Baby Steps

by coreywinseck4

Summary

Takes place when Johanna is rescued from the Capitol and returned to District 13.

Notes

I’ve always felt like Suzanne didn’t go in to enough detail about Johanna's trauma from being at the Capitol so I rewrote what happened, with a new writing style I felt like trying out. :) Also, it's up to you to decide if they are together already or not. ;)

You look over at the once strong woman laying in the hospital bed, noticing for the umpteenth time her bruised and worn down body. She still hadn't recovered from her days in the Capitol, and you wondered if she ever would. Going by the fact of her not telling you anything about it, you know she’s not yet on the road to recovery. She lets out a mumble, but you're too lost in your own thoughts to hear what she said. You were still angry. About Haymitch not telling you about his plans (although you knew deep down he was right not to do so). About Peeta's warped perception of what happened to Panem. About what they did to him, Annie, Johanna... Another mumble escaped from the girl's lips. "Stop..." You hear. She was having a nightmare, and this wasn’t the first one she's had. You rise from the little nook in your chair to wake her up, but her hands are around your neck and you're on the ground before you can do anything.

"Johanna!" You gasp out. You hear doctors coming in to sedate her but you put your hand up in protest. She needs to get through this. "Johanna, you're safe now. You're not in the Capitol." You let out a cough, she's weak yet strong enough to hold a grip. "It's me, Katniss. You're safe. It's me, Katniss. You're safe." You keep repeating. She needed to know it was you, she needed to know
you were there. Her grip loosened, but she stayed where she was.

Drip. You felt something wet fall on your face, and when you look up, you notice the tears falling down her face. You don't know what to do, she you let her let it out.

"I'm sorry." She wipes the tears off her face and pulls herself away. But you don't let her.

"Don't be sorry." You were never good at comforting people, but Johanna was different- is different. "I've seen you every single day since you've gotten back and you have been trying so hard to show people that you're still strong. That whatever they did back at the Capitol didn't bother you. That they haven't broken you." You raised your arm up to her face and tucked a stray hair behind her ear. "Strong people are allowed to be broken."

Her body slumped. You carried her back to her bed. Baby steps.

She was recovering. The doctor's cut her off from her morphling but she's taking some of yours. At first you protested, but it made her feel better, so you let it slide. Not like you needed it anyway.

She had started training with you. You don't ever let her out of her sight. She notices, but doesn't say anything. It was an unspoken rule between the two of you, to always look after each other. After what happened in the arena and the events after, you couldn't bear to lose her again. You were scared to lose her again. You couldn't imagine her life without her, so you don't. You'll help her make it through this. Baby steps.

It was running day at the gym today. She was still not as strong as she used to be. You told her to stay behind, that they would understand, but she tensed up and told you she could handle it.

The whistle blew, and you made sure to be near her before it did. It wasn't long until her breathing got jagged. She was fighter, but she couldn't hide the fact that she was falling behind. "What are you doing?" She gasped out. "Why are you running with me?"

You didn't know how to answer, so you just kept running.

"Stop." She growled. "Stop!"

You both stop, catching the attention of a lot of other people while doing so. "I don't need your pity, Katniss! I can do this myself." She turned away from you to keep running.

Turned just in time to hide the tears to start running down your face.

"Johanna won't be joining you on the rebel squad."

...

"During her test we flooded the arena and she went in to shock."

"You flooded the arena?"

"You don't know what happened to her at the Capitol?"

You shake your head, although the two of you were now room mates, you guys didn't talk much with each other. You didn't know how to apologize, and she didn't seem to want to talk anyway.
"They soaked her in water and electroshocked her to get information about the rebellion."

Your heart dropped. It wasn't obvious then, but you did notice the fact that she never took showered. She got nervous when it rained. She struggled to take sips of water... God, how could you be so stupid? The sound of your footsteps echoed through the hallway as you ran back down the hallway to the hospital room, bursting through the door.

She was sitting on the opposite side of her bed, facing away from the doors. She seemed... smaller. Not her body shape, but the way she was sitting. She hunched herself up, as if to protect herself from anyone barging in like. Like what you just did. If she had noticed you, she didn't show any signs. You just stood there. Whether it was out of respect or if you were too scared to touch the delicate flower that was once a fierce feline, you didn't know.

It seemed like ages before she started speaking. "What they did to me..." Her voice was hoarse. Was she crying? "It wasn't... human."

More silence. It was her time to talk, your turn to listen.

"They tried to get me to tell them about the rebellion. About you." She let out a weak laugh. A laugh without humour. It sent a shiver up your arm. "And I didn't. Neither did Peeta. I could hear his screams, just as he could hear mine. Sometimes I wonder if losing my memories of what happened would be better-"

"No." You say quietly, not letting her finish. You couldn't afford to think like that, she afford to think like that. "You made to where you are now for a reason. And you will keep going because you're... you're you." You walked to the other side of the bed so that you could face her. "I'll be here every step of the way, Johanna. I promise."

You kissed the side of her head as she leaned it on your shoulder. Baby steps.

You can feel her body shaking as you help her in to the tub. It's been a couple weeks now, and she told you that she was ready to take her first shower. She was completely naked, but it didn't phase you or her. It felt natural, and that wasn't the main concern for you anyway. You quickly grab a stool for her to sit on, and she takes it, almost relieved that she won't have to stand for this whole ordeal.

"Johanna." You begin to say, but she quickly interrupts you.

"Don't talk." She whispered. "Just do."

You stare into her eyes, she's scared, and she's not afraid to show you that. It makes you love her even more. You lean forward and rest your lips on her forehead, letting her know that you will keep to your promise. "Baby steps." You whisper.

You pull away and you turn the taps ever so slightly, so that only a trinkle of water was coming out of the head. You're pretty sure you're just as nervous as she is. You turn it a bit more...

She let out a blood-curling scream that made you jump, then turn the taps off. She was sobbing in to her arms.

"I can't do it. I can't do it." You heard her repeat under her breath. You just hold her until she calms down.

"I'm sorry." She finally gasps out, still crying. "I'm sorry, I thought I could- I thought I could-" She doesn't finish.
You wipe away her tears, staying strong for her. "Baby steps." You repeat, and she takes comfort in that, letting you take her out of the tub and get her ready for bed.

Johanna's in her bed now, and you are just about done getting ready. You exit the bathroom and notice that she's shoved herself to one side of the bed. She pats the space beside her, motioning for you to come over.

You stare for a moment, wondering if that's what she means, but when she pats the bed again you go over and lay down beside her. The both of you don't talk, you just lay there, taking comfort in each others' presence. She's your best friend, your inspiration, your love. You're her rock, her light in the dark, her saviour.

It almost seems too perfect.

She reaches her hand up to your face, placing it gently across your cheek. "We can try again next week." She smiles and whispers.

"Baby steps."

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