

## knock knock (laughter)

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## knock knock (laughter)

by [showcontrols](#)

### Summary

Amongst some of the things that Fruitberries does during the cold months: fishing, finding a mug, and trying to get back home in time. Not necessarily in that order.

[\[Translation in Chinese\]](#)

### Notes

dedicated to el my beloved !! :D

thank you to [lilia](#) and [nare](#) for beta-reading (and calla, for listening to me despair over this), ily guys <3

[butterfly!illumina](#) concept by vee ^^

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

Home is an odd word.

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Temporary, is what Fruitberries calls the house they build out of cobblestone and acacia planks. It's only two floors; a ladder leading up to their rooms, and a small side room filled with shelves. The main room is barely decorated, only chests haphazardly stacked on top of each other and a blast furnace and crafting table on the other side of the room. It's a temporary house, Illumina mutters under his breath, just a place to crash in while they are still in this world and until they are ready to move on to the next one.

This doesn't stop Illumina from planting seedlings in the ground outside their house and hanging up their spare weapons near the door. It doesn't stop Fruit from setting up an enchanting table in the sideroom, and placing worn out books with shimmering covers on the shelves. Neither of them are at their house often - bounty hunting didn't lend itself well to that - but it's an odd sort of comfort, knowing they *did* have a place to come back to.

Temporary, they call it.

(They keep going back.)

—

The seedlings bloom in late autumn, which shouldn't have been possible but Fruit was used to weird, improbable things happening around Illumina at this point. The flowers are a shade of purple softer than the color of Illumina's eyes. Fruit watches him hover around the plants, wings unfolded and flapping at irregular intervals - excited.

At the back of their home is another little clearing, this one for potatoes and wheat, which seemed to adhere to the seasonal changes at least. They'd harvested the crops back when the leaves had started to fall, the days starting to turn shorter and the sky darkening quicker.

Well. They'd tried to. Illumina had almost stepped on seven different potatoes during the process. Fruit ended up finishing the harvesting by himself, leaving Illumina to gather water from the closest river.

("Listen, I can excuse war crimes but I'm drawing the line at trampling on crops.")

"That's uh. Good to know where you stand I guess?")

The potatoes are stacked in the food chest, which was really just a random chest permanently left near the furnace. Illumina hauls in another bucket of water just as Fruit closes the chest lid firmly, leaving the bundles of wheat nearby to deal with them later.

It would be enough to last them a winter here, hopefully.

—

There's a crack running through the top half of the cobblestone slabs. It's deep, running through the stone with jagged ends. Fruit traces it with a claw as he sits outside, soaking in the sun and idly chewing on a skeleton bone. Illumina lies face down on the wet dirt just a few blocks away from

him. He isn't entirely sure how Illumina was breathing like that, but it was probably fine.

They'd been looking through world seeds together earlier, trying to figure out a good one to travel to. He thinks it's apt that they're called *seeds*, when you can cradle a bunch in your hands like pumpkin seeds in a bowl. It all looks similar on the surface - alphanumeric strings condensed into something a million times smaller than what it leads to.

In the end they'd picked separate worlds to look through. It was the logical choice; they'd cover more ground and it wasn't like they'd be able to stay joined at the hip forever. It might be good to branch out anyway. They were getting too recognisable.

Fruit flips over the bone shard in his palm and chips another piece off the slabs. It falls at his feet, the sound swallowed up by the grass.

—

Neither of them had really a plan in mind when they'd first built their home – some of the walls are patchworks of wool they'd never got around to replacing, and the ever growing stack of chests had quickly grown out of control and far away from anything resembling order.

Worst of all, Fruit thinks, is that this means some of the chests are too high to reach.

His favorite mug is somewhere at the top along with stray pieces of kelp and something that must've been old paper. He knows this because he can smell it, this close to the wood and yet still so far away from his mug. Why Fruit hadn't dug it out when they'd first arrived here a year or so ago, he'll never know.

Not that it mattered. He has a mug to get. And he was going to get it, even if it meant facing the looming wall of storage chests.

Illumina finds him later, perched precariously on a tower of chests, holding a mug in one hand. His legs are tucked to his chest, toe beans visible from where his feet poke out over the edge.

“Wha-what are you doing?” Illumina asks. His mask is hanging off one ear, a piece of rotten flesh in his mouth. Or at least, what passed as a mouth.

“Sitting,” Fruit replies. The *‘obviously’* goes unsaid.

