

## The Hunter

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## The Hunter

by [Fire\\_Cat](#)

### Summary

Etho had hoped for a peaceful night, all he had wanted to do was spend time with Bdubs. Hang out and chat. But of course, there had to be someone who wanted to ruin that peace.

He doesn't like to be violent without reason, doesn't like to hurt people if he can avoid it. But he's dealt with all sorts of people over the years, the good and the bad. And some in this world simply don't deserve any better.

He learnt a long, long time ago, that the only good monster hunter is a *dead* monster hunter.

(Also known as Etho and Bdubs' night is interrupted by someone who wishes to hurt them, and Etho can only see one way of handling that problem.)

### Notes

Hello hello hello! And I am back at last with more vampire au fic! Apologies for the delay, had other projects to work on the past couple months, and this unfortunately went on the backbench for a little bit. But I've been tapping away at this fic for a couple weeks and I've finally got it to a point where I want to post it! And yes, this is another two parter! Wasn't planned that way, but as I worked I realised it would probably work better if it was. Part

two is in the works, hopefully won't have to wait too long for that.

This part doesn't really warrant the 'can be read as romantic' note but second part probably will, we'll see though.

There is more violence in this one, it is more bloody, but it's not too excessive since writing heavy gore and the like isn't really my style. Please do be careful though if it's something you need to be careful of!

Not much else to say I don't think! So, as always. Big thank you to my friend CJ for being awesome and building this au with me!

And, another thank you to Cazuchan for doing some beta-reading me, much appreciated!

That's all I have to say, enjoy the fic! <3

# The Hunters Prey

## Chapter Notes

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

“Oi!” Bdubs snapped, swatting Etho’s hand away from his food. “If you’re gonna do that get your own!”

Etho laughed and leant back in his seat, popping the stolen fry in his mouth. “It wouldn’t be any fun then would it.”

“You’re a thief,” Bdubs grumbled. “Stop it.”

Etho shrugged and smiled at him. He could get his own if he wanted, but he didn’t have any money and he probably wouldn’t eat all of it anyway. He did have to be careful, eating too much normal food would make him sick and he’d like to avoid that.

Besides, stealing Bdubs’ food and riling up him a little was much more fun.

Just hanging out with him like this was nice too though. Sitting across from each other at a burger shop whilst Bdubs ate was a new one, but Etho didn’t mind. It was quiet here with not many customers coming in at this time of night. And Etho could pinch a few fries, so what was there to complain about?

After how hectic things had been a couple of weeks ago, the peace was wonderful, too.

“Judging by how grumpy you’re being, I think you must be on the mend.” Etho teased, folding his arms on the table and leaning against them. “Lively enough to get annoyed with me.”

“I’m not grumpy, I’m hungry,” Bdubs said through a mouthful of burger.

“It’s nine o’clock at night. Why are you so hungry?”

Bdubs swallowed his food before he spoke, “I haven’t eaten since like, midday, I’m starving.”

“That’s your fault.”

“Yes thank you I am aware. Busy day.”

Etho smiled, part of him wondering what had kept Bdubs so busy that he hadn’t had time to eat, but he decided not to ask. “I’m glad you’re feeling better though,” he said, more sincere now. Because it was true. He’d been worried after Bdubs had gotten so badly hurt. It was a relief that he was recovering well.

“Thanks, man,” Bdubs replied, a smile on his lips. “How’s your leg?”

“Good as new. Took a while though, Ren wasn’t lying when he said wolf bites are slow to heal.” Etho chuckled a little. The wound had been painful and had taken over a week to heal. Which, for a vampire like Etho, was a fair bit longer than he was used to. “We’ve got matching bite scars now though, which is cool.” he added, earning him an eye roll from Bdubs.

“Is that a good thing though, really?” Bdubs asked. Etho smiled, shrugged, and reached for the fries, just for Bdubs to swat his hand away again. “Stop it! Shame I don’t have anything with garlic on it, that’d stop you stealing my food.”

“Garlic won’t kill me,” Etho said, propping his chin on his palm.

“I’m not trying to kill you. I’m trying to inconvenience you.” Bdubs said, popping the last piece of his burger in his mouth. “And you’re technically already dead anyway.”

Etho laughed and leant back in his seat again, “Yeah you’re definitely feeling better.” Despite his teasing, he was glad to see Bdubs back to his usual, easy-to-annoy self.

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Once Bdubs had finished his food they left the burger shop and strolled down the street together. Just chatting idly as they made their way toward Bdubs’ apartment.

Etho’s focus was entirely on Bdubs and not much else. Usually, he’d pay more attention to the world around him, but he wanted to enjoy his friend’s company. And besides, the city was hardly a dangerous place for someone like him. So he could let his guard down and listen to Bdubs rambling about his work for a few minutes.

If he had been paying more attention maybe he would have noticed sooner that they were being watched.

