

uncontrollable, emotional, chaotically proportional

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by [mayflowers07](#)

Summary

Maybe it was a good thing that, out of all the Hermits, Doc had been the one to get hit with the long-thought dead Fear effect.

After all, as a creeper his greatest fear was cats- not particularly deadly and kind of ridiculous in hindsight.

Unknown to Doc, a few cats were going to be the least of his troubles.

Notes

Heed the warnings in the tags. Don't read anything you're not in the right mental capacity to read. Please take care of yourself!

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

To a degree, Xisuma always sounded tired- years of dealing with Hermits who had the collective maturity of a group of hyperactive kindergarteners sugar high on Pixie Sticks would do that to anyone.

In that specific moment, leant against the wall of the Octagon where they had agreed to meet while scanning over Doc's data with his helmet monitor, Xisuma seemed particularly done with life though. A twinge of guilt echoed in Doc's mind about it being his fault.

"Of all the server breaking things you've done this season, this has to be the most ridiculous- which is saying a lot," the admin reported back when he was finally finished after a few uncomfortably silent minutes.

"What is 'this' exactly?" Doc asked him sheepishly. "I know I got hit with some sort of effect from the glitch I was exploiting, but I can't tell what it is, and Ren refused to check, just kept saying for me to get you in case I broke the server... again."

Xisuma sighed and massaged his neck in exhaustion, making the feeling of guilt burn in Doc's chest even brighter. "That's because it's not an effect that exists anymore. By digging into the code, you managed to unearth an ancient effect the Builders used to use before their civilization got wiped out. It's called Fear, and I've only seen it mentioned once or twice in a few stronghold libraries."

"Fear? That doesn't sound good."

"It's not," Xisuma continued, particularly angry and biting harshly because of the danger Doc had caused. "The effect, while in place, causes the victim to experience their worst fears, manipulating the server to make that happen. If it's someone afraid of thunder, the weather will be more inclined to storm. If the fear is water, the server will generate an ocean over their spawn point. If they're scared of spiders, the mob generation will spawn spiders around them more frequently."

Doc swallowed thickly. Of all the undead curses to find while glitching code, how had he managed to find the worst possible one? "Oh," he responded plainly, not sure how to answer without sounding as panicked as he felt.

"'Oh' indeed," Xisuma retorted. "It seems to last about a week, and its deadliness depends on whatever the fear of the person may be. What is your worst fear anyways? Anything the other Hermits and I should be worried about?"

Another time Doc would have laughed at how comedic the whole situation really was, laughed at how his eyes suddenly refused to meet Xisuma's gaze and how his face felt hot as he blushed an embarrassed dark green at the realization of what that fear was. "Well," he tried to chuckle, "about that-"

Before he could finish, a gentle, innocent sounding 'mrow' from behind him sent him tumbling backwards with a flurry of curses. Turning around with wide eyes, Doc was met with the sight of an orange tabby cat innocently sitting on top of a chest and licking its paws.

The creeper-half of Doc's biology that roared to life at the perceived danger instinctually took control, hissing and cowering away from the awful creature as shuddering fear overtook his logic.

Laughing at how stupid Doc probably looked, Xisuma answered himself. "Cats. That definitely makes our lives a bit easier. This is going to be an interesting week for you though."

And all Doc could do was stare in terror at the feline that sent adrenaline through his blood and fear deep into his heart.

...

It was only a few hours after Xisuma had revealed the details of Doc's predicament to him and the rest of the server over messages that things started to go bad.

He hadn't wanted Ren to enter the Octagon meeting room to see Doc crouched on top of the table as three innocent felines darted beneath the legs. He knew that he probably looked ridiculous, growling warnings to the animals to cover the paralyzing fear he felt at their presence, unable to even look up at Ren because the second he broke eye contact with the cats, his creeper half had decided they would pounce.

Still, the sound of Ren howling with laughter at his misfortune was not helping.

