Walking Over Your Grave

by BeesKnees

Summary

Finnick wakes up in the tunnels after the fight with the mutts, which is more than he expected. 

He wakes up. 

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He wakes up, which is more than he expected. 

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He wakes up, and he's not in pain, which is far more than he expected. 

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Finnick wakes up at the bottom of the dark tunnel. He blinks for several moments in a slow sort of way. He waits for the pain to ricochet through his body, for his injuries to make themselves known. But they don’t. He breathes out slowly, waits another second. When the pain still doesn’t tear its way into his brain, he raises his hands, one after the other. He presses them against the heavy black vest that he’s still wearing. It's torn on the left side, and his fingers trace the tear marks upward. 

They seamlessly blend into his shoulder. He traces the grooves in his shoulder, which twist up along his neck. Just below his jaw, he feels the mark from where the mutt bit into him. He can’t touch it any further.
(But there was still no pain, which teases at his mind for half a second before dissipating.)

He pushes himself up.

“Hello?” he calls, taking the risk. He expects that the squad couldn't have gotten far. But only his own voice echoes back to him. There's not even the answering call of the horrific mutts hissing Katniss' name.

He looks down at the ground around him. In the sludgy water are the bodies of the mutts, burned heavily in most places. Although he's been trained for combat, has seen so many of the terrible things that the world has to offer, he can't resist the shiver that works its way down his spine. (Someone was walking over his grave is what Mags would have said.)

He walks around the sewers in a small circle, assessing the damage to the place, trying to figure out what his best course of action is. The team had been trying to get above ground, so up is probably his best bet even if he's exposed. If more of these mutts come down the sewers, he doesn't stand a chance on his own.

He heads back to where he woke up, reaches for the trident that's still resting in the inches of dank water.

He misses it on the first grab.

He frowns. He's not usually disoriented, no matter his injuries. He reaches again – and watches this time as his fingers pass through the trident. He can't help himself; he reaches again, watches his fingers go through the shaft of it as if they're air. As if he's made up of nothing.

Only belatedly does he see a glimmer of gold a few inches away in the water.

His wedding band.

He holds his left hand up, and it still gleams there, not removed since Annie put it in place. His hands fly back up to the gruesome wound, the one that hadn't hurt at all. He traces it all the way, feels how the bite pits into his throat, going further in than anyone could have possibly survived. The bite tears through part of his jaw, inching into his face.

He shouldn't have woken up, because he didn't survive.

He's dead.

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He spends the next hour just sitting in the tunnels in numb disbelief. (How? How could this have happened to him? After everything. After surviving his first set of Hunger Games, after finding Annie, going into the Quarter Quell, her being in the Capitol. After the two of them getting married, how could he have possibly died? This wasn't what their ending was supposed to be. They were supposed to have a life after this. They were supposed to be happy. They were supposed to be together.

He plays the fight with the lizard mutts over and over again in his head, on a loop, as if he can change it. He can feel his fingers slipping over the metal rungs of the ladder as he tries to pull himself up. He can still see Katniss' pale face far above him, the goal that he had to strive toward. The mutt grinding its claws into the back of his neck as it pulled him back--

What if he'd shoved the trident into his face? What if he'd let go of the ladder and dropped back
down? What if Katniss had shot an arrow down at them? What if he'd climbed just a little faster? There are so many outcomes – any of them not ending in him being here, alone.)

He waits and waits and waits – for whatever's next. For oblivion. For a reunion with Mags.

But nothing happens. And he's faced with the only idea worse than actually being dead – being dead and trapped in the sewers of the Capitol for the rest of his afterlife.

He feels the need to cry, but he can't anymore. He has no body. There is no physical outlet for him. So, he sits and waits some more.

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He doesn't know how long he's down there, but eventually he starts to feel a tug. Something is urging him upward. Can he leave the sewers? He heads back toward the ladder and stares at it. He reaches one hand forward, expecting to see his fingers brush through it--

And then he's up top. He's in the middle of the street of the Capitol, sunlight bright and streaming. Bits of rubble still line the street, but there are people out and about. Some people dressed in bright colors, but mostly it's the dull grey that he's come to associate with District 13. No one seems to notice him, which comes as no surprise. A woman passes right through him and does nothing more than shiver.

