

anastasis

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anastasis

by [stilllifewithsaxifrage \(tombofthesphinx\)](#)

Summary

i'll find you in every universe.

or: five times they're enemies, and one time they're not.

my tribute to all the swagdoons authors. i love you guys

Notes

hi guys. this is 4 every swagdoons author whose fics i have read and have felt visceral, gut-wrenching emotion over. i loveyou guys fr

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

all fall down

1 - all fall down

wherein ash is a god, and red is decidedly not. setting is lifesteal canon.

this chapter is dedicated to [eventide](#), and inspired by [pick my bones clean, 'cause i'm all yours](#).

clouds swirl dizzily around the eye of the storm, winds whipping up dust and debris. all this chaos centres on a vertigo-inducing pinnacle- a god standing unperturbed on a plateau constructed from ether.

“looks like you’re missing a few hearts, red,” ash crows, akin to the namesake given to the lines at the corners of his eyes- eye. his eyepatch is dangerously blurry in red’s vision- the man- god?- is now haloed with purple light. reality is beginning to slip away, scraps of this universe slowly ripped away and swallowed by god-knows-what. *where the hell is parrot? this is-* he won’t say unfair, out of nothing but pride, or fear, or trying to gaslight himself, prepping himself for the fight that is surely ahead.

well, he’s not going to let ash’s apparent ascension stop him from stealing a few more hearts- unfortunately, he realises, with a sinking feeling tugging at the back of his throat, that he probably can’t talk his way outta this. well, he’s not only a pretty face and a smart mouth. clownpierce himself has fallen to his blade. red draws his sword, leaning on it and smiling easily at ash.

“i won’t be missing those after i’m done with you,” he says. a bluff. always a bluff. what kind of mortal would dare to face a god? all red can do is lie. lies upon lies spiralling into some abyss of truth. he lies to ash, he lies to himself. *i’m going to kill you.*

ash sees right through red's bluff. always unable to relinquish control- it all stems from fear, fear of losing everything. control is red's first and foremost love- the one treasure he parted with last, the first spoil of war he took.

and he knows- this will break him. red is greedy, *the* incarnation of mammon on this barren earth. no land to take, infertile soil unable to support anything *remotely* close to a kingdom- so he takes lives. pushes himself up, clawing up that ladder of knives hand after bloody hand, tearing out flesh and hearts like he's some sort of animal.

ash knows red would resent that descriptor. just as well as he knows everything else about that ineffable man.

clearly, red has never seen himself in battle, never conscious of that scarlet haze he sinks into as red mist sprays the battlefield. fertiliser. crops for a kingdom. ash could laugh at how circular everything turns out to be. fucking ouroboros, man. it's not funny anymore.

godhood is not cheap, even if it's just a mockery of the real thing. it's beginning to tint his vision with black around the edges, subtle enough that he could ignore it and say *everything's fine* . ah, there he goes now, lying just like red.

didn't he say he was going to kill him? ash doesn't hate red, but he also doesn't love him enough to *not* rip out his organs and spill all of him, so disgustingly human and mortal, across the ground, sinking and rotting, hearts still beating and breaking, transferred like fucking *currency* . it's a great metaphor, now that he thinks about it. death is cheap. no- death is very expensive. but killing is cheap. and free, and easy. for people like clown and red and roshambo, at least.

“you're going to kill me, you say?” ash says, instead, matching red's smile. it's hypnotic, red's easy grin slipping through the stormclouds and lightning like a swift arrow, straight and true and unbreaking, the arrowhead dipped in poison. it hits ash's heart. bullseye.

“yeah, i'm going to kill you regardless- of anything. everything.” his voice is harsh, vocal cords straining as red yells up to the god a bit too close to

earth to be doing anything good. so unlike his usual tone of voice, velvet smooth and silk-song, persuading. nobody needs persuading here. his sword will do the talking.

it breaks the illusion for ash. that he loves red. *loved* , emphasis on the d.

“try your fucking best, then,” and suddenly he’s rushing at red, running on air and closing the gap, sword outstretched and a bit too quick for red’s comfort. red feels his sure grip on victory loosen.

red brings up his shield, opting to switch to his axe. sure enough, ash relents and brings up his shield for a prepared counterattack. red hooks the axe around ash’s shield and rips it away, spinning to the side, redirecting his momentum. ash follows it, spinning easily in midair and the direction of red’s axe brings him close enough to shove his sword through red’s throat.

red realises this too. too late. and viscerally flinches, jerking backwards as though that would do anything. ash feels a laugh bubble up in his throat.

ash drops his sword and wraps his hands around red’s throat, pushing him down with their combined momentum. red is struggling- he’s not dead and his body is reacting instinctively to combat even as his mind catches up. it’s a beautiful thing to see, the way life will struggle till the bitter end.

red is stronger than ash, but what is mortal strength, born from muscle and sinew and bone, worth to a god?