At the sight of Doc's scowl, Ren gave an over exaggerated frown and teased, "Oh no, is the big bad Doccy afraid of some wittle kitties?"

Doc's sneer at that turned into a half-concealed yelp when one of the cats, a fluffy white one, made a leap for a nearby chair. Tense and shaking in fear, Doc rambled, "Yes, haha very fun, now fucking help me! Get them out of here!"

After a second, Ren's amused expression shifted to annoyance. "Oh, great. So now I have to spend the next week taking care of you and cleaning up your messes?"

Even the cat simply shifting to scratch its side made Doc curl in on himself, the creeper half of his biology digging its claws deeper and deeper, gaining more and more control over his rational side.

Doc borderline shrieked, "Well, you chose to room with me!"

Grumbling to himself as he eventually did go about the room picking up the cats and depositing them outside, Doc pretended he didn't hear Ren mutter, "Maybe I should've picked a better roommate then."

That stung a bit more than any bite or claw from a cat would.

...

After that first day, Doc decided to avoid Octagon for the time being. There was no point ruining all of their precious work by causing lag with insane amounts of cats spawned in around him.

(Plus, Ren was currently giving Doc the silent treatment and glaring at him whenever the wolf-hybrid had to shoo away more cats. There was only so much hatred from his best friend Doc could take.)

Unfortunately the effect's mechanics meant the cats always seemed to follow him.

And even more unfortunately, that led to Doc pacing in front of one of the Big Eyed Crews shop, wondering how he was going to enter the building considering the two midnight black cats lounging lazily in front of the door.

Luckily he was stopped from just breaking through the back wall by a familiar voice calling out, "No loitering please, especially by server-breaking scaredy cats."

Doc gave an indignant huff as Bdubs strolled up. “Was that a pun?”

“Oh, at your expense? Absolutely.”

Rolling his eyes and keeping a healthy distance between himself and the two felines, Doc grumbled, “Great, now that it’s out of your system, can you please get these two out of here? Currently not too impressed with your customer service.”

Bdubs snorted and rolled his eyes, and then he... kept walking away?

Gaping at the man’s leisurely pace towards the other end of the plaza, Doc yelled at him, “Hey, what the hell?”

“Oh, please,” Bdubs drawled, turning to give Doc an unamused dirty look, “You’re always going off about how you’re the GOAT? Well, the GOAT can deal with his problems himself. Call it revenge for you leaving me behind in the jungle.”

It was like the air had been knocked out of Doc’s lungs. The entire world came to a crashing halt at the casual way Bdubs referenced what had happened in Season Five. Nauseous guilt churned in Doc’s gut.

After all, Doc had abandoned Bdubs to be consumed by the curse within those trees. The jab was well-deserved.

That didn’t make it hurt any less.

...

The following day, Doc needed a new place on the server to set up, somewhere open skies he could dart into lest the cats pile up around him and he needed a quick escape.

That somewhere could not be his own base and couldn’t be the Big Eye’s either, considering the day after his visit he got a very forward message from Keralis complaining about the dozen of cats his presence had spawned around their shops and “kindly” asking him to not visit until the effect ended.

So, the Boatem bases it was.

While looking through Pearl’s stores, admiring her builds, Doc allowed himself to forget, for just a moment, his feline predicament (and the scorn he had earned from some of his closest Hermits because of it).

That was a mistake, as a brush of something soft with fur against his bare calf sent pure, unbridled panic through his veins.

Doc screamed at the sudden appearance of the cat, tearing apart his throat. The creeper within him roared to life, sending him dashing out of the shop without a second thought. Even outside of the shop, breathing heavily as his heart pounded in his ears, the creeper part could not be calmed-hissing and shaking as fur stood straight up around his body and claws extended into wicked points, ready for defense.

A few minutes of tense, delirious alarm- waiting any minute for a threat to appear- Doc managed to quiet the mob instincts in him, enough to hear the laughter near him.

