

5 chapters of mutually pining Havoc/Roy, set about a year after the Promised Day, except for a flashback in chapter 2. Lots of angst until an extra long, emotional, and spicy final chapter.

NSFW/18+. Includes implied unrequited Roy/Hughes, and background Riza/Rebecca.

Titles come from the song Fireside by Arctic Monkeys.

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FIRESIDE.

By Jeminy3

1. *I can't explain, but I want to try.*

there's this image of you and I

and it goes dancing by

in the morning and in the night time.

WARNINGS: closeted feelings, depression, fatalistic thinking, smoking, yelling

You're kinda mysterious, Colonel," she says, fluttering her long eyelashes. "Don't really talk about yourself much, do you?"

Roy shrugs lightly, brushing his shoulders against her arm draped around them. "What's there to tell? I'm sort of an open book," he says - not at all genuine, but so convincing that it doesn't matter.

Then he cocks an eyebrow, lids his eyes, lowers his voice like he always does when being flirtatious. "Besides, I prefer hearing about *you*, Miss ah- Kathy." That was her name, right? Hm. Must be more drunk than he thought if he's forgetting already.

But it looks like he was correct, as Kathy laughs heartily, her eyes sparkling as brightly as the drink held precariously in her other hand. She's threatened to tip it over several times already because she's so focused on him... or, more likely, because she's also much more inebriated than she looks.

"Ever the charmer, huh?" she says between giggles. "No wonder you're such a ladies' man."

"I am," Roy says. Another well-practiced lie. But just to prove it, he reaches out and gently takes a lock of her long, wavy hair, following it up and tucking it behind her ear. Ever the gentleman. Chris would be proud.

Kathy giggles further at the touch, her shoulders rising. She dips her head and curls toward him, perhaps more than she intended, as she all but flops against his chest. Definitely drunk.

Roy's not much better, of course, as he's started giggling too, a haze in his mind. He pats her shoulders, almost apologetically, before reaching for his own drink from the bar counter to take another sip. When he sets it back down, he looks to see Kathy's eyelashes fluttering very close to his face now.

"You're so pretty, Colonel," she says, low, almost purring.

"You're prettier," Roy purrs back.

"You're just saying that."

Of course he is - Kathy's fairly plain underneath the makeup, the fake lashes, the perm'd hair and low-cut dress that accentuates what little chest she has. But who's counting? She's just like him, in a way - putting on a pretty mask to court with other pretty masks for a respite from the misery of daily life, however temporary. Pretending to have no jobs, no responsibilities, no future for a few hours.

After all, the passage of time only brings more and more misery until the inevitable end, in Roy's experience.

Ah- he's thinking too much. A dangerous thing to do in his addled state, and in the presence of a nonetheless lovely lady who is very much wanting his attention right now. He meets her lidded eyes, and decides, in light of not being sure what to say anymore (and not trusting his pessimistic brain), to use his mouth for more than just flattering words.

He lifts a hand to brush back another lock of her hair, cup her cheek lightly, then leans down to press his lips to hers. She rises to it quickly, expectantly, kissing back without hesitation. They shift a little as they acclimate to the taste of each other, Kathy shifting her weight up and against him from her stool, bumping her thigh against his. Roy takes the hint, and gently cups her hips (not her ass, he's a gentleman after all) and lifts, allowing her a seat in his lap. She breaks off the kiss briefly as she adjusts herself further, giggling again.

She sets aside her drink on the counter, then resumes the kissing in earnest, using the now-free hand to grasp the back of his head as they kiss. She curls her fingers into his dark hair as she pulls his head towards her, hungrier for him now - with desire, not affection, of course.

Roy responds in equal measure, just as empty of everything but the need to be filled - even if it still feels hollow.

Across the way, a fair-haired man leans against the wall of the smokers' area of the bar, his blue eyes glaring venomously. He'd been sneaking glances at the couple sitting at the bar counter here and there throughout the night, but now the sight holds him fast, fills him with bile. A muscle in his jaw twitches, and he's gritting his teeth so tightly that he's crushed his cigarette into uselessness without realizing it.

In front of him, a short, bob-haired young woman is trying to get his attention. "...Jean? Hellooo, Jean?"

He doesn't seem to hear her. "Jean? HELLO? Ugh, you-"

Groaning with frustration, she grabs him roughly by the shoulder and forces him to face her. He bristles at the contact, turning his piercing glare upon her. "Okay what?! What is it? You wanna light or somethin'?" he says, tearing his crushed cigarette from his mouth with two fingers.

The woman shifts her own cigarette in her mouth, already lit. "No, dummy. The hell's wrong with you? You've been spacing out all night."

Jean groans, turning away again, tucking his hands into his elbows and pressing himself back against the wall, hard, as if hoping to melt into it. "It's *nothing*. I'm fine."

"You don't *look* fine," the woman says, frowning at him.

"What d'you know Fran? Fuck off," Jean growls.

He's craned his head and neck away from her to avoid eye contact, continuing to peek at the couple still making out at the bar. Now they're working down each other's necks, smiling and laughing against each other, no doubt whispering sweet nothings into their skin. His blood boils.

"Jeeze, real *gentleman* you are," Fran mutters, removing her cigarette and puffing out an angry cloud of smoke. "This date sucks."

"Hm," Jean grunts, once again not really paying attention to her.

"The hell are you even looking at- what, those guys?" Jean whips his head down to see Fran's bobbed hair below him, leaning to see what he's been looking at. "Wow, they are so making out," she says, almost wistful.

She turns back to him, narrowing her eyes. "What, you gotta problem with them or somethin'?"

Something about the words makes a flush of heat go through Jean, and he throws his crushed cigarette to the ground as he jerks away from the wall. "Y'know what? Maybe I do! Maybe I gotta problem with *him*!" he says, voice rising.

"Maybe he shoulda left me behind like I asked him to! Maybe he coulda had the decency to visit me more than once a goddamn year when I couldn't walk anymore! And *maybe*, just *maybe*, he shouldn't have given my fuckin' legs back so I didn't have to see his goddamn face every day and watch him waste his life away in dumps like this!"

He's loud enough that other patrons in the smoking area, and a few at the nearby tables, are staring at him with concerned looks. Fran's face pinches with confusion. "...The hell are you talkin' about? Are you like, okay?"

"I said I'm *FINE*!" Jean barks, and turns to leave with a huff, his face burning from the fact that he knows everyone's staring at him, knows he's making a scene, knows he's totally losing control now and he just can't *be here* anymore.

He storms off toward the fire exit and throws it open, walking towards the parking lot to find his car. He fumbles his lighter and cigarette case out his pockets, and after almost dropping them two, three times, he realizes he's shaking. He rubs his eyes, rubs his face, tries to breathe evenly. He looks at the dark shapes around him and can't see his stupid car anywhere, everything's blurry and blown out like-

...His eyes are wet. His fingers too, where he rubbed at them.

He's crying.

"...Roy? What's wrong?"

Roy blinks a few times, belatedly realizing that he's stopped responding to Kathy. He'd broken off their kissing to briefly scan the bar around them in the wake of a distant, familiar voice carrying to his ears, crying out in anger. His brain responded with one part fear, two parts hope, and for a moment he searched desperately for the face that voice normally belonged to, wondering if maybe this time-

...No, no. Couldn't be. Wouldn't happen anyway. He's being too hopeful. *And* very rude to his companion right now. He turns his attention back to Kathy, trying to look as apologetic as he can. "Ah- Sorry."

She looks curious, but not accusatory. "Is it this place?" she asks, batting her eyelashes again. They open wide as she looks around the bar as well. "...Now that you mention it, it *is* kinda crowded here."

She loosens her arms around him, lets a hand drip down like water along his shoulder towards his chest. "We should take this somewhere else... If you have a place in mind, that is." The hand gently tugs at his shirt collar, her intentions clear.

Roy smiles knowingly. "I think I do."

2. there's all these secrets that I can't keep.

like in my heart there's that hotel suite

and you lived there so long

it's kinda strange, now you're gone

There's not enough stuff exploring *how* exactly each member of Team Mustang got their positions under him, so I had an idea and ran with it.

WARNINGS: war and death mentions, fatalistic talk/thinking, threats

- Roughly 8 years ago -

Jean Havoc always thought of himself and his life in one word: simple.

A simple boy from a simple town, born to simple shopkeepers, making a simple living at whatever he was good at. Which was helping out in the family business at first, but after hitting hard times as simple families tend to do, he drafted himself and became a soldier. And for that, there were really only three things you had to be good at: fighting, following orders, and giving them.

He grew into a simple man with simple desires: fight some wars, get a girl, settle down, have some kids, and live a good, simple life like his parents did.

So he was a bit surprised when his humble contingent was selected to serve in East Headquarters under a newly-promoted Lieutenant Colonel by the name of Roy Mustang. He could call it good fortune, but he'd rather blame it on this new commander being shockingly young for the position (barely in his mid-twenties, like Havoc himself), so he probably didn't know any better.

...But maybe he did, since he was also the famed Flame Alchemist and, as the military called him, "The Hero of Ishval."

Havoc and his men were at the very outskirts of the Ishvalan Civil War, but they all heard the stories - awful, terrible stories. After spending enough years in the service, you get sort of numb to stuff like this, but Ishval was an exception in just how... *grisly* the whole thing was from

beginning to end. An entire subset of Amestrian civilians all but wiped from the face of the earth completely, just for trying to push back against unfair treatment from their own government.

Tensions had been rising since Havoc's parents were young, and maybe one could argue that both sides were guilty parties, but all Havoc was concerned about was the fallout. Hundreds dead, even more missing, many of them women, children, elders. In a word - innocents. People that the military were supposed to *protect*, last time he checked.

Havoc never said it out loud - not even to his own family - but any real, genuine pride he had in his country was gone at this point. He didn't sign up to serve a military that slaughtered innocent people like butchers, no matter how they tried to justify it.

Something needed to change, and fast, before anything worse happens - but alas, if only he were a smarter man. Right now, Havoc was merely the Corporal of a small group of soldiers, and any hopes of making earth-shattering changes to make his country a righteous place again were far-away dreams. But a dream's a dream, he supposes.

He holds onto that hope, small as it is, as he stands abreast his team in East Headquarters' courtyard, all equally tense as Mustang approaches them. They all knew the gist of what this so-called "Hero" did to earn his title and rank, so none of them were particularly looking forward to meeting him - especially not Havoc.

He certainly looks the part, Havoc thinks, as Mustang inspects his contingent one by one. He stands tall and firm, as intimidating a presence as any old General. Especially with his face - stony and expressionless, no doubt hardened by the slaughter he'd participated in.

He won't be broken, Havoc thinks, as Mustang curtly announces the end of his inspection for all to hear. He's made it this far, this hotshot new commander won't scare him. ...Even if he *could* turn him and his men into cinders with a snap of his fingers, supposedly. He's not nervous...

...Well, just a little bit.

He resists the urge to swallow as Mustang stops in front of him, holds his gaze for a moment, his dark eyes looking out between thin strands of black hair. Something smolders in them, a fire that's probably as black as his soul - piercing, burning, studying. Despite himself, Havoc feels a prickle of heat go up the nape of his neck.

And then, to his surprise, Mustang smiles. "You have good men here, Corporal Havoc," he says, warm and genuine.

Havoc blinks, stammers, but only for a moment. He quickly straightens himself and salutes. "Thank you, Lieutenant Colonel Mustang, sir."

Mustang's smile widens slightly, softening his eyes. "Just Mustang or Lieutenant Colonel will do, Corporal."

Havoc blinks again. Huh... maybe he's not as scary as he first thought.

The next several months are relatively peaceful for Havoc and his men. Serving under Mustang, they find themselves usually sent out for small-time reconnaissance missions and general peacekeeping in the immediate area. It's odd, compared to what they're used to - most commanders are eager to send them out to fight in the nearest conflict, or as reinforcements for a bulwark or occupied town.

Nonetheless, Havoc finds it a relief and counts this as a blessing in disguise, as it's given him plenty of spare time to scope out East City's dating scene. But he's still not quite sure what to think of his new superior.