A distant click of metal and twang of a drawstring being released caught Etho’s ear. He looked away from Bdubs just in time to see the glint of something flying towards them at incredible speed.

He threw his arm up in front of Bdubs to stop him in his tracks, and mere milliseconds later the projectile shot in front of them and lodged itself into the brick wall beside them.

They both stood there silently for a moment before Bdubs took a deep breath and seemed to process that something had happened.

“Holy- what in the world was that?!” he almost yelled, running his hands through his dark hair.

Etho hummed and stepped forward to inspect what had been shot at them. Pulling the projectile out of the wall and holding it in his hands as he looked it over.

“What is that?” Bdubs repeated.

“Crossbow bolt,” Etho said easily. And there was no doubt about that. Red fletching plumed at one end, whilst the other shimmered with magic that likely made it do even more damage than it already would have done. “A fancy modern one too. The last time I saw one of these it was made of wood,” he added, passing the bolt to Bdubs and looking across the street, hoping to figure out where it came from.

Bdubs looked at the bolt as it was given to him before shouting “Crossbow- a crossbow bolt? Someone *shot at us?*” Etho didn’t reply, too busy scanning the street in search of something out of place. Someone that shouldn’t be there. “Etho!”

Etho looked down at him, about to tell him to keep quiet so he could listen. But Bdubs looked very confused and slightly panicked, so he tried to soften his tone as much as he could. “Yeah, yes. Someone shot at us. I doubt many people carry crossbows these days, which is interesting. They’re still watching us I’m sure of it.”

“Okay, that’s just *great* that is,” Bdubs grumbled, his shoulders tense as he looked up and down the street as well.

Etho stepped into the road, ignoring Bdubs trying to tell him to come back. Looking and listening

for any sight or sound that the person with the crossbow was still here.

He was sure that they were though. These kinds of people didn't shoot once and flee. They shot until they hit their target. Etho wasn't going to let that happen though. Not today. Absolutely not.

Another metal click and drawstring twang and a second bolt shot past him, narrowly missing his shoulder and hitting the wall, making Bdubs yelp somewhere behind him.

"I know you're there. You haven't got very good aim." Etho said, almost taunting them. Maybe it would make them show themselves.

"Etho... What's going on?" Bdubs asked from where he was standing on the sidewalk.

"I think we might have a hunter on our hands," Etho answered simply, shifting how he stood a little as the glint of the streetlights on metal caught his eye amongst the shadows across the street. There was an alleyway there, that must be where they were hiding.

"A.. A hunter? What do you mean?"

"You know, like a monster hunter." Etho clarified, keeping his eyes on the alleyway and waiting. "The kind of folks who think people like us are trophy animals they can slaughter."

"Oh..." was all Bdubs said in response to that.

"They're in the alleyway across the street. I guess they saw us and thought they could get a two-for-one. Awful shot though." Etho said, taking a few steps across the road, moving closer to where the hunter was hiding. Maybe he was pushing his luck here, but he trusted that his reflexes were quick enough to avoid being shot if it came to that.

"Etho don't- don't get closer! We should leave." Bdubs called to him, sounding panicked and scared. Etho didn't blame him, and he found himself wondering if Bdubs had even encountered a hunter before. They weren't a common sight these days, especially not in the city, so this might be an entirely new experience for him.

Etho wasn't leaving though. He'd dealt with hunters in the past. Not for many years, but this was far from the first time he'd been targeted by one.

Monster hunters were dangerous people. Usually human, often without magic of their own. But armed with enchanted weapons and a vile hatred for cursed creatures. If they found one, they would not let that target go until they either lost track of them or had them lying dead at their feet.

Etho had seen other vampires killed by them before and had been struck with those magically enhanced weapons more than once. These were not people that could be reasoned with, and they were not to be taken lightly.

In the past, maybe Etho would have run. Would have grabbed Bdubs and gotten out of there as quickly as his feet would carry him.

But not this time, not now. Letting a hunter go would just result in them targeting someone else, Etho had too many friends in this city to put any of them at risk like that.

And besides, he was much faster and much stronger than he had been a hundred years ago. No human stood a chance if they picked a fight with him.

"How about you stop hiding-" Etho started, interrupted by another bolt aimed at him. One quick

step to his right was all it took to avoid it, glancing over his shoulder as it bounced off the wall on the other side of the street.

Bdubs had ducked behind a nearby car, eyes wide and frightened. Etho didn't want him to be scared, he needed to put an end to this quickly.

Finally, there was movement in the alleyway, and a figure stepped out of the shadows. A man, dressed in black, wielding a crossbow, with a knife sheathed on his belt.

"There we go," said Etho, standing straight and crossing his arms over his chest. "It's better when I can see who's trying to shoot me. Your aim isn't very good."

"If you stopped moving I'd hit you." said the hunter, lifting his crossbow slightly as he slotted another bolt into it.

Etho shrugged, "Or, you could learn how to hit a moving target."

