

A CHAOS STATION STORY >>

SALUTE TO THE SUN

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SALUTE TO THE SUN

A Chaos Station story

For Jenn

For Felix, finding peace has always been about staying in motion—about running faster than his demons, and enjoying a small reprieve before they catch up. For Zed, peace is finding the center of the storm and sitting it out. Embracing stillness. Felix wants that. He’s determined to learn this meditation trick. He’d like to stop running. But sitting still isn’t as simple as it looks.

“Salute to the Sun” is set shortly after *Skip Trace*. I actually wrote it before we finished writing *Skip Trace*, as a Christmas gift for Jenn. In preparing to share it with our newsletter subscribers, I had to go back and edit in a few details such as nipple rings for Zed and mention their much needed therapy sessions!

I hope you enjoy this extra little episode with the guys.

Felix studied Zed's closed eyes for any hint of a twitch or half-blink. The stillness Zed managed to achieve when he meditated was unnatural. Unnerving too.

"Your eyes are supposed to be closed," Zed said, his voice low and patient.

"How do you know they aren't?"

"I can feel you looking at me."

Felix swallowed a growl. Zed's lips had barely moved and his eyelids still hadn't twitched. Bastard had some sort of super-human control. The fact that Zed was super-human, sort of, didn't make that observation any easier.

Felix had known Zander Anatolius for most of his life. Some twenty-three of his thirty-one years. There were a couple of gaps in there. Felix had apparently died, though Allied Earth Forces reports of his KIA status had been grossly exaggerated. That tended to happen when you got captured by the enemy during wartime. Zed had taken a turn at dying too. If asked, Felix would cite Zed's passing as the more traumatic event. Had damned near broken him. Might actually *have* broken him, hence his inability to sit still and pretend to meditate with his super-enhanced, alive, always larger than life lover.

Eyes still closed, Zed breathed out long and slow, as if feeding air to the atmosphere. "It takes practice, Flick." Felix's old nickname rolled off his tongue just like that, with a little flick. The corners of Felix's mouth twitched in response. "Emptying your mind is hard. Maybe start by just seeing what's in there."

What's in there? Yeah, no. Not a good idea. Felix had boxes and boxes of shit packed away in his mind, and rummaging through those carefully packed crates was most definitely not his idea of a good time. That's what they were paying a therapist for...and wasn't meditation supposed to be relaxing?

"You don't have to dig deep," Zed continued. "Just let the surface thoughts flow past without touching them. Observe, but don't engage."

"If you're observing all this shit, why aren't your eyes moving?"

"Close your eyes, then it won't matter what my eyes are doing."

Grumbling, Felix closed his eyes. "Okay, my eyes are closed."

"Now...drift."

Drift. Huh. How had Zed had his legs? Cracking his lids, Felix peeked at Zed's legs and saw he had them crossed, ankles tucked, spread knees nearly touching the ground. Zed's hands were draped over his knees, fingers all loose and floppy. Felix shut his eyes tight and sparks ringed the resulting blackness. In the dark, he made an attempt to cross his legs, grunting as he got his right tucked, hissing as the tendons and ligaments in his left shrieked in protest.

Zed made no comment. Peeking again, Felix kept an eye on Zed's lids as he continued arranging his legs. When he had achieved a half-cross, he gripped his knees and forced his eyes closed again. The sparks returned, resolving quickly to leave a murky, pixelated gray shadowed by the afterimage of Zed's silhouette and a crescent of light from the desk lamp. Never entirely comfortable with the dark—the ultimate irony considering he spent 99.99 percent of his life in space—Felix filled in the blank spaces with what he remembered of his quarters. The desk behind Zed, currently cluttered with half-finished projects and tools. The narrow shelf jutting out over the desk. The finished projects on the shelf—small mechanical toys, a holo projector with a

hazy schematic overhead, a short stack of ration bars, some data chips... Hey, maybe that pressure clamp he'd been looking for was up there.

"Are your eyes open?"

