30 Day OTP Challenge FREO EDITION

by GoldenEmpire

Summary

The Frank/Leo ship really does not get enough love and I know y'all secretly (or not so secretly) love them.
Like I do.
Goddamn they're fucking great.
So here are 30 stories about them because why not ;)
Ps. They all kind of link together but can be read as stand alone's.
Frank knew that sending him and Leo on a quest *alone* and *together* was a bad idea. Probably the second worst idea, right after the Titans deciding to wake Gaia. Yeah, that was a pretty shit idea. But then again, so was this.

Frank watched, exasperated and tired, as Leo carried on complaining, pushing through the thick branches of the trees. They were in a forest, trying to make their way to a magical lake that *allegedly* held Kronos' Scythe. It was important to find it before any of the monsters did, and Chiron wanted it safely at camp where nobody could use it to try and end the world. So clearly, he decided Leo and Frank would be great people to send on this quest.

Overtime their relationship had improved, it had to, after everything they've been through over the years, but they still argued more than any other two demigods, except maybe Clarisse and Percy, and didn't work together well if they didn't have others around them. When it was just two of them, Leo and Frank just bickered and ignored each other and got lost because they wouldn't listen.

It had been half a day since they have departed camp, and Frank was already annoyed. If Leo wasn't blabbering on about something irrelevant, he was complaining or singing and generally just *pissing Frank off*.

The Asian had enough; he was tired and just wanted to curl up and go to sleep, and yet he was stuck here, tripping over gnarled, old roots and getting hit in the face by branches with Leo fucking Valdez yammering in his ear. He was honestly tired of his voice.

"Where are we even going?" Frank asked, interrupting the Latino halfway through his monologue about fuel lines and combustion chambers. Leo looked over his shoulder, leaves in his hair. He looked half an elf then, and Frank wanted nothing more than for a tree to suck him in and give him some peace.

"Err...I thought you knew?" Leo offered sheepishly. Frank rubbed the bridge of his nose and fought the urge to snap at the other boy. He felt anger building up inside of him.

"I'm gonna shift and go check the trail out from the air," he said.

"Wait," Leo seemed panicked all of a sudden, whirling on Frank, eyes wide, "I...c-can we just...I don't know, find the lake together?"

Frank raised an unimpressed eyebrow, "We've been trying for hours. Just don't move. I'm literally
"But," Leo protested. "What if monsters attack?! Do you want my precious blood on your hands? Hazel will kill you."

_Don't talk to me about Hazel_, Frank thought bitterly. Subconsciously he still blamed the Latino for their breakup, even if Leo had already been in a relationship with Calypso and had lost interest in Hazel.

"Then I will just change into a dragon and save you," Frank rolled his eyes, tired of the smaller boys theartics. Leo flushed, "besides, you can fight well enough. I'll be a minute – I need a break from you."

He didn't give Leo another chance to object as he felt his body shift and twist, and then he was a bird, soaring upwards into the sky, free of everything. He made himself into a raven, inky black against the sky. He was still Frank on the inside, he could feel everything the same way he felt it in human form. As he pulled up over the tips of the trees, his breath caught.

Metaphorically of course. Birds can't catch their breaths.

The sun was setting, the sky painted crimson and amber and gold, the trees enveloped in a warm glow. A path snaked in between the roots and Frank's sharp eyes picked it out as he rode the wind. He felt like laughing, but he couldn't. Not in this shape.

The path carried on west, and up to a shimmering lake, deep and calm, surrounded by weeping willows that brushed it gently like a lover's touch. It was close enough that he and Leo would get there by nightfall, and after a short rest they'd be able to head back, and hopefully make it to camp by dawn.

Frank wanted to stay up in the air, away from his problems, but he had to go back. He turned and flapped his wings down, descending back among the branches that he had risen from. The second he changed back into his human form, Frank knew something was wrong.

Leo was gone. The Asian's heart skipped a beat and for a second he though he landed in the wrong place. After all most of the trees looked the same. But then he saw the footprints embedded in the grass, leading away, and he knew Leo just didn't listen to him and moved on.

Surprisingly, instead of being annoyed, Frank felt worry scratch at something inside of him, his heart maybe. His body shifted on its own accord, it grew lean and ragged and fury. The son of Mars could feel his teeth elongating into fangs and claws sprouting from his paws, until in his place stood a chestnut timber wolf.

He threw himself into the underbrush, his nose to the ground, sniffing. Leo had a specific smell, Frank had noticed it before, he smelled sweet like caramel but also a bit like motor oil and cinnamon. The smell filled the wolf with warmth as he panted and padded on along the path, silent, not a predator but a protector. Leo had rubbed off on the roots and barks and leaves, and was easy enough to follow. Frank felt thrown off when the smell veered off the path and into the wilderness, because he didn't understand why Leo would stray. Something inside of him made him pick up his pace until he was running.

The sun was gone and the sky was left in an indigo with the last pink streaks on the horizon, before Frank caught up with Leo. The Latino was sitting at the foot of a tree, his face in his hands. Frank caught a whiff of the tangy smell of tears. He could see the boy was shaking with fear.
He let out a low growl and Leo's head snapped up. For a second his eyes were wide and terrified and red as he took in the wolf. He flinched away but Frank stared at him, and the Latino relaxed after a second. There were tiny pinpricks of blood on his hands as if he had fallen over and scraped his palms, and tears made two neat lines on his face.

"Frank?" his voice was unsteady, and choked up, and hoarse. Frank felt his stomach twist as he saw Leo there, all scared and vulnerable. He stepped closer and suddenly Leo threw himself forward. Frank almost stumbled back as the Latino wrapped his arms around the wolf and pressed his face into his fur, "O-Oh Zeus, I g-got lost a-and...fuck, I'm such a-an idiot, I-I just kept w-walking in c-circles a-and y-you s-said you'd be back, a-and I was lost...oh Gods, I hate being l-lost-" Leo was blabbering so much he didn't notice Frank shift back into his human form. Tentatively, the son of Mars wrapped his arms around the shaking Latino. He was warm and solid against Frank, but the Asian felt weird with him being so close.

"I told you not to go anywhere," Frank mumbled, his heart hammering in his chest. His voice seemed to bring Leo back to reality but instead of pulling away, the smaller boy just pressed himself closer to Frank, burying his face in Frank's shoulder. The son of Mars suddenly realized that he didn't mind; the Latino was so skinny and small that he fit against him just-right. Frank tightened his arms around Leo and cradled the boy against him protectively.

"I told you not to leave me," Leo took a shaky breath against Frank's shoulder. Frank smiled despite himself,

"Idiot," he mumbled. Night had fallen, he could hear the cicadas close by, playing their slow tune. Fireflies flittered between the branches of trees. They wouldn't make it to camp by dawn, but Frank didn't care. He was more content with Leo in his arms than with some stupid quest being completed.
The Winner Takes It All

Day 2 – Pet names

'Shrill and small, echo down the hall, repeating pet names, seeing it in your eyes, you're only passing by.' - Elliot Smith

"Hey! Watch where you're going you asshole!" Leo yelled, halfway across camp, so practically everyone could hear. He didn't really need to do that, because Frank was right next to him and could hear him perfectly clear, but fuck it – his shoulder hurt and he was pissed, so the camp might as well know.

"Shut up! Not my fault you fell into me you dumbass!" Frank's face was red with anger. Leo was flushed too as both the boys stared each other down. Electricity seemed to crackle in the space between them and campers slunk away to a safe distance, away from the two.

"Comer un montón de pollas!" the words came rolling off of Leo's tongue gracefully, naturally. Frank went even more red at the insult he didn't understand, and Leo smirked.

"What did you just say?!” the Asian demanded, stepping closer to Leo. He towered over the boy by a good head, but it didn't stop the Latino from glaring up defiantly, arms crossed over his scrawny chest,

"I said," he seethed, "eat a bunch of dicks."

"Y-You eat a bunch of dicks!" Frank spluttered in outrage. Someone snickered close by,

"Shut it!" Leo snapped at them over Frank's shoulder, feeling anger boil inside him like he was some bloody kettle. He didn't understand how this stupid son of Mars could get him so worked up.

"You're such a bloody idiot," Frank growled, "stop making a scene!"

"Oh I'm making a scene?!" Leo laughed, and then he raised his voice so everyone could hear, "Listen everybody! Frank is a clumsy oaf and ouch ouch ouch." Frank had gotten hold of the smaller boy's ear and twisted it painfully to stop him from speaking,

"Shut up," he growled. His face could have been mistaken for a red light at the crossing, it was so red.

"Would you two cut it out?" Rachel asked, exasperated. Both the boys jumped a foot in the air because neither had noticed her. Leo let out a small scream,

"How the hell do you do that?!” he demanded, clutching his heart dramatically. His pulse raced. The Oracle shrugged one shoulder,

"I was a con artist," she explained, "I learn a few things."
"Right," Frank eyed Leo up, clearly irritated, but his anger seemed to have evaporated. Leo, being the child he was couldn't accept defeat so he stuck his tongue out at the Asian. He *saw* Frank's nostrils flare,

"Listen you prick-" the boy rolled up his sleeves as if preparing to fight Leo. The Latino honestly hoped he was doing it just for show because he and bruises didn't really go together that well.

"Guys," Rachel raised a ginger eyebrow at them, as if they were two children bickering...which they kind of were, "I have a proposition...a challenge, for you two."

Leo's attention immediately snapped from Frank to her, "Go on," he said with an award-winning grin that won him no awards. Frank glared at him, but he turned to Rachel too.

"Alright," the girl seemed happy that she got their attention, "The challenge is; instead of constantly screaming insults at each other, you need to make up pet names for one another and use them instead of the swear words...say, the one with the best pet name for the other wins."

Leo stared at her. Frank stared at her.

"That's the shittiest challenge I have ever heard," the Latino deadpanned. Frank covered his smile with his hand,

"What do we win?" he asked after a second.

"I'll think of something," the girl shrugged casually, and she knew she had them.

"I'm up for it," Frank said proudly, "I can beat Valdez at anything – including this stupid challenge."

"Alright then," Leo puffed out his chest, "It's *on.*"

Rachel smirked.

***

Leo prided himself in the fact that he was a fierce competitor and never backed down. Because Frank agreed to the challenge first, the Latino was determined to find a stupid pet name first, and embarrass Frank in front of their friends.

Feeling confident, the Latino sauntered over into the training pit, where currently Frank and Percy were going at each other with blunted swords. Piper and Nico sat to the side, drinking cokes and watching them lazily in the summer sun.

"Hi Pipes. Nico," Leo gave Piper a quick hug but didn't risk it with the Underworld Prince in fear he'd get brutally murdered. The Latino slid down next to his two friends and watched Frank and Percy hack and swing at each other with their weapons. Both had their shirts off, their skin shining with sweat. Leo *made* himself stare at Percy and not at Frank, because that did weird things to his belly.

"So," he started off his plot with a smirk at Piper and Nico, "who do you think will win?" his voice was loud enough that Percy and Frank could both hear him, "Percy or Poopsy Doodles."

Nico choked on his drink and started to cough and wheeze, "W-Who...the fuck...is...P-Poopsy Doodles?!"

"Oh," Leo casually leaned back, "That would be Frank."
The Asian stopped at gaped at Leo, and Percy took the chance to knock the sword out of his hand, sending it sailing through the air. It embedded itself in the grass near Leo and the Latino regarded it calmly,

"Hmm," he mused, "guess Percy won."

Fuming, Frank stepped up to him and wrenched the sword from the ground,

"Did you Google that, smartass?" he asked, waving the sword dangerously close to Leo's face.

"Do you get negative points for being rude?" Leo raised an eyebrow feeling smug, "Should I ask Rachel?"

Frank's eye twitched and he looked like he had more comments at the end of his tongue, but he kept them back, instead storming off. Leo's smirk fell a little bit when he followed Frank's naked, muscular, sweaty back.

***

Leo was playing video games with Percy in his cabin, trying desperately to beat the Son of Poseidon at the 1992 version of Mario Kart. He was failing miserably,

"Ha!" Percy grinned after wining another round, "That's what growing up in New York does to you! Another round?"

Leo sighed, "Fine," he was not about to accept defeat. They were halfway through the next game, with Leo in 6th place and Percy in 1st, when Frank walked in.

"Hi guys," he threw casually, sitting on the bed behind the boys. He watched the screen for a second, "Aw, are you loosing Schnookums?"

Leo proceeded to veer off track and lose control over his kart. The race finished then and Leo turned around to look at Frank with a confused look on his face,

"Did you just speak Chinese to me?" he asked. Frank's grin dropped,

"You suck."

"Right back at ya."

***

It was Frank the next time too. He was breaking one of the rules that were pretty light at Camp as he slid opposite Leo at the Poseidon table, where he and Percy were already seated.

"Morning," Percy mumbled, his hair ruffled, and eyes sleepy. Frank reached for toast,

"Morning," he said as he buttered the bread. He glanced up at Leo who was stirring his coffee, looking like he was planning his funeral. He had woken up at five in the morning to finish a project and he was absolutely deceased, "You alright there Kissy Kibbles?"

The look Leo gave Frank made the smile fall off the Asian's face,

"I don't know who you're talking to," Leo's voice was icy, "but you ain't getting no kisses from me."

Frank opened and closed his mouth like a fish, as if he couldn't think of anything to say. And then he
got up and left.

***

The next time ended kind of badly. It was during Capture the Flag, with Hephaestus cabin and Apollo cabin teamed up against Ares, Poseidon and Nemesis. The game was in full blow, with Clarisse and Will going at each other with swords, and Frank and Nyssa playing tug of war with the flag, when Leo decided to call out.

"Hey Pooky Bear you've lost anyway!" he was grinning brightly, red war paint smeared on his cheeks. The name threw Frank off track and he loosened his grip, letting Nyssa slip the flag out of his hands and sprint off with it. She was tackled by Ethan Nakamura a few feet away. Leo grinned and Frank whirled on him and suddenly there was a fucking bear coming at him.

Leo screeched and started sprinting, heart pounding, because Frank had murder in his eyes. He heard some campers laugh at their antics but Leo didn't feel like laughing since he was being chased by a seven hundred pound grizzly.

He made it under the cover of the trees, panting hard, before Frank got him. The bear tackled him down among the shrubs and roots, knocking the breath out of the Latino. Leo's head slammed against the ground and he groaned as Frank placed his paws on his chest, weighing him down, little beady eyes staring at the Latino.

"Can't...breathe...," Leo wheezed as the bear sniffed at his neck. Frank bit playfully at his shoulder and then he shifted back into human. For a second Leo's heart skipped a beat as he stared up at Frank, caging him in with his arms. The son of Mars didn't seem to notice the change in the atmosphere as the smaller boy held his breath.

"Pooky Bear is a shit name," he informed Leo, still dangerously close. The son of Hephaestus let out a shaky breath,

"What about Kitten Pickles?" he raised an eyebrow and smirked and tried to calm his pounding heart and hide his blush behind wit, "Isn't that just the cutest?"

"I hate pickles," Frank stood up and offered Leo a hand, "and kittens."

"You're a monster," Leo took Frank's hand. It was big and calloused and didn't help to calm Leo's heart. He let the bigger boy pull him to his feet, and he dusted himself off, trying to hide his flushed face.

***

The seven, plus Nico and Reyna and Will, were having a movie night in the Zeus cabin. They were currently watching the Breakfast Club and Hazel was insisting that Nico was Allison.

"I am not!" the Son of Hades protested as the weird girl on screen put sherbet and cornflakes in her sandwich, "I would never eat that!"

Piper snickered, and then she turned to Frank and Leo, who were sitting next to each other for some stupid reason. Leo could barely concentrate on the movie simply because of the fact that his shoulder was touching Frank's, "So what's with you two and the weird pet name thing?"

"Oh," Leo rolled his eyes and tried to distract himself from the boy next to him, "Rachel challenged us to make up pet names for each other instead of constant insults."
"Obviously I'll win," Frank added.

"No you won't," Leo scoffed.

"Aw, don't be bitter Oojy Coojy Woojy Moojy Poo-Poo," Frank cooed. Everyone turned and stared at him open-mouthed, full of disbelief.

"Jesus Christ, what the fuck?" Leo face-palmed. Frank turned back to the movie,

"So I don't win?"

"No," Leo groaned, "you definitely don't win."

***

Frank was sitting on the steps of the Big House with Annabeth, looking through some old Chinese scrolls, when Leo came over. He threw his arms around Frank's shoulders from behind and peeked at him upside down, so his curls brushed Frank's forehead. Leo recently found that he liked being close to Frank, and he tried to touch the other boy any chance he got.

"What do you want?" The Asian grumbled, but he didn't move away or shake Leo off.

"I just wanted to see my Fudge Nugget," Leo grinned, a dimple appearing in his cheek. Annabeth snorted.

"Do I look like a nugget to you?" Frank asked sourly.

"Yes," Leo said solemnly. Frank elbowed him in the ribs then and Leo stumbled away, but he was grinning.

***

Leo was in Bunker nine, hammering away at a new project that involved an oxidizer from a rocket and a nuclear reactor from a submarine, when Frank walked in. Leo looked up from the heat of the forge,

"Look who decided to show up," he said, eyes sparkling, heart skipping a beat.

"It's dinner, why are you still here?" Frank crossed his arms over his chest. Leo turned back to his work and when he hit a piece of steel with his hammer, sparks flew everywhere.

"Dunno," he brushed a stray curl from his sweaty forehead, "I guess this is more important. Besides, I'm not hungry."

"You're always hungry," Frank rolled his eyes. In reply, Leo's stomach just rumbled. The Latino offered the son of Mars a sheepish grin, and the dark haired boy surprised Leo by producing a bacon sandwich and a can of coke, "I brought you this so you don't die on us."

Leo blinked at him, and then put down his hammer, "Thanks," his hands were black with soot but he still took the food from Frank. He perched on the workbench and unwrapped the sandwich before proceeding to shove it in his mouth. It tasted heavenly.

"Just...," Frank was hovering near the door, as if stuck between leaving and staying. Please stay, Leo wanted to tell him, "don't overwork yourself."

"Yeah, yeah," Leo finished chewing, scrunched up the wrapping paper into a ball and threw it across
the room. It missed the bin. The fact that Frank was looking out for him was kind of heart-warming, "I'm nearly done anyway."

"Right," Frank offered him a small smile, "I'll see you later, love."

Leo heart clenched almost painfully, "L-Love?" he managed weakly. Frank shrugged a shoulder,

"Yeah, figured it's better than Kissy Kibbles," he said. Leo just stared at him, his heart twisting in his chest, "What?" Frank frowned at him.

"Nothing," Leo mumbled, "I think you just won."
Frank was sitting in the Ares cabin, where he stayed when he visited Camp Half Blood. He and Sherman were talking about bringing some weapons over from Camp Jupiter as the stocks at Half-Blood were running low.

"...there's these massive axes," Frank was saying excitedly. He put his hands about sixty centimetres apart, a bright grin on his face, "like this big! I'm telling you."

"Woah," Sherman nodded, mesmerized, like a child, "and you think Reyna would give us some?"

"Yeah, definitely-"

Their conversation was abruptly interrupted by Clarisse stalking into the cabin. She un-slung her sword from her back, tossing it into the corner where already there was a pile of discarded weapons. The girl looked grumpy, per usual.

"Frank, Valdez is outside," she informed the Asian as she began taking off her armour, "he wants to talk to you."

Frank sighed, not knowing what Leo wanted this time.

"Sorry," he told Sherman apologetically, "I'll talk to you in a bit."

He slid from his bed and walked across the cabin. Lately Leo had been hanging around him a lot more. Frank also noticed that the boy would touch him anytime he could; his arm or his hand or his shoulder. The son of Mars really didn't mind. He had a soft spot for Leo, though he'd never admit it. Still, the sudden change was weird.

Frank walked out of the cabin and into the warm night. The last few stranglers were dragging themselves off to their cabins, quickly, to get away from the sharp eyes of the harpies on patrol. It took Frank a second to spot Leo, standing in the shadows like a cornered animal.

"Leo?" Frank frowned. Normally Leo would already be bombarding him with one of his monologues or snark remarks, but this time the boy was quiet, "are you alright? Clarisse said-"

"I need your help," Leo interrupted. His voice sounded weird, a bit muffled. Frank tried to see him in the dark but he could barely make out the boys outline,
"Leo what the hell is going on?" he was seriously getting worried.

Nervously, Leo stepped into the light coming from the brazier next to the Ares cabin. Frank sucked in a startled breath. A crosshatch of violet and yellow bruises decorated the left side of the boy's face, his lip was split and crusted with dry blood, and his eye was swollen and black. Frank stared. He felt sudden rage inside of him, like a monster trying to claw its way out of him. He suddenly wanted to find the person who did this to Leo and beat them up. Kill them, maybe. Cause them immense pain-

"Frank," Leo's voice was quiet, "it's not like that."

Frank hadn't realized he was speaking out loud. He flushed,

"What happened?" he demanded.

Leo shrugged one shoulder and looked away as if he was embarrassed, "I...um, me and Clary we...I asked her to train with me...s-she didn't mean to...I'm just shit a-at defence." He mumbled lamely.

Frank turned on his heel to go back inside and have a serious go at Clarisse, but Leo was already in front of him, one hand on the Asian's arm, "Don't," he said weakly.

Frank sighed and deflated as the anger left him. It was replaced by worry that made his insides twist, "Why did you come to me?" he asked as he subconsciously reached up to touch the bruise on Leo's cheek. The boy winced but didn't move away as Frank's fingers gently traced his face, "Piper knows more about patching people up..."

"You already have a shit opinion of me," Leo shrugged and gave Frank a pale grin, "so I guess you knowing that Clary beat me up won't make a difference."

Frank's brows furrowed, "I don't have a shit opinion of you."

"Right," Leo said sarcastically, rolling his eyes.

"We should take you to the infirmary," Frank didn't feel like arguing with the Latino.

"No," Leo said immediately. There was a noticeable flush on his cheeks, "I don't wanna. They're gonna ask questions and-"

"Right," Frank said awkwardly, "Got it. Just give me a second."

He went back inside the cabin. Most of the campers were already in bed, just lumps under blankets, but Clarisse was hovering near her bed, looking uneasy. When she saw Frank's glare she just handed him the first aid kit without a word. Frank wanted to shout at her but he knew there was no point, so he just took the kit and stepped back outside. Leo was hidden in the shadows again.

"Come to the light or I won't be able to patch you up, idiot," Frank grumbled.

"Do you wanna be harpy dinner?" Leo was watching the sky nervously but there was no sign of the harpies, just the twinkling stars and the sliver of the moon. But Frank knew the dangers of the harpies – if they saw you, you'd be in trouble. With a sigh, the boy turned.

"Come on," he mumbled to Leo. The Latino didn't ask questions as the two silently ran across the back of the Ares cabin to where a small wooden shed stood.

"Really?" Leo asked sceptically. Frank opened the door and raised an eyebrow,

"You coming in or what?"
"Is this going to be like seven minutes in heaven?" Leo teased, slipping in. Frank whacked him upside the head, not hard enough to hurt, and closed the door. The shed was cramped with weapons and shields, with one naked light bulb swinging from the ceiling. It gave the interior a harsh light and made Leo's injuries look even worse. It also made the dark circles under his eyes stand out more. Frank hadn't noticed how tired the boy looked until then.

"Sit down," the Asian instructed and Leo perched on a wooden chest that Frank knew was filled with dented helms and blunted swords. The son of Mars knelt on the ground in front of Leo and opened the first aid kid. He was aware of Leo staring at him and for some stupid reason it made his pulse race. He offered Leo a square of ambrosia and the boy popped it in his mouth as Frank opened a tube of anti-bruising cream.

"See this is why I shouldn't fight," Leo said dramatically, "Every operation needs a brain. I'm the brain. Never let me fight anyone again, Zhang. Especially not Clarisse," the boy hissed when Frank touched the cream to his cheek, "'s cold," he mumbled as Frank rubbed the cream onto the Latino's bruised cheek as gently as he could, "like Jesus, I didn't even get a hit in," Leo's voice grew quieter all of a sudden, and sadder, defeated, "I guess I really can't fight, huh."

"Yeah you can," Frank protested as he finished applying the cream, "Clarisse is just better."

"Oh, please," Leo laughed humourlessly, "Everyone's better."

"Yeah, alright," Frank grinned and flicked one of the Latino's curls from his forehead. Leo offered him a weak smile, "You're pretty shit."

"You're a horrible friend," Leo grumbled, but he wasn't being serious. Frank wet a tissue and started dabbing at the dry blood around Leo's mouth. His heartbeat escalated suddenly as his fingers brushed against the other boy's lips.

"Honestly though," Frank said softly, trying to distract himself from the boy's mouth, "you're great at other stuff. Like maths and building shit and just..." he trailed off.

"Just what?" Leo asked. Frank withdrew his hand and looked up at Leo. In this position the Latino was a few inches taller, but also dangerously close. His eyes were like melted chocolate. Frank's gaze flickered to Leo's lips on its own accord and the Latino licked them nervously.

With a start, Frank realized that he wanted to kiss the other boy. But he was a coward so instead he just lurched to his feet, blushing. Everything with them changed ever since that stupid quest, where Leo had gotten lost in the woods. There was a tension in the air...

"I...you're all done I'm gonna head back now," he blurted. Leo started at him with a weird look on his face; a mix of disappointment and anxiety.

"Alright," he whispered. Frank opened the door and he didn't hear it creak as the only thing he was aware of was his heart pounding in his head. The second he stepped outside he heard a screech,

"CHILDREN! LUNCH! FOOOOOOD."

"Fuck."
"Oh my Jupiter!" Frank gushed, like an excited child. He rarely got so worked up over something, just because impassive about most stuff. But now his eyes sparkled and his cheeks flushed. Piper, Percy and Jason looked up at him blankly as he continued to geek out, "and apparently Spiderman will be in it, I don't know, I heard from some of the Hermes kids who got illegal Wi-Fi-"

"Wait," Piper interrupted, "Frank what exactly going on about?"