"Just stand still and die, filthy vampire." the hunter growled, aiming his weapon and pulling the trigger.

The bolt shot towards Etho, but all it took was one more side-step and it flew past. Followed by a crunch of metal as it lodged itself into one of the cars parked behind him.

Etho tugged his mask down, hissing and baring his fangs. Hoping that would be enough to deter the hunter, but knowing that it probably wouldn't be.

"Etho, stop taunting the guy and get away from him!!" Bdubs yelled from his hiding place, and Etho looked over his shoulder to see him there, crouched behind a car, watching with an odd mix of worry and panic in his eyes.

The man must have thought that he could catch Etho off guard. That he could hit his target if he shot whilst Etho wasn't watching.

Big mistake.

The click of the bolt being loaded into the crossbow caught Etho's attention. One swift movement pointed the weapon at his chest.

The trigger was pulled, and the bolt fired. Etho's quick reflexes let him avoid the shot, but this time he didn't stop there.

Less than a second after the bolt had passed him, Etho leapt forward, fangs bared as he jumped at the hunter.

One hand grabbed the weapon, pulling it from the man's grip and throwing it aside, wanting it out of reach where it wasn't a threat.

His other hand grabbed the front of the man's jacket and dragged him back across the road and back into the alleyway.

The hunter couldn't fight back, Etho's strength far out-matched his, and he was thrown to the ground and pinned with ease. He had no time to try and struggle free before Etho leaned forward and sank his fangs into his neck.

The man yelled and kicked against Etho's weight, but he held on tight as blood spilt into his

mouth. Hot and thick, warm and sweet and oh so delicious. He wasn't hungry, but that didn't stop him from drinking as much as he could. Not bothering to be careful, not caring if he made a mess. Letting the blood-lust in his head cloud his mind just a little.

Etho had learnt the hard way many years ago that letting a hunter get away with a warning was a bad idea. They'd just come back and hurt someone else. So what was the best way of dealing with them?

Make sure they can't come back. Worked every time.

The hunter's struggle weakened, his breathing quick and ragged and his racing heartbeat loud in Etho's ears.

Etho released his fangs and pulled back a little, watching his prey closely for a few seconds as he licked the blood from his lips.

"Murderous bastard.." the man gasped, clearly trying to find the strength to push Etho off of him with no luck.

Etho didn't speak, the only sound he made was a rumbling growl before grabbing the man's throat between his teeth. Fangs sinking through the skin to puncture his jugular.

Blood filled his mouth again and he tightened his hold. Feeling the man choke and use his last ounce of strength to try and fight back.

A small sound escaped the hunter's lips, one that Etho knew meant his death was near. It was almost enough to make him hesitate.

Almost.

Instead, Etho held on tight, sinking his teeth in as deep as he could before pulling back, tearing flesh and muscle in one swift movement and ripping the hunter's throat out.

There was a noise, a gurgle, from the man. But it lasted barely a second, his body falling limp beneath Etho.

Etho spat the blood and gore from his mouth, wiping his face with his sleeve. Only now realizing the state he was in and the mess he'd made.

Blood clung to his fangs and dripped down his chin. His hands and sleeves were covered, as was the front of his coat. The white fur that lined his hood stained red. Blood pooled underneath the dead man and was soaking into his pants too.

The scent of blood and death was heavy in the air, and for a long moment Etho just stared at the body he was kneeling over. Distantly thinking that he must look exactly how humans pictured vampires right now. A blood-soaked monster.

Best not to dwell on it. He'd learnt that long ago. He didn't care what humans thought of him. And that man would have killed him first if given the chance anyway.

He should find Bdubs. Make sure he was okay. That was more important.

Etho wiped at his face again as he stood. He wasn't sure if he was making himself look any tidier or just making the mess worse, but it was worth a shot.

He spared the body at his feet one last glance before making his way out of the alley, hoping that Bdubs was still nearby. He needed to make sure he was okay.

He found him standing near the road, and the moment Bdubs saw him his eyes went wide. His mouth moved as if he was trying to speak, though no words came out.

Etho glanced to the side and saw the crossbow still laying on the ground where he'd thrown it. He stepped over to it and picked it up, leaving bloody fingerprints on it. He'd take it with him and get rid of it. He wasn't sure how yet, but he'd think of something.

Bdubs looked very on edge as Etho walked towards him, almost like he might bolt at a moment's notice.

"Well, he won't bother anyone anymore," Etho said, a little more casually than maybe he should have.

"Yeah- yeah no that'll definitely- that'll stop someone causing more problems.." Bdubs stuttered, nervous hands fiddling with the sleeves of his hoodie.

"Are you okay?" Etho stepped closer to Bdubs as he spoke, but froze when he flinched away from him. "I'm not gonna hurt you dude..."

"I-I know. Sorry. I know but-" Bdubs paused, swallowing hard and struggling to meet Etho's gaze. "I did not sign up for witnessing a *murder* tonight, Etho. Okay? You didn't need to... I don't think you needed to do that."

