

like you've never known fear

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like you've never known fear

by [cloudywithachanceofmeatballs](#)

Summary

Here is what he knows— Fruitberries arrives in the fall.

or: there are no flowers in the winter

Notes

hii :)

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

There's a lot of things Illumina doesn't remember so well, anymore.

Here is one he does— Fruitberries arrives in the fall.

Fruit is— well, he's a lot. He's an enigma, first, a contradiction wrapped in green cloth and paper and a smile stamped in ink on his cheek, forever. He holds an axe and a sword and a bow, and his hands are probably stained with blood but he holds out a bundle of near dried red and purple flowers to Illumina and says, serious, *it's all I have*.

Illumina tells him to keep them.

The first thing Fruit learns about Illumina is that his hands smell like oranges.

That's new.

(The *first* thing Fruit learns about Illumina is how the level of trust he places in strangers is enough to get him killed. That's new, too.)

Fruit has been here nearly two weeks when Illumina decides that it's about time for a trading trip.

"You're coming," Illumina tells him. "My clothes won't fit you forever, and you need armour and tools."

He doesn't miss the way Fruit's hands go white knuckled. "No," he says, low.

"Yeah," Illumina says, purposefully bland. "I don't care where you're from, genuinely. If you want to tell me, sure, but I used to steal from archaeological sites as a job." Fruit looks dubious. "I'm not even joking. But I don't care if you've— killed people, I don't know."

Fruit stares at the floor a long moment. "No swords," he says finally, stony. It's been enough minutes that Illumina has to take a moment to remember what they were talking about in the first place. "No enchants."

"Yeah, okay," Illumina says.

Illumina has not killed people, not with his bare hands. Another way he's better than Fruit.

Another way he's weaker, probably.

Maybe he's not trained in hand to hand. That might—

He decides he doesn't like that idea.

Fruit lets Illumina spar with him, regardless of his initial reluctance to hold weapons again. That's how they find themselves like this, he's pretty sure, both of them breathing hard and Illumina with a piece of sharp metal under his chin.

Fruit fights very differently from Illumina. Illumina's flighty in a way that comes from high places and angry animals and constant constant running. Fruit *lives* like he was born on a rope, the high wire, the thin metal banisters stories above the distant floor.

"I win," Fruit says, defiant. Illumina eases himself out from under the axe, and then pries it gently out of Fruit's grasp. He's shaking.

"You win," Illumina agrees.

Illumina's looking through— *world* seeds, he thinks. That's probably what they're called, though Illumina might not be upset if he's got it wrong.

"Are you going out," he says. Illumina looks up.

"Soon," he says. "I've gone less this year, anyway."

Fruit tucks his chin into his shoulder. That's his fault, he knows.

"World items don't transfer," Illumina tells him. "So don't burn down the house with my things when I'm gone. But if you *do* happen to set *yourself* on fire you know where the pots are." It's another gamble, Fruit thinks. I-trust-you.

"What's stopping me," Fruit says, and Illumina smiles, slight.

He doesn't, in the end, and Illumina's back in less than a day, eyes bright and gleeful and magma cream rubbed over his burns as a salve.

Fruit holds that one close.

There are days when Fruit freezes, he's learned. Fruit has been a wildfire in the time he's been here, quick burning and fiery, and Illumina's decided the days he's not angry, at least a little bit, are the worst.

"Fruit," he says. "Fruitberries Skywars Hypixel. C'mon." He tugs Fruit's hands out of the stream. There's ice frosting over, now. Winter is soon.

Fruit holds himself, silent.

"They're only going to get more red, like this," Illumina tells him. "Come on."

"Was it our faults," Fruit says.

"No," Illumina says. "No. And they were your family, right? You didn't want to."

"I didn't want to," Fruit repeats.

Illumina stands, and Fruit does too, after a beat. "You can help with the puppies," Illumina says, and Fruit looks away from his hands.

"Where are you going," Fruit says. Illumina, methodical, clips another potion to his belt, tucks some flint and a long smooth piece of steel into a pocket.

"There's a raid scheduled for today," Illumina tells him. Fruit pauses from where he's trying his best to spin wool.

"I want to come," he says. Illumina considers him for a moment.

"Okay," he says. "Catch."

Illumina has never told him not to do something. It always manages to startle him, anyway.

There's not even a *don't do anything stupid*. He's always found that patronising anyway, he supposes. This is something else.

"How *old* are you," Illumina says. He catches Fruit's hand, frowns at the calluses and blisters.

Fruit goes stiff. "Old enough," he says.

"They just drag people into the arena, don't they."

"Least I'm not naive," Fruit snaps.

"It wasn't naivety," Illumina says mildly. It's an old argument. "I made a calculation that you couldn't have killed me, and I made a bet that you wouldn't."

"You didn't calculate shit," Fruit says, stung. "And that's a stupid bet. I could. I would."

"Would you?" Illumina says. He turns over cloth strips of bandages between his hands, thoughtful.

"Yes," Fruit says. "There's no reason not to."

"Is there a reason to?"

Fruit goes silent, hands flexing over the table.

("You're— you're going to die, like this.")

"Maybe," Illumina says, gentle. "But isn't it always the chance?")

"Is that poisonous," Illumina says. Fruit shrugs, keeps mashing the berries. There's no flowers, here, but he knows some of these plants, can still make poison and potions and actual food reliably.

"What are you going to do with it, then?"

That one takes Fruit a second.

"Just in case, I guess," he says.

"Are you going back, when the snow melts," Illumina says. Fruit stops.

They don't talk about him leaving as much, not anymore. It's jarring, somehow, to think of it, even if he's going to *have* to. The snows break soon, Illumina tells him.

You don't get used to things, in the arenas.

This isn't the arena.

"There's always the chance," Fruit says.

"Look," Fruit says. Illumina holds out his arms, and Fruit dumps the tiny wolf into them. It peers up at him, eyes wide and dark.

"What's up with it?" Illumina asks.

Fruit shrugs.

"It was alone."

The sun's out of the clouds today, finally, and it finds them outside. For once. Fruit's collecting wood, and Illumina's checking the branches for blossoms. Not yet.

Winter breaks in two months. There might be cherries, a few weeks after that.

Fruit handles axes with less familiarity than swords and bows, but they still fit in his hands too well, the teeth through wood. Illumina—

Fruit stops for a minute, and digs a hole with his shoe. Illumina cocks his head at it, and then Fruit settles a pair of pinecones in it, toes dirt back over in a little mound.

“Huh,” Illumina says.

Fruit goes on a Run for the first time, two weeks before the worst of the snows. He's not *bad* at it. That's more surprising than it should be, maybe.

He comes back, and Illumina slathers salve over his ghaſt burns, and he does not ask how it went. Maybe he knows, already.

Illumina doesn't trade for his *own* cloth from the villagers, with everything. There are sheep, here, even in the winters.

Fruit walks into the living room to see him frowning at his stock of dye.

"Oh, hi," he says, absently.

"What are you doing," Fruit says.

"The whole region's out of dye," Illumina says. "There's no flowers here until spring, I think." The cold snap days ago isn't comforting in that regard, at the least.

"There's still flowers," Fruit says. "I know some people've preserved them."

Me. There's *me*. It echoes across the room.

Illumina scrutinises him.

"How about this," he says. "If you're still here in the spring, you can show me where to find those."

Fruit looks at him, a long long moment.

"Okay," he says. There's a promise in there, somewhere.

End Notes

in the spring!!

this is so. ooc. it's fine i guess! but yeah just know i don't really think they're like this so much. this is just the most unpolished thing ive ever written

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