

coffee's for closers

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coffee's for closers

by [Corvid404](#)

Summary

“Sorry,” Bdubs wheezed, dragging an extra chair over to the table. “My wallet wasn’t in the coat I thought it was in.”

She rolled her eyes, locking her gaze on Etho as he hovered behind the other chair at the table. “*Mhm*,” she hummed, “Sorry Etho made you go through all that, Bdubs. Y’know, a *real* friend would’ve—”

Etho groaned. “You know *exactly* why I’m not paying for you, you *jerk*.”

She cackled, shrugging her coat off and draping it over the chair as she stood up. “I think this conversation would be punctuated *greatly* by some lattes, gentlemen.”

Etho, Cleo, and Bdubs get together for some coffee and an adventure.

Notes

hi hi hi! i'd like to preface this by saying there is very brief discussion of (theoretically) making love to a pinball machine. you can probably guess who they're talking about.

also, this fic directly follows [the one before it in the series](#), and reading it will help a lot with some of the context, but isnt necessary to get enjoyment out of this one i dont think :)

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

Etho

*me and bdubs are going to be late
he can't find his wallet*

Cleo

*are you kidding me
why can't you just pay for us?*

Etho

why can't you?

Cleo

*touche
well i'm already here*

Cleo stuffed her phone in her pocket and sat down at the first empty table she saw—the booths towards the back of the cafe were occupied by a small group of folks who, she assumed, were also on a weekly outing. None of them had really *meant* for this to become a regular thing, it was just that none of them had classes Friday evenings and she found Etho and Bdubs to be entertaining company.

She ended up sitting at a little round table pressed against the window, the chair just a tad too small for her liking, for the better part of thirty minutes, glancing back every time the doors opened. At last, the dynamic dumbasses themselves walked in. Maybe *dumbasses* was a bit cruel of a title for them—she'd workshop that one.

“Sorry,” Bdubs wheezed, dragging an extra chair over to the table. “My wallet wasn’t in the coat I thought it was in.”

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The three made their way to the register and placed their order. Cleo ordered a decaf hot mocha, Bdubs ordered a hot matcha with vanilla, and Etho ordered:

“Large hot latte with five shots of espresso, please.” He paused, before adding, “Actually, make it six.”

The barista taking their order must’ve been new, if the look of shock in their eyes was any giveaway. Bdubs paid, although Cleo didn’t miss the dirty side-eye he shot Etho for his excessively expensive drink.

The barista weakly thanked them and told them it’d be a few minutes.

Bdubs huffed as they walked back to their table. “Y’know, it wouldn’t kill ya to drink less

caffeine.”

Etho chuckled as he sat down. “No, but then I’d be tired later.”

“Since *when* are you ever tired?!”

Cleo hummed as she took her own seat. “I used to wonder how the hell you stayed up until the crack of dawn, but your coffee order says a *lot* about you.”

Etho shrugged. “Oh, I don’t need that to stay up. Espresso just helps me focus.”

“Mhm, sure it does.”

He narrowed his eyes at her, though the trail of thought was cut off as their drinks were announced and he stood up to get them. Etho lingered over at the hand off for a minute or so, clearly waiting for his own drink to be done.

“So, Cleo,” Bdubs started, “How’re things with Joe?”

She sighed. “Oh, everything’s fine. They still refuse to get rid of that bloody pinball machine, tinkering with it at all hours of day and night.”

Etho returned to the table and set their drinks down. She greedily wrapped her hands around her cup, savoring the warmth as it seeped into her fingers.

“I don’t get why they can’t keep it elsewhere, it takes up *so much space* in our dorm.”

“Oh, right, you guys live on campus,” Etho mumbled, “I forget that a lot.”

She rolled her eyes. “I’ve stubbed my toe on it and bumped into that thing more often than I care to admit. I’m amazed the RA hasn’t said anything about it yet.” She took a sip of her drink—damn it, she meant to ask for no whipped cream. Oh well.

“What’re they even doing with it?” Bdubs asked. “Aren’t they an English lit major?”

“Yep. I haven’t got a *clue* what they’re doing with it.”

