

it seems like once again you've had to greet me with goodbye

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it seems like once again you've had to greet me with goodbye

by [mariuspunmercy](#)

Summary

Bdubs has said the words so, so many times. It was a joke at times, a test at others, but a reassurance whenever it left his lips. It gave him the courage to fight back against the cruel words that cut deeper and sharper than any of the weapons the reds could aim at him.

“He loves me.”

Notes

title from "505" by artic monkeys :D

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

Bdubs wishes he didn't find something to live for.

It's dangerous to care for something. Deadly. Fighting for a cause is important. It's motivation. Fighting for a *person*... Now that's the leading cause of death on this server. When he spawned in this world, he was determined not to make that him.

Maybe if he wanted it that way, he shouldn't have followed Etho and stayed with him. He sealed his fate when he didn't kill Etho after receiving his Boogeyman assignment. He should've known from that point on that he's made himself vulnerable.

That's probably why he's not surprised about his life ending with an arrow to the head. He did this to himself. He actively chose to keep an ally by his side and risk everything he had for one man. He betrayed everyone and put his life on the line. It's not like anyone forced his hand at it.

But how was he expected to just... give everything up? Just like that? For what reason, anyways? No, he's not about that. He's not the kind of person to throw away what he's worked for simply because the universe said so. If Bdubs didn't want to leave Etho, then he wasn't going to.

Bdubs wishes he didn't find something to live for.

After Etho burnt a diamond, he realized pretty quickly that he was going to save a whole lot of materials if he allied with himself. He didn't have to share his true allegiance with anyone. He didn't have to do half of the things he did when he dedicated himself to someone else.

It was a bad idea from the start. He should've gotten out of there when he was ahead. All it would've taken was a swipe of his sword and a shoddy excuse about the curse to be liberated. He made the decision to stay.

Staying was a good choice while he lived in blissful ignorance. Sure, there was a red life, but he lived far enough that he didn't worry about it. Yeah, a Boogeyman ran around in pursuit of murder, but that usually happened on the opposite side of the server. He could pretend he didn't have to worry about that.

Stupid! Stupid, stupid Bdubs! He should've known his time was limited when he let himself get too attached to Etho. Did he really expect there to be no consequences for huddling extra close to Etho when an explosion went off? Or when Bdubs reaches for his wrist to keep him close? Did he trick himself into thinking that wouldn't bite him in the back later?

He doesn't know when the line between *this is socially acceptable* and *this will get me killed* began to blur. It just happened overnight. One day, he was hiding Etho behind him when they encountered a Wither skeleton in the Nether. The next, they were inseparable.

It's no one's fault but his own that he died the way he did. He wishes he could've said a final goodbye or something. He doesn't want Etho to feel guilty about what happened to him or to think he was too slow in giving him a life. Bdubs is the one who decided to kill Lizzie and betray the red names. No one's fault but his own.

Bdubs wishes he didn't find something to live for.

Someone to love.

In his defense, the creepy music disk gave him the go-ahead to start killing.

Of course, Grian wasn't listening to Bdubs' explanations. He wasn't listening at all, actually. That wasn't much of a surprise, seeing as he just murdered the guy after hanging around him for less than five minutes.

Granted, Bdubs also forgot that they were at spawn. He was preparing to put all of Grian's stuff nice and neat into a chest and wait for him to show up. His awkward laugh as Grian came back over the hill shows just how unprepared he was to face the man.

Etho backed off. He walked back, shield raised, and an amused expression on his face. Bdubs would have to try and decode that later

Grian was a bumbling mess. After his third attempt to talk, Bdubs realized he was probably the one who was going to have to start this talk.

“Oh, hi Grian! I forgot this was spawn!” Bdubs shouts. Maybe if he’s loud enough, he’d be forgiven. “I’m cured though! Don’t worry about me!”

Grian walked over to his stuff, Etho tagging behind him. Etho had a smile spread across his face, but he was trying not to let Grian see. He was enjoying this, meanwhile, Bdubs was trying to figure out how to keep this from getting hostile. Glad to see the friend he kept alive for the past hour is such a big help!

“That was Scar’s life, by the way,” Grian informs as he collects his belongings. “I was supposed to be keeping it safe for him.

“See! It wasn’t even your life that you lost!” Bdubs laughs to lighten the mood. “You did a great job at planning ahead!

Grian ignored him, justifiably. “Etho, tell me you didn’t know.”

Etho chuckles, raising his hands in mock defense. “I didn’t, honestly. This guy’s got a poker face like I’ve never seen before.”

Bdubs nods his head, very delighted with himself. He managed to fool the most paranoid person on this server into thinking he was perfectly safe! Now that... that’s something he’s going to brag about. Maybe he could even use it to his advantage later when things started heating up. It *is* only the first or second night, but it’s never too early to plan ahead.

“I didn’t tell him,” Bdubs confirms with a proud nod.

Etho ran a hand through his powdery white hair. “Holy smokes... I tested him too and he passed all of them.”

He sounded just as breathless as Grian did. His feet were glued to his spot on the top of the hill, watching as Bdubs started rummaging around the hill to help Grian collect his belongings. He had a shield in one hand and an axe in the other. If Bdubs didn’t know any better, he would think that Etho’s next.

“What sort of tests did you do?!” Grian shouts.

“I turned my back on him, stood right on the edge of lava, that sort of stuff.” Etho ran a finger along the wood of his shield as if testing to see if it would hold up.

Bdubs had plenty of opportunities to go for the kill. His mind had been slowly fogging up with bloodlust, his instincts itching at his hands to just *kill*. It didn’t matter if it was Etho or not, but someone was going to perish. Grian just so happened to be on the receiving end of his blade; he got unlucky.