Narrowing his *maybe* open eyes at Zed, Felix swallowed a sigh and began the laborious task of unfolding his legs. To say that nearly four years in a stin work camp had robbed him of flexibility would be putting it mildly—which was why he preferred to meditate while in motion. He needed to move in order to stay moving. With a glance at the heavy kick bag occupying the corner of his quarters, Felix said, "I can't do this sitting and not thinking thing. I need to move. That's why I have my kick bag and mat."

Eyes still closed, Zed offered a short nod. He appeared completely unruffled by Felix's inability to sit still, think *still*. But Felix knew that face. He knew those eyelids—fringed with gloriously long and dark lashes—almost as well as he knew the steel blue irises beneath. He'd watched Zed sleep a few times. Probably more than a hundred times. At the Academy when they'd bunked together, or just flopped together, on Hemera Station when Zed had slept the sleep of the well and truly fucked, and way too often over the past couple of months while Zed recovered from the debilitating seizures brought on when he exercised his super-self. When he tested the *gifts* the AEF had given him.

Zed was fixed...*now*. Death could do that for a man. Shake out the old, bring in the new.

Felix was not fixed, and even now, in the face of Zed's peacefulness, he could feel pieces of himself breaking away, crumbling, dissipating into clouds of dust before they hit the floor. Swallowing a lump that may or may not be dust traveling from his brain to his gut, Felix backed away from Zed's aura, stepping outside the warm circle of peace. His agitation felt apparent. He'd already teased a thread free from a seam on his utility pants. Continuing to hang around would only poke a hole in Zed's cozy blanket of Zen.

"Don't go."

"I'll just mess with your thing if I stay."

Zed's head tipped toward the kick bag. "Work out, then."

"I'll make noise."

"You make noise when you sit still."

Felix scratched his cheek, then let his fingers crawl over his ear and into short curls. "Well, yeah, I can't sit still is why. My knees are all fucked up."

A faint smile rippled across Zed's wide and sensuous mouth. "Kick your bag, then. Get 'em all loose."

After considering his position a moment longer—weighing leaving versus staying—Felix moved to his kick bag and began a warm up. By the time he had the bag swinging away from his most powerful kicks, Zed had disappeared. His body was there, but he'd gone somewhere else mentally, to that place Felix couldn't reach. To the place the Guardians had given him, that nirvana of health and wholeness that would forever be beyond Felix's grasp.

But didn't mean he couldn't try to get there, even if he had to kick his way through a new bag every month.

If the Net could teach him how to get rid of fruit flies—they were gonna start irradiating every goddamned crate of fruit carried into their cargo hold—it could teach him how to meditate. He might not find that wholeness Zed exhibited. Felix hadn't been broken down and put back together by superior beings. But if he could touch that peace, stroke it with one mental finger,

maybe he'd get an idea of what Zed did with that hour every morning. Find some of that glowy shit that flushed his cheeks with...glowy shit. Okay, he'd never look as hearty and hale as all that, but... Fuck it. Was it so wrong to want to be whole? To at least be able to imagine what that might feel like?

Every search he'd run so far detailed varyingly frustrating ways of remaining still.

Maybe he could invent his own meditation system. Some martial arts were supposed to be meditative, weren't they? Teasing his lower lip with his tongue, Felix poked at the holographic keyboard projected over his desk. *Martial art meditation*. Oddly, a blush crept out of his shirt collar, up his neck and over his ears. It would be less weird to search for ashushk porn, right?

His search resulted in a series of images, each depicting a figure sitting cross-legged. What the fuck was it about being able to cross your legs? That was some painful shit. If—if—he could get his knees all folded like that, and pointed somewhere toward the floor, then his hips ached. And his back. After a minute, his shoulders got into the act. He'd lasted three minutes yesterday.

Zed had been all patient and encouraging. Told him that if he divorced his mind from his body, the pain would fade. Only way Felix knew how to free his mind was with sex. Or movement. Glancing sideways, he regarded his kick bag. The heavy SFT material was starting to show its age, dead patches of smart fiber covered by stains. Sweat, blood. Some tears. Mostly sweat.

