

Wallflowers

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Wallflowers

by Anonymous

Summary

Jimmy Solidarity may be the single unluckiest man on the face of the earth, but his soulmate might just be the runner up. And when he meets a man at a party who checks all of his boxes, what's he to do?

Notes

hello fools it is i. also a fool

this pair i swear (explodes) (explodes) (explodes) (explodes)

White Carnations

Jimmy Solidarity walked into the campus coffee shop, digging in his pockets for his credit card. The man at the cashier, wearing a full Kakashi cosplay, for some reason, gave him a blank look. Jimmy laughed sheepishly and ordered his usual, eventually settling for paying in cash. He'd been hoping to use the money to repay Joel for gas, but sacrifices had to be made for a good coffee.

Barista Kakashi slid over his drink, and he thanked him with a smile before going to sit at one of the tables. He'd always liked to take the time to work on his laptop before his classes, even in high school, before Joel was awake to torment him. It seemed that today was not one of those days where he could enjoy his coffee, though. It took him three steps before he tripped over a loose tile, spilling hot coffee all over himself. He let it drip down his white shirt, just for a moment to let it sink in. Damn it.

"Sorry about that! I'll clean it up!" He called to the cashier, who only huffed a laugh in response.

Jimmy Solidarity was undoubtedly cursed. He'd decided on this fact when he'd broken his arm for the third time falling off the swings when he was nine, and all of his friends had agreed. One such aspect of this curse was his new roommate and lifetime friend, Grian, who had begun vacuuming as soon as he'd sat down to go over his course list for the semester.

"Grian!" He shouted, "What are you doing? Stop that!"

The vacuuming grew louder, and the blender turned on. Jimmy could've sworn he heard the garbage disposal get switched on, too, and he was going to lose it.

"Stop!"

"Sorry Tim, just gotta vacuum the smoothie I spilled and make another one," Grian said, with a break in the noise for a moment, "You know how it is."

"No, I don't," Jimmy whined, pressing his head to the table.

It rumbled beneath his head, and he was absolutely certain that their neighbors hated them. Maybe one of them would turn out to be in the mafia, or a gang, or even just a bit too close to snapping. Maybe they'd kill both of them. The freshmen dorms were full of fools and degenerates- Jimmy not excluded- and the chances weren't particularly thin. Hell, Jimmy was pretty sure that *Grian* was involved in the mafia or something, with how many scars he'd come home with after his exchange trip. He'd returned a changed man, Jimmy knew, but everyone around him swore he was crazy.

Jimmy was *not* crazy. There was something off about him, with the way flowers had stopped blooming over his skin when his soulmate was hurt. It happened a lot when they were kids, chicory covering Grian, and white carnations covering Jimmy. They'd actually become friends over the shared clumsiness of their soulmates, and Jimmy's had only grown in unluckiness with him.

Grian shut off the vacuum and poured a smoothie for both of them, and Jimmy had half a mind to ask who the hell *vacuums a spilled liquid on a tiled floor*. He didn't, though, just like he never asked about Grian's soulmate or why he hated fireworks so much. Some questions were simply best left unanswered, Jimmy thought.

"Joel's holding a get-together," Grian hummed, "Do you wanna come?"

Jimmy took a sip of his smoothie, feeling a dull pain as tiny flowers blossomed on his thumb, a new record for the amount of times in one day that his soulmate had slammed his fingers in a door, or hit it with a hammer, or- Grian cleared his throat.

"A party? That sounds great!" He cheered, "Do we need to bring anything?"

"Not that kind of party, I mean a *get together*," Grian said, "He met his soulmate."

Jimmy Solidarity was going to lose his goddamn mind. This was the last fucking straw.

"Congrats, Joel," He said instead, "I'm happy for you."

A twinkle in the eye of Barista Kakashi- Etho- had Jimmy turning to fix himself another drink, but

Joel caught him around the shoulder before he could escape. Jimmy fell limp, hoping for an opportunity to escape his clutches. No such opportunity arose, however, before Etho finally spoke.

“And how do you know this fine young lad,” he said, “So valiantly slipping on the paper towels so that he could clean his own mess, instead of letting me, the employee, do my job. Such a brave soul, he must be.”

Etho must’ve been concealing a shit eating grin beneath his cosplay mask, and it must’ve been the signal for Joel to ruffle his hair. Jimmy hated soulmates, in that moment.

“This little rascal?” Joel’s voice cracked, served him right, “He’s my girlfriend’s little brother!”

“Joel,” Jimmy groaned, drawing out the syllables so that he might one day hope to convey how annoyed he was, “We’re *friends*. I’m your *friend*. I’ve known you longer than Lizzie has!”

“News to me, this whole friends thing,” Joel finally let him go, and he scampered away as fast as he could without stumbling, casting a glance back to see the pair looking at each other with matching looks of *nothing good*.

Jimmy was going to get the hell out of there. He ducked into the kitchen to meet Cleo and Scott, along with the couple that had graciously volunteered their house, since Joel lived in a shitty one-room apartment.

The man who introduced himself as Bdubs had a killer black eye, his arm looped around a man named Impulse (seriously, what was with these guys *names*?) who had a matching smattering of flowers on his face. Figures. Despite that, conversation went smoothly, at least, until Jimmy caught sight of the ring around Impulse’ finger. He let his mouth hang open, in Scott’s words, like a graceful trout, for a moment before clicking it shut.

“You’re married?” He said, letting it slip before he could stop himself, “Sorry, uh?”

“No, no, it’s fine!” Bdubs said, intertwining their hands and holding them in the air, “We’re very proud! My *shnookums* Impulse here, light of my life, really!”

Jimmy Solidarity was going to kill a man. It would be a hate crime, even if he wasn’t homophobic and was currently standing in a room with his ex-boyfriend. Or maybe it would be ruled as self

defense, considering the sheer psychic damage he took. Who the hell actually says *shnookums*.

He downed his shitty spiked punch in his shitty red solo cup and filled it up again. He really couldn't bring himself to be actually mad, considering how contagious relationships like that were. Even if they weren't so disgustingly in love, he would still be hiding a smile with his cup. Sue him, he cried during hallmark movies, he enjoyed every cheesy novel surrounding soulmates that he read, he was a total sap.

Truly, though, Jimmy loved the knowledge that he had one, too. Even if his soulmate was as accident-prone as he was (he shoved down the thought that it was *because* of him. He wasn't actually cursed, that would be stupid and he was *not* stupid, no matter what anyone else said.) he knew they'd get along. Jimmy had pretty tough skin, and he was pretty sure the universe wasn't so cruel to put him with anyone *too* mean. Hopefully.

He vaguely registered the sound of an inflating life raft and breaking glass, but didn't bother to find out what it was, considering Bdubs ran out of the room shouting for- or at, he supposed- Etho. Impulse raised an eyebrow at him as he filled up another drink, losing himself in his daydream.

Jimmy wasn't picky, really. Maybe his soulmate would be a huge girl, maybe they'd be an itty bitty guy, or vice versa, or neither. Maybe they'd own a ranch and he could marry into the profession, and he could quit being a farmhand, even if he'd miss the horses. Maybe they'd be super rich and generous and could *buy* the ranch he worked at-

His daydreams were thoroughly interrupted when a man with glass shards in his arms, who looked like he was about to cry (or maybe had just finished), was barreled into the kitchen. Oh, it was Scar from his woodworking class. Great.

"Ow, ow ow ow ow! Get it out! How could this happen to me?" Scar rambled, "I'll sue! This is an unsafe environment! You'll be hearing from my lawyer about this! Prepare yourselves for economic ruin! I want reimbursement!"

"Scar, you don't *have* a lawyer," Impulse sighed, "I'll wake up Tango, he'll know what to do. And he's sober."

Impulse left, and Scott and Cleo had already snuck off, and so Jimmy remained standing stiffly as Scar prodded at his injury. *Yeesh*, Jimmy was really not one to judge, but he didn't envy Scar's soulmate at all.

“Oh, hey... uh, Tammy? From woodworking class?” Scar said, finally noticing him and leaving Jimmy reeling, *how was that even close*, “Fancy seeing you here, my good friend.”

“My name is Jimmy,” Jimmy said, futilely, as Scar turned back to pretending to be upset by his injuries, “What are *you* doing here?”

Jimmy was graciously spared the explanation as a *really tall* and honestly kind of lanky man ducked into the kitchen, rubbing his eyes. Jimmy watched him do a double take at both of them, which, honestly, was fair.

