between the second hand smoke, and the glass on the street

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by immolxtion_stxtion

Summary

When Zam is without Mapicc, he doesn't quite recognize himself, never quite knows what to do. They're better together, a perfect balance. Zam can talk the talk so much better when Mapicc is there at his back.

"They never saw us coming, 'til they hit the floor." Glass Shard | Vehicular Accident | "Watch out!"

Notes

I'm going to ask for a little suspension of disbelief for this one, because some of the choices made are either not smart or not possible, to which I say: do it for the aesthetic. Sometimes to make things cool, they also have to be horribly, grievously inaccurate to real life.

Anyways, this one goes out to an old fandom friend, who introduced me to Hit and Run, the prompt song for the day. We might not have talked in years, but this is their song to me <3

Title is from Granite, by Sleep Token.

Zam's used to seedy bars, places packed full of people that play the same twenty shitty bars, but it doesn't stop him from going. Sometimes, it's on his own, but tonight, he's with Mapicc, pressed shoulder-to-shoulder because it's harder to lose each other that way, and Zam also really likes Mapicc's personal space. It's why he's practically leaning on him, more than embracing the way Mapicc has an arm slung over his waist.

He's only half paying attention to the current conversation, which is probably bad, because Mapicc's always been shit at sweet talking. It's not his fault, though! There's someone across the room that Zam's eyes dart to, tall and lanky with a smile like sunshine. He doesn't hesitate, grabbing at Mapicc's hand and tugging him away, in the right direction.

The right direction in question turns out to be the actual bar, and Zam just barely manages to snag a stool right next to the stranger. Luckily, the bartender is busy with other people, so Zam turns to the side, feels how Mapicc ends up standing behind him with a barely-there brush of bodies.

"Hi," he says, putting on his best charming smile. "I'm Zam, and that's Mapicc. You plan on buying your own drinks tonight?"

The man laughs, a nice little thing that has Zam perking up with amusement. "I mean, I was planning on it, but there's always room for plans to change. I'm Ro."

"Nice to meet you, Ro," Zam says, just barely catching Mapicc saying something similar. "Got any plans for the night?"

Several drinks later, and a whole lot of familiarity gained, Zam knows that Ro is the one. Mapicc, who somehow managed to grab a stool somewhere down the line, agrees with him, hand tapping an affirming rhythm against Zam's kneecap. While he's a bit tipsy, Zam knows that Mapicc hasn't touched anything but water tonight, while Ro has met him drink for drink. It's a good set-up, a perfect arrangement. He shifts on his stool, pushes the empty glass he's been nursing away.

"Wanna go home?" Zam asks, and they all know what he means. Ro's too-eager nod, the way he brushes his fingers over the back of Zam's hand only seals the deal. "Mapicc can get the car. Wanna finish your drink first?"

"Wouldn't want to waste your money," Ro says, and they both watch Mapicc slip away into the crowd, navigating through packed bodies like it's nothing. "It's a good one."

"I haven't tried it before," Zam says, and it's not a lie, not really. He's kissed the taste off of Mapicc's lips before, but never had a glass of his own, doesn't even know the name. "But I'll take your word for it."

"You could do more than that," Ro says with a flirty little edge, and Zam can pick up on the implications more than well enough. "I don't mind sharing."

Zam can't help the bark of a laugh that slips from him. "Clearly!"

Through the bright, flashing lights, Zam almost swears he can see a hint of red on Ro's face, rounding out the sharp angles of his face. Instead of acknowledging Zam, he simply picks up his glass, and downs the rest of it in one go, setting it back down on the bar. "Isn't Mapicc waiting for us?"

"Yeah, probably. Fuck him, though. The car can wait for a while."

Ro laughs, a rich little noise that almost has Zam laughing back. It's a sign that he's in a little too deep, wooed by a virtual stranger. "Is it my turn to make a joke out of an accidental innuendo?"

"Alright! We are going to the car," Zam says, unable to hide the lopsided grin that breaks across his face. "It's car time. Isn't this exciting?"

"The most exciting thing ever. Lead the way, Zam."

