

"i love kentucky."

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Character:	Simon "Ghost" Riley , John "Soap" MacTavish , John Price (Call of Duty) , Kate Laswell , Kyle "Gaz" Garrick , Rodolfo (Call of Duty) , Alejandro Vargas
Additional Tags:	Fluff , Requited Love , Mutual Pining , Nonsexual Use of a Praise Kink , Sexual Tension , i didnt even mean for it to happen , it just did , help me , Simon "Ghost" Riley is Bad At Feelings , alternatively: they talk about alone , soap jokingly calls ghost a good boy , ghost fucking breaks , and then soap bullies him with that newfound information , As One Does , Alcohol
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"i love kentucky."

by [bravo six going queer \(cornerdreams\)](#)

Summary

Ghost is a proud man. He's also proud of the fact that the fucking all of it is over and they can get a break. Needing a place to talk, but not having a base nearby, means that sometimes, a veteran recognizes one of their own and decides to lend a hand.

...oh, did he mention that Soap is fucking insufferable sometimes?

Notes

hi sorry this took like 3 days to complete um. my cat got put down and i had a mental breakdown about how i didnt/dont (??? working on it) think im going to graduate and then slept for like a whole day and cried about that. anyway theyre homo!! yknow how it goes w me

inspired by this convo you can have in the bar during "alone" in mw2022:

"im at the bar, lt."

"you like tequila?"

"could use one right about now."
"i'd murder for a whiskey."
"you mean scotch?"
"i drink bourbon."
"like a good ol' boy."
"i love kentucky"

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

Makarov, back in play. What a day it's been...

They take out Graves, Shepherd is just... gone? El Sin Nombre - Valeria - is... well. Also gone. But more definitively so. And turns out, fucking *Vladimir Makarov* was behind the lot of the missiles the whole fucking time. Bloody hell...

They're at a bar, the lot of them. It's quiet. Past closing, actually, but they needed a quiet place to talk things over, and this bar's owner is a veteran. He was kind enough to lend them his bar for that, and even turn off his security cameras for them for a few hours. Ghost appreciates that a lot. Privacy in a place most people wouldn't expect. An unlikely, but delightful scenario.

He doesn't know the exact agreement about using the alcohol behind the bar, but Soap just left Price and Laswell's side, and set a glass in front of him, offering a warm smile.

"You said you like bourbon, right?"

Ghost smiles back, hidden behind a balaclava instead of his field mask.

"I did."

-

"Can I ask you a question, Lt?" Soap asks at some point, eyes down at his own drink while Ghost rucks up the balaclava enough to sip his whiskey. He sets the glass down, tugs the hem back to where it was, and raises an eyebrow.

“No need to call me Lt here, we’re off duty. But go ahead.”

Soap nods, staring down at his glass for a moment more. Ghost doesn’t know what it is, and also doesn’t feel like asking. “Back... in Las Almas. That night.”

Ghost’s face softens, a little, from curious to sympathetic, without meaning to. That night is plaguing Soap, and he knows it. He heard Soap wake up screaming a few nights ago, and heard Price calming him down. He doesn’t think they know he heard, and he plans to keep it that way.

“Go on.” He encourages, gently, and Soap looks at him. He offers a smile, even if Soap can’t see it, but he must have noticed the crinkle of his eyes, because he smiles back.

“Who was ‘we’? When you answered my calls on comms, you said, *thought we lost you*. Who’s the we, in that sentence?”

Ghost blinks, and pauses. The silence stretches onward for a few moments, and Soap shifts uncomfortably, opening his mouth to speak. Ghost shuts it down immediately.

“I’m thinkin’ about how to word it.”

Soap swallows anxiously, and nods, staring down at his glass and taking an anxious sip from it.

“I don’t know.” Ghost says, decisively and thoughtfully, after a few more seconds of silence. Soap looks at him strangely. “I wasn’t thinking much, that night. Just trying to keep myself alive and help you get to me so I could make sure we both made it out. Maybe I was thinking about the one-four-one.”

He shrugs.

“Like I said, I don’t know.”

Oddly enough, that makes... a lot of sense, actually, to Soap. Survival mode does funny things to you. He still questions what the fuck he was thinking with some of the things he himself said that night, and nods quietly.

“That makes sense, it’s alright.”

Ghost hums, his eyes drifting to Soap’s arm. He seems a bit sore on that side, tense, and he catches Soap fighting back a wince or cringes when he moves it too fast or a bit too far. It’s a miracle, he thinks, that he took Graves out in that tank half by himself.