Mustang seemed so serious at first, but since settling in, he doesn't do much besides the usual office work - inspections, meetings, phone calls, and mountains of paperwork that he's notoriously slow at. And when he isn't working he's a total goof-off, flirting with any attractive woman who crosses his path, going out to bars and taking the women he's wooed out for nights on the town.

He even chats with girls on the phone during work hours! Good grief! Havoc had *some* discretion when it came to girls, this guy was just shameless!

Havoc's been trying to figure him out for a while. Even now, as he takes his usual afternoon smoke in the break room, seated in a chair near the back. Mustang just... rubs him the wrong way. Like what's his deal? Is he even *trying* to take his job seriously? No, he must be, he's practically a decorated veteran after Ishval... He just isn't *acting* like it.

Acting... Hm. Havoc shifts his jaw, bothering his cigarette with his teeth, pondering. That's gotta be what he's doing - an act. Pretending to be a lazy, good-for-nothing skirt-chaser, because...

...Because he's a heartless murderer getting fat off his blood money, like every other commander from Ishval.

- And suddenly the break room door creaks and moves, jostling Havoc from his thoughts and nearly sending him right out of his skin. Even more alarming is who's walking in - Lt. Colonel Mustang himself.

He shuffles in, looking somewhat drained as he nonchalantly pushes the ajar door further open, gazing distantly across the room before catching sight of Havoc. His dark eyes brighten, and he smiles warmly. "Ah- Hello, Havoc," he says.

"Uh, hey- I mean hello, sir," Havoc says, remembering his formalities in time to quickly correct himself and give a half-hearted salute.

Mustang only chuckles dismissively as he strides in, holding the door open for a moment to allow someone else in with him - and sure enough, following closely behind him is 2nd Lieutenant Riza Hawkeye, his personal aide and bodyguard.

Havoc's wary of her as well, since her face is as stern and unreadable as Mustang's was the day he met him - except she looks like that *all* the time. She sticks to Mustang's side like glue, assisting him with daily tasks and accompanying him on official outings, her cold brown eyes always stoic and alert for potential danger.

...But usually, she's just standing by Mustang's desk, watching him as closely as her namesake to ensure his paperwork is completed before the end of the century.

After Havoc's occasional sightings of her practicing at the shooting range, it's obvious that she lives up to the title she earned in Ishval - 'The Hawk's Eye', a sniper who never misses her mark. According to rumors, she graduated ahead of her class before she was even twenty years old to be deployed there, and she's supposedly a good friend of Mustang's from those days.

...In other words, she's another murderer of innocents. More tragic here, since she's an awfully pretty young woman to be so heartless.

That's not what's bothering Havoc, though. What's weird is that Mustang and Hawkeye rarely show up in the break room, much less *together*. Something's not right here - but Hawkeye gives nothing away, as usual, and greets him with a silent nod before moving to the counter to use the coffee pot and surrounding cupboards.

Meanwhile, Mustang plops himself down into one of the cheap chairs near the center of the room, but not too far from where Havoc's seated. The oncoming summer heat seems to be getting to him, as he loosens a few of his uniform's buttons and pulls it apart, exposing his undershirt and some of his neck.

"God... all this paperwork's killing me," he says with a deflating sigh, sinking back into the chair.

"I'd think you'd be prepared for the workload, sir," Havoc responds, smirking in his direction.

"I guess I should have been," Mustang says, shrugging nonchalantly.

After a pause, he looks over, jerking his chin. "So, how's your day been, Corporal?"

Havoc raises an eyebrow. Small talk, huh? Sure, he'll play along. He makes a show of relaxing as well, leaning back in his chair and crossing his legs.

"Oh, same as usual. Training the new guys, keeping the older ones busy, seein' as we aren't getting a whole lot of action lately." He side-eyes Mustang, hoping he gets the clue.

Mustang purses his lips, nodding. He doesn't seem to catch it. "Mm. Good to hear. Are the new recruits doing well?"

"Well enough."

"Good, good... Any complaints so far?"

"Nothing much, besides the usual. Weather sucks, uniforms're too stuffy, y'know."

Mustang looks down at his own open uniform. "Well I can vouch for that," he says, chuckling heartily. Havoc joins in with his own forced laughter.

But the mirth dies as quickly as it came, and an awkward silence settles in, broken only by the bubbling of the coffee pot and Hawkeye idly tapping the counter. Havoc shifts, but says nothing, hoping that Mustang will break the silence with whatever business he's really here for.

Sure enough, Mustang glances around awkwardly before meeting Havoc's eyes again. He studies him for a moment, then leans forward slightly.

"Ah... How about we drop the titles for a few moments, Jean? Talk man-to-man, as it were."

Havoc blinks at him. "Huh?"

"Lieutenant, if you please." Mustang lifts a hand, signaling to Hawkeye, and she nods, turns off the coffee pot and strides over to the break room door. She locks and closes it with an ominous click, then stands firmly next to it, stern and wary as always. Meanwhile, Mustang leans forward, rests his elbows on his knees, interlocking his fingers. He narrows his eyes - and now that old flame's back in them. That burning, studying look that Havoc saw months ago.

Havoc swallows lightly as he looks between him and Hawkeye, feeling every bit like a wild 'coon caught in a trap it didn't see coming. He does his best to keep a straight face even as his heart begins to thump in his ears.

"...What's this about, Mustang?"

Mustang shrugs lightly. "Oh, not much. I just wanted to ask you something."

His mouth drying out and the room closed off, Havoc wisely decides to take his cigarette out of his mouth and put it out against his boot. After tossing it into his ash tray, he sits back, jerking his chin. "...A'right, then. Shoot."

Something sparkles in Mustang's dark eyes, and he smirks. "What do you think of me, Havoc? Be honest."

...Well that's a loaded question if he ever heard one, Havoc thinks. Your boss locks you into a room with him and his bodyguard and demands your honest opinion of him? May as well be asking, 'where'd you like me to leave your body - the city dump, or a river?'

Havoc shifts his jaw, despite not holding a cigarette in his mouth anymore. If he lies, Mustang will probably see right through it and press him harder. But if he's honest like Mustang wants

him to be, there's a chance he'll go easy on him for complying. And he may as well get some things off his chest.

Havoc leans forward, stares his boss dead in the eye and says evenly,

"...Honestly? I think you're full of shit, Mustang."

You could hear a pin drop in the ensuing silence.

Mustang's smile doesn't waver, though. Even widens a little. "...Really, now?"

Not angry, huh? Well, Havoc may as well get it all out. "Yeah. You came in here all serious and shit months ago, but all you do is sit on your ass and goof off with chicks all day. And I can understand that as another man, but you? You're shameless."

Mustang just nods slowly. What, is- is he actually *liking* this? Bastard... Havoc feels the hair on the back of his neck stand up. Feeling braver - and angrier - he continues.

"That's not all. Your so called 'heroics' in Ishval? My men and I, we heard the stories. We heard what the *grunts* saw, not the Generals. You were a *monster*. Whole villages reduced to dust with a few little flicks of your fingers. Men, women, children, everyone. Dead."

Mustang's smile drops into a thin line, but he's still nodding. Havoc feels his blood boiling at this point, clenching his hands on his knees.

"And I don't know about you, *sir*, but I like to think that what I do is *honorable*. I uphold the law, I protect people. Citizens. Those Ishvalans? They were citizens too, under the *law*. Y'all can call it a war till yer blue in the face but as far as I'm concerned, that was a *massacre*."

Finally, something dark and distant passes over Mustang's face, and he stops nodding.

"...Yes, it was," he says, almost whispering.

Havoc jerks to his feet, fists clenched, ignoring how Hawkeye tenses at the door. "So you agree, then? That yer a goddamn murderer without a drop of remorse in yer goddamn body?!"

Mustang only frowns in response, still staring at him. Then he slowly rises to his feet, carefully readjusting and closing his uniform. He says nothing.

Havoc can't stand this anymore. "Well?! You gonna say something to defend yourself? Or- Or maybe you already know there's no point, after what you've done."

Mustang regards him for a moment, then reaches a hand into his pants pocket. Havoc feels a rush of panic - he knows he keeps his Alchemy gloves there. He's watched Mustang use them here and there at official demonstrations: he'll coolly walk into the center of an arena, pull his white gloves out of his pockets and onto his hands, red transmutation circles emblazoned on

their backs. Then with a snap and a flash of light, he'll summon tongues of flames and explosions of any size and force he wants.

This is it, Havoc thinks. He's going to die here. But he'll be damned if he doesn't go down swinging.

Despite the fear gripping every bit of his body and sending him deep into the throes of his fight-or-flight response, he strides toward Mustang, sidling up so his chest is almost flush with his own, daring to put his face right in front of his.

"So that's it, huh? You gonna kill me now?" Havoc hisses, narrowing his eyes.

Mustang jerks back at the sudden closeness, but stands his ground. He lifts his head to meet Havoc's eyes, and at this distance, Havoc can see every detail of his face clearly. The creases around his eyelids, the sharp pupils of his black eyes, the sweat building on his brow. He can even feel the quick breaths from Mustang's nose against his lips.

Havoc jerks his eyes and head toward Hawkeye at the door, still speaking in a low, dark voice. "Didn't want your goon over there to get her hands dirty, right? I've seen 'er at the shooting range, best shot I've ever seen. But you know that'd leave too much of a mess, don't you? So instead yer gonna turn me into a nice li'l pile o' dust so I clean up *nice* an' *easy*."

Mustang only narrows his eyes, but Havoc can sense his breath hitching slightly, see his throat working, his lips pressing together. At this distance he can see that they're not as thin as Havoc assumed, sort of... soft, pliable. Pink-ish in color. And Mustang's actually significantly shorter than him, Havoc realizes vaguely, so it wouldn't take much, just a jerk of his chin and a lean forward, and he could-

...Wait, what is he-

Havoc jerks back, puffs out his chest, pushes away a vaguely flustered feeling that he blames on his highly emotional state. He keeps his eyes even with Mustang's.

"W- well do it, then," he sniffs. "I've said my piece. I got no regrets."

There's a beat of silence, the tension so palpable that Havoc can hardly breathe anymore. He glances between Mustang's hand still in his pocket and his face, his expression still unreadable. Havoc keeps his face tight, defiant. His senses fade around him, and all that seems to exist now is him, Mustang, and the sound of his heart in his ears. He flinches as Mustang's hand suddenly moves again, and pulls out-

A napkin.

...Wait, what?

Havoc just... stares, slack-jawed, as Mustang wipes his brow with the napkin, sighs long-sufferingly, then deposits it back into his pocket. Then he looks back up, clearing his throat, looking very tired, suddenly.

"No, Jean... My days of being a murderer are over," he says thoughtfully.

Havoc... doesn't know how to respond.

Mustang leans on one hip, lifts a finger to point at him. "You *are* right, though. About everything. And if I'd *intended* to get rid of you, that's probably how I would've done it. You're a smart man, Jean."

Havoc just... gapes at him. "Y... You're not- What?"

Mustang lowers his hand, smirking. "Relax, I'm not going to hurt you. Either of us."

Then he straightens and folds his arms behind his back, smiling serenely. "Sorry for the scare, I just uh- needed to test you. And I must say, you passed with *flying colors*, Jean. In fact, I'm thinking of giving you a promotion, if you don't mind."

"T... T- Test?" Havoc stammers uselessly, his mouth opening and closing like a fish. He looks between him and Hawkeye at the door and- Wait, is she *smiling*? Holy shit, she is. For once, Hawkeye's stern face wears a small, knowing smile, and her eyes are warm and mirthful instead of cold and distant.

When he looks back at Mustang, his eyes sparkle with inner laughter as well. "Has it ever occurred to you, Jean, that there is more to me than meets the eye?"

Havoc stammers again. "I- yeah, but... But you... and Ishval..."

