

## run until you feel your lungs bleeding

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/39986268) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/39986268>.

Rating:	<a href="#">General Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>
Category:	<a href="#">Gen</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Hermitcraft SMP</a> , <a href="#">3rd Life   Last Life SMP Series</a>
Relationship:	<a href="#">Bdoubleo100 &amp; Ethoslab</a> , <a href="#">BdoubleO100/EthosLab</a>
Character:	<a href="#">EthosLab (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">BdoubleO100</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Fluff</a> , <a href="#">Domestic Fluff</a> , <a href="#">Post-Last Life SMP (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">5+1 Things</a> , <a href="#">Slice of Life</a> , <a href="#">Fluff and Humor</a> , <a href="#">Hermitcraft Season 8</a> , <a href="#">Bdubs and Etho banter</a> , <a href="#">a little angst and insecurity</a> , <a href="#">just a smidge. just a bit</a> , <a href="#">Running</a> , <a href="#">theres cuddling pspsp</a> , <a href="#">bdubs gets closure for last life because we never got a last ep</a> , <a href="#">LAST SUMMARY CHANGE im never happy w the summary</a>
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of <a href="#">Running Buddies</a>
Collections:	<a href="#">Anonymous</a>
Stats:	Published: 2022-07-05 Words: 6,908 Chapters: 1/1

## run until you feel your lungs bleeding

by Anonymous

### Summary

"Ah shoot," Bdubs cursed and Etho turned. "Ice cream dropped on my leg. Jus' a lil' though." He wiped the droplet away without a thought, only to transfer it to his palms. Damn.

Etho handed some tissues wordlessly. Hating the idea of having sticky palms, he sighed and accepted it.

"You should lick it away from you," Etho chuckled as he watched Bdubs fumbling. "That's the strat."

"Oh, I see, even eating ice cream has a patented Etho strategy?" Bdubs laughed, "What next? TNT for efficiency?"

Etho laughed too, "Yeah, makes you eat it faster. Before it explodes."

---

5 times Bdubs goes running, and the 1 time he doesn't

Or: The meaningful moments after running with Etho, and some quiet moments in-between Last Life.

(set in HC S8, no need to read part 1)

### Notes

hey it's me, person who has a hyperfixation on running!!

7 months ago i wrote a fic abt bdubs and etho running together, and then i spent the next 7 months writing another to give myself closure bcause bdubs never uploaded his last session of Last Life LMAO but its ok, its fine, whatever

again, there was a part 1, but i wrote this so it can be read without the first fic.

set in Hermitcraft S8, while Last Life is going on at the same time. there are some places i just made up but i tried to make it canon-compliant (? lmao). relationship could be read as whatever because idk either. fic title from the song "Run" by Hozier.

this is dedicated to the times when you're done running and you get super hungry, so you get food, even if its not very fitness-like or whatever. also dedicating this to my running buddy: hope you trip and fall on your face. jk, love you

enjoy!

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

(1)

Bdubs rubbed his arms, feeling chilly despite the long sleeve he wore. It was a cold morning, but bearable enough for him to wear shorts. Etho, on the other hand, flew in wearing one of the many black sweatpants he owned.

“Not wearing shorts today, Etho?” Bdubs said, sat at the porch of his moon, as the ninja landed on the steps to his house. It was the first time in the few months they've been running together that Etho ever wore pants.

“Nah. Woke up like this, then I uh, left the house.” Etho shrugged while he put away his elytra. “Didn't wanna be late.”

“What?” A laugh bubbled up from Bdubs, “Seriously?”

Etho shrugged again, hands in his pocket. Bdubs just shook his head in disbelief and mumbled, “Alright. Hope you at least washed your face.”

The both of them walked down the steps and continued down the dirt path. Bdubs fiddled with his comm, strapping it on his left armband. He looked at Etho, who always held his comm to check his pace -- the habit made Bdubs smile a little.

“You ready?” Etho turned, meeting his eye.

Bdubs blinked, “Huh? Oh– Ahah.” They were already at the first few buildings of the Shopping District – the usual starting point.

He smiled wider, “Yeah. We go?”

“We go,” Etho parroted before the two started their slow jog.

—

Not every run was a special one (which implies that there *are* special ones, in which Bdubs thinks that there are, but – don't tell Etho). Today was just one of the normal runs – no real goal in mind, not much of a challenge, just going at an easy pace (which, Bdubs admits, was most of his runs.)

Maybe today was a bit special. He has to ask Etho to partner with him, today. The Last Life server was opening next week, and Bdubs did not want to wait that long.

It was their usual route today – from the Big Eyes' Shopping District to the Horse Course stables, then back.

Bdubs had his own landmarks in his head: the starting point, the wheat fields, the road forks, and the weird building before the Horse Course. The pattern of 'walk, run, walk, run, repeat' became ingrained. There are days he can run past the wheat fields, and there are days he slows to a walk there. In a way, each landmark he could run long enough to pass was a mark of his progress. It gave him a bit of pride.