"He would have killed us if given the chance." Etho shrugged. He hadn't wanted to scare Bdubs, not like this. But he'd only done what he'd felt was the best option in that situation. "Hunters don't stop if you scare them away. He would have come back for us, or our friends. The best way to deal with them is to get rid of them." he added, not sure if his explanation would be enough to calm Bdubs down.

"Sure, sure, sure. Yeah. Okay. Murder is the best option. Sure..." he was almost rambling, words coming quickly and slightly panicked.

"Please don't call it that-"

"Then what else am I supposed to call it Etho?!" Bdubs yelled, and Etho found himself flinching back now. "You- you killed someone. Regardless of- of who, or what they were you still- that's still *murder* .." There was a pause as Bdubs crossed his arms over his chest, looking down at his feet. "I didn't think you were..."

"Like that." Etho finished for him, ignoring how it made his chest hurt. "A violent vampire. Yeah. Right.."

"No! No I- I'm sorry I.." Bdubs stopped and sighed, scrubbing at his face with his hands. "I'm just in shock I think... I've never seen you act like that... So- aggressive but in complete control." he paused, taking a deep breath. "It was terrifying."

"I... Yeah, I know, I'm sorry." Etho said, chewing at his lip a little. He hated this, he really hated it. "I didn't mean to scare you, I'm sorry.."

Bdubs hummed, glancing behind Etho before looking at him again. Something vaguely resembling a smile crossed his lips as he spoke, "At least you probably got a meal out of that... I kinda feel like I'm about to lose mine... And I'm not normally squeamish!" he raised his voice a little as he



finished, pressing a hand against his stomach.

“I’m sorry…” That was all Etho could think to say. Not knowing if it meant anything right now.

Quiet hung over them for a while. It was probably no more than thirty seconds, but the lingering stress and fear made it feel like so much longer.

“I um. I’m gonna go home.” Bdubs broke the silence, nodding to himself a little.

“Okay, I can-” Etho started, stepping closer to Bdubs, but stopping when he held up his hand and took a step back.

“No- no. I can make it back on my own. You absolutely stink of blood for one but- I’ll be fine. It’s not far. I’ll be fine.” Bdubs said, forcing a smile as he tucked both hands into his pockets. “You go and clean up or- whatever. I’ll be okay.”

Etho decided not to try and fight it. “Okay. I’ll go home too then.” he said, managing a small smile, though it probably looked as forced as Bdubs’ did.

The last few words between them were goodbyes, and then Bdubs turned and started down the street the way they had been walking before the hunter had shown up.

Etho picked up the stray crossbow bolts as he watched Bdubs walk away. Waiting until he turned the corner at the bottom of the street before pulling his mask back up and following after him. Climbing up a lamppost and onto a rooftop so he’d be out of sight. He knew Bdubs would be fine. But, it couldn’t hurt just to make sure he got home safely. Right? He was a bit shaken after all.

And, worst case scenario, there could be other hunters around just waiting to pounce.

Once Bdubs had disappeared into his apartment building, home and safe, Etho headed off in a different direction. But not towards his own home. No. There was someone he wanted to talk to first, and it might be easier to do in person than over the phone.

## Chapter End Notes

Any guesses to who he's going to see?

I'll give you a clue. It's someone we haven't technically met yet. At least not in person.

These poor boys though, writing them arguing was painful ow. They'll be okay!

There's just a lot of emotions happening right now. Everything's fine, everything's fine...

This fic has been really fun to write so far, I've had this idea for a little while and thought it could be interesting to put into a fic. I've got chapter two maybe half down? Took a break to finish off this first part for posting, will get to work on the second soon though, want to write more and don't want to keep peeps waiting!

[Before I go, here's a little linky to this AUs Tumblr tag again!](#) I kinda want to draw something for this fic when I have time so keep an eye out for that ~ There's also worldbuilding, other art, character info, all sorts in there! And I love to answer questions too, so head on over and say hi!

I also just want to say a big thank you to everyone who reads these fics, who leaves comments and kudos, it means so much and I love all of you! :D

# People to See

## Chapter Summary

In which Etho has people to talk to after a particularly rough night, and he hopes that he can fix the unease between himself and Bdubs in the process.

## Chapter Notes

Here we are, chapter two! Took a little longer than I'd of liked but got there eventually, and now here we are! This chapter ended up slightly longer than the first one, but not by a lot. I'm always worried with more dialouge heavy stories that it'll be boring, but I like how this came together, and I hope you'll like it too!

The first chapter didn't quite warrant the 'read as romantic if you like' note, this one-yeah. This one does. So go ahead with that if you like!

As always, big thank you to my friend CJ for being awesome and building this AU with me, and to Cazuchan for doing the beta-reading!

And that's all I have, to chapter two we go!

