

Looking through you, not at you.

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Looking through you, not at you.

by [Thrills \(IWantToRemainASecret\)](#)

Summary

Branzy is not a fighter, not very brave, and not very smart.

You wouldn't think someone with those traits could be a good vigilante, but Branzy was never really good at following expectations either.

Introducing Branzy, the

Chapter Notes

Get ready for a LOT of exposition folks! Not sure how I feel bout this one, but I do hope you enjoy it, cos me brain be teeming with ideas.

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

Branzy was not a fighter, not even in the slightest, he could barely punch. Even if he did try to land a punch, he'd often do something stupid like put his thumb inside his fist instead of outside, which he learnt quickly is a very quick way to break your thumbs (ouch).

Branzy was in no regards courageous, he was a coward at heart, even confrontations at his bland job as a barista left him sweating and strategizing a quick escape. He could barely handle a Karen, let alone the super villains that ran rampant around his district.

Branzy was also not the smartest, he could think pretty fast but often his quick decisions would lead to disasters. He would overestimate how far he could jump, blurt the worst possible thing to say, and would likely easily give up information if he didn't value it himself.

None of these traits made him someone you'd think would end up being a vigilante.

Well, Branzy was never really good at following expectations either.

He ran down the winding alleyways with reckless abandonment, turning corners sharply and letting his agile body duck and leap where he could. He may not be a fighter, but he was fairly fit.

He skidded to a halt as he turned the corner and came face to face with another lackey waiting for him, a wicked grin on his face, smug and cocky as many lackey shmucks are. Branzy darted away and ducked into a thinner corner, picking up his pace into a faster sprint. He may be a coward, but he was a coward who could run insanely fast away from confrontations he wished to avoid.

There was a chain link fence in front of him and around four lackies chasing him, he shut his eyes with a deep breath, and when he opened them, they were purple. This was the only way. He scrambled up the chain-link fence and leapt off it onto a fire escape, climbing the building and reaching the rooftops. He ran forward and squinted as he tried to figure out if he could make the jump to the other rooftop. *Oh well*, he shrugged to himself, blinking out his purple glow to his eyes, *Might as well try*, and he ran and tried.

He missed by a metre and fell quickly to the ground, wind whistling past his ears with a familiarity he hated to admit he knew, landing in a dumpster. Branzy... Is not the smartest, but sometimes you don't need brains in this business, you just needed heart.

And while Branzy would give up information he didn't value, he knew to value what his vigilante friends told him. Branzy checked his pocket, grinning when he felt the outline of the SD card containing some very valuable plans, still nestled in.

Branzy was not a fighter, was not brave, and was not the smartest.

But he was loyal. He was fast. He was agile. He had heart. And he would do anything to ensure that he could help the people of his district.

Well, he thought to himself, as he got comfortable in the dumpster, *Where are those shmucks anyway?*

His eyes shone purple yet again, as he activated his first skill he had discovered since practicing his powers. X-ray. The walls surrounding him faded away, leaving a clear vision through the building to where the lackies were, faint outlines of bricks barely obscuring their confused expressions as they stood outside the chain link fence. Branzly chuckled to himself.

He always got away, seeing through walls meant he could see where the best path to go was, he was a perfect escape router.

He groaned as his back whined in protest from the fall.

Okay, maybe he wasn't the *perfect* escape router, but he was pretty good.

He climbed out of the dumpster, feet barely touching the ground as he fumbled over the edge and landed on his feet, stretching his back and easing his nerves with a pleasant sigh.

He'd have time to meet the rest of his team if he went fast.

So he stretched his legs and took a deep breath, looking through the alleyway walls and running, cutting corners wherever he could.

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It didn't take long to find the rendezvous point, a crummy broken down apartment that had been slightly refurbished to make as a makeshift meetup location for fellow vigilantes. It had a few first aid kits, one working sink, and that's all you need when you're in a pickle. The only rule was to make sure you weren't followed.

And Branzly did, the best way he knew how. He exhaled slowly, and his eyes remained shut when he opened them.

His second ability, phase. He was able to leave his body for a small amount of time, while it stayed stagnant, and could phase through walls and all, able to hear and see anyone around.

He looked at his still body, all it did was breath, his eyelids glowing purple from how bright the shine of his eyes beneath them was. He wore a purple cloak and a black mask over his mouth, hoping to disguise any possible way to track him. His ensemble was a little plain, he wore a harness around his torso with handles extending over his chest; purely because it was easier to attach bags, impromptu emergency weapons, documents, etc to it. And as a shirt he wore a dark purple turtleneck to go with the cloak. He wore black, easy to move around in and comfortable, trackpants.

It was... underwhelming, in terms of vigilante get-ups, I mean some of his friends had full on suits! But he did not have the time nor money to invest in something that eye-catching, especially since he didn't really want attention. (Okay, so maybe the purple was already a bit too eye-catching, but if your powers make your eyes glow purple are you really *not* gonna capitalise on that?)

He saluted his body and floated around, seeing no one behind him he snuck a peek inside the building, getting a grasp of who was inside.

He grinned, easily floating up to them and listening to them converse.

“He’s late again.” Groaned MadTiger, picking at the fabric of his costume.

“Barely, he probably just got hung up a bit, you know how many villains are after that guy?” Jaron added, throwing an old ball into the air and catching it repeatedly.

“He’s more than likely listening now.” Rek chuckled, leaning against the pillar, “You know he likes to check what’s happening before showing up.” He cupped his mouth, “Hey Lavender Lad! Get your butt up here!”

Oh yeah. The name.

Branzy did not choose a vigilante name, he just sort of, started doing his thing.

What WAS his thing you ask?

Simple. He got in contact with vigilantes, and was given by Cube, a vigilante who enjoys suppling tech to help out other vigilantes, a ping button.

Branzy phased through the walls until he located drug rings, crimes, robberies, and with his knowledge of where these crimes were taking place by literally seeing through the walls... He would climb on top of the building or near it, and click his ping button, alerting other vigilantes to the crimes.

Then he would run away.



It was not a glamorous life, but it was an incredibly useful one. He had eyes everywhere, and villains quickly caught on to the fact that wherever he went, their crimes would be busted by vigilantes following.

They did not know his powers, but knew he was a threat. And a few of them started calling him ‘Violent Violet’ Until they realised he literally never fought and always ran, then they smartly changed it to ‘Vibrant Violet’.

But his vigilante friends never called him that, and that made him sure of who he could trust. They all called him Lavender Lad.

And he did not mind such a soft sounding name.

He returned to his body and climbed up the rusted fire escape, entering through a tattered curtain over their window entrance.

“Guess who’s back!” He called, and the three inside turned to face him, fond smiles on their tired faces.

“Hey Lavender, you got the SD card?” Jaron asked, extending a hand.

Branzy rifled through his pockets and chucked it over, Jaron caught it with ease and plugged it into an old laptop. The four gathered round.

Jaron smirked, “Yes.” He whispered, and Branzy grinned.

The SD card was something Branzy had seen when he was phased, he had spotted some high level heroes conducting a deal, an illegal one, as always, (the heroes were pretty corrupt, nearly worse than villains) and he pinged vigilantes. He watched as a lookout informed the 'heroes' of the approaching threat.

“Shit.” One had said, clutching the SD card tightly.

“Hide it. I’ll come back for it later.” The other responded, and he glanced around, looking for a camera or something that had gotten them caught.

“Got it.”

And Branzy had watched him pull at a brick in the wall, before slipping the card inside, and the brick over it.

He had grinned, knowing he would retrieve that information with ease.

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“Branzy this is a goldmine.” Tiger said, watching Jaron click through the images.

It was scans of documents, really bad documents that showed payment of illegal weapons and power enhancers and signed in the bottom was a heroes signature.

“Why would they scan this?” Branzy mumbled, looking at his fellow vigilantes in confusion.

“It’s a transaction, this must be proof of the deal being done. Doesn’t make any sense though, why not just hand over physical documents you can burn?”

“Maybe because SD cards are more compact? Easier to hand over your signature in your palm then carry around a binder.” Jaron pitched in.

“I guess that makes sense, it is unusual though...”

“Look.” Rek cut in, pointing to the bottom of one of the documents. “This one states a location, or a general area, in the northwest of our district.”

“What for?” Branzy huffed, squinting.

“Maybe they’ll go there for another deal?” Tiger suggested.

“This is all really suspicious, such vital information, and a hero’s signature, right there! Who do we even bring this to in order to bring them down?” Jaron grumbled.

“The public. Heroes are corrupt as is, but if we get the general public involved, there will be uproar.” Rek proposed. “We can publish these anonymously online when internet traffic is at it’s peak... But they may not believe us without video evidence of one of these deals.”

Branzy perked up, “How about me?”

They three looked at him curiously, begging for elaboration.

“Well, I can scout out the northwest region with my phase ability, then I’ll just ping you guys when I find something, and you can record it. Cubes good with tech, right? We can have him hack any security cameras or bring in drones or something.”

“That... Actually, isn't a bad idea.” Tiger said, rubbing his chin as he thought.

“I'll let the rest of the vigilantes know, this could be a big break if we actually catch something AND have documents to back it up!” Jaron grinned, pulling out his communicator.

“Remember Branzy, one ping for something small, two for something big, and three or more if you're in serious danger.” Rek reminded, and Branzy held the cylindrical button stick in his hand tightly.

“No problem, Rek, I'll be on the hunt later tonight.” Branzy said with a grin.

-

By 'later tonight' Branzy of course meant, early, early in the morning. When the sun had not yet kissed the horizon but soon would, but for now the shadows rejoiced and Branzy blended within them, letting his dark purple attire merge in with the cool tones of his surroundings as he traversed the city.

He didn't exactly like being out this late, he liked to get at least a couple hours in before the sun rose, and he started his morning shift at the café he worked for. But when something this important came up, Branzy was willing to sacrifice anything. A few extra hours of sleep he could do without.

That being said...

Branzy yawned beneath his mask, shuffling around an alleyway and activating his X-ray, peeking through the surrounding walls and trying to find where the criminals deal would be held. It had been two hours already, with nothing obvious appearing to him.

“God dangit...” He mumbled, frustrated with his lack of results. He rubbed his palms into his eyes and sighed, sneaking further into the maze of pathways. His friends expected results by tonight, he couldn't let them down when this was really the only way, he could help them take down the heroes.

And the heroes... Branzy shuddered at the thought.

Heroes hated vigilantes, not for the reason you'd think, while publicly they said they wanted vigilantes gone because they “disturbed the peace” and “never stated if they were for the people or for themselves” the true reason was obvious to those in the vigilante community.

Heroes were paid by the hour but were paid a LOT extra for arrests. Vigilantes took away from their arrests, cleaning up the city meant they had no payment. Well, besides vigilantes, which now they targeted just for that sweet, sweet bonus. They were brutal, no care behind their actions, no want for rehabilitation, the more people in the streets the more criminals they could arrest. More often than not they encouraged crime, working with popular drug rings just to backstab them when there were plenty of people involved, and plenty to arrest.

As corrupt as they could be those heroes were.

Branzy's eyes lit up, his purple shine flickering as he spotted some movement in a desolate warehouse.

“It's always warehouses, God, can you get more cliché?” He muttered with a smirk, climbing up a nearby building to look through the building from above.

He leant on a knee and scanned the inside, looked like plenty of boxes, a few bodyguards over

some entry doors, a small crowd of crooks surrounding someone who was facing away from him. He squinted, before shrugging off the failed attempt at a closer look and instead settling on using his power.

He lay down so he wouldn't be seen by any onlookers and phased.

Breathing in the cold night air that he couldn't feel in his intangible form, he flew down into the warehouse and decided to look at the big bad that everyone was surrounding. The instant he saw the masked man he scrambled backwards, hands grasping for purchase that was impossible to achieve as he phased through his surroundings.

It was ClownPierce. One of the most infamous villains out there. While vigilantes often strived to do no harm, or at the very least, less harm than good, villains were wildcards. And ClownPierce was someone who didn't care how many lives it took if it meant he got his way.

Branzy pulled at his hair, (his cloak did not come with him when he went intangible) looking around in hopes of finding out what he was doing here, and if he was involved in the SD card info they had gathered.

"They won't show." One of his teammates said, and Branzy paused his searching to eavesdrop.

"He will, he always does. Besides, if no one shows it just proves we aren't really on the same page, then it's their loss." Clown said, leaning against a crate with his arms crossed. The eyes under his mask shone unnaturally in the warehouses dim lighting.

"What if the wrong one shows up?" Someone asked in a hushed tone, eyes glancing around as if searching.

Clown scoffed, "If we see her, we know we got him."

Branzy could not decipher whatever they were talking about, but a few were opening and passing boxes, so perhaps a deal was going on? But they were waiting for someone, maybe then they'd actually put the deal into action. He shook his head of their distraction and looked around once more before he blanched.

Through a room behind a hard metal door was a girl, tied to a chair, struggling, looking around with worry in her eyes and a cloth over her mouth. He flew over in a panic, staring at her and looking for any signs of injury, but she seemed alright, very alert, and alarmed, but alright.

He knew his vigilante friends would take a good while to traverse to this part of town, and he did not want her to experience anymore stress. His eyes narrowed in determination as he saw a door leading into the warehouse, unguarded, and conveniently there were a large stack of crates that would obscure his view from Clown and his goons. It was also closest to the room containing the girl. Perfect.

He opened his real eyes, returning to his body and getting up, allowing the feeling of gravity and physical sensations return to him. He got up and glared down at the warehouse.

"Don't worry." He whispered, "I'll save you."

He climbed down the building, approaching the unguarded door, listening against it and looking through to see if there were any immediate threats.

Clown had his back turned, good, most of his crew were now moving some boxes around on the opposite side. Branzy mustered all of his courage, and opened the door, wincing when there was a

slight creak. Clown glanced, and Branzy looked at him through the boxes. His gaze was unwavering, then it was gone, returning to look straight ahead.

Branzy didn't dare breathe as he crept slowly across the concrete floor, dust blowing into the air with every slight shift. He reached for the metal door, and tugged, expecting resistance, and receiving none, it opened with only the weight of the door holding him back.

He pushed it forward, slightly confused on why the one door containing their hostage was unguarded and unlocked but forced it out of his mind as he came face to face with the girl.

Her eyes widened and she physically slumped in relief.

"Don't worry." Branzy whispered, crouching down, and pulling down the cloth preventing her from speaking. "I'm gonna get you out of here."

"Thank you." She whispered, smiling shakily.

He nodded and went around her to her tied wrists, pulling out a small pocketknife and slicing through it. She pulled her hands to her lap and rubbed at the irritated wrists, he cut at her ankles, fully releasing her.

"The first door you see when you leave this room is unguarded," He let his eyes glow and checked again, safe. "You need to hide behind the boxes and leave that way, quietly, I can tell you when it's safest to leave."

He looked at the wall, knowing he must look insane to her.

"How?" She asked, approaching the metal door and peeking out.

"I can see through walls." He said simply, she smiled, eyes lighting up joyfully.

"I see..." She said with something else Branzy couldn't place coating her words.

Branzy waited till majority of the criminals were facing away and as far away from their side of the room. "Go, now." He said as he pushed her slightly, "Get as far away as you can, I'll try and find you after."

He watched her slip outside of the room, creep along the floor before finally getting outside and running.

He smiled to himself in relief. He did it. He saved someone! Now he just needed to plan his exit and tell the other vigilantes what is going on.

He pulled out his communicator, no need for a ping yet when he didn't have all the info, can't have them show up unstealthily if this is something they can do sneakily.

LavendarLad: Found warehouse with activity, ClownPierce and goons inside, girl was locked up, got her out. Clown appears to be waiting for someone. A deal maybe?

Rekrap: Ping your location LL, we'll be on our way.

Branzy nodded to himself, slipping his communicator back and pinging once. He then noticed a guard running around the side of the building and bursting through a door, yelling something he couldn't make out. He phased through, letting his body rest against a wall as he flew out.

“He’s here!” The guard said.

“Excellent!” Clown said, a smile in his words. “Lock the doors!”

Branzy felt his heart drop as all the doors slammed shut, automatically locking, his metallic one shutting the loudest. He gasped with horror as Clown turned toward the noise.

“Is he there?” He asked, giddily.

“Yep.” A voice called that Branzy realised with dread, he recognised.

The girl he had saved stepped into the warehouse from another door, it locked behind her as she exited the shadows, grinning viciously. “Fell for it, hook, line, and sinker.”

ClownPierce laughed villainously, “Fantastic job, Mid.”

Wait.

Branzy tugged at his hair, feeling his breathing pick up, as he put the puzzle pieces together with growing horror.

They were waiting for ME.

Chapter End Notes

Oh no our boy is in troubbblee >:D

Don't y'all hate it when you write out something in your head and then you go to write it and it's not how you envisioned it? Oh also not beta read lol.

Stupidly

Chapter Summary

Branzy needs to escape, Clown would prefer if that didn't happen, if he were honest.

Chapter Notes

Shorter! Most chapters will be now.

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

Branzy instantly phased back into his body as he noticed Clown start to approach the room he was in, his panicked breathing burst out of his now conscious body with a start. He backed up into the corner, eyes flickering around searching for anyway he could get out, a vent, a shaft, a hole, a grate, *anything*. He grabbed his ping button and *spammed* it.

Clown was at the door now, unlocking it.

Branzy grabbed the lone chair in the room and held it up like a weapon.

The door opened very slowly, Clown's eye being the only thing peeking through the crack, which would probably already be intimidating to the average person, but since Branzy could see the rest of his body he felt terror fill his veins; because in one hand he held a sword.

The eye crinkled, amused, and Branzy gulped.

"Hello, Vibrant Violet." He greeted, and Branzy pressed his back further against the wall.

Clown opened the door fully and stepped in, not even bothering to close it, he knew Branzy would not be trying to get past him when he stood directly in its way.

"That is your name, right? It's what I hear most call you."

Branzy wondered if he responded if anything would even come out. He swallowed again and forced a reply. "I didn't pick a name; I just go with what people call me."

"Well, what would you like me call you?" ClownPierce asked, leaning forward with an eagerness Branzy could not explain.

"Uh." Branzy said, "I don't mind." His hand shook as he held the chair up higher, Clown laughed at the effort. "I had hoped we'd never meet long enough for you to know my name." He admitted.

ClownPierce's laugh faded at that, but his eyes stayed as crescent moons. "Oh I've known about you for quite a while, you've been ruining our plans for a long time."

Branzy frowned at that, he had been trying to remain mostly stealthy. “I don’t think I have been.”

“Oh you have, I was confused at first, you know...” He stepped forward, hand extending upward, “I wondered, how do these vigilantes always know where we are? Many villains were thinking the same.” He grabbed the chair leg and threw it against the wall, it splintered into small pieces, Branzy heard himself wheezing. “But I figured it out! Whenever vigilantes were called, you were there before them, rarely in buildings, just nearby. I figured you had some kind of X-ray vision.”

He spread his arms wide, delight and bloodlust in his eyes, “And I was right!”

“What? No, haha, I just uh...”

“Mid said you said you could see through walls.”

Branzy winced, he let his eyes glow brighter as he looked up, and around, searching for his vigilante friend’s appearance. *Come on, where were they?*

“Are you doing it now? Is that why they’re glowing?” Clown asked, stepping closer to the point Branzy flailed, scrambling to the other corner. “Aw, don’t worry! I won’t hurt you!” He crushed what remained of the chair under his boots. “If you have use to me, why would I?”

“I don’t have use to you!” Branzy reasoned, a nervous laugh making its way up his throat, he looked to the ceiling, and distantly saw bodies leap over rooftops, *thank God*. “My power is useless! Really! I-I can’t do anything really! Can’t even see that far through walls!”

“Even through one wall is incredibly useful, Violet.” Clown said, he dragged his sword against the floor, letting the grating sound scratch at Branzy’s ears.

“I can’t do it on demand!” Branzy lied, Rek was on the roof, so were Chief and Parrot, he could see Jaron approaching from the ground.

“Powers can be trained.”

“I don’t want to help you!” Branzy tried, Rek was opening a vent hatch, gesturing for the others to follow, he watched them crawl around.

“I’m not exactly giving you a choice here, but your word is noted.” Clown chuckled, “Come on, don’t you see we’re on the same side? We both saw what was in that SD card, we know the heroes are worst then villains, so why not work with one?”

Branzy snapped his gaze from the ceiling to Clown’s eyes, “You saw what was on that SD?”

“Well, more so I know what is on it, I saw the documents get signed and scanned, before burned physically.” He explained with a wave of his hand, “But that isn’t important, what is important is that we both want the same thing, for the heroes to go down.”

Branzy narrowed his eyes, one last show of bravery as he saw his friends drop down on the crooks outside, silencing their yells before Clown could even hear them. “You want to kill for the sake of killing, don’t pretend you kill for some higher purpose. You just want to show off your strength.”

“Not true.” He scoffed, rolling his eyes. “I kill because people stand in my way.” He pulled the sword up and ran a gloved finger along it. “And do you really want to stand in my way, Violet?”

Branzy let his expression harden, seeing his friends set up an explosion on the other side of the door.

“Yes.” He said firmly, hoping it came across really badass.

The wall exploded, sending both he and Clown stumbling, but Branzy recovered from the not so surprising explosion faster, pushing off the wall and clambering outside, his friends grabbing his shoulders and propelling him out with shouts of alarm and worry.

“Go, go Lavender! Go!” Rek hissed.

“Lavender Lad, BOOK it!” Chief shouted, spreading out a hand, darkness dripping from his fingertips, creating a fog that obscured everyone’s vision as they made their escape.

The vigilantes made it out in one piece, Branzy cast a glance through the black foggy mist, and watched the light catch Clown’s sword, illuminating his furious expression.

Hm.

Yeah, this is.

Hm.

This is really, really, BAD.

“Lavender Lad?” He distantly heard the killer Clown say, and Branzy decided he needed to lay low for a while.

“Never go somewhere dangerous without pinging us first ever again, Lavender.” Rek instructed, practically pulling him to force him to keep up with his speed.

“Yeah, that was pretty stupid right?” Branzy laughed, adrenaline waning.

His teammates laughed in response, running into the night that was finally turning day.

Chapter End Notes

I did not read over this it is 12am, better than 3am like other times tho lol.

Brave

Chapter Summary

A man has to earn money somehow! And Branzy likes doing it by keeping his vigilante life separate, ah, but you know me well enough by now, I'm not letting his life be easy.

Chapter Notes

I legit just finished writing this, so once again not read over, sorryyy I just had to get it out of my head!

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

Being a vigilante doesn't pay, like, at all. Zip zero. Nada. None. In the negatives. The only reason vigilantes did was out of the goodness out of their hearts, or sometimes for a bit of fame, but Branzy was a recon guy, he didn't want to be known in the slightest. Which made the fact that villains knew about him, and wanted him gone, very scary.

But that was being pushed to the back of his mind now because the other issue, that being no money, was in the forefront. Branzy worked at a small café in his district, it had a few regulars, decent pay, and his boss didn't make him feel like hiding in shame whenever he had to talk to him. All in all, pretty good job to land in his situation, he stayed up late all night, slept through the morning, and then worked afternoons. It worked for him, and he intended to keep his job and keep it separate from his life as a vigilante.

Branzy cleans a glass in the back of the café, mindlessly repeating the task and squinting to check for any spots, the dishwasher worked fine but it could only hold so many cups at once. He twirled the glass in his hand, watching the light reflect from the bulb in the room, the ambient chatter from the main café milling through the door to the counter, easing him with its normalcy.

He finished his glass cleaning and was reaching for a mug when the bell on the counter was rung, and he noted the sudden lack of noise from the café area. He looked up in confusion, frowning slightly at the odd change. He glanced to his boss who was the only other person working today, they were sitting at the desk, head in their hands as they glared at what Branzy could only assume was some finance bills or something.

“Branzy, could you get that?” He sighed, rubbing his forehead with a grunt.

Branzy, noting that his boss was not looking at him, decided to scope out the customer ahead, seeing if he had to mentally prep himself for a Karen. His eyes softly glowed as he glanced through the wall to see through it to the counter, and he blanched.

ClownPierce was leaning on the counter, looking around aimlessly, dinging the bell every now and then, a few customers were slowly trying to make a stealthy attempt to leave the store, the bell on the door ringing at each successful escape. Clown wasn't paying them any mind however, he was

just dinging the bell and waiting.

Branzy stumbled back, sucking a deep breath as his heart rammed against his ribs. He saw no other villains outside the walls of the store, it was just the villain alone. He pulled at his hair, squeezing his eyes shut and trying to figure out what was going on.

Shit, did he find me? How? Did I get a tracker put on me? Is he waiting for me? Does he know it's me? Is this just a coincidence? My voice changer in my mask hides my voice at the very least but could he recognise me from my tone and way of speaking? Is he going to kill me? Should I ping my teammates? No, that'd be so suspicious, I don't work in the day so then if he didn't know it's me he could totally figure it out!

Branzy eyed his boss as he panicked quietly, he couldn't just say no to going out the front, his boss couldn't see Clown was there, he had no reasonable excuse to not going out to see him, and he certainly couldn't let his boss go out there and possibly be murdered!

“Branzy? The customer, please.” His boss huffed, looking up at him and only now seeing his nervous demeanour, “What? What's wrong?”

“I uh, I got like, serious bad vibes, I don't think we should serve this customer.” Branzy fibbed.

His boss rolled his eyes, “Branzy, you don't have any abilities, and if they were to manifest now, I doubt 'bad vibes' counts as an ability. Vibes are just vibes, they're not even a real thing. Can you just deal with the customer? I'm in too deep into these papers to work register today.”

Branzy gulped, risking a flash of a glance through the wall, Clown was now lying on the counter, resting his head in his arms and continuing to ring the bell.

Branzy could feel his voice shake as he responded, feet walking toward the door separating the backroom and main café, “Yeah okay.” He yielded. He gripped the knock and tried to mask his fear, if he looked afraid before leaving the room, Clown could see that as him knowing he was there. Unless he lied and said they had a camera maybe...

Pushing past the door and his fears he smiled brightly and held back the full-body shudder that threatened to run through him as he locked eyes with ClownPierce.

Please be here just for coffee. He internally begged.

“Finally.” ClownPierce huffed, sitting up and waving to Branzy like this was all fine. “Hello.”

Branzy noted that there were now no customers in the café, all having escaped, he stared mournfully at a coffee cup that had been left behind, steam whirling off the still warm drink.

“Hello! What can I,” He took another shaky breath, “help you with today?” He smiled at the clown, who hummed in response and looked at the menu above. *You were waiting here for so long, why didn't you look at the menu before-*

“Do you do iced coffee?” Clown settled on, looking at Branzy calmly.

“Sure do!” Branzy grinned, *they did not.*

Honestly, Branzy was surprised that he actually wasn't going to rob them. Making an iced coffee was a much better alternative than saying no to the killer clown himself.

“Great! I'll have that, how much?”

Branzy blanked and was in awe that the man was pulling out a wallet and a credit card. “Uh... Seven dollars.” He made-up.

“Nice.” Clown said and offered his card.

Branzy put into the machine something else worth seven dollars, some awful, bottled energy drink, and let Clown pay before smiling.

“I’ll get right on that, to go or for here?”

“For here.”

Branzy felt his eye twitch, *great*. “Great! And what’s the name for it?”

ClownPierce looked around the empty café, “Do you really need that?” He chuckled lightly, gesturing to the lack of people.

Branzy tensed, “Hah! You’re right, sorry, autopilot.” He said quickly, “Uh, I’ll be back shortly, make yourself comfortable!”

Branzy hastily returned to the backroom and sighed loudly as he leant against the now shut door. Well, he had to make the iced coffee now, Clown would likely be very offended if he didn’t. He felt near robotic as he went over to the counter, grabbing a freshly cleaned glass and filling it with ice. He poured some room-temperature coffee into the glass and stared, deciding to quickly double check on his phone if this is how one makes an iced coffee. He nodded at the instructions, and continued, barely noticing the stare his boss was giving him.

He poured in some milk and a bit of cream to make it sweeter, and a sprinkle of sugar to the top. The recipe he had said to add a straw, and specified purple, does the straw have to be purple? He didn’t want to take any chances, it had to be perfect for the murderer in the other room. He found a purple straw and added it, smiling at his success.

“Branzy...” His boss begun, Branzy turned to face him, drink in hand, “What are you making?”

“Iced coffee.” Branzy said numbly.

“We don’t- Branzy that isn’t on our menu.”

Branzy looked to the door and back to his boss, “It’s for ClownPierce.”

His boss stood upright in shock, staring at the door in horror, and back at Branzy, mouth gaping. He slid over his desk and peaked out the door before immediately retreating. He looked at Branzy, and back to the drink, and back to Branzy again. He then ran a hand through his hair and gestured for him to go out the door, “I’ll never doubt your vibes again.”

“Thank you.” Branzy said and went out the door.

ClownPierce was sitting at a booth seat, one arm leaning against the back of the lounge, he was tapping his fingers to a rhythm Branzy couldn’t hear. He switched his attention from the window to Branzy as he placed the drink on his table with a shaking smile.

“Enjoy!”

“Thank you.” Clown said, the genuineness in his voice startling Branzy slightly, “People don’t usually serve me because I’m, well, you know.” He took the glass and pulled his mask up ever so

slightly, so his lips were revealed as they wrapped around the purple straw, “Awfully brave of you.” He mumbled as he began to drink.

Branzy mumbled a quiet, “Of course, no worries!” Before scampering back to the counter, deciding that staying out and waiting for him to leave would be better than risking glances to look through the wall.

ClownPierce scrolled on his phone, drinking his iced coffee, before getting up with confidence Branzy envied, he placed a 20-dollar tip in the tip jar and left with a smile before he covered it up again with his mask.

“Thanks!” Branzy called, before murmuring in a far more distasteful tone, “Please do not come back.”

Chapter End Notes

Don't worry lads, the next chap is DEF more on the vigilante side of things, here's a lil hint: The title of the next chap is Fighter.

I'll try to make it longer too, uni is coming up for me next week, so I've been trying to get all these fics out fast. That's why btw, you guys kept asking how I keep pushing them out and it's simply cos I wanted to get them out before I'm too busy to ever pure my passion for writing again.

Thanks for the continued support, this really is such a loving fandom <3

ALSO I DID NOT MAKE THE PURPLE STRAW UP. THIS WEBSITE SPECIFIES A PURPLE STRAW. <https://www.recipegirl.com/how-to-make-iced-coffee/>

Fighter

Chapter Summary

Up. Up. Up.
Things are looking up. up. up.

Chapter Notes

Want to ruin your experience reading this chap? Imagine Branzy's voice changer as the same one when he pretends to be Kevin. Just an autotune, imagine that screaming aaoOAAooOAo hahahahaha.
Wrote this one till 4am, why am I like this.

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

Laying low lasted approximately half a week before Branzy was back at it again, donning his vigilante ensemble and leaping out his window into the cool night air.

Branzy was on patrol, messaging his friends on his communicator as he took a short break in some empty alleyway. He was retelling his work story, being careful about avoiding details that could give away his identity. His friends had been floored by it; worried Clown had somehow figured out his identity. Though all evidence pointed to a coincidence.

His eyes drifted from his communicator to the alleyway, seeing through it he saw a shady figure wandering down another street. His hands were in his pockets, his walk casual, yet his shoulders were hiked up, and eyes shifted around with a narrowed gaze.

Either that man was up to something shady, or he was about to be the target of something shady.

Branzy pocketed his communicator and let his hand rest at his hip, where his button to ping sat comfortably. He moved with the shadows of the streets, allowing himself to vanish into the darkness as he crept around corners. He followed the strange man, noting that something was poking against his hood in two places. Maybe horns? Perhaps ears? Hybrids weren't all too uncommon.

Branzy continued shadowing the man and watched in slight confusion as he turned around a bend sharply and then entered a door. Branzy looked at him through the wall and saw him pulling out his phone, making a call.

Nice. Branzy thought with a smile, letting his body lean against the wall as he shut his eyes and phased out of it. He flew through the air toward the man and looked at him before jolting back, with the close proximity, he could now see one of his eyes was completely black, with the pupil being purple, the other was a pleasing shade of forest green. Branzy was right about the hybrid features, it was horns that were poking at his hoodie.

He knew who this person was, it was Subz, teammate and partner in “hero” work with Vitalasy.

“He’s definitely here. Was following me, I could tell.” He said into his phone.

Branzy was not gonna make the same mistake as last time, this time he would immediately assume Subz was referring to himself. He flew back into his body, stiflingly the large gasp of air that always seemed to happen when he phased back in. He had to move. If Vitalasy was after him, he was dead meat.

He whirled around and started running, softening his pounding footsteps as best he could as he glanced behind him through the walls to see if Subz was making any moves. He was still on the phone.

With a sigh Branzy continued to run, before he was intercepted as Vitalasy himself dropped down from the sky, landing on the muddy ground in front of Branzy.

Branzy stepped back, arm up and ready to defend himself, he took a shuddering breath at what he knew would be a terrible confrontation.

“Vibrant Violet!” He said with a smile, arms outstretched and feet in an almost ballerina pose, one in front of the other. He had a black cloak with purple lining and patterns throughout, his entire face was covered in the darkness. Shining purple eyes that Branzy could almost feel some kinship toward looked at him intently. If he stared hard enough, he could almost make out some soft orange hair peeking out under the cloak, near brown in how dark the overhanging fabric shaded him.

“Vitalasy.” Branzy returned, he shifted his stance into a defensive one, readying his body to take a blow, or at the very least not be knocked down.

“Oh good, we don’t need to do introductions!” Vitalasy said, he grinned brightly, and his eyes flickered to a regular human green for a moment before returning to their ominous purple.

“I don’t have time to talk.” Branzy said shortly, channelling confidence he didn’t have. His voice changer failed to pick up how his own voice shook, a small mercy he would happily take.

“I’ll keep it quick then.” Vitalasy said, waving away Branzy’s comment like it was nothing.

Branzy looked at the surrounding area, he could see no potential attackers hiding within or around the buildings nearby.

“Violet, I’ve been informed of your terrific work in... Let’s say finding crime. It’s a very useful thing to be able to do! Words got out about your abilities, and I am incredibly impressed!”

Branzy tried not to let his fear show in his eyes.

Did Clown tell everyone what he had learnt? He knew many people already were aware of his existence and pattern of being at crime before vigilantes came to thwart it. But his abilities? Would Clown tell a hero of all things? He hated them.

“Not saying anything, huh? Staying humble, I like it.” Vitalasy continued, "I like you Violet, I like how you don't fight, I like how you never cause problems, but I'd like you better if instead of alerting your friends to where all that crime is happening, you alert us, the heroes."

Branzy ground his teeth and glared at Vitalasy with all the rage he could muster. "Why? So you can decide whether or not it's worthy of your attention? Whether it'll pay the bills for the month? Face it Vitalasy, you heroes don't care about petty crime, you want it to fester and boil over so you get more income in the long run."

Vitalasy flinched slightly, before shaking his head gently.

"Now don't go putting words in my mouth, yes the system is... favouring that method, but we don't need to obey it. Why don't you start alerting me as well as your friends? And we can all deal with crime easily."

Branzy rolled his eyes, "You just want me to lead all the vigilantes to you. Fat chance." He scoffed.

Vitalasy pursed his lips and sighed, "You're being really difficult, Violet." Branzy noticed the subtle shift in his stance, how his knees bent slightly like he would lunge or bolt. "I liked you better when you weren't talking."

Branzy leapt to the side as Vitalasy lunged, arms outstretched and reaching, before coiling into fists as Branzy moved. He swiftly shifted his attack and swung at Branzy, punching him across the jaw. Branzy gasped and stumbled backward, trying to keep his footing steady. He rose his arms up, blocking his face as another hit came.

"Oh, that's right!" Vitalasy laughed, Branzy backed up as he cackled, "You're not a fighter, are you? Well then! Why don't you call for backup Violet? Hmm? Need some help from your little friends? Call them." He mocked.

Branzy's hand grazed the ping button at his hip, before turning to a fist, thumb out not within it. He swung at Vitalasy, knocking him in the shoulder enough to make him jostle, but barely move. He shoved at him before taking off in a sprint, fast footsteps following.

Branzy could tell what he wanted. And as he ran, he saw it, Subz in the distance, poised and ready to join when needed. Two top tier heroes against a bunch of vigilantes? They'd surely take a fair few out, and he didn't even know what either of their powers were, they were both very secretive about it. No. He couldn't call for help, not when he didn't have all the information, not when he would endanger his friends. He needed to escape this on his own or die trying.

He winced at the thought.

The sounds of shoes against wet, muddied pavement penetrated Branzy's ears, his own thumping heart being the only sound louder. He ran, skidding on the wet floor around every corner, breath hitching when he heard Vitalasy grow closer at incredible speeds.

He was going to lose. He was going to get caught. He was going to die.

But Branzy had an advantage, he could see through all around him, he knew where he was navigating, and the more increasingly confusing paths he took, the more Vitalasy would falter his steady speed. Turning sharply into side streets, parkouring onto dumpsters to leap over chain link fences, taking hidden shortcuts, Branzy could see all his obstacles and ways around them before Vitalasy.

He could do this. He just had to keep running until he lost him.

Branzy twisted his heel as he changed direction quickly, making Vitalasy skid past him before backtracking to keep up, as he did so Branzy ducked into a thin gap between two brick buildings, shuffling through it on his side before popping out the other end and scampering toward a fire escape.

Up. Up. Up. No one ever looks up. Up. Up.

He gripped the rusted fire escape bars with more force than necessary, pulling down the ladder and

clambering up. Up. Up. He kicked it down when he was done with it, alerting Vitalasy to his whereabouts, but blocking his access. He ran up the stairs, flakes of rust digging into the palms of his hands so sharply he prayed it didn't break his skin. He did not need tetanus on top of this already awful night.

