, both from exertion and fear, and his body is just a vessel for quick transportation again.

He doesn’t remember much of what happened after that, can feel the yells of the sports fans ringing in his ears just the same as before, and when he realizes where he is, who he is, the familiar surroundings of his and Patton’s neighbourhood allow him to breathe a sigh of relief. He still isn’t
really processing the whole experience well, and he’s sure he’s going to have probably a million panic attacks when the adrenaline rush has faded, but for now, he just pants hard, turns in the direction of his house, and runs.

Bursting in the door and slamming it closed behind him gives Virgil an immeasurable satisfaction, borne from the almost victorious feeling of winning. He went through the ringer, rose up, and came out on top, just the same as when he used to run. He feels the same rush, the same jitteriness he used to get when he got first place in competitions. Virgil will freak out later, but for now, he’s a winner, and he needs to tell Patton.

“Virge, honey, you’re so late coming home. Did something happen at wor– …Virgil? Why are you all sweaty?” Patton’s sympathetic tone shifts into one of concern, a layer of worry embedded in his furrowed brows and slight frown. He rushes forward from the hallway to Virgil’s side, gives him a once-over to check for any obvious injuries, and audibly frets while Virgil catches his breath.

“I got– almost got kidnapped, Pat, an’ I– I kicked him in the balls and ran away, it was awesome and– and terrifying and I was s-so scared, I… it was so scary… I thought I was gonna d-die… I,” Virgil whimpers, comes crashing from his high too quickly, and Patton is surging forward to gather his boyfriend in his arms. Virgil shudders at the touch, flinches for a split second, and then relaxes. His embrace is so warm, brings the tears out of his eyes with soft reassurances, and Virgil is sobbing. The tears soak into Patton’s pajama shirt, bleed through to touch his skin, and he’s rubbing Virgil’s back soothingly.

“Oh, Virgil, honey, I’m so sorry it happened like that. It’s okay, it’s over now,” Patton murmurs. He guides Virgil’s head to rest on his shoulder gently, cards through his hair with a muted pressure. It’s always worked and a grounding technique, something that they’ve discussed and employed many times in the past, and Virgil feels touched that he’s thinking of that even now.

“It must have been so scary, sweetie. I’m sorry. It… could have been scarier, y’know. You could've… been shot, or stabbed,” Patton muses, and although Virgil understands that he’s just trying to help in his own misguided way, his words only cause the anxiety to rear its ugly head once more. Virgil hums shakily, swallows around his residual fear to clear the vice around his neck, and clutches onto Patton’s shirt.

“Uh… yeah, Pat, but that… that isn’t really helping right now. Maybe we can just… I don’t know, watch a movie? I– I need to take my mind off of this,” Virgil mumbles into Patton’s shoulder, sniffs as more tears leak over his lashes.

“Yeah, I mean… you could’ve gotten electrocuted, or got your head bashed into the concrete, or maybe even got raped, poor thing.” Patton continues, keeps talking as if he didn’t even hear Virgil’s request, and Virgil’s brows pull together. The words send a wave of nausea rolling through him, force a gag out of him that he somehow manages to keep at bay. Patton’s hand slowly comes up to rest on the back of Virgil’s neck, a gesture of reassurance even as he starts squeezing, clutching a little too tight. “Honestly, it’s a shame… I should’ve told them to do whatever they wanted with you, but you have to go and make things difficult, don’t you, huh?”

And before Virgil can process this, before he can feel his heart leap into his throat and pull away, there’s a sharp pain in his neck where Patton’s hand resides. His muscles feel tired, so tired, and his knees give out within seconds. Patton manages to catch him, gently lowers him to the ground, and Virgil’s head is screaming. He can only lay there, bore a terrified stare into his boyfriend, and watch and a spectator to the unknown. More tears spring to his eyes, and a scream tries to build in his dormant throat, and his fingers can’t even twitch to move. Patton sighs as he picks up Virgil by the feet and starts dragging him towards the basement door, and Virgil’s been knocked down to last
place in the rankings.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

Attempted kidnapping
Unsympathetic Patton
Mildly violent language
Rape mention
Day 7: Isolation

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.7, "Isolation".

*It takes a lot to keep going, even when your heart itself is weary.*

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

**Word Count:** 3870

**Relationships:** Moceit (NOT consensual), Moxiety

*A/N:* this one is pretty heavy y’all, so please be careful and heed the warnings. i know this is unfortunately a few hours late (in my timezone), but inspiration struck, and i wanted to do more with this. hopefully y’all like it, because it’s definitely tied for top spot on my favourite writings so far!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Ethan is 7 years old, he meets Patton.

Patton is an older kid. He’s 17 years old, ten years older than Ethan himself, and he’s so cool. He plays soccer, invites Ethan to all his games, and buys Ethan an ice cream cone after each one. He never talks down to him, never acts like he’s superior simply because he’s older like most of the other adults in Ethan’s life, and that is a big part of what makes Patton so cool.

The two of them are friends, despite his mom’s and Patton’s dad’s disapproval, and Ethan has been searching for a real friend for so long that he has no problem with Patton not being his age. The other kids at school tease him about his weird skin, laugh at him for his v-word-that-he-can’t-pronounce, but Patton doesn’t. He thinks it’s cool, tells him that it’s like a superhero mask, and for the first time since he was diagnosed, he doesn’t hate his face.

Patton’s a bit weird, too, though. He has these weird magazines, and weird objects under his bed, and weird liquids in the jars in his closet. He’s weird, and he does weird things. He says weird stuff, too. Sometimes he talks about Ethan like they’re married, says stuff to him that his own dad says to his mom. He doesn’t understand it very much, but Patton still plays racecars with him, so he just laughs along as if he gets it. (He doesn’t.)

When Ethan is 7 and a half years old, Patton puts his hand in a place his mother told to never let strangers touch. It makes Ethan uncomfortable, makes his skin itch and his brain fuzzy, and he doesn’t do anything. He squirms, but stays still and waits the uncomfortable touches out, because
Patton isn’t a stranger, and he’s always been a bit weird, so Ethan thinks that maybe it’s okay.

When Ethan is 8 years old, just a day away from his next birthday, Patton takes him out for ice cream after a game, just like he always does.

Ethan gets mint chocolate chip, his favourite flavour, and Patton slings his arm around the back of his seat. Ethan doesn’t like the way that Patton rubs the back of his neck, but his friend just bought him ice cream, and his mom always told him to never be ungrateful. Ethan thanks him, tries not to tense up at the way Patton’s hand slips into the top of his shirt to stroke the skin underneath.

And Ethan should pay attention to his surroundings, should realize that they’re going the opposite direction of his own neighbourhood, but he doesn’t.

When Ethan is 9 years old on the dot, he wakes up in an unfamiliar place, one that is cold and dark and feels wet. His arms are above him, stuck in a raised position, and he can’t free himself no matter how hard he yanks. The chains rattle and clank against one another as he tries to stand up, but his feet can only barely touch the ground, and his shoulders are on fire. He cries, calls out, tries to yell for help, but he doesn’t get an answer.

When Ethan is 9 years and two days old, a blinding, searing light floods the room from a source he can’t immediately pinpoint. He squints, turns his head away, tries to block it out through the tears that have flooded his lashes. He manages to adjust, to observe the room around him, and it’s not very big. It seems to be a basement, and there’s nothing inside of it but Ethan and his chains and a bucket in the corner. He realizes the light is a doorway, and there’s a silhouette in the middle. He can’t figure out who it is at first, but then the figure steps forward, and the glasses make it abundantly clear.

“Patton! You gotta help me, I—I don’t know why I’m here, and I’m s-stuck,” Ethan says, afraid but relieved at the sight of a familiar face. And then Patton scoffs, strides forward and immediately knees him in the stomach, and the betrayal the younger boy feels as he lets out a pained groan makes the pain so much worse. He knows what’s happening, remembers all of the PSAs about kidnapping they showed in school, but it doesn’t make the fact that it’s someone he thought was his friend hurt any less.

Ethan is angry. He shouts, he spits, and Patton just stands there and stares. Minutes go by with Ethan panting into the silence. Patton doesn’t say a word, doesn’t say anything as he turns and walks up the stairs.

“My dad is gonna come beat you up! Let me out!” Ethan yells, but despite the threat, Patton just turns away and slams the door behind him. Ethan is bathed in darkness yet again, and his head pounds.

When Ethan is 10 years old, the bruises all over his body still haven’t healed. Any attempt at getting better is impossible, since Patton comes to replenish the contusions any time they start to fade. Ethan is used to pain, but he’s also used to the numbness, once the hurt starts to fade away into the coldness of the basement walls. He doesn’t know what time it is, doesn’t really know what day it is either, but he just knows that he’s been here for a long time. Long enough to establish a routine, long enough
for him to be bored.

Sure, the beatings are terrible, and he misses his parents and the comfort of his bed, but not moving from the same spot, never getting to be in the sunshine? That feels worse. With every meager meal portion, every slice of bread and watered-down can of soup, Ethan can feel his hunger increase. Not just in terms of food, but his hunger for the outside world, his hunger for change. The most varied his days get are when he manages to cry through his dehydration, or when Patton is angry about something and needs to release stress by using Ethan as a personal punching bag.

Ethan knows he’s been here for a while, and it’s probably been weeks since he first got here, but his parents are probably searching for him right now. They probably went to the cops and told them that he’s missing, and the cops are gonna use their cool tech to find him and then they’ll bust in here and put Patton in handcuffs and then he can go home and eat a huge plate of spaghetti. He knows they’re coming, it’s just… exhausting having to wait in the meantime.

Ethan wants to leave.

- When Ethan is 11 years old, he stops believing that his parents are still looking for him. Patton told him that they had a funeral. He’s not dead. He’s not dead. Yet.

- When Ethan is 12 years old, Patton comes down one day, angrier than Ethan’s ever seen. He yells about something that happened at work, how incompetent his coworkers are, and then he displays an eerie calm. He’s silent, contemplating as he moves closer, grips hard enough on Ethan’s waist through his dirty, torn shirt to stop his flinch in its tracks.

- When Ethan is 12 years old, Patton hurts him in a different way for the first time, and he doesn’t stop crying for hours.

Ethan’s clothing is never returned to him.

- When Ethan is 13 years old, he’s so used to feeling like his body doesn’t belong to him that he doesn’t cry anymore when Patton comes down to the basement to hurt him again. He can take the beatings, can take each punch and slap and kick, but when Patton is really mad, when he gets quiet and calculating and lifts Ethan up against the wall, he doesn’t want to do anything. He doesn’t want to move, to cry, to try. He just wants to sleep and never wake up.

- When Ethan is 14 years old, he tries to kill himself. It’s after one of the rougher days, after one of the days Patton is angrier, which Ethan has dubbed “Blackout Days”. He doesn’t remember these encounters very well anymore, blocks them from his mind and escapes to his imagination when it happens, and he thinks the name is aptly fitting. So he doesn’t remember this day very well, only catches glimpses of memories from time to time. He just knows that Patton was finishing up, buckling his pants, and Ethan slammed his head back against the concrete wall, over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over until liquid trickled down his back (a familiar feeling) and dizziness left him limp, and Patton yelled and cursed as he shook his shoulders.

Ethan wakes up the next day with a piece of foam stuck to the wall behind his head, and he doesn’t try again.
When Ethan is 15 years old, he forgets his mother’s name, just for a moment. It scares the shit out of him, terrifies him that he might be here long enough to forget his own family, so he makes a plan. He starts a new routine, makes sure to say as many facts about himself and his life before that he can remember to himself after Patton comes to bring him his tiny plate of food. Ethan’s learned that these come every two or three days, so he figures it’s a good reference point for his new mantra. He’d say it daily, of course, but he isn’t aware of the passage of time down here, so he figures this will have to be good enough.

When Ethan is 16 years old, Patton gets angrier. He’s having trouble in his personal life, snarls out stories of sabotage and drama and competition, and he almost feels bad for him. But then he’s pulling Ethan’s legs apart, mouthing at his neck, and Ethan wishes Patton would fall off a bridge and die.

When he’s 17 years old, he stops bothering with his reminders. Patton comes down less often, leaves him in the lonely darkness for longer periods of time, and he wishes he could say that it’s better like this. Sure, Patton is around less, but that also means he saves up his rage for more brutal encounters, and he’s combined both the Blackout Days and the beatings together.

He doesn’t know if he prefers the loneliness or feeling dirty. Either way, he’s suffering.

When he’s 18 years old, he realizes that he hates his name. The only time he ever hears it is from Patton’s mouth, when he’s either screaming or moaning, and he hates both of them equally. Maybe he shouldn’t be Ethan anymore. Maybe she hasn’t been Ethan for a long time.

When she’s 19 years old, she loses a lot of time. Rationally, she knows that she has had to have been here for years, because her body has changed just as much as Patton’s has, but she doesn’t exactly like looking at her body, either. She doesn’t know what she looks like now, hasn’t seen her face in such a long time that she doesn’t really remember what she used to look like, either. The fact that she’s been in this dark, lonely basement for such a long time should scare her, but it doesn’t, not really. She doesn’t feel much of anything anymore.

When Delilah is 20 years old, she realizes that she can’t remember why she’s here. She can’t remember what she’s doing, why she’s alone, why Patton only comes down to do things that hurt even when she tells him to stop. She only knows herself at this point, only knows her real name, and Patton’s name, and routine, and the coldness of the shackles around her bony wrists. She knows how old she is, too, because of Patton’s “birthday presents” that consist of the same torture, just for much, much longer, but those days are far worse than the Blackout Days. Not necessarily because of the pain in her body and lower regions that never seems to go away (although that isn’t exactly helpful, either), but because of what Patton says to her during them.

He tells her about the outside world, tells her about his life, and his job, and his friends, and his boyfriend. He loves talking about his boyfriend, talks about how he’s just the prettiest little thing. He’s a weak coward, but he’s good in bed, and he brings in more money, so Patton likes him.
Delilah felt an immense sympathy for Virgil, was sad that he had to deal with the same thing she does. But over time, as the years passed and Patton talked about him more and more, she realized that he wasn’t like her. He was free, and Patton didn’t hit him, didn’t yell at him or keep him locked in a basement all the time. He could go wherever he wanted, see anywhere he wanted, do whatever he wanted, and he chose to stay with Patton? He does the things that make Delilah want to rip her skin off with him willingly?

Delilah doesn’t know whether to hate or envy him.

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When Delilah is 21 years old, she imagines herself as she wishes she was. She imagines dancing in a field in a long gown, imagines meeting someone she loves and going on dates to the places she’s pretty sure she used to love visiting. She remembers the smell of popcorn, the sound of music, the taste of cotton candy. She also remembers the feeling of whispers on her neck, something brown and green, and she doesn’t know what it means, but she knows it makes her sick to her stomach.

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When Delilah is 22 years old, something new happens. Something different happens, and she’s almost excited, even as she realizes that Patton is dragging someone else down the stairs. She hopes that he won’t treat this person like he does her, but even if he does, at least there’s something new. She has someone to talk to! And he looks like he’s not a kid, he’s her age (at least from what she can remember about the adults that used to be in her life), so maybe he’ll have done things outside already! They can trade stories, and he can tell her all about the outside world, describe the feeling of sunshine on his face so she can experience the phantom of warmth again…

But then Patton is grumbling under his breath as he strings the new guy up, grousing about “his boyfriend causing his plans to go sideways”, and Delilah realizes with a sinking feeling that this is Virgil. This is the guy that Patton talks about every year, this is the guy who comes home every night to sleep in the same bed as a monster, this is the guy who kisses Patton, and touches him, and does all of those disgusting things with him because he wants to. And Delilah can’t wrap her head around the notion that anyone could enjoy doing that, because it hurts so badly, and she constantly feels dirty, and disgusting, and like her skin is crawling no matter how much she tries to rub at it to get the feeling to go away.

But maybe… maybe he doesn’t really want to do those things with Patton, maybe he only acts like it’s okay so that he doesn’t get hurt. That would make more sense than… than…

Do… people really like doing that? Even though it hurts? Is there– is there a way to do that without it hurting, without it making you feel like your body is burning, eating itself alive? Can you really do that in a way that doesn’t make you feel like that? What do you get out of it? Is there a point in any of it, if there’s no reason to? Why can other people do that without wanting to kill themselves just to make it stop, but it always hurts when Patton does it to Delilah? Why? Why? Why? She doesn’t understand. She doesn’t get it.

And then Virgil’s speaking.

“You… you’re… who are you? Why is your face… oh, fuck, are you–are you Ethan Culver? I–fuck, how long have you been down here?” the man says, and Delilah realizes she must have had another blackout because Virgil looks a bit different than before. His shirt is torn, and he has a black eye, and if he’s been down here for the entirety of her blackout, then why has he only just noticed her presence? There’s light coming from the cracked basement door, just enough to be able to make out Virgil’s face, so has he been adjusting to the dark this whole time?
“’m… not? Ethan. Not Ethan. Delilah,” Delilah responds, voice hoarse from disuse. She hasn’t spoken much over the years, hasn’t communicated past cries of pain. Her words sound weird, less normal than Virgil’s do, as if she’s speaking with an accent because English isn’t her first language. But it is her first language, her only language, so why do her consonants slur together, and her vowels sound wrong, and she can barely recognize her own voice?

Virgil looks at her weird for a few moments, bites the inside of his cheek contemplatively, and then nods slowly. “De… lilah, then. Um… are you okay with me calling you Lilah? Or maybe Dee?”

And. Dee. She loves it, and she says so. What’s there to lose anymore?

“Been here… dunno. Long time. I was… can’t remember. Before. Not– no, can’t think ‘f before. Was a, uh. Kid, I think? Seven, or eight, or… I don’t know. Sorry. Don’t be mad. Long time…” Dee trails off, resting her head back against the foam block that’s worn down into the shape of her head over time. Although she’s not comfortable whatsoever, she’s at least grown tall enough to stand up without the chains pulling her arms painfully over her head, so she brings them up to twist at each other nervously.

“Uh, no it’s– it’s okay, I just… you’ve been here long enough to not… remember being outside? I’ve been– God, I’ve been with him this whole time and never even fucking knew? I’m– I’m such a fucking idiot,” Virgil growls, eyes wide and angry, and Delilah flinches back. She knows what happens when he gets angry. He starts yelling, and then he stalks towards her, and hits her, and then yanks her legs open, pushes them up to either side of her head–

“Ah, Dee! I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m not angry at you, I promise. I’m mad at myself. You’re okay, I’m not gonna hurt you. I won’t let Patton hurt you, either,” Virgil consoles once he’s aware of the way that Delilah cowers away, notices the fear in her eyes and works to rectify it. Dee lets her arms slowly fall to her sides again, relaxing but on guard. She doesn’t distrust him, but she doesn’t trust him either, so she’s going for some sort of alert middle ground.

“I, uh… why are you– why’re you naked? Where’re your clothes?” Virgil asks with a grimace, tilts his head to the side to itch his neck, and Delilah blanches. She doesn’t want to think about it. She doesn’t want to say a word about why she’s here, or what Patton’s done, or wonder if this is all a trap designed to reveal more ways for Patton to hurt her. But… he said he wouldn’t let Patton hurt her. Can he… can he do that? He’s strung up too, but… doesn’t Patton love him? Will he listen?

“What’s the point? Faster than havin’ to take my clothes off every time?” Delilah responds, and it’s posed as a question, because although she doesn’t like talking about it, she’s still confused. Isn’t it obvious? She thought Patton said that he and Virgil do that too all the time. Shouldn’t he know? But then Virgil’s expression goes from befuddled, to searching, to shock, and then to horror, and Delilah realizes that something is wrong here.

“You– What?! I– Please. Please tell me that’s not it. Please tell me he hasn’t been… coming down here to– to rape you for years. Fuck, you said– you said you were a kid? Did he do that when you were still young?” Virgil asks, urgent and scared and disgusted and compassionate. Delilah’s head spins through her bewilderment.

“You– What?!” I– Please. Please tell me that’s not it. Please tell me he hasn’t been… coming down here to– to rape you for years. Fuck, you said– you said you were a kid? Did he do that when you were still young?” Virgil asks, urgent and scared and disgusted and compassionate. Delilah’s head spins through her bewilderment.

“R… Rape? What’s that?” Delilah asks, brows pulled together despite the sharp sting that emanates from the cut there. She doesn’t really know what Virgil’s talking about. What’s a rape? Is that what the stuff that happens during the Blackout Days is called? Wait, then why is he so surprised if he does it too? She doesn’t get it, so she asks, postulates all the questions in her mind, and gets anxious when tears well up in Virgil’s eyes.

“You… you were so young when you got put down here that you don’t even know what rape is?
Sex? Anything?” And, well, no. She doesn’t, so she questions him again, blinks hard when he explains what sex is, what it’s supposed to be. He tells her that it’s not supposed to make you hurt, gets an indescribably sad look in his eyes when she doesn’t understand that you can have sex without wanting to die during it and afterward. He details that it’s supposed to feel good, if you’re safe, and you’re not supposed to do it like Patton does it. And most importantly, he explains the difference between consensual, safe sex and rape, and how Patton is horrible for taking her chance at a good first experience away. And she… understands.

Delilah doesn’t know why she’s crying. She doesn’t know why it feels like she’s just lost something incredibly important, why it feels like the world is crushing her. She sobs, and Virgil cries quietly with her, and their fear and betrayal and anger echoes into the silence of the room.

“I’m gonna get you out of here. We’re gonna get out of here, and Patton is going to go to jail, and you’re gonna get to do whatever you want to do. I’ll take you anywhere you want, I can’t… I can’t deal with the guilt of– of you being stuck here for this long, suffering for this long, and I never even knew,” Virgil sniffs, convicted despite his moment of weakness. And for the first time in thirteen years, Delilah feels hope rise in her chest. She senses a warmth radiating from within, like her own personal sun, and she’s ready to follow Virgil anywhere just to finally fix her life.

Delilah wants to travel, to see the world. She wants to go to faraway lands, live in a castle, eat exotic foods and play fun games and talk to nice people and make friends and fall in love and just… live. She wants to live, wants to be someone outside of this cage. She doesn’t want to die here. She doesn’t want to die here.

Delilah steels herself, takes a deep breath, and nods.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

Unsympathetic Patton
Childhood kidnapping
Rape (not explicit but very present)
Pedophilia
Abuse (mainly physical)
Starvation
Suicide ideation
Suicide attempt/self-harm
Death mentions/death wishes
Cursing
Unintentional deadnaming
Cheating
Please let me know if I need to add any more.
Day 8: Stab Wound

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.8, "Stab Wound".

But hold on a little while longer, the skies are clearing.

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

Word Count: 2054

Relationships: familial Creativitwins, platonic/familial dlamptr

A/N: yes, i know this is late! it’s only by an hour though D: hopefully my characterization of the trash man is alright! this was fun to write hehe

Well. That wasn’t a very fun camping trip!

Remus has always been one for surprise. He likes the excitement, the variety, the fun! It’s healthy to keep a little bit of spice in your life. He’s not afraid to live by this sort of motto, because life is about the little things. Although, he isn’t sure that getting stabbed in the middle of the woods at three a.m. necessarily counts as little, but he’ll take what he can get.

So sue him! Maybe he likes to have a little fun sometimes. Routine is boring! Fuck patterns! Fuck authority! Cause anarchy!

And, uh, yeah. He’s pretty chill with living on the edge like that. But maybe… maybe just a bit further from the edge? He means, like, the edge of harmful societal expectations and complacency, or whatever dumb shit Dee and Lo-Lo rant about to each other at one in the morning. Remus loves his roommates, and would totally rip out a bitch’s spine for them, but they’re fucking nerds. Speak ENGLISH.

Yeah, the edge of “normal”. Not the edge of death.

He’s not gonna die out here, no siree. If he believes he’s immortal strongly enough, he will be. That’s what Barbie movies teach you, right? In any case, even though he refuses to die, getting stabbed hurts like a motherfucker, and it doesn’t help that it’s also storming. He just wanted a nice, fun camping trip, but nooo, some shitty-ass god out there decided “Oh! Time to turn Remus into a shitty cliche horror movie protagonist!” Why can’t he be the antagonist? Or… wait, what’s the one in the middle of the two? The side character? He wants to be the one guy who is in the midst of all the action with the protag, but seemingly dies halfway through the movie, and then comes back at the end to be like, "Haha, surprise, bitch! I’m not dead!”. 
Huh. Maybe he shouldn’t make all of his life choices based on movie stereotypes.

Anyway, he wishes that at the very least it’d stop fucking raining, because it makes it seriously hard to crawl through the underbrush while slipping in mud and falling flat on his face every two seconds. The stab wound is painful, sure, but as long as he can keep pressure on it and not lose too much blood before he gets to the main road, he should be fine. But having to deal with the downpour hindering his movement and blinding most of his senses sucks ass. How the hell is he supposed to utilize his tracking skills and make sure he’s going the right way without being able to see, hear, or smell a single goddamn thing? He might like making other people wet, but that doesn’t mean he likes being wet himself.

So, he thinks he’s going the right direction. Trying to escape a batshit crazy murderer in the middle of the woods doesn’t leave you a lot of time to casually sit down at a table with a cup of tea and pull out your faded, partially burnt treasure map, but if he had a table and a cup of tea and a burnt map, he would totally do that. Maybe the killer would be so confused, he’d have time to run away.

The thought causes Remus to bark out a laugh into the white noise of the storm, which is a VBI (Very Bad Idea), because it goes straight to his stomach. The pain that radiates out from the wound is like, actually excruciating, hahaha! But… Remus is supposed to be the one who actually survives to the end. He– he has to be. Who else is gonna fill Roman’s socks with wet concrete?

Oh, Roman. His brother would probably be crying like a little bitch if he were here. Now he’d be the protagonist, the one who’d make so many stupid decisions and somehow come out of it alive anyway. He’s like those teenage girls in horror movies who make you scream at the screen “Don’t go in the dark scary basement, you fucking idiot!” but for some reason, never have a single repercussion for any of their terrible choices. (Remus would be the one who would sacrifice himself for the main character near the end of the movie at the dramatic climax, but Roman can never know that.)

Maybe he wishes Roman was here so that he didn’t have to crawl all this way on his own, but whatever. His brother would probably be too busy whining about his ruined hair to help much, anyway. Not– Not that Remus needs help! He is having a blast slipping and sliding through the sticks and mud and bushes, thank you very much!

“C’mon out, dude! Don’t draw out the inevitable!” a voice echoes from the trees, a yell that’s far too familiar for Remus’ liking. God, can this guy just give it up already? Go find some other helpless damsel to terrorize! He does not wanna try Remus right now. This may all be fun and games, but Remus is starting to get pissed off, and he is unafraid to take out the stress on this crazy dumbfuck.

Somehow, Remus is able to hear the guy’s footsteps come closer through the sound of the rain splashing all around him, and he speeds up. Probably better to just avoid the guy. Although Remus’d totally win in a fight, the dude does have a knife, and Remus would really prefer to not get stabbed a second time. There’s a drop ahead, a place where it looks like the floor disappears, so Remus shuffles over to it and peers over. It’s a small cliff, with maybe fifteen or so feet to the bottom, and Remus curses under his breath. Fuck, he’s gonna have to do it, isn’t he? And now that he’s looking, he can just barely make out some headlights flit through the trees and disappear, so he knows that he’s close to the main road.

With a grimace, Remus steels himself, then slides off the edge feet-first, trying to use his shoes as a brace against the incline. Of course, because his life fucking sucks, he somehow manages to hit a rock embedded in the side in the wrong crevice, and it pitches him forward off the wall to tumble to the ground below. He smacks into the wet dirt, is just barely able to bite his tongue hard enough to stop the scream from ripping from his throat, and he lands at the bottom harshly.
His stomach is on fire. It fucking hurts, feels like he’s being stabbed all over again a thousand times over. Bruises are definitely going to start forming all over his body from that fall, and coupled with the fact that his leg hit the ground at a weird angle, walking is going to be even worse than before. *Fuck!* Why can’t he just catch a fucking *break*?!

Remus pants hard, trying to work himself up to resuming his trek, when he hears his attacker’s voice calling out from above again. It sounds like he’s coming to the edge, so Remus just swallows hard and scoots himself over through the agonizing aches in his body to lay flat against the cliff wall. He just has to hope the dude doesn’t see him. He can’t really see very well through the storm, but Remus thinks he sees the guy look over the edge. Silence is key, and that’s pretty damn hard considering the absolute *torture* that is his wounds, but he has to. To survive.

He can’t die today.

And then the guy’s yelling for him again, and his voice is getting further away, and Remus waits in the mud until he can’t hear his footsteps anymore. Vigour and adrenaline now fully renewed, Remus bolts into the trees again, crawl morphing into a crouched run when he’s finally in cover. He clutches at his stomach to try to lessen the pain, which of course doesn’t help, but maybe it’ll keep some blood inside of him or something. Probably not best to bleed out right before he can get help. That’d be a shitty movie ending, if he’s being honest. Absolutely uncreative and unsatisfying. -11/10. 0% on Rotten Tomatoes. Is Remus delirious right now?

Despite all that, the sight of the road through a break in the trees is like a blissful breath of fresh air, a shining light of hope in the darkness. He’ll get to see Roman again, and prank Patton with bugs, and absolutely destroy Virge at video games, and listen to Dee and Lo-Lo’s stupid philosophy talks, and give his adoptive uncle Thomas a heart attack every time he does something stupid, and holy *fuck* maybe Remus is dying because when did he become sentimental? Ew.

A car finally comes along right as Remus manages to drag himself up onto the shoulder, and he waves frantically from where he’s kneeled on the ground in an effort to flag it down. Thank *fuck*, the car actually slows to a stop, and the window rolls down almost immediately. The face that pokes out is cute, and innocent-looking, and Remus prays to a god he doesn’t believe in that this person will actually help.

“Oh, jeez, are you okay? Why are you out on the road like this? Is– Is that *blood*?!” the driver asks, horrified, and Remus tries to stumble closer. He doesn’t know what he looks like right now, but it’s probably horrifying, and he wouldn’t really blame this stranger if he drove away immediately. Maybe Remus will become like those ghost stories, the spooky legends about ghost hitchhikers. Ooh, maybe he’ll become a local *cryptid*! They can tell stories about him, and sell merch with his face on it, and he’ll be famous, and he can rub all of his sweet, sweet royalties in Roman’s face.

“Got– I got stabbed. Crazy fucker got me while I was asleep. *Help,*” Remus manages to force out through his grit teeth, voice hoarse under the weight of the pain he’s in, and the driver looks extremely worried. For whose well-being, Remus has no clue.

“Alright, I’m taking you to the hospital. I couldn’t live with a guilty conscience if I left you out here. I’m Emile, by the way– please don’t murder me, okay?” the stranger, Emile, says, and Remus chokes out a laugh despite himself. Emile gets out of his car and rushes through the drizzle without any hesitation, and Remus can already see that this is a genuinely good person. Anyone else would leave him here to die. He knows that. Even he’d leave himself here. But here this guy is, the kindest anyone has ever been to Remus, and it makes him wonder if he’ll still be as nice when he realizes that Remus’ personality is awful and the polar opposite of good and kind. (He knows he’ll never be good enough. He knows. He’s heard it enough, and he doesn’t need to be told again.)
“Not g’onna murder you. I can’t– can’t even walk on my own, so,” Remus mumbles once he’s sure Emile is close enough to hear, and the latter just clicks his tongue with hands that frantically wave all around as if they don’t know where to go. Luckily enough for Remus, Emile pulls himself together quickly, slings an arm underneath his shoulder to help support his weight, and they limp back to the guy’s car together. As they do, Remus realizes the rain has stopped outright, and, well, isn’t that poetic?

Once he’s inside, dripping all over this stranger’s seats (okay, maybe he feels a little bad about that. When he’s a famous cryptid, he can pay for Emile to get his upholstery fixed), Remus starts to fade in and out. Not like the dying kind of “fading”, because he knows from multiple personal experiences what dying feels like, but more like he’s losing time as an effect of a literal stab wound. Oh, what did Lo-Lo call it? Desecrating? Dissipating? No, dissociating. Yeah, that’s the bitch. Yeah. Yeah…

He gets flashes now and again. Streetlamps outside, a tall building, hands underneath him, bright lights, rapid conversation. It smells like an E.R. It feels like home. He’s not gonna die today. Not yet.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

- Stab wound (obviously)
- Other minor injuries
- Blood
- Minor dissociation
- Lots and lots of cursing
Virgil can’t stop feeling so goddamn guilty.

He should have paid more attention, over the years he was with Patton. He should have questioned why his boyfriend would disappear into the basement, often for hours at a time, without a single explanation. He should have seen how disturbed Patton was, realized that he needed professional help. He should have seen it, should have known that Dee was down here suffering all this time, but he didn’t. He didn’t, and now Dee is traumatized, and she’s lost so much of her life and her childhood and her personal autonomy, and it’s Virgil’s fault. It’s his fault.

No, no, it’s not. It’s not his fault. He has to stop doing that. He knows that this is just a product of his anxiety, and he’s unrealistically feeling responsible. There wasn’t anything he could have done. Even if he did find out about Dee’s presence earlier, there would be no guarantee he’d have even been able to help her, and it would probably have just sped up the timeline. Who knows, maybe Patton would’ve left him down here with her.

Like now.

Even here, as Dee stands against the wall, open and unashamed with her nudity, there’s something closed-off in the air. Virgil feels an odd, overwhelming sense of insecurity that comes from a place he can’t pinpoint, somewhere ashamed. He knows it’s not his fault. It’s not his fault. It’s Patton’s doing.

“Dee, I don’t… I don’t know if he’s gonna come down here again, and I’ll try my best to make sure nothing happens to you if he does, but… I’m chained up like you are. I’ll— I’ll get us out, but I
might… I might need a little more time, okay? Not long, but…” Virgil trails off, low, strained voice echoing off the concrete walls of the basement. Delilah’s eyelashes flutter as she snaps to attention, jolts her head up to look for danger, and then relaxes minutely when she processes the statement. Virgil hates Patton. He hates him.

“Y’h… Been down here a long time anyway. Used to it. I c’n wait,” Dee murmurs, eyes trained at her bare feet, and Virgil feels his fury sharpen like a knife. She shouldn’t have to wait, shouldn’t be used to it. She should have had a good childhood, grown up properly. She should have been able to go to sports games with her friends, ordered pizzas and played video games, felt the pride of graduating from high school. She should have been able to feel the joy of her friends using the right name, to buy her first skirt, to have girl’s nights and sleepovers. She should have had a life. A real life. Not this.

Things get quiet again. They’ve been going in and out of bouts of silence for a while, have been lost in their own thoughts. There is a bit of light coming from upstairs, but it’s not exactly enough to see well by, and there isn’t really anything to do but wait. Virgil’s already tried to yank at the shackles, see if they could break if he pulled hard enough, but it was to no avail. So. Now he just… waits.

The creak of the basement door is a sound that is all too familiar to Virgil, one that he heard so many times while rarely ever questioning it. Patton told him he was making friendship jewelry. Virgil should have seen through his bullshit. Aside from the fact that the memories of Patton disappearing down here over and over and over without any repercussions or suspicion through the years are probably going to be ones that will haunt Virgil for the rest of his life, he knows he needs to focus on now, focus on Dee, and focus on keeping Patton busy.

And Patton’s down here in their presence again, rambling on about something that goes completely over Virgil’s head. It’s some shit about how great he slept last night with Virgil not there, how he had the bed all to himself, and Virgil couldn’t give a single fuck about his attempt to make Virgil angry. He’s already angry, and if he really wants to infuriate him, he’s gonna have to do better than that.

“Why, hello, Ethan. You’re looking ugly today,” Patton greets cheerfully, doesn’t notice the way Dee flinches when he says the wrong name. Virgil doesn’t blame her for not telling him. It’s none of his goddamn business to know. Even so, Virgil still feels bad for her, because it’s not like growing up in captivity has really allowed her to do any personal searching, have creative expression, or experiment with herself. Virgil’s parents were similarly strict, and although his situation was never anywhere close to being as bad as Delilah’s is, he sorta gets it.

“Y’know, if you weren’t such a disgusting excuse of a human being, I might have made you my boyfriend. Would you like that? D’you want to be my pretty, docile little housewife? Wanna be my cute little fucktoy, bend over whenever I tell you?” Patton asks, tone high as if he’s talking to a child, or a dog, and that’s probably not far from how he views her. Patton’s narcissistic demeanour is one of the most infuriating things Virgil has ever had the misfortune of witnessing, but he can’t lose control. He needs to reign in his vexation, stay in control of the situation. It’s for Delilah’s sake.