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

A quick pace down quiet streets took Etho across town completely unnoticed, and soon he was knocking on an old friend's door. Well, an old friend and their roommate.

It was the roommate who answered, Etho knew him too, though had only met him properly quite recently.

“Holy- Etho, my dude, you are covered in blood, man. What happened?” Ren said, bringing his hand up to his nose and leaning back a little before Etho had a chance to say hello.

“Yeah. Sorry. There was an- incident.” Etho shrugged, glancing down at the crossbow still in his hand. “Doc’s home right?”

“Yeah, he's here.” Ren nodded, stepping away from the door and gesturing for Etho to come into the apartment. “Do I want to know why you have a crossbow? Is it related to why you look, and quite frankly, smell like you came out of some slasher movie?”

Etho stepped inside and Ren closed the door behind him, “That's what I came here to talk to Doc about.” he paused for a moment, thinking. He heard noise from elsewhere in the apartment and assumed it was Doc moving around. “You hearing this might be good too though. The wolves should probably know as well.”

If Ren had wolf ears, Etho was sure they'd have perked up at that. Focused and curious but also just a tiny bit concerned. “Did something bad happen? Should I be worried?” he asked. Etho had heard

from Bdubs that Ren was often protective of the other wolves in the city. He was the pack leader though, so this was to be expected. Something like this catching his attention was understandable as a result.

“Maybe? Hopefully it’s fine now. I’ll explain in a minute.” Etho said, and Ren nodded in response, though he did look slightly wary now.

A door further down the hallway opened and Doc stepped out, smiling when he looked over and saw Etho, though that smile slipped into confusion a moment later, presumably noticing the state Etho was in.

Doc was a large, strong man with a prosthetic arm and a patch over his left eye. Old scars streaked across his face, he could easily be intimidating at first glance.

However, Etho had known him long enough to know that he was actually very kind. He was a doctor after all. A brilliant one at that, who not only helped vampires but more or less any magical creature in the city. Whether or not his medical license was still valid centuries after he first got it though was a subject of debate.

Right now, he was a good person to talk to about what had happened and he might be able to help out. Or if nothing else, he could talk to Xisuma so that Etho didn’t have to.

Not that Etho disliked Xisuma, they got along well enough. He’d just like to avoid being scolded for intentionally killing a human.

“Hi Etho. You are covered in blood dude what happened?” Doc asked as he walked over.

“I know, I’m going to go home and wash up soon. It’s not my blood though if that changes anything.” Etho replied, though he knew that Doc could probably already tell that it was human blood and not his own. A vampire's senses were sharp enough to notice that with ease.

“I’m not sure if it does but whatever man, what happened?”

Etho held up the crossbow in response, the bolts that had been shot at him and Bdubs in his hand too. “I had an encounter.”

Doc raised a brow at him, the expression slightly obscured by the patch covering his left eye, “An encounter?” he took the crossbow from Etho and looked it over, “Where did you get this thing?”

“A hunter. In the city.” Etho replied simply.

Doc’s gaze snapped up to him, his one red eye widening a little, “What?”

“A hunter.” Etho repeated, “Monster hunter. Vampire hunter. Whatever they call themselves these days.”

“I’ve never seen a hunter in this city,” Ren stated, sounding frightened as he eyed the weapon in Doc’s hand. “Well, I guess there’s Iskall but he’s not a hunter, he’s our friend.”

“Iskall isn't dangerous, but the guy who shot at me was. Been a while since I’ve dealt with something like that.” Etho said.

“It’s the twenty-first century, hunters are a bit of a dying breed. I haven’t seen any in a long time either.” Doc hummed, looking at the crossbow again, examining it. “This is very modern and new too. Never seen one like this before.”

“So they’ve got shiny new high-tech weapons that’s comforting...” Ren muttered, running his hands through his hair. “What do we do about this?”

“We make sure people know about it,” Doc said, holding the crossbow at his side. “Where’s the hunter now?”

“Dead in an alleyway,” Etho said, a little more bluntly than he’d planned. “So not really a threat anymore.”

Silence fell over the room, neither Doc nor Ren seeming to know what to say.

“Well,” said Doc. “That explains the blood.”

“You killed them?” Ren asked.

“The only good hunter is a dead hunter. That way they can’t come back. I learned that a long time ago.” Etho crossed his arms over his chest, trying not to get agitated. He wanted to avoid getting yelled at for killing someone. Again... “He would have killed me if he had the chance. Bdubs too. And I wasn’t going to let that happen.”

Doc was about to speak, but Ren beat him to it, “Bdubs was with you? Is he okay?”

Etho nodded and sighed softly, trying to calm himself down before he did get angry. “He’s fine. A bit shaken. And... Probably not all that fond of me right now but... He’s alright. He’s at home.”

“Oh thank goodness.” Ren sighed in relief, “I’ll call him in the morning, check on him.”

“Thank you.”

“And I guess you want me to talk to the Court?” Doc asked.

