

Against the Kitchen Floor

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by Anonymous

Summary

Yes, he usually preferred the buffer of having Subz there with them. But he was at college and Zam was at his door and well-

Vitalasy invited him in of course, he'd never just leave him out in the hallway like that. Zam was tripping on his words, and his own feet for that matter, and Vitalasy had to physically steer him to the couch to sit down and make sure he didn't fall on something. Zam's words were coming out rapidfire even when his breath got caught in his throat.

Notes

ok for real read [a waltz of tragedies](#) first or this will be very confusing. [a strange appetite](#) too probably

title from Against the Kitchen Floor by Will Wood

(if you havent listened to the songs each of these fics are titled after you should, they are very good and each one thematically relevant to each fic)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

He's clumsy about it, he knows he is. Usually he was good at this sort of thing, the listening and the comforting, but Subz was always the better of the two when it came to Zam. It was always a little weird when it was just the two of them together. It wasn't that Vitalasy didn't like Zam, he cared about him more than he was ready to admit but it felt like every time he tried to help in a situation like this he made it worse. It was a little weird because Zam had a brother who burned down his family's home, killed his step dad, changed the trajectory of his life forever. It was weird because that had made Vitalasy and Subz stay in the town, had ended up together, built a life together, met and fallen for Zam together. It was weird because there was a twinge in Vi's gut every time he came over and he usually had to go on one of his late night excursions after Zam left. So yes, he usually preferred the buffer of having Subz there with them. But he was at college and Zam was at his door and well-

Vitalasy invited him in of course, he'd never just leave him out in the hallway like that. Zam was tripping on his words, and his own feet for that matter, and Vitalasy had to physically steer him to the couch to sit down and make sure he didn't fall on something. Zam's words were coming out rapidfire even when his breath got caught in his throat.

"It's Branzzy- " Vi certainly perked up that. Branzzy? The name sounded familiar but-

"Wait, the bartender with the weird cards?" Zam nodded. What the heck did *Branzy* have to do with how Zam was acting right now? Usually he only got in a state like this over his brother.

"He's, I can't find him anywhere, he knew Clown though-" Ah, there it was. "-and they were close- it's been months and I haven't heard..." Zam's eyes were wide as he looked through Vitalasy.

It was one of the bad weeks then. But that was ok, they'd get through it, they always did! It's just, usually there were three of them.

"OK, Zam, I know- yes there you go just breathe- I know there's a lot going on but I need you to slow down a bit and walk it back for me." Vi started by just trying to listen but Zam's words were spiraling in and around themselves so much that it really couldn't be helpful for either of them.

"I went to look for Branzzy again, I'd talked to him a while ago, back at the beginning, before I'd even met you," Zam said, eyes wide and staring at Vitalasy without seeing him. "He told me Clown was- he was the one that reported him missing." Zam swallowed twice. "He told me to stop looking." Vitalasy didn't voice his agreement with Branzzy. Zam's shoulders shook.

"Ok, ok back to breathing again." While Zam took a few shaky inhales to settle himself a bit, Vi threaded Zam's fingers between his own. He focused on his own breathing to give Zam a pattern to follow. *Ok he's breathing in time with you that's good, just gotta keep a steady rhythm yourself.* He didn't push Zam to talk again, just sat in silence while occasionally squeezing his hand. He hoped that was enough.

It didn't feel like it. Vitalasy thought back to all the times Subz had helped him through his own panicked states, all the nights after the fire that he calmed him to sleep, all the days he got him on his feet when Vi wanted nothing more than to sink into the floor. He was always brash about it afterwards, but he cared.

Zam squeezing his hand brought him back to the present and to the person in front of him now. Vi cleared his throat.

"So um, do you want to talk about it? Or maybe a distraction instead? I can put on the TV or-" Vi was cut off by Zam grabbing his face and pulling him into a kiss. He was so caught off guard that he was frozen in place until Zam pulled away for air. Vitalasy blinked.

"Zam, are you sure? I don't know if-"

"Please. Please I just don't want to think about anything," he replied, eyes screwed shut, forehead pressed against Vitalasy's. Vi pulled back to get a better look at Zam who opened his eyes as he felt him move away. Vitalasy saw fear and panic and rejection in Zam's eyes and he thought his own heart might break in two if he didn't try to help. He swallowed the lump in his throat, pushed down any hesitation he felt, ignored the stirring in his stomach, and nodded.

"Okay. Okay yeah, whatever you need." Zam looked so grateful when Vi reached out to cup his face and leaned in to kiss him again.

Vitalasy's hands moved on autopilot as he pulled shampoo through to the tips of Zam's hair. He started at the scalp on each part he'd sectioned off, working his fingers between the strands, something he'd done a hundred times before. It's just that usually it was Subz standing with his back in the water stream, arms hooked loosely around his waist, forehead pressed to his shoulder. Now there was a cheek pressed to the space below his collar bone. Sometimes Vitalasy forgot just how short Zam was.