Speaking of landmarks and pride: The Horse Course was, technically, already finished. Everything else was extra pretty stuff -- adding more details or breeding more horses. But it was done, and seeing the mini-castle Bdubs built in the distance brought a sense of pride and joy as he neared the half-point of their route.

No time is spent looking at the course, though. Once they got to the stables, both men turned around and continued their run back.

At some point past the fork in the path, the two slowed to another walk to rest sore legs and catch their breath. Etho walked ahead while Bdubs collected his thoughts.

“Hey, Etho?”

“Hm?”

“You know about Last Life?”

“Oh, yeah, that's...” he hummed, pondering. “Next week, huh?”

“Yeah, yeah.” A pause. “You wanna team up?”

Bdubs noticed Etho slow his pace, so the two walked side by side. “Team up?” He hummed in intrigue, but his tone was unfathomable, drawing out each syllable. “Interesting.”

“Hey, what's that sh'posed to mean?!”

Etho shrugged, much to Bdubs bafflement.

“C'monnn, it'll be like the good ol' days! Etho and Bdubs, back at it with the survival games!”

Etho crossed his arms, pretending to give it some thought. “Hmm, that *does* sound nostalgic...”

Bdubs rolled his eyes in exasperation. “What, y'want a discount in Big Eyes or somethin'?”

There was a mischievous glint in Etho's eye, then. “Will I get one if I agree?”

“No.”

Etho pouted and gave Bdubs the best puppy dog eyes he could muster. Bdubs made a show of turning his head away and crossing his arms.

"Awww," Etho dramatically whined, then changed his tone to be more agreeable. "Alright, alright. Of course, man. I think it'll be fun."

"Yes!" Bdubs threw his arms out, "It's gonna be great, man! We're gonna do great!"

"Better not betray me, though."

Bdubs giggled, trying to hold back a smile, "Cross my heart!"

They walked the rest of the route to the shopping district.

---

(2)

"Does Pass n Gas sell any food?" Etho asked, "Anything for breakfast?"

Bdubs thought for a while. "Uh, yeah. Well, if you count golden carrots for breakfast."

Etho groaned, childishly. "Actual food, not a snack." He snickered, "What kind of convenience shop are you guys runnin'?"

"Hey!" Bdubs crossed his arms, "We sell! We sell, uh," his shoulders faltered a little, "Bread! And eggs!" He smiled, "We could make a breakfasch sammich! That's breakfast food."

He could see Etho's gaiter mask moving as he mouthed the words "breakfast sandwich". Etho hummed, "Y'know, doesn't sound that bad."

Bdubs beamed. "Can't we just go to your base, though?"

The two of them were walking to Etho's after taking a route along the swamp out of impulse. It was still early morning – Iskall might not even be up yet. The two of them could cook for Iskall, too, Bdubs thought.

Etho scratched the side of his face, "We, uh, haven't done any grocery shopping yet."

"You– You're literally the shop-a-holic from the two of you!"

"Weeell, I might have splurged a lil' on building materials instead..."

Bdubs sighed heavily, "Oh, Etho. Unbelievable." He chuckled. A pause. "Didya at least buy from Big Eyes?"

Etho looked off to the side, "Weeell, uh, no."

"What?!"

Etho put up his hands, defensive, "Boatem had a discount for me! I couldn't resist!"

"I– BOATEM?! That little..." Bdubs grumbled. Grian was an infuriating business competitor.

"Hey, if it makes it even, I'll treat us both on that breakfast sandwich," Etho said with an amused smile, "I'll pay for everything. That's like, what, double the profits for you?"

Bdubs opened his mouth to retort, but instead let himself sigh, resigned. “Sure, man.”

—

“Eggs, bread, ham... where’s the...” The sound of chests and barrels, opening and closing, echoed in the Pass n’ Gas space. Outside, the smell of the smoke, most likely from a furnace or blaster that Etho must have crafted, wafted into the room. While Bdubs had most of the necessary ingredients, he wanted to see if there was anything else for additional flavor.

“Not even cheese!” He closed the last barrel a little forcefully and sighed. Well, they were a convenience store for building and traveling, really. Whatever. Maybe he could try slicing a few golden carrots— although, the idea of crunchy hard carrots in his sandwich didn’t sound that appealing. Nevermind.

As Bdubs exited with the few food items they had at the store, Etho looked up at him. “Got a few fresh mushrooms from the forest around,” he said as put up the knife and brown mushrooms he was currently slicing.

The furnace was set up with a skillet on it, and Bdubs furrowed his eyebrows at Etho. “You went to your base to get utensils?”

Etho shrugged, “How else are we gonna cook the egg and stuff?”

“I dunno, man, but maybe we coulda’ done it in your kitchen?” Despite it, Bdubs couldn’t help but smile.

The other man’s mismatched eyes widened, “Ohhhh... yeah.”

Bdubs laughed as Etho face-palmed with his free hand (no doubt getting mushroom gunk all over his face). “At least our sa’miches won’t be as messy! Shoulda’ chopped a few trees to make a blaster.”

