

how rare and beautiful it is to even exist

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how rare and beautiful it is to even exist

by Anonymous

Summary

There's a threshold between letting off steam and frenzy, and Illumina passed it fourteen worlds ago.

ie, Illumina speedruns to relax, but sometimes... sometimes he goes a step too far. (ft our beloved fruitberries)

Notes

i did badly on my midterm and coped by writing illumina and fruitberries. ayo here we go <3

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

Illumina clicks a few buttons and launches into the speedrunning void. A void cannot be distanced – it's a void, after all – but the zone where he lands is empty and millions of blocks from any player civilization.

Illumina breathes the comforting tang of new existence and examines the world. Each leaf flickers as it should, each branch trembling in new life, but Illumina's lips twist and he jumps to the next. Each world crafted before he needs it; each one brand new and complete.

No, no, no – Illumina jumps threw new worlds with harsh abandon. The buzzy, frantic feeling settled deep in his bones doesn't dissipate with each leap. Blocks dissolve and form beneath his boots with hardly a second to spare.

No, no, no.

Oh, maybe.

Illumina throws himself into the steady pace of the run and forgets – it's a balm unto itself, forgoing life to force a one-track mindset.

The universe lends itself well, in the first five minutes – he enters the hellish heat of the nether, spinning so quickly the glowstone above are akin to stars, twinkling in the deeply red sky – but it's a dud, and Illumina jumps into the next world.

He reaches a rhythm – one world, the next. Each has something wrong with it.

(A slight peek into the code to find treasure, but it's not enough. Switch.

No ocean, no village, stuck in the jungle. Switch.

A village – no blacksmith, but it's possible – oh, he fell. Switch.)

His fingers go clammy, frigid from the icy tundra previous. They're thick and clumsy in the new world's desert temple and he nearly blows himself sky high when he jerks the iron free from the chest.

Two worlds later – he misses the hiss of a creeper and turns just to receive a face full of fire and gunpowder. The taste lingers for three worlds more – they were particularly terrible, though the first had promise.

The universe holds him in the palm of her hands as he slingshots into the next world. Perhaps *this* will be sub ten, perhaps he'll gather victory from the fallen experience and tuck it beneath his tongue. He'll leap into the void and hear the boom and crunch of the universe speaking, instead of the gentle caress at each new entrance.

“—lumina, Illumina, hey, *Illumina!*”

Illumina fumbles his flint and steel and accidentally lights the grass on fire, tripping over obsidian. He upends the water bucket on his head to put out the flames. “Fruit? Oh, hey, what's – what's going on?”

“Dude, you've been at this for hours,” Fruit says. He cuts out on the last word and Illumina twists his earpiece to fix the static.

“Yeah?” Illumina says. He steps into the portal.

Fruit speaks over the nauseating warbles of the portal – Fruit can't hear it, not unless he tunes into Illumina's world. “I know you're used to going forever, but y'know. It seems, uh, different this time.”

“What do you mean?” Illumina asks with a subtle laugh. His eyebrows furrow as the nether sways into focus. *Underground?* Seriously?

His eye twitches. If he focuses hard enough, he might be able to hear the laughing universe.

“I dunno. Couri said you’re not doing the tournament anymore. And when I asked to play parkour tag with you, you never answered.”

Illumina starts carving through the netherrack. Maybe if there’s an open area with a bastion and a fortress just a few blocks this way...

“Yeah, but that’s not weird,” Illumina defends. “I don’t do *all* tournaments. And you know I forget to answer when I’m running.”

“I asked you three days ago, Illumina,” Fruit says, laughing. He’s forcefully joking, and badly, because Illumina can hear worry evident in his tone.

“Three days isn’t so long,” Illumina murmurs. Lava spews on his next hit and Illumina sighs, jumping to a new world with the flick of his wrist.

“Dude, I haven’t *seen* you for like a week,” Fruit says. “We *live* together, that’s – isn’t that weird? Where’ve you been?”