Felix turned back to his console and reached up to poke through the collection of articles his search turned up. Nope, nope, nope... huh, what was that? Yoga. Sounded like an ice-cream flavor. With a flick of his fingertips, he expanded the article. Oh, yeah, crossed legs, nope, wasn't going to work. Hey, wait a minute...

He pulled a series of images to the forefront of the display and scrolled through them. A figure standing, reaching tall, then bending down. Doing a runner's stretch, a push-up, sticking his ass in the air, another runner's stretch, touching his toes and standing up again. No crossed legs.

"This is it. I can do this. *This* is gonna be my thing."

The article described the sequence as a "Salute to the Sun". It was supposed to be meditative. Encouraged, Felix pushed back from his desk and, eyeing the projection, performed the series of moves. His joints creaked and his tendons grated, but he got through the sequence with little effort. What's more, he enjoyed the sense of rhythm that came with repetition of the movements, or poses as they were called. After twenty reps, his chest heaved pleasantly and sweat beaded his brow.

And, he'd thought of nothing but moving.

It was kind of like a workout with the bag, but not as grueling. He didn't have to wrap his hands and, without a visual target, his thoughts hadn't latched onto the idea he had to kill something dead. Defeat all foes.

The door to his quarters slid open and Zed stepped through the hatch, ducking his head even though he had a couple centimeters of clearance. It was a good habit for a tall man.

"What's up?"

Making an effort to calm his breathing, Felix tried for a nonchalant shrug. Just one shoulder. "Nothing much."

Stepping close, Zed ghosted a hand over his damp brow. "Been working out?"

"Meditating."

Zed's blue eyes cut sideways to the kick bag, which hung still. One dark brow quirked upward. "Oh yeah?" Zed glanced toward his groin.

Felix gave him a light shove. “Not that kind of meditation.” When Zed’s gaze roamed toward the open holo, Felix quickly reached back to pinch the display, crumpling the image as if it were paper.

Zed held up his hands. “Not gonna ask, but if you’re looking for Qek’s stash of instructional vids”—on human sexual technique, no thank you—“I can hook you up.”

“I’m not looking at porn.” Anger spilled into his gut. Even as it spread, Felix could tell it was unreasonable, a defensive mechanism he had little control over. But Zed had to know he was sensitive about this shit. “I just...” He didn’t want to demonstrate his stupid sunny salute thing. It wasn’t sitting still with an expression of blissful calm, and he really didn’t need that difference pointed out while any peace he’d gained from the exercise rapidly steamed off his heated skin.

Angling his shoulder past Zed, Felix made for the door. “I gotta go clean the—”

“Hey.” Zed caught his arm, pulling him to a gentle halt. “Flick, I didn’t mean—”

“It’s okay.” It wasn’t, not really. He glanced up to meet Zed’s gaze and found befuddlement. Well, he was confused too. Lifting his heels, he reached up and caught Zed’s full lower lip between his teeth, delivering a sharp nip. Hissed breath tickled his mouth. Releasing his prize, Felix added a dash of sugar. A quick kiss and a wink.

Then he ducked through the hatch, leaving Zed standing in his quarters, looking properly confused.

So, there was more to yoga than the one salute to the sun. There were more salutes too. Different poses, and he was supposed to breathe in a special way as he moved from one to the next. *In* as he stretched, *out* as he contracted. When he got the two confused and tried to breathe in as he contracted, weird things happened to his gut.

There were plenty of cross-legged positions—or as Felix preferred to think of them, folded-leg positions. One of the women in the holos had arranged her legs like a fucking pretzel. Seriously, they looked like a tangled spool of wire beneath her.

“And what the fuck is that?” His surfing finger paused over a man—legs broken beneath him—who had his head tipped back so he could pull a strip of fabric from his open mouth. Apparently he’d swallowed it, on purpose, to clean his insides. “Yeah, well, my soul ain’t never gonna be that pure.”