“Too much work,” Etho shrugged. “And I already over-prepped. Furnace is fineee.”

The two got to work then— well, mostly Bdubs. Etho could cook, sure, but he worked so much on builds that he only made the bare minimum. It was a wonder he wasn’t malnourished, but golden carrots were probably saturated enough to make up for it? Bdubs wasn’t really a food expert. But he was a good cook! And he was going to make sure Etho had a good goddamn breakfast sandwich.

A simple breakfast sandwich of egg and ham was what he made. The egg could have used some salt, and maybe tomatoes, but the sliced mushrooms were actually okay.

As the pair ate, hungry and in peace, Bdubs pondered aloud. “I kinda want to make a trail path thing, up the mountain.”

Etho wiped his mouth, mask already up and sandwich devoured, “Your mountain?”

“Yeah, at Big Eyes. Where else?” Bdubs was only halfway through his sandwich.

“Hmm, I think it would be cool. Why so?”

“Wouldn’t it be nice to go up, see the town and the sea... maybe I could add a view deck overlooking things. That would be nice.”

Etho kicked away the wood under the furnace, letting the fire die out. The embers were hardly illuminating anything with the early sun shining down already. “Sounds like a good idea.”

“Yeah?” Bdubs took another big bite.

Etho nodded. “It’s nice. I live in a mountain where the porch is basically my view deck. Pretty cool.”

Bdubs chuckled. “It’ll be a new project. Maybe after Last Life, or somethin’.”

Etho hummed in response. The two basked in the early morning sunlight in silence.

---

(3)

It’s a short route today, and the weather this late afternoon felt perfect. Both discarded their sweatshirts for T-shirts, with it being warmer than usual.

“Ain’t it hot with that gaiter on your face?” Bdubs asked when the two slowed down. “You always wear it.”

“Hm? This?” Etho pulled the gaiter mask down, “A little.” He took the opportunity to breathe in deep, clearly a little tired.

As he was bringing it up, Bdubs chimed, “You’re still gonna wear it?”

Etho paused, then shrugged, and replied with that shit-eating grin of his, “Don’t I look cool in it?”

Bdubs opened his mouth, thinking of the practicality of it all, before deciding to shut it. Not like he was the most practical person, either. The red bandana on his forehead was a clear example, only soaking in the sweat when they ran. It was disgusting, sure, but it did look pretty cool. Maybe that practicality title would go to the other redstoners (but, with some extra thought, a few of them weren’t practical at *all* . He stopped his distracted train of thought with Cub’s base). He snorted, “Fine.”

The gaiter neck doesn’t go back up yet, though. Bdubs can still hear Etho catching his breath and a part of him felt accomplished to have somehow won their not-really argument.

---

It’s not every day that Etho walked with Bdubs all the way back to his moon base. In fact, Bdubs walked to Etho’s base more. He asked what was up, but was only met with a shrug.

Rarer was it that Etho lingered at the steps of his home, looking distracted. With amusement (and maybe a little pity), Bdubs spoke up. “Hey, you wanna have dinner here?”

He felt like Etho wanted company, but it seems dinner wasn’t on his mind, judging by the surprised look on his face. “It’s only 5.”

“Yeah, well-! Early dinner then. And, I still gotta cook the food.” Bdubs crossed his arms, “Or you wanna starve outside?”

“Hey, I got dinner back at the base. Iskall and I’ve restocked our—”

“I don’t believe it for a *second*.” Bdubs smiled, “Okay, well, I do.” Bdubs paused. “Crap, what should he say to get him to stay? ”But I’m making stew.”

“Stew?” Aha! He’s taken the bait – Bdubs grinned.

In as confident a voice he could muster, he replied, “R-Rabbit stew.” The waver in his voice betrayed him, though.

“You have rabbit meat out here?” Etho looked around, “Not a very plains-y biome, not gonna lie.”

“... Okay, I’m not actually sure if I have rabbit meat. But I’m makin’ stew and you’re helping me out, so c’mon!”

With a fake sigh, Etho trudged up the steps of the moon base. “Fine, fine.”

—

The Moon Mansion took its name not by having the horizontal space of a mansion, but more so by vertical space. Although, in the grand scheme of hermit builds, it wasn’t the largest mansion ever built. At least his place was one of the more livable ones.

“Livable” was subjective. It had amenities, but there was the small, tiny issue of space. The kitchen itself was only so wide on the first floor. The dining area was just a table and two chairs, crammed near the stairs.

Etho looked cramped in his seat, between the table and the wall, sprawling his legs to take all the space underneath the table. Bdubs rummaged through his fridge and cupboards, occasionally hitting his arms and head and body on anything, like the top of the fridge, the opened doors, or the overhead cupboards (that Etho made sure to ask if Bdubs needed help reaching the very tops of.) “Very funny,” Bdubs replied back to Etho’s giggle fit, only to comically yell “OW!” when he hit the cupboard door.

“Aha!” Bdubs exclaimed, after some time. His spoils were arranged on the counter: There wasn’t any rabbit meat, no surprise there, but there was pork. He had eggplant, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, and— “Glow berries?” Etho asked.