“You couldn’t get with someone you wanted even if you tried. Nobody wants your small dick,” Virgil spits, pulls against his chains again in frustration even as the rest of his body remains still. He’s pleasantly surprised that he’s able to keep the urgency out of his voice, since it’s imperative to not show Patton weakness right now. As soon as he finds a crack in the wall, a break in the code, he’ll latch onto it and exploit it. Virgil can’t let that happen.

“Hmph, really? You seemed to be enjoying my ‘small dick’ all those times I fucked you so good you couldn’t even speak. But maybe that was a different Virgil?” Patton muses, sneers from the side as
he strokes Delilah’s trembling face with the backs of his fingers. Virgil wants to yell, and scream, and punch Patton so hard it knocks him straight into hell, but he can’t. He can’t show emotion, can’t show fear. He has to make him angry.

“Oh, please, are you that delusional? I didn’t speak because there was nothing to say. It was boring. I wanted to yawn every single time we had sex, but I guess my plan to stroke your ego and make you think I wanted you worked, didn’t it? The only reason I stayed with you was for your house and money. You cooked for me every night, gave me a bed and a roof, and that’s honestly all I really got out of this. You couldn’t fuck someone into speechlessness if your life depended on it, you’re too boring and vanilla to attract anyone else, and I could easily have up and left a three for a ten. Sorry, bud, but you never had me.” Virgil finishes his rant with a loud scoff, a flourish to really hammer his point home. He can see how furious it makes him. He can relish in the way Patton’s brows pull down with his enragement, even as he senses a whisper of guilt work its way into his chest. Virgil hates that he feels bad, hates that he’s outright lying. He wishes that it were true, but it’s not. And at least he gets Patton’s attention, but then Patton doesn’t look very mad anymore.

“Oh, I see what’s going on here,” Patton says, tone mocking. He looks nonplussed as he turns to Virgil, huffs a laugh as he stalks toward him. Virgil isn’t afraid. He wants to punch him. “You’re trying to distract me.”

“What, like you were too distracted by that pretty young secretary Abby to keep Remus from leaving you?” Virgil retorts scathingly, and even as a flash of anger slices through Patton’s eyes, even as a fist slams into his stomach and he chokes out a whine, he knows he’s won. He knows that Patton knows, too.

“How did you know about Remus?” Patton hisses, yanks Virgil’s head up by the chin when he lolls forward. Virgil stays silent, just apathetically stares Patton down, and the latter of the two growls and whips the palm of his hand across a bruised cheek. The cough that comes out is rough, but he doesn’t yell out, and that just incenses Patton more. “Answer me!”

Virgil breathes slowly out through his nose. He can see Dee cowering in the corner, terrified as she watches them dance, and Virgil slowly raises his head up. His eyes meet Patton’s once more, narrow in the tense silence, and then he spits blood directly in Patton’s face. “Go fuck yourself.” And he looks furious, madder than Virgil has ever seen him. It’s almost funny, how Patton reels his arm back, prepares to send another blow rocketing into Virgil’s already weak body. But then Patton’s anger bleeds from his face, is replaced by cold amusement and a malicious grin, and Virgil feels dread sink into his stomach. Something is wrong. He’s supposed to be pissed, but he’s not, so what is he planning?

But then Patton spins around, stomps toward an increasingly more horrified Delilah, and Virgil doesn’t bother swallowing down the shout that bursts from his throat. And Virgil can’t do anything, can’t move as Patton slaps away Dee’s defensive hands, can’t break the chains as he pushes her up against the wall. He can’t help her when she shakes her head back and forth violently, can’t stop him when Patton rips an anguished cry from the defenseless girl, and Virgil is going to throw up. He can’t watch. He can’t watch her terror morph into apathy, watch her face slowly shift from severely distressed to droopy neutrality. He can’t watch her become quiet, watch her arm fall like dead weight to hang at her side. He can’t watch, so he squeezes his eyes shut and blocks it out.

No.

He promised! He fucking promised he would get her out, that he wouldn’t let Patton keep causing her to suffer. He said he would stop the torture, and as soon as he’s being tested, he curls up and
cries like a baby? No. No. He isn’t going to break his promise to her. He can’t let her down, betray the meager trust she’s already been kind enough to give to him. She’s gone through so much already, and Virgil gave her hope, and he can’t abandon that. Fuck this. Fuck Patton and every deranged thing he’s ever done.

Virgil opens his eyes, and his vision is tinged in red.

Chapter End Notes

**CONTENT WARNINGS:**

Unsympathetic Patton  
Childhood kidnapping/growing up in captivity (mentioned)  
Rape (non-explicit but it does happen)  
Abuse (mainly physical)  
Cursing  
Lots of vulgar/explicit language  
Misgendering/deadnaming  
Please tell me if I’m missing any.
Day 10: Unconscious

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.10, "Unconscious".

*We'll lie, we'll die, we'll live free and proud.*

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

**Word Count:** 2065

**Relationships:** none

*A/N:* virgil having repercussions for his actions? i love this song!
anyway, i’m sorry i’m late every day. i’m trying my best, but i’m having to write these in about an hour or so’s time, and it’s really difficult when the prompts are longer than 1k.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“What the hell are you doing?”

Virgil’s voice obviously comes as a shock to Deceit, of whom spins around from where he’s standing at the kitchen counter and hides his hands behind himself. Even as Deceit looks surprised, and a bit weary, there’s a gleam of childish excitement, and Virgil doesn’t like the look of it a single bit. The snake-like side shifts his weight between both of his feet nervously, rocks back and forth as he shyly glances up at him with bright eyes, and Virgil has a bad feeling about this.

“O-Oh, I was, uh– I–” Deceit stammers, refusing to make eye contact, and Virgil narrows his eyes suspiciously. What the hell is he planning this time? Back when he still lived with them, Remus and Deceit played pranks all the time, and Virgil can still distinctly remember the feeling of putting his foot in his sock and it immediately being submerged in tomato sauce. Disgusting, and juvenile, and Remus hasn’t stopped calling him Spaghetti Sock since. Isn’t he creativity? Couldn’t he be a little more… you know… creative?

“Wait, are those cupcakes? What the hell do you think you’re doing messing with Patton’s stuff?” Virgil snaps when Deceit moves a bit too far to the right, exposing the tray of cakes decorated with patterns and colours to match each of the four light sides, including himself. There are light blue ones, undoubtedly Patton’s, which he decorated with hearts and outlines of cat heads. There are red ones, for Roman, which have music notes and stars. There are ones that are obviously Logan’s in dark blue, with stripes and mathematical symbols. And then there are Virgil’s, purple swirls and bats and spiders that must have terrified Patton to draw.

Deceit looks like a deer caught in headlights, and his hand flutters at his side, quickly patting the side
of his thigh over and over again. He’s obviously anxious, which is a dead giveaway that he’s up to no good. Virgil doesn’t know what the hell he’s trying to do. Is he messing up the designs? Eating them himself? Throwing them away? Virgil doesn’t think Deceit is that evil or malicious, but… what if he’s trying to poison them? What if he’s using Patton’s hard work to get back at them?

“Patton’s… stuff?” Deceit questions slowly, eyebrows furrowed in confusion, and the purple cupcake he’s holding in his hand is lowered. He glances down at it, turns to look at the tray for a moment, then meets Virgil’s glare with an odd gaze of his own. “But that’s not–”

“What’s going on down here? I’m trying to get my beauty sleep, hello!” Roman’s voice booms as he walks into the kitchen to stand in front of the dining table and rub at his eyes groggily. Logan follows behind, wearing plain pajama pants and a t-shirt as a contrasting juxtaposition to Roman’s boldly patterned matching set. He doesn’t say anything, just leans against the counter and crosses his arms, and his sleepy eyes are dark and neutral where they bore into Deceit.

“Deceit’s messing with Patton’s cupcakes. He won’t tell me what he’s doing,” Virgil growls in response, twisting his jacket sleeves in either hand restlessly. Deceit just looks down at his shoes, and taps on his leg faster, and Virgil wishes he’d just stop.

“What?!! You fiend! How could you deface these sweet treats?” Roman asks as he pulls out his sword from seemingly nowhere, too offended to notice Deceit shrink back in what appears to be fear. What, he can pick a fight, but he runs away as soon as he’s confronted? Coward.

“That’s not–”

“Oh, quit lying, Deceit. Just own up so I can go to bed,” Virgil blusters, raises a lip in distaste when Deceit has the nerve to look upset. He’s the one who came into their home, messed with their stuff, and of course he’s gonna make himself the victim somehow. Fucking typical.

“Virgil,” Logan snaps from beside him, and Virgil whips his head to him in surprise. Is he seriously getting in trouble for this? For Deceit trying to hurt them? He’s just trying to protect them from a lying, evil snake, and Logan’s mad at him? “You are being unnecessarily harsh. Did you even see him do anything to the cupcakes? How do you know his intentions? Did you ask him, and did you allow him to speak? No matter if you like Deceit or not, you cannot accuse him of tampering and then refuse to even allow him the chance to explain himself or clear up any potential misunderstandings. He has the right to a fair trial.”

And despite Logan of course making it into literal due process, Virgil still listens. Maybe… maybe Logan’s right. He’s been stressed out all day, and he’s exhausted from the panic attack he had a few hours ago, so… maybe he’s bringing that negativity with him. He’s… what did Dr. Picani call it? Projecting. He’s projecting his frustration onto Deceit. He just needs to calm down and try to see a different perspective. Right.

“They’re Patton’s cupcakes. I didn’t make them. I was making them look worse. They taste like shit now. I hope you hate them,” Deceit rushes out, and his eyebrows furrow immediately. He looks frustrated, and confused, and a little bit panicked, and Virgil doesn’t see any of it. Instead, he sees Patton’s dejected face when he realizes that Deceit ruined the cupcakes he made for them, the way he’ll be so sad that Deceit can’t be good, that he’s nothing more than a snake. He’s angry. So angry. And Roman lets out an insulted “Hah?!”, shows the same emotion Virgil is feeling.

“What the fuck? Who the hell do you think you are?” Virgil snarls as Deceit sets the themed cupcake that was in his hand back into its place in the pan. His head buzzes like a swarm of wasps filled with ire, and he’s itching to do something he can’t pinpoint.
“Wait, no, he’s—” Logan starts, but a single indecipherable look from the snake-like side cuts his words off. The exchange is odd, and feels too familiar to be between the two, and Virgil doesn’t even care.

“I’m not gonna– I’m gonna leave now,” Deceit chokes out, expression distressed and mouth wobbling, and Virgil’s so fucking mad. How dare he try to throw himself a pity party? Fake-crying, seriously? Who the hell believes that? And then Deceit is clutching at his cape with white knuckles, hunched over as he tries to sweep out of the kitchen, and– no. He’s not just going to come in here, mess up their shit, and get away with it.

In a single motion, Virgil shoves Deceit forward, watches his panic and shock when he stumbles. He watches the fear flash through his eyes, the betrayal, the resignation, and Virgil falters too late.

Deceit’s head ricochets off the edge of the counter, smacking into the granite countertop with a loud thump. The others cringe in sympathy, wince when his iconic bowler hat is sent flying to the ground where it skids to a stop beside a chair. His body comes down with him, descends when his knees give out from the pain, and his limp arms fall to rest in front of him. He slowly pulls in on himself, and then relaxes completely with his body curled around the edge of the cabinet.

“Virgil! I may have had my own outbursts before, but I cannot condone unprompted violence!” Logan hisses, reprimands digging deep to unearth the tiny loose thread of guilt from the fray ripping into Virgil’s psyche. That… that was too much, even for him. What the hell? He’s– he’s not supposed to be the bad guy! He’s been trying to be better, and at the first sign of provocation, he immediately becomes worse than the one he’s angry at? He stooped that low in a matter of moments?

“Come on, we all know we can’t get injured. Quit being dramatic,” Roman sighs as he puts his sword away. Even he glances at Virgil with the slightest hint of surprise, crosses his arms and shifts his attention to Deceit. He looks exasperated but empathetic, something that is far from mirrored on Virgil’s own face. “Deceit. Seriously. I know that wasn’t cool of Virgil, but there’s no point in dragging this out.”

And Deceit… doesn’t answer. He may be a liar, and a slippery snake, but he has nothing to gain from faking being hurt, so what is he doing? Is he trying to guilt-trip Virgil? Not that he… not that he doesn’t kinda deserve it, but it’s an… annoying way to go about making him apologize. Which he might not even do, if Deceit’s still being an asshole when he gets up. But then Logan is kneeling down beside Deceit, shaking his shoulder with an uncommon worry in his eyes, and suddenly this whole thing doesn’t feel as nonchalant as before. “Deceit. Deceit. Wake up. Deceit!”

He doesn’t wake up.

Then Logan rolls Deceit over, displays the blood coming from the cut on the snake-like side’s forehead, shows how his head rolls to the side without any resistance, and Virgil feels his heart leap into his throat. What the fuck. What the fuck. He didn’t– He may have been mad, but he wasn’t trying to seriously hurt him! Why isn’t he getting up? They’re sides, for Christ’s sake, they can’t get injuries like that! They heal almost instantaneously!

“He’s– he’s not waking up. I think– maybe he can’t wave the wound away because he was knocked unconscious? But he still should have woken up by now. I don’t understand,” Logan mutters, talks in circles around himself with a rapid-fire pace. His thoughts are clearly hard at work, assessing all available information and possible outcomes, and Virgil’s hands are shaking. Why isn’t he waking up?

“Kiddos? Why is everyone awake so late? W– What happened in here??” Patton shrieks as soon as he sees the blood, and his hand shoots up to cover his mouth. He has to turn and lean on the kitchen
door frame for support, uses the other hand to cradle his queasy stomach, and Virgil is simultaneously relieved and terrified.

“Deceit came in here and messed with the cupcakes you made, and then Virgil got mad and pushed him,” Roman informs plainly, hands clenched at his sides with the stress of not being able to do anything to help. Virgil is in the same boat himself. His fingers twist around each other, fidgety as he incredulously watches Logan attempt to wave away the wound and subsequently fail.

“But I didn’t make cupcakes,” Patton says worriedly, eyes perturbed as he seems to try to mentally extract information from the two still standing. Of course, he can’t read their minds, so he can only speculate himself, and that allows his brain to finally process Roman’s words. “Wait, Virgil pushed him? Virgil, that’s not okay!”

“But– you didn’t make them? Then wh–” Virgil starts, but then his voice gets locked in his throat when he comes to the obvious realization. Fuck. Fuck! He… those were… why?! Why did he just stand there? Why didn’t he just say s–

Oh.

“This is what happens when you jump to conclusions, Virgil. I thought you’d moved past this type of childish behaviour, but clearly my expectations were too high. Deceit obviously made cupcakes for us, went to the trouble of decorating them with our preferred colours and themes, and you knocked him unconscious for it.” Logan says angrily. His words are charged, and they’re completely true. Virgil can’t– he’s so stupid. He was so caught up in himself he didn’t even bother to look at the full picture. He knows what it’s like to be the outcast, knows what it’s like to try to fit in and appeal to people the only way he knows how, and yet he still… He demonized Deceit without even bothering to put himself in his shoes. He shouldn’t even need to, because he’s been there, and he still ruined what was obviously meant to be a thoughtful gift to make peace with them. He’s such an asshole.

“I hope you’re happy with your choice, Virgil,” Logan mumbles, and Patton is conflicted, and Roman can’t even look at him, and Virgil knows he’s seriously fucked up.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

Not unsympathetic Virgil, but he is kinda an asshole in this
Misunderstandings
Physical violence
Injury (head wound)
Cursing
Implied neurodivergent/autistic Deceit (and mislabeling stimulating as anxiety)
Day 11: Stitches

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.11, "Stitches".

*Don't give up, hold your stance.*

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

**Word Count:** 1686

**Relationships:** logince (pre-relationship)

A/N: i know it’s a day late. i’m awful. sorry. hopefully dumbass gay roman being smitten with trans boy logan makes up for the wait a little bit

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Okay, so maybe Roman should have listened to Patton when he said not to strain himself. And maybe it was a little rash of him to get up and punch the guy despite the strain it caused him. But he doesn’t regret it! Nope! He will gladly take the pain of ripped stitches any day if it means punching a transphobe in the face.

And. Well. Maybe “pain” is a bit of an understatement, because holy shit why does it hurt so much is he dying? According to the cute boy he literally fought a bigot for despite never meeting him before in his life, no. He’ll be fine if he stops squirming, the guy says, but Roman can’t sit still when he’s literally falling in love with this cute stranger, so. Time for funeral arrangements. Maybe his new husband will come weep at his grave, bring him a single red rose to place on his tombstone. It’ll be so poetic, and it’ll be beautiful, and he’ll lay his ghostly hand on his new husband’s shoulder in comfort, and he’ll laugh at Virgil from the grave because he got a boyfriend first!

“Hey! Prince Charming! Don’t zone out on me like that,” his new husband commands, and who’s Roman to ignore such a pretty face? A pretty face, which is currently a lot closer than he anticipates, and Roman almost knocks their heads together when he jolts up in surprise. His new husband is pressing hard on his opened stitches, and although Roman’s sure he knows what he’s doing (he has glasses, and all the smart people have glasses, everyone knows that), it still hurts like a bitch. Pretty boy sticks his tongue out of the corner of his mouth as he examines Roman’s stomach, and although the small detail makes Roman’s heart go doki-doki in his chest, he can’t seem to look away from the stranger’s own sharp, focused gaze. Who gave him the right to have eyes like that? All shiny and silvery like metal, or maybe Roman’s third-favourite shade of nail polish.

“I’ll try to wipe off some of the blood, but I can’t do much more than that, not here. It’s too unsanitary and I don’t have proper equipment. I won’t risk infection with impatience. The paramedics will take care of it,” his new husband says plainly, brushes his fingers against Roman’s
side, and Roman is pretty sure he’s dying. There’s no way that this isn’t an angel. Although, Roman never expected that angels would be so… bossy. The handsome stranger instructs him to keep pressure on his side, details how exactly to hold his hands to his stained skin. Maybe he could be a little gentler about it? Especially when he puts his hands over Roman’s own, and presses harder, and draws a groan from Roman’s throat. “Oh, stop whining. It’s your fault you decided to be unnecessarily reckless for no reason.”

“Ha! For– For no reason? I would punch that guy ‘gain for you if I h’d the chance!” Roman exclaims, slurred in pain yet loud in the buzzing energy of the outdoors café he’s probably gonna die in. Honestly, maybe he’s okay with dying right now. Yeah, he’s sitting here sprawled in a café chair bleeding out, but he also has his new husband with him, so who’s the real winner here?

“Your new husband, huh? I wasn’t aware that we were married already. Shouldn’t you at least ask your potential suitor on a date first?” the pretty stranger muses, face stoic, but there’s a teasing glint in his eyes and a subtle smirk as he uses some napkins to wipe a spot of blood off of Roman’s hip. The touch sends a shiver down his spine, lends itself to a sense of familiarity despite them never having met before now. Is he talking out loud? Those thoughts were supposed to stay in his head. Hopefully his new husband isn’t annoyed by long rambles at two a.m., because that’s like… Roman’s whole aesthetic. “Although, I suppose the legal and financial benefits of marriage are a positive, despite the tradition itself being an unnecessarily exorbitant game of ‘who can spend the most money and look as rich and successful as possible’ whilst perpetuating wildly amatonormative societal expectations of seeming stable to your friends and family purely through means of surface appearance. But sure, weddings are fun.”

“Haah… Y’sound like Virgil,” Roman mutters as he knocks his head back to rest on the table behind him. The handsome stranger immediately puts his cleaner hand underneath his head and lifts it up, cradling the dead weight with a small frown. “H– Sorry, wanna… wanna sleep. Virgil a’ways says that weddings are stupid. You guys’d get along. Wait, no, that’s the worst idea I’ve ever had, and I’ve had a lot of shitty ideas.”

“Mm, I’m sure you have. Punching a transphobe for a stranger is definitely one to add to the list. Don’t fall asleep, Prince Charming. You’re not losing that much blood. Hey, you– how far away are the paramedics?” And… wow. Even the way he speaks makes Roman want to snatch him up. He’s so authoritative, and obviously doesn’t take shit from anyone, and Roman could probably listen to him talk forever. He’ll be like his own personal audiobook. An ASMR YouTuber that lives in his house and shows off that amazing voice of his but also gives him cuddles because that’s what cute husbands do together. That’s the dream.

“An… ASMR YouTuber? You sure have strange priorities.”

“‘S important! Oh, hey… wha’s your name? I have to know how t’ introduce y’a to my friends. ‘Oh, hey Virgil, this is my husband… Bob McBookshelf. I got a cute boyfriend before you, give me fifty dollars.’ Y’know, like that,” Roman asks, and if he’s being honest, he doesn’t even really know what he’s talking about anymore. He just knows that talking makes him more lucid, and his new husband told him to stay awake, so he’s going to try his best to do just that.

“Ah. Well, my name unfortunately is not Bob McBookshelf. It is Dr. Chae, professionally, but you may refer to me as Logan if you’d like,” Logan says, Dr. Chae, and Roman is taken aback. Not only is his new husband cute, and has the best voice he’s ever heard, but he’s also smart? And a doctor?! 

“Woah. That’s so cool. I can’t believe I’m g’onna marry a doctor. Wait, does that mean I get your last name? Roman Chae. That sounds weird. Fits you better. Guess we don’t have to change our las’ names. And! You’re a doctor, ‘f course y’a can’t change it now. Wow… a doctor. You are the
coolest person I’ve ever met. And I met Beyoncé once. She didn’t see me or talk to me, but it was still awesome. And you— you’re a doctor. You must be suuuuper smart. Already got a college degree ‘n’ stuff. But you… don’t look old.”

Logan’s eyes flick up to meet his, incredulity written across his face, and then it morphs into something almost fond as he lets out an amused huff of a laugh. He looks beautiful, even as he shoves his hands back on Roman’s open wound again, and Roman thinks maybe he’s a masochist or something. He should be angry at the rough treatment, but somehow, he doesn’t really care that much. Oddly enough, he trusts this stranger, his new husband, and Roman could probably get stabbed again except this time by this guy and even so he’d be the one apologizing. “I’m 24. My school experience went by very quickly.”

“Ohhhhh… you’re one of those. Those… smarty-pants people. Smarty people. Pants people. Logan, am I dying?” Roman feels delirious, and he probably is. Logan snickers quietly, smiles small and soft and– and– Roman has a feeling that if the blood loss doesn’t kill him, Logan’s adorable smile will. Thankfully, he can hear sirens outside, and that must mean an ambulance is here.

Wait.

“Wai-wai-wait, Log’n, why’d y’a call an ambulance? I’m fine,” Roman asks, reassures even as he moans dramatically when another stinging ache reverberates from the wound. “It hurts but I c’n take it! Had t’a… had t’a before! Got stabbed, did’ja know that? It sucked. My best friend… ex-best friend did it to me. Thought she was cool. She was… not cool. But! I don’t need a hospital. Jus’ a… just a little. Little papercut. Small. I c’n sleep it off. I’m strong.”

“You absolutely can not. You do understand that you didn’t just get stabbed, right? Your “ex-best friend” slashed at your stomach. The laceration is at least eight inches in length, who knows how deep, and you broke a majority of the stitches with the stunt you pulled. There is a very real possibility of you bleeding out without medical assistance. Sit still so I can make sure pressure stays on the wound, and then the paramedics will pick you up, and then your stitches will be re-sewn. There is no need for panic, but you can’t fall asleep, either.”

And, well. Maybe Logan has a point. She did yell something about splitting him in half when she did it, but Roman doesn’t really remember the encounter that well. But Logan’s a doctor! And he’s smart! So he obviously knows what he’s talking about. He can’t die before he gets married to his beautiful doctor husband. That would be the worst ending to the Disney movie that is his life. Well, if Disney had stayed true to the source content and featured a lot more gore and dramatic gay lamenting.

“Yes, yes, I’ll be your doctor husband, as you say, as long as you take me on a date first. Now hold. Still,” Logan demands, exasperated, and Roman isn’t even aware he was moving. Maybe he’s just wiggling because all of his love for his cool new husband is bursting out of him. And he says so, manages to get Logan to crack that pretty smile again, and Roman’s injury hurts just a little less.

Chapter End Notes

**CONTENT WARNINGS:**

Splitting stitches
Stab wound (no actual stabbing occurs in this fic! he only breaks the stitches in a still-healing previous injury)
Blood
Mentioned transphobia/transphobic bigotry
Cursing
Slightly delirious behaviour
Day 12: "Don't Move"

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.12, "Don't Move".

*They're poised to attack, observing at a glance.*

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

**Word Count:** 720

**Relationships:** none

**A/N:** i know this one is shorter, but i really didn’t want to be any more behind. hopefully it’s not terrible.

Something’s wrong.

Logan *knows* something’s wrong, has known it since he woke up. Everything is different. It’s all wrong. This isn’t his life. This isn’t his family. He shouldn’t be here. He shouldn’t exist in this way.

Today is wrong. It’s two years wrong. This isn’t right. Where is he?

He should be asleep. He should be awake. He should be in limbo, but not here. He doesn’t like it here.

These aren’t Logan’s parents. His mom hates wearing earrings. His dad doesn’t speak like that. They’re wrong. They’re wrong. They stole their names. They stole their faces. Logan wants his real parents back.

His brother doesn’t like the colour green, or that band, or read that many books. That’s Logan’s thing. He stole it. He stole it from him. That’s *his*.

Logan’s sibling should be wearing their binder. They’re not. They look like a girl. They hate to look. They hate pink. They hate dresses. They hate long hair, and the name Elizabeth, and they hate sparkles. This isn’t his sibling. This isn’t them. He wants them back.

He doesn’t have a dog. Logan has *never* had a dog. He’s allergic to the fur. He can’t breathe. Why is there a dog here?

He tries. He asks his “mom” why everything’s different. He asks why he can’t remember anything from the past two years. He asks why they have a dog. She looks right through him. She doesn’t even answer him. She just stares at the wall, and smiles, and puts a pancake on his plate. He hates
Logan tries to ask his “dad”, too. He doesn’t acknowledge his words. He throws a baseball at the window, shatters the glass, and the grass outside turns into dust. It’s like a painting ripped into shreds, perfect pristine landscape interrupted by slashes of static. There’s nothing. It goes on forever. Logan wants out.

His brother walks over to the broken window and slams a hand down on the jagged shards. One goes straight through his hand. Even as he bleeds, the others just smile. His hand disappears into the static, becomes the static too, and then his body is being shrunk down and sucked into the abyss. Logan wants out.

His other sibling stands up. Logan grabs their hand and yanks them away. They look at him, meet his eyes with lids painted in a glittery pink, and they’re not real. They’re not real. They’re not real. They’re not real they’re fake they’re wrong they’re wrong they’re wrong they’re wrong.

Logan sits down at the table. He stabs his pancake with his fork. He wants to vomit as it slides down his throat. Logan wants out. Logan wants out. Logan wants out.

He tries to leave. As soon as he opens the front door, the outside turns to red night and blood light. There are thousands of people standing outside his house, looking at him, looking at him, looking at him, looking in him and his brain isn’t in his body. Then they’re gone, and there’s light again, and everything is normal. Too normal. Suspicious. Wrong.

He tries to walk out onto his driveway. His mother stops him with an iron grip, turns him around quickly. She smiles, wide and awkward and weird and fake and wrong, and there’s terror in her eyes.

“Don’t move.” Her eyes flick around the street, searching, fast, too fast, quick jumping from one place to another to another to another to another and

“Have a great day at school, honey!” She says, fake and wrong and hollow and robotic and coding in the machine, and Logan is glitching. He can’t move. He’s paralyzed. Her mouth is wrong. Her smile is wrong. Her eyes are wrong. She’s not real. She’s not real. He’s not real either.

The world flashes red again, and the people are close, too close, in his face and their stares slithering into his eyes and his lungs and intruding to control his body and his insides and his soul and his brain and then it flashes to “normal” again. It’s wrong. It’s not real. It’s not real. Shadows creep in from the sides of his vision. They look like monsters. They look like demons. They look real. Too real.

There’s nothing outside. There’s nothing inside, either. Logan wants out.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

NOTE: All warnings are subjective depending on your interpretation of what is going on in the story! This is very ambiguous to what is going on, so unfortunately I won’t be able to tag every potential warning, because what one person thinks is going on while reading this may differ from what another person thinks!
There are a few that stay the same: Derealization, mild gore, blood, broken glass, potentially disturbing imagery, train of thought/fever dream-type prose

Based on a potential interpretation: Mental breakdown, hallucinations, schizophrenia/schizophrenic-type behaviour

Another potential interpretation: Manipulation, “glitch in the matrix”, outside entities/aliens, literally anything is possible with this one idk what to tell y’all

Lmk if I need to add something!
Day 13: Adrenaline

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.13, "Adrenaline".

_The road may seem long, but every street is a new beginning._

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

**Word Count:** 2701

**Relationships:** Anxceit, Logince, Moceit (past, NOT consensual), Moxiety (past)

A/N: i was SO close. almost had it on time, grrr. anyway, here’s the ending to the series of short fics in this universe that i’ve built up for whumptober! i will be posting these fics as a single chaptered story on ao3 for easier reading, so this will be updated with the link when i get around to that!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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Red.

It’s all red. Not just figuratively, not just the kind borne from anger. It’s not just the red that hazes your mind when you’re so livid that you can’t help but scream and yell and kick and punch and scathe and burn and lash out. It’s also the literal kind of red. A red that drips into his eyes, floods the rims of his waterlines, bathes his vision in claret. He smells the metallic aroma, breathes in the blood, and he’s seeing red.

The chains keeping him stuck to the wall are ripped from the hook.

Virgil doesn’t really remember much after that. He knows that he doesn’t hesitate for a second after he comes loose. He knows that he lunges at Patton, shoves him away without a second thought. He knows that Delilah dropped to the ground, barely able to catch herself in time, and he remembers the bruises. He remembers the bruises, the ones he gets as he beats his fists down on any open patch of skin, how his knuckles split from the force of punching his stupid face over and over and over and–

He remembers Delilah whimpering in fear. He remembers standing up on shaky knees and turning away from the unconscious Patton without a second thought. He remembers holding his hands flat up in the air as he approaches Dee, reassuring her that he wouldn’t hurt her. He remembers her crying. He remembers asking if it’s okay to touch her. He remembers pulling the chains from her wrists, metal falling away from skin rubbed raw, and he remembers the strangled noise she makes when the shock sets in.
Virgil pulls her into his arms.

She doesn’t cry for long, and Virgil doesn’t know if it’s from the shock or if she really is that brave, but he’s proud of her regardless. She sniffs into his neck when he uses his arm to support her, and her breaths are shaky when he helps her up the stairs. Locking that basement door feels like leaving a prison, leaving a life behind, and it’s true for both of them.

Delilah manages to sit gingerly on the couch with nothing but a small hiss, and Virgil is still angry at himself for not getting to her sooner. He could have prevented this, he knows he could’ve. But now, as Dee rests with her eyes drooping and her limbs curled up to her chest, he can’t lament for times passed and mistakes made. He needs to focus on the present, focus as he pushes the dining room shelf in front of the basement door.

It’s hard. It’s hard to watch as Delilah falls apart a second time in the middle of Virgil’s 911 call, and it’s even harder when he has to help her get dressed. He brought her some of his own clothes (not Patton’s ever again), the most comfortable ones he could find in the depths of his dresser drawers. It’s just a soft hoodie and some sweatpants, but she can’t stand long enough to step into them, and Virgil can feel angry tears welling up in his eyes. She looks at anything but him when he pulls the pants up over her bare hips, then meets his blurred gaze by a wet one of her own when the hoodie passes over her head.

Virgil is still hugging her when the first responders arrive.

“Virgil?” comes from behind him, a voice that’s all too familiar to him. Roman stands there in full uniform, badge shining on his chest, and Virgil can feel Delilah relax in his arms. Of course, she did say she was taken when she was younger. She must have had adults tell her about emergency calls when she was younger, and most children at that age really look up to first responders. He remembers being entrances with the firefighters themselves, how they seemed invincible when they rushed into the flames to save civilian lives, and he still has a respect for that line of work even now.

“You better explain later.”

“E-Excuse me, sir… are you a police officer? Y-You arrest bad guys?” Delilah asks, shaky and stuttering when she’s too afraid to keep eye contact. Roman’s eyes immediately soften, and the tone immediately lets him know to be delicate about this. He’s been to plenty of elementary schools to do presentations on what to do if you’re being kidnapped, or what to do if there’s an active shooter, and talking to children is like second nature to him. This child just has an older body than most of them, is all.

“Yep, that’s my job. I help keep people safe and make sure bad guys don’t hurt people. What’s your name?” Roman asks, clear and gentle as he sits down a respectable distance away from them, sinking into the couch as he signals for another officer to start in on getting through to the basement.

“O-Oh, I’m– I’m Delilah. Dee,” she responds nervously, silently checking to make sure it’s okay with Virgil to share her name. Virgil can’t help but feel awful when met with the knowledge that she even feels she needs to ask. She should be able to trust people, should be able to trust the police, but she’s been down there so long, there’s not really any way for her to know much past what she was told when she was a kid. “You… are you gonna make P-P– make Patton go to jail?”

“Of course. He’s a bad guy. He’s going where he’ll never be able to hurt you again, okay? You’re gonna be alright now, I promise,” Roman reassures, and Virgil has no problem giving him credit for not even hesitating a second when the name doesn’t match the body. Then again, he is married to Logan, so it’s not like trans people are a new concept to him. Virgil still loves hearing about how they met, loves listening to the ridiculous story and laugh because it was just such a Roman thing to do.
“Ro… is Logan here with you? Please… please get him. I need to talk to him. Urgently,” Virgil insists, imbues his voice with exigency, and Roman gives him a solemn nod. He reaches out to Dee, stop short and waits for her to give permission to lay his hand on her shoulder in a gesture of compassion, and the small smile she gives in return fills Virgil with a hope he didn’t know he’d lost.

Everything goes by in a blur. It feels like time is passing by too quickly. It’s all like a dream, a hazy end to a nightmare. He feels odd when Logan asks about their injuries. He feels ashamed when he describes their recent encounter to his paramedic friend. He feels angry when he tells Logan that Dee needs a rape kit. He feels drained when he asks to stay with her to make sure she remains calm and has a familiar face to lean back on for comfort.

They get into the ambulance and begin the drive to the hospital, and Delilah squeezes Virgil’s hand from where she rests on the gurney, and Virgil’s just glad that she doesn’t have to see Patton face-to-face again until she’s ready to put him where he belongs.

“Dee, it will be fine. I’m sure they won’t just stop loving you simply because you aren’t a boy. And if they do say something, they’ll have to answer to me,” Logan informs with a neutral voice, squeezes Delilah’s hand from where their arms are linked at the elbow. They’re walking down a street in San Francisco, avoiding patches of snow, and Dee sighs even as she looks at the Christmas lights and bustling shopfronts displaying clothing and toys and electronics in wonder. It’s getting much colder, and Delilah has taken to wearing scarves and sweaters and leggings, which Logan doesn’t really get. Leggings are thin, and it’s 20 goddamn degrees outside, so why not wear something that will actually keep you warm?

“I know, I know, it’s just… I can’t look like a girl yet. What if they forget to use the right name? Or what if they just say they won’t? I don’t– I don’t want to finally meet my parents again for the first time in twenty-something years and have them not accept me,” Delilah mumbles, and although the repetition is somewhat exasperating, Logan gets it. He remembers what it was like telling his dad that he was Logan, not Madeline. He can easily recall the joy he felt when his dad clapped him on the back and asked him if that meant they could go on father-son fishing trips now, even as his mom looked at him in disgust every time she was around. Logan is unabashedly glad that she left them soon after. He grew up to be successful, with an amazing husband, a well-paying job, and doing work that saves lives, so it’s her loss, anyway. He wishes that it didn’t take him so long to realize that, but he’s okay now, so there’s no point regretting decisions that led him to a fulfilling life eventually.

“It’ll be okay. No matter what happens, I’m here, and Roman’s here, and Virgil’s here, and I know that even if they couldn’t be here to support you today, they’re probably still encouraging you telepathically all the way from Florida, anyway. Although telepathy is impossible, at least at this point in time, I have a feeling they’re still trying anyway.”

And then they’re sitting down at a table inside the warm, cozy cafe, and Delilah’s parents are somehow exactly what Logan expected them to be.

