

i dont work here *dissolves*

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i dont work here *dissolves*

by [Corvid404](#)

Summary

Etho could chalk Cleo coming in as an accident; she hadn't come in purposefully looking for him, and hadn't come back since. The store simply wasn't convenient for other college kids, especially those living on campus. He could also chalk X coming in a few days later up to coincidence. Nothing suspicious, just strange, was all.

What was suspicious was Grian and Mumbo coming in, looking at him, walking around the shelves and then leaving without buying anything or saying anything to him. He didn't know either of them particularly well, but he knew enough about Grian to know that him showing up was incredibly suspicious. Still, it wasn't enough to make him question Cleo's honesty.

Then Jevin showed up, later that same night. That was fine, he guessed, if a little strange. Then Tango, the next night, and mentioned hearing about some bets being lost. He groaned and pulled out his phone to text Cleo as soon as Tango left.

Etho's workplace is gradually discovered by all his friends and acquaintances. He is not happy about it.

Notes

other characters are mentioned, and team canada shows up for a brief conversation, but

they weren't important enough to tag imo. also they/them pronouns are used for joe hills!
there's a few bits of texting, something that may or may not become more important as i
keep writing this au. anyways on to the fic

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

Etho would be lying if he said he liked his job. Okay, not *totally* lying? But mostly lying. It was money, and it was late at night so he didn't have to talk to anyone, and it was far enough away from campus that he didn't see his classmates. Most patrons were drunk and stoned randos stumbling in to buy cigarettes and vape packs and whatever junk food was in stock, and he was happy to hand it to them and then be on with his night.

His supervisor was in the break room doing *something*. He didn't care enough to ask, and she didn't care enough to explain. As long as there weren't any scenes in the store, Etho was left alone.

Tonight was shaping up to be slow; well, *every* night was slow, not many people showed up between the hours of midnight and six a.m., but tonight was extra slow. It was nearly three, and he'd only had to ring up one customer in the last hour, usually there were at least two or three.

He glanced up from his phone when he heard the door jingle, but didn't pay much attention to it—his mom had sent him a video of his dog sitting in the knocked over kitchen trash bin, covered in filth, and that had lead Etho to scrolling back through all his videos and photos of him. He hoped he could go home for winter break, he missed his pup.

The customer who had walked in earlier set down a six pack of some shitty beer or another, all the cans looked the same to him these days, and a bag of chips. Etho rang them up as quickly as he could, not looking up to avoid eye contact. Eye contact might signal he wanted to talk, and he absolutely did *not*. All he saw from glancing at their items was some frizzy red hair.

“Etho?” they suddenly said, and oh *shit*. He knew that voice.

Etho finally glanced up, and—

“Cleo? Wh—What're you—?”

Cleo cackled. “Oh my god, *this* is where you work? Dude, Joe and I thought you were a bodyguard for the strip club!”

His face burned. “Oh my god—”

“But you work *here*? At some shitty little corner store?”

Etho adjusted his mask, pulling it up a little further as if that'd hide the panic in his eyes. “Listen, I just don't like people visiting me at work, okay?”

Cleo was grinning ear to ear. “So you let everyone's imaginations just run wild?”

“Ehhh...” Etho shoved his hands into his pockets. “Well, when you put it that way, um.”

Cleo locked eyes with him, and Etho wanted to be absolutely anywhere else right then. He wasn't scared of a lot of people, but he honestly couldn't explain what it was about Cleo that made him

squirm so much. Her eyes just stared right through him like she was picking him apart, looking for cracks.

“Please don’t tell anyone,” he pleaded, nervously tapping his fingers along the counter. “*Especially* don’t tell Bdubs, he’ll make such a big deal out of it.”

She snickered. “Oh, your secret’s safe with me,” she replied, “But I’m gonna tell Joe. I have a bet with them, I need to get my cash.”

He groaned, dropping his head into his hands. “*Joe?* Oh come *on*, they’re terrible at keeping their mouth shut!”

Cleo shrugged. “I mean, I *could* keep it from them, but what’s in it for me?”

Etho tapped around the menus on his register, before shoving Cleo’s items in a bag and handing her her receipt. “Free stuff?”

Her eyes lit up. “I’ll take that.”

He crossed his arms, meeting her gaze for just long enough to glare. “If you come back here with Joe I *swear*—”

Cleo snickered. “No, I won’t, I promise. G’night, Etho.”

He sighed, watching as she walked away and towards the door. “Goodnight.”

The rest of the night, thankfully, passed without incident, but that didn’t stop Etho’s heart from jumping every time the door opened.