“Unripe ones, yesh! They’re for the sourness! Ever had sour soup?”

“Sour soup? I thought you were making stew?” Etho watched from where he sat, chin resting on his hand. “I’ve never had glow berries before. You got those from Gem?”

Bdubs snorted. “Yep! Ohoho, you’re gonna love this though! And, yeah, it’s more like a soup than a stew, so... Hey, don’t give me that look!”

Etho raised his hands up in mock surrender, eyes wide as if to ask “what’d I do?”. Bdubs pointed accusingly, “Can’t knock it till you try it, y’know?”

After a moment of silence, Etho sighed, “Okay. Sure, Bdubs.”

“Great! Okay. Now cut these potatoes for me, will ya? Not cubes, just like this...”

—

The soup smelled *great* . Bdubs was giddy about it. Sure, he could have put more vegetables in,

and it really wouldn't have killed to add some leafy greens (oh, he wished he'd passed by some spinach at the shopping district), but it'll do. And the way Etho's looking at it made him feel like an accomplished chef.

Well, partly an accomplished chef. Etho helped cut most of the vegetables while he looked over the boiling meat. Maneuvering around his small kitchen was hard, but not so bad. Etho hit his head on the cabinets a few times, which served him right. By the time they were done, the sun was already setting.

There was something very homely that Bdubs liked about making dinner with a friend. "Domestic" was the word, maybe. Maybe it was Etho. It was a welcome change of pace to not worry about him and not collect cold snow for once, and to instead share the comfort of having warm soup in his home.

Or, maybe he should have dinner with people more often. Maybe he just misses people. He didn't dwell long on it.

They shared the silence whilst preparing the food. The only thing there was to talk about, that wasn't their builds or their bases, was Last Life. But the silence spoke for them. There wasn't much to discuss – not here, in Bdubs's kitchen, a server away from it all.

"Where'd the glow berries go?" Etho was fishing around with the ladle, pouring himself some of the hot, slightly thick soup into his bowl.

"They're all mashed! So the soup gets its flavor."

"Guess that's why the soup's all orange, huh? Does it glow?"

"Nope!"

"Aw, man." Etho set down the ladle. Bdubs helped himself with a bit more pork, famished from the run. They sat, cramped, with the pot taking up a lot of table space, but they were both settled.

"Go on!" Bdubs watched Etho with delight, "I wanna see your reaction!"

Etho pulled down his gaiter to reveal an amused smile. "I'm starting to worry those glow berries were actually poisoned."

"Pssh, if they were poisoned, I would have given 'em to you straight." His fingers drum on his still-hot bowl, excited.

Etho blinked, amused at the statement, before eventually trying a spoon of the soup, not before blowing on it to cool it down. There was a moment of tense silence as Etho pondered, focusing on the ceiling above while Bdubs waited. Then: "It's... good."

"Good?!" Outraged, Bdubs gaped, "Just good?!"

"No, no, I mean—" Etho laughed, "I didn't expect it to be good! I thought the glow berries would make it... abysmally sour or something!" He took another sip of his soup, just to prove his point. "I think it's pretty good, in a good way."

Bdubs broke into a smile. "Yeah? YEAH BABY!" He clapped, "The good kind of good! Alright, I'll take it!"

Etho chuckled with a shake of his head, "Just eat, Bdubs."

Hungry from the run, the two ate in comfortable, content silence.

---

(4)

Who's bright idea was it to go all the way to Boatem anyway?

Well, okay, it was Bdubs. He brought it up, so he shouldn't complain. Except that he was going to. A lot.

"This was a mistake." He felt bone-tired. It was a good run, yes, but holy smokes was he *tired*.

"You're the one who wanted to run to Boatem," Etho shrugged. The way he slumped told Bdubs that he, too, was absolutely exhausted.

They stopped at the Pass n' Gas nearby, both accepting that this was their final stop. Bdubs originally wanted to end at the Boatem Hole, but after the grueling route, he felt he couldn't run much more.

But, hey! Another 7k run, finished! More than that, maybe – the route from the Shopping District all the way to Boatem was slightly farther than the one to the swamp. And to think they weren't close to the Boatem Hole yet...

"You still want to go?" Etho said after drinking from his bottle.

"Go?" Bdubs's mind was still fuzzy and he squinted. "Oh! The Boatem Hole? Well-" he took a moment to stand straighter, "I can still walk."

Etho nodded. "Good. Don't want ya' fallin' asleep on me, old man."

"Old ma- I CAN WALK! Just see!" Bdubs speed-walked ahead, indignant.

Etho, with his stupidly long legs, walked in pace next to him. He couldn't keep the act any longer, and let himself slow down (before his legs started screaming again).

Boatem didn't exactly have an entrance. It wasn't as purposely scenic as the wheat fields and paths that led to the Big Eyes' Shopping District, but the wheels of Scar's massive wagons were spectacular in their own right. It felt like a portal of its own, and on the other side, one emerges into the tight-knit community of the Boatem Crew group. Their bases circled the area, towering in build height, as if to close off the place from the outside (or to keep them in, depending on how you saw things).

