

bug jar

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by [Felix_J](#)

Summary

If destroying his life in the colony, if breaking him out of cryo counts as murder, Red killed the man Ash crafted carefully in his files. Ash taps his feet on the floor and wonders if it's payback enough for making him fall in love with that person.

roses and smoke week, day 8: free day

Notes

ANDDDDDD it's the end of swagdoons week for me! thank you so much to all the commenters and my friends for making me worse, and hope you enjoyed the overtake of the Ashswag/Reddoons (Video Blogging RPF) (as well as, well, temporarily the fandom tag) as much as i did. here's dystopian-esque ~2016 romance movie fusion pt 2, now in space

He imagines it easily. It's what makes it so... annoying. Him sitting next to a pod, a year or what after his own was broken, and maybe it would've taken him a bit more time, he's in for software

more than hardware, but he's got to think Red's not that perfect either. *He probably is.*

Him opening the pod up like a jar, no, wait, no. He'd stare. He would come into the room full of people *sleeping* their time away peacefully in here, untouched, he'd sit down next to Red's and *look* — that's just what Red did, isn't it? He's curious, a bit, how it went. It... the thought's strange.

And then he'd open the pod. Because it would've been so long, and he would've gone fucking crazy talking on and off to a robot that only offers more alcohol.

Ash sits up and throws his legs over the side of the bunk. His fingers dig into the mattress.

It's not really a question of *forgiveness*, forgiving Red, Ash doesn't like to forgive.

Is it... of understanding?

Is it because he *thought* he knew Red best of them, and *thought* he knew fully who he loved? He wouldn't give Red the same, he knew that. Was it, *is* it, all that's gone and passed but this thing hasn't, he's alive and so is Red, probably in his suite on the opposite side of level twenty.

He's been lying to Red. He just hadn't ever really thought... had ended up thinking he wouldn't lie in return. Cheap. Except this lie broke his *life*... broke his *plans*, and he, he feels angry. That's what the burning in his stomach is, pure anger. And his brain keeps telling him he's done worse, and makes him just *angrier* anyway.

Ash has two choices, stand up and pace or scramble back on the bed and rip his blanket in half. He wants to open the door to Red's room and stab him. That's *violent tendencies*, Ash. That has no place in your new fucking life, oh *wait*, Red was the one to ruin that.

He *wants* to gut Red efficiently so he could have his blood on his hands and *maybe* finally understand what he thought he did all this time, understand Red, and that doesn't mean he *thinks* about it or *would* do it, ever, because just the sheer black fucking stain of a murderer doesn't make... doesn't mean he'd do it again. He wants to understand Red, though. He wants to hear every second of his thoughts, *why* he did it, and then he can decide what to do with it.

If destroying his life in the colony, if breaking him out of cryo counts as murder, Red killed the man Ash crafted carefully in his files. Ash taps his feet on the floor and wonders if it's payback enough for making him fall in love with that person. It's so *easy* to get back into old patterns. He doesn't like it much.

He *thought* he got over it, but it's not something you really *do*. He thought he wouldn't need the reflexes, the... just the paranoia. It's all in there. He *should* have thought about it in the first place, but he was *busy* doing other things, like Red, and also fixing the ship.

He thinks it... He thinks he felt too safe. How *could* he not?

He's always been... he wasn't *scared* of space, but it's felt uncomfortable on the other side of the *literally-everything*-proof glass. He never told Red, like he never told him a lot of things.

It's just the first time he goes out, in a spacesuit, standing on the edge of *their* ship, after Red showed him how, the only thing that's there is the quiet. It's their... first date, something of the sort, or after it, he's never exactly sure, because he's always found Red frustrating and fascinating at the same time, and the flirting was always there with the banter, as was the perfect fucking synchrony, *some* times. Not like they've had anyone to make their relationship official to, Branzys's android face off the list.

It's special and new and different, it *is*, he just never wanted to put *too* much importance to it. Still careful. Not careful enough.

He keeps going out, looking at the stars. Red mentions he almost ended his life out this shoot back when he was alone. Ash laughs and tells him it wouldn't be that bad — he's experienced clinical death. Red shakes his head silently at him.

