When I got here, everything was cold and perfect

Posted originally on the fanfiction.lol at https://fanfiction.lol/works/1693.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warnings:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence, Major Character Death
Category:	General (non relationship-focused)
Fandoms:	Hiccup series [Book Series] - Cressida Cowell, Among Us (Video Game)
Characters:	Camicazi [How to Train Your Dragon], Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, Fishlegs No-Name [How to Train Your Dragon], Alvin the Treacherous, various others mentioned
Additional Tags:	Cannibalism, does it count as cannibalism considering...?, Torture, Blood and Gore, Gunshot Wounds, Angst, no beta we die horribly, Cross-Posted on AO3
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-10-16 Words: 6,323 Chapters: 1/1

When I got here, everything was cold and perfect

by DragonWolf

Summary

My heart beat counting down a moment, precise and quiet
I looked out and saw my own reflection, helpless
I looked out and saw him overwhelmed and helpless

Notes

Originally posted on ao3
Posted to Fanfiction.lol archive on 11.11.26

See the end of the work for more notes

It's cold when you awaken, a crackling noise of the ice shifting reaching your form, reverberating through the ice and through you.

You don't remember per se, but you know the ice's never made this noise before. Not here. It's cracking. You don't feel things, but you think you'd feel excited if you could.

You can't really think either. Not by yourself. The last shape must've been able to. You don't remember. It's been a long time, there's barely any traces of it left.

The noise repeats. It goes on for a long time. You don't know how long. You reach out slightly towards the noise and prod at the walls of your prison.

It gives.

Some of your form breaches air. It's a long forgotten sensation, air. You've only known ice since it trapped you, since *they* trapped you, cold and unforgiving and numbing and absolute. You long for anything else. You force your way through the broken wall, seeping down through the crack in dripping crimson tears, collect on the ground in a thin film of freedom.

The smells hit you all at once.

Ice, ever present all around, still, making up most of the cavern in it's hateful frost, but others now. Rocks, benign and solid, dust and earth, brown and grey, choking but sweet, ever present. Dormant grass, sleeping for millennia under the freeze, green but stagnant. Metal, grey, unforgiving but inert.

Polymers, unnatural, sickly sweet. Weave, dry and earthy.

Blood. Hidden under skin, under fur, under hide that isn't hide, under lightning and warmth, warmth that is indicative of living, of prey. You flow towards it sluggishly, too coagulated, too cold, but hungry. Starving.

It smells familiar. It makes you angry. It reminds you of Them. You hate them.

It doesn't smell the same, but it doesn't smell like your natural quarry. You don't even remember what your old quarry was. They came after the quarry dried up. They made you alone, with heat and light. They trapped you.

This one doesn't smell the same as Them. But it's close enough to make the fire in your wake back up.

You follow the trail. It never notices you approach. You can't see, you're still too cold for that, too weak, but you can sense it. It's moving slowly, unaware. It's carrying something, something warm, full of fuzzy energy that comes from the sky. You think it makes light. You can't feel any light in your direction though.

The smell of blood unspilled, of mammal, is strong, it wakes you up further. Sluggish slithering picks up the pace. You reach for a limb and sink your teeth in before it even knows

you're there.

Iron-coppery liquid spills through the new tear in skin and not-hide. You drink of it greedily, reaching for the other limbs to immobilise it, to drink from them too.

Blood is only good when it comes together with flesh. The new quarry topples over as you bind its limbs together, makes a noise that must be pain, must be a call. It reverberates through the icy chambers, unanswered and unheard. You bite at its middle, pulling away chunks of not-hide before you can get at the contents under it. You might remember these contents being the best tasting part, if you remembered such things.

It strikes at you with the thing it is holding, light glancing over you in rhythm with the sensation that could have been pain if you could feel it. You reach over and wrench the thing away, letting it fall nearby. The noises it's making increase in pitch as you dig into its middle. You pay them no mind. You think you might have revelled in these things in the past, but once you taste flesh you can't slow down. You've been starving. You are starving.

The organs are the best bits, your past self was right. You pull them out, piece by piece, in messy wet mouthfuls, tearing out the thin film of connective tissue along the way.

The noises are different now. They're quieter, off-rhythm. Gasping for breath. Wet. You don't know what they mean.

You ignore it.