Etho was very close to being the unlucky one. Bdubs knew, however, that getting into a fight with Etho was one he was going to lose. The second Etho picked up on any of his ill intentions, he would’ve met his own demise.

Killing Etho wasn’t worth it. Having Etho as an ally would be of more value to him. The man was

scary without trying. Bdubs needs to stick with someone, and he's already very content with his place.

"Well, I am a little upset that you didn't go for Etho," Grian grumbled. "There are people on this server with many more lives than me."

"I spent an hour and a half with this guy!" Etho laughed breathlessly.

He had indeed. And Bdubs had spared him.

Grian didn't get it. He doesn't know the panic that comes with being the Boogeyman. When they ran into Tango and Skizz, it could've been done there. Except of *course* the next set of people he ran into had diamond gear already. That was just what he needed when he was randomly selected by the universe to murder!

He could've gone for Etho. It wouldn't have gotten him very far. They had established a sense of trust after their short time together. Bdubs was afraid what would happen would he have betrayed that trust so early. He was afraid, but honestly, he simply couldn't bring himself to do it.

If anyone asked him for an explanation, he wouldn't be able to tell them. Lifting his sword and striking down the guy he's spent the past hour with just felt wrong.

"Are you going to trust this guy, Etho? After what he did to you?"

"He didn't do anything except lie, Grian. I trust him now, I gave him every chance and he didn't take it."

"How are you going to stay, though?"

Bdubs could tell Grian was still very angry, but there's nothing a little humor can't solve. "Because he loves me! You love me too, don't you, Grian?"

"Absolutely not." Grian sighs miserably, turning to begin his journey in another direction. "I'm sure Scar saw the death message so now I have to go explain to him that his life is gone. I can't believe this, I can't..."

They didn't hear the man finish as his voice trailed off. Etho was back at the enchanting table, chuckling to himself. Bdubs couldn't tell if it was out of amusement or nervousness. "I feel like I owe you half a life now."

Bdubs grins. A promise of an alliance was exactly what he was hoping would come out of this. "If the time comes."

Etho nods. "If the time comes."

Naturally, the Boogeyman curse didn't leave them at peace once Bdubs had been cured.

Last week, Scar had been selected and went after Etho before bailing when Etho almost killed him instead. A new week has rolled around, and once again, Bdubs' partner is trying to involve himself in the Boogeyman drama. Wasn't almost being killed by one and spending hours with another enough?

While Bdubs enjoyed chaos, the curse wasn't exactly something he liked joking about. He didn't like the panic that welled up in his throat as the time ticked down, the threat of being brought down to red looming over his every move.

Etho didn't get it. That's why he thrived off enticing fear in those who had yet to encounter the Boogeyman. It made him uneasy when his ally pretended to bear a curse he truly knew nothing about.

His worry betrays him, however. Because with every person that Etho spooks, it's another person that's frightened of their alliance. They're steadily making themselves known as Team BEST, as heroes, but that doesn't take away from their intimidating reputation that Etho's worked hard to create.

He can't complain about it, he's concluded. The chill sent up his spine whenever they talked about the Boogeyman would be nothing compared to the safety they were building up

"I'm going to name this paper..." Etho said before the curse was assigned one day. "Impulse is the Boogeyman. Give it to people, spread it around the server, throw it randomly around the ground. Let's see who we can fool with that."

Bdubs gasps. It sounded like a terrible plan which means it was probably perfect. "So everyone will be scared of Impulse?"

Etho nods, clearly happy with himself for coming up with yet another scheme. "They definitely will. If we can get this to reach his allies first, it'll plant doubt and they won't believe anything Impulse says."

A slight breeze blows in from the window, the layers of snow making him colder. He shivered ever so slightly as Etho's plan fully settled into his mind.

The Boogeyman was cause for all sorts of conflict. He knew that problems within alliances were inevitable when people were coming down with a bloodlust that didn't care about friends or family.

Tearing apart an alliance wasn't the part that made him nervous; he didn't really care what other people did with their time so long as it didn't bother him. In fact, he knew it'd be better if the larger groups fell apart. It would mean they had less backup and ammunition.

No, what made his head hurt was how fragile everything was. One flick of the finger and it'll all unravel at his feet. If he really wanted to, he could go out and survive on his own.

He doesn't want to.

Could a piece of paper that came from a bored Etho thirsting for chaos truly rip apart the other alliances? Bdubs knows it couldn't happen to BEST. It couldn't happen to him and Etho, either. Would they even be getting anything out of spreading rumors besides making other people angry?

"The Boogeyman is a scary thing," he whispers to himself.

Etho winks, oblivious. "I was spared by one. Believe me, *I know*."

"Being hunted and being forced to be the hunter are two very different things, *Etho*," Bdubs said matter-of-factly. "Everyone freaks themselves out trying to figure out who it is. Like, I wouldn't be surprised if that alone was making people argue and already put a strain on the alliances."

Etho's shrug was careless, unbothered. He didn't see the Boogeyman the same way that Bdubs did. "That won't happen to us so I'm pretty chill about it."

Bdubs scoffs. "Don't say it like that, there's no way to know for sure."

"Considering it's already happened to us, I think it's pretty safe to say. It's not like you'd spare me once but kill me a second time."

Etho raises his eyebrows as if challenging Bdubs to disagree. He didn't. Obviously, it was true, but there was still a major factor Etho was forgetting.

"What happens to me if you're the Boogeyman?"

Silence.

"Oh..." Etho mumbles. "I guess that part slipped my mind. Well, for the record, you wouldn't be my first target."

That... wasn't very reassuring, but it was comforting. Not in a *my survival is guaranteed so now I feel less on edge* kind of way but in a... friendship way.