“On the chests???”

“Maybe I just like the view from up here.”

A beat of silence.

“You're stuck aren't you.” Illumina says.

Fruit curls inwards even further and flattens his ears against his head. “...Yeah.”

Illumina, to his credit, at least keeps his comments to himself until Fruit is safely back on the ground.

---

Because all bad things happen in patterns much like a domino effect, they run out of candles during the same night a snowstorm whirls through the area. The wind howls, a flurry of white obscuring anything that wasn't an arm's length away. Fruit stares blankly at his ceiling for several hours before deciding *fuck it*, and gets up to annoy Illumina into drinking hot chocolate with him.

"We have cocoa?" Illumina says, holding the jar closer to his face as though it would help. The sliver of moonlight shining through the window would've been just enough for him to focus on the outline of vague shapes, considering Illumina's shitty vision. Fruit has never been more grateful for his own night vision. "No one tells me anything in this house."

"Dude, you literally live here." Fruit reaches forward to take the jar away from him and replace it with a mug of chocolate. The heat of it is almost burning against his fingertips.

There was something weirdly comforting about drinking hot chocolate in the middle of the night, with a storm raging outside the walls. They hadn't been able to hang out together like this for a few weeks, not when going to separate worlds had them coming back home at different hours and being too tired to do much beyond collapsing at the end of the day.

Illumina sets aside their empty mugs on the floor – to pick up later, even though they both know it wouldn't happen any time soon – and they end up nodding off slowly on the floor next to the furnace. Fruit doesn't even realize he'd started to tilt over until Illumina elbows him, murmuring, "Your weapons."

"Mhm?"

"If you don't take them off now they're gonna be annoying to deal with later," He yawns, trailing off towards the end of sentence. Fruit blinks at him blearily for a second. Then he groans and starts pulling out ten different blades from his pockets, forming a little pile on the floor.

He *thinks* it's ten, at least. He's not entirely sure where a few of his larger knives went.

"All of it, Fruit."

Another three daggers join the rest. Illumina squints somewhere past him. Fruit sighs, shoving off his boots and subsequently the two small blades tucked away in the soles of it.

"Can we go to sleep *now*," he mumbles, already half-way to unconsciousness.

If Illumina says something in reply, Fruit doesn't hear it.

---

Fruit goes fishing in the middle of winter.

Objectively, it's not the best idea he's had. But the lake he'd found deep inside the woods was still warm enough and Illumina, who had a one track mind and an equally one track heart, had gone to run through a world even though it was way too early in the morning and so Fruit was *bored*, okay.

A little fishing never hurt anyone.

Five hours, one fall into the lake, two dead fish and several different scrapes later, he was starting to regret that statement a bit. Just slightly.

Illumina gives him a bemused look when Fruit gets back at midday. Fruit fumbles to a stop, gingerly pulling out his communicator with wet paws to see if Illumina had texted him earlier.

(There are no messages.)

“Why’re you so soaked?”

“The stars are testing me,” Fruit grumbles, shaking his head to get rid of the excess water.

(He doesn’t tell Illumina about the lake. He’s not even entirely sure why. Maybe they could go back there together and figure out a system a little more efficient than just a fishing rod and a knife – it was a good source of fish, even during winter it seemed – and it would be nice wouldn’t it, sharing this with him–

He doesn’t tell Illumina about the lake.)

—

The problem with taking different aspects of work that are technically for the same job, is eventually you come across the realization that the person you’ve worked with for two years and counting just doesn’t work well with you anymore.

Fruit collapses against the fence surrounding their home, grimacing at the sweat covering his back and neck. “Maybe we should keep going to worlds separately.” It had been.. disconcerting, not being able to tell when and where Illumina would next move when they used to be able to move in sync with each other.

“Sure,” Illumina replies from next to him. Fruit carefully keeps his line of sight on the flower patch across from them. The petals are drooping under the harsh sunlight. He doesn’t want to know what kind of expression Illumina was making, whether the events from earlier had unsettled him as much as it had Fruit.

It would’ve been easier to blame it on them just being rusty, if it had been a one time thing. But it *hadn’t* been and after the fourth mistimed swing, Fruit had reluctantly admitted defeat. It wasn’t all that much of a problem, these things happened. They’d still see each other around their shared home and make time to take meals together. It wasn’t a big deal.