"It'll be my pleasure." Carefully, he slips off of the barstool, hates how it leaves him at a height disadvantage. There's nothing he can do to change it, so he simply grabs Ro's hand, and tugs him through the crowd, bumping shoulders without much care for how people complain.

Instead of going out through the front door, Zam takes Ro to the back, past the washrooms and storage rooms, pushing out the back exit and into the night. It's crisp against his flushed cheeks, almost putting a damper on the excitement running through his veins. He breathes in slowly, relaxed despite the fact that they're in a sketchy little alleyway, trash cans piled full with broken black bags.

Zam looks at the sky, at how the buildings warp with height and try to block out the stars, and when he looks back down, Ro is looking at *him*, eyes glittering in the low light. It makes Zam want to do something stupid, like kiss him, wind his arms around Ro's neck and pull them both down to the same level until there's no escape.

"What are you looking at?" he says instead, light and teasing.

"You," Ro responds, like it's as easy as breathing. The air feels caught in Zam's lungs in a way that hasn't happened since the day he first met Mapicc, tight and intoxicating.

"Shit," he says, voice some ungodly mix of shaky and breathy. "Shit."

"Yeah," Ro shifts, moves from the half-closed exit to stand beside Zam. "Yeah."

"Maybe we should ditch Mapicc," Zam jokingly suggests, and he's thinking about dumpsters, about alleys so small that they can barely fit two people pressed side to side. He's thinking about taking Ro apart, about all of the things he can learn and memorize and feel. "He's taking too long."

"He'll show up soon enough," Ro says, like he knows Mapicc. It's almost cute, except for the fact that Zam knows Mapicc, and knows that he likes to be contrary for the sake of things. Mapicc will be in the car, sure, but he'll be letting it idle, waiting until patience turns to annoyance. It's just how he is. "I don't mind waiting, when it's with you."

Zam grins, can't help the way he bumps the side of his body into Ro's. "You flatter me."

"Maybe you deserve to be flattered."

"Maybe we should see what Mapicc's up to," he says instead of playing along, tipping his head toward the end of the alley. Nothing on Ro or his flirting, but when Zam is without Mapicc, he doesn't quite recognize himself, never quite knows what to do. They're better together, a perfect balance. Zam can talk the talk so much better when Mapicc is there at his back. "He's been gone for a while."

Ro frowns. "You're right. Is he prone to getting lost?"

"Only on Sundays," Zam jokes, reaching out to grab Ro's hand. "C'mon, let's go look."

He doesn't wait for an answer, tugging lightly on Ro's hand until he starts following. They weave their way through puddles and discarded garbage, Zam occasionally turning back to send Ro a *look*, one that ends with the both of them moving faster, and Zam giggling. It's easy. It's fun. He almost trips and eats shit on a loose paver when he focuses more on Ro instead of walking, Ro catching him seconds before he hits the ground.

His arms are nice, banded around Zam, even if the position is a bit awkward. They're arms Zam could easily lose himself in, arms that he wants to break in a little. He can't help the way he runs his hands up them, the butchered tips of his fingers tracing across skin.

"I think I just fell for you," Zam jokes, getting his feet under him, but not yet pushing up. "You're a good catch."

Ro grins widely. "On the contrary, I'd say you're the catch here."

A very loud and persistent honk echoes from just outside of the alley, and Zam knows that Mapicc's getting impatient. The sound has him snorting, pressing his lips together in an attempt to smother a smile. His attempt doesn't work very well, but it's the thought that counts, especially when Ro grins as well, tugging Zam to his feet.

"I think the chariot awaits?"

"I think the chariot is *impatient*," Zam says, but it's full of affection. "Mapicc's just like that. You get used to it eventually."

Slipping his hand back into Zam's, Ro starts walking again. "Well, I'd hate to keep him waiting."

"I wouldn't!"

Ro laughs; says something that might or might not be important—Zam really isn't paying too much attention. They're almost to the mouth of the alley, almost out on the street, and the thought fills him with giddy excitement, puts a skip in his step., even if he has to take a couple extra to keep up with Ro and his long legs.