Etho cleared his throat. The topic was getting into dangerous territory where promises that couldn't be kept were about to be made. "So yeah, in regards to the Boogeyman, I'd say we're safe with each other."

Bdubs could tell the room was getting too tense for either of their liking. "Aww, Etho! Is it because you love me? It's totally because you love me!"

The sound of relief that came from Etho was enough to tell Bdubs that he had successfully defused the situation. There wasn't much of a "situation" in the first place, but their conversation was one that neither was enjoying.

Etho went back to his papers, standing with his back to Bdubs. "I'm renaming these papers to frame Impulse."

He slows his movements as if asking Bdubs for permission to continue. He wouldn't admit how much the simple gesture meant to him. "Oh, I loved your plan. Please continue, dude. When Skizz gets here, I'll take a couple when we leave and start planting them around the place."

"Leave?"

"Yeah! We're going to be heroes and return the enchanting table to its rightful place!"

Etho pretended to look exasperated, but his smile of endearment betrays him. "Alright, you guys go do that."

"This is... disgusting."

Bdubs had just stepped outside but he was absolutely disgusted.

Etho chuckles as if he had no idea *why*, but the man had a mischievous gleam in his eyes. He

knows that his design of the ugliest stairs Bdubs has ever seen would make him seethe. Seriously, how could they stay friends at this point?

(That's very dramatic for what it is, but what good is being pretentious if not to be theatrical?)

"These stairs... Etho, these stairs make me feel sick," Bdubs said.

Etho threw his hands up exasperatedly, but with a smile. Did he feel bad making the worst build on the server or did he find this funny? "One thing! I do one thing, Bdubs, and this is how you react. My one contribution to the base, but I know you love it."

He was at a loss for words. "What?" He points to the spruce stairs, vile and 5-wide and disproportionate. "This? I love *this*? Look at this!"

"...Yeah?"

Bdubs stomps to the top of the stairs, arms crossed and expression disbelieving. "One, two, three, four, five. *Five wide.*"

"That was out of necessity," Etho points out. "I got tired of using blocks to have to stack up to the wall. Plus, *you* didn't have a plan in mind. Your buildings consisted of solid towers with no stairs."

"I know we've talked about efficiency over aesthetics, but this is pushing it too far. I get it, you want this huge staircase to get up the towers quicker. But, have you considered the fact that it's plain ugly?"

"What's your solution if you hate this so much, then?"

Bdubs stands taller. "Well, we've got a pretty curvy base so stairs *are* the only way we're going to be able to get up. Stairs are easy and quick, minimal risk of falling off, and harder to trap than ladders."

If Etho's exaggerated sigh was anything to go off of, it meant Bdubs had less than five minutes to pitch his idea before these hideous stairs became permanent. He taps a finger to his chin, thinking about what design could emulate the same practicality but just *looks* better.

"Three wide, but the two on the edges are curved so it creates a kind of banister."

"*What!?*" Etho stared as Bdubs started hacking away at the old stairs with his axe. He might as well get to work while they're still here. "Are we completely redesigning?"

"Yes! And you're going to help me!"

"Why would I do that?"

"Because you love me!" Bdubs angles the spruce stairs, just right, and they curve to create the specific style he wants. "Now get working!"

"How about we do one and leave the other? When Tango and Skizz get here, we'll ask *them* what they think."

"*Etho! Just fix the stairs!*"

Etho didn't argue with him after, but it's not like he was fighting very hard in the first place. It didn't even take long. With the two of them working together, they managed to wrap everything up pretty quickly. It didn't surprise him how fast they worked. What did surprise him was how loudly

they shouted over each other when Tango walked into the base.

“Hey Tango, what do you think of the stairs-”

“Tango, give me your opinion on efficiency over aesthetics-”

“Oh! Bdubs, you’re back!”

When he walked into his base, he thought he was going to be able to talk to Etho in private about the terrible deal he made. He didn’t exactly want to explain it to the rest of their team, especially not without preparing something to say.

Bdubs rubs the back of his neck, raising his hand to wave at Skizz and Tango behind Etho. “Hey, guys!”

“How’d it go?” Etho asked.

“Pretty good,” he says nonchalantly. As long as he plays cool, he should be fine. “Yeah, pretty good.”

“You still got your pants on...” Etho ponders, looking at every piece of armor he didn’t lose. “And your shoes-”

“Wait a minute!” Tango interrupts, eyes wide. Bdubs silently cursed. Really, Tango just *had* to be observant at this one moment? “Were you always a yellow life?”

“Okay, so-”

“Did you give Scar a life!?”

Well, no point beating around the bush anymore. “I gave him a life.”

Before he could begin to defend himself, the three members of his team all shouted at him. Etho backed away, his head in his hands. Sure, it sounded bad, but if they could give him a quick minute to explain then they’d see it’s not that bad!

“The good news is we got the enchanting table back!”

Skizz seemed to agree, though he didn’t look very happy. “Alright, well that *is* good news...”

Etho crosses his arms, shaking his head vigorously at Bdubs. “I’m more worried about Bdubs than the enchanting table.”

Bdubs scoffs. His trade was worth it if it meant their team would have access to better protection and a higher advantage. “Don’t worry! I’ll be fine.”

“One creeper explosion and I’m kicking you out of here, Bdubs.”

Oh, come *on*. Was Etho really going to be this difficult about it? When has he ever liked not having the upper hand? He gets being worried about an ally, but threatening to kick him out when nothing’s even happened yet? When his worst crime was simply getting the enchanting table for

their team? Etho's being a brat about this right now, but once they get the table, he'll be fine with it.