You reach further as the contents start to wain. Bones are edible, but you aren't to that point yet. You nip messily around the spine. You reach deep, around the cage of ribs, under it. There's soft soggy tissue, all chewy iron and bubbles, and it's all well and good but you know there's something more here. You dig, it's all material for you, not just the taste, but this is important, even if you don't remember the name. It's strong, still beating.

It's not beating fast anymore. They never do by the time you get here. But it's still beating.

You bite down. It bursts.

The noise, already quiet and dying, strangles itself into silence. The rest of the thing lays still. You don't need to hold it down anymore.

You don't let go anyway. The hunger isn't gone but it's lesser now. You can do something now.

These things are never alone. None of the warm things ever are, not really, even when one breaks off. There will be more. There's always more. That's how you used to hunt, before the quarry ran out.

They were never alone either. Not for long. These things must be the same.

So there would be more. You'll have to meet them halfway. Hunt them like your kind is supposed to.

Maybe that's what excitement is supposed to feel like. Like melding of flesh, grafting yourself onto bones, or rather grafting the bones themselves. Replacing organs and muscle you destroyed with yourself. Pulling yourself into a frame that doesn't belong to you.

Well. It belongs to you now. You took it.

Its mind is in the head. Its memories are in there too.

You take it. Like you took everything else.

It's confusing, more senses that you naturally have flooding your mind- stolen mind, but yours now- in a tidal wave.

You can think now. Proper, fresh thoughts, for the first time in forever. You can see, the light of the flashlight, that's what it's called, giving you sight of the cavern around you. The light is a cold white, glinting off the ice. You hate it. You take a breath and revel in how it feels. You flex your hands and revel in that too. You make a noise, low in your throat, and it's not an unfamiliar feeling, but its elating anyway.

The reverie itself isn't unfamiliar. It's heightened now, but it happens every time.

Speech doesn't. Thoughts like this don't. You don't know if it ever has, but you barely have memories of your own, memories that aren't stolen.

There's enough of the you, the original you, to hate. This shape that you have, you hate it. You hate anything like it. Needs must.

You consider who you are now. A lifetime of memories press on you. This shape is small, young. Lithe. A thief child with a shock of blonde hair, barely old enough to even be here. Her hands are calloused, like rope burned and healed. She's suspicious of most. She'd probably manage to fight you off had she known you were there, for you were still weak and starving, but she'd gotten lost in the cavern and thought it barren.

You don't feel bad about it. Obviously. You've just learned that was even an option.

The spacesuit draped loosely on your frame is torn and ruined. The helmet is cracked. You can patch that all up though. Wouldn't wanna freak anyone out before the time is right.

You take more breaths, getting used to the rhythm of it, faked but instinctual. Get up on your legs, revelling just slightly in the vague novelty of being upright.

You leave because you are free to do so now.

***

It's. Easy.

Your old quarry got more suspicious, but you suppose that had the foreknowledge of you, of predators like that in general, maybe also a high sense of smell, something these creatures- humans they're called- don't have. But you make your way back to where they're

reconfiguring the old base for habitation and they just ask you what you found while exploring without even looking you over twice.

You tell them you found nothing. Maybe you scoff a little, say it was boring. It comes naturally.

The person nearest to you waves you off, not unkind but busy. What was their name? Something beginning with Th? Both sides of you dismiss it for the moment.

It's easy in all the ways that it's not.

There's duties you have, you're here for a reason. Even the ice cave, the hateful little thing, wasn't just a flight of fancy, it was work.

You don't want to do work. Part of you loathes wasting the time on the ruse and part of you is just bored by the work still left even after a week of you all being here, but you also know that you Have to do it. It's not a choice you feel like you make, it comes naturally, like breathing.

So you work. You help around. You were hired as a researcher, not an engineer, but you're expected to help.

You're not alone. The thing you took is standoffish, but not friendless. There's two of them, and maybe if you could feel it you would be happy to see them. You bedraggle a convincing facsimile of it.

You can see them properly inside the main building, hidden behind an airlock. The air inside is different, you suppose that's why there's a door like that there to begin with. The atmosphere outside must be bad for these things. Poisonous, your memories supply. Too much of one gas and not enough of another.

The two boys are unlikely, barely older than you. A tall weed of a boy, eyes hidden behind circular glasses and a shorter one, still taller than you, a halo of orange framing his face. It takes a time for their names to come back to you. It takes longer to remember your own, but you recognise it when they call you by it.

It's. Supposed to be tranquil? You think? To spend time with them. You don't really know what that's supposed to feel like. You don't know if you even are feeling anything. You're not meant to think or feel like this.