He took in a greedy gulp of air when he reached the roof top, smiling slightly as he ran to the centre of the roof, leaning on his knees as he caught his breath. His legs already started to ache from the short break, adrenaline waning as the lactic acid built in his sore muscles.

“Tired already?”

Branzy didn't have to turn around to confirm his worst thoughts, the sound of Vitalasy's voice was close, closer than it should be when he had removed his way up. He took off running again, legs protesting but he pushed onward, grunting through the pain.

He could feel the soles of his shoes being steadily scratched away from the rough concrete of the building's roof, his grip lessening as he propelled himself forward. He looked through the building praying to see some way down, or alternatively, a way across.

The relief he felt when he saw the building directly across from him and within jumping distance was palpable.

It was a hefty leap, that was true, he'd never land on the other side. But he didn't need to land on it.

Branzy eyed the gutter surrounding the edge of it. He just needed to grab it.

Branzy could hear Vitalasy's gasp of surprise as he picked up speed, sprinting toward the edge, one foot hitting the very edge of the building, and pushing.

For a few fleeting seconds Branzy felt incredible. Wind whipping his face and waving his cowl. Hands outstretched as he dove for the gutter, air so fresh and cold it felt like inhaling ice.

Then his fingertips gripped the gutter, nearly slipping before he righted them, his body slammed harshly against the building, and he wheezed in pain. He hung there, dangling above certain death, before he finally tried to pull himself up.

The gutter creaked.

Branzy stilled, listening for another sound before he pulled himself up a bit more, arms tensing as he hauled his body weighty up. Up. Up.

The gutter groaned.

Branzy gave up the slow movements, he felt the gutter unhinge and start to shift, pulling away from the salvation that was his safe building. He scrambled up, shoving all his weight on the falling gutter, feeling it move down as he threw himself off of it in one final act of determination.

His fingers grasped the side of the building, and he dragged his heavy body over the edge. He breathed heavily at the near-death experience, lying with his back down against the uncomfortable gravel roof of this new building. He felt his chest rise and fall before he could even hear his breath mimicking the rhythm. His throat felt cold, clogged and raw from his continued quick breathing during the chase.

But wait, he couldn't forget Vitalasy. He sat up, staring across the gap at the man who watched

him from the other side. He found himself smiling, tilting his chin up in a challenge.

He didn't expect Vitalasy to repeat the display, he grinned, white teeth standing out against his shadowed face, he looked down on Branzzy.

Then he rose a foot over the edge of the building.

And stepped onto thin air.

Branzy nearly sobbed, exhausted body barely moving as he commanded it to get up, get up and run, get up and MOVE. *Anything!*

Vitalasy held his arms out like when he first met him and walked across the air as if he was stepping on ground. He laughed. "What? How do you think I found you? Dropped in front of you?" He smiled cruelly, stepping down onto invisible stairs as he stood in front of Branzzy's shaking body. "No one ever looks up."

Branzy kicked his legs feverishly as he pulled himself backward, palms pressing uncomfortably against the gravel ground, eyes wide and powers near flickering as he struggled to control his breathing.

"Would you stop running? It makes things very inconvenient for me." Vitalasy said, looking bored at Branzzy's attempts.

Branzy tried to pull himself up, legs shaky as he struggled, falling down a couple times before finally standing. He put up his arms, curling his fists.

"You're still trying?" Vitalasy laughed, he stood mere centimetres above the gravel floor, looking as if he were floating.

"Yes." Branzzy croaked weakly, he had to think, he had to act, he had to throw him off. Branzzy's eyes darted down to Vitalasy's feet. He dropped down low, and swung a kick against them, knocking him off his transparent platform and sending him crashing onto the rocky surface.

He gasped in pain at the painful landing, and Branzzy took that as the go ahead to get the hell out of there.

He sprinted despite his legs screaming in pain, rushing across the roof and checking if he had another escape point on offer-

The sound of a familiar click of a weapon being reloaded followed by his own feet skidding to a halt against gravel hit his ears. He turned slowly, staring as Vitalasy pushed himself up off the floor, gun in hand.

"You know, I don't know why people focus so much on defeating others with their powers." He laughed, "I mean, guns are like, right here!"

Branzy felt the pain before he even registered the sound of the gun firing, a sharper sound than he anticipated. He screamed in agony and stumbled back as pain thrummed within his shoulder.

“Wh-Wh-“ He murmured, and for a moment he phased out without realising it, watching his body begin to fall backwards as his transparent form felt none of the pain. He launched back into himself, stopping his collapse before he hit the ground and sucking in a breath through clenched teeth as he recognised the pain once again.

As he gazed at his sluggishly bleeding shoulder, he realised it was not a bullet that had pierced him, but an arrow, or a dart. It stung with unimaginable pain, and Branzy gasped as it sent rippling waves of agony through him.

“This could have all been avoided if you accepted my offer Violet, you help us heroes, and we help you.” The gun, now that Branzy could properly look at it, had a thinner barrel than a regular one.

“Y-You didn’t even offer anything in return for me helping you.” Branzy hissed.

“Our protection, to stop things like this happening.” He gestured to his bleeding shoulder and Branzy held back a shout and curse.

He gripped his bleeding shoulder tightly, bloodied hand itching to ping his vigilante teammates to save him. But how could that even help him now? They’d be shot as well, apprehended, arrested, or killed.

He could not let that happen.

But he couldn’t let Vitalasy be the one to kill him. No, he intended to die how he lived, making stupid choices... that somehow worked out in his favour. Though, likely he was going to die from this choice.

He’d rather die from falling off a building than die by the hands of a hero.

So Branzy stepped backwards, again, and again, and he watched Vitalasy reach for him in surprise as he stepped back again and fell.

Down. Down. Down.

He righted himself as he fell, bending his knees and shutting his eyes as the ground grew closer and closer. He landed on his feet, one of them made an awful sound akin to crunching and sludge mixed together, he shrieked. His body folded to the ground, resting against the wall, he wheezed weakly. Why did he land on his feet? He should have let his head hit first, that way he’d at the very least die quickly.

He looked through the building in front of him and couldn’t believe his eyes.

ClownPierce was around the corner, talking with someone who Branzy thought looked like Spoke, another known villain. The two were doing some deal, he was sure. But that wasn’t what mattered.

What mattered was that unlike his vigilante friends, who heroes were not very scared of, more so frustrated with. Heroes were *terrified* of villains. And ClownPierce *hated* heroes.

Sure, ClownPierce wanted him for reasons he didn’t want to consider, but he was the lesser of two evils right now, and Branzy would do anything to get this crazy, gun-wielding ‘hero’ off his back.

He started to crawl.

He crawled against the floor till he found something to lean his weight against, a pipe, he pulled

himself to his feet, holding one at an angle and leaning on his good foot. He hopped, painfully slow, toward where ClownPierce was.

“Violet? Still alive?” He heard from above, he ignored it, and continued to hop, now with more desperation.

“Violet? If you come with me, I’ll get you all healed up in our med bay, you just need to agree.”

Vitalasy was closer now, but so was Branzy, to Clown.

He hobbled over and took a deep breath as he screamed with all his might: “CLOWNPIERCE!”

ClownPierce jolted from behind the corner, and Branzy grinned as he watched him run from within the alleyway to the entrance, dashing out into view of Branzy.

“Vibrant Violet? No, Lavender Lad? Why are-“ He cut himself off, “You’re bleeding.”

“Please.” Branzy begged, voice thick as tears dripped from his eyes, the pain nearing unbearable. “Please, help me-“

He saw ClownPierce go rigid and look beyond Branzy.

“Vitalasy.” He greeted.

“...ClownPierce.” Vitalasy said after a moment of stunned silence, Branzy didn’t dare look behind him, he just swayed, pressing against the wall for support.

“Did you do this?” He gestured to Branzy.

“Vigilantes are illegal, Clown, as are you.”

“You shot him with an arrow. He’s bleeding. You’re meant to apprehend, not kill.”

“Do you really think you have any right to say who should be allowed to kill?” Vitalasy taunted coldly.

Clown stared at him emotionlessly, before bringing out a sword with a sigh. “I really wanted to have a peaceful night tonight.”

Vitalasy stepped back with a snarl.

“Spoke, can you handle him?” Clown said, tossing the sword within the alley, Spoke emerged clutching the easily caught weapon.

“Yep.” He agreed, a manic and evil smile on his face as he charged Vitalasy. Branzy titled his head and watched the hero go further and further away.

He slumped completely, sliding down the wall in relief, the pain rippled through him.

“Lavender.” Clown said, crouching next to him, “Let go of your shoulder, I need to see the arrow.”

“I don’t, I’m not sure...” Branzy slurred, barely registering the close proximity to the terrifying Clown.

“It’s alright, you were smart for not removing it Lavender, but I will need to pull it out before I give you a healing pot.”

“Healing?” He responded drowsily.

“Yes, I’ve got a buddy who makes all kinds of cool stuff, and that includes healing potions. I have one on me, but we don’t want it to heal while an arrow is still stuck in there, do we?”

Branzy glanced at his hand, the end of the strange arrow dart thing sticking out, he slowly unclenched his shoulder and gasped as the pain rippled through him again.

“Good job, great job even, you’re doing wonderful Lavender.” Clown encouraged, he rifled through some pockets on his outfit and pulled out a vial. “Okay, when I say go, drink this, okay?”

Clown passed the vial to Branzy and placed his hand around the arrow, Branzy looked at him with dread in his eyes.

“I’ll make it as quick as possible, promise.”

Branzy shakily held the vial, uncorking it and holding it to his lips, he nodded, waiting.

Clown tore the arrow from his shoulder and Branzy screamed.

“Go, drink.” Clown said as he freed the tip of the arrow, and Branzy struggled through tears and shaky sobs to swallow the liquid down.

It tasted coppery, or maybe that was just the blood from biting his own tongue.

“You did fantastic Lavender, it’s alright now, the healing is gonna work super-fast.”

And Branzy felt it, a strange sensation of muscles and skin knitting itself back together, tears being repaired and bones connecting. He hissed as he heard his foot make an awful noise. Clown noticed and held it straight, making him whine in pain.

“Have to have it heal properly.” He murmured, “Did you break it?”

“I don’t know.” Branzy admitted, and Clown hummed, he inspected the arrow, hissing lowly, “Weakness poison.” That at least explained the increased pain and sluggishness.

The two sat in silence, Branzy felt his brain slowly wake up again as the danger had finally passed. His shoulder ached, but nowhere near the pain he had felt before, his foot felt weaker and ankle sore, he may be limping the coming week, but better than whatever was wrong when he landed. The air smelt of blood, courtesy of his bloodied shoulder and now stained and ripped attire. But he could hear himself breathing. He was alive, and able to rest.

“You really called out to me and came over here after possibly breaking your foot and having an arrow stuck in your shoulder.” Clown murmured, and Branzy risked a chuckle.

“I’d take a villain over a hero any day.” He looked up at Clown, judging his reaction, “Besides, you said yourself, I’m no use to you hurt.”

Clown murmured in agreement, “You do owe me now, might as well come work for me.”

Branzy listened to the joking tone in slight confusion, he half expected cuffs to be on him already. “I’ll think about it.” He responded, a similar joking tone.

Clown chuckled at that, he joined Branzy slumping against the wall. “I have connections with my

team, you could be healed of any injury if you joined me.”

“Vitalasy offered the same thing.”

Clown grunted at that, “Vitalasy is not to be trusted.”

“And you are?”

He snorted in response, “Of course not. But at least we both have the same goals. We just go about different ways reaching them.” Clown glanced over Branzzy’s form. “I can’t believe you made it this far. I thought you couldn’t fight.”

“I didn’t.” Branzzy admitted, “I ran.”

“You ran. Ran with all that pain?”

Branzy shrugged, “I had to.”

Clown looked up to the night sky with a sigh, “You give new meaning to the term fighter.”

Branzy let his eyes shut for a moment, phasing out briefly to escape the pain. He checked how far his home was from where he was now, and if he could escape Clown safely to get back home. He phased back in and started to get up, limping slightly as he started to shuffle away.

“Welp! Thanks for the help, Clown! I’m gonna go somewhere else!”

“What? You can’t leave. You’re still injured, and besides you owe me.” Clown hissed, hand reaching out and grasping his wrist. “You didn’t think I’d just let you get away, did you? You’re coming back to my base.”

Branzy looked at his wrist, then into the mask of Clown. He was weak, he knew that, but he couldn’t let himself escape a hero only to get caught by a villain. Besides, he had work tomorrow.

“What if I promise to meet with you later?”

That made the man pause, “Meet with me?”

“I’ll meet with you, and help you, once. In exchange for this. Anything you want, within reason, no complaints.” Branzzy said, hoping that if Clown did take this deal, he wouldn’t make Branzzy an accomplice to murder.

Clown stared for a good while before he released Branzzy, “Alright, meet me two blocks from the bank where the garden park is in... Let’s say a week? You’ll likely heal by then.”

“Are we... Clown are we gonna be robbing a bank?” Branzzy asked with defeat in his tone.

Clown lifted his mask just so he could show off the fact that he was grinning. “Yep.”

Branzy exhaled into the cold night air, “As long as no one gets hurt. Fine.”

“Great! I’ll see you then Lavender. Rest up!” He spun on his heel and walked towards where Spoke had gone.

Branzy stared until he was out of his sight and limped his way home. His vigilante friends were going to be so mad at him for essentially making a deal with the devil.

-

There is nothing glamorous about being a vigilante.

Branzy returned to his decrepit apartment, the plaster on the walls crumbled and fell apart each day. The floorboards creaked and had dirt and grot between each wooden plank. The roof shook from people walking above, causing dust and peeled paint to flake off onto his head.

He changed out of his vigilante clothes, wincing in pain as he peeled the bloody part of his attire from his shoulder. It felt like peeling tape off that had been left on too long. He tossed the ensemble into the sink, watching the water turn a light red. He'd deal with it later.

He yawned as he showered in barely warm water, running his hands along his shoulder and legs to ease the still slightly apparent pain. When he was done, changed, and fairly, clean; he collapsed onto a mattress with a few blankets on top, the bedframe so old that running your hands along it gave you splinters.

It was horrible. But it was home.

He curled up and checked his phone alarm, he had work in five hours. He shut his eyes and hugged a pillow against himself, wrapping himself in blankets and sighing. He shut his eyes, and let sleep take him.

Chapter End Notes

Side note: I LOVE Vitalasy! It's raining dripstone hell yeah bruh. Butttt I needed an antagonist, and this man hates Clownzy (in character at least), so he'll do.

Double side note! I do not know how to write this stuff, but I sure do adore writing pain. Good thing this isn't the last of it I'll need to write for this fic! So I'll get my practice in haha!

Sorry for the lack of Branzy talking in character this chap, I wanted to keep it fairly serious so all the funny lil goofy things he'd usually say were cut.

Next chap has more good times dw! Lots of coffee time and clownzy!

Who

Chapter Summary

Branzy discovers the horrid feeling of being perceived.

Chapter Notes

Branzy has a new frequent regular.

Chapter updates from now on will be different, will go into detail at the end notes.

Hope you enjoy this one, I don't know how I feel about this one because it was written uh, differently than I usually do.

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

He was back again.

Branzy held his tongue as ClownPierce walked through the café's door, the jingle of the bell ringing out. He kept his head downcast on his phone, successfully ignoring the shrill shrieks of the current customers who ran out as he entered. The line Branzy had been slowly but surely getting through disappeared, all one-by-one dashing out when they reached Branzy, leaving just Clown.

The man looked up in confusion, glancing around at the lack of people before shrugging.

“Hey.” He greeted calmly, and Branzy gave him a tense smile.

“What can I get for you?”

“Iced Coffee please.” He said politely, paying and heading over to the same booth seat he had coined last time.

“Be done in a jiffy!” Branzy said with faux cheerfulness. He quickly went to the back, seeing his boss and other co-worker. “Cancel the orders. Everyone left.” He sighs.

“What?” His younger colleague said, frowning as they put down the coffee they just made, “Why?”

“ClownPierce came back.”

His boss tensed and sighed, “Make him whatever he wants.”

“On it.” Branzy confirmed, heading over to the coffee station and preparing the drink, his co-worker was quick to add some advice on how to make the iced coffee better, adding syrup instead of sugar.

“Add whipped cream on top if you wanna be extra fancy.” They recommended, glancing nervously

to the door, hands fidgeting. “And maybe some chocolate sauce or syrupy stuff if you’re crazy.”

I am crazy. Branzy thought reverently, preparing the drink for the villain, wondering what led his life to be like this.

“I don’t know why we don’t have them on the menu to be honest, not like they’re a hassle or anything-” His co-worker continued.

“We only serve hot drinks! That’s our whole gimmick! ‘The One Stop Hot Shop’! Why would he come to a hot only shop and order something COLD?! Next, he’ll be asking for a milkshake!” Their boss complained, cutting his co-worker off.

“I’m adding whipped cream.” Branzy called, the two continued to argue, likely only because it gave them something else to think about other than the villain they were housing. He added the whipped cream and stared at the drink, it looked nice at least, nicer than last time. He reached for the draw with the straws, staring at the options.

The purple straw stared back harshly, and Branzy winced, clenching his eyes shut as flashes of purple cloaks and harsh dark purple eyes obscured his vision. He cursed silently, subconsciously reaching to touch his shoulder.

He loved the colour purple, why'd he have to ruin it?

Branzy chose a red straw instead. Forcing the thought out of his head, and being sure to keep his limping subtle, Branzy left the room to the counter, shuffling over to Clown.

Clown was on a laptop this time, typing diligently. Branzy placed the glass as quietly as he could before him. Clown still looked up.

“Thanks,” He said, head tilting, “Branzy?”

Branzy paled, staring at the man with a look of fear he couldn’t mask, he pulled a small smile onto his face. “Who?”

“You, I’d hope, considering that’s the name on your nametag.” Clown shrugged, pulling up his mask and sipping at the drink.

Oh right. Haha. Branzy sucked in a breath and smiled, nervous laughter withheld. “Ah, yeah. Well enjoy your drink!” He started to walk away quickly, wincing as he put too much weight into his bad leg.

“Are you alright?”

He cast a glance over his shoulder, Clown had pushed the drink aside, staring at Branzy with his hands folded. “You’re limping.”

Branzy let himself grin widely, eyes wide as he quickly tried to come up with a lie. “All good! Just got into a spot of trouble on the way home, you know how it is, well, I mean you probably don’t, but still haha!” His words shook.

Clown stared at him more intently, “Someone hurt you?”

“Well, yeah, it’s pretty common on this part of town.” Branzy admitted, shuffling behind the counter so his limp was better concealed.

“Ah, alright, don’t worry, I’ll kill whoever did it that to you. Any description?” He typed rapidly at his computer, looking up at Branzy as he paused.

“What?! No! Don’t kill them! They’re probably just struggling like I am!” Branzy shouted, flailing his arms in an attempt to defuse the idea.

Though, it was likely the hero who hurt him hadn’t come home like Branzy had. While Branzy had to lick his wounds clean, Vitalasy probably returned to a med centre that treated him, a warm bed awaiting his presence. Branzy had fallen asleep due to exhaustion, not due to comfort. He wondered what that would be like. To be comfortable.

“You’re struggling?”

Branzy found himself laughing despite the threat before him, “Aren’t we all?” He chuckled.

ClownPierce continued to stare at him and nodded, “I’ll fix it. I’ll fix the system so no one has to struggle again.”

Huh. Maybe they really were fighting for the same goal, like he had said.

“I wish you luck.” Branzy hummed pleasantly, shuffling the business cards they had on the counter to keep his hands busy.

-

Branzy sat on a rooftop during patrol, and this time he wasn’t alone. Rek, Chief and Spepticle sat with him, sharing some food they had brought along. Branzy rarely brought food on patrols, but when they all planned to meet, he was sure to bring something worth sharing.

He brought a few jam sandwiches, and some chocolate covered nut bars. No one touched the jam sandwiches, so he ate his happily.

“And you’re alright? You sure?” Rek asked, incredibly nervous after finding out what Vitalasy had done.

“I’m fine, I owe ClownPierce, so that’s a bit daunting... But really! I’m okay, got all healed up, just a bit sore now.” He beamed reassuringly, moving his ankle around to prove it.

“Alright... if you’re sure. Though... I am worried that because Clown has seen you in civilian form and vigilante form that he’ll put the pieces together. I mean he knows your real name! Do you act differently at work at least?”

“I just act really polite, customer service smile, you know?” Branzy grinned.

“Lavender, you’re always pretty polite!” Spepticle said encouragingly, before pausing, “Maybe you should start being really mean as a vigilante. That’ll stop him from figuring you out!”

“I don’t wanna be mean! That’d be bad for my image, you know?”

“And doing some dirty job alongside Clown won’t be?” Chief scoffed, snagging a nut bar, and crunching down.

“I could turn into you and do it for you Lavender!” Spepticle suggested, shifting his form from a strange red figure to Branzy’s vigilante form.

“No! I told you to stop doing that Sped, it’s creepy!” Branzy cringed.

“Rek thinks it’s cool.” His once-red-friend huffed, crossing his arms and turning into Rek, “Hi Rekrap, I’m Rekrap.” He greeted Rek, who chuckled.

“Hi Rekrap, I’m Spepticle.”

“No you’re not!”

Branzy shifted his gaze from his friends to the city’s skyline, watching the distant lights of buildings flicker, it grew darker as most turned in for the night. The lights in buildings slowly went out. He sighed as he considered his predicament, he would be robbing a bank soon. With ClownPierce. He shuddered and bit into his sandwich with fury.

This wasn’t the best situation, but better than bleeding out. He just hoped Clown would let him leave after he helped him.

“Lavender! Rek is trying to lie to me again!”

Branzy grinned widely, “Atta boy Rek! Soon enough you’ll be a professional!” He encouraged, and Rek, who had gone on record saying he was not good at lying, shrunk into himself with a smile that reached his eyes.

“I may not be able to lie well, but I think my power outweighs a lie’s value.”

Chief grumbled an agreement, as did Spepticle.

“Oh Rek! Can you use your freaky abilities to see if what Clown invited me to is a trap?”

Rekrap’s ability was a strange one, it was sort of a lie detector, but to situations. He was able to enter an area and instinctively know if it was a trap, which made saving people much easier. If Branzy had waited for Rek before trying to save that girl Clown had, he would have been warned it was all a trap.

Rek winced sympathetically, “Sorry Branzy, I’d only get the feeling it’s a trap if Clown himself said it or I was in the area. Why don’t I go with you?” He suggested.

Branzy shook his head with a sigh, slumping, “No, I think he’d kill me or something if I tried to get help.”

“Well, ping us if anything goes south, alright?” Chief said, lightly punching his shoulder in support.

“As always.” He smiled, and the three glared at him, “Vitalasy was a one-time thing, I’ll do it next time I’m in trouble, promise!”

Rek sighed and looked away, “You’re no better at lying than I am.”

“Branzy?” Clown called, and Branzy looked up from his spot cleaning the counter to his one customer.

“Yes?” He asked, biting his lips to stop a too-formal ‘Mr ClownPierce Sir’ from slipping out.

“Since there are no other customers, would you mind coming over here?” The man asked with a sigh, rubbing the sides of his head in a slow massage. He was leaning over his laptop, on his second refill of iced coffee.

“Of course.” Branzy wondered over and smiled at him politely, “What can I help you with?”

ClownPierce gestured to the seat in front of him, “Sit down and just, talk, please. About anything, I need some white noise so I can focus. Usually, I come to cafes for that ambient chatter but...” He spread a hand toward the empty café. “So, just speak, please.” He asked. (As if he wasn’t the reason they had no other customers.)

“Oh, right, yeah sure.” Branzy stammered, sitting down awkwardly in the seat, he looked away from the Clown as he began to type. “I had the worst Karen I’ve ever met in ages the other day, honestly, I’m surprised she stayed as long as she did, but Karen’s are stubborn ya know?” Branzy began, he glanced to Clown who had started typing quickly.

Branzy felt himself smiling slightly, he at heart was a blabbermouth, but he was hardly given the chance to ramble. He was a stealth vigilante after all, talking did not help him achieve his goals. But boy, did he love to talk when he could.

“I’ve never met someone so entitled in this district; you’d think since we’re all living here together that we have this sort of mutual respect because life isn’t the best here. She had none of that, first she told me her coffee was too hot, I didn’t really know how to fix that for her, so I suggested waiting for it to cool down and she pulled a face.” Branzy mimicked it as he looked at his reflection in the mirror, he could see Clown’s reflection chuckle, but he continued typing.

Branzy leaned his head on his fist as he continued, “She went off on this huge rant about how we needed to make the coffee come out at the right temperature and that it was our job to make it perfect. I agree to some extent, we shouldn’t serve it scalding, but like, it was the same as we’ve always made it! By the time she finished her rant I suggested she try her coffee again, because it had definitely cooled down during her speech.

Man, she was soooo mad, was all,” Branzy pulled a snooty expression and pointed aggressively at his reflection, “You dare question me? The customer? Are you calling me a liar?” He mocked in a high pitch voice, “So I said, no of course not mam, but you know, things cool down over time, so the heat has most likely changed.” Branzy checked Clown for his reaction, he continued typing quickly, but as he pulled up his mask to take another sip of his iced coffee, Branzy could see him smiling.

“She blew up after that! Told me to stop talking down to her, asked to speak to the manager, I’ve never had someone actually say the words ‘Let me speak to your manager’ before! Worst thing was, she had her daughter with her, who was just shielding her face in shame and tugging on her mum’s sleeve like ‘just drop it let’s go’ and then her mum got madder!” Branzy threw his arms in the air with a muffled scream, “Said I was causing psychological stress in her daughter and she’d sue me! Me specifically! I got bills to pay I can’t afford that!”

Branzy slumped in his seat, huffing and rolling his eyes, “The boss took over after that, calmed her down before kicking her out. Good riddance!”

Clown was engrossed in his typing, and Branzzy hadn't had the chance to vent and tell stories in so, so long. It was honestly the greatest thing he had been asked to do, just, talk, about anything and everything. Talk! And once he had gotten started, it was very hard to stop.

"So, I started breeding axolotls, safely mind you, I had a fitting enclosure and cared for them all! Made sure they were never sold to poor caretakers; I was a great owner!" Branzzy was saying, for a good while he had stared at Clown's scary mask as he retold, but now he was back to facing the window. "Then one day, the greatest thing happened!" Branzzy said, looking back to Clown as he waved his arms around to really sell the glorious story he was about to tell.

"I had done it, I had bred a BLUE axolotl, the rarest breed ever! She was beautiful, stunning, and I loved her. I planned to give up the entire hobby just so I could devote all my time to her. I was gonna invest in a larger aquarium, show off pictures of her at school, which I did for a couple days before disaster struck."

He frowned as he stared out the window gloomily. "We were moving again, and I couldn't afford to disassemble and transport all my axolotls, and it was likely we'd just keep moving. I couldn't put any of my dear aquatic friends through that, upheaving their home time and time again so they never can get comfortable... That's awful.

I had to sell her, and all the rest. I made sure she had the best owner, turning down multiple higher buyers till I found the person who I knew loved her as much as I did." Branzzy chuckled lightly, "He even sent me video updates on her for a good few months, letting me see how she was. Ah, I'm glad he got her. I don't have time for pets now, never at home long enough."

Branzy leaned back smiling, "Maybe one day." He looked at Clown and paused in shock.

The laptop was down, and he realised belatedly, it had been for a while. He wasn't sure when, but sometime during his rambling Clown had closed it. Now he rested his head on intertwined fingers and was staring at Branzzy, giving him his full attention.

"Do you not have time for maybe a fish or something? Surely this job doesn't keep you that busy." Clown asked politely.

"Uh, well, no, but I work multiple jobs." Branzzy said, which was technically not a full lie, he just wasn't paid for one. "Have you ever had a pet?"

Clown drummed his fingers on the desk, leaning back and looking at the ceiling as he thought.

"No, but I always wanted a dog. A guard dog more specifically," He leaned forward toward Branzzy again, "I wasn't the strongest when I was younger, and really wanted to find a way to stay safe and defend myself. I thought a guard dog would be a huge help, alas..." He sighed, sipping his drink, "Could never get one."

"How about now though? Could you get one now?"

"A villain with a pet? AKA putting the biggest target on a poor dogs' head to get to me? Not a chance."

"Ah that's fair." Branzzy said with a sympathetic smile.

-

Branzy didn't get a time on when to meet ClownPierce at the garden part two blocks from the bank. He just was told "a week from now". So he made his way there on his patrol, and sat in the garden, waiting.

The air was cool on his skin and the sounds of traffic was different, there weren't many cars where he was from. It was cool.

"You came!"

He jumped upright with a start, clutching his heart, and breathing a sigh of relief that it was only ClownPierce. But it was still Clownpierce, so he kept his guard up.

"Of course, a deals a deal." Branzy said, offering a smile, even though Clown couldn't see it.

"Wonderful. I was worried you'd flake on me," He turned to some bushes and cupped his masked mouth, "Spoke! Come out!"

Branzy tensed as Spoke, a void-like creature existed, he twirled some rainbow energy in his palm as he walked toward them. It matched his rainbow headband, Branzy wondered if that was intentional.

"Hey, I'm Spoke."

"Uh, hi. Violet. Well, that's what people call me, I'll come up with an actual name soon enough." Branzy said, and started brainstorming, it was hard to come up with a cool purple related thing when so many vigilantes shared that motif.

"Nice. Alright, so, heading to the bank?" Spoke asked, nodding in its direction.

"I assume so, what do you need me to do exactly, Clown?"

Clown rubbed his hands together, he was excited, giddy even. "I need you to look through the wall and check how many guards are there, and the best route to break in is."

Of course, well, better then murder. Branzy sighed. "Alright, is there something specific you're gonna want to breach? Or just like the main vault?"

"We're actually looking for a heroes vault." Spoke informed, leaning against a tree, the branches had fairy lights on it. Wow, this park was fancy. "Reddoons, to be specific, he's super rich, but he also has some information we need. It's likely kept in his vault."

Branzy nodded to himself and rubbed his chin as he thought. Eyes narrowed on the grass as he figured out the best way to go about this. *If I phase through and read the names on the vaults, I'd likely find him... Though I doubt he goes under his hero's name, it's worth a shot though. And he is a very corrupt guy, out of all the heroes I have to undermine, this is probably my safest bet...*

"Lavender?"

Branzy snapped his head back up, "Can do. Does he go by his hero's name in the vault?"

Clown nodded, "Yep, most hero's do so they keep their civilian lives separate for safety."

“Got it. Yeah, this won’t be too hard, hopefully.”

“Epic.” Clown said, “Spoke here is our getaway driver, he can teleport other people to different locations.”

Branzy’s eyes widened, looking at the man in question with awe. “That’s amazing!”

Spoke shrugged, a prideful smile etched on his face. “Useful for villainy, that’s for sure.” He sighed, “But I have to be there to teleport you guys to a location, so get ready to be teleported. I’m going to the bank.”

Clown nodded, and held out his hand, Spoke gripped it firmly, shaking it. He turned to Branzy, offering his hand. “This’ll feel weird, but I need to establish a connection to teleport you.”

“Oh, alright.” Branzy reached out and shook his hand.

It felt strange in a way Branzy could barely describe, he felt like he was falling the second he touched him, gasping for a moment. He hadn’t moved, but it felt like his body had been shuffled all over. He shook himself off the strange feeling.

“See you guys in a couple minutes.” Spoke said with a one-handed salute as he stealthily headed toward the bank.

Branzy shuddered, rubbing his shoulders as the phantom feeling faded.

“You get used to it when you do it a lot.” Clown said, he got into a crouch, one hand on the ground to steady himself. “I suggest getting low, that way we’re less noticeable when teleported.”

Branzy mimicked his movement. He tried to clear his head, set himself up for crime, but that was tricky when he’d never done anything illegal besides saving people, which didn’t really count. “I’m going to help you rob a bank, oh my god.” Branzy murmured.

“You’ll love it, trust me, the adrenaline is fantastic.” Clown giggled; he flexed his fingers against the ground. “How’s your shoulder, by the way?”

“Oh…” Branzy touched it lightly, “Yeah, all better.”

“How’s your mind?”

He frowned at Clown, his brows creased in confusion, “What?”

“Nearly dying does a lot to a person.” Clown shrugged.

“Oh.” Branzy said. *Blood. Pain. Purple.* “I’m fine.”

All of a sudden Branzy felt his body being pulled, his stomach dropped before settling and his head spun from the imaginary motion. He gasped quietly, they were in some bushes, and Branzy was dizzy. Clown hunched over, head turning as he surveyed their location. He looked across the street, Branzy followed his gaze and saw Spoke, the man nodded and started walking away.

“How will he know when we need to go?”

Clown pulled out a communicator and waved it, “I’ll message once when we need to be teleported inside, he should be able to see in from here, and then I’ll message again when we need to get out.”

Not as fast as a pinger.

“Okay, okay,” Branzy took a deep breath, “How we doing this?” He whispered.

“Look, tell me what you see.” Clown directed, twisting his head to face the wall.

Branzy’s eyes shone, and he squinted. Many guards, a few bank tellers were packing up and heading out, end of work shift then. He shifted his attention to the vault itself, it was heavily guarded, two guards on the outside, two more further down the hall. They had weapons, and worse, Branzy could see power disabler cuffs on them.

He winced.

Disabler cuffs were not comfortable like regular handcuffs, they were silver, shiny, a bit heavier and bigger. And they had spiky teeth inside, sharp prongs that dig into the skin and inject the user with a poison that disables all powers. It hurt, weakened, and was only used in extreme circumstances.

...Does robbing the place count as an extreme circumstance?

“Lavender. Details.” Clown hissed.

“Four guards near the main vault entrance, none inside, all guards have power disabler cuffs.”

“Can you see Reddoon’s cabinet?” Clown asked, and Branzy leaned forward, squinting.

“Can’t make out the labels.”

“Dammit.” Clown murmured, “Think Clown, think...” He mumbled, and Branzy smiled slightly, the action was sort of humanising, “I didn’t want to shed any blood today, but if we need to search for his safe then they’ll likely catch us quickly...”

Branzy stared at him in fear, “No! No murder!” He said nervously, Clown stared at him, and Branzy could feel the glare. “Let’s do this stealthily, we don’t need to alert anyone! Besides, I can just fly in there and check where his safe is.”

Clown tensed; his gaze lowered. “You can fly?”

Ah. Shit. He really should stop letting this guy learn his powers. Branzy winced, “Ah, yes, okay, don’t tell anyone but... I can phase out of my body and go in there to check. I can only do it for, max ten minutes, that’s the longest I’ve lasted, if I go any further, I can knock myself into a coma. I call it phase.”

“That’s...” Clown begun, and he gripped Branzy’s hands tightly, “Incredible!” He breathed, “You’re incredible! And I thought it was just X-ray, no wonder you learn the info, can you hear whilst in that form?”

“Well, yes, but no one can hear me. I’m basically a ghost.”

“Danny Phantom going ghost!”

“What?” Branzy laughed, quietly, and Clown was practically vibrating with excitement.

“The uses for this ability are endless, no wonder you’re the perfect recon agent! Yes, yes go in there! Wait, what happens to your body?”

“It’s unconscious whilst I do it.” Branzy explained, “You’ll need to keep watch of it, please don’t hurt my body.”

“Got it.” ClownPierce said, Branzy glared, “I mean it! What use are you to me if you’re hurt? You know this!”

Branzy sighed and rubbed his forehead, “Alright, I’m going to check now.” He took a deep breath, “Oh by the way, muffle me when I return to my body, I tend to gasp.” He phased out, and watched his body fall to lean against the wall of the bank, eyes shut, eyelids glowing purple. Clown crawled closer to him, examining the visible parts of his face.

“Please don’t look at my face Clown.” Branzy grumbled, knowing he couldn’t hear him. “You know, this is all your fault, you’re turning me into a crook.” Branzy said, flying around him with agitation. He continued to grumble as he flew into the bank, heading toward the vault.

“Honestly, he’s so lucky that he’s not as bad as I thought.” Branzy monologued and began looking through each safe name and number. “At least I know he wants to help people, in his roundabout way.” No Reddoons, he hoped Clown was right about him using his hero’s name. “He is... Nice. To me, as a civilian, maybe even me as a vigilante. But is that only because I have use to him? Coffee and convenience? What does he see me as?”

He found the safe and grinned, it was dead centre in the rows of safes. He phased through it to look inside. “Papers, money, ah!” He leaned closer and read a receipt, for a firearm, one he was definitely not permitted to have. “Well that’s very useful.” He smirked. He flew out, heading to the security room to see what the cameras saw.

Unfortunately, the whole area of the inner vault was covered. Fortunately, the security guard was young, and very tired. They slumped at the desk, mindlessly scrolling through their phone, occasionally flicking up to examine the cameras, before flicking back down to the phone.

“Maybe he sees me as a tool.” Branzy muttered, continuing his earlier train of thought, “Maybe he’s just acting fairly nice, so he has reason to keep using me. After this deal, what will he do? Let me go? Surely not. And...” He ran a hand through his ghostly hair, “Shit, Spoke has the ability to teleport me now, and it’s not a one-time thing if he can keep doing it to get us out! Stupid, stupid Branzy!”

The security guard got up, and Branzy faltered his panic, they headed for the bathroom, tapping a guard and gesturing to the security room, muttering about watching it whilst he went. The guard nodded, but didn’t go in the room, just stood outside it.

Miscommunication, perfectly beneficial. This was their chance.

