

the space where a heart should be

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the space where a heart should be

by [sunswOrd](#)

Summary

raevyn and luci have a much needed conversation about its feelings. zoran has... thoughts.

really normal ones, too. i promise. [lie]

Notes

for context. zorans arguing with himself. ae does this a lot. often literally. italics are also aer. it's kind of a breakdown, so heads up about that. a deserved one, though.

Zoran doesn't know what he's doing here. Or more accurately, why he's still on the Veil side of the reflection. His next move should be clear: obviously, he needs to leap through the window, sweep Raevyn off its feet, say something charming (Zoran misses that one's smile, he's realized), and end his dashing rescue in style, somehow. Maybe break a window. Maybe punch Luci.

He does neither of those things. Zoran stays unseen and not totally corporeal, sort of leaning against the window. It's where he has been ever since Raevyn arrived. He idly considers another dramatic entrance (this time something with a wink and a 'Miss me, darling?~'). It doesn't happen. Maybe he should just appear and wave at that one, blow a kiss. Its grin would snap him out of this familiar feeling of total nothingness, he's sure-

You want to be snapped out of it? What for, so you can make things worse?

Yeesh, he's spacing out hard. Nice! Zoran sticks his tongue out at Luci, even though she can't see. It's about the principle of the thing- oh. Raevyn's speaking!

"Sure? I don't mind?" Raevyn says in response to something Luci must've asked. Aw, it sounds baffled. That's cute. "Hm, let's see, I crocheted a bunch of plushies for the other spades, I hope they like them, actually, say, what's your favorite animal?"

It idly taps its gloved fingers against their leg, which Zoran finds endearing. "Hmm, I met the new Heart, she seems nice-" Oh no. There's more of them? Poor Raevyn! "I showed her where the Jokers room was, actually now that I think about maybe I should go ask them about the pain in my chest-"

That one keeps speaking, but their words escape him. What? They're hurt?! No, that's not right. Raevyn shouldn't be hurt, it should be in his arms, happy and safe and warm.

And you'll help them... how, exactly?

...He has a point. As usual, Zoran's own instincts are right~ There's absolutely nothing he can do!! Raevyn will get better soon enough, it always bounces back! Always. ~~He can't consider an alternative to this! Absolutely not.~~ And why even worry at all!! Because as usual, everything's going to go as it should! It's all fi-

Mm, not quite. Their smile is off. That one's words are more.. Hesitant. Unsure. Why is Luci making it remember? The memories hurt. Even the thought of remembering turns something in his chest inside out.

You made it remember. He tries to focus on Raevyn's voice as they explain what happened in their dreamscape.

They needed to.

They needed this? Zoran can't look away from the haunted grin on his love's face. It's as if its joy has been stolen from it. By him, of course. *Ruining everything as usual.*

I was trying to help. "...he wanted to help." Raevyn's voice echoes his in the mirror world's dead space. Now Zoran can't keep aer eyes off of the ground. Looking at its face isn't even an option.

"Whatever ae did." What Luci says next feels almost like damnation. Maybe a bit worse. "Did he help?" Of fucking course not. *No, you never help. Obviously. That's too hard. And why do something hard if it's meaningless? Everything you do is, after all. The idea that you'd want to help someone, let alone manage to pull it off- ha! Something like you just isn't capable of that sorta thing!* Perhaps someone else would describe these thoughts as biting or cruel. But for him, this is... soothing. It's meant to be, anyway. *It's not your fault.*

They should hate me, he thinks, disagreeing. Ae doesn't know why and refuses to dwell on it. Not that it would help anything if ae did. The only thoughts he can hold onto swirl around each other, going in circles upon circles without reaching a conclusion *Raevyn hates me. Raevyn loves me. I hurt Raevyn. I helped Raevyn. Raevyn hates me. Raevyn loves me.* Just Raevyn, Raevyn, Raevyn-

"I... I'm not sure." Its voice quiets his racing mind. Finally, every part of his mind can agree on something: Raevyn is too important to ignore.

When Zoran finally processes it all, their words settle into his chest like icicles taking form; cold, intrusive, and sharp. Every breath hurts. The memory of this is going to play in aer head for *weeks*.

Huh. He laughs to himself and ignores how weak he sounds. When did his hands start shaking?