“It would be easier if you did. They need to know.” Etho nodded, “And, Xisuma’s great, but, he forgets I’m not one of his anymore, and I’d like to avoid getting scolded. Bdubs already yelled at me, that’s enough for one night...” he added with a shrug. He knew Bdubs had been frightened by what he’d seen, and Etho didn’t blame him for that. But being shouted at still wasn’t nice.

Doc hummed, “Xisuma would scold you for walking in there covered in human blood too. Drives the fledglings nuts.”

“Exactly.”

“Alright. I’ll go see him later.” Doc agreed. “You,” he pointed at Etho’s chest, “go home, wash up. And rest.”

“I’m not hurt.”

“I don’t care. You’re stressed, go look after yourself.”

“Fine.” Etho sighed. “Thank you.”

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Etho left the crossbow with Doc and Ren and made his way home. Moving fast and staying off busy streets got him there pretty quickly, and soon he was in his bathroom scrubbing dried blood off his skin and from under his nails.

It was in his hair too and had soaked into pretty much every piece of clothing he was wearing.

Maybe a shower would be better than just standing in front of the sink. At first, he couldn't be bothered with it, but eventually, he decided that it would probably do him some good.

So he showered, changed, tossed his dirty clothes by the washing machine to clean later, and then let himself drop onto the couch. Staring up at the ceiling.

All he'd wanted was to hang out with his friend, that's the only thing he'd wanted to do tonight.

Of course, something had to ruin it. Typical...

It was barely midnight, if he slept now he'd wake up in the middle of the day and that would be far from ideal. So instead he tried to occupy himself. Find distractions from everything going on in his head with TV and video games. And it worked, for the most part. Forgetting the look of pure panic and fear on Bdubs' face, was not an easy task though.

Etho sent a couple of texts to him, just apologizing again and hoping that he was okay. He knew Bdubs probably wouldn't see them until the morning, but it wouldn't hurt to leave them there. And hey, maybe he'd find a reply waiting for him when he woke up tomorrow evening.

Eventually morning started to arrive, and Etho moved from the living room to his bedroom. Hoping that tomorrow night would go a little smoother as he got ready for bed.

There was so much going on in his head that he wasn't sure how well he'd sleep, but he supposed he'd find out. He was tired and he needed the rest. He just wanted to put what had happened tonight behind him.

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<Etho> [23:43] Heey, I'm really sorry about what happened tonight, didn't mean to frighten you like that.

<Etho> [23:45] I hope you're okay Bubs, I'm sorry

<BdoubleO100> [6:34] I'm fine, and I'm sorry too

<BdoubleO100> [6:35] for yellin I mean, was freaked out but still shouldn't have done that

<BdoubleO100> [6:53] hoping you're alright too dude

<Etho> [19:07] yeah I'm okay, just worried about you really haha

<Etho> [19:17] can we meet up? And talk? If you're not busy?

<BdoubleO100> [19:40] sure, I'm at my place you can come over

<Etho> [19:41] thank you, be right there

Etho wasn't sure he'd ever pulled his shoes on and ran out the door so fast in his life. And with how long he'd lived, that was saying something.

He didn't want to waste time, he wanted to see Bdubs. It was nearly eight o'clock and Bdubs usually went to bed around ten so that gave them a couple of hours. They could talk, and if there was anything that needed to be figured out after yesterday then they could figure it out.

It'd be fine. Everything would be fine.

Etho ran through the streets as fast as he could, wanting to get there as quickly as possible.

If he'd walked, it would have taken maybe twenty minutes. But at full sprint, he made the trip in just over five.

He buzzed the intercom and Bdubs let him in, and an elevator ride later Etho was knocking on his door.

Bdubs greeted him with a smile that didn't quite reach his eyes. He looked tired and slightly uneasy, but that wasn't entirely unexpected. Etho hadn't slept well and he was tired too, as well as just generally a bit nervous about what might happen.

He followed Bdubs into the kitchen, keeping space between them despite how much he wanted to hug him. It probably wouldn't be a good idea to do that right now. Not when he didn't know where they stood with each other.

"Coffee?" Bdubs asked, breaking the silence that hung over them.

"Oh, yes please," Etho replied, hoping that having something to hold and put some of his focus on might help settle his nerves a little here.

He didn't like being nervous, especially not over something like this. It was uncomfortable and that was the last thing he wanted when he was with his friend.

Bdubs took a mug from the cupboard and put water in the kettle, setting it to boil before turning and pushing himself up to perch on the counter. Etho stood across from him, leaning back against the wall with his hands in his pockets. The small kitchen left only a few feet between them. He wanted to speak, part of the reason he'd come here was to talk, but he couldn't figure out what to say.

Once again, it was Bdubs who spoke first. "So. Are you doing okay? You didn't get hurt or anything last night, right?" he asked, not quite meeting Etho's eyes.