The mountain range, especially, was a beauty to Bdubs. It was such a unique mishmash of geology and build styles, spawned from their collaboration. He's flown by before, sure, but on the ground, it was breathtaking.

"M kinda hungry," Etho yawned as he stretched. "Want anything?"

Bdubs tore his eyes from the mountain range to laugh at Etho, "Shoulda' gone to Pass n' Gas!"

"Hm, well yeah, but I wanna try something new here, y'know?"

"Right, okay, I'll turn a blind eye today, because we're such *good* friends."

"Heh heh. Gonna need to eat though, since you're a growing boy."

"I- excuse me?! So what am I, an old man, or a growing baby boy? Huh? Just because I'm short?"

Etho snickered, "Your words not mine!"

"I—" Bdubs puffed with irritation, "I am NOT short, I'm average! I am just short *er* than *you*! I— You know what, no. I'm not getting food. I am perfect the way I am."

Etho shrugged, "Alright."

They passed the wagons and into the actual open area. Bdubs immediately pointed at the potato volcano – what was it that Mumbo called it? "What about the Volcarbo?"

"Oh." Etho put a hand on his chin to ponder. "Hmm, nah. I kinda want something sweet."

"Maybe he has sweet potatoes."

"Okay, I want *real* sweets, Bdubs."

"Well, I think Mumbo is a real sweet potato guy." The two laughed.

Etho stopped abruptly then, before turning his heel towards the G-Train. "Hmm, I think Impulse sells stuff, actually."

"What? Really?" Bdubs paused, "I don't see no shop around here aside from the lichen and elytra ones. You wanna eat lichen?"

"G-Train."

"What?"

"There's a sweets bar at the G-Train. Saw it the last time I went there."

"Maybe we should set up a sweets store at ours, so you can finally drop by, huh?" Bdubs teased, poking at Etho's side, who only giggled back.

The G-Train did, in fact, have some barrels up in one of the carriages for sweets. It was after the rest of the stocks, with a small but eye-catching purple and yellow sign, and Bdubs speculated that they had done so to tempt more diamonds out of anyone who was done shopping – like snacks at a cashier counter. Truly, Grian was a genius.

"You want some ice cream, Bdubs?" Etho asked, rummaging through a chest.

"What?" Bdubs looked closer. One of the chests was insulated, filled with some ice, and did in fact have ice cream. He blinked.

Did he want ice cream? Heck *yeah*, he did! It was close to dinner, sure, but a little desert couldn't hurt. The hunger from running was about to make him cave in.

The previous conversation played in his mind. With some pettiness, he decided he wasn't going to admit it.

"Nah, I'll pass. I didn't bring any diamonds." That was a convincing lie, surely. (Although, he really

was broke.)

“I can pay. I got Iskall’s money.” Etho's eyes smiled.

A pause. "Uhm. Well, I don't wanna walk while eating!" Alright, now that was just obvious.

"Oookay," Etho mused, turning back at the selection.

A moment passed. Etho turned back at Bdubs, and Bdubs stared back as Etho's eyes crinkled with amusement. "Are you sureee?"

—

Was it a good idea to have what must be a bunch of calories after a run? Maybe not. Who cares? Bdubs sure doesn't, and by the looks of it, neither did Etho.

Surely, Etho did not care about calories, because there the two of them sat, respective ice creams in hand. Etho got a sundae cup while Bdubs told him to get one on the stick – one of the smallest, cheapest ones (if 1 diamond for one snack was *cheap*). Being treated was nice, but he didn't want to overstep.

Except, when Etho walked back to their little sitting area on the train tracks, he handed Bdubs a cone – the ones with the fancy cover for the ice cream. Etho *swore* he got the stick one, *maybe I took from the wrong chest*, he said, but *oh well*, he already paid for it. Uhuh! Sure! Like Etho could make a mistake like that.

It might have been a mistake, but when Bdubs saw the pleased look in his eyes, a part of him thought it was Etho being nice in an Etho way. The thought made him melt (pun unintended), and he yielded. Can't complain about ice cream, anyway.

"Ah shoot," Bdubs cursed and Etho turned. "Ice cream dropped on my leg. Jus' a lil' though."

He wiped the droplet away without a thought, only to transfer it to his palms. Damn.

Etho handed some tissues wordlessly. Hating the idea of having sticky palms, he sighed and accepted it.

"You should lick it away from you," Etho chuckled as he watched Bdubs fumbling. "That's the strat."

"Oh, I see, even *eating ice cream* has a patented Etho strategy?" Bdubs laughed, "What next? TNT for efficiency?"

Etho laughed too, "Yeah, makes you eat it faster. Before it explodes."

Bdubs shook his head. "I'll make sure to bring some next time."

A moment passed. Bdubs wondered out loud, “Do you ever notice the sunset like this?”

“Hmm?” Etho ate another spoonful.

