

Mission One : What Could Possibly Go Wrong?

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Mission One : What Could Possibly Go Wrong?

by [yoeyrt](#)

Summary

Etho is a professional ghost hunter! He's dealt with the supernatural for nearing twenty years now. It may be a little intense for Grian and Mumbo's first mission, but hey, when you're living off of ghost hunting, you gotta take on every job you can get your hands on, even if it seems impossible and/or dangerous.

In other, shorter words, they'll be fine.

Probably.

Notes

hiiii ^_^ this is my first time posting a fic to ao3 hope it goes well
general warning for creepy things happening. there's no specifics just like.. ooo ghosts are abound! watch out!

Takes place some time after Mumbo and Grian pick Etho up off the street like a stray cat.

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

A baby-blue van sits in the overgrown driveway of a rotting house on the edge of a hill. The autumn wind blows softly through the tall, yellow grass, and the mid-afternoon sun casts dark shadows over the lawn.

Inside the van, a small team of ghost hunters were getting ready for their first ever mission together. Etho is leading the preparations; they had stopped by Impulse's earlier that day to pick up the gear that they needed. Grian flits between bags and cameras, double and triple-checking that everything is working as intended, his movements meticulous and intentional. Mumbo sits turned around in the front seat, watching Grian and Etho with shifting eyes.

"You said I don't have to go in the house, right?"

"Yeah." Etho doesn't look up at Mumbo from the device in his lap. It looks like an old handheld radio, the dark grey paint chipping off of its corners and the screen dim. He's putting batteries into the back of it.

"Your job is to stay in the van and watch our backs." He explains, closing the back of the device and setting it in his backpack. "And to check for anything suspicious."

"The cameras are working." Grian confirms, handing one off to Etho. "They're streaming."

"So," Etho said, taking the camera and continuing. "What you're going to want to do—here, come back here so I can show you."

Mumbo looks at where Etho is gesturing. He's opening up what looks like a suitcase, emblazoned with a lowercase 'i' on the top - Impulse's logo. Mumbo climbs over the front seat with all the grace of a newborn and lands on the back seat between Grian and Etho. Inside the suitcase in Etho's lap sits a screen on the top half with an old, clunky keyboard built into the base. It resembles a laptop, one from maybe from thirty years ago. Fans inside of it buzz as Etho shows him the screen.

"Here's where you'll be checking on us. If you push this key, you can toggle night vision on and off. This one changes which camera you're looking at - you can only look at one at a time. Impulse is working on making it so you can see it split-screen, but this is it for the time being."

"So I just sit here and look at the screen the whole time?"

"Pretty much!" Etho smiles. "Easy job, right?"

"Simple enough."

“Etho, you ready to go?” Grian asks, interrupting. He was rocking anxiously in the seat, his hand resting on the door handle in anticipation.

“Yeppers.” Etho nods, passing the suitcase laptop into Mumbo’s lap as he squeezes by him. “Remember, we’re mostly just staking it out today. The point is to find out what kind of ghost we’re dealing with so we know how to get rid of it for tomorrow.”

“Yes, yes, I know.” Grian swings the door to the van open and hops out, the grass crunching beneath his feet.

“Alright. See you in a bit, Mumbo.” Etho smiles over his shoulder, pointing the camera at his friend in the van.

“Don’t die. Please!”

Etho walks towards the house, hopping across the islands of stepping-stones in the sea of dead, overgrown grass swaying gently in the breeze. Grian follows close behind him, not wanting to deviate too far from his path.

The house standing above them had been a two-story house decades ago. It’s definitely seen better days. The wood siding is black, from rot or char it was hard to tell. It had been the victim of an unfortunate case of recreational arson, but somehow most of the structure had survived. Soon after the incident, people visiting the property on a dare started reporting that it was haunted by a *very* angry ghost.

