Drowning

by BeesKnees

Summary

Finnick Odair is drowning, drowning, but Annie Cresta is calling him home.

He is underwater for nearly five minutes during his games where he’s consumed by the swell of the raging river around him. He’s bleeding freely from the wound that skitters along his ribs. He can feel his lungs shuddering, and he shuts his eyes, because he thinks it wouldn’t be so bad to die like this.

He dreams of her then, although he doesn’t know her yet. Dreams of her rising out of the river, clutching hands and tangled, wave-wild hair laced with ropes of seaweed. Her eyes are kind, and she says his name over and over like a mantra, calling him home. He says yes. He would give her anything.

But something is out of alignment in his body, because his hands wrap back around the trident, thrust forward, and he finds his mark, ripping out the throat out of the only other tribute still in the games.

He surfaces, gasping, the sky a blaring whiteness in front of his eyes. He feels as if he’s lost something in that river.

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At 19, he’s drowning in the Capitol. He’s watched all of his tributes die, been touched and revered by every hand in the Capitol, tried every drug that’s been offered to him. He stops answering when Mags calls his name. He smiles instead, because it’s an automatic reaction, a plea for
survival.

He’s not prepared for Annie Cresta coming out of the sea of tributes, wavy hair curling free from where it’s pulled away from her face. She looks at him and her eyes see straight through him, all sorrow and truth. He is the one who has to turn away.

He’s sick on the train, locks himself away, because no one is allowed to see how human he is. He dreams of his trident that night, the one he hasn’t held in years. He dreams of ripping his own tributes’ throats out, and Annie Cresta cries when she looks at him and goes, why, why.

He wakes up aching, because he’s forgotten about what it felt like in the bottom of the river. He forgot her.

They reach the Capitol and she speaks to him in a soft voice, playing with her hair too often. Her eyes only occasionally dart up to meet his, and it’s not that she’s shy — he can’t tell. Because she sees him in a way that no one else ever has, and when she meets his eyes, she stares him down and always wins.

At dinner, there is the quiet brush of her hands over his, so featherlight that it might as well not be there — is the spray of the salt from the sea, and it’s the first thing that he’s felt in years. It scares him and he pulls away at first, and then feels childish. She doesn’t react, just keep her face turned downward, neck a perfect arch.

He falls asleep in the main room the night before her games and wakes up to a nightmare wracking his bones, too brittle in the light of sobriety. Annie has her hand on his shoulder, and she hovers over him, the low lights just illuminating her face, the rest of her body cast into mysterious shadow — she could be anything.

“Finnick,” she says, a name he doesn’t feel he knows any longer. He looks up at her. Her hand is still on his shoulder, and he reaches up for it without thinking. Their fingers meet, hers tentatively curling down across his palm, tracing his lifeline. He moves his hand down quickly, lacing their fingers properly together and that’s when she leans in, brushes a kiss to his mouth that feels like breathing.

He inhales too loud before moving toward her, his other hand sliding about her neck, tangling into her hair. She’s so intangible, so beyond him, that he feels like she’s going to slip away at any instant if he doesn’t grasp tighter.

She takes a step closer and then lowers herself down onto the couch, each of her legs going on either side of his. It’s a surprise to feel that flesh, her skirt riding up. He has never done this because he has wanted to.

His hands feel clumsy in a strange way, his skin alight. The kiss turns a little too rough and she pulls away, resting her forehead against his, breathes his names across his lips again. He turns them so her back is against the couch and their bodies fit together more readily — as if they should never be separated.

Her hands are shy, but explorative, down his neck and over his shoulders, finding all the places that shadows pool on his body. Under his shirt and over his ribs feeling at where a stabbing scar should have been. She calls him home.

His fingers journey over her legs, gliding over her calves and the barely-there bump of her knee. The warmth of her thighs is an invitation and he slides fabric out of the way so that he can crook two fingers inside of her. She breathes again, eyes closing for the first time. Her hips move toward him. He kisses her throat, tongues along her collarbone, an unknown plea on his lips as his hands
move with a haste he hasn’t known in a long time.

Her breathing grows heavier and heavier, an echo in his ears, but she reaches forward, guiding him so that he has to pull his hands away. He slides into her, and she looks up at him, eyes the color of the roiling sea — and for the first time, he isn’t afraid of her seeing straight through him, into the heart of him. For the first, he feels like something resembling a human being. With every thrust he thinks, you’re saving me, you’re saving me.

She wraps her arms around his neck, cries out into his mouth, a muffled and beautiful call.

He is warm when he comes, cries out into his mouth, a muffled and beautiful call.

They curl up together until near dawn when he lifts her up and takes her back to her room so that nobody knows.

She goes into her arena. She floats in the sea, worlds away. He traces his fingers over the shadow of a scar on his ribs and calls her home.

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