“Scar? Guy I’ve never met? What are you two doing here?” The man, presumably Tango, asked, before sighing and reaching up into the top cabinet to pull out a first aid kit. Jimmy was starting to question if he was actually sober, despite what Impulse had said.

“We’re here for Joel and Etho- they’re soulmates,” Jimmy said, “They’re having their party here. I’m Jimmy, by the way.”

Joel shouted from the other room for him to, and he quotes, “Get out of the fucking way, Jimmy,” so he scooted awkwardly down the counter.

“You’re fine, you’re fine. Also, the, uh, soulmates thing, that’s cool. Real cool,” Tango said, and then whispered under his breath something Jimmy probably wasn’t supposed to hear, but did anyway, “Those- they didn’t tell me they were having a goddamn *party* . I live here too, Bdubs! You have to ask me, I *do pay rent* !”

Jimmy pressed his lips into a thin line and stared at his feet, suddenly feeling very out of place. He should not know about three people he’d just met’s roommate drama, and he did not need to be a witness for Scar’s hypothetical court case. He needed to go home.

He pulled out his phone, flicking to the most recent message from Grian.

<Grian>: Sorry, Tim! Had to go home early, I needed to bake six loaves of bread, I’m sure you can understand. Yeast takes a while to activate, you know. Surely someone else can drive you home?

<Grian>: Or you could get an uber?

Jimmy stared down at the screen, mouth dry. He absentmindedly registered Tango finish wrapping wrapping Scar's arm and stand up to look at him, so Jimmy pocketed his phone quickly, straightening to meet his eye.

"You alright there, bud?" Tango asked, voice soft, "You look upset by something."

"No, no, it's fine. My roommate just left without telling me, *again*, and I don't have any money for, like, a cab," He swirled the remainder of his fourth drink around in his cup, forlornly, "Guess I'm walking home. Again."

"I could drive you!" Tango said, just a little too fast and a little too loud, but he raised his hands appeasingly at Jimmy's look, "If you're comfortable with that, that is. I know you're probably drunk, or whatever, but you can tell someone or text your roommate."

"Are *you* sure? Are you actually sure?" Jimmy asked for the fourth time as he followed Tango out to the street, "I don't want to be a burden, I promise I can just walk home."

"I'm sure, Bdubs and Impulse use me as their personal chauffeur enough anyway," Tango stopped in front of possibly the jankiest, rustiest, and most busted up pick-up truck Jimmy had ever seen, "This is her! I call her Splatty- don't look at me like that. She may not be pretty in her old age, but she's the smoothest ride I've ever had."

He got into the truck, and Jimmy was very thankful that he could hold his alcohol because trying to make the massive step up into the truck was *not* easy. He found that the inside was actually pretty well taken care of, which was a relief, and the seats were *heated*.

"Is there a story behind the name Splatty- wait, actually don't answer that if it'll make me a witness to a hit and run or something," Jimmy said, and watched as Tango's face slowly bit into a grin.

"Oh, no, no, I wouldn't use her for such a thing. She's called Splatty, because, uh, when I was sixteen Bdubs decided she needed to be christened. With eggs," Tango said, looking genuinely proud when Jimmy laughed, "I started working as a mechanic on the side a few years ago, and made a couple modifications. This ones my favorite, by the way."

He pushed the suspicious red button on the center console, and Jimmy failed to hold back another

laugh when it started playing cartoon *awooga* and crash noises. Jimmy pushed it a couple more times, finding that it cycled through several sounds.

“That is brilliant, really Tango,” He said.

“The guys at work *hate it*, it’s great.” Tango pulled onto the campus, “She’s a real hidden gem, I think.”

“Oh, what do you do for work?” Jimmy asked.

“I’m a, uh, demolition technician. I’ve loved destructification since I was a kid, and I hope to one day destroy what Impulse and Bdubs make,” Tango said, “That’s a joke, mostly. Impy’s studying to be an architectural engineer, Bdubs is studying to be an architect, the goons.”

“Nice, nice. I’m a farmhand, actually,” Jimmy said, “I wanna do something more, uh, substantial, though. I’m going into agriculture... I just really like animals.”

Tango nodded, and pulled onto their street.

“You can drop me off here, it’s fine,” Jimmy said, but hesitated before getting out, “Oh, here!”

He handed Tango a slip of paper from his pocket, his not-business card. Joel and Grian had said that it was a dumb idea, but he’d stuck with it. He couldn’t write his phone number wrong by accident if it was printed, after all.

“Woah, mister professional here-” Tango flipped the card over on the back, mouth dropping open, “Is this a *cupcake recipe* ? That’s amazing- who thinks of that?”

“Really?” Jimmy tried and failed to cover the flush that crept onto his face, thinking about how silly his roommates had thought the idea, “You really think that?”

He watched as Tango tucked it into his wallet before looking him in the eye, “Yeah, it’s genius! Have a good night, man.”

Jimmy hopped out of the truck, waving happily. And even though he walked into the commons to greet a stress-baking Grian wearing his dusty red sweater that Jimmy didn't even know he still had and talking on the phone in rapid Japanese, the beaming smile on his face didn't leave for the rest of the night.

And the next morning, when he received a text, it returned even brighter.

Marigolds

Chapter Notes

thank you all for the nice comments! also, this fic now has fanart!

here: [https://www.tumblr.com/blog/view/oakskull/687549764825399296?](https://www.tumblr.com/blog/view/oakskull/687549764825399296?source=share)
source=share

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

Tango kept running into Jimmy after that, when he was carrying frozen groceries home and when his number had just been called at the DMV, when he'd been at the park and had just remembered that Bdubs had left the stove on- infuriatingly, all times that they couldn't stop to talk. And it was a shame, too, considering Tango had enjoyed talking to him enough for his name to stick against his slip and slide of a memory, even if it had only been for one car ride.

It was *strange*, to Tango, that he wanted to see him again, so eagerly. It didn't make any sense.

Regardless of what Tango thought, he was running out of time and options, movie tickets threatening him from their place on the coffee table. *Of course* he shouldn't have bought them ahead of time, *of course* he should've checked if his friends had seen it already.

And, *of fucking course*, Impulse had planned a date with Bdubs, Zedaph had left him on read, and literally everyone else he could think of had already seen it. What were the chances- actually, the chances didn't matter, since it was Tango and the only law he followed was Murphy's.

There was one more option, after all: four messages down was a smiley face from Saturday, September second, that he had received not moments after waking up. Mister Jimmy Cupcake Solidarity himself.

He shoved down his apprehension and typed a message, riddled with typos that he couldn't trust himself to correct.

<**Tango**>: hey, iveg ot movie tickets that i bought too early, and i've got no one to see it with wanna come?

<Tango>: btw its the new hit the target movie. lol

A message bubble with a loading screen-esque ellipses popped up, and Tango prayed to whichever god would listen that he hadn't come off as creepy- he knew his looks could give the wrong impression sometimes, all angles and bones that hadn't filled in right during puberty like everyone else's had. His worries were washed away when he saw the response, though.

<Jimmy>: You got tickets?! They sold out before I could get them, this is great?!

<Jimmy>: I actually know the producer, he's friends with my sister. Still not enough to get me sold-out tickets, though.

<Tango>: thats awesome!!!!

Jimmy went ahead and sent a confirmation that he'd be there in an hour, followed by a smiley face, and Tango shut his phone off and tossed it on the table. He'd just finished a decently big job and gotten paid, and had finally fixed the shattered screen. Things might just be looking up for Tango Tek-

With a flash of pain that he knew all too well to be the scrape that came from catching yourself on concrete, flowers began to bloom across his hands. He winced, curling them into fists before snapping them back open to take a closer look. Mixed in between the familiar white carnations were *marigolds*, bright and yellow and happy.

He furrowed his eyebrows at the change, wondering when exactly it had happened considering his soulmate hadn't gotten hurt in a while, and wondering what exactly it could *mean*. He sent a quick text to Scott, the only florist he knew, and then Skizz, his trusted bestie, then focused on wearing something maybe presentable.

He'd just been wearing one of Impulse' massive t-shirts and some shorts he didn't remember any of them having, comforting wear that someone who'd just spent twenty-five dollars on movie tickets could despair in.

He rifled through his closet, eventually settling on one of his newer band shirts and some arm warmers. Tango could admit, his red-and-black style definitely skewed towards emo, but he was blond and made it look good, so it was fine. At least, that's what he told himself.

