

Repent, Harlequin

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/41495841) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/41495841>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Lifesteal SMP
Relationship:	Branzy/ClownPierce (Video Blogging RPF)
Character:	Branzy (Video Blogging RPF) , ClownPierce (Video Blogging RPF)
Additional Tags:	Established Relationship , Dystopia , being just. so in love , Traps , Minor Character Death , Catboy ClownPierce
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2022-09-04 Words: 1,844 Chapters: 1/1

Repent, Harlequin

by [trafficpose](#)

Summary

The problem with knowing Clown: suddenly, chaos was an option.

Notes

i set out to write a fic about catboy clownpierce as a shoutout to @catboypierce and i wound up writing a love letter to ["Repent, Harlequin!" said the Ticktockman](#) by Harlan Ellison. go read that after you read this.

CCs feel free to interact <3 just please don't post/mention this fic on stream.

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

Branzy's nails were already torn back to the quick. He brought the edge of his thumbnail to his mouth anyway, tried to hook his teeth in absent keratin. Unclean nails were a grey area; the blood was easier.

"You know I'm coming back," Clown said. His ear flicked and the tuft of fur on the end shivered. "I always have before."

"It's only been half a day since you went out." Branzy's mind whirled through half a dozen scenarios. Their contraband dealers might have been found out. The billboard screen outside had been flashing Clown's mask for half the night. "You know the city is organized. You know you're one person. They'll kill you."

“They can’t kill me if they can’t catch me.” Clown turned to face Branzy, dramatic. His mask was newly on, jagged slashes around the eyes peeking out from under a Netherite helmet. The points of his ears were invisible, his tail already tucked down.

Everyone in the city knew who he was; that was the whole point. They saw him and their lives were upended, however briefly. The police chased after him and Clown outran them every time, took out a miniature squadron and made sure to wave to the spectators coming home from work on moving walkways, the same faces in the same order at the same time every time. Nobody ever waved back. It was not expressly permitted. To do so might disrupt the city; and with so many arcane ordinances and statues, the only law that could truly be followed was not to disrupt the city.

It was, therefore, the only law that could be broken. The tidy grid of streets was briefly subjected to the delights of Clown on a mission. Then the flying machines began circling overhead and the only safe place to be was in the assigned place, every nametag in its quadrant, and still Clown spun between the fireballs and dove underground and melted away into normalcy.

When people saw him on the street their eyes skittered right past his unpainted face to the graceful ears on his head, so unique and so impossible to change. Sometimes they reached out to touch, to change; sometimes their hands wound up no longer attached to their body, and they still had not applied for permission to scream.

“And besides.” Clown tilted his head like he’s smiling. Maybe he even was, for Branzy. “It’s worth it to cause a little chaos.”

Branzy chewed harder on his thumbnail. The tang of blood filled his mouth.

“Love you,” Clown said, and sashayed out. Branzy’s mind stayed whirling.

The messages didn’t come until later. Burnt to a crisp while trying to escape. Killed by magic while trying to escape. One, bizarrely, was pricked to death. Branzy chewed his nail and wondered if Clown was tasting the same thing. If sitting here meant anything when he could be using his bleeding hands.

The problem with knowing Clown: suddenly, chaos was an option.

Clown was in the crowds, so he wasn’t in the city center. Branzy traipsed through the occasional cloud of loiterers skirting the law until he was entirely alone. Silence rang familiar through the streets, so like Clown’s cat paw steps and still so unlike him. The main Nether portal stood hollow and unattended. No one was allowed in the Nether anymore save bureaucrats so high-ranked Branzy half-wondered if they really existed. There was no specified punishment for breaking the law. A punishment existed or would be devised. It simply was not specified.

Unassigned and unobserved, Branzy dug.

His hands were cold and steady as he worked his way downwards. Perhaps he would wind up as a horror story. He slapped buttons down the walls. Dripstone at the bottom. Maybe he would wind up without Clown. How similar to their life already. He sent Clown the coords when he was done, and then he pillared out, and then he did it again on the other side.

The traps were easy, once Branzy had the thought. No trace remained but grit where the edges of his fingernails should have been.

He returned back to the base. Not a home, never a home, not when it could be ripped from him so easily. The messages buzzing his communicator went unread. There was mutton to be smoked and

potions to be brewed. Besides, the billboards outside screamed the news in bright colors. A harlequin on the loose; the rhythms of the city disrupted, so finicky to repair, so reparable. Nothing about a heavy blond man with a shovel.

Clown showed up a few hours later, door banging open. “Honey, I’m home.”

“It’s an apartment. They all are.” Branzy turned. “How many this time?”

“Six.” Clown looked like it: his spine was straighter, and as he pulled off his mask, his eyes looked brighter too. “Six, and they’ll never forget me. I got the bed I was after, too.”

“We need better armor,” Branzy said. “And more food. I need to barter some potions, something.” The billboard screen through the window shone directly on Clown’s face, highlighting his cuts and scrapes in neon green. It couldn’t have been pleasant for him. It kept Branzy’s expression invisible, however.