“Just, y’know. I never get to watch the sunset, unless I’m running or when I’m in Last Life.”

Etho snickered, “Yeah, because you’re always sleeping it off.”

“Someone’s gotta make sure the night goes by quicker! You’re lucky that base of yours ain’t a mob spawner.”

“It kinda is, to be honest,” Etho laughed.

“Could be worse at night!” Bdubs had another bite, “Few more hours of night time and you might be swimmin’ in creepers.”

“Mhmm.” Etho paused. “Yeah. I don’t watch the sunset either, so... It’s pretty.”

“Sky’s always pink or orange. Or both. Ever notice that?” Bdubs licked his ice cream, heeding Etho’s advice. “I didn’t even know the sky gets pink!”

“It kinda lights stuff purple and pink, doesn’t it? If that makes sense.”

He imagined briefly, distantly, the same hazy pinkish-purple sky over white snow walls, coloring it a light purple. “No, yeah, I getcha. It’s pretty.”

They finished their ice creams in silence until the sky burned out from bright orange to a dark purple.

---

(5)

Etho's not here yet.

Not that Bdubs was counting, but it’s been a *week* since Last Life ended, and even longer since he lost. Everyone else was back, but Etho? He guessed that the guy probably went to his single-player world.

He’d send some outer server snail-mail, but Etho never responded when he was in his single-player world. Actually, Etho sucked at replying to messages in general, so it wasn’t a big deal.

And it happens – sometimes you just want to hop into your own space for a while and relax. Etho’s been doing it for years. Bdubs does it. So, it doesn’t bother him.

Well, it *shouldn’t* bother him, especially not while he’s walking to the starting point of the usual route, alone.

He did not miss Etho, nor did he miss his presence while running. He can run by himself, thank you very much. He didn’t need no man!

Just because he made a giant Etho balloon in the Etho-targeted area of the Big Eyes Shopping District, complete with a giant Etho sign, did **not** mean he missed Etho. Far from it!

So, Bdubs ran.

Running slowly became something to take Bdubs's mind off things. Building was sometimes creatively draining, even stressful when he was in an art block. Running was what he started turning to – who knew that running away from your problems *could* be a thing? It cleared his

mind. Especially when Etho was around to relax with.

Ironic, now, that he was running to get Etho off his mind. Not that he was in his mind! Of course not. But he was *full* of... anxiety? No, *unease* – he was bursting with it. He was restless. But he could deal with it.

He wanted to keep running. No breaks – he was already passing the wheat fields. He usually started walking here, but instead, he kept running at a slower pace. His body felt like it *had* to. He willed his lungs to breathe as evenly as he could.

For a long moment, he only focused on his breathing. His mind cleared.

---

He watched over Etho in the next session, the one after he died.

He didn't have to ghost around. He didn't. It's just that Etho didn't come back to the server after Bdubs died. Who could blame him for wanting to see if his friend was doing alright?

Sessions often lasted a week or more, and then they had a week-long break between, so that everyone could recuperate. But with Last Life nearing its end and only a few players remaining, Grian decided they were going to shorten both session and break days. It was hard to relax when the inevitable, the end of it all, was *so close*.

At the time, Etho didn't come back during the breaks.

...Which was fair. Grian allowed people to stay on the server, if they wanted, for whatever reason, as long as everyone was on ceasefire until next session – gentleman's rule, of course.

And Bdubs haunted. Etho never went back to the snow fort. Which was, honestly, embarrassing for Bdubs, at first, because he must have spent a day or two just waiting on the stairs of their ruins.

And Bdubs kept watching, until he realized Etho wasn't even *close* to losing yet. Which meant he didn't need to keep watching. Which was good! Nothing less to expect from Etho. Though sometimes, he wondered what Etho would have done if he had lost a life then and there, and then saw that Bdubs waited.

No, *no*, he didn't miss Etho. He didn't need to think of this. How'd he even get here?

His lungs started to strain and his legs felt like giving out. This was fine. He shook his head and focused on his breathing again. He was so close to the Horse Course. He could keep running.

---

He switched to walking the moment he got to the turning point. His nostrils burned and it stung to breathe in. It was irritating, in so many more ways than one, but he stubbornly kept breathing in through his nose anyway. Then, he made the mistake of looking over the Horse Course and spotting a target block.

He wondered if Etho ever got back at Grian, like revenge. Grian sure got Bdubs back for Lizzie – literally got his back, with an arrow.

It would almost be poetic if Etho ever did. Though, he probably didn't – he would have heard about it by now from Grian himself.

An idea of Etho popped up in his head then, of him not being able to handle seeing Bdubs's face after Last Life, of wanting to deal with it on his own first.

Bdubs tried not to think of it like that. That's not like him. Etho would slightly lament not winning, then go on with his day. No big deal; There were other projects to look forward to.

The same could be said for himself – sure, yeah, Bdubs was sad. A little peeved, maybe. He thought he could get away with it! He was gonna! Then Grian shot that stupid arrow–

But it's fine. He was fine! Okay, well, he wasn't fine for a while. But he's fine now, so that counts as something, right?

