

smile for the camera (repeat and do it over)

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by [gin \(tabanthas\)](#)

Summary

You're an ally and an enigma at the best of times. At the worst, you are a challenge.

You are never, never a friend.

OR: rek and his trust issues <3

Notes

1. (head in hands) the fixation wants what the fixation wants. the fixation wants what the fixation wants. the fixation wants what the fixation wants. th

2. anyway i made a couple texposts but i need attention like endlessly and im too scared to like . actually talk to people so whatever ill do this instead

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

You are the most wanted person on the Lifesteal server.

Not the man who ran multiple scams from the safety of his Casino; not the man who claimed half the server and was executed for it; not the countless people lying in wait to pounce on those they

deem easy kills.

No, none of them. *You*. You are the most wanted person, and thus the most dispensable. No alliance lasts longer than two weeks, because apparently nobody can resist the draw of the chase.

But you have been running for a long, long time, and you will run for a long, long time still. Humans are persistence predators, some have said, and in this analogy you are the prey.

It's not that difficult to see it from their perspective. Sometimes, you wonder if they even see you as human.

You keep running.

—

The first mistake you make is one that practically no-one else would see as such. You escape one trap, then two, then three, and your reputation grows.

People begin to invite you to visit them in remote, conspicuous places, one hand behind their back and the other firmly on yours, guiding you towards certain death. All the while, they talk about you, thinly veiled anticipation bleeding into their voices.

I want to kill Clown, someone tells you, and you are immediately on alert. When you make your own escape route – minecarts and pit traps and who-knows-what-else could await – you discover a separate trap made for you.

When you see him the next day, you can barely hear his words over the uneven rhythm of your pulse. He is cheerful, though, and clearly under the impression that you let bygones be bygones.

So here is your first mistake, and the fact that derives from it: you drew attention to yourself, and you will do anything to survive so you will do it again.

Your friend knows you well enough that he knows where you'll stand upon entering a new building, and plans accordingly. Branky is worse off than you, in some ways, because he's not enough of a toy to be seen as anything more than free hearts.

(of course, this is before he joins the most powerful member on the server, and somehow has the guy wrapped around his finger within two days. that's branky's secret, and a terrifying one at that: he is underestimated, and he likes it. *uses* it.

he's not a smooth talker, is prone to nervous ramblings in the same way you are, but that's what everyone expects of him. when they hear him stumbling over his words, they don't get suspicious, not really.

this is how he gets them, laughing along and feigning fear of the man who bends to his whims, and you *fell for it*.

never again, you swear, no matter how much your chest aches when you level your friend with suspicion. he doesn't seem to mind, though: he is eyeing your own teammate with equal distrust.)

—

You pretend not to notice how conversations stop when you appear, voices abruptly cutting off and replaced by strained greetings. They rush to give excuses that sound fake, even to them, and breathe sighs of relief when you accept them.

There's no point calling them out on it; after all, you will escape whatever is thrown at you no matter what. You *will not* give them the satisfaction of trapping you.

(a lesser known fact, now, but no less true: you are vindictive, and paranoid, and this makes for long-held grudges and never-forgotten slights. you have no need for museums; every near-miss is permanently engraved into your mind.

you are not the smartest, nor the fastest, nor the strongest. but you are underestimated by people who overestimate themselves, and this is a role you have played for a long, long time.

checking the floor of a new area; making your own escape route, because you don't trust the smooth voice promising safety; standing in doorways and always, always keeping a pearl on hand – these are things you have learned to do through brute force.

you may not be able to beat your attackers and would-be trappers in combat, but you know things most wouldn't even consider, and this gives you the advantage. approach with a harmless offer, then profit.

not a wolf in sheep's clothing, perhaps, but definitely not the sheep, either.)

You're an ally and an enigma at the best of times. At the worst, you are a challenge, a way to prove oneself, an easy heart.

Never, never, never a friend. You've made that mistake before, and it was only when you were faced with the cool, still air of the End that you realised how foolish you were.

Diamonds are exchanged with promises of trust and love; you see it for how it will be, even if that is not how it *is*. This will become a weakness, another point for people to poke and prod at.