Etho snickered, clearly keeping something to himself. Once he had both of their eyes on him, though, he piped up. “I think they’re gonna try and recreate *Back to the Future*, but instead of a Dolorian they’re gonna use that pinball machine.”

Cleo grinned. “Or stick their dick in it.”

Bdubs sputtered, whipping his head to look at her, while Etho nearly spat out his drink laughing.

“You should *see* how they look at that thing, seriously!” she continued, cackling. “You’d think they want to marry it, or something.”

“Okay, so theoretically, then,” Etho started, “Would they use the coin slot? Or is there somewhere in the back?”

“Well, I can’t imagine fucking the coin slot would be comfortable—”

Cleo and Etho spent a solid few minutes discussing how exactly Joe might go about making love to their pinball machine while Bdubs sat beside them silently, sipping at his matcha. Ultimately, they came to the conclusion that there’d need to be some rearranging of wires and that it *definitely*

needed to be unplugged. Clean-up was a different story.

“So,” Bdubs interrupted, “I finally got a vinyl player for my room, but I’ve got no vinyls to play yet.”

Cleo rolled her eyes. “There’s more graceful ways to change the subject,” she muttered, but Bdubs kept talking like this was a perfectly natural progression of the conversation.

“Do you guys have any suggestions?”

Etho lit up. “You should get Sleater-Kinney’s *Dig Me Out*, if you can find it. I don’t know if they still do pressings of that, though, it is something like twenty five years old.”

“Or, hear me out,” Cleo started, “We all hit up the record store down the street. I’ve been meaning to add to my own record collection recently, anyway.”

Bdubs sighed. “I don’t want just any ol’ record, though. I want one that’s *cool*.”

She shrugged. “If you like the album, then it’ll be cool. You don’t get a record player to *impress people*, Bdubs, you get one because you want to play records.”

As the conversation continued on, Cleo couldn’t help but think that she could sit here and talk with these two forever. If reality was shrunk down to just their cramped table in this little coffee shop, she’d be fine with that. Her mocha was a little less hot now, edging more towards warm, but the taste of coffee and chocolate was still rich and sweet. Bdubs had taken maybe two or three sips of his matcha, his drink forgotten as he got caught up in the fervor of defending himself to Etho. Etho’s drink was somehow already gone—how was he *not* about to shit his pants?

Cleo tuned back into the conversation as Etho leaned his head into his hand. “I’m just *saying*, you get a lot more out of older albums, and some new albums too, by listening to them on vinyl or CD, because that was their *intended* listening method.”

Bdubs huffed. “Yeah, but that shit’s inconvenient! You think I’m gonna lug around a whole CD player just to get on the train? No, dude, I’m gonna use Spotify.”

“But then you’re losing the effects of the song buffers and transitions, the *flow* of the album gets all messed up—”

“I think there’s a time and place for both,” Cleo added, doing her best to dodge Etho’s glare. “If you just want to listen to the songs, then streaming them is fine, but if you want to *experience them*? That’s where CDs and records really shine, these days.”

Etho grumbled in defeat, and Bdubs met her gaze with a beaming grin.

“With that settled, did we actually want to check out the record store?” she asked, taking the last sips of her drink. “I want to see if they carry the new Arctic Monkeys album.”

The other two agreed, and they all slipped on their coats and headed out. The sky was painted in soft oranges and pinks as the sun set, and the chilly wind bit at her face. She tossed her empty cup in the nearest garbage can as the trio set on their way, led by none other than “best at directions” Bdubs.

Three wrong turns later, she groaned. “Do you actually know where we’re going?”

“Why, of course!” Bdubs declared, confidently taking them down another random street she had

never walked down before.

Etho sighed. “I think we’re lost.”

“No, no we’re not!” Bdubs insisted. “When have I *ever* lead you guys astray?”

Cleo snorted. “Every time we walk somewhere together?”

She tilted her head up, sharing a concerned expression with Etho. He quickly fished out his phone and pulled up Google, taking point for the remainder of their walk. The sky was a dark gray by the time they finally arrived at the record store.

“So, Bdubs, who’s your favorite artist?” she asked, approaching one of the rows of vinyls.

He paused, gave her an awkward glance, and cleared his throat. “Okay, so, the thing is…”

Etho sighed. “You don’t have one, do you?”