The sparkles fade, along with Mustang's smile. "Yes, I did do all those things in Ishval. And I can tell you now that not a *single* part of me is proud of that, any of it. But if anything decent's come out of that hellhole, it's this-"

Mustang unfolds his arms, taps his forehead with a finger. "A plan. One that, if successful, will see me rising to the highest echelons of this godforsaken government, where I can enact change that will turn this country into something that *both* of us can be proud of again. A place of peace and justice, where the Ishvalan War, or *any* war, will never happen again. No more innocents will die, Havoc. I can promise you that."

Havoc feels his eyes nearly pop out of their sockets. "You- You don't mean... the Führer?"

Mustang nods, his eyes burning again. "Oh yes. I do."

He glances and nods in Hawkeye's direction. "But I can't do it alone. I need people on my side to help me get there. People I can trust, not just with my life or my orders, but with my ambitions. This will be dangerous in every possible sense, Jean."

Then Mustang's smile returns in its brightest form yet as he regards Havoc, puffing out his chest and lifting his chin, looking at him as if he were something... special. Like a grand treasure he's just discovered, a trophy he's won.

"...But from what I've seen? I think you're up for it," he says.

Havoc just... stares at him, breathless again. What he'd thought was a cage meant to kill him was a challenge that he'd risen to meet without even realizing it. He'd guessed correctly that his superior was putting on an act, but he'd misjudged his intentions *completely* - Mustang made himself seem lazy and shameless not to hide his inhuman cruelty, but so no one would ever suspect the earth-shattering ambitions hidden beneath his surface. Not his superiors, and certainly not his own subordinates. And maybe that in itself, the misjudgment, was part of the act too.

Something swells in Havoc's chest, and it must be pride, he thinks. Mustang was trusting *him*, simple ol' Jean Havoc, with those ambitions now. No one else, besides Hawkeye.

He's... Mustang... He's nothing short of incredible. There's no doubt about that, now.

...But he's not worth spacing out over like an idiot, Havoc realizes, and he blinks himself back into existence before he makes himself look even more foolish. He straightens quickly, and gives Mustang the best salute he can muster. "I- I- I'll do my best, Lieutenant Colonel Mustang sir!"

"I know you will," Mustang says, still smiling at him. "Now, let's head back to my office. There's much to discuss."

And that was how Havoc gained the title of 2nd Lieutenant, and more importantly, an absolute shitload of admiration and respect for his superior.

3. *I'm not sure if i should show you what I've found.*

has it gone for good?

or is it coming back around?

WARNINGS: suicidal talk/thinking, death mention, closeted feelings, yelling, callouts

- *Back in the Present* -

"...So, it was alright, I guess. *She* was alright, I mean. Don't know if I can say the same for myself."

...

"I mean, I tried. But she didn't seem into it as it went on. Dunno, maybe she could tell. At least she was nice enough not to say anything."

"...Not nice enough to at least leave me a note, or *something*. Just... poof, gone. Didn't even wake me."

...

"I'm not hung up. It was one night, I'll live. Not like it's the first time it's happened anyway."

...

"Hah, that's true. Look who I'm talking to."

Roy looks down from the horizon to what's in front of him: the grave of Brigadier General Maes Hughes. He's left another rose on it, alongside the other flowers and bouquets he's brought over the past two years. The grief's still there, but at least it's a more distant, empty feeling now.

He lets out a long, tired sigh. "...I know what you'd say. That I deserve better, right?"

He takes a swig from the small metal flask he's brought. It's some cheap gin, nothing special. Just something to take the edge off.

"You used to say that all the time. Didn't really help, but I guess it was better than nothing. We all know what I really deserve."

...

"Yeah? Wish I didn't."

...

"I guess so, yeah. It's nice while it lasts."

...

"Hah. You always made it look so *easy*. You were kind of an ass like that, y'know? Telling me to get married and all. But you didn't know, to be fair, so."

...

"Like I said, I'll live. This is nothing, compared to everything else I've been through."

...

"Well, it's looking like I'll be promoted soon, so... maybe it's not too long, now."

...

"I'll be fine. I'm kind of looking forward to it, actually. Maybe I'll see you again. See my parents, even. You'd better introduce me if they're there."

...

"I was a *child*, Maes. I'm practically a stranger now."

Roy glances back at the horizon, where the sun's dipping further and further from its high-noon position, the glare long-since faded from the surrounding clouds. He guesses that it must be getting close to two o' clock now. Break's almost over.

"It's getting late. Better get back to it, then."

...

"Yeah, I'll try. It's just... hard. You know."

He glances back over his shoulder as he turns to leave. "See you later, Maes."

Then he makes his way down the hill and out of the graveyard, away from the silence.

Breda approaches the break room door with some trepidation. It's quiet in there - too quiet. But he knows why. He sighs long-sufferingly, and pushes his way inside.

As soon as he enters, Havoc glares at him from the couch at the back of the room. And as Breda predicted, he's still in *that mood*. Leaning forward, arms draped over his knees, gritting his cigarette between his teeth, bouncing his foot vigorously. He's a ball of tension wound too tightly, ready to snap at any moment.

He's way too obvious at this point.

The others know as well, but are still keeping their distance from him. Riza in a chair near the center of the room, Fuery at the coffee pot in the corner, Falman by the water cooler to the left of the door. Safe positions.

Havoc meets Breda's eyes, jerks his chin. "He's at the graveyard again, isn't he?" he growls.

Breda shrugs. "Probably, yeah. His car wasn't out there when I looked."

"Tch..." Havoc clicks his tongue so harshly he almost hisses. With the smoke from his cigarette he looks every bit like the lit fuse of a bomb. He leans back, trying too hard to relax, crushing himself into the couch's back cushion.

He tears his cigarette out of his mouth, breathes out a uneven plume of smoke. "Typical. Talkin' to dead men when there's real ones right under his goddamn nose."

"You know how he is," Riza says evenly, but doesn't look at him.

He glares severely at her. "Yeah, but I don't have to *like* it."

Riza just shrugs at him. Breda can confidently say he's sized up the situation by now, and decides to move himself next to Falman by the water cooler, away from the door. The others aren't saying anything or making any moves, just glancing at Havoc nervously (especially Fuery). As usual, Breda decides to step up to the plate himself.

He gives Havoc a pointed look, putting his hands on his hips. "Y'know Jean, *you* could talk to him."

Havoc aims that glare right at Breda. "Oh yeah? And say *what*, exactly? Some sage relationship advice or somethin'? Sure, I'm the damn guru of that shit. Big help I'd be."

He's wide open. Breda looks him dead in eye, keeps his voice even and matter-of-fact.

"Jean... just tell him you love him already."

Direct hit. Havoc's eyes go wide, his jaw goes slack, his cheeks flush to the color of tomatoes. The tension snaps.

Havoc stares, stammers. "I- I don't- W- what the *HELL* Breda?! Where'd *that* come from?!"

Breda frowns. After knowing Havoc for as long as he has, he can't be surprised. "Uh... from you, man. For what, the past year?"

"Two years now," Riza corrects.

"Possibly more, if you count anything before the Lab Three incident," Falman adds.

Havoc just gapes at all of them, mouth opening and closing like a fish. He's flushed down to his neck by now. "Wh- what the *HELL* are you talking about?! I- I'm not- I'm straight and you all know that!"

They all give him knowing looks. Fuery's turned away from the counter by now, arms crossed in front of his chest, face pinched with a look of absolute pity. "Jean, please. We're getting *worried* about you. You can't keep denying it forever."

Havoc scrambles to his feet and throws his cigarette to the floor, standing in this vaguely defensive stance with his fists up. "I- I'm not denying a goddamn thing! I like women! And he's our boss! And that's *FINE!*"

Fuery frowns further, looks him up and down. "...You don't seem fine with that."

"The hell d' *you* know, Kain?!" Havoc barks, shaking a fist. "Y'all don't know me!"

Fuery cringes further. He might've hit him a bit *too* directly, Breda thinks. The drawl only gets heavy when he's *really* pissed off. And he definitely is now, from how he's trembling slightly, gritting his teeth and flaring his nostrils like a bull. But honestly, Breda saw this coming, too.

He tries to save face for Fuery. "Jean, stop-"

Havoc turns on him, the bull ready to charge. "*You* stop, Heyman! And all y'all! Yer makin' shit up that don't exist!"

Breda shakes his head, fixes him with the disarming look he always uses when he has to silently tell Havoc that he's flying off the handle and *needs* to calm down. And as usual, Havoc catches it, closes his mouth, exhales through his nose, simmers down into a venomous glare.

"Forget it. Fuck y'all."

He strides to the door in a second, throws it open with enough force to make it slam against the wall, and leaves. The tension dissipates as his footsteps echo down the hallway, and everyone sighs collectively. Breda's glad he moved away ahead of time.

He scratches idly at his neck. "Honestly? I expected that."

"Same here," Falman says, defeated.

Fuery lifts his glasses to pinch the bridge of his nose. "I'm gonna have a nervous breakdown *for* him at this rate."

Riza's leaning against her knees, rubbing her eyes and mumbling. "I'm getting a migraine."

Breda sighs deeply, again. "God... Was Rebecca ever this bad?"

Riza shakes her head, still covering her eyes. "Not nearly."

Fuery readjusts his glasses. "Well, you had the smart idea of confronting her early on, so it never *got* this bad."

Riza withdraws her hand and straightens. "Yeah, that's true."

"And Rebecca didn't follow you into bars just to spy on you from the smoking area," Breda adds.

Riza side-eyes him at that. "Well, *yeah*. I don't drown my feelings in booze and loose women. And Rebecca isn't an anxious mess with an inferiority complex."

Breda just shrugs again. "*Harsh*. But true."

Fuery shakes his head. "I just don't get it. Doesn't Roy notice anything?"

"Doesn't notice... or *won't* notice?" Falman muses, his eyes shifting.

Riza sighs, dipping her head again. "He's ignoring it. Has to be."

" But why?" Fuery asks.

"Easy. He thinks he doesn't deserve it, like he does with *everything*," Riza mutters.

Breda shakes his head, clicking his tongue. "Tch- Well they're a perfect match there. Jean acts like he'd rather lose his damn legs again than think he has a chance with him."

Riza groans softly. "Ugh- It's not about having *chances*, or being in the same *league*, relationships are hard enough without everyone making up silly rules that don't matter. Just *TALK* to each other."

"He's scared. So's Roy. That's all there is to it, at this point," Breda says, now with finality.

Falman hums in agreement, and Fuery just sighs sadly. No one says anything for several seconds, and the awkward silence is... well, awkward.

Suddenly, Riza rises to her feet, jerking her chair back and squaring her shoulders. "Well, I can't watch this anymore. Next time they're in here together, I'm leaving and locking the door behind me. Leave them in here overnight, if that's what it takes."

Fuery snorts behind her. "God- that's kind of extreme, isn't it?"

Riza side-eyes him over her shoulder. "Desperate times call for desperate measures. And those two are the most desperate I've ever seen."

Fuery just snorts harder. "Well, you got *that* right."

"A solid enough plan, unless Roy melts the door open," Falman points out, stroking his chin.

"Not if he doesn't have his gloves," Riza says coolly, glancing at him.

"He doesn't need them, he can do that clapping thing like Edward did, can't he?" Breda asks.

Riza closes her eyes, nodding slowly. "He can... and he wouldn't even need to use fire, just a metal transmutation to break the lock."

And then she looks at Breda again, this time with lidded eyes and a mischievous smile. "...He's forgetful under pressure, though."

Another look that Breda knows all too well. God help them.

4. *isn't it hard to make up your mind?*

WARNINGS: crying about feelings, gay shit, smoking

This chapter's too short on its own, but too long to stick onto another one, and I wanted to keep the chapter names thematically relevant with the song lyrics.

Breathe. Just breathe, Havoc thinks, forehead pressed against his steering wheel. Okay. It's okay.

He lifts his head, leans back against his car seat. He wipes his eyes dry with one hand, stares out across Headquarters' parking lot, his breath slowing down, growing easier. Huh. He actually feels *better* instead of worse. That was probably the best cry he's had in months. Years, even. A regular 'good cry,' completely bawling your eyes out just to get it all out of you.