Illumina pauses for one moment – the world is crystal clear and obviously a reset, so he doesn’t feel guilt. But the moment he stops, the moment he lets his thoughts catch up with him, his bones grow heavy. Static licks at his nerves.

“Around,” Illumina says. The kind way to say *jumping between worlds, the void, scattered across the stars*. He hasn’t had time to go home. Not when he fills his hours so consistently that thoughts don’t have time to settle.

“Come home,” Fruit says.

Illumina opens a new world and dives into the waiting ocean.

“Not now, Fruit,” Illumina says around the water. “I’m busy.”

“I wanna hang out, though!”

“Later,” Illumina promises.

Fruit goes quiet, then says, “okay, Illumina.”

He hears the subtle click of disconnecting.

Surrounded by the beautiful waves, the golden sunlight casting cool shadows on gentle sand, the snuffles of pigs and the sway of grass in the wind...

Illumina’s never felt more alone.

The world is good, at least. Better than the last dozen, though he’s filtered through too many to count at this point. But Illumina’s thrown off by Fruit’s call.

He struggles to craft a pickaxe and shovel. Seconds trickle through his fingers like sand and the buzzing restarts, sending cactus-like pricks across his skin. The bucket drops one too many times and the nether portal takes far longer than normal to create.

By the time he’s entered the nether and run through the bastion, it’s... too late, not good enough, *no, no, NO*.

Won’t the universe lend herself to him? Won’t she say, *your trials have ended. I love you, I love*

you.

Illumina chokes on void and sinks into the world, huddled into a ball. Let him hear their voices like honey and silk, like a hurricane and grinding rocks. *I see the player you mean.*

Illumina?

Illu...

Oh,

how

the

world

falls.

Can he not function without runs? Where does he exist, between the space of each forgotten world?

Is there space between worlds?

Illumina opens his eyes and sees –

Well.

Void, really.

Static crackles in the background like a ghost, flitting at the edge of his senses. He stares at the distant caves of glowing lava but doesn't move, doesn't examine or test or *try*.

The universe blinks, and Illumina blinks back.

Wake up.

It played well. It did not give up.

Wake up.

Everything you need is within you.

Wake up, Illumina.

I love you because you are love.

Wake –

Illumina gasps.

He falls.

(And the player was the universe. Wake up.)

The new world tastes like sparks and the grass is softer than wool beneath his fingers. It's a standard oak forest (no, no, it's not good enough) and Illumina flops backwards to stare through the leaves.

The static remains, and Illumina claws at his ears until the earpiece falls out, taking the static with it. He rolls the earpiece between his fingers and peers at it.

It's cracked and broken. His sense of time vanished the moment Fruit left and Illumina wonders.

He pulls to his feet and exits the world – it tasted fake, wrong, new, plastic. He flits between stars and planets, around the purple nebulas of nearly created worlds, and settles in a zone long familiar.

The world tastes like ash when he arrives but it's more comforting than the acidic newness of his runs.

The moment he lands, his comms light up.

[Illumina has joined the game]

[fruitberries] ILLUMINA???

[Fyroah] hey illumina!

[PeteZahHutt] HI?? WHERE HAVE U BEEN

msg from [fruitberries] dude wtf

msg from [fruitberries] where r u

Illumina takes the scenic route back to their house, slipping behind farms and around backyards. He shoots a quick message to Fruit – *heading home* – moments before reaching their door.

It's quiet.

(It's usually quiet.)

And then, suddenly, it isn't.

“Illumina!” Fruit yells, bowling him over. They aren't physical people, not by a long shot, but Fruit all but smothers him on their uncomfortable plank flooring.

“H-hey, Fruit.” Illumina rests a tentative hand on Fruit's shoulder. Uncertainty flows off him in waves.

“Dude, you've been away forever,” Fruit says. He punches Illumina on the chest and Illumina huffs a surprised breath.

“Uh, sorry?” Illumina says.

He wiggles until Fruit shifts away, the two of them sitting upright in the middle of their living room. Fruit reaches and touches Illumina's wrist with a curious frown.

“Fruit?”