Above them, the sky whirs with sudden activity: One of Thirteen's aircrafts zips overhead flying toward the President's Mansion.

He feels some distant thrum of hope. Does that mean it's over? Does that mean they've won? And if they've won, where is Annie?

No sooner has the thought left his head does he shift again. He's somewhere else instantly.

It takes him a moment to orient himself: He's still in the Capitol, but he's inside a room somewhere. Nondescript, could be any hotel room in the Capitol. It has two beds, each fluffed big with pillows, a garishly bright wallpaper adorning the walls.

Why here? Why has he been brought here now?

It takes him another second to hear the noise. Soft. Sniffling? Someone's crying. He edges around the room.

Pressed in between the wall and one side of one of the beds is Annie. She's burrowed half underneath a blanket and has it pressed to her face, but he knows her anywhere.

“Annie,” he says desperately, reaching for her – but of course, nothing happens. His hands pass through the blanket. She can't hear him. She can't see him.

“Why the fuck am I here if I can't do anything?” Finnick bursts out, unable to hold his anger in. Not now. Not when Annie's in such pain and he can't help her. No, he's the cause of her pain. Is this his hell? To have to watch her be torn to shreds over the news of his death? Is this what killing other kids at the age of fourteen had earned him?

He settles as near as he can to her and listens numbly as she weeps. Time becomes nebulous and thin again, and he can't tell how much passes.

“I'm sorry,” he tells her eventually. “I'm so sorry.”
He doesn't have any other words. Even if she could hear him, what else could he tell her that means anything? That he's sorry that he threw away their chance to be together? That he broke the one promise that she held him to? (“Promise me you'll come back to me.”) That they'd held forever in their fingertips for a few short days and it slipped away when they finally thought it was safe? That he's never going to forgive himself?

None of those words will change anything. They won't really speak to his misery – or hers.

“Come on. You need to eat.”

He's been so intent on Annie that he hasn't noticed Johanna's in the room. She looks so much better than when he'd last seen her. She's put on some weight and some of her hair has started to grow back in, dark and wild as always.

Annie shakes her head underneath her blanket. Johanna passes straight through Finnick to get to her. She sits down next to Annie's feet, wedging herself between the wall and the bed.

“I brought your favorites,” Johanna says, waggling a roll above Annie's head.

“No,” Annie says, her voice tiny and muffled.

Johanna waits, takes a bite of the roll herself.

“Ans,” Jo says finally, sighing. “I know you're not hungry. But that baby's gonna be.”

…

If Finnick still had a heart, that's when it would have stopped. Baby.

His Annie is pregnant, which means--

His brain stutters out at that thought. He'd been told, after he'd started working for Snow when he was fifteen, that he wasn't capable of having children. He'd been told that it was something that was done to all the victors who were sold.

Of course, near everything he's ever been told by Snow or his government or anyone in the Capitol is a lie. So, he wonders why, after all these years, after everything, he still could believe that anyone.

Annie is pregnant with their baby.

It's then that he slides out of the room, finds himself somewhere else in the Capitol. He doesn't know where he is, why he's landed here, but he's desperate to get back to Annie. Nothing else in this world matters but being near to her. If he's really stuck here, he's going to be near her. He may not be able to help or do anything, but at least he can watch her – can watch their child grow up.

(He feels that flaring sense of irritation again, an acute awareness of what he's lost. What he gave up.)

But he can't bring himself back to life. He can bring himself back to Annie.

He tries to capture the feeling of when he'd been moved above ground, to Annie, away from her – and then there she is.

He slides through time, across the physical plane. Annie and Johanna are no longer in that room, but inside something akin to a hospital. Annie's wearing a paper gown, Johanna plopped right
down next to her. They're staring at a screen together – the baby. Barely there, but there all the same. In defiance of his parents' odds, a little blip on that black screen. A blip with a heartbeat.

“Look at him,” Annie breathes out, and she's smiling, clinging to Jo's hand. Annie's not looking at Johanna, but Finnick sees it – the set of Jo's jaw, the way the tears are welling up in the corners of her eyes even as she fights them. But she doesn't let go of Annie's hand to push them aside. No one else sees anyway.

