

sleight of hand

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/54445462) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/54445462>.

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| Rating: | General Audiences |
| Archive Warning: | No Archive Warnings Apply |
| Category: | Gen |
| Fandom: | Lifesteal SMP |
| Relationship: | Branzy & ClownPierce (Video Blogging RPF) |
| Characters: | Branzy (Video Blogging RPF) , ClownPierce (Video Blogging RPF) |
| Additional Tags: | Misunderstandings , aro4aro clownzy , Branzy nearly has a panic attack, and then promptly loses all fucks he has to give , Fake Dating in the loosest of senses |
| Language: | English |
| Series: | Part 3 of MCYT aro week |
| Stats: | Published: 2024-03-13 Words: 1,669 Chapters: 1/1 |

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Summary

“Suddenly, I appear to have forgotten every single thing about my life so far!” he laughs nervously, looking anywhere but at Clown’s mask. Wow, the wood floor really is interesting these days! It’s made of . . . wood.

MCYT aro week day three - solidarity

Notes

Short & sweet & simple for today - atypical clownzy my beloved

Prompts for this day were solidarity / hobbies

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

“So,” Branzy starts, and then immediately stops. What is he supposed to say? How is he supposed to go about telling Clown about some very incorrect, very disturbing rumours. Or—okay, maybe he’s being a little bit dramatic. But it’s still something to be worried about! “Um.”

“Yes, Branzy?” Clown asks, like he’s someone who’s patient about distractions and anything that takes up his valuable time. “What is it?”

Instantly, Branzy regrets every single decision he’s ever made in his life that has brought him to this point. He should never have said hi to Rek that one time, should have never asked him what servers he spent his free time on, shouldn’t have even *thought* about joining Lifesteal. He blames redstone. And Rek. They both got him to this point. “Absolutely nothing! Have a good day, Clown, I’m just gonna—”

“Branzy,” Clown says, in a tone that could be either playful or warning. He still doesn’t know how to read Clown’s moods— *heck*, he doesn’t think anyone on Lifesteal knows how to, but Branzy’s spent a lot of time with Clown recently, and now he’s gotten himself into big trouble over a silly little rumour that he didn’t even need to bring up. “Tell me what it is.”

“Suddenly, I appear to have forgotten every single thing about my life so far!” he laughs nervously, looking anywhere but at Clown’s mask. Wow, the wood floor really is interesting these days! It’s made of . . . wood. “Who’s Branzy? Who are you? What am I? Nice weather we’re having, isn’t it?”

All of a sudden, Clown’s big ass scythe is visible in the corners of Branzy’s vision, and the dulled little rounded out bit that a head could fit perfectly inside is pressed against the back of his neck. The chill of the metal cuts right to Branzy’s bones, and yet somehow, this is a heck of a lot less terrifying than saying people think Clown and him are *dating*. “Don’t lie to me, Branzy. What’s going on?”

Branzy inhales deeply, and very promptly loses control of his brain-to-mouth filter. It’s an unfortunate side effect of murder clowns. “

The server thinks you and I are dating and I don’t like people like that. ”

For a second, he doesn’t get a response, not until the scythe the back of his neck, and he’s *so* close to being able to breathe easily. Then the tip of it lands under his chin, and tips his head up to look at Clown, who has his head at a forty-five degree angle exactly. “I didn’t quite catch that. Say it again?”

“The server thinks you and I are dating,” Branzy says, trying not to cringe at the wobbliness of his voice. “But I don’t like people like that. At all. So if you hear any rumours, they’re—” Fake? Stupid? A result of overactive minds that do not understand the bond between a murder clown and his indentured servant? “—Fake. Very. I don’t like you like that. Sorry.”

If Clown responds, Branzy can’t hear him over the rush of blood in his ears, the frantic beat of his heart that is no doubt going to send him to an early grave when it gives out one of these

days. Oh god, this was a bad idea. This was *such* a bad idea. He should have just kept it to himself, and—

Clown laughs under his breath, a soft thing that should *not* have him feeling as reassured as he does. The scythe stays at Branzy's throat for a couple more seconds, and then it disappears, sent off to Clown's inventory. He can't help the way he sags forward, bracing his hands against the edge of the chair in front of him.

"You worry too much, Branzy," Clown says, and when Branzy jerks his head up, he can practically hear the smile in Clown's voice. Is now when Clown admits he's liked Branzy all along? That he *wants* them to date? Look, Branzy says he has a wife, but it's a decoy. A way to keep people off of his back. He doesn't want to deal with Clown wanting him. "Me neither."

"You *what* ?!" Branzy finds himself blurting, no longer in control of his mouth at all. He's gone past denial, past grief and bargaining and anger and depression. Now he no longer has a filter. On his mouth. Is it wrong to hope that he'll get killed for it and save himself any embarrassment?