He leans forward, folds his arms over the top of the steering wheel, rests his chin on his hands. He lets his sore, puffy eyes gaze out through the windshield, unfocused.

Just tell him you love him.

...It was that simple after all, wasn't it?

All this pain, all this aching... it was just love, huh? He'd been so scared that it was something so much bigger, more complicated - Well, to be honest, it still is. And it still hurts, but... at least now it has a name to it.

He definitely feels better than he did last night, at least. God, last night was terrible. After leaving the bar, he got so caught up in trying to stop crying that he could barely concentrate on driving back to his apartment, and he didn't get much sleep when he got there. He spent hours tossing and turning deep into the night, plagued by an ache in his chest that's been there for years, now.

He really only noticed it when he lost his legs, come to think of it. Back then he figured it was just the natural symptoms of a freshly-broken heart. It only made sense after his experience with 'Solaris' - not every day that you find out your latest girlfriend is actually an immortal monster woman who tries to kill you via stabbing her claws through your back. Even more uncommon to lose all use of your legs from the ensuing spine injury, but then get them magically restored through a miracle of Alchemy at the behest of your commanding officer.

Mustang... he's in love with him. Huh.

Havoc thought he already knew what love was, what it felt like. It was his bread and butter, he thought, a skill that he'd honed over the course of his dating life. You meet a girl, you talk to her, you click with her, you hit it off. Be confident, but not a jerk about it, be flattering, but not a kiss-ass, be yourself, but also a gentleman. If she warms up to you, great, if she doesn't, let her go gracefully. And if all goes well, you get those warm fuzzies with her, she gets them with you, and you can see yourself having fun with her, whether that be at a restaurant or in your bedroom. And hopefully, that can turn into something real and long-lasting, and then you can see yourself settling down with her.

But apparently, that wasn't love at all.

Because this wasn't something you did or got better at, this was a *force of nature*. A storm that grew in size and strength and power until it tore through your heart, your head, your *entire being*, without making a sound the entire time. And you don't even see it coming until it's too late - and you're in too deep.

It's someone you're suddenly working under that you're not sure what to think of, but there's something strange about them, something you can't quite explain. He's someone you learn to respect and to trust, not just with your paychecks or your life, but with a dream, a future for your country that you and the rest of your team all believe in.

Then he's someone you befriend, and they become more than just your boss or future leader, he becomes... well, a person. With thoughts, feelings, hopes, doubts, fears. Someone who likes watching the clouds through office windows, holding pen caps in his mouth and lightly chewing on them, his coffee with extra cream and three lumps of sugar, no more, no less. And when he's your drinking buddy after work, he likes his alcohol just as sweet, whether it's fruity gin or hearty rum. And you'll tease him endlessly for his "girly" tastes but he'll always justify that it gives him

an edge on stealing your woman for the night, since if he drinks on her level it makes him more relatable to her. And he's right, the bastard.

...But then you'll hear him sobbing quietly in a bathroom stall later that night, when he thinks he's alone and can't bear his broken heart anymore. And you know it's because of what happened with Hughes, and everything else in his life, and you know you should say something, *anything* - but you don't. You stay silent, do your business, and leave quietly, giving him the benefit of his privacy... and his dignity. Even when deep down, your heart screams otherwise.

He's someone with dark hair and dark eyes that've seen far too many horrors and tragedies to still be so deep with knowledge, so sparkling with mirth, so intense with fire. He's got an impressive smile when he's confident, and a beautiful one when he's genuine. A strong chin but soft cheeks, broad shoulders but a small waist, this mix of stern and masculine but slight and elegant, all at once.

And his hands seem strong and calloused, but because he wears gloves and does paperwork most of the time, they're always soft and smooth when you shake them. And you've only touched each other casually like this, but here and there your eyes wander over his shirt collars and short sleeves, how his pants cling to his hips. Sometimes your skin prickles at any little brush of contact, and you keep thinking and wondering and dreaming 'till you're so hot and aching alone in your bed that you have to satisfy yourself with fantasies of him. And you're completely ashamed of yourself because he's your *boss*, for crying out loud, what are you *doing*? But no matter how you try to justify it to yourself, you do it anyway. You blame it on stress, or boredom, or being so pent-up from striking out with girls all the time that you're just desperate, that's all. It's like a phase, you'll get over it eventually...

But you don't, because you're in love with him.

And it all makes sense now - not just the aching (physically *and* emotionally), but all the other feelings too, feelings Havoc's had and couldn't explain the origin of. The fact that he thinks about him more than he thinks of himself. The fact that, honestly? He'd do anything for him, absolutely anything, just say the word - even lay down his life for him, if it really came down to it. And sure, that's what's expected of him in their line of work, but deep down, he wouldn't really do it because he's supposed to - he'd do it because he *wants* to. He wants this - *has* wanted this - for a long time, now.

Havoc sighs, long and hard, closing his eyes. How long has it been... Eight years? Yeah, jeeze... almost eight years since he first met Roy Mustang. So much has happened... but in terms of this particular situation, not much has happened at all, really. Ever since his promotion, he's been content to remain one of Mustang's most trusted subordinates and friends, but nothing more. He's been biding his time, going through the motions, ignoring this feeling that's only grown stronger with time instead of fading away. Because he didn't know anything about it - didn't think about it too much, didn't want to face it. Kept it under tight lock and key while fooling

himself otherwise, kept aimlessly pursuing women when what he really wanted was right in front of him all this time.

Even when Roy saved his life, saved his legs, refused to abandon him even when Havoc begged him to. On top of the other dozens of times Roy's saved his ass, Havoc doesn't deserve the time of day from him anymore, honestly.

And yet his heart says otherwise, Havoc thinks, opening his eyes and leaning back against the driver's seat. He retrieves his cigarette pack, thumbs out another joint into his mouth, but as he sets it back down, his mind wanders, and he doesn't particularly feel like fishing out his lighter. He's thinking about Roy - has been this whole time, really, but it's particularly intense now. He's seeing his face, his smile, his eyes. His bare hands, his bare neck, his bare chest as he travels further. He imagines the scent of his skin, the feel of him under his hands, the taste of him on his lips-

...Damn. He really *does* have it bad. Why didn't anyone tell him he could fall head over heels for another man just as hard as a woman?

Havoc bothers his unlit cigarette with his teeth, shifting his jaw. Well, his friends did, just now. Practically shoved it right under his nose. And yet he still tried to deny it, yelling and losing control like a fucking idiot just because he was too damn scared to admit otherwise. Yeah, that's what he was - a scared idiot. Pushing his feelings away, spying on Mustang from bar corners, being shitty to women he wasn't even interested in to begin with, he just dragged them along to keep up the charade. And then blowing up on his friends when they were just trying to help? Yeah, fits the bill.

Havoc straightens himself, sitting up in his seat and wiping his eyes again. There's a well-deserved wave of shame settling over him now, but still, his chest feels lighter, his head feels clearer, his tears are spent. The pain's out of him now, mostly. All that's left to do now is... well, like Breda said - just tell Roy how he feels.

Whether Roy felt the same way or not was... terrifying, honestly, but Havoc supposes that in the grand scheme of things, it wasn't that important if he could finally get this off his chest after all this time. And honestly, Havoc wasn't sure what Roy would even see in him to begin with - he's still just a simple man from the countryside, after all.

...But he'd definitely be lying if a very small (but very loud) part of him wasn't hoping for Roy to love him back with even a fraction of what he felt for him. God, just imagine - him and Roy, together... Just entertaining the thought makes his face warm and his heart flutter.

...Havoc rubs at his face again, snapping himself out of another bout of spacing-out. Okay- okay, now, he's getting distracted. No need for all this daydreaming. Can't be thinking too much and not doing anything about it, or he'll just end up right back in his old ways again - and he can't afford that, not anymore. Not when he finally knows what he needs to do now. Confessing to Roy - yeah, yeah. He can do that. It'll be hard, really hard, but... he can do it. He just has to...

get him alone, somehow? Meet him after work? Or maybe during work, in his office. Like a private meeting, or something. No no, that's not- that's inappropriate, he should stick to after-hours... But then, where-

Havoc shakes his head, blinks himself free of a potential spiral into his own anxiety. He muscles open his car door and steps out, standing and giving himself easy access to his pockets and lighter. He lights his cigarette, finally, taking a long, slow drag to ease his nerves before they start acting up again. One thing at a time, Jean, one thing at a time, he thinks. Cross that bridge when you come to it. His *real* first order of business should be getting out of this parking lot, back into Central Headquarters, and apologizing to his friends for being an asshole just now. *Then* figure out the confession stuff. Yeah.

Havoc exhales, letting out a lazy cloud of smoke. He'll probably be rejected when he does, but, still... maybe not? Roy *does* tend to smile at him an awful lot... and he's caught him staring at him sometimes, or shrugging away awkwardly when they've been too close, so...

Havoc takes another, smaller drag, relaxing further. Then he closes his car door, locks it, and starts his way across the parking lot, feeling steady on his feet, determined. This new prospect is a little scary - well, really scary, but Havoc's never backed down from a challenge before, and he's certainly not going to start now.

...Hopefully.

5. *when you're losing, and your fuse is fireside.*

WARNINGS: depression, feelings, yelling, crying, making out, (NSFW/18+) frothing, blowjob, awkward clothed sex.

Thank you for being patient through the angst! Now we finally get the extra-long confession and feelings jam. And as the Cinema Snob would say: "And then they bang. HARD."

But if you'd rather skip the sex, stop reading at the line where Havoc asks "Uh- Should I stop?" Then scroll down to the time break, where the last section basically sums up what happened.

Another day, another lunch break. For once, Roy wasn't so swamped with work he couldn't take one. Hopefully it's a sign that his promotion will come sooner than later. He sits languidly on the slightly uncomfortable chair in the center of the break room, staring down at his cup of creamed coffee.

Hm... He's thinking about Kathy again. And here he said he wasn't hung up.

Well, to be fair, he's not thinking about *her* so much as every other woman *like* her, ones he's taken to bed only to have them leave shortly afterward - their affections as short-lived as his own, despite his heart's yearning. But it's only fair, really - it's obvious by now that he's pretty much a failure in every romantic aspect of his life. Ironic, considering his reputation.

Maybe he was doomed from the start. He can't remember having any strong feelings for anyone of the opposite sex beyond infatuation or brief sparks of lust. Besides that, all that comes to mind is familial love for Chris and her girls, friendship and absolute loyalty for Riza.

He really only knows how to flirt and be intimate with women because his adoptive family taught him how. He's been well-versed in the ways of using his good looks and silver tongue to get what he wants, and by now he's weaponized his charm to a fine, surgically-precise point that he uses to fulfill any desire he wishes. But that's just what it is - a weapon, too sharp and clumsy for the soft, careful realm of real love.

It's a strange and confusing time when you're young and hopeful, ready for all those warm, flustered feelings that everyone tells you to expect when it comes to attraction - but you feel them towards the handsome young men around you *far* more often than the women, and slowly, you realize that you're different. And then it's sad, and very, very lonely when you have to figure out how to navigate this, mostly on your own. How do you communicate this to the people around you without putting off the people who won't understand and find the ones who will? Or at least won't openly criticize you for it?

But one day, you finally find someone who does understand, who supports you in every way. He becomes your best friend, your most trusted confidante - and over time, you find yourself hoping that you'll be more than that someday. You wait patiently, dreaming and hoping for him, looking for an opening, a chance to tell him how you really feel...

...And then he turns around and tells you he's met this wonderful girl named Gracia lately, and he's got a really good feeling about her. Says could really see himself loving her, marrying her, settling down and starting a family.

And he does. You're the best man at his wedding, and it's both the happiest and saddest day of your life, all at once.

But you ignore the sadness and put on a smile for him, like you always do. You stuff your feelings down a deep, deep hole inside you, let them rot down there while you enslave yourself to your ambitions, turn yourself into a monster with an expiration date, shatter what's left of your heart into an unrecognizable mess. And he's dragged along for the whole terrible ride because he's your best friend, but *only* your best friend, not even 'till the bitter end, like he promised, because now he's-

Hm. Enough of that.