“Well, no matter how he sees me, we’re a team for now. I’ve got to fulfil my end of the deal. And I can’t half-ass it.” He said, sighing but not feeling it within his lungs. “Alright Clown, prepare for the best temporarily teammate ever!”

He phased back into his body, gasping and eyes opening wide, a hand slapped over his mask. He locked eyes with Clown’s mask.

“Good?” Branzy nodded and Clown relinquished his hold. “Great, what did you find?”

“We should go in now, it’s in the corner of the vault.” Branzy said quickly, not wasting time, “The security guard just left for the bathroom, no one is watching the cams right now.”

Clown nodded, pulling out his communicator. “Spoke, teleport us in.” He paused, Spoke answered on the other side, and Clown hissed, “What do you mean?” Branzy strained his ears to hear Spoke but couldn’t. Clown ran a hand over his masked face, hitting it lightly, “Spoke says he can’t teleport

us into the vault directly because he can't see it, he can only see through the windows.”

Clown pointed to the window closest to them. “Can we get in through that room?”

Branzy looked through the wall, and shook his head, he slowly looked up and grinned. “There's a vent.”

“What?”

“A vent. On the roof, we can climb into the vault through the vent shaft.”

“That will be loud.” Clown said, considering it.

“Do we really have another choice?”

“Murder.”

Branzy glared, “No murder.”

Clown groaned but conceded, “Fine, no murder, only because I don't want you using your powers against me.”

“How could I do that?” Branzy frowned quizzically.

“You're kidding, right? Lavender your ability is incredible; all you'd have to do is follow me home in your ghost form to find where I live.”

“Unless your home is ten minutes away, I can't do that.” Branzy soothed, but instantly started considering the idea, wondering if he could find a work around.

“Whatever you're thinking, stop it.”

Branzy grinned sheepishly, “So, vent?”

“Fine. Vent.” He pulled his communicator up, “Teleport us to the roof, where the vent thing is sticking up.”

Branzy expected some warning, he didn't get one, falling forward in surprise when the uneven dirt ground shifted to a flat concrete roof. Clown opened the vent shaft with a horrifyingly strong grip.

“Woah, you're so strong, is that your power? Strength?”

“Nope.” Clown said, not elaborating, “You lead, I'll follow.” He urged, gesturing for Branzy to hop in.

Branzy shook out his hands to relieve his building anxiety, sucking in a breath before he carefully gripped the edge of the vent and started crawling down. He pushed his back against the side with his legs, shuffling down until he hit an area he could crawl on all fours against.

Looking forward he could see the layout of the vents, and below him the rooms around the bank.

Forward, left, left, right, left. He memorised, shuffling forward with carefulness he had learnt to have. Clown he heard behind him, just as quiet as he two started crawling.

There were three people up ahead, right below the vent, Branzy held out a hand behind him, Clown stopped as he did.

“What?” Clown whispered.

“People below us, they’re going to leave I think.” He glanced to the security room, the guard was still out there, the bathroom had the security guard. He was sitting on the toilet on his phone, Branzy rolled his eyes, thankful for the man’s laziness, but internally frustrated he didn’t take his job seriously.

“Is your view as great as mine?” Clown teased, and Branzy tensed, barely withholding a giggle that threatened to spill out. He lightly kicked back at Clown.

“Shut.” He said, a small giggle escaping him. The three people below moved out, laughing with each other. Branzy moved forward again, relieved to see that the only worry they had now was the guards outside the door.

They reached the open grate, cool air blowing toward them from the other end of the vent. Branzy looked in, seeing the vault below and wondering how he was meant to do this without making any sound.

“We’re here. What now?” He asked, and Clown shuffled forward, bumping his butt.

“Move.”

Branzy crawled up forward, glancing behind him to see Clown looking into the vault.

“You’re amazing, Lavender.” He said quietly, and Branzy tried not to let the praise go to his head.

“Thanks?” He settled on, nervously.

Clown grabbed at the grate, jostling it to test its strength. “Easy.” He said with yet another ounce of giddiness coating his words, “They make it too easy.” He slowly tried to move one leg in front of himself, making his body hunch over to accommodate the cramped size of the vent. He kicked the vent grate, and it fell loudly onto the floor of the vault. “Let’s go!” He laughed.

“What?! Are we forfeiting quietness now?!” Branzy hissed, watching him drop down. Branzy gulped, legging his legs dangle out but staring at the drop with fear.

“I’ll catch you!” Clown said, offering out his arms, “Come on, we need to be fast!”

Branzy clenched his eyes shut and dropped. He yelped when he was caught with ease, like he weighed nothing, Clown let him down easily. “Awesome, trust exercise complete!” He chuckled.

The purple vigilante shook himself of his surprise, heading over to the vault and pointing at it.

“This is it.” He said, and Clown came over, glaring at it. “How do you plan on unlocking it? It has receipts of him buying illegal weapons.”

Clown whistled, “That’s certainly some good blackmail.” He pressed his ear against the vault and started twisting the combination lock. “Be my lookout, I’m pretty fast at this.”

Branzy paled at the fact he was just doing it the good old-fashioned way but complied none the less. He stared out the walls, the guards hadn’t moved, but were talking to each other with worried looks. Branzy froze as he saw the security guard leaving the bathroom.

“Clown. The guard is returning to the camera room.”

The quiet sound of tick-tick-tick replied, he looked at Clown in worry, he nodded, turning the lock

again. Tick-tick-tick.

“Clown, he’s...” Branzy stared, he was arguing with the guard outside his door now, likely telling him he meant to watch the cameras. The guard was arguing back, probably about that not being his job. “He’s right outside the room.”

Tick-tick-tick.

“Clown!” Branzy hissed, the security guard entered the room, other guard in tow, he threw a hand at the cameras, the guard dropped his flashlight and pointed at the screen. “He’s seen the cameras!”

The two guards were freaking out, seeing the two in the vault. They hit a button, and Branzy looked up as an intercom sounded out.

“Two intruders are in the vault, I repeat, two intruders are in the vault.”

“Clown!” Branzy said, nervous energy fuelling him, the guards were rapidly typing in the code to unlock the huge vault door.

“I’m almost done, Lavender.” Clown whispered, “Shh.”

Branzy held his tongue, but panicked, pressing his back against the wall as the vault door slowly but surely started to open. Guards tried to force it to open faster, yelling on the other side, they had their cuffs ready.

Branzy whined as the arm of a guard shoved through the steadily opening gap.

Tick-tick-tick-CLICK.

Clown swung open the door to Reddoon’s vault, shoving the items into his hands, and shoving some toward Branzy, who took it whilst stumbling backward at the harsh shove.

Clown double checked they had everything, then pulled out his comm, and grabbed Branzy, shoving him behind himself as the guards entered. “Spoke, take us out.” He said calmly.

He stared down the guards, one that forced himself in first stumbled backwards at the sight of him.

“C-ClownPierce.” He said with terror. Branzy clutched Clown’s shoulder, hiding behind him.

“Hello, we’ll be leaving now. Goodbye.” Clown responded, waving slightly, other hand gripping his stolen goods.

The florescent lights of the inner vault vanished in a blink, the frosty night air hitting their skin so quickly Branzy had no time to acclimate to it. He jolted at the shock, the darkness of the park surprising him. Spoke stood before them, and he held out a bag.

Clown dropped the goods into it, halving the stacks of money they had and offering it to Branzy.

“That went perfectly, your cut.” He spoke.

“Perfectly?! The guards saw us!” Branzy panicked, pacing across the grass, “They’ll... They’ll think me a criminal! A villain!”

“Lavender, you are a criminal.”

“But I was a good one!” Branzy whined.

“Relax, cameras record everything anyway, even if we weren’t spotted, we would have been seen eventually on the recordings.”

Branzy slumped.

“You did great, here, take it.” He shoved the money closer to his face, Branzy cringed and backed up, he tossed the papers he had toward them.

“No thanks, I’m good.”

“If you say so.” Clown shrugged, lugging the bag over his shoulder. “This was a very profitable partnership; I’d like to work with you in the future.”

Branzy backed up, hands raised in surrender. “I’d prefer not, I prefer just helping out people and spotting bad stuff then calling on it.”

“You know, I heard two guys robbed a bank here, you should call your vigilante friends to catch them.” Spoke laughed.

Branzy flushed, “It wasn’t my choice to do this!”

“You’re a natural, really, you should consider villainy as a career, it pays more.” ClownPierce said smugly, once again waving the money out and within Branzy’s reach.

He smacked it away and pouted. “This was a one-time thing, and don’t you forget it.”

“Come on, it was fun, wasn’t it?”

The adrenaline, the people below them that he had to avoid, the fact he was directly participating instead of just observing...

Branzy would never admit that a ‘yes’ was on the tip of his tongue.

-

The tv in the café was broadcasting a news report, making Branzy look up curiously.

“Citizens are to be warned that a vigilante has been spotted more frequently and is a threat as all vigilantes are. He is said to wear all purple and is male. He was last seen robbing a bank with the villain ClownPierce, a direct diversion from his previous vigilante behaviour. He does not have a public name; however, some citizens have taken to calling him Ultra-Violet.”

“Ultra-Violet!” Branzy laughed with a grin, “That’s so clever!” Oh he was so using that instead of dumb ‘Vibrant violet’ and ‘Lavender lad’.

“Wherever this vigilante goes, more are sure to follow. Stay vigilant for vigilantes is the heroes’ message to us.”

Branzy watched it switch to a different topic but found himself murmuring the name under his breath with glee. “Ultra-Violet, that’s so much better than the other ones.”

“Do you like that vigilante Branzy?”

Branzy jolted, nearly forgetting Clown was there, typing away on his laptop again.

“Uh, yeah, he’s never hurt me before and vigilantes are just helping out where the heroes don’t.” He shrugged.

Clown halted his typing and looked up at Branzy, “How do you feel about heroes?”

Branzy flinched, a phantom feeling of an arrow lodged in his shoulder making his hand raise subconsciously to hold it. He forced it down before he was caught doing so.

“They’re... Trying.”

Clown scoffed, “That’s one way of putting it.” He closed his laptop and leaned on his fist, tapping the table, a signal Branzy had learnt meant ‘come talk to me’. He made his way over, “How do you feel about villains?”

Branzy sat down fairly uncomfortably, frowning at Clown. “If I answer wrong, will you kill me?”

“I’d never kill you Branzy,” He pulled up his mask as he pushed the straw from his drink into his lips, “Who’d serve me?” He mumbled through it.

“Okay, well, I don’t condone killing. But I can’t say that the rich people you guys steal from occasionally, *didn’t* have it coming to them.”

Clown laughed huskily and smiled around the straw. “Have you met any vigilantes? Heroes? Villains?”

“Other than you? Uh...” Branzy almost said no but decided merging his path with his vigilante self may give more credibility to him not being the same person. “Yeah. I briefly met uh, the purple guy.”

“From Five Nights at Freddy’s?” Clown joked with a wide grin.

“No!” Branzy laughed, waving his hand. “Ultra-Violet. I met him.”

“When? What happened? Do you like him?” Clown asked in rapid fire.

“Woah!” Branzy chuckled nervously, “Uh, yes I like him.”

“Good, me too.”

Branzy swallowed harshly and glanced out the window. “I met him, or saw him, a few years ago, before he was really known. I was... on a rooftop.”

That made Clown pause from his drinking, his mouth shifted to a confused frown. “What?” He whispered.

“I was contemplating life, you know, our district isn’t very good, not a lot of opportunities. I felt like I had no purpose, nothing to strive for.” Branzy admitted, he remembered the cool breeze on his neck, the setting sun casting a small amount of warmth on him before it was gone completely.

“I saw a person struggling on the street, and he...” Branzy pursed his lips, wondering how to retell this memory. “I saw him hiding around a corner, and it looked like he wasn’t going to do anything, like he was just going to watch it happen. Like I was.” He sucked in a breath, “But he didn’t; he ran out and kicked the guy, then ran around a corner and there was another Vigilante, Rek, he pointed at the crook and Rek beat him up, saved the woman and her purse.”

He remembered the feeling of the purse being fought over, the tear of the fabric handle, the theft that ran away in anger. The feeling of the woman's hands cupping his as he went to leave, the thankfulness in her eyes. He remembered Rek asking how he'd seen him, saying how if he hadn't told him what was happening, the woman would have lost her purse and gotten hurt.

He remembered being told he had saved her, his act of getting help had saved her.

"I realised after... watching that. That any small action can make a difference, and I did have a purpose. I can help people, one small act at a time, if it helps one person, I've lived a life worth living."

Branzy then registered that he was spilling all of this, practically his origin story, to ClownPierce. He shook himself of his memories and smiled sheepishly, "Sorry for rambling. But yeah, I like him."

ClownPierce's mouth was parted slightly, and Branzy wished he could see how he was looking at him.

"Yeah, yeah, he's... He's a good person. And so are you Branzy, really good."

Branzy smiled and got up, mentioning something about needing to finish cleaning the counter. He was stopped by a hand on his wrist, he stared wide-eyed at Clown.

"You've helped me. So, you, you're sticking to your philosophy."

Branzy felt his heart warm, "Thanks Clown." He said softly, the man released his wrist, but stared after him as he went back to the counter.

-

"Maybe you've found your calling."

Branzy lightly shoved Chief, letting the man squeal lightly before pulling him back from the ledge. "Never joke about that." Serious tone falling as he chuckled through his sentence.

"I mean, honestly it wasn't THAT bad, you didn't hurt any civilians, and information on Reddoons is great! Should have sneaked the papers Branzy, not let Clown have them." Rek said, and Branzy shrugged.

"He does have the same goal of exposing the heroes, so I think he'll use it to help us."

"He's still a murderer." Spepticle said, biting into an apple.

"Yeah..." Branzy sighed, resting his head on his hand. "That he is."

Maybe, in another life where he wasn't, they'd be friends.

-

When Branzy heard the familiar screams of people leaving the café, it was basically his personal

doorbell alerting him to Clown's presence. The man seemed less intimidating when in the café, so he found himself exiting the backroom with a smile, staring ahead to see the man.

He faltered though, smile dripping off his face replaced with a look of shock, because he wasn't alone this time.

Clown entered with his hands snugly in his pockets, his posture the epitome of confidence. By his side were two people, Spoke, and a girl, who Branzy recognised as the one who had pretended to be a hostage. She was looking around with interest, eyes lighting up as she spotted Branzy.

Branzy felt himself involuntarily tense.

"Branzy!" Clown cooed, a warm tone of familiarity, he walked over to the counter and leant against it, leaning in toward Branzy's face.

Branzy forced himself not to flinch and instead smiled, "Hello Clown, how can I help you today?"

Clown gestured to Branzy and turned to his friends, whatever he was conveying seemed to click because they stepped up by the counter as well; eyeing Branzy with curiosity.

"I'll have my usual iced coffee, Branzy." Clown said, pulling out his card in preparation.

Branzy put in another thing that cost seven dollars into the machine and stiffly smiled. "Mm-Hm, and you two?"

The girl was staring at the menu, furrowing her brows. Spoke was as well, headband slipping down his head as he looked, he pushed it back up. His black hair had a strange luminescent quality to it.

"Uh, I'll have... Hot chocolate, thanks." Spoke settled on, he looked at Clown, who rolled his eyes and offered his card to Branzy.

"Mid? You?" He asked.

The girl, Mid, squinted and looked at Branzy with a calculating gaze. "The One Stop Hot Shop, that's this place, right?" She asked.

Branzy already knew where this was going and felt his shoulders rise dramatically, his tense smile grew wider, eyes rapidly glancing from Clown and back to her. "Yes." He answered.

"You only sell hot stuff, right?"

"Branzy's for sale?" Clown joked and Spoke hit him in the shoulder at the remark.

Branzy blushed and looked at Clown with poorly hidden shock, was... did he just flirt with him?!

"Not my point, you only sell hot drinks, right, Branzy?" She asked, leaning forward like Clown had done.

Branzy gulped. "Y-Yep."

"Iced Coffee isn't on the menu." She stated, leaving no room for argument, though she stilled looked very confused.

"What?" Clown said quickly, head swivelling to Mid in surprise, he stepped back and looked up at the menu above the counter. His head turned as he read every option. It snapped back down to

Branzy, who was trying to make himself as small as possible. “It isn’t on the menu.”

“Uh, it is for you?” Branzy said nervously, finger gunning the now slumped Clown, Branzy *wished* he could see his expression so bad. He felt left in the dark.

Mid sighed and played with her fringe, fixing her crown that sat atop her head as she did. “Branzy, did you make iced coffee for Clown because you were scared?”

Branzy looked between the three faces, feeling very much like he was being interrogated. “Uh, is that not a reasonable response?”

ClownPierce nodded. “You could have just told me no though.”

Branzy rolled his eyes, “You’re a murderer Clown, I think I had a right to be at least a bit hesitant to saying no to you.”

“Is that all you see me as? A murderer?” Clown whined, tone light.

“And my customer killer.” Branzy chuckled, feeling a bit brave.

“I don’t *tell* them to leave!”

“I’ll have a flat white coffee, there, pay and let’s go Clown.” Mid scoffed with a slightly amused smile.

“Oh, to go today?” Branzy asked and Spoke nodded.

“We got plans.” He said lightly.

“Alright,” Branzy said, Clown swiped his card and Branzy printed the receipt, “Be back in a bit!”

He made their drinks, co-worker helping from the safety of the backroom, he handed to them with ease and watched them leave.

As they did, he heard a noticeably quiet. “He’s not *that* cute, Clown.” Followed by a very annoyed, “Ow!” As Clown smacked Spoke’s head.

He really hoped that didn’t mean what he thought it meant.

But secretly, he let himself smile at the thought.

-

“Hello Lavender.” Branzy snapped his head from where his gaze was resting, his eyes widened, his jam sandwich was in his mouth. He shoved it out and pulled up his mask.

“ClownPierce.” He greeted, swallowing the remains of his snack. “Also, I’ve decided to go by Ultra-Violet now, it’s way cooler.”

ClownPierce tilted his head and chuckled lightly, he sat beside him on the top of an incredibly tall building. It loomed over the world. “Fair enough, it is very cool. Guess I’ll call you Ultra.” He hummed.

Branzy grinned, excited by the idea of a cool-sounding nickname, Lavender made him sound *soft*, and he was not *soft*.

“I’ve come to let you know to be careful, Vitalasy has told everyone of your X-ray power, no one knows about your phase ability though.” Clown explained, and Branzy tensed.

“How did they find out about my x-ray ability; did you tell them?”

Clown scoffed, crossing his arms, “Of course not, why would I give that information to my enemies?”

Branzy smiled, “Ah good, wonder how he figured it out though...” Branzy thought, worried.

“Do you have a mole in your vigilante group?”

He stared at Clown in shock, “No! Of course not, we’re all incredibly loyal!”

“Are you sure?”

Branzy frowned, playing with his fingers as he went through all vigilantes allowed to share their hideout spot. There were a few newer ones, but surely, surely no one would betray them. Why would they? What would they gain?

Branzy glared at Clown, “Are you trying to make me doubt your teammates?”

“Yes.” Clown said, “For good reason, I don’t know how else they figured it out since I didn’t tell them, and only Mid and Spoke know about your powers.”

Branzy wished he could tell a liar like Rek could. He slumped, unsure if he was being lied to.

“Alright, I’ll stay, vigilant, hah.” He joked with a lack of humour.

“Good.” Clown said with a touch of relief in his tone that Branzy did not expect. He rose a brow at Clown.

“Why do you care so much?”

“People like you are rare, Ultra-Violet.” Clown said quietly, like sharing a secret, “Not many people are open to conversation instead of going straight to fighting, not many people would help me instead of running away to hide, not many people would use their unique ability to help others. You have a gift that makes you perfect to save others in a way no others could.”

He chortled lightly to himself, pulling up a knee and resting his head on it as the other dangled. “I only know one other person who’s even the slightest bit like you, not many people seem to be at ease around me like you or him.”

At ease? Branzy was only at ease because he had become accustomed to seeing him at the café. He stared at Clown, despite the divide of the mask, he felt he understood him completely in that moment. He meant... him. Him. Still, despite knowing the answer, he had to ask.

“Who?”

Clown laughed and lifted his mask up so he could cover his grinning mask with a slender gloved finger. “That’s a secret, Ultra.”

Branzy smiled smugly, a knowing glint in his eyes that made Clown’s smile soften slightly. How he hadn’t even considered who he was under the mask being the same as his friendly server was

amusing.

A secret, he chuckled quietly to himself, *is it really?*

Chapter End Notes

I know, I know, I'm late! I apologise, and I apologise that that is going to be the norm from now on. My Uni has started up again, semesters back on so now writing doesn't take priority. I tried to get this one out as fast as possible, so the quality I feel like wavers and I'm so sorry about that I just couldn't leave you guys waiting longer when I knew it'd be a while, so I just kept going.

Updates will be very sporadic now, I'll try to keep writing, but when I'm doing time-consuming courses like animation, it'll be rare for me to be able to update.

But I love it, I love writing, and I love seeing you guys in my inbox, and I'll miss that, so I doubt I can keep myself away for long. Besides, I don't have classes at 2am, now do I?

Thanks for all the support lads, and thankfully we have some wonderful new authors popping up! So y'all will be fed with content from others at least!

Sacrificed

Chapter Summary

Trust a dog when it starts barking, it sees things you can't.

Chapter Notes

Don't worry about the chapter title, only good things happen, you can trust me!

...Trigger warning for a lil bit of blood and poorly written disassociation.

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

Branzy had learnt that ClownPierce showed up for iced coffee around the same time every day. He used to be more sporadic, slowly but surely, he formed a pattern that even the regular customers had learnt.

Branzy hated to admit it, but it was very funny watching customers check their watches, sigh, before waving a goodbye and leaving. Now when ClownPierce appeared he wasn't greeted by screams, just an empty café.

Part of him was frustrated that he had so easily learnt the man's routine, but it certainly made things easier. He arrived at 3:13 PM every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday. Branzy had no idea why 3:13PM exactly, but he did know that he had grown the habit of making the mans iced coffee at 3:10PM in preparation for his arrival.

Which was what he was doing today, smiling to himself as he made the coffee, waved to his boss who refused to leave the backroom after 3PM, and headed out to the counter to wait.

He quirked his lip up as Clown walked in, hand raised in a tentative wave as he made his way to the booth seat.

"Afternoon, Branzy." The man greeted with his usual coolness.

"Morning Clown!" Branzy greeted cheerfully, placing down his iced coffee before him, he eagerly took it. Branzy found himself hiding his pride as Clown lifted his mask up, a smile already on his lips before he had even sipped his drink.

"Have you been well? No trouble?" Clown asked, sipping slowly, head tilting to face Branzy.

"All good here, no trouble. Yourself?" Branzy asked, leaning on the counter casually.

"A few... suspicious happenings, but nothing I won't be able to handle when it turns into a

problem.”

Well, that was slightly concerning. He'd have to remember to tell his friends that.

“So,” Clown said, drinking slow, he tapped the table, Branzy sat across from him instinctively. *Wait, did Clown Pierce Pavlov me?* “Tell me things.”

Branzy frowned, staring at the lack of laptop in Clown's possession, he hadn't even pulled out his phone. “Uh, okay?” One knows not to question him, at least, not to question him externally. “I um...” It was hard to come up with conversation topics when half the things he did he couldn't tell the man about. “I saw you were on the news recently.”

Clown hummed, “I'm on the news a lot.”

“Yeah, the news anchors said you uh, were fighting some of the heroes... What did they do?”

“Threaten things they don't own.” He said elusively, “Not really important, besides, I want to hear about you, not me.” He slid his free hand over, fingers barely grazing Branzy's.

Branzy never knew what to do when Clown acted this way, it was unnerving, and confusing. The thought that he could even slightly like him romantically wasn't lost on Branzy, it was just a very daunting thought to have. He smiled tensely, trying to keep his nerves hidden.

What did he want from him?

Clown pulled his hand back, looking out the window, his smile morphed to a thin line.

“I saw... a dog, the other day, reminded me of your want for a guard dog. It was a cute little thing, some fox terrier, kept yipping at people as they passed.” Branzy said simply, the thought making him smile. He'd seen it on a patrol; it was barking at its reflection in a puddle, pawing at it, like it couldn't even recognise that it was his own body. “All bark and no bite, practically melted when I gave it a pat.”

Clown chuckled, “Cute.” he said, watching as Branzy giggled whilst describing the dog's funny behaviour, how there were rarely any dogs that weren't strays in this district. Clown was a good listener, Branzy learnt, and he was incredibly funny when he wanted to be. Branzy found himself laughing a lot when Clown did decide to input into Branzy's ramblings.

He would always smile when Branzy laughed, like he'd won something.

“That can't be your answer to everything- “

“Who's she gonna complain to in hell huh? Satan? Satan is the manager; she can't ask for a higher-up.” Clown grinned, and Branzy sighed.

“Please don't literally kill our customers, even the annoying ones pay.”

“Pay the price- “

“Don't kill our customers! They- “Branzy jolted as his pocket buzzed, not his phone's regular ringtone, just the small vibration of his vigilante communicator. He paled; they knew not to contact him during the day.

“You alright?” Clown asked, frowning, his tone concerned.

“Yeah! Yeah, I'm fine, I just remember I promised a friend I'd give them a call today and I totally

blanked,” He gestured to his pocket, “ that’d be them asking me where I am.” Branzy lied, laughing with his words, he slid out of the seat and pointed to the backrooms. “I’m just gonna go take this, if uh, if that’s okay?”

“Yeah, yeah that’s okay, obviously.” Clown said, he drank his iced coffee aggressively, “I’ll actually be back later today, I need to go meet with Spoke.” Clown said, standing up, slamming a twenty on the counter and waving as he quickly left. “Later Branzy.”

“Oh! Uh, bye!” He called, watching him till he was completely out of sight of the café windows. The second he was he dashed into the backrooms and pulled up his communicator.

RekRap: Need you. Found trap location, talk details?

Branzy furrowed his brow, typing out a quick response.

UV: Can’t it wait?

RekRap: It feels super important, and Chief said he spotted shady behaviour here prior, I think we can stop it before it starts if we find out what’s happening in day rather than night.

Branzy nodded to himself, running a hand through his hair shakily. “Uh...”

“You alright Branzy?” His boss asked, peering toward the door, “Clown gone?”

“Yeah, yeah, he left early. Um, I need to go, my friend needs my help.” Branzy said, wringing his hands together, selling his worry.

“Oh, are they okay?” His boss frowned, “Anything serious?”

“Hopefully not, just had a fall and needs some help. Can I go, sorry?”

“Yeah, yeah of course. Let me know if they’re alright, okay?” His boss said, settling back into his seat, “I can take your shift, think someone’s scheduled in an hour anyway.”

“Great! Thanks!” Branzy said, itching to get out and help, he gave a smile, grabbing his bag and ducking outside.

The one problem with his outfit, was during the day, it did not provide stealth at all. He groaned at the thought of being spotted in his ridiculous purple outfit in broad daylight.

“Whatever, it’s fine!” He said with a nervous laugh, shucking on his outfit in the cover of a nearby alleyway. “Sure, I’m gonna look ridiculous, but if I help Rek, then I help everyone! It’s fine.” He murmured, slipping on his mask, and activating the voice changer. “If I can help even one person, it’s fine.” He reaffirmed, sucking in a breath, and pulling up his communicator to ask for a location. “I’ll be fine.”

-

“Ultraviolet!” Rek greeted with a wave, ushering Branzy closer from where he crouched behind a dumpster, looking across the street at a building.

“Hey Rek, so, what’s the deal with this place?” Branzy asked, he squinted at the building, it looked

like a rundown bakery, complete with one of those shop windows where one would display baked goods, except the blinds were pulled down.

“Right, so, Chief told me to patrol this area because he swears he saw some people skulking around here.” Rek explained, “The second I leant onto that rooftop, I had the biggest alarm bells blaring in my head. That place is practically a bear trap in how bad it felt.” He shuddered as he recalled the feeling. “I’m hoping you can have a peak through it and see if it has anything dangerous inside, like a bomb.”

“A bomb? It’s that bad?” Branzy said in awe.

Rek nodded solemnly, “I’ve never felt this bad of a wave of anxiety from a trap. It’s something big and bad.”

Branzy nodded, “Alright, let’s nip this in the bud then.” He looked through the building and frowned. “Okay, uh, well, that doesn’t look... good exactly.”

“What? What can you see?” Rek asked, shaking him lightly.

Branzy stared into the building, near glaring at it with intensity. It had a single chair in the middle of the place, nothing upstairs but some crates, and a few more crates near the chair in the lower level.

“There’s just a single chair with...” He squinted, “It looks like, chains, or restraints.”

Rek glared at the building with the same intensity as Branzy, “So they’re likely planning on holding someone hostage.” He shuffled forward, “Come on, let’s get closer, just at least to the side alley. Maybe if no one’s there we can find a way to stop it before it starts.”

Branzy nodded, they two crept across the street, Branzy stuck to the shadows, sticking out like a sore thumb otherwise. The two stopped under the neighbouring building's balcony. The brick wall of the bakery building was old and crumbling, likely abandoned a long while ago. “It’s always abandoned buildings, don’t you think it’d be less sus if it was, oh I don’t know, just some persons random apartment?” Branzy muttered, Rek shushed him.

“Can you see anything else?”

Branzy looked, but only saw the same thing, a chair, and a few crates. “No, there’s just-“ He froze, locking eyes with one of the crates, the lid of it had jostled, ever so slightly. “Hold on.” He whispered and leant against Rek as he phased out.

He flew forward into the bakery, seeing nothing odd besides the chair. “Is someone...” He whispered, floating closer to the crate that had shifted, he pushed his head in and immediately startled backwards. “Vi-Vitalasy?!” He gasped, poking his head back in.

Vitalasy was in the crate, curled up, a device in his hand, he glared at it, frustration evident in his expression.

Branzy zoomed out, panic building in his gut, he looked into the other crates and found his panic building as in every single one was a person. Subz was in one, in another some lackey, dressed in the purple duo’s colours and emblems. In each one a person was crouched, poised and ready to attack.

He forced himself back into his body and jerked upwards, Rek already had a hand over his mouth as he gasped in breath, and continued to take shallow, panicked gasps.

“What’s in there?” Rek asked, holding his shoulders, and staring into his eyes in worry.

“There- There are heroes, waiting in crates, it’s an ambush, they... They must be waiting for me Rek! They, they knew I could look through walls but why would I ever think to look into the crates? Even when I’ve done that before I never look into the contents I just look completely through it- They- They know my abilities and the extent of them and-“

“Ultra, ultra, deep breath, calm down.” Rek said, though worry laced his voice. “It’s alright, we, we know now! They’re not gonna get you because we know what they’re planning, and we can go now!” Rek stumbled over his words.

“You don’t understand, if they’re willing to get me like this, if that chair is for me, then what are they gonna do to me if they get-“ Branzy choked on his words, Vitalasy was getting out of the box, and was running toward the exit. “Rek, Rek, Vitalasy is coming!”

Rek pulled Branzy up and looked around rapidly, “Okay, keep calm we can-“

Branzy pressed his back against the wall, watching the others leave their spots and start heading out the other exit. “Rek, they’re surrounding us.”

Rek looked to the wall, debating if they could scale it.

“Rek!” Branzy yelled, they could both hear their footsteps now, and Rek was shaking.

“This is all my fault, this is all my fault, if I hadn’t asked for your help none of this would have happened.” He clenched his hands, “But I can fix this, we can call the others and stall-“

“No!” Branzy hissed, grabbing his hand before it touched his communicator. “Are you crazy? If they come here the heroes will surely capture at least some of us, we can’t ping them! That’s what they want!”

“But we’re gonna get captured if not!” Rek argued, they were turning the corner now, within their vision.

“They don’t want you Rek, they want me.” Branzy sighed, and Rek froze.

“No.” He grabbed his hand and held it tightly, “We’re gonna fight this, together. No self-sacrificing BS.” He flicked Branzy’s forehead, and got into a fighting stance, “Now look for a way out of this for us.”

Branzy nodded, steadying his body and glancing at their surroundings, the wall of the bakery was crumbling, maybe they could break it down, cause some commotion... Or they could try and scale a pipe... No, the easier thing would be to push past the weakest links, then Branzy could guide them to safety.

“Here’s the plan, you follow me, we’ll push through them and breach their lackies, then I’ll get us out of here.” Branzy whispered, Rek nodded, and the two kept their eyes firmly on Vitalasy as he emerged from the crowd forming around them.

“Violet! What a pleasant and unexpected surprise, you really do stand out in the day, don’t you?” He greeted, smiling as he slowly approached.

Branzy tried to push his body in front of Rek’s, but Rek kept an arm firmly out, shielding him from the villain.

“What do you want Vitalasy?” Rek asked, his eyes roamed over the people around them. Five on each side, Subz on one with four helpers as backup, Vitalasy on the other with four goons, blocking the street. Not too many, they could possibly push past the less prepared group.

“I think that much is obvious, I’ve already done my pitch to Violet here, he just needs to agree.”

“I’ll never help you, especially after what you did to me last time.” Branzy hissed, standing tall.

“How is that shoulder doing?”

He tried to keep himself from shaking.

“I’m not letting you take him Vitalasy, we’re sticking together, whether you like it or not.”

“Hmm,” He scratched his chin, “Or not.”

Branzy froze as someone jumped down from above, and the entire area was surrounded in a thick navy mist.

It erupted into chaos.

Branzy felt himself be shoved, he scrambled back and away from where he heard shuffling, eyes glancing around in terror. He couldn’t see through the mist; he couldn’t see Rek. He pushed himself to his feet, listening to the sound of fighting and yelling, a distant shout that sounded like Rek’s made him lurch into action.

“Rek!” Branzy shouted, running toward the sound, a hand grabbed his arm and he yanked it as he spun to face his attacker.

Chief stood, staring at him blankly.

Branzy melted at the sight of him, “Chiefy.” He nearly sobbed, smiling and reaching toward him, “Boy am I glad to see you, Chiefy, Chief they got Rek, we have to find him and get him out of here!”

Chief smiled, eyes crinkling, he tilted his head, letting his tentacles fall over his face slightly, “Hard to see through the mist, isn’t it?”

Branzy laughed slightly, “Yeah, yeah actually.”

“Who knew your weakness is not being able to see through it, huh?” He said, chuckling, and Branzy frowned at the strange tone coating his words.

“What?”

“Who knew it’d also be seeing through people?” Chief said, and he grabbed Branzy’s hands that were reaching for him, now lowering slowly.

Branzy stared into his friends’ eyes, searching, “Chief?” He asked, a horrible feeling of dread settling into his stomach as he came to a realisation, “We didn’t ping you, we didn’t, we didn’t ping anyone...”

“Yeah, you really should have, would have been a lot easier for us. A ton of vigilantes, for the price of one.” He shrugged; his grip tightened.

Branzy shook, his voice quaking as he asked one last time, “Chiefy?”

Chief's smile grew.

"Chief, how did you find us?"

"You forget I was the one who asked Rek to go here." He whispered, and Branzly jolted as he heard Rek scream from somewhere in the mist.

"REK!" He screamed in response, he pulled toward the sound, gritting his teeth as Chief held on tighter, "Chief, Chief please, Rek is our friend! He's our friend Chief!" Branzly shouted, "Surely that means something to you!"

"Of course it does, vigilantes are just heroes in the making, and you were one of the best Violet, until you decided to help a villain." He scoffed, "I didn't want to uproot my alliance with you guys, but you just had to turn to villainy, didn't you?"

"I- It was one time Chief!" Branzly hissed, glaring at him, he heard more movement in the mist, and he struggled in Chief's grasp. "Please! Please! I need to see if he's okay! You can have me; you can do whatever you want! Just don't hurt him!"

"Is that a promise?" Chief asked with a coo, and Branzly grimaced.

"Yes! Yes, you can have me, just, let me see that he's okay!"

Chief looked around, subtly checking his surroundings, he leaned forward. "I'm not meant to do this Violet, but I'll let you phase out to check on him, I'm not allowed to let you leave."

Branzly stilled his struggling, looking into Chief, wishing that he was observant enough to see the nuances in his expression. "And you promise you won't hurt him, you'll let him go?"

"You have my word."

Branzly glared at him, voice turning bitter, "As if I can even trust that anymore." Regardless, he let himself fall into Chief's arms as he phased out. The feeling of panicked breathing and bruising wrists vanished as he became intangible, he narrowed his eyes and searched.

He passed by unconscious lackeys, paying them no mind, his breath caught in his throat as he found Rek.

"Let him go!" Rek shouted, and Branzly repeated the statement upon seeing his position. He was on the ground, arms held behind his back, a bruise forming on his cheek, the mask over his mouth had fallen, an ugly scowl in its place. He spat blood onto the dirt, lip cut and sluggishly bleeding. Many people around him were leaning on their knees, holding hurt arms, one had a small knife, Rek's knife, in his thigh, he pulled it out and hissed.

"Chief." Vitalasy said coolly, sitting on top of Rek and holding his hands, grunting as Rek continued to writhe on the floor.

The mist evaporated, all swirling toward where Chief stood, clearing the air in moments. Chief held up his hand, "Gun." He requested, still holding Branzly's body, his eyelids were glowing, pulsing with purple hues.

Wait, gun?

Subz threw a gun his way.

“ULTRA, ULTRA NO-“ Rek shrieked, nearly throwing Vitalasy off with the force of his struggles.

Chief caught the gun, and twirled it around, before swiftly hitting Branzý’s head with the butt of the gun.

Branzy stared in shock as his body, if possible, slumped even more.

Oh, oh fuck. Oh no, if I phase back in now I, I won’t be awake when I returned.