Etho, Grian, and Mumbo were called in by the current owner in hopes of getting rid of the ghost. The owner wanted to bulldoze the lot and build on top of it, but was paranoid that the ghost would persist and haunt their new home. Etho had assured them that they would definitely get rid of it and put their mind at rest. Unfortunately, the information they had to work off of was very little. Previous ghost-hunting teams were unsuccessful in even being able to set up observation tools. The ghost would constantly interfere; while normally a good thing, too much energy can break tools and render their data as good as useless.

Their team could definitely handle the ghost, though. Etho is a professional ghost hunter! He’s dealt with the supernatural for nearing twenty years now. It may be a little intense for Grian and Mumbo’s first mission, but hey, when you’re living off of ghost hunting, you gotta take on every job you can get your hands on, even if it seems impossible and/or dangerous.

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Probably.

The steps of the house threaten to snap under Etho's weight as he carefully makes his way to the front door. It's a big wooden door damaged by water and rot, the brass knocker and handles tarnished the same dark color of the wood from misuse. He turns the old key he was given in the lock and the door opens with a click, noisily opening into the rest of the house.

"Alright, keep your steps light." He cautions Grian over his shoulder. "You don't wanna fall through the floor."

"Yeah, of course." Grian watches his footsteps as he follows Etho inside, careful of the moss growing between the floorboards.

The front door opens into what looked like the living room, big couches with what would have been gaudy floral patterns arranged around a broken coffee table. Just behind it is the kitchen, where cabinet doors hang off their hinges or lay on the floor. To the left is a set of stairs that looks like it's seen better days, and a closet, its door off its hinges and left inside the alcove.

Etho makes his way carefully into the living room, heading to the kitchen.

"We should first try to set up motion detectors. The ghost is apparently super active, so it should be easy to find out where it likes to hang out."

"Sounds good to me." Grian supplies, checking the video camera he cradled in his hands for Mumbo. He frowns as it seems to glitch in front of him, blurrier than it should be with static obscuring its picture.

"Huh." He mumbles to himself, closing the viewing screen and opening it again. That seems to do the trick, and the picture is back to being clear.

"Here." Etho's voice pulls his attention back. "Take this, turn them on, and place them around the bottom of the walls." He's handing Grian a small black box with a camera and a light. "I'll go

upstairs and install these.”

“Wait,” Grian pauses. “We’re splitting up?”

“The house is small.” Etho says with a kind smile pulling at the corners of his eyes. “You’ll be fine.”

Grian frowns. He actually doesn’t feel like he’d be fine.

Almost on cue, as if the ghost heard his thoughts, the front door slammed shut with a loud

BANG!

Grian nearly leaps out of his skin as he whips around, eyes fixed firmly on the door.

“Well, looks like they’ve announced their presence.” Etho’s tone is one of amusement rather than fear. “You can assume what we’ve come here to do,” he speaks loudly to no one in particular. “We’re here to help you move on.”

“You’re just chatting with it?!”

“We have to establish communication.” Etho shrugs as he turns the motion detector on in his hands. “If it knows we’re here to help, maybe it won’t be as violent with us.”

“As violent!?”

“That’s the best we can hope for! Alright, I’m headed upstairs now. You good to set up down here?”

“I’m most certainly *not* good. I don’t wanna be left alone, Etho! This is scary!”

“Fine.” Etho says with a sigh. “We can set things up down here together. I just don’t want you going upstairs with me, I don’t know if the house can handle two people upstairs.”

“That’s fair.” Grian agrees, turning on the motion detectors Etho had handed him. He copies where Etho placed the sensors--facing corners, both at foot level and at head height. There weren’t very many places to put them, actually. The house was pretty open-concept for being as old as it is.

“That’s weird.” Etho remarks after a moment, pulling Grian’s attention away once again. “They seem way more sensitive than usual.”

He crouches down to one he placed on the edge of the sofa. It’s flashing incessantly in a random pattern, almost strobe-like.

“Yeah, mine have been flashing this whole time.” Grian adds, glancing at the one he had just put down, the white light beaming across the rotted floor. “Are they not supposed to do that?”