nothing. cheap as the hearts clown wears on his sleeve because he can always go on the hunt and know he’ll win more, cheap as the enchantments roshambo weaves around his very being, his soul sold for infinite power in finite packages. cheap as charisma and pretty words and flattery is to red. always easy, never in short supply.

you always choose strength in lifesteal. somehow, red has cheated the system, and come out on top.

they had shared this apex once.

it means nothing, though; friendships and alliances come and go, and ash has probably worked for and with every person in the server by now. red is just another name on a long list of lives. red just another notch in his sword, even if he had been the only lover ash had taken in his time here. love is just a toxic form of friendship, after all.

the light is fading from red's eyes. ash does not let go.

he leans down, now that he's sure red is close to death, strength sapped. he's whispering in red's ear. "and now you're down one more."

suddenly, red surges up, strength renewed. *he was pretending-!* ash realises, but it's too late, and red's sword is buried in his chest.

ash tries to speak, but his throat can only give out a wet gurgle. iron pervades the taste of everything, netherite and blood identical in a disgusting rust-red mess.

"i told you i'd win this," red hisses through his teeth, glasses askew from the fall, his startlingly blue eyes narrowed and bright with bloodlust. he's merciless- he rips his sword straight through ash's body, again and again until everything is stained with vermillion and an iron tang. red, the colour of his name. the name of his favourite colour. it's like he's fucking marking his territory with every kill. ash's lips curl in a disgusted sneer.

"sure about that, my love?" the name slips out from his lips without either of them giving it a second thought, natural enough from repetition that it's learned, burnt into neural pathways embedded in the emotional sector of the brain. there's already enough mess up there nobody will clean up, anyway.

ash brings up his other hand. it's a button. red recognises this very simple piece of redstone; just a radio transmitter attached to a button. the most quintessential piece of redstone on lifesteal- a trigger for a hidden bomb.

"fuck-!" red yells, but it's drowned out by an enormous blast. the two of them are in freefall now, as countless tnt minecarts stacked together detonate simultaneously and shifts all the earth beneath them. the two are

still connected by red's sword in ash's guts- and with a final, pained scream, ash pushes himself off of it, too late, too weak, too exhausted to fly back up.

he's dead. they both are.

this wasn't how it was meant to go. he was supposed to stand over red's body and press red's still-beating heart into his own. he was supposed to smile and laugh and gloat that he'd brought down the dictator.

still, ash supposes, seconds before they're gonna hit the bedrock a bit too hard, that the bottom of a tnt sinkhole, blood and guts and viscera splattered everywhere, is a fitting grave for the two of them. together, magnetically forever.

even in death.

especially in death.

reticulate spiral notebooks

Chapter Notes

helohelo, hs au!!
jojo reference im sorryr

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

dedicated to the [revolution cave discord server](#) (for all you swagdoonies cultists, join up!!) and especially cherri, who's catswag au has inspired this <33

a highschool, kaguya-sama style student council au, with elements taken from my own fic [how to be a human being](#)

the autumn leaves are falling in flurries of golden wind, alternating between drifting lazily down and jumping the crest of the invisible currents in the air, twirling in time to the eddies in the breeze. one such leaf has the misfortune of the wind taking it directly into ash's long braid, dyed purple and black being yanked back by the wind.

ash snatches the leaf out of his hair and crumples it, dropping it to the ground, for good measure. this is pretty impressive for the sole reason that his hands are currently occupied by a tote bag, several textbooks and a package with two kimonos in it. red and purple.

“ash!” red calls, waving at him from the relative reprieve of the doorway of the school building. ash picks up his pace and hurries across the oval, the blustery gale yanking at the items in his hands. when he's just a few metres from the door, red hurries to grab whatever items he can relieve ash of, which ash is grateful for.

“red,” he greets the other with a nod once they're back inside and settled, the kimonos and textbooks dumped on the tables, bright splashes of colour

against the muted classroom painted in dull light by the weak sunlight filtered by clouds and grimy glass.

“hey, vice-captain.” red says, a customary greeting, reaching out to adjust the badge pinned on ash’s lapels, hands calloused from hockey and basketball and water polo or whatever sport he was playing at the moment, (he’s unfairly good at everything, ash thinks) moving unnecessarily to gently brush his bangs aside.

if he wasn’t completely sure that red was straight- that guy had gone through far too many girls for his own good- he could’ve sworn he was *flirting* with ash. it’s the same sort of technique, anyway. prioritising ash for group projects and casual greetings alike, excessive physical touch, the way red could make his smile seem like some sort of secret reserved solely for you, unwritten novels of implied communication only the two of you shared. he’s awfully good at this, and ash resents it.

