EastEast Password: Elias Smith

When I was little, like, maybe middle-elementary school little? 10 or so?

My very favorite thing to do on the playground was to Organize Events.

I'd cordon off a slide, for example, and not let kids up unless they knew the "password". The password, ofc, being anything at all.

I only ever rejected people if they refused to even try.

My little brother would be my minion, and something about that drew people in as well. They wanted to help.

Sometimes we'd have whole story lines, sometimes we'd go to war with each other, or put on a circus. Someitimes it'd just be the pw game but we'd be able to block off more exits.

I just enjoyed creating a context for so many strangers to play together in all their own ways.

I remember one time I pulled the password trick, and some kid REFUSED to guess. Everyone would EVENTUALLY, especially with all the hints I would give to it being super easy.

But this kid, no, he went and got his mom who yelled at me and it sucked.

I wasn't trying to ACTUALLY block access to the slide. I was trying to make it feel more magical when you used it. Like you were part of a conspiracy. And I wanted to learn a little bit about the participants. What sorts of things they'd guess. Its the first steps to being friends.

I think about that kid a lot, when I remember making [???]. That all I want is for people to try. To engage with me.

I want the world to feel mysterious and special and connected. I want YOU to feel special and connected. And mysterious too, if you want. I sure enjoy that vibe but I know its not for everyone.

The internet is huge and the barrier to entry to "matter" feels impossible, like you gotta be some kind of Influencer with millions of followers.

But sometimes, in order to matter, all you need to do is be on a playground and have fun with strangers.

I hope you're having fun :)

EastEast Password: How your brain lies to you

The Answer to Life, the Universe, and Everything?

Is simple.

Zampanio is a story about how even if you feel monstrous, even if you feel irredeemable, you deserve to be happy.

That this happiness is itself a way to heal the world.

Have you seen the Good Place? In it, the thesis is the world is so interconnected these days, that you can't POSSIBLY do good. Even eating breakfast in the morning is probably destroying the environment and supporting slave labor and it SUCKS.

And living in that kind of world, having that kind of mindset...

Don't we all feel like monsters?

Like we don't deserve happiness?

So here is a story about supernatural creatures that KILL and worse and HAVE to do these terrible things to live.

And about how even as they do so much harm they can still learn to do BETTER.

The Killer feels safe with her Family and she kills only to protect them now, or to close the time loop.

Parker has no choice but to use his gun at certain times, but he CAN choose to not use it voluntarily against people who have objectively wrong opinions on hatsune miku.

Each of the blorbos is an example of this, at different points in their arc.

And none of them did it overnight. None of them destroyed themselves trying to be BETTER. None of them punished themselves into being Good People.

Hell, most of them didn't even REALIZE They were doing better. They just...started to find things that didnt' hurt. Things that came easier.

Because that's what The End Is Never The End really means, to me. It's not just a meme phrase that accidentally wormed its way here from Stanley Parable.

It means that as long as you're alive, there's hope.

That no matter how bad things get, no matter how badly you fuck up, one day you will look back on all this and wonder how you could think the hole was insurmountable. There is always a next page to your story.

You can be happy.

All you need to do is endure. One day at a time until, little by little it stops feeling like endurance and just feels like living.

Till it stops feeling like just living and instead feeling like thriving.

I believe in you. Not like I might believe in aliens or bigfoot or whatever, but like I believe in air.

I believe you have no choice but to be happier, no matter how dark things are, because regression to the mean is an actual damn thing.

The Herald summarized how I take "the end is never the end" as "this too shall pass" and YES.

Life isn't simple and orderly. Things don't just keep going in their current direction forever and ever. Its chaotic and messy and surprising and sudden changes are all but guaranteed.

So the only thing in doubt is if you'll LET yourself have the good times that are headed your way.

And if you're caught up in whether or not you "deserve" them, whether or not you're a monster?

Remember that happiness heals. Not just you. Everyone around you. If you let yourself bask in the good times, to heal, you will be in a better place to help others. To survive future bad times without needing as much help. To THRIVE.

And the more of us who thrive, the better the world is.

THAT is what Zampanio is, to me.