He'd just finished styling his hair to be less frazzled and more nineties anime protagonist when the doorbell rang, and he checked the clock. To his surprise, an hour had already passed while he'd been humming kid's show theme songs like an absolute tool.

On the other side of the door, looking a little unsure of himself, was Jimmy. His hands were tucked into his pockets, and his eyes didn't stay in one place very long.

"Ready to go?" Tango asked cheerfully, hoping to disperse some of the awkwardness, and succeeded; Jimmy lit up like a lantern.

"I was *born* ready, bro!" Jimmy held out his fist, and Tango gleefully returned the fist bump, "Although... I haven't seen the last few in the series. You're gonna have to fill me in before we get there."

Tango saw his cue, and immediately launched into a spiel about the history of the Catlike Hero and his Magic Animal Club, and the long rivalry between him and Hit The Target. He talked about how much he liked how villainy was portrayed, and how he appreciated that in a world of CGI and live-action, the series kept its 2D animated style, even at the expense of a larger budget.

"And it's so *interesting*, how Veeva Dash stays loyal, even though Hit the Target's not her soulmate. Their writing is so human, even if they're the bad guys-" Tango cut himself off, "Getting a bit off topic there, sorry. I guess I've always found myself relating to the villains, and it's nice to see them treated like people. Even if they're just, uh, characters."

Jimmy hummed, and damn, he'd blown it-

"That's really interesting, actually. If you want, could you explain more about it?" Jimmy said, staring at him with a frankly unreadable expression, "I don't quite get *why* Veeva's so loyal."

Tango floundered for a moment, reeling from the question. Sure, no one ever told him to shut up or anything, but it was clear that his friends were never really interested in his cartoons, or his contraptions, or the modifications to his car, or-

"You're really good at character analysis," Jimmy said, hammering the nail into the coffin, "I'd never be able to notice all of this on my own."

That was all Tango needed to ramble all the way to the theater, and to whisper quietly about what was happening during the movie. It was honestly one of the best movie experiences he'd had, even if he got some glares from the other people in the theater, because Jimmy nodded along and laughed quietly at his jokes. For once someone had listened- the same person who'd thanked him profusely for such a small gesture of movie tickets, and driving him home. It felt nice. It felt *really* nice.

Jimmy walked Tango home (he's a gentleman!) and lingered at the door, for just a moment. Tango was still grinning ear to ear, and leaned against the doorway.

"Do you wanna come in?" He asked, shifting so that there was room for Jimmy to enter, "I don't really have any plans for lunch, can't really cook, but-"

"Sure thing, sure thing!" Jimmy strode past him, straight into the kitchen, and Tango finally got a good look at the embroidery on the back of his denim jacket, and, wait a second-

He shook his head, sure that it was just something from a store with tens of thousands of the same garment, and definitely not Scott's old jacket. That would be crazy, considering everyone and their mother knew about Scott's decision to abstain from dating when he became a florist. Tango decided that it did not matter in the slightest, and firmly shooed the conspiracies that arose out of his mind.

He set to making a frozen pizza to split with Jimmy, who lingered and watched him from the other side of the kitchen. He'd asked to get a glass of water at some point, and who was Tango to say no, but- he'd somehow dug up Bdubs' old Finding Nemo cup from Walmart ten years ago. How.

"So, what do you do for fun?" Tango asked when the oven beeped, sliding perhaps the most freezer burnt pizza he'd ever seen into it, "Outside of studying, work, and hanging out with numbskulls like me, I mean."

"Oh, uh," Jimmy scratched the back of his head sheepishly, "My sister and I were on the swim team as kids, we both still do it. She's actually, um... going to the Olympics next year? It's so cool- they call her the *Ocean Queen* and everything. Imagine that, being so good that you have your own title."

Tango was impressed, really, but that's not what he'd asked. Not in the slightest.

“What about *you*, Jimmy?” Tango asked, watching the way his eyes shot to the floor, “I’m sure your sister’s great, she sounds great, but that wasn’t what I asked.”

“I- uhm... uh-” He spluttered, “I’m on a scholarship for it? It’s not much, really, and this school doesn’t get very far in competitions-”

“That’s fantastic!” Tango said, finding himself actually meaning it, “I think that’s great, that you can do the things you enjoy and, y’know, support yourself with it. It’s why I decided not to go to college, actually. Demolition was enough for me, yeah?”

Jimmy just grinned at the compliment, and the timer for the pizza finally went off. Tango muttered to himself about how delivery might have been *better* than Digiorno, considering the absolutely sorry state of the pizza. The cheese slid around loosely as he took it out of the oven, and Tango was so glad that he’d had worse, because a weaker man would have lost his lunch.

He cut it with his As Seen On TV Bicycle Wheel Pizza Cutter, and pulled out the strongest paper plates to give to Jimmy. Jimmy, whom Tango was beginning to question the sanity of, lit up after one bite.

“He can’t cook, he says! This is absolutely lovely!” Jimmy said, and it finally brought upon the question of if Jimmy had ever had decent food, ever, in his life.

Maybe it was *Tango* who was the weird one, though, maybe he was just picky. No matter- the compliment was very sweet and maybe a little misguided and Tango found himself struggling to come up with a response. So he didn’t. They ate in a comfortable silence for a moment, until Tango’s phone buzzed on the table, startling both of them.

“Oh, shoot! Just remembered, Grian asked me to take the chicken out of the freezer, gotta go!” Jimmy stood up, tossing his plate into the trash and dusting off his pants, “This was great, thanks. Really enjoyed it- *oh, he’s going to kill me-*”

Tango was pretty sure he wasn’t supposed to hear the last part, but he still walked Jimmy to the door with a wave. Then he practically pounced on his phone, fumbling it in the process and nearly letting it hit the floor. He caught it just in time, unlocking it to see several messages from Scott.

<**Tango**>: scotthelp me my soul flowers changed., theyve always been white carnations but now

theres marigold too

<Scott>: floral readings and consultations start at 29.99

<Scott>: i dont do this for free lmao

Tango went to respond, but stopped when a typing bubble appeared. It disappeared and reappeared for several minutes, and Tango had half a mind to tell Scott to hurry the hell up when the next message appeared. He furrowed his eyebrows.

<Scott>: white carnations, tho? how interesting

Wow, what was *really* interesting was how absolutely Scott was being. Tango really shouldn't, it was frowned upon, but-

He typed out a quick google search about flower meanings, and was greeted by an absolutely unhelpful infographic about Mother's Day. He sighed, decided that it *hopefully* didn't mean his soulmate was like, a dead milf or something, and locked his phone.

Tango flopped onto the couch, laying on his back and pulling down his arm warmers to stare at his palms. The flowers from before had faded along with the pain, leaving no sign that Tango hadn't just hallucinated it. He groaned and covered his face with his arm, and though he wanted to focus on figuring out what the flowers meant, his mind kept drifting back to Jimmy.

Chapter End Notes

in this au florists are a bigger deal than irl, more like fortune tellers / relationship counselors than just the guy that makes arrangements (although they still very much do that!) that's why scott's in college for it, and also why he's sworn off romantic relationships in it! :3

(googling/internet searching about flower meanings is frowned upon because it's seen as not caring about your soulmate enough to go to a proper florist)

Goldenrods

Chapter Notes

taps spoon against cat food can

this ones slightly less lighthearted than the previous chapters but nothing too bad. ton of comfort for a teensy bit of hurt

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

Jimmy, for once, passed his midterms by more than a few points, and he couldn't even bring himself to be surprised. He didn't manage to beat Grian in terms of score, no, but he did impress both Lizzie and *Joel* with his grades, which felt good. Really good.

And he knew *why* his grades had improved so much. He'd started hanging out with Tango more and more since he'd been taken to see a movie, and unfortunately, he'd accidentally let it slip one night that he struggled with testing, something he was honestly a bit insecure of. Fortunately, though, Tango had known exactly what he'd meant, and explained that in high school he'd made a contraption that essentially turned studying into a game show.

Jimmy actually found himself having a lot of fun playing it, even if Grian pretended to be exasperated when he asked, and even if Fwhip called it childish. He'd passed, and he'd passed without any sleepless nights, and that was fine.

He'd elected to stay on campus for the holidays, seeing how Lizzie practically raised him, and how she was busy with off-season training. Grian and Joel had gone on a camping trip with Scar, and he was starting to wonder when *Scar* became their pathetic little man to drag around, instead of him.