Zam counts the seconds, counts the steps, counts every time Mapice lays on the horn, probably drumming his fingers against the steering wheel and wondering why Zam's decided to take his sweet time. It's part of the fun, though, the little lead-up where butterflies twirl in Zam's gut and he gets to squeeze Ro's hand in excitement, grinning widely and thinking about seeing Mapice's face again. Mapice's face always means the best part is yet to come.

"I'll go check to see where Mapicc's got the car," Zam offers, and Ro nods, presses a kiss to the back of his hand like a true gentleman. He doesn't protest, doesn't question, doesn't ask why on earth Mapicc would be hiding the very same car he's been blowing the horn of, and that's what makes him perfect.

Zam walks out onto the street, pokes his head out just past the brick of the nearest building, and locks eyes with Mapicc, half a street down. Mapicc blows him a kiss with his middle finger from behind the dashboard, and he grins in acknowledgment, knowing Ro won't quite be able to see his face.

All of the little pieces are back in place, so Zam schools his face, turns it into something more neutral, ducking into the alley. "I can't find him," he tells Ro through a pout, slipping his hand into his pocket for his phone. "Would you want to go look while I see if I can text him?"

"Yeah, of course," Ro says, pushing off of the wall he was leaning on. "Is this normal for him?"

Zam waves a hand back and forth, typing in a passcode with the other. "He's directionally challenged, you know how it is. Sorry about that!"

"It's no problem at all," he gets in response, Ro not noticing that not only was the passcode Zam input wrong, the phone also isn't his. "Teamwork makes the dream work!"

Zam hums noncommittally, watching Ro over the top of the phone. He doesn't hesitate before walking out past the buildings, half into the street, and hopefully unfamiliar enough with the area that he won't see Mapicc right away. It's about as close to the road as Ro will probably get, so Zam moves closer on silent feet, waiting until Ro looks the wrong way and the rev of an engine fills the night air.

One eye on Mapicc and the other on Ro, Zam waits until the car's jolted into motion before planting his hands on Ro's back and *shoving*. It sends him stumbling, lurching forward into the road and scrambling to catch his balance, turning to look back at Zam.

They don't get the chance to make eye contact. One second, Ro's barely on his feet, blinking frantically and turning to look at Zam.

The next second, Mapicc is running into him with the car they picked up from an impound a few weeks ago.

Metal hits meat with a heavy thud, and then Ro is flying forward, albeit with less force than Zam is used to. His body hits the ground with force, and Zam watches how his wrists snap, head cracking against asphalt a few seconds later. The sound of the car pulling closer to his towned form covers up any groans that Zam could potentially hear, so he heads over to Ro, flips his body over so that he's on his back.

"I'm sorry it had to be this way," he says, trying for apologetic and not quite making it. Ro, with blood dripping from his broken nose and blood already starting to ooze from his arms, simply looks at him with a dazed little expression.

"No you're not," Mapicc snorts, stepping out of the car. He crouches down, tips Ro's head to the side and whistles lowly at the lack of resistance. "Got him good, didn't I?"

"No, I'm not," Zam confirms. Well, maybe he's a little sorry. Really, it *is* a shame things had to be this way. Ro has a very pretty face. "You sent him flying."

Mapicc pauses, arms tucked under Ro's shoulders. Behind him, the backseat door is wide open, showing off the easy-to-wipe leather seats. "It's vehicular manslaughter, Zam. I'd sure hope he went flying."

"Partial vehicular manslaughter," he corrects, because Ro's still breathing—decently well, too! Mapicc usually isn't that kind with his hits. "I get the bar, you get him in the car?"

"You stop trying to be funny," Mapicc says, grunting as he tries to haul Ro's lanky body off of the ground. It takes him a bit, especially 'cause he keeps glaring at Zam every time he tries to help, but eventually, he's halfway to getting Ro into the backseat, ignoring all of his pained groans. "And do your job, bucko."

"Don't call me that," Zam says through a pout, walking around the very gangly legs bent at odd angles. He leans through the open driver's window to grab a lighter off of the dashboard, ignores how Mapicc complains about it before swearing at Ro, who's trying to flop over to god knows where. "I'll meet you at the point." "Don't set your little arsonist ass on fire," Mapicc responds, and Zam knows that it means *stay safe, don't get caught.* Then, he very promptly swears even *more* at Ro, in a far less affectionate tone.