“...how’s your arm doing, by the way?” His voice is softer, and Soap’s eyes flick up to his. They’re so *blue*, Ghost is taken pleasantly off guard, every time.

“It’s...” Soap pauses, sighs. “It’s not too good. Sore. Hurts like high hell whenever I move my elbow even a little above my shoulder. Lifting things hurts. So does holding onto anything heavy for too long. Nurses think I tore some muscle fighting so soon after it got injured.”

A sigh comes out of Ghost, and he nods, feeling like something is pulled out of him with minimal resistance at that. Soap must be in a lot of pain, and he didn’t notice the injury,

“Thanks for treatin’ it with Rodolfo, though.”

Ghost’s eyes snap back to Soap from where they landed on the table. Soap is smiling at him, warm and genuine, with a small furrow to his brow. Ghost swallows, scowling. He doesn’t like when people look at him like that.

“I... kinda doubt I would’ve made it if you hadn’t. He told me you found an iv and put me on it.” Soap’s boot makes light contact with Ghost’s shin under the booth table. “Thanks for savin’ my ass, Ghost.”

His mouth runs dry, and he offers a quiet nod, forcing himself to speak. “Least I could do. You’re a sergeant, I’m a lieutenant. You were, and are, my responsibility. I wasn’t about to let you go without a fight.”

Soap smiles at him, furrow in his brow easing. “If I didn’t know any better, I’d say you *do* like me.”

Ghost snorts at him, and rolls his eyes. Soap laughs, light and warm, and nods to Price and Gaz,

sitting at the bar, with Gaz looking over at them. He nods, and Gaz smiles at them, turning back to face Price, who's listening to Laswell talk about... whatever. Hm. They all probably needed this, huh.

He shifts, and quietly takes another drink from his glass. He doesn't remember the last time he's tasted alcohol, and honestly, he thinks he might've missed it a bit. Simple things in life really do feel important, sometimes.

Lost to his thoughts, he doesn't notice Soap looking at him, watching how he manages to hide the majority of his face while being able to drink from his glass, his eyelashes, the shadows under his eyes that are worse than they were a few nights before. Soap thinks he's pretty. Especially after really seeing his face. He remembers being astonished at the face he saw under the mask - sharp blue eyes, a stoic expression, sharp jawline and stubble. Ghost is beautiful, he thinks, and he wonders if Ghost would be comfortable taking off the mask again.

...he kinda regrets saying he doubts that Ghost wasn't ugly, now.

Ghost notices the stare, after a few moments. The balaclava is back in place, and he's looking across the bar, and Rodolfo and Alejandro, happily chatting together at a table a bit beyond the bar. Rodolfo is laughing and smiling, and Alejandro is talking with his hands.

He's glad they're happy, but turns to Soap when he feels the stare burning into the side of his head. He raises his eyebrows.

"...sorry for assuming you were ugly." Are the words that comes out of Soap's mouth.

Ghost snorts.

"Apology accepted. Did I prove you that wrong, that you're apologizing?" He teases, and Soap groans, rolling his eyes.

"Don't expect me to suddenly profess my undying love to you or some shit."

He can't help it, and Ghost barks a laugh at Soap, shaking his head, pushing down the disappointment he tells himself there's no reason for. No reason for, none at all. Even as he looks at Soap's scowling, half-pouting face and his heart stutters in his chest, he tells himself that.

There's no reason for him to be disappointed upon hearing that. *None*.

"What makes you think I'd want that?" He jokes right back, and Soap snickers.

"No idea, but I didn't want you to get your hopes up." He's trying to tease Ghost, and it's not working, because Ghost coughs into his arm, choking on a laugh at this point. He sends Soap a grin, hidden entirely other than for the crinkle of his eyes beyond the fabric.

"You didn't, don't worry mate."

They sit in silence for a few seconds, Ghost leaning back to watch the conversation happening at the bar, entertained by the fact that Gaz is now staring at Price with a shocked, borderline offended look on his face, and Laswell is laughing into the back of her hand. He smiles. It's good to see the kid getting along with Price.

"...I do take it back, though."

Ghost looks over, staring blankly at Soap with ever-so-slightly raised eyebrows.

"That you're probably ugly." Soap explains, face a little pink. He shifts, avoiding eye contact, and Ghost can't seem to find the words to respond. "You're... really handsome, actually. Don't know what I thought was under the mask, but. When you took it off, I hadn't been expecting... that. You look... nice."