Branzy stared, eyes widening, he forced his attention to Rek, his turning slow and near mechanical. “Rek...” He whispered, reaching for him, and staring in horror as his hand phased through his friend’s cheek as he began to sob. “Rek?” He repeated, his voice, though he felt it should crack, refused to, no vocal cords even being used.

“Let him go.” Chief said, throwing the gun aside.

“His power is useful, may be useful to us.” Subz said, glancing at Rek with an appraising eye.

“Don’t bother, he’s not gonna work for us, plus, he’s an amazing escapist.” Chief grunted, “Besides, Violet said he’d help if we let him go, he won’t work with us if we don’t keep our word.”

“You already broke it.” Branzý hissed, flying over to Chief and gritting his teeth, “He’s hurt.”

Vitalasy let go of Rek, and pushed him forward, “Go, and don’t try to get your friend.”

Rek stumbled away, staring at Branzý’s body, “Ultra- “

“Go.” Vitalasy said, and Subz rose the gun to point at him.

“I’ll be fine, Rek.” Branzý said, knowing he wouldn’t hear his reassurances. “Save yourself. Please.” He begged, and he smiled when Rek finally forced himself to turn away and run.

-

There is something bizarre about staring at yourself, and seeing your eyes are shut. It’s not like looking in a mirror, watching your body mimic the movements, it’s like looking into a corpse, one that looks too similar to you.

There’s a strange thing where if you look in the mirror too long, you can see your face deform slightly, in strange uncanny ways. Some say it’s because your mind grows bored and seeks entertainment in bizarre ways. Some say it’s a myth, that doesn’t happen.

Branzy would say, that looking at yourself for too long makes it less deform, and instead, makes it more detached from himself.

He watched as his unconscious body was pulled into the bakery, watched as they shook him, watched as they peeled back his eyelids. He cringed when his eyes didn’t shut again, instead staying open, staring past them and into the wall, flashing purple.

“So, he’s not in his body then?” Vitalasy asked slowly, poking at him.

“No. He’s never stayed out longer than ten minutes though.” Chief said, sitting on one of the crates, watching as Subz and Vitalasy prodded at his still body. “He’ll likely be sucked back in, but he won’t wake up instantly like usual since we knocked him out. He’s probably staying out to avoid that.”

He was right, and that infuriated Branzly. “I can’t believe you Chief.” He whispered, ignoring Subz as he left the room to go upstairs. “You were so close to us, how much of it was a lie? Did you have to fool yourself into believing you were being real and true so that Rek never detected your betrayal?”

He stared at his once friend, he picked at his sleeves and refused to look at Branzly. “You know, Clown told me there was a mole. I never would have expected you.” He found himself growling as he flew within Chief’s sight. “Maybe I should have turned to villainy, at least Clown’s open and honest with me.”

Subz returned from upstairs, and Branzly froze as he saw what was in his hands.

“Alright, this should stop him from figuring out where we take him.” He clasped power disabler cuffs, silverly, shining, and the tiny teeth within them glistened in the most haunting way.

“Wait, wait, no!” Branzly said, he nearly phased into his body, but then he’d truly be at their will. No powers, no way to see what they were doing, and completely unconscious. He gripped at his hair, watching them near his body, crouching and pulling his wrists. “Please, no, don’t, I don’t know what they’ll do to me when I’m like this.” He begged silently.

They didn’t hear his pleas, and clicked the cuffs in, he watched them pierce his skin, teeth sinking in.

He stared, amazed, he wasn’t returning to his body. “I’m...” He flew closer, “I’m still here? It didn’t force me back in?”

“Why haven’t his eyes stopped glowing?” Vitalasy asked with a scowl, “Hey, Violet, Violet, you in there?” He hit his head, watching his head sway before leaning to the side. “What’s happening? Why isn’t he here?”

Chief got up and approached cautiously, “I... Don’t know? Maybe it can’t block his powers because he isn’t all in one location right now, his powers are... technically in his ghost form, it can’t connect to them.”

Branzly grinned, he was immune! He was safe! But he... He frowned, he had never stayed out of his body for longer than ten minutes, he was always forced back in without his control.

Subz seemed to have the same thought, he checked his phone, frowning at the time.

Branzly stared at his body and approached, he touched his shoulder, and sighed, awaiting to be forced in.

Time ticked by, and he wasn’t in his body.

“Body?” He asked, he pressed his hands into his shoulders, which usually trigger him to enter it.

He phased through it.

“What?” He laughed, “What?” He flew into it again, and again, and again. “Hey, hey let me in!” He shouted, staring at his body, glaring at his face, “Let me in dammit! This is my body, this is

me! Let me in!” He barked. His living reflection didn’t react, his head continued to stay slightly tilted, eyes staring to nowhere. “Wake up! Let me in!” He screamed, gripping at shoulders he couldn’t feel, he fell through it.

He stared at the wall behind his body, breathing heavily, no sound coming from his mouth and no movement in his lungs. He tugged at his hair, something he could grip. He glanced over his shoulder at his body.

“I think he can’t get back in.” Chief said, his hand cupping his cheek, forcing his head to right itself, sitting straight.

“Hmm, let’s try and shock him back in, when I shot him with an arrow his eyes shut and glowed for a moment before he opened them again, so maybe pain can wake him.” Vitalasy suggested, and he held a hand out to one of his lackeys.

The lucky was bandaging his thigh, he handed Vitalasy Rek’s knife.

“Wait, I don’t think you need to-“ Chief begun, Vitalasy stared at him till he shut up.

“Don’t worry, I’m not gonna kill him.” He scoffed, he held the knife against the arm and pulled up the sleeve, Branzy watched in horror as he slowly sliced a line against the arm. A thin red line took its place, and Branzy stared.

He was bleeding, but there was no pain, not even a moment of recognition that that was his own arm being cut. Was it even his arm, really? When he couldn’t feel it? Was that even his body?

He stared at his face, it stared back. Did he even look like that? Was he really this bland? Did he have no expression, no personality? Was Branzy the body, or the mind?

Did the body like dogs, axolotls, helping others, playing pranks, god he hadn’t pulled a prank in years... Had he even laughed in years?

He had with Clown. Or was that the body that had laughed? He wouldn’t be able to feel laughter now.

Did he even want to feel?

He watched the thin red line drip slowly over his arm, watched Chief stare with remorse, watched his body fail to react, as if dead. He watched Vitalasy toss the knife aside, stepping past him to discuss what to do next with Subz. Chief stepped forward, pulling a handkerchief from his pocket, and wiping it over the wound.

He didn’t want to feel that.

Did he want to feel anything?

He barely lived anyway, just work, patrol, sleep, work, patrol, sleep, work. Did he even live a life anymore, or just survive it? He had helped enough people; he didn’t need to keep going. And how could he if no one could even see him.

He tugged at his hair again, and belatedly realised, he couldn’t even feel it. Couldn’t feel the hair pull against his skin and skull, couldn’t feel the texture of his own hair. It felt... It felt just like everything else, air. When he tugged it, it was just rough air against his hands. He looked at his hands, their translucent quality made him look through to the floor.

Was he becoming less real by the seconds?

He flew up, up into the air and into the now night sky, the moon was shining brightly down on him. He spread his arms wide and let his chest rise up to greet the sky.

“I’m here.” He reaffirmed, imagining the moon casting light on him as he shut his eyes. “I’m real, I’m here.” He slowly floated back down, he had to give himself a task, something to keep his mind off his lack of touch. He would find out what they were planning, use this large amount of time he usually didn’t have to investigate and bring back information for his teammates.

He let himself float back into the bakery, settling in the main area.

All he saw was an empty chair.

No body was there.

-

Clown had been having a rather nice day, all Tuesdays were nice for him, he got to see his favourite barista, and know tomorrow he’d see him again. Branzy brought him more ease than anyone ever had, speaking to him like he was a person, not a threat. Sure, he was clearly apprehensive around him, but he knew Clown wouldn’t hurt him.

Branzy was beautiful, with white curls that Clown wanted to tangle his hands in and sparkling brown eyes that shone in a magical way. And, he could talk. He adored listening to his voice, the strange anecdotes he shared with him when Clown begged him to talk. It made Clown’s eyes crease at the corners, and Clown wondered with joy, if he would get crows feet as he aged because of the joy Branzy brought him.

He wondered if Branzy knew he danced when he walked. He moved like water, fluid in his movement as he stepped from behind the counter and sauntered over to him. He would move like there was a tune stuck in his head, feet hitting the ground with a clear but unusual rhythm. He would talk like he was being ignored, rambling and side-tracking but always managing to return to his topic in a roundabout and almost artistic way.

He wondered if he knew he was getting better at making Iced coffees, and that he was weird for serving Clown at all. He wondered if he knew how bad he was at hiding his emotions, how Clown could always tell when he was withholding a laugh, or when he snapped himself out of an adoring look that matched Clown’s own. He wondered if Branzy had the support system he deserved.

He wondered why he stopped giving him purple straws. He wondered if he knew Clown had fallen for him.

And today, as he sat at his booth, having come back again like he had told him, he wondered where Branzy was. He glanced to the empty counter, frowning, and drumming his fingers on the

countertop.

Slowly the door creaked open, and he perked up, but instead of Branzy someone else poked their head out.

“He’s not here.” They said, before they darted back behind the door.

Clown pouted, half insulted they believed he’d only go for Branzy and not for iced coffee, and half amused that they absolutely were correct.

With a sigh, he stood up and left, listening to the door ring as it swung shut behind him. He’d be there tomorrow though, so it was alright. He’d see him then. Maybe his friend just wanted to see him, who wouldn’t?

So Clown strolled down the streets, wondering what he was going to do now, he’d already done the villain-related business he had to attend to, discussed Vitalasy’s recent suspicious behaviour with Spoke, and he had scheduled the rest of his time for Branzy. Now he was free, and bored. Ridiculously bored.

His ears perked up and he glanced over to a rooftop, where two vigilantes stood, shouting. Well, that was something to do.

He climbed to the roof elegantly, barely even wasting breath as he arrived at the top, peeking up before pulling himself over, watching the two vigilantes have a shouting match.

“I DON’T KNOW!” Ah, he recognised that one, that was Rek. “I don’t know, all we know is he was in this stupid old bakery place, and now he’s gone.” He sobbed, oh, the vigilante was crying.

“Rek, deep breaths, we’re not gonna find him like this.” The person with him was colourful, and had wings, an avian hybrid. Ah, Parrot. That’s what his name was. “Ultra’s smart, he’ll keep himself safe while we think of a plan.”

Clown didn’t even register he was moving forward until the two jolted at his presence and held up their fists. “Lavenders missing?” Clown asked, staring at the pair, he pulled his sword from its sheath, his hands gripped and released the sword’s handle repeatedly.

Rek stared at him before pushing forward, staring up at Clown with anger simmering in his eyes. “Yes, Vitalasy took him. He knocked him unconscious and kidnapped him, and now he’s gone from where he was keeping him.” Rek explained, “I know you’re a villain, but you care about Ultra-Violet too, and you hate heroes just as much as us. Will you help us find him?”

“Rek...” Parrot whispered, gripping his friends’ sleeve, and tugging him back.

Ultra Violet, the one vigilante in his life who humoured him, talked, and used his incredibly distinct powers to help others in a creative way. He was the perfect lookout, and would definitely be the perfect robber if Clown had convinced him to enjoy the act of robbery more.

Clown remembered the fear that struck him when he saw how Vitalasy had hurt him, how he had been driven to seek help from a villain of all things. He was bizarre, and incredibly brave. And Vitalasy had hurt him again.

Clown looked at his sword and threw it aside, “I’ll need my scythe for this.” He said, and Rek grinned.

-

“This would be a lot easier if Ultra was here to look through the walls for us.” Rek grunted, staring at the map laid out before them, Clown sat uncomfortably on the small wooden chairs in their vigilante base.

“Clown, if you so much as breathe about this place-“

“Relax. I want Ultra back just as much as you, and unlike you people with moral codes, I don’t have one. I can kill Vitalasy for you, no problem.” He ran his finger along the edge of his scythe, the two vigilantes shuddered.

“Carrying a person is a heavy ordeal, they probably took him somewhere nearby... Or maybe...” Rek mumbled, rubbing his chin. His eyes widened and he pointed to a building, the heroes’ logo on it. “The heroes base isn’t far from it; they could have taken him there.”

“Would they really do something so obvious?”

Clown jolted as he heard a door open in the base, and a man exited a dimly lit room. His hair a mess of rainbow colours, green, yellow, red, blue, and his eyes spiralled the same colours.

“The answer is yes, they found his pinger, but found it too late. I was able to reverse engineer a way to find his signal, making us ping him, rather than the other way round. I was able to see him receive the alert and manually active his ping. It was deactivated shortly after, but not soon enough.” Cube said, a smile on his lips. “He’s being held in the heroes high rise base, in the uppermost floor, where exactly I’m not sure.”

Clown grinned, “Well, that certainly makes this easier. Let’s go-“

“Hold up.” Cube said with his hands raised placatingly. “We can’t go in guns blazing so to speak, we have a team of vigilantes who would drop anything to help Ultra if he pinged, I think we should call them all in for this.”

“Ultra was against calling anyone when we were cornered,” Rek explained, “Was worried about us getting caught.”

“With a good enough plan, and a good enough crew, I don’t think that’ll be a problem.” Clown said, and he pulled out his phone, “Plus, I have a couple friends who I’m sure wouldn’t mind helping us out. More villains means a higher threat, they’ll focus on me, and you guys can just make sure no one else gets to me while I go for Lavender.”

“He goes by Ultra-Violet now.” A voice said, and Clown turned to see, what looked like, Rek, sitting on the open window frame, he waved. “Hey, I’m Spepticle, I’m a trustworthy guy.” He greeted, turning to a red slime like man.

“I know you...” Clown greeted with a nod. “Alright.” He swiped the map off the table and grabbed some blank sheets of paper. “Let’s come up with a plan, infiltrate, assassinate, and evacuate.”

“Can we cut the assassinate part?”

“No.”

-

The vigilantes surrounded the building, using their various abilities to cloak themselves from being seen, all helping each other and as they readied for the signal to enter.

Clown stood on the ground, staring up at the building, he levelled the highest floor with a glare that could make gods shudder. His seething rage was palpable even without seeing the glare, and he revelled in the screams of bystanders that spotted him. He glanced to the edge of the building, Rek, in civilian clothing stood, waiting, he nodded at Clown. No trap yet, it was go time.

“Vitalasy!” Clown yelled, raising his scythe toward the building, “I know you can hear me, and now the world will too!” He eyed the news reporters that gathered at the sidelines. He dropped his scythe letting it grind against the ground as he stepped toward the building's entrance. “I know you took Ultra-Violet, I know you kidnapped him when he was doing you no harm. I know you harmed his friends to force his hand.”

He let out a soft laugh that built, growing in volume and energy, till he was cackling, a screeching sound that many winced and covered their ears to. “And I know that you’re gonna pay for it. And you’re gonna hand Ultra-Violet over, to me.” He jutted a thumb at his chest, grinning at the building. “The world is against you, in ways you can’t even comprehend yet, so I suggest you take the cowards route and just surrender.”

The vigilantes held their breath, in their positions, hanging outside of windows, ready to leap in, besides doorways, in vents, they all collectively awaited the heroes' reply.

Clown grinned as a small spec of purple appeared at the top of the high-rise and stepped onto the air to look down at Clown.

“We refuse to hide from a villain, and we refuse to allow you entry.”

Clown giggled, in a way that was unnatural. Vitalasy frowned, and Clown melted, body shifting to a near bloody-appearing puddle before a red man took his place.

He laughed, brightly, and smirked at them, as his soft and sweet voice responded. “Too late.” Spepticle said, he daintily waved at them, morphing to a puddle yet again and sliding into the sewer grate at his feet.

Vitalasy paled at the display. “Search the building!” He shouted, running back from the sky to the rooftop.

Rek smirked and shook his head as he turned and slipped into the building, screaming bystanders obscuring his entry. “Still creepy, Spepticle.” He said as he entered, finding a hiding spot to wait. He readied his communicator, if any of the heroes had any kind of trap up their sleeve, they’d know.

-

Clown rolled his eyes at Spepticle's impression of him, the laugh wasn’t even the slightest bit accurate, his laugh was raspy and quiet, something to be feared. A cackle was far less intimidating

than a whisper of amusement before the inevitable.

Speaking of the inevitable...

"Parrot." Clown spoke to his comm, "What's the situation?"

"Everyone is in position, Ro is distracting them right now, Spoke is ready to jump in if that gets hairy." Parrot said.

"I have Leo and Mid planting some fake explosions as something to bargain with. If it goes south as well." Cube said, "Don't worry, they're filled with AshSwaggs illusion magic, it'll look real but do no damage. Just a good scare if we need a quick escape."

Clown nodded, murmuring an affirmative as he crept along the floor, "Should I take the elevator or stairs?"

"Take the lift. I'll make it force you to where they're keeping Branzly, and actually, Rek?"

"Yes?" Rek asked, voice a whisper.

"I'm sending the elevator to you first, so you can tell if they lie to Clown better when he faces them."

Clown watched the elevator's number display go down floors, before returning to go up, stopping on his floor. He smiled as it opened and Rek stood inside, pulling him in.

The elevator music it played felt almost comedic against the massive rescue mission they were attempting.

"So, any bad vibes yet?" Clown asked, leaning against the lift wall and swinging his scythe like a metronome.

Rek tensed, "No, I don't think they expected us to team with you."

"Perfect." Clown grinned, watching them get higher and higher, "I don't think they realised how many people care about Lavender."

Rek chuckled, "He doesn't even know how many people care about him. He's dedicated his life's purpose to helping others, to the point I don't think he even helps himself."

Clown hummed, "We'll change that when we get him back."

Rek nodded, and the two held their breath as the elevator dinged, and the doors slightly opened. Clown shoved Rek against the wall so he wouldn't be seen from the outside.

Clown barely flinched as he heard a shot go out, holding his scythe blade out flat, an arrow hit it and bounced away. He lowered it from his face, staring at Vitalasy who held the gun and glared at them from behind the barrel of it.

"You should try bullets next time." Clown said, stepping past the elevator's threshold to the carpeted floor. "I hear they're very effective."

"Someone else is here." Rek whispered, and Clown twisted his head to the side, catching sight of Subz before he even stepped forward.

"Two against one? That's hardly fair, now is it?" Clown chuckled, "I mean, surely there are more

heroes you have to help you out?”

Vitalasy stepped back, “We aren’t going to hurt him Clown. He’s better use to us than to you.”

“I think he made his choice of who to work for when he came crawling bloodied and bruised to me after you made an attempt at his life.”

Vitalasy snarled, and Clown grinned at the inhuman canine teeth he revealed. “You know animals bare their teeth when they’re scared?” He leaned toward him, “Are you scared, little fox?”

Vitalasy *lunged*.

Clown dodged the attack with ease, sidestepping back and swiping his scythe when Subz attempted to get close to him. He laughed as Vitalasy landed in the air, using his powers to crawl along the air and claw at Clown as he stepped backward. Subz summoned a weapon to his hand swinging it at Clown and just barely chipping against his mask.

He moved his scythe swiftly upward, hooking around Vitalasy and pulling him to the ground, his scythe cut into his back from the sudden grab. He man groaned and Clown advanced toward Subz with a growl.

“You know...” Clown murmured, watching the man back up, the tremors in his grip apparent no matter how hard he tried to hide them, “Ultra-Violet is a merciful man, one of the only good ones left out there, if he were here, he would spare your life.” He watched with unrestrained glee as Subz’s eyes filled with a glimmer of hope. “But as he is not...” Clown smirked, he watched the hope die out, “I will not grace you with the same mercy.”

He rose his scythe high in the air, readying to bring it down.

“Clown!”

He turned around in surprise and saw Vitalasy shoot his gun at him, Rek’s outstretched hand doing nothing to stop the incoming attack.

Clown hissed with pain as the arrow lodged itself into his mask, the tip hitting his eye beneath it enough to cut, but not fully impale. He gritted his teeth and snarled as he pulled the arrow out, his eye revealed to the world, dripping with blood.

“So gods can bleed, ay?” Vitalasy said, as blood poured from himself.

Clown laughed, letting it rise in volume before settling to a whispered chuckle, “Oh Vitalasy, I am no God, and I’ll let you in on a little secret...” He dropped his knees to the floor and his voice to a whisper, “I don’t even have powers. I’m more human than all of you.” He watched Vitalasy’s eyes flicker a soft green, mouth slowly falling agape.

“No...” Vitalasy whispered.

“Yes.” Clown chuckled, standing up again, he felt the weakness from the arrow start to enter his bloodstream, his movement felt sluggish, no doubt it’d take more effort to finish the heroes off for good now. “I’m not the deadliest villain in the world because I’ve got an amazing power, I’m the deadliest villain because **I never give up.**”

Vitalasy shot again, and Clown let it graze his arm, let it let him bleed, to prove a point. He stepped closer and rose his scythe over Vitalasy, he shot again, it hit the horns of his mask, he laughed, and brought the scythe down, down, down.

Vitalasy screamed, curling in on himself in pain as he bled.

“Vitalasy!” Subz cried, he shoved past Clown, and Clown let him trip over his scythe, cutting his legs in the process. Subz shielded Vitalasy with his body and glared up through his bangs. “I’ll tell you where he is if you let us go. We’ll never try to get him again.”

“Subz no-“ Vitalasy wheezed, Subz shushed him, and levelled his gaze with Clown.

Clown turned his head to the elevator, Rek stood just outside of it, staring with wide eyes. “No lie.”

Clown turned back and grinned, his bloodied eye creasing ever so slightly, “Where is he?”

Subz shakily pulled a key card from his pockets, “He’s in a hidden room, turn the corner up there,” He pointed, “And underneath a painting of a cage is a light switch, place the key card against it.”

Clown scoffed, and walked past the cowering pair, “Wow, how original.” He snatched the key card as he left them. “Hope he bleeds out.” He spat as he past them, Subz glowered.

-

The room was pitch black as the wall rose to reveal it, and the two stare in horror as the only lights within it was the purple glow of Ultra Violet’s eyes.

Rek spoke into his comm quietly, “We found him.”

He sat in a chair, not even tied up, nothing but the cuffs on his wrists as a form of restraint.

Clown rushed forward, falling to his knees and skidding to a stop in front of Ultra Violet. “Lavender? Lavender?” He said, staring into the man’s eyes. He looked to his hands and stared at the cuffs. “He’s cuffed, Rek, do you have anything-“

“Got it.” Rek said, joining Clown’s side and sitting on his own knees, he pulled out a slim metal object, when he flicked it on it hummed red, he held it against the cuffs and watched the silvery metal melt until he could tear it off.

The two winced at the sight of where the teeth of the cuffs had bit, small holes and indents across his wrists, purple bruises surrounding them.

“I’m so sorry Ultra.” Rek said with a shaky breath, “We need to get him out of here.”

Clown continued to stare into his eyes, “Is he...” Panic built in his chest.

“Ultra?” Rek said, sounding more panicked, “Ultra are you breathing?!” He asked, and shoved Clown out of the way as he pressed his ear against his chest. It was slow. So, so, very slow. “Why is he breathing so slow?!” Rek asked.

“His mask. His mask could be affecting his breathing.” Clown thought, his hand rose slowly toward his mask, he looked at Rek for permission.

Rek took a deep breath and nodded.

Clown slowly and gently pulled down the mask, his eyes widened. “No...” He whispered, and he

shoved off the hood.

“Clown! -“ Rek shouted, but he couldn’t hear him anymore.

Clown stared into the face of Branzy, his barista, his beloved barista and the only person who had ever stolen his heart. Branzy stared back, white curls disturbed and not in his usual style, his brown eyes a shining purple that pulsed like a heartbeat. It was unnerving how he gazed, and Clown found himself mesmerised.

It wasn’t just Ultra, the kindest vigilante he had met, that they had hurt. It was Branzy. His Branzy. His beloved Branzy. His grip tightened around the chair’s handles, it near splintered under his grip.

“Branzy.” He whispered, his hand shakily reaching out, cupping the mans face, it didn’t lean into his touch, he didn’t even move. “Branzy, Branzy it’s me.” He whispered, his voice rising in pitch. “Branzy!” He shouted.

“Clown-“ Rek said, trying to pull him off.

Clown grabbed his mask and threw it aside, Rek stepped back in shock. Clown smiled at Branzy, his eyes searching his, “Branzy!” He said, his voice cracked, quivering as he spoke, “Branzy it’s me Clown! Branzy!” He said, his smile shaking. “Branzy!” He cried again, his eye stung as salt mixed with the blood, tears cascading down his cheeks.

“Branzy!” He gripped his shoulders and stared at him, eye to eye. “Branzy, I’m right here, I’m here now, I’ll keep you safe, you’ll never have to worry again! I-I’ll make sure you’re only ever happy, I’ll get you a dog or an axolotl and, and, some really nice purple clothes! You like purple, right?”

He covered his mouth as a sob left it, “Branzy?” He asked, and the eyes stared. “I’ll protect you, I’m sorry I failed this time, but I’ll never mess up again, I promise!” He bargained; the eyes pulsed. “Branzy?”

“Clown, come on, he’s... He’s not all there.”

Clown chuckled and shoved away the hand Rek offered, “No, no! Don’t be stupid!” He laughed wetly, smiling manically as he stared into Branzy’s eyes. “He’s looking right at me.” He whispered lovingly.

Rek pulled Clown to his feet, they shook against his weight, “He’s looking through you,” He said sombrely, “not at you.”

Chapter End Notes

Where did Branzy go? Oh no, I can’t find his soul, how can I write about a body without a soul? Guess we won’t be hearing from him for a while, huh?

Himself

Chapter Summary

Each day moves by slowly when Branzly isn't there. Where is he anyway?

Chapter Notes

A very special thank you to some wonderful fanart we received for the last chapter! Never expected to get screamed at so much! That sure was funny!

[This absolutely gorgeous art by the wonderful aoikitty, so awesome!!!](#)

[Also this beautiful art by my beloved blue goons!!!](#)

If you ever make any fanart you can @ me on tumblr @okaydontjudgemebut, please don't @ me on twitter if you know my @ as I don't want the creators finding me lol, I'll likely see it on twt anyway <3.

Otherwise, you are welcome to join the wonderful [lifesteal brainrotting discord](#) I'm on there a lot and love talking to people <3

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

They didn't have anywhere to go.

That was Rek's first realisation as all escaped from the heroes' building, making their escape. He remembered watching Clown carry him in his arms, the jostle of his limp body, the way his eyes glowed into the now night sky. Like a night light one would have as a child. His face was so incredibly neutral it was uncomfortable. The jaw relaxed, mouth a thin line, not a crease in sight.

Rek knew his face was the opposite, as he stumbled and struggled to keep up with Clown's rapid footsteps as they ran.

Rek had skidded to a stop when they were safely away, the group all convening in an alley hidden from the public's sight. "We- We can't go to the base." He said, realisation dawning on him far slower than it should have.

"Why not?" Spepticle asked, words coming out choppy as he was catching his breath.

"Chief. Chief knows where it is, we can't keep him there." Rek said, "They had no reason to get us there before, since they were preoccupied with Branzly... But now..."

"That's their only lead on us." Clown finished, eyes never leaving Branzly.

That's when everyone had jolted, and Rek should have found it funny, how slow everyone was to notice that Clown was completely unmasked. Rek's second realisation that night had been that he was too stressed to even notice he had grabbed the mask on the way out. A large gap was where one of the eyes would be, cracked.

Everyone looked at Clown, as blood dripped sluggishly from the injured eye.

“Clown... Your mask-“ Parrot said, wings flapping nervously.

“I have an apartment. No one knows where it is. We can go there.” Clown said, either blind to what he had revealed to everyone or just uncaring. Maybe he hadn’t even noticed, his gaze was still on Ultra Violet.

“You’d let us stay there?” Cube asked, voice shocked.

Clown laughed, a bitter sound. “Even if you were all vigilantes before this, you’re villains now. You worked with me and directly went against heroes in front of the public.” He held Branzy closer to his chest, fingers curling around his leg and shoulder, “Besides, we’re all here for Branzy, I’d like to think we’re going to stick together until he’s awake.”

Rek had nodded swiftly, “You’re right. Whether we like it or not, we need a safe place to go and a place to keep Branzy where we can look after him. Our base is compromised, so Clown is the next best thing. We all in?”

The team nodded, putting on brave faces for the sake of their mutual friend.

They didn’t need to bother; it wasn’t like he could see them.

-

Marble countertops. A kitchen island with a bowl of lemons. Black and red accented furniture. Couches with no lumps. Dark oak doors with golden doorknobs.

Rek had never been in such a fancy estate, and neither had many of the other vigilantes. It wasn’t a paying gig, after all. But it appeared villainy was.

Stacks of money tied neatly sat on counters and in corners, no one dared to even touch them.

Despite the clean and pristine appearance of the high-rise apartment belonging to none other than Clown, there were now some things that did not fit the overall vibe of his home.

A calendar stuck to the fridge; six days marked off. A pair of headphones left by the bowl of lemons, Spepticle was responsible for that. Rek’s jacket hung over the couch. A few stray feathers littered the floor, no doubt from Parrot and his worrying. It appeared even Clown’s friends were staying over more frequently despite having no need to, they weren’t the ones being sought out by heroes, yet Mid’s crown and Spoke’s headband found themselves strewn about.

There was so much to look at, to mull over, an outsider could easily spend hours puzzling over how the deadliest villain was letting so many lowly vigilantes get away with finding themselves at home in his apartment. How they were still there, still alive, not yet kicked to the curb, not yet killed beneath his blade for their mistreatment of his home.

There was no need to ponder over that though, they all knew why he wasn’t reprimanding them.

It was because he never left Branzy’s room.

Rek stared at the large dark oak door with red trim around the edge, it faced the kitchen directly, a

constant reminder of their continued failure. He rests his head on his arms, allowing himself to sigh, burdened by the knowledge that the door may remain shut for far, far longer.

“Hey Rek!” Spepticle called, walking into the kitchen with ease that Rek wished he had. He smiled tensely at his friend, offering a weak wave. “How goes the thinking?” He asked, leaning against the counter.

“It’s... going.” He sighed, scratching at his scalp.

“Pretty swanky base though, right?” Spepticle said, spinning around in the room with a giddy laugh, he hadn’t shut up about the apartment’s appearance since they ‘moved in’, “Branzy is gonna FLIP at how fancy it looks when he gets back!”

Rek couldn’t help but let a bittersweet smile form at Spepticles optimism, ‘when’, sure... ‘If’ was a safer bet.

No. Rek shook his head of the thought, he couldn’t give up on Branzy, he was the strongest and bravest person he knew! *Knows!* Dammit, he’s not gone yet.

Casting a glance to the door, Rek frowned, “Has anyone checked on him today?” He murmured, and Spepticle scratched his chin in thought.

“Not that I know of.”

Rek let out a breath of air and stood up, walking with shaky legs to the door. “Guess I’ll go.” Despite the sight inside constantly leaving him feeling sick to his stomach, the thought of not knowing if anything had changed made Rek feel even sicker. He rose his fist and knocked a couple times, waiting with an ear pressed against the door.

“What.” Came the bitter growl from inside, and Rek winced.

“Can I check on... Branzy?” Rek asked, and he listened to the sounds of frustration from inside before a huff of affirmative responded. He opened the door slowly, peeking in and shutting behind himself just as quickly.

It was not a nice sight, no matter how many times he saw it, he would never get used to it.

The room was all red and black, a large comfortable bed in the middle of the room against the back wall, with draping fabrics falling from the beds canopy. The wallpaper was dark brown, gold detailing along the middle of it and red trim against the floor and ceiling. A chandelier lit the room in a soft glow, the bedside tables were covered in empty potion bottles and medicine. Opposite the door to enter was floor to ceiling windows, which would have let in a lot of light, but the curtains had been closed and never opened since Branzy arrived.

Oh right... Branzy.

Branzy lay in the centre on the bed, heavy quilts pulling up to his chin, arms sticking out where IV drips were attached to him. They had shut his eyes once they had settled him in the bed, well, not really *they*, Spepticle had shut them.

“Can you imagine having eyes that dry when he gets back? It’s gonna be so annoying!” He had reasoned, which was a valid point, but they all knew that it was easier to look at a resting body with shut eyes then open.

His eyelids continued to pulse purple, and Rek felt his grief grow at the sight of them.

“What do you want, Rek?” Clown asked, but it came off as a warning. His mask was on, a new one, his previous had been broken due to the arrow. He sat beside Branzy on a chair by the bed, his gaze firmly on the resting man’s face.

“I wanted to see how he was.” Rek explained, creeping closer and sighing as he looked at Branzy. If he didn’t know better, he’d think he looked peaceful.

“Well, you’ve seen him.” Clown mumbled, leaning on the bed with his head cushioned on his folded arms.

“You think that... Maybe you should head out of this room sometime buddy? I’m happy to take over watching him-“

“As much as I want to choke Vitalasy with his own intestines,” Rek grimaced at the imagery, “I’d like to be here when Branzy wakes up. Besides, I’m sure he will appreciate me leaving the choice up to him.”

Rek grabbed another chair left in the corner and pulled it besides Clown, sitting down and preparing himself for a conversation that would likely be unpleasant.

“If he says no to you killing him... Would you?”

“Course.” Clown said, laughing lightly, “It’s his choice.”

“You wouldn’t go behind his back to hurt him?”

“Well, I didn’t say that, now did I?” Clown finally broke his gaze from looking at Branzy to look at Rek, Rek had the feeling he was grinning, “I won’t kill him, but that doesn’t mean I won’t torture him at every opportunity I get.”

Clown looked back to Branzy and Rek wrung his hands.

Part of him was glad that Clown had such... Loyalty? Appreciation? Love? Whatever it was, he was thankful he had it for Branzy, since now they had a place to stay, but also...

“Why do you... like Ultra so much? I mean, you only saw him as a vigilante a few times, and while he did mention you saw him at his civilian job, he never explained the extent of what that meant so... Why? What about him makes you care so much?”

Clown drummed his fingertips on the bedsheets, before reaching them out and holding just the end of Branzy’s fingers.

“He treats me like a human, I don’t... feel like one.” Clown explained, eerily monotone, “When you’re talking to me you may as well be talking to a loaded gun.”

Rek leaned back, staring up at the ceiling rather than the dangerous man beside him, “You really believe that?”

“I know I’m feared for a reason.”

Rek nodded in agreement. “What was Ultra, no wait, Lavender, no, Violet- *Branzy*, whatever and whoever he is, what was he like, as you knew him?”

“You didn’t know him?” Clown asked in confusion.

“Well, I did, of course,” He pulled a knee up to his chest, “As a vigilante. He was... stupid, and

impulsive, and never really thought about what he was going to say or do, even when we planned things, he always managed to improv something.” He chuckled to himself,

“And he was so, so kind, willing to help all of us. You know, ages ago us vigilantes went through a bit of a spat, and split in two, and he kept helping all of us, never picking a side.

It was so him, you know? As long as we were his friends, and he was ours, he didn’t really care about what he was doing, so long as he was helping us.”

Clown nodded, “Yeah, I guess he’s always been like that then. I think... Looking back on it all now I think he told me his origin story, all he ever wanted to do was help people.” Clown looked past Branzzy, toward the curtain, and Rek could tell he was lost in a memory.

“He always helps everyone, and I wonder if it ever crossed his mind to help himself.” Rek whispered.

Clown didn’t answer for a while, just continued to stare, until; “He mentioned you, saving someone, and you asked him how he saw the crime happening.”

Rek laughed, “I remember that, I was so confused, we became fast friends afterward. He was so committed to helping us out so we could help others.”

Clown ran his fingers along Branzzy’s hand. “He... He was... It’s hard to describe Branzzy. He was really good at his job, and he could ramble on for hours.”

“Yep, that sure sounds like Ultra.”

Clown chuckled, “I can’t wait to hear him talk again, just... Talk. About anything, I don’t even care if he repeats a story I’ve heard before.” His grip tightened on the hand. “I just...” He cut himself off, and Rek didn’t hear anything from him when he tried to start up conversation, he decided to leave it at that and see himself out.

-

“Hey guys.” Cube said, exiting from a guest bedroom, clipboard on hand, he strode over to the calendar and marked off another day.

He found himself nervously glancing to the door facing the kitchen counter. “Has... He come out?”

Rek scoffed lightly, body draped across the couch, “Who? Clown or Branzzy? They’re both still where they have been for the past week Cube.” He sighed, letting an arm fall over his eyes. “Any idea what’s happening?”

Cube worried his lip nervously, “I have... a working theory, but I’d like to see Ultra again just to confirm it.”

“What’s going on?” Spoke’s voice said, waltzing into the living room like he owned the place, which honestly was truer than all the other current occupants.

“Cube’s gonna do a check-up on Lavender.” Rek summarised, continuing to slump on the couch. “Any luck with your soul reaching thing?”

The first thing the group had tried was teleporting Branzzy, Spoke had tried his best and found himself unable to connect, unsure why, and confused. When they found him, it was, well, fairly obvious why.

How can you teleport a soul when it isn’t even in the body?

“No...” Spoke grumbled, rubbing his face. “Though I can definitely tell why now, I thought maybe I could teleport his soul to his body, but after a few tests I have come to a realisation.”

“Which is?” Cube said, clicking his pen and writing in his clipboard, intrigued about the other’s power.

“Basically, when I teleport someone, I am rearranging their matter out of one place into another. To tap into their body, I need to access their soul and well... I can’t teleport souls, I just use them as a way to grasp the body’s matter.”

“Have you tried grasping just the soul?” Cube asked and Spoke slouched.

“I tried everything I could think of, but I can’t, it’s not within my capabilities.”

