Rainy Day in Radiant Garden

by Megpie71

Summary

All Leon has to worry about is doing nothing. Of course, when you're someone who's been working on repairs close to non-stop for the past few years, doing nothing is harder than it seems.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

It's a rainy day in Radiant Garden. Leon's been up since dawn, same as always. But Aerith called this one a week ago, said it was going to be about three days rain without stopping, and she's never been wrong yet about the weather since they came back from Traverse Town. It's a knack; something to do with her being Cetra, they think. Since the current area being reconstructed is sewers and storm water drains for the next section of the town to be rebuilt, there's not much sense in the Restoration Committee doing anything for the rest of the week.

There's a few things need updating in Tron's systems, but Cid's already grabbed the schematics for the hardware side, while Sora's friend Pence over in Twilight Town turned out to be a programming whiz-kid who's more than willing to help out in exchange for a flight over by Gummi Ship for himself and his buddies and a donation to his college fund. Sora and Riku are busy keeping Hayner entertained, while Kairi and Olette are keeping Yuffie out of Leon's hair for the week. All Leon has to worry about is doing nothing.

Of course, when you're someone who's been working on repairs close to non-stop for the past few years, doing nothing is harder than it seems.

"You're pacing," Cloud mutters from where he's sprawled on the couch. There's a book lying open across his face, where he's presumably got fed up with reading and decided to try to nap. The ex-SOLDIER doesn't sleep particularly well on rainy nights, between the post-traumatic nightmares and the enhanced senses. The idea of spending the next four to five days listening to Leon
stomping from one side of the room to the other is less than attractive.

"Sorry," Leon says.


"Do we have anything in this place to read?"

"There's a whole shelf there," Cloud says, not opening his eyes.

"Anything I haven't read twelve times already?" Leon's tone is irritated.

"Not unless you're wanting to read those romance novels Aerith keeps leaving," Cloud says. "Or there's the yaoi manga Yuffie keeps dropping off as a hint."

"I thought you threw those out."

"Tried. They brought more. Gave up." Cloud rolls over onto his side, lifting the book off his face. As suspected, Leon is standing in front of the bookshelf, looking vaguely annoyed. Most of the books they have are engineering texts on permanent loan from the castle library, but there's also some old weapon customisation magazines Leon found in a second-hand shop one day; a couple of volumes on chocobo breeding Cloud managed to retrieve from the old SOLDIER barracks the last time he was in there, before the nightmares (and Sephiroth) caught up with him; and the battered copy of "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" Cloud was attempting to nap beneath.

The house looks like what it is: a space occupied by two ex-military types who don't usually spend much time at home. It's mostly neat, the furniture chosen more for practicality and comfort than for style or effect, and the decor is plain and simple. There's a few swords and gunblades here and there on racks around the room, mostly out-dated models their owners no longer have much use for, or antiques picked up here and there out of curiosity. The tables all have odd marks and stains from having weapons of various types cleaned or repaired on them, not to mention the occasional carburettor or extractor of Fenrir's. The kitchen table currently can't be seen beneath the blueprints of the Radiant Garden sewer system (the remains of last night's Wutaian take-away are in the fridge), and the plates and cups from breakfast (toast and coffee) are draining on the sink.

Leon's bored.

While this isn't a disaster on the same level as, for example, Yuffie being bored would be, it's still not a good thing to be happening. Normally, Cloud would offer to spar, but today he's cranky and low on sleep. Besides, their usual sparring grounds are outside and he's not in the mood to get soaked to the skin.

"Colosseum?" Cloud offers as a suggestion.

"Nothing running at the moment," Leon returns. The gunblader tends to keep a closer eye on the fights running there than Cloud does. Then again, Leon doesn't have Hades wanting to snare him as a permanent fixture in the Underworld every time he goes near the place. True, the god doesn't particularly like Leon, but that's more to do with Leon's status as a hero than anything else. In Cloud's case there's bad blood involved with his leaving in the first place, and never mind he'd been legitimately defeated by Sora and his pals, not to mention being damn near killed by Cerberus.
Leon does another circuit between the couch, the bookshelf, the front window, and the kitchen door, while Cloud tries to think of another potential distraction.

"Blitzball?" There's a league started on Destiny Island - they can sometimes pick up games through the gummi communicators. From the vague details Cloud's picked up, it appears a couple of friends of Sora and Riku were the ones to start the whole thing.

"Off season," Leon says. So much for that idea.

Cloud shrugs, and replaces the book over his eyes. "Well, I'm out of ideas," he says, wriggling into a more comfortable position on the couch. He's also still tired, and still cranky.

"Yeah, whatever," Leon says, watching as the other man closes his eyes and tries to catch up on his missing sleep. It's not that Leon resents Cloud being able to sleep during the daytime - he's a former mercenary, he can do the same thing himself when he needs to - it's just whenever he tries it without extreme exhaustion as a stimulus, his days and nights stay muddled for about a week, and it plays merry hob with his scheduling for the Restoration Committee. He doesn't need the distraction, not when they're working on getting another section of the town back into a liveable state in order to deal with the influx not only of former inhabitants, but also tourists who have come to see the place and help out with the restoration.

"You're pacing again," comes the cranky voice from the couch. Leon looks up, and realises he's not where he'd started off his thought. Pacing is a habit from... before. He doesn't remember it being a problem back then, but then again, back then he wasn't sharing a house with someone who was firstly, able to hear a wider range of sounds than he was, and secondly, quite capable of ripping him limb from limb without assistance if he pissed them off.

