

The Aro SmallEtho Fic

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The Aro SmallEtho Fic

by [2point5](#)

Summary

“So... we are dating?”

“Mmm,” Etho squinted. “I don’t know, but I’m leaning towards no.”

“Well I’m leaning towards yes,” Joel frowned, irritated now. “So.”

“So,” Etho turned to him, finally. “So, we’re at an impasse.”

“Rock paper scissors,” Joel said, decisively. “If I win, we’re dating, if you win, we’re not.”

Etho blinked, before laughing, shaking his head in amusement. “Sure, why not. Rock paper scissors.”

Notes

uhh. UH. UHhhh. uH. *points at smalletho* this bad boy can fit so much projection*

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

“Are you two... together?”

Joel blinked, looking up at Jimmy, who was standing by, innocently, watching Etho and Tango talk at the base of the ship. “Huh? What?”

“Are you and Etho dating?” Jimmy asked again, then his face screwed up. “Oh, nevermind, that’s probably stupid, cause, like, Lizzie-”

“No, no,” Joel waved his hand, still confused. “I’m poly, I can date multiple people, that’s not an issue. What do you mean *am I and Etho together*?”

“Like, are you guys...?” Jimmy looked confused now too, glancing helplessly between the two below and the man standing next to him. “I think... cause, like, Bdubs and Impulse are a couple now... and I think BigB and Ren...? So, I don’t know, I was wondering-”

“Cause we’re soulmates?” Joel scoffed. “I mean, you and Tango aren’t dating, are you?”

“I mean, we... our situation’s a little different.”

“Is it?” Joel asked, crossing his arms, challenging. “How do you know?”

Jimmy squinted down at him, opening and closing his mouth a few times like a landed fish, before looking dubiously at Etho. “I mean, is he aromantic?”

Joel’s brain flatlined at that one, and he took a moment to stare stupidly down at Etho, trying very hard to remember whether or not the other man had ever mentioned anything like that. “...Maybe?”

“Right,” Jimmy sighed, pinching his nose bridge. “Whatever you say Joel.”

The conversation ended shortly thereafter, with a very smug Etho and a very nervous looking Tango. Joel took that as a victory and gave Jimmy one last smug look before the Ranchers departed.

The conversation stuck with him, though. The canary had a habit of doing that, of saying something that stuck with Joel in just the right way, even though everything else he said was stupid nonsense. Something about the way he’d asked the question, like he genuinely had no idea... surely he wasn’t that dumb, they lived in a giant boat called the “Relation-Ship” for crying out loud. Of course they were dating.

But were they really?

His head hurt.

He wasn’t very good at emotions- in fact, other than Grian, he considered himself the worst in the group at emotions. He didn’t just *feel* things, he had to think it through first. So what did he feel for Etho?

One night, he finally got around to asking him.

It was warm out, the kind of muggy warmth that came during summer nights and kept you up, the kind that made the fireflies swarm the bushes and trees, making the dark silhouettes look like pieces of the void itself. There was a lightning storm just over the horizon, and Joel and Etho were watching it, watching the light flicker through the clouds.

“You know when Jimmy and Tango stopped by the other day?” Joel asked, abruptly. “Remember

that?"

"Yeah, I remember." Etho said, in that Etho way. "What about it?"

"Jimmy asked if we were dating," Joel said, carefully, then added in a laugh. "Imagine that."

"...Yeah," Etho said, slowly. "Imagine that."

They sat in silence for a bit longer, before Joel cleared his throat. "Yeah, I'm not sure what he was confused about."

"Yeah, me neither," Etho hummed, his eyes barely visible in the dim, flickering light of the storm. "...What did you tell him?"

"The truth, of course," Joel said. "What else?"

"Mhm..." Etho ran a thumb under the bottom of his mask, along his jawline. "Right."

It was silent again, an uneasy silence.

"... We are dating, right?" Joel asked, finally, uncomfortably. "Aren't we?"

"I mean..." Etho shrugged a shoulder. "I don't know if I'd call it... *dating*."

"Why not?" Joel said, immediately, a bit panicked. "What- what do you mean?"