Cube rubbed his forehead, “Damn, this would be so much easier if we could teleport him...”

“But he should just come back automatically!” Rek shouted from the couch.

“That’s exactly what my theory is about, oh right, I need to check on him...” Cube winced, glancing at the door yet again.

Spoke and Rek eyed each other, knowing glints in their eyes, they both shot Cube a thumbs up. “Good luck!” They said in unison.

Cube took a deep breath and smoothed out his lab coat, walking close to the dark oak door. He rose his fist and knocked.

It took a moment before a croaky, “Come in.” Answered. Cube nodded to the two friends before he opened the door and entered.

Branzzy’s body lay still as always, breathing slow, IV’s all in, and eyes...

Still, the eyelids glowed a pulsing purple, and Cube sighed with dejection at the lack of change.

“Cube.” Clown greeted, and Cube pulled his eyes from the living corpse to Clown. He was sat in his chair pulled close to the bed, hand gripping Branzzy’s wrist, tapping out the slow pulse he had.

“Hey Clown.” Cube smiled sadly, “Can I give him a check-up?”

Clown stood up and gestured for Cube to take the chair, he leant against the wall. Out of respect, Cube ignored the tremors in his shoulders as he tightly gripped his arms. Cube sat in the chair, checking his pulse, noting it in his clipboard, he changed out the IV drips and summoned his courage for what he hated the most.

He leaned over Branzzy, and stared into his face, peeling back his eyelids, looking into them for any change in his pupils. He shone a light on them, and frowned as they failed to react, like always.

“Well?” Clown asked, impatiently tapping his arm.

“No change.” Cube muttered, wincing as Clown hissed to himself.

It was always no change. He was as skinny as when they saved him, pulse the same slow metronome, body as unresponsive as ever. The only change over his week under their protection was the cut on his arm, which had been healing naturally... Just undeniable slow. They sped it up with potions.

At first, they had been hopeful. The cuffs were off, and when the poison left his system, he should be brought back. It's how his power always worked! When he was out too long, *it forced him back*. But... It hadn't. Not a twitch, not a blink, not a breath out of rhythm. The same... lifeless, Ultra Violet as the one they found.

The more they looked at his glowing eyes, the more the team was growing to despise the colour purple.

“Okay well... I think... I think I have a theory of what's happening.” Cube said, and Clown snapped his head to him, “But before I tell it, I want to check out your eye.” Cube reasoned.

Clown growled lowly, voice raspy as he spat a reply, “Do not try and blackmail me when I offered you a place to reside.”

“It's not blackmail, Clown.” Cube sighed, “It's concern.”

Clown stiffened before he sighed with resignation, slowly reaching to his mask and taking it off with a grunt. Cube smiled at that. He was happy Clown trusted them, even if the trust was purely built off their mutual love for the vigilante laying in the bed. They all wanted Branzzy to be safe.

And his safety relied on the safety of every member under the apartment's roof. Thus, Cube took on the role of team doctor.

He stepped closer and ushered Clown to lean down, pulling back the medical eyepatch and surveying the eyes healing process. The potions were working well.

“Good.” Cube said with a smile, “Still, even though you can see, keep the eyepatch on so it heals fully. I'm afraid however the colour won't return, potions can have that weird side effect on wounds like this.”

“That's fine. Not like anyone's going to see my eyes.” He shoved his mask back on, after Cube finished rebandaging the wound, covering the red and grey irises. “Now, your theory?”

“Let me tell it to the whole group, so I won't need to repeat.”

Clown clenched his fists. “I won't leave him.”

“I know.” Cube smiled, “We'll gather in here then.”

Everyone in the vigilante group gathered around Branzý's bed, having pulled in available chairs or settling on standing, Cube stood in front of the bed, staring at his clipboard with an air of power surrounding him as he commanded the room's attention.

"Alright." Parrot said, "Spill."

Cube nodded, "Alright. Here's what I believe has happened." He sat on the edge of the bed, Clown glared at him beneath his mask for the action, as if the very bed Branzý lay on were sacred ground. "Ultra-Violet- *Branzy's* powers have completely altered since being away from his 'vessel', so to speak, for so long. I believe that his mind grew used to having no tether, that's his body, so it stopped forcing him back in."

The crowd nodded, following along.

"So he can't go back automatically?" Rek asked quietly.

"No. I do not think so." Cube shook his head, "But! I do think he can go back manually."

That made a fair few members scoot to the edge of their seats, hope brewing in their eyes.

"I believe that Branzý is not going back into his body, not because he can't, but because he doesn't know where it is. The cuffs stopped him going back in originally, it is likely he lost track of his body when it moved to a second location, and he since has not been able to locate it to go back."

"And it didn't help that we moved it to Clown's apartment, a place he definitely doesn't know about or would think to check." Groaned Jaron.

Cube winced, "Well, yes, but I have no clue where we could have taken him. None of us know where his home is."

"So, to summarise, Ultra can't get back in his body because he doesn't know where it is, and we are essentially hiding it from him." Spepticle said, red skin turning pinker and paler with each word.

Cube fiddled with his clipboard for a moment, "Yes." He whispered.

Clown cracked his knuckles, "Okay. What do we do now?" He asked quietly, no matter the volume however, his voice demanded attention.

"I think... We should take the body to places he frequents. He probably is floating around somewhere he likes to go, that or he has just completely run away."

"Flown away you mean... And, how on Earth are we going to pull, what is basically just a breathing corpse--"

"Watch it." Clown growled.

"What is basically a sleeping person, all around to different places without arising suspicion?" Rek argued.

Everyone paused as they contemplated that, frowns appearing on many faces and terrible suggestions being thrown into the mix.

"Body bag?"

"Are you stupid--"

“Maybe a pram? A big one?”

“That’s somehow worse.”

“I could turn into Branzy and whenever someone asks why he is asleep I just take his place and say I’m fine-“

“That’s so convoluted.”

Spepticle frowned at his debunked suggestion before lighting up brightly, “Oh! We overlooked the easiest solution!” The group looked at him with various levels of skepticism. “We could... Piggyback him.”

...

“Hmm, I mean, it’d look more natural.”

“Like a friend who just fell asleep.”

“Still weird but could actually work.”

Clown let out a laugh, surprising the group, who were very used to him being mournful, “Okay, I agree that piggybacking a sleeping friend is something that we can do, but are you forgetting we are all criminals?”

That gave everyone pause. Spepticle groaned, “I mean, I can shift so that I’m not red? That’ll divert attention at least.”

“We can’t all go, clearly, it’ll rouse too much suspicion.” Parrot grunted, fiddling with a feather.

“Okay, I’m fine going undisguised.” Rek said with a shrug, “Pretty sure you’ve all seen me casual anywho.”

“I wanna go too!” Spepticle agreed.

“I’d like to go to ensure Ultra is stable.” Cube added.

“I can hide my wings, having someone who can fly away quickly may be useful if we are spotted, that way I can grab backup or at least distract.” Parrot said.

Rek nodded, “Alright, so who’s carrying Ultra?”

“Me.”

The three turned to stare at Clown, frowning.

“...Undisguised?”

“No.” Clown shrugged, “I need to be ready for battle.”

“But... Clown if you-“ Parrot scrubbed a hand down his face in slight frustration, “If you just go as yourself, it negates the entire point of us trying to blend as regular citizens!”

“Don’t care. I wanna carry Branzy.”

“Clown, how about you bring your mask and stuff in a bag with us, but go as a citizen? Then you

can-“

“We’re going places Branzzy goes right?”

“Yes.”

“I don’t want people recognising me based off my voice.”

“Then don’t talk!” Parrot hissed, “Just, come on dude.”

Clown crossed his arms with a huff, “I’ll just go out and pretend I kidnapped him or something.”

“Yeah, with a gaggle of three regular-looking dudes trailing behind, super chill.”

“I can do this alone.” He shot back.

“No, you can’t, I need to be there to make sure Lavender is okay!” Cube cut in, “And, I highly doubt you know where we all hung out as a vigilante team, do you?”

Clown hunched his shoulders and sighed, “Fine, but I’m wearing my mask, just under a hood.”

Parrot looked ready to strangle Clown, he sighed, “Okay, sure, if that’s the best we’re getting. Dress normal, hood up, head down, mask on. Fine. We can work with that.”

“We should probably go at night, less people that way.” Rek said, peeling back the curtain lightly, everyone winced as some light flooded the room, Branzzy’s body didn’t even flinch at the change of lighting.

“Alright, reconvene at night, I say we stop by the old base, just the outside first, then our old hang out spot.”

“I’m for that, you gonna be good carrying him Clown? He’s probably heavy.” Rek asked cautiously, Clown nodded hastily.

“I’ll be fine.”

“Awesome, operation, bring back Ultra is a go!” Rek put his hand down, a few piling their hands on tops.

“Can we just use his name? The alteration is way more pleasing.” Spepticle piped up.

“Argh, fine, Operation: Bring Back Branzzy, is a go!” Rek snagged Clown’s wrist and forced him to participate, they vigilantes rose their hands up with a cheer, and Clown sighed in mock frustration.

He was glad Branzzy had such good friends looking out for him.

-

“Our base was so good, I kind of miss it to be honest! Don’t worry though Clown, your house is way fancier!” Spepticle said, a pep in his step as he led the trailing group behind him. Clown adjusted his grip on the man laying across his back, his head resting on his shoulder. Clown held onto his legs tightly, hoping by-passers just thought he was piggybacking a sleeping friend.

“Glad you like it Speppy, but I have been to your base before, and I gotta disagree on how ‘good’ it

was.” Clown grunted.

Spepticle pouted, “It was a little rundown, but a perfectly fine base.”

“It was well concealed and worked for what we needed.” Parrot added.

“And I had my own room I could contact you guys’ in.” Cube smiled, “Shame that it’s likely been raided.”

“Well, only one way to find out... Then again...” Rek looked up at the decrepit building as it loomed over them. “I don’t really want to take my chances and go inside to an ambush.”

“I’ll fly up and check in the windows.” Parrot offered, launching into the air with one beat of his wings, he hovered by one of the windows, clawed talons resting on the window sill as he peaked in. “Well it’s definitely raided!” He called from above them, slowly falling down back beside the group. “Our stuff has been all torn apart.” He grumbled.

“Aw...” Spepticle whined, “Well, not all is lost, maybe Ultra is here!” The four turned to Clown, looking at Branzzy’s resting face with irritation.

“He’s still out.” Clown huffed, tightening his hold. “Call for him maybe?” He asked.

“Ultra!” Rek called toward the building, Parrot flew up and into it, muffled noises of calling coming from inside.

“Ultra come on back into your body! We got it right here!”

Some strangers started walking past and looked to the yelling criminals with confusion.

“Uh, he’s asleep.” Spepticle said quickly, slapping on a fake smile and leaning against Clown in false casualness. Clown kept his head down, hiding his masked face under his hood. “Just calling for our friend before we leave!”

“Some heroes came by here before; I’d be careful exploring that building if I were you.” One of the strangers said, a grimace on their face, “No idea who was squatting in there, but they did not take kindly to it.”

Another stranger sighed sadly, “First they take away that lovely purple vigilante, and now this? Really, it’s a wonder why they haven’t been decommissioned.”

“They did what?” Clown said quickly, nearly snapping his gaze to meet theirs but managing to hide his shock.

“Didn’t you see the news? About a week ago some villains and vigilantes attacked the heroes’ base...” The civilian said conspiratorially, “Apparently the hero took someone from them, and the purple vigilante hasn’t been seen since. It’s likely the heroes took him; we can only hope the vigilantes got him back.”

“What makes you so sure the villains didn’t take him?” Cube asked.

The strangers laughed, “We all know heroes don’t do anything for us here, they hate any vigilantes who show them up. Villains often work with them! Just like how that ClownPierce worked with the purple one when robbing a bank.” They chuckled, “I can’t wait for them to expose those heroes, I’m sick of paying taxes going to such useless protectors.”

“Huh. Maybe dismantling the system won’t be as hard as we thought.” Clown whispered, Spepticle smiled at the strangers, nodding in agreement as they made their way to leave.

Parrot flew back down, glancing at the retreating backs of the civilians. “What was that about?”

“Some vigilante supporters, getting on the public’s side may not be all that challenging.” Rek grinned, before slipping to a frown, “So, no Ultra here then?”

“He hasn’t woken, so no, I guess.” Clown grumbled. “Where else can we go?”

“We had two main hangout spots; we’ll head to the closest now.” Rek said, guiding them, “It’s actually not at all far.”

-

Clown sat on the rooftop of a tall building, overlooking the empty streets and enjoying the peace and quiet of the neighbourhood. He shook Branzy, who he had placed beside him, “Hey, Branzy, want to come back now?” He asked, the body slumped, and he sighed.

“Don’t lose hope, this was just one of two spots, and not the one we went to most.” Rek encouraged, patting Clown’s shoulder and moving to sit beside him, legs dangling over the edge. “I really hope Branzy can come back to his body, I hope he isn’t just watching and... unable to go in.”

“That can’t be the case, that’d be... Well that just can’t be the case.” Cube debunked firmly, “I... No.”

“What if we don’t find him tonight?” Spepticle whispered, hope dwindling.

“Then we search every night after this one.” Parrot said, pulling his friend to his side. “He wouldn’t give up on us, we won’t give up on him.”

“Yeah, you’re right.” Spepticle smiled slightly, “I wonder if he’d like a jam sandwich when he wakes up, that was like the only thing he ever brought.”

Rek giggled, and Clown managed a soft smile.

“Welp, on to the next one.” He said up, stretching his neck and reaching to pick up Branzy once again.

-

“This was our second hang out spot, just up ahead.” Rek explained, grunting as they walked up the cobbled pathway beside the road. “It was a bit busier than the other spot, we liked to watch the rare car go past as he talked.”

“Plus it’s a nice tall building! Nice, pointed roof with a flat bit, perfect for sitting or leaning against to look at the stars.” Spepticle described, eyes squinting as he searched.

Clown shifted his hands slightly as he continued to carry Branzy, the shine of his eyes reflected

ever so slightly off his white mask. “How far is it?”

“One more block, look, you can see it!” Rek pointed, and Clown tilted his head, he noticed a rather tall building with a pointed roof, but the rest of it was mostly obscured by other houses.

The group continued their walk, Rek describing the average vibe of any night they met up there.

“We’d usually eat at this spot since it is a bit shielded from others’ views. It was nice, usually it was just me, Spepticle and-“

Rek stopped walking and shot out an arm, everyone else froze, and waited for Rek’s call.

“A trap?” Parrot whispered, pulling himself close to Rek’s side and readying a weapon in his grasp.

“Worse.” Rek muttered, he pointed up toward the rooftop, the group followed his line of sight.

Two shiny black shoes rocked gently, attached to a pair of legs wearing navy dress pants. A quiet murmur of a voice came from the person sitting on the ledge, Clown angled his head up to try and make out the voice.

“I’m just... I never expected this would happen, you know? I just hope you’re okay. I hope you can’t hear me because that means you’re not back in your body but... You know I wouldn’t have agreed to this if I knew what the outcome would become, right Lavender?” The voice quietly spoke.

Clown grit his teeth, recognising the voice, the dress pants, the shoes and the fact he was digging his fingers into Branzzy. He collected himself and relaxed his grip, settling on glaring up at the traitorous fool who was the catalyst to Branzzy’s capture.

“Chief.” Spepticle whispered, grief coating his tongue.

“Parrot, can you fly up and make sure he doesn’t leave?” Clown asked, Parrot nodded, launching into the air.

The four of them watched with various expressions on their faces, Rek and Clown were furious, though only Rek’s snarl was visible. Cube and Spepticle looked on with regretful grief, the knowledge that a good friend had betrayed them, and still went to a spot that had once been theirs making them wonder if there was any friendship worth salvaging.

The legs left the edge as Chief rose to stand, and Parrot called for them to come up. They ascended the nearby fire escape, arriving at the rooftop and glaring down at the hero before them. Clown hung back, letting his head peek over the edge of the roof, hiding Branzzy from Chief’s view.

Chief stared at the group, illuminated by the city lights in the distance, his tentacle hair waved lightly in the breeze, slightly covering his expression, one of remorse. He stood his ground, fists clenched.

“I didn’t think you’d ever come back here.” He muttered.

“Yeah, well, we didn’t think you would either.” Spepticle replied.

“What are you doing here Chief? This is a spot for *vigilantes*, not heroes.” Rek spat, “Don’t think we’ve forgotten your utter betrayal, where were you when we rescued Branzzy anyway, huh? Couldn’t even be bothered to be by his side.”

Chief clenched his teeth and snapped his gaze away, muttering something under his breath with a hiss.

“What was that? Couldn’t hear you, not that I especially want to listen to a traitor like you.” Parrot scoffed, pulling out a sword from his sheath, he pointed it toward Chief.

“I said I was quitting!” Chief snapped, turning his head back to them, tears pricking at his eyes. “I was quitting being a hero! I when to quit before you all raided us because I couldn’t do it anymore! They put me in lockdown so that I wouldn’t think about helping you guys!”

He wrapped his arms around his waist, hugging himself, “I never thought that they’d completely mess him up, the cut was one thing, but then... then they just left him there! When they didn’t know how to bring him back it was just... Their ideas were so awful, Vitalasy suggested electroshocking him! Why would that work?! Cutting him didn’t bring him back why would another type of pain do it?!” He shouted, curling in on himself.

“Guilt was eating away at me, I couldn’t do it, I decided to quit. I wanted to tell you all where he was but then he was out of his cell and hidden and I was being put in lockdown and then-“ He cut himself off with a sob, “And I still don’t know if he’s back, I keep talking up here each night, I hope he can hear me, if he isn’t back in his body yet.”

Clown casted a quick glance to Branzzy, his eyes still shining.

“He’s not here.” He said, and Chief snapped his head to Clown with a sniffle.

“He’s not?”

“Not right now at least,” Clown stepped up onto the roof, and Chief gasped at the sight of Branzzy.

“Lavender-“ He said, reaching for him. Both Parrot and Clown drew their weapons, pointing them at Chief before he even thought of approaching. He slunk back.

“Don’t think you can spill a sob story and be forgiven.” Clown chuckled darkly, “You did this to him. And I don’t care if that fact keeps you up at night. You deserve to suffer for what you did.”

“In the end it isn’t up to us to forgive you, it’s up to Ultra.” Parrot said sternly.

The rest of them nodded, and Rek turned his back on Chief. “Ultra, are you here? Go back in your body if you are.”

They waited, just like last time, and nothing happened. They sighed regretfully and turned to leave.

“If you really wanted to make up for it...” Rek muttered, and Chief perked up. “Find out how to dismantle the hero system that made you heroes operate that way.”

The desperation and shame washed off of Chief’s face, replaced by sheer determination. “I will.” He said firmly, tilting his chin high, “For Lavender.”

Rek rose a fist, “For Lavender.” He whispered in agreement, the last to leave.

As the five reached the bottom of the building Spepticle shoved his palms against his eyes, “Where now?” He whispered shakily and Parrot sighed.

“I don’t know. We don’t know where his house was, or any civilian place he went to frequently. I’m at a loss here.”

Clown rose his head, "I know where we need to go."

Rek turned to him, "Where?"

"His work. The One Stop Hot Shop." Clown grinned beneath his mask, walking forward in long strides, "I don't know about you, but I'd kill for an iced coffee right about now."

-

As the group arrived at the coffee shop they noticed on the door and across the windows were missing posters. Rek slumped at the sight of them.

[Missing: Branzzy, white hair, brown eyes. Last seen leaving work on Tuesday]

"It's been so long since I saw his regular eyes." Cube commented with a frown.

Clown couldn't help but stare at the picture of Branzzy, a bright smile on his face, peace sign facing the camera, there was a server behind him that Clown recognised as his co-worker he had seen a few times. He wondered if he'd get to see Branzzy that happy again.

"Uh, guys, won't they recognise the sleeping body on Clown?" Spepticle asked, pointing to the slumped body with concern.

"They sure will, and I don't care if they do." Clown said, "This is the only place I can imagine him going."

The bell by the door rang coldly into the night air, and Clown stepped forward with Branzzy on his back, a determined look on his expression as he entered the shop.

The server behind the counter jolted at his appearance, shuffling back before levelling him with a hard glare. "*You.*" They hissed, pressing their back against the wall. "You were the one who took him?! I should have known."

"No, I wasn't. The heroes kidnapped him, and I saved him. They messed him up though, he's been in a coma." Clown explained, placing Branzzy in the booth seat where he normally would sit across from him.

"What? Why would the heroes want him?" The server asked, edging toward the door to the backroom.

"To... hold against me." Clown lied, and the server looked near tears. Clown wondered why they would believe him, then again, his infatuation was fairly obvious.

"Will he wake up soon?"

"Here's hoping." Clown said, and the bell on the door rang again, the vigilantes walking in curiously.

"Oh! Uh! You may not want to-" The server said, ready to ward them away from the villain.

"They're with me, Branzzy's friends."

"Oh." They said, clutching at their heart, "He... He rarely told us much about his friends." They pointed at Clown with a shaking finger, "Y-You didn't hurt him, and won't hurt him, right?"

“Of course not. Come on, you know I didn’t come here just for the coffee.” Clown said, tone light, hoping to ease their worries.

It worked, the server quirked a lip and sighed, “You... You have ten minutes before I call the cops.”

“Got it.” Clown nodded, sitting down across from Branzy.

The server slunk into the backroom, and the vigilantes breathed a sigh of relief.

“How much of a regular were you?” Parrot asked curiously.

“Regular enough.” Clown whispered, staring across at Branzy. “Branzy, Branzy come back now.” He asked. He could feel wasps in his stomach, grip tightening on the edge of the table as he looked across at the sleeping face of Branzy.

Please. He internally begged.

The rest of the vigilantes joined in, calling for their friend.

“Branzy! Branzy come back please!” Rek called.

“Branzy if you are here, please go back in your body!” Cube shouted.

“Branzy! We don’t have long here, please go back in!” Parrot yelled.

“Branzy! Please!” Spepticle ended.

They all continued to call for him, before drawing to silence as they got no response from the body.

“Well, that’s it.” Rek said, a dejected look on his face as he ran a hand through his hair. “This was the last spot.”

“Don’t give up just yet,” Parrot said, placing a hand on his friend’s shoulder, “he may have just explored all over the city, we can check different areas tomorrow.”

“Yeah, we won’t stop until every corner of the city has been checked!” Spepticle cheered, arms raised in triumph.

Clown rubbed the side of his head, staring down at the table as he struggled to keep himself stable. It didn’t matter where they went, if Branzy was moving, which he likely was, then they’d likely never run into him. They’ll just be running around while he does the same.

He could be gone forever.

“Clown?” Clown jolted, looking up at Parrot, the man smiled at him tensely. “You good? We’re heading out now, you wanna carry him?”

Clown nodded firmly, the idea of anyone else holding him sending a spike of fear into his heart, “Yeah, yeah, just... Give me a minute.” He turned his gaze back toward Branzy, the man sat across from him, eyelids glowing, head leaning against the back of the booth seat.

“We’ll be outside.” Parrot said, he squeezed his shoulder, and Clown wondered if he was weak now to not even consider murder at the action. How many times had he been reassured just this week?

The group left, and Clown listened to the bell ring as the door swung shut.

He took a shaky breath, hands carding into his hair as he tried to calm himself. He heard the sound of the fluorescent lights buzzing overhead, the low volume of the cafe's TV faded in and out as it played some old movie on repeat, but no Branzy. No Branzy talking to him, no Branzy tapping mindlessly at the counter or playing with the business cards as if he was a dealer at a casino, no Branzy walking over to him with a walk that looked more like dancing. No Branzy.

Just the shell of him before him, shut eyes, relaxed body, and no Branzy.

Clown released his hands from his hair, letting them rest on the table, curling into fists before he relaxed them completely. He sighed, staring at Branzy fully, taking in his lifeless face and imagining it was simply any other day he would come in. Imagining the soft smile that would grace his lips when he rambled.

Come on Branzy.

Clown sucked in a breath and rose a single finger up lightly.

Talk to me.

He tapped the table.

And it was like flicking a switch.

Branzy's eyes flung open, his entire body lurching forward and gasping in breath so quickly that it sounded like he was drowning.

“BRANZY!” Clown called, reaching over the table for him in shock.

Branzy gasped and wheezed, tears forming in his eyes far too quickly and falling even faster, leaving track lines against his cheeks that steadily turned red as he continued his panicked breathing.

“Branzy! Branzy I'm here, it's okay Branzy!” Clown cried, he scrambled out of his seat and ran to his side.

Branzy looked around everywhere, broken sobs leaving his mouth as he hissed and whined in his seat, stumbling out of it and nearly toppling to the floor.

“Branzy! Please, you need to focus on breathing-“ Clown begun.

Branzy sucked in another breath, taking a step and shouting the moment he made contact against the floor. He swayed, breathing finally evening, and Clown watched as his eyes rolled back into his head and he collapsed to the floor, only to be intercepted by Clown arms as he caught him.

The vigilantes that were waiting outside burst in, bell ringing far too loud and voices coming out even louder. Clown felt his own breathing quicken substantially as he stared at Branzy, a mantra of regret and fear etching itself in his brain.

No, no, no, no, I just got him back, no, no, no, this is all my fault, no, no no-

“Clown!” Cube said, and he was smiling through tears, “Clown he's okay! He's okay Clown! Look! His eyes!”

So Clown did, his own eyes focusing as he blinked through the wetness in them.

There was no purple glow.

And his chest rose and fell, at a much firmer pace.

“Clown, it’s okay, he’s just been awake for a week, his body may have rested but his mind didn’t, he’s just gone to sleep properly now.” Cube explained, the rest of the vigilantes crowded the sleeping body, smiling as they all held him tight. “He’s going to wake up again, but for now, we really should let him sleep.”

“He’s... okay?” Clown asked croakily, and Cube laughed, light, relieved.

“Yes. He’s okay.”

Clown pulled Branzly against his chest and let out a bright laugh.

-

Branzy woke, something he didn’t expect to do, because he never remembered falling asleep. It felt strange, to come to awareness when you don’t recall losing it.

The first he noticed was how much everything *hurt, stung, stabbed*, it was like a thousand needles touching his skin all at once and wait- SKIN??? He had *skin*?

He shot upright, hands grasping at nothing and breaths coming out choppy and messy, he wheezed at the realisation that there was air in his lungs, and he was losing it and he could feel it. Feel the air work its way through his nose to his throat to his lungs through his body and everything *stung*, and everything *hurt*, and this is surely what dying feels like.

Wait, no, this isn’t what dying feels like... This is what *living* feels like.

He gasped, vaguely recognising that he was screaming, or had been, or maybe he only imagined that. Tears formed in his eyes because he forgot he had to blink, he threw the sheets over him off, squeezing his eyes tight and clamping his ears. Too much, way too much, everything was everywhere, and everything hurt, and he could feel again.

How long had it been since he felt?

There was way too much touching him, something was on him, he tore at it, trying to pull it off, it was on too tight. What was it? Why wouldn’t it come off?!

Someone was shouting, he scrambled away from the sound, falling to what he assumed was the floor with a gasp. His body felt like fire ants were crawling all over him, biting at every inch of skin as pins and needles covered his body and every movement felt like the rocking of a ship.

He felt back the urge to throw up, why had he wanted to have a body again? This was awful.

Oh right, to beat Vitalasy’s ass.

“Branzy! Breathe, please.”

That voice, that voice was so familiar.

His eyes opened slowly, and he saw a masked man before him. *Clown*. It's Clown! Branzzy wove his hands from his ears to his hair, tugging at it and shouting at the sensation.

Part of him wanted to feel all this pain forever, the lack of anything was far worse, but this was too much, surely he had not felt all of this constantly when living?

“Sensory overload-“ Someone was talking, and way too loud too, he whined and curled into a ball, clamping his ears again. “He had no feeling for over a week, it'll take a while for his brain to get used to having a body again.”

A week? Did the person say a week? Surely not, it felt far longer than that. How many times had he seen the sun rise? Maybe five? He had spent a good while in buildings, he must have been inside those for many days.

“Shut up.”

That was Clown again, he looked up at him, wincing at the amount of information the room had. Too many colours, too many moving things, or were those moving things people? One of them was Clown, so had to be. Yes. Those are people.

“Branzy,” A whisper, good, thank God. “Take a deep breath, okay? Do you remember how to do that?”

Forget breathing? As if, he knew how to do that, his body did it automatically.

He wheezed in response, trying his best and failing miserably.

He opened his mouth, trying to say Clown's name, only a gurgle came out.

-

Clown had been sitting in his chair by the bed when it happened, the vigilantes all patiently waiting, it had been about another day. Cube said that was expected, he hadn't slept in a long time.

Still, Clown wished he would wake for maybe a few minutes, just to ask if he was okay.

His wish was granted, but more in a monkey's paw sort of way.

Branzy's body lurched upright, and he *screamed*, everyone in the room jolted at the sound and scrambled over to his side, Clown held out an arm to stop them from getting closer.

“Stop, wait, give him a bit-“ He said, and Branzzy clamped hands over his ears and kept screaming, before cutting himself off as he tried to breathe, breaths coming out shallow then too deep then shallow again.

They watched as he threw the blankets off himself, and he pulled at his skin, tugged at his shirt and trying to pull it off but failed, he pulled at his skin with newfound fury.

“ULTRA NO!” Rek shouted, reaching out to pull Branzzy's hands off himself. The other vigilantes joined in with his cries, shouting warnings and worries towards their friend.

Branzy covered his ears with a wince and fell out of the bed, legs going boneless and not even supporting his weight in the slightest, he fell to the floor and shouted at the contact.

Clown fell to the floor besides him, holding out his hands in a placating manner, “Branzy, Branzy, breathe please.” He begged, and Branzy opened his eyes and stared at him, mouth open and eyes searching.

They were brown, his beautiful eyes were *brown*.

“It’s me, see? It’s me Clown, and everything’s going to be alright, just breathe.” He said, but Branzy was looking elsewhere now, to the people behind him, he squinted and winced and stared, like he had never had eyes before. He tugged at his hair and shrieked, Clown’s hands shot forward to catch his wrists, but Cube caught his.

“Don’t touch him, he’s experiencing sensory overload.” He explained, the shouting in the room quietened instantly. Branzy whined and curled up, Cube softened his voice. “He had no feeling for over a week, it’ll take a while for his brain to get used to having a body again.”

The vigilantes around whispered to each other in worry. “How long will it take?”

“I don’t know, we have no idea what his headspace is light right now.”

“How can we stop him from trying to pull his own damn skin off without touching him?!” Parrot hissed.

“Shut up.” Clown whispered, turning to the onlookers with a hushed snarl. He turned back to Branzy and crept forward, making sure his face would cover a lot of his vision. “Branzy,” He whispered, worry and love creeping into his voice, “Take a deep breath, okay? Do you remember how to do that?”

Branzy twitched in front of him, flinching every now and then, at least he was looking at him. He tried to breathe, so he definitely was listening, which was good. He opened his mouth and gargled; Clown flinched.

“Okay, try to repeat after me, okay?” He motioned to breathing in, sucking in air with exaggeration, holding up a finger and counting to four. He breathed out, doing the same, and repeated the gesture.

Branzy watched, eyebrows furrowed and mouth open as he tried, a few tears leaked out of his eyes.

“Branzy, blink.” Clown said after letting out another breath. Branzy did so, a few times, more tears spilled out at the action. “In,” He breathed, “And out, okay?”

Branzy followed, and finally, after what felt like too many minutes, got it.

“Cube says you’re experiencing sensory overload, is that right?” Clown asked, and Branzy stared. “Can you nod or shake your head?”

He nodded, and flinched, hissing out of his teeth.

“What hurts?”

Branzy croaked, and a very quiet, slurred, “Everything.” Came out.

“Just focus on breathing, okay?” Cube said, sitting beside Clown, “Your body will eventually get

used to feeling again, you just need to give it time.”

Branzy turned to Cube, eyes flashing with recognition. “Cube.” He said, “I’m alive?”

Clown stifled a cry at the question.

“Yes, yes you’re alive Branzy.” Cube said, smiling softly, “You’re alive, and safe, and we’re all going to make sure it stays that way.”

“Vitalasy.” Branzy said, it was likely meant to be a question.

“He’s alive.”

Branzy, achingly slow, looked at Clown, “I want him dead.” He said, fury in his tone never heard before, a stillness washed over the room.

“I want him dead, and I want to watch him die.” He croaked, then coughed, and Rek came beside them to offer him water, he struggled to hold the cup, he swallowed and sighed. “I want him dead. I want him gone.” He elaborated, and Clown melted.

“Of course, he’s as good as dead.”

Branzy held up his hands slowly, staring at them. “I’m alive. This is real, I am talking and am being heard.” He muttered, “Incredible, I feel so much, too much.” He pushed himself to his feet, the three surrounding him stepped back.

He began to pace.

“Every touch a spark of pain, that will surely fade, I can feel it. I’m alive, I’m a person, I’m...” He stared at his hands and frowned. “Is death what that was? The loss of feeling?”

The occupants in the room stared, unsure if the question was hypothetical.

Branzy grinned and clenched his fists, still wincing at the pain, but seeming to enjoy it. “I’m alive.” He giggled, “I’m here, I’m real and I’m here!” He spread his arms wide and grinned at his friends in the room. “I’m alive!” He cheered; tears continued to trail down his cheeks.

“You are.” Clown said with adoration, “You’re alive, Branzy.”

Branzy laughed, a joyous thing, “You know my name! Oh god, you all know my name!” He laughed even louder, pressed the palms of his hands against his face, he laughed through a sob. “My identity is ruined! I’m sure Vitalasy knows it too! They’re all after me!” He cried but giggled throughout.

“No, I’ll protect you.” Clown said, stepping toward Branzy, “I’ll keep you safe-“ He reached for him and Branzy yelped, falling backwards with a flail. “Branzy-“ Clown called, hands stretching to catch him before he hit the wall.

Branzy fell backwards.

Through the wall.

Rek blinked slowly, staring at where Branzy had been. “Ultra!” He screamed, jumping into action and running toward the wall. He slapped his hands against it, banging loudly. “Ultra! Are you in there?”

“Lavender?!” Parrot yelped, rushing forward and palming at the wall, “What, what? Come out! Come out!”

Clown stared with his hand still outstretched, “Branzy?”

Branzy then poked his head out of the wall, but only half of it, his mouth was agape and eyes wide with terror. “No, no, no, why am I- I’m meant to be alive why am I-“ He swatted at the air, partially translucent body flickering as his hand went through the bedframe nearby. He sucked in a breath and swallowed a sob, “I’m, I’m here, aren’t I?! I’m real why am I-“

“Branzy! It’s likely your extended period outside of your body modified how your powers work.” Clown cut in quickly, walking toward him gently, “Focus on your breathing, feel the air enter and leave your lungs, you can feel it, can’t you?”

Branzy took a shaky breath, and let it out, he stepped out from the wall, body flickering from fully visible to only partial. He looked at his hands with terror, and Clown rushed toward him as he noticed his eyes softly glowing purple.

Clown slammed into Branzy, wrapping his arms around him and clutching him so very tightly that Branzy only focused on the feeling. The feeling that there was something odd, something pulsing from within Clown, it felt like he could grab it... Like he could... Take it out.

He clung back, feeling the scratchy fabric move beneath his fingers, and the thick material of the mask squish against his cheek. He concentrated on those sensations, rather than the strange pulse.

“Clown...” He murmured, and he held tightly, “Did they... Did they fire me from my job?”

Branzy felt the laugh before he heard it, the body jostling before Clown burst into laughter and leaned away from Branzy as he continued to laugh before it dimmed into giggles. He pulled off his mask and wiped away his tears, smiling solidly.

“No, no they did not fire you Branzy.” He smiled softly, and Branzy gaped at him, a red eye staring back that creased with happiness. His soft black hair fell lightly over his other eye, obscured by an eyepatch.

“What happened to your eye?” Branzy asked with concern, hand reaching up before retracting, unsure what his current relationship with Clown even was.

Clown lightly grabbed his hand and held it against his cheek, “Doesn’t matter.” Clown grinned, staring back into Branzy’s beautifully, captivating, brown eyes.

Rek cleared his throat, and Clown frowned. Both he and Branzy turned to face him.

“Branzy, you okay now? Are you feeling alright?”

“Everything feels...” Branzy murmured, struggling with words, “It’s like my sensitivity has been upped, it’s fading... I think, just feels like I’m covered in fuzziness or something.”

“Okay, good.” He sighed with relief, “I, I’m so sorry Branzy, it’s all my fault that this happened to you, if I hadn’t listened to Chief-“

“Don’t blame yourself. Blame Vitalasy.” Branzy cut in, voice monotone and expression shifting into barely concealed fury. He stepped out of Clown’s embrace to fully face Rek. “Blame heroes. Blame the system. Blame Chief if you want to, though I bet that snake Vitalasy sunk his fangs into him somehow.”

“Branzy’s right, Vitalasy is the one we should be taking revenge on.” Clown agreed, standing by his side.

“Well he didn’t exactly say that-“

“No he’s right, I want revenge.” Branzy nodded, “I...” He tugged at his hair, flinching at each harsh tug but continuing the action, “Imagine, imagine for days on end flying around and seeing countless people in trouble. So many innocent civilians in trouble, being hurt, imagine seeing them being actively ignored by heroes.” He clenched his hands in his hair and gritted his teeth.

“I don’t have to imagine, I saw it all. I saw a little girl bleed out on the ground, with a hero nearby, aware but unaffected. I saw it and couldn’t help; I saw it and couldn’t even scream for help. I saw it and they did NOTHING.” His voice rose to a shout, arm lashing out, making Clown stumble away. Branzy started pacing again.