Looking around, Doc's eyes went wide at the sight of Grian and Scar further down the path, both laughing so hard they had tears in their eyes and Scar petting the very cat that had sent him into the attack while it lay sleepily in Scar's lap in the wheelchair.

The realization of what had happened, of how the two had pranked him, made Doc bristle in embarrassment. This only amused Grian further who cackled, "Who knew Doc would turn out to be afraid of such a cute little fuzzball?"

Doc opened his mouth to retort, only to be cut off when Scar threw in, "I mean, thank god it ended up being him to get cursed and not anyone with a real fear. At least the one thing he's good for is entertaining us."

"... not cool, you guys," Doc muttered, too disappointed in himself for allowing himself to be mocked in such a way and letting down his previously held image of a strong badass to fight back.

"Awww is the creeper upset?" Grian kept bullying, tone harsh and grating in a way that made Doc want to tear his ears out. "What are you going to do? Hiss at me? Maybe we should lock you up in the Magical Menagerie with the other freaky monsters."

There was no response to that taunt by Doc.

He was too busy fighting back tears and swallowing thickly around the lump in his throat.

...

That encounter only seemed to be an introduction for what was to come, because it seemed every single Hermit was unhappy with Doc for the issues he had brought.

And it all worked to slowly form cracks in Doc's usually rock-solid confidence in himself.

Whether it was Hypno and xB not so subtly locking their doors at his arrival and yelling for him to go away until he could handle his own problems,

Zedaph calling him a beast and wondering if his instincts would get so out of control he'd attack someone,

Joe and Cleo giggling between themselves about how Doc was finally good for something by making them laugh whenever he scurried from the cats that would arrive,

or Gem annoyed by his constant bullying of something as innocent and harmless as kittens, they all left Doc feeling dejected and heartbroken.

Who would've guessed all it would take is one glitch to expose just how much the other Hermits secretly despised him?

One of the worst was when he ran into Etho and Beef while outside of the Evil X Emporium.

"Look what the cats dragged in!" Beef announced as the exhausted cyborg shuffled himself to where the two old friends had been conversing.

His tongue felt thick and swollen in his cotton-stuffed mouth, so all Doc did was wave.

Etho noted, “Long time no see. We were both kind of wondering if you were avoiding us this season... which would be a blessing, honestly.”

A shudder and flinch carried through Doc’s nerves at the harsh words. Of course they hated him too. Who wouldn’t?

“You- you really mean that?” He asked, tripping over the words, silently pleading that Etho would take them back.

Only for Beef to reiterate them instead. “Yeah, if we had known it was that easy to be rid of you, we would’ve done it forever ago. Maybe before you let the NHO crash and burn.”

This time Doc didn’t have the energy to even fight against himself. He let the tears fall and only half-heartedly turned to the side to avoid the two other men’s gazes.

Which didn’t work, as Etho just sneered at him, “Oh, really? Playing the victim about all of this? Dude, you’re literally always the villain on this server. No one sees you as anything more than a literal freak show and now you want our sympathy?”

With a final parting remark before him and Beef walked off, Etho shattered what remained of Doc’s heart into a million fragile pieces: “This is why everyone on the server hates you,”

Leaving Doc to stand in horror in place until a spawning cat chased him off, realizing how alone he really was in a world where no one even wanted him alive.

...

There was nowhere left for Doc to turn to.

Every single person, every player on every pixel of the server despised him and saw him as not even human.

So what was the point in trying anymore?

Doc sat, curled up into a ball so tight his muscles ached, in the middle of a field out where there were no bases to be seen. The hard ground against his skin was the opposite of comfortable, as he had been in the same position for who knows how many hours, but he made no effort to change anything; there was no fight left in his soul to.

He resigned himself to any cats that would come and any harm they would do him.

Oddly enough, no more felines spawned around him anymore.

But Hermits seemed to, as approaching footsteps and voices sent him curling up as much as his massive frame would allow him to until he couldn’t see beyond his own arms and knees- anything to escape further ridicule and reminder of how unloved he was.

