

rip the stars to shreds

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/35237584) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/35237584>.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Rating: | Teen And Up Audiences |
| Archive Warning: | Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings |
| Category: | Gen , Other |
| Fandom: | Last Life SMP |
| Relationship: | Hermitcraft Ensemble & Hermitcraft Ensemble , Bdouble100 & Ethoslab , BdoubleO100/EthosLab , Minor or Background Relationship(s) |
| Character: | Charles Grian , EthosLab (Video Blogging RPF) , BdoubleO100 , Hermitcraft Ensemble , Minor Characters , Boatem Members , Daniel M. VintageBeef , Xisumavoid (Video Blogging RPF) |
| Additional Tags: | Queerplatonic Relationships , Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , Alternate Universe - Gods & Goddesses , Angst with a Happy Ending , Hurt/Comfort , Implied/Referenced Character Death , Grief/Mourning , Not RPF, which should be obvious but yknow , Implied/Referenced Dissociation (very light) |
| Language: | English |
| Collections: | stories from the pantheon |
| Stats: | Published: 2021-11-20 Completed: 2021-11-23 Words: 3,865 Chapters: 3/3 |

rip the stars to shreds

by [BananasofThorns](#)

Summary

“No, no, no, no, no,” Etho breathes, falling to his knees beside his partner’s body. Grian wants to look away, to give him some semblance of privacy, but he can’t. “Bdubs— Bdubs, c’mon, man— Bdubs!”

Grian has never heard him sound so devastated. He pillows Bdubs’s head on his knees, head bowed; his hair hides his eyes, and his mask covers the bottom half of his face, but his shoulders are shaking with tears.

“Etho!” Bdubs cries; Grian glances sideways as his translucent form bursts through the loose circle of ghosts around their newest victor. “You won!”

In another world, Etho and Bdubs are the final two left. Etho, god of the Void, wins. Last Life doesn't stand a chance against the devastation of his grief.

Notes

I started this weeks before Last Life finished but only just now finished it lmao. It's set in my god AU, in which all the Last Lifers are gods or otherwise non-human. Grian, the

admin god, put wards on Last Life to suppress all their powers so that they were basically human while in the game. The wards lift when someone wins. Etho, some sort of cosmic horror made from the Void itself, is far older than everyone else, but he's also just a guy bc. Etho, yknow?

that should be everything. this isn't connected to my other Last Life god AU fics
enjoy! <3

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

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

despite this fic being ethubs centric, they aren't really in this chapter at all lol

anyway. some notes:

- "*Italics in quotes*" are telepathic speaking/my god au version of messaging. *Italics* are thoughts

- everyone on Hermitcraft is a god. all gods have god forms, which they shift into when they're using/have used so much power that they either can't maintain or can't focus on keeping their mortal form, but their passive state is the mortal form so that they don't like. burn out from being in the god form the whole time

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

Grian rises from his body just in time to see Etho and Bdubs throw their swords away and face each other, armorless, in the center of their destroyed base. The scene is achingly familiar; he breathes through the tightness in his throat and digs his intangible hands into the walls of snow to stave off his *deja vu*. Just like last time, there's no question about who will win. Etho is pulling his punches, but Bdubs is doing the same, and they've all known the outcome from the moment his lips twisted into a tired, bitter smile. All he has to do is trick Etho, push him far enough that his instincts overrule his devotion, and then it's done. The game is over. For the final time, Bdubs dies.

"No, no, no, no, no," Etho breathes, falling to his knees beside his partner's body. Grian wants to look away, to give him some semblance of privacy, but he can't. "Bdubs— Bdubs, c'mon, man— *Bdubs!*"

Grian has never heard him sound so devastated. He pillows Bdubs's head on his knees, head bowed; his hair hides his eyes, and his mask covers the bottom half of his face, but his shoulders are shaking with tears.

"Etho!" Bdubs cries; Grian glances sideways as his translucent form bursts through the loose circle of ghosts around their newest victor. "You won!"

Etho can't hear him, of course. He slumps.

"I'm sorry," Etho mutters, voice shaking. "You weren't— that was so *stupid*," he laughs weakly. A long pause; all of the ghosts are silent, and the only sound in the world is Etho's unsteady breathing. "I'm sorry."