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Etho

cleo. did u tell joe

Cleo

i might’ve. idk me and joe got really drunk i don’t remember what we talked about

Etho

you jerk

i trusted you >:C

Cleo

sorry, i'll make it up to you <3
am i still invited to game night?

Etho

no, i'm revoking your invitation for this
my alone time cleo!
MY ALONE TIME!

Cleo

oh boo hoo, you could really stand to talk to more people anyway

He locked his phone and shoved it in his pocket with a huff. His supervisor was coming out to send him on his break, so for at least thirty minutes he'd be left completely alone. He spent his entire thirty minutes sending various angry reaction images to Cleo, none of which she did more than read. The jerk.

His suspicions that word had gotten around were solidly confirmed on one rainy night when, accompanied by the door jingling open, two very familiar people walked in.

"Hey, Etho!" Pause chirped.

He sighed.

"Hi Pause," he replied, dragging his gaze up from his phone to address his latest visitors, Pause and Beef. "Buy something or I'll get in trouble."

They weren't unwelcome visitors. He couldn't necessarily stop anyone from showing up, it was a public store, after all. But *man*, what he wouldn't give to somehow stop Cleo from ever coming in in the first place. His peaceful night shifts were now being constantly disrupted by anyone he'd ever uttered his name to, up to and including his best friends.

Beef dropped a lighter onto the counter with a snicker. "What, you gettin' sick of us?"

He rolled his eyes. "No, but I *am* getting sick of everyone else just showing up, saying hi, and walking out like I'm an exhibit or something."

Pause shrugged. "You could've avoided all this if you'd just—"

He narrowed his eyes at him. "Yeah, I realize that now."

Beef bought a lighter and a pack of gum, and Pause ended up getting a Redbull.

"This store's actually pretty close to our apartment," Pause stated as he took his bag. "Can't believe we've never actually been here before."

Etho sighed. "Yeah, yeah, okay. I'll see you at game night."

Beef chuckled, and the two made their way out. Etho dropped his head into his hands. What he wouldn't give to get everyone to just *leave him alone*. If he had to ring up anyone he knew the name of his next shift, he was going to quit and find somewhere else to work.

His one saving grace, though? Bdubs would *never* show up. He'd picked his shift specifically to avoid as many people as possible, and it just so happened to line up with the hours Bdubs was asleep. It didn't stop him from throwing a fit about it, though.

Etho was greeted by Bdubs, still in his pjs, when he came home from work that morning. The sun had barely risen, the apartment shrouded in soft grays and blues, and Bdubs was standing in the living room with his arms crossed, staring at him like he'd just thrown all his plants out.

“Why was your job such an important secret to keep, huh?”

He groaned, shrugging his coat off. “Dude, why’s it matter? Not like you’ll ever see me there, anyway.”

“But you tell me *everything!*”

He sighed. His head hurt, and he really didn’t care about this conversation. “Maybe when we were *kids*. I doubt you wanna hear everything *now*.”

Bdubs tripped over his words, standing there sputtering for long enough for Etho to walk into his room and toss his keys over his doorknob.

Bdubs followed after him, stopping at the doorway. “Okay, well, maybe not *everything*, but your job as a lousy *cashier*? Seriously?!”

Etho shrugged, tossing his coat onto his bed. “Just wasn’t important.”

Bdubs grumbled, leaning against the doorframe. “Next time you’ve got a secret so stupid that I have to learn it from Cleo, I swear I’m gonna—”

Etho whipped his head up from his dresser, his mission of finding something to sleep in momentarily forgotten. “Cleo *told you?*”

“*Yeah!* She did! Texted me last night like, ‘Oh, since the cats outta the bag, I thought you should know!’”

He made a mental note to send Cleo more angry reaction images. He *specifically told her* to not tell Bdubs, and here they were. It was *really* out of his control now; the most he could do was hope nobody planned on pranking him at work.

“Can we talk more when I’ve gotten some sleep?” he asked, stopping Bdubs as he puffed up to say something else that he was a little too tired for. “It’s really not a big deal, dude.”

He grumbled something about the state of Etho’s room, before trudging away. Etho closed the door behind him and fished his phone out of his coat pocket.

Etho

you are extra double triple banned from all future game nights

Cleo

damn it

are we still going out for coffee friday?

Etho

yeah ofc!

im not paying for you though >:]

Cleo

asshole

Etho sent an image.

[A smug-looking cat.]

Cleo

well now u're just being a dick

Etho

^_^

End Notes

and that is (a little bit of) the extended cast for this au! most hermits will make an appearance at some point or another, as well as a few non-hermits, but for now u just get cleo and team canada (because *what* is an au involving etho w/o team canada?)

anyway!! hope yall enjoyed!! leave a comment if u feel so inclined, and have a good day/night <3

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