One by one, the voices of his friends came, each with venomous words on their tongue to spit at him:

“Disgusting freak.”

“I bet he doesn’t even feel anything, he’s just a mob after all.”

“What an idiot, thinking we ever cared about him at all.”

“Why haven’t we kicked him from the server yet?”

“The worst embarrassment to Hermitcraft yet.”

Slowly the voices got louder and louder, building up and up and up over hours until they felt like needles, burrowing into Doc’s brain and piercing through his mind. His hands came up to press against his ears, so harsh his own skull creaked under the forces, but no respite came.

Nothing quieted the voices.

Louder and louder, meshing together into one incoherent mass screaming at Doc, spewing vile hatred that ate away at Doc’s soul. The world around him fell away until there was only noise.

There was nowhere to run to escape, no hope of freedom, nothing, just Doc alone with the writhing mass of NOISE.

Even Doc’s body seemed to fade away, no tears left to cry as Doc forgot he even had eyes to cry with, forgot there was anything beyond how betrayed and hurt he felt now that everyone had turned on him, forgot what it meant to be Doc.

He had no mouth, but he had to scream.

...

The shift from nothing but constant, excruciating sound to near silence was instant and disorienting. In a second, everything stopped, sending Doc rocketing up from where he had been laying down (when had he lied down?) and screeching in hysterical agony. Hot, burning tears ran from his organic eye, each one an overstimulating burn that carried down his cheeks.

Hands grasped at his shoulders and his arms, only making him howl even louder and more unhinged, because others would only bring pain and hatred and fury.

Eventually Doc ran out of air in his lungs, making his screams transition into whines of terror at whatever danger lay out there. His eyes were both screwed shut. It was only then that Doc began noticing things that didn’t make sense- how he appeared to be sitting on a soft and springy bed with a blanket tangled around his waist, how the hands on him were being very gentle as they wiped away his tears and rubbed against his tense shoulders, and how there were people talking to him- but not in a mean way anymore.

“Come back to us Doc. You’re safe here. I promise you. It’s over,” Xisuma reassured, his voice delicate and with none of the annoyance it previously held.

Another person, Ren this time, spoke with a sad but soothing tone, “We’ve got you. We’re not going to let anything hurt you again. Just open your eyes for me, love.”

And it was such a relief, an overwhelmingly incomprehensible relief, to hear people talk to him so

kindly that Doc was quick to obey. Peeking open his organic eye and slowly releasing the lens cover of his mechanical one, Doc immediately had to shut them again with a soft cry when the light burnt.

Again though, Ren and Xisuma were nothing but patient, reminding him to take his time and more tears fell at those simple acts of kindness.

After a moment to recalibrate, Doc managed to peel both open, blinking as the world came into focus to see that he was sitting in his bedroom. Xisuma was to the left of him in his bed, holding Doc's shoulders with a look of pure relief as soon as he saw Doc staring. On the other side was Ren, tear tracks tracing down both eyes from under his sunglasses as he reached up and gently cupped Doc's cheek, revelling in his presence.

"Thank god you're awake," Ren choked out with a wobble that threatened to cut his words. "For a second, we were worried that-"

Xisuma cut Ren off with a soft wave. "None of that," he hushed. "It didn't happen, so there's no need to worry him."

With that, Xisuma pulled a water bottle from his inventory and handed it off to Doc, and when it became apparent that Doc was at risk of spilling it with how badly hands shook, Xisuma took it upon himself to hold it and lift it to Doc's lips.

Once the drink had soothed the rough tears in his throat where the screams had ripped through, Doc managed to croak out, "You guys... you're not mad at me anymore?"

Both men seemed confused at that question, Xisuma tilting his head and Ren continuing to stroke Doc's cheekbone with his thumb while he answered, "No? The whole server has been scared to death for you but never mad."

Doc pressed his lip together and shook his head in a jerk. "But you were so angry and you all hated me and started yelling at me. Why are you being so nice now?"