Her mom is a petite woman, curly brown hair and hazel eyes to match her daughter’s. She has prominent smile lines, and a soft voice that sounds like how honey tastes, and she reminds him of how his own mother used to be before she left them. “You’re… you’re here.”

The two are hugging soon afterward, immediately joined by her father. Dee’s father is a stocky man, sturdy and tall, and yet he hunches over in a way that makes him appear nervous. His voice is low in register, but unexpectedly shy, and he seems just as kind as his wife.
And… the child, the one that is sitting at the table in the corner, the one that Logan hadn’t been expecting to see. She looks remarkably similar to Dee herself. There’s no question as to who she is. She has long, bouncy locks, despite her age, and bright blue eyes to match her father’s. Logan wasn’t aware she existed. It’s a wonder nobody told Delilah she had a sister.

“I– I know we’ve talked on the phone, but I just… it’s nothing like seeing you in person. We… your father and I have waited so many years for this moment. And you’re… here. Our child,” Dee’s mother says, tears filling her eyes, and her lightly wrinkled hands shake in her husband’s gentle grip. Delilah’s sister sits up more in her chair, confused and curious, and Logan gives her a small wave when she stares at him from her own chair. She waves back.

“I… I’m sorry I didn’t listen to you about him. I should’ve known. I should have been able to figure it out before…” Delilah trails off, and her own eyes look misty too. Her words prompt an incredulous exhale from her father, and he speaks fully for the first time since they all sat down.

“Nonsense. You can’t blame this on yourself. You were a child. Your mother and I… we spent a very long time feeling responsible for what happened. Over the years, we thought of every ‘What if?’ scenario you could possibly imagine, and it took us even longer to realize that this whole situation is nobody’s fault but the evil man who hurt you. It’s not our fault, and it certainly isn’t yours, either.”

They spend more time talking. They discuss how life has been without their child, and how much Delilah missed them. They introduce her sister, Caitlyn, and Dee reassures them that yes, she knows they didn’t replace her. In turn, Dee introduces Logan to them, and tells them about how much he, Roman, and Virgil have been helping her. Although Logan would never cry in front of strangers or in public, he does feel oddly touched that she thinks so highly of him.

“I like your eyeshadow,” Caitlyn speaks up at the first bout of silence that comes along, and the metaphorical elephant in the room is brought to everyone’s attention. Logan can hear the tiny sound as the air catches in Delilah’s throat, can sense the hard swallow as she shifts uncomfortably in her chair, and Logan reaches out to hold her hand tightly in a tactile version of comforting words.

“Oh– Uh, yeah. Roman did it for me before the flight out here,” Delilah chokes out, and Logan rubs the back of her hand with his thumb. Her father’s brow furrow, and he stays quiet to simply observe. Her mother’s mouth falls open minutely, painted red lips parting with no sound to come from between them, and Delilah takes a deep breath. “I’m… I’m not Ethan anymore, mom, dad. I’m Delilah. I’m a girl. I really hope you can respect that.”

And her father tilts his head, smiles softly when his wife lets out a sob, and Caitlyn flicks a straw across the table towards Logan. Logan flicks it back.

“Sweetheart, I’m just glad I have my baby back. It doesn’t matter to me if you’re my daughter instead. I love you no matter what, and so does your father. And I’m sure Caitlyn is happy to have a big sister to look up to.”

Logan feels like he’s intruding when the three of them get up to hug again, but he and Caitlyn are in an intense match of the newly coined Straw Soccer, so it doesn’t really matter much in the end.

“Hey, Virgil?” Delilah asks one day, leans against Virgil’s desk and looks down at him with a serious gaze. Virgil perks up, cranes his neck to look at her from where his head is rested in his arms, and lets out a hum to let her know he’s listening.
“Do you still love Patton?”

Virgil can’t control himself when he immediately shoots up, sits back straight and rigid in the chair at the mention of the name. The question feels loaded, like any wrong answer is a step in the wrong direction, the pressure that will set off the landmines surrounding him. Why is she asking? It’s been three years. It’s been three years since Dee first got out, and she’s still thinking about this? Has she been wondering all this time?

And… Virgil hates this. He hates every single moment of this, because he can’t lie to her.

“Yes,” Virgil whispers, manages to get out through the lump in his throat. Dee’s been better. She started HRT, is slowly working her way towards displaying the type of body she’s supposed to have. She got her name legally changed, has a new wardrobe, friends, a job, a stable life. She has a service dog named Lucy, and still gets panic attacks and flashbacks when she hears yelling, but she’s doing better. They’re dating, and she’s healing, and starting to try new things that she’s been uncomfortable with for so, so long. She’s taking her life back. And Virgil’s just ruined it with a single word.

“I’m sorry,” Delilah says, and Virgil can’t even meet her eyes, even as his heart feels like it’s splitting in half.

“I’m sorry you still love someone you also hate. That must be really hard,” Delilah murmurs sympathetically, and Virgil is taken aback, and tears spill over his lashes, and Virgil presses his wet face into Delilah’s soft white turtleneck sweater.

“I love you, Dee, I love you so fucking much. I’m so sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry…”

And Delilah just holds him tightly, presses a kiss to the crown of his head, and they’re going to be okay.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

Rape mentions
Rape aftermath (mild imagery/description)
Blood mentions
Physical violence
Mention of PTSD symptoms
Cursing
Please let me know if I forgot any!
Day 14: Tear-stained

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.14, "Tear-stained".

*Take a deep breath and embrace what you're feeling.*

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

**Word Count:** 1314

**Relationships:** Loceit (up for interpretation/ambiguous; can be read as romantic, platonic, neither, or somewhere in between)

A/N: THIS ONE’S ACTUALLY ON TIME AAAAAAAAAAAAAA;;; anyway omg hope y’all enjoy this Logan Angst™ because y’all know it feeds my life force

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They’re not real. They can’t be.

He’s Logic. He’s *only* Logic, not Passion, not Creativity, not Morality, not anything but cold, hard facts. He’s Logic. He’s Logic, so he can’t have feelings and emotions. They’re impractical, they just get in the way, and they’re absolutely non-essential to his purpose. So they’re not real. It’s impossible for them to be real, because he doesn’t *have* feelings. He knows they’re not real, that they shouldn’t be there. So why are the tears still dripping hot on his cheeks?

Logic is annoyed, frustrated, *irritated* because he shouldn’t be crying. He can’t cry, because crying is caused by emotion, something he’d like to remind he doesn’t have. He shouldn’t be here, holed up in the corner of his pristine, dark closet, muffling his sobs with shaky fingers. He shouldn’t be pressing his face into his drawn-up knees, shouldn’t be curled up as tiny as he can into the wall. He shouldn’t be hiding behind the hanging fabric of his shirts, shouldn’t be so overwhelmed he can barely think properly, but he is. He is and he doesn’t understand why.

He’s always been a neutral, unbiased force within Thomas. His job is to act as his host’s Logic, unfeeling and unfettered by social expectations. He is here to act as Thomas’ critical thinking and fact recollection. He isn’t emotional. He doesn’t have emotions. That’s Patton’s area of expertise, Morality’s job. He’s not supposed to care about himself. He doesn’t have wants or needs or feelings. Logic exists only to serve Thomas as a core aspect of his being, to be his function and nothing more.

Logic knows this. Logic *knows* this, so when will he stop *crying* already?

And it started because of something childish, too! It wasn’t even that big of a deal. He shouldn’t be crying because of Virgil saying that he’s insensitive, because of Roman calling him a “mean robot”,...
because of Patton telling him “just because you don’t have feelings, it doesn’t mean you disregard the feelings of everyone else”. It’s not that bad. It’s really not that bad. He’s used to it by now, he seriously is! He even made himself into a robot puppet for them because he knew they’d like him accepting his inhuman personality. But…

Then why is he crying? Why is he so upset over this? They’re right, so why does he want to do something, anything to go back to that familiar state of apathy? Why is it that he can operate perfectly fine without feelings, but a few words can force a metaphorical crack in his brain to let an avalanche of emotions leak out? Why? Why? He doesn’t get it. He doesn’t understand. He doesn’t want to feel like this, he doesn’t want to cry, he doesn’t want to hate himse–

And then light is flooding the closet, and Logic can’t see a thing through the tears blurring his vision, and his stinging arms feel wet. He’s being lifted up, brought into someone’s arms easily, too easily. The fabric of their clothing is unbelievably soft, and they smell like rose water, and Logic really hopes that Deceit closed his bedroom door.

“Logan, you can’t hurt yourself like this,” Deceit murmurs as he sets him on the sink counter, furrows his brows as he takes Logic’s shaking arms in his gentle grip. He reassures him that it’s okay, everything’s okay, he’s not mad at him, he’s going to help him. He wipes the blood away with a damp cloth, and then his tears away with smooth fingertips, and Logic can finally see Deceit’s sad eyes boring into his own.

“Can’t— ‘m not… I’m Logic. I can’t h-have feelings. Why am I crying?” Logic asks, hoarse and small, and Deceit gathers his stiff body in his arms again. Some part of Logic wants to be embarrassed by the treatment, but then Deceit snaps his fingers, instantaneously replaces Logic’s day clothing for his favourite unicorn onesie, and Logic doesn’t really care anymore. “Shouldn’t— be like this.”

Deceit just sighs as he sets Logic slowly onto his bed, adjusts his pillow and fixes the placement of his head, and Logic doesn’t really know what to think. Deceit pulls the covers up and tucks them underneath his legs like a small child would want, and Logic yearns for something he’s unable to pinpoint. Then the other side’s laying down next to him, cradles his head and presses it into his chest and lays an arm and a leg over him as a comforting, safe weight, and… ah.

That’s what it was.

Why? He shouldn’t need this. He shouldn’t need reassurances and gentle words and tactile comfort. He doesn’t have feelings, and therefore there should be no reason why he… he needs this. He shouldn’t need the tight embrace, the protective arms around him like a safe cage from negativity, but he does, and he doesn’t— he doesn’t get it. He doesn’t understand. So he says so.

“I’m— I’m Logic. I’m only here to further Thomas’ knowledge and get him through academic pursuits. I’m just here to help him ‘think straight’, as one would say. I don’t— I can’t have emotions. Feelings are not imperative to my function, and are in fact a detriment in most cases. S-So why? Why am I— I—” Logic stutters, recites a spiel that he says to himself every single day, and his head feels like it’s wrapped in a figurative fog, a haze that sets deep into his psyche. Nothing feels real. He doesn’t feel real.

“I shouldn’t exist,” Logic mumbles, and Deceit’s hands squeeze a little tighter around his waist as if to make sure that he can’t just up and vanish. Maybe he shouldn’t be saying this. He should probably keep this to himself. Yeah. Yeah, he should. He should stop talking. He’s going to stop talking. Right. “It would be better for everyone if I wasn’t here. I’m broken. I can’t perform my function properly because for some reason, it seems I’ve developed these false ‘feelings’. I’m no longer of use to Thomas. I’m worthless. Have… have been for a long time. I should just disappear. A new Logic
will form in my place, a better one, one that is emotionless and stoic as Logic should be. I can’t– I can’t burden you guys and Thomas any longer. It’s unacceptable.”

Huh. So much for shutting up.

“You… no. That’s not it. Yes, you are Logic. You are in charge of Thomas’ knowledge, and academics, and logical thinking. But you are also Logan, who urges Thomas to learn and discover new things. You are his curiosity, and his drive to better himself, and his wonder about the world around him. You keep him on track, and focused, and on schedule. You work so hard to make sure Thomas is living the healthiest and most fulfilling life he can.

“It’s okay if you make mistakes. It’s okay if you aren’t always perfect, because not only is it impossible to be perfect, you shouldn’t be 100% flawless, either. Imperfection is, in itself, what makes us real. You’re not perfect. But you shouldn’t be perfect, you should be Logan. You’re Logan, who loves space and the stars. You love the ocean, and learning about the depths. You love animals, and coffee, and reading, and onesies. You are Logan, and you are imperfect, and you’re one-of-a-kind. Nobody can replace you. We don’t want Logic, we want Logan. We want our friend.”

Maybe… maybe Deceit is right. Maybe it’s okay to not always understand everything, to have to learn how to be more accommodating of others, and to also be more accommodating of himself. Maybe it’s fine if he gets things wrong sometimes, if he makes mistakes. Maybe… maybe it’s alright to be Logan, here, crying into Deceit’s chest, and maybe, just maybe, it’s okay to be flawed after all.

Chapter End Notes

**CONTENT WARNINGS:**

Self-hatred
Emotional repression
Minor suicide ideation
Minor derealization
Non-graphic self-harm (scratching)
Blood mentions
Touch starvation
Cursing
Day 15: Scars

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.15, "Scars".

I know you think you're alone, but I promise you aren't.

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

Word Count: 2458

Relationships: Creativitwins (familial) NOT remrom don't tag as remrom or i'll steal your bones and use them to make Halloween decorations

A/N: i'm not too upset about this one! it's not my best, but it's certainly not my worst. can y'all tell i love writing creativitwins brother dynamic?

dedicated to L. love you, dumbass ♥

See the end of the chapter for more notes

There’s something calming about running your fingers across the raised lines, about observing the streaks of light painted thin on your skin. It has an almost soothing effect, at least for Roman, and despite the irony of it, hyperfixating on those scars can help prevent him creating more. And creation, being such a prevalent aspect in his function as a side, is definitely not a force to be reckoned with. So he counteracts it the only way he knows how, runs his fingertips softly along the ridges on his forearms, and just breathes. Usually.

Except right now, as he sits here huddled in the corner of his room, it’s not working. It’s not doing what it should be, isn’t tempering his hyperventilation, isn’t nullifying the pain echoing in his heart. Roman doesn’t know what to do. He’s tried hydrating, splashing cold water on his face, holding an ice cube to his skin, and singing Disney songs to distract himself, but nothing is working. Everything feels tense right now, dangerous after his fourth breakdown this week, and he just… wants this all to end.

Roman doesn’t want to feel like this anymore. He doesn’t want to have the urge to dig into his skin, to take a blade to his shoulder until the apathy comes to drown his self-hatred. He doesn’t want to feed his addiction, to give up this easily, but… he yearns. He yearns so deeply for that cold, unforgiving brush on his fragile canvas, for the numbness that comes with it.

He’s in the bathroom rummaging through his drawers like a madman before he even realizes what he’s doing.

And maybe he should think this through more, try harder to resist, but it’s so tempting. He isn’t just
helpless toward his relapse, he wants it, and for the first time in seven months, a silver edge comes within an inch of his marred skin. But of course, of course he forgot to lock the door, and his brother barges in the room without a single knock or warning beforehand. He’s jittery, and looks like he’s about to yell something, but then his whole demeanor shifts when he sees Roman bowed over his vanity sink with a razor in his grip. His sleeve is rolled up, and his scars are on full display, and Remus shoots forward to knock the blade out of Roman’s hand with an almost desperate snarl.

“You idiot, what are you doing?!” Remus hisses as he grabs his counterpart’s arm roughly, drags him out of the bathroom and shoves him onto the bed without a hint of gentle treatment to be found. Roman rubs harshly at his forearms and glares at his lap with dull, dark eyes, and slaps his brother’s hand away when he tries to pry his grip off of his damaged limb. “I’m supposed to be the violent one, what the hell do you think you’re accomplishing with this?”

“I’m trying to be better? This is the only way I can-- I can fucking think. I tried. I fucking tried everything I could, every grounding technique and distraction, and nothing’s working. I can’t… I can’t do this,” Roman spits back, anger dissolving easily into resignation. Remus takes a loud, deep breath, clenches his fists so tightly his knuckles go white, and sits there in an odd, silent suspension for some amount of seconds. Once he’s seemingly calmed down, his brother deflates and it’s like all of the stiffness trickles out of him in one fell swoop. It’s strange to watch, considering how easily both of them lose their tempers.

Remus just stares at him, flat gaze boring into Roman’s own, and it feels like there should be some exchange happening here. It’s almost as if Remus is searching for something, something that even Roman himself can’t see. After another long moment where they just observe each other, his brother clicks his tongue in a sudden movement that almost startles. He looks like he’s sizing Roman up, gathering intel with eyes that are bathed in the tempest, and then he’s speaking again. “You haven’t tried everything, I bet. I’ll show you.”

“Remus, you don’t have to do that. Just… let me be. If I wanted to, I could easily wave them away, so. It doesn’t even matter,” Roman mumbles, fingers flitting up to unconsciously trace the scars on his arm, and his counterpart just scoffs. “Yeah, no shit, of course you can wave them away. But you haven’t, and you won’t, so just shut up and come on,” Remus replies, scalding and protective at the same time, and Roman doesn’t understand. They’re supposed to hate each other. They’re not supposed to hang out, not like… not like they did when they were younger. Their days of running around the Imagination waving plastic weapons at their combined villainous creations have been over for a long time, so why does he even care?

Roman doesn’t know, but he still stands and follows his brother anyway.

They go to the light sides’ common room first, the living room devoid of any presence other than the twins’ own. The others are up in the real world watching a movie with Thomas, if he remembers correctly, so they probably won’t be back until late. Remus gestures to the couch and waits for Roman to sit hesitantly before flopping down himself.

“Try screaming,” Remus tells him plainly, and Roman just gives him an incredulous look. What? What does that mean? Scream? Why? Apparently his brother can easily read the confusion on his face, because he just rolls his eyes and snatches up a throw pillow to place in Roman’s still hands. “Scream. Into the pillow. It helps, so just do it. Here, I’ll do it too, see?”

And Remus just stares at his own pillow resolutely, takes a huge breath, and then smashes his face into the fabric. The pillow doesn’t muffle the sound by very much, but it’s still at a similar volume to his speaking voice, and Roman wrinkles his nose in disgust. Is he joking? And-- no, of course he’s
fucking not, he’s *Remus*. Well… he might as well do it. Roman figures if he’s gonna looks stupid anyway, it should probably be along with someone else, and his brother *always* looks stupid, so maybe his presence’ll mitigate it a bit.

So he screams. He lets loose a long yell into the stuffed cushion, shouts even louder when Remus laughs beside him and starts yelling into his own pillow again, and this whole situation is awful. They must look so dumb, two twins screaming intermittently into pillows as almost a response to one another, and Roman has to admit, it’s more funny than it is mortifying. Shocking, sure, but Remus somehow manages to make even the silliest things sound serious, so Roman doesn’t even know why he’s surprised in the slightest.

“So? Feel any better?” Remus asks cheerfully when they finally stop to breathe, both sitting back against the couch panting as they clutch their respective pillows to their chests. Roman groans and throws his head back, inhales slowly while he gives the ceiling a scathing glance, and Remus tilts his head in confusion not unlike how a dog would.

“I mean-- I don’t know, I guess? A little bit, but…” Roman trails off and Remus jumps to his feet. His pillow is thrown at the wall as harshly as possible, discarded viciously to smash against and shatter a picture frame. Roman starts with the noise, and then gives his counterpart a disapproving glare. Remus stares him down for a second, then hunches over and groans when he realizes Roman isn’t going to back down on this one, and he moves over to fix the damage with a wave of his hand as he rolls his eyes.

“Right, well. Still not good, huh? Let’s try something else. Follow!” Remus shouts far too loudly, a fairly unreachable sentiment when is comes from Roman himself, and the two of them leave the room.

They go outside next, trek around the house in the beating sun, and Roman sweats from both the heat and the mischievous look in his brother’s eye. The two stop in the backyard beside the porch, and Remus sizes up a blank stretch of brick wall as Roman just shakes the collar of his jacket in an attempt to air it out a little. Remus nods to himself after a couple moments of deliberation, and then summons what seem to be brightly coloured water balloons sloshing around in a blue plastic bucket.

“Water balloons? I don’t want to get wet right now, Remus,” Roman sighs, ignores the suggestive eyebrow wiggle he gets in return, and he crosses his arms when his counterpart grabs a balloon from off the top of the pile.

“Haha, no, dumbass! You’re so silly, of course they’re not water balloons-- they’re paint balloons!” And Roman has to leap forward and snatch the balloon away as Remus is winding up to launch it, berating his pouting brother as he replaces the paint balloons with *actual* water balloons. Roman doesn’t bother with words, just gives Remus a withering look when he huffs and waves his hand over the balloons again. “Fine. Compromise.”

“There better not be paint in those again, Remus, or I might literally strangle you. *Ah*-- before you say it, no, not in ‘the fun way’.”

And there isn’t. They’re water balloons, still, but they’re also filled with so many different colours of glitter, and Roman has to admit that the way the sun shines and refracts off of the little flecks coating the side of the building is pretty awesome. But… as pretty as it is, Roman can still feel that itch, that wanting, so they clean up (read: Roman cleans up while Remus tries to swallow a balloon whole. Wait, can *Deceit* do that?) and head back inside, having managed to stay decently dry.

So they try again. Remus takes him to his own room, drags out a huge canvas and easel from god knows where and swats the dust and cobwebs away from the slightly yellowed surface. It isn’t hard
to guess what they’re doing, and Roman wonders if Remus only puts out shades of red acrylic for a reason. He has to admit, though, smearing the page with so many different hues to make an abstract mess of bright claret is surprisingly fun, though he’d never admit that to Remus.

They also attempt to make cupcakes, but that’s all more of Virgil’s thing than anyone else’s. Stress baking is a common occurrence, to the point where Virgil has actually gotten to be extremely skilled, and it does make for a humorous juxtaposition to the other two. Logan is great at cooking because it can not only be precise and measured, but also a creative outlet, and despite his insistence that he is Logic and Logic only, Roman knows that even Logan can create some really amazing, unique things if he tries. Patton, on the other hand… oh boy. Despite his position as a parental fixture within their group, he is awful at making nearly everything related to food. He’s too prone to experimentation and disregarding recipes and measurements outright, which is why baking is always a disaster, and he gets too scared around heat to really cook a proper meal. He does make some really good parfaits, though.

So although he has years under his belt of watching those three do their thing, of learning what to do from Virgil and Logan and what not to do from Patton, Roman isn’t exactly good at baking himself. He’s awesome at decorating, and he’s made some really cool cake artwork before, but the actual baking part is not something he usually ever has to deal with. And Remus… well, Remus is Remus. He purposely switches the salt and sugar in his food, so.

Needless to say, their attempt is an absolute tragedy, but Roman honestly isn’t too mad about it. Sure, they’re both covered in flour, and Roman’s jacket is stained with vanilla extract from a particularly disastrous spill, and Remus has been continually making Roman cringe by crunching on the cakes that are burnt beyond recognition (cupcakes are not supposed to be crunchy, what the fuck), but Roman’s actually having a lot of fun. Maybe the cupcakes didn’t turn out very well, but Roman hasn’t laughed this hard in a long time, so he’ll take small victories where he can get them.

And the twins don’t stop. They throw darts at headshot pictures of politicians taped to the wall, they have a pillow fight until Roman’s arms feel like jelly, and they go into the Imagination to ride some of the horses there (a white one with an elegant mane for Roman, and a decaying half-skeleton horse for Remus) until the sun is setting in the real world. They do so much, a surprising amount, and it feels just like when they were kids and they used to run around the house together yelling at the top of their lungs and giggling as they ran away from an exasperated Patton. Roman didn’t know how much he missed this until now, but it’s late, and unfortunately it has to come to an end.

“Remus, I’m tired, and nothing’s working… can I just go to sleep?” Roman sighs as they walk back into the main part of the mindscape again, scratching at the back of his neck as Remus whistles a cheery tune. He doesn’t understand how his twin can still be so energetic even after every exhausting activity they’ve participated in today, but it’s somewhat refreshing nonetheless.

“Nothing’s working? But you just went a whole day without cutting yourself! Seems like it worked to me!” Remus exclaims, eyes bright as he grins cheekily, and– holy shit. He’s right. Roman didn’t cut today. He didn’t hurt himself, even though he was feeling that bad earlier. Even with the stress, and the tension, and the breakdown, he still managed to not give in. Because… because of Remus. Because of his little brother. That sneaky little shit, he knew what he was doing from the get-go. Maybe Roman is sorta proud. Okay, a lot proud.

“Anyway, I-- woah, don’t cry on me! Otherwise I might have to steal your tears and keep them in a jar to use as lube,” Remus snickers, and Roman doesn’t even care about his vulgarity as he brings his brother into a tight hug. He can tell that Remus is surprised, and a little stiff even as Roman squeezes his shoulders with gratitude. But then he’s relaxing a little, laughs more sincerely as he pats Roman’s back, and maybe Remus isn’t so bad after all.
CONTENT WARNINGS:

Self-harm (c/ting, it doesn’t actually happen but it is referenced outright many times. there is mild/non-graphic description of it as well, and scars are referenced multiple times too)
Mention of self-hatred
Mentions of emotional breakdowns
Cursing
Mild inappropriate language
Lmk if I forgot any!
He’s right. Patton’s right. He’s Morality, and he knows about emotion, and love, and all of the things that Logan doesn’t understand. He knows more about the fans than Logan does, and understands their slang, and trends, and everything he himself could never dream of getting so effortlessly like Patton does. Patton knows, and he gets it, so he must be right. He has to be, because otherwise Logan is going through this for nothing.

And— and it’s okay, really! He gets it, gets that fanservice is important, and that it will please the ones who have given Thomas so many opportunities and so much exposure. It’s their responsibility, right? That’s what Patton says. So… so he can just shut up and bear it. It doesn’t matter that the loving words make him uncomfortable, that every kiss makes him want to hit something, that every subtle touch makes his skin crawl. It doesn’t matter, because Patton knows what he’s doing.

Logan shouldn’t even be upset about this. He shouldn’t. Patton is doing him a favour by dating him. It’s not like Logan is completely oblivious to the fact that he’s not exactly well-liked within their group. He’s harsh, cold, snappy, and has pathetic, childish temper tantrums. He’s not particularly attractive, nor does he have an attracting personality, and Logan has been aware of that for a very long time. He’s not exactly… desirable. And although Logan doesn’t understand emotions or feelings, hates how they make his head spin in their vague, subtle natures, it doesn’t mean that he still doesn’t wonder, sometimes. That he doesn’t wonder what it’d like to be in love.

Maybe… maybe he is in love with Patton. When you’re in love with someone, you’re supposed to always be thinking of them. Logan is definitely hyper-aware of Patton’s presence and location at all times, so he checks that one off the list (no, not a figurative list, a literal list. He can’t keep track of the thoughts ravaging his brain without physical organization).
He’s heard people say that being in love with someone means you feel “butterflies in your stomach”, and from what Logan understands, that is just a metaphor connected to feelings of unease within the lower torso. Not actual butterflies, because that’s obviously impossible, as they would not be able to survive within your stomach acid. And, well, he does feel… somewhat squeamish every time Patton latches onto him and tells him sweet nothings into his ear. He supposes that means another item on the list checked off.

Although the third one is more synonymous to the sexual aspect of relationships, Logan feels it’s important to consider. He’s never had sex, has never done anything even remotely sexual, so he’s not exactly sure what it’s supposed to feel like apart from his knowledge as to the workings of the human body. Supposedly, arousal is supposed to feel as if there is heat or a queasiness emanating from a place centralized to the abdomen. When Patton murmurs in his ear and slips his hand down to massage his inner thigh, Logan does consistently feel nauseous, so that means that three items on the list are now marked.

So… he is in love with Patton. Logan still feels odd about it, considering the fact that love is supposed to feel like more of a positive experience than Logan has had so far, but then again, he doesn’t really understand emotions, either. Maybe it is positive, and he just doesn’t realize it because feelings are not his “forte”. Yeah, that’s probably it.

So the next time Patton takes him into his bedroom to engage in romantic activities, Logan doesn’t protest. He loves Patton, as he has concluded from his research and data, so he has to do this. For the fans, and for Patton. He just wishes it came a little easier to him, though.

“Lo-Lo, you’re so cute…” Patton trails off from where his lips meet Logan’s own. Patton shifted him to straddle his lap earlier, has them sitting in the middle of his bed, and the position makes Logan feel vulnerable. He doesn’t really enjoy his legs being spread and open like this for Patton to rub lightly at his jeans, doesn’t really like how Patton delicately bites Logan’s bottom lip between kisses, but it doesn’t matter. He has to do this.

“I think we should do more this time,” Patton sighs into Logan’s mouth, and the phrase causes him to stiffen up substantially. What? No, they have a busy day tomorrow. Logan doesn’t want to do this right now. He doesn’t really want to do it with Patton ever, if he’s being completely upfront with himself, but he… he can’t say that. It’d hurt Patton’s feelings, right? He can’t say that, he knows he can’t, so he doesn’t.

“Patton, I don’t— I don’t think we should do that right now. We have a busy schedule for tomorrow, remember? We should be well-rested to function at optimal levels in case Thomas needs us, and he always does,” Logan informs him, almost rambles at this point, and does he sound desperate? Why should he sound desperate? He doesn’t understand, he really doesn’t, and it infuriates him. What he does understand though is that the feeling that fills his stomach when Patton grips his thighs through his jeans hard, when he pulls him closer so that they meet in the middle, it has to be arousal, and by extension, love. So he should… he should be okay with this, right?

“Lo-Lo, come on! Why do you have to be such a party pooper? If you really loved me, you would do this for me. Don’t you love me?” Patton asks, tone sad and eyes unreadable, at least for Logan, and he’s… he’s right. Logan shouldn’t be so selfish. Isn’t that what he’s been working on this whole time? Not putting himself above others, being conscientious of other peoples’ needs and wants, that sort of thing? If he really is going to become more of an acceptable part of their group, to maybe even be considered their friend, he needs to be more selfless. That was the whole debate in the courtroom, after all.

So it doesn’t matter when Patton slips his hand up his thigh to pull his jeans off, doesn’t matter when
he unbuttons his black shirt and leaves it to hang open with his bare torso on display, doesn’t matter when he pushes Logan down into the pillows and pulls his legs apart, doesn’t matter when Patton’s observant gaze bores into his body and makes him feel like he’s going to be sick.

It’s fine. It’s fine. He can just hold out until Patton is done. That’s what boyfriends are supposed to do, what lovers are supposed to do, and Logan is in love with Patton. He must be, he has to be, or else…

But then Patton is pushing in immediately, without properly prepping him or using lubrication, and Logan can’t breathe. His mouth falls open in a soundless cry, and his back arches unconsciously, and pain pain pain rips through his lower regions. He can feel everything. He can feel every single bump and ridge and peak and valley and it hurts so fucking badly—

“Wh– P-Paaah– Patton, what are you– not– not safe. Supposed to,” Logan stutters out, throat closing around the lump that’s forming, and he can’t breathe. What is he doing? Despite how he plays at innocence, he knows what sex is and how to do it properly, so why? Why? Why? What is the purpose of this? Why is he doing this if he knows it will hurt him? Why can’t Logan move, or breathe, or do a single thing to get away?

“Oh, quit whining, Lo-Lo. Of course this is safe; I’m fine, see?” Patton admonishes with a high tone, scolds as he gestures at their connected bodies along with a look that seems to imply that he thinks Logan is stupid, that he’s the one who doesn’t know what they’re doing, and—fuck—

“I don’t– I don’t want to do this anymore! Stop, please, just– let’s just go t-to sleep, okay? I ju– haah, just want to sleep,” Logan tries, and now he sounds desperate. Somehow, a part of him could care less, and the other part is withering in mortification, and the battling duality of negativity within Logan’s brain is dizzying. He doesn’t want to be here. He doesn’t want to be here. He doesn’t—

Logan tries to push Patton away, tries to knock him off and sit up, but then there are strong hands slamming him back down into his previous spot. The hands hold him still, grip not letting up in the slightest even when Logan shakes and struggles and breaks, and there’s nothing he can do. Patton’s too strong, strong enough to pin him to the bed even as he thrusts just as harshly without the added support. It hurts. It hurts. “Lo-Lo, sweetie, I’m warning you.”

“Pl– Please, please! Just let– let me– aaah, go,” Logan pleads through the painful lump in his throat, voice thickened by tears. He gasps every time his head knocks into the wall above him, whimpers at the unwanted rhythm, the stings and aches. Patton’s fingers encircling his wrists feel not dissimilar to iron shackles, like he’s being held in place by metal restraints, and he can’t shake the feeling that he’s on an examination table waiting to be experimented on.

“Shut up! This is supposed to be romantic and sweet and you’re ruining it! I’m here doing something nice for you, dating you when nobody else will, and you’re still ungrateful? You’re repulsive, Logan, and your personality is terrible. You’re mean, and half of the things you say don’t make any sense, and you never let other people do what they want to, and all you ever do is talk about your space books and the bottom of the ocean or whatever, and never let anyone else talk! Nobody likes you, and I pity you for that. You know I’m all you have, so just be quiet and be grateful that I’m giving you the time of day,” Patton spits, angry and scathing and truthful. It’s the truth. Logan knows, has already known for so long, but hearing Patton confirm it just cements it even more. He doesn’t even fight the wetness that finally spills over his lashes, despite how much he loathes crying, and Patton huffs before returning to his ministrations.

Logan’s… Logan’s so worthless. Of course nobody would want him, not even a sliver of a chance. Patton laid it all out, said everything that he feared was true, and he’s right. Logan is lucky that
Patton wants him. He’s lucky that he even has a boyfriend, and he has the nerve to try to pick and choose who his suitor is? He should love Patton, because Patton loves him. That’s how relationships work, what their basis is founded on, so why would he even be with Patton if he didn’t love him?

Patton thrusts harder, and Logan whimpers with the pain, and the tears on his cheeks drip softly onto the covers. After a deep breath, Logan forces himself to draw back, to retreat into his mind for a while, and a neutral expression takes over his face. His eyes dry substantially even as his head radiates an ache from knocking into the wall, and his arms go limp in Patton’s grip, and the world hazes over. He can’t see. He doesn’t want to see. He doesn’t want to feel, either, so he numbs himself, puts on a weak smile, and bears it.

Chapter End Notes

**CONTENT WARNINGS:**

Explicit rape/dubcon
Sexual coercion
Romantic/relationship coercion
Self-loathing/self-deprecation
Brainwashing
Cursing
Please lmk if I missed any!
Day 17: "Stay With Me"

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.17, "Stay With Me".

This may be the end, but I'll wait for you on the other side.

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

**Word Count:** 1527

**Relationships:** Logince

A/N: so.... superhero au, anyone? this is early today! hopefully this is some Good Pain™ to satisfy y’all uwu

Logan isn’t supposed to be here. Logan is supposed to be at home, safely doing work at his desk, stubbornly staying up for his boyfriend even as he’s falling asleep where he stands. Logan’s supposed to be curled up into the couch, small and soft as he waits sleepily for Roman to walk through the door, buried under a warm blanket with the television quietly playing in the background. Logan’s supposed to be eating the terrible spaghetti Roman made last night, grateful and endeared by his care even while met with his boyfriend’s amateur cooking skills. Logan’s supposed to be safe.

But Prince swoops in, ready to fly down into the wreckage of the collapsed building to search for injured citizens and carry them to safety, and he spots Logan. Logan, who is supposed to be at home, he’s supposed to be at home, and instead, he’s holding a sobbing little girl in his arms as he stumbles his way out of the dust through large chunks of debris. Roman feels panic shoot through him, a sharp, electric rush that sends his heart leaping into his throat. It takes longer than he’d like to admit to snap out of his stupor, hastily flying down to them as the crying child is taken from Logan’s arms by a firefighter.

Roman ignores the shouts, blocks out every “Prince!” and “Prince will help us!” as he glides down to the ground, ready to swoop Logan up and admonish him later in a place that isn’t so public. But then, his feet touch the ground, concrete poking his soles through the fabric of his supersuit, and Logan sways where he stands. It takes every bit of Roman’s self control not to shout as he dashes forward, snatching up his beloved before he can hit the ground. Once the younger man is firmly in his grip, Roman floats to rest on a chunk of flat concrete, gingerly holding and supporting Logan in his arms. Roman boasts an impassive face even as he can feel panic rising like a cacophony in his chest, flooding his torso while he surveys the damage.

Logan’s glasses are cracked, bent from the force exerted on them. He’s covered head-to-toe in dirt and pieces of debris, shards of rock and concrete stuck in the multiple lacerations littered all over his
open skin. His clothing is ripped and torn, and his hair is mussed and tangled, and Roman wants to scream and yell and hit something because why is Logan not at home?

