

## pick my bones clean, 'cause i'm all yours

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## pick my bones clean, 'cause i'm all yours

by Anonymous

### Summary

Red fights (a self-proclaimed) god.

Ash decides to troll one last time before giving up his powers, and, as always, is very extra about things.

### Notes

Yeahhhh I don't know where I wanted to go with this one I'll be honest I was practicing writing fights and I don't think I did that well

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

“You look like you have a couple of missing hearts there, Reddoons.” Ash’s voice rolls through the air, thunder amidst the lightning splintering the sky. “How about I give you another one?”

The light sparks over his armour, sharp against the purple sheen of enchantments. It slithers down the length of his sword as he swings it, collecting at the tip when it buzzes impatiently, straining to leap off the blade.

When his sword stills, it's pointed straight down at Red.

“Ash,” Red begins lowly, eyes narrow, hand tightening on his own sword. “What is this?”

Cold wind lashes at him, whistling past the cracks in his armour, whipping his cape out hard such that he has to throw himself forward to keep from being pulled over. Darkness snarls over the sky with the furious clouds swirling, and there, luminous in the eye of the storm – Ash, with the space around him warping and glitching.

If Ash wanted one of his hearts, he was going to have to come and get it, because Red sure wasn't going to give it up at a little intimidation. He's killed Ash before, pushed his sword through his chest until his body fell apart and spilled every part of himself on the wet earth, and this is going to be no different even given these weird conditions, Ash's apparent ascension. He'll be taking one of Ash's hearts today.

“I am a god!” Ash laughs and it echoes, shuddering through the stone beneath Red's boots. A stream of gravel skitters down the mountainside. Ash's eyes glint sharply. “And you, Red, you've never been more mortal.”

He dives.

Red has less than a second to bring up his own sword in response – their blades clash, his feet crunch into the ground, and he hisses from the impact, something like electricity sizzling from his grip into his hands. Ash, thankfully, zips back up into the sky, circling, his grin a gleaming knife in the shadows crowding around him. Red takes that moment to scan his surroundings, observe the rocky mountaintop and remember the placement of the boulders taller than him so he can slowly position himself with his back to one.

“Do you think you have power, Red?” Ash swoops lower, just out of reach beyond the cliff's edge, darting forward, backward, taunting. “Do you think you have any power in this world?”

“Of course I do,” Red scoffs. “I am the most powerful one here.” Keep him talking. Keep him talking until he lets his guard down and hovers too close, where he'll find Red's sword biting into his flesh. “You don't scare me.”

“I don't scare you, do I?” Ash repeats, mocking. “Come now, Red. You don't need to lie to me.”

The plan works perfectly, or even better than perfectly, because Ash charges and Red pivots and their swords clang once, twice, sparks flying, lightning flashing in the background, Ash cuts Red's exposed sleeve and Red slashes him through the shoulder. Ash switches to his shield and Red chases with his axe, hooking the blade over the top of the shield and tearing it to the side, exposing the rest of his body which he immediately strikes at as his sword flashes back into his hand. Ash cackles as he parries, redirecting Red to the side instead.

“I'm the better fighter.” Red spins his axe back into his hand and bats the incoming swing away, arcing back in a slice that would've taken Ash's head if he had been a little quicker. A thin line of red appears against Ash's neck. “You're awfully vulnerable for a god.”

“Oh, Red, oh... You don't know anything.” Ash is quick, and darts within the range of his axe. Little pockets of reality tear and reform rapidly around him – he's all worked up, pupils blown wide, grin curving its way up his face. “You have no power here.”

Red braces for his first injury, but instead, a hand closes around his wrist.

The world goes pitch black. He's only aware of himself, the immediate vicinity under his feet, and

the grip Ash has on him. Blood thunders through his skull as he struggles to form a mental image of the terrain, trying to trace where Ash could possibly be, switching his sword into his free hand to slice at the blind area around him.

“You’re not in control,” Ash’s whisper, deep and rumbling, sounds way too close and there’s a puff of breath by his ear from behind. A shiver crackles down Red’s spine as he growls and twists, lashing out.

“Oh, that was close.” Ash is beside him now, and just as Red corrects his course and prepares to strike again, Ash yanks his hand up and twirls him, catching his waist in an arm before dipping him down and pulling him back straight again, flush against his body. Red leaves his weapons and elbows him, an attack he knows is successful when Ash releases him and retreats into the darkness.

Red swings after him, and is rewarded by the hard ‘clack’ hitting a shield. “I’m blind, and you’re still losing!” He calls.

The laugh he hears in response should be concerning, but he only uses the sound to venture forward, seeking in the darkness.

A hand grabs his shoulder and tugs him backward. There. He digs his feet into the ground and does a 180, kicking off the ground while bringing his sword up, slashing down. In his wake behind him, he hears gravel roll off an edge, clattering a hard fall downward. He’s at the edge of the cliff – the mental map from earlier comes into being.