Bdubs sputtered. “No! No, I do! I just, um, I have so many it’s hard to choose just one!”

Cleo snorted. “Bdubs, *everyone* has a favorite artist. If you listen to enough music, you’re bound to prefer one over another.”

Bdubs shuffled towards the rows of vinyls and started awkwardly flipping through them. Etho walked towards the ‘P’ section and wasted no time flipping through—she was pretty sure she knew Etho’s end goal, but Bdubs was still staring at all the rows, looking lost. She walked over and bumped herself right between the two of them, hovering over Bdubs’ shoulder.

“If you want a recommendation, I think you should see if they carry anything by Sleeping At Last. They’ve got some really pretty, atmospheric stuff.”

Bdubs huffed, frowning at her. “I don’t need any stinkin’ recommendations, I know what I like.”

“Oh, sure you do,” she replied, “That’s why you were asking for recommendations earlier?”

Before Bdubs could reply, Etho pulled out an album that was mostly white with an orange butterfly centered on it and pressed that into Bdubs’ hands. “*Brand New Eyes*. It might be my favorite Paramore album.”

Cleo scoffed. “Etho, *every* Paramore album is your favorite.”

“Not true!” he snapped back, “I’m not huge on all the poppier sounds in *After Laughter*. The songwriting is still good, I just don’t like the sound profile they went with.”

Bdubs examined the cover while Etho pulled another album out, this one looking more like someone had gotten bored at school and scribbled *Riot!* as many times as it’d fit on the page—Cleo was pretty sure she knew what album that was. Bdubs hummed as he flipped the record he was holding over, scanning the tracklist on the back.

“Is this the one with that song you played all the time in high school—shit, what was it?”

Etho shook his head. “No, the one I’ve got has that on it. *Born For This*. It’s really fun live, we should all go to a Paramore concert when they come back around this area.”

Bdubs snatched the album Etho was holding, swapping it for the one he’d originally given him. “Swapsies! I want this one.”

Etho blinked a few times, staring down at the butterfly now in his hands. Cleo giggled.

“You guys will have to introduce me to them,” she said, peering down at the album art for *Riot!* more closely. “I’d love to go.”

Etho lit up. “Oh snap, really?”

She nodded. “Yeah, sure, why not? I love a good concert, but I’ve never been to a real rock and roll concert. Paramore’s... rock, or rock-adjacent, right?”

Etho chuckled. “Yeah, sure, rock-adjacent.”

The record store didn’t have the new Arctic Monkeys album, as hard as Cleo looked for it. They had *Favorite Worst Nightmare* though, and she could settle for that. The three of them checked out separately, and by the time they stepped out of the store, night had fully taken hold of the city.

They all walked together as long as they could—Etho and Bdubs didn’t live too far from campus, so for the most part their treks home were identical. Of course, there came the final crosswalk where Cleo had to go left, and her friends had to go right.

“Guess we’ve gotta split now,” Etho said, stuffing his hands into his coat pockets, the handle of the bag swinging loosely around his wrist.

She sighed, and watched her breath turn to fog. “We should do this more often,” she blurted, the honesty surprising even herself. “I mean, just getting coffee is nice, but we should explore some little nooks of the city together.”

The other two glanced at each other, then to her, murmuring in agreement.

“There’s a fun-looking thrift store a few doors down from my job,” Bdubs suggested, “We can go there next time.”

Cleo grinned. “Sounds like a plan, then.”

The crossing light turned from a red hand to a white silhouette, and she made her way across the street, ideas for finding hidden gems in the walls already stewing in her mind—she was sure Joe knew of a few. Bdubs yelled for her to text the group chat when she got home, and she waved back at them.

End Notes

ah yes, clethubs, my favorite (looks at smeared writing on my hands) group of friends who go on platonic weekly coffee dates and have platonic outings. yep. platonic. i genuinely havent decided if i want to make any ships canon yet. if yall have a preference, lmk!! for now, though, assume everyone is just good friends ~~beuz once i make them all date each other its going to turn into one massive abomination of a polyeule~~

anyways, leave a comment if u feel so inclined, and have a good rest of ur day/night <3

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