With a hum, Xisuma realized something and began explaining, "Oh, no Doc. That wasn't real. None of it was. You accidentally unearthed an ancient effect-"

"I know that," Doc insisted, becoming frantic at how no one seemed to understand him. "The Fear effect. You've already told me all this."

This made Xisuma do a double take, pausing until he slowly put together, "I did?"

"Yes, you did. It made the server spawn in my worst fear- dozens of cats all over the place."

"... oh, Doc no," Ren whispered, then shifted to pull Doc into a side hug, letting Doc rest his head on Ren's shoulder. That admittedly felt nice, the warm contact giving Doc time to unwind and just breathe in the presence of his closest friend.

"Let me explain, because I think we're all on different pages here," Xisuma began, then sighed and looked at Doc with something akin to guilt in his eyes. "A week ago, Ren came into your base to find you unconscious beside a glitched chunk. When he couldn't wake you up, he called me. Together with the other server admins, we managed to find out that you had unearthed the Fear effect, and it had latched onto you. Nothing would dispel it or wake you up, and slowly your condition got worse and worse- you began crying in your sleep, occasionally calling out for people to stop, and eventually you began having seizures at an exponential frequency. Joe did some digging and found out that the Fear effect was used as an execution method by the Builders, only

ending when the target was dead. In a last ditch emergency effort, I rolled back the chunk Ren had found you in and reset your data, finally killing off the virus.”

Doc blinked up at the admin, trying desperately to match up the words X said with the very conflicting account he had personally experienced. It made him dizzy if he focused on it too long.

“But then why did I see all of those cats then? Why did... that other version of you tell me about the effect but wrong?”

Ren laughed a bit, sad and heartbroken. “You poor fool, your worst fear was never cats, dude: it was all of your friends hating you. The Fear effect created a scenario where you thought everyone would hate you, then made you believe it was real, no matter how illogical.”

His heart skipped a beat.

His lungs barely moved.

His eyes went wide in horrified shock.

And in an instant, everything clicked in Doc’s mind.

“It... wasn’t real? You guys... don’t hate me?” He barely dared to believe, not wanting to get his hopes up too high only for them to send him crashing back to reality.

If anything, Ren pulled Doc into an even tighter hug, something protective and desperate about it. “Hate you? You haven’t been around the server this past week without you. Xisuma nearly killed himself trying to find a cure with no breaks in between. I basically haven’t left your side all week, and I can’t remember the last time I stopped crying, because I was petrified at the thought of losing you. Bdubs had a huge breakdown when he found out you were basically dying, and Grian was this close to contacting his Watcher buddies to try and find an answer. According to Iskall, Etho hasn’t slept in days, because he was scared of waking up and finding out you had died in his sleep, and Beef comes by to check on you every hour or so and is always bringing metal music or fresh flowers and other things you’d like. Everyone on the server has visited at least once, and it’s been like the servers on lockdown, waiting to make sure you’re okay. We love you- so much that the thought of you hurting under this effect nearly broke us.”

The words Ren said sunk in, one at a time, slowly working to soothe and heal the broken parts of Doc’s soul. To be loved was such a wonderful feeling that when it returned to him all at once, Doc couldn’t help but fall apart again.

But this time when he wailed and sobbed to himself in relief, Ren was there to hold him and lovingly tuck his hair behind his ears with a light touch that made his heart sing, Xisuma was there to tightly hold his hand and repeat words of encouragement over and over again until they were ingrained on his brain and never forgotten again, and the rest of the server was there to catch him when he fell and put him back together again.

End Notes

I had originally planned to get this fic out on Halloween. Obviously this never happened, but the ideas never really left me and I wanted to at least finish the damn thing.

If anyone wants to use this idea of the Fear effect in their own work, please feel free so long as I'm credited. I have (maybe) one more idea I'd like to explore with it, but really nothing else concrete, so if any of you have any ideas I'd love to read them.

Hope you enjoyed the fic!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!