"Feel no romantic attraction, Branzy. It's a simple concept. Sit down, would you? Your desperate knuckling of the suede is beginning to stress me out." Like he hasn't just broken Branzy's world down and rebuilt it again, Clown tips his head at the chair, and numbly, Branzy steps around it, and flops down. It is deceptively soft, for a chair in Clown's office. He likes keeping his visitors on edge. "Now, where have you been hearing these rumours?"

"Oh, all over, really," he says, letting his mouth do the thinking for them. Filters are overrated. Branzy's lost his in the war. "Zam, Roshambo, Spoke, sometimes Ashswag. Reddoons tried to bring me into his office to discuss a business deal regarding it? It's just—they— *everywhere*."

"And yet I haven't heard of it?" Clown muses, not sounding murderous enough to make any sharp moves. "They clearly know better. Shame." He leans forward, braces his elbows on the desk in a way that means business. "So tell me, Branzy. How are we going to go about dealing with this?"

"I—what?" he asks, blinking a couple of times. Out of all the possible outcomes, this was not one he accounted for. Dying? Oh, absolutely. Getting strong-armed into a relationship by half the server and also Clown? Maybe. Clown proposing a deal? Cold day in hell. Cold, *cold* day in hell. "We're going to what?"

Clown laughs. "Deal with this, Branzy. You and I are not so different, and I think we both desire a little chaos. So, do you and your genius brain have any ideas?"

Branzy blinks once, twice. Clown is acting like nothing has changed between them even though everyone thinks they're dating, even though neither of them clearly want nothing to do with it. *And he's flirting? Probably? Maybe?*

"I'm so confused," he wheezes out, dropping his forehead against the cool wood of Clown's desk. He's too old for this. He's old, and decrepit, and he can feel his brain failing him at the

old, old age of twenty-seven.

A gloved hand lands in his hair, and ruffles it slightly, a move he would not expect from Clown in a thousand years. Oh *god*, they got their signals crossed, didn't they. Now Clown thinks they're dating, and it means Branzy is going to have to kiss him, and feel those sickening little butterflies that sound like a bad case of salmonella, and he thinks he hates that almost as much as he hates the idea of having to throw an arm around Clown's shoulders and act lovey-dovey.

Power couple this, power couple that, they're going to need a power *washer* to get rid of the vomit that will come out of Branzy's mouth if he has to do even half of the stuff Zam's been giggling about them doing. If someone gives him flowers, he might just go insane and start eating them. Horse-zy. He will become a horse. Horses don't have to do romance, right?

Clown's fingers drum idly against his skull, muted little thuds that reverberate through Branzy's bones. "Consider it an alliance of sorts. You don't feel romantic attraction, and as a default, I do not either. Hence, we team up on another level."

"So we're not dating?" he asks, muffled against the desk. His nose is starting to hurt from the position of despair. "At all? Ever?"

"Oh, absolutely not," Clown says, amusement in his tone. "Far from it."

"Oh thank god." The words leave him in a rush of air, and he breathes in a gratitude the likes of which he has most likely never felt before. No dating Clown. No romance for him. The server can *suck it*. He is a free man.

"Though, if you want to keep up the flirting, I would not be opposed. You're funny when you're tripping over your feet, you know that?"

Aaaand Branzy is back in the depths of confusion. "I thought we weren't dating?"

"No feelings, Branz," Clown says, and then he's trying to coax Branzy's head off of the desk with far more gentleness than expected from him. With much reluctance, Branzy goes, letting Clown hold his chin between his fingers. "Just you, and me, and our lack of interest in romance. It's like a slot machine, yeah? All of it's rigged, just for show. You flirt with me, I flirt with you, and everyone thinks we're dating, but the symbols never match. It's always a loss."

"So we make them bet on us dating, but it never lines up?" It's smart, really. Another line of redstone Branzy sets up to draw the eye away from what's really going to happen, to trick someone into thinking they have a chance at winning. "It's all a front, of sorts."

"Smoke and mirrors."

"Sleight of hand."

"Aromantic for aromantic."

“Huh?” Branzzy asks, letting Clown’s hand drop from his face. He leans back in his chair, trying to get significantly more comfortable now that he is not going to get killed on sight. “Aro for aro?”

“You and me, in an alliance. Because the server can’t mind its own fucking business, and they won’t get off of our heels unless we pretend. So you and I hold hands, in a way that isn’t romantic. It just *is* .”

Branzy . . . isn’t opposed to that. At all. If he doesn’t have to do *romance*, doesn’t have to date Clown behind the scenes or behind the mask, and can run his mouth— *within reason* — then he can see this arrangement working out well. Him and Clown against the server once more. “I think we have a deal, Clownpierce.”

End Notes

I don't have anything written for the next two days so! See yall on the sixteenth o7

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