Frank blinked at them and then his massive shoulders deflated a little bit when he realized they hadn't been following what he was talking about, "Um...Captain America Civil War?" he offered, like a question, nervously.

"Ohhh," Percy nodded and smiled, only now catching on, "Yeah, what about it?"

"H-How...," Frank spluttered, "how are you not going crazy right now? It's literally been like two years since the last marvel movie! It's the biggest showdown between heroes until Avengers-"

"I don't like superhero movies," Percy shrugged, interrupting, "I prefer comedies."

"Captain America is kinda boring in fairness. So old fashioned and just blegh," Piper added, "Iron Man is so much better."

"Iron Man will be there!" Frank piped up.

"Wait," Jason raised an eyebrow, "Don't tell me you wanna sneak out and go see it?"

"I...," Frank flushed, this time from embarrassment and not excitement, "Well yeah...I thought you guys could come with. Hazel hates cinemas and Annabeth's busy..."

"Sorry Frank," Piper gave him an apologetic smile, "I'm not risking it for Captain. Maybe when the next Iron Man movie comes out?" she got up from the steps of the big house, offered him a smile, and walked out into the strawberry fields. She really doesn't care.

"Sorry, Pipes will hate me to go," Jason said sheepishly and he followed his girlfriend. Frank felt weirdly crushed. He looked to Percy, his best friend, with a hopeful look in his eyes. The boy just shrugged,

"I prefer comedies," he said, "I'll get the Hermes kids to download if for you?" he offered, as if that
would make everything alright.

"Yeah," Frank said quietly, "Thanks." He felt like a child, being told that Santa wasn't real. It was pathetic really.

He collapsed onto the stairs and watched Percy walk off. He sighed. It had been a tradition really, between him and his mom; they'd always go see Marvel movies together. The midnight séances excited Frank as a child as it meant he could stay up and out late. They'd buy sweet popcorn and two cokes and sit in the back, whispering throughout the movies, about the plot and special effects and the characters. It was the only real time they got to spent together when his mom was home; there was always a hero movie to see. Afterwards they'd get on the bus, half asleep and content.

After his mother died, Frank's grandmother came with him, even though there was no whispering through the movie or popcorn with her, it still felt nice, to uphold the tradition. Frank was sure if he told his friends how important this was to him they'd go in the blink of an eye, but somehow his enthusiasm had died when they didn't share his excitement and he didn't feel like sharing such a big part of himself with them.

The boy sighed and kicked a stone off of the step. The sun was setting, the midnight screening was tonight. Frank thought about going alone but that just made him sadder.

"It's just a stupid tradition. Mum's dead, and I should just leave off."

Still, Frank had a real and secret passion for comic books and superhero movies, and he had been secretly excited about this movie for over a year. Today was the first time he really showed it to his friends, and they brushed it off. He was sure if Percy asked to go, they would've.

"Why the long face, Zhang?" the Asian hadn't seen Leo skip over. As ever, the Latino's tanned face was smeared with oil and soot, his hair pulled back with a bandana. He most likely came right from the forge,

"Nothing," Frank stood up, and dusted himself off. He didn't have the energy for Leo's enthusiasm and yet he lingered. He didn't want to be alone and besides, the Latino was good company, especially lately since he argued with Frank less. He was currently staring at Frank with a weird facial expression.

"So I was gonna ask you," he said suddenly, excitedly, "There's a midnight screening of Civil War!" Frank blinked at him and then just stared. His heart did a weird flip. "You know," Leo rolled his eyes when he didn't get a reaction from the other boy, "Captain America?"

"Yeah, I know," Frank's voice was quiet, "Do you want to go with me?"

"Yeah I basically just asked you."

"No you didn't I asked you," Frank scoffed and suddenly he felt as light as one of the venti's and he couldn't keep a grin off of his face and his heart was doing weird flippy things in his chest, "I heard Spiderman was in the trailer."

"Oh I know Spidey was in the trailer," Leo smirked, "I've seen it."

Frank's eyes widened, "No way!"

"Yes way! And Ant man too, and Black Panther," he plopped down on the steps and Frank joined him without a second thought, jittery with excitement, unable to remain still.

"I love Black Panther!" he gushed, "have you read the comics?!"
"Of course I read the comics!" Leo was grinning from ear to ear and the air around them seemed to vibrate with joy, "Team Cap or Team Iron Man?"

"Team Cap," Frank said, "getting registered is pure bullshit. What about you?"

"Team Iron Man, duh. The guy is practically Hephaestus reincarnated."

"Don't let your dad hear you," Frank grinned. He had never felt so warm in his life.

***

The two slipped from camp and walked to the closest bus stop and took a bus all the way to New York. They wore their teams respective shirts, and bickered and laughed and just generally geeked out over the superheroes throughout the whole thing; their walk and the bus journey and the wait in the queue.

They bought salty popcorn and two sprites and they whispered through the entire movie. It made a weird kind of content spread through Frank as he watched Leo's face illuminated by the screen, all blue and green and kinda mesmerizing. If truth be told he was more taken with Leo than the movie, but the movie was still pretty great.

They took a cab back, and they were absolutely exhausted. When the cab would go no further, stopping at the dirt road leading to camp, they had to trek back. By the time they got there, dawn was turning the sky pink and orange.

"Black Panther is definitely my fave," Leo said and yawned. His hair was rumpled, his eyes tired but happy, "and Cap still sucks."

"You suck," Frank said, but he had a soft, fond smile on his face. Grassy fields stretched out on either side of the dirt road, ruffled gently by the wind. Frank felt warm and happy and he punched Leo lightly on the shoulder, "Hey," he said, "thanks for coming with me."

"No," Leo grinned, "Thanks for coming with me."
Day 5 – Teaching each other how to do something

'The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you.' - BB King

Leo was staring at Frank quizzically, head cocked to the side. The son of Mars stood in front of him, holding two wooden swords in his hands.

"Err...," Leo didn't know what to say, so he just continued staring. Frank looked up to the sky as if asking the Gods for patience and then chucked one of the swords at Leo.

"I'm going to teach you how to fight," he said as the Latino fumbled to catch the weapon, "Come on."

He led Leo to the training pits and the Latino protested the whole way – I can't fight and let's not do this I have projects to finish. Of course he did want to learn how to fight but he didn't feel like getting beaten and embarrassed in front of Frank. Like seriously, he could barely hold a sword. It was a wonder Leo had even survived the quests with how little he was actually able to protect himself. Still, he wasn't about to tell Frank that.

The pit was empty; most of the kids were preparing for the campfire in the evening. Leo stood awkwardly at one end of it, holding the sword the way he thought you're meant to hold it. Frank's raised eyebrow clearly meant that he was holding it wrong, so Leo quickly returned to a neutral position, cheeks flushed.

"Hey, don't look so grumpy," Frank said, as he shrugged out of his shirt. Gods have mercy, Leo thought desperately as his eyes trailed over the other boy's chest and abdomen. His stomach did a weird little flip. Clearly, the Roman Gods were a lot more generous when it came to muscle than the Greek Gods because suddenly Leo felt too scrawny and skinny. He sighed and Frank picked up his sword, "Doesn't Cali want you to be able to fight?"

"Calypso doesn't care," Leo fought a wince. Things hadn't been going well between him and his girlfriend lately, mostly because Leo was avoiding her. He felt guilty – his thoughts were constantly plagued with Frank, Frank, Frank leaving no room for her. He didn't remember feeling like that when he met her. Nowadays he was thinking that maybe he never loved her, and was only dating her because she was the first person to notice him.

Leo's sword was knocked from his hands suddenly, and it flew through the air. The boy stumbled back, heart pounding, eyes wide. Frank was right in front of him, sword raised, looking unimpressed, "I'm doing a nice thing for you and you can't even pay attention?!!"
"How about give me a little warning," Leo huffed and went to retrieve his weapon. It felt heavy in his hands and meanwhile Frank's sword looked like it was an extension of his arm.

"Okay," the son of Mars said patiently, "You have to hold the sword with two hands. It makes it lighter and easier for defence. If you had a lighter sword you could use one hand, which is better for speed and attack."

Frank was holding his own sword in one hand and when Leo tried to do the same, he found that the weapon weighed him down. So he clasped it in both hands and shoved his pride aside,

"Like this?"

"Yeah," Frank nodded, "That's good. Okay, now try attack-

Leo didn't wait for him to finish as he dashed forward, and slashed with his sword. It bounced off harmlessly off Frank's shoulder. Leo flushed bright red,

"Put some strength behind it?" Frank offered.

"I did," Leo grumbled, looking away.

"Put all of your strength behind it."

"I did," Leo sighed, "See," he lowered his sword, "I told you – I'm the worst fighter."

"You're not a fighter so how can you say that you're the worst?" Frank asked. "You'll get better. Come on."

"There's no point," Leo groaned, "I'm too weak."

"Jesus, could you stop complaining?"

"Well what else am I meant to do?!"

"Fight me."

"Fine," Leo glared, "Fine I'll fucking fight you," before Frank could react Leo channelled his anger and suddenly his hand was on fire. The flames spread from his palm and licked at the wood of his weapon until he was wielding a fire-sword, "Fight me then!" Leo taunted, furious. Frank watched him with wide eyes and Leo came at him, swinging the flame sword. Frank managed to parry it with his own at the last second, but then his own weapon burst into flames. The boy hurriedly dropped it.

"Fuck," he cursed. Leo laughed coolly,

"I win," he said smugly. Frank looked at him furiously and suddenly he wasn't human anymore, instead he was a fucking dragon. Leo gaped at him and raised his sword, but it seemed a mere toy compared to the beast. It was massive and slick, with green scales that looked as hard as steel. The monster still had Frank's eyes, dark and angry, but nothing else was like Frank. Leo found that he was afraid.

The dragon opened his mouth and breathed a gust of flames at Leo. The boy felt a warm, comfortable, tingling heat and then the flames were gone, and his sword had guttered out. It was just a burned piece of wood, unrecognizable as a sword anymore. Leo's clothes were in tattered, his shirt practically gone, his face dark with ash.

"Oh fuck you Zhang!" the Latino yelled, wiping some of the dirt from his forehead and eyes. He had
no more weapons; not against a dragon. Frank transformed back into human, smirking and sensing he won. Leo saw red. He was just so angry. Frank knew that he was weak and not good at hand-to-hand combat and yet he thought it was alright to taunt him!

Leo threw himself at the other boy and the surprise made Frank lurch backwards. He stumbled over a small dent in the ground and went down, Leo on top of him.

"Screw you!" the Latino yelled angrily. Frank just kind of stared at him with wide eyes, "I don't need you to rub the fact that you're better than me in my face all the time! And you know what?! You're not better! Just 'cause you can fight doesn't mean you're a better demigod!" he was pinning the other boy to the ground, but he knew Frank could throw him off any second, "you're such a piece of shit! I don't know why I'm even friends with you-

Frank flipped them over and Leo's head smacked against the ground. He hissed in pain and Frank held him down by his wrists. His grip was actually painful, and Leo wondered if he'd have bruises in the shape of Frank's fingers there.

"Fuck you," he spat venomously as he tried to wiggle out of the bigger boy's grasp.

"Shut the fuck up you little shit-"

"Look at you all high and mighty! No wonder Hazel broke up with you."

Frank's eyes narrowed and Leo felt something icy in his heart. He knew he crossed the line. His mouth went dry.

"That's rich coming from you," Frank seethed, "when nobody even wants you."

Those words hit home hard and Leo sucked in a startled breath. Frank looked like he wanted to punch him for good measure but instead he just got up and stormed off, leaving Leo lying in the dirt in his tattered clothing. The Latino felt tears pool in his eyes and he blinked them away desperately. The world was blurry. He sniffed. He couldn't even remember why he and Frank even started fighting, he just knew that he fucked everything up.

And the boy had been right; nobody wanted him. Not his family, not his friends. Damn, not even Cali – she was probably only with him because she didn't know any better or because she was too much of a sweetheart to break up with him.

You're pathetic, Leo told himself as he got up from the ground. He picked up Frank's sword and dragged himself back to his cabin.
Frank was downright miserable. He didn't realize how much time he spent with Leo until suddenly the boy wasn't there, leaving him all alone and weirdly lonely. Their argument came as a blow and Frank couldn't find it in himself to get over his pride and apologize, and neither could Leo. So the two spent the week avoiding and ignoring each other, to the confusion of the rest of their friends.

"What even happened?" Hazel asked when Leo stormed out of the hall the second Frank came in, making a scene. The Asian sighed and leaned his forehead on the table, ignoring the food around him. He wasn't hungry.

"We fought," he mumbled, not really wanting to explain why they even fought. It still confused him a bit; one second everything was fine and the next everything crumpled around him. He didn't know why a stupid argument affected him so much but for some reason it made him feel hollow and exhausted, as if Leo had left and taken all of Frank's energy with him.

"About what?" Hazel was clearly not letting it go.

"I told him that nobody wanted him," Frank's heart gave a twist when he remembered Leo's expression fall. He had felt like such a jerk then...well, he still felt like that really.

"Ouch," Hazel said, but she sympathetically patted Frank's shoulder. The boy didn't want to tell her about the fact that Leo had lashed out at him first, mentioning their ruined romantic relationship. Instead he just kind of sat there, feeling as if he was Atlas, holding up the sky.

***

Frank hadn't seen Leo all day, not even a glimpse, and he was on the verge of breaking. He literally couldn't take it; he was emotionally drained and he just wanted Leo around him again, making stupid puns. He wanted to make everything better except he didn't know how – he had stepped over the line, and he doubted that anything he could have said would make it better.

Annabeth causally slid into a seat at the Ares table, breaking Frank out of his thoughts. There was such a disregard for the 'stick to your table' rule that it was a mystery why it still existed. Still, Sherman scooted so the daughter of Athena could get comfortable,

"Leo's sick," Annabeth informed Frank. The rest of the Ares lot turned to them with interest and
Frank fought a blush. He hated being in the centre of attention and he knew that his reaction to Annabeth's statement could mean he'd be the butt of jokes for the next few weeks as everyone would tease him about 'fancying Leo' (not that he did or anything...)

"Oh," he said, sticking with the neutral option. Annabeth raised an eyebrow and looked like she could see right through his bullshit. She probably could.

"I know you guys are not talking," she started in her no-nonsense voice, "but he's pretty miserable.
Maybe you should check up on him-"

"He's the one who started it," Frank blurted, not wanting to show how much he really cared. His hands tightened underneath the table and Annabeth rolled her eyes, "Zeus, you two are such children. Frank, please, stop being so damn immature and just go sort it out," the girl stood up and grabbed an apple from the Ares table, "before you fuck it up completely."

Frank watched her walk off sullenly. Clarisse elbowed him lightly, "Yeah," she teased, not unkindly, "go see your boyfriend."

"Shut up," Frank grumbled.

***

The son of Ares knocked on the metal door to the Hephaestus cabin, feeling nervous. After a few seconds he saw gears turning and a load of smoke was released with a hiss, right in his face. He coughed and when he finished, Harley stood in the doorway, dirty, with a hammer in hand.

"Yo," she said, used to seeing Frank in her cabin.

"Is Leo in?" Frank asked awkwardly because of course Leo was in. Heat poured from the cabin alongside the smoke, and Harley glistened with sweat.

"Yeah. He's ill though," she informed the son of Mars as she moved aside to let him in. He was greeted by more gears and bunk-beds and LED lights. Without saying bye, Harley disappeared into the tunnels to return to the forge. The room was messy as usual; bits of metal and equipment streamed across the floor, mixed with shoes, clothes and weird mechanical bits and pieces. There was a half-way taken apart microwave in one corner.

Leo wasn't on his bed, so Frank knew he was probably in the private room below his bunk, where he could get some peace and quiet and privacy. The Hephaestus kids spent most of their time in the forge so they rarely used their rooms – only if they were going to secretly sneak one of the other kids in and fuck them after curfew. Frank hesitated for a second, hovering at the foot of the bed, unsure whether he should go down or not. He could hear the clanger coming from the forge and he had half the mind to turn around and get out, but he forced himself to stay. He was meant to be brave after all.

The boy pressed his hand to the little panel on the side of the bed. Once, Leo had taken his handprint and made it possible for the room to open up to him. It had been convenient then, since the two hung out so much that Frank practically lived in the room below Leo's bed. Clearly, the Latino hadn't gotten round to getting rid of the son of Mars' pass because the bed hissed and moved to the side, revealing a spiralling staircase.

Frank descended and the bed closed overhead. His heart clenched. Down below it was cooler than in the cabin and room was soundproof. The walls and floor were made of pale brown wood, bits and pieces mixed with dishes and clothes on all the surfaces. Leo was a lump under dark blankets in the
"Annabeth?" he mumbled weakly. Frank cleared his throat awkwardly.

"Err, no...it's Frank."

Leo sat up in bed abruptly, startling Frank. His curls were a tangled mess, his eyes angry and swollen. He looked sickly pale, his nose red, cheeks flushed.

"Get out," he growled, he was shaking as if he was cold and suddenly Frank just wanted to hold him. Instead he opened and closed his mouth and desperately tried to think of something to say, of something that would make everything better.

"Annabeth said you were sick," he managed finally, pathetically. Leo's eyes narrowed, "Come to me in my moment of weakness? How noble," he said sarcastically. Frank rolled his eyes, "I wanted to apologize."

"You can shove your apology up your ass," Leo informed him, collapsing back on the bed. A silence settled over the room and Frank wondered if that was his cue to leave, or a hint to stay. Leo turned his back to him and stayed quiet so Frank awkwardly started picking clothes up from the floor. His grandmother always told him that nobody will kill you if you're helping them. He made his way around the room, picking things up and stacking the plates and cups into a neat pile. He folded the clothes, and put them away in the cupboard. He shoved all of Leo's equipment in the corner. Doing something helped take his mind off of his pounding heart.

When Frank was done he looked up and saw that Leo was staring at him. He didn't look angry anymore, just exhausted, and Frank found himself relaxing slightly.

"Leo," he started. The Latino sighed and propped himself up on one elbow.

"It's fine. Just forget about it," he said and although his words brought relief, Frank sensed the sadness behind them and he knew that Leo was still hurt. How can I make it better? He thought desperately, Tell me how to make it better.

"I'm sorry," he said, and his words sounded hollow.

"Me too," Leo offered him a weak smile. Then he sneezed, "Ugh. I'm dying," he stated dramatically.

Frank smiled, and offered Leo a tissue. The Latino blew his nose. Frank stared at him fondly, feeling his heart grown warmer. He had missed Leo so much that it felt like a physical weight had been lifted off of him. His hand moved on its own accord and he brushed one of Leo's stray curls from his eyes. The Latino looked at him, bewildered, and Frank quickly stepped away.

"I...can I do anything?" he asked awkwardly. The hand that had touched Leo felt like it was on fire.

"Chicken soup," he murmured, "I want chicken soup."

"Okay," Frank rolled his eyes, smiling, "I'll bring you chicken soup," he moved to the door.

"Wait!" Leo sat up again, looking kind of panicked. Frank suddenly remembered their quest in the woods, and the way the Latino had clung onto him after Frank found him. His heart skipped a beat, "I-I...," Frank couldn't tell if Leo's cheeks were flushed because of embarrassment or because of the
fever, "Don't go...um, we can watch a movie? I've got the illegal copy of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles two?" he sounded adorably unsure of himself, like Frank was going to laugh and leave.

"What about your soup?"

"I don't want it anymore," Leo mumbled, looking away.

"Alright," Frank came over and kicked his shoes off. There was TV opposite Leo's bed and when Frank slipped underneath the blankets he could see the screen perfectly. It was warm and comfortable in Leo's bed and the Latino was like a mini-heater, burning against Frank's side, "Just don't make me get the soup after I get comfy."

"Shhh," Leo clicked a switch and the lights in the room dimmed. It felt horribly intimate and Frank started getting weird ideas as the other boy flicked through the movies he had downloaded. Frank watched him out of the corner of his eyes; he was all curled up like a cat, his eyes tired, his nose red. Subconsciously the boy huddled closer to Frank, practically pressing himself into the other boy. Frank had to stop himself from wrapping his arms around the boy. He wondered what Leo would do if he just pulled him into his lap. What he would do if he kissed him.

*Why are you thinking about kissing him?* Frank panicked.

The movie started.

"I'm Michelangelo," Leo mumbled. Frank's heart clenched. Leo was so close, he could just reach out and...

"Okay."

"You're Raphael."

"Okay."

"Frank?" Leo's voice was a shy whisper.

"Yeah?" Frank murmured back.

"I broke up with Cali."

Frank's heart skipped a beat and his stomach did a weird flip and he let out a breath he didn't know he had been holding.

"I'm sorry," he muttered.

"I'm not."

*Does that mean I can kiss you now?*
Gravity Can't Hold Us Down

Day 7 – Ice Skating

'Everything in life is about balance.'

"Remind me why we're doing this again?" Leo asked, looking at the ice ring nervously. Frank shrugged one shoulder as he fastened one of the ice skates on his feet,

"We haven't been out in a while," he said.

"We literally went to see Civil War two weeks ago," Leo deadpanned. Frank rolled his eyes, "Why are you always complaining?" he asked. Leo didn't know – it was like a second line of defence, right after his sassiness. Somehow he felt like Frank always knocked all of his walls down and it unnerved him. Being a pessimist helped to shield him from the other boy...though sometimes Leo wondered if he even wanted to be shielded. If he got the chance to let Frank pick him apart as if he was a puzzle, then he would. Even if Frank didn't put him back together afterwards.

Chiron had taken the campers on a 'free day' out. They were all meant to get Wendy's and walk around shops for a bit before returning to Camp with new books and comics and snacks. But Frank apparently discovered a spontaneous gene in himself and he dragged Leo away from the group when nobody was looking at them. And that's how they ended up here; in the ice skating ring. What Leo didn't understand was why Frank took him and not Hazel or Percy or any of their other friends.

He also didn't understand why they were alone. Well, not completely alone. There were obviously people around; parents teaching children how to skate, a group of teenagers, two couples...but Leo and Frank had ditched their other friends. It felt almost like a date, and the Latino was not complaining. He was scared he'd be lonely after the break up with Calypso, but somehow Frank had taken up almost all of his free time, not letting the break up fully get to him.

"Have you ever skated before?" the son of Mars asked, breaking Leo out of his thoughts. He eyed the ice nervously.

"Nope," Leo said, popping the 'p', "From your facial expression I assume you haven't either."

"There's a first time for everything," Frank cracked his knuckles as if he was about to go and punch the shit out of the ice. Leo watched, half worried and half amused, as the boy gingerly stepped out onto the ring. He looked awkward and unsteady and adorable and Leo snorted when the bigger boy clung onto the edge, afraid to let go and risk falling over.

"Let's see you do better," Frank glared at Leo hearing the boy's laughter. The Latino grinned at him and stepped onto the ice surely. But that's where his confidence ended; his heart did a little flip when he stumbled on the slippery surface, and his hand shot out and he was clinging onto the ramp just like Frank in seconds. The Asian chuckled and Leo elbowed him,
"Shut up," he grumbled, and then let go of the ramp nervously. He wobbled on the ice and decided that ice skating was definitely not for him. He felt unsteady and like his world was about to topple over, which was how he usually felt around Frank anyway but let's not mention that.

"Wait," Leo kind of slid a few centimetres without even moving, as if pulled by an invisible force, "how do you skate?!" he sounded more panicked then intended because Jesus fucking Christ there was someone coming right at him. From the look on the girl's face she wasn't pro-enough to skate out of the way, and was giving Leo the you better move 'cause I won't look. Except Leo couldn't move either. He was about to experience his first collision and fall at the same time, on ice. Great. He should have never let go of the damn ramp.

Frank's hand was on his arm and he tugged the boy back roughly, out of the girls way at the last second. She let out an audible sigh of relief and then wobbly skated on. Frank and Leo exchanged a look,

"Okay, come on," Frank's hand slid from Leo's down to his wrist and the Latino would be lying if he said that his heart didn't skip a beat when he felt the other boy's fingers against his bare skin. And then his heart was pounding because he and Frank were shakily making their way across the ice. Leo couldn't stop the burst of laughter that escaped him despite how unsteady he felt. Frank was grinning too. Across the ice, a woman fell over and started laughing as her friend helped her up.

Frank's hand slid from down Leo's wrist and he shyly interlocked his fingers with Leo's. The Latino looked up, surprised, but Frank wasn't looking at him, his face flushed. Leo smiled and gently sped up, so that he was pulling Frank along.

"Hold your horses," Frank sounded kind of terrified but kind of happy too, "We're gonna fall."

"I should be more worried about burning a hole in the ice," Leo said. His cheeks stung from the cold, but he didn't mind.

"Are there any ice animals?" Frank asked as he and Leo picked up the pace, still holding hands. He was breathless. Leo's body was all cold, except for his hand. And his heart, it felt like it was going to burn through his chest.

"Err polar bears?" Leo glanced at Frank, "Why?"

"Just thinking of a backup plan," the Asian said casually. Leo was about to reply, but then his feet did a weird zig-zaggy thing on the slippery ice and he found his stomach coming up to his throat as he fell backwards. Frank – that idiot – let go off his hand and Leo ended up sprawled on the ice, the breath knocked out of him. His back was wet, his bum numb.

"Don't try and pull me down with you!" Frank yelled, "Take one for the team!"

"What team?!" Leo complained loudly as he sat up. Frank was smiling when he offered Leo his hand, and the Latino was glad that he did because he doubted he could stand up in his shitty, heavy ice skates by himself. Frank retreated his hand the second Leo was back on his feet, but some impulse made the Latino reach out and tangle their fingers together again. It brought him comfort; physical touch.

