

seeing in colour

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Summary

You're supposed to love your soulmate, to want to hold hands and hug and kiss and start a life together. Zam loves Pangi, but he doesn't want to do any of that.

He likes the hand-holding, likes the hugs, but it's not romantic. It's just two people seeking out comfort, seeking out the familiarity of someone they grew up with. Pangi knows all of Zam's secrets. Zam knows everything Pangi tries to hide. It's as simple as that; nothing romantic, nothing more.

Nobody ever said soulmates had to be set in stone.

Notes

So. Soulmate AU.

I never expected to write one of these, not because I hate the trope, but because I am deeply aro and find a lot of difficulty with the concept of Fate Demands You Belong With This Person. Thus? We play around with things a little ;). Soulmate AU: aromantic edition is a go.

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

Zam's always known who his soulmate is, or at least it feels that way. He met Pangi in

kindergarten, found him hiding underneath the slide and asked if he wanted to play kingdoms with him. Pangi said yes, pushed himself to his feet and brushed off rock-dust with a shaky smile. His hand was held out awkwardly, as if Pangi was afraid that the simple touch would cause him to fall back to the ground. Zam didn't like that.

So he took Pangi's hand, and the world burst into colour. Soulmates.

In the midst of his shock, Pangi had asked him if that meant they had to kiss now, and Zam laughed. *No, they didn't.*

So they didn't. It was that simple.

Zam has always loved Pangi, but not in *that* way. Never in that way. He always figured it was some flaw in his code, a dent in the crown he would wear everywhere as a child.

You're supposed to love your soulmate, to want to hold hands and hug and kiss and start a life together. Zam loves Pangi, but he doesn't want to do any of that.

He likes the hand-holding, likes the hugs, but it's not romantic. It's just two people seeking out comfort, seeking out the familiarity of someone they grew up with. Pangi knows all of Zam's secrets. Zam knows everything Pangi tries to hide. It's as simple as that; nothing romantic, nothing more.

Pangi said he was fine with things being platonic ages ago, when they were cornered under the mistletoe at some school-held dance and told to kiss. Zam had flinched away, fought the strange feeling bubbling in his stomach that told him this was *wrong*.

He let Pangi kiss him on the cheek, feeling nothing about the brush of lips against skin, but *everything* when Pangi dragged him off to some secluded corner and made him explain what was wrong.

Pangi loved him. Pangi loves him. Pangi understands that Zam may never love him back, and he's okay with that.

Maybe one day Zam will find the same level of acceptance.

Several years after that fateful night had passed, Zam meets Mapicc. He's in high school now, has stopped insisting people call him *prince*, and needs some sort of club to make his resume look impressive. Out of all the available ones, half of them are things he's not interested in, and the other half are *nerd shit*, and he's in high school, he can't be doing nerd shit!

He chooses coding. Coding is one step away from hacking, and all the cool people in the movies hack, which means if Zam learns to hack, he'll automatically be cool! It's exactly what he needs out of high school, so he joins the club.

His first meeting is rather boring, if he's completely honest. The room is a basic computer lab, kids scattered around in groups or alone, all working on their own things. There's a kid in the corner who the club leader introduces as Mapicc, too busy tapping away at his keyboard to bother glancing in Zam's direction. A red bandana is tied loosely around his head, two very poor space buns with nowhere near enough hair in them flopping over.

Apparently a kid named Roshambo sits at the desk near him, so Zam can't use that space. He chooses one across the room, and ends up sneaking peeks at Mapicc the whole meeting, for

reasons he himself is unsure of. He almost gets together the nerve to say hello after the meeting ends, but the teacher accosts him to talk about projects, and Mapicc disappears without a trace.

The next few meetings continue in a similar pattern, this time with Roshambo added to the mix. Him and Mapicc bicker for most of the hour, and Zam quickly becomes familiar with the tones of Mapicc's voice, and the cadence of his laugh. Slowly, butterflies climb their way into his stomach and his heart, and Zam has to beat down feelings he hasn't felt in a long time.