You hate them, you hate everyone here. The fire burns bright, it's hard to contain, it's been hard not hunt anything that moves.

But even with that hatred in the background. You breathe evenly. You even manage a smile when it's appropriate.

It's all fake anyway. The smalltalk, the jokes, the smiles.

It goes on for days. No one notices the difference.

***

It doesn't take long. They're foolish, for all their complex thoughts, oblivious.

There's something in your memories about your information saying there's no big predators on here. They'd forgotten you.

You pick a first. It's that colleague that waved you off days ago, Thuggory. You've seen him around since, held light conversations to keep up the illusion of normalcy. You feel no specific emotions towards him, just vague amicable indifference. He stays in his sectors, you stay in yours.

There's no hard feelings that make you go after him first. He's just an engineer. He just prefers to work alone. He's just vulnerable first.

He waves a hello to you as you enter the workshop. He's working on something you don't have enough information to decipher. You don't respond, just go to stand by him as if observing his work. He makes meaningless conversation for a while, and you hum in acknowledgement sometimes.

He turns away to tinker. You think you've might have done this song and dance a couple times in the past. Seething bubbles up in your chest.

It's quick. He barely screams before choking. There's a spike going through the top of his chest from the back, just where the neck connects. You pull it back out, letting him slump over the machine he was working on.

Red foams up at his mouth for moment. He manages to puke before expiring. You don't seem to care. You're still hungry.

Things taste best when you're hungry, but it's not the same when you're starving. It's a different matter when you have new words and senses for it.

It's. You can't describe it very well. Poetry isn't your thing.

You remember wondering what human tasted like. Back when you weren't you. In jest, of course, as one of your friends is squeamish and it's fun to tease him like that, and the other is a zoologist, so he had a slanted but educated guess. You remember arguments if it would be more like chicken or venison.

It's like neither of those. It's. *Sweet. Tangy. Salty.*

Unique. Like nothing you've ever had before.

There's no cleanup after you're done, besides the uniform. Bones are edible, if crunchy, after all. They're better than what they serve as rations here anyway, all minced treated dead meat and preserved veggies.

You throw the suit in a ravine. The fire in you doesn't change, doesn't die out. It won't until they're all gone, you know this.

***

It's the same for the second. Middle aged man, H something Hotshot. Melodramatic but not high and mighty. Capable. Dangerous.

No personal hard feelings.

He fights back, but it's not enough. You snap his neck.

It's savoury. Some of it pulls like taffy, some of it crunches like celery, making your teeth feel weird.

Minimal cleanup. Another bit of a cloth and glass in the ravine. You continue to seethe.

People notice they'd not seen Thuggory all day. You say you haven't seen him either.

The third is the same. Brutish young man, nicknamed for his bad breath. You're not sure you've ever actually heard his real name. It might start with a D. He's an idiot. Mentions he's supposed to get his next task from Hotshot but he hasn't heard from him in some time.

No personal hard feelings. You pull his entrails out before he manages to stop breathing.

The lungs are spongy and wet, tasting like iron. The kidneys are earthy and bitter, coppery and rich.

Minimal cleanup.

Your seething is unchanged.

The fourth. The fourth is different.

There's a viscous anxiety in the air, different from the unfamiliar safe atmosphere in the domes, different from the apparent poison outside. It's not been long, but the missing have been noticed.

There's nothing to find, obviously. Your teeth itch. Copper taste lingers in your throat.

There's not that many people here, but there's enough for the three missing to not make the base run much different.

Your friends stick together with you. They're worried for you. The red-haloed one, Hiccup he is called, theorises about hostile fauna, but is confused since management told them all there wasn't any fauna here at all. He chews on his nail, nervous same as worried. The taller one, with bad eyesight, Fishlegs he is called, mutters something about saboteurs and how he doesn't trust some of the older adults. He toys with a bronze pendant at his collar absently all the while.

You can't seem to ditch them. Safety in numbers, they say. It makes you seethe harder, but you can't do anything. Your own nature doesn't let you break facade. You wish you'd killed them when you had the chance.

A day passes. Then another. You grow restless.

A dead body shows up.

It's just. There. In the common area. Not cleaned up, not hidden at all.

It's just there in the morning, with no preamble.

It's Tantrum. She'd also been wondering where Hotshot was. You vaguely remember rumours that they were seeing each other in secret. You wonder if that'd been true.