He’d stick with the external stuff.

Okay, these looked good. Balance postures. Mountain, tree... Fucking weird names, but... Okay.

Felix pushed away from the console and stood as directed by the instructional holo he’d queued up. Feet hip width apart, knees slightly bent, thigh muscles engaged, which meant pulled toward his hips. Stomach tucked toward his tailbone, shoulders back and down. Spine straight. Just getting himself lined up took concentration and by the time he finished, he felt nothing like a mountain. He felt more like a broken stick. Maybe he’d got tree and mountain confused?

The guy on the holo—hey, wasn’t that the same guy who’d just pulled cloth out of his throat? Felix bent forward to peer at the small pixelated face, then enlarged it. Man, that was a peaceful face. Too fucking peaceful. The guy looked as if... Hell, he looked as if he’d just come sixteen times. Shouldn’t even be standing, let alone trying to look like a mountain. Oh, right, hands over his head.

Felix put his hands up, palms together in prayer position. At least no one had asked him to actually pray. In fact, the whole yoga thing seemed less focused on communing with an actual god as with himself.

Probably not the best instruction for a former prisoner of war.

Losing his focus, Felix tipped to the side. He fetched up against his kick bag, hugging his arms around the solid weight until he found his feet. He'd just fallen over while standing up.

"I am fucking pathetic."

And he didn't feel all that peaceful, either.

He needed something easier than standing. What about... Oh, corpse pose. Now if that title wasn't *apt*. Though, in his experience, corpses usually weren't so neatly arranged and peaceful. Nevertheless, he laid down, flat on his back, feet turned out, hands slack at his sides, and activated the guided meditation.

"Tighten your fists, hold for a breath, and loosen."

Repeat without the rinse.

The tightening and loosening thing moved from limb to limb until he was apparently relaxed. Then the voice guided him down a set of stairs that never seemed to end.

When Felix finally opened his eyes they were a little crusty... and Qek was looking down at him. "Are you well, Fixer?"

Felix yawned and stretched. "Yeah. I guess I fell asleep."

"On the floor?"

"Apparently." Wriggling his fingers and toes, Felix tested his *wholeness*. Felt like he'd slept on a cold, hard floor. It'd been a good nap, though.

"No fucking way."

If he couldn't cross his legs, nothing short of a dislocated hip would place his ankle behind his head. Felix glanced down at his legs, which he had managed to loosely cross after a week and a half of practice, and tried to envisage lifting one of them up and over his shoulder. His back screeched in protest.

"Jesus, Joseph and Mary, I haven't even moved yet!" he scolded his recalcitrant body.

"Fixer to the bridge."

Thumbing his bracelet, Felix answered the captain's summons. "I'm trying to meditate down here."

"Yeah, yeah," Elias answered. "*Wash your hands before you come up, eh?*"

"Fuck you."

Why did everyone think his idea of meditation was masturbating? His pants had been securely fastened when Qek found him passed out on the floor.

"Right, we're gonna do this."

It'd been three weeks. He was getting limber. Sort of. He could sit cross-legged for eight minutes now and he'd mastered the floor nap. Corpse pose rocked.

Felix lifted his leg, grasped his ankle and tugged it toward his head. If asked, he'd have no clear explanation for why he had to put his foot behind his head. It would hurt, he already knew that. Was one of those givens, like the fact his bones ached when he got too cold. Ever since

seeing it, though, the posture had teased him—challenged him. He'd spent years pushing himself toward limits, passing them and redefining them.

He'd survived four years as a prisoner of the stin. Three and a half of them deep in the mines of Isroth.

He could put his foot behind his head.

His hamstring tangled, then settled. The bones in his ankle creaked. Fire licked along one side of his back, a warning he'd stretched just a bit too far... and then he had his foot in front of his face and it was an ugly mother. He really needed to borrow one of Zed's scrubby things. The textured puff he used to loosen dead skin. According to Zed, sloughing away dead skin was good for the complexion. His wrinkled heels could use a lot of sloughing.