He cradles Bdubs's head in his hands, fingers tapping *three-two-one three-two-one* on his temples. Slowly, he exhales, and the world seems to shudder with him. Grian drifts closer despite himself, only to freeze when he moves close enough to see Etho's face; his eyes glow blinding white, two miniature stars, and he's crying pure black tears that drip over Bdubs's face like spilled ink. Grian blinks, and Etho's edges waver, smudging into something that walks the line between human and *other*. He blinks again and Etho is barely there at all, half-consumed by Void.

Oh, he thinks, a sudden realization that almost sends him scrambling back except he *can't*.

“Etho!” Bdubs shouts again, this time more desperate. “Etho?!”

The world trembles. Grian winces; he can *feel* it dissolving, like acid is eating at its core, and there is nothing he can do. There is no way he can even *think* of fighting a power as ancient as this. Tendrils of Void snake through the ground, clawing through the air and consuming everything in their path. At the center of it all, Etho is a sentinel made from nothingness.

“Guys,” Lizzie asks, her spectral form glowing gold with her nervousness. Through his tenuous connection with the world data, Grian can feel her struggling and failing to spin around. “Guys, what’s going on?”

The horizon is swallowed by cold nothingness.

“Guys?!” Jimmy cries.

Grian grits his teeth. His powers spark uselessly at his fingertips, admin screens crashing before he can even bring them up. “I can’t *do* anything! I— Etho’s too powerful!”

He can feel the Void tugging at his limbs, caressing the depths of his soul. With the last of his strength, he throws as much magic as he can out into the world, blanketing the others in a shield that will - hopefully, Universe, *please* - keep them from getting swallowed into the blackness. He trusts Etho, and he knows he would never purposefully hurt them, but no one knows the true depth of the Void’s power.

“Etho!” Bdubs shouts, voice muffled and near-inaudible by the smothering emptiness. “Etho, c’mon, you can’t—”

Everything goes black. The sudden silence is deafening. Grian can’t breathe. He can’t move.

There is nothing.

+++

He wakes up with a gasp, wings flaring and burning and bleeding light as he stumbles out of bed, chest heaving. It takes a few seconds to rein himself in, to fold his wings into one pair and focus his eyes onto the faux-starry sky above his alleyway. He can feel other divinities flaring around Hermitcraft, but the sensation is distant as he reaches out for the Last Life world.

It’s gone. Not abandoned and slowly dissolving into the Universe like Third Life is, simply— gone. Like it was never there to begin with.

He slams back into his body with a jolt, already moving before his mind catches up. Fiery, inhumanly large wings propel him out of the alleyway in half a second and he hangs suspended in the air for a moment too long before gravity takes hold and he glides back down toward the Boatem Hole. The others are already waiting for him; he can sense their worry before he gets anywhere close enough to see their faces. They’ve contained their godliness better than he has, but Scar’s eyes are a few shades too gold and Pearl’s freckles look closer to stars than skin and redstone drifts around Mumbo like ender particles and Impulse is still just a bit too *other*. When Grian lands, they turn to face him as one.

“What just *happened*?” Mumbo asks.

There is a line of scar tissue running from his temple to beneath his shirt; it’s faint, nearly unnoticeable except for the shimmer of blood-like redstone at its edges, but he adjusts his collar over it like its very presence weighs him down. Grian pulls his eyes away.

“I think Etho might’ve just dragged Last Life into the Void,” he says carefully. “I can’t feel it anymore, it’s just *gone*. And— well, you all saw what happened.”

“Yeah, we did,” Impulse agrees slowly. His half-visible wings twitch. “Speaking of which, can anyone *find* Etho? Because I can’t feel him. Which. I don’t know, I feel like I *should*, seeing as—”

“He just dragged an entire world into the *Void*, yeah,” Grian nods.

He reaches out his divinity, brushing against the other Hermits, but there’s no feeling of cold, kind nothingness that marks Etho’s presence.

“...I can’t find him. He’s not on Hermitcraft.”

Pearl frowns. “Did he not come back with us?”

