

## The Aro Ranchers Fic

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## The Aro Ranchers Fic

by [2point5](#)

### Summary

Tango's eyes widened abruptly, his mouth working for a few moments before he seemed to remember how to talk. "Are you- are you asking me to marry you-?"

"No! No, no, no, no, uh, the opposite, actually," Jimmy said, and then, weakly. "I'm asking you... not to marry me?"

### Notes

this is for me and like three other people, but i guess you can read it if you like.

also, there's like one line where it mentions bdubs and impulse being married, so warning for that

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

It was, admittedly, very hard to feel guilty around Tango.

He was so forgiving, so casual about everything. Every time Jimmy messed up, every time he broke a tool or accidentally killed an animal, every time he thought he'd blown it for sure, Tango would just shrug it off, grin that needle-sharp grin at him and tell him it was alright, everyone

made mistakes.

It was hard to feel guilty around Tango, but not impossible.

And Jimmy was nothing if not a guilty man.

First of all, he felt bad that Tango was stuck with him, instead of anyone else. He had been so close with Impulse and Bdubs in the past, and he was good friends with both Grian and Scar. Surely one of them would have made a better soulmate.

Besides, Jimmy had the curse hanging over his head at all times: he was the first to die, every time, and Tango didn't deserve that. He deserved a winning chance, not to be tied to the canary in the coal mine, farming cows in an ugly dirt hut. He had to be bitter, even if he was too nice to say it.

Worst of all, even if you ignored the curse, even if you pretended that they had a shot at winning, there was the fact that Jimmy- although he hated himself for it- just didn't *like* Tango.

He "liked" him, sure: the older man was kind and warm, and when they cuddled at night, Tango let him steal the blankets, but he didn't like him in the *right way* . He didn't love him.

He knew what love looked like, he'd seen Joel with Lizzie, he knew the gentle looks and soft touches that came with it, but he didn't know if he even wanted... *that*. He didn't know if he wanted someone to love him, knowing that if he messed up, they could leave him so easily. Or, worse, if they stayed, and he lost interest or realized he never had any to begin with, what then? Would he have to tell them he was wrong, that his love had been fake, conditional, *wrong* ?

Tango was his soulmate, they were supposed to be perfect for each other but, truthfully, Jimmy wasn't sure they were.

He thought, once or twice, about the concept of dating Tango, maybe even marrying him, just to see how it sat with him, and both times, he was left with a bitter taste in his mouth.

He'd get sick of his voice first, he thought. The strange buoyant cadence with which the fairy spoke was calming, usually, but at some point, in the grand scheme of forever, it'd get old.

He wasn't sure what Tango thought of their relationship.

He hadn't said anything to Jimmy about it, but... they were soulmates. Surely, he expected romance. Impulse and Bdubs, Tango's closest friends, were married already, only days in, and Tango spent more than enough time at their place to no doubt get ideas about what a soul bond should or shouldn't be. He'd also called Jimmy "babe" a few times, never in a conspicuous way, always just mid-sentence, but that was a romantic thing, so...

Jimmy had to do something.

He had to tell Tango, had to inform him that he didn't want to be with him like that, because he was broken, and wrong, and didn't *love* correctly.

But he wasn't sure how to do that.

They were soulmates, after all.

They were *supposed* to love each other.

They had to.

So he kept his mouth shut.

They were working on the house when it finally came up. The door wouldn't hang straight no matter how Tango tried, so he asked Jimmy to come take a look.

"Here, look here," Tango ran a long, thin finger over the top of the door frame. "Look at the gap. I don't know how to fix that."

"Uh," Jimmy said, trying his absolute best to remember how Scott had fixed it, back in Third Life. "I think... I don't know..."

Tango looked at him, his yellow eyes glittering unknowably for a moment. Jimmy braced himself for the insult, the cruel words, but then he shrugged.

"Ah well, damn it," The older man chuckled, shrugging a shoulder casually. "I'll message Impulse, see if he can come look at it. No harm, no foul."

"Right," Jimmy said, and then, weakly. "Sorry."

"For what?" Tango huffed, stepping down from the chair he was balanced on and dragging it back to the crooked table. "I didn't know either."

"So maybe we're both idiots," Jimmy muttered, halfheartedly rapping his knuckles against the top of the door frame. "Good for us."

Tango's face screwed up at that. "Jim, babe, don't say that."

"Sorry," Jimmy said, again, watching him deposit a handful of scrap wood in a chest. "Why do you keep calling me that?"

"Calling you... what? Jim?"

"No, *babe*. Why do you call me babe?"

"Uhhh," Tango made a face, measuring out a handful of seeds from a bag. "Would you rather I not?"

"...Yeah," Jimmy said. That was only the tip of the iceberg of his issues, but that was enough to warn the ship. "Yeah, it's... not my favorite."

