

(surrender) all the pain we've endured until now

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(surrender) all the pain we've endured until now

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Summary

Zam has a nice room, has a nice team. Maybe it's in his blood for him to want to ruin it. Vitalasy did say something similar, once. Zam likes to take nice things and smash them into little tiny pieces, only Eclipse Federation isn't made of glass, and they won't break. They love Zam too much to break. They won't let him leave another team because he's convinced he doesn't deserve them.

"I'll call out your name, but you won't call back."

Thermometer | Delirium | **"They don't care about you."**

Notes

I'm really obsessed with the concept of an Eclipse Federation that cares for Zam, but in all the wrong ways. I played with it a little in [old wounds](#), but I'm bumping the concept up to one thousand here.

Title is from Surrender by Billy Talent.

They don't care about you. Why would they save you? You aren't their teammate. They abandoned

you. They killed you—they ruined you .

Zam's grown tired of being in his room. Don't get him wrong! It's a nice—nice room, full of space, and soft things, and lots and lots of yellow, a couple purple accents. It's pretty to the eye, carefully organized, and he's exhausted of the same four walls.

He knows it's for his benefit, that Vitalasy just wants to keep him safe, but all Zam wants to do is *leave* .

Maybe it's because he's all fucked up in the head. He knows how to take nice things and ruin them, how to make himself cruel only to backstab the team that only wanted his faith in them. He builds castles, and then abandons them, destroys them, covers his hands in blood because he can't stand the sight of nice things.

Zam has a nice room, has a nice team. Maybe it's in his blood for him to want to ruin it. Vitalasy did say something similar, once. Zam likes to take nice things and smash them into little tiny pieces, only Eclipse Federation isn't made of glass, and they won't break. They love Zam too much to break. They won't let him leave another team because he's convinced he doesn't deserve them.

Maybe that's what makes Vitalasy and Subz better than everyone else. They're willing to risk their arms and their hands and their bodies to declaw the wild cat that Zam is, lashing out because he doesn't like safety. They're putting themselves in harm's way until Zam learns how to calm down, until he remembers how to feel safe and loved and special.

They're saving him from himself.

They're giving him three solid meals a day, spoiling him with an indoor garden Vitalasy takes him on weekly visits to, a base that Subz has tirelessly grinded out, because Zam only deserves the best. They're giving him the world, and making sure he can't break it. It's all he can do in return to sit nicely at the table they carved into the wall, a little nook that doubles as a lounge bed when there's no food.

He can eat properly and nicely and complement the food that Vitalasy spends *hours* on, making sure each thing tastes just right, because Zam deserves only the best. They love him, blunt the tips of the forks he eats with and don't give him any knives, but it's okay, because Zam doesn't need them. Knives hurt people. Knives are dangerous. Zam is putting down his claws, learning how to be kind again, so he doesn't need a knife. The side of his fork works well enough.

Vitalasy likes nests, likes all sorts of soft things, so Zam's bed is full of pillows, a large, large expanse of blankets and soft things that he could drown in. It's large enough that it runs empty, that Zam falls asleep feeling cold most nights despite the abundance of warmth his blankets offer. He can't be cuddled to sleep every night, can't be wrapped up in Subz's arms and bundled against Vitalasy's chest, because they have *things to do*, they have to keep Zam safe.

The server still doesn't like him much. Pangi is still resentful that Zam doesn't want him back, Planet hasn't told Zam about it, but Vitalasy's heard how he's still upset that Zam killed him without mercy. They're better than Planet like that, because they forgave him. Zam went after Subz and Detroit, but there's no hard feelings, because they know how to forgive. Planet and his friends still hold a grudge.

They rarely talk about Mapicc and Ro, because when they do, Subz has to wrap his arms around Zam's chest to make sure he doesn't slip into a panic, and Vitalasy has to tone down the stories so he doesn't get paranoid again. It's just how things have to be. Mapicc and Ro hate him, and they fucked him up, and all Subz and Vitalasy want to do is teach him how to feel safe again.

Zam builds forts with all of his pillows and blankets and cushions, and tries to ignore how his room feels cold and empty regardless.