“I mean— maybe he’s still recovering?” Mumbo offers, sounding like he doesn’t quite believe himself. “Like, that must’ve used up a great deal of power.”

“Maybe.” Grian’s wings shuffle, feathers rasping against fire. He doesn’t bother to put himself out; he has bigger concerns than quieting his divinity, right now. “We should still let the others know, though. And make sure everyone’s okay.” He laughs humorlessly. “That was...a *lot*.”

He still hasn’t processed everything. As soon as he gets around to crashing, he knows that the sight of Etho’s devastating grief and void-black tears will haunt his nightmares.

“Yeah,” Impulse agrees. “It— yeah. So do we just...yell for him, now? Like—”

“I mean, I guess. I can try,” Grian offers.

He takes a deep breath. “*Etho?*” he calls, casting the message out across the server. Generally, they try to avoid talking to each other like this, but desperate times call for desperate measures, he supposes. “*Etho, are you here?*”

There’s no response, but after a few seconds, other Hermits start chiming in.

“*What’s going on?*” Gem asks; her divine presence isn’t as familiar as the others, but still warm. “*Is it over?*”

“*Where’s Etho?*” Ren wonders.

“*Etho?*”

“*Etho, buddy, where you at?*”

And then, a bit louder than the chorus: “*I can’t find Bdubs, either,*” Tango says, panic tinging his words, and collective horror washes through their godly bond. “*He’s not here.*”

“Oh, no,” Mumbo mutters.

“*Are they still on Last Life?*” Ren asks.

“*No,*” Grian says. Distantly, he can feel his wings splitting again, multiplying and burning, but that is a secondary concern. “*Last Life is gone.*”

Tango’s shocked laughter echoes through his mind. Pearl jumps. “*He actually destroyed it?*”

“Yep.”

“There’s no way they’re in the Void, though, right?” Mumbo asks, then repeats aloud, “Right? Grian?”

“I don’t....” his voice echoes oddly, both aloud and in his own head. “*I don’t know.*”

“*I’ll look for them,*” Xisuma interrupts, voice and divinity strong over the rising, nervous panic. “*Knowing Etho, they’re just...lost. He and Bdubs are smart.*”

Bdubs was dead, Grian doesn’t say. Bdubs was dead and Etho killed him and Etho was grieving. You don’t know what that could do to them.

“Okay,” he says instead. “*Do you need help?*”

“*If you like.*”

“*I’ll do my best,*” Grian starts to say, but a sudden rush of void-cold power cuts him off. The sound of ticking clocks fills the air, deafening, like a thousand heartbeats at once. He can’t breathe.

All at once, the sound cuts off and the feeling fades; he nearly collapses with relief when he reaches out and feels both Etho’s and Bdubs’s divinities settling into the world.

“*Uh, guys,*” Beef says, both bemused and worried and unspeakably relieved, “*I think I found them.*” He pauses. “*They just appeared out of nowhere in front of my base.*”

Grian laughs and ignores how it sounds like he’s trying not to cry. *It’s okay*, he thinks, or maybe says. *They’re okay.* At some point, all the Boatem members have drawn together, leaning against each other in their relief. Mumbo squeezes his shoulder. Scar wraps an arm around his waist, and Impulse grabs his hand, and Pearl reaches out to knock their heads together. They’re all crying now, probably.

We’re okay.

Chapter End Notes

don't worry, everyone made it back to wherever they came from safe and sound. next chapter (which is actually Bdubs and Etho focused) will probably be up tomorrow

feel free to send a comment or tumblr ask about any god au stuff (or any other questions you have)! I'd be happy to talk about it <3

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

veryyyyyy light mention of dissociation in this chapter! It's very background and only mentioned a few times, but be careful

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

Bdubs opens his eyes and finds himself in the Void. He's not sure if he's breathing, or even if he's actually woken up, but he supposes there's no need for air nor sight in a place like this. His heartbeat is loud in his ears: *tick. tock. tick. tock. tick—*

Two glowing, pupilless eyes blink into existence in front of him. He screams. It doesn't make a sound in the Void, which is incredibly unsettling, and he screams again.