It was fine, he wasn't jealous, and he definitely wasn't lonely. To prove how absolutely *not* lonely he was, he was currently curled up in the common room with a scratchy blanket, holding his mug of hot cocoa close to his chest. The only other people in the commons were people who looked way more distressed than he was, and he figured they had probably failed exams. The kicked puppy vibe of the lounge wasn't really what he was going for, though, and he decided it was bumming him out too much. Jimmy downed the rest of his cocoa and scratched his hand on the chipped handle.

The blood that beaded at the scrape reminded him of his soulmate, and the way new flowers had been appearing recently. First it had been marigolds, and recently sprigs of goldenrod had joined the arrangement. The soft yellows and sunset oranges didn't look that bad with most of his wardrobe, so he didn't really mind.

Jimmy wiped his hand on his pajama pants (not like anyone would care how they looked) and made his way up the stairs to his dorm, instead of the elevator, which had broken as soon as Grian had left. The stairs were outside, and he was cold. It sucked.

He briefly considered sending Scott a message about his soul flowers, but even though they'd ended things on good terms, he couldn't help but feel a little bit odd around him. Scott had broken things off for the sake of his career, and Jimmy had agreed, wanting to save himself for his soulmate instead. It just didn't help that with both of them starting college, they hadn't had time to continue being friends, like they'd said they would.

Jimmy firmly avoided thinking about how at the same time last year, he'd been watching the fireworks at Scott's family's estate. Jimmy did think about how this would be the first new year he started off alone, and he refused to let it become a trend, if he could do anything about it.

His face was flushed from the drafty stairwell by the time he made it to his room, flicking on the lights with a shaky hand. He rubbed his eyes and went through his nightly routine, preparing to just sleep the break away.

Jimmy Solidarity was absolutely *not* prepared for his eyes to focus on Etho, still in his cosplay and perched on Grian's bed, playing his old DS, and not prepared to see Tango sitting backwards in his desk chair holding an unopened ginger ale. Huh. He rubbed his eyes again, just to be sure, then laughed.

“Ello, people who don't live in this building,” Jimmy said, still a bit baffled, “Can I ask what exactly you're doing here? And, uh. *How* exactly you're here?”

“Joel's gone and I'm bored, so I'm checking up on your Nintendogs.” Etho said, like that was a good enough explanation, then pointed a thumb at Tango, “No clue about this guy though, you should probably call security.”

Jimmy gave up on Etho and swivelled his gaze to Tango, who had the decency to look at least a *little* embarrassed. He pulled out a chunk of metal and circuitry, and it took a moment for Jimmy to realize that it had once been a phone. He murmured a half-joking prayer for it in sympathy, shuddering at the thought of how much damage it must've taken. The universe must be merciful, to forbid machinery from having soulmates.

“Etho let me in,” Tango started, and this was already going great, “I came to ask if you wanted to

come watch the fireworks with me- I would've texted or called, but... I left my phone on-site at work and forgot until the job was already over. She's not in her prime anymore."

There wasn't a lot that someone could say to Jimmy that could make him instantly forgive them for breaking into his house, but that got pretty close. Etho was a force to be reckoned with, really; Jimmy was terrified of him. If Etho decided he was going to let Tango into his room, could he stop him? No, so he wasn't going to think about it.

"Nice pajamas, Jimmy," Etho said, the tiniest bit of laughter edging his voice.

"They are very nice, aren't they?" Jimmy preened, "Tango, do I need to change or is this okay?"

Tango smiled, sharp but friendly.

"Rockin' the PJ's, I like it," He paused, "No, you don't need to change, if you don't want to. There shouldn't be any people where I'm taking you."

"Sounding *very creepy* over there, Tango," Etho chimed, "Sure you don't want me to take him out for you?"

Jimmy didn't bother to grace Etho with a response, "Yeah, I'm ready to go. Let's- um, go then."

Tango flipped Etho off and followed Jimmy out the door, turning off the lights behind him and leaving Etho in the dark. They'd both been sitting without light when Jimmy had first walked in, which was strange, but he figured it was just for drama points or something.

Tango led him down a back alley, and *man* if Jimmy didn't trust him so much this would be suspicious. He pulled a pair of wrenches out of his cargo pants, and before Jimmy could question why, he popped open a padlocked gate and held it open.

"Come on, I don't wanna miss the fireworks," He said, and Jimmy hesitantly entered, slightly worried that they'd get caught trespassing.

The walls of the alley were dingy and neglected, with one of the buildings looking like it was about

to turn to rubble. Tango took the fire escape up two steps at a time, and it took him a moment to turn around to offer Jimmy a hand. He took it, staring up at Tango with wide and maybe a little nervous eyes.

“This is where Bdubs, Impy and I would come as kids,” Tango began, “Not sure if you grew up here, but it’s kinda the hot spot if you’re looking to hangout alone. No one ever comes up here.”

Jimmy hummed, “Is there a reason for that?”

“Ah, yeah. The owner of this building died, like forty years ago, right?” said Tango, “His wife refuses to sell. The city’s been tryin’ to get the rights to the place for years. It’s kind of sad, almost. I don’t think I could be on the demolition team when it inevitably goes down.”

Jimmy said nothing, just watching the moonlight that spilled across Tango’s features, giving him an almost ethereal glow. Tango looked a little bit weird in the good way, in the way that became familiar and comforting, in the way that he could always count on Tango to be making an exaggeratedly happy expression around him. He jumped and scrambled for a moment, pulling himself onto the roof, then helped Jimmy up.

When he reached the roof, Tango didn’t let go of his hand, and he didn’t quite mind. It was warm, actually, and he found himself subconsciously scooting towards the absolute space heater of a man. He *probably* should’ve changed into something warmer than his pajamas, but it was way too late now.

Tango dropped to sit cross legged, yanking Jimmy down with him. Jimmy heard the first rush of a firework, and nearly gasped when he looked out over the edge. He could see most of the city, and the white-gold crossette that lit amidst the stars looked *so much closer*. He turned, wide eyed to see Tango already looking at him with a delicate expression.

“Do you like it?” Tango asked softly, letting go of his hand to lean back onto his palms, “I never really expected that I’d be bringing anyone else up here, but...”

“*Tango*,” Jimmy said, and he couldn’t think of anything else, couldn’t think of any words that would express how he felt as he saw the next firework cast colored light onto them, “Tango, I-”

Tango held a thin finger to his lips, and Jimmy nodded, watching the rest of the firework show in silence. He huffed out a shiver when the clock turned to midnight and the fireworks came to a

cacophony of a conclusion, unsure if it was from the sight or just the cold.

Jimmy saw Tango point at an area on the floor, and after his eyes adjusted to the darkness once more, he stared at dozens of names scratched into the stone. He found Tango's, just below Impulse' and Bdubs'. The area next to Tango's name was covered by a strip of blue painters tape, but Tango tore it off quickly.

"It's kind of a tradition to write your name the first time you come up here, good luck or something. I, uh-" Tango's voice cracked in the middle, and Jimmy patted him on the back as he coughed, "I, um... I've been saving this spot for my soulmate for a long time, but... I think... I'd prefer if you used it? Maybe?"

Jimmy didn't even have time to cover his blush with his hands before Tango handed him his pocket knife. His hand shook as he carved his name, fingers slipping on the cold metal and messing up the shape of the letters. It looked bad, real bad. Tango smiled when he handed back the knife, so he figured it might not be *that* terrible.

Their fingers brushed together, and Tango's face fell. Jimmy froze, wondering if he did something wrong.

"Jimmy, you're *freezing*. Why didn't you say anything- c'mere," Tango murmured as he unzipped his jacket, way too big on him, and Jimmy inched towards him.

Shoving his hands into his pockets, Tango wrapped his arms and the jacket around him, and *holy shit*. Jimmy let himself be picked up, though there was considerable effort on Tango's end, rearranging him onto his lap. He was considerably warmer already, and he found himself leaning back against Tango's chest, careful not to knock them both over.

"So," Tango said, clearing his throat in the way that he did every time he thought he'd done something wrong, "Is this, um... okay? Okay with you?"

Oh, that's what Tango looked so nervous about. Jimmy buried his face in his hands, voice coming out as a squeak.

"Yes, it's more than okay," he said, "Thank you, it's real cold out."