Zam leaves that clusterfuck behind in favour of heading back down the alley, toeing the edges of puddles that smell a little too sweet to be just water. He flicks the lid of his lighter open and shut, open and shut, enjoying how the *clink* of it snapping shut bounces through the alley, turning into something so much larger than a hunk of metal.

His thumb rubs back and forth over the grooves of the sun engraved in the side, Mapicc's little gift to him. It means the world to him, is the most precious thing he owns, and that's why Zam's careful when he crouches outside the back door of the bar, looking for the shine of a gasoline trail. Ro wasn't paying too much attention when they left, and Zam was counting on it, because half of his stupid, dangerous, downright idiotic plan relied on it. He likes to play with his life! So what!

When he squints, tips his head just right, Zam can catch the oil-slick shine, and he grins, slipping his shirt off. The night is maybe a little too cold for it, but he needs a little bit of kindling, and it's practically ruined as it is, already laced with hints of gasoline. Zam's been tracking it everywhere, leaking it from his shoes and patting it onto walls with his hands

Trying to be at least a little careful about it all, Zam wipes his hands off onto his shirt before dunking it into the nearest puddle of gasoline, undoing pretty much all of his work. It's *fine*, though, because the door to the bar is still propped open a crack, and that's important.

Zam's lighter flips open with a happy little noise, and he flicks the flame to life, shuffling until he can touch it to the line of gasoline just inside the door.

With a *fwhoom*, fire bursts to life.

Like a starving monster, it instantly starts to devour anything it can, tracking its way down the line with an unearthly glow. Zam watches it for a second before standing up, touching the lighter to the half-soaked, most definitely dangerous edge of his shirt. The thing catches almost instantly, and then Zam is throwing that inside as well, with all of the urgency of a game of hot potato. His shirt has indeed become one very hot potato, and Zam quite likes having his hands intact, thank you very much.

It doesn't stop fire from licking at his fingers, though, and Zam hastily shakes them out, slipping the lighter into his pocket. Now, it's time to *go*.

Brisk air nips at his hands and his lungs and his chest and he runs for the car, and Zam can't help the little giggle that slips from him, manic around the edges and ready to see this whole place go down in flames. Part of him knows he'll be long gone before anything is visible, but it's whatever. He can catch the footage on the news in the morning.

Mapicc's already flipped a shitter by the time Zam gets back to the car, the passenger side facing him. Instead of climbing into the front, Zam slips into the back, barely has time to close the door before Mapicc takes off. It throws Zam back into the seat, has gravity dragging his body down until he's ass to leather, free to put his seat belt on.

He won't, of course, but it's the thought that counts.

Ro is folded up into the seat beside him, leaning heavily against the other door, and that just won't do. Zam leans into the front seat to grab his change of shirt, and once he's got it on, tugs Ro's half-limp body over into his lap. His fingers card through Ro's hair, grip tightening slightly when he

tries to pull away, but aside from that, it's perfect.

Mapicc looks at him through the rearview mirror, raises his eyebrows in the way that means he's *dying* to call Zam a freak, but keeps driving like a maniac. He's almost worse than Zam, taking sharp corners and jerking the wheel all over the place, but he stays within the relative speed limit, which Zam takes extreme offence to. If Mapicc *really* knew what he was doing, his foot would be pressed to the gas, pushing the car to the extreme.

But he drives at a relatively normal pace, and Zam can live with it for one day before he starts heckling again. Besides, Ro's head is in his lap, and he's looking up at Zam with these wide, wide eyes, pupils blown and gaze hazy. He's probably concussed, definitely out of it, too stunned to do much more than let Zam touch him, cradling his face like he's a gift from god. He's definitely one of Zam's favourites, so far, and they've barely even done anything.

Buildings whiz past the windows when Zam turns to look, slowly getting shorter and shorter, sparser and sparser. The docks are always gloomy and grey, especially in the low evening light, masked by seafog and smog, but Zam has always loved them. There's a quiet life to the grunts of workers, the dinging of bells and boats coming into the ports nearby. Mapicc pulls the car up to their warehouse, the empty, abandoned little space they frequent, close enough that Zam's door almost scrapes against the corrugated metal when he moves to open it.