"Why are you sleeping on the couch, anyway?" Leon asks.

Cloud gives a vague shrug. "Started drifting off here. Besides, the bedroom's too noisy."

"Too noisy?" It's not something Leon has ever noticed.

"Downpipe near the window," Cloud says. "I think it might be blocked or something. It drips."

"First I've heard of it," Leon says.

"Didn't notice it until last night," Cloud replies. "Then it kept me awake all damn night." He lifts his head enough to glare at Leon, who's still pacing. "Which is why I'm trying to fucking sleep now."

Leon notices the glare and makes a "backing off" gesture. "Okay, okay, point taken." Cloud's a good housemate most of the time (upgrading to fantastic since they started sharing a bedroom, and more importantly, a bed) but he needs his sleep. Leon's sure Cloud did actually sleep some last night, because he remembers being woken up by the kind of twitching which is a surefire indicator Cloud's in the grip of one of his nightmares. But then, the nights where Cloud has his nightmares, he tends to be cranky the next day as well.

Leon decides to have a listen to that downpipe himself. Clearing blocked gutters on a rainy day may not be the most comfortable exercise, but it beats getting stuck with an increasingly cranky Cloud Strife for company for the next three days.

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Cloud is woken out of his nap on the couch by the sound of the front door banging shut. He looks
up to see Leon stalking in, soaked to the skin despite the raingear he's wearing, and looking as offended as a cat that's been dunked in a rainbarrel.

"I found that dripping downpipe," Leon says, pulling his jacket off.

Cloud blinks. He's just woken up, and isn't quite up to speed on the whole conversation.

"It was four Hynebedammed houses away," Leon continues, pulling off his soaked boots. "In that group of three houses stuck together. It was also a downpipe on the boundary between two of the houses, so neither side thought it was their responsibility to clean the stupid thing out. Which is why it was blocked. And dripping."

Cloud blinks again. Pieces are starting to fall into place, and while he's not actually surprised by Leon's action (Leon's an active type, and he'll take any excuse to be doing rather than sitting around) he is rather touched by the thoughtfulness behind it. "Fixed now?" he queries, just to be certain.

"Fixed. And hopefully staying fixed - I spoke with the idiots who shared the houses on either side and worked up a schedule for cleaning the damn thing."

"Why didn't they just take turns?" Cloud asks, levering himself up off the couch.

"Couldn't agree on who was going first," Leon says, sounding disgusted. "I flipped a munny to decide, and Hyne alone knows why they couldn't have done that themselves."

Cloud looks Leon over. "Let me guess," he says. "You flipped that munny after you'd cleaned out the blocked downpipe for them, right?" Cloud walks over to the cupboard and pulls out a towel, which he throws to Leon.

"Someone had to clean the stupid thing," Leon replies. He starts scrubbing at his hair with the towel, trying to get rid of the excess water which is dripping down his neck. Not that it would really make him any drier, but it's the thought which counts in these situations. He braces himself for the expected outcry of "maybe someone had to do it, but why does that someone have to be you?" he'd get from Aerith or Quistis.

It doesn't come. Instead, Cloud just gives one of those half-snorts he uses instead of laughter. "Go take a shower," Cloud tells him. "It'll warm you up a bit."

Leon's reminded once again of why he likes Cloud so much. At least the other man understands when he does things himself, rather than delegating. Better yet, Cloud seems to understand the why of it - the sheer practicality of doing things in order to know they've been done, rather than dumped onto someone else's "to-do" list at the mercy of that person's prioritisation. He decides to take up the suggestion of the shower. Standing around in a pile of cold, clammy leather might conceivably be someone's idea of fun, but that someone isn't him.

As Leon stalks off toward the bathroom, Cloud kicks the towel over from where it's been dropped on the floor to the puddle forming below Leon's jacket and boots. Leon's soggy gear can wait.

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The one luxury Leon allows himself as the head of the Radiant Garden Restoration Committee is the hot water system. It's large, it's permanently spelled by Merlin to keep the water hot, and it's set to a point only a few degrees below boiling. Which means when he's half-frozen from working on the upper reaches of the castle battlements, or dealing with strained muscles from fighting off the Heartless which are still clustering around the Great Maw (never in such proportions as when they
had that thing with the Nobodies, thank Hyne, but they still showed up now and again), or, as now, chilled to the bone from spending four hours on a rooftop in the rain unclogging a blocked downpipe, he can warm up again by having a long, hot shower. There's something eminently satisfying about feeling hot water beating on the back of his neck and against his back, and the way the bathroom fogs up with steam is also comforting. He figures after years of cold showers dealing with Garden's dodgy plumbing (the Shumi were supposed to be semi-aquatic in origin, so why Cid and Norg had skimped on the hot water was beyond him) he's entitled to as much hot water as he can humanly handle.

The blond swordsman giving him the blowjob is just an added reward for a job well done, he thinks.

End Notes

* The dripping downpipe that kept Cloud awake is a homage to several I've had to live with. Here's a hint: a metal downpipe leading from the upper floor of a two-storey house will create a lot of noise on those days and nights where there's only enough rain to make it drip. Actually, if it comes to that, any metal downpipe will create a lot of racket on a night where there isn't much rain happening.

* Cloud's sleep patterns (particularly the whole conviction that "I was awake all night" while the person who shares the bed knows full well you were asleep and dreaming for part of it) are inspired by my partner, who has these sorts of sleep habits down to a fine art. Of course, my partner also combines this with snoring loud enough to keep whoever he's sharing a bedroom with awake as well.

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