

we like to keep it on a high note

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we like to keep it on a high note

by [immolxtion_stxtion](#)

Summary

Spoke counts them in, clacks his sticks together with reckless abandon like he intends to break them. It wouldn't be a surprise if he did, because it's happened before, on purpose, and by accident, and for wall decoration in the name of a resin-coated skateboard. Honestly, Zam thinks Spoke just likes breaking things.

A spur-of-the-moment, improvised cover during the middle of a concert? Sure, why not.

Notes

This . . . was not a fic I had planned for this series. Our Last Night's cover of HUMBLE., however, might have swayed me over to the dark side. Also, Spoke gets to play a decently large role, and that is quite pleasant, considering most of the fics bouncing around in my brain centre around Zam, Mapicc, and Ro.

The title, and song used for this, is, of course, HUMBLE. as done by Our Last Night, but originally by Kendrick Lamar.

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

“See, Calgary,” Mapicc starts, and Zam can already tell he’s up to no good. “We’re gonna change things up a little tonight. Spoke Is Here, the one and only man on the drumkit, has spent the last

fifteen stops on this tour *begging* to take the wheel for a song, and tonight, I'm feeling merciful."

The spotlights spin around before settling on Spoke and his drums, glowing rainbow under the bright lights. There's a shit-eating grin on his face as he adjusts his bandana, sticks a singular drumstick in it and then swings the nearest mic closer to his face. "Hello there, hello. It's been a pleasure to play for you all, and it's even more of a pleasure that Mapicc's stopped being a little coward and let me have a turn."

Mapicc, who has gotten *way* closer to Zam than he should be, flips him off in response, but lets Spoke continue to talk. It's an unusual kindness in an unscripted moment, letting Spoke take the wheel despite his loose-cannon tendencies.

"See, I've heard some things about egos. I have heard some things about egos, things like 'oh, Spoke, you're too confident, your dick energy is too big for this stage, you're *definitely* not overcompensating for something.' To that?" He leans forward, pulling out a new drumstick and rattling out a quick little rhythm before finishing his statement. "I've gotta say . . . bitch? Be humble."

Oh, fuck no. Fuck yes? Simply *fuck*? Spoke's ability to pull a whole speech out of his ass is truly impressive, but out of all covers they've strung together for shits and giggles, *Humble*? The crowd's going to go wild. Zam's going to destroy his fingertips. It's gonna be so much fun.

Spoke counts them in, clacks his sticks together with reckless abandon like he intends to break them. It wouldn't be a surprise if he *did*, because it's happened before, on purpose, and by accident, and for wall decoration in the name of a resin-coated skateboard. Honestly, Zam thinks Spoke just likes breaking things.

Zam shifts his hands on the fretboard until he's got the right notes all planned out, and then he starts the song, the sound of his guitar ringing across a near-silent arena. It's as nerve-wracking as it is exciting, bubbles building up in his throat and trying to drown out the butterflies in his chest. It starts out as just him, just the iconic tone of a well-loved song, and then Mapicc throws his voice on top, a little yell that functions as a distraction, because everything kicks in with a violent intensity the next second.

Parrot, and Spoke, and Ro, and Zam, all of them play their parts, and it hits the stadium like a tidal wave, a tamer form of a breakdown, but a breakdown nonetheless. It's a heavy hit that tapers down, allows a space for the sound to breathe and for Spoke to show off, pulling out long-memorized lyrics and little snappy rattles of his cymbals.

He sounds smug, like he's having the damn time of his life—which he probably is, because Spoke *loves* the spotlight, and he likes surprising people with new things, and this is just right up his alley. Zam keeps one eye on his excited, energetic form, and the other eye on Mapicc, the crowd blurring out just in front of him.

As always, the timing is perfect, because they've been working together since they were teens. Spoke knows when to take the calmer tones of his voice and jack them up into a yell, pushing his voice louder and louder until Mapicc swoops the sound from him.

It's a loud noise that leads directly to a *killer* breakdown, and Mapicc screams the pre-chorus, howling every word with an uncharacteristic grin. He's having *fun*, improvising little dance moves as he headbangs, and Zam focuses on pushing his distortion-edged riffs forward, making sure they sound as close to the original sound as possible. In the not-practice they first used to string this together, they gave Zam the lead guitar, the most recognizable parts. It was for fun, for teasing, for bragging rights, if he dares go that far.

It doesn't make every note he plays any less anxiety-inducing. Parrot backs him up, plays solid notes that blend with his in perfect harmonies and counter-tunes, but Zam is the one creating most of the iconic sound, and that's terrifying. He's the lead when they push and pull sound into being, switching from loud to near-silent, from a more recognizable sound to its heavy, distorted brother.

The terror in his veins doesn't make it any less enjoyable to watch Spoke take the mic for once, pulling out all of his dramatic little vocal flourishes as he blends rap and singing in a way so smooth that fans are going to be hanging off of it for *weeks*. Zam can barely talk while playing guitar. Spoke keeps a complex rhythm up on his drumkit like it's *nothing*, rapping and twirling his sticks with horrifying ease. This is his chance to show off, and he fucking takes it.

Him and Mapicc work smoothly, switching lyrics back and forth from rap to screaming, the drum beat never once faltering. It's impressive as fuck, something Zam will never quite be able to comprehend despite being friends with him for years. His ability to multitask is jaw-dropping, and this only proves it.