“Hm,” Fruit says. He moves so they're seated a hairs width apart and doesn't release his grip. “The universe was holding onto you.”

“I guess,” Illumina says.

“You've never spent so long with the universe before,” Fruit says. “Normally you don't even listen

to them.”

“Well... no.”

“What happened?”

Illumina stares at Fruit’s gentle hold. Fruit’s green nail polish is chipped and cracked.

I don’t know feels like a lie. So, Illumina thinks. Fruit doesn’t deserve a lie, not now.

“I fell,” Illumina says. “The universe picked me back up.”

“It’s been weeks, Illumina,” Fruit says. His voice wavers and he pinches his lips together. When Illumina glances at him, Fruit shakes his head, like his feelings are larger than words.

“I didn’t know,” Illumina says. “I...”

“Don’t do that again,” Fruit says. He drops Illumina’s wrist and Illumina’s untethered. The loss burns brighter than the stars.

“I don’t know what happened,” Illumina says.

“What – what do you mean, you *don’t know*? Illumina, you just – you just speedran into the *void*, are you *kidding* me?”

Illumina snorts a laugh despite himself and Fruit scoffs.

“Sorry, sorry, I...” Illumina takes a slow breath. “I didn’t mean to. Really. I was just blowing off some steam and got carried away.”

“You can’t play with the universe like that, man,” Fruit says. “Someday it’s gonna go wrong.”

“Nooo,” Illumina says. He smiles crookedly at Fruit. “No way. The universe won’t hold me hostage, I gotta *run*.”

“Mmhmm,” Fruit hums, raising an eyebrow derisively.

“Besides, I got you to hold me accountable,” Illumina says. He nudges Fruit, still grinning. “Right?”

Fruit grumbles a bit, but Illumina can see the small smile painted on his lips. Illumina pushes him again, and again, and again.

“Yeah, okay! Okay!” Fruit wards off Illumina’s increasingly violent shoves. “Yeah, I got you, you got me, we got each other, I know, I know.”

Illumina laughs. The world is realigning itself, slotting back into place.

“But...” Fruit raises his gaze to stare directly at Illumina. The acid green of his eyes shines brighter at night. “Illumina, next time, you aren’t going to listen to me. And the time after that, or the time after that. You never listen.”

Illumina presses his lips together and drop’s Fruit’s stare. Fruit *did* come after him when he was hanging on the precipice – he had Illumina’s back and reached out a helping hand, and Illumina just... turned away.

(Isn't that what he wanted? To turn away, distanced from home?)

"I'll try next time," Illumina says. "And don't give up on me. Be annoying, Fruit, I know you're good at that."

Fruit, for all his worth, laughs at Illumina's pitiful attempt at a joke. "Okay, mister, I see what's going on here. Illumina thinks since he was chilling with the universe that he's *alllll that*."

"Mhm, yeah, yeah," Illumina says. "That's it exactly."

"Next time I'll jump into the void myself, chase you around those worlds you create so quickly," Fruit says.

"And ruin my run?" Illumina gasps. "How could you?"

"Damn, if only that was my plan all along," Fruit says.

"I can't believe this," Illumina says.

Fruit grins, and it's... it's *good*. They're good.

Fruit jumps to his feet and says, "race you to the trails!" before taking off out their back door.

Illumina jerks on instinct alone and he's after Fruit before he knows what's happening, the two of them running with the light of the moon just like old times. Fruit cackles and the sound echoes on waxy leaves, reaching for the sky.

With the beat of the wind in his chest, Illumina runs after his best friend.

(and the universe said: you are not alone)

Illumina exhales the words, and they paint his heart clean.

End Notes

the end poem is something that can be so personal, actually

the hints at universe!illumina is a call to fruitninja's (?) trend thing -- idk where it started, I just saw it a few times on my dashboard and thought it was neat. i love fruitninja interactions too much to put it into action for this one tho, lol, also human illumina makes me so happy. funky little ninja who's crazy good just because he is.

anyway, hope you enjoyed! <3 ty for reading :]

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