"No, I'm kicking you out of here."

Tango lightly hit Skizz on the arm. "When that happens, we've got to get over here for the show. I want to see how it plays out."

"It's not going to play out because Etho's overreacting! I'm not going to turn red, trust me."

Skizz pats him on the shoulder, a grateful expression on his face. "That's a heck of a thing you did, Bdubs, but I can't believe you let Scar swindle you out of a life."

"It's *worth it!* We'll keep the table for ourselves and if anyone wants to use it, they can, free of charge. We just gotta move it every time."

Etho brushes past him, hitting his shoulder as he went inside the base. Bdubs rubs the spot as he followed, Skizz and Tango coming up behind him. He watched Etho begin rummaging through their chests, his eyes hard and focused.

"Can we start setting up an enchantment room or something right now?"

If they hadn't killed him already, they were sure about to. Bdubs froze, wishing he opened the conversation with the bad news.

"That's the, um... That's the problem here, you see... I don't actually have it yet."

"WHAT!?" Everyone at once seemed to shout.

"It's going to be delivered shortly. It's on its way, Scar will be here any minute now. He promised, and he's a man of his word! Enchanting table *is on the way*, he was just going to grab it and bring it on over!"

Tango and Skizz still didn't look pleased, but Bdubs could tell they were content. As heroes, keeping the enchanting table and letting others use it, free of charge, was just the thing the server needed. Sure, he's down to yellow, but it's not like it's the end of the world. Plenty of people *started* on yellow; he hasn't even died yet! He'll be fine so long as he continues his normal lifestyle.

"Team BEST is scarily close to becoming Team SET, just saying."

"*Etho!*"

Skizz gives him a sideways smile. "Dude, he's getting the enchanting table back for us. We're all worried, but better enchantments is something we need. Why fret?"

Etho got a dark look in his eyes, and Bdubs took that as his cue to step in. Etho didn't like talking a lot in the first place, and being pushed to talk was his least favorite pastime. The last thing their alliance needed was to become Team BST or whatever because Skizz decided to mess with Etho a bit.

Besides, Bdubs doesn't like seeing his friend frazzled. He gets the worry, and it does warm his heart a bit, but it shouldn't come at the cost of Etho's comfort. No, Bdubs would have to take care of this.

“Because he loves me, Skizz,” Bdubs deflects. “Scar’s an honest man and he sees his bad deals through to the end. We just have to wait.”

And they would wait a *very* long time. Bdubs noticed the way Etho slightly stood in front of him when Scar came around.

He pretended he didn’t.

A simple visit to the Nether.

The Nether’s a scary place. It’s full of scary things that want to kill or steal gold. It was far from Bdubs’ favorite place. In fact, he’d go as far as to say it’s his *least* favorite. The Nether is abhorred. The Nether wasn’t fun. It was no place for him or his friends.

It was supposed to be a simple visit to the Nether.

They wanted to get blaze powder. He went with Tango and Etho, allowing Etho to take the lead and grabbing his friend’s wrist when things started getting heated. And by *heated*, it means dodging blazes and trying not to get lit on fire. The Nether wasn’t a very fun trip, but it was a necessary one.

It was one where he foolishly felt safe. He had Tango and Etho with him and Etho was looking out for them. “Eyes!” He’d call, or, “Look out!”

He thought Etho could keep him safe. He thought he could rely on his friend and he’d be fine.

Because that’s what it was at first! Etho built the ladders up, took out some Wither skeletons, instructed them on when to come up the ladder, and went to the main part of the fortress to begin killing off the blazes.

Etho didn’t see the fall.

While Etho was occupied with skeletons, Tango showed Bdubs a safer route. A little ways past the middle of the ladder, there was a walkway that led to a small group of blazes. Tango fell back after getting hit once, but Bdubs raised his shield and charged in.

He wasn’t about to get close to the blazes, so he brought his shield down and tried shooting at them with his bow. As soon as he wasn’t protected, a blaze hit him. He pushed through the pain and shot at the blaze from behind a wall. He could see when the blaze died and dropped a blaze rod, so naturally, he shot at another as Tango collected the rod.

“Let’s roll,” Tango said, already making his way back to the ladder.

From the top, Etho shouted, “Let’s get a few more!”

Bdubs agreed, of course. What’s one blaze rod going to do? If they were already in the Nether, might as well make it the last trip for a while. Killing a few more blazes and collecting the rods had seemed like a smart idea. It’s only a smart idea when you’re careful, it turns out.

He shot at another blaze, and it fired back at him.

He backed up, slowly, and suddenly there was no longer ground beneath his feet.

The first thing Bdubs felt was the turn of his stomach. Tango's panicked yell coursed through his ears, as did the wind as he plummeted to the floor of the Nether. He reached out with his hands, but he hardly scratched the red bricks. There was nothing he could do to slow his fall. He shouts and thrusts his shield out, but there is no stopping the inevitable.

As he made his way back through the Nether portal and to the fortress, he thought about the implications of being on red.

Tango and Etho were waiting for him at the fortress entrance. All he wanted to do was get his stuff back; he knows he appears hostile to them now and he's not going to bother trying to stay. He has to collect his things and he'll be out of their hair in no time. So long as no one escalated things, this would be quick and easy.

"No worries!" Bdubs shouts as he approaches. "Don't worry, I just want to get my stuff back."

Tango backs away, but Etho stands a couple of feet in front of him. "Well, I am a little worried. Bdubs, what happened man?"

He couldn't tell if Etho looked disappointed or upset. That made him want to rush out of there quicker. "I fell in a hole."

Barely, *just barely*, Etho cracks a smile. The corner of his lip twitched up, and he was holding something out in his hand for Bdubs. "You had too much of this."