“Lo,” Roman murmurs, careful to keep his voice low enough that none of the civilians and first responders milling about can hear his words. Logan’s lashes flutter, eyes tired and heavy, and his head lolls to the side like dead weight. More panic shoots through Roman at this, but he keeps as collected as he can. He needs to get Logan to a hospital, needs to make sure he’s okay. “Hey, baby, stay awake for me, okay? We’re gonna get you to a hospital and patch you up, but you can’t fall asleep on me.”

Logan’s eyes open a little wider, and they swivel around in an attempt to find Roman’s own. His gaze is sad, subdued when they meet, and Roman doesn’t like the dread that’s slowly beginning to wash over him. Logan’s mouth opens, lips cracked and dry and split with blood, and his tiny voice falls out of his throat. The words are gravelly, and Roman has to lean in to hear him, and what he hears makes his heart skip a beat. “No… Ro, ’m not… got hurt. St’m’ch… hurts. Wanna… go home.”

As the last words register, Logan eyes get misty, and he wears a scared frown that makes him look young, so young, too young for this. And he is. He’s supposed to graduate soon, and he’s been working toward his Master’s for so long. Roman’s been there with him through it all, and he’s never run out of support to give. Logan’s supposed to be successful. They’re supposed to live a long life together, with Logan studying astronomy and Roman continuing to sing on stage, setting aside time to save people’s lives under his alter ego. They’re supposed to be happy, so why is Logan here, now, softly whimpering as Roman finally feels the blood he was ignorant toward the existence of soak through his supersuit and touch his abdomen?

With another burst of adrenaline fueled by terror and pure dread, Roman pulls back, ignores Logan’s whine with a lump in his throat as he finally lifts the tattered button-up to inspect his boyfriend’s torso. Roman sucks in a painful breath as he immediately sees the gaping, bloody wound, a long gash that’s coated and dripping in red claret. This… this is too much. It’s too deep, they’ll-- they’ll never be able to--

“Look, baby,” Roman says, croaky voice choked with tears as he points upward at the night sky. Logan follows his boyfriend’s direction through his own tears, the stars shining in the beautiful, beautiful eyes that Roman loves so fucking much. There’s so much wonder in the younger man’s eyes, even as he’s bleeding out, dying-- and he watches the stars and the moon and the news helicopters above with a detached sadness.

“W’sh… wish I could’a… could’a been to space. It was… a’ways… my dream…” Logan says, quiet and slurred and defeated, and Roman can’t stifle the loud sob that tumbles off of his tongue. He doesn’t care anymore. His baby is hurt. He’s dying and the newscasters and civilians and paramedics and everyone else in the world doesn’t exist, has never existed.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry, Lo, I wish I could go back and take you to space, take you wherever you want to go. You can’t-- y-you shouldn’t-- you don’t deserve for it to stop here. You’re too young, baby, please, I’m sorry, please don’t leave me,” Roman says, and he finally breaks. His words come out between hiccupped sobs, choked cries through a thickened tone. Logan’s eyes slide back over to land on Roman again, considerably slower this time, waning as his gaze is distant and the rise and fall of his chest is nearly invisible.

“Don’t… cry. I… I love you Roman. St… Stay w’th me?” Logan mumbles, barely intelligible over the noise around them, and his sweet, resigned words send a fresh wave of tears leaking over Roman’s cheeks. With all of his cares thrown to the wind, Roman releases his transformation, finally
able to just be himself with the one he loves. Now without the supersuit in the way, Roman cradles Logan’s face in his bare, trembling hands, just the two of them existing together even over the new wave of shocked commotion from the bystanders around them.

“Of course I’ll stay, Logan, I’ll never leave you. Never. I love you so much, so fucking much, baby. I’m so sorry, Lo, I love you,” Roman blubbers, laying kisses upon cracked lips, tears streaming and mixing with Logan’s blood to leave a metallic tang in his mouth. He couldn’t care less.

“Roman?! The famous singer Roman is also our superhero, Prince? Talk about a double life!”

“How can he do that? It’s like magic…”

“Should I ask for an autograph?”

“Shut up and leave him alone! Can’t you see that guy’s dying?!”

“No way… is that… like, his lover?”

“Oh, fuck. That’s his boyfriend, isn’t it…”

“Shit…”

“What about paramedics? Can’t they save him?!”

“No, it’s far too late. Can’t you see the wound on his stomach? He’ll bleed out before they can even do anything.”

“But… Prince saves us every day. There’s… there’s nothing that we can do?!”

So many voices, people talking, conversations all around, probing and pressing and Roman slams his head into the concrete. He doesn’t mind the pain, doesn’t care that he’s going to have a massive headache later. He just wants the voices to stop, the ringing to cease. Wiping away the blood on his forehead, he leans down over Logan again, strokes his cheek. Logan smiles, weak and small and barely there, and Roman kisses him hard.

Even now, on the edge of death, Logan lets out the prettiest sigh, is just barely able to reach up and grasp Roman’s shirt with a couple fingers. Even now, he’s still loving, wanting, pleased. Even now, in this situation, Logan is so fucking beautiful, and Roman can’t stop sobbing into his boyfriend’s mouth, crying as he clutches his lover close. He doesn’t have time. He doesn’t have time.

But then Logan’s fingers are loosening their grip on his t-shirt, and his arms fall heavily to his sides. Roman jolts up, alarmed, and cradles his boyfriend’s head in his hands. Logan’s head lolls when it’s not being supported, so Roman uses his hands as a mount to keep him upright. Another tear slips out of Logan’s eye, glistening under the starlight, and he lets out an inaudible sigh.

“I’ve you… Ro.”

Logan's breathing slows to a stop, and his mouth parts slightly, and his movement stills, and his eyes dim.

Roman throws his head back and wails.
CONTENT WARNINGS:

Major character death
Fatal injury/wound
Blood
Collapsed building
Cursing
Day 18: Muffled Scream

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.18, "Muffled Scream".

*Just take it all in, this'll make sense in time.*

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

**Word Count:** 300

**Relationships:** none

A/N: I’m…. honestly so sorry. I didn’t really want to do a poem but I’ve been busy and unmotivated and needed a short break. Hopefully this isn’t awful and I’m sorry it’s so short. We should be back to fic tomorrow.

Also, I should mention that even though it isn’t explicitly stated, this poem is about Deceit. The other person is a mystery, though! :) I’d love to hear you guys’ thoughts on what’s going on, so don’t be afraid to comment on this ^^

Oh also!! Thank you @queerly-traumatic on tumblr for helping with this one!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Every drop of water echoes off the walls and in your brain

Every drop of blood shows that your mistakes can leave a stain

Your panicked thoughts lie in disarray

You might as well be a thousand miles away

In the knife he holds you can feel the imminence

Of your last hope torn apart by the dissonance

His hands dyed in claret muffle every desperate noise

And you know to him you’re nothing more than another toy
The ache resounds through your limbs like a fatal ballad
He washes the colour out of your skin and leaves you pallid

You’re here on the other side, just a single room away
But they can’t hear you shout even as you start to fade

They curl up into each other, murmur above the television
Eyes boring into a spot just below the division

You’re so close to freedom and yet so far
Maybe you’re trapped here because of your tainted repertoire

It’s hard to fall away, retreat to the deepest corners of your mind
When all you feel is resentment, interminably maligned

A shining glint of silver reflects off the glass
You don’t want to turn around and see his eyes, icy and crass

He tells you that you deserve the pain
That you suffer because you go against the grain

He tells you about how worthless you are
And you know, you knew with every single scar

You gaze through the mirror at them, loathe all of their ignorance
Despite knowing that toward you they only hold indifference

And maybe you brought this upon yourself
That you beckoned it, self-esteem forgotten on the shelf

So when he runs the knife down your back, draws out another silent scream

You stop fighting back and leave your consciousness hung on a moonbeam

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

Implied torture (mild)
Mild blood
Knife mentions
Self-loathing
Self-victim blaming/mild brainwashing
Unnamed unsympathetic side
Vaguely implied past self-harm
Day 19: Asphyxiation

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.19, "Asphyxiation".

You want to know what it's like to go beyond the fray.

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

Word Count: 2537

Relationships: Demus (platonic), implied Intrulogical (queerplatonic crush), familial Creativitwins (not remrom i will Eat You if you tag as remrom), Prinxiety (minor/background)

A/N: aromantic hypersexual remus babeyy!!! anyway yeah this one is.... interesting. heed the warnings, since there is a lot of explicit language and mentions of heavy topics!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It’s like fire.

The feeling of the rope squeezing so tightly around his neck, not being able to suck in a single bit of air, it’s like fire. It feels like he’s being burned alive, like flames are licking at his lungs, teasing brushes never hot enough to char. He wants it to be over, he wants the oxygen to stop going to his brain and in his blood and through his heart and through every system until all of his organs are shutting down and he dies. But he’s a side, and he can’t actually die, so now he hangs here unable to move or breathe while he’s burning from the inside.

And it does feel like fire, it really does, because Remus has set himself on fire multiple times before and it feels pretty much the same. Although, this does feel a little bit worse, because not only does it feel like his chest is on fire, his lungs are also contracting and his throat is raw from screaming and his neck is cramping because of the odd angle it’s being held at. He wishes his neck would just snap. He wishes he’d just die already.

And-- and the worst part is, he can’t even scratch the itch on his leg that’s been bugging him this whole time! Since he can’t breathe, he can’t lift up his arm to wave the noose away, so he therefore can’t reach down, meaning he has to sit here and suffer through the ticklish feeling that’s slowly creeping up towards his knee, too! It’s awful! Absolutely awful!

Well… in any case, at least he knows what happens now. He can’t hang himself, either. He’s already tried slitting his wrists, downing bottles of pills like candy, dousing himself in gasoline, drinking cleaning supplies, shooting himself in the face, and eating as many toxic things as possible, but none of them worked. He thought maybe hanging himself would have some promising results, but alas.
Unfortunately, this method is a bust, too.

But it’s fine! Remus tested it out, and it didn’t work, and that’s okay. He’s in the light sides’ part of the mindscape, just in an old storage room. Someone will walk in on him, scream like a little baby, and then cut him loose, so he can just chill here until that time comes. Right. Right!

- 

Okay, Remus is fucking panicking.

He’s been waiting here, kicking limply at air for what feels like hours, and his fingers have long gone numb. The chair he used to jump off of is too far away for him to reach, discarded on its side just a foot further than he’s able to stretch. Of course he’s too stupid to have set up a backup plan. Thinking through things is Logan’s job.

Remus wonders if the nerd will be the one to find him. He’d probably just give him one of those emotionless looks, wave the noose away, and leave without a word. That’d really be the best outcome, because Logan isn’t really the type to ask questions about why Remus does the things he does; after all, he just does! Haha… yeah. And, not to mention, he won’t say anything to the others, either. Remus knows that Daddy-o and Storm Cloud don’t give a shit about him, but his brother would probably get angry or something. He’s always angry at Remus. Mr. Snake doesn’t particularly like him, as far as he knows, but he’d probably berate him for it and take away his fun toys.

So yeah, maybe Logan will be his saviour, and then Remus can be the damsel in distress who gives him a big smooch as a thank you for rescuing him. Ooh, maybe he can also thank Logan in other ways! He could bake him a cake, or give him his entrails to keep in a jar, or he could give Logan a year-long pass to use his hole all he wants! Or his dick, because even Logan needs to be fucked real good once in a while. Especially with all the working and studying and planning shit he does. Do the others really not see how stressed he is every single day since the workaholic dumbass refuses to take a break once in a while? Disgraceful. Logan could be getting the dick appointments he deserves a lot sooner.

- 

It’s nighttime now, as evident by the room flooding in darkness and the moonlight shining through the window. Considering the mindscape runs on the same clock as the real world, it’s safe to say that it’s been quite a few hours since he got stuck here. His neck still hurts, and his lungs are in agony, but hey, the itch is gone now!

- 

Maybe Storm Cloud will find him. Probably have some sort of panic attack meltdown thingy, but then again, he’s never liked Remus. Virgil always yells at him when he talks about the actually fun stuff. Boring, if you ask Remus, but it’s whatever. He left them to go hang out with the light sides, and he hasn’t come back since, so Remus just decided to forget about him. Virgil doesn’t deserve to hear his cool ideas, anyway! He can stay with his stinky boring brother, listen to his dumb, frilly, saccharine nonsense, and they can keep their gross romance shit far away!

How much do they fuck? Probably a lot. They’re the types who never have their honeymoon phase because they’re too busy sucking each other’s dicks. Virgil’s definitely a top, though. Oh god, does that mean his brother is a bottom? Ew, ew, ew--
What time is it? How long has Remus been here? The sun’s already gone down and come up a few times. He isn’t really keeping track anymore.

- 

So, Dad Guy. Morality. Kind of a wimp, if you ask Remus. Oh boy, if he saw this now, he’d probably scream his head off! Can you literally scream your head clean off of your shoulders? Anyway, he would definitely cry like a little baby. He’s always been a big softie, the type to hide under the blankets while watching scary movies. Remus doesn’t really get it, to be honest, because then you miss all the fun stuff!

Although, it is always the ones that seem innocent that are the freakiest, so maybe he’d actually be pretty fun. Definitely has a Daddy kink, no question there. Probably degradation, too. How can you go that long only saying nice things to people without an outlet? Gotta release that anger somehow, so why not get funky with it? Get a little spicy? He says that, right? Oh god, what if he has a food kink? Likes to slather cupcake icing on an asshole and lick it off? Actually, that’s kinda hot.

- 

Maybe he’s going to be here forever. Maybe they’re not coming to help him. Maybe they know and they--

Maybe they just don’t care.

- 

Oh, Deceit. Little snake man. He hates being called little, which is funny, because he has the biggest size kink Remus has ever seen. Although they aren’t really friends, they’ve fucked multiple times, and Remus will admit that Deceit is actually pretty cute. Not in like, a romance-y way or whatever, but in bed. He likes bossing Remus around all the time, but when Remus pushes him down into the mattress? Fuck, he takes orders so well.

Deceit likes that Remus is the tallest out of all of them, because that means that his hands are also the biggest and his fingers the longest, and it’s no surprise that that particular trait is put to very good use. Slid around his waist to make him feel small, wrapped around his dick to completely engulf him, pressed into his pretty little hole to make him whimper-- Deceit’s fun to mess around with.

Maybe he’d leave Remus hanging here.

- 

He doesn’t even feel the pain anymore. His whole body is numb, unfeeling, like he’s just a brain floating in space. It’s like he doesn’t have limbs, doesn’t have a torso, doesn’t have a head. He knows what a beheading feels like, though, and it’s not this.

- 

“Okay, okay, Padre, I’ve got them! Just give me a second,” sounds his counterpart’s voice from outside the door, exasperated and fond and Remus wants to cry out for help but his vocal cords aren’t working. He doesn’t care anymore. He doesn’t care about his stupid experiments, doesn’t care about his “fun and games”, nothing. He just wants to get out.

Oh, Roman. He’s the one Remus refused to think about in the time he’s been suspended here, slowly swishing back and forth in the middle of the room. He doesn’t want to know what’ll happen if he walks in here. He doesn’t want to see his face, disgusted and freaked out and hateful as always. He
doesn’t want to face the very real, very likely possibility that Roman will simply give him a sneer and leave. He doesn’t.

But then the door swings open, revealing his brother in the middle of rolling his eyes. He stops in his tracks when he sees Remus hanging in the dim light, no movement to be seen. It takes him a moment to process the image he’s being met with, but when he does, he lets out a loud, panicked yell. Wait, is Remus dripping blood on the carpet? Fuck, Roman’s probably so pissed.

And… Remus doesn’t get it. He doesn’t understand why Roman dashes forward with terror in his eyes, how any sense of rationality or reason leaves him when he grips hard on Remus’s waist to lift him up. It eases the pressure substantially, allows him to reanimate from the limp, pale corpse he was before with a hoarse, strangled gasp of air, and Roman yells again for the others. Shit, he doesn’t need an audience. What, is he bringing them in here so that they can laugh at him, make fun of him like Roman does? To tease him and scorn him and torture him like--


“F-Fuck, Re, what did you do?” Virgil asks as Remus realizes the other three have filed through the door and are consecutively freaking out, tongue of the tempest echoing easily despite the storage room itself being too small to create one. Re? Virgil hasn’t called him that in years. Not since… not since he left them alone. He doesn’t deserve to use that name. He doesn’t deserve to even speak to Remus, with how he treated Deceit and him.

But Remus can’t speak, can’t respond to tell him so as Logan reaches forward silently to wave away the noose. Once it’s gone, finally off of his neck, Patton sucks in a painful-sounding breath, and Remus realizes it’s probably because his neck has ropeburn, or a bruise or something. Wimp, like he said.

Roman goes to set him down, but as soon as his feet touch the floor and his brother lets go, Remus’ knees give out, too numb to support his weight. His muscles are probably atrophied from disuse, but then again, he doesn’t actually know how long he’s been here, so maybe he’s over-exaggerating. Doesn’t mean it isn’t utterly mortifying to have Roman need to literally carry him just so he doesn’t fall over, though.

“What-- Why did-- Why did you… why did you do that? You know we-- w--we can’t-- we can’t… die, right?” Patton manages to stumble out, sad and choked up as tears spill over his lashes. Such a baby. Such a crybaby. He’s… fuck. Fuck. He… no. He doesn’t care. He doesn’t. He’s just crying because he’s scared of ropes, or some dumb shit like that. He…

“H-Hhhaa! Guess my exp’rimen’ failed. Bummer. Allllll…ready tried s-so much! I sh-- I shot m’self right in the-- right in the face! The eye! ‘nd it didn’t even work! Didn’t die! Tried-- tried bleach, carbon monoxide, drugs… n’thin’s workin’! Fu… fuckin’ tragic, if y’a ask me,” Remus slurs out, gravelly and thick, and Patton covers his mouth with trembling hands. Virgil cowers in on himself, tugs at his hoodie strings with nervous hands, and Logan just challenges Remus’ stare with his jaw set. “Should’a… should’a died by now. Why does Th’mas hav’t’a be boring? Can’t he jus’... jus’ let me die like I wanna? So fuckin’ annoying.”

And then Roman slaps him across the face with the arm he isn’t using to hold Remus upright, sends a shockwave of pain feeling across his cheek, and everyone just looks at him, astonished. Patton looks aghast, reaches a hand out as if to help somehow, and Virgil just pulls his hood over his face. Remus is stunned, and can’t process what just happened in the slightest as his brain hasn’t really come back to full capacity yet. The… the fuck?

“‘s… is that really th’ way to treat someone who’s been hangin’ for… for… what day is it?” Remus
asks, confused yet playful quip trailing off when he realizes he doesn’t actually know how long he was there. Let’s see… it must have been, what, two days? And he first came in here on Tuesday, so… “It’s Th’rsday, right? The tenth?”

Patton coughs out a quiet sob, and Virgil’s brows furrow in concern. Roman adjusts his grip to be more supportive, and a mild pain in Remus’ back is eased slightly. “No… no, it’s Friday. You’ve been-- wait, did you say the tenth?”

And the nod he gives just prompts an abject horror to fall upon all of their faces, almost like they’ve just seen a ghost. Even Logan, while still as stoic as possible, looks disconcerted. Remus doesn’t get it. What? What are they all freaked out about? What a bunch of crybabies! It’s kinda pathetic to get scared at every little thing. Live a little! But then Logan is speaking, voice unusually soft, and Remus still doesn’t get it. “Remus, it’s the eighteenth. You’ve been here for over a week.”

Shit. Now they’re gonna give him that “concern” bullshit. He’s fine. He’s fine.

“Again, Remus?” The familiar voice calls gently from the corner, sighing in a way that shows just how tired he is. Deceit must have came in here as soon as Roman shouted, and Remus really wishes he would’ve come sooner so that he didn’t have to deal with this mess. “I told you to tell me whenever you’re feeling like that. Let’s go back, hmm? I cooked dinner and I’m sure you must be hungry.”

Well, he isn’t wrong. Remus thinks he might actually start gnawing on his own arms if he doesn’t eat something soon. And although the texture is alright, arms don’t taste very good, so Remus would prefer to avoid that. Deceit cocks his head as he moves through Virgil and Patton, slips his arm under Remus’ own to replace his brother’s and the familiar smell of rose water greets him. Remus wrinkles his nose even as he leans in closer. It’s so… calming. Ew. He should try Remus’ favourite cologne, Piss Mist.

Whatever. Remus still buries his face in Deceit’s coat as they sink out, anyway.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

Suicide attempts/hanging (only one attempt happens, but multiple past attempts are mentioned)
Suicidal thoughts
Death mentions (and specific mentions of ways to die)
Explicit/vulgar/disturbing/upsetting language
Sexual/explicit language (talk of the sides sexually/descriptions of nsfw activities)
Self-loathing/self-deprecation
Cursing
The door to the bedroom should be shut. It’s supposed to have clicked into place, a barrier to separate the darkened bedroom from the hallway. It needs to be lined up perfectly in the frame, a slab of wood acting as a feeble, illusory protection from something that doesn’t even follow its laws. The door should be shut, because Patton flung it closed when he ran through, but it bounced back, cracked open in a way that seems to taunt and mock and laugh at his failure. It’s all Patton can do to not whimper, a bloodied hand clasped over his mouth if only to silence his wild, wet eyes.

Then, the creaking comes, a croaking, shrill squeal that echoes down the hall. It’s inhuman, a noise far beyond the reach of any person’s vocal cords, a sound that tears itself to shreds. The footsteps clunk up the stairs slowly, counting pauses in between if only to draw out the inevitable once more. Patton feels tears leaking over his cheeks, tainted with the stench of Roman’s blood, his husband’s blood--

Patton retches into his hand, barely able to contain the vomit and bile that rises in his throat. As quietly as he can, ignoring the nausea frothing in his stomach, he shimmies underneath the bed, picking up dust and hair and insignificant things along the way. He knows it’s a bad idea, but he doesn’t really have any other choice. If he wants to survive, he has to stay quiet, so he closes his eyes, feels the tears wet the creases of his burning, blood-stained face, and he waits.

Another footstep comes, a clunk that breaks its way back into Patton’s conscious thought, and he’s made aware of how close it is. If the sound hadn't have given it away, the smell would’ve. The room fills with a sharp, pungent stench that burns his eyes and trails into his lungs, a demonic haze out to suffocate him.

The footsteps pause for a moment outside the door to Patton’s bedroom, that awful screeching noise
muffled in its mangled throat. Whispers seem to float from outside the door and into his ears, saying things that Patton can’t make out but is almost hypnotized by anyway. There’s something melodic about it. Soothing, calming, manipulating, scalding, wrong--

Patton snaps back into attention, and realizes with horror that he’d started to scooch himself out from underneath his hiding place just to hear those sounds even closer. He adjusts himself again, sliding back into place quickly, too quickly, and he hears the soft squeak of his rubber sole on the wooden floor as his stomach sinks. If he heard it, then it definitely heard it, and he’s screwed. He’s--he’s absolutely fucked. This is how he dies. Alone, without his husband or child.

Roman had tried his best, he really did. When little Virgil’s scream had echoed down the hallway, Roman had shot up out of bed and into his room, expecting to be greeted by the poor child having woken up from a nightmare. However, he didn’t expect to see it in the 6-year-old’s room, looming tall despite it’s hunched back. It peered at Roman as he flung the door open, seemed to laugh with a million voices at once while Roman’s fatherly concern morphed into terror. Patton had only been a few steps behind, but somehow he was too late. He only got there in time to see it snatch Virgil up, to hear both of the people he loved the most shriek in pure devastation and fear. And then Virgil was gone, absorbed into the dark, swirling, abstract pit inside its torso.

Patton had to yank Roman away from Virgil’s room, even as they both screamed and sobbed, forcing him to run downstairs and into the living room in an attempt to get to the front door. But they weren’t a match for it, and its banging footsteps came down the stairs quickly, and it launched itself at Roman with another one of those horrible, chilling, vicious screeches. His husband didn’t even have time to turn around and meet Patton’s eyes before he was thrown against the wall, his blood spattering onto Patton’s face and hands and arms and everywhere, everywhere, red and dark and--

Patton had been able to sneak away and run upstairs while it feasted on his husband, but he knows that it knows he’s still here, and he’s running on pure adrenaline at this point. If it weren’t for the rush he has from his unfettered instinct to survive, he probably would have shut down long ago. But… he can’t. He can’t.

A few moments pass, held with bated breath, and it has gone to another room, and Patton wants to cry out in relief. Its scent follows it, as if it’s being sucked back up into its body when it goes outside a set radius, and Patton can breathe again. The grey mist laying heavy over the master seems to clear up, allowing him to observe the darkness of the hallway from his spot sprawled on the glossy hardwood. There’s nothing there, but Patton can hear it hissing loudly as it goes to check the guest bedroom.

What should he do? What can he do? This thing obviously isn’t human, so what is it? It could be a mutated animal, but it looks too much like a person for that. Maybe a mutated human, a chemical spill or radiation or something. He doesn’t know how it works, but that’s what happens in the movies, right? Maybe it’s one of those urban legend thingies, the ones he likes to read about on scary story websites (with his husband there to hold him when he gets paranoid, of course). Or… or maybe it’s a demon. If it’s a demon, then he’s screwed. He can’t fight a demon! It’s a demon!

Patton is too lost in his head to notice that the hissing screech coming from the thing has stopped completely. It’s only when the whispers return do his thoughts trail off into oblivion, falling away piece by piece until his head is silent. The whispers beckon him, promise him safe haven and relaxation and respite. Reunion. He wants it so badly, so, so badly. He lets out a dazed sigh, is too late to breathe in the overpowering stench to clear his head and stay quiet.

The whispers come to a jarring halt, bathing the room in silence.

He has to live.
For Roman. For *Virgil.*

And then he feels something cold, slimy, and *rotten* latch onto his leg, an animalistic scream twisting and intermingling with Patton’s own.

Chapter End Notes

**CONTENT WARNINGS:**

Blood & gore  
Major character death  
Inhuman creature  
Implied death or kidnapping of a child
Logan doesn’t go out much. He doesn’t particularly enjoy spending nights in bars or clubs, getting more and more drunk if only to forget the massive hangover that’s sure to come the next morning. He’s never been much for drinking in general; inebriation has only caused him to fall behind on his studies, and although college courses aren’t especially difficult classes to follow up on, being drunk or dealing with a hangover during lectures doesn’t make it easier, either.

So, no. He doesn’t really want to go out tonight. But it’s Roman’s birthday, and he wants all four of them to go out (five, if you count Remus; although he wasn’t actually invited, he’s almost guaranteed to tag along anyway) to celebrate. Logan doesn’t really understand what kind of celebration would require destroying your body, doing extremely stupid things that will most definitely be immortalized by the nearest cell phone camera, and moaning for death while dealing with the headaches and nausea the next morning, but it is Roman’s birthday, so Logan doesn’t really see the point in complaining.

“Come on, Logan, loosen up! It’ll be fine!” Patton had said, rubbing his shoulder in what was meant to be a comforting gesture, but Logan still stands by his point. Drinking is a bad idea, and so is coming to this bar, and Logan just wants to leave as soon as they walk in the door. It immediately is too loud, smells of cigarette smoke and chemicals, and the heat is starting to get to him. He feels dehydrated already, despite having drank multiple cups of water throughout the day before they left, so it’s somewhat of a relief when the four of them immediately make a beeline to the bar. Remus has already run off to do who knows what, and it’s not a stretch to assume that his face will be plastered all over Logan’s social media networks by tomorrow.

Roman and Virgil order shots of something strong immediately, going into a sort of competition as soon as they can get their hands around the small glasses, and Logan rolls his eyes. They could go a
little bit slower, couldn’t they? Patton says as much, warns them to be careful, and the two of them wave him off as they excitedly down another shot. Patton just sighs and orders himself a water, having been dubbed designated driver for today, something the eldest of their friend group is perfectly fine with. He doesn’t like drinking any more than Logan does, albeit for different reasons, so he’s happy to be the mom friend who makes sure the other three (excluding Logan) don’t end up getting into some sort of trouble.

Remus is, well, Remus, and seems to garner chaos and destruction anywhere he goes. While drunk, it’s only worse, because then he’s charismatic enough to actually get away with the things he does, which is an interesting sight to see. Logan doesn’t necessarily excuse his actions, but seeing him talk circles around authority figures and random strangers until they forget why they were angry in the first place is extremely entertaining, and has peaked his interest as someone who is taking lots of Psych.

Roman may already be a boisterous, loud person, full of charm, but while drunk, he experiences an effect opposite to Remus, which is something that intrigues Logan enough to study the twins’ behaviour whenever possible. Drunk Roman is just as flirty, sure, but he’s also clumsy and reckless, and has offended so many people on accident that their group has a running tally for just how many strangers Roman can manage to piss off and then cry his apologies to. He’s definitely what Virgil would call a “Sad Drunk”, and this quick flip in moods often confuses people long enough for Roman and the others (if involved) to run away.

Virgil is an interesting case, maybe even more so than the twins, because when he’s drunk, his typical anxiety seems to simply vanish. Generalized anxiety disorder is something that makes Virgil’s everyday life difficult, and Logan has seen more than his fair share of panic attacks and spirals, but when Virgil starts drinking, it’s as if all of his worries figuratively melt away. He’s happy to talk to new people, doesn’t get afraid to interact with waiters or cashiers, isn’t too anxious to try new things- and it’s refreshing to see. Virgil actually befriended three out of five people in their friend group while drunk, including Logan himself, so Logan figures that Virgil drinking once in a while is okay so long as it’s moderated. Too much to drink and Virgil becomes a manic drunk, anxiety heightened far beyond operable levels, so they’ve tried to find a so-called “green zone” through trial and error.

Like he said, Patton doesn’t drink around them, doesn’t really drink at all, but his sister has told them before that he’s a “Melancholy Drunk”, which is, despite being an exact opposite to Patton’s usually cheerful personality, not very difficult to envision. Logan can imagine that staying in a constant state of bubbly, outgoing happiness must be draining, and with the assistance of alcohol, the figurative mask can come off. It’s something that would be mildly interesting to see, but considering Patton’s firm stance on alcohol, Logan doubts he’ll see it anytime soon.

Logan’s personality doesn’t really change much after a few drinks, and he finds that he also has somewhat of a naturally high tolerance for alcohol, which means that without regulation, he’s pushed himself too far and went way past the desirable (ha!) levels of intoxication. He isn’t sure what he’s like when he’s really drunk, since his memory usually fades away by the time he even gets drunk enough to change, and he isn’t usually around other people when he does. Stress is a hell of a motivator, though.

Considering all of them, today is likely to end in a disaster of some sort, needing to drag a crying Roman away from a pissed off stranger or Virgil from doing something reckless like base jumping (yes, it has happened before, and no, Virgil is not allowed to wander off on his own ever again) before the night’s end. Remus usually manages to get home on his own somehow, and they typically only learn of his exploits through social media the following morning. His reception among others has been mixed, some believing him to be fun and entertaining, others regarding him as an irritating nuisance. In Logan’s opinion, he’s both simultaneously.
And so he exemplifies now, as Logan can see him flirting with anyone who has the misfortune of walking anywhere near him from across the bar, and Logan shakes his head as he turns to ask for a mixed drink. Something easy, heavily diluted, just enough to placate Roman but not enough to get him drunk. He doesn’t want to be drunk today, or really any day, but to Logan’s knowledge it’s considered rude to not participate in a birthday celebration when you’ve been specifically invited. It’ll be fine.

It’s not fine.

As the night has marched on, everything has devolved. The atmosphere is potent and muggy, sweating bodies constantly brush up against Logan’s sensitive skin, and the noise is dizzying. Roman and Virgil went off to dance long ago, having roped Patton into coming with them, and Logan can hear their shouts even from his seat at the bar. There’s the occasional loud thump and some sort of statement such as “Hey, Mustache, watch where you’re going!”, which is undoubtedly a response to Remus. Everything is high energy. It’s supposed to be fun, but Logan isn’t having that much fun. It’s Roman’s birthday, though, so he’s gonna have to suck it up and bear it until Patton decides that Roman and Virgil are becoming hazardous to themselves or others and need to start heading back.

Logan hasn’t moved from his seat at the bar in the couple hours they’ve been here, but after finally having finished the single drink he’s been sipping on slowly, he needs to use the bathroom. It takes a while to push through the crowd to get to the glowing sign on the other side of the room, but he manages to get through only having been elbowed in the gut twice, which is a win in this sort of scenario. His trip only takes a minute or so, and once he’s washed his hands and fixes a smudge on the dark eyeshadow Roman somehow convinced Logan to let him apply, he returns to his seat with a long-suffering sigh.

“Something wrong, doll?” The voice comes from his left, closer than Logan is expecting, and he lifts his head up to observe the newcomer. It’s a man, much taller and more well built than Logan himself. He’s donned a tight muscle shirt underneath a long coat. His legs clad in cargo pants slide over the top of the seat behind him, boots knocking against the side of the bar, and he gives a gleaming smile that feels fake. “Why would y’a be sighin’ like that in a place like this?”

“I am not a doll. I am a human,” Logan responds without a second thought, words huffy and tired and he honestly just wants to go home.

“That you are. A fine one at that,” the stranger purrs in his ear, leans in so closely Logan can feel his breath on the side of his face, and he leans away inconspicuously to attempt to put distance between them. Logan clears his throat, sits up further and reaches out to take a large gulp of his drink from before, mouth pursed as he tries to give off the impression that he doesn’t want to be messed around with. No eye contact is made, and the man just laughs lowly. “Do y’a wanna have a little fun, doll?”

“No… no thanks,” Logan says, and something feels wrong. His tone was much clearer and more assertive in his head, but what came out was weak and soft. His vision is starting to double, lightheadedness catching up to him full-force, and the man has to lean over and catch him before he takes a nose-dive into the concrete floor.

“Wooohh! You must be drunker than you thought!” the stranger laughs, and the bartender glances over before shaking his head and going to serve another customer. Logan doesn’t feel right. Nausea curls in his stomach, lights up his torso to the point where he feels like he can’t even walk properly, and everything feels bad. It’s like he’s swimming through a thick sludge, lights around him blurring substantially, and it takes far too much effort just to keep his head up.
“Let’s get you somewhere safe, hmm?” the man murmurs low in his ear, wraps his thick, muscled arm around Logan’s much smaller body, and his perception of everything after that is vague at best. He remembers walking through the crowd, being held underneath the arm and pushed between drunken dancing people, vision shifting in and out of focus at random. He trips coming out the door, is pulled into the stranger’s arms, and suddenly his feet aren’t on the ground anymore. They get into a cab, and Logan watches the blurred green of the cash being handed over, and the stack looks way too tall for... something. He doesn’t know.

The next thing he remembers is that he’s being carried in strong arms up a flight of stairs, through the door of an apartment that smells like faux lemon-scented window cleaner, and the sound of lock is strikingly clear as the metallic click echoes against the walls of the strangely barren living room. Logan’s arm falls limply to hang at his side as he’s carried through a hallway, and being placed onto a mattress in a dark bedroom causes another wave of nausea to roll through his body. This isn’t his house. Wait, where is he?

It’s difficult to see the stranger in the dim light, but Logan can make out his silhouette as he hears the clink of a belt unbuckling. Fabric rustles, is kicked to the side, and the man crawls up the bed slowly. He throws Logan’s combat boots toward the corner of the room, peels the ripped jeans off of his legs, rips open his fishnet tights to get access, and--

Logan can’t remember anything, not a single thing apart from his own choked gasp of pain. The rest comes in flashes. Dirty fingers prying his lips open to slip in and rest on his tongue, hands hooking around the edge of his ripped fishnets to open the hole more and allow better access, thumbs pressing forcefully enough into his thighs to bruise. A groan and a moan and a whisper in his ear, sending shivers down his spine and bile up his throat. His own quiet sobs, slurred pleas, protests and refusals that fall on deaf ears. He doesn’t understand what’s happening, how he got here. Where is Roman and Virgil and Patton and Remus? He doesn’t want this. He doesn’t want this.

“Hey, Robert, have you seen-- oh, shit, what the fuck?” comes a new voice from the door, light from the hallway illuminating the room. Things are still hazy, as if he’s looking and listening through clouds of cotton, but at least words are intelligible now. Logan tries to look at the door through tear-filled eyes, unconsciously reaches a hand out almost like asking for help, and he probably is. Wait, when did he start bleeding? “What the fuck. Who is this? Why is he bleeding? Robert, what the fuck?”

“Get out, Ethan,” the stranger (Robert, apparently) snarls, snaps his hips again, and Logan cries out with a gasp that dissolves into a soft whimper. It’s too much. He wants Roman, wants Virgil and Patton, even wants Remus to beat this guy’s ass. He wants to go home. “This isn’t any of your business.”