"I just mean... we haven't gone on any dates," Etho drawled, easily, his eye still on the light show. "And we don't really... act like a dating couple-"

"-Sure we do," Joel frowned. "We act like any dating couple out there. This is how Lizzie and I acted when we were dating."

"Is it?" Etho asked, somewhat dubious, glancing briefly at the shorter man. "Alright."

"So... we are dating?"

"Mmm," Etho squinted. "I don't know, but I'm leaning towards no."

"Well I'm leaning towards yes," Joel frowned, irritated now. "So."

"So," Etho turned to him, finally. "So, we're at an impasse."

"Rock paper scissors," Joel said, decisively. "If I win, we're dating, if you win, we're not."

Etho blinked, before laughing, shaking his head in amusement. "Sure, why not. Rock paper scissors."

They both balled up one hand, pressing it into their palm. Then, silently, together, they bounced it, once, twice, three times, and-

"No way," Joel hissed, glancing between their hands. "You cheated."

"How did I cheat?" Etho asked, tilting his head, his eyes glittering in amusement. "How does one even cheat at rock paper scissors?"

"I don't know, but you did! I declare a rematch!"

They went again, and again, and again, and every time, Etho beat Joel with ease.

“Are you sure you don’t want to thumb wrestle or something?” Etho’s eyes squinted in amusement. “Tic tac toe?”

“Not with those freakishly long fingers of yours,” Joel snapped. “And I bet you’d cheat in tic tac toe too.”

After 6 rounds, Joel had beaten Etho once, and Etho had won every other round with ease. The victor was clear.

“You suck,” Joel spat, slouching down to the ground, crossing his arms over his chest. The storm had cleared out, leaving nothing but the faint smell of ozone in the air. “I hate you.”

“So, we’re definitely not dating,” Etho said, smugly. “Cool.”

It was quiet for a bit, before, quietly, Joel tentatively asked, “Uh, so... are you aromantic?”

“Where’d that come from?” Etho snorted, picking at some grass.

“... I just...” Joel hummed, before forcing a grin. “Well, I don’t know, I don’t know why someone wouldn’t want to date me, otherwise.”

“You’re such a dork,” Etho chuckled warmly. “...I don’t know, actually. I’m just kind of... here.”

“Well, have you ever had a crush?”

“Uh,” The elf hesitated, narrowing his eyes slightly at the horizon. “I don’t know. I’ve dated a few people, but I’m not sure whether I actually liked them or if I was just kind of making it up.”

“Ah,” Joel hummed. “Yeah, I get that.”

“Do you?” Etho asked, but his voice wasn’t accusatory, or disbelieving. It was a question, simple and gentle.

“Yeah, uh.” Joel shifted, uncomfortably. “Okay, I’m going to tell you a secret, the only person I think I’ve ever... actually liked... was my wife Lizzie. Other than that, I genuinely don’t think I’ve ever had a crush... Is that weird?”

“I don’t know,” Etho said, simply. “How long did you know her before you decided you actually... liked her?”

“We’d been dating for nearly a year,” Joel murmured. “It took me a year to get a crush on the woman I was dating.”

“Hm,” Etho cracked his knuckles, still not looking at Joel. After a moment, he pulled his mask down. Instinctually, Joel looked away, even though he knew the other man didn’t mind. “That’s nice at least. So... if you don’t like me, why did you ask me out?”

“I didn’t ask you out,” Joel said, only vaguely defensively. “I asked if we were dating.”

“You *assumed* we were dating-”

“-We live in a boat called the Relation-Ship-”

“-And *who* named it that?!” Etho laughed, raising an eyebrow at the smaller man.

Joel laughed too, and they just sat there for a little longer, both grinning, both happy.

“Can I tell Jimmy we’re dating though?” Joel asked, casually, leaning back against the wall. “I just want to one- up him.”

“*Christ*,” Etho groaned, goodnatureedly. “Yeah, fine, you can tell him we’re dating. But I get to tell Cleo.”

“Deal.”

End Notes

yeah yuh yuh. follow me on tumblr @tangodyke.

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