Fearing he would mistakenly be too rough and get himself killed, he gently took whatever was in Etho's hand. The item was cold on his fingers, and bringing it closer to see showed that it was the courage crystal he got off Scar.

"Too much courage," he repeats.

"You're going to need it now!" Tango jokes, but Bdubs could tell he wants to leave. Tango took a step back, then two, then realizes Etho was glued to his spot. "So, are we going...?" He tried to whisper, nodding his head in the direction of his base.

Bdubs can clearly hear him, and the pang in his chest *hurt*. His allies are gone and he's separated from his friend all because of a clumsy stumble

Etho hands him a diamond chestplate, diamond pants, his soul speed boots (for soul speed that was *his* idea!), and some food. He doesn't hesitate in returning his diamond pickaxe, ender pearls, a fire resistance potion, and blocks for getting back out. His shield with the red B, however, is nowhere to be found.

"I'm missing my weapons," Bdubs says.

Etho turns to Tango. "Give him his sword."

"Why do you want me to give him a *weapon!*?" Tango shrieks.

"Because he loves me and doesn't want me to kill him, now give me my sword so I can get out of your way."

Etho's sharp look didn't scare him. It wasn't directed at him; it was for Tango. Tango wasn't scared either, but he reluctantly handed the sword over. Bdubs understands, seeing as he just

became one of the most dangerous people on the server. The knowledge doesn't do anything to soothe his clenched heart. So he's not ignorant. Now what? What's waiting for him now that he's alone?

Bdubs turns around and leaves. He does so in hope that his closest friend will stop him.

Etho lets him go.

Being red's *fun*.

It's more enjoyable than he thought it was going to be. He's been having a great time setting up traps, scheming with Cleo, messing with Skizz and Etho-

Okay, being red isn't all that. Sure, he likes not having rules. He likes the newfound freedom that he's been granted. There's a twisted part of him that likes not having to worry about losing those closest. They've already cut him off and abandoned him, so there's no more loss to mourn and suffer over. The only way to lose an ally as a red name is through death.

He's still luckier than his fellow reds, at least. Etho had the decency to let him stick around with the only condition being he stayed on his side of the base. Cleo left her alliance broken-hearted and alone, Joel's been on his own for more days than Bdubs can count, and Grian got exiled.

Four pathetic reds and they're all eager to see who they can get onto their side.

He heard Grian tried and failed to convert Mumbo. Bdubs scoffed at his attempts because really, how hard could it be? How painstakingly difficult is it to convince a friend to go red?

It was much more complicated than that. He asked Etho to throw himself off the walls for him, and Etho said no! They're both fully aware how much Etho thrives off chaos, off making traps, and freaking out the server

Going red was one thing, but having a guaranteed friend once the green and yellow had vanished from the eyes? Now that's the best it's ever going to get for a red. Red names don't get to keep their old friends and make partnerships out of necessity. Etho's never going to get another offer better than this.

But he's not taking it! He keeps slipping away, coming back every once in a while to check up on Bdubs. If he didn't know any better, he'd almost think Etho was making sure he hadn't died yet. Seeing as the man could hardly look at his red eyes, Bdubs was very aware that Etho was babysitting the base, not him. Just to make sure he didn't blow the whole thing to kingdom come.

It didn't stop him from building a TNT cannon. It didn't stop him from asking a second time. It did, however, send Etho away from the snow fort for the seventh millionth time today. Bdubs simply sighed and pondered a decision he was going to have to make by the end of the night.

Did he want to stay?

What was left? A wall that separates him from the person he longs to stand next to? How long did

Etho expect him to live like this? He supposes if he's thinking about it this hard that Etho's guess was just as good as his. He imagines Cleo and Grian would be offended if they were told exactly where they could breathe.

Why is he even considering staying? He's not being treated very nice here, but then again, it's not like he's being very nice back. Making a TNT cannon leading to his friend's side of their shared base and setting up a deadly carnival game that rains lava down when shot isn't an ideal living situation for Etho either.

Nothing is forcing either of them to continue living in the shared base. Yet neither of them has decided to get up and move out.

It's during his assembly of the cannon that Cleo finds him shaking like a leaf as he weighs his options. He tries to convince her not to use PVP, but he's subtly sneaking in hints that she should leave Etho alone. He made a great deal with her, and Bdubs would make sure those deals continue should she spare him.

Cleo got the point. She steadily (and wisely) moved the conversation away from murder to sand. She's showing him loads of sand she and BigB had mined before he killed her, happily offering a couple of stacks to Bdubs.

"Cleo!" He celebrates. "How did you manage to get all of this?"

Her casual shrug told him she was more overjoyed at her accomplishments than she was willing to show. Etho leaving wasn't necessarily a betrayal, but that's sure what it felt like. He couldn't compare to her situation at all, but that didn't mean he didn't understand her pain and heartbreak.

"BigB and I wanted to stop as many people from getting TNT, so we mined a *lot* of lakes and river banks. I haven't got much sugar cane on me, but..."

You received a life from GoodTimeWithScar

He didn't mean to, but he tuned out the rest of Cleo's sentence. He thinks she processed it much faster than he did, judging by her loud gasp as green sparkles filled the air between them. He swears his knees were seconds away from collapsing and he probably would've passed out if he wasn't filled with the overwhelming need to find Etho.

Bdubs and Scar weren't friends. Not enemies, but not nearly close enough to warrant Scar gifting him a life out of nowhere. It can only mean one thing.

"Who was that?" Cleo frantically asked.

"I think Etho just made a bad deal with Scar..." Bdubs whispers in return.

"Why would he get you a life?" She sounds confused. Hurt. He doesn't think any of her old friends attempted to get her anything.