“Real cold out, huh?” Tango said, voice playful but not mocking, it never was with him, “Maybe it’s just because *someone* wanted to wear his pajamas instead of, say, a jacket.”

Jimmy said nothing, just wrapped his hands around himself and listened to Tango’s quiet breathing. He saw faint marks of flowers on his skin, but they were fading too quickly for Jimmy to get a closer look and figure out which ones Tango had. He *did* know a bit about flower meanings, mind you, he’d dated Scott.

The thought of Scott reminded Jimmy of why they’d broken up in the first place- their respective soulmates. Jimmy’s mind drifted to how he’d wanted to wait for his soulmate, and he thought about Tango, holding him, right now. He stiffened, and it seemed that Tango noticed.

“Hey, so...” he said, “Is there any significance to the birds on your PJ’s? They’re cute.”

Jimmy glanced down, qualms forgotten, and realized that he was wearing *those* pajamas. The matching ones that Lizzie had given him and Grian for Christmas when they were twelve, the ones with little canaries.

“Yeah, there’s a story all right,” He said, and for once his recollection wasn’t bitter, “They’re canaries. I got this nickname, as a kid, because I would always get hurt before everyone else. Like... a canary in a coal mine, they said. It became a running joke, that I was a sign of bad things...”

Tango was silent, for a moment.

“Hm, I dunno about the whole bad luck thing. You remind me less of looming danger and more of Tweety Bird,” Tango said, “Even if bad things happen to you, you still pull through. You’re not dead yet, are you?”

Man, Jimmy really should’ve expected that. The comparison was so *Tango*, so optimistic, and of course he wouldn’t pass up an opportunity to slip a cartoon character into the conversation. He squirmed around to look Tango in the eyes, and inhaled sharply at his expression. Jimmy knew he was loved, or whatever, that wasn’t his problem, but-

He couldn’t think of a time that someone had looked at him so *fondly*.

He also couldn't think of a better moment to break the tension, so he laughed. Tango looked a little confused, though, but that only made Jimmy laugh harder.

“What? What's so funny- hey!”

“Who does that make you, then, Sylvester? Or-” Jimmy took a breath, “ *Granny?* ”

“I would *not* be Granny, excuse you,” Tango said, but he puffed his cheeks out and looked *just like her*, “No! Stop that right now!”

Jimmy just grinned, and they spent the rest of the night like that, with playful teasing that didn't hit any sore spots, and he figured that he really didn't *need* his soulmate, if Tango was right there with him.

And that served as a comfort for him, even if there were days in the rest of the break that Tango was busy, and even if he had to work twice as hard with unruly, cold animals. Even if he was still just as alone as he was before that night, he didn't feel quite as lonely.

It was... nice.

Chapter End Notes

HELLLO sorry this one wasn't out yesterday i was in crisis <3 <- not going into detail but this is ao3 you know the deal

gonna be visiting friends over the next week or so, so im not sure if i'll get a chapter out or not! sowwy..

Coriander

Chapter Notes

haha. i am so sick rn. heres chapter

more art from oakskull!

<https://www.tumblr.com/blog/view/oakskull/687911198322294784?source=share>

<https://www.tumblr.com/blog/view/oakskull/687832939761942528?source=share>

:D

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

Tango hoisted the bag over his shoulder, and firmly pretended not to notice Jimmy's worried look. Who cared if he was maybe a little bit scrawny, and Jimmy definitely wasn't, because he would not give up. He could carry the bag, and he was *not* struggling.

He'd taken off of work for Jimmy's spring break to go camping with him and their friends. Said friends were currently pulling ahead on the trail, leaving him to trifle with the heaviest bag. So what if they knew the trail from experience- if they went on without him, he would be able to find his way to the site anyway. Tango was capable, Tango was the one who always did the work, Tango was supposed to make sacrifices for the group-

Tango was being pulled aside by Jimmy, not even an hour into hanging out with their mutual friends. Damn it.

"Listen, mister muscles," He started before Jimmy had the chance, "I'm doing fine, I don't need help carrying any bags. They aren't even heavy."

"What?" Jimmy said, tilting his head like a puppy, "No, Tango, I was going to ask if you wanted some Gatorade. But now I know you're struggling with the bags, and as your... your... um, I am required to be a gentleman and help you. And that's final."

Jimmy's arms and what was visible of his torso were covered in tiny, faint flowers, so whoever his soulmate was must be having a hard time. The flowers reminded Tango of his own, which had recently added coriander to the mix. He'd only recognized it because Jimmy had shown him his herb garden, complaining about how his cilantro had gone into bloom before he could stop it.

"I said the exact opposite of that, Jimmy. I said I'm *not* struggling with any bags. Ever."

Tango was not liking the look that had just crept onto Jimmy's face. No siree, not at all. He thought about calling attention to the fact that they were being left for dead, but Jimmy hit him with his most powerful move before he could.

“So you don't think I'm capable of carrying the bags?” There was a tinge of sadness in Jimmy's voice- no, stay strong Tango! It's a trick! “You think I'll just mess it up like I always do? Like everyone else says?”

He caved so fast. It was less than a minute later that the both of them had caught up to the rest of the group, with the duffle bag in Jimmy's arms and the significantly less heavy bundle of blankets in Tango's.

The group settled at their site, and pitched the tents. Tango was the first to realize that while there were nine people, there were only four two-person tents. Either someone would have to sleep *literally on top of* the others in their tent, or someone would have to sleep outside. He cast a forlorn glance at the pile of blankets, and hoped he wouldn't be the one chosen for either.

Jimmy was the second one to notice.

“Oi! Who packed the tents?” He called, a bit louder than was strictly necessary, “There's only four!”

Grian looked at Scar, who pointed to Ren, who proceeded to blame Etho. Etho, however, claimed to have been too lazy to pack anything, and thus turned the blame over to Jimmy.

“I mean, out of all of us, who's most likely to forget their tent? Hm...” Etho rubbed his chin, “I really have no clue, you're gonna have to help me out here Jimmy.”

“ME?! I-” Jimmy cried, then stopped, failing to cover his tracks, “I think- actually I think we should have some sort of competition for who has to sleep outside, like, a scavenger hunt. Or something.”

“You're just saying that because you know it was your fault, Jimmy,” Joel said, raising an eyebrow.

And, woe, Jimmy cast his eyes onto Tango, silently calling for his aid. Before he could metaphorically jump into the house fire that was Jimmy, Ren and Bigb saved the both of them.

“I mean, it could be fun, right?” said Bigb, “It’ll give us something to do before dinnertime. Didn’t really have much planned, all that’s written on the list is ‘Have adventures of epic proportions,’ so.”

“Don’t diss the adventures, my man! They must be forged in the raw blood of brotherhood, the pack, with no curation! They must-”

“This discussion is getting in- tents,” Martyn said, laughing at his own joke and helping no one, “C’mon, let Ren show off his forestry knowledge. It’s enrichment.”

“My keen ears and eyes as sharp as the night shall lead me to victory!” Ren called, already inching on the edge of the trail, “I, uh- I’m going to go look around to see what kind of things we can put on the scavenger hunt list. I promise I won’t return to where I find them originally.”

Bigb gave a thumbs up and followed him, and Tango surveyed the camp before asking a terrible question just short of a whisper.

“Do we know what kind of furry he is? I think I would feel better knowing.”

“Knowledge is a curse,” Grian deadpanned, “There is so much about people here that I wish I didn’t know. And so much that I wish they didn’t know about me. I feel like Ren’s fursona falls into this category.”

“You are just mad that I know about the incident.” Joel said, receiving a glare, “The incident in which you-”

Grian lunged for Joel, clamping a hand over his mouth. Jimmy had started tearing apart fallen leaves, whistling in the least nonchalant way he’d ever heard. Tango was curious, but he wasn’t going to be the one to ask. Someone would, later.

“He changed his last name to *Dog* when he turned eighteen,” Scar chimed, “I feel like I might know the answer.”

“No, he plays a werewolf in our DnD campaign,” Martyn said, “He’s a wolf. I think the more important question is whether or not he participates in Alpha Male culture.”

“Isn’t he a paleontology major? I think he might have chosen, like, the common ancestor of all canines or something,” Jimmy said.

“That’s smart, Jimmy,” Tango said, watching with fascination as Jimmy tried very hard to pull his collar up to cover his blushing cheeks, “Do we know what that is?”