“Bodies piling up day after day and no one doing anything, no one caring, they winced at each wound they gained but didn’t once consider what it was like for those with worse. For those who don’t have somewhere to go after a battle. They want us to struggle, they want us to bleed, they want us to praise them as... as... gods! When they’re not even close.” He slammed his fist against the wall, and everyone jolted.

“Branzy...” Rek murmured, stepping toward him.

“They’re *weak* Rek.” Branzy hissed, and Rek nodded.

“I know.” He whispered.

“They’re so, so, weak, so weak they consider emotions a fault, so weak they consider empathy a... a waste of time! Yet they spare some care for their precious sidekicks and teammates?!”

“They’re cowards.” Clown spat, and Branzy whirled to face him with a vicious nod.

“Weaklings, cowards, and idiots.” Branzy snarled, and the vigilantes surrounding him watched on with the terrible sinking feeling that they had lost the Ultra Violet they once knew.

“Branzy,” Clown asked, placing a gentle hand on his shoulder, he paused his fury to look at him, “while I agree with you completely, I think you may want to sit down.”

He was panting loudly, Branzy nodded and sat on the edge of the bed, exhaustion filling him. “I’m so tired, but I only just woke up.”

“You’re feeling a lot right now, physically and emotionally.” Parrot said, “You should probably sleep.”

“No!” Branzy shouted, stumbling to his feet, “I don’t want to! What if I go back out of my body again?! What if I-“

“Branzy, this is your power and your body, you are in control of it.” Cube added, lightly guiding Branzy back to the bed. “You need your strength, rest your mind.”

“But I- They took that control away from me.” He seethed, tears pricking at his eyes, “They took my one way of helping others away, they stole it from me. They-They’re the reason I’m...” The tears fell and he covered his face with a sob, “They broke me.” He whispered through his hands.

“No, no you’re not broken Branzy.” Rek gasped, he tried to keep a brave face, but it was crumbling

fast.

“How am I ever meant to go back to who I was?!” Branzy yelled, glaring at Rek as the tears continued to cascade down his cheeks. “Who even AM I anymore?!”

“Y-Your Branzy!” Clown said quickly, gripping his hand tightly.

“And who is Branzy? Hm? Do you even know?” Branzy spat, but the anger was lost as his lip continued to quiver.

“He’s a fighter.” Clown said firmly, and Branzy stared at him, eyes wide and mouth opening slightly. He searched his expression.

“You still think that, after this? After knowing who I am?”

“Of course.” Clown affirmed, he pulled Branzy’s hand up and clamped it between his other, holding it firmly, before resting his forehead against it. “Of course, you’re so strong Branzy. You’re... You’re incredible.”

Branzy smiled shakily, “Oh, thank you, Clown.” He giggled lightly to himself, “I expected you to kill me.”

“Never, never ever. I said I’d protect you, didn’t I?” He glanced to the other vigilantes, “Everyone in this room wants you to be safe, and... we’re all gonna do everything we can to make sure you are.”

“Absolutely.”

“Agreed.”

“We’re here for you Branzy.”

“It’s going to be okay.”

Branzy slowly let a grin work its way onto his face, he chuckled to himself, sinking into the bed and sighing. “Love you guys, I’m so, so glad you saved me. Thank you.” His eyes shut, and his breathing evened out. His body continued to twitch as he slept.

The group watched him, eyes darting from him to each other in terror.

“Dude.” Rek said with a gulp, tears finally falling.

“He got fucked up.” Parrot said, earning a solid smack from the other vigilantes in the room. “What?! He clearly did! He wants to kill someone! That’s new!”

“To be fair, pretty sure we all want to kill someone after hearing that.” Rek said, and the group nodded coldly.

“He... He had to watch people suffer. Just WATCH!” Speptide mumbled, form shaking.

“He’s so different but the same but... I just... Who even?”

“Don’t say that, he’s always gonna be our Ultra.”

“You mean our Lavender Lad?”

“Vibrant-“

“Violet-“

“Ultra viole-“

“Branzy no, Ultra, NO- Argh! Whatever! Who cares who Branzy is, so long as he’s himself!” Rek ended.

“He’s always going to be Branzy you know.” Clown said with a wet laugh, “I mean, no matter what he goes by as a vigilante, he’s always going to be Branzy. You should really switch to just using his name.”

“You’re right...” Parrot sighed.

“He’s Branzy.”

“He’s our Branzy.” Rek nodded.

“Wow, communism.” Cube chuckled lightly, Rek pulled the clipboard from his grip and whacked him on the head with it.

Clown rolled his eyes, allowing the sound of bickering and quiet laughter fill the room, relief of Branzy’s return allowing them to finally relax.

He reached for Branzy’s hand, curling his fingers around it. A warm grin came to his face as Branzy’s fingers slowly gripped his and held him back. He hummed pleasantly to himself, tapping Branzy’s hand lightly.

Don’t worry Branzy. He thought, laying his head on the bed and allowing himself to finally take a moment of rest. You’re safe now, I’ve got you.

He peeked open an eye to watch the light banter of the vigilantes. *And I don’t doubt that they’ve gonna help keep it that way.*

Branzy’s lips twitched, moving to a smile.

Chapter End Notes

[What Branzy saw when he woke up.](#)

Oh nooo Branzy's back but now he's on board with murder who could have predicted thissss? *Adds villain!branzzy to tags*
Sure hope that doesn't have any consequences.

Hope you enjoyed this one! I know it's a lot slower, and cube is so ooc so sorry about that... but I do hope you liked it anyway.

For those

Chapter Summary

A soft comfort before the confrontation.

Chapter Notes

Pardon the hiatus, uni has been really sapping me of time. Plus, this has been the hardest two chaps I've ever written me thinks.

Thanks for hyping me up, living up to y'all expectations is a frightening thing to attempt, all I can hope is I deliver a thread of what you seek.

Hope you enjoy!

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

Branzy is not stupid.

He's not. And he's determined to prove that now more than ever before.

Sure, he'd been tricked, been lured, and captured and harmed; but that was not an act of stupidity, it was an act of loyalty and sacrifice because those bastards played dirty. They held Rek against him, those cruel and unjust 'heroes'.

Branzy allowed himself to thread his fingers together, staring across the marble island countertop at the reflective kitchen backsplash. His reflection narrowed his eyes, fuming silently.

No, Branzy was not stupid. And he was foolish to ever categorise himself that way, not when he helped so many by using his power, not when he made sure to look out for others. Then again, was that just kindness, and not cleverness? If he was foolish to think himself stupid, then doesn't that mean that he was still stupid?

He gritted his teeth. Whatever, he wasn't stupid now at least.

He wasn't stupid, Clown had seen potential in him. Clown knew he was strong too, and Branzy was by no means a coward either.

Cowards are stupid, and he wasn't either of those.

Being brave is not the absence of fear after all, it's working past the fear to achieve your goal.

And what was Branzy's goal, anyway?

His eyes narrowed further.

To take down the heroes of course, he may be afraid of Vitalasy, but his vengeance would give

him the bravery to push past that.

They would make a plan, of traps and trickery, using all his friend's strengths to outwit the dangerous scum that had so often hurt them. He'd use his newfound power to walk through their borders and take them out.

Clown would likely help him fight them too, he seemed as vengeful as Branzzy.

There's his name again, Clown.

Branzy glanced to his side, where Clown sat, eating lunch.

Whilst Branzzy's friends had elected to give him space, Clown had not gotten that memo. He stayed by his side, a comforting presence that assured Branzzy that he was real. After all, how could he always be by his side if he didn't know where he was?

He appreciated it. His friends were considerate to think he'd need space, though he did dislike how some would say 'he had to get used to being alive again'.

Alive. *Alive*, he was alive now! He was here, alive, in his body... but... then again, he was never dead to begin with. No, that would have been far nicer than that week. A week sounds so small when shrunken down to a word, a *week*, that's all. How many hours would it have been? One hundred and sixty-eight.

Branzy took a deep breath, relishing in the feeling of air entering his lungs.

Clown's hand found its way on top of Branzzy's, it squeezed lightly.

Branzy sunk into his seat, focusing on the feeling.

Branzy was not stupid.

And he'd be stupid not to notice Clown's feelings for him.

He glanced toward Clown, watching how he silently ate some noodles. He was maskless, and Branzzy would be an idiot to not even notice how pretty he really was. Mismatched eyes, swirling hair that matched him too well and the lips... He had seen them plenty of times, but they still made him watch with masked awe.

Why would such a powerful man take interest in the likes of him?

Clown must have noticed his apprehensive, his grip on his hand increased a bit.

Clown liked him, and he had liked him since he met him as just a simple barista. Why? Branzzy threaded his fingers into his hair, tugging, relishing in the sensation. Was it the fact that he served him at all? The fact he rambled? What could have possibly drawn Clown to him?

And why was it so hard to feel anything back, when he knew, he *knew* he had felt the smallest of

some things before?

It was like his every emotion except burning rage had been dulled, feeling the rage at least let him feel like a living human. But when he couldn't find himself caring about much else, it worried him. And even the worry was dampened.

Branzy had been trying to stay focused the past few days he had been back in his body, focused enough on what he could feel and touch that he could never find himself in that god awful dissociative state again.

Though, like now, sometimes his mind wandered, sometimes he found himself remembering the things he saw, the numbness he felt, the lack of any understanding of time passing. Sometimes as he stared down at the reflective backslash and he found himself not really comprehending it at all.

It wasn't just him that was changed now though, *EVERYONE* felt weird. Everyone had this strange pulsing sensation inside them, just under the skin. Was it their pulse? Their heart? He wasn't hearing it, more so feeling it. It thrummed with energy that he almost recognised, when he felt it, it felt like colours.

Clown's was red. That was fitting. Perhaps auras? Why would he feel those? What purpose did it serve him? How did it relate to his pre-existing abilities?

"Branzy, you're turning see-through."

He jolted, noticing his hands transparent quality, and quickly brought himself back, a steady hand fell on his shoulder, grounding him.

"You okay?" Clown asked quietly, face creased with concern.

"Fine, fine, just got stuck in my own head." He chuckled in response and focused on the strange energy Clown emitted. "Thank you, for bringing me back." He said sincerely, he smiled softly at Clown.

Clown's eyes widen and lips parted slightly, he swallowed. "No problem." He muttered, he cleared his throat, "What's on your mind?"

Branzy contemplated telling him, staring hard at the benchtop before sighing; He trusted Clown. Clown would listen, Clown always listened.

"People sort of, feel different now." Branzy admitted.

"Different how?"

"Like... I can feel something inside of them, it wavers and pulses." Branzy explained, moving his hands around as he did.

"A heart? Maybe you're hyper sensitive now and are sensing our hearts?"

Branzy shook his head, "No, no, it's in every part of your body. Not just the heart."

Clown tapped his chin, eyes narrowed as he thought, "Hmm, try not to worry about that too much, just focus on getting better for now, here, eat." He slid an apple his way and Branzy rolled his eyes but begrudgingly ate.

“Not my fault I didn’t need to eat before.”

“That’s why we need to remind you to eat, so eat.” He pushed some water to him as well, “Drink.”

“I’ll never get used to caring for a body again.” Branzy huffed, drinking and eating slow. His body was thinner, to be expected when unable to eat solid foods for so long.

“That’s okay, I’ll remind you.” Clown smiled, Branzy felt a flicker inside his chest, he focused on the feeling.

It was nice. He wanted that more.

He soaked in the comfort Clown brought him, it he had told his past self that the person that made him feel safest would be the deadliest villain, he’d call himself insane for sure. *Well, that wasn’t an incorrect accusation anyway.*

Clown had always been protective, since first meeting him as Branzy, even meeting him as Ultra. Really, he was the one that Branzy knew would save him from any threat, shield Branzy from any harm. He had brought him back to his body after all, with the help of all his friends.

He was... Like a very scary, but kind of cute, guard dog.

Branzy snorted and covered his smile at the thought.

Clown rose a brow and smirked, “What?”

Branzy shook his head, snickering slightly at the comparison.

“Hmm? Cat got your tongue?” Clown asked with a broad grin, leaning on his fist.

“Pah!” Branzy laughed, he pointed at Clown as he continued to giggle, “Dog.”

Clown tilted his head, much like a dog would, Branzy snorted loudly, “What?”

“Dog. *You’re* a dog. A guard dog.”

Clown blinked, then gave him a fake glare, the effect dulled by his still wide smile. “What? No way! If anything *you’re* the guard dog, your whole job was to look out for people!”

“No way, *you’re* a guard dog, because you’re guarding me.” He juted a thumb to his chest, “And *I’m* a watch dog. Because I watch out for people.” He grinned cockily.

“Hmm, okay.” Clown said with a shrug, “I’ll guard you, and you can watch out for me, that way we have each other’s backs.” He beamed.

Branzy felt heat on his cheeks, he touched them lightly in confusion. *Oh, I’m blushing.* He grinned; *Awesome! I’m feeling!*

He glanced at Clown and frowned as he noticed him staring out towards the apartments window. It was sunny, a very pleasant day to be out and about. His eyes darted back to Clown, trying to gauge his expression, he was softly smiling.

Am I keeping him from getting on with his life?

Branzy sobered up from his good mood very quickly, Clown was glued to his side all the time, and while he appreciated it greatly... He hadn’t really thought about if Clown truly wanted to be there.

He sucked in a breath and some courage, “You know...” He started, Clown looked back to him, hair falling into his eye, he pushed it behind his ear. “You don’t, need to be with me all the time, if you don’t want to, I’m sure I’m keeping you from doing your usual villainous things.”

Clown snorted, “My ‘usual villainous things’?”

Branzy rolled his eyes, “You know what I mean, whatever it was you got up to before.”

Clown hummed that same hum he always did, glancing back to the window before meeting Branzy’s gaze with steely determination. “Do you want me to go?”

Not really, he thought, you’re the only person I know who can protect me. The only one who knew who I was as Branzy, rather than Ultra Violet.

Why do you still care about me?

“I don’t want to owe you more than I already do.” Branzy lied, he’d gladly owe him forever if it meant he could stay by his side.

“You owe me nothing.” Clown said quickly, eyes narrowed.

“But you took care of me and let all my friends and me stay at your house? And we still are? When are you even kicking us out? You know my powers are useful you still have use for me-“

“You’re not a tool and I was wrong to have used you as I did.”

Branzy’s eyes widened substantially, *wrong to use him? Had he expired his usefulness to Clown? He wouldn’t drop him, would he? No, surely not, he loved him.*

“What? No, it was fair, you helped me I helped you-“

“We are all a team now, I have plenty of guest rooms, you can all stay here as long as you like. So long as the heroes are against as all, then we are all together.” Clown cut in sternly.

“I-I’m not weak Clown, I’ll be alright, the heroes don’t scare me.”

“Yes they do.” Branzy jolted and glared at Clown.

“Excuse me-“

“Of course you do, they traumatised you, it’s only reasonable to fear them. Fury and fear combined does not make you weak, it makes you motivated. You’re not weak, but you are scared. That’s okay.”

“I...” Branzy tugged at his hair again, “I... Okay, that’s true.” He conceded.

“Great! Then we’re in agreement, you’re stuck with me.” Clown smirked, he got up and put his bowl away, Branzy snorted. *He’s really the most obvious person, isn’t he?*

“Now rest up and heal up, you need strength, no more vigilant-ing for...ever.” He tossed Branzy a smug look, “I’m not letting you get hurt again.”

Branzy sighed, slightly fond. “Clown, if I can turn intangible whilst still in my body, then no one can grab me. I’m way safer doing vigilante stuff than I was before, I’m not going to quit and never help people just because one hero managed to catch me off guard.”

Clown's gaze hardened, "And that hero shall pay."

"Mmm, yes." Branzy hummed pleasantly, "I'd like to deal with him sooner than later."

"When you're fully better." Clown nodded, and Branzy grumbled to himself.

He stared at his hands as they drummed on the marble countertop, memories tapered on the edge of his mind. He couldn't wait to see Vitalasy again, though he feared him his fury overpowered that.

He remembered when it rained, the water falling through him to the ground, a dead child laying by a dumpster, blood turning pinker as the water diluted it. He remembered a hero passing by, Reddoons maybe, staring in with hands in his pockets, before walking past with no care or sympathy.

She may not have been dead yet, she still twitched. Branzy stared at Reddoons and planned his demise.

A couple fighting, a gun being pulled, a hero jumping over rooftops and witnessing the ordeal, the hero waiting to intervene. A gunshot ringing out, Branzy staring at the injured partner, the hero knowing that this unwitnessed event would not do them any favours. They left.

A bank was robbed, that's when they came crawling, grinning to cameras and saving the money, ignoring the house on fire a few blocks down.

"Branzy?"

He remembered the numbness as each shock of the heroes' cruel actions turned to expected and unsurprising, the neglected civilians crying out and only being heard by the one person who could not help.

He clenched his fist, watching his flickering hand come back to fully solid.

They were all at fault. But Vitalasy made him watch and made him unable to call for help when no one else could.

He wanted him to die, but then again, that was too easy. Too kind, it would be over too quick. Perhaps if he was killed slowly? Blade twisting in his heart as blood spat from his open mouth, pleading for mercy he would not give. No, no... Too kind. No impact. A dead hero killed by a vigilante would likely lead to the heroes broadcasting it, using it to make vigilantes out to be bad.

But he was bad, wasn't he? Wishing for death, that wasn't a good thing.

Eh, who cares. If the heroes die, then everyone benefits.

Maybe he wouldn't kill him then, at least not publicly, not in a way the other heroes would be able to share. He needed to ensure they didn't soil their name.

"Branzy, are you with me?"

He wasn't exactly a vigilante now though, was he? If he separated himself from that title, then at least his friends would not be dragged into his bad deed.

They wanted him dead too, right?

There were a couple taps on the table and Branzy snapped his gaze to the noise. Clown stared at him, red eye twinkling now that he had his attention.

“What are you thinking about Branzzy?”

“I think I should be a villain.” Branzzy blurted.

He remembered floating in his workplace, watching his co-worker from a distance but not really there or present. Not really understanding what was happening, why they were sad.

Noises happened but he didn't hear them, not really, his eyes staring into nothingness as some people talked.

Was that his name?

He had turned his head and stared at his friends, leaving the shop, and there was-

His body sat in the booth seat, and he was certain if he had air in his lungs, he would have choked on it. He stared at it, admired it, and then he heard a tap and saw Clown, beckoning him.

He needed to talk to him, didn't he? He needed to tell him what he learnt, what he saw, he needed to-

He had held his body and couldn't remember a thing after that, just when he next woke up.

Branzzy narrowed his gaze at Clown. “Huh.” He said simply, the realisation that he had actually been pavloved into returning to his body amusing and unsettling him. He really allowed Clown that much power over him?

Better Clown than anyone else, at least Clown cared for him. He'd never hurt him.

“A villain?”

Oh right, he was having a conversation.

“Yeah...” Branzzy murmured, “I think I'm better off as one, especially if we're going to be working together to take down Vitalasy. I don't want to drag the vigilante's name down.”

“Villain isn't just a title you can label yourself with so easily Branzzy, you have to do bad things to earn it. You've only done good.” Clown said sternly, but not unkindly.

Branzzy hummed, leaning back, and staring at the ceiling. “I guess I'll be becoming a villain in the future then, for now I'm just a sort-of-not-good-but-not-bad-vigilante.”

Clown leaned onto his fist, staring at Branzzy. “You'd look good as a villain.” He whispered, and Branzzy quirked a brow at the comment, watching how Clowns unreadable expression turned to openly bashful.

Hm. Branzzy smirked. *Cute.*

“Not that you don't look good as a vigilante, I just think a rebrand would be pretty nice.” Clown coughed.

Branzzy smiled easily, “Mhm. Sure.” He swivelled his kitchen stool, so he was fully facing Clown. “I do want to get rid of the whole cowl thing, the hood, I want Vitalasy to see my face when I see

him next.”

“Is that so? Maybe you can have an outfit like mine.”

“Hmm, no, I don’t think jester vibes suit me.”

“Clown vibes.”

“Sure, I don’t think they suit me.” He hummed, “Maybe a suit? Argh wait, no, too many of the heroes wear suits.” He cringed at the thought.

“You can be fancy without a suit, maybe a dress?” Clown suggested.

“Nah, lack of movement, though maybe a pants suit would be cool...” Branzy thought, and if it didn’t have sleeves, he’d have so much more moveability in his arms.

Alright, that could totally work. Option one: Pants suit.

A bedroom door slammed open, Spepticle and Rek coming out of it, happily chatting away, they waved to Clown and Branzy.

“Hey guys! What’s up?”

“Branzy is thinking of rebranding his vigilante outfit.” Clown summarised.

“Pfft, who needs an outfit when you can just look super cool and causal? Right Rek?” Spepticle dug his elbow into Reks’ side, who nodded in agreement.

“I only wear a cloak for stealth missions. A jacket or hoodie can work easily.” He smiled.

“Boo, boring!” Branzy said with a cupped mouth.

Spepticle pouted, “Well someone’s feeling better. “ He joked.

“Go all out.” Branzy turned his head to the person, Parrot entered with a relaxed walk. “I just wear super colourful clothes to match my wings, looks awesome, not good for stealth though.”

“Are you sticking with purple?” Rek asked nervously.

The rest of the group tensed at the question, memories of shining purple eyes plaguing them.

“Of course.” Branzy said coldly, “I refuse to let Vitalasy ruin my favourite colour for me.”

“Right uh, well, what about... hmm...” Rek tapped his chin, “Something militarily like? Purple camo?”

“That’s ridiculous, Rek.” Clown laughed.

Branzy grinned, “No, no, let’s hear him out, what am I blending into with that Rek? What is the camo matching?”

Rek flushed, “Hey! Your old outfit was pure purple, of course anything purple is going to look ridiculous!”

“Lies! Waluigi is purple and he looks awesome!” Spepticle cut in, moving to the couch and collapsing on it.

“Hm, how about overalls, Branzy?” Parrot snorted.

“No way!” Branzy denied quickly, “I’d look like some weird farmer!”

“Oh my god, Branzy, make a purple dress like Elsa, you have the white hair for it!” Rek grinned with encouragement.

“No! Dresses decrease mobility!”

Jaron walked into the room, Cube trailing behind him, having overheard most of the convo from down the hall, “My two cents is a detective jacket, purple, you’d look like a purple spy. It’s perfect.”

“I am not copying your outfit and dyeing it purple Jaron.” Branzy laughed good-naturedly.

“Or wear a lab coat, I swear it works.”

Branzy groaned loudly.

“Okay, okay, let’s redo this purely from what you want out of your fit.” Clown said, “What do you want?”

Branzy rubbed his forehead, “Mobility, in my arms especially, I want to... I want to take advantage of my new power, grab people.”

Cube nodded, “Smart, okay, so something that isn’t constricting.”

Clown paused, face slowly turning slightly red as he stared at his hands. He reached across the counter to where his mask lay, shoving it on. He held an arm up confidently, “Sleeveless!”

Branzy nodded, “Yeah, that’d be good.”

“Hm, a tank top maybe?” Cube suggested.

“Oh come on, mans needs to be fancy.”

“What about a top and shorts?” Rek offered.

“What is he, a kid during summer?”

“I don’t see you suggesting anything useful Parrot!”

“Fine! How about uh, like, a vest?”

“*Just* a vest? Wow Parrot...” Spepticle snorted.

“Wha- No!”

“Watch yourself Parrot.” Clown scolded jokingly.

Branzy rolled his eyes fondly as his friends bickered, he eyed Clown judgmentally, noticing how the tips of his ears were tinted red.

Hm, he smirked, now what had caused him to blush so hard?

“Clown?” Branzy said calmly, the man snapped to him, “Do you have a suggestion?”

“Uh.”

All conversation halted as the door to the apartment opened, Spoke and Mid walking in with a swagger to their steps, “Ay! We brought take-out!” Spoke beamed, he dumped the food on the counter, glancing to everyone, “What’s going on?”

“Clown was about to suggest something Branzy could wear for a new vigilante fit.” Spepticle said with a smile.

Clown choked, “Uh.”

“Oh?” Spoke rose a brow and grinned, “I wouldn’t worry about what you wear Branzy, I’m sure *Clown* will like it no matter-“

Clown shot up and covered his friend’s mouth with his hands, hissing; “A TURTLENECK!” He squeaked, “Uh. Sleeveless, you know! For mobility! And with some comfy pants or leggings you’d be able to move so easily!”

Branzy hid his knowing smile under a hand, pretending to think about the suggestion. “Hmm, not bad, yeah, that sounds good.”

Clown slowly sunk back into his seat. “Yeah, good choice.” He said with false confidence.

Branzy chuckled.

He had given Clown an awful lot of power over himself, but really, it seemed Clown had given Branzy power over him as well.

An equal partnership. Branzy thought pleasantly. Or wait, what had Clown called it, ages ago when he robbed that bank with him?

A profitable partnership.

Branzy snorted, funny, Clown had tried to convince him to turn to villainy back then, now he seemed slightly against it...

He glanced at Clown from the corner of his eye, he was scolding Spoke in an angry whisper. Branzy’s eyes creased with affection, *he wants me safe so badly that he doesn’t want me to even involve myself in the world of villains?* He looked back to the reflective backslash. *Too late for that.*

-

Branzy was colder. He held an air of contained and seething anger in every moment of quiet, as if the second he was left to his thoughts he was plotting murder. Rek didn’t doubt that that was exactly what he was doing. He couldn’t call him out on it when he too, like everyone in their newly formed team of sorts, was doing the same.

Rek watched his friend as he lay on the couch, his hand reaching into the air. He clenched and unclenched his fist repeatedly, actions like this seemed more regular since he had returned to his body.

Clown had reluctantly left to go run some 'errands', whatever errands those were Rek had no idea... But it left Branzy without someone glued to his side.

Rek would not let him feel alone, so he ignored the new found alarm bells that rang in his chest when he neared Branzy, and instead collapsed on the couch beside his dear friend. He sent him a pleasant smile as he turned to acknowledge his presence.

"Comfy?" Rek asked.

Branzy grinned and slumped further into the couch. "Yessss, I never had any furniture this nice at my house."

"Oh, right, uh..." Rek scratched his neck, "We should probably grab your stuff from there, shouldn't we?"

Branzy rolled his eyes with a tense smile, "There's nothing in that place except a sink with bloodied clothes soaking in it. I'm happy to never have to enter it again... Damn, I wonder if my landlord thinks I died." He hummed curiously, eyeing the ceiling.

"Yeah, we should probably cancel your rent or whatever." Rek nodded to himself. "In fact, I should do that too, it's not safe to really leave for too long now."

"You guys keep saying that, but I don't really get it, why can't we leave nowadays? Heroes want us dead or something?" He turned his risen hand toward Rek, and gripped his shoulder tightly, "Not like they didn't want us dead prior to the whole... kidnapping thing."

Rek eyed the hand curiously but didn't comment, figuring Branzy needed grounding, "Well, they're way more onto us now. After stealing you back the public has been on edge, favouring Spepticles- well, he was disguised as Clown, favouring his speech over the hero's word. The heroes want to take us in and have us admit to being bad people so that all blame shifts to us for all the problems plaguing us."

"Ah," Branzy said, "So they want us to lie?"

Rek snorted, "Essentially."

He felt his stomach drop and gasped, confused for a moment as he momentarily saw double, his hand floating out of what looked like... his own hand?

He lurched forward, clutching his heart which beat slightly faster, he looked around in worry, eyes landing on Branzy.

Branzy's eyes were shining purple, his mouth parted in surprise. "Rek, are you- are you okay?" He asked, Rek stared at the hand on his shoulder, it was pushing down. Like he was being *contained*.

"Ultr- Branzy, did you... do something just then?"

Branzy smiled, tilting his head, Rek felt the alarm bells ring, "No, whatever do you mean?" He lightly patted his shoulder and released him, moving to a more relaxing position. "So, I've been thinking about my outfit, purple pants with purple top or nah? Black? Maybe a really deep purple?"

Rek took slow breaths, centring himself. He was fine. This was fine. Branzy was *fine*.

"Uh, not... not the same shade. No way." He managed.

“Good point...”

Rek tried his best to relax besides Branzy, but his shoulders refused to untense.

Why did it feel like Branzy was a trap waiting to activate?

-

“Alright Branzy,” Mid dropped some fabric in front of him with all the grace of a turtle on its back. “Pick a fabric, any fabric.”

Branzy stared down at the fabric with a wince, “Can’t I just like... *Buy* a sleeveless turtle neck? Do we have to make it?”

“Did you buy your last outfit?” Mid asked, hip popped to the side as she tapped her arm impatiently.

Branzy flushed, countless hours of stabbing his hand with a needle coming to the forefront of his mind. He played with his fingers. “No...”

“Then why do you want to buy this one?”

Branzy winced, “Because my old uniform kept getting torn during stuff, and patching it up got so frustrating... I only had like three sets and those all took hours to make.”

“We have a tailor who makes all our outfits. It’s why we flex on everyone with awesome fits.” Spoke bragged.

Branzy deadpanned, “Spoke, you’re made of like, the void. I literally think your headband is the only fabric on you.”

“You think I’m naked?” Spoke asked with a smirk, and Branzy frowned.

“I... Don’t know... Actually.”

“Neither do we, don’t think too hard about it.” Clown chuckled, coming from his room to sit beside Branzy as he eyed the fabrics. “There, go with that.” He pointed at the soft dark purple fabric, a corduroy type of fabric.

Branzy picked it up and felt it between his fingers, nodding to himself. “Yep. That works.” He tossed it to the side, Mid snatched it mid-air and nodded.

“Cool, what kind of pants?”

“Lots of pockets, please. Baggy is fine.” Branzy said with a wave of his hand, she nodded, grabbing a deep dark fabric that neared black.

“There, see? Easy and done. Thank God Clown showed up.”

“Thanks Mid, thanks Clown.” Branzy said with a smile. Clown stretched his arms above his head with a snort.

“No problem.” He let his arm fall around Branzzy’s shoulders.

Spoke covered his grinning face, and barely reacted when Clown lightly kicked his heel. Branzzy elected to ignore their silent conversation.

He focused on the warmth radiating from Clown, leaning into it with a pleasant sigh.

Mid rose a brow and nodded to the hallway leading to the exit, eyes darting toward it as she looked at Spoke. The two started to leave, Mid giving them a small wave. “I’ll give the details and fabric to our tailor, catch you guys later.”

Spoke stopped just before he left, “Oh, by the way Clown, we got new intel.” He smiled brightly, “The heroes are as good as gone.” He winked and shut the door behind him.

Branzzy turned to Clown, watching his exposed face turn slightly pink from the proximity.

“Intel?”

“Uh yeah, we’ve been, sort of, gathering information against the heroes. Like you guys have been doing, we’re planning on doing a big publicity thing and releasing it all to the public at one point. Take them all out in one fell swoop.” Clown explained, waving his hand slightly. “Anyway, enough boring talk, how are you?”

He gently squeezed his shoulder, “Feeling any better?”

Branzzy smiled, the pulsing energy within Clown was cosy. “Yeah, yeah... I am.” He admitted, he smirked at Clown, glancing to the arm around his shoulders and raising a brow. *You ain’t slick.* He thought loudly.

“What?” Clown said, clearing his throat, he averted his eyes.

Branzzy felt a giddy feeling inside him as he watched Clown’s blushing face, knowing he caused that reaction.

Could probably cause a greater one too.

Branzzy reached up, delicately cupping Clown’s cheek with a hand, Clown stiffened, eyes wide. Branzzy rubbed his thumb along his cheek gently, humming lightly.

“No mask?” He commented, pulling back, and smiling to himself calmly.

“Wha- Uh. No. No mask. I didn’t really see the need; everyone here knows my face now.” He paused, eyes searching Branzzy’s face, “Can you... Can you talk to me, please?”

“About what?” Branzzy asked quietly.

“Anything.” Clown pleaded, the hand on his shoulder gripped lightly.

Branzzy tapped his chin, “I’ll be honest Clown, my brain has been kind of messy these past few days.” He muttered, leaning back against the arm, “Sometimes it feels like, if I’m not angry, I’m empty.” He pulled his knees to his chest. “Everything’s been dulled. Not my touch though, physically I’m feeling everything way more.”

“So, your emotions are lessened?”

“Yeah, everything’s less intense, and it sucks.” He laughed bitterly, “I *want* to feel things properly,

but everything is just... Less.” He bit his lip, glancing toward Clown, “And remembering how much I felt before, it feels weird. Now I feel like I’m merely preforming my emotions because they’re so little It’s harder to identify.”

Clown frowned, he scooted closer, knocking their knees together. “You were always passionate and expressive when you talked to me at the café, how about you try talking about something that happened before Vitalasy’s biggest mistake ever?”

Branzy snorted, “That’s one way to label that ordeal...” He looked out the window, seeing a tree’s branch sway in the breeze. “The... people at my work used to talk about you a lot.” He quirked a lip at the memory, quiet happiness in his chest, “They really had no idea what to think, it was pretty funny. Apparently if I wasn’t at work, you just left?” He snorted, glancing at Clown for confirmation.

The man was already red, “Uh, well, yeah, no one else made iced coffee.” He said unconvincingly.

Branzy rolled his eyes, and reached for Clown’s hand, letting his fingers brush over before holding it. Clown held him back and he hummed. “Clown, without your mask you’re an open book.”

Clown blinked owlishly, tilting his head, “Huh?”

Branzy rolled his eyes fondly, “I know you like me.”

“Of course I like you.” Clown said dumbly.

Branzy laughed and held up their joint hands with a sharp grin, “No Clown, I know you *like* me.”

Clown tensed, his hold tightening for a moment. “Oh.” He said, eyes wide, staring holes into Branzy. “You’re not meant to know that.” He admitted guiltily.

“I mean, you aren’t very subtle Clown.” Branzy said quietly, and Clown snapped his gaze to the floor. “No, no! Don’t worry! It’s a good thing! Good!” Branzy cut in quickly, trying to crush any doubts Clown may have.

Clown look at Branzy through his drooping hair. “Good?”

“Yes! Good! Because uh, I have feelings for you too it’s just...”

Clown deflated, “Lessened?”

Branzy winced, “Yeah... I’m sorry.”

“Don’t apologise, it’s not your fault.” Clown reaffirmed, he held Branzy’s hand more solidly. “I uh... I’m just thrown off because I had a whole dramatic confession planned.”

Branzy snorted, eyes alight with mirth, “You *what*?”

“Listen-“ Clown said, speech broken by chuckles, “Back when I only knew you as Branzy, not Ultra, Spoke and Mid were really trying to get me to confess but I was all worried about you dating a villain because it’d put a target on your back.”

Branzy smiled.

“Yeah, so clearly that worry is gone, you managed to put a target on your back all by yourself.”

Branzy pouted playfully, “You said yourself my power is super useful, I think using it for good

was valid.”

“It *is* good. I’m just mad that I’m now aware that you were constantly going out and getting hurt without me there to protect you.”

Branzy swatted at him, “I don’t *need* your protection all the time.”

“I *know*, but I’d like to be able to keep you safe, because I *care* about you.”

Branzy felt the warmth in his cheeks and grinned, “I care about you too.” He whispered; Clown’s eyes creased. “So, you had a big confession planned?”

Clown hunched his shoulders, “I was gonna wait until all of this was over, didn’t want to impose something like that when you’re in a sort of emotionally vulnerable state.”

Branzy rested his head on Clown’s shoulders, making him relax them. “Confess to me now, please.” He pleaded.

Clown was still for a while, only his slow breathing yet racing heart to be heard.

“Branzy I’m in love with you.” He confessed; voice draped in love so incomprehensible it made Branzy shudder.

“That was *not* as dramatic as promised.” He giggled.

“I blanked. I don’t think any other words could express what I feel.” Clown admitted, he released Branzy’s hand, sliding his own up Branzy’s arm till he reached his cheek, cupping it. “What about you?”

Branzy hummed, relishing in the sensation of being held. *God*, he was so touch starved.

... He really did love him, love this, loved that someone could get this close to him still. Loved that he hadn’t been as drastically changed as he first thought.

Loved that he felt safe around him, soft, comfortable. Loved that he always cared for him, even when he wanted him as a tool, he would check on him, make sure he was alright.

Loved that he had always loved him. All of him.

And it was sort of hard to not love someone so considerate, yet strong.

“I think I love you too, but... it's an ember, compared to your flame.”

“Any chance of that ember growing?” Clown probed.

“With kindling, and time, I can see that happening.” Branzy smirked.

Clown snorted, a teasing smile on his face, “And what exactly is kindling in this metaphor?”

Branzy pouted and glared with no fury, “Oh shut up.” He huffed, “It’s this, obviously.” He reached for Clown, holding his face, and pulling him close, centimetres from his lips.

Feelings that overwhelmed hit Branzy like a truck, blooming and bursting in his chest, his heart rattling like shaking train tracks. His breathing stuttered, he felt Clown’s very soul pulse in anticipation and excitement.

He's beautiful. Branzy thought, awed by the emotions he was feeling in full.

Confident, charismatic, caring, loyal, stunning...

Why did he want me again?

He let out a soft breath and pulled back. "So anyway, this whole plan on how we take down the heroes, I'd like to know more--"

Branzy squealed as Clown jumped on top of him, tackling him against the couch.

"You tease!" He laughed, "Who gave you the right?!"

Branzy grinned back at him, sticking out his tongue playfully as he swatted reaching hands away, "I wanna be a villain, I've got to be villainous!"

"Not to other villains!" Clown whined, pouting his lips and trying to get to Branzy, Branzy held his face away with a hand, still laughing.

"I thought you were going to wait until it was all over. What? Impatient now, are we?"