But his attention strays away from Johanna and back to the screen. Disbelief wells inside of him once again. Is this real? Can he trust the reality of this when he's not even sure what he is anymore? But that little thump-thump-thump persuades him once again that it doesn't matter. This is all he has left.

He wills himself to stay here this time, to stay near Annie. He reaches out one hand, brushing his fingers over the edge of the screen. The image blacks out for a moment. Finnick pulls away quickly, and then the picture of the baby returns, as if nothing was ever wrong.

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He stays with Annie. He doesn't let himself slip through time or place. Where she is, he goes. For the time being, that's the Capitol, even though Johanna is already starting to plan for them to return back to Four. That's where the baby will be born. In his home. Not the Capitol.

Finnick watches over Annie when she sleeps. She's restless still. It takes her a long time to doze off. She curls into the spot where he would have been, still wakes herself up multiple times throughout the night. More than once he hears her whisper his name, as if she expects him to still be there. She'll start when she realizes he isn't.

He starts off just across the room, but he gets more bold as the weeks drag on. He sits on the bed while she falls asleep now, moves his hand around her hair even though he knows she can't feel it. He likes to think that she knows anyway – that she can sense his intention. He likes to think she sleeps better when he's near.

She sleeps with her hands cradled underneath her belly, protecting the tiny swell of their son.

She wakes once when Johanna comes in to go to bed as well.

“Is the window open?” Annie murmurs sleepily.


Annie murmurs in the affirmative, and Johanna frowns. She goes to fetch another blanket, pressing the back of one hand briefly against Annie's forehead, but Annie's already asleep.

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They go back to Four not long after, and Finnick manages to go along. It's tricky – he can't get on the train with them, but once they've settled again, he finds that he can relocate. Back home. He wishes he could feel the sun again. He pretends that he can – that the brightness and the clean, salty air have any effect on him when he can't feel anything at all.

Johanna and Annie settle in Annie's parents' house, which is near the beach. It doesn't take much to get it set back up. Annie takes the bedroom downstairs, and they transform the office into a nursery. Johanna takes the upstairs room.

Sometimes – just sometimes – Finnick swears that Johanna knows he's near. She'll stop, look
around as if she's maybe forgot something. As if she's heard something and is listening for it again. She starts leaving lines of salt around the house, which Finnick teases her about, out loud, even though she can't hear him. The salt has no effect on him either.

He resumes his habit of watching over Annie as she sleeps.

“Is it cold in here?” Annie asks one morning, burrowing into one of his old sweaters. (She's brought his things out bit by bit. Johanna had dragged them down from Victors' Village, but Annie can't bring herself to go through most of it. She has this sweater, worn thin around the wrists. One of his necklaces that she had made for him.)

“It's boiling,” Johanna says, waving a fan in front of herself. “I can't believe you're wearing that.”

Annie says nothing, but tugs the sweater down a little more over her stomach.

Her shivers throughout the night grow and grow. Finnick frowns as he watches. He wants to touch her, wants to wrap his arms around her, and keep her warm. But all he can do is let Jo take care of.

Jo tries. She checks the house for drafts, make sure that Annie has plenty of blankets, and brings her tea and soup. But nothing seems to keep Annie warm. Johanna makes her go back to the doctor, but the doctor can't find anything wrong – says that Annie, and the baby, by all accounts are completely healthy and doing fine.

And then finally, it gets so bad that Annie can't get out of bed one morning. Her teeth chatter, and she can't bear to have the blankets taken away. Jo actually gets into bed with her, pulls her into a tight hug, just to try and get her warm.

“You're burning up,” Annie murmurs into Jo's shoulder as she finally falls back asleep.

Finnick can tell by the set of Jo's shoulders that that's not true at all. Annie's freezing.

…

“It's you.”

It's been so long since anyone has spoken to him – spoken directly to him – that he doesn't realize at first that that's exactly what's happened.

And then, slowly, he turns at the sound of that voice. Because he knows that voice from somewhere. The memory scratches at the surface of his mind until he sees her.

Prim Everdeen.

He starts at the sight of her, so little still. Glowing, just like he does.

No.

The pain of seeing her sears through him, so strong that it's nearly a physical pain – the closest thing to real he's felt since he died. How did this happen? This is impossible. Out of anyone in the war, she should have been the most protected. Katniss would never let anything happen to her.