"He loves me! It's because he loves me, Cleo! What else can I say?"

He doesn't offer his condolences. He's too happy to think about any of that right now. Besides, he knows Cleo; knows her better than anyone else on the entire server, he'd bet. She'll get a life from somewhere and she'll be fine.

Turns out, so would he.

“You’ve risked a lot.”

“No, *we’ve* risked a lot,” Bdubs corrects.

Etho deadpans. Bdubs hid his smile in the crook of his arm because he knows exactly what Etho’s talking about. He just finds it amusing to mess with the guy and play stupid.

“For starters, between the two of us, you’re the only one that’s been on red. Second, you’re the only one that’s been on red *twice*. Third, you’re the only one that almost went back to red minutes after gaining a life. That’s a *you* problem, not a *we* problem.”

“Everything’s a *we* problem when we stick together!”

Etho, leaning against the snow walls, slumps to the ground sighing. “Why did you go after Tango for your Boogey kill? It didn’t have to be him. I could’ve helped you get a kill if you had told me earlier but you went after your own teammate.”

Bdubs, more confused than anything, frowns at the scolding. It’s not exactly easy to avoid dying. What right did Etho have to be lecturing him?

(Etho has every right, considering he’s the one that’s brought Bdubs back from red every time. If the man had to find him a life again, he can only imagine how well that would go for him).

(Would Etho even get him another life?)

“Hey, I’m a survivor and I’m chill with being on red. *You’re* the one that keeps bringing me back!” Bdubs teases.

Etho turns away from him, looking up at the ceiling. “If you want to leave so badly, then get out. Don’t stay, be my guest and find somewhere else to go.”

Bdubs’ face fell. He... didn’t mean it. He’s usually pretty clear when he’s joking, right? Etho doesn’t snap at him, very rarely ever getting angry. He wasn’t mad when he fell off the fortress, or when Mumbo managed to kill him in the Boogeyman detection circle. He seemed more impressed earlier when he killed Tango than angry, but he sounds pretty upset about it now.

“Dude...” Bdubs furrows his eyebrows. Etho’s always understood actions better than words. Maybe making the most confused face ever would drop the idea that he’s got no clue where this is coming from. “When did I say I want to leave?”

“I don’t know, Bdubs. But you’re awfully adamant about running into danger and you’ve gotten yourself down to red twice. What, are you trying to find an excuse to leave or something? Just get up and go, don’t pretend to want to stay. For both of our sakes, please.”

“Literally what in the world are you talking about?” Bdubs ran a hand through his hair, trying to make eye contact with the man who’s circumventing looking at him. “Why would I want to leave you?”

Etho shrugs, but it’s aggressive. Unkind, but not uncaring. He’s trying to come across as unbothered, but Bdubs has a feeling that if he got up and walked out, it wouldn’t be as simple as

Etho's making it sound.

"I don't want to leave. I'm loved here."

Etho's breath hitches and Bdubs doesn't dare exhale. Did he go too far? Was he wrong? Etho doesn't like to tread on dangerous territory when they talk, but he might as well have thrown them both in a pit loaded with charged creepers.

"Do *you* want to leave?" Bdubs asks.

Etho shakes his head. "If you're not leaving, buddy, neither am I."

Bdubs forced his breathing back to normal. For such a short, out of nowhere conversation, it took a lot out of him. Did his recklessness come off as carelessness? Bdubs didn't think he could leave Etho even if he wanted to.

"Stay," Etho whispers, avoiding eye contact by looking at a spot on the ground.

"Okay," Bdubs responds, staring at him as best he could.

Bdubs was hurting.

This wasn't a death by his own accords, but it sure felt like it. He wanted to fight the Wither and he died. That was the *worst* thing that could've happened and it happened because why wouldn't it happen? Why wouldn't his luck be terrible right when he needed it?

The green names didn't notice him at first. When he came back and helped them fight the Wither, they hadn't seen him. It was only once it was defeated and they were traveling elsewhere that they decided he needed to go.

He has the low ground. Standing on the edge of a river, all the greens, *Etho*, stood across from him at the top of a hill. He didn't want to walk away. Walking away solidifies his departure and he can't leave. He *can't*. He has to stay with Etho.

"Where are you going?" Scott asks.

"I'm just trying to get the high ground with you guys," Bdubs admits, brutally honest.

Etho's face is hard as Ren and Scott kick him out. They tell him he's on his own, that he can't stay with them. Etho wasn't looking at him. Bdubs scoffs at the tasteless nature of the greens and says, "You guys got lives to spare."

His silent plea, *Etho, please*, was noticed. His partner raises his head, staring directly at him. "Bdubs, I've got one. But you have to do something for me."

He didn't have to do much for Scar or Tango when they gave him lives; sign a contract, be nice to Tango, whatever. Of all people, it's Etho who wants Bdubs to earn his life. It makes sense, he supposes. Giving Bdubs a life would send Etho to yellow and the man wouldn't do it for no reason. He's not going to act like he thought everything he's done for Etho up until this point acted as compensation enough. It's not because he's gifting the most precious thing on the server, and is Bdubs even worthy to receive such a gift?

“Give you the courage to fight a Wither? I already did that!”

“Kill a red name.”

Bdubs freezes as Etho continues. “If you kill a red name, I’ll give you a life.”

He had already seen them. On his way back to the Wither fight, he saw each and every one of them in the same place, laughing and pointing at the newest addition to their kind. Never mind that he’d have Tango on his side, or that it would just be him and Etho as Skizz is *dead*. Never mind that, he’s never going to have a red alone for long enough to get a kill.

“They’re all grouped up!”