“A wolf.” Martyn said, “I know *fur* a fact that his fursona’s a wolf.”

“Oh yeah? Show me a picture, then,” Joel wrenched Grian off of him, “I bet it’s a species of dog, maybe a german shepherd? Furrries like those, right?”

Etho, who had been silently rummaging through their supplies, turned his head up to Tango.

“Do you want to help me get firewood?” He asked, and Tango was thankful for the out, “We didn’t bring any starter logs, either, so pick up some kindling, too.”

They left, completely unnoticed by the rest of the group, which had quickly devolved into insults. A few minutes into walking in the forest, looking for dry leaves and sticks, they heard Grian’s scream of anguish, shortly followed by Etho rubbing his shoulder.

“Did they get attacked by a bear?” Tango asked, “Or did Joel make an innuendo?”

“Innuendo, I’d say,” Etho said, then turned his wretched, evil gaze on Tango, “Hey, speaking of Joel. Do you wanna see something?”

Tango couldn’t allow himself to pass the opportunity up, but watched in horror as Etho pulled up his shirt to reveal a tattoo of Kakashi on his stomach. Tango was going to be sick from holding back his laughter.

“Joel insisted on getting one to match, and *man*, is this embarrassing. I got it when I was like, sixteen, and-” Etho coughed, “He thinks he’s just getting a tattoo of me, and he’s showing everyone tonight. It’s going to be *so embarrassing*.”

“Why are you telling *me* this?” Tango asked, and even though he’d known Etho for a pretty long time, he didn’t know about the tattoo. He did know him well enough to know that he wasn’t joking about being embarrassed, though.

“Hm, maybe because... no one will believe you.”

It was deflection, and Tango knew it was deflection, but he couldn’t help but take the bait. He felt scandalized. What the hell.

“Also, Tango,” Etho fixed him with a certified *look*, “You know... the tents are being divided by soulmate pairs... sorry about your loss.”

“What? How does that even work? Martyn, Jimmy and I don’t have our soulmates here. Are you trying to s-”

“Oh boy, nevermind,” Etho waved a hand and picked up another stick, “You might be worse than Scar- we have enough wood.”

Etho pranced off before he could protest, and he was left to wander back to camp, completely baffled. And, of course, he returned just moments before Ren and Bigb, and was immediately bombarded with secondhand embarrassment.

“Say, Ren,” Scar said, much to Grian’s obvious displeasure, “Is your fursona a german shepherd, a husky, a wolf, a coyote, or a fox?”

Ren blinked. “Like, all at once, dude?”

Grian buried his head in his hands, and Martyn just laughed. Bigb looked like he didn’t want to be there as much as Tango, and cleared his throat.

“We wrote the lists,” He held up a notepad, “It’s probably a good idea to get started now. Let’s pick our teams- I’m with Ren.”

Grian and Martyn both did not seem happy with this, and laughably, Grian got stuck with Scar. Again. Tango ended up rejecting Martyn to pair up with Jimmy, to the apparent surprise of the group.

“You’re pairing with Tim?” Grian asked, pointing a thumb at Scar, “I’m with him, but I still pity you. You’re going to lose, sorry.”

“We’ll make do,” Tango said, glancing over the list.

Oh .

He could see why it might be a problem, considering there were several insect species listed by Latin name only. Tango was not familiar with them, and neither was Jimmy. Without a doubt they’d never find any of them.

That was fine, though. Tango pocketed the list and slipped a hand in Jimmy’s, and the group dispersed. He was tugged along into the forest with bright smiles on their faces, and the sun filtered through the leaves in a way that made Jimmy look otherworldly.

They found the first couple items with ease, a feather on the ground, a picture of poison oak, a flower, and dew on some leaves. They still needed an ambiguously cool rock, with the list not clarifying what counted as *cool* , and the troublesome species from earlier.

“Hey, Tango?” Jimmy’s voice broke the comfortable silence that they’d been sharing, “Why don’t we just... google it? The species, I mean.”

Tango blanked, then pulled out his still jacked-up phone. Jimmy made an equal expression of despair, revealing his own, split clean in half and shattered. They stared at each other, for a moment.

“Shit. Wanna just catch every bug we see and hope one of them is right?” Tango asked, and Jimmy nodded.

They came dead last. Even though they got everything else on the list, their rock was deemed uncool, and they didn't get any of the correct bugs. This sucked.

Joel lit the firepit with a frankly *obnoxious* lighter, adorned with a shitty Naruto sticker on it. Tango sat defeatedly next to Jimmy, who mirrored his posture, watching as the fire flickered to life. Jimmy burned his marshmallow faster than what should have been possible, and Tango grabbed the stick from his hands to swing it around, putting it out in what was likely the least efficient way to get rid of a fire.

He wordlessly gave Jimmy his, a perfectly-done golden one, and grimaced at the burnt smore in his stead. To escape eating it without making Jimmy feel bad, he cleared his throat and threw it away when everyone was distracted.

“So, what were the bugs on the list? We couldn't figure it out.”

Grian shared a look with Martyn, who had joined their team, then tilted his head.

“What do you mean, you couldn't figure it out?” He held up his list and though it was crumpled, Tango's heart dropped at the words, “They're all right here?”

Mosquito, lady beetle, termite, roly poly - Tango was going to lose his goddamn mind.

“I'm going to lose my goddamn mind,” He said, “ *Why* was our list written in their *scientific names*? ”

He pulled out his list, and everyone broke into laughter- was Ren *howling* , in the literal sense? Not important. Tango was mad.

“Oh, sorry dude! We must've given you the original list, my bad,” Ren said between what Tango assumed was laughing, “I'll give you guys one of our extra pillows, if that's any consolation.”

“This isn't fair!” Jimmy cried, “I want a rematch! Guys, stop laughing, c'mon-”

“You want a rematch, at eleven o’clock? Nice try, Jimmy,” Joel said, “I’m not going to be eaten by a bear, not when my beloved soulmate is right here with me.”

Tango met Etho’s gaze, and he stiffened- this was his chance! For revenge, for his honor, for Jimmy’s honor!

“Speaking of, Joel,” He watched with glee as Etho’s eyes widened in horror, “Didn’t you have something to show everyone? About Etho?”

“Suddenly I have to go to the bathroom. Desperately.”

Joel grabbed his arm and pulled him back, an evil grin on his face.

“Where’re you going, Etho? I’d like to show everyone how I’ve-” Etho gave up and sat back down, and Tango enjoyed the growing terror on everyone’s faces as he started to take off his shirt, “-got a tattoo! Of you, because you are my soulmate and I care! About you.”

Oh, god, it was worse than Etho had made it sound. It was a *full torso* tattoo of a fucking Kakashi body pillow art, colored and thankfully clothed, biting his lip beneath the mask. Tango *lost it*, burying his head in his hands to try and conceal his crying-laughter. Etho’s shitty stick and poke could not compare to it, not in the slightest.

“ *Why*, Joel?” Grian’s scandalized shriek only made him laugh harder, “ *Why* would you do that?!”

“To match with Etho, of course.”

Tango could not even begin to describe the uproar that followed, maybe ‘herd of startled elephants’ might come close. Martyn looked like he was choking from laughter, and Tango couldn’t blame him. Etho stood in a motion *way too fluid* to not have been practiced, entering his and Joel’s tent without a word.

Tango had known Etho for long enough to know what his face looked like, or in other words, he’d known him before he ordered that damned Kakashi cosplay. And now, he wished that he would remove the mask, just so that he could’ve seen his expression. It would have been priceless.

Martyn rolled over for the fifth time in the sleeping bag next to him, snoring loudly. Tango stared at the roof of the tent, clenching his fists. Maybe Jimmy had it better, even though he'd drawn the short stick- even if he was sleeping outside.

Tango extracted himself from the tent after a moment of thinking, and relished in the cool night air. Jimmy was curled up on the ground, and even with the extra pillow from Ren there was no way that he could be comfortable.

Moonlight gleamed on his face, and the flash of his eyes let Tango know that he was still awake. He couldn't blame him, really.

"Hey," He whispered, "Are you good?"

Jimmy turned to look at him, and Tango couldn't stop the grin that crept onto his face at how *sleepy* Jimmy looked.

"Yeah."

Tango crouched next to him, dropping his sleeping bag with a quiet rustle. The only sound he could hear save for the crickets was Jimmy's rhythmic breathing. Fireflies flickered lazily about the camp, and other than the moon they were the only light.