For now, though, you take it and laugh along with Parrot and let yourself think, just for a moment, that this will last. He lets you preen his wings and the feathers on his arms, and in return you turn away from him to dump your items in a chest.

(all the while, your heart is pounding, a constant *thump thump thump* in your ears. for most people on this server, showing one's back is a little scary but not worth panicking over: if you will die, then you will die.

you are not most people.

people have discarded their weapons for more elaborate – *increasingly* elaborate – traps, ones you still feel burned into your skin in the form of scars. these, you never show anyone, hidden by your clothes as they are.

all this to say: this is not your base. you have not seen this place before. if parrot decided to kill you now, or had rigged the chest to tnt, you will be at his mercy.

this is not your base, and this is not your friend. no matter how much you may wish for stability, for companionship spanning past half-baked alliances, this is *not your base*.

you have a base, one that is safe and protected and an easy target. you have a teammate, one that is strong and smart and a potential enemy.

your heart is still racing long after parrot asks if you're okay. his head tilts in concern as he regards you, but you're still caught up on the fact that you're still alive.)

As mentioned before, you are the most wanted player, and you are a plaything to dissect beneath the bright lights of a beacon. This is ... fine. It's cool, it's whatever. Really.

So what if you let others go around corners before you do? So what if you keep potions and golden apples on you at all times, even outside of wars? So what if you want one *goddamn day of rest*?

You won't get one, though, and plaster a smile on your face as you go meet up with your server mates. They're playing around, having fun, and you'd love to join them but they extended an invite first.

(this is your third fact, one known only to you: nothing is safe, and no invitation is sincere. he has learned the hard way, as all things on this server are taught, that people don't have his best interests at heart.

no matter how stupid and harmless the situation appears, there is always a very real, underlying threat, and if he doesn't pick up on it then he dies. hell - he *has* died.

his death doesn't satisfy the wolves prowling in his blind spots, and he can't turn fast enough to keep them all in his sight. the next best thing to do, naturally, is to run. they can call him cowardly all they want; he has very few qualms about saving his own life.

so he avoids, and he deflects, and in the situations where that's impossible then he makes excuses and slips away at the first opportunity.)

You betrayed your teammates on the first day through pure bad luck. It wasn't an intentional thing, but then you had an extra heart's magic coursing through your veins and you were branded as a traitor.

It hurts, strangely enough, and the dull ache it leaves behind makes it easier to face the inevitable collapse of the new alliance. You stand alone in the fallout, a target on your back and nowhere to go.

Something interesting you heard somewhere unimportant comes to mind: betrayal only comes from those we trust, or something like that. It's a pretty obvious statement – it wouldn't be a betrayal, otherwise – but it's a sentiment that's not really expressed.

Maybe that's why you don't feel hurt by the easy way teammates turn on you for the chance to earn the honour of trapping you. You don't trust them as far as you can throw them (which isn't very far, anyway), and the only emotion you can muster up is a faint sense of relief.

Relief that the anticipation is finally over, and you can stop devoting part of your mind to this; relief that you've survived to see another day, even as your reputation grows; relief that you can go home, wherever that is, and know they didn't get what they wanted.

You are the most wanted person on the Lifesteal server.

You are scrappy, and will do anything to see the next sunrise. You are vindictive and vengeful, and every attempted trap lives on in the burn scars on your arms. You are wary, and regard every innocent offer with suspicion.

You are desperate, and you are paranoid, and you are terrified. You are a target for simply wanting

to live, a crime deemed unforgivable.

Humans are persistence predators, some claim. Humans are ambush predators, others argue. You don't know which side you agree with; you don't know if you agree with any.

Such romantic ideas, tainted with such bloody ideals. There is blood on your hands that will never go away, and there are bloodstains on every monument across the server.

You don't care – you are not the prey.

End Notes

1. had to post this not on anon bc ao3 is a fucked up little website and I hate it
 - 1.1. IM GOIGN INSANE I hate this dumb fuckin webbed site so much awawaawa
2. ngl i wrote this over the course of like 2 hours to the reese's puffs x cpr x misery mashup and its permanently rewired my brain chemistry btw
 - 2.1. it was nice to not have to think abt word count actually

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