Etho chuckles. "*Hey, Bdubs.*"

"*Etho!*" he cries. "*You scared me!*"

He reaches out to smack the space beneath Etho's glowing eyes, half-expecting his hand to go straight through; instead, Etho catches it and laces their fingers together. He's cold and not completely solid, like silk slipping over Bdubs's skin.

This is weird, Bdubs decides.

Etho is tapping a pattern on the back of his hand, *three-two-one, three-two-one*. Finally, he says, "*Time to wake up.*" His voice is shaking, a little.

Bdubs frowns. "*What—*"

He'd been floating, he thinks, but all of a sudden it feels as though the world has fallen from beneath his feet. His stomach swoops.

He wakes up - when had he closed his eyes? - in Hermitcraft, staring up at bright blue sky half obscured by Etho's head. All across the world, he can feel the others' divinities gently prodding his, making sure he's safe. He reaches back even as he tries to push himself upright. Etho's arm tightens around his chest.

"Etho," he complains, nudging his elbow into Etho's stomach. No response. He wiggles a bit. "Etho! You can let go now, we're safe! We're back on Hermitcraft!"

Etho blinks down at him with two glowing white eyes; even without pupils and with half his face hidden behind his mask, he doesn't look present. Bdubs sighs and pushes down the twinge of fear in his chest.

"Hello?" he calls, shifting so that he can see better. There's a massive, half-constructed crater to his right, with some sort of alien ship hovering above it.

Beef appears suddenly, blocking out the rest of the sky. His eyes are bright blue with concern, pupils glowing faintly white. "Bdubs! Etho! Oh my gods, you guys scared the crap out of me!"

“Hey, Beef. Can you get this jerk to let me go?” Bdubs asks, forcing his tone to be light.

Beef properly looks down at him, face dropping slightly. Bdubs frowns.

“What?”

“Oh, Universe, Etho,” he breathes. He kneels beside them and gently starts to pull Etho away.

“Okay, buddy, come on. You can let go now.”

Etho’s hand tightens on Bdubs’s wrist. His eyes stay distant, but his eyebrows scrunch together in a frown. Beef grimaces.

“What did he do?” he asks, resigned. “He always gets like this after using too much power. Look at his eyes.”

Bdubs’s mouth moves wordlessly for a moment. The memories are distant, tinged with grief and the numbness that always comes with death, but—

“I think he dragged Last Life into the Void.”

“*Universe*, Etho,” Beef swears again.

Finally, he manages to move Etho enough that Bdubs can sit up. He does so carefully, grimacing when his head spins - the others have backed off, now that they know he’s safe, but the presences of so many divinities combined with the Void-travel have left him with a pounding headache. Etho’s hand tightens around his wrist; he shifts to tangle their fingers together. Etho is achingly cold.

“He’ll be okay, right?” Bdubs asks, glancing between Etho’s empty expression and Beef’s concern.

“Hm? Oh, yeah, he will be. Just give him some time.”

Bdubs presses his lips together and tries to cross his arms without letting go of Etho. “If you say so.”

A sudden suction, like all noise has been plucked from the air, cuts him off before he can continue. He looks around wildly, skin prickling with the now-familiar feeling of Void. A heartbeat later, the space in front of them warps, and Xisuma steps out. Sound returns to normal. The temperature rises to something bearable.

Xisuma waves; his visor fades from pitch black back to the normal semi-transparency he keeps it at. Bdubs smiles up at him, heart twisting at the concern clear on their admin’s face. Beef, most of his attention still on Etho, glances over.

“Oh, hey, X.”

“Hello. I’m glad you two made it back alright,” Xisuma says, crouching down near Bdubs’s unoccupied side. “I heard you had quite the...experience.”

Bdubs snorts. “That’s one word for it, yeah.”

“How’re you feeling? I know the Void can be a bit rough, especially if you’ve never experienced it before. Most people aren’t really...suited to being there for very long.”

“Oh, yeah, I’m great. Super duper.”

He's not, and he's pretty sure Xisuma and Beef are fully aware of that fact. His headache is getting worse by the second, and his chest is an odd mix of tight and airy, like his soul was settled back into his body wrong. Hopefully some good sleep will fix it - good sleep fixes *everything*, in his opinion.