“Any red and I’ll give you a life, that’s the deal.” He goes silent for a moment before the ghost of a smile appears on his face. “We’ll be back together like buddies again.”

Bdubs nods. “I’ll be back,” he promises because Etho loves him and Bdubs has to earn this. “Yeah, I’ll be right back.”

“Bdubs,” Grian starts. “How did Etho solo the Wither?”

As the reds looted the destroyed snow fortress, Bdubs pops his head up from where he searched inside a chest. Seriously, is *that* the rumor going around? “Etho didn’t solo it, I solo’d it! I gave him the courage! He wanted to retreat when you spawned it but I made us fight!”

It’s clear that the reds fear Etho. Grian and Impulse chose to spawn the Wither at their base and now they think Etho single-handedly killed it. What would they think if they knew Bdubs was plotting on running back to him? That one of them was going to die because he needed to reunite with his friend? Oh, he hopes to hear their reaction one day when he’s yellow and fighting at Etho’s side again.

“Bdubs,” Grian says, all the reds gathered around. His voice is low. Dangerous. It captures his attention. “Etho has no loyalty to you. He just immediately teamed up with the next guy that came along.”

“He’s a survivor; it’s what he does,” Tango agrees.

He wants to retaliate, to prove them wrong, but he can’t talk. But they *are* wrong. They are! Etho can’t be his friend until he returns to yellow. He has to team up with someone, it’s not like he’s going to wait around for Bdubs all day. Quite frankly, that’s more silly and ridiculous than the impossible task that he gave Bdubs.

Tango’s probably still mad about the Boogeyman kill. Why else would he agree? He knows about the friendship and loyalty Bdubs and Etho have for each other. He would only agree with Grian because he’s trying to get Bdubs to stay. There’s no way he would say something like that otherwise.

Because... Because the reds are wrong. Grian’s trying to get in his head, Tango’s still mad at him. They’re spewing out whatever nonsense and trash they possibly can to get the upper hand. Bdubs sees right through their facade. Behind the confidence and smooth talking, there’s genuine fear to

the point that they feel they need him on their side to win.

Bdubs has said the words so, so many times. It was a joke at times, a test at others, but a reassurance whenever it left his lips. It gave him the courage to fight back against the cruel words that cut deeper and sharper than any of the weapons the reds could aim at him.

“He loves me.”

“If he loves you, why didn’t he give you a life?” And Grian smiles because he’s brought his only doubt to the surface.

Regardless, Bdubs shakes his head. They’re *wrong*. “He cares.”

“You’re the only one left in BEST from what I see.”

He glances at Tango, but Grian cuts him off before he can say anything. “Nope, Tango’s out. We’re all in agreement that Etho needs to go.”

Joel grabs Grian by the shoulder and points at something over yonder, something about Scott and Cleo, but Bdubs isn’t listening. Bdubs is regulating his breathing, trying to control his shaking hands, and making sure he’s got a steady grip on his axe. They’re *wrong*. Etho loves him and he cares and it’s not like Etho’s just going to give him a life. If it was that easy, there’d be no reds. The reds are idiotic and scared.

They think by convincing Bdubs of this... what? That he’ll suddenly give up everything he’s fought for? He’ll leave behind his friend and ideals for people that are one brawl away from death? No, unlike them, he’s got someone waiting for him on the green team. He’s got someone who never gave up on him, that doesn’t abandon him the second he turns red. He has a friend, a lover, and he has to get back to him as soon as possible.

The reds are wrong, and one of them is going to die for it.

Bdubs tails Lizzie.

The reds want to find where some secret base may be hidden. He didn’t pay much attention to the plan when they went over it; he wasn’t planning on staying here for much longer. All he had to do was get the kill and he’d reunite with Etho.

He chose Lizzie as his target. Killing Tango wouldn’t make him feel very good, Grian and Joel seemed too difficult of targets, and there’s no telling where Scar’s at. Lizzie would be the easiest, and he was already apologizing profusely in his head for when he finds the perfect moment.

Bdubs held a bucket of lava in his hand. He let himself fall behind the group, a step or two behind Lizzie but right against her heels. They approach a lava lake, Joel teetering on the edge. He considers it but remembers he has to be smart about this. He can’t start swinging his sword at the first opportunity he gets.

Lizzie stops for a second to acknowledge the visible dirt amongst the field of grass. Just as Bdubs is about to place the lava, he takes out the secret weapon he was hiding in his pocket.

When the Wither killed him, he left behind a wither rose.

She stood there, perfectly in place, completely still.

He couldn't *not* take the chance.

Bdubs opted to switch the lava for his wither rose, the very one he dropped himself. He places the rose at her feet, and she jumps back in shock and pain. She yells, "Bdubs, woah!"

The other reds stop walking, looking at him as if expecting an apology. He glances at the terrain around him: there's a small mountain straight ahead. All he's got to do is kill her and run for the hills. Once he's on the other side, he'll be safe. At that point, it's a game of waiting for Etho. Either waiting for the life or waiting for his friend to give him coordinates to meet up.

He hates the waiting game.

But he's close, *he's so close* .

Bdubs pulls his crossbow out of his inventory, loaded with fireworks and arrows. He begins shooting every possible thing that can inflict damage upon her. He gives her the best sympathetic look he can, but he's not sorry.

It's only once Lizzie's dead that he finally speaks again. "I had to! I had to do that! I had to!"

He sprints forward, climbing over the hill. He's just got to get over and he's *safe*. He'll be safe, Etho will give him a life and he'll protect him. The reds won't be a problem once they're together again. Arrows whiz past him, one hitting his arm and another lodging into his shoulder, but it'll be okay. He's at the top of the hill, he's just got a little further to go before everything's okay again.