It sounded a bit like Soap struggled to find a word to explain himself at the end, but Ghost still feels like the wind got knocked out of his chest, and can only swallow awkwardly, face feeling a little warm under the balaclava, heart pounding in his chest. He forces himself to swallow again, and speaks, voice a little rough. He can always blame it on his laughing fit.

"Thank you."

"Mhm." Soap is embarrassed. Thoroughly so, and it's obvious. They both don't speak for a bit, and Ghost pauses, looking down at his drink, then around the room. Everyone here has seen his face, one way or another.

(Price first met him with his mask off. Laswell saw his face when she visited his room in the hospital after a mission went bad, and she wanted to personally update him on the other task force members who had gotten injured. Rodolfo and Alejandro saw it for the first time with Soap - crowded around the table, right before they went after Graves together.)

He reaches up, and pulls off the balaclava after a moment of hesitation, Soap's eyes widening. He seemed to try and start to speak, but falters.

Ghost swallows thickly, and pauses, setting his glass down properly and gently laying the mask off to the side, before reaching up and ruffling his hair around. He doesn't need to gel his hair back since the mask tends to hold it in place for him, which means it's now sticking up a bit all over the place. He gives his head a little shake once he removes his hand, and takes a drink from his glass, catching Soap's eye before quietly averting his gaze.

Soap exhales softly, and then smiles, giddy like a child on Christmas, and drinks from his glass as well.

Ghost doesn't make much conversation, after that. Just quietly avoids Soap's eyes, listens to Gaz, Price, and Laswell's conversation instead. He initially tunes in to them talking about her wife, but now, they're talking about how Gaz wants to own a dog someday, and what kind he should get. Ghost smiles a little. That's cute.

"You're beautiful."

The smile drops and Ghost's eyes snap to Soap, who's looking at him with a soft expression. Ghost swallows hard, and Soap smiles.

"You are. I think you're beautiful, Ghost. And no," Soap chuckles, tilting his glass in his hand and glancing at it, before smiling wider at Ghost. "That's not the alcohol talking."

Ghost exhales a breath to calm himself, disguised as a sigh, and offers a fake half-smile back, heart skipping a beat despite his internal protests. There's no reason to be reacting like this. It's a single compliment, for fuck's sake.

"Thanks." He kind of hopes Soap will shut up. He doesn't want to make a fool of himself. Not really.

Soap stares at him for a few seconds, then asks a question that takes Ghost, frankly, completely by surprise.

“What’s up with your jokes, though? They’re fuckin’ awful.”

Ghost snorts into his wrist, and gives Soap a mischievous look. “Answer me this, first.”

Soap squints at him. “Are you telling me another bad joke?”

“Why did the cat go to the vatican?”

“*Ghost.*”

“He was cat lick.”

“*Ughh.*”

There’s a laugh, and Price calls over to them.

“Soap, is Ghost telling his jokes again?”

Almost accusingly, Soap turns to Ghost. “Go on. Tell them the joke too.”

So Ghost does, turning to them with a grin on his face. “Why did the cat go to the vatican?”

Price gives him an unimpressed glare, and Laswell’s eyebrows raise. Gaz is the one to bite the bullet, innocently asking, “why?”

“He was cat lick.”

Laswell snorts into her drink, Gaz cackles, and Price seems to sigh heavily, eyes closing as he turns away, Gaz giggling into his hands and Laswell chuckling along. Ghost, smug, turns to Soap, and gives him an entertained look.

“*Someone* thinks they’re funny.”

“And it ain’t me.”

Ghost chuckles, smiling, and takes a drink, finishing off his glass of bourbon and nudging it aside, turning his attention to Soap and answering the question he was initially asked. “In all seriousness, I think how people hate them so much is funnier than the jokes themselves. You especially. The fact you hate them so much is just more reason for me to tell them to you.”

Soap groans irritably and rolls his eyes, shaking his head at Ghost. He snags the empty glass and gives him an annoyed stare, that quickly cracks into a warm smile.

“I’ll be right back. You want a refill or are you done?”

He hums thoughtfully, looks at the glass, then at Soap, and offers the barest hint of a smile in return. “I’m done.”

“Rog,” Soap confirms, and leaves to supposedly take care of the glass. Huh. How considerate of him.