“No. They’re supposed to light up once for about two seconds when something walks by.” Etho picks it up and takes out the batteries, waiting a few seconds before popping them back in. A good old reset should make them work, surely. Unfortunately, it doesn’t. As soon as the batteries hit their terminals, the device begins flashing once again.

“Uh oh.” Grian remarks as Etho’s brows furrowed in frustration. That can’t have been a good sign.

“Yeah, uh oh.” He agrees as he starts picking the sensors up off the walls. They were all flashing now, turning the haunted house into a rave. “I guess we gotta tell Impulse they’re busted.”

“That sucks.”

“Yeah, especially since I checked them at the shop...” Etho trails off as he makes his way back to his backpack. “We have other tools to use, though, it’s not the end of the world.” Grian hovers over his shoulder, passing off the black boxes he removed back to him.

“Like this.” Etho holds up a device that looks like a tv remote. It has a rectangle cut out near the end, housing a glass dial that reads from 1-10.

“EMF reader?” Grian reads the text on the side.

“Yup! It senses electromagnetic fields. The number should go up the closer we get to the ghost. Once we get a feel for where it is, we can actually start working.” He says with a chuckle, turning the device on.

Immediately, the device’s needle swings to the 10 and starts buzzing.

“Huh.” Etho blinks. “Uh...?” He gets up from where he was crouching, taking a couple confused steps back into the living room.

“I’m getting that it’s not supposed to do that?” Grian asks, following Etho with the camera pointed at him.

“Well, it should be going down if I’m getting away from the ghost.” Etho waves the device around in a wide arc, trying to find where it stops buzzing. “Uh... right now it’s basically telling me the ghost is on top of it. But it shouldn’t be, I don’t think.”

“This is so spooky.” Grian laughs anxiously, peeking over his shoulder as if someone could sneak up on him from behind. “First the motion detectors, now the EMF. Is all our equipment busted?”

“Don’t think like that. Remember, other teams had trouble too. But Impulse assured me that these would work, though...” He huffs through his nose. “Yeah, I guess the motion detectors and the EMF-”

Suddenly, Etho’s phone rings from his jacket pocket, his alarm cutting through the tension in the air. Etho digs it out and answers it immediately, *urgently*, not bothering to check the screen.

“Hello? Mumbo?”

Garbled static resonates through the speaker, loud enough that Grian can hear across the room.

“Nope!” Grian exclaims, nearly dropping his camera. “No way.”

“Mumbo?” Etho asks again, and the static continues to buzz in response.

“That’s *obviously* not Mumbo!”

“Eh.” Etho shrugs as he hangs up the phone a little too quickly. Grian doesn’t see the slight shake of his hands as he does.

“You’re just gonna hang up on it!?”

“Yeah? Why not?”

“It was talking to us! We could’ve- I don’t know, we could have used it. Established communication, like you said. Asked it questions!”

“Do *you* want to ask it questions?”

“..no.”

“That’s what I thought.”

Etho has his reputation for being stoic, unafraid in the face of the supernatural, and he *likes* it that way. There was no way on earth he was going to tell Grian he was actually *scared* just then. No, actually, he *wasn’t*, in fact, he was just as brave as ever. If Grian knows he was afraid, who knows how the rest of the mission would go? Honestly, they probably shouldn’t have taken it in the first place- obviously, this is a job meant for a bigger team, a more experienced team, a team who knows what the *hell* they’re doing with a powerful ghost.

There’s more to the phone situation, though, beyond just his nerves. He’s never experienced it firsthand, of course, but the old internet forum he frequents would tell tales of broken and busted phones after strong ghosts interacted with them. Older devices were fine - something about the limits of their hardware - but newer devices, newer phones, they were in trouble. Screen errors, camera glitches, slower processing speed... He had read about one person who claimed their phone’s battery exploded, though their post was deleted a week later for being ‘too cliché to be believable’.

No matter the case - he doesn’t want to risk breaking his phone. He *can’t* risk breaking his phone.

He probably should have explained all this to Grian to help him understand.

He had not.