Roy closes his eyes, leans back, loosens his too-tight grip on his coffee cup. He lets out a breath, then raises the drink to his lips, focuses on the bitter sweetness as he takes another sip. He'd rather have some of that cheap gin again - but it's too early in the day for that, so he decides to just stop thinking for a while.

Instead, he focuses his attention on things like the sound of his own breathing. The annoying buzz of the break room's lights. The soft, rhythmic shifting of Havoc's uniform pants while he jiggles his foot. Riza's footsteps while she walks across the room to the break room door. The soft creaking as she pulls it open. The sight of her turning to glance at him, wearing an odd little smile, then leaving and closing the door behind her with a soft click-

...Wait, did she- ?

"Did she just lock the door?" Havoc says, mildly startled.

Roy blinks, and looks over at him. Havoc's sitting up in his seat on the couch, glancing nervously between him and the now-closed door.

"...I- I guess so?" Roy wonders aloud. Confused, he rises from his seat, leaves his half-empty coffee on a nearby counter, then strides over to the door. He tries the doorknob - and sure enough, it doesn't budge.

"It's- Yeah, it's locked," Roy says, confusion giving way to a quiet panic, his heartbeat picking up speed.

Havoc startles again. "You- you serious?"

Roy spares him a glance, seeing Havoc staring at him with this odd, wide-eyed look. Ignoring that, he tries the doorknob a few more times, with increasing amounts of force and desperation, but the lock refuses to give.

Panic rising, Roy lightly bites at his lower lip. He can't be stuck here, he has work to do! It could easily be *hours* before the custodian comes by during his rounds, and with Havoc stuck here too-

No no, it's fine. Riza can't have walked too far from the room yet. "Lieutenant!" Roy cries out. "Lieutenant, come back! The door's locked!"

He puts his ear to the door, listening. No answer... not even a sound of footsteps. How far has she gone?

He bristles, and starts rapping on the door with a fist, increasing the pitch of his yelling in hopes the sounds will carry. Bang! Bang! "RIZA! THE DOOR IS LOCKED! *RIZA!*" Bang, bang, bang!

He stops again - still no answer. Shit- she can't be *that* far out of earshot, can she?

"Uh- I think she's gone, sir," Havoc says from behind him.

Roy exhales through his nose, deeply frustrated by now. "Yeah, no shit," he mutters over his shoulder.

"Just sayin'..."

"Sorry," Roy mutters, realizing that he's losing his cool over nothing. It's just a locked door, he can always- Yeah, he can use his Alchemy. It'd be a shame to ruin the doorknob, but it's better than being locked in here for hours with-

Wait. Roy's hand is in his pocket, but he doesn't feel- where are his gloves? He's feeling for it, but it- it's empty. He searches his other pocket - nothing there either.

"Sir?"

Roy glances over his shoulder to see Havoc is on his feet now, cigarette missing, still giving him that strange look. Ugh, why is he- Bah. It's fine, maybe it's in his shirt pocket for some reason... Not there either? Wh- Where are they?

"You uh... lookin' for something?" Havoc again.

Roy exhales again, searching and re-searching his pockets like someone with a neurotic tendency. Which he may as well be. "My gloves," he says. "They're not- I can't find them."

"Your gloves?"

Roy sighs again, dropping his arms. "Yes my gloves, Lieutenant, I don't- Ugh, maybe they... fell out somewhere..."

He tilts his head down as he searches the floor around him - then he hears Havoc laughing. He looks up and sure enough, Havoc's now doubling over in a fit of giggles, covering his mouth with one hand. Normally Roy would enjoy seeing him laugh, but he's not really in the mood for this right now...

"Wh- what's funny?" Roy says, with only the vaguest air of authority in his tone by now.

Havoc meets his eyes, then turns away to calm himself. "Ha, god- I- I'm sorry sir, it's just..."

He shakes his head, sighing happily. "Just... Holy shit. She actually did it, the absolute madwoman... Serves me right for procrastinating, I guess."

Roy frowns at him, confused again. "...What? Havoc, my gloves are missing, this isn't humorous."

Havoc glances back at him, suddenly looking guilty, and spreads his hands disarmingly. "No no, it's not, I'm sorry sir, it's just- it's an inside joke, don't worry about it."

"...An... inside joke?" Roy cocks an eyebrow at that.

Havoc waves his hands dismissively. "It's fine, it's fine. Just uh- we might be here a while."

Roy bristles at the idea, panic renewing itself in his chest. He doesn't like feeling trapped, certainly not with Havoc. Not- not that he dislikes him, far from it, it's just-

"...I don't have time for this," Roy says curtly, turning his attention back to fiddling with the doorknob. Dammit all- if only he had his gloves, or a bobby pin, or *something*-

Suddenly footsteps approach from behind, and Havoc speaks up again. "That won't- Look, Mustang, can I ask you something?"

Roy stops trying the door to turn around again - and is taken aback, a little. Havoc is much closer to him now, just at arm's length, enough to see the details of his soft eyes and disarming expression- Roy swallows lightly, feeling something fluttering inside him. As usual, he ignores it.

"Er- of course. What is it, Lieutenant?" Roy asks, straightening himself.

Havoc scrubs at his neck with one hand, glancing away. "I'm just wonderin', uh..."

He searches the floor for a few moments - then he takes a breath, as if emboldening himself, and lifts his gaze to meet Roy's eyes, giving an odd, crooked smile. "What're... what do you think of me?"

Roy blinks, processing the question. Strange... something about it feels awfully familiar, but he can't place it... But as for the question itself, there's a lot he could say of what he thinks of 2nd Lieutenant Jean Havoc.

First and foremost, Roy could say how much he's appreciated having him by his side all these years, how glad he is to have made him his first trusted subordinate after Riza (and Hughes, to an extent). He's an honest, trustworthy man, humble and down-to-earth. But at the same time he's fearless, passionate, unafraid to stand for what he really believes in, even if it costs him his life. Roy saw that as early as his days as a Corporal, when researching his military career proved him to be an honorable soldier who put the safety of civilians above all else and expected the same of his teammates. That's why Roy hired him - he had a good feeling about his potential, and he's never been happier to have been correct.

...There are other, far less professional things Roy could say as well.

He *could* say that Havoc's clear blue eyes remind him of cloudless summer skies, and his russet-blond hair of the color of wheat fields and autumn leaves. And in turn, those remind him of his more innocent years spent in the countryside, when he was young, hopeful, and his only immediate concerns were impressing Master Hawkeye with his Alchemy lessons in hopes of cracking his secretive shell, and trying to be a good friend to his young daughter with her odd hobby of playing soldier with an old revolver she'd stolen from her paranoid father's bedroom.

In a word, it didn't feel *quite* like home, but Roy never seemed to hold onto a place or a time long enough to really have one in his life, so this was close enough, and just as comforting.

He could *also* say that personally, Roy never really minded the scent of smoke that always hung around Havoc's person and in whatever rooms he'd spent large amounts of time in. ...Well maybe he did, a little, but by this point he was used to it, like everyone else was. That was the thing about it - the smell was so off-putting, but at the same time, so... *intoxicating*. It was so much like Roy's fire, in a way, but at the same it was so *unlike* it, because of the nicotine and other flavoring chemicals. It's as if the smell encapsulates Roy's feelings towards fire itself - horrifying and dangerous, but at the same time alluring and beautiful in its own strange, terrible way. And the fact that it's so intrinsically tied to Havoc's presence, his very *being*-

Ah. Roy blinks, glances away for a moment, belatedly realizing that he's been silently staring at Havoc for an awkward length of time. He's thinking too much again - a dangerous thing to do, as he's proven time and again - and now that fluttering feeling inside him is getting a bit uh- out of hand. Pushing it back down, Roy takes a breath, clears his throat, and looks back at Havoc with a warm smile.

"...Is that all? I'd think that would be obvious. You're a good man, Lieutenant. One of the best," he says, both as cautious and as genuine as he can be.

Havoc blinks, then smiles warmly, brightening his eyes and puffing out his chest like he usually does when proud of himself. It's always been endearing. "Aw- well I appreciate that."

But then he relaxes, the smile fading slightly. "But uh- how 'bout we ditch the titles, Roy? C'mon, man to man, like we used to."

Another wave of déjà vu washes over Roy, stronger this time. He's starting to remember its origin - and how much he'd rather *not* remember it. Quickly, desperately, he pushes it away, swallowing lightly. "Er... Alright, Jean, " he says, nodding.

The feeling resists him, his heart beating faster as Havoc takes two small, careful steps closer. One or two more and he'd be nearly flush with Roy's own body, and now his scent and body heat are far too noticeable.

Havoc meets his eyes, almost sheepishly, and quietly asks again. "Roy... What do you think of me? Be honest."

Now the familiarity is too intense for Roy to even try to ignore it anymore. He... he remembers now. The break room in East Headquarters, the test he'd given eight years ago. Havoc's response to this question was everything that he'd been hoping for - up until the end , that is. When he'd suddenly approached him like this, face-to-face. Fearless, defiant, no fear. It'd stirred something inside him, sealing Roy's decision to trust him with his grand plan.

...But... and he hates to admit this... it also stirred something else. Something primal.

...Well, to put it simply, Havoc is a very handsome man with very beautiful eyes, among other features, and when he'd been very close to Roy's face, breathing heavily and speaking in a very low, sensual version of his charming drawl, Roy found it very, very hard to ignore the chills that'd gone up his spine, prickled at the back of his brain, dropped into the bottom of his gut, warmed there. He feels it again, right now, at this distance. He can see all of Havoc's features in detail: Besides his eyes and scruffy, soft-looking hair, there's his strong brows, his chiseled cheeks and jawline, the mild scruff of his beard there. And his soft-looking lips-

Again Roy swallows, presses his mouth into a thin line, feels his throat drying out and his heart thumping in his ears. It had... also been difficult not to notice the close proximity of their mouths then, how Havoc glanced down at them for the briefest moment. And how briefer still, a thought crossed Roy's mind where he...

...He wished Havoc would kiss him. B- but he didn't, thankfully, that would've been inappropriate in every sense of the word, given the situation...

...They're almost that close again, right now. And again, Roy finds himself fighting this small urge to keep glancing down, to lean forward-

"...Are you okay?" Havoc says suddenly, leaning away. He's frowning now, looking vaguely concerned.

...He's spacing out again. Roy tears his eyes away, straightening and clearing his dry throat. "I-I'm fine," he says, a little hoarsely. He turns away, pressing his right shoulder against the wall and bowing his head. He keeps his gaze squarely on the break room door, silently hoping for someone, anyone to come and open it.

There's an aching long beat of silence... then Havoc sighs, and Roy hears him shift and step away. And he feels this rush of anger, this irritation with himself. He shouldn't, because he's clearly rejected this, Havoc was only responding in kind, but...

...But he... he resents that day, a little. When Havoc was promoted. Because with that show of bravado he'd earned Havoc's respect and loyalty from then on into forever, and he'd never be defiant again, never press him. Which was a good thing, wasn't it? Yes... yes of course it was, it just... it stuck to him, that moment. That feeling, that vague wish for a kiss, became a seed that planted itself somewhere deep inside him, spread its roots far into his subconscious. What *would* have happened if Havoc didn't back off when he did? If instead he'd leaned forward, caught his lips with his own, slid his tongue into his mouth, undone the shirt and uniform he'd carefully readjusted, right there, in that room, unheeding of any rules or titles or professionalism and just *took him*-

...He's doing it again, Roy realizes. He's staring at Havoc through the corners of his eyes, stealing glances as he takes in the sight of him without Havoc noticing. He's turned away now, scrubbing at his neck and chin with one hand, looking strangely dejected as he paces the room. As he moves, Roy finds himself studying how his uniform clings to his arms and chest,

further accentuated by the year or so he spent working his upper body. The curves of his broad shoulders, of his arms mildly bulging through his sleeves. His thick waist wrapped in his undershirt, peeking under the bottom hem of his uniform jacket. Roy wonders how they'd feel under his hands, wrapped in his arms with his chest flush against his, how the scent of his smoke would taste in his mouth-

Roy blinks, then closes his eyes this time. Damn him and his brain, treating his own subordinate like he's something to ogle at. He keeps thinking too much - he keeps entertaining this *fantasy*, as if he hadn't spent so many years ignoring it, pushing it back down whenever it showed itself at certain moments. Whenever Havoc met his eyes and smiled, brushed their hands together on accident, stood close to him for awkward lengths of time.

