

recovery is hard but that's fine

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recovery is hard but that's fine

by [NetherBastion](#)

Summary

In which Etho goes to bed with a stomachache, and everyone is proud of him regardless.

Notes

mom said it was my turn to project onto etho

bit of a departure from my normal work but i read several of @420_im_lonely's fics but this one kinda stuck with me. i hope you don't mind that i took inspo from it! it's set in the same setting lonely's fic is, a private world maintained by Joe where the hermits wait for the Hermitcraft server to reset and rejuvenate.

tw for body dysmorphia and nausea

- Inspired by [Skin and Bone](#) by [420_im_lonely](#)

Etho's stomach hurt.

After dinner was said and done, he'd gone to hide in the library. Not the most comfortable place for someone in his circumstances, but the commons area was far too open compared to the veritable maze that was the library. Besides, Joe hadn't skimped out when he made this place — there were comfortable chairs and bean bag chairs scattered amongst the stacks and in small areas where people were meant to congregate.

Etho went to the far end of the sprawling library, where part of the room was shrouded underneath a solid ceiling rather than the glass floor of the courtyard above. He found one of the few couches Joe had supplied the library with and flopped down on it. He pulled off his vest and used it as a blanket, curling up underneath the article of clothing. It was bigger than he remembered it being.

His stomach still hurts.

He had a lot to eat today. Some bread for lunch, half a cookie False had given him as thanks for helping with dinner. She was surprised and delighted to see him interested and helping in the kitchen and had slipped him one before dinner as a thank-you. He actually ate dinner today too. Thinking back on it, it wasn't actually a lot at all, and it seemed a little pathetic to say he's eaten a lot; but there was a small, nagging part of him that still whispered *too much, that's too much*.

He kind of wishes that part of him was physical just so that he could run away from it.

Etho *knows* that he's taking steps in the *right* direction but he can't help the desire to stick with what he knows. 'Better the devil you know' the old adage goes. Hunger he knew, hunger he could deal with. He's used to being hungry — used to sitting with it like an old friend. He hasn't been full in a *long* time, and it *hurts*. It's bitter, and it feels like failure. He finds himself missing the gnawing, empty ache in his gut, rather than the feeling of something sitting in his stomach.

He squirms in discomfort on the couch. He feels gross. He knew the vaguely bony look he had wasn't great, but the way his stomach stuck out just below his ribs looked worse in his opinion. Blindly, he reaches down and tugs down the waistband of his joggers and swallows against the bitter rise of bile in his throat. He is *not* going to throw up in Joe's library. If he only gets one win today, it would be keeping down his dinner and *not throwing up in the library*.

Etho tries to relax. He closes his eyes and tries to breathe deeply, pulling his vest over his head to block out the light.

He hadn't even realized he'd managed to drift off until he was being shaken awake.

"Eetho, Etho! Wakie wakie — " Bdubs chants in a quiet, sing-song voice.

Etho lets out a frustrated groan as he slid one of his hands out from under his vest in an attempt to push Bdubs away. His hand makes contact, but he's still sluggish from sleep. It doesn't do much. Bdubs does, however, stop shaking him.

"Hey!" Bdubs protests, despite the fact that he's barely pushed backward, "Good evening Sleeping Beauty!"

Etho grunts back from under his vest. Bdubs tugs on it lightly, testing whether he was holding onto it or not. Well, he wasn't before, but he was *now*.

"C'mon man, you're gonna get a crick in your neck if you sleep here. Besides, it's not good for you to sleep right after eating."

He doesn't care if it's good for him or not. His stomach hurts, his brain was furious with him, and he wants it all to *stop*. Besides, if he does get up, he's going to have to walk up to and around the courtyard to get to Bdubs' room and he doubts the bloating has gone down in the short time he's been asleep. Everyone would see how gross and out-of-control he was.

"I'm gonna get Beef," Bdubs threatens. Because while Bdubs couldn't pick him up and carry him around, Beef absolutely *could*.

Finally, Etho pokes his head out from underneath his vest, if only to moan out the word; "No," in as petulant of a tone as he could muster.

"Yes, dude, I will!"

Etho lets out a sigh and sits up, *slowly*. He squints against the bright light of the library, wobbling a bit as static briefly filled his vision. He closed his eyes and scrunched his brow, Bdubs' hand coming to rest on his shoulder to help steady him.

"You okay?" Bdubs asks, the tone of his voice much softer than when he was threatening to go make Beef carry him.

Etho swallows against a new wave of nausea that rears its ugly head and crashes down upon him. "Yeah — " he nearly gags around the word. He was having a really good day that's turned shitty real fast.