"I'm okay. Needed a shower when I got home, but um. He didn't hurt me, no." Etho said, smiling a little under his mask. The hunter had tried to hurt him but hadn't been successful. Not even close. "What about you? You were really freaked out and I- I hate that I scared you like that.."

Bdubs sighed before he replied, looking down at his mismatched socks rather than at Etho. "It's not something I ever expected to see, Etho," he said simply. "You just- there was no hesitation. At least not from where I was standing. You just attacked. Like it was nothing. Like it was easy..."

Etho took a few seconds to figure out how he wanted to reply to that. "Humans aren't exactly hard to kill." And that was probably the worst thing he could have said, the hint of a grimace on Bdubs' face proved that near instantly and Etho mentally scolded himself for it.

"Love the vampire in my kitchen saying stuff like that.." Bdubs muttered, and Etho bit his lip to stop himself from saying anything else stupid.

"I didn't want to do it." he said, a little firmer than he'd planned to, "I didn't want to kill the guy but I knew that if I didn't he would kill me. Or you. Or both. Or go after our friends. And I couldn't- I couldn't let that happen." he paused, looking down at his feet, trying so hard to keep himself calm. "I couldn't let him hurt you. I just wanted to keep you safe..."

Bdubs didn't respond straight away, staying quiet and still not looking directly at Etho. "I.. I know that.." he sighed, "I do. And I appreciate it but... I don't know dude. Knowing how strong you are is one thing, seeing it on display like that was terrifying. It looked way- way too easy for you to kill someone."

Etho could understand how seeing a vampire's power could be frightening. Even to him, seeing a powerful vampire put their strength on display was quite something. Maybe not terrifying, but it was quite a sight.

He could see why it would scare someone. Especially someone not used to seeing that sort of behaviour. Etho knew he was strong. Stronger than any human. But that didn't make killing people easy. Well- physically he supposed it did. But there was more to it than that.

“Just ‘cos it looks easy, doesn't mean it is. If there had been another way I would have taken it, but there wasn't.” Etho didn't know how else he could explain things, he couldn't put it any simpler than that. Though maybe it wasn't the complexity of the thing that was causing issues here.

“Right..”

Etho racked his brain for a way to fix this, he didn't want to argue, it felt like Bdubs' trust in him was slipping through his fingers and he hated it. “I don't- I don't kill people on the regular, Bdubs,” he said, wanting to clarify that, just in case there were any doubts. “I know vampires are just... Blood-soaked beasts or whatever but...” he paused and shrugged, he didn't know where he was going with this. “I won't lie to you. People have died to my fangs before and you can call me a murderer if you want but it's rarely intentional. It doesn't feel good to do that...” Etho looked down at the floor, he didn't know what else to say.

There was another long beat of silence and Etho didn't dare look up, he could feel Bdubs' eyes on him and he wasn't sure he wanted to see the look on his face right now.

“You're not a beast, Etho.” Bdubs said softly, “You were pretty damn blood-soaked last night,” he let out a slightly forced laugh to that, “but you're a good guy.”

If Etho's heart could flutter, he thought it would have. Just that little compliment, was all it would take.

“You're annoying as hell sometimes.” Bdubs frowned, though there was no malice in it, and despite himself, Etho chuckled. “But I do like being friends with you.” he smiled, glancing away and ruffling his hair before continuing, “I said some stupid stuff last night, I was freaked out and panicked and not thinking properly.”

“It's okay,” Etho replied, but Bdubs shook his head.

“No, it's not. I yelled at you and that wasn't helping anyone, I shouldn't have done that, and I'm sorry.” Bdubs said, holding Etho's gaze with a soft, sincere expression.

Etho smiled, he didn't think he'd needed an apology, he didn't blame Bdubs for being upset and frightened, even if it had hurt a little for him to yell the way he had. Still, he appreciated it all the same. “It's alright. But, thank you.”

The kettle whistled and clicked as the water finished boiling, and Bdubs hopped off the counter to make coffee. “You know, there was a story on the news earlier,” he said, changing the subject as he filled the mug with water.

“Yeah?” Etho said, pretty sure he knew where this was going.

“Yeah. Some poor dog walker found a body in an alleyway this morning. A couple of streets from here.”

“Oh damn.” Etho couldn't stop the smile that spread across his face, he'd known someone would



probably find the hunter's body, but Bdubs talking about it so casually was almost funny for some reason.

“Must have been quite a shock. The body had its neck ripped open apparently. Bite marks. Police think it was an animal attack.” Bdubs continued as he took the milk out of the fridge.

“Not a lot of coyotes in this country. Or wolves, or bears”.

“Nope. So I wonder what could have done it.” Bdubs mused, pouring milk into the coffee and stirring it. The uneasy look in his eyes had faded and now he was smiling.

Etho chuckled, “A mystery.”

“Big mystery!” Bdubs grinned, adding sugar and stirring before carefully passing the mug to Etho. “Here.”

