

away from the winds

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by Anonymous

Summary

Ash, because he's a bastard and has never heard of a healthy sleep schedule, shows up at his doorstep at six on the dot. He's sitting in the kitchen when Red finally stumbles downstairs, spinning the key Red gave him months ago around his fingers with a shit-eating grin on his face.

Notes

(sort of) inspired by all the pirate/siren au's ^-^
this is not at all polished bc my family is dragging me out to see the fireworks in like 10 minutes happy new year everyone

Ash calls him at 4am on a weekend with the dumbest idea Red has ever heard.

“We’re going on a roadtrip,” he announces, no preamble and uncaring of the fact that the sun hasn’t even risen in the sky yet. Red squints at the bright light of his phone and debates whether wasting the only days he gets free from work was truly worth this.

He hangs up. His phone rings repeatedly for the next fifteen minutes – and really, Red could’ve just thrown it across the room or switched it off to get some blessed, peaceful *silence* but he’s got

an unfortunate soft spot for his former highschool rival turned project partner turned friend. He picks up on the sixth ring.

“We live on an island,” Red says before Ash can get a word in, “where the *fuck* do you plan on going for a roadtrip – the corner store?”

“Hilarious,” Ash tells him dryly. His phone mic, Red knows from exposure, is utter trash and barely picks up the fluctuations in tone. Red’s been trying to get him to buy a new phone for months. Something clatters in the background, wind rushing and almost drowning out his next words, “–going on a *sea* trip then, you’re so insufferable.”

“The ferry terminals don’t even open for the next two hours. Don’t call me til then,” and he hangs up, switches off his phone, then rolls back over to finally *sleep*.

Ash, because he’s a bastard and has never heard of a healthy sleep schedule, shows up at his doorstep at six on the dot. He’s sitting in the kitchen when Red finally stumbles downstairs, spinning the key Red gave him months ago around his fingers with a shit-eating grin on his face.

There’s a backpack on Red’s kitchen table which he absolutely did not give permission to be there. “You’re actually serious about this.”

“I got us tickets,” Ash confirms, “Did you know you can do that online now? I didn’t even have to walk all over there.”

Red frowns. “Don’t you need to wait till seven to get a ticket that way?”

“Oh, I *love* nepotism.” Right. Squiddo worked at the lone ferry terminal on the other side of the island. Ash laughs, and doesn’t even look bothered when Red shoves the bag right off the table and into his lap.

Between Ash being as unhelpful as possible, Red refusing to take less than five minutes in the bathroom and having to make the trek all the way to the jetty at an hour where it was impossible to get a ride, it’s not surprising that they barely make it in time to board the ferry. Barely anyone is around, just the staff and the poor souls who have to make the trip to the central island for work. There’d be a larger crowd in a few hours when uni students from the nearest island show up but for now, it’s just them and the half-asleep group of workers watching with bleary eyes as the ropes are untied and the engine starts, the boat rocking as it pulls away from the docks and finally sets out into the sea.

The sky is clear, and mercifully it’s low tide hours. Red slumps over in his seat and places his head on Ash’s shoulder, closing his eyes with a sigh. He can feel Ash shift slightly – a creaking noise, then the sudden spike in the scent of seasalt when the window next to them is opened.

Trying to make conversation above the noise of the engine is a lost cause. It’s easier to get lost into the rhythmic swaying motions, to thread his fingers through Ash’s and revel in the quiet instead. This early in the morning, the air is chilly enough to spread even inside the boat, but Red barely notices it. Being at sea felt like a weird, in-between space – timeless, the sun seemingly unmoving in the sky, the horizon stretching out for miles and even the faint outlines of other islands looking like a mirage, a far away dream.

If they were very lucky, they’d catch sight of a dolphin.

The blue-greens of the ocean give way to deeper blues, and then back again to light hues as they get closer to shore. They pick up the bags at their feet, stumble off the boat and reorient

themselves to dry land with practiced ease, keeping a tight grip on each other until they're safely away from the docking point. You don't fuck around with the ocean, and Red had no intention of adding *had to be fished out of a reef* to his already considerable list of accomplishments.

Ash doesn't let go of his hand, still a steady warmth against him that does things to Red's heart he doesn't want to look too closely at, so he doesn't mention it. They stumble into a nearby cafe to get breakfast because once again, Ash is a *menace* with no sleep schedule and Red refuses to go any further without food in his stomach.

Or coffee. He'd take anything that would make him feel less like he's sleep walking, at this point.

They get their food to-go and clamber up onto the seawall to eat breakfast. It's somewhat slippery, but they've both been doing this since they were kids and it's as familiar as the taste of salt at the back of his throat when he inhales. Ash tears into a roll of flatbread from next to him, gaze fixed at the sandbanks. Red cradles his paper cup in his palms and takes slow sips, unwilling to break the comfortable silence that had fallen over them.