The moment's reflection had been enough for his thigh to stop complaining. Drawing in a breath, Felix breathed out and *contracted*. Folded his belly, dipped his head and wedged his right ankle behind his neck.

"Holy shit."

He had a single moment to revel in his accomplishment before the pain hit.

A howl tore from his throat, a primal sound that echoed from the metal walls of his quarters. When it met his ears again, his yell sounded like a scream. Felix pushed at his leg and more pain burned from the back of his knee to his groin. Letting his hands fall away, he grappled with breath—stifling another scream—and sought the place of calm he knew he'd need to get his fucking ankle off the back of his neck.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck..."

Breathe in, breath out. In, out. Tighten and release? No, fuck no...ow, ow, ow.

"Shit, shit, shit..."

He needed to calm down, which would be easier done without his foot wedged behind his head.

"Of all the stupid things."

Either the pain had begun to fade, or he'd killed his leg. Maybe shock was descending. Oh, man. If he passed out like this, the crew would piss themselves.

They'd think he'd been trying to suck his own cock, wouldn't they?

"Fuck. Okay, I need to calm down. Calm. Caaaaaalm."

Ow, ow, ow.

He needed to find that place of peace and wholeness that he'd been searching for. He needed to relax. Closing his eyes, Felix practiced a couple of the breathing techniques he'd learned. He distracted himself by trying to remember whether he'd inhaled or exhaled through his left nostril last. When he felt calm—in a fucking relative way—he tried to pull his foot away from his neck. His sweaty fingers slipped on his ankle bone. The tension in his leg remained on lockdown.

He was stuck.

"Shit."

Breathe in through the left nostril and out through the right. If he could pull the hemispheres of his brain into balance—

Ow, goddamn ow. Shit! "Double shit."

He needed to call someone. Either that, or spend the rest of his life folded in half and in agony. Who should he call?

Elias would laugh until he choked. Qek might not have the strength to help him pull his leg back over his head. She would also likely make several embarrassing observations while making the attempt. Zed... Zed would collapse onto the deck with Elias, hooting and howling.

He'd have to call Nessa. This qualified as a medical emergency, didn't it? And, as ship's doctor, she'd have to keep his confidence. He couldn't count on her not to pass judgment, but he could count on her not to tease him...verbally. She'd laugh with her eyes instead.

Releasing his hold on his ankle, Felix tapped his bracelet. "Ness."

"What's up?"

"I, um... I need some assistance in my quarters."

"You all right? You sound kind of breathless." Her concern was evident through the comm, as well as her unasked questions. Had he discovered where she'd hidden the sedatives? Had he found some other supply?

"I was..." *Don't say meditating.* "Exercising and... got stuck."

After a beat of silence, she answered, *"On my way."*

She tried not to laugh, he could see that. To her credit, the surprise in Nessa's expression far outweighed any humor, but once she got over the shock of finding her ship's engineer with his ankle wedged behind his neck, mirth lit her merry brown eyes.

"What were you doing?"

"Not jerking off." Or trying any other method of self-pleasure.

"I can see that." Her features took on a business-like cast while she ran her hands up and down his thigh, the touch not intimate but stupidly embarrassing. "Lord, Fix, the muscle here is so tight. How did you even get your leg back like this?"

"Determination."

She bit her lips together, cheeks rounding to either side. "But why?"

Huffing out a breath, Felix related a version of his story. His search for a meditative technique, his discovery of yoga.

"This is yoga?"

Felix waved at the holo display where the dude with the broken legs continued to look completely blissful. He's obviously dislocated his brain from his body somehow.

"That does not look like fun." She pressed her thumbs into the back of his knee. "Okay, you need to relax or we'll never get your leg down."

"Then stop asking me why I put it there."

Of course the hatch to his quarters slid open right then to reveal Zed, who paused in the act of ducking to stare, openmouthed, at the tableau before him. "What the ever loving fuck."

