

Never Felt So Real

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Never Felt So Real

by [trafficpose](#)

Summary

“I’d rather be hurt by you than anyone else,” Clown says quietly, and when Branzy gives him a look that straddles the line between fearful and appreciative, Clown just laughs and laughs.

Notes

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

Clown’s not used to listening the lapping of the ocean waves. He hears them, sure. Just, usually there are other things on his mind, too.

“You look so tense, man!” Branzy says. His hip is touching Clown’s, nonchalant, like he’s not even thinking about it. “Relax, I triple-checked the area. No one should be within a few hundred blocks.”

“Yeah,” Clown says. It’s taking everything in him to stay where he is, to not press into it the Branzy or, failing that, to sprint the other direction. He’s built for movement. For armor. He doesn’t have either, right now. “Just... admiring the view.”

“It’s nice, right?” Branzy’s smiling, staring out over the beach. “I wanted — something nice. These past few weeks have been hectic!”

“Aren’t they always?” Clown says. His brain’s only half-paying attention to his words. The rest of

his processing power is going to the surroundings, the way it always does. Branzy, and the place where they're touching, and the little finger taps Branzy does without thinking about them. He'd shown Clown the tiny escape hatch he'd built into a nearby cove, just in case. If that doesn't pan out, there's always the ocean, and he's got a boat and a lead. Just in case.

The wind whistles over the sand, flips up the carpet they're sitting on. Branzy smoothes it back down with a smile.

He's got a nice smile, cheerful and crooked, and he never seems to have to think about pulling it out. It makes Clown want to smile, when he sees it, except he's never been good at that sort of thing. Clown's too used to seeing people flinching, or sprinting away, or screaming. Branzy's not doing any of those things.

"Why're you staring at me?" Branzy says after a few seconds. His smile isn't quite as big, but it's still nice.

Clown lets out a small noise. "Sorry."

Slow, slow enough that it has to be on purpose, slow enough that Clown has time to force himself to not block it, Branzy's hand comes up to tap Clown's mask. Right where it covers his nose. "Don't be sorry."

It didn't touch his skin, but Clown still thinks he felt the warmth of Branzy's finger for an instant. His cheeks feel warm enough for it. "Well, never mind, then."

"I was just curious." Branzy's face is so open. If there's one of them that could really use a mask, it's him.

"I didn't mean to stare, anyway," Clown says. "I was just thinking."

"Tell me more, man." Branzy shifts so his torso is facing Clown straight on. Their hips stop touching. Clown wouldn't even notice, except he can't seem to do anything but notice it, the cold spot where there used to be comfort. It never occurs to him how long it's been since someone touched him gently. Well. Reset the timer, now.

"It's nice out." Clown shrugs. "I'm not used to it. Or, well — I'm not used to paying attention to it, I guess."

"The weather here is so nice! On my home world it rains all the time." Branzy shows no signs of moving back towards Clown. He probably didn't even notice they were touching. That's the kind of thing that shouldn't make Clown press his hands down hard enough that his nails dent the wool.

"Yeah?" Clown's focusing on Branzy, not the constant, unpredictable crash of the ocean, or the turtle that occasionally sticks its neck out, or the way he hasn't felt the wind on his neck since he first scraped together enough iron for a helmet and enough wool for a sheltered bed.

Branzy says something. And Clown hears it because he's paying attention. He is. It's not hard to nod at the right times, anyway, and Branzy can kind of keep himself going for a while.

"Clown!" Branzy says, and — okay. "Are you good?"

"I don't know." It comes out too honest. "I mean, I'm fine. I'm just... this isn't me."

Branzy's eyes are big. His throat bobs when he swallows. "I mean — could it be?"

It's a good question, one that deserves more thought than Clown can give it. "I won't know until I know."

The corner of Branzzy's mouth twists down. "If you say so."

"I mean —" "Courage is stupid. It shouldn't be easier for Clown to throw himself after the six people attacking his ally than to be with Branzzy. Only one of those things gets him stabbed. But he's just so used to doing the thing that hurts. "I mean."

Branzy waits, which is sweet. He's terrible at waiting.

"I could try," Clown says at last. He puts his hand on Branzzy's leg, palm face-up. It's as clear an invitation as he can make. His throat is thinking about whether or not to close up.

"Oh." Branzzy's voice is like sunrise. He lets out one of those helpless laughs Clown only usually hears when he's just avoided near-certain doom. "Oh!"

He's so warm under Clown. Like a furnace. Like lava when you've splashed fire resistance, all the heat, none of the pain. Clown can't tell whether he likes it or not, just that his brain can barely process the sensation. "Branzy."

"No need to sound so — well, you know," Branzzy says, even though Clown doesn't. His hand touches Clown's. Their callouses catch on each other. The fire is hotter now, impossible to understand, terrifying and good at the same time. Clown's hand tightens on instinct, the same one that tells him to swat away the pain of a sword blow if it means he can get one with his axe. It doesn't hurt now, but maybe it will later. No way of telling but to find out.

"Branzy," Clown says again. He doesn't have words to follow it until he does. "Thanks."

Branzy laughs, nervous, which is odd. There's no reason for him to be nervous around Clown. He never would have come out here if he didn't trust him. He'd barely even checked the surroundings for traps, although it's a good thing he did. Paying attention is hard when there's a pool of magma surrounding his hand.

"Thanks," Clown insists. "I should get out more."

Another pause. Branzzy's hand tightens around his for just a second. It hurts, but if hurting was good. "Happy to help."

Half of Clown wants to lean his head on Branzzy's shoulder. The other half thinks that maybe his mask would melt, or the skin on his face would fuse to it, or maybe the pain would start hurting.

Not for today, then. But — maybe for tomorrow. That's the dangerous thing about Branzzy. He counts on Clown so much that he makes Clown count on there being a tomorrow. One that doesn't hurt, even.

It's fine. Clown will take the ways Branzzy touches him over the way anyone else does it. Even if it start hurting.

"I'd rather be hurt by you than anyone else," Clown says quietly, and when Branzzy gives him a look that straddles the line between fearful and appreciative, Clown just laughs and laughs.

please leave me a kudos or a comment if you enjoyed! i have no idea if i'll be writing more about these two, but i did have fun with this fic so... maybe?

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