His blade strikes something solid. Ash lets out a grunt which morphs into a giggle.

“Look at me, Red.” Ash’s voice floats to Red again and he pinpoints him to be standing right in front of one of the boulders. He pretends to fumble, staggering blindly with no sense of direction, slowly but surely approaching the right location-

He closes the distance in a leap, Ash’s face blossoming into view amidst the darkness, and slots his sword under Ash’s chin, shoving upward, the blade settling in a place so familiar the motion could’ve been muscle memory at this point.

“That’s right,” Ash rasps, a trickle of blood tracing a path down the side of his neck, stopping in the dip over his collarbone. “Look me in the eyes-” His breathing hitches when Red pushes him further into the boulder at his back.

“So, Ash.” Red does exactly that and glares at him, eye to eye, noses about touching, breaths mingling. “Mind explaining what this is all about? Before I kill you.” He applies the smallest bit of pressure, and blood beads at the edge of the blade.

“Look at me,” Ash leans forward as far as he can go, eyes half closed, head tilted. A hand glides up Red’s arm to rest on his shoulder, and for a moment, Red thinks he’s going to kiss him. “And remember - I’m a god.”

The world comes back with a deafening peal of thunder, the shadowed surroundings entirely too bright compared to pitch blackness, and Red flounders, disoriented. In that moment of carelessness where his grip loosened by an inch, Ash slips out, flashes a sword into his hand, and strikes. Red struggles to parry. He’s losing ground, and his thoughts are hammering against his skull painfully.

One strike from this side, another from that side. Ash raises his sword high, too obvious, but Red is caught up in the flow and stupidly, raises his blade to catch it.

Ash kicks him in the stomach.

He staggers back, and seethes through clenched teeth. “You dirty bastard.”

“That’s why you love me,” Ash sings, then makes a show of blowing him a kiss.

They’ve been enemies. They’ve been rivals. They’ve been partners. They’ve been friends. In another world, they might’ve been something more – something that has no place in this world, not when Ash is trying to steal his hearts that he worked hard to earn, hearts that are slowly increasing toward twenty. The number’s only going up, he resolves. Not down. Right now, they’re enemies.

Red shoves, unbalances Ash, and spears his sword through his shoulder. When he yanks it out, Ash winces and reaches a hand toward the wound, fingers coming away sticky with blood.

“Last chance,” he warns, blade ready. “How did you even-“

Ash cackles, lightning explodes in the background, and the light glints off the gold sword in his hand.

Wait, gold sword?

Ash swipes at him. It wouldn’t have hit him anyway, but he blocks the hit. He quickly regrets it once his body starts to feel light, feet leaving the pull of the earth, and his head goes woozy like he’s been deprived of oxygen. The ground falls away, literally, as swirling particles fizzle and pop around him, lifting him into the air.

Below, Ash wheezes, catching his breath, before leaping into the air as well. “Come up with me, Red.”

With nothing to push off of or grab, Red flails through air, and he feels like he’s underwater, limbs finding purchase nowhere. He prides himself as a patient man, but this was wearing away at the last strands very quickly. Ash is *toying* with him.

He likes being powerful. He likes being in control. He likes being on top, and if there’s anyone he’d let stand beside him at the top of the world, it *would* be Ash if they were on agreeable terms, but he would never let him stand *above* him.

“Beautiful scenery around here, isn’t it?” Ash comments, circling just out of reach.

Red cranes his head down. Surrounding the mountain they’d been on are other smaller mountains, the flatter areas dusted in snow and thick with towering spruces. In the stretches without trees, natural, unmined ore gleam with each flash of lightning. A ravine splits the earth right next to the peak.

It’s a long way down – enough to kill a man from the fall.

He begins to swim away from the mountain, slowly inching over the edge of the cliff into open air above the ravine right next to it. He’s acutely aware of Ash following him, but decides to ignore his presence.

Until Ash bumps him and sends him back toward the mountain peak.

“I *will* kill you.” Red tells him, wringing every bit of venom he has into those words. “Once we get down there, you’re done.”

Something is off. Something is off about this fight, and Red thinks he’s just about got a grasp on what it is after reviewing the details of their confrontation. He’s pretty sure he’s found the chink in

Ash's armour, but it may be a trick of his mind, far too presumptuous for his own good, a mental delusion telling him he's seeing what he wants to see.

"I'm sure you will." Ash smirks, and they drop.

Red bucket clutches while Ash abruptly stops mid-air a couple blocks away from the surface, then plunges with his sword the rest of the way down, blade crunching into stone and spewing shrapnel. "Carry on, Red. Keep clinging to that illusion of control."

