

## we're going down in an earlier round

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## we're going down in an earlier round

by [BananasofThorns](#)

### Summary

A collection of conversations from Joel and Etho's first week as soulmates

### Notes

[title from Sugar, We're Goin Down - Fall Out Boy]

hi. etho and joel my beloveds that pairing is So good. this was so fun to write I hope y'all like it

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

Joel respawns laughing. Etho is already waiting for him, arms crossed as he shakes his head.

“Joel,” he starts.

He reaches out a hand; Joel allows himself to be pulled to his feet, though it’s mostly him pushing himself up as he struggles to muffle his laughter.

“I’m so sorry,” he manages.

“I think we need to have a little talk,” Etho starts. He’s trying to be serious, but Joel can see the amusement lurking in the corners of his eyes. “Um, so I messed up first, but I think you messed up way worse, there.”

Joel accepts that with a shrug as he tries to reorient himself and figure out which way they need to

go to get back to their things; it's not like Etho is *wrong*, anyway.

"*Maybe* I should be more careful, next time," he allows.

Etho falls in step beside him. "You think?"

Joel pushes him into a tree. He should maybe be more upset about this, since lives are even more finite this time around, but beneath his annoyance Etho is laughing too, and it's not scary, it's just *fun*. Except for the fact that it's currently the middle of the night and they're somewhat lost in a forest.

"This *is* the right direction, right?" he asks.

Etho pauses. "...probably."

"*Probably?* What, you don't know?"

"I was just following you! *You* know where you're going, don't you?"

"Uh. Yeah, I think so."

"Joel! Our stuff!"

Just like that, the laughter Joel had mostly succeeded in subduing comes bubbling back. Etho stares at him for a second before his eyes crinkle with a smile.

"I'll just message Bdubs for the coords," he says.

"That's probably smart."

+++

"So," Joel starts awkwardly.

They're tending to their small, kind of sad farm, and generally he's comfortable with silence but something about there being another *person* makes it weird. Maybe it's because it's Etho, who is always quiet, or maybe it's because it's Etho who is his soulmate and they're supposed to, like, *know* each other. Or something. Joel's not really sure how this works.

Etho, knelt in the dirt with a handful of seeds, looks up. "...yes?"

He didn't plan this far. "Uh. What's...you come here often?" he blurts.

Etho stares at him, incredulous. "Seriously?"

"I panicked! I'm not used to working with someone from the start!"

"So you decided to *flirt* with me?"

"On accident!"

"*Accident?* You didn't even *mean* it?! Joel," Etho gasps. "I'm hurt. My own soulmate...honestly."

Joel squints at him. Beneath the mask, his face is carefully blank, but there's a foreign sliver of teasing amusement curling in Joel's chest.

"Sorry," Etho says. He doesn't sound very sorry. "You should've seen your face."

“Oh, shut up.”

+++

“You’re helping me build this, right?” Joel asks as he lays out a floorplan for their base. It’s a little small, but he’s working with what he’s got, okay?

Etho chuckles. “Why would I do that? You’re the builder, aren’t you?”

“*I’m* the builder—?” Joel starts, incredulous. “I’ve seen your stuff, I know you can build, too!” He places down another block with a bit more force than necessary. “You’re just gonna stand there and watch me, aren’t you?”

“...yeah.”

He can *hear* the smile in Etho’s voice. With a scoff, he turns and tosses a stick at Etho’s head. It whacks into the side of his temple and then bounces off his shoulder; Etho catches it before it hits the ground. Dull pain flares in Joel’s head where the stick had hit. He swears under his breath.

Etho laughs. “Thanks, dude.”

“I forgot that would do damage to me, too,” Joel mutters.

“It’s okay,” Etho assures him. “You’re not that strong, anyway, it didn’t hurt too badly.”

“Hey!”

+++

“I’m going to hunt creepers,” Joel announces.

“Is that a good idea?”

Joel crosses his arms. “We need gunpowder. For...you know. Later on in the game. Look, I’ll be careful!”

He’s not even the one that got them blown up last time. And *this* time, he’ll be careful to not look at any endermen. Believe it or not, he is capable of learning from his mistakes.

“Okay,” Etho says skeptically. “Be careful.”

“I’m always careful. See ya!”

Joel ducks out of their base before Etho can say anything else. Etho’s quiet laughter follows him out.

“Remember to use your shield!” he calls.

+++

“Sorry for killing you last time, by the way,” Joel says one night as they’re both trying and failing to sleep because *some people* (Grian and/or Scar, almost definitely; he is going to be making a *visit* to the other side of the valley tomorrow) keep blowing horns at who-fucking-knows AM.

Etho doesn’t answer for a long moment, long enough for another horn to blow. Finally, he says, “Are you, though?”

“No.”

Joel barely hesitates, which...maybe he should have waited a second longer, just to keep up appearances, but. He really isn't that sorry, especially since he ended up dying anyway five minutes later. It would probably be good for their partnership - *soul bond*, whatever - to air out past grievances, though.

“Yeah, I didn't think so,” Etho says cheerfully. “It's okay, I forgive you.”

“Oh, good.”

They lay there in silence - broken only by goat horns - for a while. When Joel rolls over, he can just barely make out the white smudge of Etho's hair across the room, illuminated by moonlight.

“You think we're gonna win?” he asks.

Etho opens his eyes; the one on the left glows yellow in the darkness. It's a little eerie.

“If you stop getting us killed, yeah. Maybe.”

“That was *one time!* And you blew us up first!”

“You broke the boat!”

“On *accident!* God,” Joel scoffs. “I wish I could kill you. This sucks.”

Etho laughs, and then Joel laughs, too, and then they're just two idiots laughing at each other in the dark. It's nice. It almost distracts him from the godawful horns keeping him from getting his beauty sleep.

*Maybe* having his life tied to someone else isn't so bad.

## End Notes

thank you for reading! comments and kudos are greatly appreciated <3

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