Now he's entertaining other thoughts, softer feelings.

When Havoc finally woke up in the hospital, eyes sharp and aware, not glazed over at death's doorstep. When he demonstrated that unwavering, defiant determination despite his disability, still hale and hopeful in the hospital when he saw him next. When Roy felt his heart leap into his throat at the sound of his voice, like a deep, deep breath of fresh air after six long months of holding his breath for the Promised Day. When Roy refused to let his eyes be healed until he heard the sound of Havoc's utter joy at having his legs again, heard his footsteps, his voice speaking to him from head-level.

He doesn't want this.

Because it brings other feelings with it. An ache in his chest, sharp and stinging, that brings him back to darker moments.

When Havoc was pierced through the stomach by Lust's claws, crying out in utter anguish before crumpling to a heap, lying unconscious in his own blood because of Roy's damnable lack of foresight. When Roy sealed his wounds shut with his fire, but his body was still terrifyingly quiet. When Havoc was in that hospital bed, his face deeply pained as he relayed the fact that he couldn't feel his legs anymore. More pained still as he demonstrated that unwavering, defiant loyalty in the worst way possible, screaming and begging for Roy to give up on him.

And when - worst of all - Roy tried to visit Havoc on his time off, only to just *sit there*, staring at the steering wheel, frozen in that parking lot because he was so caught up between his desire to see Havoc in the hospital and his crushing guilt for being the one who put him there. And every time, *every time*, he opted to take the coward's route of giving up entirely and heading to the nearest bar instead. And that only made him feel worse, which made him freeze up more whenever he tried again, making him feel worse still, and this vicious cycle repeated and compounded itself to the point that Roy stopped passing by the hospital altogether, went straight to the bars after work. It's a damn miracle that Havoc was still friendly with him at all when he passed on that message about the Promised Day... Riza's involvement probably helped there.

Havoc trusted him with his life, and to this day, he still does. Roy has no place wanting him like this when he's been so careless with him. He didn't check that room thoroughly enough, didn't see Lust's attack coming, didn't take any precautions like a responsible commander should have done. He didn't *protect* him, like with Hughes-

"-about that. I just, uh- I just wanted to know something. But it's fine, it's fine."

Belatedly, Roy realizes that Havoc's started talking by now. Again he forces back his rampant, distracting thoughts. He takes a breath, opens his eyes, and looks to see that Havoc's stopped pacing to turn back to him - but he's not quite looking at him, his eyes still downcast.

He spares Roy a glance as he notices him paying attention, then looks back at the floor. "...So yeah. Sorry. I guess that was too much," he says, sounding dejected.

Roy stings with guilt again, sharper this time. "...It's fine," he lies.

Havoc sighs deeply. "Yeah... I- I guess I'll come clean, then."

Roy looks back at that - come clean? With what? Has Havoc been keeping a secret from him? That's... unusual, knowing him. But sure enough, Havoc has that odd, nervous look to him again, shifting uncomfortably, working his jaw and throat.

"Okay, uh- the whole locked door thing? It's... not really an inside joke."

Roy blinks. "What?"

Havoc glances at him, then back at his boots, his cheeks darkening with color. "Yeah, uh- me and the guys have been uh... talking lately."

"...Well. They've been talking to *me*, really. 'Cause this... that's what this is about. Me, that is."

Roy narrows his eyes, concerned now. "Wh- what is it, then?"

Havoc glances at him again, flushing further, and starts scrubbing at his neck and chin with one hand. "It's uh- it's something I wanted to talk to you about for a while now, actually. So... I'm doing it now, since everyone's been kicking my ass about it. Haha." He forces a chuckle, flushed down to neck by now. And now there's a part of Roy that can guess what he's getting at, and is lighting aflame with hope and excitement while the rest of him starts to panic again. Does he...?

Havoc wrings his hands together, working up to his elbows, glancing back and forth from him. "Roy, listen- I uh... I care about you. Not just as like, my boss or whatever but- as *you*, know?"

Roy's eyes widen now, almost bugging out. He holds his breath without thinking, his lungs pressed between wild hope at his fondest fantasy coming true, and terrible pain as his guilt crushes him further. He can't- he can't be-

And then Havoc takes a breath, clenches his fists, squares his shoulders and looks Roy in the eye, saying,

"I- I love you, okay? I'm- I'm in love with you."

Roy's heart stops beating altogether, for a few moments.

Havoc's bravado crumbles as quickly as it came and he starts fluttering his hands, his face and neck beet-red by now. "Uh- A-and I know that that's weird as *hell* coming from me, I know, but- I- It's true. I just- I love you and I want you to know that."

Havoc stares at his shoes again, scrubbing his neck and chin with more fervor than ever. "And uh- it's fine if you don't love me back. I get it, y'know-"

And Roy realizes- Oh no. Oh *no*. He rejected him. Havoc was trying to tell him this earlier, and Roy *rejected* him. His heart's threatening to beat its way out his body entirely by now, wishing to soar out of him and tell Havoc that the absolute opposite was true, he cares so much, *too* much, in fact-

But wait. Why should he? Why should he reciprocate this when he's far from deserving of it? With who he is, what he's done? Havoc deserves so much better, man, woman, or otherwise. Someone who's not a miserable fraud, a heartless murderer, a slave to his ambitions and his sins. An irresponsible commander who almost let him die, then felt too sorry for himself to even apologize properly...

Desperately, Roy opens his mouth, trying to say something, anything. "I- I..."

I... I what? What does he say? What *can* he say? Should he give his own confession, or reject Havoc further? Admit to his own selfish feelings, or subject Havoc to the terrible pain of unrequited love? He can't bear either option, it's all too much- his mind feels like it's flying apart from his conflicting thoughts, and any words he tries to say sounds like strained sobs more than anything coherent.

Roy feels his strength leaving him, and he slumps against the wall, trembling, drawing a concerned sound from Havoc. "...Roy?"

He's breaking down. Dammit all, Roy's breaking down in this damn break room, the worst possible outcome he could have predicted of this situation. He presses his head against the wall, squeezing his eyes shut, trying desperately to hold back his oncoming tears. He breathes, ragged and uneven, until he can choke out something resembling a sentence.

"Don't- don't do this to me, please," he mutters, to no one in particular. Perhaps the universe at large, for saddling him with yet another heartbreaking, impossible choice.

Havoc startles somewhere behind him, drawing closer. "Do- do what? Roy, what's wrong?"

"I- I can't," Roy chokes. "Just-"

He's trembling hard by now. He takes another breath, deeper this time, and forces himself away from the wall, his heart to harden, still as stone. He stares at the door again - now looking warped in his eyes.

"-*Just open the damn door already*," he says thickly. God, he needs a drink. Something sharp and burning, like he deserves.

...Maybe he deserves this too, this pain. Maybe it's fair that his desires are so warped and twisted now. Ishval changed everything else about him, it only made sense... Where he was once confident and brimming with vigor, now he was just... tired. Tired and sad and desperate, but never getting up the courage to act on what he really wants anymore. Instead he ignores his feelings, drowns them in alcohol. He'll stew there in his misery at the bar, stare out at every other couple around him and wish he had something similar - but no, not for him. Even if he deserved it, he'd never get up the energy to try anyway. He's too tired. Too scared.

And he'll glance at a familiar fair-haired, blue-eyed young man striding toward the smoking area and silently hope and pray that he'll see him and come over and just *take him*, take him away from everyone and everything. But he never did, never does, because Roy didn't deserve that, much less from *him*. He just sat there, nursing his drinks or chatting up the young women like he always did.

...Like he himself did, Roy realizes suddenly. Maybe... maybe Havoc was scared, too?

The thought brings him into this odd moment of clarity. Roy finds himself relaxing a little, daring to look at Havoc again. He's very close to him now, leaning in with a hand hovering near Roy's shoulder, unsure. And he does look scared. Terrified, even, his blue eyes wide and fearful.

It's starting to make sense now. What Havoc said, not just about his feelings, but about the others, this whole situation... Was he just as torn over his feelings as Roy was? Did they plan all this, locking them in here together, just so Havoc would finally get up the nerve to say something?

How... How funny, really.

"Jean..." Roy breathes, almost a whisper, realization settling over him like a blanket. In response, Havoc's fear fades from his features, replaced by an expression that must be something like the love and fondness he'd just confessed to earlier, crinkling with heartbreak at its edges. Then he steels himself, as if plucking himself up to be brave again, and closes the distance between them.

Gently, he wraps his arms around Roy's shoulders, draws him into an embrace. Roy all but collapses against him, the onrush of sudden warmth and tenderness making his knees buckle

for a moment. His cheeks feel wet as they press into Havoc's shoulder, and he finally realizes that he's crying.

"It's okay," Havoc says quietly.

Roy's tears flow unabated now. "It's not," he sobs pitifully. "No, it's not- I failed- I *failed* you, Jean-"

"Hey, hey- It's okay. I'm okay now." Havoc shushes him, patting his back with one hand, then rubbing in small circles. It's calming, and Roy's sobbing subsides a little, trying to enjoy this even as his guilt tries to claw at him from the inside out. He sinks into Havoc's warmth, the bitter sweetness of his scent, the soft sounds of his breathing, the vague thumping of his heart beating against his own. It's all he's ever wanted, and it's finally here, in his arms, and oh, if only he weren't such a sad, broken man that he could accept this wholeheartedly-

"I- I love you too," Roy chokes out, muttering against Havoc's neck. It just- comes out of him, here in this moment. He's not sure why. Maybe it'll ease the hellstorm of emotions inside him. Maybe it'll ease the guilt. Maybe he can at least let Havoc know that his feelings aren't meaningless, like with Maes-

Havoc pulls away suddenly, and gapes at him, eyes wide. "You- you do?"

Roy blinks at him - then narrows his eyes incredulously. "Of- of *course*, Jean, god- why else would I be such a mess right now?"

Havoc blinks at him, looking terribly confused (but very endearing, as usual). "But... But you-"

Roy decides to keep talking, unheeding, his feelings spilling out uncontrollably now that the floodgates are open. "You're so goddamn important to me, Jean, I just- I couldn't say anything, not when you're my subordinate, not after you nearly *died* because of me. It tore me up inside to see you like that, I just- I couldn't stand it. I couldn't bear to even *look* at you. I- I'm so *sorry*." He chokes, his throat thick with tears again.

Havoc blinks again, then softens, settling into something like understanding. "...So that's why you didn't visit me."

Roy buries his face in Havoc's chest, making a strained sound. "Yes, I- I'm sorry, I'm so fucking sorry, Jean-"

Havoc's arms tighten around him again, momentarily, before he pushes Roy away again, gently, to look at his face.

"Hey- c'mon, stop that already. I said it's okay, I'm over it now."

He's stern, almost critical, but in his soft, mournful way - sort of like Chris, Roy thinks distantly, holding and speaking to him like this in those early days when he so small, so young, could hardly process the pain over the loss of his parents. Much like then, Roy closes his mouth and

stills himself - not to stop his tears, but to stop babbling over the past, what he can't change anymore.

He wipes his eyes with one hand, lets out a long sigh. "...Okay," he says quietly.

Havoc's expression softens, and then he starts flustering again, anxious. "Uh- Sorry. Was that too much?"

Roy regards him, tempted to laugh. Ah, Havoc... he really is too good for him. But all that escapes Roy is a weak chuckle, and he lets his head fall against Havoc's shoulder again. "No, no- you're right, I just- it's hard," he says.