—

They make it a point to come back for dinner and talk aimlessly at the end of the day. Preparing the meal is a mess in itself – half the plates are never quite where either of them expect it to be, and potatoes are versatile but there was only so much you could do with them before even Illumina

started getting sick of potatoes.

But then one of them gets back too late – he doesn't remember who. Does it even matter? – and then the next time the other is too exhausted; *could we just go to sleep tonight?* Cooking is tiring, no matter how you look at it, and the nights where they bother to put together a proper meal become fewer and fewer.

They persist, still. (*Tomorrow, tomorrow. Tomorrow, I promise.*) Maybe it's irrational, being upset over something like this but his chest feels heavy with grief, something like obsidian weighing him down.

Tomorrow, Illumina tells him. Tomorrow, he tells Illumina and sees the same grief reflected in Illumina's eyes.

—

Sometime in late spring, Illumina brings back to the house with a box of chalk.

“Where did you even get these?” Fruit holds one up, leaning closer to sniff at it. He sneezes immediately after. Illumina tugs it away from him and places it back on the table with the rest of the chalk.

“Bought it from a trader. It's uh, made of calcite I think.”

“...We could eat them.”

Illumina makes a noise that could've been a laugh. “Let's not do that. C'mon,” he says, pulling Fruit up to his feet.

After years of living here, the walls are battered from explosions that had gone off a little too close to their house (or, in some cases, *inside* their house) and the general wear that came with weather and cobblestone being smoothed out over time. Upstairs is much the same, scorch marks and discolorations covering the walls. They come to a stop in front of the midway point between their rooms, chalk still in hand.

Illumina picks out a piece of green chalk from the box and hands it to Fruit. He takes a dark shade of blue for himself, and starts to write on the wall:

*And the universe said I love you.*

“Oh,” Fruit laughs, delighted, “The poem.” Then he presses his chalk on the wall and continues the next line.

(And the next, and the next.)

—

He'd lost track of how many times he has to uncurl his tail from his own leg. *A little further*, Fruit thinks and keeps running through the trees. The sky turns the shade of dying embers, then slowly turns dark and he doesn't register it beyond pulling his mask up to see better.

The forest is quiet except for the dull, muffled sounds of Fruit's boots hitting the foliage. He bursts through the tree line with something like anxiety crawling under his skin – was he too late? Was Illumina even awake still, what if he'd gotten the time wrong, was it *today* or tomorrow or – and time keeps going in its relentless, steady march.

Fruit slips past the fence and the flower patch (the flowers are wilting again), raises his hand to the door and then- stops.

*Sorry*, he'd told Illumina earlier in the day, the same way Illumina had apologized to him yesterday, "I'll be back in time tonight I swear." And here he was, hands trembling, unable to do something as simple as opening a fucking *door*. He can't remember the last time he'd managed to sit down with Illumina – just to talk. To hang out together in the same way that they used to.

This used to be easy. Even when it hadn't been easy, he'd still wanted to *try*.

Fruit tugs his mask back down, then opens the door.

"...Illumina?" he calls out softly. There's no response. He closes the door behind him and steps in a little further. The table is still set, the food long gone cold much like the blast furnace nearby.

Fruit finds Illumina sleeping on top of a bunch of chests. His arm is dangling off the side. Fruit stares at him for a minute, swallows around the lump in his throat and then goes to get the blankets.

(He does not cry. He takes in a few shaky breaths and has to hold his head back for a little while but he does not cry. He's just - tired. Tired of feeling tired and tired of having to brace himself to interact with someone who was supposed to be his best friend.

...Supposed to be? He *is*, isn't he?)

Illumina doesn't wake up when Fruit tucks one of the blankets around him. He curls up against the chests and closes his eyes.

Tomorrow would be better.

—

Two weeks before the day of the summer solstice, Fruitberries gets a cold.

"I told you," Fruit says in between sneezes, "we should've picked something other than a damp, *freezing* cave to make camp in. I can't feel my fucking legs."

His only consolation is that Illumina looks just as miserable as he does. "I didn't know it would turn into a storm." He pokes his head out briefly, flinching back when the raindrops immediately start soaking into his hood.

The weak fire they'd managed to get going wavers, dim light bouncing off stone and dirt and the

scales scattered across Illumina's cheeks like a permanent blush. Fruit tosses the last of their sticks into it, huddling closer into Illumina's side. Despite the thick material of the cloak covering them he can still feel the chill seeping into his skin, slowly turning his fingernails blue.