"Etho!" Bdubs shouts, an arrow piercing his neck. "Etho, give me the-"

So close, but an arrow to the head was not something he could survive.

He hopes Etho misses the message in chat.

Banana this, banana that, Etho's tired of it all.

He's bored, quite frankly. Listening to Ren stall for time, making small talk with the reds, yapping on and on and *on*. He's itching for the codeword, waiting for the time to strike and continue with their admittedly flawed ambush. It's a strategy that works in theory and hopefully stretches beyond their imagination.

Judging from his limited range of hearing, he knows BigB is here. Scar *maybe*, but Etho thinks he hears Grian. He's got it out for the reds, of course, but he's got a goal.

These reds have gotten too powerful. They've got to get pegged down a step and Etho plans to be the one to do so. They've lost a lot, sure, but their losses have been expendable. Have they *really* lost? Have they lost like Etho's lost?

No, they haven't.

“Banana!” Ren shouts, the sound of swords clanking audible from the bubblevators. “Banana, banana!”

Etho takes the cue, rushing to the surface with his bow at the ready and sword unsheathed. Cleo’s already running after BigB, but Etho’s on the lookout for the voice he thinks he heard. He sees Scar, and attacking Scar means Grian would appear at his side within a couple of seconds.

“Banana!” He shouts in response, hitting Scar with his axe.

Scar raises his shield and ends pearls away. Etho crosses the bridge to meet him at the landing spot, but Grian appears out of nowhere. He’s in front of Scar, a smirk spread across his face. They’re both thinking of the same thing, it’s clear.

They both have Bdubs’ last moments on their minds.

Except Etho’s mind is wandering. He knows Scar and Grian’s partnership is jumbled, but their old relationship is still a weakness. It’s a weakness to Grian more than it is to Scar, and Etho knows exactly how this works in his favor.

“Grian,” he greets, tipping his head.

“Etho,” he receives in return. “Didn’t know you still had partners.”

Etho raises an eyebrow, glancing back to make sure Ren and Cleo are faring well on their own. “Yeah, I don’t kill my friends whenever I feel like it.”

Grian chuckles. “Spoken like someone who doesn’t know what it takes to win this thing. It wasn’t for no reason, either. Don’t be a liar, Etho, we both know lying doesn’t work on me.”

He thinks back to when he tried tricking Grian into thinking he was the Boogeyman. The man saw through him instantly. “Doesn’t it? What’s Scar been feeding you to make you stay, hmm?”

Grian falters, and Etho smiles beneath his mask. “Oh, that’s *rich*. You’re acting like Bdubs thought of you as anything more than the guy who gets him lives whenever he went down to red.”

“At least he had someone who cared about him. Having to threaten Scar to give you a life doesn’t tell you enough about where you actually stand?”

From behind Grian, Scar shifted his weight. He took a step to the side, choosing not to hide behind Grian. Grian’s grip on his sword loosened. “We aren’t stupid. We know not to get attached in a place like this, I learned my lesson from last time.”

Last time, when they were ride or die. “You’re an idiot if you believe that having friends and people you care about is stupid. What do you fight for? Why are you still here if you don’t have anyone you care about?”

Because Etho has someone to avenge. He has a partner that he outlived that should be at his side right now. But his partner’s gone and it’s Grian’s fault. He has a reason behind his action, not just mindless swinging of his sword. That’s going to cost any red who wants to kill just for the sake of killing.

“Winning’s my motive.”

It’s Etho’s turn to smirk. “Don’t lie to me, Grian. I can see through you and everyone here knows that’s not true.”

He's gaining the upper hand on the conversation, and of course, Grian can't lose his grip in front of all the server members. Etho would love to see it, would love to unravel his lover's killer and pull him apart piece by piece. But alas, the two of them aren't willing to give up on the people they love no matter how much they try to hide it.

"He said you loved him."

Now, why did he have to mention that?

Etho aims his bow for Grian's heart, because what means the most to a man who pretends to have no cares or attachments in the world? That title belongs to Etho now, having spent *way too long* acting as if Bdubs was just his partner, not showing him the love he deserved, and the answer to that question is the heart.

"I did."

GoodTimeWithScar was shot by Etho

"You forgot how shields work, didn't you? I showed you how to use one and you kept getting yours disabled by Joel's axe! Man, you're so lost without me!"

"I didn't win it for you, Bdubs."

Bdubs reaches forward, grasping Etho's hand in his. He didn't care who won, he's been waiting to see Etho again since the last time they separated!

Distantly, he's aware of some sort of spawl happening. The final four members are battling it out for the victory, but Bdubs has already declared himself the champion. He didn't have to win the whole thing, he just had to win Etho's heart.

"Well, you didn't win it for me either." A chuckle. "Just kidding. You know I love you."

Bdubs did know. He died loved, and he'll continue to love and be loved because they were stronger than death. The nature of the server didn't kill their souls or bond, only their bodies. It's a beautiful thing, he thinks.

Etho squeezes his hand, and Bdubs has never been happier.

End Notes

if you're reading coconut mall, i'm so sorry <3

i've got to stop posting fics later than 1 am because i feel like these never make sense jhfjjds. if there's any typos and stuff i'm actually so sorry, i tried to catch all of them but i might've missed one or two. i mean, hopefully it's all good but yeah just in case

for the small canon divergence at the end i just really wanted the etho/grian fight we didn't

get in canon. i didn't write it but i imagine in the final fight when everyone dies before it goes down to the final four, etho manages to kill grian and avenges bdubs.

okay this is the point these notes stop making sense so imma cut myself off lmao. thank you for reading if you made it, hope you enjoyed :]

tumblr: aviangrian

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