"Okay, I'll stop, then," Tango said, putting the sack of seeds back, standing up again. He stood there for a second, just looking at Jimmy, before shrugging. "Is that it? Anything else?"

"No," Jimmy stepped aside, expecting him to walk out, but he didn't. "That's all."

"You know," Tango said, narrowing his eyes at Jimmy in thought. "You know, we're soulmates, we're stuck together from here on out, if you have anything else, it's better to say it than to keep it inside."

"I know, I know, I just—" Jimmy hummed in frustration, glaring at the wall. "I'm not good at explaining things."

"That's alright, I'm usually pretty good at understanding," Tango said, setting the handful of seeds on the table. "What's up?"

"...You know how Scott and I were married, yeah?"

“Yeah?”

Jimmy huffed, annoyed with himself now. This wasn't so hard to say in his head, didn't feel so catastrophically important. “I didn't... I didn't want to be married to him. He kind of... I don't know, he took things too far, and I didn't know how to tell him to stop.”

“Oh.” Tango said, his jaw tight.

“Not- not like *that*,” Jimmy said, quickly. “Not like that, just... and I don't blame him, it was really my fault, but, uh...”

“Uh-huh,” Tango hummed, his eyes narrowing slightly. “Are you... okay?”

“Yes, yes, I'm fine, but, um,” Jimmy hissed out a nervous breath. “Uh, I figured that... since we're soulmates... and since Impulse and Bdubs have already gotten married...”

Tango's eyes widened abruptly, his mouth working for a few moments before he seemed to remember how to talk. “Are you- are you asking me to marry you-?”

“No! No, no, no, no, uh, the opposite, actually,” Jimmy said, and then, weakly. “I'm asking you... not to marry me?”

Tango blinked, before shaking his head and laughing in confusion. “Alright, you've lost me.”

“I want... I *don't* want...” Jimmy whimpered, frustrated. His wings were pressed between his sweaty back and the wall and he took a moment to readjust them, and try to think of a way to phrase it. “There's something wrong with me.”

“Huh?”

“I mean, like, uh. You know how people... fall in love? Like, they meet someone they like, and they spend time together, and as time goes on, they fall more and more in love with them?”

“Let me guess, you don't?” Tango asked, something... almost hopeful in his voice.

“No, I do. I mean, I get crushes, but then they almost always... go away? Or I realize I don't like being in a relationship at all, or I get too stressed out over it. That's what happened with Scott, I did really like him, but once we were married, I felt... I don't know, I felt like whatever stupid crush I had on him wasn't... worth it?”

“...So, you get crushes, but you don't like dating?” Tango asked, leaning on the table, rubbing his chin. “Huh.”

“...Sorry,” Jimmy said, softly. “I know you... I don't know, you probably wanted a romantic relationship.”

“Huh?” Tango looked up at him, blinking absently, before his eyebrows suddenly raised as soon as he realized what the other man had said. “What gave you that idea?”

“I don't know, that's what soulmates are supposed to be, yeah? Like, the person you're supposed to love forever?”

“Uh, no?” Tango frowned. “I mean, I was kinda... I might have been dozing off when Grian explained it, but I think it's just someone who you, y'know, *click* with. Sometimes that's a romantic thing, sometimes it's a platonic thing.”

“So you don’t... you don’t want me to love you?”

The fairy laughed at that, but not a mean laugh. “No! I’m gonna be honest, I... I don’t really know if I’m even capable of loving people like that. Romance has never actually... appealed to me? Like, if you want to cuddle someone, just get a best friend?” He shrugged a shoulder. “I dunno, but I don’t really get the hype.”

“Have you never had a crush on someone?” Jimmy asked, surprised. “Ever?”

“Not really,” Tango shook his head. “Like, my buddy Zedaph, back home? I thought I had a crush on him because he made me really happy and I liked spending time with him, but when we tried dating it just ended up being... like... the exact same thing as when we were friends? So we broke up, and nothing changed. Like, there’s no difference between romantic interest and platonic interest to me.”

“Huh,” Jimmy tilted his head curiously. “That’s... an interesting way to think about it.”

“Yeah, so,” Tango paused, before laughing. “So, it’s probably good that you don’t want to date because I would have absolutely panicked and said yes and then we’d both be miserable.”

Jimmy giggled almost hysterically at that, pressing his cold hands to his forehead in relief. “Oh my god, you have no idea how happy I am to hear that you don’t like me.”

“Oh, it’s mutual,” Tango laughed, shaking his head. “Oh, man, is it mutual.”

“In that case,” Jimmy rubbed his face one more time, still chuckling quietly. “You may call me babe.”

“Thank you,” Tango nodded at him, his needle-like teeth poking through his lips. “Thank you, I will.”

## End Notes

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