

Keep Me Safe

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by [Gatorade_blade](#)

Summary

Just like every other hermit, their origin of coming to Hermitcraft is blurry. No one pries for answers or explanations. But that doesn't mean that the terrors of their pasts don't haunt them.

Or,

Etho remembers his time before Hermitcraft and gets panic attacks. Luckily, he has someone to help him get through his night.

Notes

TW: panic attacks

Lightly inspired by BewitchingNotes' "I'll Be Your Puppet (So Guide Me Along)"

Title from Bears In Trees' EP 'Keep Me Safe' (which was also listened to while writing this)

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

It's late.

It always happens when it's late.

When it's late and dark, and all the light in the world has dissolved into the street lamps. And nothing but the pale beaming of the moon is left to glance down onto the sleeping world. Everyone is asleep, everyone *should* be asleep. Because everyone and anyone with half a brain and a will to live past 40 is asleep right now.

But heterochromic eyes lain restless and waiting, darting around the dimly lit bedroom as if foreign territory. They land on the clock that's hung on the wall, reading an undeniable '3am' and he can only sigh as he continues to run thin fingers up his arm in silent shivers.

He's overreacting. He knows he is. He has no reason to be panicking, no reason to be anxious. But he is. And he can't bear how sensitive his skin is right now, how all the sheets of the bed are too wrinkled or soft, how all the darkness which eats up the room is too quiet. How the pressure of laying on his side makes his rib cage rattle with wrong dread.

Next thing he knows, his breathing is too loud, and he clasps cold, sweating, hands around the framing of his head and presses hard on his temples. His eyes are now closed as he tries to catch his breath. This is pathetic. What is he doing? He's supposed to be better than this. He *is* better than this. And yet this is the fifth panic attack this week, and it's only Tuesday.

Great. Now he's hyperventilating. He presses his knees closer to his chest, tucking his chin into where his knees meet his collarbone, and the tremors rushing his spine and arms are only making it worse. He's muttering something to himself now, and for some reason he can't quite understand any of his own words.

This is humiliating.

But everything feels so still and quiet, and yet so loud and intrusive, and he needs to ground himself somehow. Or else he's going to end up throwing up, with the way his head just keeps on spiraling over and over and over again. And then his head feels like static, and his hair feels like pine needles. And his skin feels cold and uneven and wrong on his body.

And-

And then there's a dip at the foot of his bed. And there's a buzzing warmth coming from a hand that doesn't touch him, but simply shifts a few light blankets around him to properly cover

shivering shoulders. And then the hand is placing something next to Etho's head, just barely brushing the sleeve of Etho's sweater ever-so gently.

Etho's eyes are still clamped shut though, finally easing out his breathing to just the slightest degree, when the person begins humming a song he resembles. He can't put a name to notes in this current headspace, but the familiarity of the music allows him to match his breathing to the off beats. And in another five minutes, he can finally open his eyes up again and move his hands from where they had turned white from being balled into tight fists.

The first thing he is able to recognise is his face mask waiting beside him, and he isn't quite sure how it got there, but he's quick to move clumsy fingers and pick it up to wrap around his face, the subtle pressure on his nose and chin helping him all the more as he tries to stay grounded and piece himself back together. He presses his left palm to his chest and slowly adds more pressure until the buzzing in his head is finally gone, and he is finally able to decipher who is humming.

He pushes himself into a sitting position, and the shifts and changes in weight on the bed make the second party pause in his humming, a worried smile creases across his face. A large tanned hand rests carefully on Etho's knee, and when Etho doesn't flinch or attempt to push it away, the hand squeezes his knee comfortingly. "You gonna be alright?"

Etho melts to the way Beef's voice is flooded with all kinds of worry, and nods slowly, "Thank you Beefers." He's speaking slowly, but the patient look in Beef's blue eyes allows him to continue, "I think I'm going to be okay. Maybe not tonight, but I will eventually."

There's a pause when Etho moves to press his forehead against Beef's shoulder, his hand covering the one Beef has on his knee. They sit there in silence, it's comfortable. And the way Beef's body radiated such a warm heat, with his heartbeat filling up the room that was so devoid of noise, washes over Etho's soul. He feels more at home than he has week. Being cooped up in your house when your mental health is bad will do that to you though.

Beef hums again before he speaks up, "Did you want to talk about it?" Beef squeezes his knee again, rubbing his thumb into the blanket covering Etho's legs. He isn't forcing Etho to spill his feelings, not forcing him to come clean about what's bringing about these panic attacks, nothing rushed or scary, simply Beef.

The younger reels in a long breath, "Haven't slept in a week." He's burying his nose into Beef's shirt where he smells the familiarity of warm cinnamon and freshly chopped wood, even through his mask it's intoxicatingly comforting and Etho wants to practically sob at how grateful he is that Beef is here now. "Keep thinking of them all, Beef. Zistau and Nebris- and Baj and Seth. And- and Pause."

It's the last name listed that makes Beef freeze up. And Etho knows that he does because the brunette's breathing goes ragged even if for just a moment. The younger is already starting to regret opening up about it all, but then he hears Beef take in his own long breath, "I miss them too. All the time. I don't go a day without thinking about all of them." He presses the side of his face to the top of Etho's head, and if messy white locks of hair poke uncomfortably at tan skin, Beef doesn't make a mark of it.

"I keep seeing them how I did last time, hurt and trying to brush it off before it got worse- I-" His breathing has picked up again, and he's now holding Beef's hand with the desperation of a lost child, "I never got to say goodbye." His eyes were welling with tears again, but he held them back, only pressing his face into Beef more.

Beef hushes him, but all the same allows Etho a moment to cry if he wants to. *He didn't*. But the option still made his heart thump loud in his chest. Etho didn't want to talk anymore, much rather preferred to try and get some sleep, and without vocalizing it, Beef somehow understands and ushers for Etho to lie back down. When the younger doesn't let go of his hand, he carefully fits himself behind Etho until his chest is pressed against the younger's back, fingers still intertwined loosely.

Before he drifts off to sleep, he mutters a quick line of thanks that he isn't even sure if Beef was able to catch. He then proceeds to get the best sleep he's had since leaving Mindcrack.

End Notes

Hope you enjoyed that :)) I wrote this back in October, but just recently beta read it for posting. Might do a similar concept for a bdubs/etho work also.

Comments and kudos are always appreciated <33 stay safe.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!