You wonder why you even bother thinking about it.

She's on the floor, lifeless. There's a circular wound that smells like burned metal in her forehead.

Everyone argues about it. Accusations are thrown. You tune it out. It annoys you.

They all annoy you.

You suppose this makes things easier. If you're not working alone, however unintentionally, your quest will be over quicker.

You don't appreciate having your meals stolen though. You wonder if she would have tasted any different. Like cotton candy perhaps? Or maybe like a spicy roast.

The incinerator robs you of the revelation.

Nothing changes but the atmosphere. Fear smells like rot, you decide.

***

It's the same for the fifth but it's not the same.

It's in one of the labs this time. A dead body that isn't your handiwork.

You're alone for once. You've managed to break away from your cohorts, and you hear about the discovery over the loudspeakers. You filter through to the area in an uninterested meander.

It's. You can't tell who it is at first. Their protective suit is off, for work you suppose, the labs are nestled in an air-locked dome after all, but it makes things more difficult. The lab uniform is uni-size, it sits weird and baggy on everyone.

All identification you can see is a halo of orange around their head.

And it makes you feel. Something different.

Is it. Worry? It's new. You're confused by it, it makes the hate in your chest feel. Different. Prickly. Gross.

You despise it. It's just another dead human, you wanted it dead since you met it, since before you met it. You've wished for its demise even in its company.

You take a step forward. There's a din in the room, there's more people here.

You hate them, just like you hate the dead thing before you. You hate it. You do.

Something twinges in your chest. Something sticky, gross, like betrayal.

You hate it. You hate it. You do. You do. You do. Its death doesn't matter.

You get closer, ignoring the din entirely. There's a blossom of red under its head, you imagine from the same metal burn wound the woman a day ago had. Its limbs are splayed out like it fell backwards.

You hate it. You do, don't you? Don't you?

You finally see its face.

It's not who you thought it was. Something in your chest lets go, feeling suspiciously like relief.

Its the other redhead boy. You never payed too much attention to him, a brute and a bully even as a young adult. Snotlout was his name.

You don't feel anything but vague satisfaction at his demise. Other than the…. No.

Why does it feel like you can breathe again?

Your two cohorts arrive late. They're together. You beeline for them. They're happy to see you safe.

If you allowed yourself to you might be happy to see them safe too.

You hate them too. You must.

***

Hunger nips at your core.

Your cohorts are fools. They trust you, blindly, obliviously, trust you enough to stick by your side. Trust into safety in numbers, trust enough to let their guard down.

Trust you enough to rest, sleep while you keep watch. Trust for you to act like a guard.

You don't understand it. You don't understand the feeling. You don't understand why.

It should be easy prey. Your instincts should let you go.

Hunger gnaws, softly for now, at your insides. It should be easy.

You don't understand. You don't understand.

Kill them, get it out of the way. That's what you wanted, right?

Complicated feelings are a foreign concept. You don't know how to deal with them.

You.

Can't do it.

The fire feels sickly. Still bright and hateful but weird now. Sputtering. Choked off. Ill.

It feels wrong.

You stew in it. Keep watch like you're supposed to. For a while.

Hunger nips at you.

You can't stay.

They'll… they'll be fine. You'll be back. Soon.

There's three people left on the base, besides you and your friends. Any of them will do.

You don't know if Clueless is a name or a nickname. You were trying to find out before, you think, but never got your hands on any official papers.

You suppose it doesn't matter anymore.

You're too distracted to ruminate too much. You can't manage to come up with a comparison. You're thinking about other things. Blood drips off your teeth. Down your face. Down your shell. You're thinking about other things.

The ravine is getting crowded now. You wonder if anyone's even ever been to it, properly that is. They must not think it important.

You return like you were never gone.

You're thinking about other things.

No one notices.

***

They call for help. Ask for an evacuation. Understandably.

It'll not be here for a over a week. Maybe more. The outside world doesn't care enough the small bundle of no-name and has-been xeno-scientists. Doesn't care enough to hurry.

It smells like fear all the time now. Sickly-sweet anxiety and gentle rot in the air in every building.

The two older adults left seem somehow more frantic than your little posse. They just keep arguing with each other and it all seems so… pathetic? It's pitiable, really.

A day drags on. Then another. Nothing happens. You wait. You don't know what to do anymore.

You take night shifts to stand guard. You sleep in short increments during the day, watched over like you need it.