“Uh, fuck if it isn’t! Did you fucking drug this guy? What the hell is wrong with him?” Ethan asks, prompting a sneer from Robert. “Get off of him now. I’m taking him home, you fucking asshole. I’m sick of this shit, man! Last week it was that waitress, and now it’s-- I don’t even fucking know who! You’re fucking sick!”

“I said it’s none of your fucking business! Don’t stick your nose where it doesn’t belong!” Robert shouts, turns confrontationally with anger in his eyes, and the movement causes another wave of pain to radiate upward. Logan lets out another sob, doesn’t realize that his body is slowly numbing, and so is his brain, too. It’s hard to understand what’s being said, what with the mist hanging heavy in his thoughts, and the light of the hallway contrasting with the darkness of the bedroom sends flashes through his vision.

There’s something about the police, and a few more bouts of yelling, and then Robert is getting up. It
hurts, it’s fucking awful, but Logan can’t do much more than slowly roll over and curl up on his side in the fetal position. There’s a few more things said, a few more arguments, and then the front door is slamming, and a soft voice comes from beside his head.

“Hey, are you with me? Can you hear what I’m saying right now?” Ethan asks, and Logan can only nod his head in a daze. The fog in his head doesn’t help him much when Ethan asks him other simple questions, like his name and where to drop him off at, but somehow they manage to talk. It’s much more difficult for Ethan to get Logan dressed, granted he can’t even stand on his own, but with gentle treatment they manage to get him clothed. Ethan picks him up gingerly, strong despite being slightly shorter than Logan himself (which is a feat).

The car ride is much more pleasant this time, doesn’t have seats that are falling apart and reek of alcohol, cigarettes, and vomit. The air conditioning is a nice breeze on his slick skin, the seat heater acting as almost a balm for his injury. Logan can see Ethan looking over every so often with guilt written all over his face, so deeply ingrained in his expression one might think that it was him who hurt Logan rather than his assumed roommate. Logan does manage to fight through the drug (that he’s finally aware of) long enough to reassure Ethan, to thank him for bringing him all the way across town to make sure he gets home safely, and it seems to ease his concern if only a little bit.

Logan’s sure that the sight of him being carried in the arms of a stranger to the front door of their shared apartment must be a disconcerting and bewildering sight for the other four, but their shuddered sighs of relief when they realize he’s at least home fills Logan with a warm feeling. That could be the vomit building in his throat, though, so Ethan doesn’t even get a chance to explain before he’s rushing through their house to set Logan down in front of the toilet. He rubs at his back soothingly, pays no mind to the group of exhausted, half-drunk, baffled young adults huddles in the door frame as Logan empties the contents of his stomach into the porcelain bowl.

“What the-- what the hell? Who are you? What’s wrong with Logan?” Roman asks from behind the two of them, upset and worried, and Logan is certainly touched as he leans over to spit more bile into the water. The care and compassion almost seems to radiate off of the four of them, anger mixed in very subtly as well despite Logan having a feeling that the particular lividity will spike as soon as they’re told what happened. This whole thing is too hard to process, and Logan is really just running on steam at this point, but the tear tracks on his cheeks and lashes still haven’t dried yet.

“Logan, huh? That’s your name, bud?” Ethan murmurs softly, reaches up to grab the washcloth hanging on the small rack by the sink to wet it. He returns and hold Logan’s head up, an almost dead weight cradled in his hand as he uses the other to gently wipe the spit from Logan’s mouth. The support is comforting, relaxes his weary limbs a bit in the safe familiarity of his shared home, and Logan can feel his eyes drooping. He wants to sleep, so he tells them so, and Ethan gives him an endeared smile despite not even knowing of his existence before tonight. Funny how that works.

The trip upstairs is a quick one, or at least it feels like it, but that might just be the residual effects of the drug trying to hold onto his consciousness for as long as possible. Roman had tried to take over, but Ethan simply scooped Logan up with no hesitation or visible strain, and even Logan wasn’t oblivious to the blushes seen on multiple faces at the action. Interesting. Perhaps Ethan should return another day.

Being laid in his own bed is the best feeling ever, Logan concludes as he sinks down into his enormous, puffy comforter, and the sight of him practically disappearing into the blankets draws smiles and small laughs out of those present. It’s still kind of hard to hear, like there’s water in his ears, but even so, Logan still is glad they’re not freaking out. Yet.

And they probably will. Logan can imagine the twins’ anger, Patton’s tears, Virgil’s guilt. He can
imagine Ethan telling them to keep an eye on him, to take care of him, to make sure he’s okay. Logan knows that this isn’t something that just goes away, and that even though he feels generally fine right now (if not a little nauseous) because he isn’t exactly sober or clear-headed, he’ll still feel the phantom touches of that man for a long, long time. He knows it’s going to be a lot of pain. And he knows that in the morning, it’s not going to be pretty. But right now, he’s tired, and he wants to go to sleep surrounded by people that will protect him and care about him, so he drifts off silently into the comforting darkness.

Chapter End Notes

**CONTENT WARNINGS:**

- Drugging/date rape
- Sexual assault/noncon (mostly non-graphic but very present and mildly described)
- Drinking/alcohol usage
- Vomiting (emetophobia)
- Cursing

Please let me know if I missed any!
Day 22: Hallucination

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.22, "Hallucination".

*We have a message for you lost at the end of the hall.*

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

**Word Count:** 1787

**Relationships:** Loceit (minor relationship? kinda)

*A/N:* okay,,,, ngl i have no idea where this came from. this idea is so dumb and not even really whumpy but i did it anyway lmfao. hey, at least it gave me an excuse to describe the characters in some of my timelines! anyway yeah i love these character designs, no matter how silly/unrealistic they are. they are my babies and i will take them to my grave

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Thomas, can we talk?” his best friend’s voice comes from beside him, speaking up in the silence after the two of them had finished watching a movie. It was comfortable, quiet, just a lazy day today, so they’d come over to hang out and forget about the stress of video-making. Thomas looks up with a cocked eyebrow, asking a question with his eyes as Joan sighs.

“You… maybe you should see someone,” Joan says, their voice low and concerned, and Thomas doesn’t get it. See who? Like, a doctor? He isn’t sick. So he tells them so, asks what they mean, and they duck their head contemplatively. “You need to see a psychiatrist, or psychologist, or something. I know the videos are fun, and we have these awesome characters. I get it. But you… you think it’s real. You think the *sides* are real. That’s-- That’s not healthy, Thomas.”

Thomas just laughs, doesn’t even look up as he scrolls through his feed. His phone case is beaten up where it rests in his hand, and Joan shakes their head worriedly. “Thomas, I’m serious.”

This causes Thomas’ expression to drop immediately, and he turns to them awkwardly. “Wait, you’re serious?” Thomas asks, confusion welling up easily in his head. What are they talking about?

“Yes, I’m serious! You stand here and talk to nothing for hours on end! You think they’re real, and they’re not! You need help, Thomas, please,” Joan begs, rearing back to sit taller in an unconscious show of authority. They don’t want to be mean about this, they really don’t, but if Thomas is in denial about the sides’ existence (or lack thereof), they can’t be sugarcoating everything. They need to be straightforward, because they care about their friend, and to see him hurt would be awful.

“Joan, they *are* real. You just haven’t been here in person to see them yet,” Thomas says gently,
acting as if Joan’s the one who’s being irrational here, and Joan doesn’t think it’s an overreaction when they groan loudly. If Thomas believes that the sides are real and are defending their existence this fervently, then there might be something really wrong with his head, and the worry in Joan’s demeanour is insurmountable.

“Thomas, stop! They aren’t real! They’re in your head. They're in your head. They’re just characters that we made up for a YouTube series, nothing more,” Joan stresses, tries to break through that glass wall of denial that Thomas’ mind has built around itself. From what they know through random Tumblr awareness posts and late-night research, this sounds like a defense mechanism, something Thomas himself isn’t even aware of. But… aren’t brains only supposed to do that after severe trauma? Did something happen to him that Joan doesn’t know about?

“Hey, there’s no need to get upset. I understand, you haven’t seen them yet, and don’t realize that they aren’t just characters. Do you want me to show you?” Thomas asks gently, places his hands up but low in a placating gesture in an attempt to calm them down. Joan isn’t angry, and they wouldn’t lash out or anything, but they are troubled with the thought that there may well be something going on in Thomas’ head that they won’t be able to fix.

“No, it’s okay! I’ll show you, ready? Please don’t scream, alright? It’s scary the first time, but once you understand, it’s fine!” Thomas exclaims, happy and careless and he isn’t even listening to them. Fuck, does he need to be, like… forcibly taken to a hospital? This isn’t okay, he’s not okay, and they don’t know what to do anymore.

“Hmm… Logan, Ethan? I need you!”

For a moment, nothing happens, just as Joan expects. Thomas stands there, smile never wavering a single bit, and Joan sighs as they reach up to lay a hand on his shoulder. But before they can, before their eyes, a mist seems to envelope the floor. It’s not a moisture, but more like a haze, where light is distorted and twirling in on itself as if caught in fractals and thrown away from itself. It hurts Joan’s eyes to look at, so he doesn’t, and two people jump up out of the disturbance despite all logic and reason.

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“Wha-- What the fuck? Is this a joke? Please tell me this is a practical joke, Thomas, and you just suddenly got really good at doing magic tricks. What the fuck?!” Joan forces out helplessly, bewildered and urgent. They’re…. they’re here. This has to be a trick. It has to be, but it… they look exactly like Thomas. These aren’t some random actors who just happen to share a resemblance with their friend, they could be clones, identical copies without a single mistake in sight.

And.. well, to Thomas’ credit, they do look similar to the characters they have created together. The one that’s clearly Logic has straighter black hair with blue streaks rather than brown, and his irises are a striking silver leading into an electric blue closer to the pupil, but otherwise he looks mostly the same. The only other big physical difference is his body type, which while slim and long and appearing to be tall in an odd sort of optical illusion, he’s actually quite a bit shorter than Thomas is. He’s wearing a soft-looking dark blue sweater, black leggings, and some fuzzy socks as opposed to the character’s typical outfit, but there’s no mistaking him. This is Logan… the real Logan?

The other one (obviously Deceit) is also similar enough, with hair that is a rich, warm chestnut brown, but there also seem to be literal strands of gold braided and looping through the very lightly
curled locks. It’s almost mesmerizing, although not as much so as his eyes, which are just as heterochromatic as their beloved character. The right one is the same shade of light grey as Logan’s are, and the left one is a reptilian eye. Not the fake snake eye contact that they’d managed to find online, but a realistic one, a deeper gold and a darker black with depth and texture. He’s short too, somehow even shorter than Logan is, but he’s still quite intimidating despite that. His half-serpentine smirk is soft but empowering, and somehow cancels out a lot of the cuteness of his unexpected outfit. Rather than his signature bowler hat and cape, he wears a black beanie and a huge, thick black hoodie. Sweatpants long enough to cover his feet are draped over his legs, just as comfortable an outfit as Logan’s and Joan realizes that it’s late and they might have been about to sleep. Wait, do sides sleep?

But more than anything, they both have one feature that really stands out, a feature that makes Joan really believe that they might actually be real, that this isn’t just some elaborate prank. For Deceit, it’s the scales. It’s not makeup, not flat colour; they’re real snake scales, a shimmering, pearlescent emerald colour that refracts the light like diamonds. They’re beautiful, they really are, and Joan is almost sad that they haven’t done Character Deceit the justice he deserves, now that they’re faced with Real Deceit.

For Logan, it’s his eyes. Yes, the colour really is pretty if abnormal, the clear silver like liquid metal seeping and blurring into bright sapphire in a ring around his pupils. But that’s not the only thing, because Logan has what looks to be technology in his eyes, power buttons surrounded by slowly spinning lines radiating from the center almost like a circuit-board. They seem like they’re being projected slightly past his actual eyes, like he has a bright blue hologram playing in his vision. It’s… certainly in the realm of science fiction, so it really is aptly fitting, despite how Joan’s brain refuses to accept that this is actually real.

“Wait, you said his name is Ethan? Deceit’s name is Ethan? That’s not what we decided on…” Joan says, and it’s honestly all they can say through their confusion. This is too difficult to process, too perplexing to understand right away, and Joan seriously needs to sit down before they pass out in the middle of the floor. Thomas huffs a laugh as they plop down on the couch, hand rubbing hard at their face to try and clear their head, and he just sits on the edge of the couch beside them.

“Joan, this is Logan and Ethan. Logic and Deceit. They’re real, and they obviously look differently to how we designed them, but they… this is them. You can take all the time you need; I certainly had to,” Thomas chuckles, gaze distant for a moment as if in the midst of reliving a faraway memory, and Joan just groans and drops their head into cold, waiting palms.

“Thomas, you know to refrain from calling us here when it’s after one. We’re busy at night, you know that,” Logan speaks up from where the two of them are still standing in the middle of the room. Deceit-- Well, Ethan just shoves his hands in his hoodie pockets, looking down at the floor in an attempt to hide his knowing simpering. What the hell is going on? “Hello, Joan.”

“Yeah, sorry, guys. Just wanted to introduce you to Joan, finally. You can go now,” Thomas reassures them, waves goodbye and smiles when they return the sentiment (including Joan, too, which is simultaneously a thoughtful show of kinesics and mildly terrifying), and then they’re sinking back through the odd fog on the floor that has stayed there the whole time the sides have been standing here. It goes with them, leaving the normal appearance of the carpet to be on display, and this all feels like too much to deal with right now. Joan just wants to go to bed, if they’re being honest.

“Wait… are those two dating?” Joan asks incredulously, a previous comment stuck out in their mind just waiting for the loose thread to be pulled, and Thomas glances over at them. He just laughs silently with sly eyes, body shaking with unvocalized laughter, and Joan picks up the pillow next to
them and yells into the fabric.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

Mentions of mental illness
Mild mention of trauma effects
Cursing
Day 23: Bleeding Out

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.23, "Bleeding Out".

Run from the masquerade and live one more lie.

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

**Word Count:** 1661

**Relationships:** DLAMP (romantic)

**A/N:** sorry that this is late. i've lost my second source of wifi and am now on an unreliable schedule. please forgive me. anyway, i know someone wanted something patton-centric, so hopefully this is okay! i know it's not super whumpy, but i've been playing around with this idea for a while and thought it was interesting.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Who am I?

Words filter through Patton’s brain, drench themselves in an apathy far removed from expression of ideals. Breaks and cracks and trials and tribulations rip throughout his head, shake him to the core, and it’s like his train of thought has switched to a west-bound track at the very last second. Nothing seems to be tangible here, impalpable in the bleak, bleached whiteness of the room itself. Existing in an echo of itself, pictures hung in thin air as residual temperament of times past.

Where am I?

The blank space pushing a pressure on his mind shifts and morphs into something new, amalgams of amorphous nothings twisting and braiding strands of senses, whispering gold in artificial light. Walls rise up, looming and hollow, and Patton wants to hide inside a diamond box until the last bit of oxygen is expelled from his lungs. A roof closes over top, securely snapping into place as if it’s been there all along.

Am I alive?

Dreary greys arise from bleeding spots of discolouration in the new room, pooling out to coat a shade darker like a storm cloud just before it fades away. The attempt at colour is pathetic, and wholly a failure, and none of the words seem to stay in Patton’s brain anymore. There are magicians to tell him no, dancers leaping and twirling as they snatch up every bit of coherency Patton didn’t know he still had. They spin away, leaving him with nothing.
What happened?

A true question, valid and fair, but it doesn’t stop his mind from unconsciously raising a red alert that trails for miles long. The query is stolen away, bartered by thieves of the night for the tiniest splash of the colour magenta, and touching that dot of flat paint sends a shock through his system. The new colour shoots out from every fingertip, shades of red falling heavily over the room to muster shadows and highlights and shapes that are now clear enough to be recognized. A bookshelf, a couch, a table. Blurs of wine, marred by time, falling behind, undefined, stuck in line…

Am I awake?

Taken into consideration, broken and under construction in wavering hands that fall to his sides.

Am I asleep?

Movement blossoms underneath his skin, sparks and compels to bring his tired fingers to wrap around his stomach.

What is that?

A real shape, a real feeling, cylindrical rubber and plastic. It’s a handle, ridged and beaten-up and misshapen, malformed, and Patton grips it hard. Pulling at it is like agony, feeling despite the whims of the shallowly merciful, diluted promises to echo brightly in his head. Each word digs into him, digs deep enough to release his cyan blood, and along with the red comes blue and purple. Azure skies spill from his stomach, coat his hands and stick to his clothes, and the clouds are missing.

How did I get hurt?

The knife rests easily in Patton’s hands, forming to the curvature of his digits like a malleable putty slipping between with the viscosity of caramel. Happy accidents reset the logistics of nightmares, pertinent to the matter of when and where and how and why. The who is him, a stolen identity and a fake face, masked with indifference to the things he had to leave behind. Yellow shines through his chest, rays of light splitting him in half, and the full painting bursts into being.

Patton gasps in a choked breath of much-needed air, pupils blown wide in the dim light of the room he’s in. He shoots up from the concrete, the smell of garbage and petrichor wafting up from the alleyway he resides in. Rain splashes down all around him, filling the city’s atmosphere with a staticky, white noise to offset the far-off ambience of horns honking, vague lyrics, and the occasional police siren. The water soaks through his clothes easily, chills him to the bone in the cool night air, but that doesn’t matter because there’s a huge gash in his abdomen, and a bloodied knife discarded on the ground beside him. Hypothermia is the least of his problems right now.

The pain is acute, ripples deep through his flesh as nerves spark like fireworks under his skin. The wound leaves a bitterness in Patton’s heart, calls forth a litany of self-destructive, self-righteous, asinine introspection, things that usually would remain locked deep in the chasm at the back of Patton’s mind. It’s not as if he necessarily wants to die, but maybe it’d be easier to fall asleep here, lay in the flood and accept each pool of regret as they really are.

Maybe not.

After all, his boyfriends are waiting for him at home. The four of them know about Patton’s job and yet stay with him anyway, despite the danger it’s brought upon them all, something Patton regards with a bittersweet outlook. Yes, the show of sentiment is warming, unconditional love acting as a buffer between himself and his karma that he knows he doesn’t deserve, but it also makes them
reckless, loyal to a fault. They will all die if they continue to be with him, something Patton has stressed to them multiple times, but the warning never seems to get through their heads.

Roman and Virgil are similar, in a lot of ways, despite how drastically opposing their personalities are. Virgil is unerringly cautious, finds it easy to betray the powerful under the motivation of bettering the masses, and is rebellious despite his paranoia-- it’s what drew Patton to him in the first place. Roman, on the other hand, prioritizes by not prioritizing at all-- every single person is born equally with the ability to do good or evil, and their path is a result of external factors rather than wholly internal. Setting aside his own wants isn’t losing, not really, because no matter what he chooses he will always find gratification, a trait that Patton does not share but respects anyway. Together, they tend to fight and clash, opposing ideals dancing around each other under a common drive and purpose. This overhang is what brings them together, in the end, as two who refuse to stand on the sidelines and let those who cannot fight for themselves be taken advantage of.

Logan is complicated, mainly because of the very nature that forces him down into commonality. He is inconspicuous in every sense of the word, prefers to work in the shadows rather than the limelight, and it’s this trait that allows him to sneak around those he’s manipulating like a puppet master. His intelligence is boundless, never held down by narrow perspective or innate complacency from where he stands as an individual in a society that constantly seeks to strip him of that title. He’s calculating, assesses every possible outcome before he makes a decision, which makes him extremely dangerous. Exactly the kind of person who would be very high up in the hierarchy in Patton’s line of work.

Ethan is the one out of the four of them that acts as an outlier, the one on the other side of the glass. He’s drastically different to the others, sharing very few commonalities, which made getting to know him much more interesting. Ethan is a coward, bravery having melted away long ago, as if it were never there to begin with, and maybe it wasn’t. He’s opinionated, and fierce, and protective, but when push comes to shove, he will hide in the shadows under an umbrella of regret to part the downpour. He means well, but his fear holds him back, leaves him susceptible to panic. However, this doesn’t mean he’s weak; he’s far from it. While Ethan may crack under direct pressure, when he’s allowed to operate in the flanks, fight by proxy, he’s unstoppable. A worldview untainted by inherent decharacterization pushes him far beyond the rest, an allowance of growth never wavering throughout any success he garners.

They’re all unique, special in how they deal with what the world throws at them, and it’s why Patton hasn’t just killed them all yet. The way he grew up, he was always taught to take advantage of anyone who can provide what he needs and then kill them off when he’s finished with them. Being an assassin means no baggage, not a single suitcase taken along, and shedding identities like the skin of a snake is just another part of Patton’s daily life. He can’t allow them to stay. It’s a terrible idea, leaves him with weaknesses if anyone ever found out. And yet he still refuses to give them up, like an idiot. A lovesick fool, just waiting for an enemy to take revenge and the lives of the ones he cares about.

Because that’s the thing, isn’t it? He does care, dreadfully, impossibly so, and it strips him of his advantages. That cold, detached front he’s worked for years to achieve is easily smashed to pieces any time Logan gives him a stress massage, or when Virgil gently holds his hand, or when Ethan curls up with him under a warm blanket, or when Roman gives him soft kisses early in the morning. There’s no way to be the sharp, clinical assassin known as The Heartbreaker while not confronting the fact that he’s also Patton Etienne (for now, at least), a weak, fun-loving secretary from a small town in Florida.

And when his boyfriends finally get sick of him, he will become Jace, an accountant from Manhattan, or the poor artist Kaden, or Mark, the neighbour from down the street. He will blend in like a chameleon for the express purpose of staying on the down-low, put on a new mask every day
to get closer to his target, and then he will move onto the next victim and the higher payout.

But right now, under cover of the night and the rain, Patton clutches his stab wound, struggles to his feet, and limps home.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

Stab wound
Blood
Knife
Dissociation (? kinda)
Assassin
Identity theft/false identities
Morally grey Patton (Patton was conditioned and trained from childhood to be a killer, though not by choice)
Day 24: Secret Injury

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.24, "Secret Injury".

Don’t fall out of line yet, be patient for the final prize.

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

**Word Count:** 1436

**Relationships:** Prinxiety (minor/background), Creativitwins (familial) NOT remrom :/

A/N: sorry this is kinda shorter, i wrote it in like 20 minutes before i got unmotivated again hjfhsdjkhk anyway yeah excuse the shit quality of this. by the way this is absolutely inspired by criminal minds. what are you gonna do, shoot m

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Shit, Logan, watch out!” Roman yells out from somewhere to the left, and Logan just barely manages to jump out of the way before a desktop computer crashes into and explodes on the wall right where his head would’ve been. The FBI agent ducks down, scurries on tired legs to the other side of the hall, and then he lunges forward to take cover behind the nearest hallway intersection.

The person they’ve been chasing across states turned out to be not one, but three, a team of serial killers stirring up a panic within the country. They’ve easily been able to attack wherever they pleased, and considering the fact that it took the FBI 13 months and 17 victims to link the killings together, it’s safe to say that their confidence is high. The spree has led Logan’s team through five different states in pursuit of The Executioners (as dubbed by the media), being met with the signature single shot to the victims’ temple just moments too late. This particular case has been frustrating and tiring, and every member of the team has been embittered with how they always seem to be two steps behind these guys.

But now, after a fake anonymous tip, plenty of searching through case files, and epiphanies that could have come a lot sooner if not for human error, they’ve cornered the trio. The team staked out this building for days before they planned to rush the place, waiting for the right moment to take the killers by surprise and hopefully, into custody. Of course, as soon as they entered, a gunfire started, and one of the members of SWAT assisting them was gunned down by the one carrying an automatic. It’s easy to ignore the exhaustion caused by very few hours of sleep, but Logan really is just running on adrenaline at this point, and if they don’t corner these guys fast, he’s not going to make it through to the end of this.

Later, he’ll blame it on the lack of sleep. He’ll say his recklessness was a result of being tired, not thinking things through. He’ll tell Thomas that he wasn’t intentionally trying to ruin their chances,
that he saw an opportunity and took it. Only one of those things is true, but their team leader doesn’t know that.

Logan barely feels the bullet lodge itself in his stomach, doesn’t flinch when his vest rides up to expose his abdomen. The pain is distant, numbed by his partial state of dissociation, and from there, tackling the smallest of the three killers is easy. Virgil has his back, nails the burly one in the forehead with his precise aim, and Remus gleefully jumps on the back of the last one before sticking the barrel of his pistol to the temple of his head. Ethan just barely manages to stop him from pulling the trigger, now that the threats have been neutralized, and Remus grumbles but begrudgingly allows Ethan to put the man in handcuffs.

Everything after that goes by in a blur. The local authorities take the three out of the apartment, one in a bodybag and two in cuffs, and Logan doesn’t really see any of it. His lightheadedness is a big factor in the way he stumbles about, having a hard time finding balance with the bullet still inside of him, but he doesn’t seem to be losing that much blood, so Logan thinks that maybe he can get through at least the ride back to the station before he’ll need to ask to be taken to the hospital. It’s a bad idea, he knows it is, but right now he can’t even speak through his dry throat, so it’ll just have to wait.

Sitting down in one of the SUVs is like agony, and he manages to pass off his grunt of pain as the result of a punch to the ribs that never actually happened. Emile’s concern is waved off, and the beginning of the car ride is spent with the reality of the situation finally crashing down on them. Their celebration comes all at once, laughs of disbelief trailing off into relieved sighs, and Logan only watches them from the back with a pained grin as they all relax in their own ways. Roman clutches Virgil’s and Remus’ hands tightly, loving both of them for different reasons; the romantic and familial care he gives to them is palpable, something Logan is sure everyone around him appreciates. Remy and Emile chatter excitedly together over the phone as Remy details exactly what happened during and after the stakeout (Emile suffered a leg injury and hasn’t been cleared for work in the field just yet), and Thomas chuckles at them all from his position in the driver’s seat. Patton may deal with PR, but he still opted to come along to greet them after their confrontation, and his concern and care as he frets over any small injuries from the agents in the car is certainly appreciated by the others if not lightheartedly teased about.

And then there’s Logan, quiet and unnoticed, the one that nobody in the car even bothered to check on. He tells himself that it’s okay, that they’re just busy riding the high of the big arrest and they’re not ignoring him on purpose, but it still stings a little. Maybe even more than the gunshot wound currently staining his shirt.

Eventually, they pull up to the field office in this city, ready to go in and close off the case along with any other lingering details. Paperwork is another part of the process, but Logan has a feeling he won’t be doing any of that any time soon. Clambering out of the SUV hurts just as badly as it did going in, but Logan manages to make his way out as promptly as possible to ward off any suspicion. Really, he’d prefer to have everyone remain ignorant to his injury entirely so it may be dealt with in a quiet, quick, efficient manner, so being inconspicuous is imperative.

And that does work, for a while. It works when they walk up to the building, works when they’re congratulated as they go in the door, works when the stickiness of the blood hidden underneath his vest is completely overlooked. He’s fine when they stand at the front of the room, when Thomas goes up to explain a bit about the final stakeout and arrest to the officers present, when the chief of police praises their team leader for bringing The Executioners in after a long, long year of horrors and gruesome misfortune. They honor the deceased, extend condolences, and clap at the victory even as Logan feels his eyes glaze over with the effort to continue standing. Just a few more minutes. Just a few more minutes.
But “a few more minutes” never comes, because as Thomas is in the middle of thanking the team members for their assistance and the local police force for their tremendous help in the case, Logan’s knees finally give out, and he goes crashing to the floor. He lays there, still and unmoving even as his name is shouted by many people, and the hands gripping his body feel so far away. He’s rolled over, Logan’s head lolls to the side, not physically able to be supported alone anymore. He’s in a cold sweat when his vest is lifted off of him and panicked shouts for medics arise from his team upon seeing the massive coating of blood soaked through most of the bottom of his shirt.

His consciousness bleeds in and out, much like his wound, but it makes putting together a coherent timeline of events extremely difficult. To his best knowledge, he’s put into a car and raced to the hospital in an attempt to bypass the wait time for the ambulance, and the sunlight shining through the car windows does his headache no favours. Being carried, limp and shaking and covered in blood through the front entrance of the closest emergency room feels like a dream, like it isn’t really happening. Set onto a bed, rolled through bleached white corridors, mask on his face and nurse running by his side yelling out numbers and statistics and detriments alike.

Logan is rolled into the operating room and he fades through the setup with a slackened jaw and dizzy mind, unable to pinpoint just how many needles are inserted into his arms. IVs, syringes, darkness and medicine… and the anesthesia finally hits, washes a cool breeze through his veins, and Logan is drifting off into unconsciousness.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

- Gunshot wound
- Blood
- Hiding a severe injury
- Serial killers
- FBI/police stakeout
- Gunfight
- Minor character death
- Dissociation because of an injury
- Hospital/ER
- Mentions of needles/IVs/anesthesia and implications of surgery
- Cursing
Day 25: Humiliation

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.25, "Humiliation".

Call upon those that you trust, listen to your head.

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

Word Count: 2196

Relationships: past Logicality (dub-con/coerced/abusive), platonic/familial DLAPR??

A/N: SORRY THIS IS LATE BLAH BLAH BLAH BUT OH MY GOD DLAMPR WITHOUT PATTON IS DR. PAL YOU CAN'T CHANGE MY MIND. anyway!!! so this is technically a sequel to day 16 (pinned down)! i know this is a bit weird in comparison to most of my fanfics, but i've had no motivation to write and the work might have suffered for it. i'm sorry. hopefully this is still okay!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

One year, two months, thirteen days, twenty-seven minutes, thirty-eight seconds.

It has been one year, two months, thirteen days, twenty-seven minutes and forty-five seconds since Patton broke up with him. He remembers every single second, every single moment before, during, and after. He can recall Patton’s every expression, can hear his biting words, can almost feel the figurative blade twisting in his heart. He can remember all of it, to an impossible level of perfection and accuracy, and it makes it all hurt so much more.

They weren’t doing anything in particular that day. Logan had allowed Patton to use his mouth without complaint, had snuggled into his side when he asked him to, hadn’t spoken a word unless he was spoken to. He wasn’t even being bad, like he usually is, but that seemingly meant nothing to him. Patton had turned, told him that it wasn’t working out, that he was just a useless burden to have to keep up with, and that had been that. Patton fell asleep clutching a stunned Logan to his chest, woke him up later that night with his length pushed between Logan’s bare thighs, and when Logan woke up, he was gone.

Patton’s all Logan had. He was the only one to ever love or care for him, the only one to spend time with him and take care of him, and now he’s gone. Logan must have fucked up somehow. He said something wrong, or did something wrong, or maybe he isn’t good enough for Patton to want anymore. Logan doesn’t know why Patton left him, but he does know that it’s his fault. He just hasn’t figured out why yet.
He can’t stop thinking about it even now, weeks after it happened, and the wondering and confusion refuses to leave him long enough for Logan to properly heal from it. He can’t help letting his mind wander to this particular topic even while not alone, as is evident by how he’s been figuratively lost in his head the whole time the others have been talking tonight. They’d all gathered here in the living room to have a “FamILY Night”, as Patton used to call it, but Logan has barely been present during it.

His ex had gone to bed early, claiming he was too tired to stay awake, which normally meant that Logan was supposed to follow him into the bedroom and prepare for a long night. It’s routine, simple, doesn’t require much reading of others, and yet it all feels too complicated. Like there’s something more there, lingering underneath the surface, waiting to burst free.

Logan is interrupted from his thoughts and brought back to the present by a notably raucous round of laughter, much louder than its predecessors. Logan missed whatever it was that was so funny, but between the four of them, it must have been one of the twins. Judging by Remus’ boisterous laughs and smug smirk, it’s easy to guess who may have brought the cacchination upon the others.

“Wait, that’s not-- how could you say that? You asshole!” Deceit snickers from behind his gloved hand, delight and amusement shining in his eyes when the reminder sends the other three into a bout of giggles again. Remus makes a comment typical to his nature and then gets playfully smacked by his brother for it. It’s all… normal. Blisteringly normal, typical, suitable. Why does he feel so out of place?

“If you don’t obey me, I’ll slap you,” someone says jokingly, a voice that’s difficult to pinpoint through the haze settling like a fog over his brain, and something happens. It’s as if a switch has been flipped in Logan’s brain, has reverted him back to who he used to be so many months ago. Before Patton broke up with him, before he learned to not be scared, before he learned to enjoy it. It’s just like before, when he would cry himself to sleep nearly every single night, wondering when the pain would go away, if it’d ever go away. He’s back to that emotional state, before Patton had convinced him that it couldn’t hurt, he didn’t have feelings, and every single bit of air rushes out of Logan’s lungs in a panic.

“So pretty, down on your knees like that. Be quiet and let me do what I want, and I won’t hit you tonight.

He slides off of the chair and drops to his knees on the edge of the small circle they’d all formed, puts his head down and straightens his back like he was taught to do, and a shaky exhale leaves him. He can’t fight back, can’t be rebellious. He can’t complain, either, or else-- or else--

“Logan? You good, dude?” comes from within the circle, but he can’t hear it. He doesn’t see them, doesn’t feel the carpet underneath his legs or the chair against his back. Logan’s in bed, he’s waiting for Patton, and he’s hoping that he’ll go easy on him so he doesn’t cry for very long tonight. Dim eyes glaze over, unseeing even as his silence is met with befuddlement and concern, and Logan just wants it to be over already.

“P-Please, just… I’ll stay still,” Logan mumbles, easily heard in the quiet that’s fallen over the room. Rustling comes from all around him as the others move, and he’s hyper-aware of the stares boring into him. Not the others, not his friends, but Patton. It’s all Patton, all him, all his hungry eyes waiting to devour him, to wreck him, to hurt him--

“Lo, what are you talking about? Stay… still? What does that mean?”

It sounds like Deceit. It’s not. It can’t be.
“It’s okay, I can take it,” comes soft from Logan’s mouth, easy as he curls into himself further to appear smaller, less threatening. He can’t stand up, because Patton doesn’t like when he tries to take the lead. He isn’t in control here, Patton is, so he has to stay. He has to be here, small and pliant and ready for him, because otherwise he isn’t a good boyfriend. Good boyfriends let their partners use them to relieve stress, help them out, to repay everything they do. He’ll be a good boyfriend. For Patton.

“C’mon, Pocket Protector, this isn’t funny anymore,” Roman says with worry in his voice, but it’s okay, because it’s not him. It’s not Creativity, not Princey, not his friend, not him. It’s Patton. It has to be Patton, because he and Patton are dating, and Patton is the only one who wants him. He’s the only one who loves and cares for him, who’d take care of him like this so graciously. Logan loves Patton. He really does. Maybe if he says so, Patton won’t hurt him very much?

"Please use me. I'll be good, I-I'll-- I won't even cry or anything, I promise!” Logan rushes out, frantic tones underlying his pleading, and a chilled hush falls over the room once more. Logan sits back just enough to slowly push his knees apart, leave himself open for whatever Patton wants, a gesture that hopefully will be appreciated. “I-- I’ll listen, so you can-- you don’t even have to hit me tonight! I learned, I promise I learned!”

Hisses come from two different voices in the room, and Roman looks horrified. Remus-Patton is angry, a dark, malignant aura almost palpable at the implications of Logan’s unintentional confession, but they’re all the same, aren’t they? They’re all Patton, they’re just his boyfriend, he’s there to take care of him. Patton is here because he loves Logan, and Logan loves Patton, so that means that Logan has to let Patton do what he needs to. It’s what a good boyfriend does.

“What the fuck?” Shit, Patton’s angry. He didn’t even do anything, though! Or… or maybe he did. Maybe Logan is taking too long? Oh, that has to be it! His silly boyfriend can be impatient at times, it’s cute. In that case, who is Logan to say no? He’s learned how to be a good boyfriend, so it’s okay!