Xisuma chuckles. "Right, of course." He glances at Beef; some sort of conversation passes between them, but Bdubs is too out of it to try and parse their silent looks, so he just watches them feeling vaguely left out. "Ah, Bdubs—"

A flurry of feathers and flame cuts him off. Bdubs yelps when Grian skids to the ground in front of them, eyes wild and too bright. His wings fold in on themselves until they're back to one pair.

"Sorry," he gasps. "I just— y'know." He waves a hand vaguely like the wide sweep of his arm can encompass everything he wants to say. All of him visibly stutters when he looks at Bdubs. "Oh, dude, your *face*."

He bristles. "Wh— hey! What's wrong with my face!"

He hadn't noticed anything wrong, but when he reaches up to check, his fingers tingle when they brush his skin. His fingers are cold when he pulls away. It feels like the Void. He swallows.

"Guys? What's— what happened to my face?"

Beef and Xisuma exchange another look. Xisuma is the one to flick open a mirrored screen on his comm. With a sinking feeling in his chest, Bdubs looks.

There are black markings over his face, like someone had dripped ink onto his cheekbones, except it doesn't smudge when he brushes his thumb over a drop near the corner of his eye. The hair near his temples is bleached pure white; it's almost like when he was red, except this is bright, not the muddied grey of before. It looks—

It looks like Etho's hair. He swallows again, harder.

"...what happened to me?"

The question hangs in the air for a moment too long before Beef speaks. "Etho...he's powerful. Well, obviously, but— he's probably the most powerful person any of us will ever meet. It's like he *is* the Void, sometimes. He can't control it," he hastens to assure at whatever look Bdubs's face contorts into, "but sometimes it leaves...marks. Like, like my eyes, or what happened to you."

He points to himself and the white, almost-glowing pupils he's had for as long as Bdubs has known him. Now that he actually looks, the effect is eerily similar to Etho's pure white eyes.

Still— "*Etho* did that?"

"Sure did. Doesn't affect my vision or anything, it just looks kind of weird."

"...huh."

"You know, you're taking this remarkably well."

"Yeah, well." Bdubs makes a face. "Give me some time. I'm sleep deprived, my brain isn't working."

"You were just dead," Grian points out flatly. He at least has the tact to grimace a moment later.

“Sorry.”

Bdubs’s hand tightens. He’s still holding onto Etho, he realizes. He doesn’t let go.

“Yeah, exactly! I need some time to recover, and then I’ll freak out about all this, okay! Besides, I want Etho to be—” he falters. “Well, I can’t exactly yell at him if he’s not gonna hear it, can I!”

“Maybe let’s keep the yelling to a minimum,” Xisuma suggests, head tilted to where Etho has slumped to rest his head on Beef’s shoulder. His eyes are still glowing, staring vacantly into the distance somewhere between Bdubs and Grian’s heads.

Bdubs rolls his eyes. “Yeah, yeah. Hey, Beef, can I crash here for the night?”

It’s midday. Beef shrugs.

“Yeah, sure? Don’t you have your own base, though? Tango and Keralis probably want to see you, they’ve been badgering me about it.”

“They wh— oh.” He hadn’t even realized that the messages in his own head had quieted, and suddenly he’s almost suffocatingly thankful for the Hermits’ tact. “They can see me. *After* I sleep.”

Xisuma chuckles. “I’ll let them know.”

“Okay,” he breathes, suddenly exhausted.. “Okay, thank you, goodnight.”

Beef laughs. “You want a bed or anything? I can let you borrow my captain’s quarters, they’re pretty comfortable—”

Bdubs waves him off. He’s tired enough that he could probably fall asleep standing up; there’s no way he’s going to even try and move. It’s comfortable enough here on the grass, leaning on Etho even as Etho half-lays on him.

“‘m good. Good night.”

He’s asleep before he gets the chance to hear Beef’s response.

Chapter End Notes

hope you liked it! as always, feel free to send me asks on tumblr if you have any questions about lore <3

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

them <3

Bdubs wakes up slowly. All his limbs are heavy, an exhaustion that weighs him down even though he knows, instinctively, that he's slept through the afternoon and into the next morning. When he shifts, grumbling under his breath as he rubs the sleep from his eyes, his pillow moves as well. He jumps up with a yelp, nearly hits his head on something, and spins around to the sound of a familiar, warm chuckle.

