

addict's lullaby

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addict's lullaby

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Summary

Mapicc's no stranger to pain. It's been written in his blood and his bones for as long as he remembers; the dislocated joints and broken bones of childhood very quickly turned into an ache that follows him throughout every waking moment.

The pills make it easy.

On chronic pain, being the lead singer of a band, and quiet yearning.

Notes

I'm not really planning on writing things for this series in order, because there's no real solid plotline, and also half of the fics are just a song title with *elaborate later* written below it, so. Anyways, the series is (hopefully) going to be arranged in timeline order, so while posting order may jump around, the series function will have everything in the right(ish) order.

I'm embracing the autistic nerd in me, so it's officially songfic time, lyrics and all. The song in this one is Vermillion, Pt. 2 by Slipknot, and it's a fucking masterpiece. I will die on this hill. If you're familiar with the song, ignore the gender swap, I had to make it gay somehow.

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

Mapicc's no stranger to pain. It's been written in his blood and his bones for as long as he remembers; the dislocated joints and broken bones of childhood very quickly turned into an ache that follows him throughout every waking moment.

His joints still dislocate, but his bones no longer break (he's too careful for that, too unwilling to be saddled with another cast and another set of limitations blended with physio), and he knows all too well what pain is like. It is with him when he goes to bed, and it is with him when he wakes.

Pain is with him when he steals some of Zam's rarely-used sleep medication in hopes of relief, and it's with him when he finds himself taking too much codeine, passed out on the bathroom floor and barely breathing.

It's with him when he promises *never again, never again*, and when he jokingly recites the Alcoholics Anonymous pledge to a concerned Parrot.

Pain is in his arms and his legs and his chest when he tells the band that he overdosed, when Ro gets that wide-eyed and panicked look on his face that only gets worse when Zam asks *again?* Pain radiates like a bruise under tight fabric, pulling at the edges of his smile until it could cut like a knife, and making his voice crack whenever he tries to sing.

Pain takes all he has, and throws it in the dirt. His hands shake just as much as his vocal chords, and the distant fantasy he has of getting Zam to stand behind him and teach him guitar with arms wrapped around his shoulders gets even more distant. The ache in his bones, old as he is, only knows how to take. The knives in his spine, sharp as they are, only know how to ache.

Mapicc, twenty-three years old, lead singer of a band more famous than they should be, only knows how to break.

The pills make it easy.

He starts with advil, the common headache relief, and winces when it does nothing. There is still a chisel in his thigh, so he takes some more, and prays it lasts, knowing it won't.

Two every four hours, more than the recommended dose, but not enough. Two every four hours, until he realizes that advil doesn't do *shit*, and he needs something stronger before he fries his liver.

So the pills get stronger, and he gets weaker, and after far too many fucking doctors, they tell him to fuck off and that he has chronic pain. That's where things start to go downhill.

Simple painkillers become NSAIDs, become narcotics until he's finally got influence, and uses it to get his hands on opioids. With them, he learns how to breathe again.

The pain gets bad, and the pills wash it away, make life somewhat bearable again. He can pull out the worst of the knives in his body, and pretend to be normal. Shows get more energy, he dances and sings and on one particular occasion, even crowd surfs, despite the fear he'd get dropped and break something. Life comes back into his body.

But just like how his pain breaks, his relief breaks too.

At first, he gets used to it. He learns to welcome the pain back into his body like a bitter ex, remembers how to swallow it down and wrap his arms and legs up until he can no longer feel them

throb.

The braces and the compression become part of his style, become his thing. He makes them look cool and appealing, even when his knees pop every few steps and his elbow bends too far in the wrong direction, a shitty party trick.

He saves the meds for once a day if necessary, just enough to blunt the edge of things when he can no longer take the ache. If he's desperate, flaring and determined to make it through the day, sometimes he'll take two, but never more.

But his pain doesn't go away, and neither does the steadily-building anger at himself, at the world, at his body, that doesn't know how to work right. Mapicc continues to hurt, and the baseline amount of pain he forces himself to go through before he claims relief lessens.

Excruciating pain becomes debilitating pain, becomes pain that sits like a knife in his throat, and eventually just a brutal ache. He starts on the extreme end of the spectrum, and walks his way down. He starts taking pills for pain that's just annoying—never too many, only the ones necessary to sand out his nerves and put a smile back on his face.