“It's okay,” she reassures him. She rests one of her little hands against his arm and he stares at it for a long time – longer than he should. He doesn't really feel it. It's still more the idea of sensation rather than sensation itself.
“It was quick,” she says. “I didn't feel anything at all. I came back, though. Because you're stuck.”

“Stuck?” Finnick repeats faintly.

“You're not supposed to be here anymore, Finnick,” Prim says easily. “You're the one who's hurting Annie.”

The second part is said just as lightly as the rest, but it's one of the most terrifying things he's ever heard. Him? He's the one who's causing Annie all this pain? No – he couldn't be. He'd never do that to her. He's just trying to protect her. To stay near.

“No,” he says before he can stop himself.

“You're drawing on her life force,” Prim answers. “Because she wants you near. Because you want to be near to her. But you need to figure out how to be unstuck. Or you're going to kill her.”

No.

“How do I fix it?” he asks, desperate.

“You have to let go,” Prim answers, her tone still gentle. “You can't help her anymore.”

She's gone in the next instant, as if she'd never been there at all. But her words still echo inside Finnick, haunting him in turn. He's killing Annie.

…

He tries to root himself out of the house in the days that come. He focuses on moving himself, wills himself to be anywhere else in Panem. The Capitol. His house back in Victors' Village. He doesn't focus on people. But nothing slides him out of place. He's become a part of this house, ingrained in the fresh paint and the old wood. He avoids rooms when Annie's in them, but it doesn't seem to make any difference anymore.

“I love you,” he tells her when she walks into rooms he's in. “But I need to leave you now.”

Her stomach blooms, but she wilts. She gets weaker and weaker. Johanna starts to grow desperate. Finally, one morning, Annie isn't in the house at all. Neither is Johanna. It resounds with silence – and Finnick can only hope they've left him behind. Maybe he is stuck here, but they're not. Maybe Johanna's convinced her to leave.

He barely has let that thought take form when Johanna walks back in through the front door. She stands there for a few measured moments, looking inside.

“Finnick?” she calls, but she sounds uncertain.

“You're such an asshole,” she mutters under her breath. “I don't know if it's worse if you're here or not.”

“Annie's in the hospital,” she says, raising her voice again. “She's real sick. You know that, don't you?”

“Yes,” Finnick answers, even though he doesn't think Johanna can actually hear him. But he needs this to work. He needs something to work, because he can be dead, but Annie can't. Annie has to live.

“Tell me what to do, Jo,” Finnick begs. “Make it better. Make her better.”
No sooner has he said the last word does he slide out of the little yellow house by the beach where their son will grow up. He's in the hospital – and there's Annie, hooked up to so many machines. She's pale, her hands still resting over the growing swell of her stomach.

“I'm sorry,” he says, dropping down on his knees beside her bedside. “I'm sorry. I love you. I just want you to get better, Annie. Please. I want you to have our son, and I want you to live for a long time without me. I want you to fall in love again. I want you to be happy.”

He would be sobbing if he could, but he can't. He leans into her – and suddenly can feel the searing heat of her hand. It brushes over his face, just for a flicker of a movement.

“Annie,” he whispers. “Annie, I love you.”

…

He wakes up back in the tunnels.

He whirls around, trying to figure out how he's been brought here.

But this time he's not alone. Johanna.

She stands in the middle of all the muck, shoulders squared. The mutt bodies are gone. The trident is gone, but Johanna is looking all the same. She holds a flashlight in front of her as she plunges through the sewers. She follows the same track over and over again – the stretch where the mutts had caught them.

She keeps at this for the better part of an hour before finally bending over. Through the grime, she picks up something.

His wedding band.

She stares at it for a moment and then wraps her hand around it.

“Jo,” Finnick says. “Jo, please take care of her, all right?”

Johanna glances around – looks straight at him for a moment, he swears. But she heads back up the ladder a few seconds later without saying anything. It doesn't matter, he knows. She would take care of them anyway, because she had loved him and because she's a much better person that she pretends to be.

He lets a wave of sorrow crest over him again – that it will be a long time before he sees Johanna or Annie again. And even longer until he's able to meet his son.

“It's all right.”

He turns at the sound of Prim's voice. She holds out one hand to him.

He takes it.

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