Zam and Subz might be decently different in height but neither of them were the best at caring for themselves when stressed. Vitalasy had perfected the art of getting tangles out quickly and painlessly so it wasn't long before Zam's hair was thoroughly cleaned. He ran his nails over Zam's scalp a few more times, noting just how much his roots were growing in. The blond was Zam's signature look, plus it helped Vi find him when he got lost in stores, but he had to admit that the deep brown of his natural hair was just as lovely. It suited him somehow. Everso gently he tilted his neck back. Vi was careful to not let any soap get into Zam's eyes and brushed away the few bubbles still clinging to the sides of his face. He watched Zam flinch as a stray water stream hit the side of his face and he mumbled an apology.

He brought Zam's head back to his chest and wrapped his arms around his shoulders. He might not know what to say but he has this, he can do this. He hoped it was enough. It was starting to feel like it might be for now. Zam pulled away slowly and blinked up at him.

"Hi," he said. His voice wasn't exactly happy, but it was a heck of a lot calmer than an hour ago. Vi will take that as a win.

"Hi there, Sunshine," he replied, keeping his tone soft but light. He hoped his nervousness didn't leak through. Zam blinked again and gave a small smile.

"Do you think we could go to bed?" he asked.

"Yeah of course, let me just," Vi leaned forward to turn the shower off, reaching over Zam's shoulder and holding him just a little bit tighter in the process. Water dripped onto his arms from the tips of Zam's hair.

The air had already started to cool down and Vi knew he'd start shivering soon even with Zam's extra body heat. Everso gently he removed the arms around his waist and grabbed two towels from the rack outside the curtain. He wrapped a towel around each of their shoulders and stepped out to dry off.

"I'm gonna grab some clothes and be right back." Vitalasy glanced over his shoulder before closing the door behind him. He leaned on the wall, closed his eyes and took a deep breath, before pushing off and heading to their room. He glanced at the mess that was the couch in the living room and walked a little quicker.

They had a few pairs of Zam's clothes in the bottom drawer of their dresser and Vi picked some out before stopping to reconsider. After a moment he grabbed a pair of Subz's clothes for Zam instead. Vi changed into his own clean clothes and headed back to where Zam was still drying off, movements a little slow but coordinated. Vi let himself just stare for a moment and take in the full sight of him. There were bags under his eyes and his gaze was still far off. It had been difficult to catch everything Zam was trying to say when he first showed up but the parts about Branzy and Clown had come through clear enough. It had been a minute since the last spiral but it seemed to be hitting him hard this time. His smile nearly reached his eyes as he took the clothes offered to him with a thank you. Vi tried to ignore the twinge in his fingers as he watched the red lines that criss-crossed along Zam's chest and back shift while he dressed.

Sufficiently clothed and dried off, Zam turned to face Vitalasy. His expression was still cloudy to Vi, but it seemed a little less troubled. He would count that as a win for now. Vi let himself be led out of the bathroom and into his and Subz's bedroom by Zam's light grip, settling down under the blankets while Zam turned on the AC. It was always too hot for Zam in their apartment which he constantly complained about, so he discarded the shirt he'd just put on and got into bed. He winced slightly as he rolled his shoulder and stretched out his left arm.

"Man, you did a number on me," he said with a laugh. Vitalasy couldn't stop the worried whimper that crawled up his throat as he shrunk in on himself slightly. Zam noticed his tensing and rolled his eyes before he pulled Vi down onto him. Vitalasy waited frozen for a

moment as Zam shifted the two of them around to a more comfortable position that left Vi's hand overtop Zam's heart and his head on his shoulder.

"Aw, come on, you know I'm just messing with you," he said, placing a kiss on top of Vitalasy's head. He buried his face into Zam's neck in response and felt the way his ribs moved in silent laughter. Somehow this had turned into Zam comforting him instead of the other way around and guilt filled up in his chest like smoke. Once again Vitalasy found himself at a loss at what to do to help this person that he cared so much about.

"Do you want me to get you something to eat?" he offered, grasping at some way to help him, to take care of him. Zam's eyes were steadily falling closed.

"Nah, I'm good..." His voice trailed off as he relaxed fully for the first time since he had entered the apartment.

Vitalasy waited until Zam was asleep to trace the outlines of marks still covering his upper body. The red lines were starting to fade across his shoulders and back, but Vi couldn't help but notice how much deeper the ones over Zam's chest were. He let his fingertips ghost over Zam's left side, feeling the raised skin and hating how his stomach twisted in hunger as he did so. He stared openly at Zam's chest where his breath was even and measured, before letting his eyes trail upwards to his neck. There was a slowly fading mark overtop the pulse point, shifting with every beat of his heart.

Vitalasy swallowed. Still staring, he reached for his phone and ordered food.

End Notes

poor vitalasy, he's just a hungry lil guy you know?

ooo fun fact: this was originally going to be titled That Unwanted Animal by The Amazing Devil! make of that what you will :>

edit: so um a fic was made based on this which is like the highest compliment I could ever receive go read it right meow!!!!

Works inspired by this one

[Aching Heart](#) by [ros_is_writing](#)

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