He's long been aware of the consequences of somewhat-rejecting his soulmate, because him not wanting Pangi means he will be forever alone. If someone wants him, they will run when they find out he isn't their soulmate, because non-soulmate relationships clearly won't last when there's someone out there the universe has chosen for you. It's bullshit.

He likes Mapicc regardless, stealing glimpses at his face whenever the opportunity presents itself.

Everything changes the day he finally talks to Mapicc.

Maybe that's misleading, because he didn't really start the conversation. Halfway through figuring out exactly what his project entails, someone's tapping on his shoulder, and he looks up, expecting it to be the teacher's aid, here to point something out.

It's not.

Instead of someone he's talked to before, someone who could offer him advice on what he's doing, Mapicc stares him down, hands hanging limply at his sides. "Hi."

"Uh. Hi?" Zam responds, out of his depth and entirely confused as to why the kid he has a crush on is suddenly talking to him.

"Hi. I'm Mapicc. Is someone sitting there?" he gestures at the seat next to Zam, the seat nobody has yet sat in in the few weeks of Zam being here.

"No, I don't think so. Why?"

"Because I want to sit there," Mapicc says, as if Zam was stupid for not seeing through his words to his intentions. "What's your name?"

"Zam—Prince Zam, if ten-year-old me was to be believed. I still make it my online username sometimes, because it's fun."

"Mapicc hums a response, pulling out the chair and sitting down so he's facing Zam. It's the first time they've been in such close proximity, and Zam still doesn't know why Mapicc is here instead of in his corner.

"That's Ro," Mapicc says, pointing towards the corner as if he was a mindreader. Ro still sits there, hunched over a keyboard and muttering something under his breath, periwinkle hood draped over his head.. "He's my soulmate. I'm going to kill him."

Despite the fact that Zam hadn't gotten his hopes up too high, it still feels like a brick dropped on his chest, a heavy reminder that because he doesn't want his soulmate, he can't have anyone else either.

"Oh," Zam says, trying to disguise the sadness in his voice. "He seems like a nice person."

“He isn’t. He is a loser who makes too many shit jokes and tries to ruin my code. You’re nicer than him.”

“I’ve said maybe three words to you and I’m already nicer than him?” Zam teases, fighting the urge to lean over and bump shoulders despite this being their first official conversation. “Damn, that’s kinda sad. For all you know I could be a raging asshole underneath all this cheer.”

“Nah, you’re not.” Mapicc turns in his chair to face Zam, and Zam fights the urge to blush at how intensely his brown eyes search Zam’s face. “You’ve got some dorky ass clothes and fist pump every time you get a line of code right. That’s not something a raging asshole would do.”

Goodness gracious. Either he’s reading this wrong, or Mapicc has paid enough attention to him to pick up on some of his little habits and traits, despite never looking in his direction when Zam is *stealthily* checking him out. “You’re paying that much attention to me? Seems kind of like a waste of time when I’m not making noise the way you and Ro are.”

“Maybe you’re interesting, Zam. Maybe I’m curious about what you’ve got going on, huh?” Slowly, in a way that almost feels like a threat, Mapicc turns to sit properly in the chair, logging into the computer in front of him and swiftly logging in.

Like it’s nothing, he relocated, and now he starts working on his project as if Zam was Roshambo, and this was his typical seat. It’s strange, but Zam tries his best to ignore the new presence at his side and gets back to work on his project.

He’s halfway through starting a new line of code that should let a user change text colour with basic commands when Mapicc says, “Go out with me. After school.”

Zam’s heart skips a beat. Then another. “I—what?”

“Are you deaf? Go out with me.”

“Are you kidding me? You have a soulmate! I—I can’t do that to him.” Sure, there’s a part of Zam that resents Roshambo for getting what he wants, but he won’t be the one to ruin whatever sort of relationship they have. He might be selfish, but he’s not selfish enough to do that to another man. Zam’s already robbed Pangi of his soulmate. “I’m not a soulmate-stealer.”