He leaves Ro in favour of unlocking the side entrance, leaving Mapicc with the dirty dirty work of moving a body that is getting less and less stunned by the second, more willing to squirm around in transport. He's the strong one, anyway, always wearing shirts that show off his muscles. Zam is built for the sprint, the chase; for hunting someone down and pushing a blade into their chest. Mapicc prefers to hack and slash, to rip things apart.

Zam holds the door open when Mapicc finally shows up, walking so much slower than normal. It probably doesn't help that Ro is so fucking tall in comparison to the both of them, half-draped over Mapicc's shoulder with his legs still scraping against the ground. He's a gangly little bastard, but it all works out in the end, because it means that there's more to go around, at the end of the day. There's more blood in his body, longer bones and *all the more space to ruin, my dear*.

Once Mapicc and their esteemed guest are both clear of the door, Zam lets it swing shut with a heavy noise, locking it afterwards. They're not trapped in here with Ro, Ro's trapped in here with *them*. Also, it makes it harder for any onlookers to come in and see what they're not meant to.

Mapicc drops Ro down onto the floor in the centre of the room, just barely managing to not trip on the tarp they have laid out for this very purpose. His body takes up so much more of it than Zam's used to, and he can't help but marvel over it as he digs around in the storage lockers for anything that could be particularly useful. They have a lot of tools, but none of them feel *right*, too harsh or cruel or impersonal for someone like Ro. Zam settles on the combination of a hunting knife, a hacksaw, and his own bare hands.

When he heads back to the middle of the room, Mapicc is saying something to Ro, soft but with a vicious edge to his tone that only really disappears around Zam. They chose Ro because they both liked him, sure, but Mapicc's always struggled with tenderness. The wide, slashing scars on Zam's chest only serve to prove that.

"Hi," Zam says through a grin, placing his fancy little tools off to the side, just out of reach. "You two are still getting along?"

Mapicc sends him a long, judging look, while Ro, a faint wheeze in his voice, asks simply, "Why?"

"Oh, it's nothing personal," Zam says, reaching out to fiddle with Ro's hair until it lays nicely against the ground. "It's just what we do."

"You were too nice to let get away," Mapicc seconds, which is rare, mostly because he's meaner than that. Zam is the good cop, and Mapicc is the bad cop, two sets of viciousness hidden differently. Or not hidden at all, if you're Mapicc. He's so bad at it that it's endearing. "You'd look a lot nicer covered in blood, y'know? Everyone would, but you in particular."

A snort forces its way out of Zam's nose. Of course Mapicc would say it like that. He's so fucking predictable. "We'll take care of you."

"And you'll die."

"But we'll be good about it!" They won't, really. It's hard to give someone an easy death, especially when you do what Zam and Mapicc do. They're the arsonist and the butcher, two sets of fucked up hands who need to take whatever pretty things they see and watch how they crumble to ash. "How do you want it, Ro?"

"Not at all," Ro says, and Zam frowns. That's not one of the options!

He makes sure to tell the room this, that the only options are death, easy, and death, not easy. Even then, the easy option isn't that easy, but Ro doesn't need to know that.

"Quick, then."

"We can try to make that work," Zam says, and he does mean it. They might not be the best at it, but they can give it a try. "Wanna play dead for me? Just as a test run?"

Surprisingly, Ro does as told, but that might also be because he's been hit by a car, moved to a secondary location, and probably pumped full of brain damage. Still, his body goes limp on the floor—that is, more limp than before—and Zam shoots a quick, wicked glance at Mapicc. They both know what he's playing at, and Mapicc will always play along, if Zam asks it of him.

After a moment's hesitation, Zam yells, "Cleeeear!" His voice echoes around the room, bounces off of the high roof, and Mapicc, already tired of his shit, plays along regardless.

He puts his hands on Ro's chest, one on top of the other, testing the give for a second before starting CPR. It doesn't matter that Ro is still alive, that he doesn't *need* it, it's all for fun and games, for the sound of bones creaking under the strain of heavy hands.