"How do people live like this?" What would he say, if they asked him? *Life is horrible. I don't know how they do it either.*

"What're you supposed to *do*," Raevyn continues, sounding lost and suddenly the distance between them feels *so* far- "when everything remains and there's nothing you can do about it-"

Something like a sob tears its way out of him. *Shaking and sobbing over nothing. How fittingly pathetic*, he thinks.

Everything aches. The hollow feeling in his chest that Zoran refuses to acknowledge burns cold. Memories of the lab from Raevyn's nightmares flood aer senses. The terror in its wide eyes, the pain in its scream, the feeling of their hand on his, only for them to be torn apart all over again. He can't escape the images and sensations that overwhelm his thoughts. No, he can't even think- all Zoran can do is drown in the onslaught of loss, misery, and pain.

And this is what ae damned Raevyn to. How could he have ever claimed to have helped it?

Zoran feels something in aer shatter. Or it would, if there was anything left to break. Instead ae collapses in on whatever broken bits of himself remain, defeated and hollow.

It was beyond naive to think that he could escape this, he thinks. It was stupid. Tragedy and despair are as inevitable for aer as death is for everyone else. All of the magic he has, all of the love ae's felt.. the knowledge that it's all ultimately meaningless twists at his heart. Or rather, at the space where it should be.

He notices his control over his own magic is slipping right when it's already too late. Zoran feels their presence before they even speak.

"Everything you touch, you ruin." A familiar voice muses from somewhere behind Zoran. *"How many times do you have to learn this lesson?" No, no no no no.* Ae feels like ae's about to shake apart. *No*, he *can't* do this right now. Even as ae squeezes aer eyes shut tight, the memory of their face taunts him. That sick, awful feeling eats at aer again. *"You can't be this stupid, Zor, even y-"*

"Shut up, W..." He can't even bring himself to fully say their name, but it's enough. The illusion melts away. What remains is that numb feeling of sorrow that accompanies any thoughts of them . As it always does. Ae can't get it to just go away already.

He really is entirely useless, huh. Zoran can't do a single thing right! Ae realizes he's smiling. He can *feel* how ghastly and grossly saccharine it must look. Yet ae can't bring himself to stop.

He starts counting on his trembling fingers. Let's see.. he's a disappointment as a weapon, a pathetic failure as a son, a shit brother, a terrible friend, and he's even worse as a partner. And now look at him! (Ae hears aerself laugh. His voice sounds distant, and even to aer own ears the harshness of his laugh is startling.) All of that! And, *still*, this idiot tried to think he could help Raevyn.

He's a burden at best. Thinking differently was begging for disaster, he muses. Even when he wants to do something right, when ae's willing to endure.. it ends like *this*. Always. Of course it does. The problem is never the situation, the other people, or even fate's uncaring indifference.

The problem, as it has always been, is him.

The thought gives aer some sort of peace, for what feels like a while. When ae's suddenly aware of aerself again, Zoran's eyes feel like they've glazed over. At some point he was upright, but now he's collapsed into a limp mess. The weight of his own body presses down on him uncomfortably.

Zoran sits up. His eyes fix on Raevyn. It's gone quiet and perhaps a bit solemn. They fiddle with their gloves. It really is cute, when it does that.

That hollow space in aer chest aches all over again when ae looks up at that one's face. Raevyn is so wonderful, it's charming, clever, and kind. It's his love. But now... Their gentle features seem lost and unsure. And that's his fault. The acknowledgement of that weighs heavy on aer. It *is* his fault. Zoran repeats it to aerself, as if it might suddenly become untrue the second time around. Wouldn't that be nice.

But no. He hurt Raevyn. Even if he wanted to help... he hurt them. Something settles over aer with that thought, deepening the ache. It's solemn, melancholic... but not quite resigned. Zoran leans against the window again. They still can't see him, but he offers Raevyn a smile. Despite the pain, ae means it.

He loves them. That's what makes it hurt. It's why the guilt refuses to fade.

Zoran watches Raevyn nod its head, looking too fragile for aer to bear just watching and too uncertain for him to look away. ...But what can he do? He listens to Luci's gentle reassurances with them, at a total loss. Most of what she says washes over him, completely devoid of meaning. The guilt persists still, wound tightly around his core. It's suffocating. Zoran strains to listen despite it, for reasons beyond him. The words aren't even meant for aer, but he hangs on still, listening like they might be his lifeline. "This feeling..." Luci says, comforting Raevyn and shattering Zoran in the same breath, "It'll be yours to keep."

What a terrible thing that is.

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