“S-Sorry, I’m sorry, Patton. I’m t-taking too long, I-- I can learn! I’ll be faster, here,” Logan reassures with a trembling voice and trembling hands, and he doesn’t hear the angry growls come from the other four. No, that’s Patton. Of course, he wouldn’t want to keep his lovely boyfriend waiting, now would he? Logan reaches down to undo the buttons on his pants and unzip his jeans, starts to pull his shirt out from where it’s tucked into the waistband. He’s lifting up his shirt to expose his abdomen, gets it far enough up past his waist, his ribs, and--

“No, Logan, stop!” A hand shoots out, grabs onto his wrist and his shirt and the fabric is being yanked back down. The sight sends Logan into a panic, starts hyperventilation and violent shudders to wrack his body. He… what? No. No! He needs to be ready! He’s-- he’s being good, he’s listening, he’s being a good boyfriend! This is what Patton wants, so why? Why?! "Stop! Stop it! I have to-- have to be a good boyfriend! Please, let me-- please use me! Use my mouth, f-- fuck me, I don’t care! You don’t even have to-- to prep or do anything, I know you d-don’t like that, j-just… please,” Logan trails off, hoarse and broken, and his vision feels so, so dim. He wants to sleep, but… he can’t. He knows what happens when he sleeps, what he’ll be woken up by. He knows what happens when he goes to sleep without letting Patton take care of him first. He knows he can’t sleep, so he scratches his arm hard enough to draw blood, and the pain sends a rush of adrenaline and clarity through his veins.

“Fuck, what the-- what the fuck?! What did that fucking asshole do?” Patton… Deceit… Ethan gets out with a sharp tongue and venom in his words, hands trembling with lividity as he takes Logan into his arms. Logan is expecting his fingers to sweep over his back, trail lower and dip between his legs,
but they… they don’t. They just stay there, hold him gently but tightly in a protective hug, and Logan doesn’t understand. He doesn’t get it. Why is he being hugged? How can Dee even stand to touch him, when he’s dirty and worthless like Patton said?

“Why… why aren’t you hitting me? I’m-- I’m being bad,” Logan tries, but his voice cracks and dissolves into a sorrowful nothingness before he can finish, and a sob tumbles out of his mouth. Ethan cradles his head, guides it to rest on his own shoulder, and the figurative dam crumbles. Logan releases a torrent of tears, shaky limbs and shaky breaths and shaky queries, questions with no real answer. Roman pulls both of them into an even bigger hug, and Logan hadn’t even noticed the tears dropping light and warm on his hair and shoulder. What’s… going on? Where is he? Where’s Patton?

“I’ll fucking rip his heart out and feed it to Dee-Dee’s snake,” Remus snarls as he stands up, makes to go march into the hallway, but he’s stopped by Virgil’s iron grip on his sleeve. Virgil looks like he’s experiencing every emotion at once: sadness, anger, guilt, betrayal, fear, loathing, concern, bewilderment, then… determination. Remus visibly fights the impulsive want to get revenge for the logical side, has to reel in his rage and malice for when he can use it properly, and a frustrated howl is buried into his hands.

“I’m sorry,” Logan cries into Ethan’s capelet, whimpers into the spot soaked with tears, and he wonders if Dee is going to yell at him when he realizes. He wonders if now that Patton doesn’t want him, will anybody else? They only tolerate his presence, he knows that, because Patton told him. And Patton doesn’t lie, doesn’t lie like Ethan does, so it has to be true. Then… if it isn’t true, why is Dee holding him like he’s never going to let go?

“You don’t need to apologize, Lo,” Ethan mumbles into his fluffy head of hair, mussed from the activity it’s been put through today, and holding the side in his arms is the easiest thing he’s ever done. It’s easy when Remus comes to knock his forehead into the crown of Deceit’s head, easy when Virgil joins in on the hug and rubs a soothing thumb into the back of Logan’s clenched fist. And it’s easiest when Logan finally seems to relax enough to hug back, finally feels safe enough to truly let go.

The four of them know that there is something severely wrong. If what Logan said is true, Patton, Morality has been corrupted, and he… he needs to be removed. Replaced. He can’t stay if he’s actively hurting another side like this. They know that, know what it means, know how it’ll end. This won’t be easy, but then again, when is justice ever easy? And for Logan, to help their resident nerd, to help their family, they’d do anything.

So they do.

Chapter End Notes

**CONTENT WARNINGS:**

- Unsympathetic Patton/corrupted Morality
- References of dub-con/non-con/sexual abuse/sexual coercion
- Mention of unsafe sex practices
- Brainwashing/conditioning
- References to physical abuse
- PTSD/immersive flashback
Could be read as mental/emotional breakdown
Explicit language
Unconscious/unintentional self-harm/blood mention
Self-loathing/self-deprecation
Cursing
Please let me know if I missed any warnings!
Day 26: Abandoned

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.26, "Abandoned".

Form an alliance with the masses, put an end to mindless bloodshed.

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

Word Count: 2835

Relationships: Prinxiety (implied pre-relationship/pining Virgil)

A/N: i don't really have much of an explanation as to how this ties in with the prompt. you could view it as roman abandoning his pride to accept comfort, or virgil abandoning his anxiety to help someone he cares about, or even just something as simple as that abandoned mug of hot chocolate. up to you, do with this what you will. anyway, i intended this to be way angstier, but then it somehow got to almost 3k word of prinxiety fluff? so. yeah idek either. by the way, the song in the fic is called "Ribbons".

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“And you fell in ribbons around me.”

It’s nighttime when he hears it. The melody of a song too obscure to pinpoint, beauty in each wistful note. The words are laced with thoughtfulness, speared by longing, and it’s unlike anything Virgil’s ever heard before. It’s almost as if the lyrics themselves dance down the hallway, twirls and pirouettes and every kind of graceful move imaginable to the ballad from which they were born. Virgil doesn’t know the song, hasn’t heard it sung or played in the mindscape before, which is odd considering how it feels like there’s always new music waiting to be discovered here.

“Shredded by the ones you used to seek.”

Virgil hopes he’s not intruding on anything important when he rounds the corner, and he’s met with a massive room he didn’t even know existed. It spans multiple stories, bookshelves filled with all different sorts of novels towering so far into the sky that he can’t see to the top. The room itself is oval-shaped, which is odd enough, but considering this is in Thomas’ mind, anything is possible. Smaller, more normal-sized bookcases lie in rows on either side of the room, creating long passageways that seem to twist and turn like a labyrinth fueled by pure knowledge. In the very center lies a few couches and beanbags chairs all situated in a circle, bordering a large table in the middle that holds magazines, stray bookmarks, pens, and a single mug of what looks to be steaming hot coffee beside an opened book.

The room is impressive, and almost intimidating with it’s accented swirling designs in the mahogany
virgil wonders why he never knew of this place.

“Be quiet now, it’s almost time.”

the soft voice comes again from somewhere in the left half of the room, far away enough to allow virgil to conclude that he’s on a different floor. it’s roman, he knows it is now that he can hear his voice better, but what’s roman doing in a library at three in the morning?

virgil twists his hoodie strings in his fingers as he slowly walks into the library, making the trek across the plush green carpet to the common area in the center. the soft fabric caressing his bare feet feels more soothing than he was expecting, like a cloud holding him up as he walks across the sky. he doesn’t know if roman came in here with the express intent of being alone, but hopefully he won’t be angry. virgil couldn’t sleep, and who’s to say he’s to blame for being curious?

“Be careful not to fall out of line.”

A page finally submits to it’s rigid conditioning and falls back to the other half as virgil approaches, exacerbated further by the small amount of a breeze he kicks up when he gets close enough. scanning everything on the table is more of out of wonder, for once, rather than fear, and it’s a nice breath of air from the usual hypervigilance he’s been instilled with since his first appearance within thomas as a side.

there’s not much of note in the way of the scattered supplies and note sheets littering the table, covered in neat handwriting that is undoubtedly logan’s. it’s a surprise to see such a disquieted work space, such an unrefined lack of organization that isn’t typical of logan’s usual behaviour. his need for categorizing and cataloguing and sorting is something that feels like it’s been ingrained into him since day one, and to see his visibly scattered thought and work process is weird. really weird.

“Breathe so softly, keep your whispers low.”

virgil notices that the bright red porcelain mug on the table doesn’t, in fact, hold coffee, but hot chocolate with colourful marshmallows. it’s fitting to roman, suits his need for simple comforts such as a warm, sweet beverage, and the thought of him with a chocolate mustache on his lip from drinking it too quickly brings a small smile to virgil’s face. well, at least it does until hot chocolate mustache roman turns into regular remus, and virgil berates his brain for corrupting a pleasant mental image like that.

the liquid is still very hot, as shown by the steam rising from the lip of the cup and the heat virgil can feel radiating onto his fingers despite his hands not even being close to touching the ceramic. it hasn’t been drunk, not even a sip as evident by the perfectly clean and immaculate rim around the edge, which means roman must have either gotten distracted or was in a hurry for something. virgil can’t imagine that someone leisurely singing songs at 3 a.m. is necessarily in a rush, so that just leaves distraction. typical of him. virgil wishes he were annoyed instead of endeared.

“Silently dream of what you used to know.”

virgil finally tears himself away from the warmth, comfort, and coziness of the reading area to start locating roman, and it’s not particularly difficult to find him. his voice carries even when he’s not in one of those grandiose, lifting belts he loves so much, and the melodies act as a rope to pull virgil
closer to where he is. Up the stairs behind one of the bookcases on the wall, along balconies, traversing ladders and mazes of shelves just to try to find his way to the source of the song.

“They don’t love you, no, they never will.”

At that lyric, Virgil stops in his tracks, falters when the words sink in. Is… is that what Roman thinks? It could be argued that they’re just lyrics and don’t mean anything, but Virgil of all people knows best that the music we listen to is an extension of ourselves. It reflects our deepest wants, and fear, and insecurities, the ones we refuse to let out of their cages locked deep within the heart to escape and leave us vulnerable. And judging by the raw emotion in his voice as he sang that line, the way it dipped at the end of the line very narrowly missing a crack, it… it makes Virgil worried. And guilty, because this must be partially his fault.

“They’ll always be better so rest your heart and still.”

Virgil wants to tell him that he’s wrong, wants to stave off the thickness steadily building in his throat as the result of what is likely to be tears. Roman’s cried around them, of course, but never over something very serious or personal. When he learned an actress Thomas looks up to died, or when he realized that a show they were scheduled to play got cancelled at the last minute after weeks and weeks of painstaking script memorization and practice.

It’s hard to not say something when he finally peers through an open space in the last bookcase in the row and sees his Princey, of whom is surprisingly not in his trademark royal garb. He wears it so often Virgil has wondered before if he dons it while he sleeps, when he works out, even in the shower, and if Virgil’s being honest, it wouldn’t surprise him. But the familiar red sash and white jacket and golden lace embroidery is nowhere to be seen, replaced by something much less prince-like, more humbling, more… human.

Virgil never thought he’d be admitting to himself that Roman somehow is able to look hot in dark grey sweatpants and a loose red t-shirt, but here he is.

“It’s time to leave, I promise it’ll be fine.”

Roman sings much softer this time, as if coming to his senses about his surrounding, realizes that it’s late and he might wake someone up. Too late.

His face is stained with tear tracks, both old and fresh with the moisture building in his eyes only to spill over the dam and roll heavy upon his cheekbones. Virgil’s so used to him keeping up appearances, just as Virgil himself and every other side does despite how much Patton denies being sad or Logan denies having emotions, and he decides he doesn’t like it. He doesn’t like the sorrow in their resident prince’s eyes, doesn’t like the way meekness looks on him.

“Just don’t look, they’re not coming back this time.”

Roman seems to get impossibly smaller with every uttered word, curling in on himself where he sits against the railing, peering over the balcony to the ground floor many stories below with misty, unseeing eyes. His arms slowly snake their way up to his sides, come to clench at each other with a surprisingly harsh force. His fingers dig hard enough into his arms to cause them to go white with the lack of blood, to create crescents in the shape of his fingernails, and Virgil doesn’t think he’ll be able to hold himself back from rushing over to help any longer if he sees even the tiniest ounce of blood come out of Roman’s skin.

“Tell me now how is it up there.”
And it does, unfortunately. Roman has never been one to control his strength very well, and in this state of upset, it’s likely he doesn’t even feel the pain. Being numbed by self-loathing, the apathy that comes shortly after almost like a soothing but assertively temporary balm to the pain, it’s all so familiar. Virgil knows that state like the back of his hand, can almost feel it radiating off of Roman in waves, but maybe that’s his ability to sense the others’ anxiety. He’s still not very good at being able to differentiate between different feelings.

Tiny little droplets of blood well up from where he pressed a bit too hard with sharp, manicured nails, wells up just the same as a soft sob does. Virgil doesn’t know why he’s here. He doesn’t know what happened, what set him off, what triggered this kind of response. He doesn’t know the kinds of thoughts Roman may be having, or how in control of himself he is. He doesn’t know. But Virgil will damn well try to help despite all of that.

“Princey?” Virgil murmurs from behind, and Roman flinches as he whips his head around to meet Virgil’s concerned gaze. He seems bewildered for a moment, as if he hadn’t been expecting anybody to be in here, which would be a fair assumption if it weren’t for the fact that Virgil’s sleeping habits and schedule is awful. Roman takes a minute to process the turn of events, and then comes back to himself with a shuddering sigh as he hastily wipes his tears away with unforgiving fingers.

“Haha, what are-- what’re you doing up, Surly Temple? Prowling in the night? Some sort of… I dunno, emo ritual? A-All the emos gather ‘round at 2 a.m. to chant My Chemical Romance lyrics while they sacrifice band tees to the flames?” Roman rambles on nervously, a look on his face that implies even he doesn’t know what he’s saying anymore. He scratches the back of his neck sheepishly when Virgil gives him a judging look, but then hisses through his teeth when he realizes he has minor wounds littering his upper arms. Virgil’s immediately back to that same worry, that same empathy that coursed through his veins before, and he calmly approaches the disheveled prince. Roman gives him an unreadable look when he sits down a respectable distance away (closer than Virgil originally planned on being, close enough to barely be able to brush shoulders if he just leaned over a bit), but soon his eyelids flutter as he shifts his gaze back to look out over the chasm filled with books.

“C’mon, Princey, what’s up?” Virgil asks quietly, knocks his shoulder against Roman’s in a show of good faith (at least he hopes it comes across like that). Although he still feels awkward talking so candidly with someone he’s used to bickering with all the time, Virgil finds himself oddly confident. Maybe it’s the survival instinct that’s embedded so deeply within his core, the want to protect and save those he cares about, those who have been hurt by both others and themselves. Although he and Deceit have had their differences in the past, ones Virgil is still having trouble reconciling even after acknowledging his faults in the unfortunate falling out, the two of them share that, at least. Self-preservation, two sides working to protect and better Thomas (and the sides, by extension) in their own specific ways.

“It’s… it’s nothing, don’t worry about it. Just saw a-- saw a sad movie! Needed to cry it out, haha!” Roman bites out, pained and strained and oh so fake, and Virgil huffs out an exasperated breath. It’s times like now where Virgil feels that intense urge to safeguard, to shelter the ones he cares about, and it builds in his chest like a scream waiting to burst out. There’s no way to expel the restless energy, no way to quench that absurd, overwhelming need to shield, except…

“Roman, don’t do this to yourself,” Virgil murmurs gently, reprimands with a soft, caring tone, and taking the other side into his arms is much easier than he ever imagined. It feels right, feels like he’s supposed to be here, helping and holding the creative side throughout anything the world could throw at him. Or whatever he can throw at himself; Virgil is no stranger to being your own worst enemy. Roman just laughs brokenly, shudders through another sob as he buries his face into the soft fabric of Virgil’s patchy jacket, and Virgil wraps his arms around the broader shoulders to offer the
rare moment of tactile comfort while he’s able to stand physical touch.

They sit there for a long time, a long few hours of Roman crying as quietly as he can while Virgil delivers gentle, relaxing reassurances. He knows it isn’t easy to open up like this, to allow someone you’re not very close to see you vulnerable, and Virgil hopes that maybe this’ll spark a change. Maybe they can get to know each other a bit better, understand each other’s intentions and wants and needs, and maybe. Maybe they can be friends, could be something more.

Roman’s weeping tapers off eventually, shifts into soft sniffles as the sun rises high enough to shine bright rays through the enormous stained glass window in the center of the library, just above the fireplace. Virgil is starting to get uncomfortable from holding the same position for too long, and sitting hunched over on the floor for hours like this surely isn’t very good for his back, but he’ll deal with that when it comes. Right now, his focus is on Roman, on wiping the last stray tears away from his reddened cheeks after a moment’s hesitation, and he counts it a victory when Roman doesn’t push him away for it.

Roman sits up fully but doesn’t lean away, just presses his fingers into his eyes as the two of them finally rise and stretch their sore muscles. Virgil can’t help but admire the way the red light falls upon Roman’s face, the way it casts shadows and highlights and wraps his lips and lashes in hard candy. It’s breathtaking, steals the air from his lungs and the support from his trembling knees, and he knows they need to wrap this up quickly before the events of the night can fully crash down on Virgil and send him into a spiral. The panic attacks can wait until later, when he’s alone and doesn’t have to deal with the humiliation of being so uncharacteristically sappy.

Roman sudden barks out a hoarse laugh, shakes his head at Virgil’s questioning look. He leans back nonchalantly, tries to appear casual even though Virgil can see that his hands are still shaking in the aftermath of his breakdown. He won’t say anything, though. He doesn’t like when people call attention to his anxiety unnecessarily, and although he knows it’s out of concern, it often just makes it worse. “Grasp my hand and pull me out of here.’ The next line in the song.”

Virgil smirks at the soft, final notes, senses an idea blooming in his head. This is probably a bad idea, a terrible idea, and Roman will probably slap him for it, but… he said to grasp his hand and pull him out of there. So Virgil does, he slides his hand into Roman’s own, tugs him to run down the balcony and the stairs and through bookshelves and the thankful grin he’s given in return is absolutely blinding.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

Crying/Emotional breakdown
Mild self-harm (unintentional)
Mild blood
Mentions of panic attacks
Mention of rituals/sacrifices in a joking/satirical manner
Chapter Summary

Prompt no.27, "Ransom".

(Protect those you love), prepare to leave it all behind.

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

**Word Count:** 2161

**Relationships:** Intrulogical

A/N: hmm... i don't really know what to think of this one, to be honest. it feels weird to write right now, since i'm a bit sick, but i don't know. maybe it's not as awful as it feels like it is, who knows. anyway, have this shit. i'm not really a huge intrulogical shipper, since i don't actually ship remus with anybody (i hc him as aro), but logan fit so here we are.

It’s pretty cold here. Remus knows that being kidnapped and held hostage in a basement however far below the surface isn’t a particularly forgiving situation, but couldn’t his kidnapper give him a blanket or something? It’s too fuckin’ cold for this! And it’s weird, because the guy seems pretty warm himself despite not even wearing a jacket or anything, just a t-shirt, and it makes Remus a little jealous. Remus is always cold, but this place just makes it worse.

He doesn’t even know why he’s here, either. He’s not special, doesn’t stand out, isn’t known for any notable actions or anything. He’s just a simple guy, a dude who lives in a shit apartment and works two jobs in fast food and bartending. He’s pretty common, in society’s eyes, so… why is he here?

The blow to the head had been delivered from behind, just after Remus has gotten into his apartment after work. It came when he least expected it, which is so not fair, because he would have loved to fight the guy. Have a fun old-fashioned full-out brawl in his living room at two in the morning, show him what he’s got. It could have been a fun end to his shitty night, but no, of course the guy had to take the coward’s way out and avoid the fight completely. What a fucking bore.

Now, sitting here tied to this chair in the middle of the room, Remus doesn’t even really feel the pain from the big knot on his head. There’s better things to worry about, like “Am I out of milk?” and “Will I get back in time to catch the season finale of the television show I’ve been following since the premiere?”. Besides, injuries are nothing new to Remus, having grown up playing only contact sports, so a little bonk on the head is nothing compared to the evenings he’d come home from practice or games with welts and bruises littering every inch of his skin. Before she died, his mom would freak out over the blood and cuts on his arms and legs, but then he’d give her a toothy grin
with multiple teeth missing from being knocked out, and she’d just shake her head and clean him up. His mom was super cool, before she became a druggie and too busy fucking whoever was closest to come home and take care of her kids.

Anyway, Remus still doesn’t get why he of all people had to have been kidnapped, because it’s not like he’s some important figure or in any sort of position of power. He holds sway exactly Nowhere, and therefore isn’t exactly the ideal choice when stealing someone from their home for your own gain. Whoever this guy is, he’s kind of a dumbass.

“Listen up. You’re gonna sit here, smile into the camera really pretty, and you ain’t sayin’ a word unless I tell you to. Got it?” the guy demands as he sets up a tripod, and Remus just snickers. His kidnapper gives him a withering glare as he settles the camera into the correct spot, and then walk around to the other wide to line the shot up the way he wants it. “What’s so funny?”

“Just wonderin’ what the video’s for. Who you gonna send it to, my dead grandma?” Remus asks, licks his lips with a grin as he wiggles in his seat. The ropes around his wrists are tight, but definitely loose enough to slip out of if he pulls hard enough. Remus gets to work using his sharp fingernails to slice through through the rope one strand at a time, to try and reduce the circumference and be able to slide it far enough through the knot that he’ll be able to just yank his hands free. Remus guesses that all those years of putting up with Roman’s boy scouts phase weren’t a complete waste.

“Nope. You got a brother, it’s goin’ to him,” the kidnapper replies with a sneer. He’s finally finished setting the camera up, presses a button to start it rolling, and the red light begins to blink. Remus raises an eyebrow as the kidnapper settles back slightly further from the tripod and pulls out a stack of note cards, and it’s with a barely contained giggle Remus realizes that he had to write his speech down.

“Proof of life,” the guy says into the microphone with a much deeper, more gruff voice than before, and it takes so much effort to not burst out into raucous laughter. “If you want your poor little brother here back to you alive, you’re gonna leave no less than 200 thousand in a bag at the address provided. Unmarked bills, no cops. You leave the money, and then you get your ass out of there. If you call the police or try to pull any tricks, little bro here is gettin’ a bullet to the face. Once I confirm the money’s clean, he’ll be dropped off somewhere within walking distance of help, alive. You have three days. If that money still isn’t with me by the time midnight rolls around come Saturday, he’s dead.”

The kidnapper presses a button on the top of the camera and the red light stops blinking with a little click. Just in time, too, because Remus busts out into uncontrollable laughter as soon as the camera stops recording. His lungs and chest hurt with how hard he’s laughing, but he can’t stop, and the offended, angry look on the guy’s face just makes him laugh harder.

“Stop fuckin’ laughing!” his kidnapper snaps, but his voice cracks at the end, and Remus is in tears. It’s pretty predictable when the guy rushes him and punches him in the jaw, knocking the rest of his breath out of his lungs in a pained wheeze. Remus barely has a moment to recover before the guy’s fist is buried in his gut, forcing a hacking cough from Remus’ throat. He wants to keep laughing, but now it hurts like a bitch to even breathe, so maybe staying quiet for now is the best option.

“I said I’d bring you back alive, not unharmed. Don’t fucking push me,” the guy growls maliciously, a cold glint in his eyes as he reaches into his pocket. He pulls out a switchblade, flips the knife out in a way that shines the metal’s reflection of the light in Remus’ face. How annoying. The kidnapper presses the knife into Remus’ throat, in the same spot he’s had tracheostomies performed when his airway was blocked, and the feeling of smooth, sharp metal just centimeters away from his trachea is almost comforting in its familiarity.
“Fuck you,” Remus responds hoarsely, spits as much as he can and it lands on his kidnapper’s chin. Remus knows he’s going to be pissed, knows the fallout will be painful as fuck, but he can’t really seem to bring himself to care. He doesn’t regret it, either, not even when the guy yells out in anger and slams his fist into Remus’ stomach again. He doesn’t regret it when the guy mutters something about teaching him a lesson, he doesn’t regret it when he replaces his switchblade with the bigger chef’s knife laying on the shelf in the corner, and he certainly doesn’t regret it when the guy returns with a sadistic grin.

Remus will brag about what happens next for so, so long after he gets out of here, because it’s the funniest shit he’s ever done. The disheveled man brings the knife to Remus’ chest and pushes the blade into his skin, slowly slicing it open as the fresh cut forms a bleeding slash. But Remus doesn’t even flinch, doesn’t even yell from the pain. He just moans, one that isn’t of fear but rather high-pitched and obscene, a mockery of sex that leaves him barely able to hold onto the laugh that wants to push past his harshly gritted teeth. “Harder, daddy!”

And that’s probably the last straw, because the end of the cut turns much less clean in the guy’s lividity. The blade presses deeper into his skin, draws more blood and elicits more pain to radiate from his chest, and it takes more effort than Remus would like to not cry out. As much as he doesn’t find real humour in this situation, he can’t really afford to die here, so staying the dominant, unafraid personality to this man who obviously fears a lack of control is important. He can’t show fear, because that will just bolster the guy’s confidence and keep his head clear enough to not make mistakes. However, if he’s upset and feeling undermined, his anger will cause him to slip up, and allow Remus the opportunity to turn the tables on him. It does sound easy in hindsight, but slacking off won’t help any, so Remus focuses in on burying the pain below a layer of numbness.

“You know what? Maybe I won’t send it to your little brother. Maybe I won’t return you at all. Maybe, I’ll just keep you here, tied up so you can only sit there as I torture your little boyfriend,” the kidnapper seethes, and his eyes narrow as an even more deranged smile slips onto his face when Remus stiffens uncontrollably. “What, that hit a nerve? You scared for your little boy toy? What was his name… Logan, right? I know where he lives. And I’ll steal him from his bed, bring him here and force you to watch while I slice him up. Maybe I’ll make you watch me fuck him, take care of him better than you ever could, hmm? How about that? Want me to fuck your boyfriend for you? I saw him, y’know, a cute little nerd with glasses. Nice ass, skinny waist… he’s almost like a girl. Maybe I’ll keep him for myself, after I kill you, fuck him every single day while he just cries for his poor ol’e Remus.”

No. No, no, no no nononono. How dare he?! You can do anything to Remus. You can threaten him, make fun of him, torture him, and he’d laugh in your face. But this guy has the fucking nerve to bring his boyfriend into this? No. Unacceptable. This isn’t-- fuck.

And Remus knows he should stay calm, not let his words get to him, but...he knows Logan’s name. And apparently, where Logan lives. What if he does take Logan, does hurt him while Remus can’t even do anything about it, helplessly tied to a chair? What if this guy hurts his baby, hurts his Logan, and Remus could’ve prevented it? It’s far too easy to imagine Logan’s eyes filled with fear, the attempts to stave off tears, muffled cries of pain. All he can see in his mind is Logan traumatized, and for the very first time, the thought of sex makes Remus feel sick to his stomach.

So with an enraged snarl, Remus yanks his hands free from the flimsy rope keeping then locked behind the back of the chair, and then lunges. He relishes in the surprised yelp, the angered fear in his eyes, the way he scrambles to fight back far too late. Because he’s pinned under Remus, and once he’s got someone in his grip, he isn’t letting go. For probably too long, Remus just sits there, beating his kidnapper with shaking fists. The man fell unconscious a while ago, hasn’t been a threat for minutes, but Remus doesn’t have any other way to take out his frustration besides sitting here on
top of this guy, pummeling him to hell and back. Eventually, his arms fall limply to his sides, and
Remus’ eyes dull as he slouches over. His breathing is light and trembling, and there’s a feeling
welling up in his chest that he doesn’t understand, can’t pinpoint or identify. His legs feel like they’re
on fire when he pushes himself to his feet, burn when he sways a bit in an attempt to keep his
balance.

Remus doesn’t know where he is, or how far he was taken from his home, but that doesn’t matter. It
doesn’t matter what Remus has to go through, because as he climbs the ladder out of this cellar and
emerges in a long, dark hallway, he knows. He knows as he trudges to the end, as he whips open the
door on the other side to reveal an alleyway. He knows as he gets to the road, recognizes the bakery
across the bustling traffic, and when he turns in the opposite direction of his apartment. He knows
when he sees the green sign at the intersection, sees the familiar name of Logan’s street, when he
approaches his apartment complex. He knows that Logan’s going to be okay, because he’s going to
make sure of it, and Remus vows that nobody will ever be able to threaten his boyfriend ever again.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

Kidnapping
Physical violence/weapon (knife)
Blood and injuries
Mentions of torture
Threats of non-con to another character
Vulgar/explicit language
Mentions of drug usage/bad parenting/death of a minor character (not a side)
Cursing
Day 28: Beaten

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.28, "Beaten".

Count your blessings while you can, there's not much left to find.

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

Word Count: 1726

Relationships: Analogical (platonic, toxic/abusive)

A/N: hm. yeah idek what this is but whatever. i am very steadily losing inspiration so i apologize that all of these are so awful

“How many minutes has it been since we started, kitten?”

Logan knows. Of course he knows, he’s Logic. He can remember everything down to the second, as accurate as he can possibly be to more efficiently serve his host. Without it, he’s useless to Thomas. He doesn’t want to be useless, not like he thinks, not like Virgil says he is. And he tells him that all the time, is not afraid to say how he really, truly feels about him. Logan is used to the insults, used to the scathing remarks and passive-aggressive words, the blistering anger that's so typical to Virgil that it feels almost normal. It shouldn't be normal, Logan knows that, but...

"F-Fifteen minutes, twenty-seven seconds-- twenty-eight seconds-- twenty-nine seconds--" Logan stutters out through the acute ache, barely able to speak properly with each sharp blast of pain. Every second acts as not just a stopwatch but a running count, and every new number means another whip on Logan’s slowly numbing bare back. And it can't stop, it won't stop, because Virgil says that it depends on Logan.

"Awe, cutie, aren't you hurting? Isn't this painful? Don't you wanna stop? You know it'll stop if you don't count," Virgil taunts, soft and sweet and mocking. Logan can hear the smile in his voice, the no doubt sadistic grin marring his face, and it sends a shiver wracking his body. This is-- this is terrible. He knows, Virgil knows he can't stop. That's why he's doing this. He's just toying with him at this point, dancing around him with his words that cut deeper than the barbed whip ever could. “Hmm? Nothing? How many minutes since we began?”

“Sixteen-- sixteen minutes, fourteen seconds-- fifteen seconds-- sixteen seconds-- s-seven--sevent-- twenty seconds--” Logan pushes out through gritted teeth, and his throat feels raw. The tears came a long time ago, having spilled over without a chance of being held in during the beating, and Logan hates himself for it. Showing such weakness, allowing Virgil to have power over him like this? It’s
pitiful.

Every stuttered digit prompts another slap of the plastic whip on the mangled skin of his back, torn and bloody and exposed. The nerves are firing furiously, burning and searing throughout his flesh, and Logan wonders how long it’ll be before he passes out. Though they can usually wave away injuries, and they don’t typically cause any pain, their rooms often can override any type of set rules for how they operate outside of the mindscape. Logan’s room, unfortunately, is the center for logical thought, so anything that happens within must be within the realm of reality or abide by the known laws of the universe. This means that injuries are very real, and they last, and they hurt.

“C’mon, kitty, keep counting,” Virgil murmurs into Logan’s ear, much too close, and Logan almost falls out of his kneel with how hard he flinches away. The other side’s breath is hot on Logan’s ear, and his hoodie brushes against Logan’s wound leaving stray threads and dust, and it’s probably get infected if he isn’t able to get away soon. And this was supposed to be a day for relaxation, too; since Thomas decided to take a mental health day, that means the sides get a break too, by extension. But he woke up from his nap slouched on his floor, hands bound behind his back, and Virgil in front of him holding a whip with a wicked grin.

“Fifty-six seconds-- fifty-seven seconds-- fifty-- haah, sto--” Logan whines desperately, only able to break out of his counting for a moment with far too much effort needed. Virgil raises a brow and falters in his vicious treatment, causing the rope to linger just a bit too long in a more sensitive spot, and Logan’s cry dies in his throat as the look in his eyes. It’s something animalistic, overpowering, controlling, like he’s ready to kill him the moment he steps out of line. Sides can’t die, not even in Logan’s room, but fatal wounds do scar, and they can never be waved away.

“What’s this, sweetie? Did you manage to stop counting? Well, good for you! I guess that means it’s time to train you a different way, huh?” Virgil muses, drags the bloody whip across Logan’s lip hard enough for him to taste the metal on his tongue, and the whimper that builds in Logan’s throat is strangled and quiet. Virgil just smiles, innocent and unassuming, and dread forms like a lump of coal in Logan’s stomach.

“Here, kitty. A present, hm?” Virgil tells him lightly, and it takes a lot of self-restraint not to yell out in anger when he sees what Virgil pulls out of the gift bag sitting beside Logan’s armchair. It’s very obviously a collar, one that you’d put on an animal. The leathery circlet is a soft, pastel blue, with silvery metal pieces adorning it. Rings around small holes punches at equal intervals around the collar adorn hanging charms, tiny, delicate chains with equally small blue gemstones at the bottom. The clasp looks heavy and secure, and definitely would hold up under pressure. And the focal point of the whole piece is the big charm in the center, a dark blue fake sapphire hanging from a metal heart as a mockery of Logan’s favourite tie. The collar is beautiful, and well-made, and Logan absolutely hates it.

“There you go,” Virgil sighs as he places the collar around Logan’s neck nimble fingers sliding back to buckle the back too tight to be comfortable. It makes it hard to breathe, and sucking much-needed oxygen down is an extremely difficult task. His breathing is thin, and the lightheadedness slowly descends on him like a predator to prey. “Now you really are my little pet.”

Logan is mortified. He’s humiliated by the way the leather presses into his bruised throat, is embarrassed by the amused look Virgil gives him as he stands up, gets nauseous when he realizes Virgil is going back to the bag again. His heart seems to figuratively leap up into his throat when two items emerge from the pink plastic, both of which Logan is unfortunately able to recognize on the spot. The first of which is immediately deposited over his mouth, hooked behind his head as the straps dig painfully into his cheeks.
A muzzle. A *fucking* muzzle. Like a dog. Logan has a feeling it won’t be very long before he passes out from the lack of air.

The second item makes no sense to Logan, doesn’t take the form of anything familiar in the midst of his hazed brain. The pain coursing through his body leaves his coherent thoughts few and far between, so identifying the new object isn’t an easy process. Although Logan is slow on the uptake, doesn’t understand what Virgil is planning on doing with a bunch of leather strips and spikes, he knows it isn’t going to end well for himself.

A metal circle meets his chest, cold and unforgiving, and Logan can’t help but involuntarily jerk away from the unfamiliar object. Virgil clicks his tongue in annoyance when Logan looks up at him defiantly, trying to stay strong despite the humiliating position. With a huff of displeasure, the other side bends down and reaches around Logan’s shoulders, and then digs a finger into one of the wounds on Logan’s back. The logical side hisses in pain, shakes his head over and over and over again until Virgil finally lets up. “Don’t disobey me, little kitty. You know I own you, so just sit there all still like I tell you, and maybe you’ll get a treat later.”

Logan shakes in fear when Virgil places the mess of black straps up to his chest again, flinches hard but stays in place when the metal meets his skin like ice. It doesn’t take much longer to figure out that this is a harness of some sort, with the way the many strips of thick leather encircle his chest and meet behind him. Too late Logan understands what the small spikes are for, because sharp metal pierces his already mangled flesh, digs hard into his sensitive muscle, and the muffled scream Logan lets out leaves black spots in his vision. He arches his back in an attempt to get away from the barbs, but they’ve already been swiftly clipped around his chest, and Logan can’t even move a fraction of an inch without agony bursting from his torso.

Tears finally rush out of his eyes, burn like fire on his cheeks before they roll off of the muzzle strapped to his jaw. There’s nothing he can do. He can’t move, he can’t speak, he can’t breathe, he can’t see through the moisture blurring his vision. His glasses were discarded on his bedside table long ago, so it’s not as if his visual perception of everything has been particularly clear, anyway.

And he can’t do anything. He’s helpless when Virgil coos at him, calls him a pretty little pet, tells him he’s so much more fun when he’s not running his mouth. He can’t get away when Virgil reaches into the bag one more time to retrieve a leash, can’t run and ask for help when he clips the length onto his collar gently and then harshly yanks him forward to his feet. He can barely stand, feels like his knees are going to give out any second, and with how violently his body is trembling, maybe unconsciousness would be a welcome, temporary reprieve before he has to face Virgil’s lividity once more.

But then Virgil leads Logan into the living room, in his jeans and the harness and muzzle and collar, tears and blood alike dripping down his body, and nobody is even here. Logan is alone. There’s nobody to help him, nobody to save him from this torturous nightmare. And as Logan realizes that the others are having a fantastic time curled up on Thomas’ couch watching a movie completely oblivious to the turmoil in Logan’s heart, as Virgil punches him in the face so hard he falls to his knees on the kitchen floor exactly like Virgil wanted, he decides that maybe he doesn’t even need a heart at all. After all, being numb would be better than feeling like this.