He can't message them on his comm, because he surrendered his comm along with his tools near the beginning of things, when he was still jumping at shadows. It's a common procedure during mental breakdowns. They take away anything you could use to get worse, and they let you recover. He doesn't have his comm because it still pings with death threats and haunting messages, and he doesn't have his sword because he could snap and try to stab it right through Vitalasy's chest, no matter how much the thought makes him feel sick inside. When you're fucked up like Zam is, sometimes you don't think before acting. He doesn't want to hurt his teammates.

So he doesn't have his pickaxe, and he doesn't want to smash his fists to pieces punching at the obsidian outside his door (because he's a flight risk, they don't want him to run away and hurt himself), so Zam focuses on all of the details of the room, the intricate blackstone placement and high ceilings that are so painfully Subz. He misses Subz, misses his horns and the corruption webbing its way across his chest and eye that he *swears* doesn't hurt. He misses the way Subz kisses him, on the forehead and the cheeks and on his jaw, soft little things that partner with his rough hands.

He misses how Vitalasy rumbles, how his ears twitch when his hood is gone, and how Vitalasy will kiss him on the nose and his eyelids and all over his face until they're both giggling. Vitalasy holds him with soft hands and a gentle heart, is willing to cut himself on the broken glass of Zam's heart and mind until he learns how to put it all back together again. He tells the truth even when it hurts because he knows how much the truth means to Zam, because that's what love does.

Vitalasy and Subz will get their hands dirty, and do whatever it takes for them to help Zam get better. It should feel like love, warm and bubbly and happy in his chest, but all Zam feels is guilt. They're giving up everything for him, and he doesn't deserve it. He owes them whatever he can give, owes it to them to get better, because otherwise else, everything they've given him will be for nothing.

Zam owes it to them to not pull all of the drawers out of the dresser he's finally been allowed to have, owes it to them to not rip all of his pillows to shreds and start screaming. Zam owes Eclipse Federation *everything*. He can't just start backsliding now.

So Zam sits on the ground, cleaning up the mess of pillows and blankets and cushions until his room is perfectly spotless, and the bed is made with no wrinkles in the cover. The stone underneath is hard, even through the rug he's sitting on, but maybe Zam deserves it, because he's still not a good person. He's broken, and screwed up, and needs to look inside himself and figure out why he wants to ruin things.

He's happy, perfectly safe and taken care of here. There's nothing wrong with his room or the base, but he still wants to leave, to destroy anything he can get his hands on, and that's exactly why he needs to *stay*. Zam will not ruin this. He knows better than to ruin this.

Distantly, there's the sound of pickaxe on stone.

Zam ignores it, because Subz loves to work on things, loves to make a base larger and larger until it sprawls out endlessly, in glorious wings and mazes of halls. He's probably just making a room bigger, finally making him and Vitalasy a proper bedroom. They don't need to sleep with Zam anyway. It's probably better for them if they don't, so he can't accidentally hurt them.

The sound gets louder and louder, muffled in such a way that Zam can't tell exactly where it's coming from. It should make him feel unsettled, but that's just his paranoia again, the same

paranoia that wants him to ruin things. He'll be fine. Everything is fine. The hole that slowly begins to form in his ceiling is just Subz making the roof bigger, or miscalculating the dimensions of his latest project, even though Subz is almost never wrong.

Chips of stone land on his head, and Zam looks up just in time to see familiar eyes and a red bandana stare down at him.

“Zam!” Mapicc shouts, jumping down from the hole in his ceiling and taking a couple ticks of fall damage. “Holy shit, you’re—Ro! Get your ass down here, he’s okay!”

When he looks back down from the tunnel he dug into Zam’s room, Zam’s safe space, the place where he was supposed to be free and safe and unharmed forever and ever again, Zam’s already pushed himself in the corner. His back digs into blackstone brick walls, hands held out in front of him like a shield, because he gave his up to Vitalasy weeks ago. He doesn’t need a shield. He’s safe in his room, because Vitalasy and Subz will take care of him. They will protect him.

Mapicc and Ro will only hurt him. They’re here to take revenge, remind him that he’s never safe, and that he should start ruining his own life before they do it for him. Zam’s going to die, going to have his hearts stolen from him while Vitalasy and Subz panic, racing home to try and save him before it’s too late. All Zam does is make them worry. Maybe he deserves to die for it.