"Figured that since I failed the scavenger hunt just as much as you did," He said, "I should probably be sleeping out here too."

Jimmy blinked, then shifted to sit up.

"Tango, you don't have to," He muttered, "It's not exactly comfortable."

He raised an eyebrow at that, then plopped down to lay next to Jimmy, crossing his arms behind his head and staring up at the stars, his mind unusually clear. Tango felt a surge of affection as Jimmy laid back down and scooted closer to him, curling against his torso.

Tango, noticing that Jimmy was very much still awake, untucked one of his arms to run it gently through his hair. His back faintly ached, but he figured it was his soulmate's problem- and he would soon match anyway.

“Who would I be if I let you sleep out here alone?” He huffed out a laugh, “It beats sharing a tent with Martyn, at least. Plus... I can't let you take the fall for something that was equally my fault.”

He caught a glimpse of Jimmy's eyes widening, just before he buried his face back into Tango's shirt. Tango smiled, and just barely heard his next words.

“...you're so nice, Tango.”

“Nonsense, it's just what you deserve-” Tango started to say, fully prepared to go on a spiel about Jimmy's strengths, but was cut off with a quiet snore.

He glanced down at the warm weight against his side, and sighed contentedly, pulling the spare sleeping bag overtop the both of them. The hard ground beneath his back definitely wasn't comfortable, but he found that he didn't mind.

“Goodnight.”

Chapter End Notes

top ten chapters that warrant the double life smp ensemble tag that i put there a while back. next chapter is last one.

Dandelions

Chapter Notes

so, that episode, huh. weeps cries here's somethin for yall.

thanks to felicitypheonix5 on tumblr for beta reading!

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

The afternoon sunlight cast long shadows on the train station platform where Jimmy and Grian waited, a gentle summer breeze blowing through their hair. Grian tapped away at his phone, the telltale faked frown letting Jimmy know that he was probably talking to Scar.

He huffed and pocketed the device, puffing out his cheeks and staring up at the tv screen that announced the delay.

“I can’t believe it’s delayed,” Grian said, “For *thirty nine minutes* ! Did it fall off the tracks?”

Jimmy smirked. “Man’s just upset about being late to dinner with Scar, it seems.”

Grian squawked and crossed his arms, before sending Jimmy an accusatory side-eye. He didn’t deny it, though, and that was a win in Jimmy’s book.

“I’m not clingy!” He retorted, despite Jimmy never having said as such, “Besides- at least I don’t go parading around in his clothes!”

That was not true. On the other hand, Jimmy definitely couldn’t call him out on it, because he very much was wearing Tango’s vest. It went well with his outfit, okay?

He loved Tango, really, but he did need his breaks sometimes- that was why he’d decided to hang out with Grian alone, so that things between them wouldn’t be stale. But he could miss him, obviously.

Wait- wait. *Did* he love Tango? He frowned at the question, since it was so obvious. He probably shouldn’t even have to ask himself that. He shook his head and turned back to the tracks.

A faint tingling sensation in his hand was the only warning before his skin exploded in flowers, accompanied by what was probably the worst pain he'd ever felt. He bit his tongue to stop from alerting Grian, and watched numbly as the flowers wilted.

Jimmy was not a florist, nor had he ever looked into flowers; it didn't really matter to him who the universe stuck him with, when he was content with whoever would stay. He did not know what wilted flowers meant, but he had an inkling suspicion that it wasn't good.

He reminded himself that the burning wasn't his, and with shaking hands dialed a familiar number on his now-fixed phone. It picked up on the first ring.

"Jimmy?" Scott asked, annoyed, and it was then Jimmy heard the airport announcer in the background, "What do you want?"

"Oh, yeah, hey, Scott!" His voice shook despite the forced cheer, "Been a while. Um, so--"

"Get to the point, Jimmy."

"Right, right," His hands were clammy, and he felt dizzy beneath Grian's confused glare, "Um- I just wanted to ask, do you know what wilted soul flowers mean?"

"*What*," Grian interjected, and Jimmy faintly heard Scott echo him before Grian took the phone out of his hands. "Jimmy, I'm so sorry. Scott- I'm with him, yeah, I know how to treat for shock. I've done it before."

Grian nestled the device between his ear and shoulder, and juggled his bags so that he could lay Jimmy down on the bench. He vaguely registered the uncomfortable hard surface, but blood pounded in his ears and drowned out most of his thoughts.

"No, it looks like burns. I just don't understand how his soulmate could've--" Grian cut himself off with a pitying glance at Jimmy, "I don't understand how they wilted just from a *hand* injury. It doesn't make any sense."

Jimmy watched as Grian set down his phone, Scott still on speaker, then used his own to call,

presumably, the soulmate emergency line. The phone had a protective but rather bland red case, with the only other pop of color being a tiny phone charm. Jimmy had never seen it before, but despite that, it looked old and faded.

“I’m sorry about your soulmate, Tim.”

Pearl was the one to pick him up from the emergency room, driving him to pick up his pain meds in her shitty 2006 Honda Civic. The torn seats were a grounding comfort as he pulled at the fraying fibers and stared out the window.

“Y’know,” Pearl said, “How I was in prison, a couple weeks ago?”

Jimmy sighed and decided to take the bait, any conversation better than the dull roar of the car and the ringing in his ears.

“Yeah? Unlawful possession of bio-hazardous materials and three counts of assault, can’t forget it.”

She giggled and turned her eyes off the road, a dangerous grin on her face. If Jimmy hadn’t known her for so long, he’d probably be scared of her like the rest of their friend group had after she’d essentially lost it, but hey. He didn’t see anyone else driving him.

“Well, turns out, wilted soul flowers aren’t so rare!” She said, and Jimmy’s stomach dropped. So much for the distraction. “There was this guy, killed his wife. Don’t think he meant to, honestly- he’d just sit there and stare at his hands, stare at the flowers. I think they were hyacinths. But that isn’t the point.”

Jimmy twisted his arm so that he could see his own flowers, then frowned. He really did not know where Pearl was going with this, and it certainly was not helping.

“...My flowers are wilted too,” She said, “But I know for certain that my soulmate isn’t dead. It- it can mean a couple things.”

Jimmy's eyes widened as he watched her worry her lip and turn back to the road, steering down a street close enough to the university that he recognized it.

Everyone, from Grian to Scott to the people treating him at the soulmate emergency center had said that his soulmate had died. *Everyone*. And here Pearl was, dropping a bomb like it didn't completely change his perspective- his soulmate could still be alive!

He felt a little saddened by that, too, in a way that only made him feel guilty. Over his months with Tango, he'd finally made peace with the fact that he didn't know his soulmate, that he could be happy even without the universe's help. He didn't need one, when he had Tango, but lo and behold, they were still alive.

"This isn't the way to my dorm, Pearl," Jimmy said instead of expressing that, skeptical.

"Correct!" She cheered, "We're gonna do a bit of B&E to cure the soul!"

"...bed and eackfast?"

"Breaking and entering!"

Jimmy was left to cradle his hand by his chest as Pearl shut off the engine and got out in front of a *very* familiar house. He gulped before following, not liking the mischief on her face, or the way she put her hands on her hips and stared up at the building like an unconquered goal.

"Pearl, can we pick a different house?" Jimmy asked, because apparently he was going along with the crime anyway, "I know the people who live here, and it'll be really awkward..."

"Oh, no, I know them too!" She whirled to smile at him, "That just makes it more fun!"

Jimmy sighed when she pulled a bobby pin from her hair and handed it to him. He was pretty sure there were way better ways to break into a place, ways that didn't involve hairpins, or going through the front door, or robbing your friends. He voiced this to her, but she only laughed.

"I see, I see. You're scared!"

He frowned and puffed out his chest, then snatched the pin out of her hand. Truthfully, he didn't know the first thing about lockpicking, but he was not going to let that stop him.

"No, I'm not!" He said, missing the slight snapping sound from the pins, "I'm actually a master thief, the best lockpick in the land-"

It broke off in the lock. Shit.

A flare of pain cut off his defense as Pearl rolled her eyes and opened the kitchen window, but he was glad that she at least had the awareness to grab his *other* hand to pull him up. Even if he himself couldn't *cause* the pain, he could definitely still feel it.

"So, Pearl," He coughed, standing in an otherwise dark and empty kitchen, "You never told me *why exactly* we've broken into our friends' house?"