"Impulse is gonna have some explaining to do. 'These things are in perfect working condition', yeah, right. C'mon now." Etho tries to change the topic of conversation again to something more light hearted, to ease the tension he'd accidentally left hanging over their heads.

His phone rings once again. Etho checks the screen, cracks a smile, and holds it out in Grian's direction.

"It's for you!"

"Go away!" Grian exclaims, laughing a little too loudly and jumping away from it like it was a bomb. Etho answers it.

"Hello?"

"Etho? Hello?" Mumbo's voice comes through the speaker, a welcome relief to the both of them. "You hung up on me."

"Oh, weird. Sorry. It just sounded like a bunch of static on our end. What's up?"

"I was looking at the cameras like you told me to. And the feed got all fuzzy for a while. I - It's still fuzzy now, but I wanted to make sure you guys were okay. I'm glad to see you haven't died yet."

"You didn't think to come in to check on us?" Etho teases.

"Nope!" Mumbo says with no hesitation. "No way am I going in there. You couldn't pay me to!"

"That's fair. It's been pretty creepy out here." Grian butts in.

“Yeah, I think some of the stuff Impulse gave us was busted. We haven’t gotten any work done yet on figuring out this thing, it’s kind of frustrating.”

“That’s unfortunate. Oh, the - the camera feed’s gone back to normal.”

“Huh.” Grian checks the screen on his handheld camera. He hadn’t noticed it go off at all.

“How long had it been broken?” Etho asks. Mumbo doesn’t reply for a moment.

“Mumbo?”

“It - you - breakin - can’t - erstand - *hello* -”

Etho feels a chill race down his spine. He shivers, trying quickly to appear normal to Grian, and hangs up the call again. Thankfully, Grian doesn’t pick up on his nerves.

The static’s starting to get annoying more than anything. They’re *trying* to help this ghost move on, but *apparently* it just doesn’t want to cooperate. In order for them to successfully (and humanely) get rid of a ghost, they need to establish a safe line of communication. That’s how he’s always done it - ask them what they need to move on and do it for them. (Of course, there are significantly *less* humane ways of dealing with ghosts - but they take a lot of energy to perform, and Etho’s Latin is rusty.)

He stuffs his phone back in his pocket after checking the time. It’s nearing dusk, now, with the sun turning the house orange as it dips low in the sky. They should probably think about heading back to the van soon. Being here overnight is not something they wanted to do.

Etho turns the EMF reader over in his hands to shut it off. It’s still on - and strangely, dead silent.

“That’s weird.” He remarks to himself, causing Grian to look up from his backpack.

“Hmm?”

“Did you notice when it stopped buzzing?” Etho asks, showing it to his partner. The dial is sitting at 0.

“No. Did you turn it off?”

“No, I didn’t.” He furrows his brow as he starts waving the reader around in the air again. Nothing is being picked up, and the arrow stands still, frozen at the 0.

“Maybe the batteries just died?”

“Maybe.”

Etho makes his way over to his backpack once again, though, a determined look set on his face. Grian moves out of his path, his hands up.

“You look like you’ve got a clue.”

Etho doesn’t respond as he fishes around in his bag for one of the “broken” motion detectors.

“If this works...” He mumbles to himself as he turns the sensor on, setting it down just on the table. Grian hovers behind him, watching.

The detector blinked once as Etho waves his hand across it, and *only* as Etho waves his hand across it. It doesn’t blink again until Etho moves in front of it once more.

“It’s working!?” Grian exclaims in surprise.

“It’s working.”

“*How?*”

“I don’t know.” Etho turns off the motion detector and puts it back in his bag, grabbing another one to test. “I don’t know why.”

“Could it have been the ghost?”

“The ghost was definitely messing with it before.” Etho’s tone is void of emotion as he meticulously and routinely tests each “broken” detector. “I just don’t understand why it’s stopped.”

“Maybe it just got bored?”

“Ghosts like these don’t usually just ‘get bored’. They *want* to interact, they want to either scare us off or hopefully cooperate and be laid to rest.” Etho leans back, arms crossed over his chest as he watches the motion detectors, waiting for them to flash again without his intervention. “This has never happened to me before.”