"How about," Red rolls to the side, wincing as small shards of rock dig into his palms, his wrists. "You do that." he gets to his feet close to the edge of the cliff, the dizzying drop beyond radiating a chilling cold, wind howling, dust flying.

Last chance to rethink his plan, to re-evaluate his judgement and confirm whether the flicker he'd seen in Ash's eyes was actually there or not. He's running out of time.

He's a businessman. Cost analysis says that it's win-win; either he throws Ash off and gets his heart, or he dies and Ash doesn't get his heart – risk exists, but how could that scare him? He lives for probabilities and unlikelihoods, percentages and fractions that would've sent any rational person running.

"Come down with me, Ash."

Red steps back, into open air. The world tilts, then blurs.

He watches Ash's eyes go wide, and it's not from glee.

Red plummets. He has no levitation effect this time, so if he hits the bottom, he's gone for sure. He's the one smirking now; Ash's shocked expression is enough to give him smug satisfaction for the next few days, and if Ash thought he was the one in control, well, that's a funny joke.

After a blink of hesitation, Ash swoops after him.

For a moment, Red thinks that he won't make it. He's falling fast, and Ash can only fly so fast – but as he has the tendency to, Ash defies all odds and loops his arms around Red's back, pulling him into an embrace just before they both hit the ground, veering off to the side in a slanted trajectory before slamming into the ground, part rolling, part skidding to a stop.

"Red, what the hell--"

Red draws his arm free, and stabs Ash through the chest.

The shimmering blue plate, cracked from previous wounds and impact of landing, shatters around his sword and a few shards fall on him, clinking against his own armour. Blood sprays across his face. Ash lets out a startled laugh, then a pained choke when Red flips the both of them so he ends up on top.

Red's shades are crooked, but he can't care less. He took a beautiful gamble, and he won, beautifully.

"Who's in control now?" He purrs as he leans down, pushing his entire upper body weight onto his weapon. Cracks spiderweb through what remains of the armour beneath it, and it sinks in even deeper. Blood bubbles up like a spring through the fissures, soaking Ash's clothes, staining Red's suit, but Red doesn't mind. His suit was red anyway. "How the mighty have fallen, Ash. Not so godly right now, are you."

Ash's lips twist into a smile – slow, resigned, proud. A trail of red dribbles from the corner of his mouth, glitching. “Red,” he gurgles as more begins to fill his mouth. “Did you- did you like it?” One hand grasps at Red's collar, weakly tugging.

Red blinks. He's always been someone to know what to say in every situation, but he finds himself searching for words, unable to answer a simple question. Leave it up to Ash to pull whatever this is. He knows Ash can be a little mad at times - Red can be, too. It's that twist of insanity and the brazen ambition that made him look at Ash for the first time and immediately think, *that needs to be mine*, and right now that thought bubbles back to the forefront of his mind, loud, clamouring, eating up the sounds of any other more sensible thoughts.

What are they, in this world, in this moment?

Wait.

Was this all to-

He sucks in a deep breath and suppresses the urge to start yelling.

“Don't you ever do this again,” he grabs Ash's head, fingers tangling into wet, matted hair at the nape of his neck, and yanks him closer, using his other hand to push the sword in deeper, hilt thunking against ribs. Torn flesh oozes against his hand. The air reeks of iron and electricity, wind and smoke. “And for the record, I am *always* in control.”

He kisses him so hard their teeth clack through flesh. He thinks he split a lip.

Ash makes a small sound, something like a muffled gasp, into his mouth, and grabs him with renewed vigour, fisting his hands into the fabric of Red's shirt. He tastes like blood and heat and a little lick of desperation – he tastes like light fading from his eyes, strength fleeing from his limbs, and life bleeding from his body.

“Enjoy the heart,” Ash murmurs into his lips. “I did say- I'd give you another one.” He shudders, and falls limp.

Red releases him, sword still buried to the hilt, and stands, spitting the residual blood from his mouth. The new heart fizzles in his health bar, electric under his skin, a tingling sensation of renewal against the exhaustion settling in his bones. “You cheeky little-“

So that's why Ash had opened with declaration of Red's lack of hearts, followed by the ambiguous, almost incoherent offer to give him another one, and of course Ash's answer to the question of "how do you give someone a heart" was going to be "everything but withdrawing one and handing it over". Well, there were some other things that happened, but Red pointedly decides to ignore them for the sake of his internal grumbling.

*Ashswagg was killed by Reddoons*, the chat reads.

From nowhere in particular, like ambient smoke on receding storm winds, he hears laughter swirl around him.

“Quit sitting in the respawn realm!” He shouts at the corpse, even though he's sure he can be heard if he spoke normally, and shoves it for good measure. “You and I are going to have *words* after this.”

## End Notes

I hope you enjoyed reading this barely coherent word vomit thanks lmao

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