Havoc sighs into his hair, rubbing his back again. "...I know."

Roy closes his eyes, sighing again. "...Ah, well. Can you blame me? After what I've done, after Hughes..." He lets out another breath as he trails off, melancholy, like the mood always is whenever Hughes is mentioned. There's a long silence before Havoc clears his throat and speaks again.

"...You loved him too, didn't you?"

Roy closes his eyes. He could burst into tears all over again with how much he could say about Hughes, but to put it simply...

"...Yes, I did."

"Mm." Havoc knows. And he understands, completely now. Roy can't be surprised, honestly.

"...Even I knew it was pointless," Roy admits, comfortable enough to be honest. "But- I dunno. I guess I'm just a hopeless romantic, deep down."

"...Or just hopeless." Roy chuckles again, bitterly now.

Havoc straightens a little, letting out a breath. "...Well, you're not alone there," he says, sort of dryly, tinted with insecurity.

Havoc understands this too, very well. For Roy, it's nearly cathartic - and for once in a long time, he truly, truly feels that he's not alone anymore. It's sort of strange - but very, very welcome.

There's another silence, but it's easier now. Roy nestles further into Havoc's embrace, resting his cheek against his shoulder, finally raising his arms to wrap around Havoc's broad back, holding tightly. His heart feels so full now that some of the venom's been bled out of him in the form of his confessions. And again, he feels so grateful for Havoc, so warm and supported here with his arms, his words. He's always been understanding, really. Not in the traditional sense, like with the gritty details of Alchemy compositions or the finer points of military protocol, but in an emotional sense. He knows people, how they talk, how they feel, how they hurt and heal. He

knows Roy himself, probably about as well as Riza does now.... Maybe even more. And still he doesn't judge him, doesn't hold a grudge, loves him unconditionally.

Roy feels warm. So, so warm.

"...Honestly, I thought you were pointless too," he mutters, sort of playfully to lighten the mood.

Havoc snorts into his hair, ruffling it slightly. "Oh c'mon, really? Kinda ruining the mood here."

Roy draws away to look back up at him, biting the inside of his cheek to suppress a grin. "I'm just being honest. You've stated on *multiple* occasions that you love women exclusively, as I recall."

Havoc laughs at that, hard, and he's lovely to look at as he does. When he comes down from it, he shakes his head, sighing wistfully. "Honestly? So did I. Funny how that's panned out."

Roy's started laughing too, since Havoc's was infectious. But as he calms, he can see something slightly sad, almost ashamed in Havoc's expression now, and the meaning of his words settles in. Aw, Jean... He's only recently come to terms with this. Roy can't imagine the confusion of grappling with this sort of thing later in life rather than earlier. Apologetic, Roy leans in, aiming to offer a kiss to Havoc's cheek.

But to his surprise, Havoc pulls away slightly, narrowing his eyes. "To be fair, you were *preeetty* much doin' the exact same thing, chief," Havoc says, smirking. "And a *lot* more often than me."

Roy blinks, slightly bewildered, before catching the tease. He smirks back in response. "True enough. Honestly, I thought I was pretty obvious to anyone who was looking in the right places."

Then he adds, lidding his eyes and lowering his voice, "...But I suppose no one bothered to, since I actually managed to get laid more often than not."

Havoc feigns a look of hurt. "Wow. Really? When I'm huggin' you and trying to make you feel better?"

Roy snorts, trying vainly to maintain a smug grin. "I am better. Better at dating."

"Shut up, you," Havoc says through a laugh, reaching a hand up to push Roy's head back into his shoulder, ruffling his hair slightly. The two devolve into giggles, both falling into the realization of how ridiculous this is. How they've both been lying to themselves all these years, denying their attraction to each other by hiding inside the reputations they'd so carefully constructed for themselves within society - never realizing they were merely building their own cages.

When Roy calms down, he sighs wistfully. "God- we're both idiots."

"Yeah." Havoc sways a little, gently rubbing the back of Roy's head. It feels nice... but a melancholy settles over him nonetheless.

"...I *am* sorry, though," Roy says quietly.

Havoc pulls away and gives him a sharp look. "Can you *stop* already? I said I'm over it, dummy. Quit apologizing."

"Uh- sorry." Roy tries to look apologetic, but fails miserably as he devolves into giggles again. He can't help it, Havoc looks so funny when he's being serious - and, of course, very handsome. Havoc only holds it for a moment before he suppresses a laugh himself, his eyes crinkling.

He moves his hand to Roy's face, brushing aside some of his bangs before settling on his cheek, stroking gently with his thumb. Roy leans into it, lidding his eyes, basking in the gentle, warm touch of Havoc's warm, rough hand. When he looks to meet Havoc's gaze again, he's smirking, something glinting in his eyes.

"Say sorry *one more time*, and I'm shuttin' you up."

Roy feels a little thrill go up his spine at the prospect. "...Is that an order, Lieutenant?"

Havoc raises an eyebrow. "Maybe."

Then he lowers his hand to Roy's chin, gently tilting his head up. He lids his eyes, lowers his voice, and Roy finds himself helpless in the best way possible.

"...Maybe I'll just do it anyway," he says, low and dark, almost growling. But this time there's no malice or defiance, just... hunger. The chills intensify, crawling up to the top of Roy's head, and the warmth in his belly returns tenfold as his heartbeat picks up speed.

There's a beat of tension, and they stare into each other's eyes, expectant. Roy could drown somewhere in the deep pools of Havoc's eyes, whether it was the blue of a clear sky or a freshwater lake.

Instead, he parts his lips. "Sorr-"

And before he can get out that last syllable, Havoc closes the distance and kisses him. And it's all he could've asked for.

Havoc takes him and tastes him with equal parts desire and affection, with all the tenderness of a man in love *and* in lust. All the pain and misery inside him melts away in Havoc's warmth, turning to vapors and escaping him in the form a long, long sigh. For the first in a long time, he just feels... *okay*. Maybe better than okay - happy, even. If only for a short while.

They stay like that, holding each other against their lips, for an eternity Roy would gladly stay in.

When they finally pull away to catch their breaths, it takes a few moments for Roy to see anything beyond the shining brilliance of Havoc's smiling face in front of him, and he briefly wonders if his sight's been taken from him again. If so, he would've accepted it wholeheartedly this time, if Havoc was the last thing his eyes saw before leaving him.

He's beautiful, Roy thinks. Both in looks and in how he's looking at him. He's certainly never seen him look at any woman like he's looking at him now, with this raw, unbridled *love*, almost sparkling from him. Roy's heart swells, close to bursting in his chest, and he falls back into Havoc's warmth like it were the easiest thing in the world right now.

The kissing resumes, with more earnestness now that all uncertainties are out of the way. Roy takes a bit more of the lead, drinking in the sweet bitterness of the nicotine on Havoc's lips as he tastes him, sucking lightly. It's as good as he was hoping for, perhaps better, and he drinks it all as greedily as any sweetened coffee or gin.

Havoc's eager as well, but there's something slightly cautious about him - he's taking his time, but not quite *taking* him. Not completely. But Roy recognizes these as the movements of a fellow man who's spent more time pursuing fruitless affairs with women instead of what he really wanted, and now that it's finally here in his grasp, he probably must be at a bit of a loss at what to do, how far he can take this. And, of course, must be a bit flustered at the idea of doing this with his own boss.

And Roy is understanding, but also very impatient at this point. He decides to subtly encourage Havoc by widening his mouth, giving small flicks of his tongue, inviting him.

And it's all the incentive Havoc needs, as he responds with a low sound in his throat, and his kissing becomes hungrier, more fervent. He takes the invitation, takes Roy's mouth further with more biting motions, daring to brush against him with his tongue and nips of his teeth. Roy shivers a little, lets his shoulders rise, and his arms and hands travel up and along Havoc's back and shoulders, finally wrapping them around the back of his head and neck, pulling him further in.

Further indeed, as Havoc then starts leaning into him to the point that he's now gently pressing Roy back and against the nearby wall, slightly sandwiching him with his own body. His hands travel further as well, down along Roy's back and towards his waist and hips, tucking into the folds of his uniform and sliding along the curves of his backside. Roy clings to him in kind, moaning softly as he feels his breath mildly squeezed out of him, the heat inside him pooling in the bottom of his gut and squarely between his legs. God, it's so good.

The heat intensifies as Havoc kisses his mouth again and again, then along the rest of Roy's face, licking away the salt on his cheeks and jawline. He works down to his neck, raising a hand to pull down at Roy's uniform and undershirt, exposing the base of his throat. Roy exhales deeply, almost groaning into Havoc's hair as his collarbones are kissed and nipped at like he's always dreamed of.

Then Havoc stiffens suddenly. He loosens his embrace and jerks away, catching his breath and meeting Roy's eyes. That scared, unsure look has returned to his face.

"Uh- Should I stop?"

"God, no," Roy breathes, lidding his eyes, hungry with a need that won't be denied anymore now that it was finally here. "Don't- don't ever stop."

He must look somewhat ridiculous in his lust, as Havoc just stares at him in response. Then he relaxes, giving a short, throaty chuckle.

"Heh- is that an *order*, sir?"

Roy pauses - then laughs as well, at Havoc's teasing. Then he takes a deep breath, looks Havoc square in the eye, and his command has more certainty than anything he's given before, he thinks.

"Yes, Lieutenant - I want you to *fuck* me, right here, right now."

Havoc's eyes widen, the pupils clearly dilating at this distance, and his mouth parts a little.

"...Absolu-"

And Roy swallows that word as he pulls Havoc back in, grabbing the back of his head and neck. Havoc groans in his throat as they continue the kissing, more intense than ever now. They curl into each other, exchanging licks, bites and kisses between each other's mouths and throats, gasping and moaning. Havoc resumes pulling at Roy's uniform to get at his collarbones again, and Roy opens himself to him eagerly. He pulls apart his uniform jacket and unbuttons his undershirt, and soon his entire chest and stomach are exposed to Havoc's worship - and its nothing short of that as Havoc dips down, tasting the flesh of Roy's torso like it were the sweetest delicacy, sighing contentedly.

He works down, then up, then down and to the side as his tongue catches on Roy's nipple, drawing a sharp breath. He pauses briefly to meet Roy's eyes - who nods with approval at the gesture. Havoc seems to have experience here, as he expertly weaves between lips, tongue and teeth at his sensitive nubs, licking and suckling and biting. Roy squirms in his grasp as, at the same time, Havoc's hands grope along his smooth, slightly flabby stomach (the result of a more lax workout routine as of late), then back and around to slide inside his pants and underwear. He cups his equally soft ass cheeks, rubs in circles again, and this along with everything else has Roy arching his back against the wall, groaning with need.

Havoc moves his hands closer to the sides of Roy's hips as he shifts, crushing him further, now with his pelvis. The obvious bulges in their pants disappear against each other, drawing a loud moan from Roy and a deep, throaty growl from Havoc himself. Havoc's just as hard as him, but what catches Roy's attention more is how he feels *larger*, too. He bites his lip at the thought, and

at the intense sensations going through him, pressure and arousal welling up inside him but not to the point of release - not yet, to his annoyance.

Havoc bucks his hips against him, causing more embarrassing noises, then begins to slowly, maddeningly grind into him. At the same time, Havoc resumes the ass-groping and kissing on the mouth, sloppier and unfocused this time.

But the ministrations don't last, as Havoc quickly loses the rhythm as he loses coherence. He loosens his holds and draws away to catch his breath for a few moments. Roy does the same - but not for long, as his curiosity over what his partner's packing downstairs has reached its peak. He withdraws his arms from Havoc's shoulders to reach for the zipper of his uniform pants with one hand - and grab at his bulge with the other. Havoc flinches at the touch, swearing under his breath.

Roy pauses - both to give Havoc a moment to recuperate, and to estimate the size of what he's dealing with here. It seems, ah... above average, at least. Impressive. And unexpected.

He clears his throat, then glances up to meet Havoc's eyes, not quite able to suppress a smile. "...You never told me you were packing heat, Lieutenant."