Grian swallows anxiously, scanning his surroundings. He’d say more, but he’s too scared to. The house is getting steadily darker, the shadows longer, the air colder. He doesn’t really want to be here anymore. It’s bad enough that Etho said the mission might be tough for beginners, but the fact that even *he’s* getting stumped, too, makes him want to run all the way back to the van and hide out until tomorrow.

“Maybe we should head back.” Etho’s heavy sigh fills the room. “I can put up some cameras to record overnight, hopefully catch some more activity, but... I don’t think there’s much more we can do right now. Plus, it’s getting late.”

He won’t say it, that ghosts are more active at night and that staying was *their best chance* at figuring this thing out. Had he been by himself again, he’d stay and hopefully establish a real connection with the ghost - but for Grian and Mumbo’s sake as beginners, they can always try tomorrow.

He *also* wouldn’t say that he himself is thoroughly creeped out by the whole thing, too.

“Oh, thank goodness.” Grian sighs like a weight is being lifted from his shoulders, his backpack already packed, in hand, ready to run back to their van. He’d bolt, but he doesn’t want to leave Etho here alone.

“Go ahead back to the van.” Etho says, digging out some trail cams. “I’ll be fine, since the ghost doesn’t want to mess with us anymore, apparently.” There’s a slight taste of bitterness in his words.

“I’m not leaving you.” Grian steps closer, fishing through Etho’s bag as well. “We can set the cameras up together. The quicker we get done, the sooner we go home, right? I’m not letting you stay in this creepy house all by yourself for longer than we have to.”

Etho responds with a thankful hum.

It doesn’t take long for the two of them to set up cameras in the downstairs area. Etho briefly considers going upstairs, but the way the boards of the stairs creak under his feet make him change his mind. With nothing else to do and the house set up for observation, the two of them grab their bags and head back to their van. They try to ignore the way the house seems to linger on their clothes, instead choosing to believe that the chill they feel is definitely from the night wind blowing in.

The next morning, Etho wakes up early to retrieve the footage from the house. He’s impatient, eager to see if the ghost did anything to their cameras from last night.

He goes through his early morning routine quickly - making sure the blankets on his bed are presentable, brushing his messy hair and his teeth, grabbing something for breakfast. He’s up before Mumbo, when the light is just starting to shine through the windows and onto the couch he’s crashing on.

He takes a second to relax, to sit at the dining table and eat his breakfast. It might be another couple hours until Grian and Mumbo are awake enough to deal with their job, so there’s no real use rushing through it. He grabs his phone off the counter and unplugs it, checking the screen.

That’s kind of weird, he remarks to himself. The battery was stuck at around 60%. He double-checks the charger - maybe it wasn’t plugged in all the way? No, it was definitely still plugged into the wall. Maybe he just didn’t plug his phone in properly. It didn’t matter too much to him, though, there’d be plenty of time to charge it throughout the day.

What he *can’t* ignore, though, is his screen seeming to lag behind a half second too long when he swipes it open. Swiping through his home screen yields the same lag. It’d be fine if it lagged full seconds behind, then he knows he has to take it to a repair shop to get it looked at, but with it lagging a half second behind it’s a minor inconvenience more than anything. He figures that it’s probably because of the weird charging from last night - he’s not a genius, he doesn’t know how

phones work, so it's entirely possible the messed up charger did *something* to the internals or the screen. Maybe he'd ask Impulse about it later. He restarts his phone for now, holding down the power button until the screen goes black.

He grabs a pen from the cup by their fridge, hastily scribbling on a note for Grian and Mumbo to find if they wake up while he's gone. He'll text them when his phone's back online, no big deal.

With the last bite of his breakfast and the note pinned to the fridge, Etho grabs his motorbike helmet from a hook by the door and sets off for the haunted house.

"You - don't you ever do that again!"

"Do what?"