Chapter End Notes

**CONTENT WARNINGS:**
Unsympathetic/abusive Virgil
Non-consensual pet play/viewing someone as a pet or animal (it could be read as sexual but it was not intended that way, this has no sexual content)
Torture
Serious wound/graphic description of injury
Blood
Humiliation/mocking
Dehumanization
Taking advantage of an uncontrollable tick
Cursing
Day 29: Numb

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.29, "Numb".

Don’t lose yourself, one day you’ll be okay.

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

Word Count: 4980

Relationships: DLAMP (romantic), Creativitwins (NOT remrom), Intrulogical (platonic)

A/N: Y’ALL I’m YELLING?? I THOUGHT THIS WAS GONNA BE SHORT AND IT TURNED INTO 5K AAAAAAAA;;;;;;; OKAY so someone mentioned wanting to know what happened after logan woke up after the events of day 21: laced drink. and. this happened!! i hope y’all enjoy this not-as-little-as-i-expected sequel in 5+1 style! it's fluffier than i thought it'd be :3c

See the end of the chapter for more notes

1

It’s a lot to come to terms with when Logan wakes up.

He’s never been one for sentiment, never really has had Romanticized dreams or wants relating to that type of thing. Sex and romance have never been a very prominent part of his personality, never been something he thinks about very often. Between his studies and college, he has much more important things to worry about than who copulates with whom.

But for some reason, when he finally opens his eyes and rises from his slumber, Logan bursts into tears.

He doesn’t know why. He can barely remember what happened last night, can barely remember anything outside of a vague sense of pain. There are shadows on his skin, phantom whispers of fingers pulling his thighs apart, and it feels so real that Logan gags in fear. It doesn’t help that he’s also nauseous from the drug and the alcohol he consumed last night, so his shooting up from the covers and running into the en suite bathroom to empty the meager contents of his stomach into the toilet isn’t really much of a surprise.

Logan wants to stop crying. He doesn’t want to be breaking down like this, tears dripping hot from his face onto his comforter. He just wants to go back to sleep and wake up and have everything be fine, but of course he can’t even have that. This is all pathetic anyway, because there’s no reason for
him to be so upset. He doesn’t really care about sex or relationships, has never dreamt of romance, so… so why is he crying quietly into his blanket as if he’s mourning the loss of something important?

His “first time” shouldn’t mean anything to him. It doesn’t matter that it was with a stranger, because he doesn’t care about sex, and he doesn’t have anyone to share his first time with anyway. There’s no logical reason to be crying, no rationale that would make this acceptable in any way. He’s here curled up in the fetal position, pathetically shedding tears into his pillow, and he’s in this much pain over a night he doesn’t even really remember. What an idiot.

“Hey, Pocket Protector, you up? I tho--” Roman’s voice comes from the door, bursts through Logan’s bubble of misery with the typical full tone echoing in his bedroom. He cuts himself off when he sees Logan shaking, clutching his pillow so tightly his knuckles are white. Little sobs spill out from behind the dark blue fabric, trickle out into the air like music notes and melodies carried by the wind, and Roman’s heart drops into his stomach. “Oh, shit.”

Roman immediately rushes over to launch himself onto the bed, placing himself strategically so that he ends up sliding into place right beside Logan’s head. Said Logan peeks up at Roman with a mixture of sadness, regret, and fear shining in his wet eyes, and the way he shrinks into himself breaks Roman’s heart. He lifts his hand up to run his hand through Logan’s hair, frowns even more when Logan nuzzles into the affectionate gesture desperately. “Logan, amorcito, what’s wrong?”

The term of endearment is more comforting to Logan that he expects, and given Roman’s low speech and gentle handling, it’s no wonder Logan feels a warmth blossoming in his chest. He doesn’t know what it means, doesn’t know how to pinpoint it, but he does know that when he looks at Roman, he sees a light from within. It shines so brightly, like rays of sunlight spilling over his face, and Logan finds himself craving more of it.

“I feel-- think there’s something wrong with me,” Logan whispers, shame building uncertainly in his throat, and Roman’s brows pull together. His concern is like a balm, eases the burn of the man’s fingers on Logan’s skin, and it’s almost addictive. His boisterous roommate doesn’t hesitate to pull Logan into his arms, doesn’t notice the way he flinches at the touch. He isn’t scared of Roman, of course he isn’t, but he’s of remarkably similar stature to his assailant.

“You are perfect just the way you are, dearheart. I… I love you. A lot. And I’m not saying that you have to return it, or that you even have to say anything, I just… you are loved. I care about you so much, and I vow to do my best to protect you from the dangers of the world,” Roman rambles, a dramatic speech to punctuate Logan’s sniffles. He doesn’t want to move, doesn’t want to get up out of his bed. But reaching up to give Roman a soft, appreciative kiss on the cheek is easier than he’d ever expect.

Honestly, Logan should’ve expected it’d come eventually. Despite his breakdown the first day, the day after it happened, he hasn’t actually had another. Closing his heart in an icy cage feels like second nature, as if he’s flipped a switch to turn off his feelings so that he doesn’t have to confront them. He knows it’s unhealthy. He knows it’s not a proper coping mechanism, that it’ll only cause him problems. But he can’t do it, can’t face the pain and the residual fear and the debilitating anxiety whenever someone touches him without warning.

It wasn’t Patton’s fault that it changed so quickly, of course not, because he didn’t know. He couldn’t have known, because Logan still refuses to tell them what happened that night. Ethan, ever the gentleman, courteously left that part of the story out, said that what happened wasn’t his place to
tell. Logan can’t even begin to describe how much he appreciates that, because he’s still coming to terms with the events of the night. He doesn’t need other people fretting over him before he’s ready for them to know, especially when he himself doesn’t really understand the turmoil in his mind either.

But that same silence has caused a lack of proper communication between the five of them, a gap in the knowledge of what to do and what not to do. Logan can’t exactly ask them to not touch him without letting him know first, without asking beforehand, because it’ll just bring up questions. Things asked that are too personal, queries he won’t know how to answer, information he doesn’t truly understand himself. So he just has to wait, and process, and hope that one day, he’ll stop feeling tears prick at his eyes when he hears yelling, that he’ll stay calm when someone brushes against his side by accident.

Of course it’s a hug that ruins his plans.

Patton means well, Logan knows that. He knows that it is meant to be a gesture of solidarity, the type of tactile affection his roommate gives so freely. It’s supposed to help, supposed to make him happy, supposed to be like a remedy to his unexplainably downtrodden mood that’s been going on nonstop for the past week. But as soon as Patton comes up from behind, loops his arms around Logan’s waist as he’s trying to make himself a sandwich, it’s all wrong. It feels too constricting, too much like a cage, a prison cell. Patton’s hands squeeze tightly around his midriff, hold and pressurize and pin him down, and they’re going to go lower and lower and slip between his legs and--

Logan doesn’t even get to apologize for shoving Patton into the refrigerator before tears are dripping down his cheeks and panicked hyperventilation cuts through the silence of the apartment’s kitchen.

And Patton looks much less hurt than he does confused, and worried, and almost as panicked as Logan is, and he calls for someone to help when trying to talk to him through his sobs doesn’t work. Remus is gone, and Virgil just stands at the doorway and twists his hoodie strings in his fingers nervously, but Roman is there, strong and ready to help. With both his and Patton’s help, soft hushed voices in the morning air to soothe and lull his sorrow away, Logan’s fear tapers off.

He feels bad. He tells them so, apologizes over and over to Patton for hurting him. He says he’s so sorry for pushing him off, for scaring him, and Patton just looks bewildered. “Lo-Lo, I was the one who scared you. There’s no need to apologize, that’s what I should be doing! It isn’t okay to sneak up on someone like that, it’s not your fault that you had an understandable reaction to it, honey. I’m sorry. I love you.”

And this time, just this time, Logan gets to initiate the hug, has much more control, and he feels like he can finally breathe again.

-3-

“Hey, Logan? You think walrus meat would be good in a stew?” Remus asks one day, spinning crazily in Logan’s desk chair as the owner of the chair himself quietly reads a book in his armchair. It’s a lazy day, dreary and gloomy as a storm rages outside, and Logan loves it. He adores having an excuse to hole up inside his room, to be with himself and his book and… well, Remus too, apparently.

“Maybe. I wouldn’t advise trying it, though. Regular beef is perfectly adequate and is much easier to obtain,” Logan replies monotonously, inflection lost when he’s too lost in his novel to care. Social interaction takes effort, too much to sound more normal to the ones he communicates with, and when
he’s multitasking like this he can’t concentrate long enough to even bother to try. He doesn’t want to
fake animation and liveliness, wants his care to be real. His friends deserve that.

“Yeah, guess you’re right. Hey, did’ja know that lions can fuck a hundred times a day? They have
sex over and over and over and over and over and—” Remus says, but his nasally voice slowly
bleeds away. It’s drowned out by the rushing of blood like white water rapids through Logan’s ears,
lingering on facts that don’t even really have anything to do with him. It only happened once. It was
weeks ago. He barely remembers it. But for some reason, even the mention send his thoughts into a
frantic, dizzy spiral, and it’s all back. The pain, the fear, the touches that made him feel like nothing
more than dirt on the ground.

Nausea coils in his stomach, and Logan throws up in his bedside trashcan because of his irrational
fears a second time.

“Woah, shit, you okay? Did’ja eat somethin’ rotten? Somethin’ gross? Are you sick?” Remus asks,
high and quick, and to his credit, he sounds more concerned that Logan expects even with his words.
He hands Logan some toilet paper to wipe his mouth with even as he drones on about how long it
takes for food to go bad, and although his method is unorthodox, Logan still is grateful that he’s
trying. He flushes the toilet and stands on shaky knees, gratefully leans on Remus’ extended elbow
until he’s able to sit on the edge of his bed. The silence between them extends for quite a while, a
surprisingly long time for Remus to go without talking, but then he speaks up, much quieter than he
was before.

“I do love y’a, y’know. Like another brother! You’re my friend, help me to not do too much stupid
shit. You’re a party-pooper, but you’re probably the only one keepin’ me outta jail. So thanks!” And,
well. Remus may be reckless, and vulgar, and completely irrational, but he’s a pretty good friend
too.

What Logan wore to the bar that night was one of his favourite outfits.

“Was” being the operative word in the statement, because now, he can’t even stand to look at that
pair of fishnets without tears blurring his vision and the air getting trapped in his chest. The cross-
stitched pattern is a net, a vice made to capture him, and the giant gap where threads are frayed
around the edges is a noose waiting to strangle him. Every time he looks at that pair of jeans it’s as if
his heart has been waterboarded, drowning in regret and terror and hatred, and it’s suffocating.

So he got rid of it. Threw them out, never to be seen again. It’s not a permanent solution to his
figuratively fractured heart, but it makes it just a little bit easier to breathe.

Virgil watched him that day, when he tossed the clothing into the garbage can outside their
apartment, watched his contempted eyes scan the streets and alleys around him with a vigilance that’s
all too familiar. He doesn’t know what’s going on with Logan, what caused him to have such a
drastic shift in his personality, but he can make educated guesses. That day, he came back with a cut
on his eyebrow and a raw, bleeding lip, so Virgil has the feeling that maybe he got attacked. It’s not
unheard of for people far too drunk to safely interact with others to have short tempers, and if Logan
exhibited his usual curt retorts, he may have pissed them off enough to beat him up.

Of course that’s only speculation, but something happened, and they all know it, but they just don’t
know what. It’s driving Virgil crazy, and he knows it’s severely bugging Roman too. Even Patton is
overcome with worry, but he managed to convince the two to let Logan come to them when he’s
ready. Virgil knows that’s the right thing to do, that he’d want the same thing if it were him in Logan’s position, but it doesn’t mean he has to enjoy it.

And it’s times like now when Virgil wants desperately to break that rule, to interrogate Logan until the truth is finally out, but that’s awful and would only hurt Logan. He just doesn’t know what to do anymore, not with the way he comes downstairs in the middle of the night to retrieve a glass of water for his parched throat and instead finds Logan curled as small as possible in the corner. His knees are drawn up to his chest, and he’s managed to compact himself enough to fit between the end counter and a shelf. Tears come in rivers over his cheekbones, and his hands shake, and his breathing is choppy and shallow.

“Lo. Logan, listen to me, you need to breathe. You’re having a panic attack, but it’s gonna be okay, I promise. Just follow my breathing. count to five when you breathe in, hold it for five seconds, and then breathe out for five seconds. Nice and easy,” Virgil murmurs, quiet reassurances in the dead of night. Logan tries his best despite the mortification he feels at being caught, but then again, Virgil knows what panic attacks are like better than anyone. He wouldn’t judge him or laugh at him for this. He wouldn’t. Right? “There you go. You’re doing great. Just keep breathing.”

It takes a couple more minutes to come down from the anxious cloud Logan is suspended on, and once he does, he immediately is ashamed of himself. Virgil could have been sleeping this whole time (and he needs it) and yet he’s sitting here, helping Logan with his selfish dramatics. He doesn’t know what to do, how to make it up to him, so he just apologizes, sad and angry at himself. His upset causes Virgil to shake his head as he rubs comforting, soothing circles into the back of Logan’s hand with his thumb. “Don’t worry about it, dude. Panic attacks suck, I get it. I’d much rather you come to us for help instead of brave it alone, though.”

“Thank you,” Logan whispers hoarsely, eyes wide and wet and clear and Virgil just gives him a small smile. He raises his hand up slowly, asks him if it’s okay to touch, and it almost feels like his heart stutters in its pace. He’s touched, so incredibly touched, and he’s also almost endeared. Permission is granted easily, and Virgil tucks a lock of hair behind Logan’s ear, and then he pulls him into the lightest hug Logan’s ever experienced.

“No problem. I-- I… I love you, Logan. Sorry I haven’t said it before.”

The idea of hugs is seriously starting to grow on Logan.

5

Truth or dare really is a stupid game.

“Logan, truth or dare?” Roman asks, bouncing up and down from where he sits cross-legged on the floor. The six of them are all arranged in a circle, playing a game of Truth or Dare to commemorate Ethan’s first sleepover (coined at Patton’s insistence) in their apartment. They’ve all been steadily growing closer with him, going on outings or texting in a group chat far into the early hours of the morning. Although the circumstances in which they met aren’t ideal, Logan easily finds himself glad and thankful for his presence. He’s so similar to Logan in a lot of ways; although he does enjoy engaging in chaotic activities with Remus and belting out show-tunes with Roman, he also likes the quiet, to read and debate philosophy, which has left the two of them at a mutual understanding of one another more than once.

The other five have been drinking all evening, and are currently at various levels of intoxication. Logan opted out, which earned him an understanding look from Ethan, of whom completely skipped
over him while handing out the initial first round of beers. Roman is by far the drunkest, although he isn’t completely inebriated. Remus has drunk the most, but he doesn’t really exhibit any obvious signs of intoxication, so it’s difficult to tell. Virgil has also drunk a lot, and as a result has taken the charge along with Roman on most of the dares. Patton surprisingly agreed to drink as well, and he’s been swaying on tipsy for a while now. Ethan hasn’t drunk much, but he’s definitely much more loose and carefree than before they started.

Virgil pops a handful of chips into his mouth and chases it down with some more beer as Remus takes a swig of whatever he has in his water bottle. Logan’s pretty sure it’s vinegar, but he doesn’t really feel the need to bring this fact up. Logan wants to just answer truth and get his turn over with so he can return to his novel, but they are here to have fun, and Logan would hate to ruin that.

“Dare, I suppose,” Logan sighs as he tilts his head, watches the other players’ eyes light up in various levels of conspicuousness. He’s chosen truth every single time his turn came around and answered the questions succinctly, leaving no room for confusion. He’s aware that his presence and participation are what one would consider boring, but he’s far more interested in the novel by his side than the game. He’s perfectly content to just watch their antics from the sidelines, exasperated but amused and fond, but they had insisted on him joining the game too.

“Hmm… we keep giving each other boring dares, let’s make this more fun! Logan, I dare you to… hmm… oh,” Roman vocalizes as he’s struck with an idea, sly eyes and a smirk sliding onto his face. The others lean in, intrigued, and Logan doesn’t really know what to expect. He’s never played Truth or Dare before now, hasn’t experienced a dare, so he isn’t exactly sure what a typical dare entails. “I dare you to kiss Ethan!”

Oh.

Logan doesn’t really know how to react to that. His brain is much more alert now than before, on guard despite there being no real danger around him. There’s no danger, it’s safe, it’s okay. The words of self-comfort are ones he’s uttered to himself night after night of being afraid of sleeping alone in the dark, where it’s all too easy for his vision to flash and put him right back in that man’s house, underneath his sweaty body, feeling his fingers pressing into--

“Logan? Sorry, was that too much? You don’t have to,” Roman says, confused even as he laughs and takes another drink from his plastic cup. Patton reaches over and slowly pries the cup away to replace it with a water bottle, and although Roman whines about it, he complies in the end. Virgil just continues to munch on the chips and watch them all, not even flinching when Remus drapes his arms and head over one of Virgil’s shoulders.

“A dare is a dare. I have to do it,” Logan says, clear and strong even though inside, he’s shaking. Although it is a reply to Roman, it’s also a reassurance for himself, a way to build up confidence so that he can actually do this. It’s not as if he doesn’t want to, because he does, it’s just that the thought of potentially losing control and getting hurt scares him. He feels almost guilty, because Ethan would never, ever hurt him or do something he’s uncomfortable with, but it doesn’t change the fact that the thought still nags at the back of his mind anyway.

“Nice! Go Logan!” Remus cheers, and Virgil and Roman laugh along. Patton just grins at all of them, happy and endeared as he breaks off a piece of a chocolate bar to let it melt sweet on his tongue. He hooks his arm around Roman’s neck and gives him a peck on the cheek, eyes bright and loving when Roman turns to catch his lips with his own anyway. Virgil just smiles and shakes his head even as Remus yells something about cooties right beside his ear.

“Logan, don’t, you-- you don’t know if you can handle this. You don’t have to,” Ethan stresses quietly amidst the energy, worried eyes boring into Logan’s own. And Logan knows. He knows that
it still hurts, that he could freak out any second, that he could hear whispers in his ears any second. He doesn’t care. He can’t live his life constantly afraid of intimacy. He needs to take control, take it back, and be able to conquer the demons residing in the darkest corners of his head. So instead, he just sets down his book, places his hand on Ethan’s shoulder, and draws him closer.

Playful taunts and jeers come out of the others when the two stop inches away from one another, intense eye contact serving as the only thing keeping either of them from advancing. Logan breathes slowly and deeply, lets a small smirk play in his expression. Ethan’s breath catches in his throat when he manages to break the eye contact, lets his gaze flick down to Logan’s lips before licking his own, and then--

And then. They’re kissing. They’re actually kissing, and Logan isn’t even that afraid anymore! Sure, he isn’t completely off guard, but his own want surprises him when his hand slides from the base of Ethan’s neck to tangle his fingers in soft, lightly curled locks. Ethan responds just as eagerly, allows three fingers to rest on Logan’s jaw as a guide, and the feeling causes Logan to shiver from where he sits on his knees. It feels nice, warm, comforting. Despite the tiny bit of heat coiling low in Logan’s abdomen that he knows he won’t act on, it all feels somewhat tame, just an easy slide of lips against lips as the two figure each other out. Pulling away feels like it happens far too soon, but the others are teasing them with “getting a room” (apart from Remus, who lefts the room to go find more snacks), so it’s probably best to hold off, at least for now. Ethan releases out a shaky breath, and a bright smile makes its way onto his face, and Logan is instantly smitten. Is this…

“I love you,” Ethan breathes, sure and truthful and hopeful, and Logan can pinpoint the exact moment his brain figuratively catches up to his mouth and embarrassment spreads like roses across his cheeks. The others cheer happily, saying things like “Finally!” and “ Took him long enough.” and it makes Logan wonder just how long Ethan has wanted this, how long they’ve known and he himself has been in the dark.

“I-- I love you guys, too. Fuck,” Ethan stutters out, curses his own unsure confession, and he’s stunned when looks of pure delight spread across the others’ faces. Roman looks absolutely overjoyed, and Patton is giddy with happiness, and Virgil is quiet even as a bright smile graces his typically downturned expression. Logan is aware of the acute feeling in his chest, the way the breath seems to get stuck in his lungs in a different way than that of when he’s afraid or in a panic. This feels warmer, more definite, and it only increases when Ethan smiles shyly as both Roman and Patton tackle him in a hug.

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+1

It’s interesting how quickly movie nights have become a regular occurrence among their five-man household.

With the addition of Ethan into their home, into their FamILY (as Patton says), things have become a bit different in terms of everyday life. They still wake up every morning for breakfast, still deal with Virgil’s grumbling and Remus’ energy and Roman’s singing and Patton’s laughter and Logan’s exasperation. They still play board games every Friday, still help each other with homework, still curl up in whoever’s bed is closest to leech the warmth from one another. But now, they have Ethan there, to sweep into the kitchen and pour Virgil and Logan coffee, to stir the food in the pan that Patton inevitably will forget about, to make sure the twins don’t fight over serving portions. Now he absolutely demolishes all of them at Clue, assists with whatever schoolwork he can, brushes his teeth right alongside them as they prepare for bed.

It’s strange to consider these new developments, this new relationship, and Logan finds that he’s
more entranced with the idea of it than he previously assumed. The quiet, trusting comfort they’ve
found within one another is something that Logan doesn’t quite understand, and he doesn’t think he
ever really will. It’s beyond words, beyond explanations, and that alone would normally completely
turn Logan off to it. He operates best when he can rationalize things, describe and explain and make
sense of things that happen in the world around him, but this… there’s something different. There’s
something about him that frustrated him to his core and yet he can’t let go, refuses to give it up. He
loves them too much for that.

And it’s that thought, that stray thought that floats into his head as the others lounge in various places
around the living room that sends what feels like an electric shock coursing through his veins. He
loves them. He’s in love with them, so deeply that it makes his heart ache. He loves how Virgil is
perched on the arm of the couch, how Patton giggles at every joke in the movie, how Roman sings
along with the soundtrack, how Ethan snuggles into Logan’s side as he rants about character flaws in
the downtime between action scenes. He loves them all, loves them for who they are.

Logan also loves them for being so patient with him. He loves that when he feels like he can’t escape
from the memories, Patton will take him aside to bake cupcakes and distract him from his mind
rebelling against itself. He loves that when it becomes too hard to stay focused on the present, when
his breathing becomes like painful bullets in his lungs, Virgil will count with him, hold his hands
until he doesn’t feel so lightheaded anymore. He loves that when he just can’t stop shaking, needs to
know that he’s safe, Roman will enclose him with a protective embrace and rock him until the
trembling stops. He loves that when he can feel the phantom sensation of the man’s touch on his
legs, when he can feel wispy fingers dipping between his thighs, Ethan will cocoon him in blankets
and read a story to him to stave off the terror and the nightmares. And although Logan loves Remus
in a different way than he does the others, he still loves how Remus is always happy to rant and
ramble about anything and everything at once when Logan can only hear the man’s voice playing in
a loop through his thoughts.

He loves them. His boyfriends, and one of his best friends, he feels like he’s bursting at the seams
with how much love has welled up in his chest. He wants to let them know, wants to tell them. He
wants them to understand how he feels, that he adores them unconditionally. So he does.

“I love you guys,” Logan says, soft and important when the volume is turned down on the television,
and four heads whip around to stare at him in shock as the credits roll in the background. Logan feels
a bit awkward under their scrutiny, doesn’t really know how to jump-start their movement and
cognizance again, so he just gives a tiny, genuine smile.

Apparently, that’s plenty enough to achieve the effect he wanted, but Logan doesn’t expect for three
bodies to immediately hurl themselves at him in a massive group hug. Ethan simply turns and places
his face in the crook of Logan’s neck, laughs silently as Patton starts crying and Roman goes off on a
long, dramatic spiel declaring his love and Virgil just buries his face in Logan’s arm. And Logan
flinches, of course he flinches, because the sudden touch startles him. But he’s not scared. He doesn’t
feel afraid, doesn’t feel unsafe, and a gentle, shining warmth glows within him. And he gets it now.
He understands what that warmth is. It’s pure, unadulterated love, and he wouldn’t have it any other
way.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:
Rape aftermath/memories of noncon/talk of phantom sensations & memories from the event
Panic attacks/hyperventilation/crying/emotional breakdowns
Remus-typical vulgar/disturbing language (mild)
Mention of animal mating habits
Vomiting (non-graphic/not described in detail)
Self-deprecation
Cursing
When Deceit wakes up, he realizes three things simultaneously. One, it’s fucking cold, so cold that he can’t feel his hands or feet. Two, his head feels like it was just run over by a truck, like his brain got melted into mush and now he can barely think properly. Three, he’s not dead. He knows he’s not dead, he’s not gone, because Logan is sitting in a chair across the room quietly reading a book. If Deceit had truly succeeded, Logan wouldn’t be here, and he wouldn’t have woken up at all.

Shit.

“Wh… What happened? Why’m I not gone?” Deceit asks hoarsely, words slurred and throat gravelly from disuse. Much of his existence has been defined by his innate ability to repulse people, to scare them and push them away, so it’s more than a shock for him when Logan glances up from his book and gives him a small smile. That warm look is always reserved for the others, the ones who actually deserve it, so seeing it directed towards himself steals the breath from his lungs.

“You’re awake, I see. Are you in any pain?” Logan asks as he strides over to stand in front of where Deceit is lying propped up on a stack of pillows. He raises his hand to check for a fever, the backs of his fingers a warm balm on cool skin. When he detects nothing unusual, Logan tucks a loose strand of hair behind Deceit’s ear, tilts his head and listens with rapt attention as Deceit describes his points of pain (throat, stomach, head). The care he’s being given is so unexpected, and surreal, and Deceit is almost desperate to keep receiving it. He doesn’t remember the last time he had any kind of affection directed towards him, the last time someone cared enough to ask if he was okay. It’s odd, yet addicting in a way.
“Why aren’t I… should’a died,” Deceit whispers as his brows pull in, an unmistakably sad look
echoing in his distant eyes. It doesn’t feel like there’s much else to say when his legs curl up to meet
his chin, when he gazes ruefully at the blankets in front of him, and yet Logan somehow knows how
to quell even a little bit of the turbulence in Deceit’s mind. He just sighs and sits on the bed, adjusts
his glasses, and clears his throat with restlessness barely hidden below a mask of indifference.

“Roman found you in the tub. We immediately got to work caring for you and attempting to keep
you alive, however you fell into a coma, which is obviously irreversible when the injury is self-
inflicted. You have been asleep for approximately three weeks, and it… has been, well. Chaotic, for
lack of a better term. As you did not die, there was no replacement to act in your stead, but since you
were not awake to properly facilitate your function, Thomas was unable to employ your trait at all. It
caused a lot of havoc, you know,” Logan says softly, exhaustion clear in his face and voice. A gentle
finger wraps around one of Deceit’s own, holding it in a gesture of comfort, a promise. “I’m… I
apologize for not saying anything that day, for not stopping Patton. I should not have been so
cowardly as to enable the casting away of such an important side.”

And though Logan’s voice is thick, his sentiment remains steady, a quiet regret laced in the
atonement that’s just as heavy as the tears building in Deceit’s eyes. He never thought in a million
years that Logan would ever apologize to him, that anyone would ever care enough about him to feel
guilty. It tears through him like a whirlwind, switching back and forth between joy and grief so
quickly it’s causing a migraine to poke tauntingly behind his eyes.

“No, Logan that’s… s’not your fault. You didn’t wanna get hurt, and that’s good. I’m glad you didn’t.
I’m… ‘m self-preservation-- not just for me and Thomas, but for you sides ‘s well. You getting
mistreated would be far more painful than anything I’ve had to endure,” Deceit mumbles, wet eyes
shining as he finally raises his head to meet Logan’s sorrowful scrutiny. Logan swallows hard as he
moves his fingers to thread through Deceit’s own, unusual tactility breathing in a space meant for
rest. His posture is tense, a sure sign of discomforted remorse, and it takes all of Deceit’s effort not to
reach forward and gather him in a protective hug.

“It’s not an excuse, though. I still shouldn’t have allowed them to push you out like that, should’ve
tried harder to get them to understand how valuable and important you are to Thomas. Like you are
to me,” Logan stresses, and Deceit’s breath catches in his throat. He… does he really care that
much? He thinks Deceit is important even when Deceit doesn’t believe that himself? That he’s of
value? That… that he isn’t worthless?

And Logan has never been one for brevity, has always been ready to go on tangents of information
and explanations and reassurance. He always clarifies things, breaks them down to the true basics to
expose them for what they really are. He teaches, and cultivates minds and knowledge, and he’s so
incredibly fascinating to watch. His mind is mesmerizing, the way he forms his thoughts so clearly
and concisely that it’s impossible to have things be lost in translation.

“You keep Thomas safe, Deceit. You are his verbal shield, of sorts, what gives him the ability to
protect himself and others. You strive for him to better himself and to do things for himself. You
allow him to treat himself kinder, let him live easier without so much stress and responsibility and
exhaustion. Although I don’t agree with some of your viewpoints, you only want what’s best for
Thomas and will fight for it despite everyone pushing back on you anyway. You’re the only one of
us who is truly alone and yet you’re brave enough to face the scorn just so that you can do your best
to help Thomas. I… I admire you, Deceit. You are much stronger than I could ever be. It’s why you
can’t leave us. I know selfishness is in your nature, and wanting to disappear is understandable given
the circumstances of your existence, but… Thomas can’t function properly without you. He’s almost
lost three friends just this week, which would only be detrimental to his mental and emotional state.
We need you to stay. I need you to stay.”
And, well, if an immeasurably vulnerable Deceit is only able to burst out into tears, bury his sobs in the fabric of Logan’s button-up shirt while they both rock soothingly back and forth, then maybe it was time to really, truly let go.

To Deceit’s surprise, the second person he sees after waking up is Virgil. Logan has apparently allowed Deceit to stay in his room throughout the duration of his slumber, but Deceit is seriously starting to miss his pet snake, Ethel, so he managed to convince Logan to let him switch to his own bedroom. It’s odd to walk after not moving at all for weeks, so leaning on Logan’s shoulder for support is crucial to making sure he doesn’t fall over and take a nose dive into the floor.

It’s in the hallway that they run into the anxious side, and where Deceit is sure he’s about to get yelled at or something. Although they had been close in childhood, once Virgil left them, his attitude flipped like a switch for no apparent reason. For a long time, Deceit wondered what he did, thought that Virgil’s hate was warranted, but now… although he still doesn’t truly believe he belongs with anyone, he’s done throwing a pity party for himself. He didn’t do anything wrong, has never done anything to purposely harm Virgil, and hell if he’s gonna let the other side's scalding remarks poke holes in his self-esteem.

“D… Deceit?” Virgil breathes when he sees them, stops in his tracks and hides further in his hood. Logan looks at Deceit questioningly, as if telling him that he will absolutely walk right past Virgil without a word if Deceit wanted him to, and it’s so reassuring that Deceit immediately feels a thousand times more ready to finally face this. “You’re actually awake.”

“Yeah. I am,” Deceit says, and then he realizes that he needs to say this now before he loses his courage again. A sigh escapes him as he rubs his eye tiredly, and Logan squeezes his waist comfortingly. “I’m not leaving, Virgil. I don’t know what your problem is with me, I don’t know why you hate me so much when we used to be best friends, and I don’t know what I did to you that was so awful that you have to fight with me every time I’m around. I don’t. But I’m tired of spending night after night crying to myself and wondering what I did wrong. I think… I think it’s time for me to ask what you did wrong, and I don’t know if I can really forgive you for the things you’ve said to me right now. But I’m here, and I’m staying for good, and you’re gonna have to learn to get over that because I’m seriously getting sick of feeling like I'm not good enough for you.”

Wow. That little rant made him feel the best he has felt in a long time. Although he’s pinching himself hard and using the pain as a way to be able to tell the full truth outside of their rooms, a certain clarity befalls him with each word. It’s immensely relieving to finally say the things he’s been wanting to tell Virgil for years, to finally let himself think that maybe it’s not his fault for once. And he can tell Logan is proud of him, judging by the way his eyes shine with respect despite his neutral expression.

Virgil looks miserable, and Deceit wants to feel bad, but he doesn’t. He doesn’t regret what he said a single bit, doesn’t wish to take back any of his words. The anxious side opens his mouth as if he’s going to say something, but aborts the action at the last second, instead going to stare at the floor while he chews on his lip. His silence means a lot more than Virgil himself likely realizes, meanings and intentions and unnamed thoughts spilling out in the space between them, and Deceit nudges Logan so that they can walk around him and into Deceit’s own bedroom.

They have a long way to go, but Deceit can already feel the tiniest bit of hope shining inside him.

-
more permanent spot in the group, after a particularly heated argument with Logan than ended with
the three of them finally coming to a mutual understanding with one another. Secondly, Virgil is
talking to him again. Not the passive-aggressive banter, not the scathing insults, not the glares and
hostility that Deceit is so used to. Now, he’s really trying to actually talk to him, will speak about
something that happened in the news with him at the dinner table or show him memes when they’re
both chilling in the mindscape living room. There’s so much more there, so much more respect and
care, and Deceit has a feeling that they might even be friends again sometime soon.

Thirdly, Deceit has barely seen and hasn’t talked to Patton outside of filming videos.

Although Deceit doesn’t particularly want to speak with Patton, listen to him say that "he’s a bad
influence, Thomas is a good person, you can’t be here", it’s still odd that he’s somehow able to never
be in the room when Deceit enters. When he does catch him off guard, the older side only gives him
an unreadable look and makes his exit as quickly and inconspicuously as possible, typically taking
advantage of the twins’ commotion to slip out undetected. Deceit notices, because of course he does,
and to his own surprise, it doesn’t bother him as much as he expects. He’ll just wait for Patton to
come to him, whenever he’s finally ready to admit his faults and apologize, so there’s no point in
fretting over it.

However, Deceit does need to talk with the twins, Roman more so than Remus, and it’s this need
that leaves him standing outside Roman’s door at one in the morning, a fist raised to knock. It’s not
like he has to worry about Roman being asleep, because he’s always awake into the late hours of the
night, frantically coming up with new ideas just to veto them all anyway. His process is almost
manic, completely self-destructive, and it garners a lot of sympathy from a part of himself that can
sorely relate.

The three swift raps on the door evoke a surprised squawk from within the bedroom, and multiple
loud thumps can be heard before the heavily decorated door swings open. Deceit just stands there
with a judgemental expression, lightheartedly raising an eyebrow in amusement at the sight of the
creative side. He’s covered head-to-toe in glitter, multiple colours sparkling when the plastic reflects
the dim light coming from the hall. He looks ridiculous, with the flakes in his hair and eyelashes and
clothing, but he manages to look confident even despite that. It’s fake, Deceit knows it’s fake, but he
humours him anyway.

“What’re you doing in there?” Deceit asks, a sly smirk playing on his lips, and Roman has the
humility for an embarrassed blush to spread across his cheeks. He fidgets with the bottom of his coat
even as he puts on a brave face, and Deceit can see through him so easily. Maybe it has to do with
his purpose, the fact that the very arrogance the princely side portrays is a lie in itself, or maybe it’s
because Roman is just that transparent.

“Just-- Just creating art! None of your business! Why’re… why are you here?” Roman asks, initial
loudness tapering off to reveal uncertainty and vulnerability, and it’s a wonder the others haven’t
figured this out sooner. Roman is so painfully obvious in his insecurity, shows how much he truly
doubts himself and his work like a flashing neon sign above his head.

“I wanted to talk. Come to an understanding, if you will.” Deceit hums, adjusts his trusty bowler hat
on his head casually despite it actually being a nervous tic. He doesn’t actually know what Roman is
going to say, doesn’t know if he’s going to fall back on yelling and accusations and swing out his
sword just like he did before. Will Deceit be left with a scar this time, too? Will he gain another
streak of raised white, another lightning bolt stretching across the expanse of his skin, marring the
smooth surface just like last time?

“Oh. Uh, um. Come in, then, I-I guess,” Roman stutters, picks at a flake of shimmering chipped nail
polish as he steps to the side. His room is just as much of a mess as Deceit expects if not more, but the vexation he feels as he scans the aftermath of a creative tornado is just as acute. Stacks of parchment paper are piled in high towers around the room, looming overhead like a thundercloud of loathing. Pens and pencils and fabric and threads are strewn about, placed in such an intrinsically accurate way that it feels like the chaos is almost organized. It’s meticulous in its frenzy, a passionate craze that seems to be woven into so much of how the other side functions.