Spoke doesn't usually share, Zam thinks, but he plays nice with Mapicc. For once, it isn't a game about overshadowing each other, like their practice sessions are often full of. Spoke isn't talking over Mapicc, and Mapicc isn't hurling insults with a smug look on his face. Instead, they work as a team, so well-oiled that Zam almost has to do a double take to make sure neither of them were replaced.

But Spoke is still the same cocky bastard he always is, slamming his cymbals with reckless abandon, and Mapicc is still standing at the front of the stage, commanding a crowd like it's nothing. His confidence is hot, the way he's able to stare at the maw of the beast and not flinch at all the eyes staring back. His smile also doesn't hurt, wide and real and so painfully genuine that Zam can't help but smile too, because he's having *fun*.

Not the usual, anxiety-filled exhaustion-tainted fun he's used to, but actual, genuine fun.

It's a startling surprise that sits right in Zam's chest, more than making up for the way his fingers will sometimes slip a string, or not switch notes fast enough. He's having fun, and Mapicc is having fun, and Spoke is having fun, and *the whole goddamn band is having fun, why haven't they done this sooner?*

Zam doesn't know why they haven't, but he takes the single moment of manufactured silence, only Parrot's rhythm guitar noticeable, to look at how Spoke grins, how he twirls his stick around his hand before launching back in with a violent passion, mouthing the lyrics that Mapicc screams.

The latter half of the song gets heavier than the first, because they're a fucking metal band, and they'd all probably die if the sound didn't get turned down, manipulated into a solid punch of noise. Any of the silence they played with, forced into the song for breaks gets absolutely slaughtered by Mapicc's screaming, and the heavy press forward they all make. Spoke goes ham on the cymbals, Ro keeps pushing his low rhythm forward, and Zam and Parrot play with depth, because every good song needs a low point to match the high points.

The low drone of Zam's guitar mixed with Ro's bass accents and Parrot's supporting sound rumbles straight through his chest, and while Zam's always preferred lighter music, sillier riffs, there's something that just sits right about this. Metal is about the energy, the noise, the threat of something darker hiding just around the corner. Metal is the circle pit beating the fuck out of each other just in front of the stage, flashes of silver and long, wild hair.

Metal is the way Zam's guitar turns him into a beast instead of a short, anxious bastard who doesn't sleep right. Metal lets him grin and lurch into awkward headbangs, weird little body rolls.

Metal is all about him and the bright yellow guitar he plays like it could save his life, all of the dark, screaming tones he wrenches out of it, tones that rumble through his bones and make him appreciate the music even more.

Metal is about the rumble in his chest and the ecstasy in his grin when they finish off the song, a heavy one-two punch of riffs and chugging, backed up by a little distortion, and Spoke going absolutely batshit on the drums. It's about the way Mapicc turns to give Zasm a little nod of acknowledgement and a half smile, how Ro says fuck propriety and full on *beams* at him, taking his hands off his bass to wiggle his fingers excitedly.

It's about how Zam, with his anxiety and his issues, all of the stupid things that nobody knows about because it's easier to keep them hidden, has a place where he belongs.

End Notes

I intentionally put a lot of thought into the themes and sound Team Awesome as a band would be looking for, and this fic is no exception. Spoke in particular drove the sound development in a direction that wasn't originally expected - because of the proclivity for rap he and some of the other members have, I wanted to find a way to blend that into the general sound and energy of the band. That led to the careful and conscious choice of metal songs with rap interludes, or rap elements, because I wanted to make sure that the band's sound as a whole had elements for every member. (This is also why there are some songs chosen that have operatic elements despite my general consensus that as a band, their sound would primarily be heavy and screaming, because Parrot has this whole singing thing going on in videos, and Spoke often slips into a mocking operatic tone, and I wanted to find a way to incorporate that. This one goes out to Slipknot and Unsainted, and The Plot In You and Divide, because they're bangers, and life savers). Zam and Ro don't have as much input into the sound, but I did want to make sure there were songs with good basslines for Ro (think Vore, or even Lovesick by Aurora View), and plenty of room for fun guitar for Zam. (Sick Little Games by First and Forever). In general, I put an intense amount of thought into the playlist I made for this AU (which you can find [here](#), if you haven't seen it already), and almost every song has a reason for being chosen, even if that reason is limited to "I really like this band", or "I think the dynamics present in the song connect well with the themes and relationships I'm going for", or even "the guitar is hot". I wish I could say the last reason was not as prevalent as it was, but I love guitar, and I love music, and I think this end note has made it clear just how intense my special interest for it is. I also feel obligated to say that if you like guitar, but don't like screaming, Sick of it All by 4th Point and A kés hegye by Depresszió are both really, really good.

Anyways, that's a very long-winded way of saying that this series allows me to do one of my favourite things in high-definition: listen to a song, and pick out all of the details to describe it right. If you haven't done this, I can't recommend it more, because some of the best parts of a song are often overshadowed by the lyrics. With that said, this fic/series is skewing my Spotify listening history, because I have had OLN's cover of HUMBLE. on repeat for the better part of an hour, just to make sure I don't slip or skip bits. It's truly a beauty of a cover, and the guitar is impressive as all fuck.

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