Clown grabbed his wrists and held them down against the couch, "Yes." He hissed, leaning close to his face. Branzy smiled, slightly nervous. Clown frowned at the reaction, "You okay?"

"I... I don't even know why you like me, to be honest."

Clown lowered himself over Branzy, propping up with his elbows, "Because you talk a lot. You have interesting things to say, you fill the empty space I had grown upsettingly used to."

"But I don't do that as much anymore... I get stuck in my head." Branzy debated.

"You're a fighter." Clown continued, "You're so strong Branzy, it baffles me, and you're so determined..." He ran a hand through his hair, Branzy shut his eyes and hummed as he focused on the comforting action. "You're still kind, still a protector, still a good person despite what happened to you. And before you ask, yes, that applies to even if you kill Vitalasy, you'd still be a good person."

"How?" Branzy snorted.

Clown stared at him with a hardened gaze that unnerved Branzy slightly, grey and red irises glistening. "Do you think I'm a good person?"

Branzy draped his arms around Clown's neck. "Not at *all*, in the societal standard at least, but to me? To our team? *Yes*. You have given us so much Clown, you can't not be a good person."

"Then how could you possibly think you're not a good person?" Clown reasoned.

Branzy furrowed his brows, "I don't know."

"That's okay, you'll figure it out, you're really smart." He lightly nuzzled his nose against Branzy's, who giggled. "*God*, how could I not love you Branzy? Really?"

Branzy blushed and bit his lip, eyes opening slowly to stare into the loving gaze of Clown.

"You're *beautiful*." He whispered.

Beautiful. Branzy thought. *Despite feeling broken, I'm beautiful?*

“You’re gorgeous.” Branzy confessed in a rushed breath, hand coming up Clown’s neck to play with his hair.

“Thank you, now, *please*, can I kiss you?”

Branzy pretended to think about it, causing Clown to groan, “Fine, fine.” He rose a finger to his lips, and tapped twice, a cheeky glint in his eyes.

Clown chuckled and pushed forward, connecting their lips.

Soft. Was Branzy’s first thought.

Gentle. Was his second, as he let his hands tangle amongst Clown’s hair, knowing he was safe here.

Perfect. Was his third, he laughed for a moment, breaking the kiss with his giddiness.

“What?” Clown giggled back, staring at him with those wonderfully perfect creased eyes.

“Nothing, nothing,” Branzy said, trying to kiss him again but failing as he laughed once more, “Sorry, sorry you just... You make me feel...” He kissed his cheek instead, “Like myself again. Whole.”

Clown grinned, “You make me more of myself too,” He admitted, “Now, stop grinning or else all I’ll kiss will be your teeth.”

Branzy tried to hold back his giggles but when the restriction is given everything is way funnier than it should be.

Clown settled on kissing his forehead, then his nose, then both his cheeks, then his chin, all while Branzy laughed loudly and freely. He rested his forehead against Branzy’s, smiling as his laughing evened out.

“It’s been so good being about to listen to you again.” Clown whispered.

“I always loved your lips.” Branzy admitted guilty, “It was all I could see when you came into my work, you were very distracting.”

Clown hummed, “I was doing that on purpose.”

Branzy gasped with mock offense, and lightly tugged Clown’s hair, he yelped and snickered.

“You fiend.”

“I’m a villain!”

“So?”

“So I get to antagonise you~” He grinned.

“Well what happens when I become a villain too then, hmm?” Branzy asked.

“Easy,” He trailed a finger down Branzy’s nose and booped it. “We become partners in crime.”

Branzy kissed him.

“Hey guys! We’re back-“ Spoke called as he entered with Mid in tow, “The tailor gave the go ahead, will be very practical and I think fingerless gloves may be very beneficial to help with grounding you Branz-“

His voice died in his throat, Branzy’s eyes widened but Clown just waved them away and kept kissing him. He shoved Clown off and smiled at them tensely, “Hi! Welcome back!” He croaked, hair sticking up in odd directions due to Clowns meddling.

“Oh my god fucking finally.” Mid whispered with relief, pushing Spoke toward the hall past the kitchen where the bedrooms were, “Continue, we’ll be on our way.”

“Thanks!” Clown said with a thumbs up, he turned to Branzy, “Do you have a plan for what we tell others about this?”

Branzy rose a brow, “Clown, you aren’t subtle. I think everyone already knows about how *you* feel.”

“Then what about us?”

Another door opened and they snapped their heads to it, it was Rek’s room, who left the room with Parrot and Cube.

“And I said-“ He paused as he saw the pair, face going red as he covered it, “Ah! Sorry! Didn’t meant to impose!”

“See? We don’t even need to say anything now.” Branzy gestured toward them, “Don’t worry Rek, our fault for smooching in a public place.”

Rek whined behind his hands, “Uh, congrats?”

“Thank you!” Clown grinned.

“Will this effect anything regarding the overthrowing heroes plan? Or not?” Cube asked cautiously.

“Not really. Just pair us together when planning stuff so that I can be sure to keep him safe.” Clown suggested, holding Branzy tightly.

“As if that wasn’t the plan originally.” Parrot snorted.

Branzy poked his tongue out at his friends, and wrapped his arms around Clown, digging his head into the crook of his neck with a barely concealed smile.

-

Clown’s rooftop was different to the previous rooftop hangouts Branzy, and his friends used to frequent. It was taller, for one, it loomed over the buildings below in a way that made Branzy feel like an observer, like he was floating away again. He took a deep breath, remembering what his friends had been teaching him about grounding, and focused on the feeling of the jagged and slightly painful cement under his palms.

He could hear distant traffic, sirens, and music from some apartment below them. His friends were quietly talking as they sat beside him, legs swinging over the edge. They were never afraid despite the threat of falling; it seemed such a trivial thing to a bunch of adrenaline junkies.

The air smelt of wet grass and damp asphalt, wafting through the clean air with a familiarity Branzy had nearly forgotten. He breathed it in deep.

I'm here. I'm present. He recited internally, turning to his friends with a tired happiness at the knowledge he was overcoming his struggles.

“So, tomorrow, hm?” Parrot said, one knee propped up as he leant against it, staring across the city scape with a longing Branzy only ever saw avian’s have.

“Tomorrow.” Confirmed Cube, he was scribbling away at his clipboard, likely plans. “We’ll get in, get info, get revenge, and get out.”

“Sounds good.” Branzy nodded, “I can’t wait.”

Rek frowned slightly, squeezing Branzy’s shoulder lightly, “Just remember, you can run if you want to.”

Branzy shook his head, “No more running, I want to face Vitalasy head on and make him feel the way I have.”

“Hell yeah!” Spepticle cheered, chewing loudly on a jam sandwich Branzy had brought.

“I honestly can’t wait to kick some hero ass.” Rek mumbled, “But I’ll just be on trap duty.” He groaned.

“You can kick some heroes, as a treat.” Branzy allowed, patting his back and giggling.

“Thanks Branzy.” He snorted.

“So Branzy, you and Clown, am I right?” Spepticle teased.

Branzy just rolled his eyes, “Yeah, yeah, me and Clown.”

“Thank god, it was honestly driving us insane to see him not make a move.” Cube chuckled, “You shoulda seen him when you were out of your body, he was going crazy, I’ve never seen a more literally love sick man before.”

“Was he really that worried?” Branzy frowned.

“Dude, he refused to leave your side.” Rek said, “He just held your hand and waited.”

Branzy looked up into the night sky, mulling over the information. “I wonder why he never told me that.”

“Because it made him look like a huge simp, duh.” Cube said, receiving a slight whack to his shoulder, “What? It’s true! He was like a pathetic puppy! I’d have made fun of him if I wasn’t also worried out of my mind and also fearing he’d kill me.”

“Oh come on, he wouldn’t kill someone for no reason.” Branzy scoffed, playing with his fingers. “He has the same goals as us, just with more violence involved.”

“Love really makes you do a 180.” Rek smirked, “What happened to the frustrated barista who was

sick of Clown constantly coming in?”

“Got kidnapped.” Branzly deadpanned, making Rek freeze before he burst out into laughter, “Sorry, sorry, that was a joke.”

“Branzy!” Rek said with panicked laughter, “Don’t do that!”

“Sorry to cut in, but I did want to mention, tomorrow I’ll hack into the hero’s security system and steal a bunch of info.” Cube started, “I’ll also look into their cameras, I wanted to ask if any of you have seen them do shady things and whereabouts you saw it, maybe I can find it on the city cameras.”

Branzy paused, mouth opening slightly as he remembered watching many horrific heroes opening ignore crime under the belief no one saw them.

“I do.” He whispered; Cube tilted his head at him.

“Oh? Where?”

“Map of the city. Need one.” Branzly mumbled, rubbing his forehead. A steady anger thumping within him as he realised, he finally had the chance to use his week of watching to help.

“Here.” Cube said, quickly handing him a map.

Branzy gripped it tightly, watching how the edges creased. Rek passed him a pen, he uncapped with his teeth, circling areas he was familiar with.

Alley with the dead girl. The scribbled a red circle.

The couple that got mugged. Two frantic scribbled circles.

Burning building. He accidentally tore through the page in his fury. Rek reached out to stop him but froze as he continued to circle multiple other areas.

Dying person. Bleeding person. Shot person. Ignored assault.

Scribble, scribble, scribble.

“There.” He said, finally, breathing deeply and passing the map back to Cube. “If any of those places have cameras, you’ll definitely find something.”

“Thanks Branzly.” Cube said gently, “You alright?”

“Just mad.” Branzly said, brushing off the concern. “I’m... really ready to get back at those guys.”

“Same.” Parrot parroted with a soft smile.

“Yeah...” Rek said, he bit his lip and pulled his knees to his chest.

“I missed you.” Rek mutters, almost sounding guilty. “I missed you so bad and felt so bad because if I had just realised it was a trap *sooner*, none of this would have happened.”

“I don’t blame you at all Rek,” Branzly said softly, “even in those days stuck in my head, it never crossed my mind that you had done anything wrong.” He wrapped an arm around his shoulder and pulled him into a side hug.

“None of us really knew what to do.” Cube admitted, “I wish I had thought of moving your body around sooner, just, anything, if I had-“

“Cube no, you’re not responsible for everything, we should have at the very least suggested more ideas and figured it out sooner-“ Parrot started.

“At least you were suggesting things, all I did was waste space and time-“ Spepticle cut in.

Branzy beckoned his other friends, effectively silencing them “Get in here, I never blamed any of you.” They all shuffled over, sharing in a warm group hug.

“None of us are to blame, only the heroes who have been out for our blood this entire time.” Branzy explained, tightening his grip, “Being up... there... away from everything and away from feeling was scary but truth be told, I think I’d be a lot more insane if I didn’t have you guys.”

“Dude.” Rek said wetly, rubbing at his eyes.

“It’s true! The fact I knew I had people who would be there for me, gave me that slim bit of hope that I’d come back. I cursed Chief, Vitalasy, the entire hero system, for days on end, thought up revenge scheme after scheme, but I never once doubted you guys.”

“How?” Rek asked, “How? If Chief betrayed us, how did it never cross your mind that we couldn’t also have been against you-“

“Rek, you’re forgetting I let them take me for your sake.”

“I haven’t forgotten! I’ve been guilty over your dumb sacrifice for weeks!”

“But it was my choice, despite all that happened, all they took from me. I *chose* that. What came after was all their doing.” He leaned back, pulling his friends with him, who lightly yelped as they fell back onto the rooftop, staring at the sky. “We’re all gonna take down those heroes and save this messed up world.”

Cube cracked a smile, “Here, here.” He rose an imaginary glass, the others joined.

“To taking down the heroes who are at fault, for everything.” Branzy cheered, “To killing Vitalasy. Or something worse.”

“Here, here!” Rek laughed through tears.

“Here, here!” Spepticle said, rolling over to tightly hug his friends with a laugh.

“Here, here!” Parrot said, briefly flapping his wings, a few stray feathers dancing in the clear sky above them as he did.

“Here, here.” Branzy whispered, staring at those he cared about, those he fought for, those he’d sacrifice himself for over and over again.

“You guys good?” A voice called, Branzy tilted his head back and smiled warmly at Clown, as well as Spoke, Mid, Jaron and Tiger who came to the roof.

He held his arms up, “Come join us! We’re celebrating!”

Clown came over, squeezing between Rek and Branzy as they lay down, “What are we celebrating?”

“The downfall of the heroes!” Whooped Spepticle with a grin, grabbing his friends and tugging them down into the pile.

Branzy beamed, feeling the joy of his friends roll off them in waves as they had this pleasant moment of pure happiness.

He’d do anything for those he loved.

Chapter End Notes

Hello, I'll try to keep this brief but I'm pretty sure those who read these know I can't do that haha.

I just want to say thanks, it's been a really good thing for me, this community that is. When trying my best at uni and failing despite it, coming home and seeing comments in my inbox excited about a chapter I put my all in and reworked multiple times to get it exactly how I envisioned... it's really nice.

It's nice to feel like I'm good at something. So, thank you.

Thanks for the kudos, the comments, and the fan art too, that's always a delight haha!

Just...

Thanks :) I mean it.

He loved.

Chapter Summary

The vigilantes are vengeful, oh sorry, I meant villains, not vigilantes.

Chapter Notes

YOU THOUGHT MY UNI COULD HOLD ME BACK?!?! YOU THOUGHT I'D TAKE THIS LONG TO UPLOAD AND ONLY HAVE ONE CHAPTER DONE?! SIKE BITCH! YOU CAN'T STOP ME FROM GNAWING AT A KEYBOARD!!! I AM LIVING PROOF THAT IF YOU GIVE A MONKEY A TYPEWRITER, IT WON'T WRITE SHAKESPEARE, BUT IT SURE AS HELL WILL WRITE GAY FANFIC!!!

Anyway, enjoy the final chapter hope you like it. These last two chaps were the most difficult time I've had writing in years, so I hope it turned out okay ^-^.
Very action-heavy, but don't worry, the gays do some gay stuff too.

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

Branzy trembled as he stared up at the building, eyes glowing as he saw general workers milling about... and at the very top, heroes, relaxed, calm, happy.

Not remorseful. Not guilty of their faulty status.

He shook as he saw the smallest purple figure on one of the highest levels, the one who stole his soul away.

His fingers clenched, sharp nails digging into his palms. A hand coiled around his, pulling his fingers from their position and slipping themselves into a comfortable hold.

Branzy sighed with relief and squeezed Clown's hand back.

"You don't have to get involved with this if you don't want to." He whispered, Branzy felt how his very being shudder with apprehension.

"No, no, I want to, I think I'll never feel full again if I don't do this." Branzy said quietly, "But I... I am scared. But I need to do it, I'm angry but I'm afraid." He laughed, edging on hysteric, "God, how do you do anything without freaking out?"

"Simple." Clown said, stepping in front of him and tilting his head to their team, who were pointing at a floor plan of the building as they prepared. "I trust in my team," Clown explained, then guided Branzy back to look him in the eyes of his mask, "And I trust myself."

Branzy nodded, chewing on his lip. "I trust you guys, I do, I... how can I not after what you did? What you're all doing now? But I don't know if I *can* trust myself." His grip tightened, he eased it

when he remembered Clown was on the receiving end, "I... I feel a bit insane these days Clown, I'm worried I'll go overboard. I don't want to hurt any civilians."

"And you won't." Clown patted his hand, Branzy searched his gaze for reassurance, begging to be understood, "You aren't the type of person to do that, you're not going to lose control when your powers aren't exactly the deadliest. The worst you'll do is fly out of your body, and if you do, we'll grab your body, and you'll re-join it later."

Branzy nodded, but his other hand was already tugging at his hair, "But... what if the heroes touch me and I get so hurt I lose myself again? And I forget how to go back? What if I get stuck out forever again? What if-"

"Then we'll go back to your work and call you back in, and even if that doesn't work, we'd find another way, I promise. Besides, they can't touch you anymore, you can just phase through them, they'll never touch you again."

Branzy relaxed his shoulders and nodded, "Right, you're right, we have loyalty and... and I have new powers fuelled by spite."

Clown hummed, a clear sign he was smiling, "There you are. There's my bloodthirsty little Branzy."

Branzy laughed and lightly shoved Clown, "Hey! Don't say that like this is normal for me! This is just... the new normal."

"There's my morally grey Branzyyyy, there's my axolotl loving, iced coffee making, professional rambler, not to mention *cute* Branzy-"

Branzy laughed a lot louder, hiding his smile behind his hand as he tried to shove Clown further away, however, he refused to release their joined hands.

"Hey! Earth to be gay and do crime duo! Are we going over the plan or what?"

Branzy blushed brightly and spluttered as he ran toward the main group, dragging Clown with him, "Excuse you! Not only is that an awful name but it's not at all accurate-"

"Team magenta?" Spepticle offered kindly.

"No, now you've cut the gay element out." Spoke disagreed.

"There's no need for any name-" Branzy rebutted, before being cut off again.

"Team Clown's unrequited insanity."

"I have a better name," Clown offered, "Team bendy straws."

"These are all awful and also not at all relevant to our very serious discussion about taking down a corrupt system." Cube said seriously, sobering everyone up.

There was a brief silence and a few shuffling feet before he continued, "What would be better is a team name for all of us."

Branzy groaned loudly and dramatically but smiled through it.

"Team: Violet revenge!"

"Team: Violent Violet reborn."

"Oh my gosh I nearly forgot I was called that for a bit!" Branzy gasped.

"Team: Soon-To-Be-Villains?" Rek suggested. "Team: 'Rage is a hell of a drug' "

"Why can't we just be called villains it never failed us before." Clown sighed.

"Boring and nonspecific..." Branzy mumbled, getting into the name game, "Team: I see you?"

"Team: Eye Spy?"

"Ohhh I like that one!" Branzy laughed.

"How about team Spitefully loyal? Team Morally Confused? The Vengeful Violets?"

"The rest of you aren't purple we need to stop with the violet suggestions." Branzy sighed, "What about, The Real Heroes?"

"I really want to kill people I think that'll ruin that names message."

"Can we cut the killing part?"

"No."

"Okay, okay, we'll come up with a name later, it's not that important." Cube said through quiet laughter, "Does everyone remember what they're doing?"

"Yes! Wait, actually can you say it again?" Spepticle asked sheepishly.

Cube rolled his eyes, "Alright, Spepticle, you enter the main building disguised as a general worker. You go into a heavily populated area of the office and exclaim that there are villains approaching the building, little do they know we're right outside or already entering. This will get them running to warn others, and leave you in a mostly deserted place, a perfect time to slip away and try and find dirt on the heroes."

"Whilst you do that, you'll let Cube in, allowing him to gain better access to the building's technology, locking doors, turning off cams, anything that will help." Clown continued.

Spepticle saluted, "Got it!"

"Rek will stay on watch hidden with the building, letting us know if at any point there could be a trap or the heroes have an upper hand." Cube added, "Meanwhile, the rest of you guys are going to take the elevator or stairs or anything to ride to the upper levels. There, you defeat the heroes, and find any important documents that we can use against them when we publicly expose them."

"Spoke, tell them about the document we want." Clown said, nudging his friend.

"Okay, okay so," Spoke begun, arms spread as he grinned, "We've been researching and stealing and investigating these guys for months. And we know of the existence of some documents that basically highlight every crime they've committed--"

"Why would they document that in the first place? Seems risky." Rek asked curiously.

"Well it wasn't *meant* to be a documented. Some anonymous tipper made it physical to help us out." Spoke explained with an eyeroll, "This document is just a combined document of every

illegal arms deal, every conversation stating a citizen in need being ignored, every shady thing, all in this one binder, hidden.”

“An anonymous tipper? Can we trust them?” Parrot asked cautiously.

Spoke nodded, “A little while ago, we received this.” Spoke pulled recorder from his pocket. “Anyone recognise this?”

He hit the play button, and the vigilantes shuffled closer to listen.

“This could have all been avoided if you accepted my offer Violet, you help us heroes, and we help you.” Vitalasy’s voice said through the grainy microphone on the recorder.

“Y-You didn’t even offer anything in return for me helping you.” Branzly’s voice said, it sounded muffled, and Branzly paled as he remembered this moment.

“Our protection, to stop things like this happening.” Vitalasy said, tone dark and evil. The recording stopped and Spoke smiled.

“Attached to the recorder was a note, it said they had access to more conversations like this, all recorded through the heroes comm system. They then explained they had all the information we’d need to take them down. Hence, the documents we’re after.”

“Who on Earth...?” Rek muttered with awe.

Clown grasped Branzly’s shoulder, pulling him close. “You okay?”

“I’m fine!” Branzly squeaked, “I’m okay, I’m...” He clenched his fists, finding the strength he had needed in his fury, “Angry.” He snapped his head to Spoke, “Where is it hidden?”

“Don’t know, so we gotta search.” Spoke explained with a sigh, “Your Xray won’t help either, it’s not like it’s a bright red binder with “BAD THINGS” written on it.”

“So, while we kick ass, keep an eye out for this document.” Clown explained, “Anything else you can burn for all I care.”

“We get to set things on fire?” Spepticle grinned childishly.

“Yep.” Clown chuckled, “Now, are we ready to do this?”

The vigilantes cracked knuckles and rolled shoulders, smiling at each other with anticipation.

“Let’s crush these schmucks.”

-

“GO! GO! GO!” Rek shouted, skidding into the elevator as the panicked members of the heroes building rushed out fearfully. “What floor, Branzly what floor are we going to?”

Branzly squinted up and saw the tell-tale figure of Vitalasy. “Are we going documents first or Vitalasy?”

"Vitalasy." Clown grit out, "Get the fox out of the way."

"Second the highest." Branzy nodded, and Clown hit the button with anger.

The door slid shut, inside; Spoke, Mid, Clown, Rek and Branzy.

The elevators level number changed, and the occupants jolted at the disturbance.

"The hell? Who uses the elevator during an emergency isn't that against the rules?" Branzy hissed, seeing through the walls and trying to pinpoint who called it.

"I think that's for fires, but you'd think it'd be the same during a raid or attack too." Mid muttered, crouching lower to the ground and staring at the elevator door.

"Looks like we're taking a detour, Branzy, what kind of heroes are we facing?" Clown asked.

Branzy squinted, "They don't look like heroes..." He sucked in a breath, knowing it would be easier to help if he simply phased out.

"Don't leave your body if you don't want to, we're getting closer, give a description as we near."

Branzy nodded and focused on the three figures awaiting the elevator, he noted the similar suits; easy to move in, uniformed, the postures oozed false confidence.

"Lackies." Branzy determined with an eye roll.

"Easy." Spoke stretched, he smiled at Parrot as he rolled his shoulders, "We won't be too hard on them, don't worry."

"Disarm, disable and disperse." Clown recited, "We try not to kill these types of goons, but it may come to that."

"No shot at ignoring them and hitting the button to shut the door?" Branzy joked with a snort, imagining the scenario with slight glee.

"That would be very funny, but they would probably shoot us." Rek noted.

"Yeah, fair point." Branzy nodded, "I can walk out and distract them."

"And whilst you do that: Mid, find a vantage point and hide, shoot from a distance. Spoke, touch and teleport those fools out of this building. Rek, stay close to the elevator and let us know if they gain an advantage on us. And Parrot?"

Parrot nodded, awaiting instructions, Clown tilted his head, "You good to fight?"

Parrot tucked his wings in close and got into a fighting stance as they levels ticked higher and higher. "You bet."

"Let's go." Clown chuckled.

The door dinged, and slid open, Branzy stepped through the still-sliding doors as Mid skidded out, locating hiding spots and dashing to them with speed that was inhuman.

Rek pressed his heel against the elevator doors, keeping them open for when they'd disperse, he nodded at Parrot as his teammate threw himself into the battle. Clown left his scythe in the elevator for the time being, electing to try his best to not kill mostly innocent henchmen that likely didn't even believe in what they were fighting for. (Truth be told, he didn't want Branzy to be disappointed in him for killing civilians.)

Branzy was having the time of his life. He grinned as he ran past, around and through the goons as they continued to charge and swing at him. He let their weapons phase through, throwing off their balance in the process.

The sound of grunts and collision filled his ears and mind, he paraded around the room following the melody of battle. He paused, noticing someone approaching Clown from behind, his footsteps were dead silent, it must be their power.

Branzy ran towards Clown, and skidded to a halt at his side, "Clown duck!" He instructed, he did, using the change in position to sweep his current opponent off his feet, just as Branzy became tangible and rounded a kick against the approaching attacker's stomach. He collapsed with a wheeze and a whine.

Clown rose back on his feet, shooting Branzy a dorky thumbs up.

They went right back into the fight, Branzy discovered that with his new power he had a lot of skill as an assist in battle. He phased to Mid's hiding spot (a spot so good he had to look through the walls to see her) and was able to easily hand her the guns of the fallen goons when she had run out of bullets. She seemed grateful, eagerly continuing her confusing shooting, switching from spot to spot so they never knew where to aim to get her.

Parrot used his wings to distract, flaring them out like a peacock to startle anyone that got the jump on him, giving him enough time to knock their lights out. Branzy noticed him on reflex spreading his wings when three people started to edge closer to him, Branzy hopped on a desk and jumped off it, phasing through the wings and surprising the lackies as he tackled a few to the ground.

It became a sort of rhythm as they fought, with his friends calling for his assistance and him very happy to help out. He crouched to the ground as Clown leapt over him to land a two-legged kick to someone, grabbed guns out of goons hands as they failed to land a single hit, and protected Rek when anyone tried to get to the elevator.

But there was one issue...

"Where the hell do these guys keep coming from?!" Shouted Spoke, grappling yet another guy before shoving him away, Branzy watched him appear outside the window and fall onto a window washer's boon. "I'm running out of easy areas to chuck these guys." He reached for another, who dashed from his grip, Spoke grunted, "Branzy?"

Branzy phased through the man till he was behind him and kicked him with his heel so that he stumbled back into Spoke's grasp.

"Thanks, but seriously-" A yell and oof outside the window as yet another guy fell into the now pile of guys on the window washer's suspended scaffolding. "They just keep coming!"

"They keep sending more, they're stalling us as they come up with a proper plan, we can't stay here." Clown hissed.

"We can't leave either; they'll rush the elevator or try to delay us somehow if we don't keep them

occupied." Parrot said, punching a goon.

Branzy looked up, the heroes hadn't evacuated yet. "They're still there, we have a chance." He felt someone charge through him and turned his head just in time to see a henchman run headfirst into a wall. You'd think they'd learn not to try and grab him already.

"Dammit!" A goon grunted, which was new, most of them had abstained from talking, probably an intimidation tactic. "Just who the hell do you think you are?!"

"The guys who are currently kicking your asses." Clown deadpanned.

"Some vengeful vigilantes." Rek growled, tapping his arm. "There's no trap yet, but I feel like we're wasting time here."

"We ARE wasting time here!" Mid shouted, "Or at least all of us are by being here. Some of us should stay behind."

"Great idea!" Parrot responded, flailing backwards and catching himself with his wings. "We can handle this; they're dwindling in amount now."

"Rek, Clown and Branzy, you guys go." Spoke smiled, "We'll keep these guys at bay."

"You're sure?" Branzy asked, though he was eager to face his real enemy.

"Just go!" Mid shouted again, shooting to scare off the goons.

"Roger. Rek will comm you guys if a trap happens." Clown nodded, reaching to pull Branzy along with him, Branzy turned tangible and let himself be dragged into the lift.

Rek removed his heel and kicked a henchman that was crawling toward them, slamming the close button and the second to top button.

The door slid shut once more, Clown slicing his scythe at the fingers that reached for them through the closing gap. Rek flinched at the blood splatter, Branzy stared at it with annoyance.

"Hm, this is a bit familiar, isn't it Rek? Last time the two of us were in this elevator we were rescuing Branzy." Clown chuckled.

Rek smiled slightly, "Uh yeah, that sure was... a day."

"Hopefully it's the last time any of us are in this elevator." Branzy sighed, the closer he neared Vitalasy he felt the bubbling rage in his gut boil over. "We're close." He hissed.

The door dinged, Rek stepped forward, but Branzy stopped him, "Go back down, we can handle this." Branzy said.

"Really?"

"Yeah, we need you safe and able to warn us, you can't do that if we're fighting against really capable heroes." Branzy said with a smile, he pulled his friend into a tight hug, "See you shortly."

"Alright..." Rek sighed, hugging him back, and pulling Clown into the hug before he stepped back into the lift fully, hitting the ground floor button. "See you when we win."

"See you." Branzy smiled, lip quirked, Clown and he stepped out and watched the doors shut on Rek's worried face.

“You ready for this Branzzy?” Clown asked, fingers twitching closer to his wrist till he was gripping it.

“More then ready.” Branzzy admitted, smile dropping from his face, “I’ve been dreaming of the downfall of these heroes since the beginning.” He turned to Clown and wrapped his arms around his neck, “And there is no one I’d rather spill blood with then you.”

“Aww!” Clown cooed, “I never thought I’d get the chance to fight by your side, not this much at least, it’s a dream come true.” He traced Branzzy’s jaw, “You ready to go full villain on these fools?”

“More then anything.” Branzzy said coldly, eyes darkening as his bangs fell to obscure them slightly, “If this is your dream, let’s make this their nightmare.” He quipped, lips pulling into a thin smirk.

Clown sighed dreamily, “After you, my darling.”

Branzy hid his blush with a determined turn towards the door, seeing through it the quaking form of the villains.

He narrowed his gaze, letting his rage fuel his every movement. “Guess who’s back~” He whispered to himself, sauntering to the door with a sway in his hips.

-

The heroes backed away from the shaking door, knob turning, door jostling.

“We’re fine, it’s reinforced.” Reddoons said calmly, hands behind his back as he held his head high, the epitome of cool and collected.

The other heroes slumped with relief, but Vitalasy stepped back, slowly backing further away from the door.

“You good?” Subz asked lightly, eyebrow risen in surprise at his cowardice.

“We thought we were good when Clown came after Branzzy, I don’t want to know who’s behind that door.” Vitalasy hissed quietly, the door stopped jostling, Vitalasy turned and ran further into the hall around the corner. “Get security! Someone, check the cameras!”

“They’re all out, last one went out just a second ago, they must have a tech guy.” Hissed DonTurnt.

Subz took a step back, remembering the vigilante group did in fact have a tech guy. “They got Branzzy, what more could they want?” He whispered.

The door knob turned, but instead of the door opening or merely jostling again, a hand pushed through it.

The heroes jolted, scrambling backward in surprise as Ultra Violet walked through the door.

He eyed them with a delighted smile, head leading his body as he leaned in and walked with arms behind his back. “Here you all are!” He grinned with teeth, “Why were you hiding, heroes?” He pouted, tapping his chin gently, “Could it be you’re scared?” He tilted his head and giggled. “How very human.”

“Ultra Violet.” Reddoons greeted, hand reaching for his gun holster, “Are you returning yourself to us?”

He laughed, and the heroes took note of his outfit being far more exposing than the last they saw him. No longer was he hidden behind a cloak; eyes hidden under shadows with only their shine to show he saw them. No, he wore no cloak, no mask, nothing. Just a purple sleeveless turtleneck exposing his shoulders and some loose hanging trackpants. He had combat boots, and fingerless gloves.

Oh, he had a tattoo too.

Seems he had nothing to hide.

His eyes gleamed purple as he lethargically dragged his gaze over the heroes, “I’m afraid I’ll not be joining your team, I’ve found myself with far more reliable teammates.”

“Teammates who aren’t with you I see, clearly, they don’t care for your safety. You have no brute strength, you’re a stealth agent. We know you have no chance against us.” Reddoons rose his gun, “You’re better off with us, than them.” He said, his words coated with charisma that could influence a stable mind with ease.

Too bad Ultra Violet’s mind was not all that stable.

“No thanks.” He rolled his eyes, “Very hard to convince me when you literally kidnapped me.”

“They kidnapped you back, to be fair.” Reddoons reasoned.

“No, they rescued me, there’s a difference.”

“Well,” Reddoons cocked the gun, “you’re no use to us as an enemy.” He shot with zero hesitation, Ultra tilted his head to the side, watching with a dissatisfied gaze as it whirled past him.

“Hmm, well, that was very foolish of you.” He smirked, Reddoons aimed again, Ultra stepped to the side so that he was standing directly in front of the door.

Reddoons shot once more, and it went right through his stomach. He grinned. “Was it really?”

The man who should have been bleeding laughed, “Oh Reddoons,” He scolded, he stepped to the side, no bullet wound in his stomach.

Reddoons paled.

The doorknob and its lock had been shot.

“It really was.” Ultra bowed and the door was kicked open, flying across the air, knocking down DonTurnt in the process. Clown surged in, sparing not a single glance to the others as he charged and slashed his scythe against the first person he saw, which happened to be Reddoons.

The red man stumbled backward with a gasp, grabbing at his waist, and pulling out a retractable baton. He stretched it to its full length and narrowly blocked the next strike.

“C-Clown, listen, I’m sure we can come to a mutually beneficial agreeme-“ Ultra sauntered behind him and kicked him in the ass, making him stumble and fail to dodge the next attack, the scythe firmly lodged itself in his arm.

“Please!” He cried as he stumbled to find steady footing, he panted as he swung his baton at Clown, Clown leaned backwards, letting it fly over his face, Ultra grabbed the baton from him.

He turned to look at Ultra, eyes wide as he met a deadly gaze.

“Don’t even try to hit him.” He hissed, Reddoons pulled the baton out of his grasp and aimed for Ultra Violet instead, arm raised high as he swung low.

Clown jumped to intervene, but Ultra held up a single hand that stopped his movement. He rose a brow at Reddoons just as the baton passed through his body. It hit the floor, pulling Reddoons with it, Ultra rose his arm and elbowed Reddoons on his way down. He let out a final gasp and fell to the floor with a wheeze, allowing himself to lie there and bleed.

Subz watched with wide eyes, remembering what happened last time he crossed Clown, but now... now it seemed Ultra Violet was the one he should be fearing.

“P-Please, I’m sorry.” Subz said in a whisper, he stared at Ultra, meeting his gaze, “We would never have taken you if we knew-“

“Knew that it’d have consequences?” Ultra finished, he lightly placed his boot on Reddoons as he lay on the floor, pushing down, letting the man cough, “Where’s Vitalasy?”

Subz froze, body going rigid and heart filling with ice. “I-I, I’m not telling you.” He glared at Ultra, “You can do whatever you want to me, kill me if you want, but don’t hurt him.”

“Oh don’t worry, you won’t be spared either.” Ultra scoffed, rolling his eyes as he turned on his heel and glared down the hall. “Clown, there’s more coming this way,” Subz could hear the thumping footsteps of heroes racing down the hall, “Be a dear and take care of them for me, please?” He asked, touching his shoulder with a gentleness that Subz didn’t expect.

“Of course, you’ll be alright on your own?” Clown asked, reaching for Ultra Violet as he begun to walk away.

Ultra turned and lightly clutched his hand, giving it a soft squeeze, “I’ll be fine, don’t worry. Rage hell here and I’ll be back before you know it.” He promised with a warm smile.

Subz felt his heart drop into his stomach, his vision clearing as he witnessed the display of tenderness.

Oh shit, they hadn’t just stolen a vigilante.

They had stolen Clowns *boyfriend*.

No wonder he had been pissed!

“Oh we’re fucked.” He whispered, Clown turned to face him, and started to advance, Subz stumbled backward.

“By the way Clown!” Ultra’s voice echoed, Clown snapped his head toward him, Subz started to slink away, “Don’t kill Subz, if you can, for this to hit the hardest we need him *alive*.”

Subz gulped as Clown levelled his gaze back on him.

“Alright Subz, let’s play a game…” The killer whispered, stomping toward him, “How many bones can I break without killing you?”

Subz sucked in a shaky breath and *ran*.

-

Vitalasy had barely managed to warn the other heroes about what was happening when he heard the door break. He cringed and nodded to the other heroes, “That’ll be them, we need everyone on them right now. If this is Clown’s doing, then it’s likely it’ll end as poorly as when they last attacked.” He explained briefly, shoving a few heroes toward the hall, “Distract and attack, I’ll go call for more back-up.”

The devoted heroes nodded, racing down the hall towards the destruction and their doom.

Vitalasy wondered how many he’d get back; he shrugged it off and ran to the weaponry room. Slamming his hand on the button to the door, he watched the metal shutters slid up, agonisingly slow.

“Come on, come on!” He hissed between his teeth, glancing down the hall, the cries were getting louder, that meant Clown was getting closer. When it was halfway up, he ducked under and dashed in.

He knew he was useless as a fighter, walking on air was a cool party trick, an intimidation tactic at most, but he needed weapons to have any advantage in battle. His eyes darted around the gun rack, looking for his weakness dart gun, it was always an effect way to take down an enemy.

“Psst.” He heard behind him, spinning around he looked for the source, but no one was there.

“What the hell, I must be getting paranoid…” He muttered to himself, smiling nervously. He kept his eyes on the doorway, hand reaching behind him and grappling for where the gun was, he paused when his fingers were met with nothing. He turned around and paled.

The gun that was there a moment ago was missing.

“What?” He whispered.

“Oh. There you are.”

He grabbed a gun at random and turned to face the threat, eyes narrowed and glaring dangerously.

It was Clown, he stood confidently at the entrance to the room, one hand behind his back, the other gripping his scythe, said scythe dripped with blood.

“Clown… I thought our other heroes were dealing with you.”

Clown shrugged, “They were, but they did a really bad job.” He looked down the hall from where he came, “I’ll get back to Subz soon enough, he’s not going anyway.” He chuckled darkly.

Vitalasy aimed the gun at Clown, his fingers shook on the trigger. “What do you want Clown? You got your stupid violet back, what more could you want?”