Whatever. Bdubs got over it. He stopped ghosting around the last session. He sketched out building plans for the Etho sign, instead. Therefore, he did *not* miss Etho.

Oh, but he missed breathing in air though. Goodness, his head felt so light. His attention was so out of focus as he mindlessly walked the beaten path.

But this was the longest he ran so far without pausing. No pauses! A laugh erupted from him unprompted, so goddamn pleased with himself. It felt like a *huge* achievement – but *goodness* was he tired.

Oxygen – brain needs it, and oh, why does oxygen have to hurt his nose? He needed to steady his breath before he can run again.

But he couldn't run the same on the way back anymore – his muscles ached, his lungs heaved, his nostrils burned, and his head felt too lightheaded for far too long. He stopped pushing himself to run when he could feel himself get nauseous. It was a blow to his average pace, but oh well. It was better not to push himself. Etho would freak out if he found out he was pushing himself, so he wasn't going to tell.

He walked all the way to the shopping district before he jogged slowly again. By the time he passed the shopping district, Bdubs slowed to a walk, grabbed the comm on his left arm, and stopped the tracker.

Forty minutes. His very first five-kilometer run was 48 minutes. Bdubs considered this a win – that means he's faster now! He's definitely faster now, and he can probably get faster.

Still far from Etho's goal, though. Bdubs remembered Etho once mentioned he wanted to do five in under 35 minutes. Not that Bdubs made it his goal, too. But, he wouldn't want to slow down his buddy during a run.

Bdubs put away his comm and turned back to the shopping district. The lights were now automatically lit up to make the ridiculous Etho sign stand out, with its redstone lights blinking in a pattern. The large balloon swayed in the backdrop of the evening, the brightest stars blinking faintly as the sun was swallowed. On this side of the sky, the moon was starting to rise.

The sky reminded him of the first 7 km run with Etho. It was the same burning orange.

He laughed hysterically. He really did miss Etho.

---

(+1)

"The moon's big."

"Yeah," Bdubs replied.

Etho shrugged, "Just pointing it out."

The moon's big, but it's not the end of the world. (Not yet. They wouldn't know that it would end in a week.) It didn't matter.

They weren't running today. The floating blocks were making holes in the path and the fluctuating gravity made it difficult. But Bdubs wasn't going to let some silly lunar event ruin a nice walk with Etho. He wasn't going to let it ruin today – not when Etho's finally back.

"It's like the horoscope stuff, it'll be haaarmless, don't worry!" Bdubs brushed the dirt off his mossy jacket after he had floated and missed the landing. Harmless, really.

"Bdubs, the horoscopes are based on the stars, y'know. Don't really think the moon is involved." Etho squinted at the moon then, quizzical, "Actually, I don't know. Is it?"

"Horoscope, schomorscope. I don't even know mine!"

Etho thought for a moment. "Yeah, me neither." He chuckled, "But if you say so..."

In response, Bdubs snorted. The moon was getting bigger, so what? Not a problem right now.

Bdubs had waited *days* before he finally asked Etho when he was free. The two met up at the Pass n' Gas near Etho's place. If they couldn't run, they might as well walk.

Sure, they couldn't go running, but he was excited to hear what Etho had thought of his special decor of the shopping district. He was excited to hear what new projects Etho might have started in his own world. He was just excited.

Well, he also wanted to show off the mountain path he mentioned so long ago. It didn't take too long for Bdubs to make it – compared to making the actual mountain, anyway. It was a simple dirt trail that transitioned at the peak into a stone path (of deepslate stone – he loved the contrast with the snow).

A few wood fences were erected here and there, with a few shroom lamplights up so it was safe at night, and the path was... well, it was simple. And that was the charm. He liked it.

There was a small flat area going up the mountain, just a bit above the base, that was large enough for him to make a resting spot. It had a good view! It overlooked the forest below, in the perfect direction to watch the sunset. Bdubs put a few logs for a place to sit and, because he couldn't resist, terraformed with some moss.

"Nice view," Etho said, slumping down on the ground to lean on the log.

"Yeah, right? I– what are you doin'?"

Etho looked at Bdubs with furrowed eyebrows, "I'm sitting down."

"I put the logs on there for a reason!" Bdubs kicked his legs over them as he plopped himself on the stripped logs.

Etho laughed, "I want to lean back on something, man. My back's killing me."

"You an old man now?" Bdubs chuckled.

"Not as old as you." It was Etho's turn to chuckle. Bdubs only rolled his eyes in exasperation.

After a while, Etho murmured loud enough for Bdubs to hear, "'S a miracle the moon didn't take the blocks way up here."

Bdubs looked at the top of Etho's head. He couldn't see his face, expression unreadable. He sighed, finally resigning himself to sit on the ground next to him. "Yeah," he settled.

They were still.

The sun was slowly being swallowed by the trees. Now and then, in the far distance, specks of distant blocks would float up and fall back down. Bdubs focused on the sky – the sunset made the trees look like they were burning in bright red and orange hues. It would have, anyway, if it weren't for the giant moon looming above.