“fuck you,” ash says, but he lets red smooth out his collar and straighten his tie, ruffled from the wind. any lasting bitterness from losing the election is gone after six months, and it’s an easy partnership for the two, utilitarian (or so ash liked to think) down to the buttons on his blazer. you might as well get along with your partner captain, because goddamn if you weren’t gonna be seeing them all the fucking time regardless. might as well make it easy on yourself.

it’s certainly helpful that red is so goddamn *attractive* .

ash coughs. “the kimonos. i wasn’t sure of your size-”

“you could have asked me, you know,” red interrupts, leaning against the table with his arms crossed, smirking. it’s the ‘i’ve-got-all-the-cards-here’ pose that ash has seen, many, many times. like a tidal wave of charisma that slaps ash across the face, but he’s been on the receiving end of it a bit too many times to be affected anymore.

unfazed, ash ignores him and continues. “i wanted to surprise you. can you try it on real quick?”

“ooh, you wanna see me in pretty clothes you bought for me? aww, ash, you’re so-” red’s simpering is cut off by ash raising a textbook. “okay, okay!” he yelps, scrambling over to the other side of the table and out of reach of ash’s painfully solid makeshift weapon.

ash huffs a sigh as he drops the heavy book, watching as red peels off the plastic wrap, elegant fabric folded in a neat bundle underneath. he disappears out the door to go change, but not before winking at ash and telling him not to peek.

ash is still wearing an exasperated scowl when red returns. “you should really lighten up,” red teases, watching his co-captain scribble on a hastily drawn schedule. the original reason they had agreed to meet here, on this blustery autumn day, was to discuss the school fair planned for the end of semester.

that reason had evidently not been buried under red’s shenanigans, and ash privately wondered how red was even keeping up with the enormous pressure of prelim exams, being on their school’s basketball team, and shouldering the responsibility of school captain, all on top of a devil-may-care attitude. he’s jealous, of just about every aspect of red- *some people get all the damn luck* - but he’s not enough of a loser to be angry about it.

“we should, y’know, plan. the summer festival.” ash’s voice is carefully set to be flat, professional. red thinks it makes ash sound older than his years, and the weight of the world that ash privately carries reflects in the graven etching of crows feet at the corners of his eyes. they only make his face seem uniquely weary, youth preserved by freezing it under ice.

red doesn’t have any right to mourn, considering how violently ash has rejected any form of interpersonal connection, especially to red, his rival; but red still watches the way those dark eyes seem to be buried under kilometre-thick ice, cold as the permafrost oceans on europa, and mourns whatever childhood ash had been denied.

it never ceases to unnerve him, how quickly ash can shut off emotion like that. “sure,” he agrees, mildly, cautiously, like he was talking to a wild animal. he can feel ash’s eyes burning into his back as he goes to retrieve

his notes, hastily scribbled and mostly derived from knowledge of previous years' festivals, but when he returns to the desk, ash's head is down and he's concentrated.

"ah, we're not really planning to make radical changes this year, right? not from the standard format, anyway."

ash tilts his head. "actually, if you're not too busy, i wanted to try something else this year."

oh? a challenge, something red is always up for, raring to go. "yeah?"

"most of the artisan classes want to showcase their work, maybe sell some. i was thinking, in conjunction with a standard summer festival, i want to set up a mini market, similar to those night-market style streets, specifically for the artisan classes' work." there, a spark of passion, the way jupiter warms a frozen moon through tectonics motions and the tide.

red's mind is already racing. "okay, so we'll need to set up an area for that, and we'll need stalls and-"

"the alleyway between a and b block, and the arts department has already said they'll take care of that." a snap of his fingers, a twirl of the silver pen against chocolate skin. red can't help but follow the movement with his eyes, elegant and faery-like.

"great! we'll probably need some sort of security as well, to prevent vandalism and theft."

ash nods, and red envies the way he spins the pen with ease, the silver just a blur jumping from finger to finger to palm, a wild animal coaxed and tamed into easy control.

"you're getting distracted," ash notes coolly, raising his eyebrows. the pen spins to a stop, landing between his thumb and index, like he'd never stopped writing in the first place.

“uh-” red stutters, caught off guard for just that second. ash watches that crack in his facade, enjoying the keyhole poked by a silver sword through that perfect skin, a teasing glimpse of viscera and truth underneath. good things never last, though, and red is recovered in a second or less, million-watt smile directed right at ash.

“it’s not my fault the school paired me with someone so... distracting.” the purr is there, the way red lowers his eyelashes to sharpen the way he looks at him, but the flirting still falls slightly flat, missing something ash can’t quite identify.

strangely, he finds himself missing it. he doesn’t *quite* know how to deal with that feeling, though, so he just taps his pen in a show of impatience, turning to the paper to avoid that pretty face. “get back to work, then,” he snaps, and it comes out colder than he intended.

Chapter End Notes

just wanted to explain the reference incase nobody got it which would be embarrassing

- europa is a moon of jupiter, and it has water frozen on it
- it sometimes gets warm enough to *melt* some of that water, which is astonishing, through tectonic motion -> as jupiter's enormous gravity shifts it's shape (like the moon making the tides on earth) and warms it up through friction WHICH IS SO COOL SFJLDK

End Notes

i hope i did this justice , and i hope you enjoyed :D

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