"You're like the wall in Game of Thrones," he informed Frank when the Asian glanced at their interlocked hands, "you protect the realm. I'm the realm. You're the wall. If I fall next time you better catch me."

"Okay," Frank said and then the two were skating again. Leo got more confident, more steady. He
calculated the distance he'd have to start turning at corners, and Frank follow his lead. At some point he tucked their interlocked hands into his pocket, where it was warmer.

Soon enough the two got so confident that they started speeding, zooming past other skaters, laughing. The ice sparkled prettily.

This time it was Frank who lost balance and Leo didn't even know how, but suddenly he was falling backwards and pulling Leo down with him. The Latino yelped as he tumbled over his own feet and ended up on top of Frank.

"Ouch," the Asian rubbed the back of his head. Leo raised an eyebrow,

"You were meant to be my wall!" he smacked Frank's chest, "Gods you're shit."

"Help me up," Frank grumbled, ignoring Leo's comment.

"Funny, I can't even help myself up," Leo said. He could – he just didn't want to. Frank's face was inches away from his, and he was warm underneath the Latino. If it was up to him, Leo would have never moved.

"Fuck," Frank cursed.

Leo saw the girl too – the same one from before – coming at them, looking panicked. Clearly she had not learned to skate in the past few minutes, "Incoming," Leo sang and then he was up on his feet and skating away from Frank, who was still sprawled on the ice, looking ready to be that Polar bear.
Don't Threaten Me With A Good Time

Chapter Notes

So sorry for not posting guys, I was away at camp with no Wi-Fi. I'm going back on Sunday but I will try post as much as I can in these two days.

Day 8 – Making fun of each other

'I like people too much or not at all.' - Sylvia Plath

Frank was teaching a class of eleven and twelve year old Demigods the basics of self defence, when Leo came over. The Latino literally didn't understand the concept of lessons and decided it was the best time to annoy Frank, in front of a mini crowd. No matter how many times the Asian told the son of Hephaestus that 'now is not a good time' and that he was teaching, Leo never left him alone during lessons.

"Hey class," he said as he sat on a little wall drowned in the sun to the side of where all the kids stood. Frank didn't even bother to look over as he fixed the stance of one of the little boys.

"Get out of here, Valdez," he said as he manoeuvred the child's elbow so he was in the correct position for paring.

"Let Leo stay!" a little daughter of Athena protested. She reminded Frank of Annabeth despite her caramel skin and dark hair, always correcting him and leading the group. Frank sighed, but didn't say anything. The kids adored Leo – his witty sense of humour and the kindness hidden beneath it – and if Frank was honest, so did he. So he continued to try and teach while Leo blabbered on from his wall.

It proved hard though, not only did he distract the kids, but he distracted Frank as well, especially when he got to the stories.

"...and I am telling you, swear on my life, that Frank turned into a giant koi goldfish!" the Latino finished and the children erupted into giggles that they tried to hide behind hands.

"You weren't even there!" Frank scoffed, feeling his face heat up. Leo shrugged and grinned. Frank honestly loved his grin. But he'd never tell him that.

"You weren't even there." Leo teased in a deep voice, as if imitating Frank.

"Oh haha," the Asian said sarcastically, "how old are you?"

"How old are you?" Leo parroted, puffing out his chest and taking on a facial expression that made
him look constipated. Frank's class laughed freely now, looking from one boy to the other as if watching a football match. Frank's eyes twitched – Leo always got him way too riled up for his own good.

"Oh look at me," Frank said in a squeaky voice, putting one hand on his hip and the other in the air, "I'm Leo and I'm soooo good looking." Leo rolled his eyes but the group of children laughed, "and I can set fire to things, aren't I amazing?"

"I am actually," Leo shrugged, "Who's immature now?"

"Try me, bitch."

Leo snorted, "I'd give you a dirty look but you've already got one," he said, eyeing Frank up and down. The group of kids 'ooooh'ed and watched enticed as Frank retaliated. The Asian walked right up to Leo and grabbed his chin in his hand. His skin was soft against Frank's calloused palm. For a second the Latino looked at him with wide, surprised eyes, lips parted, and Frank just wanted to kiss him senseless, but instead he peered at him closely.

"I love what you've done to your hair," he said calmly even though his heart pounded so hard he was scared it'd burst from his chest, "how did you get it to come out of your nose like that?"

Leo swatted at Frank's hand as the Asian's class erupted into laughter as Frank stepped away. Leo glared but Frank knew he wasn't really offended,

"The only way you'll ever get laid is if you crawl up a chicken's arse and wait," Leo informed him. A girl doubled over, laughing soundlessly. A boy had tears in his eyes as he roared with laughter and Frank stared with his mouth hanging open. Leo looked pleased with himself,

"I'd like to see things from your point of view," the Asian said, "but I can't seem to get my head that far up my ass."

Leo grabbed his heart, "Rude!" he declared dramatically.

"Come on Leo!" Piper was among the kids suddenly, grinning. Frank had no clue where she came from, "You can do better than that!"

"Hey!" Frank protested. Piper shrugged one shoulder and mouthed 'sorry' at the Asian. Frank didn't really mind that she was Team Leo.

"Your family tree must be a cactus 'cause everyone on it is a prick," Leo yelled.

"We have the same family, moron," Frank laughed, "Someday you'll go far...and I hope you stay there."

"You're such a dick," Leo was laughing. His cheeks were flushed. Stop thinking about kissing him! Frank told himself, but it was hard. He didn't know when it started – maybe at that quest all those weeks ago when Leo got lost – but he couldn't keep his eyes off the Latino, and constantly wanted to be near him. He also noticed stupid little things about the boy that he hadn't before, like the fact that he always had a curl of hair in his face, or that in the right lights his eyes looked like whiskey, or that he was always fiddling with something. It made it horribly hard to concentrate on anything really.

"Alright, game over," Frank said, because he needed Leo to leave before he did something stupid.

"Oh," Leo raised an eyebrow, "I didn't know we were playing."
"We are now," Frank's smirk grew. He liked to challenge Leo.

"Okay," Leo smiled and then sauntered off, leaving Frank with his class and Piper and his frantically beating heart.
Leo heard from Annabeth.

She came sprinting into the heated, smoky interior of the forge in the basement of Cabin 9, hair flying everywhere and eyes wide with panic. The Latino was busy hammering away at a piece of metal that would add up to make part of the project he and Nyssa were working on.

"Leo!" Annabeth almost fell into Harley in her haste to get to her friend, "Leo come quick!"

The boy pushed the goggles that had been shielding his eyes up into his hair, and gave Annabeth a quizzical look.

"What?" he asked, "you look like Hades is chasing you."

"It's Frank," Annabeth tried to catch her breath, "He's hurt."

Leo was hit by a sudden wave of nausea as his heart clench. He felt light headed. Combined with Annabeth's tone of voice and the terrified look on her face, Leo knew it was bad, "There was an accident, we had to take him to the hospital-"

The boy let his hammer slip from his hands and slam into the floor. He was by the girl in seconds, grabbing her shoulders with his hands,

"Where is he!? Is he dead?!" he demanded, feeling his pulse pounding. No, no, no...

"He's at a mortal hospital up in Brooklyn, and-"

Leo didn't let her finish. He had never felt such deep rooted panic before. He felt like he couldn't breathe as he sprinted out of his cabin and into the sun lit afternoon. His world tipped to the side and he felt like he was about to faint. It was as if someone punched him in the gut. He saw images in his mind; Frank dead, his body pale and lifeless. Or ripped apart and bloody. Or charred and black with fire. Dead. Dead. Dead. He could be dead.

Nico was finishing teaching a history lesson to a bunch of younger demigods out in the field when Leo barreled in among them.

"Take me to Frank!" he said, interrupting Nico mid-word. The son of Hades blinked at him, surprised, "Nico!" Leo yelled impatiently, feeling all kinds of wrong and worried and like he was
about to start crying, "Take me to Frank!"

The class stared, wide eyed. Nico collected himself,

"Class dismissed," he told the children, and without further ado he grabbed Leo's wrist. His hand was cold against Leo's skin. There was a swirl of light, and then a swirl of darkness. The world spun around like a fairground ride. For a second Leo was in the void, floating, with his heart up in his throat. And then his feet were slamming down onto the hard hospital floor.

Leo took a second to take a breath and stop the world from spinning, leaning hard against the wall. He didn't shadow travel much, and it always left him in a bit of a state. His heart pounded painfully. The corridor was flooded with harsh light, and Hazel, Chiron, Piper and Reyna were already present, sitting in the hard, plastic hospital chairs.

"Where is he?!" Leo demanded when the world steadied. His hands were shaking and he had to blink to get rid of the tears in his eyes, "Where's Frank?!" his voice sounded hysterical even to him, but he couldn't do anything about it. Reyna gripped his shoulders, suddenly in front of him,

"Calm down, Leo," she said in that comforting but stern voice of hers. Her hard grip helped Leo to ground himself, "Frank is alive, he's fine. He'll be fine."

Leo sucked in a breath and when he let it out it came out as a sob. His frame shook and he had to fight to keep his tears at bay. Everything in him ached.

"Please l-let me s-see him," his voice was a whisper, broken and shaky, "Please, j-just...I just want to s-see him..."

Reyna looked defeated and tired as she led him down the corridor, past the other people from camp, and to a door. Leo didn't wait, impatiently pushing it open and stumbling inside. Reyna didn't follow him.

Frank laid in a bed with horribly blue blankets. The shutters were drawn over the windows, and only small shafts of orange light made it inside the room. The walls were bleached, the lights harsh. Frank had one bandage around his head, and another around his stomach. He wasn't wearing a shirt but Leo didn't even have time to think about that. Frank's eyes opened when he heard the door slam shut. He looked exhausted – but he was alive.

"Hi," he smiled weakly at Leo. The Latino's hands balled into fists and his lower lip trembled as he tried to stop himself from crying,

"W-What happened?" he managed shakily. Frank forced himself up into a sitting position and winced. The wince send a shaft of pain through Leo's heart; he wanted to run at Frank and hug him and make sure he was real and alright and alive, but he couldn't move.

"I was out on patrol," Frank's voice was a bit hoarse, "and a manticore attacked. I managed to send it back to Tartarus, but it got me across the stomach. It's too deep for ambrosia."

"Y-You...," Leo's throat felt dry and he swallowed, "You w-won't die, r-right?"

"Didn't realize you cared so much," Frank grinned, trying to lighten the situation. Leo didn't feel like joking. His heart hurt so fucking bad that he could barely breathe.

"Frank."

"No," Frank's expression softened, "I won't die, idiot." He held out his hand to Leo, "C'mere."
Leo didn't hesitate then. He practically ran to Frank's bedside and threw himself into the other boy's arms. Frank hissed when Leo pressed up against his wound, but didn't push the boy away. In fact, he just pulled him closer. Leo couldn't hold back the tears; the relief flooded him like a wave, and feeling Frank's strong, steady warmth against him made everything so much more real. Leo wrapped his arms around Frank's shoulders and started to sob against his neck.

"Hey, shhh," Frank said gently. Leo never heard him speak like that and it just made him cry harder. One of Frank's arms wrapped around the Latino's waist, the other coming up to brush through Leo's curls soothingly, "It's fine. I'm fine."

"I thought y-you'd die," Leo's voice was raw and he clung onto Frank even harder, letting everything out, "I-I couldn't breathe a-and I was j-just...," Leo trailed off. His sobs subsided and he realized how close to Frank he really was, and how close he had come to saying something he might regret.

"Sir!" a nurse rushed into the room and Leo practically fell off the bed in his haste to get away from Frank. He wiped at his cheeks furiously to get rid of the tear tracks, "You can't be in here!"

"I-I just-"

Piper appeared out of nowhere,

"Hi," she said to the nurse with the sweetest smile she could muster, "you should leave these two alone." Leo knew she was using charmspeak.

The nurse looked dazed and she nodded, detached, before leaving the room. Piper turned to Leo, who was blushing like mad,

"We're going back to camp. Leo look after Frank tonight, 'kay?" she winked and before Leo could protest, she was gone. The Latino turned to Frank, who didn't look that bothered, just really, really tired.

"I...um, if you mind I can go," Leo offered lamely. The sun was setting at the room was growing dimmer,

"I don't mind," Frank said, but he was looking away. Leo's heart pounded, but this time not from worry. He slipped the goggles that he was still wearing over his head and put it down on the chair. He was only now realizing how dirty he was; his hands were stained with soot from working, and his face had to be streaked with it too.

"I'll go take a shower," Leo said quickly, staring at his feet.

"Bathroom's on the left," Frank said. It was a small, cramped bathroom attached to Frank's hospital room. Leo disappeared into it as fast as he could. He stripped and stepped into the small cabin but he didn't risk a warm shower in fear it would wake some parts of his body that he preferred to stay asleep. The cold water chased away the last of his fear and anxiety, and ensured him that everything was real and Frank was really okay.

Leo pulled his underwear back over his damp body when he was done but left the rest of his clothes in a heap on the floor. They'd be too uncomfortable to sleep in, he decided. However he realized his mistake too late.

He stepped into the room and remembered that Frank was shirtless too and that was too close for comfort. Night had fallen outside and Leo swallowed hard as he looked at Frank on the bed. He imagined their naked skin pressed together, and blood rushed south.
"Turn the lights off," Frank mumbled. His eyes were closed, strands of hair falling over his bandage. Leo quickly walked over to the switch and flipped the lights off, glad for the cover of darkness. He'd hate for Frank to see the blush on his face, or the bulge in his pants. The only light in the room came from the traffic outside, red and green and white, just bright enough so Leo could see the outline of things.

"The bed's small," He mumbled. He felt shy and nervous and all kinds of weird. He knew there was no way he'd be able to hide his feelings from Frank, not like this, not so close.

"Just come here," Frank sounded exhausted. When Leo awkwardly stood next to the bed, Frank grabbed his wrist and tugged him down on top of him. Leo yelped and he was sure Frank could hear his heart hammering away as the two pressed together, skin to skin. He felt like there was something in his throat and he was shaking. Frank was just so goddamn warm and so close and Leo just wanted to push himself closer, he wanted Frank's hands all over his body and-

"Isn't this painful?" Leo asked, trying to stop his body from reacting the way it did. His chest was pressed against Frank's, their legs tangled together, "On your w-wound?"

"No," Frank mumbled sleepily, "you weight barely anything." His strong arm came to wrap around Leo's back. The Latino flushed bright red and quickly buried his face in Frank's chest. Maybe he's high on morphine or something?

"Stay with me, okay?" Frank asked softly. Leo nodded because he didn't trust his voice. Frank's free hand came up to stroke Leo's cheek gently, "I'm glad you're here."

Suddenly Leo was exhausted. The events of the afternoon came crashing over him, and the tiredness hit him. He was too tired to do anything more than snuggle more into Frank's warmth and let the other boy hold him close.
Never Let You Go

Day 10 – Hugging

'A silent hug means a thousand words to the unhappy heart.'

When Frank woke up in the hospital, Leo was gone and he was left with a hollow feeling in his stomach. The feeling intensified when over the next three days Leo didn't show up again. The others did; Nico and Hazel, Percy and Annabeth, Reyna and Clarisse and the other Ares kids. But Frank really just wanted Leo; but the boy was avoiding him.

Okay, so the night they spent together might've been weird. They slept tangled around each other, which Frank was sure 'just friends' didn't do. But he didn't know how Leo felt about it...damn, he didn't even know how he himself felt. All he knew was that when Leo was around his heart would start pounding and he'd just get these weird urges to hold and kiss him. It was pretty intense, and nothing like what he felt with Hazel.

After three days his wounds have healed enough that he could be let out from hospital. The ambrosia helped to patch him up and where the wound was there was now just a raw, pink scar to add to his collection. Chiron drove him back to Camp Half Blood, because Frank said he wanted to go there instead of Camp Jupiter. I want to see Leo.

But of course it couldn't be that easy. At Camp, Chiron had to check him up again, and Rachel too. Then all the Ares lot made sure he ate something and then forced him to rest. He asked them to find Leo for him, but both Sherman and Mark came back empty handed, saying that the Latino was not at camp. But Frank knew the truth. He's avoiding me.

He was determined to make everything right. He remembered how shitty he felt after the argument the two of them had after he tried to teach Leo how to fight, and he really didn't want to repeat that.

So when Frank was finally let up from bed, he immediately went to the Hephaestus cabin. After three very long minutes of impatient pounding on the door, Jake finally opened. His face was practically black from all the smoke and soot, and his teeth shone pearly white when he grinned,

"Up on your feet again I see," he said.

"Yeah," Frank said, "Um...is Leo here?" he asked, hoping he wasn't blushing. Jake blinked at him, and then his eyes shifted.

"No," he said, "Sorry."

Liar. But Frank couldn't exactly barge past him and look for Leo in not his cabin. He was sure the Hephaestus kids had some fancy machine that would kick him out if he tried.
"Right," he said awkwardly, "Thanks...I guess."

Frank walked across the strawberry fields, hands in his pockets, sulking. He didn't know why Leo was avoiding him, or what he was scared of. He sat among the strawberries, picking at them and kind of half-heartedly helping the people collecting them. He felt like there was a black cloud over his head despite the fact that the sun was shining. Nico saw his distress,

"Frank," he said, coming over. He was clad all in black, despite the warm day. Frank looked up at him and Nico sighed, "You're honestly like a heartbroken puppy. I think Leo's being childish, so that's why I'm telling you," he shoved his hands into his pockets, "He went to Camp Jupiter."

"What?!" Frank groaned, "Wow...he really must hate me," he laughed to himself bitterly. The idea never really hit him, that maybe Leo just didn't like him. The night they slept together Frank had been pretty out of it...maybe he said something? Or God forbid did something?! He was pretty sure he remembered all of it, but what if when he thought he had been sleeping, he had really been doing...things. What if he hurt Leo?!

"Can you Shadowtravel me there?" Frank asked brokenly. He needed to fix everything, to apologize...

"I'm not a taxi."

"Nico, please," Frank looked up at him. Nico sighed,

"Fine," he offered Frank his hand and helped him up from the ground, "Want to take anything?"

"No."

Back at Camp Reyna was the praetor and Frank and Percy swapped being the other praetor around depending on when which of them was there. They both had cabins to themselves for whenever they came. Reyna was managing fine without them though, and didn't mind them switching camps or not being present all the time. Still, Frank realized how long he hadn't been at Jupiter.

It's because I wanted to be near Leo. They still don't trust him at Jupiter, but he still went there to get away from me.

When Frank found himself on the border of Camp Jupiter, Nico almost immediately went back to Half Blood. And then there was Terminus in front of him, angry in his white-washed, marble way.

"FRANK ZHANG!" he boomed and Frank flinched, "FINALLY DECIDED TO SHOW UP, EH? FOLLOWING THAT LITTLE VULCAN BOY! AY, LEAVE REYNA WITH ALL THE WORK! YOU AND JACKSON BOTH!" If a statue could spit, Frank was sure Terminus would have.

"Sorry," he winced, "I'm looking for-"

"LEO VALDEZ," Terminus' stone eyes narrowed, "AYE I AM AWARE. WELL HE IS HERE, YOUNG ONE. BEST GO FIND HIM."

Frank slipped past the borders. He didn't even have any weapons on him, he just wanted to get to Leo. He bumped into campers on the way; Dakota offered him cool-aid, Gwen had a go at him for not showing up for a long time, but Reyna just waved him off when he showed up at the doorstep of the Praetor house.

"There's not much work today," she said, "go find Leo."
So he did. Or at least he tried. He wandered around camp, through the cohorts practicing, and the shops, and the older Romans sitting out on the benches and eating ice cream. He asked the Vulcan lot about Leo, but they hadn't seen him. It was all tiring and annoying, and by the time the sun was setting and everyone was dispersing into their homes, Frank had had enough. There was literally no trace of the Latino...maybe he hadn't come here after all, or he went back to Half Blood.

Defeated, Frank dragged himself to his cabin, a white, marble structure by the training fields. He hadn't been there in a few weeks but it was still a kind of home for him. What was surprising was that the lights were on. Frank's shoulders tensed when he saw the warm glow from the windows. *Found you,* he thought as he stepped inside.

Sure enough, Leo was sprawled out on Frank's bed, fiddling with something and looking exhausted.

"How long have you been here?" Frank asked as he closed the door. He swore he saw Leo jump up into the air.

"Zeus," the Latino touched his heart and sat up, "you scared me."

"Again," Frank crossed his arms over his chest, suddenly feeling defensive, "Care to tell me why you're in my bed?"

Leo flushed a bright red, "It's yours?" he managed weakly, "Didn't realize."

Frank sighed.

"Why are you avoiding me?" he asked softly. He didn't have the strength to be angry, or even annoyed. Leo blinked and then looked away, as if he was embarrassed. He bit his lip and didn't say anything. Frank took a hesitant step towards him, aware that Leo was still on his bed. It would be so easy to just push him back against the pillows, to cage him in with Frank's arms and- "Did I do anything?" the words tumbled out of Frank's mouth before he could stop them, "Did I...hurt you?"

"No!" Leo said quickly, "No...Gods no, Frank you didn't..." he trailed off. Frank relaxed visibly, "What is it then?" he frowned, "Why are you avoiding me?"

"I'm not," Leo said, "I came here because I needed to think."

"About what?"

"It doesn't matter," Leo shook his head and got up from the bed. Frank was blocking the door, "Frank, this is weird. All of it...," the boy groaned in frustration, as if he couldn't find the words he wanted to say.

"What's wrong?" Frank felt like they were walking around the topic, as if they were both scared. And maybe they were, "Leo, talk to me you fiery idiot."

"I need to go," Leo mumbled. Frank could see his shoulders were shaking. The Latino stepped closer to Frank and then tried to go around him to reach the door, but the son of Mars grabbed his shoulders, "Frank," Leo's eyes were angry suddenly, "*Let me go.*"

"No." Frank slipped his arms around Leo and pulled him into his chest.

"Frank!" Leo squirmed and tried to get away but Frank was stronger, and he held Leo tightly. The Latino was warm, his hair tickled Frank's cheek, he smelled like fire and cinnamon. The more Leo fought him, the tighter Frank hugged him. Eventually the Latino gave up and stayed in Frank's
embrace, tense and angry.

"I'm sorry," Frank mumbled, trying to coax Leo out of his shell, "I don't know what I did, but whatever it was, I'm sorry."

"You didn't do anything," Leo grumbled, and he relaxed against Frank. The Asian loosened his grip, but only enough so he could slip and arm around Leo's waist, "I'm just...I don't know."

"Yeah," Frank smiled, because he kind of understood. He didn't know what he was feeling either, "It's alright."

Leo sniffed, like he was about to cry, and buried his face in Frank's shoulder, "I don't know what's wrong with me," he whispered. Frank's heart ached.

"Nothing's wrong with you," he said softly. Leo's hands came up to grip the back of Frank's shirt. They just stood there for a while, in a comfortable, perfect silence, clinging onto each other. Frank never felt so content before. Leo was pliant and steady in his arms, and he actually wanted to be there.

But then Leo detached himself. He was flushed, and looked dazed and unsteady as he pulled away. "I should...um, go...," he licked his lips nervously, not looking at Frank. *Kiss him, just kiss him, Jesus Christ just...*

"You can stay here?" Frank offered, heart hammering away, "Bed's bigger than the one at the hospital."

Leo cracked a smile, "Thanks but...," his smile disappeared, "I don't think I can. Reyna will give me a cabin...," He slipped around Frank before the bigger boy could stop him, "I'll see you tomorrow."
'Cause We All Wanna Dance When The Funeral Ends

Day 11 – Death of someone close

'Love the people God gave you, cause one day he'll take them back.'

Leo looked at the door nervously, his hands itching to knock. Behind him, Camp Jupiter was in the midst of activities; sparring and training, shouting commands and obstacle courses. But in front of him was something more challenging; Frank's cabin.

*Come on Leo, don't be such a pussy. He needs someone right now, and you're the only one here.*

And that was true, Jason went back to Half Blood for a few weeks, and Reyna was away on a quest. Leo and Frank were the only campers left in Jupiter and besides, they were the only ones attending the funeral. Well...right now it looked like Leo was attending alone.

The boy mustered up all the courage he had, and knocked. He didn't expect Frank to open, and he didn't. The Latino had to push the door open without being invited in, only to find that Frank's room was dark, the shutters were closed. The air was musty and stuffy, and Frank was just a lump underneath his blankets. It broke Leo's heart.

"Frank," he said, softly, unsure, "you should get dressed."

Frank didn't reply, didn't stir. He could be asleep or he could be dead, but from the door Leo wouldn't know. The Latino walked across the dark room hesitantly and gently touched what he hoped was Frank's shoulder under the blankets. The boy shifted.

"Frank," Leo murmured, "please. We have to go."

Frank pulled himself up as if he weighed more than the world. His eyes were dull, his shoulders slumped. He looked ready to pass out or crumble or cry or all three. His hair had grown longer and it fell messily against his forehead. Leo gently brushed it back. Frank wouldn't look at him, he just sat there.

Leo got up and walked to the wardrobe. He started pulling out clothes; a black button-up shirt, a black blazer, dress pants. He had to rummage for some black shoes and he ended up finding only trainers. When he came back to the bed, Frank was still just sitting there, looking halfway to death.

Leo slipped the other boy's shirt over his head, and tried not to admire Frank's naked chest. Not now. He helped the son of Mars pull the button up over his head, but that's where Frank's cooperation finished. Leo quickly did up the buttons and then he slipped the tie around the boy's neck. Frank was silent as Leo tied the tie, his fingers shaking, but then he stood and pulled on his own trousers, and tugged on his shoes. Leo had to stand on his tiptoes to brush through Frank's hair with his fingers, sorting it out.

"There," he offered a small smile when he was done, "you look nice."
Frank didn't say anything, just stared at the floor. There were tears in his eyes but he clearly didn't want to cry. There was a knock on the door and Leo went to open it; it was Nico, all in black as usual. It was fitting, really.