Etho blinks, taken aback by Grian fussing over him as soon as he opens the front door. He's just gotten home, his backpack full from the camera equipment taken back from their jobsite. His helmet is still on.

"What do you mean? You scared Mumbo and I nearly half to death! What were you thinking, going back to that house alone!?"

Oh. Oops. Etho shifts his gaze away from Grian awkwardly as he pulls off his helmet. "I wanted to get a head start on the day is all. I left a note."

"We saw the note." Mumbo has it pinched between his fingers, flapping as he waves it in the air. "*You* said you would text us."

"I did text you." Etho insists, pulling his phone out of his breast pocket. The restart earlier had worked, and there didn't seem to be any more problems with it when he had sent the message to them. He navigates to their group chat, where to his surprise, the message has a little (!) next to it.

"Oh. Well, I tried to text you." Etho turns his phone to show Grian and Mumbo both as he shrugs

off his backpack and jacket. “See? It just didn’t send. No biggie. I’m fine.”

“But you *could* have *not* been fine.” Mumbo crosses his arms over his chest, tapping his foot against the ground. “What if you needed us and we couldn’t reach you? What then?”

“Guess I’d die.” Etho says, apathetic, with a shrug. “Guys, come on. It’s not that serious. There wasn’t anything weird about the house last night, and it didn’t feel weird this morning. Look, we can go through the footage together, and you’ll see. It’s *fine* .”

Etho’s apathy doesn’t do much to help soothe Grian or Mumbo’s worries, but there really isn’t anything else they could *do* . It does feel nice to have someone care for his safety for once, even if it is a little annoying. He decides not to tell the two of them about his phone’s new bugs for their sake.

In any case, Etho grabs his laptop to review the footage they collected from last night. He hasn’t gotten a chance to look at it yet, but from retrieving the cameras, they seem to still be intact and recording. All good news so far.

The camera itself was set to record whenever it heard noise above a certain level, or it detected movement in front of it. There were quite a few 60-second clips waiting for them. The group decided to split up the workload between them, each getting their own SD card to rifle through on their own computers.

Most of the videos are just... uninteresting. Nothing happens at all for the full 60 seconds. There are a few here and there where bugs crawl or fly into view of the lens, but those are the *interesting* videos. The uninteresting ones are just 60 seconds of crickets chirping or dead silence with still video. Nothing was out of place in the background, either, save for things that had been pushed around by the wildlife, anyway.

From what the three of them could see, the house is completely and utterly normal.

“What a waste of our time.” Mumbo scoffs as he closes the file viewer. “What a complete and utter waste.”

“You got nothing interesting, either?” Grian asks, looking up from his screen. “I’ve been trying to see if there’s anything in the background.”

“It’s so strange.” Etho furrows his brows, leaning back in his chair, pushing his messy hair out of his face. “The other guys said their cameras were busted when they got them in the morning. Broke like, thirty minutes after they left.”

“Oh, and our cameras aren’t busted?”

“They’re working fine.” Etho gestures to the tens of files pulled up on Grian’s screen. “All throughout the night. And there’s even clips of me grabbing the cams in the morning.”

“Where did the ghost go, then?”

Mumbo’s inquiry hangs heavy in the air. That really *is* the question- they know it had been active before, messing with the EMF and the motion detectors. It really seems like it had just up and vanished.

“They don’t - this doesn’t normally happen, right?” Grian asks, trying to get confirmation from Etho. “Like, this is decidedly weird.”

“Yeah.” Etho says as he scrolls back through some of the footage, looking for something, *anything* interesting. “Yeah, this is definitely weird. I’ve never had this happen before.”

“Okay, but where did it *go* ?” Mumbo insists, his gaze settling three times between Etho and Grian. “Like, it can’t have up and walked away. Or something. Or maybe it could?”

Etho shrugs, selecting and deleting the nothing files. “It doesn’t really matter at this point. What matters is that the ghost is *gone* .” He levels his gaze to meet his roommate’s eyes. “You understand?”

“No.” Grian shakes his head.