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While Soap is gone, Alejandro stands up and goes and speaks with Price, Rodolfo trailing behind him. When he’s done talking to them, he comes over to Ghost, and his eyes dart between the mask and his face, before he grins. Ghost’s jaw clenches at first, but he forces himself to relax.

“We’re going to leave, *hermano*. But it was nice to get to see you all again before we go.”

Ghost blinks slowly for a second, then speaks.

“You’re leaving the states, aren’t you?”

Alejandro smiles over his shoulder at Rodolfo, and Rodolfo smiles back at him, face soft and warm, and Ghost, for a split second, recognizes that look, before he neatly stuffs it away into a corner of his mind, refusing to acknowledge that he sees how Soap looks at him in that expression.

“Yeah. Going back to Mexico. Our people - they still need us. But it was an honor to work with you.” Alejandro says, and sticks out his hand. Ghost shakes it firmly.

“Likewise, mate. Stay safe out there, cowboys.”

Rodolfo grins at him. “We will.”

Ghost watched them leave, silently noting when Soap returned, also watching them leave the bar. Offhandedly, he wondered if they’d ever work in proximity again, and turned to face Soap, swallowing thickly when he saw Soap’s soft expression directed towards him. He raised an eyebrow, and Soap smiled a little wider.

“You’re a weird fuckin’ guy, Ghost.”

He snorted, unable to suppress his own smile.

“Yeah, I know. What are you gonna ask me about this time?” He’s half-teasing, and can’t help how his smile grows when Soap bursts out laughing.

“Damn, am I that obvious?” He jokes, before leaning in, eyes bright and focused. “I need to know. How much of what you said that night was impulse?”

Ghost pauses, exhaling, lost to thought for a second and having to skim over what he remembers of their conversations, intentionally skipping past a few specific points. He tilts his head, nose scrunching, before he replies slow and thoughtful. “Probably at least forty percent. I was thinking, just not entirely about my phrasing the whole time.”

“Steamin’ Jesus,” Soap mumbled, looking a bit beyond baffled and amused. “Does your joke about Kentucky count as you not thinking?”

Fucker. Ghost swears to himself. That was one of the interactions he fucking skipped over, god damnit-

“Yeah.” He sighs. “Yeah, I wasn’t thinking on that one.”

“Is it because I called you a good boy?”

Ghost choked on his own spit, completely taken off guard, and coughed into his hands, lungs almost rattling with the force of it, before he choked out his response, far, far weaker than he wished he did.

“Johnny, what the fuck?”

“Well?” Soap teased, snickering. “Is it?”

“No,” Ghost rasped, a lie blatant to himself as he forced himself to breathe. “No, it’s not.”

Soap raised an eyebrow at him, grinning smugly, and Ghost stared back at him, not understanding. There’s no way he knows, is there? He can’t know.

“You sure, Lt? Don’t have a thing for being called a good boy?”

Jesus fucking Christ, Soap.

“Yes,” Ghost half-growled, rubbing his hands over his face, starting to get truly fed up. “I’m sure.”

Soap was grinning when he put his hands down, a gleam in his eye that Ghost really didn’t like. He knew something, and Ghost was hoping it wasn’t the fact that he was lying just a few seconds ago.

“I don’t believe you, sir.” The use of a title, an honorific, felt like mocking, and Ghost’s heart kicked up a notch in his chest. *Shit*. He knew, didn’t he.

“Why’s that?” Ghost challenged right back, glaring Soap down. If Soap didn’t have an answer, he could push that, force the topic to become uncomfortable and get Soap to drop it. He did it before, with dozens of other people, he could do it to Soap, too. But, because his luck seems to have run out, it wouldn’t go that way.

“Your face is flushed.”

Ghost’s world stopped. *What*. When he looked to Soap, what must’ve been a disbelieving look on his face, Soap shrugged.

“You’re bright red, sir. Don’t know what to tell you.”

For a second, Ghost’s brain just *couldn’t* catch up, until he glanced down and his eyes caught his mask and - *fuck*.

That’s right. He has his mask off.

Which means that Johnny can see when he gets embarrassed and flustered.

His eyes flicked back up to Soap, his horrible realization accidentally painted across his face, and Soap started to smile, smug and *knowing*, and Ghost’s heart kicked in his chest. Oh, fuck. *Shit*.

“You forgot you had your mask off. You *forgot*,” Soap whispers, and Ghost *feels* his face get hotter. Motherfucker.

“Be *quiet*, Soap.” He growls, and Soap grins at him.

“No,” He says, thoughtful and decisive. “I don’t think I will.”