"Ready?" he asked. Leo nodded and moved so Nico could come in. The Italian murmured his condolences to Frank, then he took his hand and shadow travelled out of the cabin. He came back for Leo in two seconds, looking exhausted. The Latino's world spun.

They stepped out of the shadows of the funeral home. Frank already stood there, staring up at the charcoal sky.

"Will you be okay?" Nico asked softly. Leo nodded,

"Thanks, man," he said. Nico just slipped back into the shadows, leaving Leo alone with Frank. Leo's throat felt tight as he looked at Frank, so shattered and broken. He seemed smaller somehow, as if he had folded in on himself.

Together, wordlessly, the two boys stepped into the funeral home. Already there were dozens of people around; Frank's family members milling around the empty caskets, drinking wine and whispering softly. Leo's heart clenched when he realized that he was meeting people Frank grew up with, and in such shit circumstances as well.

"Frank!" a girl saw them and she pushed through the thick crowd. She wasn't Asian, unlike everyone else, but had the same dark hair. Her chocolate brown eyes twinkled but there was an underside of sadness to them. Of course there was, she just lost a family member. Leo stepped away from Frank and watched as the girl gave him a tight hug. Frank responded half heartedly and the girl broke away to look at Leo,

"Hi! I'm Caitlin, Frank's adopted cousin, the girl – Caitlin – extended her hand and Leo shook it nervously, "it's nice to meet you...too bad it's under such circumstances." She sounded apologetic.

"I'm sorry about your loss," Leo mumbled. He didn't know who Caitlin lost – maybe it was an aunt, or a great aunt, or something, "I'm Frank's...um, friend." He finished quickly. It felt weird. He didn't know what he was to Frank, not anymore. He didn't even know if Frank felt the same way as him, but now was not the time to think about that. They had a funeral to attend.

Leo watched as family members swarmed over Frank, smoothing out his hair and tie and stiffly offering their condolences. The Latino stayed to the side, feeling detached. Apart from Ares, he had never met anyone else from Frank's family, and he felt like an intruder now. Still, he owed it to Frank to be here. After all, Frank had asked.

Yesterday, when he first heard the news, he had cried. A lot. Leo sat with him and offered all the comfort he could, and Frank asked him to come to the funeral with him. Since Leo left him that night, he hadn't said a word – he wasn't even speaking to his family now.

"So," Caitlin appeared at Leo's side, seemingly out of nowhere, making the boy jump, "You're the Leo Valdez."

"The Leo Valdez?" the Latino raised an eyebrow. Caitlin grinned and rolled her eyes,

"Yeah. Whenever Frank gets service he talks to me," she glanced over at her cousin, and dropped her voice so she was imitating him, "Oh you know Leo, such an idiot. He's so cute though but don't tell him that."

"H-He said that?!" Leo spluttered, flushing red. Caitlin slapped a hand over her mouth,
"Oops, probably shouldn't have repeated that," she shrugged, "oh well, you might as well know. Frank should stop pining like a lovesick puppy."

"P-Pining?" the information was a bit much for Leo, and he felt dizzy all of a sudden, but Caitlin was grinning like she knew everything in the world. Leo cleared his throat, "So...err, who was she to you?" he asked, gesturing to the closed coffin near the door.

"Great aunt," Caitlin said, giving the casket a mournful look, "I only met her once, didn't like me much. After all I'm not 'proper family.'"

"That sucks," Leo winced. He knew what it felt like to be an outsider. He could still sometimes hear his aunts Rosa's voice in his head, screaming in Spanish that he's a Diablo. Before he and Caitlin could continue their conversation, Frank came over. He looked like he wanted to be anywhere but there.

"They're gonna bury her now," Caitlin said, seeing some of the men of the family lift the coffin. Leo wanted to take Frank's hand but he didn't know if Frank wanted that. He was shattered right now, heartbroken, and Leo didn't know how to make it better.

He followed the Zhang family out into the grey, drab afternoon. The trees rustled softly in the wind, almost like they were mourning too. Leo wanted to cry, even if he didn't know the dead. He wanted to cry because Frank couldn't.

He stood next to the son of Mars as they lowered the coffin down into the ground, their shoulders touching. Caitlin stood to Frank's other side, and despite what she said, she looked sad too. Leo got weird looks from Frank's family, but he didn't care. He heard the whispers, but he paid them no mind. He was used to weird looks and whispers.

What he wasn't used to was Frank holding his hand. The son of Mars slid his hand down so he could grip Leo's. He was shaking and after his initial shock passed, Leo slipped his fingers through Frank's and squeezed his hand. Frank offered him a weak, thankful smile and the weight on Leo's chest lessened slightly.

The ceremony was over in a blink of an eye. The family said a little prayer, each left a little message, and then they began to disappear, walking off in ones and twos. There was a coldness around them, a detachment, like they weren't a real family. There was no affection or love. Caitlin was the only one to say goodbye to Frank, and then she was gone too, and it was just the two demigods next to a fresh grave.

They stood like that for a long time, holding hands until the cold afternoon passed into an even colder evening. Frank was shivering, but Leo's was always warm.

"We should go," the Latino said softly after a light rain began falling. Frank gave the grave one last look,

"Goodbye grandma," he whispered. Leo squeezed his hand.
Day 12 – Watching the other sleep

'Since the rain is falling, I think I might fall as well.' - BEAST

After the funeral Frank felt hollow and broken and just...he didn't know how to describe it. The empty condolences of his 'family' didn't help either, they just made all of the bitterness and sadness in him stronger. But Leo lessened the pain, and that's why Frank asked him to stay the night.

It rained at Camp Jupiter. Unlike Half-Blood, the weather wasn't magical at the Roman camp, and that night the skies reflected the Asian's mood. Frank didn't realize how much he had missed the rain until he was sitting on his bed, with the lights turned off, listening to the droplets pit patter on the windows, making little silver streaks against the glass. A reflection of the window made itself on the wall, and the rain on the wallpaper was black.

Leo lay on Frank's bed, tangled up in his sheets, blissfully passed out. He didn't have the burden of mourning up on his shoulders like Frank, and it was easier for him to fall asleep. Frank didn't hold it against him; even unconscious, Leo still brought him comfort.

Frank's back was against the headboard, his legs drawn up to his chest as he listened to the rain and watched Leo. He was mesmerizing really, and Frank couldn't believe he never noticed it before. How could he have spent his days on the Argo II being smitten with Hazel when Leo was right there, all dark eyes and curls and quirky little smiles?

Asleep, Leo looked younger than eighteen. His face was relaxed, his curls splayed on the pillow like a curly halo, some falling onto his forehead. When Frank reached out to brush them from his skin, the boy furrowed his brows. His eyelashes cast dark shadows on his cheeks, and the rain from the window reflected on his skin. Leo's mouth was parted slightly so he could let out deep, calm breaths. One of his hands was curled against his stomach. His wrist looked terribly skinny and fragile, his hand tangled in the sheets. One of the Latino's legs was hanging over the edge of the bed.

Leo let out a soft snore. Frank smiled. The rain continued to pour.

Frank gently brushed through Leo's hair, and then let his hand trailed down the other boy's cheek, all the while he began to pull up from the hole of darkness that he had been in ever since he heard the news of his grandmother's death. He felt the tiredness hit him as the heartbreak slowly eased, ever so
slightly, like a shift in the air. Of course it wasn't gone, it would take a long, long time before it disappeared. Or maybe it would stay forever...still, somehow Leo made everything more bearable.

The rain eased into a drizzle, barely a soft whisper against Frank's cabin as the boy wrestled the blankets from the Latino and slid in next to him. The bed around Leo was warm and Frank smiled as he snuggled closer. From the new angle he could see the boy's face more clearly. There was the softest dusting of freckles across his tanned cheeks.

Frank's heart started beating fast when he realized how close they were. It was quiet, just Leo's breathing stirring the air. Frank pressed himself closer to the boy, slipping an arm around the boy's waist. Their faces were inches apart and Frank held his breath as he gently nudged his nose against Leo's. The boy was fast asleep, warm and plaint in Frank's arms. The son of Mars could feel the other boy's breath against his lips. Blood rushed through his veins as he pulled Leo a little bit closer. *If I kiss him right now he'll never know. Just a gentle, soft kiss, he won't even wake up...* Frank wanted it so bad. He reached up to cup Leo's face in his trembling hand, heart hammering.

Then he leaned up, pressed a soft kiss to the boy's forehead, and turned to face the wall.
Once upon a time, in the faraway kingdom of Olympus, there lived a prince. He was born to a beautiful Queen and the God of war. However the Queen died when he was still a child, and the King moved to his throne in the skies. Therefore the prince grew up alone, with only his advisors and the King Regent as his protectors and teachers. Among white, marble pillars and underneath blue skies, the child was blissfully happy. His name was Frank, and on the day of his sixth-and-tenth birthday, he was crowned King of Olympus, like his father before him, and that's when everything changed.

A hundred responsibilities fell onto the boys shoulders; finances and war-tactics, and the worst of all; marriage. On the fortnight after his coronation it was announced, without his approval, that he would have to pick a wife. In a second, hundreds of girls flocked into Olympus, for King Frank was not hard on the eyes, and powerful like no other despite his young age.

The girls were all beautiful and smart and graceful, some did archery, some danced, others sang or played the harp. They appeared in Frank's ballroom dressed in bright colours, wearing bright smiles on their faces. He hated all of them, and wished he could will them away. He didn't want a wife. He didn't want a kingdom.

He told as much to his best friend. Leo Valdez was born a low commoner, but he made his way up and worked at the forge in the castle, making swords and shields and arming the Legions for war. He was a short kid, with a quirky grin and wild curls, but he never failed to make Frank smile. They met on a very unfortunate event when they were both nine and Leo fell into the lake. Frank helped him, and Leo decided to repay the debt by sticking to Frank's side at all times, even following him to the castle where he became an apprentice at the forge.

"...I don't want a wife," Frank finished his long confession, sitting outside the stables with Leo. Inside, the horses whinnied, and the sun beat down on the earth. Leo, dressed in dirty clothes with his face stained with soot, gave him a sympathetic smile.

"You know, every day I wish less and less to be King," the commoner admitted with an easy laugh. At the beginning, when the two became friends, Leo wanted nothing more than to be Frank; to be a King and have his power and wealth and luxuries. But Frank could see the prospect dwindling in his friends eyes – at least the commoner was free to marry whoever, or fuck whoever, without worrying about bringing down alliances with it.

"I don't know what to do," Frank sulked, kicking a stone and watching it bounce across the
"They are all pressuring me to choose in three days. But how can I? I know none of these girls, they're all just strangers in pretty dresses."

"Host games," Leo said casually, fiddling with a piece of metal from the forge that he always carried with him. Frank blinked at him,

"Games?" he frowned. Leo shrugged one slim shoulder,

"Aye, a competition of sorts...say, three challenges for all the ladies," he mused, "to see which one is the best...," he trailed off and after a second thought added, "They should all wear masks, so you won't have favourites."

"Isn't having favourites the point?"

Leo shrugged again, and Frank sighed,

"Fine," he said, "the idea is not the worst."

***

The girls were ecstatic, and ready to compete with each other. They cheered loudly when Frank made the announcement, although his advisors were not as pleased. The ladies were all smiling but beneath the smiles they were predators – ready to kill a bitch and win the crown. Frank hoped it didn't come to that.

"The first trial," Frank said after the hall had quietened, "will be the mouse and cat game."

The ladies cheered again, like a pack of wild animals. Everybody adored the game, as it usually took place at weddings or balls. The ladies would run off into the forest wearing bright sashes at their waist. The men, or in this case man, would chase after them and if he got the sash, the lady lost and owed him a kiss. The rules changed this time.

"Every lady who's sash I take will lose," Frank informed the girls, "and will be asked to leave the castle."

Two dozen masked girls stared back at him eagerly, grins on their brightly painted lips. They all followed him outside without complain, along with his advisors, where serving girls tied the sashes around their waists. Frank stood near the entrance, trying to spot someone he knew among the crowd. But to him everyone was a stranger, and with their masks they were faceless strangers. Masks were a bad idea...But Frank couldn't take it back, not now.

A trumpet blew and the girls sprinted into the woods, hiking up their skirts and squealing. Frank stifled a sigh; he had to move to ball games to find a wife. Still, maybe it would decrease the amount of people he had to chose from. The girls had an hour to run from him, and Frank wondered how many ladies he'd catch in the hour. It was hard to pick a wife from twenty and four girls.

He set off, and just a few minutes in he had a bright green sash in his hand. The girl he caught had a pile of ginger hair and started crying when he took the sash, wailing that she'd never be a queen. Frank had half the mind to give her the sash back, but then he knew the game would be pointless. Instead he sent the girl back to the castle, where she could get some refreshments and be sent home.

The second girl he caught was hiding in the bushes and her red sash joined the green one. She followed him for half a mile, begging for him to return the sash. Together they found the third girl, who tried to run for it, but once caught, she gave the sash away and kept her pride, marching the red-sash girl back to the castle.
The fourth girl had a yellow sash and she tried to tackle Frank to the ground and kiss him, as if that would somehow get her back in the game. It didn't and she returned to the castle, sulking. Frank caught half a dozen girls before he stumbled across her.

She had long brown hair, and a plain white mask that covered all of her face, even her lips. She was dressed in a crimson dress slashed with gold, and regarded Frank calmly even as he saw her, as if she didn't understand that she had to run.

"Got you," he gave her an apologetic smile. The girl's gloved hand tightened on her golden sash, "Not yet," she sounded like she was smiling, despite her muffled voice, "not yet."

And then she was off. Frank sprinted after her but she was like a fox, dashing in-between branches, jumping over roots. Frank was breathless and flushed, but he continued his pursuit, tripping over rocks and stumbling over little creaks, until the girl disappeared into the underbrush, leaving him panting and tired and alone. Frank cursed under his breath and then a girl tumbled from the branches, right into his arms, with a scream.

"Oh," he blinked at her. Her mask was tangled in her dirty blonde hair, but she was not the white-masked girl, "Hello." He took her blue sash off of her. By the time the hour passed, eight girls had been eliminated, leaving sixteen behind. Frank bid the eliminated ladies goodbye and helped them into their carriages, glad that none of them caught his eye after they took their masks off. After they left, Frank tried to find White Mask, but she was gone.

At dinner, all the girls returned to the table with no masks and in different dresses, and Frank searched their faces, trying to find the girl who could possibly be White Mask. There were a few brunettes, one had flowers in her hair, another had curls, but her hair could have been straight earlier. Frank sighed and turned to his food.

Afterwards, exhausted, he dragged himself to the forge to talk to his best friend. Leo was the last person in there, hammering away at a sword. His face was illuminated by the flames, determined and tense. Frank thought how much easier it would be to just marry him. They could run away together, get a cottage...

"Hey, firebug," Frank leaned against the door to the forge. Leo dropped his hammer into the flames in surprise. "Fuck you," he grumbled, reaching for some tongs to pick it out. It was red-hot and Leo put in to the side, looking vaguely annoyed. Frank smiled at him and Leo glanced up as he wiped his hands on a dirty cloth, "Well?" he prompted when Frank just looked at him with a goofy grin.

"Sixteen left," he said. Leo nodded, though he seemed tense, "That's good...," he said, and trailed off. That was unnatural – usually the commoner spoke his mind always and everywhere. Frank frowned, "What's wrong?" he asked softly. Leo looked away and Frank couldn't tell if he was flushed from the fire or if he was just blushing.

"Nothing," Leo's voice was quiet as he clutched the cloth, "Just...will we still be friends after you marry?"

Frank smiled softly and came closer to ruffle the boys hair, "'course, idiot."

"VALDEZ!" a voice boomed, it was the forgemaster, "BACK TO WORK YOU BRAT!"
The next trial was a chosen skill. Frank watched, trying to look interested, as four girls came in, one after the other, to dance. Their dancing was good, just a bit...boring. Frank stifled a yawn as he saw a similar routine for the fourth time, and almost exhaled with relief when the next girl brought in a canvas. That relief turned to frustration when the girl began painting his portrait, which lasted two hours and a short nap. It wasn't very good but he still thanked her.

The next girl that came in tried to strip, which Frank quickly stopped, sending her out. The next half a dozen girls played some instrument, almost putting him to sleep until the flower-hair girl played the trumpet so badly she woke him up.

Two girls sang, softly and sweetly, one a church song and another an old Arabic ballad. The girl before last read a poem. Then in came White Mask. Frank sat up straighter when he saw her.

Her mask hid her face, her hair fanned out around her shoulders. Now that they weren't running Frank could see that she was short and skinny under her lavender gown. Still, she was intriguing.

"And what will you show me today?" Frank's voice sounded hoarse even to his own ears. He was glad that he was alone in the ballroom, without his advisors, because suddenly he was all hot and bothered.

"Will you not run screaming?" the girl asked, teasing. She didn't speak like a royal, her speech more relaxed. Frank leaned forward,

"No," he said, "I won't run. Or scream."

The girl stepped closer. She smelled like perfume, but beneath that she was all fire and ash. He wondered if a commoner had sneaked in among the royal ladies but White Mask was so close that his mind went blank. She leaned in close, but her eyes were just black paint on a white mask.

"Fight me," she said, and suddenly there was a sword at Frank's side. He tensed but the girl moved back, her own sword in hand. Frank blinked at her as she pointed it at him, "Come on then, your grace," she mock-bowed and her skirts rustled around her, "you have to be a fighter before you are a King."

Frank went at her. The swords were deadly sharp but he had no real will to hurt her. He struck at her sword and she parried him easily as he didn't put all of his strength into it.

"You can do better than that," she taunted. Frank came at her again, sword raised, and her own weapon met him halfway. Steel sang against steel as the two spun around one another, the lady dancing and skipping away from the blows, the King fighting hard. He just couldn't seem to get her, and by the end he was sweating and tired. A second of not paying attention had him up against the wall with the point of the sword at his throat. Frank gulped.

"Good fight," the girl said and cocked her head to the side. Frank couldn't see anything behind her mask. She drew her sword back and bowed – not curtsied, "until the next challenge," she sounded confident, as if he knew Frank wouldn't eliminate her. And he didn't.

"It's going well then, I trust," Leo said as he and Frank shared a fresh bun from the ovens outside the stables. Frank nodded,

"Aye. Yesterday I sent three of the dancers away, and a girl who tried to take her clothes off," Frank
winced, "Four of the instrument players went."

Leo nodded, "So who is left?"

"Seven. A dancer, two musicians and two singers, a poet and-" He stopped.

"And?" Leo prompted, impatiently.

"There's this girl," Frank frowned, "she fought me."

"What?" Leo's eyes widened. Frank shrugged,

"She brought swords and she beat me...she wears a white mask," his voice trailed off, dreamy. He wondered what she looked like beneath the mask, if her eyes were blue or brown, her skin dark or fair.

"So what, you going to marry her then?" Leo snapped. Frank blinked at him, surprised to find the boy fuming with anger, flushed.

"Is that not the point?"

Leo rose, "Forget it," he spat and stormed off. Frank watched him go, open-mouthed. He didn't understand why the little apprentice was so angry. He can't want to... the thought came sudden and struck hard. What if Leo was jealous? What if he wanted to be with Frank... The King felt his heart clench as he watched his friend disappear into the forge.

***

The last trial was so embarrassing that Frank couldn't make the announcement publicly. Instead he had letters sent to all the ladies, and was surprised when the herald informed him that there were six girls left, and not seven. He was right – White Mask was a commoner, Frank was sure. He gave the letter to one of the serving girls, to be read down in the kitchens, and he could only hope that White Mask would appear.

The first girl came in. Fair hair and a blue mask, one of the singers.

"Could you take it off please?" Frank asked softly.

The girl had angry grey eyes, she looked none too happy with her task as she clutched the mask in her hand. She was pretty but...

"You don't have to do this," Frank said gently, "If you do not want to marry me..."

"My parents sent me here," the girl said, all tense and furious, "I will marry you for the good of my kingdom."

"Your parents cannot hold it against you if you lose-" before Frank finished the girl bent down and kissed him. Hard and cold and quick. She pulled back almost immediately, flushed and still angry. Frank flinched,

"Thank you," he said, just to see her go. She did. He didn't even get her name, but she slammed the doors behind him. Kissing had been the idea of his advisors, to see if there would be a spark between him and the candidates. If it all went like that, Frank doubted it.

However the next girl was all too excited for her kiss. She had red hair and bright green eyes when she slipped off her silver mask; one of the musicians. Her name was Rachel and she kissed fierce and
hot and too long for Frank's liking. He had to gently push her away because he couldn't breathe. He cleared his throat when the girl looked all too happy, and thanked her.

The next girls came in. Clarisse the poet's kiss was like a threat. Silena the dancer's kiss was barely that, more of a brush of lips. Hazel, another of the musicians, was clumsy and uncoordinated but Frank didn't really mind. Another singer was called Drew and Frank barely remembered their kiss.

White Mask came in last, again, dressed in a white dress to match her mask. It revealed her tanned arms and shoulders and skinny collarbones. Her hands were clad in white gloves, making a lovely contrast with her skin tone.

"Take your mask off please," Frank's throat was dry. The girl regarded him,

"No," she said.

"How else will you complete the trial?" Frank hated and loved at the same time the fact she challenged him. She came closer again and Frank found himself mesmerized by her skin. There was a scar on her left shoulder.

"Close your eyes," her voice was a breathy, muffled whisper. Frank didn't even hesitate, letting his eyes fall shut. His whole body tensed when the girl touched his cheek with her gloved hand. She was close enough that Frank could feel her body heat.

The first touch of her lips sent a shock through Frank's body. It was soft, tentative, almost shy. But then she cradled his face in both of her hands and kissed harder and suddenly everything was hot and messy and wet. Frank grabbed her by her hips and pulled her forward, so she was in his lap, and kissed her fiercely. His tongue slipped past her lips, her arms wrapped around his neck, pulling him closer. Frank realized that she wasn't wearing her mask, that if he opened his eyes, he could see her.

She tasted like cinnamon. He reached up to tangle his hand in her hair and the wig fell with his hand, slipping past his fingers and falling to the floor. Frank pulled away, his eyes snapping open.

Sitting on his lap, breathing hard and flushed, in a white dress, was Leo. Frank gaped at his best friend,

"L-Leo?" He managed weakly. The boy looked terrified,

"Fuck, I'm sorry you weren't meant to-" he made as if to slip from Frank's lap, but the King gripped his wrists and pulled him back in. Leo was shaking, and Frank just stared at him, flustered, his lips swollen.

"Jesus, Leo..." he groaned. Frank grabbed his chin and moved closer to kiss him again-

"Oi!" Frank woke up with a start, a pillow in his face. He spluttered, heart pounding and sat up. Pale morning light flooded his room and Leo stood above him in his pj's, looking annoyed, arms crossed over his chest.

"Finally," he sighed, "You're like a sleeping bear!"

Frank opened and closed his mouth, "I...I...I..."

"What?" Leo raised his eyebrow, "We'll be late to lunch with Percy and Annabeth."

Frank shook his head to clear his mind, "Nothing...I just had a weird dream."
Frank didn't want to go out the day after the funeral, and Leo didn't blame him. If their roles were reversed, he'd want to hole himself up in a dark room too. Instead, he decided to have a lazy day with the son of Mars, to at least try and make him feel better. The Latino brought snacks and pillows to Frank's cabin, and made a fort on the bed, which took a lot of shoving and arguing. When it was done, the two slithered down into its warm, private confines, bowls of popcorn and sweets in hand. They laid back on the pillows and started watching Warcraft on Frank's laptop.

Leo fell asleep first. He was warm underneath all the blankets, snuggled up against Frank's side. He was drowsy from the night of trying to stay awake with his friend, and it caught up with him now. It was that kind of naps when it feels like you're bathed in sunlight, amazingly comfortable.

When Leo woke up he felt like he didn't sleep enough – his limbs ached, his eyelids felt heavy. It was midday by then, and some of the popcorn had spilled near his and Frank's feet. The movie ended playing but Frank was asleep too, blissfully relaxed up against Leo. A tiny shaft of sunlight came through a gap in the blankets overhead.

The Latino fell back asleep with a smile, hand curled up against Frank's chest. When he woke up the next time his body was wonderfully warm and fuzzy and he felt like a melted puddle next to Frank, deliciously toasty. He could feel Frank's heart underneath his hand.

"We should get some food," Frank's voice was slurred and drowsy as he shifted. Leo smiled and allowed himself to just enjoy the other boy's closeness for a second. *It would be so nice to just be like this all the time, and not worry that we're crossing boundaries. Why can't Frank want me the way I want him?* Leo sat up, face flushed, trying to will those stupid thoughts away. He found that they came more and more often, at the worst moments. He found himself getting hot and flustered and hard-

"I'm gonna get lunch," he said, scrambling away from Frank and almost bringing the roof of their fort down in his attempt to escape. He felt an uncomfortable tightness in his pants from being so
close to Frank, "Want anything?"

"Whatever you're having," Frank's voice was still muffled from inside the fort. Leo slipped out of the cabin as fast as he could, but the warm afternoon air did nothing to help him with his problem. When he looked down, his dick was pressing up against his shorts. The Latino groaned and changed course mid-step, instead of going to the dining hall, he went to one of the weapon sheds. He didn't want any of the Romans seeing him in this state.

The second the door swung close behind him and Leo was drowned in darkness, he had a hand down his pants. His cock was painfully hard and the second the Latino wrapped his hand around it, a moan was ripped from his throat. He muffled it with his hand quickly as he worked himself, shivering. Pleasure rippled through his body as he panted against his hand, desperate to keep his mind clear of anything that could make him feel guilty later. He just wanted his erection to go away, to get it over with fast, so he could go back to Frank.

_Frank._

Fuck.