The air is heavy, filled with everything they hadn't been saying to each other. He hates how talking to Illumina has become stilted, tense in a way that he'll never be able to adjust to.

It's not even the worst storm they'd had to sit through but something about the situation – the four days they'd spent searching through the woods, the cold, the ever-present danger of nightfall arriving soon – is enough to make him open his mouth, despite everything else.

"Wish it was warmer."

Illumina tilts his head at him. "...We could always make a bigger fire. I mean – how difficult could it be?"

"No, w-with—" Fruit waves a hand at the bags discarded on the other side of the wall, teeth chattering. "with what? That was the last of our wood. What're you gonna do, just dig into the side of a mountain and pray you find wood on the other side?"

For a moment all he can hear is the flames flickering and the rain steadily falling outside the cave. Illumina stares at him with bright eyes. He doesn't blink. Fruit stares back just because he can and also because he *knows* that look (*despite everything*) and-

"Motherfucker, *no*."

—

Fishing, once Fruit figures it out, is easier than he expects it to be.

He throws the line into the lake and watches the end of it bob merrily in the water. The sky is clear today, if a little dim, and he's making most of the sunshine while he still can. It's easy enough to lose himself into watching the ripples surfacing across the water, the feeling of grass under his toes.

At midday, he packs up the fishing equipment and goes back to the house.

There are no messages on his communicator. When Fruit gets back to the house, he finds Illumina already there, inspecting the dying flowers with a look that Fruit can't read on his face.

They eat dinner together for the first time in weeks. Maybe it was a month. Time and the days blur into each other – he wasn't even sure when summer had ended and autumn had begun.

*You were someone I once loved*, he thinks. The problem was that he still loved him. The problem was that he couldn't recognise the face in front of him.

"Goodnight," is what Fruit says out loud.

—



It's all been leading to this.

When the dust settles: the sun, the dead flowers rotting below their feet, stains on the blades of their sheathed weapons. In the end it is just the two of them. Illumina and Fruitberries.

Fruit and Illumina. If Fruit looks at where their hands are intertwined, he wouldn't be able to tell where he ends and Illumina begins.

In the end it's not even a fight, just — a quiet exhale. Just them slowly untangling themselves from each other and rueful smiles slanted in the sunlight.

It feels like leaving pieces of himself behind. "I'm sorry," and he's not sure which one of them says it first.

—

Autumn is a time for dead things. Change. The trees lose their leaves and the wind becomes chillier. The day they part ways, it's cold enough that Fruit steals one of Illumina's cloaks.

"You sure you wanna stay?" Illumina asks, looking up from where he's tucking one of Fruit's knives into his belt.

"It's alright." Fruit replies, and can't tell whether he's lying. "I still have things to do."

Illumina smiles and tugs his mask over his face. He wavers for a second, then tugs Fruit into a hug.

(Fruit does not cry. If he holds Illumina a little tighter then, well. He could blame that on the cold.)

"See you," Illumina says, then he turns down the road that leads away from their home.

"See you," Fruit echoes after him, and lets him go.

It's the closest they'll get to saying goodbye.

—

Fruit blinks awake. There's frost building on the windows.

He looks up at the ceiling of their house and remembers, *oh*. Oh.

(What was the point of waking to a world without—)

Fruit goes back to sleep. Maybe his dreams would be kinder.

---

They hadn't really bothered with clearing up the wall of chests before Illumina had left. Most of the items in there weren't organized at all, from years of procrastinating over it, and more often than not it was just random knick knacks either of them had picked up in other worlds.

Fruit picks up his favorite mug and places it in his satchel. It's dull, stained from years of use. He keeps it anyway.

He goes through the house, methodically closing the doors and grabbing any last minute things he hadn't picked up earlier. The enchanting table is covered with a blanket, anything flammable tossed into the nearest storage chest. Fruit stands outside their rooms and traces his fingertips over faded chalk. The words are still visible on the wall.

Then he climbs down and walks out the front door, and Fruit closes the gate behind him.

It had only been temporary after all.

## End Notes

It's early autumn when Fruit travels back home.

The memory of the path back home was like a photograph exposed to the sun - burnt out, faded into a haze of light. But even after a year, his feet still remember the way and Fruit comes to a stop in front of a familiar, patchwork house sooner than he expects.

The gate is open. The flowers are blooming.

Fruit tugs his mask off, then opens the door.

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