“Our job was to make sure the house isn’t haunted anymore.” Etho elaborates, popping the SD card out of his computer. “We did that. House isn’t haunted! Job is a success.”

“Surely you can’t call this a success!?”

“Why not?” He shrugs, a dangerous glint in his eye. “The ghost isn’t bothering the house, and it’s not bothering us. Maybe we put it to rest accidentally, somehow. Who knows. All *I* know is that we have a job well done.” He raises his hand to Grian for a high-five. “Your first mission!”

“That is... not at all how I expected our first mission to go.” Grian hesitantly meets Etho’s hand with a soft clap.

“You take what victories you can.” Etho chuckles. “Come on. We can go out to celebrate. I’ll text the owner and let him know we’re done.”

The three hunters sat on Etho’s bed, their living room couch, cozied up for a movie. It was tradition now, at least once a week, they would all clamber in and watch something together. *It’s a team building exercise*, is the excuse if anyone asks.

Mumbo is leaning back against the couch, one arm slung across the back behind Grian and Etho, his other hand wrapped firmly around the remote. Grian sits in the middle, a blanket pulled tightly around his shoulders. Etho sits on Grian’s other side, bent over his phone, staring blankly at the screen as he forcefully restarts his phone *again*.

“You okay Etho? You’ve been staring at your phone all night.” Grian nudges his friend’s shoulder, knocking him out of his trance.

“Huh? Oh.” Etho looks a little guilty. “Yeah, no, I was just .. you remember yesterday when my texts weren’t going through?”

“Yeah?” Mumbo asks, leaning past Grian to look at Etho.

“My phone’s just been acting real weird lately. It’s been slow and barely holds a charge anymore. I’ve been restarting it every time it happens, but I’m worried it’s actually broken. I’m hoping Impulse can fix it or something later this week, I don’t wanna pay for a new one.”

“Aw, man.” Grian frowns. “Hey, at least we got paid.”

“Still. Won’t be easy on the wallet.” He chuckles dryly, his phone screen flickering to life. Mumbo looks like he wants to say something, but Grian and Etho ignore him, instead focusing back on their movie.

Etho opens up his notes app to write himself a reminder, and is greeted by a note he hadn’t seen before. It had no subject line, and simply read;

hello

He stares at the note for a solid few seconds, frozen. He can’t even begin to unpack what this meant - who wrote it, did *he* write it, *why* did he write it - all these questions buzz in his mind, blocking out his thoughts.

He barely registers that the note is now *open* , the keyboard up, the line flashing in anticipation for more text. The enter key is pressed and more words are typed before Etho’s eyes.

hello

hi etho

Etho clears his throat a little too loudly, causing Mumbo and Grian to both startle.

“What’s up, buddy?” Grian asks, tilting his head.

Etho opens and closes his mouth behind his mask like a stupid fish before deciding it’s just easier to show him than to try to explain what’s happening. He really doesn’t even want to try, he knows his words would falter in his throat.

“Oh.” Grian furrows his brows, not completely understanding. “You have a note addressed to you?”

“I didn’t write this.” Etho says, his voice filled with an indescribable emotion.

“How?” Mumbo laughs to himself. “I mean, it’s your phone, mate.”

“*I didn’t write this .*” Etho says again, desperate. “I was - It typed it out in front of me. I watched my phone type this out to me.”

“That’s a little strange.” Grian frowns, looking between Etho and his phone screen. “I mean, I don’t know why he would lie.” He says as an aside to Mumbo. Mumbo just shrugs in response.

“I’m not *lying* , Grian.” Etho scoffs, pulling the phone back to his chest. “I - I don’t know. I think I might just be going crazy.”

youre not , the note adds below its greeting.

Etho nearly throws his phone into Grian’s lap as he shows him the screen.

“Look! Look, it’s actually typing.” He says in earnest. “It’s typing, right?”

“No, yeah, definitely typing.” Grian’s eyes widen in fear. “What? How is it doing that?”

“I don’t know!”