Just like that, Leo's mind went down the gutter. With a desperation, he slid his palm up and down his cock, feeling a knot in his stomach and heat rushing through him. In his mind, Frank had his hands all over him; up his shirt, one of his rough, calloused palms wrapped around his cock. The thought made Leo cry out against his palm, despite how much he tried to muffle it. In his sleep-and-arousal muddled brain, he could feel Frank against him, kissing and touching and claiming him. Leo was trembling, his toes curled, Frank's mouth was on him, and then he came.

When Leo dragged himself back to Frank's cabin, chips in hand, his legs still felt like cotton wool. He passed the food to the son of Mars and snuggled back up into his side as he put another movie on, and prayed he wouldn't get hard again.

"You alright?" Frank murmured, dangerously close. His arm was around Leo, resting on the boy's shoulder. The Latino stifled a moan, all he wanted was to climb into Frank's lap and have the boy's hands all over himself.

"F-Fine," Leo's voice came out breathless as he tried to hide his red face from the other boy. Frank pulled him a little bit closer and turned back to the movie. Leo's heart was pounding, his body was warm and lax, he was still glowing from his orgasm. He fell asleep again, and when he woke up, Frank was sleeping too.
Something weird and confusing was bound to happen between Frank and Leo. Well...more weird and confusing than all the cuddles, weird dreams and sleeping in one bed. Something that would actually push them to see their stupid feelings.

It just so happened to be Jason's birthday that did the trick.

For it, the son of Zeus came back to Camp Jupiter to celebrate with his old Cohort, Piper was at his side, as ever, and Annabeth came to. They were all welcomed warmly by Reyna, Leo and Frank. It started with a dinner party with most of the Campers present.

However the dinner party quickly turned into just a party, where alcohol flowed and people stumbled around, drunk or high off their heads. The music boomed through the ground of Camp, shaking the ground, but nobody minded because Jason Grace was finally home.

Leo drank whiskey and coke, and then more whiskey, and topped it off with two shots and a beer. Frank, on the other hand, drank two whole bottles of wine. So by two in the morning, when everyone was either too tired or intoxicated to party any longer, the two boys dragged themselves back to their cabin, tripping over rocks and dips in the ground.

Somewhere along the way, Frank's cabin had become their cabin. Leo moved all of his stuff over, adding his mess to Frank's own, letting their clothes and books and weapons mix together on the floor.

So now the two returned home together, leaning against each other, as the music faded at their backs. It was a cold night, and both were shivering by the time they reached their cabin.

"Open it," Leo slurried, leaning heavily against the doorframe. Frank fumbled for the key in his pocket clumsily and it took him a good two minutes before the door swung open and they could tumble inside, tripping over their own feet.

"Bed?" Frank asked, looking at the mountain of pillows longingly. Leo tugged on his sleeve, "Bathroom first," he managed. Together the two boys dragged themselves there, and both groaned when the harsh light filled the room, reflecting off the toilet and bath. It took them a minute to adjust to the brightness, and by then Frank was pulling off his shirt. He felt constricted in it, and just wanted to get into his pyjamas and collapse onto his wonderful bed, preferably with Leo snuggled up into his side like a cat. He knew the hangover would be bad tomorrow.

But instead of getting on with it like Frank was, Leo just stared at his friend quizzically, head cocked
to the side, as if Frank was an exhibit in the museum, or a puzzle that the Latino wanted to solve. Shamelessly, the shorter boys gaze slid down Frank's chest, and the Asian was too drunk to make anything of it.

"What's that?" Leo's voice was a weak mumble, and his hand was unsteady when he pointed at Frank's chest. When the Asian glanced down he saw that Leo was pointing at a thin, pale scar that ran from his collarbone to his ribs.

"Oh...that," Frank subconsciously reached up to touch the scar. It felt lumpy underneath his hand. His mind was fuzzy and he felt like he couldn't control his body properly, "'s a scar."

Frank barely noticed Leo stepping closer. The room seemed to spin both ways at once.

"Where did you get it?" Leo reached up to brush his fingers along the scar, nudging Frank's own hand out of the way, "looks painful."

"It was a mission," Frank started sobering up; Leo's touch and the bright light helped him with that, "with Hazel...'s was hard...got scratched by a manticore..."

Leo's hand gently slipped from that scar and down to Frank's abs where he shyly traced a thicker, uglier scar near his bellybutton. Frank shivered at the feather-light touch.

"And here?" Leo was looking down and Frank couldn't see his eyes, just his thick eyelashes.

"Stabbed," Frank slurred, leaning back against the cold tile wall of the bathroom, "by one of the empousai."

"Oh..." Leo's eyes were unfocused, and he seemed unsteady on his feet. Frank reached out to grip his upper arms, to make sure the boy didn't fall. The Latino frowned, "What about the one on your shoulder?"

Frank didn't even look down – he was too busy staring at Leo, pupils blown wide, plaint and warm and not in control.

"Slashed with the claws of a hellhound," Frank murmured. Leo shifted closer and then, without a warning, pressed a small, quick kiss to Frank's shoulder scar. The sudden feel of the boys warm lips made Frank jump. Leo just smiled at him sleepily, as if he didn't notice that he just made Frank's heart start pounding.

"What was that for?" Frank frowned. Leo shrugged one shoulder, "To stop it hurtin'," he said.

"I got the scar years ago..."

Leo just shrugged again and leaned down to kiss the scar across Frank's chest. The Asian stumbled back, his reflexes not fast enough to stop the boy. Maybe he was drunker than he thought, or maybe he didn't want to push Leo away.

"Where are your scars?" Frank grumbled, spinning him and Leo around so the Latino was against the wall. Frank's world went around in circles for a moment, and he gripped Leo's wrists in his hands to try and steady himself as his stomach came up to his throat. When the world somewhat steadied, Frank examined the Latino's tanned hands. There were so many burns and little cuts on them that the son of Mars couldn't stop himself. He pulled Leo's palm to his lips,
"D-Don't-" the Latino said shakily. Frank kissed the little burn on his life line without permission, and then peppered his knuckles with soft kisses without a protest from Leo. The Latino trembled when Frank's lips trailed a little bit lower down his hand. The Asian didn't even think about what he was doing, he just knew that he liked the feel of Leo's skin against his lips, and that he wanted to kiss him all over.

When the son of Mars tugged on Leo's shirt, the Latino helped him slip it over his head. The shorter boy's chest was littered with cuts and scars and burns, and he leaned heavily against the wall, like he couldn't hold himself up as Frank gazed at him.

Soon enough the son of Mars traced his tongue across the scar on the boy's collarbone. He pressed feather-light kisses up the little cuts on his shoulder. He brushed his lips against the burn next to Leo's bellybutton. The Latino's knees buckled and suddenly he was in Frank's arms on the floor, gasping.

They stared at each other, faces inches apart. Leo smelled like alcohol and sweat.

"I really like your scars," Frank's arms were wrapped around the smaller boy, keeping him close and safe. He didn't even know what he was saying, the words just tumbled out, "Like a lot. They're so..." He frowned, trying to look for the right word. Beautiful? Stunning?

Leo smiled, "I like yours too." Frank lent down to kiss a bruise in the hollow of Leo's throat, "You should stop that," the Latino's voice was hoarse, but he still didn't push Frank away. The Asian's brow furrowed as he pulled away slightly,

"Why?"

"'cause we're just friends," Leo's speech was slurred, his curls falling into his eyes. Frank brushed the strands away, but Leo wasn't looking at him anyway, his cheeks flushed. It's just the alcohol... The son of Mars sighed and without warning stood up. Leo squeaked in surprise, his legs wrapping around Frank's waist.

The taller boy carried the Latino back into the bedroom, fumbling to switch the bathroom light on. The dark didn't spin as much. Leo stared at him with wide eyes when he was dumped on top of the pillows and blankets. Frank wanted to fuck him, right then and there, to take him apart and put him back tomorrow. But he was drunk, and he didn't know which way was up or down.

So instead he climbed underneath the blissfully cold blankets, not realizing how heated his skin had been. After a moment, Leo joined him. Frank ruffled his hair clumsily,

"Night, idiot," he mumbled fondly. Leo didn't say anything, just turned his back to Frank. He wasn't wearing a shirt and the son of Mars could see the bones and gentle muscle underneath his tanned skin. He wrapped an arm around the Latino's waist, but the smaller boy squirmed away, and curled up on the edge of the bed, as far away from Frank as possible.

The son of Mars felt a pang of hurt in his heart, and then he passed out.
"It's part of a project!" Rachel insisted, holding out the piece of paper and crayons to Frank. The Asian regarded it suspiciously. Since getting back to Camp Half Blood after their overdue stay at Jupiter, everyone had been acting dodgy around him and Leo. Still...Rachel looked hopeful, a bright smile on her freckled face. Drawing something for her couldn't possibly hurt Frank.

"So," he took the paper from her hands, "What do I draw?"

"Well," the girl said excitedly, "It's all part of the project 'draw your best buddy!'"

"So I draw my best friend?" Frank asked sceptically. It seemed weird. Rachel nodded so hard the boy swore she got whiplash. Frank sighed and reluctantly agreed, "Alright." The Oracle squealed and hugged Frank tightly before skipping off. She seemed way too cheerful for just a simple 'project.'

Frank went back into the Ares cabin. His half-siblings roamed around, sharpening weapons, working out or getting ready for the night's capture the flag. Frank sighed as he sunk onto his bed. It had been only a few days but already the noise of so many voices and actions were doing his head in. He yearned for Camp Jupiter.

Frank hated living with his siblings. Of course, he loved them, but he had gotten used to the peace and quiet that his own cabin had offered. And of course there had been Leo. Frank missed his warmth so damn much, especially at night. He saw the Latino during the day, like all the time, but at night he just had the snores of the Ares kids and his cold bed to keep him company. He missed the way Leo would curl into his side, like a little heater.

Frank stared at his paper and thought about best friends. Once upon a time he could have said that his best mate was Percy, or Hazel. But now there was no doubt that it was Leo, though Frank didn't know if 'best friend' was the correct term for him...too much things have happened between them, and yet not enough to make them anything more. Still, through quests and nightmares, to sharing a bed and getting drunk (even if Frank couldn't remember what happened after a certain hour), Leo was there for him.

Frank put the pencil to the paper and began to draw. Leo's face, with his high cheekbones and the gentle freckles across his thin nose. His massive doe eyes, the colour of whiskey, with that mischievous, endearing gleam in them. He closed his eyes and tried to picture Leo's lips in his mind, soft and pink and full. So goddamn kissable. The curls were the tricky part; they just wouldn't come out as wild and messy as Leo's ones, but Frank just had to make do with what he could draw. Leo's neck, which Frank hadn't really paid much attention to before, came next. Even as Frank drew it, he thought of the unblemished, tanned skin, and felt the urge to find Leo and kiss and bite at it until Leo was marked. He almost drew the hickeys onto the paper.
The picture didn't do Leo justice. It didn't capture his spark and beauty and just...

"What are you drawing Valdez for?" Clarisse plucked the paper from Frank's hands before the boy could react.

"It's for Rachel," Frank said quickly, but he was blushing. Clarisse glanced at him, then at the paper, and then back at him. She grinned as if she just solved a murder and then she was off; sprinting out of the cabin. Frank scrambled to his feet and stumbled outside, to try and catch up with the girl running through the strawberry fields.

***

Leo had never been very good at drawing, but when Rachel asked him to partake in her project, he just couldn't turn her down. So he spent half an hour laying in the field, just staring at his paper, thinking.

Of course he'd draw Frank, that much was obvious. But he wanted to capture the boy perfectly; the gorgeous almond shape of his eyes, his strong jawline that could grate cheese. Leo wanted to draw the little smile that Frank only saved for him. He wanted to sketch those perfect muscles of his, his collarbones, and his calloused but gentle hands. He wanted to draw all of his scars and little imperfections but he didn't know how.

He decided to just go with it but when he finished, he winced at his work. It was terrible. Like truly terrible. Sketching machines was one thing, but drawing people...Leo sighed and flipped the page over. Quickly, he scribbled a message at the back.

I know Frank doesn't actually look like this. I'm shit at drawing (nobody's perfect) but Frank is so much more hot than this. Like so much. He's really hot.

"Oi Valdez!" startled, Leo looked up to see Clarisse sprinting towards him, grinning like a madwoman. Frank was hot on her heels, face flushed. Leo's heart skipped a beat and Clarisse came to a halt in front of him, "Look what-" the girl started breathlessly but then she saw Leo's drawing. Her eyes gleamed with glee and then she snatched the picture off of Leo.

She started laughing manically, "Oh this is perfect!" she howled, and tossed Frank's paper at Leo. The Latino scrambled for it and gaped. Meanwhile Clarisse shoved Leo's drawing into Frank's arms.

"I...," Leo's mouth felt dry as he looked over the picture of him, "Jesus Frank, I didn't know you could draw." He stared at the messy but beautiful lines that made up the sketch of him.

"Really hot, eh?" Frank was trying to hide his smile. Leo flushed,

"G-Give it back!"

"It's a really terrible drawing," Frank admitted, even as he put it in his pocket, "But I think I'll keep it."

He and Clarisse laughed and Leo just stood there, clutching Frank's drawing. On it he looked so...different. So much more gorgeous and just...

Does he really see me that way?
"Leo," Frank murmured as the Latino's curls tickled his cheek, "Get up, twat."

"Shuddup," Leo grumbled against Frank's shoulder. The Asian sighed and tried to get his eyes to open properly as he looked at the pale morning outside the window. It was early, sooo early, and he really didn't want to get up. Besides, the idea of leaving Leo's warmth was almost too much to bear.

"Leo," Frank repeated impatiently, through his sleep-clouded brain. He reached over to try and shake Leo awake, but somehow his arm ended up curling around the smaller boy and pulling him more into his chest. Leo sighed contently and buried his face in Frank's shoulder. The son of Mars glanced over at the clock. 6:30 in the morning. He sighed, half an hour more couldn't hurt, they'd just have to get breakfast on the go.

As soon as Frank made the decision to sleep in, he felt better. With a goofy, lazy smile, he turned to face Leo and wrapped his arms around the boy, snuggling into his warmth.

"Don't crush me," Leo mumbled, half-asleep. Frank loosened his grip, but only ever so slightly. It was so easy to fall sleep next to Leo, and when Frank did, he had a dream. Or a series of dreams.

_They were on their first quests alone, sitting in the clearing where Frank found Leo again, and the Latino was clinging onto him. Back then, the son of Mars didn't realize he was in love with the other boy, but in the dream it was different. Leo let out a tiny snuffle, still holding onto Frank desperately._

"I love you," Frank whispered. The cicadas weaved themselves in-between the branches of the trees nearby. Leo pushed himself off of Frank suddenly. When Frank looked at him he saw that the boy wasn't crying. Instead he raised an eyebrow, his eyes cold and expressionless. Frank shuddered.

"I'd honestly rather get lost than date you," he informed the Asian, and then got up to run away into the darkness, leaving Frank alone and hurt and confused.

_The scene changed._

_They were inside the shed and Frank was on his knees, in front of Leo, a bloodied tissue in his hand from where he had cleaned Leo's lip cut. He looked up at the boy's warm, brown eyes, and the words tumbled out of his mouth._

"I love you."
In a second, there were tears in Leo's eyes. Frank's heart clenched as the boy lurched to his feet, tears falling down his cheeks.

"Why w-would you say that!" the boy sobbed, and it completely threw Frank off, "you k-know I love C-Cali, w-why would y-you ruin our f-friendship!"

Before Frank could reply, the scene changed once again.

Leo was pinned beneath him in the fighting arena, a bruise blooming on his cheek. His eyes were furious but whatever anger Frank actually felt during that moment, disappeared in the dream. Instead it was replaced by one stupid thing.

"I love you," Frank let go of Leo's wrists, gazing down at the boy softly. The Latino flipped brought up his knee and kicked Frank right in the crotch. The boy couldn't feel the pain but he still rolled over with a groan, white spots flashing in front of his eyes. Leo was on his feet in a second,

"You fucking faggot!" he spat, "I hate you!" There was a sword in the Latino's hand and before Frank could move, Leo stabbed through his heart.

Frank woke up with a start, his heart pounding. Leo stirred against his chest at the sudden movement and Frank desperately tried to calm his breath. Leo's eyes fluttered open and he looked up at the other boy with those gorgeous, sleepy eyes of his.

He reached up and flicked the dark haired boy's forehead,

"You woke me up," he grumbled. Frank elbowed him and rubbed his forehead. It was just a stupid dream...

"Dickhead," he grumbled. Leo stretched and yawned, almost punching Frank in the face. The last of the nightmare disappeared from Frank's head and he opened his mouth to say something, but then the door burst open. Annabeth barrelled in, fuming,

"WHY ARE YOU TWO STILL SLEEPING!" her voice died away suddenly when she saw the two boy's tangled together. She gaped, "I-I-..." she choked out, "I'll come back later."

She practically ran out. Leo groaned.
Frank looked so damn nervous in front of Leo that the Latino just wanted to give him a hug, to make him feel better. Or maybe to make himself feel better, since his heart was fluttering in his chest. He didn't know why Frank was so serious.

"S-So...," Frank was staring at his shoes, fiddling with his hands. He cleared his throat awkwardly. 

What if he confesses? Leo thought suddenly, What if he says he loved me?! "I...um, I m-met a girl a-and-"

Leo was glad he was leaning against a wall because the breath was knocked out of him and he thought he might fall. His ears felt as if someone held up a seashell to them, and he could hear the sea. Except it wasn't the sea, but his blood circulating around his body. Frank's mouth moved but Leo didn't hear anything. He felt like he couldn't breathe, his chest was being squeezed by a massive, merciless hand.

I thought you lov-

Frank finished talking and gave him a shy, uncertain look. Leo's mouth felt dry,

"Could you repeat that?" he asked, feeling faint. You're an idiot, Valdez, he scolded himself, You thought Frank could actually have feelings for you. For you! Like when did that ever happen?! Of course he found a pretty girl who he likes...

"...b-basically," Frank continued stuttering, "Um I-I wanted to take her o-out b-but I need to buy flowers."

"And why do you need me?" Leo's chest felt constricted. Frank shoved his hands in his pockets, a blush on his cheeks,

"Everyone else is busy," he mumbled, "so...I thought you could help me?"

Leo wanted to say no. He wanted to go to his cabin and bury himself under his blankets and maybe cry a little bit because he was just pathetic like that. But Frank looked so damn hopeful...

"Fine," Leo sighed, "But just because I love you," he joked.
Except he wasn't really joking.

***

The two boys walked in-between bunches of roses and pots of hyacinths and hand-full's of tulips. Leo dragged his feet, hatefully glaring at the flowers as if somehow they'd wilt and make Frank's girl go away. He considered going to Aphrodite and begging her to cast a charm on Frank, but that would be a really, really shitty thing to do.

"What about these?" Frank practically shoved a bunch of white roses in Leo's face in an attempt to get his attention. He peeked shyly at the Latino over the petals, "No way," Leo made a face, trying to act as if all of this didn't bother him, "white roses are like...wedding roses," he battered the flowers away from his face, "but roses are a good idea, actually."

Frank sighed and looked at the rainbow of roses that he could choose from. So many colours. The boy was adorably confused.

"So...which ones then?" he asked helplessly. Leo couldn't help a tiny smile, "Yellow is friendship," he said, pulling up a load of sunshine roses, praying that Frank would take them. Be just friends, just friends...but the Asian made a face at the flowers. Defeated, Leo put the roses back and moved on, heart hammering away in his chest, "Um...purple's love at first sight."

"That's lavender," Frank said, looking at the pale purple roses.

"Whatever," Leo snapped, more angrily than he meant to, "Is it love at first sight?" it came out like an accusation more than a question. Where did you meet? Was it in a coffee shop somewhere? Is she beautiful and calm and collected, unlike me? Frank held up his hands defensively, "It wasn't love at first sight..." he rubbed the back of his neck nervously, "Sorry."

"Don't worry," Leo mumbled, looking at the flowers. It wasn't his fault he snapped! Frank had a weird effect on him, and the boy couldn't control his emotions around the son of Mars..., "pink's gratitude I think," his voice was almost a whisper and the Latino winced at it. Frank didn't reply so he moved on quickly, still not looking at the Asian, "the orange ones," he skimmed his fingers over the amber petals, "Mean a bunch of things. Like enthusiasm, passion, desire..."

"What about the red ones?" Frank was looking at an army of crimson roses.

"They just mean love," Leo shrugged one shoulder. He felt defeated, broken down. He just wanted to go, "You should get those," he mumbled, hand tightening into a fist. He suddenly really wanted to cry. Frank gave him a weird look, as if he was sad.

"Okay," he said, and then picked up the bunch of red roses and took them to the counter. Leo watched him sullenly, thinking about how luck the girl was.

***

"Leo?" Frank was at the door but Leo had been so busy playing Mario Kart and trying to forget the day that he didn't see him.

"Oh," he almost jumped when he saw the son of Mars standing in the doorway to his secret room. Holding the roses, "Um, hi?" he offered awkwardly.
"I...," Frank cleared his throat and he was blushing again, "I went out with the girl," he said, trying to sound casual.

"A-And?" Leo asked quickly, his heart stuttering in his chest. Please tell me it didn't work out...Frank shrugged,

"I don't think it will work," he said softly, looking up at Leo shyly. The Latino exhaled loudly and prayed Frank didn't hear, "I didn't want to give her the flowers," the son of Mars stepped closer awkwardly, "So...um...you can have them...if you want." He held out the flowers to Leo at an arm's length, and looked like he was ready to flinch if Leo declined. But of course, he wouldn't.

Relief and guilt blossomed in Leo's heart at the same time, and all of his helplessness and anger and jealousy crumbled around him.

"Thank you," he murmured, and took the flowers. Frank looked at him for two seconds, red-faced. He nodded and then practically sprinted out. Leo sat on his bed, clutching his flowers, and smiling like an idiot. He wondered if there ever had been a girl in the first place.
Frank didn't realize that people decided that they had enough of his and Leo's charades until Piper slid onto the bench across from him with a sly smirk on her face.

"So," she folded her hands on the table and leaned forward as if telling Frank a secret, "What's the plan?"

"The plan?" Frank asked over his toast, munching away.

"Of action," Piper said like it was the most obvious thing ever. When Frank gave her a quizzical look she rolled her eyes, "With you and Leo! Hello! Wake up!"

"The plan with me and Leo," Frank clarified, eyebrow raised. It was too early for this shit. Piper groaned,

"Percy!" she yelled over Frank's shoulder and then the son of Poseidon was sliding in next to Frank, seemingly out of nowhere.

"Morning!" he said brightly, sipping on a can of blue coke.

"What's the plan of action for Frank and Leo?" Piper asked him, as if they had rehearsed this.

"Oh," Percy sobered immediately and gave Frank a serious look, "I personally think you should be straight up with him, and just...you know, tell him."

"Tell him what?" Frank was confused, looking from Piper to Percy and back again.

"That you love him," Piper deadpanned. Frank choked on his toast,

"I-I don't love h-him!" he wheezed, trying to breathe past the crumbs in his throat. Piper and Percy exchanged a knowing look,

"Frank seriously, I think it's time to get past the whole denial stage," Percy said sympathetically.

"It's the seven stages of love," Piper patted Frank's hand gently, "you already went through
attraction, confusion, and now it's time to add denial to that list."

"So what comes after denial?" Frank asked stupidly as his brain tried to grasp onto all the information he was being bombarded with.

"Getting your shit together," Percy grinned, "So come on, what will you do?"

"I-I don't know?" Frank offered weakly.

"Personally I think that you should do something nice for him," Piper mused, stroking her imaginary beard, "like spoil him maybe."

Percy, who was stuffing his face with custard creams, nodded vigorously.

"Spoil him how?" Frank asked.

"You know," Piper waved at the air, "clean or something like that for him. Get him food...or better! Cook for him."

"Take him away for a weekend," Percy said.

"Yes Percy!" Piper high-fived the boy, who grinned like a puppy who was just given a treat.

"Wouldn't that be a bit forward?" Frank pulled a face, "I can't exactly go up to Leo and say 'hey, I love you, want to go somewhere all by ourselves?"

"So you do love him!" Piper squealed. Frank flushed bright red and his heart pounded.

"W-What I-I-" before he could deny it, Piper and Percy stood up together.

"Just do those things," Piper patted his shoulder, "and you'll have him in no time."

***

"Where are we going?" Leo asked as he followed Frank up the hill, dragging his feet.

"You said you were hungry," the son of Mars said.

"Yeah but the cafeteria's that way," Leo pointed behind them. Frank didn't reply, just shielded his eyes from the sun beating down on camp. He felt terribly nervous, his heart in his throat; what if Leo didn't like his idea? What if he thought it was weird? What if he figured it all out and now knew Frank's feelings?...

Well, that was the point, for him to finally confess to Leo, but Frank still dreaded it. His nightmare haunted him endlessly.

I'd honestly rather get lost than date you.

Why would you ruin our friendship?

You fucking faggot! I hate you!

Frank didn't even know if Leo liked guys. The only person he ever did anything with was Calypso. As they neared the crown of the hill, the son of Mars made a point to ask Leo about it...tactfully...sometime...
"Frank?" it came out as a question as Leo stopped at the top of the hill. Frank's heart clenched. In front of them was a picnic blanket and a basket, filled with all of Leo's favourite food. What if it's too much? Frank panicked, what if he thinks it's weird. Dreading the boy's reaction, Frank looked over. Leo was grinning brightly.

"Oh shit," he plopped down on the blanket, "Woah, Doritos!" he started pulling food out of the basket, "Thank the Gods...and Paella! Where the hell did you even get this?!" Leo looked up from the platters of edible food.

"I...uh, made it?" Frank offered as he sat opposite Leo, playing with the frayed edge of the blanket to calm his nerves.