“Thanks.” Etho smiled, the heat feeling nice in his hands as he took the drink. He pulled his mask down to blow against the steaming liquid before taking a sip. It was still a little too hot, but it tasted perfect and the warmth was comforting. Exactly how he liked his coffee.

“In all seriousness though they can’t trace that back to you right?” Bdubs asked as Etho followed him into the living room. That was a reasonable thing to be concerned about. “I did ask Ren when he called me earlier and he said it would probably be fine, but still.”

“I doubt it. There were no cameras on that street, and legally I don’t exist so I think they’d have a hard time finding me even if there was evidence.” Etho shrugged. Sometimes vampires left dead bodies around, but he’d never heard of anyone being tracked down by police. He was glad to hear that Ren had called Bdubs like he said he would though.

“What do you mean you legally don’t exist?” Bdubs squinted at him, confused.

“I died two hundred years ago in Canada, Bdubs.” Etho smiled, “Legally, I’m long dead.”

Bdubs stared at him for a few seconds before nodding. “Yeah alright, makes sense.”

Etho chuckled and they sat down on the couch together, just talking idly for a while about different things whilst Etho drank his coffee. Bdubs remembering how he liked it felt nicer than he’d thought it would.

Just talking was nice too. A welcome distraction from what had happened last night, and the unease that had lingered between them had faded away. Things seemed normal again. Comfortable. And Etho liked it, he really did.

Bdubs got up to take Etho’s empty mug into the kitchen and returned by dropping down next to him and pulling him into a hug.

Etho froze for a moment, staring forward as he processed what was happening before he smiled and returned it, resting his head on top of Bdubs’. “What’s this for then?” he asked.

“This is me saying thank you.” Bdubs said, his voice slightly muffled against Etho’s hoodie.

“Why?”

“Because I realized I hadn’t said it yet.” Bdubs pulled back and looked up at him, “And you did probably save my life yesterday. So. Yeah.” he shrugged, “Thank you.”

Etho chuckled softly at that, “You’re welcome Bubs. I’m just glad we’re both okay though.”

“Oh me too. That guy would have killed us, and you stopped him. So uh, even if it was, you know, violent. Thank you.” Bdubs smiled.

Etho replied by pulling Bdubs close again, holding him tight and smiling as he felt Bdubs squeeze him back. A warm, comfortable embrace that felt so right, so safe.

“Wait,” Bdubs said after about a minute, pulling back again to look up at Etho, “Does this mean I can say I have a friend who will *literally* kill for me?”

“Don’t get used to it, I’m not making a habit out of it.”

“I damn well hope not!” Bdubs practically yelled.

“I think I’d get in trouble if I did anyway.” Etho shrugged.

“Yeah probably. Still kinda cool though.”

“An hour ago you were saying it was all awful.” Etho pointed out, his smile shifting into something slightly cheeky, he had no idea where this conversation was going but how casual it was made him happy.

“It *was* awful *never* do that again with me around *geez*.”

“Then what’s so cool about it?”

Bdubs’ gaze dropped away from Etho for a few seconds, like he was figuring out what to say. “Having a friend who will protect me without a second thought,” he said, his voice remarkably gentle. “That’s what’s pretty cool about it.”

Etho’s smile softened, but a moment later the cheek came back, “Well I wasn’t just going to let you get shot now was I.”

Bdubs cuffed him round the side of the head, “Oi!! I’m trying to be sincere here!”

Etho laughed and pulled Bdubs close again, just holding him felt so good right now, and as he felt Bdubs relax in his arms, head resting on his chest. He knew that they were going to be okay. Maybe things would be slightly odd whilst what happened yesterday was still fresh, but they’d survive. And Etho was immensely grateful for that.

They stayed as they were for a while, just quietly holding each other, enjoying the warmth and safety it brought. Last night was stressful and scary, so the calm and quiet company of this moment was *perfect*.

## Chapter End Notes

Everything is okay, they're hugging, they're happy, it's all good!  
I love them so much, such good boys. Love writing the soft moments.

I want to say a well done to everyone who guessed that Etho would be going to see Doc. You were correct! I haven't really written him before though so I apologise if he

seems a bit off, but I did my best!

Regardless, I hope you enjoyed this chapter! The aftermath scenes are oddly nice to write, even if there is more dialouge and less action. I guess it's 'cos I can write Etho and Bdubs being sweet. I don't know. I hope this lived up to your expectations, I had fun writing it!

What's next for this series? Well, the next fic I have planned is actually one I've been looking forward to for a while, and I finally think it's due for being written. What's gonna happen in it, you ask? Oh, well that's a surprise!

In the mean time though, thank you to everyone for reading and leaving kudos and comments! It all means so much to me to know people are enjoying my silly little stories that originated from some random ideas in a Discord chat with my friend. I never expected so many people to like these fics. But yeah, I love you guys, and hopefully I'll see you soon with more stories! <3

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