She flipped on the lights and retrieved a box of Count Chocula (why they had that in July, he did not know) and shook it into a cup for each of them. Pearl's cup was seemingly ancient: white plastic, with most of the design faded due to time. The only words still barely saturated enough to read were *Mardi Gras 2002*, but Jimmy thought he could see the face of a jester beneath it.

His own cup was Looney Tunes themed, one of Tango's, he was sure. The thought of Tango made his chest ache- the house was seemingly empty, and he'd been half-hoping that he could confide in him about his soul flowers. Too bad, he supposed.

"Oh, Impulse forgot to return my copy of Marmaduke last time we had movie night with Gem. I thought it might be nice to watch it here, since their couch is way bigger than mine."

Jimmy rubbed the bridge of his nose; first he got dragged into a crime, then movie night. But-

"That movie's one of my favorites!" He said, a soft smile creeping onto his face to match Pearl's.

Hell, he was feeling lonely, she was feeling lonely- he really was lucky to have someone who tried (?) to cheer him up. His other friends, though he loved them, could be huge flakes. They both settled onto opposite sides of the couch with the spare blankets, and Jimmy picked at the scratchy

surface.

He hoped his soulmate was okay, even if the doctors had said that wilted flowers meant that they were probably dead. He was sorry about his soulmate, and sorry about whatever he must've done, when Pearl said that a ruined relationship could cause wilted flowers. He was sorry, even if Grian wasn't answering his messages and neither were Tango or Joel-

Jimmy fell asleep with the credits rolling in the background and a frown on his face.

...

He did not wake up on the couch. This was his first cause for concern, and he flailed, struggling with the covers until he fell out of Tango's race car bed.

His second cause for concern was the sound of pots banging and swearing in the kitchen, with the smell of fire accompanying it. His third was the fact that some of the wilted flowers trailing up his arm had bloomed back to life, though not the ones on three of his fingers.

Jimmy wrapped a blanket around himself and stepped out into the hallway, recognizing the voice as Tango's. Pearl must've left in a hurry, if her dirty dishes on the coffee table were anything to go by, and he sighed as he walked into the kitchen.

It took a rub of his eyes and a second glance before he really registered the sight. Tango's hair was mussed and greasy, his eyes half-lidded and angry, but he wore a frilly pink apron with way too many pockets. That wasn't important, though.

What was important was the bandage that wrapped around his arm and hand, cradled close to his chest, and the way that he struggled with stirring a pan of eggs. Jimmy cleared his throat and held up his hand, spreading his fingers to show off the flowers.

"Run me through what happened, Tango."

The look on Tango's face was almost good enough to make up for the crash of the pan when he whirled around too fast, keyword almost. A spare bit of hot egg flew and hit Tango's leg, burning both of them.

"Oh my god, you're my soulmate?" Tango spoke entirely too quickly for just-woke-up Jimmy to follow, "Oh *no* , I'm so sorry, it must've hurt really bad. Well, I know it did, but-

Jimmy shushed him in a way that he hoped was soothing and *not* obnoxious, then crossed the kitchen to lend Tango an extra hand. (He definitely did not laugh when he muttered that to himself. Definitely not.)

"Can you tell me what happened, though?"

Tango, once more, did not tell him what happened, instead opting to furrow his brows and let his jaw drop. He slowly set down the wooden spoon, and Jimmy could see the realization fade to anger on his face.

"It hurt you too," He muttered, "I am going to *kill* Bdubs when he stops hiding over at Etho's place. Yeah, I know that's where he is. Piece of shit bastard-

His face was flushed in a way that Jimmy didn't like the look of, and he took slow, deliberate-but-growling breaths. He was halfway through pulling out his phone when Jimmy decided to take action, cupping his face with both hands.

"Tango," He sighed, bumping his forehead against Tango's and running a thumb over the bags under his eyes, "Let's think, for a second. Tell me what happened- it'd be pretty stupid to take revenge in my honor without telling me why."

Eyes widening, Tango took a deep, shaky breath and nodded. The motion knocked their noses together, and Jimmy found it in him to laugh. Tango shortly joined him, and though it was bitter and short, it was still laughter, and still an improvement.

"All right, buddy, you deserve to know, but I'm serving breakfast first. Gah- the first time you wake up at my house and it's not even because- cutting that sentence short. Nuh-uh, no implications from Tango."

Jimmy smiled, grateful to see that he was acting silly again, and let himself be served.

Hm. Perhaps *served* was the wrong word, considering he was the one with both of his limbs completely intact, and had to hold both the pan and the plates as Tango scooped. The plates were paper, and they ended up sitting on the couch with two wooden TV trays that Jimmy had to set up, a shitty sitcom roaring in the background, but it was comfortable. He really wouldn't have it any other way.

"So."

"So," Tango began, and turned his eyes down to stare at his hands, "Y'know how it was just the fourth of July? And how, I, uh, really like fireworks?"

Jimmy nodded, and though he thought Tango was beating around the bush, he didn't press. He'd get there- he trusted him to.

"I spend it with Bdubs, Etho, and another one of our friends- Skizz, every year. Another one of those, 'oh, I've known you since before I could read,' things," Tango said, pitching his voice upwards in mockery, "Well, this time, Bdubs came loaded with fireworks, all unlabeled. Super suspicious, but, y'know, all the good fireworks are."

Tango gritted his teeth and clenched his uninjured hand.

"They seemed normal enough, though, and Bdubs told me that he'd gotten them from his pyrotechnician friend. Said I could have the first go," He murmured, "What he *didn't* say was that his pyrotechnician friend was his crazy-ass ex, and that it would blow up all in my face. To smithereens! Kablooey, there goes Tango!"

Jimmy frowned, remembering the mind-numbing pain that he'd been in, and the knowledge from Scott that soul-pain was usually much less severe than the actual injury. He felt as angry as Tango had been, to be honest, but he was able to keep a wrap on it.

"I don't really remember the next couple hours, but I ended up losing several fingers- had to get skin grafts, too. And it sucks, so much, cause it fucking hurts, emotionally! I know that if it had been Impy, or even Etho- he wouldn't have had them test it out. Punching bag Tango, here to take the bullet!"

The lost fingers explained the wilted flowers- flesh that wasn't *there* was dead, technically. Speaking of the flowers, when Tango had burnt himself on the food earlier, the flower that

bloomed on his own skin was a dandelion. He hadn't seen it on himself before, but even he couldn't miss the meaning.

Dandelions, the little yellow flower that withers into soft seeds that carry wishes on the breeze.
Dandelions, the stubborn, hated weed that lives in concrete, yet barely disrupts ecosystems.
Dandelions- Jimmy's favorite flower as a kid.

"Tango..." He tried to say, but his voice cracked and drifted off before he could get his point across.

That was fine. Jimmy swallowed down the lump in his throat and wrapped an arm around Tango, pulling him close. The position was awkward with both their legs beneath the TV trays, and Tango's bad arm was facing him, but they made it work. Tango buried his face in his chest and clutched his shirt, and he traced flowery shapes on his back.

"Tango, you didn't deserve that. I- I'm so sorry that happened," He said, wishing he could say something better, more poetic or comforting, "Just- I'm so glad you're my soulmate. I'm so, *so* happy that it's you."

Tango pulled his face away to look him in the eyes, and though tear-streaked and tired, he still held a proud smile. A hand reached up to brush a stray hair away from Jimmy's eyes, and Jimmy felt himself melt into the touch.

"You know, you're less like a canary," Tango's eyes twinkled with mischief, "And more like a little puppy, say, a golden retriever. Um- wow, good going, me. Anyways. This place reminds me too much of Bdubs, so, um-"

Jimmy shushed him, though the act was fond.

"Yeah, yeah. Let's go-" He froze, "Oh my god, everyone else knew. They knew we were soulmates- guh! I can't believe this, didn't even tell me. I'm going to have some *very strong words* with Grian-"

Tango's giggles interrupted him, soft breaths falling just close enough to his face that he could feel them. And man, if Jimmy said he didn't feel like the world itself was in his arms, he'd be one hell of a liar.

Like that piece of shit snake Bdubs.

Chapter End Notes

weeheehe !!! it's done! i'm gonna b taking a teensy break after this, but expect a scarian sequel/companion fic sometime in the future!

... also, bdubs crazy ass ex is doc. >:) just a fun little tidbit

if you're interested, i do have a tumblr little-soldiers.tumblr.com! feel free to shout at me smile

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