Elias's face poked out from behind Zed's bulky shoulder. "Holy crap."

Behind the pair of them, Qek clicked.

Kill me now.

Leaving off her ministrations, Nessa stood to shoo away their audience. "What are you all doing here?"

"You ran down to engineering waving your medical wallet," Elias said. "What do you think we're doing here? I thought Fix must have got his hand stuck in the core or something."

"Thanks for the vote of confidence, Eli." Shouting had the effect of tightening the tendon along the back of his leg. Fuck. He had to remember that.

Recovering his composure, Zed stepped inside. "Can I help?"

"Actually, yes. We need to relax the muscle in his leg so that we can get his foot out from behind his head."

"How did—"

“I wasn’t jerking off.” *Must. Not. Shout.*

“Perhaps a muscle relaxant would be in order?” Qek said.

Nessa nodded at Qek. “I might have to.”

“Aww, Ness, those always mess with my stomach.” Muscle relaxers and Felix were old foes. He’d broken so many bones and torn so many muscles that his body often felt like a worn out kick bag. Some mornings, his back spasmed and his neck locked up. Regular work outs usually kept him limber, but putting his leg behind his head had probably reversed two years of progress.

“It’s either that or we wait for you to calm down.”

With all the crew in his room looking at him like he’d sprouted a second head.

“Hit me.”

She fiddled with the dial on her medical wallet. The hypo hissed and seconds later, his body melted into a pile of goo, limb by fucking limb. Zed and Ness eased his ankle out from behind his head. Elias fetched a bucket. Qek held his head while he vomited.

Nothin’ like crew.

Curiously, their care did not smother him. Not completely. And in it, he found a measure of peace, but not the sort he’d been looking for.

He woke up with Zed’s nose pressed to his cheek.

“What are you doing?”

“Smelling you.”

Felix shifted and turned his head so that he could press his nose to Zed’s. “That’s weird.”

“Tell me you’ve never smelled my skin.”

After a pause in which Felix could not deny he’d ever inhaled the scent of his lover, deeply and profoundly, storing the essence of him against every future, Zed smiled—the movement of his lips only visible as a bunching of his cheeks and wrinkling around his eyes.

“Ass.”

Zed pressed a kiss to his mouth. “Takes one to know one.”

With a grunt, Felix disengaged, pulling back far enough to bring Zed’s face into focus, and put a little space between them. Breathing space. “Did I get to brush my teeth before I passed out?” Felix ran his tongue over his relatively smooth teeth to answer his own question.

“Yeah, you pretty much insisted on it.”

“I’ve had experience waking up with my face in a puddle of puke.”

“You don’t say.” Zed pursed his lips. “So…”

“Why did I have my leg behind my head?”

“Looked bloody painful.”

A smile creaked across his face. “It was.”

Zed stroked his cheek, large fingers tweaking his ear before disappearing into his hair. Closing his eyes, Felix leaned into the caress. He could meditate like this. With Zed touching him, caring for him, he could find the will to let go. And he didn’t have to go far, he could just slip into the man next to him, claim his skin, *his* peace, wear it as his own for a while.

Felix opened his eyes. “I was trying to meditate.” Zed’s eyes widened. “It’s called yoga.”

“But you don’t even like sitting cross-legged.”

“I still don’t. I’m getting better at it, but—”

“You’ve been practicing sitting with your legs crossed?”

Felix shrugged the shoulder he had pressed into the bedding. “I thought if...” A sigh gusted out of him and suddenly looking at Zed became too painful. He closed his eyes again, hoping the act of shutting them would dampen the urge to tell Zed he wanted to be like *him*. That he craved his health and wholeness.

Zed continued rubbing his head, fingers sifting through short curls as they navigated the curve of his skull. “So sitting still isn’t your thing.”

“You think?”

“Nor is putting your leg behind your head.”