These days, *these few* days the memories fall flat. Ash tries to rewatch or watch the first time some of the files on Red, and the facts he says on the recordings in too placid of a voice for Red are all the ones he already *knows* because Red told him so, and the small ones he didn't are just the same, making him bite his teeth, curl in on himself and throw the projector on the floor. It's much sturdier than the ones he used back on Earth.

It's just too much *Red*. And he needs that. He thinks it's something that completely fucked with his head from not seeing another human being for a year, and it's just Red being... Red. He'd have fallen for him even when they had achieved their destination, *if they've* all woken up at the same time.

He knows that.

He asks Branzly once, a bit too drunk out of his mind, what do they think it is when someone's too much for you. They laugh, and swipe the glass with too much of an ear-wrenching screech, and say something about perfection not being real, which, fuck that, he was never talking about that, *or* the fact that *what we should be is happy with what's already close to perfect! right?*, because it's *not* perfect. It's what he tells them.

Branzy is a shit therapist, even with the discount of not having a human brain.

He and Red never *click perfectly*. They just work like they were *made* to push each other onward. Which shouldn't really work to the split in professions, they wouldn't work in the same department on Life Four, he doubts Red would even *really* work at all. He's glad he held back the rich boy remark first time he knew, because he'd feel pretty dumb in front of himself a couple months after.

He catches himself smiling.

It falls, and it's a little forced, leans forward, and his chin feels heavy.

It's been three days. He's *known* what Red has for over a year, because he's known before it ever happened, for that long. He's not really been doing anything with it besides *avoid* and also swipe a bottle from the counter to the fake sadness of Branzly's, because that's just how he fucking *communicates*, and then get drunk the way Red likes to, probably did way more in the days *before* Ash. Brood. It's what he's doing right now. *Brooding*.

If when he first woke up he'd been pointed straight at Red, like, hell, this's the guy that broke your pod, he'd probably strangle him on the spot.

He keeps sitting on the bed, like this transition state between breaking everything and laying without motion for eight more hours staring at the hologram of a nebula, reshuffling memories in his head. *Hey, remember the time you played golf with this person you barely knew, and it blew your mind you could just never think about anyone else again? And he was annoying, and you kept losing. And you didn't want to only think about him. Or only ever talk to him.*

And now the only thing he's doing is- he gets up, finally, jumps up, and his mouth's too dry from breathing in through his teeth.

He smacks the bracelet against the sensor to leave his suite, and the only thing on his mind's been *Red* the last three days, and he's still fucking angry, shaking with it.

He wants to lie next to him and ask how many months he watched the records of a life that Ash came up with instead of putting in his own, in the records, to try and start a *new life*, before he figured that wasn't enough. If it was imminent, if it was instant, if it was an accident first. It claws at him to be able to feel *wanted*. The first time he did fucked up his life, and this first time is now, and he also didn't have much of a life that he didn't already leave behind.

He presses his forehead to the metal of the door before he opens it, bangs his head on it, once. It's cold. Like he's running a fever.

Red told him the truth. Himself. It took him a year, but he did, and Ash knows now, knows him a little better for who he is, a liar, a... whoever *would* he have to be, to get as far in life as he did.

Didn't make much difference in the end, still ended up on the same ship as an old criminal the likes of Ash. Brought *him* to his level, even.

Ash takes the stairs quietly. They're slippery. He knows they are.

He sits down by the bed, on his knees, and Red's sleeping in sunglasses, as he does. Or not sleeping.

Red breathes out and a smile breaks his face, and he says, quiet, just a whisper, that he's having a nice dream.

Ash flinches. It doesn't work like that, it's too loud. For a second he wants to shut Red up, shut him off like what he *can* do to Branzly, explain things that shouldn't be said, because he doesn't *want* to say them, doesn't *want* to talk about his life, in dead silence.

He gets on the bed, and grips the clothes on Red's back into a fist, and hides his face in his chest.

What he means is something between *why can't I just live without you anymore and go back to sleep, you probably... nah, really haven't slept in days, have you*, and it lacks any of the burn.

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