Leo stared at him for a second with those big, surprised eyes of his, "Jeez, Frank," he looked down, still smiling and blushing, as if he couldn't stop himself, "What's the occasion?"

"Um...t-there isn't one really," Frank hadn't thought so far ahead. How should he explain all of this to the son of Hephaestus? Sorry, I'm in love with you and I'm trying to show it instead of saying it.

"Well," Leo grinned and reached for the cheesy pull apart bread, "thanks, man."

His smile brightened Frank's day and chased away his insecurities.

***

"Frank, what the fuck are you doing in here?"

Frank looked up to see Leo standing by the door, clutching a hammer in one hand, and a screwdriver in the other, face dirty from the day's work. He stared, wide eyed, at his secret room beneath his bunk, sparkling clean. Frank stood in the corner, wiping down the cabinet, a half-full rubbish bag at his feet.

"I'm cleaning your room, obviously," Frank turned back to his work after a brief glance at the other boy. The air smelled like lemon surface cleaners, "when you get a new girlfriend – or boyfriend – you don't have to be embarrassed to bring them here."

Leo sighed, "Don't bother. It'll just get dirty again," he slipped his magic belt off and dumped it on his chair. Frank's heart skipped a beat.

He didn't deny that it could be a boy...maybe he's bisexual, maybe there's a chance-

"Then I'll just come clean again," Frank shrugged as tied the rubbish bag.

"Is this like a new thing?" Leo collapsed on his bed, yawned and stretched, "this cleaning thingy magingy? Like, do you have OCD now?"

"No," Frank scoffed and threw the wipe he was using to get rid of the dust. It landed on the Latino's face, "I just wanted to do something nice for you."

"Oh really?" Leo turned to face him and propped himself up on his elbow, dropping the wipe to the floor, "Since when are you so nice to me?"

"Sorry, should I go back to being a dick?" Frank asked sarcastically. Leo rolled his eyes,

"No, this is nice," he stretched out on his bed like a cat, eyes closed, "But be careful. Someone might think you're doing all of this 'cause you're in love with me."
Frank's heart skipped a painful heartbeat.

***

Frank stared at the tickets nervously. He had bought them with some of the money he had saved up; two tickets to Tokyo for a week. It was a perfect holiday, a moment to get away, and something Frank had wanted to do for a long time. He booked a room in a hotel, and there would be an anime convention going on at the time...

The only problem was that there were two tickets. Well, it wasn't really a problem...more like a tiny obstacle. Percy said that he should take Leo somewhere, and go big or go home, so it was either Japan or the McDonalds down the road.

Frank chose Japan, and now he just had to ask Leo to go with him. What if he says no? What if he thinks that I'll try something? The doubts circulated the boy's head.

"So what's this then?" Leo leaned over Frank's shoulder. The Asian jumped to his feet, startled by the Latino's sudden appearance. Leo stood on the top step of the stairs to the big house, looking curious.

"I...err, tickets to Japan," Frank shoved the tickets into his pocket quickly, hands trembling. He needed to back away, he wasn't ready for this...Leo scrunched his cute little nose up,

"You're leaving?"

"Um...yeah," Frank mumbled. Because Leo was three steps above him, he was about an inch taller, and he glared down at Frank with sudden anger,

"Oh so you're leaving me, how wonderful," he said sarcastically, crossing his arms over his skinny chest, "how long are you going for? Why are you even going? Can't you just stay here? What if a monster gets you?" the boy bombarded Frank with questions.

Don't tell me you'll miss me.

"I-I won't!" Leo spluttered, red-faced. Frank hadn't realized that he had asked out loud. He smiled softly at how flustered the Latino was, his small hands curled into fists.

"Actually," Frank said, "I wanted to ask you to come with me."

Leo gaped at him, "M-Me?! Why?!" he stuttered.

Frank shrugged, "We're best friends, right?"

"B-But...," Leo was blushing hard, "Percy knows more about manga. A-And Annabeth would w-want to see the architecture-"

"Leo," Frank interrupted, "I want you to come with me."

"I-I...," Leo looked like he didn't know what to say. He started fiddling with his hands nervously, "I just...I-I never get asked to do anything as the first person," he finished in a whisper. Frank's heart twisted and he wanted to reach out and hug Leo. He always knew that because there was seven of them, one would get left out. He just didn't realize that it was always Leo.

"Take that as a yes?" he asked gently.

"Yeah," Leo offered him a small smile. Then, without warning, he reached out and wrapped his
arms around Frank's shoulders, pulling the bigger boy against him. He almost fell off the step when Frank hugged him back, and by then they were both laughing.
I Believe I Can Fly

Day 20 – Needing Each Other

'Gravity sucks, I want to fly.'

Leo didn't want to freak out, not in front of Frank. They settled into their cramped plane seats, shoulder to shoulder, and the air hostesses started doing their weird little 'in case of an emergency' dance. Leo couldn't really hear them, or even look at them, because he was too busy giving himself a pep talk.

Come on Valdez, you can do this. You were on the Argo II for fuck's sake! And besides, Frank is right there, and he can change into a bird or a dragon or something else that can fly. You're a demigod stop being such a baby!

"Leo?" Frank peered at him with a worried expression on his face as the air hostesses returned to the back of the plane, "is everything alright."

"F-Fine," Leo's voice came out shakier than he expected. Frank frowned, "You're really pale all of a sudden," he said, pressing the back of his hand against Leo's forehead. The Latino jolted at the sudden touch, "do you feel ill?"

"N-No 'm fine..." Leo mumbled, looking right ahead at the chair in front of him. The airplane lurched into moving all of a sudden and Leo tensed. He could feel Frank's eyes on him, and knew that he was clenching his jaw, his eyes squeezed shut, but he couldn't stop it, he couldn't control his body. I'm going to fucking die. His heart pounded as the metal can picked up speed. The Latino's breath came out shaky, his entire body was trembling.

"You're scared of flying," Frank stated, the realization dawning on him. Leo didn't reply, just curled his hands into fists. The next thing he knew was that Frank was gently opening the fist he just made, and threading his fingers through Leo's. His hand was warm and calloused and comforting. He's right there, Frank's right there, Leo told himself as he squeezed the other boy's hand tightly, if anything happens he'll be there. If Zeus blasts us out of the sky he'll save me, if we fall, he'll catch me, don't be so fucking scared.

The plane was plucked from the ground and suddenly accelerated to an unbelievable speed. Leo knew how planes worked, knew all about the engines and turbines and all that, and it just made everything worse. Despite what it looked like, an airplane was a delicate thing, one wrong screw and the whole thing could fall apart. Literally. Okay, maybe Leo was exaggerating a little bit but...he desperately wondered if he did anything lately to piss Zeus off...
The 'beep' of the seatbelt sign flickering off brought the boy back to earth (or in this case, sky). The Latino's eyes fluttered open, his eyelashes clumped with tears that he had fought to keep back. All around, the clicking of seatbelts being undone sounded. When he looked down he saw that his nails had dug into Frank's hand, leaving a line of red half-moons on his skin.

"S-Shit I'm sorry," Leo tried to pull his hand back but Frank held on tightly.

"You should've said you were scared of flying," he said, his thumb rubbing circles into Leo's skin, and still looking at him with that worried expression. The Latino shivered.

"Sorry," he mumbled. Then he let out a small, hysterical laugh and shook his head, "Jesus, I'm sorry."

"Don't be," Frank said gently. He was horribly gentle nowadays, as if he was scared that Leo would break. The Latino didn't know if he hated or loved it, "So, why are you scared of heights?" Frank asked, probably trying to distract the boy from the situation.

"All Hephaestus kids are," Leo shrugged, pushing a stray curl behind his ear, "it's because Aphrodite flung dad off Mount Olympus. Oh Gods," he groaned when the plane did a turn, "how long are we stuck in this metal box?"

"Fourteen hours," Frank winced. Leo sighed and buried his face in his free hand. The plane shook at a sudden turbulence,

"Fuck," Leo groaned. Frank squeezed his hand,

"We can watch a movie?" he offered, "Or listen to music."

Leo peeked at him from in-between his fingers, and his heartbeat calmed down a little bit. *I'm safe, Frank's here. Everything's alright.*

"Okay," he said in a small voice, sitting up straighter. Frank selected a movie, something called the Butterfly Effect, and held onto Leo's hand throughout most of the fourteen hours. It was clammy and Leo's hand cramped at one point, but it was terribly wonderful.
It was two in the night and Frank was blissfully passed out in his futon, having a wonderful, dreamless sleep (for once). He was exhausted after three days spent running around Tokyo, taking pictures, looking at historical sites and visiting shrines. He just wanted to sleep it off so he'd have enough energy to keep up with his firebug the following day. But of course Leo had to ruin it by waking him up.

Frank was startled awake by the hand on his shoulder and when his eyes adjusted to the darkness, he saw that Leo was squatting next to the futon, fully dressed and looking like he hadn't slept at all.

"Hi," he said, grinning in the darkness. Frank groaned at his cheerfulness,

"What do you want?"

"I'm hungry," Leo said, poking Frank's cheek to try and get the boy to open his eyes.

"You're always hungry," Frank grumbled, "Go to sleep."

"Fraaank," Leo whined, "Pleaseee, I'm so hungrryyyy."

"We literally had dinner like three hours ago," the Asian sighed as he sat up and rubbed his face, trying to wake up. There was no way he'd go back to sleep, not with the Latino complaining all night, "I don't know what you want to do. It's not like we can raid the kitchen or call room service," Frank rubbed sleep out of his eyes.

That much was true – they couldn't call room service or raid anything. The place they were staying at was a resort, with long, wooden bungalows stretching for ages, with nice rooms with futons and not much else inside. There were pools and saunas and spas in the resort, and delicious food at meal times, but the gates locked at midnight, and nobody could come in or out after that time.

"I can smell the street food from here," Leo informed Frank, sniffing at the air. Frank was pretty sure the Latino couldn't smell anything, but he still slid out of his futon and yawned.

"You're lucky I love you," the son of Mars grumbled as he stood up and stretched. Leo stared at him, and Frank couldn't see his facial expression in the darkness, "Well come on then. We're either eating or sleeping," he slipped on some sweatpants over the boxers he slept in and opened the sliding door.

"You'd only sleep and eat if you could," Leo teased, standing up and ducking under Frank's arm to
go outside.

The two slipped out into the night. It was cooler than during the day but by no means cold. The cherry trees rustled in the breeze, more purple than pink in the silver light, and mesmerizingly beautiful. Frank and Leo crept around the dark pool, and past the rooms with turned-off lights.

The lobby was full of shadows, and for a second Frank wondered what he would do if a monster attacked right now. Probably make sure Leo is safe, he mused as the two picked their way to the front door. It was locked – no surprise there.

"Leo," Frank whispered. In seconds, the Latino had a hair pin in his hand, Gods knows where he got it from. He bent it and shoved it into the key-hole, and in a blink of an eye the door clicked and swung open. Grinning like the Cheshire cat, Leo walked out. He repeated the same manoeuvre at the gate, and then they were free, out on the street.

Even in their calm, quiet neighbourhood they could hear the traffic and music and noise coming from the main street, and they followed that.

For a few minutes it was peaceful, just Leo and Frank walking along a dark street, the latter slowly waking up. The cold air brushed against their faces and tangled through their hair. They walked in comfortable silence and when Frank looked over at his friend, he saw that Leo was lost in thought, looking ahead blankly. He wanted to reach out and hold his hand. But what if he flinches away? What if I ruin everything? Frank, son of Mars, didn't have enough courage to make the first move.

They had to walk through an alleyway lined with bins that smelled like alcohol and piss before they came out onto the main street. Massive buildings loomed overhead, with a hundred windows bright with lights despite the late hour. Billboards and golden-glowing advertisements hung overhead, flickering and inviting people in for food and drink and more. Everything was in Japanese but Frank didn't need to understand the language, he just followed his nose. It smelled heavenly.

Leo was like a starving animal. He found the closest stall of food, which wasn't very far, and started pointing at numerous things as the lady behind the stall loaded it onto a plastic bowl. He was grinning like a child at Christmas as he pulled out his yen to pay.

"Jesus," Frank shook his head as Leo and the food lady exchanged the money for the food. The second the Latino had the food in his hands, he was shoving it in his mouth. Frank glimpsed chicken and rice and dumplings, but they were disappeared rapidly.

The Asian dragged Leo over to another stall that sold cakes in the shape of fish, savoury pancakes, baked sweet potatoes and Imagawayaki. He got some of each and ate slowly, watching Leo finish up his portion. The son of Mars never understood where all the food Leo consumed went – the boy was like a stick.

"You know what I want?" the Latino said as the two walked together down the street filled with lights. The boy threw away the plastic bowl as Frank continued to eat.

"Let me guess," Frank chewed on a potato, "more food?"

"Awe, you know me so well," Leo grinned, "But yeah. I want some grilled squid."

Frank made a face and swallowed his food, "If you can find it."

It was warmer here on the street where the tourists mixed with the locals, and Frank and Leo blended in perfectly with the crowd. Different music played from different stalls, some Japanese and some American, all blending together to add to the noise.
Leo found the Ikayaki store and bought squid. He decided he hated it after seven minutes of chewing so to 'wash out the taste' he got a chocolate crepe. By the time he was tired enough to decide to go back to the resort, it was almost five in the morning and the stalls were closing for the night.

Leo and Frank dragged themselves the long way back up the main street, yawning and leaning on each other. Their little expedition completely drained Frank.

When they returned, with surprise they found that the gate to the resort was locked. The two boys exchanged a look,

"The night guard," Frank murmured, looking past the gate, "We have to be careful."

In all fairness, Leo did try. He opened the lock quietly but the gate gave a terribly screech when they pushed it open. The second the two boys stumbled onto the ground of the resort, they heard footsteps coming near. Frank's heart jumped to his throat,

"Fuck," he grabbed Leo's hand and dragged him over to where the cherry trees framed the resort. The two boys ran behind one as quietly as they could, and Frank protectively pushed Leo's back against the bark, framing him with his arms without even thinking about it. The son of Mars looked around the tree, heart pounding, and saw the Night Guard puzzling over the gate, fiddling with the lock. Frank was still. The guard looked at the gate for a few minutes, shone his torchlight in the general direction of the trees, and then walked off, muttering under his breath in Japanese.

Frank let out a relieved breath, "That was close. We're never doing that again."

When he turned to Leo he saw that the boy was looking at him with sparkling eyes. Frank frowned when Leo smiled softly,

"What?" he asked, confused.

"Nothing," Leo murmured, and wrapped his arms around Frank's neck, pulling him closer. The son of Mars was drowsy and tired, but that didn't stop his heart from skipping a beat. He's really warm...Frank pressed his forehead against Leo's, his hands wrapping around the boy's waist on their own accord...it's like he had no control over his body. The two of them just stood like that, impossibly close and yet not close enough.

*I love you,* Frank wanted to say as he studied Leo's face. So, so badly. Leo let out a soft laugh under his breath,

"What?" Frank smiled dopily.

"Nothing," Leo's hands tangled in Frank's hair. A pink cherry petal landed on top of Leo's curls but the Asian didn't have the strength to brush it away. Around the two boys, the world was slowly lightening, the sun waking up. But for a moment the world held its breath and Frank and Leo were in their perfect little bubble, just the two of them against the tree. Their smiles melted off their faces as Frank pressed himself a little bit closer. His heart hammered, his stomach twisted, his breath caught in his throat.

Leo was staring at his mouth, looking dazed, his thumb brushing against the nape of Frank's neck absentmindedly.

"What?" Frank asked. His lips were inches away from Leo's and he couldn't think straight.

"Nothing," Leo whispered and his lips brushed against Frank's by accident. And suddenly the son of Mars was kissing him, hard and desperate and messy, pressing the Latino into the tree. Leo let out a
shaky gasp but barely hesitated in kissing Frank back with the same desperation,

Frank's mind blanked out. All he could think about was Leo, Leo. Leo and how soft his lips were, and how perfect he felt in Frank's arms. He was gripping the smaller boy's hips so hard he was sure he'd leave bruises, but he couldn't make himself loosen his grip, scared that Leo would disappear if he did.

The boy tasted like chocolate, his hands were trembling against the back of Frank's neck. Frank nipped at Leo's bottom lip and the boy parted his lips to let their tongues tangle together. Frank hoisted Leo up and the Latino wrapped his legs around the other boy's waist on instinct, his hands coming to frame Frank's face as the kiss turned even more heated. Frank explored the smaller boy's mouth, as if trying to map it out.

Leo broke away so he could gasp for breath and Frank's lips moved along his jaw so he could kiss down his neck. Leo's fingers threaded themselves back in Frank's hair as the son of Mars sucked a line of purple hickeys into his skin. Frank didn't think he could stop if he wanted to. He kissed behind Leo's ear and the boy shivered and let out a soft little moan.

Frank's heart was beating so fast he was scared he'd have a stroke so he leaned his forehead against Leo's shoulder to try and catch his breath. Then he gently pushed the Latino's oversized t-shirt to the side to kiss his shoulder. He leaned up and kissed him again, this time slowly and gently and carefully, almost shyly. He could feel Leo smile into the kiss and he thought his heart might explode. He pulled away to look up at the Latino. He was all messy hair and flushed cheeks and swollen lips.

"What?" Leo whispered.

"I love you," Frank murmured.

"I know," Leo whispered, a stupid, adorable grin on his face, "I know you idiot," and he kissed Frank again and the son of Mars had never felt so fucking happy.
They didn't go out in the morning, Frank said he was too exhausted for that, and Leo had to agree. The two boys collapsed onto their futons, not even thinking about talking about what just happened. That could wait until they weren't so sleep deprived to discuss what exactly happened.

The second Leo's head hit the pillow, he was out like a light. He didn't dream of anything.

When he woke up, the sunlight had that warm glow that meant it was the late afternoon, and it painted little squares on the floor. Dust floated in the air and Leo was blissfully warm and relaxed. He turned in his futon, stretching, and saw that Frank was propped up on his hand, watching him. The second their eyes met, Frank flushed and quickly looked away.

"Good morning to you too," Leo grinned.

"It's the afternoon, dumbass," Frank grumbled, "Thanks to your raging appetite we slept through the day. We were meant to go to the Meiji Shrine, and now we can't."

"Oh don't sulk," Leo sat up. When he thought about the events from last night it made his heart pound. He remembered the feeling of Frank's lips on him, hard and desperate as if he thought Leo would push him away any second. Which was stupid, but it still made Leo want to desperately climb into Frank's futon and get the boy's mouth on him again. Preferably in other places too.

Fuck, Leo groaned internally when he felt himself grow hard in his boxers. He didn't know if he could consider it 'morning wood' if it wasn't the morning. In fact, when Leo looked at his phone, he saw it was coming up to six in the afternoon. Well, it didn't really matter if it was morning wood or not, because Leo was hard.

Technically...shouldn't I be able to ask Frank for...Leo bit his lip at the thought. He had never really done anything like that before. Sure, he had kissed Cali but that was different. She was shy and soft and gentle, and Frank was demanding and fierce and-

This is really not helping the situation, Leo laid down and stared at the ceiling, maybe if I will it away? What can I know about sex, we literally had our first kiss yesterday, it's wayyy too fast. Gods, I'm an idiot, I don't even know if he wants to have sex with me...what if he kissed me out of pity?! Or because it was really late and we were both not thinking straight-

I Wanna Fuck You All The Time

Day 22 - NSFW

'Desire, lust and sin.'
"Leo," Frank's voice broke the slightly hysterical train of Leo's thought, "You okay?"

"Yeah, fine," Leo said. Frank slipped out of his futon and stretched, raising his arms over his head. Leo's mouth felt dry as he stared at the shirtless boy. Frank's tanned muscle rippled as he stretched and Leo licked his lips nervously, imagining Frank pressed against him, skin on skin, the boy's hands on his body, rough and calloused.

Leo's cock twitched and he gritted his teeth in annoyance.

"Why don't you go get breakfast?" he asked, trying not to sound breathless, "I want some miso." _I want to have a wank so you don't see my hard-on._

"Leo," Frank raised an amused eyebrow, "I know you're hard."

Leo blushed so hard he was sure he looked like a tomato. When he looked down, he saw that his cock was pressing up against the futon. With a squeak, the Latino sat up, desperately re-arranging the futon to hide his erection.

"I-I...," he stuttered, "I...it's fine, I'll um, take care of it...just go get breakfast a-and-"

Frank knelt next to Leo's futon and gently took turned his face so they could look at each other. When Frank kissed him, Leo's heart jumped in his chest. He wanted to push him away because it was _really_ not helping right now, but instead his treacherous hands reached up to tangle in Frank's hair and pull him closer. They were still new to this, to being together like this, but to Leo it felt so right it was almost painful.

Leo let Frank's tongue into his mouth and he shivered. It was warm and gentle, but it still made Leo's cock ache in his pants.

"I can help you with that if you want," Frank murmured, kissing down Leo's jaw, "Only if you want though."

And how could Leo _not_ want? After what seemed like years of dancing around each other he finally had the son of Mars right there, kissing him like he was the only one in the world. Leo slipped out of his futon, pressing his lips against Frank's again, his hand holding onto Frank's one on his face. A heat coiled up inside the Latino and he felt feverish all of a sudden.

"Frank," he murmured against the other boy's lips, "I...I..."

He didn't know what to say. _I want you to fuck me_, sounded a bit forward. Also, Leo had no idea how that worked and just because he wanted Frank's mouth and hands all over him didn't mean Frank wanted it too. Especially with someone as inexperienced as Leo, who had no clue what he was doing.

Frank didn't seem to mind as he gently pushed Leo back onto the futon and climbed on top of him. Leo's heart was hammering away in his chest but he didn't want to push Frank away. If anything, he just wanted to pull him closer. He was sure his lips would be numb soon enough but he didn't care as long as Frank kept kissing him the way he was.

The son of Mars' hand slipped beneath Leo's shirt and the Latino shivered at the feeling of Frank's calloused hands trailing up his ribs. When his thumb brushed against Leo's nipple the boy whimpered into his mouth. Frank pulled away and grinned as if he just solved a crime and then he was tugging Leo's shirt over his head.

Leo laid spread out in front of Frank, and watched as the boy's eyes slid over his bare chest. The
Latino knew his body was mottled with golden squares from the sun outside, and he imagined that looked pretty awesome, but Frank...Frank was looking at him as if he was the most beautiful person in the world. It made Leo's heart ache.

Their pace slowed, Frank reached down and gently brushed his fingers against the purple bruises on Leo's hips. They were in the shape of his fingers,

"Sorry," the son of Mars murmured.

"Don't be," Leo pulled him down for another kiss but Frank wasn't having any of that. He moved down Leo's body, grinning and nipping at his neck gently. Leo closed his eyes as the warmth surged through his body. Frank took one of his nipples into his mouth, and Leo couldn't stop the moan that was pulled from his throat. Frank's hand was rubbing the Latino's other nipple. Pleasure coursed through Leo's body as Frank kissed down his chest and stomach. The boy stopped at Leo's hips and peppered the bruises there with small, loving kisses. The mix between careful gentleness and rough desperation was making Leo's cock leak inside his boxers.

"F-Frank," he whined as the boy licked across his hipbone. Frank looked up at him innocently, "I hate you," Leo grumbled.

"I hate you more," Frank joked and pecked Leo's navel before hooking his fingers in Leo's boxers and pulling them off in one swift movement. The Latino sucked in a startled breath but didn't have time to even think about being shy because Frank was taking his throbbing cock into his mouth.

Leo's first reaction was to arch his back and let out a sound halfway between a moan and a whimper. His mind blanked out and the only thing he could concentrate on was on how wonderfully warm and wet Frank's mouth was around his dick. the Latino's hands tangled in Frank's hair as the boy bobbed his head up and down, slow and deliberate, taking practically all of Leo's member into his mouth, leaving the Latino to moan helplessly.

"J-Jesus, oh f-fuck...," Leo couldn't even formulate proper sentences, "Frank...oh Gods, Frank..."

Frank swirled his tongue around the head of Leo's cock and the boy choked on a moan, hands gripping Frank's hair. Something hot and tight coiled in his stomach and Leo felt his orgasm building up. It wasn't his fault, nobody had ever touched him like that and Frank was just so goddamn good that Leo was sure that he would come in the next thirty seconds.

He forced himself to tug Frank's mouth from his cock, and it took a lot of self control to do that. Leo wanted nothing more than to come right now. Well, he wanted one thing more.

"What?" Frank frowned up at Leo, his lips swollen, his hair mussed, "Did I do something wrong?"

"No, no," Leo said desperately, pulling Frank up so he could kiss him messily, "That was...you're so..." Leo couldn't find the words. He tried to catch his breath.

"What is it then?" Frank brushed Leo's curls from his sweaty forehead.

Leo didn't want to sound needy or desperate or like a slut, he wanted to have sex with Frank without actually telling him that. But the heat in his body was becoming unbearable, and the thing that came out of Leo's mouth was -

"Fuck me."

"Gods, Leo," Frank groaned, burying his face in Leo's neck, "You can't just say that."
"Please," Leo whimpered, trembling, "P-Please Frank, I-I need you to-

Frank pushed Leo's legs apart. His eyes were almost completely black with lust,

"You asked for it," he growled, like an animal, and then he was furiously kissing Leo, his hands groping his ass roughly. Leo couldn't breathe, but he didn't care. He moaned into Frank's mouth helplessly as the son of Mars reached out and rummaged in his bag next to the futon. When he pulled away so Leo could catch his breath, the Latino saw he was holding a bottle of lube.

"Oh you b-bastard," Leo said shakily, "Did you plan this?!

Frank blushed, "Um...it's a backup?"

Leo rolled his eyes but then Frank was kissing the daylights out of him again, licking and biting and just generally making Leo melt against the covers. The Latino barely barely heard the lube bottle open but then he was feeling Frank's wet, cold fingers against his hole. Leo shivered and cried out when Frank pushed the first finger inside of him. It burned and felt weird and Leo pulled away from the kiss so he could rest his forehead against Frank's shoulder and focus on breathing.