“*Soap*.”

“Why should I? We’re off duty, you can’t tell me what to do. Besides,”

“*Johnny.*” That’s a threat. Soap knows it is, but he outright ignores it, smiling, because he’s right. Ghost *can’t* do anything. And he knows that.

“You can’t tell me it isn’t a little endearing that the arguably most feared lieutenant of the one-four-one *melts* when he’s called a *good boy.*” Soap leaned into his accent, and dropped his voice just a little when he said those two damn words, and Ghost felt himself turning into jelly, struggling to fight back.

“I do not-”

“But you *do,*” Soap purred at him, watching Ghost’s composure crumble before his very eyes as he desperately held on to what was left of it. “You’re a *good boy,* Simon, and you like hearing it too. Don’t you?”

Ghost felt whatever he had left of his composure dissolved, and hid his face behind the shade of his folded hands against his forehead, heart racing in his chest, weak and mouth dry. He didn’t - he never knew that Soap could *do this,* could have such an effect on him, but he was melting and *weak* and something about it being his Johnny that was doing it made it so, so much better and worse at the same time, in different ways he couldn’t explain.

He heard Soap chuckle, and saw the shadow of him leaning in a little more.

“*Good boy, Lt.*”

Ffuck,

Ghost let himself crumple, hiding his face in his arms instead, a thin whine escaping him without meaning for it to, head seeming to fill to the brim with fuzz. *Fuck,* Soap *had him,* caught him and he couldn’t even bring himself to *want* to fight back. Soap laughed softly, and Ghost choked down another whine, eyes squeezing shut.

“That’s fuckin’ cute, Simon.” Soap murmured, voice drenched in affection, and Ghost could’ve

sworn that his head was spinning. “I won’t tell anyone, I assure you that, but this is the most attractive thing I’ve ever seen from you.”

“Shut up.” He rasped, voice wavering on the edge of a crack as he protested, eyes still pressed shut. He was so dizzy. *Too* dizzy,

“Negative, sir.” Soap said, sneaking a glance over at Price, Gaz, and Laswell. They weren’t looking their way. Good. He looked back at Ghost - a weak puddle before him, head down on the table in his arms, hair a mess all over the place, ears bright red from what he could see. He smiled. “You’re *beautiful*. Such a *good fuckin’ boy*.”

Ghost whimpered, much to his own dismay, shoulders hunching as he did. Soap chuckled a little breathlessly at him, and he felt those fingers gently brush against his own, touch his scalp, gently push hair back, laying it flatter.

“Please,” Ghost whispered, feeling like his heart was going to beat out of his chest. “Stop.”

Soap exhaled slowly, feeling like the air was punched out of his chest. *Please*, Ghost said. *Please, stop*. He said *please*. A thousand thoughts filled Soap’s mind, but the clearest ones became that they were technically in public, and Ghost probably hadn’t been praised like that in months, if not years.

“Okay,” He said gently and sincerely. “I’ll stop.”

“*Thank you*.” Ghost whispered, exhaling shakily, still feeling like his head was spinning. Soap hummed gently, patting his arm, and sliding his mask closer to him.

“Can I suggest you putting your mask back on?” Soap offered sheepishly, and watched Ghost shift, spotting the mask right by his arm.

“Yes,” Ghost grumbled, voice cracking a little. “Yes you can.”

“I recommend you put your mask back on, Lt,” Soap joked, using the tone he always does when he’s being respectful and helpful on the field. “Think it’ll help you get your head back.”

Ghost managed to locate his hand despite not having most of his field of vision back, and smacked Soap's hand, *hard*, Soap laughing and holding the hand to his chest while Ghost slid the mask back over his head cleanly, meaning that by the time the three at the bar whipped around to see what the hell that loud bang was about, all they would see is Soap holding his hand to his chest and laughing, and Ghost in the middle of putting his mask back on.

They ended up leaving less than fifteen minutes later, Ghost eerily quiet and lurking behind them all as they walked, unable to help but melt on the inside when Soap looks over his shoulder and catches his eye, offering him the softest, kindest smile he thinks he's ever been given.

His face warms up behind the mask and he averts his eyes, smiling. Maybe being a little vulnerable, being known by others, isn't so bad sometimes.

End Notes

please note: i do not write smut. if you want to write ghost being fucked and called a good boy, DO IT YOUR GODDAMN SELF /LH

anyway hi, im on tumblr !! come say hello @ cornerdreams-txt :)

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