Smiles have felt so far out of reach. The painkillers put them back in his grasp. They reteach him how to feel happy, loose-limbed and content with the body he has. He doesn't hurt as much, only when he wakes up in the morning, and sometimes when he forgets to top himself up on the meds and they start fading off.

They start fading away faster and faster, and the airy ease they give becomes less and less effective, so Mapicc gets his hands on more, and more, and he's not *stupid*, so he's not mixing any of the leftover ones he had. It's just a couple more bits of codeine than he was taking before, and if he runs through his dubiously-got prescription faster than usual, who's to judge him?

He's the one in pain, he's the one who knows when he needs the pain to be killed. Sometimes he needs more medication than usual. That doesn't make him an addict.

Mapicc forgets what it's like to not be high. It sounds depressing, but to him, it's not. It means he isn't constantly hurting, that he has freedom from the prison of his body. When codeine is in his blood, he forgets what it's like to hurt.

Sleep is a little harder some nights, and he lays on his bunk and feels his heart jump around in his chest like how he does on stage, but he isn't awake because bear traps are closed around his body, so he can take it. He can trace lyrics into the roof of the tour bus, work out new things to do and listen to his friends sleep. It's soothing, even when Zam gets up and out of his bunk every half hour.

It's only when he's post-encore, locked in a bathroom and counting out pills to reverse the effects of a show that things go south.

He swallows them dry, then drinks from the sink faucet when it feels like one gets stuck in his throat. While his body starts to take them in, he rubs gel into his knees, because regardless of whether he feels them hurt or not, they'll still click and pop. He does the same for his ankles, wrists, and elbows, pulling some of them out of their braces only to tuck them back in.

Exhaustion slips into his veins, but it's not unusual after a show. There's a huge adrenaline high for his body to work off, and sometimes the best outlet for it is sleep. Spoke usually deals with his through spray paint, and sometimes he even lets Zam play around with his drum kit. Ro draws stickmen and hands and concert outfits, while Parrot makes friendship bracelets, or throws himself

into planning things out like he was the manager of the band.

Black spots slip into the corners of Mapicc's vision, and he slowly blinks them away. His chest doesn't feel quite right, and when he goes to press his hand to it, his muscles jump and shake.

Underneath his skin, his muscles scream an itch that he doesn't remember feeling before, and when he tries to scratch it, his hands aren't strong enough, even when black-painted nails dig deep into his arms. His head swims, heavy and light and dizzy and *fuck, when did he get so dizzy, when was the tile painted white instead of hotel-brown?*

Everything after that clips from his memory, but he's heard enough from Parrot.

They had a meet and greet. Mapicc didn't show up. Parrot went to check on him, and heard a loud noise, and when he broke open the door, Mapicc was collapsed on the floor, drooling heavily and barely breathing.

Because Mapicc was stupid about it, and Parrot spends far too much time poking his nose into things that shouldn't be poked into, Parrot had a couple syringes of Naloxone, and stabbed Mapicc right in the ass with it. He likes to say it was the thigh, but Mapicc knows it was his ass.

An ambulance came, and the meet and greet was cancelled, and a fun, fun thing called *detoxing* had to happen. He liked none of it, but he was alive, and that's what mattered. Mostly.

Because he was still in pain, he just had to find different ways to deal with it.

Mapicc still isn't sure whether it was a good idea or a bad idea to put him and Zam in the same hotel room.

Sure, he has the alibi of being a solid sleeper, but most of that is a lie built off of the few nights where he's pumped full of sleep medication or even alcohol, when he's desperate. Zam, on the other hand, is a chronic insomniac, jumpy enough to make Mapicc want to strangle him some nights.

If he has to choose between entertainment while he stares at the ceiling, or wanting to murder the bandmate he has a slight obsession with, he'll pick option c, closing his eyes and praying that this is the night the ache in his bones slips away long enough to let him sleep. He likes Zam, despite it all. He just doesn't like how Zam can't sit still for more than twenty minutes at a time.

Tonight, at least, Zam's been half-decent. Sure, he's still twisting and turning, but he's not getting out of bed, and the mattress doesn't squeak at every movement, so Mapicc can deal with it. He can listen to how Zam shifts around and makes the blankets rustle, how his breathing switches between too-controlled and heavy sighs.

That doesn't stop him from wanting to kill Zam a little when he just straight up gets out of bed, turning his phone flashlight on to rummage through the pile of stuff left in their room. He must not find what he wants, because he leaves the room, and Mapicc listens to the silence until his ears ring.