Havoc stares, flushed and breathing hard. The he swallows, composes himself enough to give a slightly uncomfortable laugh. "Well- Y- Y'never asked. I mean- I don't go swingin' pipe for no reason, sir."

"Hah- Fair." Roy chuckles as well as he releases his grip, working Havoc's zipper. Though he can't help but wonder why Havoc's had such terrible luck with girls if *this* is what he's equipped with. Was he too modest, to the point that most of his dates never got this far? Or maybe they did, but only lasted as long as Roy's own one night stands *because* of his equipment. Oh well - not that it matters, it's all his now-

Then Roy's eyes widen. Oh. *OH*.

He's fully exposed Havoc's cock and can see now, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that it is *significantly* larger than average. He's not in the right mind for exact measurements, but it's about as long as the span of his hand from the tip of the middle finger to the bottom of the palm, and almost as thick as two fingers put together. It stands straighter upon escaping the confines of Havoc's briefs, springing to attention like any good soldier.

Roy pauses again, licking his lips as he finds himself. "...You've been holding back on me," he says hoarsely.

He hears Havoc cough lightly. "W-well uh- so have you."

Roy spares him a glance. "Not anymore."

And faster than a guilty man in church, he drops to his knees, one hand clutching Havoc's thigh and the other taking his sizable cock and guiding its tip into his mouth - and he starts praying.

"Ah- *fuck*." Havoc curses loudly, almost doubling over from the sudden stimulation. He catches himself on the wall with his arms now that they're no longer occupied with holding Roy.

Tragically, Roy has little hands-on experience in this department - but he knows enough about male genitalia, and about giving to their female counterparts, that he has a decent idea on what to do here. He's cautious, but still gives nothing less than what Havoc deserves - stroking with his hand, suction on the tip, briefly letting go to trail his tongue down along the shaft, then back up to resume the sucking. He dares to draw him further into his mouth as he repeats the cycle once, then twice, basking in the taste of him, the feel of his cock filling his mouth so *deliciously*. Ah, if only he had more experience - he'd love to feel Havoc deep in his throat without fear of triggering his gag reflex. Patience, patience - maybe someday.

In the meantime, Havoc grunts and swears further, his breath hard and ragged, hips twitching against Roy's ministrations.

Roy feels a hand grasp the hair on the back of his head, holding him fast for a few moments as Havoc grinds in time with Roy's movements. Then it loosens his grip and taps him lightly. This makes something click in Roy's addled brain and he remembers - oh right, manners. Still a gentleman.

He relinquishes Havoc's length (begrudgingly), pulling away to look back up at Havoc's face. He's not quite looking at Roy, his face is deeply flushed by now, no doubt overwhelmed with sensation. Roy finds himself equally frazzled with the taste of Havoc's cock still fresh on his tongue and mind, but he does his best to sound coherent.

"Wh- what is it?" he asks, half-whispering.

Havoc taps his head again in response, muttering, "I thought- thought I was the one doing the fucking, you ass."

Roy glances between him and his flushed, glistening cock, caught between this important fact and his own temptations. He attempts to look guilty. "Ah- sorry. Could say I got uh- *ahead* of myself."

Havoc snorts again. "Goddammit- I'll give ya somethin' to apologize for, you little-"

He bends down, hooking his hands under Roy's armpits and urging him back to his feet. No sooner is he up does Havoc shove him back against the wall, less gently this time. He takes a few breaths to compose himself - once he does, he fixes Roy with an almost predatory smile. "Now- yer gonna hold still, and let me do my *job*, which you asked me to do so *nicely*, sir."

Roy suppresses another giggle, faking a swoon instead. "Oh- do be gentle with me, Lieutenant."

Havoc spares him a glance as he works to undo Roy's zipper, his devilish smirk faltering with suppressed laughter. "What- gentle? With the guy who dove for my cock like pigeons for bread crumbs?"

Then in one swift motion, Havoc succeeds in exposing Roy's hard, needy erection and takes it in hand, admiring it as he slowly, agonizingly strokes it. Whatever retort Roy had in response to the bird comparison dies in his throat as he groans loudly, bites his lower lip in a vain attempt to stifle it, making his breath hiss through his teeth. The sound grows into a long, open-mouthed moan as Havoc suddenly slides up to him, withdrawing his hand and making his chest and hips flush with Roy's in a familiar way - this time pressing against his cock with his own.

"...I don't think so," Havoc growls in his ear. Roy's cock twitches helplessly against his, dwarfed by comparison.

Havoc jerks his hips again, drawing out another, more ragged groan from Roy with the raw contact of their bare cocks together. It's a sound of pleasure, but mostly discomfort as Roy's dry cock chafes painfully against Havoc's wet one. Havoc seems to notice this as well, and pulls away slightly to look down between them.

"Um- one problem," he says, stammering a bit. "I have an idea, but uh- I've only done this with girls before."

Roy breaths himself into some kind of composure, again, and sighs lightly. "A- and you think you're alone there?"

Havoc glares back at him, but he's smiling. "I *thought* I was. You were so hungry for my dick a second ago."

"That was an educated guess, to tell the truth."

"Coulda fooled me," Havoc says, shaking his head and laughing softly. He's started adjusting and readjusting himself and his position but seems to be missing the real issue here, as Roy's still-dry cock attests to.

Roy groans again, this time with exasperation. "Agh- Jean, just- I need *wetness*, Jean. Spit on me."

Havoc shoots him the most adorably confused look he's ever seen. "Excuse me?"

Roy starts snickering, but he fights it down. "I mean- unless you have a bottle of lube in your pocket for some godforsaken reason, use your spit." Then Roy smiles devilishly. "...Or your mouth, if you're so inclined. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery after all."

Havoc blinks, and his flushed cheeks darken further, somehow. Whatever smartass retort he wants to make he decides to give up on, huffing and muttering a quiet "*fine*" under his breath instead. He licks his palm with his tongue and strokes Roy's cock, repeating the gesture until it's

at an acceptable level of wetness - then he strokes a bit more for good measure, as each movement causes yet more gasps and moans of pleasure from Roy, and further bucking and twitching of his hips. God, he aches, and aches for more still, and he wishes Havoc would just *get on* with it-

Suddenly his cock feels even wetter, and Havoc's smile has turned predatory again. When he looks, a clear fluid has started oozing from Roy's tip, lubing him further.

"Precum already? Damn. You're even thirstier than I thought, sir," Havoc teases.

Roy attempts to bring himself back to some level of composure, his trembling wet cock still in Havoc's grip. "Well- well it'd help if you'd stop *teasing* m- muh- ah, ah *shit*-" His snipe drowns into swears and moans as Havoc strokes him again, hard and *slow*, so, so slow. All the while he maintains eye contact, still smiling, obviously enjoying how Roy's coming undone by his hand. Roy hisses again, biting his lip hard enough to start hurting. God- god, fuck, it's so good, *he's* so good, but he can't stand this much longer, can't he just *move* already-

"AH!" Roy cries out uncontrollably as his prayer is answered with a thrust from Havoc's hips, pressing his cock up and against his again, along with his hand, stroking them both at once.

"There we go," Havoc mutters under his own ragged breathing. He pauses to center himself for a moment - then he leans back into Roy's ear, resuming his growling.

"Now- I'll make you say more than just *sorry*, sir."

And Roy just *melts* at this point, from the words and everything else. Havoc resumes tonguing his neck and collarbone while rhythmically thrusting and stroking down below, as Roy's cock dribbles further with more liquid, now joined with Havoc's own secretions. There's a passing thought of what a mess their uniforms will probably be after this, but, oh well.

After a few thrusts, Havoc catches his breath again, then releases his grip on their cocks to grab under Roy's thighs. He hikes up Roy's left leg to wrap it around his waist, spreading him deliciously and lifting him up and against the wall, causing Roy to have to look down slightly at Havoc, for once (and he appreciates it). He supports Roy with his strong arms and his hips pressing up against his own, and ah- Roy sees the nature of the technique now. He is, quite literally, in for the ride of his life.

His excitement must show in his face, as Havoc's smile grows into a grin when he meets his eyes again. "Ready?"

Roy nods breathlessly. Oh yes, he's ready.

And then Havoc moves- and god, does he move. He thrusts up and against Roy, crushing him between the unyielding wall, his impressive strength and even more impressive cock. Roy feels boneless, disintegrating from the heat coursing through his system, hotter than any fireball he could conjure. He all but wails with moans now, loud and uncontrollable, crying out in time with

the low creaking of the wall. His hands twitch uselessly at his sides until they find purchase on Havoc's back, lifting up and around to hold onto his neck and shoulders, desperately hanging on as every sensation is overwhelmed with the intense pleasure.

In the meantime they'd started kissing again, but now it was more like mindless, messy swipes of their tongues that rarely hit their marks, mouths panting against each other, gasping and grunting and moaning with increasing pitch and frequency. Occasionally it's punctuated with prayers and curses, variances of "fuck" and "God" and "yes, yes, yes."

God, Roy could only imagine how this would feel if Havoc was actually inside him, like whatever dates he's done this to. Maybe someday that will be a reality too - but he can hardly imagine that, or much of anything, in his current state of mind. He feels his eyes watering again, this time from the arousal building and coiling inside him to unbearable levels, close to its breaking point. And from the sparks lighting along his nerves, heart hammering against his ribs, breath quickening to the point of hyperventilation, he knows he's going to come harder than he has in *years*. And by god, he's ready for it.

His vision darkens into points of bright light as he approaches the edge, and he squeezes his eyes shut, bracing himself.

On the other side of the break room door, Riza jerks to her feet from her crouched position and briskly starts walking away, her face hot and loins prickling. She's heard quite enough now, fairly certain that she heard Roy give a command with the word 'fuck' in it and Havoc say something about cock and bread crumbs that *definitely* wasn't referring to chickens. And now that the muffled banter has devolved into telling grunts and moans and a rhythmic creaking in the wall, it's time for her to leave before her composure crumbles further - and before hearing how embarrassingly loud Roy will undoubtedly be when he climaxes. Damn her morbid curiosity.

It seems *all* of them underestimated just how long the tension's been building between him and Jean. She nearly forgot about the day Roy gave Jean that test and promoted him all those years ago... and she was right there! She saw the whole thing! How did she not notice? At the time she'd chalked it up as 'just a guy thing', getting up in each other's faces for intimidation, or something. But apparently they never forgot that day, from the sounds of it, and now... Oh, boy.

As she continues down the hall towards an intersection, Breda turns into view, approaching with an empty mug - probably looking to refill his morning coffee. She raises a hand to jab a thumb behind her as she approaches him.

"Breda. Ah. Don't- don't go in there," she says tightly.

He stops, gapes at her slightly. "Wh- why not?"

Riza stammers. "Uh- They're- Roy and Jean, I mean- They're uh..."

She can't quite get the words out - which is a bit ridiculous, they're all adults here. But still, it's awkward when it involves two of your closest friends and coworkers and it's happening *right now* in your damn *workplace*.

Breda stares at her in confusion for a moment - then realization crosses his face, furrowing his brow. "-Wait. You didn't *do it*, did you?"

Riza nods tightly. "I did, and they are in there, right now, and they- uh. They're-"

She's interrupted by a sound echoing down the hallway. A distant, guttural cry from a distinctly masculine voice, sounding like something between a scream and an intensely loud moan. A few moments later, another sound follows it, similar but much quieter and harder to distinguish.

And Riza is absolutely *floored*, both at how fast it came and that it carried this far. She exchanges awkward stares with Breda, her cheeks darkening further.

"...Looks like they finished," she says quietly.

Breda blinks at her a few times.

"...Well thank *god*, finally."

END.

Note: Sorry for no pillow talk ending, I had to be goofy. :P

All you need to know for an epilogue is that eventually, Fuery comes by with the custodian's keys to unlock the break room and sees Roy and Jean cuddling on the floor, half-asleep and covered in semen. He gives them A Look(tm) and is like "Congrats on the sex, now please get cleaned up and back to work, sirs."