Mapicc snorts derisively. “I never said you were. Ro doesn’t care. He’s not interested in any of that stuff, told me that if I ever tried to kiss him he’d hit me in the nuts so hard I’d see god. He thinks romance is *gross*, and a *scam created by god to make babies*, like he doesn’t make sex jokes all the time.”

“Yeah, but . . . fate put you two together. It must have something it wants you to do, right? You and Ro wouldn’t be together if there weren’t some reason for it”

“Zam, look at me,” Mapicc starts, reaching out to turn Zam’s head toward his. The second Zam makes eye contact, he’s *done* for, so instead he focuses on the scar right by the end of Mapicc’s brow while he talks. “Do you think I give a *fuck* about what fate wants? The universe can go fuck itself. Mapicc does what he wants.”

Despite the steady build of anxiety-butterflies that have been taking hold in his chest, Zam laughs. “Do you always talk in third person?”

Idle fingers drum against Zam’s jawline, Mapicc’s hand still sitting there. It’s a warm weight on his cheek, and part of him fights the urge to pry it off in case Mapicc can feel how hard he’s blushing.

Eventually, Zam gets his answer, a simple, “Mapicc does what he wants.”

It makes him smile, makes the anxiety butterflies start up a whole new dance that feels a lot like excitement, a lot like hope. Maybe he still has a chance after all. “Zam likes when Mapicc does what he wants.”

“God, you’re such a fucking nerd,” Mapicc says, voice soaked in light amusement. His hand leaves Zam’s jaw to push at his shoulder lightly, the loss feeling almost like a physical blow. “Why are you talking?”

In too deep to back down now, Zam reaches for Mapicc’s hand, grinning when it isn’t pulled away and he can tangle their fingers lightly. “Zam does what he wants.”

“STOP TALKING!” Mapicc howls, head thrown back. A grin splits his features, even as it’s clear that he’s trying to hide it. “You should not be speaking. You should not be speaking.”

“Boys, is everything okay over there?” the attending teacher asks, and now Zam is *really* flushing as he turns to explain that everything *is* in fact fine, and that he’s just having a gay crisis.

Luckily for him (or maybe unluckily, in this case), Roshambo decides to step in, getting up from his seat with a grace that says he’s up to something. Hell, Zam hasn’t known him for long, but the lines of his body and the expression on his face says that something is up, and Zam is not going to enjoy it. “Don’t worry, mister Kringleston, I have this all under control.”

“I am going to kill this bitch,” Mapicc mutters under his breath, grip tightening slightly on Zam’s hand. “Do not listen to a single thing he says.”

“I won’t, I won’t,” Zam promises, watching the kid who sits in the corner of his English class and does nothing more than make snarky remarks come closer and closer. “My mom doesn’t let me hang out with bad influences, you know?”

Mapicc looks torn between laughing and strangling Zam, redirecting his attention to a steadily-approaching Ro. Even though it’s his soulmate approaching, his hand stays firm in its grip on Zam’s, which shouldn’t melt his heart the way it does. “His name is Knicholson, Roshambo, you dumbass. One day he’s going to get fed up with your shit and then you’ll see.”

Like he’s just had the best joke in the world set up for him, Ro grins wide enough to show off both sets of gums, leaning on the back of Mapicc’s chair. “See deez nuts! You must be Zam. I’m Roshambo. You should stop talking to Mapicc. He’s a horrible person. Did you know he kicks babies?”

“You kick babies?” Zam asks incredulously, looking at Mapicc once again. Drama class comes in handy for once, because Zam takes every bit of information he’s picked up on, and tries to make the most shocked and disappointed face known to man. “I can’t believe it, man, I thought you were a good person! This is so sad, I thought you murdered *grown people* .”

And cue the seven stages of grief. Shock, disbelief, the moment of *oh shit Zam was joking* , homicidal urges, and three more things Zam can’t be bothered to figure out right now, because Ro is laughing, and Mapicc has this bewildered expression on his face that Zam wants to kiss off, and oh dear god he is down bad for someone he barely knows. Right.