Ro falls down half a second later, landing with nowhere near as much grace as Mapicc. He’s got way too many hands floating around him, hooking into his hair and swishing around his cape, until they see Zam and make a beeline for him instead. It’s one of the worst ways to die, pummelled by Ro’s hands. There’s no end, no real recharge time that isn’t coordination-involved. Ro can take someone down from a chunk away, and Zam really doesn’t want to have to live through that again.

Harsh stone digs into his shoulders as Zam flinches back even further, preparing for an attack and wishing he could disappear. He’s been *good*. He’s been so good, not tried to fight Vitalasy and Subz, tried his best to heal and get better. Why is he still—

A hand lands gently on his head, combing through the waves of his hair. It’s soft, gentle. Ro isn’t supposed to be gentle. He’s supposed to be hitting Zam, yelling about betrayal. His hands aren’t supposed to be touching Zam’s face and shoulders like he can’t believe he’s real. Mapicc isn’t supposed to be crouching down in front of Zam, slipping his armour off and letting it pool on the floor.

This has to be a trap. It can’t be anything *but* a trap. They’re testing him, trying to lure his guard down. They want to hurt him, want him to hurt Vitalasy and Subz. They aren’t supposed to be like this. They’re supposed to be hurting him.

Softly, like he actually *cares*, Mapicc looks at Zam and asks, “Are you okay? Where’ve you been, it’s—it’s been *months*.”

“You disappeared,” Ro seconds. “We thought you were banned, trapped somewhere. Your comm —”

“I don’t have my comm,” Zam says, trying not to let his voice shake. “I don’t need my comm. It’ll make me spiral.”

“And which dumbass told you that?” Mapicc asks, as Ro’s hands righten on his shoulders, tense in his hair. It sounds like anger, like Zam should be cowering again. “Fuck’s sake, Zam. We thought you were hurt.”

“You think he isn’t?” Ro asks, like Mapicc is stupid. He doesn’t come nearly as close, sits down on the side of Zam’s bed and watches the two of them like a puzzle he can piece together. “This isn’t Zam. He’s not okay.”

Mapicc makes a noise of disbelief, right as Zam opens his mouth to defend himself. “I’m healing. I’m getting better. They’re going to make me better. I break things. I’m not going to break them anymore.”

A hand flies over to Mapicc, and clamps itself over his mouth before he can say anything. Ro, when Zam looks at him, seems subdued, not as angry or powerful or dangerous as he should be. He just looks . . . sad?

“This is a bad time,” he finally says, the hands sitting on Zam’s shoulders and braiding his hair like in the good old days flying back to Ro. The loss feels almost like a physical blow, and Zam doesn’t know why. “Mapicc, this is a bad time. We need to go.”

“You’re going to go?” Zam asks, and even he can hear how he doesn’t sound sure about it. They should leave. He doesn’t want them to leave. He doesn’t know why he feels so strongly about them being here when all they’ve wanted is to hunt him down and kill him.

“We should.” Mapicc’s joints crack as he pushes to his feet, refusing to look Zam in the eyes as he picks up his armour. “We—we’ve got some things to do. To talk about. To see. If you need us. . .”

“We’ll be back soon,” Ro says, because Zam doesn’t have his comm, doesn’t want a comm, doesn’t need a comm when it will make him worse. He shouldn’t even be talking to Mapicc and Ro right now. He has the potential to backslide every second he does. “Give us time, okay?”

“You don’t have to come back,” he says in response, because they don’t. They shouldn’t. Team Awesome is long dead. They’re Leviathan now, he doesn’t belong with them. “I’m getting better. It’s okay.”

“It’s not okay,” Mapicc says, and it looks like it pains him. “It’s not okay. We’ll be back.”

Zam looks to Ro just in time to see him typing something on his comm, and Mapicc replaces the block in the ceiling right before they both disappear, leaving the room quiet. It’s almost too quiet, and Zam hates how he can hear the sound of his breathing, the way his heart keeps beating insufferable beats in his chest.

Something isn’t right. Team Awesome—Leviathan isn’t right. His room is too quiet. Things are *wrong*, but he doesn’t know what.

When Subz and Vitalasy come back, they can tell him what’s wrong.

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