“The fall of the hero’s system, for one, but for right now? Some good old revenge.” He walked into the room, surveying the walls, “Nice weapons, hmm, one seems to be missing.” He pulled his hand

from behind his back, holding up the weakness dart gun.

Vitalasy opened his eyes wide, “W-Where, how did you get that?” He asked shakily, trying to keep his voice steady and failing.

“The walls have ears and eyes, and *hands*, Vitalasy.” Clown offered as an explanation.

Vitalasy hissed, backing himself up more and gripping the gun. “If you leave now, I won’t shoot.”

“I could say the same thing.” He aimed the gun at Vitalasy’s shoulder.

“Why would you want me to leave?” He gritted his teeth.

“Because someone else wants to see you.” He shot the gun.

Vitalasy leapt to the side, but it was no use, he knew how powerful that gun was. The arrow lodged in his shoulder, he shouted at the sudden pain. He gripped the arrow and pulled it out in one fell swoop, it hurt like a bitch, but he would not let the weakness continue to taint him. Clown aimed the gun again, his eyes creased as he smiled.

“One, two-“

Vitalasy didn’t wait to hear what happened at three, he pushed past him, sluggishly scrambling away from the raging Clown as he gripped his shoulder. He pulled out his communicator with a gasp.

“I’ve been shot, they got my dart gun, I don’t know how. How many are hearing me right now?” He reported, he waited for a response, and frowned when no one responded.

He heard Clown chasing him and saw a few more heroes up ahead. He narrowed his eyes and ran past them, hoping they’d at least stall Clown’s rampage.

“Hello? Come in, this is Vitalasy, I’ve been shot. Is anyone else on the line?”

Static responded.

Vitalasy paled. “Subz? Subz are you there?”

He ran into a dark room, letting the door swing behind him as he scrambled in and hid himself from the chaos outside. He listened to the screams and shouts as he clutched his communicator tightly in his hands. “...Subz?” He whispered, voice shaking, “Come on man... Come on, answer me.”

With still no response he listened against the door and felt relief flood him as he heard the solid and firm voices of the backup team arriving. Good, good. They had more people to help. He slid down the door, crouching on the floor and gripping his shoulder as it thumped with pain. Wooziness hit him fast and hard, the weakness poison in the arrow making him want to fall asleep as all the pain amplified.

He heard the screams outside abruptly cut off, voices he heard before silencing. He perked up at that, the backup team must have done their job and finally stopped the villains and vigilantes.

Vitalasy thought it would be alright to peek out from behind corners and survey the scene before him. But no, down the hall was a mess of bloodied bodies, some alive, some... less convincingly alive, nearing dead. He saw Clown at the centre of the fight, taking on the many heroes with an

ease that terrified Vitalasy.

He'd gotten stronger. Clown stabbed another hero and begun to advance towards Vitalasy's hiding place. He yelped and quickly dashed back into his room.

He tried to catch his breath as he gripped at his chest. He peeked his head out the crack in the door, watching as Clown stalked past him. He sighed with relief.

Then a flicker of purple caught his eye.

"Hello, Vitalasy."

He snapped his head back into the dark room, freezing in shock as Ultra Violet stepped out of the shadows, eyes glowing a purple that illuminated his grinning face.

"Violet." Vitalasy scoffed, "I was wondering when you'd show your face again, though I..." he paused as he noticed he wore no hood, white hair falling gracefully across his face. It shone with purple highlights from his eyes, and Vitalasy wondered what he could be looking through. "Didn't expect to see so much of it."

"I just realised there was no use hiding," Branzly shrugged, grin still firm on his face, "not like anyone can catch me now."

Vitalasy rose a brow, the confidence on the meek vigilante unsettling him. "Oh? How so? I caught you fairly easily I'd say."

He giggled, a hand delicately covering his lips as he did so. "Oh yes, having to employ a former friend and holding another vigilante against me; Truly, so easy, definitely not planned for a long while." He sighed, eyes alight with mirth as he popped a hip out to the side. "Really Vitalasy, I'm amazed I was so sought after, then again, I am pretty cute, or so I've been told."

"Whoever told you that is a liar." Vitalasy laughed bitterly, "Though, you did look cute when you were unconscious, be nice to see that again."

"Ohhh yikes, coming off a bit like a creep Vitalasy." Branzly said, faking a wince, "And you're really calling Clown a liar?"

"Clown a-" He froze, eyes narrowing, "*You*, you're how he found us. I should have guessed; I'm surprised it took you guys so long to find us. Too busy making out to make time?"

Branzly laughed loudly, "Oh no! I was out of my body for a week you dunce!" He cackled, eyes shutting, "You left me, floating, watching, never interacting, for so long!"

Vitalasy felt his heart drop at that news, he pushed the regret away.

"Clown was going to kill you, but he left the choice up to me!" Branzly said, walking toward him like he was dancing.

"Oh..." Vitalasy recalled what Clown had said to him, that Ultra-Violet was a merciless man, right? "So what did you choose?"

"Oh, I told him not to." Branzly's shook his head fondly.

Vitalasy tilted his head at that, "Oh, so he went against your wishes?"

"No, no! Don't be stupid!" Branzly laughed, he dropped his smile and stared at Vitalasy coldly,

“He’s just playing distraction, *I* wanted to be the one to kill you.”

Vitalasy stepped back, against the door, Branzzy stepped forward.

“B-But you’re a vigilante! Surely, you’re not turning to a villain...?”

“I’d rather be an alive villain than a dead vigilante.” He scoffed, “But you know, I was thinking, death is a little bit too good for you. I know what it’s like to survive without living, with no other option, not even death, and I personally think it’s far worse.”

“S-So what? You’re going to torture me or something? Fat chance, your powers are useless to fight.” Vitalasy shot forward, hands poised and ready to choke, Branzzy smirked as he neared him.

Vitalasy fell through his body, eyes wide in shock as he hit the floor with a grunt. “What...?” He wheezed as he propped himself back up, scampering to get back on his feet.

“Being out of your body for so long, well, it helps you really understand how they work. How the soul works, how to tap into it.” He tapped his head, body slightly translucent, “And maybe even... Tap out of it.” He swung at Vitalasy, who scrambled away, not knowing the exact danger he was in, but knowing a threat when he saw one.

The man continued to swing at him, not deterred, Vitalasy sluggishly dodged as best he could each time. Biting hard on his cheek as he tried not to scream from the excruciating pain his shoulder still felt.

Ultra Violet did not have any of this energy he had when he first met him, his eyes locked onto his with cold determination, and Vitalasy felt like prey.

He couldn’t dodge forever, Ultra Violet grabbed him by his bleeding shoulder and Vitalasy gasped as he felt his very soul pulled from his body.

He stumbled forward, hands gripping nothing, he heard something fall and turned in shock.

His body fell to the floor behind him, unconscious, eyes very subtly shining purple.

Ultra Violet stared at the body, before turning to Vitalasy with a smile. “An eye for an eye, as the saying goes.” He kicked the body, and Vitalasy flinched, noticing the lack of feeling. “You know, at one point when I was like that I thought, ‘Wow, I wouldn’t even wish this on my worst enemy!’” He chuckled, “Yet, here I am.”

“Violet, do you really think this will stop me?” He asked, and Ultra Violet laughed joyously.

“You haven’t had these powers before Vitalasy, I *know* this will stop you. I *know* you have no idea how to rejoin your body, what’s more, that arrow that Clown injected you with will keep you from getting in anyway.” He shrugged, giggling as Vitalasy floated slightly above him, glaring down. His bodies attire slowly turned red, blood leaking out.

“My team will find me.” He said, shakily, hope dwindling for any chance of saviour as he watched his body bleed and couldn’t feel an ounce of connection to it.

“They won’t know where to look for you, will they? Afterall...” He chuckled darkly, grin never leaving his face, he stared up at Vitalasy with a deadly perceiving gaze, “No one ever looks up.” He spoke, parroting words Vitalasy once said.

He turned on his heel and walked out the shut door, a single hand risen in a wave. “Goodbye,

Vitalasy. I'd have Subz join you in that form, but well, I think it's greater punishment to keep you apart, isn't it?"

Vitalasy watched his retreating form an emptiness and hopelessness filling his mind. "Subz?" He whispered, head darting around, "Subz!" He screamed, awaiting a reply.

It never came.

-

Rek stood by the elevator with his arms crossed, body tingling as he waited for any trap to be triggered. Nothing had come, it seemed they had truly and wholly surprised the heroes to the point they had no upper hand. The elevator dinged, he scrambled back before relaxing, his power hadn't triggered, so it must be a teammate behind the door.

The door slid open, and he stared at the occupants with wide eyes.

Clown was covered in blood, scythe held lazily in his hand, he couldn't even place what colour it had been originally, now it was pure red. Branzzy stood beside him, smiling cutely, his hand had some blood on it, but other than that, he looked perfectly put together.

"All good?" Rek asked nervously, and Branzzy nodded slowly, slumping against the elevator's walls.

"Yeah, yeah, finally, we got him. It's over." He said, smiling tiredly. "I'm so relieved."

"You did fantastic, Branzzy." Clown praised, pulling the smaller man to his side, he leant against him, ignoring the blood as he shut his eyes for a moment.

"So, Vitalasy, is he dead?" Rek asked coolly, "I can't say I was against the idea, honestly."

"Mmm, not exactly." Branzzy admitted, and both Rek and Clown turned to him in confusion.

"Why?"

"What do you mean? I saw him bleeding out on the floor."

"Yeah, well, that was just his body." Branzzy waved his hand around as if to brush off the idea, "I pulled his soul out of his body, so he'd know what he did to me." He slowly grinned at the confession, he looked up to Clown, "This makes me a proper villain, right?"

Clown blinked, slowly. Rek lightly touched his shoulder, recalling that odd experience with Branzzy and now realising what exactly he had done.

"Oh." He whispered, "*Oh.*" He said with fear coating his words, he had almost been pulled from his body.

"Yeah, you know that pulsing thing that I mentioned I kept sensing from people?" Branzzy explained to Clown, who nodded sluggishly. "Mhm, that's their souls! Cool right? And I can," he wiggled his fingers, touching Clowns arm, "*Touch* them."

"Y-You're not going to do that again though, right?" Rek asked with a nervous laugh.

“Oh, no, of course not.” Branzy said seriously, “Vitalasy was an exception, I’d never use to on my friends, or regular civilians. This is something only for emergencies. I don’t want anyone to suffer the same fate I had, except Vitalasy.”

“Thank god.” Rek laughed; the villains paused as they heard sirens approaching. “We best split up, I’ll let the guys still on the upper floors know. We’ll meet back at Clowns place?” Rek pulled out his communicator, quickly typing out a message.

Clown nodded firmly, “Yes.” He looked at Branzy, his exhausted form scaring him, “Will you be okay? We can go together-“

“I’ll be fine Clown.” Branzy reassured, “Besides, you’re literally covered in blood. I’ll take some back alleys, phase through some buildings, I’ll be fine.”

Clown didn’t look convinced, but eventually gave in, nodding and pressing his masked face against Branzy’s head. “See you later.”

Branzy kissed the mask softly. “See you.” He waved, nodding at Rek, who nodded as well, and started running toward an exit. Clown looked reluctant to leave, “We’ll be back before you know it.” Branzy smiled and phased out the elevator.

Branzy took a shaky breath, the adrenaline of the day’s events finally crashing. He phased through the hero’s base and out the wall. He found himself between two high rise buildings, he looked up, staring at the sky framed by buildings like a painting. His hand reached up; fingers outstretched as he watched the clouds passing by oh so slowly.

No matter the chaos on Earth, time really did wait for no one.

He heard the sound of rapid footsteps made Branzy turn sharply toward the entrance of the alley, seeing a familiar face run with a panicked expression.

“No, no, no...” Chief repeated with a hiss, he skidded to a stop and stared up at the building. He surveyed the shattered windows, small fires, and general chaos. His head slowly looked down and met Branzy’s gaze.

The two stared at each other, and Branzy felt the hatred he thought he had quenched rise within him.

"Branzy?!" Chief gasped, looking from the building to him, "Were you behind this?"

"Of course not!" Branzy said with a giggle following, his smile dropped to one of pure disinterest, "Just kidding." He said lowly, turning his back on him and walking away with a one-handed wave.

Chief watched, glancing from the bloodshed to the retreating back of Branzy, he gritted and ran towards him, shoving a binder full of papers into his hands before running again. Away from Branzy, away from the heroes crumbling building, away from everything and as far as he could go.

"Betraying your team Chief? Can't say I'm surprised." Branzy giggled as he watched him run, he flicked his eyes to the papers and felt his interest rise as he realised, they were *classified* hero documents. *The* documents, the ones they had been looking for.

They could take down the heroes with this.

"I'd take it back in a heartbeat Branzy." Chief called, staring at him with earnest regret.

Branzy merely smiled, stepping toward the next building's wall, and phasing through it.

The hatred that was boiling simmered down.

-

Clown's apartment door opened smoothly, no creaky hinges. Branzy heard no footsteps above causing plaster to fall, no old floorboards that shifted and whined with each step. No, when Branzy entered Clown's apartment he entered a building full of warmth and life. He found himself smiling, because for once, he was heading into a home that truly felt like one.

When returning from vigilante missions, Branzy was never greeted by anyone, only the sounds of a steadily decaying building. But returning home as a villain?

"Branzy!" Clown called, he was dragging a wet flannel over his face, wiping blood that was dripping onto the floor.

"Hey Clown." Branzy greeted, waving to the other villains in the apartment as they all patched themselves up after a job well done.

Spepticle was excitedly explaining how he did to Parrot, who nodded at him as he recited the days' events. Cube was typing on his laptop next to a slumped Rek. Despite his attention on the laptop, he still chuckled at some joke that Spoke was saying to Mid, he was dramatically re-enacting a fight. Clown finished removing most of the blood off himself, gesturing for Branzy to approach.

He did, body relaxed as Clown wiped some blood off his hands and chin.

"You did wonderfully, truly, you were made to be a villain."

"Definitely not born to be one." Branzy joked.

"We're all villains now!" Spepticle cheered, the rest all joined in cheering.

Branzy cheered too but found a small twinge in his heart dwindling his spirits. "I'm gonna chill for a bit." He announced, waving goodbye as he approached his bedroom (or was it Clown's? he never really explained WHOS room it was. Oh well, his now.)

He entered the large room, pulling back the thick red curtains to reveal the window behind it. The cityscape stared back at him, the setting sun lighting it in a magnificent glow.

I remembered flying over views like this one, he touched his hand to the glass, pressing his forehead against it. Viewing the world as if it were a line of dollhouses.

Could I phase out again?

He paled, stomach clenching at the implications of such an action. He didn't want the heroes to make him afraid to use his main power, one he had used the most and honestly *enjoyed* using the most. Walking through walls was awesome but being terrified to use a skill as incredible as his would be a waste. A weakness.

He furrowed his brow; the stars were starting to come out.

He slowly sunk to rest on his knees, feeling a bit safer when closer to the ground. Yet he wanted to run from it, wanted to dance amongst the clouds or speed through alleyways as if he were a bird taking flight. He wanted to see the old streets he patrolled, he wanted to feel alive whilst feeling disconnected. He used to have that balance.

He squeezed his eyes shut, knowing what he had to do. He had to take it back.

"Hey Branzzy," Cube greeted gently, Branzzy glanced at him tersely, nodding to show he heard him, "We're all making a video to explain the stuff in the documents we're releasing, and why we're doing it. You don't have to but, if you'd like to speak about what happened, that'd help."

Branzy stood, dusting off his knees, "Sure." He answered, head still looking out onto the expansive world outside the window.

Cube led him to the living room, the laptop Cube had was rested on Clown's lap, and a camera was set up facing a blank wall. Right then, Spepticle was talking to it.

"The heroes were never forgiving, and never had the civilian's best interest at heart." He said, ducking his head and leaving the camera's view. Parrot clicked to turn it off.

"I half expected him to turn into, like, the mayor and just pretend he was firing them." Cube snorted, guiding Branzzy toward the camera.

"Woah wait, I go now? No script? No nothing?"

"You can write a script if you want to." Clown smiled, glancing up from the laptop.

"Unfair! I didn't write a script!" Spepticle huffed.

"Well done, no one would be able to tell." Rek commented dryly.

"How long do I need to speak for?" Branzzy asked, hesitantly stepping toward the camera's view. He glanced back to the bedroom.

"As long as you want, just describe how the heroes wronged you and why we are posting the documents. Or one of us could describe it for you, if it's too hard."

"No- No it's fine... I," Branzzy let his eyes shine purple, staring through the camera towards Clown, "I can do it."

"You want to go now?" Parrot asked softly, and Branzzy took a deep breath, straightening his posture and nodding.

"Yeah. I feel like this is the last thing I need to do. For closure, or whatever."

"You can ask to stop at any point." Clown reminded, and Parrot nodded in agreement. He readied his hand over the record button, clicking it and gesturing for Branzzy to start.

"Hello." Branzzy begun, and nearly gave up then and there for such a lame greeting. "You may not recognise me as I am now, but I was, and am, Ultra Violet." He shut his eyes briefly, his eyelids still glowed as he collected himself.

"Around a month or so ago, the 'hero' " he air-quoted, eyes glancing distastefully to the side, "Vitalasy, sought after me, he threatened me. This was not totally unexpected, vigilantes are

illegal, and this is a risk we all are willing to face on our path to help others. What was surprising, is he shot me in the shoulder, and during my escape I may have broken my foot." He winced at the memory, "Talk about embarrassing. You could say we started off on the wrong foot." He snickered; Rek groaned off camera.

"In reality, I was scared, and hurt, and thought I'd die. But the villain ClownPierce healed my wounds and saved me. It was then that my prior assumptions about him vanished, how could heroes be good and villains bad if a hero hurt me and a villain saved me?" He shook his head in wonder.

"A bit later, Vitalasy kidnapped me, holding my friend Rek-" He pulled Rek into the cameras view, "against me. He said he'd hurt him if I didn't submit to them. I did and ended up unconscious for a week. The vigilantes and villains teamed up to save me from their clutches." Rek waved to the camera sheepishly.

"Citizens, the heroes are lying to you. They do not care about you, they prioritise publicity over public safety and would rather you hurt and in harm's way to gain profit, then safe and happy. Take it from the vigilantes who have been helping you all for free for years, they are not the good guys." Branzzy scoffed. Clown got up and walked into view, ducking his head so he was better in frame.

"These released documents contain videos of heroes ignoring those in need, purposefully. Audio of conversations between them about illegal acts and harmful actions against innocent civilians, and also documents of their purchases of illegal and lethal weapons. As well as more. Our hope is that the government defunds them and brings justice to this world and them." Clown explained.

"Thank you for watching!" Cube called from behind the camera.

"We're not Youtubers you don't need to thank them-" Spoke laughed, being cut off by Spepticle.

"This is team- uh, we never settled on a team name." Spepticle begun, hopping back into the sight of the camera, the rest of the villains and vigilantes soon joined, offering potential names.

"Whatever! This is team-" Voices overlapped each other in an avalanche of noise, "VILLAINS!" Clown shouted over the discourse, "Signing out!" Laughed Branzzy, the chaos mildly amusing.

Clown reached out and cut the camera, the gaggle of friends laughed, deciding the take was good enough.

"Let's upload this bad boy!" Cube whooped, plugging it into the laptop and quickly editing the segments together, ending with Branzzy's one. "Once this is uploaded, we can't take it back, no one will be able to take it down, I've made it hack proof." Cube said seriously, "Any last things you want to add?"

"Should we mention Branzzy trapped Vitalasy out of his body and he may or may not be dead from bleeding out?" Rek asked.

The group paused.

"Nah." Clown shrugged, leaning over Cube to press upload.

-

Branzy sat on his bed, staring out the large windows again, imagining the feeling of flight he had felt previously. The views from above as he floated and watched, the ease of moving, it was surreal.

"I need to overcome it." Branzy muttered, staring over the rooftops, face pressed hard against the glass. "I won't get stuck; I have my friends to help me. Clown will bring me back." He sat up a bit straighter, "It was as easy as breathing..."

He took a deep breath and shut his eyes.

When he opened them, his body's were still shut. He stared down at himself, now flopping back into the bed, laying down as if he had simply fallen asleep. His mouth was slightly parted, breathing easily. His eyelids glowed pleasantly.

Branzy waited for ten minutes, hearing the sounds of chaos in the other room as the villains dealt with the aftermath of the documents being leaked. He counted in his mind.

One minute.

Two minutes.

Clown was laughing loudly, he smiled to himself at the sound.

Three minutes.

Four minutes.

Rek was speaking in that tone of voice he had when he was exceptionally impressed.

Five minutes.

Six minutes.

Branzy gulped, even though he had no need. He focused on what he could see and hear.

Seven minutes.

Eight minutes.

He was terrified, he needed to feel again, he couldn't do it, but he needed to know if his powers functioned the same, if he had the safety net that was a consistent timer.

Nine minutes.

He clenched his fists and squeezed his eyes shut.

Ten minutes.

His eyes snapped open as a tidal wave of feelings hit him, he lurched forward with a gasp and stared out the window in amazement. He grinned. He did it.

It still lasted only ten minutes. He couldn't get lost. He'd be pulled back in.

The door swung open, a panicked Clown on the other end.

"Are you okay? I thought I heard you gasp for air-"

"Clown," Branzzy said tenderly, holding his arms out, Clown rushed to his side, holding him close. "I did it Clown I phased out. And I'm still here, it only lasts ten minutes."

"You- Why did you test that when you were alone?" Clown said, voice laced with worry. He ran his fingers through Branzzy's hair.

"I just... I don't know, I did most things alone before. I wanted to try again. I knew you would help me if I couldn't go back in. I could hear you in the other room, I didn't even leave the bedroom, just stayed floating."

"Okay, good." Clown sighed, "Do... do you want to leave this room?"

Branzzy tensed, "Kind of."

"Go ahead, I'll be here when you get pulled back." Clown promised, pressing a kiss to his forehead.

Branzzy frowned, "You're okay with that? I heard it was pretty scary for you when I was out."

"It was probably the worst thing ever." Clown shrugged, he shushed Branzzy when he tried to comment, "BUT, I'm not going to stop you from using *your* powers how you please. They're *yours*, no one else's."

Branzzy smiled against Clown, holding him tightly, "Okay. I'll be back in ten. I... I love you."

He felt Clown's soul grow in warmth and brightness. "I love you too." He whispered like a secret, (a poorly kept one).

Branzzy tilted his head to look Clown in the eye and held his face softly, Clown leaned into the hold, pleased. The villain took a breath and leaned up, kissing Clown as the night sky outside illuminated the room in soft cool light. Clown turned his head to deepen the kiss, holding Branzzy firmly at his neck and waist.

Branzzy relished in all the feeling Clown brought, the warmth, the ease, the softness, the devotion. It made him feel more alive than anything else in the world. He'd need the firm feelings; it was hard to feel them when he was phasing out. He kissed more firmly, before he pulled back, staring at his lovesick partner with as much admiration as he could express.

"Bye."

Clown jolted as Branzzy's body fell backwards, laying limp in his arms.

"Wha- Warn a guy!" Clown muttered, and Branzzy smiled as he begun to float further away, out the window. He stared at the city streets below, tossing a glance at Clown, who kissed his bodies cheek. He fluttered his eyelashes against his hair, before settling on simply holding him.

Branzy's soul felt warm with love, and he decided he would be just fine.

He flew up, up into the air and into the now night sky, the moon was shining brightly down on him. He spread his arms wide and let his chest rise up to greet the sky.

The clouds drifted past, likely they'd feel wet, but he preferred to imagine they were as soft as cotton candy. He let his fingers dance across the passing clouds surface, let himself lay in it as he rested.

"I'm here." He reaffirmed, imagining the moon casting light on him as he shut his eyes.

"I'm real, here, and I want to be here. I want to live, and love, and... hell, I want to live laugh love like those stupid signs." He chuckled, pressed a hand against his cheek, it didn't exactly press against anything. He sort of let it rest there as if it was. The hushed sounds of traffic were a constant hum beneath him, lights from buildings below him paralleling the stars above.

He thought of his crummy apartment, he thought of previous missions, he thought of meeting Clown for the first time, he thought of rooftop hangouts with his friends, he thought of Chief and how he was open to forgiving him.

He thought of everything, and anything.

The stars shone with a brightness that Branzy thought was just a tad duller than the light within Clown's eyes. He reached into the air, letting his hand curl around nothing.

"I'm..." He smiled, warm. "I'm-" He broke off into a soft giggle, elated by his joyful feelings.

A tug hit his chest and he yelped as he felt himself be pulled back, down, down, down, watching the world around him whiz past like a blur of colours on an abstract painting.

He jolted upright with a gasp, instantly relaxing as gentle fingers played with his hair and another hand held his wrist. Clown was humming as he leant against him.

"Hey." Branzy croaked, and Clown chuckled.

"Hey, welcome back, nice view?"

Branzy looked into Clowns mismatched eyes and swore he saw galaxies and nebulas.

"Hm," He thought of the stars and the soft clouds, of the city lights and the muffled noise. "Nah." He mumbled, pulling himself close against Clown's chest, hearing his heartbeat thumping. "This one's much better."

Clown smiled, blush rising in his cheeks, "Yeah, gotta agree with you there." He tugged Branzy even closer.

They held each other in compatible silence.

"I love you." Branzy said again.

"I *love* you." Clown repeated like worship. Branzy revelled in the feeling of warmth between them, the texture of soft fabrics and even softer skin touching one another.

There was a knock on the door that interrupted the pairs quiet cuddling, Rek poked his head in with a polite smile.

"We're all meeting in the living room to destress, wanna join the party?"

Branzy nodded, "Sure, let me just change out of this villain get up." He poked his tongue out at the pants, some red stains on them, "Hope you guys are used to cleaning bloodstains."

"We very much are, I mean, come on, look who you're talking to." Clown laughed, getting up, "I'll get in some comfy clothes too. See you in the lounge."

Rek nodded, opening the door wider to let Clown pass, he shut the door quietly and Branzy smiled.

"I'm here." He whispered, full of awe, "I'm real, I'm here." The bedsheets beneath his hand creased as he gripped it tighter, he beamed at the ceiling. "I'm *happy*."

-

Branzy sighed with contentment as he shoved a cosy warm hoodie over his head with a flourish, leaving the apartment's bathroom with relaxed muscles and equally relaxed smile.

He entered the main living area and waved to the occupants, the vigilantes, or now, villains, waving back with similarly dopey expressions.

"Well, we did it." Cube said with a warm laugh, slumping into the couch, "The heroes are no more!"

"Down with the heroes!" Spepticle cheered. The rest of the group let out whoops of excitement, many curling up comfortably in the living room, the couch was an L-shaped one, so plenty fit.

Branzy had decided that he wanted to sit on the doubles couch, with Clown. He sat beside him, leaning against his protector and beloved, allowing him to hold him close.

Branzy felt a sense of calm and peace he hadn't felt in... well, he hadn't felt since before he became a vigilante, and now a villain.

He'd been told that revenge was something that wasn't simply quenched, that once he got it, he'd want more.

And while he did want some small things, like possibly taking over the world- (*Kidding*) He didn't feel the drive to go out and seek bloodshed. He'd done it. It was over. He was tired.

And he could finally rest.

He felt soft, when with his friends, when with Clown by his side, hands carding through his hair. He wasn't soft, maybe once he was, but now he'd been hardened, but in that moment... he was soft, and he liked being soft.

He liked how he felt vulnerable, yet safe.

He liked how he trusted everyone around him.

He liked how he could feel the warmth of everyone in the room, see their souls glowing with happiness very faintly.

He hummed with delight, leaning closer against Clown, who cooed at his actions.

"Stop being cute Branzy, you're ruining our newly-announced-villain cred." Parrot joked, Branzy flipped him off and snuggled closer against Clown.

"You know, if I told my past self that I'd be working with villains and become one, I think I'd have tried to talk myself out of it." Rek snorted.

"Yeah, I definitely didn't picture this in my future, but at least villains are paid more." Spepticle giggled.

"We're paid more because we rob from the wealthy." Spoke said with an eye roll.

"But if you become the wealthy, then what?"

"We succumb to greed~" Clown said with mock evil laughter.

The group chuckled, until Cube grabbed at his stomach with a grunt. "Anyone else hungry?"

"We should celebrate!" Spepticle suggested, "With a feast!"

"We should!" Spoke agreed eagerly, leaning forward with a grin, "Wanna order pizza?"

"You think any pizza places would even be open right now? After our stunt, I don't know how many places will stay open... Pretty scary time for civilians." Rek commented.

Spoke pouted, "Well, what else are we meant to get on a Tuesday night? It's pretty late, pizza places are all I can think of."

Branzy perked up, "I know a place that's open on Tuesday nights." He grinned.

Clown turned to him with a knowing smile, "Oh, do you now? You know, I have been craving an iced coffee for a while."

"I've been meaning to let those guys know I'm alright anyway..." Branzy added, he stretched and got off the couch, pulling on some sneakers and smiling at his friends, "Come on! Let's go!"

-

The bell on the entrance to the One Stop Hot Shop rang out as the door swung gently, Branzy carefully tore the missing poster on the inside of the door off and stared at his picture. He smiled at it, he was certainly a different person than who he was when he took the photo, but at the very least he was just as happy.

"Yo! Guys!" Branzy shouted, strutting in with the gaggle of villains behind him, (most in casual wear, though still wearing masks and disguises) he shoved his hands in his pockets. "I'm back!"

The backroom door slammed open, his co-worker and boss on the other side. His co-worker put their hands over their mouth in shock, eyes creasing with joy.

"You're okay!" They said with delight, jumping over the countertop and pulling Branzy into a firm hug, "You're okay! Oh Branzy, I'm so glad! We were so worried!"

His boss sighed and slumped against the register, "I-I was certain we made the wrong call when

Clown came back here with you unconscious, we... We thought that we lost you for good.”

Branzy hugged his co-worker back and leaned across the counter to hug his boss, “You made the right call, Clown and my friends saved me!” He explained, gesturing to the large group of people standing awkwardly in the shop.

His boss stepped around the counter and approached Clown, he held out his hand, “Thank you so much, Mr ClownPierce, for keeping our Branzy safe.” Clown shook his hand.

“No problem, sir, can’t have my favourite barista up and dying on me.”

“Oh yeah! Lemme make you an iced coffee, Clown!” Branzy grinned, rushing behind the counter, “Sit down guys!” He called, and the villains shuffled their way over to the booth seats, sliding in. “We got any hot food left?” Branzy asked as he entered the backroom.

“Yeah, just enough for your friends I think.” His co-worker grinned, watching Branzy make an iced coffee again like it was second nature. “God, Branzy, we were so worried... I’m so relieved.” They laughed.

Branzy smiled back, “Yeah, well, you and me both.”

“Branzy that...” His boss begun, following after him slowly, “The news, the leaked video, the man it showed... That was, that was you, wasn’t it?”

Branzy froze up and winced. *Wow, I should have thought about this before letting my face out there.* “Uh yeah, that... that was me.” Branzy cringed, he turned to face his colleagues, doing jazz hands, “Surprise!” He made his eyes glow.

“That makes so much more sense on why you were targeted.” His co-worker gasped in realisation, “But, but you’re okay now, right? You’re okay?” They grabbed his arms and squeezed, worry etched into their face.

“I’m fine.” Branzy confirmed softly, “Clown and my vigilante friends rescued me, and I got back at the heroes who hurt me. It’s all okay now... And after exposing them? They aren’t going to hurt anyone again. Not on our watch.”

He glanced between his friends nervously, “Y-You’re not scared of me, right? I know I did some bad things in retaliation, but I mean, I stand by it. They fucked me up big time, it was deserved. Also, am I fired? I know I didn’t show up for a pretty long time but like can I still work here? I miss it a lot, oh wait my face is out there huh? Should I dye my hair maybe? I’m starting to think that was a bad idea to reveal my identity... Then again, really wanted them to know I didn’t fear them anymore. Sort of was a statement, will that affect getting rehired? Since I’d be a known villain working at the shop? I just wanted-“

“Oh my god Branzy shut up, I forgot how much you can ramble.” His co-worker laughed, “We already knew your moral compass or whatever was skewed when you started getting the hots of ClownPierce.” They teased. Branzy spluttered excuses as he blushed a brilliant red.

“Yeah, we don’t care, you’re not fired dummy, why would I put up missing posters if I didn’t want you back?” His boss laughed, “By the way, you and that Clown an item yet?”

Branzy blushed and smacked his co-workers’ arms lightly, “Staphhh!” He whined, quickly making the drink to escape their teasing, adding a purple straw as they continued to laugh at him. “Can you guys just bring us some food *pleaseeee*? It’s been a long day.”

“Sure can Branzy, you kick back and relax.” They playfully shoved him towards the door. He stuck his tongue out and walked through the wall just to mess with them.

“Ayy Branzy!” Cheered Rek as he reappeared on their side.

“Foods on the way!” Branzy smiled, walking over and sitting opposite to Clown, sliding the iced coffee his way.

“Thanks Branzy.” Clown cooed, sliding his hand over and covering Branzy’s. “You okay?”

Branzy looked around at the room, seeing his friends all laughing in their booths, the atmosphere light and familiar in a way he didn’t think he’d feel again. He felt normal, he felt happy. He felt warm.

“More than okay.” Branzy beamed, flipping his hand and clutching Clown’s.

The man blushed and pulled the purple straw against his lips, Branzy stared at the pretty red lips that continued to captivate him.

"Branzy?" Clown asked, tilting his head and looking behind himself, he looked back at Branzy. "What are you looking at?"

Branzy chuckled, "Don't be silly Clown," he muttered, standing up and sitting right next to Clown. He leant again him with a hum of delight, reaching up toward Clown’s face and cupping the man’s cheeks, "I'm looking at *you*." He whispered lovingly.

Clown reached up to his mask with shaky fingers, pushing it up onto his head and staring at Branzy. Tears pricked his wide eyes, slowly building and trailing over his blushing cheeks.

Branzy jolted in his seat, gasping with horror. “What? What’s wrong Clown? What did I say?” He brushed the tears away with his thumb, searching his beloveds face with increasing concern.

Clown let out a wet laugh, shaking his head and smiling despite the tears, “No, no, nothing Branzy, nothing.” He chuckled, wiping his eyes feverishly. He leaned over and kissed Branzy gently, Branzy returned the kiss, though still looked concerned.

“You sure you’re okay?”

Clown stared at Branzy with the kindest smile he had ever seen, incomprehensively fragile in how he touched Branzy, like he would disappear at any moment.

“Yeah. Yeah, I’m... I’m just so happy...” He took another sip from his drink, smiling around the straw. “I’m so happy you’re here.”

Branzy smiled back, leaning his head on his shoulder. A car drove past, the TV in the store had some news anchor telling the story of the public's declining opinion on heroes, his friends chatted with so much energy and excitement you’d think they hadn’t just taken on some of the scariest people on Earth. Branzy listened to the thumping heartbeats of his many friends, watched how the souls glowing light intermingled into one beautiful pulsing force.

“I’m happy you’re here too.” Branzy whispered, silently wondering, how on Earth did he end up in this position? He was in no way what you’d see as a typical villain.

Branzy was not very charismatic, he could not handle a business deal between other villains. Hell, he hadn’t even met the villain's personal tailor, Mid had gone to pass on the details of his outfit *for*

him.

Branzy was in no regards a heartless beast, he was kind at heart, despite all he had been through he didn't want any harm to come to those who were innocent of blame.

Branzy was also not the most logical person, he let his emotions fuel all his ambitions and acted on impulse. He often made plans on the fly even if he did have a prior scheme on how he'd approach a threat. Meeting with Vitalasy was proof of that.

None of these traits made him someone you'd think would end up being a villain.

Branzy shrugged, tossing the self-analysis aside as he held on just a tad tighter to ClownPierce.

Well, he smiled to himself with amusement, he did tend not to think things through.

Chapter End Notes

Catch me out here repeating opening chapter lines to show growth of character every single fucking time.

Here's a fun lil note I had after I wrote the vitalasy fight:

And then vitalasy haunts Branzy as he's the only one who can see him, and through bickering and frustration, they eventually form an unlikely friendship in their shared pain. Branzy released vitalasy as he sees that they are now even and the two stay friends with now equal morals ready to save the world- BAHHAHAHAHA JUST KIDDING WHO DO YOU THINK I AM???

ANYWAYYY Hope you liked the ending and hope it lived up to y'all's expectations! This was a tricky bitch to write for sure for sure!

Here's my [fun little writing playlist](#) I used as I wrote scenes.

Anddd here is some things I never got to mention because I was worried it'd slow down the pacing:

Rek first discovered his power when he was invited to a fake party as a joke, he never went in, seeing it was a trap. He left disappointed but invigorated by his newfound powers.

Branzy first discovered his power by blinking really fucking hard, he thought for a while that everyone could see through walls if they did that.

Mid's power is the ability to hide super duper well, like in her hide-and-seek videos! There's more but I won't clog these notes up with some random things.

As always, everyone is welcome to remix my work and use the universe I've made or just make ur own vig au, I don't own it! If you take substantial inspo I'd like just a name-drop credit, otherwise whatever pop off! If you don't like my ending, you're welcome to write your own! Also, you can ask me questions in these comments or on my Tumblr or whatever, I know there is much of this universe I didn't exactly explore. Like what the fuck is Clown's deal? Idk! He's just quirky like that! (I lie, he was bullied for being powerless and decided he'd make his own power through physical and mental strength.)

Wow, I am rambling HARD. Thanks for sticking with me through this fic, it was my

first time writing actual angst before, so I'm glad it made people cry.

Alright! Can't wait to get back into frequent uploads when uni is over! Bye my pigeons!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!