

hold up just a minute, don't burn me down

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hold up just a minute, don't burn me down

by [Felix_J](#)

Summary

Red, Ash, the "cigarette table". (Sometimes blowing smoke down his lungs isn't showing interest, it's just the most you'd let or make yourself do.)

roses and smoke week, day 1: roses | **smoke**

Notes

roses prompt fill what roses prompt fill welcome to swagdoons week today you get to experience what. right, swagdoons smoking. smag- swo- okay im not trying

TIITLE from locked in a cage by brick + mortar

showing off the s3 finale bitter ex redds that lives in my head. probably not for the first time, likely not for the last. shoutout to ghostpajamas for the Incredibly Informative talk about shotgunning during the writing of this thing, and also the original [swagdoons shotgunning art](#) without which i probably wouldve never thought of it

It's a question of trust.

There's no trust to be had anymore. The train's gone.

Red likes to spend his mornings dirtying the floors of the base of the current resistance, which doesn't mean he gives enough of a fuck to know their name. He has his teammates, he has Zam 'n Woogie, and he's probably gonna die for them one way or another before the server ends, and this all? It doesn't matter to him. Vitalasy doesn't throw anyone out as long as they're not with Clown, though, and so he comes here when it's quiet, to get away from the noise of villagers and panicked bargains of Zam in the very early mornings.

This day's got another seat already taken, and he seems to be not the only smart person to practice their morning routines, healthy as they are. It's clean here. He could probably share with one person, that'd be no problem.

It's just the trust, that one that's gone, with this particular one's a bit *special*, you see. It burns just a bit too much. So he doesn't... he'd *lie* if he said he doesn't *mind* Ash completely, no, that he doesn't *care* for Ash being here. But he'll play the game. They were... He wants to say they were friends once. He can never really settle on anything with Ash, here. It's always, *sure, you say friends, but how about everything else?* And it's Ash's voice, too.

He slides the chair out, sags down. Ash doesn't move, leant back in his seat, eyes closed. He's got his presence acknowledged, just by the bat of the eyelashes and the way the easy buzz of Ash's that signifies him resting *shifts*, for a second. That makes it not exactly silence.

The table's thin, so Red's chair's now two away from him. Just not to be a *bother*.

"Morning." He says, drops into the air, and it's not that he *wants* to start the talk. Ash's just gonna ignore him otherwise. Like this, he might get to ignore him back instead.

"I... didn't take you for a resistance member. Red."

Ash stretches his hands out on the table, like he's just woken up. Red's name goes at the end of his words oh, so *carefully*.

"Neither did I." Red shrugs. Plucks out the pack of cigarettes under Ash's look. Ash has nowhere to focus on, so he does on his fingers, and Red chuckles, puts the box away instead of dropping it on the table. Ash'll pick that up, then, and fuck that anymore.

When he's taken a drag, finally, it's been enough seconds Ash might not expect the continuation, which makes it that much more hilarious. Red breathes out, and then cackles at him. "And imagine that: I was right." Drops the hand with the cigarette down, with a knock.

Ash raises his eyes back up from it, in a jump, and maybe he's just realised he's been staring, and that's *fine*, if he did.

He snorts back, a little late. "So you've been using it... as a peace spot, too? Huh."

"Yeah, vacation leave, my vacation leave's here." Red stops looking at him.

Taps the fist on the table, twice. Vitalasy's gonna figure it out sooner or later who keeps leaving ash over the purpur of the table, but if it's later they'll all be gone by then, so hopefully it'll be later.

Honestly, he shouldn't mind, given there's a whole Ash sleeping his mornings away in there.

"What, so you're not just gonna fight me here?" Ash asks, and it sounds kind of fucking small. Red contemplates it for a second, just imagines pulling a sword on him. It'd look strange here, too

sterile. He's not fought Ash since the Cleansing, and the morning of that day he thought they were teammates.

"I mean, do I have to?" Red asks, doesn't really, and it's just this kind of small talk with Ash. It should be a question, except that Ash will never answer something like it, and Red'll never really know. "I don't know how to guess if we're enemies anymore, Ash."

Ash flinches, a bit. "I don't..." It feels wrong on him. It just feels wrong, when they're not *supposed* to be close enough, some kind of self-imposed unspoken order Red can't think of well, to see Ash anywhere close to breaking. Just because he can't forget there's something human to Ash doesn't mean he can get to see it.

