Of Stars and Sleepless Nights

by MissTangle

Summary

After everything he's been through, Benji can't sleep. Maybe he just needs someone to look after him tonight. Set pretty much immediately after Rogue Nation.

Notes

Day three of Whumptober, and I have officially become Benthan trash. Aren't you proud of me for lasting so long? Anyway, I broke from the prompt a little here, because one night of not sleeping is not insomnia, but I figured I could get away with it by implying that there would be insomnia without the things that happen in this fic occurring and because there isn't a nightmare prompt. This is also heavy on the comfort because I can't not write these boys incredibly soft, apparently. I also toned down Benji a little bit compared to the previous fics, because I was starting to worry that I was getting a little carried away with his inner thoughts.

Anyway, that's enough of my rambling for now. Here's Whumptober Day 3: Insomnia!
It had only been a day since they’d caught Lane. Hunley and Brandt had gone off to deal with all the things that come up when a criminal mastermind is caught and an MI6 handler is found to be corrupt. Luther had disappeared as quickly as he’d appeared, which seemed fair enough considering he technically wasn’t supposed to be there in the first place. That left just Benji and Ethan together, hiding out in a safe house until things calmed down a bit.

Night rolled around and the two turned in, with Ethan softly advising Benji to try and get some sleep. Ethan meant well, of course, but they both knew that it was just wishful thinking. Benji never slept well after the hard missions, and this had certainly been the worst one yet.

Still, Benji always put a lot of stock in what Ethan had to say, and as such, he really tried his best to sleep. Unsurprisingly, he had no luck. Every time he closed his eyes, he was back in that vest, Lane’s unsettling voice whispering in his ear, completely in control of everything Benji did. The few times he did manage to drift off, it was only a minute or two before one of the possible outcomes his mind always loved fixating on was bad enough to scare him awake.

Benji kept at it for a few hours, determined to try his best, if not for himself, then for Ethan. He gave it up then, abandoning his bed and venturing out of his room. He wandered aimlessly through the house for a while, moving as quietly as he could, not wanting to wake Ethan and worry him even more than Benji knew he already was. He eventually came to a stop by a window in the sitting room. Carefully pulling back the curtains, Benji let himself look up at the stars. The night sky had a strange way of making him feel better, if only a little.

He stood there like that for a long while, until the soft sound of footsteps drew his attention away from the window. Benji turned to see Ethan standing nearby, watching him carefully. It seemed that his attempts at stealth were unsuccessful.

“Benji.”

“Ethan.”

“Couldn’t sleep?”

“Not at all.”

Ethan joined Benji by the window, taking a look up at the stars himself. Then he turned to look at Benji, and even in the dim light Benji could see the concern in his eyes.

“Are you okay?”

Benji knew Ethan wanted a real answer, not his usual cheap smile and overly bright assurances. “I…” Benji trailed off, looking away from Ethan and back out the window, finding that meeting Ethan’s eyes was a little too hard right now. “I don’t know, really.” The fear and the pain of everything he’d gone through came back to him again, making it hard to breathe. He swallowed hard and shut his eyes. “I don’t know.”

Ethan stepped closer then, carefully wrapping his arms around Benji and pulling him into a hug. Benji reacted immediately, clinging to Ethan desperately, burying his face in Ethan’s shoulder, hiding from it all as best as he could. He fought back the tears that had suddenly welled in his eyes, whimpering quietly as he did so, trembling there in Ethan’s arms. Ethan just shushed him softly and held him tighter, swaying lightly.

When the shaking stopped and the imminent threat of crying had subsided, Benji let himself relax into Ethan’s embrace. For the first time in about forty-eight hours, he found that he felt truly safe.
Nothing could hurt him here, not as long as Ethan was holding him. The feeling sank into him, soothing his heart, calming his mind. Benji wanted it to last forever.

Benji wanted Ethan to hold him like this forever.

“Hey.” If it couldn’t last forever, Benji would at least make it last as long as he could. “Don’t let go yet, okay?”

Ethan turned his head slightly, just enough that Benji could feel the gentle brush of Ethan’s words on his ear. “Okay.”

Exhaustion crashed down on Benji then, weighing heavy on his eyelids. He wondered if maybe, just maybe, Ethan’s presence might enable him to sleep. Ethan seemed to have the same idea, and with a little bit of persuasion, he convinced Benji to loosen his grip just enough for the pair to shuffle to the couch, Benji still clinging to Ethan as best he could, unwilling to completely break contact. Some part of his brain tried to tell him how ridiculous he was being, but he ignored it. He needed this right now, and if that meant throwing poise to the wind, so be it. If Ethan didn’t care, then neither did he.

They settled together on the couch, Benji curled up in Ethan’s arms, letting the warmth and the safety wash over him. Eventually it lulled him off to sleep, his head on Ethan’s chest, his night terrors kept at bay by the steady sound of Ethan’s heartbeat and the rhythm of his breathing.

Benji expected Ethan would leave him at some point in the night, tuck Benji away there on the couch once he was soundly asleep and return to his own bed. When daylight finally stirred Benji awake the next morning, though, Ethan was still with him, arms securely wrapped around him. Pleasantly surprised, but surprised nonetheless, Benji inquired as to why as soon as Ethan had awoken as well.

Ethan looked away from him, almost as if he were embarrassed. “Truth be told, I couldn’t sleep either.”

Benji blinked up at him, disbelieving. It hadn’t even occurred to him to wonder why Ethan had been awake too. Maybe Ethan had needed last night just as badly as Benji had.

Ethan turned back then and met Benji’s eyes, smiling softly.

“And besides, you asked me to not let go.”

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