“Go for it.” Clown hadn’t stopped smiling since he came in the door. “I could come with you.”

“You’re bleeding,” Branzy said. A curious mix of emotions seethed within him, pride and loneliness and regret. He did not let his hands reach out. “People will talk. You can’t.”

Clown’s lips pressed together into a thin line. “Branzy.”

“You’re welcome,” Branzy said dryly, and returned several hours later, under a sliver of moon, supplies in hand.

Clown was already asleep when Branzy crawled into bed. When Branzy’s alarm clock rang out, he was still wrapped around Clown’s soft, bare chest.

“Sorry,” Clown said. His ears pressed flat against his head. “Thank you for the traps.”

“It’s fine.” Branzy stroked an idle finger over Clown’s ear until it relaxed. “I have work.”

“Tell me if there’s anything you need,” Clown said. His ears twitched again under Branzy’s hand, so expressive, so delicate, so impossible to misread. No wonder he did all his lying with actions.

A yawn cracked Branzy’s jaw in half. “Stay safe. Tell me what you’re trying to do. Even better, tell me when you’ll be done.”

“I don’t think I’ll ever be done,” Clown said. “Isn’t that the point?”

“At least stay safe,” Branzy said. “I have to go. I’ll be late.”

“So be late.” Clown smiled, a sad thing trying to be less sad. “I know, I know. Don’t worry about me.”

The day passed in a bleary haze, much like all of Branzy’s days. He laid down redstone in neat grids, and transcribed pin-straight writing on signs, and slowly contributed to the vast corpus of bureaucratic minutia required to keep a city the size of a server flowing. No one could keep track of it all; and to break away from it meant — well. That was the other half of it, the rumors on whispers of what happened to people caught digging traps in front of Nether portals and breaking the beds of upstanding politicians before slaughtering six police officers and disappearing underneath a flying machine.

Branzy typed, and did not think about the clock, or his communicator. The best disguise was no

disguise at all. At precisely the same time as everyone else, he stood and exited into the late afternoon sun. He stood at the far left, next to the same person every day, and he did not know her name, which made things easier some times and harder other times. As they passed a billboard screen still playing yesterday's news, he would have liked to ask her what she thought of the events; and yet, she would have questions in return.

So there was silence.

Until:

A loud murmuring ran through the crowd, impossible to place to any one source. The great billboard screen over the nearby buildings flashed bright red and then switched to a reporter.

It was as neat as if it had been planned. Clown had broken the bed; Branzy had set the trap; the twisted and broken corpse of a politician lay skewered on a stalagmite, never to return.

The murmuring grew in volume until it was a babble, then a roar. Branzy wheezed as his chest was forced against the railing, the people behind him craning for a better look. His head was very cool and clear. So, these were the actions. This was the consequence.

The moving railway delivered him inexorably home.

Clown was on him from the second he closed the door, tail lashing in excitement. "Did you see?"

"It's gruesome." Branzy knelt to take off his shoes. "I don't — I don't want to talk about it."

"Thank you," Clown said. His eyes gleamed. "The city will be so much choppiier without Zam."

"I killed him," Branzy said. "I've never done that before. I was just trying to help."

"You did." Clown swooped in, pressed a kiss to his lips. "Oh, thank you."

Branzy shivered, a full-body thing. "You're sure?"

"Think of everyone who saw it," Clown said, ecstatic. "The millions of minds who know the world can be changed."

"He's not coming back," Branzy said. "Is that — change?"

"It's even better." Clown pulled back, fumbled to slip on his mask. "It's chaos."

Branzy sighed a drawn-out, sweet sigh, and let Clown draw him close even as he trembled. The mask was on, but his ears were out, an odd combination, like seeing two people at once. Like seeing Clown vulnerable and enraged and dangerous and loving all at once, more facets than Branzy could ever hope to understand, all frighteningly beautiful nonetheless.

His tail came around to touch Branzy's hip. Clown turned the two of them towards the window that shone bright at every hour. "Look."

The billboard screen showed a whole mass of people expanding steadily, like a pulse, all heading outwards, mice fleeing a sinking ship. Doors opened. Whole apartment complexes flooded the street with people, moving walkways damned, rules damned, whole world damned if need be. Whole world damned, and Zam first.

In the very center of the city stood the Nether portal, as abandoned as always, and the gaping holes in front and behind. Branzy did not see the body, but he understood its finality the same way he

understood the bottom of a hole. Digging a hole was illegal, for it might disrupt the city; and lo, here was Clown, magnetic.

“I don’t know if it was worth it,” Branzy said. Blood crusted under his nails. It mattered that it came from his own body. It did.

“Then I’ll take the blame,” Clown said, and pressed Branzy’s hand to the fuzz at the base of Clown’s ears, vulnerable and soft and so trusting Branzy thinks he could choke on it like blood in his lungs. “I love you.”

“I love you too,” Branzy said. His hand reached for Clown’s ears as his lips pressed against Clown’s mask.

End Notes

i hope you enjoyed! i'm on tumblr @terrafirmapunk :)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!