Ash doesn't look like he's got the memo.

"I don't know, yeah." He says, finally.

Red pretends he's breathing the smoke him in the face. Ash's eyes are fixated and unfocused at the same time.

"I mean, how would I..." Red starts, and it's *kinda* pointless, he already said so. Stops, when Ash reaches out and scratches an open hand on the table, next to him, wordlessly. Tilts his head to the side.

Ash opens his mouth, looks like he's jumping between words to say, and he hopes there's an understanding in there somewhere, what he did wrong. "Sorry." He says, finally. It's not the right kind of one — Red doesn't have time to be happy or mad about the word before he knows. "It's just messing with... with me, you never smoked alone before."

"I'll share the lighter." Red says lightly, aimlessly. If there's one thing Ash has on him it's that, and he drops a muffled laugh at it, glitchless.

"You're with Zam, right?" Ash asks instead. Red raises an eyebrow.

"And if I was?" He doesn't like to give away his allies, but the server's pretty black-and-white at the end of things, that being now. Well, not fully. There's always Ash. He has no idea what Ash wants at any moment in time, he's finally figured *that* out.

"Right, then. We're not enemies enough." He smiles like a Cheshire cat. His fingers twitch on the table. It's like he got the balance back, just that Red now knows the balance is fake. He's no god anymore, there's none of that power to him Red's known of since the early days, saw himself. There's just Ash, and he wants something again.

"*You* working with Zam?" He asks. It's the second, or third, or forth thing he actually wants to know.

Ash doesn't answer. "And we're not working with each other, that's right?" He stands up in the chair slightly, and it's not *close* enough. Red doesn't move in his, just holds his hand up, slack, to take another drag. "We never even really..." Ash shakes his head, small motion. "Red, this is stupid." He jerks the chair next out and falls on it, still sitting too straight up, unnerved. "I'm going, today, off the server."

"Oh? How so?" Red raises an eyebrow.

"Just gonna wait... for some better things. New season, probably." Ash grins, just shows his teeth. Red can't ever fully guess *how* serious he is, and he's never gonna say it out loud if he regrets

something, really, Red's never seen him do that.

"Gonna give Zam my hearts, so yeah, in a way I'm working with him. Working with you." Something like that *would* be the closest he'd get, Red thinks. He also wouldn't know what the *you* really is. If it just means Red.

"Oh." He just says again. "G... ood to know?" He's not gonna be able to say *thank you* back. It's like a game, if Ash won't admit he's sorry, he won't play his cards either, in this bitter and completely pointless kind of game.

Zam will say thank you for all them, he *knows*.

"Good." Ash nods, heavily, and he stares through him, reaching out along the table again, flicks Red's hand when he gets to it.

Red doesn't move it, because it freezes for a second, his brain does, and the first's on before the second.

He's got Ash's hand gripped, then, silently. Ash stands up, and he does, at the same time, and the distance chair to chair's not that big, he flags it in the back of his head, design flaw, really.

Ash shakes his hand, and he's biting down a grin again with teeth on his lips, so literally.

"Well, have fun with your little smoke break, I think I intruded on that, by... eh. That was *uncalled* for, I'll get Zam in another place."

Red doesn't let the hand go, takes a light breath. "That's a farce, you know that, right." He mutters, and breaking the handshake feels like letting water slip through his fingers. Ash's just gonna go, like he likes to.

"Hey, I wasn't expecting to have it shared, what do you have on that thing left, a minute or two?" Ash doesn't step from the table, just wipes his hands on the jacket.

Red holds out a hand easily, takes hold of his tie, there's that pin on it that wasn't there before that makes it easy, tugs. He feels lightheaded. Ash leans in easily, like he's humoring him, and his eyes are just a bit wide. Red takes a drag sideways — and Ash's right — squints, and breathes it into Ash's mouth, at the distance of what, two pressed fingers.

Ash likes to kiss him, both close- and openmouthed, before breathing out the smoke, so he leans back in the second it takes Ash to enjoy it. Extinguishes the cigarette on the quartz bits on the edge of the table, harsh. "I'm going to go, now." He tells Ash. "Give my best to Zam for... actually, I'll just tell him that at the base."

Ash's eyes are permanently open too wide now, and he licks his lips, but doesn't relax his neck enough to nod.

He'd probably say something like, *alright*, if he opened his mouth. Which would be nothing at all.

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