It gives you time to think, even thought you're really trying not to. It's uncomfortable. Thinking and feeling wasn't something you were meant for. Thinking *about* feelings…. well.

It's dull. You're getting restless again in a. Different way now.

You have a dream. It feels soft and silky. It feels like pastel and sunlight that you've never seen. It feels almost…. happy? You aren't used to it, but it's brief. You wake up quickly. You try not dwell.

You're sick of lying to yourself.

You hear a noise while keeping watch. There's something outside the door.

You wait. The presence stops. Lingers. Hesitates just on the other side of the door.

You hold your breath.

You wonder what it's thinking. You wonder what it thinks will happen if it opens the door.

You wonder if it thinks it's the monster.

It stands there for another moment. You can hear it breathing, even through the metal door. Maybe it you concentrate you might hear its heartbeat.

Is it scared? Is it excited? Pondering?

Is it ready?

Then…

Step. Tap. Step. Tap.

It thinks better of it. The uneven footsteps get quieter as it moves on, down the corridor, and out of earshot.

You consider. You weigh options.

This decision comes to you a lot easier than most do lately.

You slink under the door soundlessly.

The smell of blood hits you before you know it. It's thin, already expired for some time, even if not for long. It's spread in a thin smear over the ground, footprints along the length of the corridor.

You don't need to follow it. You sense the presence still nearby, heading out of the building. It doesn't know you're there, it can't hear you yet.

You follow at a distance. Your footsteps are feather light, owing to years of practice. You're not sure whose practice you mean.

It, the intruder, the saboteur, the man. He heads out of the dome and to the security building. Half the cameras don't work, never fixed, and the ones that do point at transitionary spaces, hallways and empty spaces where people don't linger long.

You've been avoiding the sight of them like second nature. It doesn't take much effort.

You suppose he wants to know if he's been found out. Or maybe where the others are.

You can't imagine the other leftover adult is still alive. His blood is smeared over the living quarters, temptingly fresh still. You wonder what it tastes like. If you'd be able to feel the desperation in it, the fear, the anxiety.

You have bigger fish to fry though.

He only hears you when you allow him to. Your boots make the softest click on the metal floor of an unventilated building. He turns around to see you and immediately there's a noise- it's a gunshot.

It misses you by a mile. You wonder if he didn't even aim or if the fear made him misfire. He seems flustered enough for the latter.

It takes the man- Alvin, you correct yourself with vitriol- a second to compose himself, or at least pretend to. You don't care for the little excuses he gives, you can't even be bothered to respond, but the expression on your face must reflect something that isn't there because he pauses. And then he…

Laughs.

You're forced to pause too, to listen. You raise your eyebrows, instinct in the face of absurd.

He pulls himself together. His smile has traces of mirth but more it's a wicked thing, slimy and self-assured.

He points to you.

He….

He calls you a partner.

He asks when they sent you, why they thought he'd need backup, not that he's complaining. Things have been a breeze so far, he says, he's gonna get a bonus, he says, for how well things are going. For how fast it's progressed, he expected to spend another month here.

He thinks you're like him. He thinks you're like *him. He thinks you're like him*.

He thinks-

It's be funny if you weren't so mad. You could laugh in turn if you weren't choking. He's making plans already, not that you're listening, inferno thundering in your ears.

He extends his hand to you. For a handshake probably. A deal, to end off the job, now that he assumes he has an ally.

You tear his arm clean out of the socket.

"Clean" is a terrible word for it. The joint pops as you pull, the ligaments tear, muscle gives out under pressure, blossoms into red thread, frayed at the edges. A quick spray of crimson follows in its wake. He screams, shock and pain in equal parts.

You don't bother with the arm. He's got more life in him still that you have to burn.

You snap his ankles first. It's easy, the bones break under your teeth in a moment. He falls back, a pathetic thing in front of you. The gun slips it out of his hand before he can even fire at you again.

You flay his legs, layer by layer, Skin then fat then muscle then bone, down to chunks and splinters. Blood coats your teeth and spikes an mouths and claws and all the rest of your shell, screams reverberate through you, high pitched and pleading.

You move on to the one arm still attached to him. You snap his fingers, one by one, joint by joint, until they're all left at weird angles.

You take your time. You wrench all the digits off the hand entirely. The skin stretches until it snaps, chunky bones littler the floor. You break the wrist too, mangling it, grinding the little bones together until they sound like dust. You peel the layers off this limb too.