Mapicc strains the bones, but he lets Zam finish things off, sliding off to the side and watching as Zam assumes position. His palms skate across the fabric of Ro's shirt, finding first the right spot and then the right position, fingers loosely intertwined. Proper CPR needs a rhythm, but Zam doesn't, simply rising to his knees, and shoving his hands down. Hands linked, elbows locked, the heel of his bottom hand placed right over Ro's sternum, Zam pushes down, punches force through Ro's chest until he can feel how bones creak and groan and snap under his heavy-handed sort of attention.

Each push downward gets easier and easier, denting Ro's chest in until all Zam knows is the steady pulse of his hands, falling in sync with Ro's heart. At some point, Mapicc sneaks up behind him, wraps his arms around Zam's back to join in. Ro never really stood a chance, if Zam's being honest. Not when it's Zam and Mapicc together, Zam and Mapicc against the world.

Combined, their hands pulverize Ro's ribcage, and from there, there's not much he can do to stay alive. He dies with grace, though, pain tarnishing his pretty little face and peace slipping through

his body, leaving him as nothing more than a beautiful corpse. Zam trails his fingers against Ro's lips, presses a kiss to his slack cheek, and can't help but wish they went about things a little bit slower. They promised Ro minimal suffering, sure, but he was too good to waste on a quick death.

At least there's more than enough time postmortem.

Leaning over Ro's body, he grabs the hunting knife, passing it off into Mapicc's waiting hands. While they have more than their fair share of weapons, that knife is Mapicc's *baby*, and there's nobody better to use it on than Ro. He's special like that, gets to experience the tail end of Mapicc's patience.

Instead of forcing Mapicc to move, Zam does, heads around the tarp and the limp body so he can be reunited with his hacksaw. There are many different ways to use one, really, but Zam knows exactly what he wants from Ro's body, and exactly how he's going to get it.

The second saw touches fabric, Zam loses himself to the heady rhythm of violence.

It's something he doesn't partake in nearly as much as Mapicc, because there are better ways to go about killing people, less personal ways. It's why he's the honeytrap, and Mapicc's the murderer, why Zam sticks to a lighter and chained-shut doors.

Still, Ro deserves it, and Zam only comes to when there's nothing much left for him to get at. His one leg is cut open, split down the centre like a book with a cracked spine, and the other is almost completely cut off, the fabric of his pants thrown somewhere unimportant. Blood and viscera pool on the tarp, Ro's chest ripped open and torn to shreds; a desecrated ruin.

When he looks up, Zam can't help but notice how blood splatters Mapicc's face, covers his arms like he's shoved them clean through Ro's chest until his hands poked out the other side, splayed out like tiny little wings. The sight has fire burning in his chest, blood covering his own hands as well. It's the cost of breaking free bones, of digging around under flesh and muscle until he can get his hands around red-stained ivory, pulling his prize free from ligaments and tendons.

Marrow still sits on his tongue, the bittersweet flavour burning in the back of his throat like chocolate. Cracking open someone's bones is something he doesn't get to do often, a rare little treat saved for the best people, the best occasion. Ro's bone marrow tastes better than any other, soaked through with rich, flavourful notes that he wishes he could savour forever.

There are more than enough bones in Ro's body for Zam to desecrate, and he has all the time in the world to tear him apart. Zam leans over the corpse to press a kiss to Mapicc's lips, blood bursting bitter in his mouth like a partnering wine, tracking the gore on his hands all over Mapicc's hair. By the time the night ends, they'll be dressed in it from head to toe.

End Notes

Shoutout foreshadowing and double meaning, my beloved foreshadowing and double meaning. Words and statements that take a different context and have a different understanding once a story has been read are so much fun to work with, and I might have overused them here.

Anyways, some of the days I have worked on (such as today) have complimentary playlists,

which is quite fun! The only issue is that I have given them stupid names and I have gotten too attached to said stupid names to change them. Shoutout to the day eighteen playlist, called "she sonkin on my ponkle till i", which is a name I will never be able to top.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!