“You look so fucking peaceful when you meditate. It’s... kinda scary.” Opening his eyes, Felix discovered a Zed who appeared more concerned than peaceful. “I don’t know if I could do that. Go to that place. I think if I ran out of things to fight, I’d—”

What the fuck was he saying? He really should be saving this for their therapist.

Zed curled a hand around his shoulder and pulled him into a hug. Craving the warmth and comfort of his lover’s embrace, Felix melted against him, tucking a knee between Zed’s and putting a hand around his hip. He breathed in the scent of Zed—woody soap and heated skin, that hint of sex which was probably just Zed being Zed.

“Your thing is movement, Flick.” Zed’s chest rumbled beneath the words. “It always has been. You’re still enough when you tinker, but it’s when you move that you’re most at peace.”

“Feels wrong.”

Zed’s lips claimed his ear, nipping along the ridge. “Not wrong.” His breath washed over the fine hairs at the back of Felix’s neck, stirring and arousing.

Could movement equal peace? Could he be chasing a ghost?

Flattening his palm to Zed’s chest, Felix pushed, encouraging Zed to lie on his back. He climbed aboard to straddle Zed’s hips. They half-dressed—shorts, no shirts—and he vaguely remembered Zed helping him to the bathroom and back, stripping off his clothes and all but carrying him to bed. Felix’s muscles had been too relaxed for him to do any of it himself.

“You could have taken advantage of me last night,” he said.

Zed showed him a lazy smile. “As if I need to wait for you to be drugged.”

“You could have topped.”

In the same tone, Zed said, “Like I care who tops or bottoms. So long as it’s you.”

Felix leaned forward, smoothing his hands up over Zed’s chest, fingertips sifting through dark curls. He loved Zed’s chest hair—the feel of it beneath his palms, the tickle of it against his chest or back. Zed wasn’t a bear, but he was the hairiest lover Felix had ever had and he adored every single curl. He toyed with one of Zed’s new nipple piercings, grinning at the slight hiss issuing from Zed’s parted lips, and bent down to catch the tight little nub of flesh and metal between his teeth. The small point hardened further beneath his flicking tongue. Moving to the left, Felix delivered the same sweet torture, Zed’s catching breath and light moans sending coils of arousal through his center.

Sex really was the best meditation, except...

Felix lifted his head. “I did this thing called ‘Salute to the Sun’ and I liked that. You start standing, then stretch a couple different ways while breathing. Maybe you’d like to do it with me sometime?”

To his credit, Zed didn’t immediately moan and ask why they were talking about meditation while Felix sat on his hardening cock delivering lightning strikes to his nipple piercings via his tongue. Felix would have moaned. Hissed a bit. Maybe complained. Instead, Zed managed a warm and companionable look. A peaceful look. “Sure.” Then, fastening one of his ever-warm

hands around Felix's hip, he said, "I'll always be here, you know that. Whatever you need. You want to talk, we'll talk. You want to move, we'll move."

Felix arched a brow. "And if I want to fuck?"

Zed grinned in response.

Felix felt it then, the peace that usually eluded him. Stillness, movement, therapy, meditation... It would all be meaningless if he didn't have Zed. Then there was this, the thing they could do together, and only together, without conscious effort. Because it was natural. Because it was... *theirs*.

Leaning forward again, Felix traced the tip of his tongue up the side of Zed's neck. Nipped the stubbled line of his jaw. Let his fingers roam over every line of beloved musculature that cut Zed's torso into perfection. Kissed his shoulders, sucked on the lobe of each ear. He worshipped his lover and his friend, the man who meant everything to him. The man who had died and come back—who had broken him, and wanted to help rebuild him.

He tended the center of his own personal galaxy, making Zed writhe beneath him. His heart, his fragile heart that had to beat outside his body, in the soul of another.

God, he loved this man. Words always failed him when he tried to express how he felt. But he could do this, he had this.

And this was his peace.

"You are my sun," he said, lips coasting down Zed's cheek.

Zed breathed in. His eyes shone.

With his mouth, his hands, his body and his soul, Felix gave salute to his sun.

THE END

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