He Looks Magnificent

by cheshireArcher

Summary

He's always been this way to Cassius. Always magnificent.

Notes

I followed the events of HBO Rome's Philippi episode instead of the historical record. I could sit here and detail the actual battles of Philippi (there were two) but I won't (hit me up on Tumblr if you want). We'll just get on with the story.

This is based off of my favorite scene from Rome- when Brutus is suiting up and Cassius looks at him and says "You look magnificent" and Brutus doesn't notice the lovestruck look on his face. Poor Cassius. This is basically a stream of conscious narrative. Get some tissues and enjoy.

You can’t believe it. He’s certainly the same man, but he’s completely different. For one, he’s shaved and his hair, once disheveled, is back in order. His bearing is back to that of the young patrician that you had known before everything happened. Thank the gods. He’s suiting up now, his footman strapping on the armor and you stand aside, leaning on a camp table, looking up at him. You’re taller than him usually. Looking up at him seems oddly right.

He’s so handsome- the strong jaw, the grin; the bright, laughing eyes. He looks like a soldier now, even though he really isn’t one. He’s a scholar, a nerd, a snobby politician and young man, but at this moment he’s perfect. He’s an absolute idiot, you are painfully aware. He’s always made bad
decisions. He always ignores what you have said to him. But you allow him to overrule you, so many times. You always will, and you’re not quite sure why this stupid puppy holds you in his sway.

The worst part is that he doesn't even realize it. You would go to the ends of the earth for him, crawl through Tartarus if there was the promise of his arrogant smile at the end of it. And that night, when he drunkenly tried to defend his honor, when you told him that he’d ruin their chances of getting support, you in truth were even more worried about him. Because then you saw the mess he had become, his broken soul pouring out over wine and perceived insults. You wanted, in that moment, to keep him safe. To heal him.

But you couldn't.

He yelled at you to leave and so you did, walking away from that skirmish, leaving him alone and hearing him shout after you that he was sorry, and then hearing him screaming. He screams like that on occasion, when he’s truly torn. You first heard that howl when he finished off Caesar. He’s greatly messed up, and at that moment you knew the extent of his turmoil. You didn't, however, know what he was apologizing for- possibly ruining the chance of support from Bithynia? Putting you in that situation?

Of course he wouldn't know that he was breaking your heart.

Seeing him like that broke what part of your heart you still had. You have always prided yourself on having little feeling. You’re a soldier and have seen so much death that any softness in you has been beaten out by now. You've killed, you've nearly been killed, and you have never thought anything of it. But the thought of him in harm’s way, especially that he might bring on himself, that’s something you can’t bear. You want him to be safe, alive, free.

You look up at him, and you feel the warmth of love wash over you. He looks like a true hero, which he is. He’s strong now; ready to face the enemy and to win. If he listens to you, he will succeed. If not… you don’t think about that because you know that you’ll let him do what he wants. You let him walk all over you. You’d let him walk over you in hobnailed boots. You feel love and admiration swell inside you. You’re so proud of him.

“You look magnificent,” you say. He grins his cute, smug little grin, and agrees. Every time he does that you don’t know whether you want to smack that smile or kiss it. He ignores the look on your face, probably not seeing it at all. He agrees that his mother probably would like a picture of him. He doesn’t care, if he sees, that you’re staring at him and can’t stop. You feel tenderness, and vaguely realize you probably don’t look like you usually do. Usually you look at everything like it’s below you, but at this moment he’s the only thing in the world, and he’s so high above you. He’s the only person that matters. Not your rivals, not your allies, not even yourself- he is the only being that registers in your mind.

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Many days later you’re at the frontline, preparing for battle. It will probably be the last- it will decide who has control of the Republic. You’re beside each other, each of you mounted on your horses and in full armor. He mentions that it’s your birthday, and you realize that you forgot. How sweet of him to remember. Even sweeter, he apologizes for not having a cake. You joke that next year he should make an extra big one for you. You're fairly certain he can’t bake, but you'd like to see him try.

When it comes time to give the signal, you start to give it, but then you look over at him. He deserves to do it, even though you’re the more experienced soldier. You ask if he wants to, but he
tells you to. You lower your hand and the order to go forward is shouted. The battle begins and all you can hope is that he will not be lost. You feel anxious and it probably shows.

Like all the other battles before, the dust kicked up and the fear and confusion scatter all thoughts. A barrage of arrows rain down and you are pushed back into a *testudo* by a comrade. Some arrows break through the shields, piercing the hands and faces of several men. But it’s far safer than being on the outside.

But if you hide you will never advance. You give the order to break.

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When you see him again you’re lying on a stretcher, being carried to safety behind the lines. He runs to you and kneels beside you. You’re covered in blood and dust and wounds. They took off your armor so the extent of the injuries could be made known. You’re coughing up blood as he lifts your head. As he does so you can but keep your eyes on him. It’s your only bit of comfort. You know you’re not going to make it.

He asks you what happens, and you reply you’re not quite sure. It’s been one hell of a birthday, though. He looks at you, and you see that spark of optimism. He says the day isn’t over yet, and you believe it, for a moment. You look into his eyes and that feeling of love and tenderness fills you again and you feel your face relax, even though you’re in excruciating pain. For the moment that he holds you, you feel that the two of you could win. It’s him and you against the world, and you could be victorious.

A centurion runs over to give him a report. It’s probably bad news. He gently sets you down. You can’t tell him how much you want him to just touch you again. You were holding onto life as long as he held on to you. You stop breathing and a second later your heart stops. How appropriate. He held your heart but he never noticed. He tried to keep you cheerful, and then, the moment he looked away, you died. You’re dead, so you don’t see him turn back to you and realize that you’re gone.

You don’t feel him wrap his arms around you and hold you close, pressing his face in your hair and kissing your forehead. He will sit there for a moment, holding you and rocking back and forth, until the centurion tells him he needs to get back to work. You don’t know any of this. If you did, if you could sense him cradling you and the tears in his eyes and the hope that has drained out of him, it would break your heart.

He’s now left to face the enemy alone.

You didn’t want to leave him. You wanted him to know. You wanted him to see what he was and what he could become if he pulled himself together, and in the last few days you just wanted him to realize that you loved him. Maybe, if you could see yourself in his arms now, on the battlefield, under a cloud of dust and death, you might feel that he loved you too.

Whatever he did and whatever he meant to you, he would always be magnificent.

*Works inspired by this one*

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