You wonder how it would feel, to have your nerve endings to sing like this. You don't have any. It must sound something like the high octaves of a violin, pitch so high it's probably tearing those vocal cords into shreds.

You move on to the middle. Tear the skin off, slowly, pacing yourself. Remove the peritoneum holding the contents in place, ribbon by ribbon of smooth slimy tissue. Take the organs one by one, untangling them from each other, pulling slowly but persistently enough to tear them out.

You snap the ribs open, flaring them out like wings, just from the front. The lungs still move, short and shallow breaths, the heart still beats, quick, sickly pulse.

You consider them.

The noises are muted, barely sobs now, and you look to check if he's even still awake. He seems to be, his eyes are open, pupils dilated but unseeing, flickering gaze across the ceiling. You don't know how aware he is anymore, though.

He still breathes, his heart still beats. You consider.

Maybe leaving him like this, to bleed out like a blooming lily of viscera and bones, would be satisfying. Maybe it would be poetic.

You're terrible with poetry. It's never been your thing.

You reach a hand out. You don't remember shaping it back into a hand. Fingers close around the heart. They squeeze.

Whatever's left of the man squirms under you weakly as you apply more pressure. Lungs try to take deeper breaths, for all the muscles that aren't there to contract anymore to do so.

The heart pops. Quietly, pathetically. All movement and noise stops with it as it goes.

You breathe evenly, shaped like a human again, with no memory of returning to it. There's a space in your chest that feels hollow. Extinguished. Calm.

You don't understand.

It's all numb as you walk back. You instinctively call the room home. They're your home.

Nothing can hurt them anymore. There's nothing left to.

***

They find them. Obviously. The other man, Flashburn, a once famous scientist fallen into shameful obscurity, sporting a matching bullet wound in his forehead, laying like a doll outside the power plant, and the. Masterpiece you left in the security building.

They don't know you ever left.

There's not supposed to be fauna left on this piece of rock. There's not supposed to be a gun among the crew either.

Because they find the gun, obviously they do, they know what kinda person would have one.

It's him who made everyone disappear. It's a wild animal, one the scans missed, that made a human soup of him. What else could have done it?

Lying is second nature. You're not sure for whom.

You don't leave the living quarters' dome anymore. The airlock is barred from the inside.

It's safe now. Safe to wait for rescue. It's alright. It's going to be ok.

The fire's gone. It's cold now. The cold doesn't scare you anymore. It's tranquil, it's peaceful. Safety like a blanket over you.

~~You don't understand. You don't understand. You don't understand. You don't understand. You don't understand. You don't understand. You don't understand. You don't understand. You don't understand. You don't-~~

You.

Maybe you do understand.

You took her. Took all that she was, body and mind and identity. Through pain and blood you took it all. That's how you hunt, that's how your kind has hunted since before you existed. It's in your nature.

Maybe. Maybe she took you too.

Theft was her favourite. teal you like Maybe this is in her nature like it is in yours.

You don't know for sure. Memories from before feel blurred.

You feel. Happy. Probably. Happy to be safe, not just you but together. You can't stand lying to yourself anymore.

Hunger chews at your core.

Preserved meat turns to ash in your mouth.

***

You just have to wait it out. Ride out the waves of discontent and would-be-pain that swirl just under the core of your being. Ignore the instinctual broil that teethes at you, a slow ramp-up. Slow and steady. Ride out the waves of discontent and would-be-pain that swirl just under the core of your being. Ignore the instinctual broil that teethes at you, a slow ramp-up. Slow and steady.

Should be easy as breathing.

Treated minced meat is not enough. It tastes of nothing, no matter how much salt you pile up, no matter how much you chew. It doesn't fill the hollow in your insides.

It's dead. Dead longer than you've been on this rock, whichever one of you that was. It has no life left to take.

It used to taste like something, you think. It wasn't great, but it was Something. You think.

It should hurt. You think you know whose expectation that is, but you aren't sure anymore.

Easy as breathing, just like you said.

You're sick.

Cold curdles into an ill freeze in your chest. You don't miss the fire. But you don't want this either.

You sink into fog. Just under a week left. You can ride this out. Wait yourself out.

You spend a time at the library, or what of it there is, just a few shelves in a corner, books dusty and old. Fishlegs shows you a particularly melodramatic love poem that he says he recommends. You tease him lightheartedly over it, and he chuckles along.