"You okay?" Frank murmured, kissing the side of Leo's head. The Latino nodded, shaking, "I know it feels weird just...just give it a moment...or I can stop, if you want."

"No!" Leo said, too loud and too suddenly. He flushed, "No, don't," he repeated in a whisper. Frank smiled, and then slowly started moving his finger in and out. It felt better then, still weird but borderline good. Leo whimpered, "Y-You can...add another o-one...," he stuttered after a moment. So Frank did; he pushed another finger into Leo's hole and the Latino panted as the warmth inside his body intensified terribly.

Frank fucked him with his fingers slowly, deliberately, scissoring and stretching Leo's hole until the Latino was reduced to a trembling mess on the sheets. When Frank added another finger his movements grew more rough and hard, and Leo found that he liked it. He felt like he would be bruised by how hard Frank was fingering him, and that thought just made him moan louder.

Frank pulled his fingers out and Leo felt horribly empty. His eyes were glazed over, and he felt tense and relaxed at the same time. He watched as Frank tugged off his underwear, revealing his leaking cock. Leo had the sudden urge to get his mouth on Frank's member, but the son of Mars was already reaching for the lube.

"You sure you want this?" Frank asked worriedly. Leo growled in annoyance and grabbed the bottle from Frank's hand. He wasn't even thinking straight when he poured the lube into his hand and then he wrapped it around Frank's cock. The son of Mars let out a startled moan as Leo lubed his cock up sloppily. Then he climbed into Frank's lap. All he wanted was the boy inside him, like now.

"Leo, wait-" Frank started but then Leo was already lowering himself onto his cock. The Latino gasped at the sudden burn of having the head of Frank's cock push into him. It hurt, but Leo gritted his teeth and pushed on, getting inch by inch inside of himself. Frank's eyes were squeezed shut and he was panting. Leo whimpered so the son of Mars pulled him in for a messy, sloppy kiss as he bottomed out.

"F-Fuck-" he hissed as he shivered violently. It burned, but at the same time it felt weirdly good and Leo wasn't breathing, just gripping Frank's shoulders and trying to concentrate on not coming. He let out a shaky breath as he felt Frank's cock throbbing inside of him, "I-I'm...fuck, that's g-good...I-I...," Leo was babbling on, his lips moving against Frank's neck. The son of Mars roughly gripped Leo chin and pulled him in for a rough, bruising kiss.
Leo lifted himself up on Frank’s lap and slowly sunk back onto his cock. The pain was still there, but it just added to the sudden pleasure that almost made Leo pass out. He slowly rode Frank, their lips brushing together, as a litany of moans spilled from his mouth. A desperation rooted itself in the Latino and he began riding Frank faster, desperately wanting to get his cock deeper.

Frank’s cock brushed against something inside him and Leo shuddered and cried out, toes curling.

"W-What was t-that?" Leo asked, sounding like he was about to cry, arms wrapped around Frank’s neck, "F-Frank, f-fuck that felt s-so good-"

Frank slammed him back down on the futon and Leo's legs fell open so Frank could slide back inside. When he did Leo's back arched and he sobbed at the pleasure that was hitting his body as Frank abused that spot inside him that made him see white. The son of Mars took advantage of his strength as he pinned Leo's wrists down to the futon and fucked him with so much strength that Leo thought he would break. He wanted to break, he wanted Frank to break him.

"Jesus, Leo you're so fucking gorgeous," Frank growled, leaning down to bit at Leo's neck, "and you're mine."

Leo couldn't breathe. Everything felt so fucking intensely good, Frank was kissing his neck and hitting his prostate every second, making Leo moan and sob and whimper. Leo knew he was close, the heat in his body was almost unbearable, and the pleasure was building up, hard and fast.

Frank must've been close to because he gripped both of Leo's wrists above his head in one of his hand, while his other hand went down to curl around Leo's cock. The Latino couldn't do more than shake and sob as his orgasm washed over him suddenly, hitting him so hard he thought he'd black out.

He was vaguely aware of Frank kissing him as he came inside him, and then Leo was being cleaned up. It was dark by then, and Frank tugged a shirt over Leo's head. When the Latino finally became fully aware of everything he saw that Frank was slipping into his futon with him.

"You okay?" the son of Mars was smiling, looking tired but satisfied. The futon was small for two people but Frank wrapped his arms around the other boy and it was surprisingly comfortable.

"Yeah," Leo smiled, his whole body tingling. Frank peppered his face and neck with small kisses,

"I love you," he murmured.
Sorry for the late update I'm in Poland for the summer and it's a pain in the ass to get a moment to myself.

Day 23- Interacting With Family Members

'The love of a family is life's greatest blessing.'

“Um…I know it’s soon,” Frank mumbled, frantically trying to fix the creases in Leo’s t-shirt (something he’d never done before), “Like…really soon…b-but you know how Gods can b-be, and Dad’s impatient-“

“Frank,” Leo grabbed the Asian’s hands and held them away from his clothes. They were shaking, “Chill out. I know. It’s not that big of a deal.”

“It is,” Frank groaned, tugging on his hair in frustration, “and…a-and…It’s too soon.”

And it was. Leo and Frank had spent their remaining days in Japan fucking and sightseeing and fucking some more, completely lost in each other. And when they returned to Camp Half Blood, still in their little bubble, they got their little ‘invitation.’ If you could even call it that…

The Gods were curious and vain, everyone knew that, and of course they wanted to know everything about everyone. Basically, Mars wanted to see Frank and Leo together, and Frank was petrified. His father was impulsive and had a weird, dark sense of humour. He was pretty terrifying, and Leo…Leo was small and skinny and not very scary looking. He wasn’t exactly a warrior, or a fighter, not in the literal sense. He didn’t charge into battles holding a sword or a spear, he didn’t slay monsters with blades. He rarely even killed any, mostly he was on the side-lines, fighting with tricks and fire and machinery. He was a brilliant, brave genius but Frank knew his Godly father would want him to take on a soldier partner.

Frank was lost in thought, his hands frozen at Leo’s waist as he bit his lip and thought about the endless ways things could go wrong, starting at best case scenario where Mars just full laughed in his face, and worst case scenario being the Latino getting stabbed in the chest.

“Quit freaking out,” Leo grabbed Frank’s face and smiled comfortingly, “It’ll be fine. It’s not like he’ll kill me or anything.”
Frank’s hands shook beneath the table, and he hoped that neither Mars nor Leo could see it. The atmosphere was tense, and Frank could almost taste the nervousness and fear that was rolling off of Leo. Or maybe it was rolling off of Frank himself. He couldn’t tell.

Mars sat across from them at the table, dressed in his Canadian Special Force uniform, holding a half-full glass of whiskey. The ice cubes chinked against the glass with every move the God made. His face was impassive, his eyes sliding from Leo to Frank every few seconds. It had been going on for almost ten minutes, everyone silent, and Frank was about to burst.

The room they were in was an office, looking to be in a CIA building but Frank couldn’t know for sure. The walls were bleached and empty save for a corkboard with several pictures and newspaper clippings pinned to it. Apart from the desk and three chairs, there was no other furniture.

“So,” Mars said finally, so suddenly that Frank almost jumped. He felt a trickle of sweat roll down his back. Please don’t say anything bad, Frank prayed in his head, not knowing to who he was praying exactly, please like him, please, please, please, “How long have you two been fucking?”

“D-Dad!” Frank spluttered feeling the blood rush to his face.

“You’re a God,” Leo shrugged, looking laid-back and unbothered, surprising Frank, “Shouldn’t you know, being almighty and all?”

Don’t provoke him! Frank wanted to scream. But Mars’ lips just twitched into a smile,

“I could kill you on the spot.”

“You wouldn’t warn me about it first,” Leo just said, his eyes twinkling. Frank stared at him open-mouthed. The small Latino never failed to surprise him, even now, when he was walking on thin ice. One word from Mars, one look, and there’d be smoke where he was and he’d spent eternity in Asphodel.

“I like this one,” Mars knocked back the rest of his whiskey and stood up, “I really do. But his mouth will get him into trouble one of these days,” he straightened his uniform out, “Well, I’ll be on my way. Son, see you soon.”

“T-That’s it?!” Frank spluttered. Mars was at the door,

“What did you expect?” he raised an eyebrow, “Fireworks and smoke and blood? This isn’t war son. It’s love, but that’s close enough,” and then he was out, leaving Frank and Leo in the weird office room. Leo slumped in his chair so far he was almost on the floor, and he exhaled shakily.

“Jesus Christ,” Frank muttered, but he was grinning. Relief flooded him and he couldn’t stop the laugh that escaped him as he pulled Leo up and kissed him fiercely, “I hate you so much,” he said, but he was kissing Leo all over his face and neck, the words I like this one echoing in his head.
Frank stared at Leo, who was still trying to catch his breath, his sweaty hair falling into his eyes. It was warm in the room, despite the air-con being on, and Frank wished that it had a window. But he really didn’t mind the heat, for now content on staring at Leo.

During the day the boy was an excitable firebug, always running around and arguing with Frank or fiddling with something. When he slept he still moved around and sometimes talked under his breath. During sex he was a ball of heat, never quite still… but now… now he was different. Every time Leo and Frank fucked, the Latino would go quiet afterwards. But it was a good kind of quiet; he’d be smiling blissfully, eyes closed while he came down from his high, body pliant, like a melted puddle.

He was like that now, all of his walls taken down, not hiding anything from Frank. The son of Mars was still pleasantly warm from their sessions a few minutes ago and he lay down next to Leo and pulled him close so he could kiss his shoulder. The Latino hummed happily and threaded his fingers through Frank’s hair.

“You okay?” the son of Mars asked, lips brushing against Leo’s shoulder.

“’course,” the Latino smiled sleepily, “why wouldn’t I be?”

Frank shrugged and snuggled closer into Leo’s skinny shoulder. One of his hands was resting on Leo’s warm, naked stomach. They didn’t speak for a while but Frank knew that Leo wasn’t sleeping.

“Hey,” the Latino said after a few minutes, sounding drowsy. Frank ‘hmm?’ed into his skin, “Are we… dating?” Leo sounded hesitant and the son of Mars could hear his nervous heartbeat. He sat up, surprised by the sudden question and opened his mouth to say yeah, of course we are, but then it hit him that he never actually asked Leo to date him. Frank’s heart clenched. Since Japan a month has passed, a month of arguing and kissing and cuddling and fucking, and neither of them had asked what they were. They were just too busy being with each other to bother, but now that they weren’t scared that the other would disappear anymore, the question of what were they arose.

“I…,” Frank didn’t really know what to say, “I don’t know… are we?”

Leo stared at him, his big eyes still a little bit dazed. The boy licked his swollen lips nervously and Frank couldn’t help himself as he swooped down to kiss the Latino quickly. He tasted like caramel. Leo pulled away and touched Frank’s cheek tentatively,

“Frank,” he murmured, “Will you go out with me?”
Frank couldn’t help the burst of laughter that escaped him – it was just that Leo was being so damn serious, like he wasn’t sure that Frank would say yes even though he obviously would. The Latino glared,

“Fine,” he huffed, annoyed, “I’ll take that as a no.”

Frank kissed his cheek, “You’re an idiot,” he said, still grinning, “but I love you.”

Leo smiled softly at that, “Is that a yes then?” he asked. *Jesus, he’s serious,* Frank realized suddenly. He knew that Leo was insecure about some stuff, but the Latino couldn’t *really* think that Frank just wanted to fuck him and leave. The unsure, scared look in Leo’s eyes showed that that was exactly what he though.

Frank kissed him, long and deep, leaving the Latino breathless, “that’s a yes.”

In a second, Leo’s entire demeanour changed. The fear and uncertainty disappeared from his eyes, replaced by pure happiness. Leo grinned,

“I’ve got a boyfriend!” he whooped, fist raised in the air. Frank rolled his eyes,

“What was I before?” he asked, wrapping his arms back around the Latino.

“A fuck buddy,” Leo shrugged.

“Dickhead.”
"...you do understand, I hope?" Chiron asked, looking worried and distressed and just overall uncomfortable. In front of him sat over two dozen demigods, some eighteen and some nineteen, and some even older. Jason and Percy, Miranda and Katie from Demeter, Frank with Clarisse, Mark and Sherman, Annabeth with her half-brother Malcolm, Will and Kayla from Apollo, Leo with Jake, Nyssa, Shane, Christopher and Harley, Piper, Drew, Lacy and Mitchell from Aphrodite, Conor, Travis and Chris from Hermes, Pollux, Nico and Hazel...

"Where do we propose we go?" Nico asked, his mouth drawn into a tight line. He looked paler than usual.

"I truly don’t know," Chiron sighed, his tail flicking nervously, "The camp can offer you some money, protective spells. But the cabins are overflowing with new campers and you lot are too old to be living here anymore—"

"This is our home," Katie protested, cheeks flushed with anger. A dozen voices agreed with her, making a terrible clamour. Chiron winced.

"There is always Camp Jupiter!" Jason shouted over the noise, silencing everyone. He had that power, to get everyone to shut up.

"Not for all of us!" Clarisse spat angrily, "Some of us ain’t so luck to be Roman, Grace."

Leo had been silent for a while, staring at the floor, but now he glanced over at Frank nervously, heart pounding in his chest. A stupid, idiotic thought slipped into his head. Frank’s Roman, his place is at Camp Jupiter. There he has protection and safety and a shot at a life not filled with monsters, somewhere he can grow old... But me...they would never let me stay there, not forever. They barely tolerate me.

There was still bad blood between Leo and the Romans and now the Latino wondered if Frank would choose safety over him. I wouldn’t be surprised. Sure, it had been a few months since the two started dating, but Leo still had his doubts. For him, the four months had been the best he ever had. Of course he and his boyfriend still bickered like an old married couple, and sometimes didn’t talk to each other for a few days, but Leo actually felt like Frank loved him (most of the time). In-between
the fucking and snogging and just spending time together sparring or talking or pranking each other, Leo was just…happy. Undoubtedly, wholeheartedly happy. It was a new, weird feeling. Frank was always there for him if Leo needed to cry or laugh or show him a stupid meme or tell him about a nightmare. The idea of losing him made Leo feel as if someone punched a hole through his chest.

The Latino only realized the meeting in the Big House was over when he was pulled outside by a throng of angry, frustrated demigods. Some of them, like Clarisse and Nyssa, were really pissed, cursing under their breaths and threatening to punch things, others like Jason and Hazel seemed more relieved, since they had somewhere to go. Frank looked unbothered as he slipped his hand into Leo’s and directed him away from the crowd, towards the cabins.

“We should pack,” he said. Leo didn’t reply, just enjoyed the feeling of his hand in Frank’s, fitting together perfectly, for at least a moment more before everything crumpled and he’d have to ask the ‘what now’ question. How could I ever think that Calypso was the one for me? The Latino thought as he glanced at Frank. He rarely thought about his ex-girlfriend, they didn’t work out as friends in the end and she moved away and didn’t keep in contact with Leo. Still, what he felt for Frank was so much different than what he felt for her that it still surprised Leo that he had thought he loved Cali.

The two boys were nearing to where the paths to cabin 9 and cabin 5 split up, and Leo swallowed hard and stopped abruptly.

“What?” Frank asked, glancing over his shoulder.

“What are we doing?” Leo asked. He didn’t want to sound scared, he didn’t want to be scared, but he was, because Camp Half Blood was the only home he ever knew, “Where are we going? I-I… Camp Jupiter won’t take me-“

“Hey,” Frank said gently, softly, the way he spoke when Leo woke up from a nightmare. He took the Latino’s other hand in his and rested their foreheads together, “Don’t panic firebug. I’ve got you.”

Leo exhaled and relaxed slightly, feeling Frank’s comforting warmth close to him. He’s right here, he won’t leave me, he won’t…

***

Leo packed all of his stuff. It felt weird, putting all his trinkets and mechanisms away, leaving his secret bunk empty. He felt like he was leaving the only home he ever had, which was true. Someone else would sleep in his bunk, someone else would have his secret room, and some other team of demigods would take the Argo II on a quest. When Leo realized this, he broke down crying down in his empty, sad, room and felt shit about it until he came back up and saw that Sherman’s and Harley’s eyes were red too.

There were new kids in the cabin, ones from a few weeks back, and newer ones; excited twelve year olds, proud thirteen’s and confused fourteen’s after their first quests. They’d see much and more, but they’d never face two wars like Leo did. Like all the other campers who were leaving did. Chiron said they’d be able to visit and teach, that it was still their home whenever they needed it, but Leo’s bunk would never be his own, and he’d never be counsellor of Cabin 9 ever again.

It wasn’t fair.

“We’ll be in contact,” Nyssa had them all in a circle inside their cabin. She was hard as a rock, as always, and wasn’t crying, “We’re siblings after all. No matter what.”
Surprisingly, the little kids all started bawling when they found out the olders were leaving, and Leo had about a dozen of them stuck to him before he even got to leave the cabin. When he finally dismantled himself from them, there was another teary goodbye from the seven.

“We’ll go to Jupiter,” Percy said, standing with Annabeth, Jason, Piper and Hazel, “are you sure you two don’t want to come with us?”

Leo tensed but Frank just took his hand again, “We’re sure.”

Annabeth cried as they hugged, even though they promised to see each other as much as possible. They were a family, they survived wars together. They’d be okay.

***

The queue for the taxi was wayyyyy too long, and the Gray Sisters were unreliable, so Nico mercifully offered to shadow-travel Leo and Frank to wherever they needed to go. Except-

“Where exactly are we going, Frank?” Leo frowned as he took Nico’s hand in his free one so the son of Hades could teleport them. Frank kissed him quickly, to shut him up.

“You talk too much.”

***

After a head-spinning, stomach churning quick twirl Leo and Frank and Nico left Camp behind them and ended up in a back alley somewhere, in between a passed out drunk and an overflowing bin. Leo wrinkled his nose,

“Manhattan?” he asked. Nico let go of their hands, and stepped away from them.

“Call me…if you need anything,” he said, a bit awkwardly, and slipped back into the shadows before either Frank or Leo could say anything.

Frank had his suitcase in one hand, and Leo’s hand in his other one, and together they walked out into the street. It was Manhattan alright, late morning downtown Manhattan with loud-ass traffic, and crowds of people, and the cold winter sun. There were small heaps of snow around the buildings and they came as a shock to Leo after the warm, fake-summer of Camp.

Frank seemed to know where he was going as he led Leo through a maze of side streets and alleys until they ended up in a quieter neighbourhood with tall, red-brick flats on either side of them, like valley walls. Leo’s heart was in his throat as Frank pulled him along silently. It started snowing and the Latino shivered as the snowflakes landed on his exposed cheeks.

The son of Mars pulled Leo into one of the blocks. It was cold out on the corridor, and damp, the lift was out of order, so Frank turned to the stairs.

The Latino was confused, his heart pounding. First he had to leave his home and now Frank was taking him up to some random flat, God knows why. On the third floor, Frank turned so he was walking down another white washed corridor. *Maybe we’re visiting a friend,* Leo’s thoughts were a mess; he couldn’t really concentrate on anything. He tried to remember if they knew anyone in this area.

Frank fished out a key and opened the door numbered ’95.’ *Why does he have a key?* Leo let himself be pulled inside and the door shut behind him. Frank went to one of the rooms and Leo was left in the corridor for a second by himself. He took in a shaky breath and then followed his boyfriend.
Frank was in the living room. The flat was small and cheap, with practically no furniture and the paint peeling off of the walls. Outside the windows Leo could see the traffic, and the buildings all around them, and snow falling slowly. He looked up at Frank, who was avoiding eye-contact.

“Frank,” he mumbled weakly, “What the hell is going on?”

“I…um…” Frank cleared his throat awkwardly, staring at his shoes and fiddling with his hands, “I knew before, about…you know, the whole c-camp thing. Grandma left me s-some money and I just…,” he looked up at Leo shyly, “I know it’s early. I know, okay? But I didn’t want to go back to Jupiter without you and-”

“You got this flat,” everything clicked into place in Leo’s head, suddenly and all at once, “for us. For me and you.”

“Yeah,” Frank mumbled, as if he was scared Leo would shout at him. Leo didn’t shout. Instead he threw himself at the other boy but Frank caught him easily and hoisted him up so Leo’s legs were wrapped around his waist, and then the Latino was kissing him furiously, hands tangling in Frank’s hair. His heart was pounding and he couldn’t stop from smiling stupidly as Frank wrapped his arms around his waist. They kissed for ages, desperately and heatedly, like it was their first time all over again.

When they finally broke away for air, both of them were grinning like idiots.


“I love you too, firebug.” Frank smiled into the kisses.
Singing in the Shower

Day 26 – Clothes Swap

‘You look better naked.’

Leo woke up on their little mattress in the corner of the bedroom, feeling every bump and spring digging into his back. When he opened his eyes everything was bleary for a second. Sunlight filtered in through the curtain-less window, and when Leo blinked away the sleep he could see bits of dust floating about. There were dusty drop sheets everywhere, and the sun glinted off them. Dust and ash was gathered in small grey heaps around corners, and pots full of paint littered the floor. Leo sneezed, feeling the dust tickle his nose, and that cause Frank’s arm around him to shift.

“What?” the son of Mars mumbled sleepily. Leo yawned and shivered. They still had no central heating in the flat, and painting the walls was taking up most of their time so they didn’t sort it out. They had no furniture but their stupid little mattress and lived off pot noodles or whatever Annabeth of one of the other demigods brought them. But Leo didn’t care; he could have lived in a cave as long as he had Frank.

“We need to get up,” there was snow melting on the window, but the sunshine made it gleam prettily. Leo reached for his phone and checked the time. It was 7:34, and Nyssa and the rest of Leo’s siblings were due to show up at eight o’clock sharp with breakfast, to help sort their flat out. Frank’s hand was resting just underneath Leo’s shirt, on his stomach, and the Latino slapped it playfully to try and wake his boyfriend up. It didn’t work, and Frank just pulled the boy closer into his chest.

“Frank,” Leo grumbled, annoyed, even as he snuggled up against his boyfriend. He could feel Frank’s warm breath against the back of his neck and he shivered again, “Frank wake up you retarded panda.”

Leo felt a shift at his back and then there was fur pressed up against him where there had been skin before. Leo closed his eyes to ask the Gods for strength to deal with Frank,

“You’re taking the piss,” he groaned and turned around. Sure enough, Frank was gone and in his place was a giant black and white panda. His eyes were still Frank’s, sparkling with amusement. Leo’s eyes narrowed, “Frank. No.”

Frank let out such a noise that could only mean Frank, yes.

The panda climbed on top of Leo, practically crushing him, and proceeded to lick the Latino all over his face. Leo squealed and cursed and tried to squirm away but Frank just pawed at his chest and slobbered all over the boy’s cheeks.
“N-No! You animal, get off me!” Leo yelled, though he was laughing, “I hate you…F-Frank, no!”

Frank transformed back into himself and grinned cheekily down at his boyfriend, so close that his hair tickled Leo’s forehead.

“Ugh,” the Latino wiped his wet cheek on the pillow, “you’re disgusting.” Frank kissed his neck and face as the Latino continued to complain; “Now I have to take a shower! Seriously, I don’t know why I’m even dating you.”

“Because you love me,” Frank said, biting playfully at Leo’s neck. He slid off of the boy, “C’mon Valdez! Shower time!”

Leo propped himself up on his elbows and raised an eyebrow, “For me. You can clean the room up.”

“It’s my shower time,” Frank scooped his clothes up from the floor. Leo’s eyes widened and then he was on his feet, racing Frank through their dirty flat to the bathroom, screaming bloody murder. He ducked underneath Frank’s arm but the bigger boy lifted him up easily and put him back down the corridor.

Eventually they both tumbled into the bathroom and the second they were in, Frank locked the door. Leo was panting, cheeks flushed.

“Did you **[plan]** this?” he asked, and the only reply he got was Frank picking him up and carrying him into the shower, “Hell no! Let go, you bastard!” Leo complained, but Frank already had him up against the shower wall, kissing his neck,

“Shut it, Valdez,” he growled, slipping Leo’s shirt off and tossing it somewhere to the side. Leo reached backwards and turned the water on. Frank yelped as the cold water suddenly hit him, “Asshole,” he hissed and reached over to turn the knob and make the freezing sheet of water warmer. Leo was grinning smugly, his arms wrapped around Frank’s shoulders, and when Frank kissed him, the Latino kissed back hungrily, water sliding in between their parted lips.

Leo tangled his fingers in Frank’s wet hair as the boy’s warm mouth slid down his chest.

“We don’t have time,” Leo’s words came out like a breathless moan. Frank grinned at him, “Yeah we do.”

It turned out they really didn’t. They had to hastily finish up when they heard the Hephaestus lot let themselves in as if the flat was their own, shouting over one another about how they had coffee and needed to piss. Leo and Frank scrambled out of the shower, giggling, and tugged on their clothes blindly before piling out into the corridor with wet hair.

“Ah, there you are,” Nyssa was holding four coffees in one hand and she gave Leo a one-armed hug.

“Frank,” Harley raised an eyebrow, staring at the boy’s feet, “are those Leo’s socks?”

“I knew they were too small,” Frank glanced down at the small-ish, tight, mismatched socks on his feet and wiggled his toes. Leo elbowed him,

“They’re mine!” he complained.

“Mate,” Frank flicked Leo’s forehead, “That’s my shirt.”
And fair enough, Leo was wearing Frank’s shirt, which was way too big on him, brushing over his thighs. The Latino blinked down at it for a few seconds and shrugged,

“If you’re quite finished fucking,” Shane rolled his eyes, a load of muffins in his arms, “I’d like to eat and get on with the painting.”

Leo and Frank exchanged a sheepish look.
Baby, I like your style

Day 27 – Dealing with children

'A child has a special way of adding joy to every day.'