“I’ll murder the both of you, that’s what I’ll do,” he threatens, using his free hand to swat at Roshambo until Ro catches it and bites down on the web of skin between his thumb and pointer finger. “Stop biting me, dickhead. What is wrong with you?”

“Nothing’s wrong with me!” Ro says around a mouthful of Mapicc’s hand, letting go of it to talk more clearly. “I just wanted to come check in, say hello to your *crush* .”

Mapicc swears. Repeatedly. Zam feels his stomach drop right out of his chest, ears ringing a little. A little? A lot. His ears are ringing a *lot* , and he just barely manages to make out Mapicc threatening to delete every last bit of code Ro’s been working on before burying him in a hole so deep his body will never be found. Apparently this makes Ro laugh, and then the hand around Zam’s is squeezing hard enough that he has no choice but to look up.

There’s a face way too close to his, a face that belongs to none other than Mapicc. His heart, which hasn’t fully calmed down, does another flip, picking the racing beat back up without hesitation. He *cannot* do this today. What if he dies, huh? What if his ass has a heart attack and dies, because Mapicc is unfairly handsome and might just return his feelings.

“Sooooo,” he finds himself saying, voice uncomfortably shaky. “I hear you have a crush?”

“Oh my *god* .” On the bright side, Mapicc also sounds on the edge of a heart attack! At least if he dies now, he won’t be alone. “Why do you think I asked your dumbass out, huh? Roshambo can og suck shit and be alone for the rest of his life, that’s how much I care about his goofy ass.”

“Aw, man, and here I thought you really loved me,” the man in question complains, now sitting cross-legged on the floor, bleached-blond hair falling over his eyes. “I thought we were going to have so many babies, because god saw the world and said *damn* , they need universe-assigned love so they can see beautiful things, like colour and love and marriage and babies. I really thought our fate-assigned bond had something going, and now you throw me out like that? I can’t believe you, Mapicc, I can’t believe you. I knew from the very second we touched and I found out I was colourblind that we were never going to work, but—”

Mapicc slaps his hand over Roshambo’s mouth, twisting in his chair to plant his sneaker on Ro’s chest and push him over. “You stop talking. Go ruin someone else’s day before I delete your project.”

From the floor, whining dramatically, Ro rebuts, “You say that all the time and never follow through. I don’t think you even know how to delete projects, just like how you don’t know how to rizz someone up. I could do so much better than him, Zam, I promise.”

Brain still fuzzy from all the emotional one hundred eighties the conversation has been taking, Zam bursts into some unholy combination of tears and laughter. Whatever’s coming out has his chest shaking, and his mouth is pulled into the world’s most awkward and least flattering grin. “Sorry, Ro, I think I already have a date with Mapicc planned, and he told me you *haaate* romance. Like, with a passion.”

Roshambo pauses to think, still sprawled on the floor like a starfish. “Yeah, you’re right. Romance is for losers like Mapicc who have no bitches at all.”

“I have a bitch!” Mapicc butts in, kicking aimlessly at Ro’s feet before turning to Zam. “Zam, are you okay with being called a bitch?”

“Hey, man, if you’re the one calling me it, then I don’t mind. I do not mind one bit.”

“Suck it, Ro! Now who’s the loser? Not me, that’s for sure!”

“Boys,” Mr. Knicholson calls warningly, and Zam’s back instantly turns into a rod. “Are you getting work done over there?”

“Yes sir!” Zam calls, instantly forgetting about Roshambo and his floor activities to turn back to his keyboard. Roshambo and his floor activities seem to dislike this, and he mutters something about *stupid Mr. Kringleston* under his breath before pushing back to his feet. Much to his surprise, Zam is slightly disappointed to see him go.

His disappointment disappears like magic the second Mapicc leans over from his computer to whisper, “So, you still wanna go out with me after school sometime?”

End Notes

I have two modes: three fics a month, or three months a fic. I think we all know which one I am currently set to.

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