Bdubs' hand left his shoulder, rubbing slow, comforting circles on Etho's upper back. "Take your time," he says, "You're doing good."

Once he was feeling significantly less pukey he let Bdubs drag him up and out of the library. Etho put his vest back on and zipped it back up, hunching over and sticking his hands in his pockets in an attempt to obscure his stomach. His efforts will probably garner him more attention than he wants, but he didn't want anyone to see him like this *period*.

Their walk through the courtyard as they make their way to the suite he and Bdubs were sharing this time around was brisk, Etho's long legs able to carry him across the space pretty quickly. A few greetings were thrown their way, Bdubs returned them. Etho raises his eyebrows in the hopes of tricking his friends into thinking he was smiling under his mask.

Beef meets them before they could get to the door to Bdubs' apartment. "Hey!" He greets the two of them, "Stress is making ginger tea."

Etho doesn't know if he could stomach anything else right now, even something meant to soothe it. "Oh, cool — but I was gonna — "

"Dude, Joe isn't gonna be mad if you eat or drink in your room." Etho could almost cry at Beef's assurance. They weren't going to make him sit in the courtyard and be miserable.

He ends up laying on the couch inside of the tiny apartment, much to Bdubs' chagrin. Except this time, he could take off his shoes and had a blanket thrown at him after he shrugged off his vest. Bdubs and Beef fought over the one remaining chair for a few minutes before Beef won, prompting Bdubs to sit on him.

Stress came by with the tea.

"Just try for a sip or two luv," she says as she presses a glass into his hands, "You did good today."

Etho mutters his thanks and Stress makes pleasant conversation with Beef and Bdubs for a few minutes while Etho works himself up to taking a sip. He no longer felt like he was going to burst, but that didn't mean he was feeling *good*. He takes a small sip, then places the glass of warm tea on the coffee table. He lays back down and pulls the blanket over his head, willing Stress, Bdubs and Beef's voices to fade into white noise.

'*You're doing good*', '*you did good today*', '*He's doing better*'. He's been getting that a lot lately. And it wasn't like he *didn't* want to get better either — it felt like his body was fighting him at every turn. He would eat and in retaliation his stomach would cramp, or worse, if it was too rich he'd just throw it back up. If he didn't, a dark corner of his mind would start spitting bile — *you've lost it, you're out-of-control, you're slipping*. He felt so sick and so out-of-control, but he felt sick and out-of-control even when he wasn't trying to get better. He felt out-of-control when he was starving.

He tricked himself into thinking he'd been in control of his own downward spiral.

Just when he was about to dig himself deeper into his depressive spiral, someone scoops him up into their arms and he can't help but let out a yelp.

"Oh, sorry Etho!" Beef chuckles as Etho fights his way out of the blanket still wrapped around his body, "I thought you were asleep!"

"You couldn't have just *looked*?" He protests once he's finally freed from his fabric confides. It was just him, Beef and Bdubs in the room now. Stress must have left.

Beef looks down, a grin on his face, "I... I didn't wanna risk waking you up if you were... "

"Oh but picking me up *wouldn't* wake me up?"

"Hey, I was gentle!"

"Gosh, you're so — "

"Bdubs, you mind telling me where to put this guy? He's awfully mouthy for someone being held six feet off the ground."

"Well since he's up you could just — " "Put me on the bed," Etho interrupts, "I wanna *sleeeeeep*." He even wraps his arms around Beef's neck like a girl in a romance movie being carried off by her beau.

Beef snorts, "What am I, a taxi?" He says, as he walks over to said bed and dumps Etho onto it, blanket and all.

"Hey!" Etho giggles, "*You picked me* up!"

"You know you're not supposed to sleep for at least an hour after you eat," Bdubs reminds him again, crawling onto the bed with him.

"Then it shouldn't make me sleepy," Etho murmurs, lounging back on the many pillows Bdubs keeps on his bed. He wishes it wouldn't make him miserable either.

"To be fair to him," Beef says as he perches himself on the side of the bed, "I'm *pretty* sure it's been longer than an hour."

"Bah," is all Bdubs has to say to that. He scooches over and curls into Etho's side. Etho tosses an arm around him.

"So do you two want me to leave, or — "

Etho reaches out with his remaining arm and makes a grabbing motion in Beef's direction. "Come cuddle," he says, "You'll feel less awkward."

Etho ends up sandwiched between his friends, Beef on one side, Bdubs on the other. Neither of them were disgusted by him, Bdubs having practically climbed on top of him while avoiding putting pressure on his stomach (which he was sorely grateful for) and Beef lying next to him, head resting on his shoulder. Etho felt... good. Content.

This felt good.

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