“It’s actually responding to you.” Grian’s stressing out now as well, his hands planted firmly in his hair, tugging it back out of his face. “Wow. Okay. That’s - I - I don’t know how to feel about that.”

“Tell me about it.” Etho mumbles, handling his phone more carefully than before, like it’s a delicate animal.

you guys are so funny , the note types again. *its kind of cute actually. ill give you a hint. im not actually ethos phone. wink!*

“Why didn’t it just type a wink?” Mumbo asks, trying to redirect the incredibly nervous energy around them. His anxious chuckles are the only ones in the room.

Suddenly, the pieces click in place for Etho, his face lighting up in recognition. The haunted house. There's a reason why their equipment, going haywire before, suddenly stopped picking up a signal. There's a reason why the footage from last night was completely empty. And there's a reason why his phone has been so glitchy the past few days.

Etho smiles. And he tilts his head back as he laughs, the nervous energy still coursing through his veins. He laughs, because he's an *idiot*, and he should have seen it coming miles away, back when his phone first glitched out, when Mumbo called him while they were in the house.

"What? Etho? You're scaring me." Grian's anxious voice fills Etho's ears, shaking his shoulder, trying to get at least one of them to calm down.

this guy figured it out!, the note reads.

"Ohh, man." Etho sighs, rubbing his eyes with the heel of his palm, catching his breath. "Oh, I'm so stupid."

"What?"

"Grian, this is the ghost that disappeared yesterday."

"WHAT!?"

bingo boingo!

"The what?!" Mumbo adds in disbelief, craning his neck to see the messages.

"Yep. This is- that's what it has to be, yeah. Somehow the ghost we were trying to get rid of - I guess- I don't know." Etho's skipping over his words, trying to piece them together in his head quickly. "It must have jumped to my phone when you called me that one time. That's why it was all static-y and stuff. I don't know *how*, or *why*, really.."

oh, i can answer that one! , the note types as Etho speaks. *its because you guys seemed like a lot of fun.*

“Well, there’s your answer.” Grian murmurs, pulling his blanket tighter around his body. “Gosh, that’s so *creepy* .”

“It’s so *cool* .” Etho corrects, the fear turning instead to excitement as he kept his phone in his lap. “This is the most direct contact I think I’ve ever had with a ghost before. You can- wait, I should probably ask what its name is.” He mumbles to himself.

boo! , the note types, having heard him anyway.

“Boo? That’s not a name.” Grian laughs.

“Just Boo?” Etho furrows his eyebrows.

b-double-o, boo. yep.

“I’m not gonna call this thing Boo. That’s stupid.” Mumbo says, suddenly brave.

“That is definitely cliche.” Etho chuckles. “If I made a post saying ‘a ghost named boo is haunting my phone’, it’d be deleted in a heartbeat. I’d probably get banned from the whole forum. We gotta get a better name.”

you guys are awfully snarky for some reason. what if i could blow all your phones up? then what would you do, huh?

“If you could blow my phone up,” Etho wagers, “you would've done it a while ago. I think that you like us.”

eh , the note types, starting and deleting several sentences before just leaving it at that.

“Well, what are you going to call it if not Boo?” Grian asks, tilting his head against the knees

pulled to his chest.

“B-double-o. How about ...” Etho pauses to think. “Bdubs for short?”

i like it!

“I gotta know everything about you, Bdubs.” Etho says, trying out the name on his tongue. It rolls off it nicely. “Hold on, I’ll get my laptop- this is so exciting.”

“At least do this in the kitchen.” Mumbo pinches the bridge of his nose, one eye closed. “So Grian and I can finish the movie?”

“Got it.” Etho flashes a quick thumbs-up as he tucks both his phone and his laptop under his arm. His voice trails off as he walks further into their apartment. “So, well, first question I have for you...”

End Notes

yay you made it to the end!

thank you soooo much to the lovely @maybeanss on tumblr for helping me edit and also giving me the brain worms in order to write all of this. could not do it without you <3 you can find me on tumblr at @yoeyrt as well, there's more info + art there if you're interested

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