

let me hold it lightly

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/46071793) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/46071793>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M , Multi
Fandom:	Lifesteal SMP
Relationship:	ItzSubz/PrinceZam (Video Blogging RPF) , ItzSubz/Vitalasy (Video Blogging RPF)
Character:	ItzSubz (Video Blogging RPF) , PrinceZam (Video Blogging RPF)
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , Eloping , vitalasy haunts the narrative , The New York Option , Married Life , Post-Break Up , technically
Language:	English
Series:	Part 3 of eclipse (syzygy)
Stats:	Published: 2023-03-28 Words: 1,071 Chapters: 1/1

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by [genesis_frog](#)

Summary

It's a quiet life, outside the world border, but it's one Zam and Subz have made for themselves.

Notes

set in a hypothetical future where zam has eloped with subz, based mostly on my own insanity but also a bit by that one twitch message from today. awesome. posting this before any of this events which could trigger this will happen

BTW pls dont link to or discuss this work anywhere a cc could see it !! this is my boundary, ty for understanding

title from 100 years by florence + the machine.

for dog

They've built a house together. It's a little bigger than the sandstone construct at the now-abandoned desert base, their bed more solid than a hammock. It was built with room for two. The bedsheets are light blue, and there's planter boxes in the windows. They don't grow flowers - rather herbs, for cooking, and some tiny sprouting attempts at vegetables. There's a small garden

outside, too, and a chicken coop. The hens make noise every morning.

It's a quiet life, outside the world border, but it's one Zam and Subz have made for themselves.

They live in a meadow, near a village. (There is no artificial village buried in the mountain; these people live freely, wander.) Every morning Zam walks into town to talk to the villagers. He trades them jokes for jokes, story for story - and only sometimes, goods for goods. On those days, he'll bring home an armful of woolen fabric, or an armful of wheat to grind into flour, and he smiles so brightly and easily that it makes Subz' heart hurt.

Subz keeps busy on the day to day by tinkering. He improves the village's infrastructure, builds them real roads and adds streetlamps that turn on when night falls; he builds small machines to ease their work. "It's an automatic bonemeal machine," he explains; "just put your excess seeds into this chest, and the hoppers will suck them up and drop them in the composter for you." He erects a fence around the chicken coop and leaves automatic feeders in the village for the cats. Nothing big. That was the agreement: nothing big.

So it's a quiet life, and an easy life. Most days, it is calm, peaceful. Some days, it feels like a charade, like they play parts not made for them. They live as if they have not brushed shoulders with gods, as if they haven't broken the laws of nature with their own hands and irreversibly changed the world. They eat dinner and talk about their day and live their happily married life as if Vitalasy was never part of it.

Zam is chatting about something or other. Subz tries to listen, to be good for him. But today there's thorns under his skin and nothing sits right and he snaps over something stupid. He watches the way Zam clams up, apology in his mouth like rocks. It makes Subz feel sick.

"Shit - no, that's not what I meant. I'm sorry, Zam," he says. Stupid. Stupid. Zam's not eating anymore, just staring at his plate, hands tucked into his lap like a scorned child. (Subz never did sand off all his rough edges. He'd just had someone who never seemed to mind them much.)

"Do you resent me?" Zam asks, quietly, after a few moments of awful, awful silence.

"No, never." A lance to his heart.

"Do you miss Vitalasy?" Zam's gaze lands somewhere on his chin, jaw, cheek. Subz suddenly feels like a ghost in his own body, not fully there - or maybe like he's drowning, noise in his ears.

The sound of death.

“Yes. No. Yes.” Subz breathes in, his head tilts to the side. Out. “No. Yes.”

“I got it the first time,” Zam deadpans. It’s a little lighter. Subz traces the grain of their dinner table’s wood with a finger instead of studying Zam again; he’s not sure he could take it. “In the spirit of *com-mu-ni-ca-tion*”- he sounds out every syllable for emphasis - “could you explain what you mean by ‘yes no, yes no, yes’?”

There’s a Vitalasy in his head. A memory, maybe, or a shard of him who got stuck there, tore Subz’s chest open and made a home in his heart. Like an infestation, or a splinter, or one of those metal rods they screw onto your bones to hold them together when they break. There’s a Vitalasy in his body and every day it makes him ache; when the air pressure changes, he feels it in his knees, and he knows there’ll be thunder soon.

“I miss him every day,” Subz says, eventually. “but I try not to. I want to enjoy my time with you, instead. I don’t want to waste it all agonizing over him. I know I’ll -” he chokes a little, and isn’t *that* embarrassing - “I know I’ll go crawling back to him eventually. Or he’ll turn up on my fucking doorstep, or something. A bad penny.”

“He’s not a bad penny,” Zam defends weakly. He looks wilted, almost.

“He’s not,” Subz agrees. “I just don’t want you to think I like you any less, or something.”

“Sometimes, I get scared that you hate me,” Zam confesses. “I get all scared that you hate me because I asked you to go, because I stole Vitalasy from you - or, you from Vitalasy, I guess, I dunno. I worry that I ruined everything.”

“I was a fucking *bitch* earlier,” Subz apologizes, again. “Even if I’m going through shit I shouldn’t take it out on you. You don’t deserve that.”

“Sometimes I feel like I do.” Zam rolls some vegetables around on his plate. Subz takes a fork, spears one, and eats it. “*Hey!*”

Subz laughs, his little *hehehehaw*, and Zam pouts for a moment, before properly sticking a fork into his food and resuming his meal.

There's a Zam in Subz' brain too, but the Zam in there is quiet; he is no beast, the way Vitalasy is, because there's no need for him to be. Zam is real and right here in front of Subz: within the reach of Subz' hands and words and mouth, real and beautiful. Subz gets to listen to this Zam talk about the flock of chickens he's raised and complain about the stray cats that skulk around their homestead, and watch him move and touch him and hold him and kiss him. He can hold this Zam's hands in his and promise, once more, to protect him and keep him safe, to build a home where no harm will come to him. A place where he doesn't have to live in fear. Zam sits on his skin like aloe vera, goes down his throat warm. At night, when Zam doesn't hear, Subz whispers to the shadows his truth and prays that, when the world ends, Vitalasy understands.

"I chose you." It burns on the way out.

"I love you, too," Zam tells him, and it is warm, and sad.

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