You're not one for poetry, not really. It's always been his prerogative.

One less day to wait.

You have another dream. More tangible. Getting rescued, getting on the ship, leaving. Safe and sound, all of you.

You watch a movie on one of your tablets. It's a shitty old thing, terrible enough to be funny. You don't have anything else, and you remember already seeing this thing twice on the flight here.

It's there for background chatter. To distract the three of you from the anxious rot in the air, from the wait.

To point out the flaws in it, again and again, like you've all done before. Like Hiccup does now, anxious chuckle turning to something genuine as the movie goes on.

You elect to watch a documentary next. It's the one movie he'd managed to bring that saved on his tablet properly, and you've seen this one even more times by now. You've heard this monologue before. The boy can quote it front to back. Both of you tease him for it. It's completely lighthearted.

You fall asleep to its credits. Or you should.

All around you, breathing softly and gently. Restful.

You struggle to breathe. It gnaws.

One less day to wait.

You have another dream. Safe on the ship, away from the rock, going through space. Going home.

You scan the manual. Try to toy with the computer in the ways you're not supposed to with the use of it.

There's a chess game, rudimentary and shitty looking, hidden on it. You're terrible at it. It's funny how quick the ai beats you. You can't even muster frustration, it's amusing.

One less day to wait.

Days drag on.

One less day to wait.

You forget if you know how to breathe.

One less day to wait.

You wonder why.

Why didn't she take all of you.

Why didn't it take all of you.

Hunger tears at the hollow in your middle.

You have another dream.

It's the realest feeling yet. You're home. It's warm. The sunlight doesn't hurt your eyes when you look up.

You feel alive in a way you haven't… maybe ever?

There is no fear here, no heavy anxiety in the air.

There's a knock. You don't wake up.

It's peaceful. You don't know what that feels like, but you imagine it is nice.

The hollow in your middle is gone. Food tastes like food, coffee flavoured candy melting on your tongue. It's like a day at a public library, subdued but sweet, with a hint of bitterness, just a smidge, just enough.

You chew thoughtfully, vaguely salty filling of the candy dripping down your lip.

You don't actually know what chewing thoughtfully means. That phrase confuses you. You suppose you're thinking now, but does that mean anything?

Where did the phrase come from? What's the etymology of it.

Wait that's not the right science, is it, etymology studying where individual words come from, right? Or is it the one that studied bugs.

Why does the study of bugs need a separate science all to themselves? They're annoying and loud and they get everywhere, why are we studying them.

What the fuck are you talking about anymore.

Where are you?

That's not the sun. That's the hallway lights. Your room door is open.

You're awake. The dream is still fresh under your skin.

You're chewing on something.

It sweet enough to be candy still.

Something catches on your teeth, metal but not iron or copper but bronze. It's terrible, cracking a tooth as it comes down, if only the crack lasted for longer than a moment. You spit it out on instinct.

Bronze chain hits your palm, a little pendant suspended by it. Tiny lobster, innocent as can be, caked in gore as if its own.

Blood spills over your lips, salty caramel tainted by sour chunky bile, but you can only take, not give.

Never to give. Never to give back.

Only ever take.

***

He's waiting at the middle most room. He expected the both of you, you think, at one point, in the past, but. Doesn't seem surprised. Maybe disappointed. Not in you.

You're bloodstained still. His shoes are too, you see it on the soles.

You can't breathe anymore. You hand the pendant to him, loosely.

You don't know what to do anymore.

You lock eyes with someone you can't even call a friend. That was a lie from the beginning.

Was it though?

You don't know which one you are anymore. Which one was You?

It's both, isn't it? Is it not how this works?

He calls you by your name.

Camicazi. Yes, that is your name.

Is it you?

Which one are you.

Something changes. In his eyes and you suppose in yours.

He opens his arms. A peace offering, an invitation.

Maybe you can learn to breathe again. You take it.

It's an embrace, and you melt into it like life depends on it. You want it to melt the ice in your chest.

It doesn't last, nothing ever does, nothing has since you left the cavern. There's would-be-pain in your back, that'd sever your spine had you had one.

There's a knife in your back. It feels like desperation, lashing out against betrayal.

You suppose you understand This. Most of you.

Blood tastes like firecrackers and haloes on your tongue.

You can't breathe through the fire anymore.

End Notes

This whole fic happened cuz while playing a *different game* i heard the word imposter a bit too many times and started having visions

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!