Then, Zam comes back.

He's got something in his hands, barely visible in the dim light that Mapicc's half-cracked eyes can pick up on. That something very quickly reveals itself to be a guitar—an acoustic one, because their main instruments were taken to the venue in preparation for their next show

Zam tries to mute the sound of the strings, and Mapicc risks looking at him to find that he's perched on the desk chair, palm sitting over the hole of the guitar while he fiddles with the tuning. If it weren't endearing to see Zam do something he's good at, Mapicc would probably break his silent lie of sleep and tell him to put the guitar down.

Instead, he listens to Zam finish the tuning, fiddling around with a few notes before playing a simple tune. It's one Mapicc hasn't heard before, but Zam's clearly familiar with it, if he's playing it in the dark, with the moonlight the only way for him to see where his hands are positioned.

Carefully, Zam picks notes, a sound that feels almost like a wave, rising in pitch slightly before sinking back down. It sits nicely against Mapicc's skin, a calm sort of sound that doesn't feel out of place.

The picking transitions to a simple strumming pattern, Zam's fingers skating across the strings with little scratchy noises that are a lot easier to hear in the quiet. He repeats it for a while, and Mapicc's just about to wonder if he's going anywhere with the sound when Zam clears his throat softly.

Then, out of practice and slightly out of key, Zam starts singing, voice barely a whisper. It's not the careful roughness Mapicc throws into his voice, not the intentionally dramatic sounds Spoke and Parrot make. It's simply *him*, awkward, and slightly out of place, and while the professionally trained singer in Mapicc winces, the part of him that likes Zam embraces the sound.

"He seems dressed in all of me," Zam sings, and Mapicc can hear emotion slipping through the gaps of his voice. *"Stretched across my shame, all the torment and the pain leaked through and covered me."*

It hurts in a way Mapicc can understand, echoing the way his muscles still don't sit right despite the comfort of the bed he's in. Maybe it's because Zam's singing it, maybe it's because Mapicc's tired, and when he's tired, he's sentimental, but the sound reaches right into his chest, and makes him feel things he doesn't want to name.

And still, Zam keeps singing, a soft croon of, *"I'd do anything to have him to myself, just to have him for myself. Now, I don't know what to do. I don't know what to do when he makes me sad."*

Mapicc swallows, the songwriter in him picking out the pronouns and the word choice and the repetition. Whatever Zam is writing about, it's something—some *one*—he cares about. If only Mapicc would let the others help him write songs more often, maybe he'd get to hear this from Zam more often.

"He is everything to me," Zam sings, and Mapicc can hear all of the spots where a secondary guitar and maybe even a piano would slot in perfectly. *"The unrequited dream, a song that no one sings; the unattainable. He's a myth that I have to believe in. All I need to make it real is one more reason."*

A tightness worms its way inside Mapicc's chest, constricting around his ribs and his heart. He listens to Zam sing *but I won't let this build up inside of me* over and over, a soft sort of pain in his voice while his brain tears the words apart over and over again, thinks about how this song that he should have never heard in the first place somehow manages to rip the yearning out of his chest and put it into music.

"I catch in my throat" —and fuck if that isn't something Mapicc understands— *"Choke! Torn into pieces. I won't, no, I don't want to be this."*

Neither does Mapicc, Zam. Neither does Mapicc.

“He isn't real—won't let this build up inside of me—I can't make him real.”

Fucking ouch. Mapicc wants to hear every song Zam's ever written in secret, every slightly wrong pitch that comes out of his throat. He wants to know who Zam thinks about when he writes shit like this, wants to believe in a futile dream that it's him and nobody else.

He wants Zam to sing more, wants to hear the chord combinations that he comes up with in the dead of night. He wants Zam to look him in the face and sing this song again, because hearing it once isn't enough. He needs to write the lyrics down and make sure every person in the world can hear them.

He *wants*, and he *needs*, and his body lets him have none of it, because it decides that Zam's voice is the perfect lullaby, and finally starts kicking him towards sleep. It's lucky that he's tired and sappy enough to let it win.

End Notes

My body almost didn't let me post this one, because I've been sick as balls lately, so it felt fitting to pull this one out of the archives and post it. I've got a bunch of fun stuff and fun songs planned for this AU, so here's to hoping that I can stick to it!

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