“Etho!”

Etho laughs, eyes - back to their normal dull grey and red - crinkled at the corners. “Morning, sleeping beauty.”

“You're awake!” Bdubs blurts, then grimaces. “I mean—”

Etho cuts him off with another soft chuckle, this one more self-conscious than earlier. “Yeah, I, uh...sorry about that. I can't really...help it, sometimes. I kind of just—” He waves a hand around his head in a gesture that Bdubs interprets as *turn into a humanoid version of the Void and then completely zone out from my own body for periods of time*.

Bdubs hums. Etho looks up at him but doesn't make eye contact, instead choosing to stare at the smooth white walls of wherever they are. His timidness is a far cry from the Void-god Bdubs remembers from their final moments on Last Life.

“You're kind of scary, you know,” he says bluntly.

Etho grimaces. “I don't— I didn't mean to scare you.”

Bdubs crosses his arms. “I never said you did!” When Etho doesn't respond, he grumbles under his breath and drops back down onto the bunk beside him, knocking their shoulders together. “Hey, I think you were pretty cool. I mean, you won! And then—”

He swallows down the sudden pang in his chest when he remembers the devastation of Etho's grief. His face tingles; he grabs Etho's hands so that he doesn't brush at the markings.

“I think you're cool,” he repeats lamely.

Etho laughs and laces their fingers together. “Aw, thanks, Bdubs. You're pretty cool yourself.”

“I know I am,” he grins.

They lapse into comfortable quiet; the world is still and silent except for the distant hum of generators and redstone and, for a moment, he can almost pretend that it's just the two of them here forever.

Etho squeezes his hands. “I'm sorry for killing you.”

He frowns. “What, why? One of us had to win, that’s how the game works, isn’t it? And it was always going to be you, anyway, come on. We knew that.”

Etho laughs, shaky. “Was it, though?”

“Yes!”

“Mm. If you say so.”

Bdubs huffs. “Well, I do, so there you go. I’m glad you won.” He pauses, then adds, softer, “I’m sorry I made you do that.”

“I know.”

This time the silence is a little more tense. Bdubs glances around, studying the room they’re in - white walls, black accents, with a desk on the opposite wall and some sort of red plant...thing hanging from the ceiling - before finally, inevitably, returning to Etho. He looks *tired*, more exhausted than Bdubs remembers him being even on that final day. His fingers tap a careful, methodical pattern on his knuckles. A dark metal band shines on his left hand and Bdubs presses a sudden grin into his shoulder.

“You’ve still got your ring,” he says, voice muffled.

Etho shifts, slightly, to look down at him. “Yeah, man. So do you.”

“I do?!” He pulls away and brings his hands up to his face, smile growing when he sees the matching band on his own finger. “I didn’t even notice!”

“Really?” Etho laughs. “*How?*”

“I don’t— stop laughing at me! I was asleep, okay! And— *stop laughing!*”

“You’re so cute, Bdubs,” Etho mocks.

Bdubs whacks him lightly on the chest. “Shut up. Universe, you’re the *worst*. ”

“Mhm.”

“I hate you.”

“Uh-huh. I’m sure you do.”

His teasing grin is obvious even through the mask. Bdubs shoves his face away.

“Oh, *you*. I want a divorce.”

“We aren’t even properly married!” Etho protests.

The bags under his eyes are still dark, his hands still hesitant - it’s obvious how he’s holding himself carefully, even if he thinks it isn’t; he always forgets how easy it is for Bdubs to read him - but his smile is bright and familiar. There will be time, later, to properly talk about everything that happened on Last Life. For now, Bdubs lets himself bask in the relief of them being safe, and home, and together.

“Yeah, yeah, whatever,” he mumbles, pressing his face back into Etho’s shoulder. “Love you.”

Etho chuckles warmly. “Aw, love you too, Bdubs.”

End Notes

thank you for reading! comments and kudos are greatly appreciated if you have any questions, feel free to send me an ask over on tumblr, [@bananasofthorns](#)

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