Six days after he was found unconscious in his living room, Aramis finally started to show signs of regaining consciousness. They were small signs, granted; a twitch of his fingers, a quiet moan, a slight flutter of his eyelids. But they were signs that the neurologist was wrong, that Aramis would wake up, that he would recover.

He looked more alive too, with the tube gone from his head and the ventilator replaced by an oxygen mask. There was even a little more colour to his cheeks so that he was no longer blending in with the bedding. If not for the half-shaved head, thick layers of gauze and the oxygen mask, he could even look halfway to healthy.
Athos sat at his side half-heartedly skimming a book Porthos had brought for Aramis. It was a romance novel, apparently a guilty pleasure, but Athos just found it boring and difficult to focus on. It didn’t help, admittedly, that his attention was constantly torn away by yet another movement on the bed. The nurse on duty had told him that yes, it did seem like Aramis was waking up, but it would be a long, slow process as his body adjusted. That had been hours ago, and Athos was growing impatient. It seemed like Aramis was too, as yet another moan escaped his throat and his head rolled to face Athos. A quick glance told Athos that it was yet another unconscious movement, not the conscious, confused gesture he’d been expecting. He didn’t bother to hide his disappointment.

But a moment later Aramis moaned and shifted once more. His fingers tightened a little on the blanket which covered his legs.

“‘Mis?’” Athos called as he tossed the book onto the nightstand and leaned forwards in his chair. “‘Mis, can you hear me?’”

Aramis wrinkled his nose and tossed his head the other way, seemingly trying to bury his face in his pillow. Athos glanced up at the glaring light above the bed and grimaced – not exactly ideal for someone who’d been in the dark for six days. He picked up the book once more, opened it to a random page and held it over Aramis’s head in an attempt to block some of the light. Not exactly ideal, but it would work until his eyes adjusted.

It did seem to work at least a little, as Aramis shifted his head and finally opened his eyes. He squinted at the book over his head, eyes dull and unfocused. After a minute, they closed once more and Athos couldn’t help but sigh softly in disappointment. It had looked so promising.

But a few moments later, soft brown eyes appeared once more and locked on Athos. There were no signs of recognition, no signs that he was looking at something more interesting than a wall. The nurse had said that he would be confused when he came to, but Athos wasn’t expecting it to be this frightening to witness.

“Aramis, it’s ok. You’re in hospital, you’ve been here for a while. How are you feeling?” he asked in a low voice, not quite able to hide the concern in his voice.

Aramis continued to stare, blinking slowly every now and again. The frown deepened and his grip on the blanket tightened. His breathing echoed a little louder against the oxygen mask.

“Aramis?”

One trembling hand dropped the blanket and moved up to poke at the oxygen mask instead; at first a little nudge but then clawing at it with fear in his eyes. He seemed unable to grasp the edges, his fingertips sliding across the plastic like tyres across ice. The fear grew more intense, his breathing sped up and he started to struggle against imaginary restraints.

Athos once more tossed the book aside in favour of catching Aramis’s wrists and pulling them away from his face. He held them both in one hand while his other tugged the oxygen mask down past the man’s chin. The heaving gasps grew quieter, but that was more due to the fact that they were no longer echoing than anything else. “It’s alright, you’re safe. Deep breaths,” he soothed.

The fear didn’t leave Aramis’s eyes even as his struggles grew weaker. His mouth began to move with words that did not escape his throat, but he didn’t seem to care. His lips moved faster and faster until he seemed unable to breathe around the movements. He grew pale once more as he squeezed his eyes tight shut and began to shake.

“Aramis?” Athos called softly as he reached for the call button with his free hand. The other still
clutched Aramis’s wrists – loose hands did not make for a good idea at the moment, it seemed.

Aramis’s mouth continued to move, and with time little noises began to accompany them; little grunts and groans at first, but finally words uttered in what Athos realised quickly was Spanish. He grimaced – Aramis only returned to his mother tongue when he was truly desperate.

“I can’t understand you,” Athos said in a slow voice, hoping that it would break through Aramis’s terror.

The noises stopped the moment Athos had finished speaking. Eyes flew open once more and locked with Athos’s, his gaze intense. Aramis’s mouth moved silently once more until finally, he spoke. His voice was shaky, the words themselves barely louder than a whisper. But they carried more power and more raw emotion than should have been allowed. Three words which left Athos desperately fighting to keep his composure and not break down there and then.

“Who are you?”

End Notes

Thank you for reading!

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