They've been here before. The same seawall, the same thirty minute ferry ride, the same flatbread Ash buys every time they make the trip here, whether it was under the cover of the stars or in the blistering heat of the sun. Their ninth grade field trip had been to the reefs on the other end of this island.

Not everything's the same – they're both older and taller for one, and there are more buildings, unfamiliar twists to the paved roads and less trees at the sandbanks. The sting of salt is less harsh. The lone park is bigger now, something that was a delight to the local kids but had left Red staring at it in a daze, suddenly all too aware of the passing of time.

He wonders what it would be like, to let the sand bury him and his worries of the future, to let the waves run over him and wash away his memories. What it would be like to fade into the air, with nothing but other people to remember him by.

Ash jolts him out of his thoughts, taking the empty cup out of his hands and crumpling it along with the plastic wrapping on his lap. "You think too much," he says, something sharp in his eye that tells Red this trip might not have been completely impulsive after all. He hops off the seawall, slips, almost over balances and just nearly stops himself from cracking his head open on the rocks.

"Maybe *you* should think a little more," Red calls down to him, picking out footholds more carefully. Ash sheepishly grins at him, reaching out to take his hand the second Red reaches solid ground.

They find a place to throw out their trash and then wander through the streets, pointing out new places – the neighborhood still in construction, a line of small flowers growing at the base of a low wall. Red gets them short-eats at the market to share later during the day, when the sun is at its peak and the wind has picked up, ruffling their hair and sending leaves swirling through the air.

It's easy to imagine that they have all the time in the world. Like the weekend would never end, and they wouldn't have to go back to their grueling day to day lives.

Neither of them discuss it, but it's kind of inevitable that they end up at the beach anyway. Red toes off his shoes – neither of them are wearing socks, which will absolutely leave them will blisters later but was a small price to pay to avoid having to get sand out of them – and rolls up his trousers, placing his bag down at the base of a tree. Ash pushes a branch irritably away from where it's seemingly doing its best to get tangled in his hair. Sand shifts under their feet, soft and mildly heated as they run out from under the shade and towards the shoreline.

He watches as Ash wades further in, the water glittering under the sun. A small school of fish scatters around his legs, silver and nearly invisible if it weren't for the light glinting off their scales. When he turns around Red steps in, kicks his feet into the water to spray it in Ash's direction just to watch him scream.

Naturally, it dissolves into a game of keep-away after that.

Sand swirls around his ankles underwater, shifting and sending him stumbling easily into the depths with a loud curse. Shaking his head in an effort to get the water out of his eyes, Red barely manages to get out of the way when Ash tries to drown him again.

“Could you stop-” Another lunge, this one aimed for his feet, “-for *five seconds?!*” Ash only cackles in response. Red sticks out his tongue at him, then yelps and stumbles to the side when he throws himself through the water, arms outstretched.

Scratch that, this was more than a game. This was a *battle*, and one Red had no intention of losing.

Warily staring at Ash, he gets back up on his feet, taking the momentary reprieve to shuffle backwards. Ash squints at him. Or it could be because of the sun, rays reflecting on the water. Regardless, Red squints right back. A distant part of him wishes he still had his sunglasses, but they've long since been abandoned on top of his bag.

“Do you give up?” Ash cockily raises an eyebrow. Red crouches slightly, ready to lunge in any direction.

“*Never*,” he hisses out, twisting on his heel and swimming for shore. Ash laughs, racing right after him, and Red's grinning even as water drips down his back and clings to his clothes.

They're both shivering when they finally drag themselves back to where they'd left their backpacks – the water had gradually gotten colder as the evening crept closer. There's nothing they can do about their clothes, but Ash pulls out towels and they dry themselves off as best as they can before taking the winding paths back to the ferry terminals again.

The sky's growing darker, in shades of red and orange-pink like a mosaic painting. Red gets them something warm to drink while Ash tries to figure out the ferry schedule. He's still staring at the map tacked onto the side of the building when Red gets back, standing off to the side to avoid blocking the way for other travelers.

Red steps into place next to him, handing Ash one of the cups before wrapping an arm around his shoulders and leaning in close, like he belongs there. “Where are we going?”

The next boat would be here in ten minutes. That'd lead them back to the central island. The one that's supposed to arrive at the dock next to it would take them further away, closer to the atolls that were less populated, closer to the uninhabited ones. He watches as Ash traces a finger over the terminal details and abruptly, foolishly wishes that time would stand still, to let them put the world on hold until they were ready to slip back into it.

“Wherever you wanna go,” Ash tells him, steady, worn down in a way not unlike how the rocks making up the seawall had been smoothed over with time and crashing waves, “We've got all weekend.”

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