“I came to ask you for a favour. I ask you to not whip out your katana at me any time we are in the vicinity of one another. We wouldn’t want a repeat of last time, no?” Deceit asks, smooth and suave and uninterested on the surface. Of course, underneath he isn’t faring as well, but Roman doesn’t need to know that. Deceit is just waiting for Roman’s congeniality to flip on its head like a switch, for the civil nature of their interaction to turn sour when he decides he’s done listening to him. He’s expecting for Roman to yell, or maybe even for a fist to come his way, and he’ll have to start back at square one again. That’s just how Roman is. Fiercely protective, headstrong even when that same stubbornness and fire causes him to stumble, to put his attention in the wrong place.

But he doesn’t. Roman doesn’t get angry, in fact, he gets quite a sad look in his eyes at Deceit’s words. The way his gaze probes far into Deceit’s own, pulls him apart and examines his intentions and thoughts and feelings, it all leaves him feeling incredibly vulnerable. And he is uncomfortable when against all odds, Roman just darts forward to pull Deceit into his arms, smushes his half-scaled face into a broader chest with a passion that has never, ever been for him.

“But of course, small snake! A true prince would never brandish his blade at anyone other than a foe, and you, my Daring Deception, are far from it,” Roman tells him with a full tone and bright eyes, and the way he looks down at Deceit with such compassion and care to completely contradict his usual regards leaves Deceit’s head spinning. The snake-like side looks up at Roman from where he’s snuggled into his chest, gives him wide eyes and a look of surprise that he forgets to mask, and Roman’s smile is so much more gentle than Deceit thought he had the capacity for. “You are a friend. You’re a brave, shining knight to protect Thomas, just like me! If you ask me, I think we’d make a pretty good team.”

The endeared grin Deceit gives him in return surprises both of them equally.

Deceit doesn’t expect much to happen when he rises up in Remus’ room. The place is just as messy as always, just as chaotic as Roman’s is but in a different way. While Roman can make sense of the chaos, search through the whirlwind with such accuracy as if rifling through a file cabinet, Remus simply takes a sniff and hopes for the best. He doesn’t bother with organization of any kind, doesn’t bother with making things easier on himself, and Deceit supposes that very tendency can account for a lot of the behaviour Remus has portrayed in the past.

“Double Dee! What’cha doin’ here? Wanna try the sandwich I made? It has strawberries and eel meat and tartar sauce! Here, have a bite!” Remus demands excitedly, childishly, and despite the disgust Deceit feels while looking at the absolutely abominable excuse of edible food squished between Remus’ fingers, he only shakes his head neutrally. He just needs to get this over with, make sure everything is okay between them.

“I’ve already eaten today, Remus. Maybe next time. Actually, I wanted to ask you something,” Deceit dismisses, waves a gloved hand as he clears away some garbage for a spot to sit on Remus’ bed. The owner of said bed perks up from where he sits cross-legged on the floor, a rigidly-postured Remus surrounded by a circle of discarded candy wrappers. Deceit only hopes Remus actually ate them, and didn’t do something stupid, like glue them to his legs or see how many he could shove up
his nose. “Do you... do you hate me?”

“What? ’f course not! You’re fun, Dee-Dee! Almost as fun as when rollercoasters go flying off their tracks and smash into a building and go up in flames with the screaming passengers still inside! Hey, what did dying feel like?” Remus answers, jumping and shifting from one topic to another so fast it’s giving Deceit whiplash. He doesn’t like to linger on a particular topic for very long with the exception of him being the one to bring it up, unless it’s immediately or inherently shunned by someone else for existing. That only adds fuel to the fire, gives Remus a reason to keep perpetuating the idea, because the more Thomas doesn’t want to think about something, the more he’s guaranteed to toil under it. “You wanted to die, right? Otherwise you wouldn’t’a ate all those pills. ’cept I already know that we can actually die ’n’ be replaced, since that’s what happened with our ol’e pal Lust. And the new one got thrown in the subconscious a week later, so. Are y’a wantin’ to leave? Wanna... wanna leave me behind?”

And Deceit doesn’t really know what to say to that. They didn’t talk much when they were still living together in the “dark” part of the mindscape, not even when they were three instead of two. They’ve never been particularly close, and yet Remus sounds genuinely upset at the notion of Deceit leaving for good. His impact must be much larger than he’s thought all this time, to cause such hurt and betrayal in someone he was sure was indifferent to his presence.

“Of course not, Remus. It was a mistake, and I won’t make it again. I’m staying, this time, and I’m not gonna leave you alone,” Deceit consoles, reassures despite the fact that Remus isn’t outwardly upset. He doesn’t cry, he doesn’t lash out, he doesn’t scream or shout or yell. He simply sits there, stares with his wistful, bitter brown eyes, and it makes him simultaneously all too easy to read and yet incredibly difficult.

“Oh. Well, good! That means I can make y’a more sandwiches! Chef’s special!” They’re sure to be disgusting. But maybe Deceit can pretend to like it just to see delight burst to life on Remus’ face.

Confronting Patton is the scariest thing Deceit has ever had to do in his entire existence as a side.

Despite what Logan said the day he woke up, Deceit is a coward. It’s a direct result of his purpose; after all, what kind of self-preservation would run straight into danger with no regard to what might happen after? His caution is certainly warranted, given the situation, but it doesn’t necessarily mean that it isn’t still difficult. It’s hard to be so distrusting of someone who’s supposed to be a helper, someone who’s supposed to be Thomas’ morality. And Thomas is a good person, at times dangerously so, which makes Patton’s actions that day so many years ago so confusing.

Despite how part of him rings a pulsing red alarm when he’s even within a twenty-foot radius around the patriarchal side, there’s an even bigger part that’s yelling at him to hurry up and instigate an apology already, because this is getting annoying. He just wanted to wait, to let Patton come up with the correct conclusion on his own, because how else will he truly learn? But Deceit can’t even be in the same room with him without the other side scampering away at the first opportunity, and he’s tired of playing these cat-and-mouse games. The worst part is, he doesn’t even know if he’s the cat or the mouse.

Having already made amends with all of the others, Deceit decides it’s time to stop putting this off. If Patton won’t suck it up and apologize, or if he really is just that oblivious to the point of all of this, then fine. He can be like that. Deceit will just come to him. And so he does, manages to sneak up on him while he’s in the kitchen, humming as he makes himself a salad. It’s late, so everyone else is either asleep or pretending to be, and it creates a space where Deceit can do this on his own. Although he’s embarrassed, Deceit isn’t too proud to admit that he is a little afraid, that he can see
Patton turning on him and hurting him as a vivid mental image playing in a loop. He just hopes this doesn’t go that way.

“Patton,” Deceit says stoically, not exactly a greeting, but more of an accusation. Patton lets out a little shocked yelp and whips around, butter knife out as if he’s going to actually use it. Deceit may be scared, but apparently Patton is too, and he has no right to be. Before Patton can sink out and run away just like every other time, Deceit grabs his shoulder, gently but assertively pushing him down into the kitchen chair scooted away from the table.

Patton looks up at him with terrified eyes and an almost nauseous expression, and it takes a lot of personal control for Deceit to not be offended. Who is he to be afraid of Deceit? What has Deceit done to hurt and scare him so badly? What gives him the right to be so frightened, the nerve to seem petrified of this encounter after how he treated Deceit? Anger boils up in Deceit’s throat listlessly, a nebulous animosity that yearns to explode. It only builds when Patton cowers under the snake-like side’s unperturbed stare.

“We need to talk. No more of your running away,” Deceit demands, stern and obstinate, but he’s sure his firm demeanour appears much more inexorable to the fatherly side. Although Deceit really is trying his best to not be antagonistic, his ire is only fueling his volatility, leaving his self-restraint put through the wringer in the face of his almost overwhelming sense of betrayal. What took place that day should never have happened, the events seemingly a direct antithesis to Patton’s usual intentions and motivations as Morality, but it did, and he can’t go any longer trying to escape responsibility and repercussions while Deceit shoulders all of the stress it caused.

“W--W-What do you wanna t-talk about, kiddo?” Patton stutters, stumbles around a feigned ignorance as his eyes dart between everything but Deceit’s own steely gaze. His fingers tremble as he fidgets with them, attempts a distraction from the confrontation, and it’s so unfair that Deceit almost wants to turn and kick the side of the counter in an angry outburst. He doesn’t, of course, because he’s not that brazenly juvenile, but he sure does wish he could.

“I’m not your kiddo, not after what you did to me. Don’t you dare call me that,” Deceit hisses as he slams a hand down on the table right beside where Patton is leaning. The latter of the two flinches, jumps with a tiny scared squeal dying in his throat before it can even be released into the silence left after Deceit’s outburst. He swallows hard as tears prick at his eyes, shine in the dim light of the kitchen, and Deceit feels no sympathy at all.

“I-- I… I’m sorry!” Patton blurts out, uncertain under Deceit’s withering glare. His admission feels fake, hollow, empty. It echoes in the room for a round, allows Deceit a moment to quell the curses that well up in his throat and dance on his silver tongue. “I didn’t mean to--”
“Yes you did, don’t lie to me,” Deceit spits, interrupting the fake reassurance and stopping it in its tracks before it can become bigger than it deserves to be. Patton’s mouth snaps shut as he looks down at his lap, arms slowly shifting to curl around himself in a mockery of an embrace. Fine. Let him garner all the comfort he can get, because he sure won’t be comfortable when Deceit is done.

“You made me think I was safe, that I had a family. I had existed in the mindscape for a total of two hours before you threw me out for something I couldn’t even control. And I’m half-snake, you know that— did you know that snakes are cold-blooded?” Deceit asks, and he laughs humourlessly when he sees a dawning realization that turns into horror on Patton’s face. “I almost died out there. When Virgil found me, he had to literally bring me back to life moments before I would have fully faded away. Do you know how much that fucking scared him?

“You turned everyone who I ever thought could have been a friend against me. Roman was so happy to finally have someone to go on adventures with, and the next time I saw him, he hated me. I wonder why, hm? Did you know that after he switched his sword from plastic to metal, after you made him believe that I’m the evil villain he needs to slay, he tried to do exactly that? I still have the scar,” Deceit says bitterly as he lifts his hand up. He ignores Patton’s flinch in favour of pushing aside the fabric of his capelet and shirt, showing the paternal side the raised white line that jaggedly falls from the top of his shoulder to about halfway down his arm. A whimper spills from Patton’s lips, desperate and ashamed, and Deceit really hopes he’s finally starting to get it.

“Not to mention what you did to Logan. He was so fucking terrified to speak up about what you did to me that he stayed silent, went directly against his purpose as a side just to make sure that he wouldn’t be thrown out and ostracized too. Do you know how much that hurts me, as self-preservation? What’s even worse is that I’m glad he stayed quiet and kept himself safe, because who knows what could have happened if he dared to go against Morality.”

With the words shot from Deceit’s mouth like a bullet from a revolver, tears finally breach Patton’s lashes, roll over his cheekbones and fall in droplets onto his pants. His shoulders shudder under the weight of silent sobs, and even as Patton’s lips twist as he tries not to cry audibly, he still keeps his head held up while he listens. The action is peculiar, and Deceit knows what he’s trying to convey, but atonement is much more than just that. It’s a start, but there’s certainly a long way to go.

“Virgil was my best friend, you know. I cared about him so fucking much, and he was the only one who truly had my back when I was still recovering from what you did. But even he wanted to have a taste of acceptance, and it wasn’t a surprise in the slightest when he suddenly hated me the next time we were able to talk. Your brainwashing knows no limits, truly,” Deceit sneers, contempt in his eyes and pain in his heart. He doesn’t want to open up. He doesn’t want to be honest like this, doesn’t want to pinch himself until he’s numb just so he can focus long enough to finally show Patton the truth about what he’s done. He doesn’t want to, but he has to, because he’ll just regret it if he doesn’t.

“I wasn’t really ever close friends with Remus, but that doesn’t matter because Remus shouldn’t even exist. In fact, neither should Roman. You split Creativity apart, forced them apart based on your arbitrary set of rules for Thomas to abide by, and shoved him into a harmful, narrow mindset. And if that wasn’t enough, you couldn’t even let them properly be brothers and grow up together as siblings, like they should have. No, you shoved Remus out just like me, and it caused him to hole himself up in his room for nearly twenty years just so he could use his part of the Imagination to make a world where he wasn’t separated from his literal other half. He likes to act like he doesn’t care, but I know he does, and he shouldn’t fucking have to.

“You’ve only brought suffering upon me, and Remus, and Virgil at one point. To those who needed you the most, you scorned and demonized, and left us with no guidance or warmth simply because
you don’t like our purpose. But we are all sides of Thomas, just as much as you are, and whether you like it or not, we are important and needed. I’m done trying to convince myself to be the villain, to play into your fantasy and the knowledge that I’d never get accepted or be listened to. I deserve so much more than you’re giving me, and I’m never going to make the mistake of inherently trusting you again. This time, you have to earn it.”

“I’m so sorry, Deceit,” Patton whispers, slow and thick and watery at the same time, and the soft, quiet words cause Deceit to completely deflate. He’s so tired, so fucking exhausted, and he knows that it’s going to be this way for a long time.

And maybe it’s too much. Maybe it’ll take too long, or maybe it’ll never happen. Maybe they’ll never truly fix this, mend and repair the cracks driven between them as a result of how Deceit grew up. Maybe Deceit will never work up the courage to forgive Patton, to be able to look at him without fear and anger leaping up into his throat. But none of that matters, not really, because Deceit finally has people who care about him, people who will stand up for him and support him when he can’t do it himself. And for now, maybe that’s all he really needs.

Chapter End Notes

CONTENT WARNINGS:

Suicide attempt aftermath (it isn't really talked about much, but it is mentioned)
Not unsympathetic Patton but he is an asshole in this and he sees the errors of his ways (hopeful ending)
Remus-typical disturbing/violent language
Angry confrontation
Mentions of a scar/violent altercation
Mentions/implications of brainwashing
Cursing
Day 31: Embrace

Chapter Summary

Prompt no.31, "Embrace".  
*The sun shines brightly and we finally claim our victory.*

Warnings in end notes!

Chapter Notes

**Word Count:** 4008

**Relationships:** DLAMP (romantic), Creativitwins (familial) NOT remrom

A/N: !!!!!!!!!!!!! aaaaa oh my gosh i'm finally done!!! i know i've had some slips and that my timing wasn't always the greatest, but surprisingly, i did every single prompt!!!!!! a lot of these works aren't very good, but i'm just glad i managed to get them all out regardless. here's the final fic, just a bunch of cute fluff!! hope ya'll enjoy this roman-centric piece, and thanks for sticking around with me throughout this stressful dabble into the land of writing challenges!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Roman has a checklist.

It’s a small one, boasting only five items, but they’re all very important. The list itself does have a physical form, a glittery artwork on a big poster board that sits proudly on his desk, but it mostly just resides in his own mind. Although he absolutely would if he could, carrying the big paper around while he completes the tasks would just get annoying after a while, and probably take away from the sincerity of his actions. He wants to be as genuine as possible, to match the love residing in his heart, so it’s important that he tries to be more serious about this. Maybe he can take some pages out of Logan’s book.

Finally finishing his checklist is literally the only thing he’s been thinking about recently, constantly in his mind nagging for completion. He thinks of it in the shower, at dinner, during their movie nights, you name it. And he’s thinking of it now, as he sits in his cushy desk chair and stares with rapt attention at his swirling, loopy handwriting and artistic doodles. It may be a short list, but certain tasks are likely to be a huge undertaking, so he’s brainstorming ideas on how to properly carry them out. One or two of which will be easy, but the others require a certain delicate touch to make sure it all goes as smoothly as possible.

He thinks he’s ready.

So Roman decides to start at task number one, which pertains to a certain fatherly side. He’s sure to be in the kitchen baking cookies, as evident by the delicious smell wafting up the stairs and down the
hallway and underneath Roman’s door, so he feels fairly confident as he descends the stairs and strides into the kitchen. The smell is much stronger in here, and Roman can easily pick apart the various aromas given off by brown sugar, vanilla, and chocolate.

“These smell absolutely delectable, Padre!” Roman exclaims as he sweeps over to where Patton stands, leaning sideways on the counter as he watches the other side mold little balls of cookie dough to place on the tray in front of him. Said side looks up in surprise as he plops a mound of sweetness onto the baking paper, and a happy grin spreads across his face at the compliment.

“Thanks, kiddo! There’s a tray in the oven already, and it’ll be done in about ten minutes if you want some!” Patton tells him as he scoops out another chunk of dough from his mixing bowl, surprisingly accurate and uniform in relation to the size of all the other cookies. Roman is tempted to swipe his finger through the bowl and steal a little bit of the uncooked treat to snack on, but his mission right now is much more important, as much as he hates to pass up some of Patton’s baking.

“Actually, I came down here for something else,” Roman says cryptically, a sly smile playing at his lips when Patton sets down the ball of dough and turns to him attentively. Before he can voice his question, Roman pulls him into a tight hug, and his smirk widens when Patton makes a little noise of confusion. The other side is soon to recover, though, and he lets out happy giggles as he throws his arms around Roman’s neck. To his surprise, Roman is soon forced to move his arms when Patton jumps up and wraps his legs around him. Roman’s little huff is drowned out by Patton’s bell-like laughter, but he can’t help chuckling anyway when the gleeful side lays a flurry of kisses on his forehead, and nose, and cheeks, and lips.

“Awe, Roman! I love you so much,” Patton swoons, shifting to cup Roman’s face in his hands, and soon Roman can taste the vague sweetness of vanilla and sugar on his tongue.

God, this is gonna suck.

Okay, listen. They’ve come a long way from the days of constant arguments, from how they used to insult and snap at each other any chance they got. Roman knows how much progress they’ve made, and he’s come to really, really love their resident emo. But although he did agree to join their relationship, he hasn’t changed in the sense that he still has a lot of trouble opening up. Accepting and returning affection, especially physical, is not something that Virgil has mastered at all. And that’s fine! His love language is just a bit different, and Roman knows he cares just as much. But goddamnit, maybe he just wants to cuddle with his favourite emo once in a while, alright?

So yeah, this is going to be difficult. And he’s likely to get slapped in the arm and pushed away. But he’s still going to try, because Virgil is the second item on the checklist, and it’d be a shame to not finish it.

There’s almost an odd sense of dread as Roman walks down the hallway, an uncertainty as he approaches Virgil’s black door. Roman almost wants to turn on his heel and run away, but he’s already here, so he might as well just follow through with it. Raising his hand up to knock is mildly nerve-wracking, but the thought of getting to embrace the anxious side is incentive enough to deliver a few swift knocks on the glossy wood.

A few moments of silence pass before Roman can hear footsteps, and then the doorknob is turning from the other side. The door opens with a soft click, and it swings open in a leisurely arc to reveal a tired-looking Virgil peeking out from behind the dark paint. He raises an eyebrow when he registers the identity of his interrupter, rubs his bleary eyes with a fist covered in his jacket sleeve, and Roman really hopes he didn’t wake the other side up. Virgil already doesn’t get enough sleep, and it really
wouldn’t do for him to lose more unnecessarily.

“Princey? What’s up?” Virgil asks, voice soft and a bit hoarse, and Roman actually kind of melts a little bit where he stands. Despite his exhaustion, Virgil really does look beautiful, stormy brown eyes looking at him with a surprising amount of trust from under his bangs and hood. Not for the first time, Roman feels his throat close almost painfully in the face of the all-encompassing love that wells up inside of him. “Shouldn’t you be in bed?”

“Oh, uh, sorry if I woke you up. I just-- I wanted to give you something,” Roman stammers, a small blush spreading across his face. He didn’t realize how late it must be, if even Virgil is confused as to his conscious state, so he must have been staring at his checklist for longer than he originally thought he was. A questioning hum comes from the tired side in front of him, and there’s a second where it feels like Roman might just run away. What if Virgil gets mad and slams the door in his face? It’s not like Roman would blame him. What was he thinking, coming here this late?

“Princey, you alright? What is it?” Virgil asks, caring and concerned, and Roman breathes out shakily. He surges forward and wraps his arms around the side in front of him, squeezes gently around his huge jacket, and Virgil huffs out a surprised breath. To Roman’s shock, Virgil easily laces his fingers together around Roman’s back, knocks his head companionably against the prince’s temple with a tiny, low laugh. “What, that’s all? What were you all worked up about, you drama queen?”

Roman knows he should be offended, but right now, kissing the life out of his soft, amused boyfriend is much more important.

If Roman’s being honest, the next item on this list is one of the ones that scares him the most. It’s not that Deceit hates him, or anything, but he’s really unpredictable. Roman has had the biggest crush on him for, well, ever, and he’s never acted on it before out of fear that Deceit will laugh at him or brush him off. He’s just so cool, and awesome, and although Roman was a little uneasy about his snake features at first, he’s come to think of them as unique and beautiful.

So standing here in front of Deceit’s swirly yellow door certainly gives Roman pause, and he draws a resemblance to his encounter with Virgil a couple of days ago. Both of the ex-dark sides act similarly in that they’re very protective of their space, valuing privacy and personal freedom over much else. Although it went well with Virgil, Roman just hopes that Deceit won’t see this as encroaching on his territory.

Before Roman can even knock, Deceit’s door swings open, and the other side leans on his doorframe with crossed arms and a lazy smirk. The other side is wearing a yellow hoodie and black sweatpants in lieu of his usual ensemble, and the casual clothing suits him far more than Roman expects. His comfortable attire makes Deceit look comfortable by extension, and all Roman can see is his potential soft snake boyfriend. Wanting bubbles up in the prince’s lungs, and he opens his mouth to speak.

“Deceit! I, uh. I wanted to, uh. Give you… something. Um-- here!” Roman tries and fails to articulate his intentions, and Deceit looks even more amused than before. Roman feels a vague sense that he’s being made fun of, but Deceit isn’t like that, and it’s probably just his own uncertainty and insecurity rearing its ugly head. Roman knows his confidence is often fake, but this time he’s putting that aside to focus on the present. He just hopes he’s good enough for the snake-like side to actually want to be with him.

“Hm? And what would that be?” Deceit muses smoothly, and his snake eye glints sharply in the
light. It’s ominous, sure, but Roman knows it’s also incredibly fake, just a mask to put on. He behaves like that for the sole purpose of riling people up, acts like a scary villain to push people away because he’s scared to let someone get too close and trust them with a more vulnerable part of himself; he is self-preservation, after all. Roman’s not near as oblivious as one might think, and a lot of his knowledge and ability to see through the act comes from very familiar cues in Deceit that he knows are also present in himself.

So slowly stepping forward in Deceit’s space is just as much for himself as it is for Deceit, silent solidarity in the way he gently pulls the other side into a warm hug by his tense shoulders. Said side winces, allows a single moment of transparency from being caught off guard, and it just stirs an aching inside Roman’s chest. Deceit deserves just as much affection and reassurance as the rest of them, and he deeply regrets treating him like he did when he was so quick to put labels on someone before truly getting to know them.

“I, uh. I like you, Deceit. A lot. Like, romantically. Actually, I think I love you. And It’s—it’s okay if you don’t feel the same! But I just. I dunno, I want you to know you’re not alone, y’know? I got your back, so… if you ever need help, or wanna talk or something… my door’s always open, okay?” Roman says, quiet and careful and filled with so much love, and he can feel Deceit shudder in his hold. Unsure fists come up to clench in the fabric of Roman’s prince jacket, search for the comfort and support he isn’t used to receiving, and Roman is determined to never let Deceit feel alone ever again.

“I… I like you too, Roman. Romantically. That’s… weird to say. Roman tically. Huh. Ah— thanks. I appreciate it,” Deceit stumbles out even more awkwardly than Roman expects, soft and searching, and Roman realizes he really, really overestimated Deceit’s self-confidence capabilities. Roman knows he doesn’t exactly have the best track record for self-confidence, but he’s slowly learning to believe in himself with the help of his boyfriends. Deceit just… doesn’t have that. At least, he didn’t before. Now, though, when Roman presses a short kiss to the shorter side’s cheek, when Deceit breathes out a rush of air and turns to catch Roman’s lips with his own, he isn’t going to be alone anymore.

Literally the last thing Roman expects to see when he enters Logan’s room for the first time is the logical side in a unicorn onesie watching cartoons as he drinks from a sippy cup.

For a moment, he thinks he’s dreaming, what with the way Logan turns to him with wide eyes when the door clicks closed behind him. The bespectacled side doesn’t seem scared, or irritated, or surprised, but rather overjoyed, something Roman realizes with a sinking heart that he hasn’t seen in years. A pleased grin pulls at Logan’s lips, bright eyes squinting with how elated he seems to be at Roman’s appearance. He pats excitedly at his side, beckons Roman to come sit with him, and the princely side does so with a confused, uncertain, placating smile.

When he’s close enough, Logan shifts over to Roman and plops himself in the taller side’s lap, snuggling into the broader chest with a contented sigh as he wraps sweater paw fingers around his sippy cup and the turtle plushie at his feet. It’s overwhelmingly adorable, and extremely bewildering, and Roman doesn’t understand the tender, vulnerable state his nerd seems to be in. At least he doesn’t until Logan buries his head in the crook of Roman’s neck, curls up impossibly further as he watches the children’s cartoon playing on the television out of the corner of his eye, and the nagging thought pulling at the back of Roman’s mind finally comes to light.

Of course, how could he have forgotten? Although being in the sides’ rooms have an adverse effect on those who enter it, such as Virgil’s room causing them all to have overwhelming anxiety, the effect of the room on its owner is the opposite of their purpose. Virgil’s room calms him down,
Patton’s room dampens his emotions to a more tolerable level, Roman’s own room causes him to stop having so many ideas and gives a reprieve for the constant slew of creation running through his head, and Deceit’s room causes him to only tell the truth. Although Logan’s room makes the rest of the sides more logically inclined, Roman hasn’t ever actually thought about what it does to Logan himself when he’s in there.

It makes sense, now that Roman’s considering it, because his room would have the opposite effect: it’d cause him to be il logical, right? Let him indulge in things that he doesn’t when he’s out of his room. Things like cartoons, fantasy and fiction, mindless comfort— they all would constitute as illogical, irrational, or useless things in Logan’s mind, and therefore would be heightened impulses when he’s in here. And that does make sense to an extent, but their rooms don’t affect them so much as to cause their personality to do a complete 180, so there has to be something more to this that he’s missing.

“Ro, y’like cartoons too?” Logan asks, soft and high and nothing like the way he usually speaks and articulates, and the tiny voice catches Roman incredibly off guard. He sounds… he sounds like a child. He sounds little.

Oh, that must be it! Roman remembers Thomas reading about age regression, about “littlespace” being a coping mechanism for trauma or stress. Logan would definitely be the one to retain that information, store it in the books in his room that are full of facts Thomas has learned throughout his life, so it’s no wonder this has happened. Roman theorizes that since Logan is definitely stressed out a lot having to make schedules (and re make schedules when Roman messes them up— he feels bad, but his work is important, okay?!?) and try hard to help Thomas study and research things, his room must take that to the next level and puts him into a childlike mindset to offset his usual workaholic tendencies. After all, the purpose of their rooms is to help the side it’s assigned to, so if Logan’s room decided that being a kid is the thing he needs the most, then it must be true.

Roman doesn’t have any complaints. Of course he wouldn’t, because if this helps Logan and allows him to relieve stress, then Roman would support him no matter what anyway. But this is also literally the cutest thing he’s ever seen, and his small boyfriend is so trusting and sweet, and he already adores this version of his nerd.

Said nerd giggles happily along with what happens on the screen, kicks his feet up and down excitedly and gasps at the cool events portrayed in the children’s show, and Roman kinda wishes he could watch him forever. However he knows his time is limited, so Roman just wraps his arms around the side in his lap, cuddles his delighted boyfriend close, and nods along when Logan rambles on about the characters in the show. He seems excited to be able to share with someone, passionately talking in that high tone and prominent lisp about his favourite characters’ backstories, and Roman is completely enamoured with him. He can’t help but push back the hood of his onesie and press kisses to the crown of Logan’s head, soft brown hair falling easily over sparkling eyes.

It’s not exactly the kind of hug Roman was hoping to get out of this originally, but Roman finds that he loves and appreciates it just as much.

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This is such a terrible idea. Roman shouldn’t be here, shouldn’t be all the way at the end of the hall standing in front of the bright green door. There’s a twinkie wrapper nailed to the center, and some sort of half-dried brown sludge dripping down the side, and Roman is already starting to regret this. What was he thinking? His brother hasn’t left his room in weeks, meaning he’s probably working on some crazy, grotesque project that he’ll likely just end up destroying anyway.

But there are already four boxes checked off, glittery red marks signifying their completion, and it
wouldn’t make sense to quit now. After all, there’s only one more box, one more task, and it’s probably the hardest one out of all of them. The act of coming up to a side’s door in the middle of the night is starting to become very familiar, almost boring in a way. Where’s the drama, the pizzazz, the flair? Well, then again, this is Remus, so there’s sure to be something dramatic on the way.

Roman doesn’t bother knocking, just walks right in, and he’s wholly unsurprised by the state of his brother’s bedroom. Piles of trash reside in the corners, overflows from any surface it can. There’s a stack of mannequin limbs leaning against the wall, and Roman doesn’t even want to know what that’s for. The bed looks torn up, threads in the fabric frayed and split. There are stains on the walls, words written in pencil upon the discoloured wallpaper, nearly illegible with the messy scrawl. And in the middle of all of it sits Remus, cross-legged on the floor as he stares at the carpet with a completely blank expression. It’s so empty that it almost scares Roman, like there’s nothing behind those dark eyes. And then his counterpart notices Roman’s presence, shakes himself out of his stupour, and a familiar grin spreads across his face.

“Big bro! What’cha doing here? Thought y’a didn’t like my room. Isn’t it too gross and stinky for you?” Remus laughs, flinging a randomly conjured earthworm in his direction. Roman has to jump to the side to avoid it and narrowly misses stepping in a puddle of… something. He doesn’t really want to know what it is. Despite the revulsion Roman can feel at the state of his brother’s bedroom, his worry completely tramples everything else.

“No, I— stop throwing worms at me! I’m here because… well, I wanted to check on you. You’ve been here for a long time and I wanted to— to make sure you’re okay. You’re not hurt, are you?” Roman asks, neatly stepping over an old piece of chicken smashed into the carpet, and Remus’ gaze flashes with something bitter before returning to its usual bright, chaotic state. His smile never wavers, but it feels much faker than before, shows too many teeth.

“What do… whadda’ya mean? ‘f course I’m fine! I’m… I’m just playing with bugs, see?” Remus tells him, strained and spurious, and his brows pull in as he holds up a ladybug to show Roman. The latter of the two tilts his head in concern as he lowers himself to the ground in a patch of carpet unmarred by stain or rot. He wonders if it’s intentional. “Look, I conjured it myself! I mean, it’s— it’s probably not as good as yours are, but still!”

And even as Remus’ hand is dirty, even as he resides in a chamber of violence, the way he holds the ladybug is gentle, as if the small insect is a great treasure to him. Roman doesn’t miss the way Remus swallows and looks away, hunches his shoulders as if he’s prepared to be insulted and made fun of for his creation, and the familiarity of the action mirrored in Roman’s own psyche causes nausea to well up in his throat. He has Logan to calm him down with facts and rationality, Patton to give him compliments and affection, Virgil who knows just how to distract him when he’s feeling insecure about himself and his art. Remus doesn’t have that, and Roman knows that despite how much his brother can disturb him, he deserves compliments for his work too, even if said work isn’t necessarily Roman’s taste.

“It’s a very pretty ladybug, Remus,” Roman praises softly, an unusual reassurance as he lifts the ladybug up on the tip of his own finger. The red colour is a much deeper saturation than normal, and the distinction between black and white is extremely prominent, and Roman really isn’t lying when he says that it’s a good creation. The ladybug flutters its wings in tiny movements, sits picturesquely on his fingertip as Roman smiles kindly at it and then at his brother. And the way Remus looks up in wide-eyed shock, too stunned to pretend like everything’s okay, it sends a dagger of regret deep into Roman’s heart.

“Why?” Remus whispers, brows pulled together in a way that exposes his true inner turmoil. “Why are you here? Don’t you hate me? I go against everything you represent.”
“Remus, you’re my brother! I made a promise to be your shield, and I intend to keep it,” Roman replies fiercely, protective and striving to make amends. Remus’ mouth falls open at the reminder of the pact they had formed as children, the pinky promise acting as an unbreakable vow to always keep each other safe. “You may be my opposite, but that just means we gotta have each other’s backs! You’re the sword, I’m the shield, remember?”

The ladybug on Roman’s fingers jumps off and flies away, dashing out of sight and leaving the two brothers alone on the floor again. It takes a lot of courage to put away his discomfort, to remind himself of who Remus truly is, but Roman manages to find that bravery within himself as he pulls his counterpart into a meaningful hug. He can feel how rigid Remus is, how much he’s locked his limbs up in an attempt to not jostle their positions. “I don’t hate you. I could never hate my little brother.”

Roman will make sure that his brother’s shaking grip and quiet, fleeting tears stay a secret, just between them.

Chapter End Notes

**CONTENT WARNINGS:**

Remus being unclean (literally. like garbage kind of unclean)
Insect (ladybug)
Oh my gosh I think that's it??????? lmk if I missed any !!!!!
Full Poem

Chapter Summary

Not a new chapter, unfortunately.

Chapter Notes

Alright! If you’ve been following this thus far, you might have noticed some odd lines of text in the summary of each chapter. They were italicized, and likely didn’t make a lot of sense. These bits of text are actually lines in a poem! Each day corresponds to another line in this long poem I made, and most of the lines also can be related back to the prompts or the fics themselves. Here is the full poem for easy reading!

(Each link will bring you to the Tumblr post for that fic.)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Day 1: Shaky Hands | (So it begins.) We’re in for a wild ride, aren’t we?

Day 2: Explosion | (We’ll tear out our hair), call out into the deep.

Day 3: Delirium | (We’re ready to shout), gearing up to go.

Day 4: Human Shield | (Pack your bags, martyrs), let’s go for a stroll.

Day 5: Gunpoint | (Between laces and braces) we fall to our knees.

Day 6: Dragged Away | (But they won’t push us down), we’ll do what we please.

Day 7: Isolation | (It takes a lot to keep going) when your heart itself is weary.

Day 8: Stab Wound | (But hold on a little while longer), the skies are clearing.

Day 9: Shackled | (We’ll scream, we’ll dream), we’ll cry to the clouds.

Day 10: Unconscious | (We’ll lie, we’ll die), we’ll live free and proud.

Day 11: Stitches | (Don’t give up), hold your stance.

Day 12: “Don’t Move” | (They’re poised to attack), observing at a glance.

Day 13: Adrenaline | (The road may seem long) but every street is a new beginning.

Day 14: Tear-stained | (Take a deep breath) and embrace what you’re feeling.

Day 15: Scars | (I know you think you’re alone) but I promise you aren’t.
Day 16: Pinned Down | (We’ll lift you up again) and rebalance your heart.

Day 17: "Stay With Me" | (This may be the end) but I’ll wait for you on the other side.

Day 18: Muffled Scream | (Just take it all in), this’ll make sense in time.

Day 19: Asphyxiation | (You want to know what it’s like) to go beyond the fray.

Day 20: Trembling | (But you can’t give up yet), you need to live another day.

Day 21: Laced Drink | (Please listen closely), heed the echoing call.

Day 22: Hallucination | (We have a message for you) lost at the end of the hall.

Day 23: Bleeding Out | (Run from the masquerade) and live one more lie.

Day 24: Secret Injury | (Don’t fall out of line yet), be patient for the final prize.

Day 25: Humiliation | (Call upon those that you trust), listen to your head.

Day 26: Abandoned | (Form an alliance with the masses), put an end to mindless bloodshed.

Day 27: Ransom | (Protect those you love), prepare to leave it all behind.

Day 28: Beaten | (Count your blessings while you can), there’s not much left to find.

Day 29: Numb | (Don’t lose yourself), one day you’ll be okay.

Day 30: Recovery | (We’ll bring you back to life), so please just stay.

Day 31: Embrace | (The sun shines brightly) and we finally claim our victory.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for sticking around this month! I appreciate all of the kudos, bookmarks, and lovely comments I got! You guys seriously gave me so much motivation to follow through with my original want to be a completionist. ♥

The Tumblr masterpost
The poem on Tumblr

End Notes

Check out my Tumblr and yell at me!
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!