Two years later

Jason didn’t even bother knocking as he barrelled into Leo’s and Frank’s flat on Saturday morning. The two boys were still in their PJ’s, lounging on their couch and watching Shrek II on their second-hand TV.

“Hi, Jas,” Leo said, barely even looking up from the movie to take in his dishevelled friend. Jason had a one day stubble on his face, and dark circles underneath his eyes. In one hand he had a bag full of groceries, in the other he held his and Piper’s little girl; Kat, named after Piper’s trusty dagger.

“I need your help,” Jason said, sounding as if he just ran a marathon, “Piper’s at work, I have a meeting, and Rachel bailed on me that little rat.” He unceremoniously dumped Kat into surprised Frank’s arms, “Take care of her. Just a few hours. Please and thankyou and sorry!” And that was it, no introductions, no beating around the bush.

“Wait-“ Leo started but Jason was already sprinting out of the flat as if Hades himself was chasing him. When the door slammed shut, Leo and Frank exchanged an uneasy look. Kat made a little spit-bubble. She was only eight months old but she was an adorable, chubby little baby with Jason’s blonde locks and eyes after Piper, one green and one brown. Her little cheeks were permanently red, her mouth always smiling. Frank held her gently, uncertainly, as if he was scared he’d break her.

“We were meant to go to the beach,” he said softly as Kat pawed at his face. He and Leo had planned their weekend for ages, even taking days off at their jobs to get away for a while. Frank wanted nothing more than a chill day with Leo at the beach, but Jason was one of his best friends, and he owed him a favour…

“We could give her to Harley?” Leo offered, sticking his finger out so Kat could wrap her little fist around it, “Or maybe Clary? She’s good with kids.”

Frank shook his head, “You know how protective Jas gets over Kat,” he sighed, “I guess we’ll just have to put the beach off…”

“No,” Leo plucked the child from Frank’s arms, “Hell no, Zhang. I did not bicker with Arnie and take double shifts for two weeks to ruin this damn day,” he kissed Kat’s cheeks, “not that you’re ruining anything, sweetie,” he said, even though the girl just squealed happily, oblivious to his words, “but yeah, we’re going to the beach like we planned. And Kat will come with us,” he smiled
at the child.

“Err…,” Frank was unsure; he loved and trusted Leo, but not enough to let him go near deep water with a child, “Shouldn’t we ask Piper first? Or Jason-“

“Nope,” Leo popped the ‘p,’ “They wanted us to take care of Kat, so we will.”

***

The sea breeze brushed against Frank’s face and he smiled, feeling the saltiness in the air. He looked at the sparkling blue in front of him and simultaneously thought about changing into a fish and diving in, and about camp. The lake there always looked beautiful in the sun, just like the sea right now. Leo was at Frank’s side, grinning, his curls kept back by a bandana.

“See? Everything’s fine,” he smiled brightly at Frank. Kat rested on his hip easily, as if he was used to having a child there. She was looking around curiously, a little sunhat on her head.

Okay. Just don’t get weird ideas,” Frank rolled his eyes behind his sunglasses and slid his hand into Leo’s free one. They walked out down to the beach, letting their feet sink in the sand. It was a Saturday so there were loads of people out and about; families with kids on picnic blankets, teenagers eating ice-cream and arguing with each other, old couples talking long strolls down the shore, letting waves wash over their feet.

Leo snatched his hand from Frank’s suddenly and wrapped both of his arms around Kat. He looked tense, and Frank frowned at the sudden change of mood,

“Valdez?” he asked, pushing his sunglasses up into his hair, “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” Leo said, looking straight and marching right ahead as if he was on a mission. Frank reached out and grabbed the boy’s shoulder, turning him around.

“Leo,” he touched the boy’s cheek, “What is it?” Kat looked from one boy to the other with big eyes. Leo sighed and shifted the child back onto his hip,

“People might say stuff,” he mumbled softly, “because we’re both…guys.”

“Oh,” it all clicked in Frank’s head. He looked around the beach filled with people. They looked friendly enough, but any of them could turn on them and spit faggot at them, “Right.”

The two walked in silence towards the sea, the atmosphere tense. Frank couldn’t help but think how stupid it was that he was too nervous to hold his boyfriend’s hand because of what people might think.

Near the shoreline he put down a picnic blanket and he and Leo settled down. Kat started crying then, her beautiful, mis-matched eyes filling with big shiny tears that spilled down her flushed cheeks.

“Shhh,” Leo said soothingly, taking out the girl’s bottle. He settled her down into a comfortable position in his arms, “No llorés bebé. Shhh, hay que ir,” he smiled gently as Kat reached up to grip at the bottle and drink, “eso es una buena chica.”

Watching him, Frank thought his heart was going to burst. Leo looked so happy, so peaceful with the child in his arms, a stray curl falling into his eyes. Frank wanted to kiss him, to hold him, or just to touch him, but there were too many people, too many eyes…
“Come on,” Leo grinned when Kat was done eating, “It’s too hot out here.”

***

Leo was out in the sea, swimming on his back leisurely, while Frank remained in the shallows and held Kat in his arms, letting her splash around happily. The baby was gurgling, her little hands thumping against the water.

Frank had never been a baby person, he thought they were too loud and too messy and too much work. But Kat was adorable, and he knew how much taking care of her made Leo happy. He wanted Leo to be happy.

They came out of the water and dried out on the blanket. Leo wrapped a towel around Kat so she looked like a little croissant, and Frank went to get them ice cream. When he got back, Kat was asleep in Leo’s arms, and the boy was looking at her fondly.

“Hey,” Frank handed Leo his ice-cream.

“Hey,” Leo smiled and shifted Kat in his arm. Seagulls circled overhead and beach-goers walked past, talking among themselves. It was like Elysium, perfect and quiet and calm.

“Leo?” Frank asked uncertainly, finishing his ice cream. Leo ‘hmm’ed?’ at him quietly. The son of Mars was tired of beating around the bush so he just outright said; “do you want a baby?”

Leo almost choked on his ice cream, “W-What?!” he wheezed. Frank shrugged, blushing, “I don’t know,” he mumbled, “you just seem so happy around kids.”

Leo finished his ice cream in silence, letting Frank beat himself up over his words, and finally he said, “Yeah. I’d like to have a child,” he let out a strained laugh that hurt Frank. It was such a sad laugh, “But obviously I can’t.”

Frank squeezed his knee, “We can always adopt.”

“Don’t,” Leo tensed, “It’s fine. I don’t need it, I’ve got you. There’s no point forcing you to want a baby.”

“No,” Frank said quickly, “I want to…I mean…anything that makes you happy makes me happy too. And I wouldn’t mind, you know, like raising a kid with you. I think it would be nice…”

Leo smiled gently, “You’re an idiot. But I love you.” He leaned over and, ignoring everybody around them, kissed Frank on the lips, long and deep, nestling Kat in-between them. When he broke away he was flushed, “Maybe someday.”

Someone squealed close to them and the boys looked up. A teenage girl stood close by, grinning like an idiot, blushing, “You guys are so cute!” she fangirled. Leo snorted.
It was dark. That’s all Leo knew; it was so, so dark. He stretched his hand out in front of him, but it disappeared into the shadows. His heart pounded and he tried to swallow but his mouth was too dry. It was hot, so hot that even Leo found it uncomfortable.

“Frank?” Leo called softly, fear rooting itself inside him. His words echoed back at him, but that was the only answer he got. A draft came from somewhere high up, but it was warm and just added to the stifling heat that enveloped Leo. The boy felt like there was somebody watching him from the darkness, studying him. It was unnerving.

He tried to step forward, but he couldn’t. He couldn’t feel his legs at all, as if they didn’t exist. He didn’t know if he was even standing, he felt detached from his body. Panic bubbled up inside the Latino,

“Frank!” he called desperately, “Jason? Piper! Anyone?...” he trailed off when his words echoed back at him. He felt like crying, he couldn’t see anything, couldn’t move. He was helpless and he had no idea how he got there.

“Wake up,” he whispered to himself, “Wake up…”

“Nice try.” The voice came so suddenly Leo flinched.

“Who are you?!?” he tried to look around but all he saw was darkness. His heart was pounding, “What do you want?” Leo knew how dangerous demi-god dreams could be, and he was terrified. 

A soft, grey light appeared in the darkness suddenly, like a spotlight. A shadow dashed somewhere in the back and Leo felt his hair stand on end. He shivered,

“Yeah, be scared,” a laugh echoed somewhere. Leo knew that voice, “you’re good at that.”

“Frank.” He whispered.

The boy stepped into the spotlight. He looked just like Frank, dressed in a black t-shirt and black trousers. But all the warmth and kindness was gone from his face, his eyes just two black holes in his face. He grinned grotesquely,

“Well, well, well, Leo Valdez in all his glory,” he taunted, “you’re really not much are you?”
“What is this?” Leo didn’t understand. His heart pounded, his palms were sweaty. He still couldn’t move, “Who are you?”

“I’m Frank,” the other boy said, spreading his arms out invitingly, “Or I am the real Frank. I am exactly what Frank thinks and feels, and not the lies he tells you.”

“W-What lies?” Leo knew, deep down, that it was just a dream. But it felt so real; the breeze on his face, the heat. And Frank looked like he was really there…

“The fact that he loves you,” the son of Mars smiled, “he lies about that.”

“Yeah,” Leo rolled his eyes, “Sure, nice try.”

“You don’t believe me?” Frank laughed, “Frank is only with you out of pity. He has a good heart, bless the kid, but he doesn’t really love you. He doesn’t know how to tell you that so he tolerates you.”

“Y-You’re lying,” Leo mumbled, but doubt rooted itself in his heart and suddenly he remember all the insecurities he had earlier on in their relationship. I’m a burden. I know that…but Frank said he loved me, he said…

“Aw, don’t cry little boy,” Frank cocked his head to the side as tears stung Leo’s eyes, “and don’t act so surprised. You know he doesn’t love you. And how could he? You’re weak, worthless…you’re no good in a fight, no good at anything really. You’re disgusting, everyone hates you. Your friends – do you really believe they love you? They don’t; they just pretend they do. Everyone hates you, nobody will ever love you.”

Each word felt like a stab in Leo’s chest. The second he let doubt into his mind, he couldn’t help but believe everything dream-Frank said. Leo’s dad abandoned him, his family thought he was the devil, he blamed himself for his mom’s death. All his life he was hated and pushed away. Even as part of the seven he was always the one man out. And every word from the dream-Frank hit home. He finally thought that he was loved and now…

“You’re worthless!” Frank spat, “You’re a disappointment! Nobody will ever love you.”

“Shut up!” Leo yelled, but he still couldn’t move. His eyes stung with tears, his heart hurt, “Shut up! Shut up! SHUT UP!”

“Leo!”

Leo jolted awake, heart pounding, eyes stinging with tears. He gasped for breath, seeing the familiar ceiling of their flat. Frank was leaning over him. The window was open and it was so cold.

“F-Frank,” Leo whispered, relieved, and threw himself at the boy. The second their bodies touched, Leo’s boyfriend pushed him away roughly. The Latino’s heart clenched. Frank looked furious, “F-Frank?” Leo was confused. He scrambled out of bed and Frank got up too. For the first time ever, Leo was scared of him. Their size difference didn’t really help either; Frank could probably pick him up and smash his head against the wall, and he looked like he’d actually do it. He advanced on Leo, “What are you doing?! What’s wrong?” the Latino backed up until his back hit the wall. He felt sick.

“You’re wrong!” Frank slammed his fists into the wall either side of Leo’s head. The Latino flinched, heart hammering, “I’m tired of this! Of having to put up with you, of pretending I love you when you disgust me!”
“What are you saying?” Leo whispered. Frank leaned in close and for a second Leo thought Frank would kiss him,

“I hate you.”

Leo woke up with a gasp, sitting up in bed, heart pounding. Rain *pit pattered* on the window, the world was still, and Frank was waking up at Leo’s sudden movement. Leo stared at the dark room and dream-Frank’s words echoed in his head. *I hate you, I hate you, I hate you*… A sudden, helpless sob was ripped from Leo’s chest as tears dripped down his face. He couldn’t stop them as all the emotions suddenly washed over him. Doubt, fear, anxiety…

“Leo!” Frank sounded panicked, “Leo what happened?!” he reached out but Leo flinched away. He stared at Frank as he continued to cry softly, but the boy’s eyes were normal – warm, worried, kind, confused, “Did you have a nightmare?”

“Y-you said y-you hated m-me…,” Leo whispered shakily. His heart hurt so much it was hard to breathe. He waited for Frank to agree, to say that he was worthless and disgusting. Instead, the Asian’s expression softened. He gently nudged a scared Leo down onto the blankets and climbed on top of him,

“I could never hate you,” Frank whispered, and kissed his forehead. Leo shivered and the pain in his heart eased slightly, “You’re quite literally the best thing that ever happened to me.”

“I’m sorry,” Leo whispered when Frank kissed the tip of his nose, “It was just a stupid dream.”

“No,” Frank kissed along Leo’s jaw, “you believed it. You believed that I could not love you,” Frank kissed down his neck, feather-light, “I know we used to dislike each other, and that I said bad things,” his thumb stroked Leo’s cheekbone, soothing him, “but… I can’t imagine ever being without you. I love you so much,” he pressed a kiss to Leo’s heart, through his shirt, “So, so much.”

Leo smiled. The fear he felt in the dream disappeared. He tugged Frank back up so they could kiss slowly, gently,

“I love you,” he whispered. Frank pecked his cheek and grinned,

“Cool, I’m going back to sleep now, firebug,” he rolled off of his boyfriend and buried himself under the blankets with a yawn. Leo smiled and laid down comfortably, but then Frank roughly pulled him closer so he could cuddle into his boyfriend. Leo rolled his eyes and then he closed them. He fell asleep, he had no more nightmares.
Those Christmas Lights

Day 29 – Ugly Sweaters

'My idea of a perfect Christmas is to spend it with you.'

15 years later

Frank was looking at the Christmas tree, twinkling at him happily. The decorations on it were half bought, baubles and tinsel and fairy-lights, and half made with little brownies and paper angels. The man smiled at the tree fondly. It emitted warmth and the fact that it stood in his living room, in his house made it even better. He bought it with his own hard earned money, and it felt good to know he had a place where he could celebrate Christmas, his own little corner.

“Frank you twat!” Leo ruined his little bubble by bursting into the living room, flour on his face, a frying pan in one hand, “I told you to make space in the driveway not stare at the Christmas tree!”

“Sorry, sorry,” Frank grumbled, but he couldn’t be annoyed – not with Leo standing in the middle of their living room, glaring. He hadn’t changed much over the years; he was still pretty short, his hair was still curly, his eyes still like whiskey. But now he had a stubble on his chin and little laugh lines on his cheeks but it didn’t matter because to Frank he was still the most beautiful thing ever.

“Frank,” the Latino said in warning, raising the frying pan and breaking the Asian out of his thoughts. Sheepishly Frank slipped past him and out to the front of the house. The sun was setting and the little patch of sky that was visible through the thick clouds was pink. Snow had stopped falling for a while but the world was still blanketed in white. Houses, cars, everything looked like snowy hills.

Frank’s and Leo’s SUV was parked sideways on their driveway and with a sigh Frank got inside to re-park it and make more space. When he was done there were lines in the snow. Frank decided to spend a little bit more time outside. He was emotional like that, he liked to reminisce about things. He remembered when he and Leo first got the house, ten years back, after five years of being cramped up in their own apartment.

Frank leaned against the car and smiled. He had had such a wonderful life with Leo, and they still had so many more years in front of them. The two had been through so much, all the quests and fights and arguments, but the years just made Frank love Leo more.

The honk of a car brought Frank out of his thoughts and he saw a slick black Mercedes pull into their driveway, lights flashing merrily. The man straightened up and grinned as the car’s door burst open before the vehicle even fully stopped.
“UNCLE FRANK!”

The little dark haired girl and the slightly bigger blonde boy sprinted across the icy driveway, kicking up snow, to throw themselves against Frank, hugging him tightly. The big man laughed and picked both of them up easily as they squealed delighted.

“Hey guys,” he said. Annabeth and Percy spilled out of the car after their kids.

“Frank!” Percy yelled, almost as excited as the children. He barrelled into his friend and bear hugged him, “Oh man, you haven’t aged a day!”

“You saw me last week,” Frank muttered, voice muffled by Percy’s shoulder.

“I know,” Percy said as he moved away so Annabeth could hug Frank, “It’s good to see you two. And of course the kids as well.”

The children grinned up at him. Jake was nine, and he had Annabeth’s pale blonde hair but Percy’s blue eyes and cheeky grin. Tina was shyer, but she was practically all Percy, though Frank knew she had Annabeth’s temper.

Frank was smiling as he carried both the kids into the house as Annabeth and Frank pulled out boxes and presents from their car. The second they got inside, Leo was attacked by everyone’s hugs and kisses and Frank couldn’t keep the smile off of his face.

***

The house was full to the brim. Frank and Leo ran around, putting food on the table and making sure none of the kids were falling out of windows or shit like that. After Annabeth, Percy, Jake and Tina showed up, Piper and Jason followed suit with their thirteen year old daughter, Hailey. Then Nico and Will showed up with their two year old twins Ollie and Aaron, and finally Hazel and Reyna came, hand in hand.

Frank was used to peace and quiet but the atmosphere reminded him of camp, which was always nice. Chiron had to decline the invitation to the Christmas dinner as he had to look over camp, but there were too many people anyway. When Clarisse showed up with Mark, followed by a whole load of the Hephaestus kids, there was almost no space to sit.

Everyone was eating, laughing, bickering. The children ran around under the table, squealing and giggling. Annabeth and Clary were in a heated debate about the presidential candidates while Percy was telling Hailey one of his many quest stories. The girl watched him with big, excited eyes.

She was the only kid who was old enough to be at camp, and she spent the summer there. She hadn’t been on a quest yet, which Jason and Piper were very glad about, but Frank knew she really wanted to go.

“Frank,” Leo called over the noise, interrupting the conversation Frank was having with Jason about cars, “Come help me in the kitchen!”

Frank didn’t hesitate as he pushed his way past the guests to get into the kitchen. It was a mess in there; flour and food was strewn across all surfaces, the sink was almost overflowing. Leo was never much of a cleaner.

“Need help?” Frank asked. Piper and Leo were in charge of food, but currently Leo was alone in the kitchen. He had a smudge of flour on his face.
“No,” he said innocently and opened his arms, “I just wanted to see you.”

Frank pulled him into a hug and kissed him, “You just saw me.”

“I know,” Leo kissed his jaw, “but I needed a moment of peace.”

“Yeah,” Frank smiled, “I know…it’s nice though,” he brushed Leo’s curls from his face, “having so many people here.”

Leo smiled and pressed their foreheads together. Frank wrapped his arms around his husband. He was so happy he thought his heart might burst. He pushed Leo up against the counter and kissed him with a sudden passion, hands gripping his hips. Leo let out a little gasp against his lips, hands tangling in Frank’s hair.

The doorbell rang. Leo laughed and pulled away from the other man.

“We’ll finish this later,” he winked and sauntered to the door. Frank followed close behind him, pouting. Leo opened the door. A girl stood in the snow, snowflakes in her red hair. She had blue eyes, sparkling with happiness, and a bunch of boxes under her arm.

“Hi dad,” she grinned at Leo, “hey dad,” she threw over his shoulder and smiled at Frank. Leo pulled her into his arms and kissed her cheek,

“Allie,” he hugged her tightly, “It’s so good to see you.”

The girl’s eyes shone brightly as she opened her free arm to pull Frank into her and Leo’s hug. Frank laughed when her boxes tumbled to the floor and squeezed her tightly. He didn’t think he could have been any more happier, but of course, Allie always made everything better.

When Frank and Leo bought their house, they decided to adopt a child. Allie had been seven then and a delightful child, but she was seventeen now and conveniently she was also a child of Demeter, so she spent a lot of her time at Camp Half Blood. Neither Allie nor Leo nor Frank cared that they weren’t blood-related because in their eyes they were a real family.

“Come, everyone’s here,” Leo said excitedly. Allie grabbed their hands before they could move,

“Wait,” she picked up one of the boxes, “I want you to see your Christmas presents before I say hi to everyone else.”

Leo and Frank exchanged a look. Allie had a terrible habit of giving them inappropriate presents, but Frank still took the box from her tentatively. Better open it away from everyone, in case it was a dildo. Again. Frank and Leo ripped apart the paper and two jumpers fell out.

They were ugly.

One of them was a horrible burgundy colour and the other was mustard-yellow. Both of them were thick, scratchy cotton. Frank raised the jumped up so he could see the words etched into the material.

The burgundy one said ‘Return to Leo if lost.’ Frank glanced at the mustard one that Leo was holding and fought a smile. On his jumper it said ‘I am Leo.’

“So?” Allie was grinning, “Do you like them? I made them myself.”

“They’re fantastic,” Frank said, and kissed his daughters cheek. Allie smirked,

“Great. You should wear them right now.”
Leo and Frank exchanged another panicked look.
I'm Findin' It Hard to Believe, We're In Heaven

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Day 30 – Growing Old Together

'I know heaven is a beautiful place because they've got you.'

Life went on.

Frank and Leo loved each other, they worked, they laughed and cried. Allie grew up, she got married and they met their little grandchildren. Then Piper died. Frank and Leo went back to Japan, though they couldn’t do half the things they did the first time. Annabeth died. Then Frank got sick.

Leo sat at his bedside almost every day, watching as old age took hold of his love. Frank’s strength wilted, his skin became dappled with marks, wrinkles covered his face and hands. He could barely stay awake.

“Dad,” Allie said, one day in the corridor of the hospital. It stank of chemicals, the lights shining down on them harshly. Leo’s eyes hurt. Actually, nowadays everything hurt, including his heart, “You need to rest.”

“I can’t leave him,” Leo mumbled. His body was old and frail, not what it used to be like. He was exhausted, and Frank’s sickness drained the last of his energy. Allie kissed her father’s cheek and then slipped away down the corridor. Leo walked back into Frank’s hospital room.

Mars stood by his son’s bedside and Leo almost jumped.

The God, of course, hadn’t aged a day. Next to Frank, he looked horrible healthy and strong. Frank was asleep, blissfully unaware of his father’s visit,

“Valdez,” Mars said, without his usual snark, “or I should say Zhang now.”

“W-What are you doing here?” Leo asked shakily, hand clenching. His heart pounded.

“I came to see my son. He doesn’t have much longer left,” the God said, and looked at his child almost fondly. Leo had to sit down, because his legs threatened to give up on him. The words hit him, hard. Somehow he thought Frank would magically heal and everything would be back to normal…but even Demigods couldn’t turn back time, and now all Leo could feel was pain when he realized Frank would leave him.
“I-I…,” Leo swallowed nervously, looking down at his shaking hands, “is there nothing you can do?”

“I’m afraid not.”

That’s when the anger came, the anger and the bitterness and the pain intensified. Leo glared at the God,

“You’re a god,” he hissed, “do something! He’s your child! You must have some amazing power that can heal him! You must, you-”

Mars’ eyes turned cold, “You think I can stop death? I cannot.”

Tears prickled the back of Leo’s eyes and he wiped them away angrily. He took Frank’s frail hand in his own. He just wanted to be left alone with his love. He just wanted to memorise his face so he had something to hold on to in the cold, dark night.

“There is something I can do,” Mars said softly, “so you are not alone in this world.”

“Do it,” Leo said numbly.

***

Leo was standing on a cobbled street. On either side of him, beautiful houses and cottages rose to the pale blue sky, as the sun shone down on the gorgeous village. Close by, a fountain shimmered in the sunshine. People walked in-between the bakery and the butchers, some sat on the benches in the park.

Leo was in Elysium. He let out a shaky breath.

“Leo!” the shout came from behind him and when the Latino whirled around, he saw Piper and Annabeth running towards him. They weren’t like when they died; their wrinkles were gone, their grey hair as well. They were young and beautiful once again, and they barrelled into a startled Leo, hugging him tightly, fiercely.

“We knew you’d come,” Piper said. Annabeth laughed,

“We missed you so much!”

“Where’s everyone else?” Leo asked, pulling away, “where’s Percy and Jas-“

Piper’s and Annabeth’s faces fell. Of course, Percy and Jason were still alive. So was Hazel and Nico and Will, and all of their children.

“Oh.”

Then the girl’s brightened up, looking over Leo’s shoulder.

“Hey.”

Leo turned around, and there stood Frank. Frank like he was in Japan the first time; smiling and young and healthy and not dying. Leo’s heart clenched and for a second he couldn’t breathe as if it was that first time when Frank kissed him all over again. And then he burst out crying. By then Frank had him in his arms and was holding him close.

“Hey, shhh,” he murmured, kissing his husband all over his face, “it’s okay. We’re okay.”
Leo kissed him, hard and desperate, and when he pulled away he saw that Frank was right; they were okay. Leo smiled through his tears and pulled Annabeth and Piper and Frank into another hug, clinging onto them, his family. They just had to wait for the rest.

Everything was fine. Everything was perfect.

Chapter End Notes

Thankyou for reading!
Massive thanks to;
aaaaaaAAAAAAAA
Asophogus
Darkanny
Dark3Star
Defiantly not Leo
DelinquentLunatic
Haley
Hifreinds
ImADamPanda
Lady+Aoi+-chan
PartOfAWhole
QueenElizabeth2478
RedTears
RGSupremeWW4630
soches
SlytherinPercy
SolNiveAngelo (Mogadorian_Wolf)
SomethingAboutMcDonaldsHeSaid
terranami222
undying_young
Whadda_Goofoff
If you still don't have enough of Freo then go check out my new work "Inspiration" where I shower this pairing with more love.
~Fly on

Works inspired by this one: 30 Day Solangelo Writing Challenge by sunlightbender

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!