They were silent. His hands itched to fidget on something but he made fists of them instead, firmly planting them on his lap.

Etho just needed time off. That's why he was gone for so long. And he shouldn't make a big deal out of it.

"Hey, Etho?"

"Yeah?"

"I missed ya," Bdubs tried to say as nonchalantly as possible.

A long pause. Bdubs sniffed, told himself to chill, and continued. "So have the others. You missed a lot, too. Yeah." Then, in a quieter voice, "Sorry."

"What're you sayin' sorry for?" Etho moved his head slightly to glance at him.

"I..." Bdubs laughed nervously. "I dunno. I didn't make it. Didn't win."

Etho bumped Bdubs slightly, "It's alright, man." A pause. "Sounds like this has been buggin' ya."

"A little." *The understatement of the season*, Bdubs thought.

He knew it wasn't a sore spot – for Etho, of course. It wasn't for him, either. Water under the bridge and all. (At least, that's what he kept telling himself.)

Unless... It *really* was a sore spot for Etho? Despite years of knowing each other, sometimes, Etho's emotions were an enigma.

Etho nodded, and Bdubs felt like he knew it was more than 'a little.' "It's alright," Etho lowered his head, "I didn't win it for you either, sooo I guess we're even."

Etho heard Bdubs scoff.

"Just kiddin'. I love ya' Bdubs." Etho scooted closer and playfully leaned his head on Bdubs's shoulder, "I missed ya' too."

The two sat in silence, unsure of the other. When Bdubs moved his head *away*, backward, Etho leaned back to look at him, concerned. Bdubs was leaning his head back on the log, his eyes glassy.

"Hey, you alright?"

Bdubs blinked away the tears, gaze still fixed on the sky above. He smiled, "Yeah. Love ya' too, man."

Etho teased, "Awww, are you getting emotional over little ol' me?"

Bdubs sniffed, wiped his eyes quickly, and crossed his arms, "Shuddup, Ladders." Etho laughed. Bdubs's expression didn't seem to lighten.

"Alright—" Etho sat up straighter, "C'mere," he said as he opened his arms, facing Bdubs.

But he didn't budge, unsure. Etho sighed and he lifted Bdubs's legs onto his lap. Bdubs immediately moved closer, instinctually burying his head on Etho's shoulder and wrapping his arms around his midsection.

"There." Etho patted Bdubs's back. "Better?"

Bdubs mumbled, "You make it sound like I'm a baby."

"Maybe you are."

"HEY! I'll tickle you, then let's see who's the baby!"

"Nooohoho, I'll tickle you back!"

"Fine! Mutually assured distraction—"

"Destruction."

"Yeah, destruction! That's what I said."

Etho giggled, glad to have his friend be acting more like himself. His free hand went up to Bdubs's head, his fingers running through the strands of dark brown hair absentmindedly (and Etho almost thought he saw white – he blinked, and it was gone).

"Are you alright then?"

Whatever tension Bdubs was holding dissipated with a sigh. His voice was muffled by the green vest material. "Yeah." He laughed, "Yeah."

Etho wasn't sure what to say to that, but maybe that wasn't what he had to do at the moment.

"Anything else about Last Life you need to... get off your chest?"

"Nah, I just—" Bdubs didn't speak for a moment. "I stayed there, for a little while. After I— uh, lost, I mean. Just spectating, watching. I wanted to see how you were holding up."

Another pause. "I thought you... I thought you were gone for so long, 'cuz of... maybe you didn't want to see me."

“Nah.” Etho let go and moved back slightly just to look at Bdubs’s big ol’ eyes, “Just needed some time off. Y’know, to destress. Bdubs, c’mon, you’re my friend. I’m not gonna ghost you over that.”

“I know,” Bdubs laughed, “Woulda’ lost ya’ after a survival game years ago.”

“Hehe, yeah. Totally would’ve.” Etho tightened his embrace again and spoke quieter. “S okay. It’s over.”

The two didn't stay in an embrace for too long, not when Etho immediately turned back on his word and tickled Bdubs, earning him an accidental headbutt. It was deserved, Bdubs exclaimed, laughing as Etho rubbed his jaw and complained. But it did not help that, immediately after, gravity shifted and Bdubs screamed, grabbing a laughing Etho by the arm as both were lifted off the ground.

When gravity was right again, they stayed there anyway, even when Bdubs complained that they "could have fallen off the cliff" and "this place is a whole hazard!" And when Bdubs rested his head on Etho's shoulder, the ninja didn't say anything, just adjusted to be comfortable instead.

They stayed until there were no longer any oranges or reds on the horizon.

## End Notes

1) i just found out bdubs never ever called the moon base a mansion and i just, for some reason, thought he did. i've just been calling it the Moon Mansion ??

2) angst is so hard to do right @\_@ lol

hope you enjoyed, send a comment if u did! (and also tell me if i got their characters right, i kinda want to get better at writing them and i'd appreciate it...!)

[bdubs voice] thank you, muwah <3

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