a mile down

by rosehale

Summary

// haymitch dries out deep down in district 13 //

Notes

was re watching mockingjay part 1 after seeing part 2 yesterday (eeek!!) and plutarch mentions haymitch drying out a mile down. i couldn't leave him all alone down there.

peace out my friends xx

he aches right to the bone. every light is too harsh, burning into his bloodshot irises, every smell, even the taste of the bland gruel they leave at his bedside makes his stomach roll sickeningly. he sweats through the thin pajamas they've given him, so he wakes wet and shivering, the roots of his hair damp. he can't stop shaking, the water glass clinking at his teeth as he holds it with two trembling hands, the liquid in his mouth wet and nothing-like. he craves the burn of liquor to scrape it's way down his throat, settle in his belly and swarm into his mind, wash away all his memories with it's chemicals.

he cries. when they turn the lights way down to signify night or whatever the fuck schedule they've got going on miles beneath the earth, and he's all alone, skinny and weak. he's quiet, god knows he's learnt how to be quiet about weakness over these long years, but the sobs tear at his chest until he thinks his rib cage is going to shatter, splintering bone into all his vital organs. he's so exhausted and wrung out he doesn't even know what he's crying for, maybe for peeta,
abandoned in an electrified arena, or his dead family, murdered by faceless men and no one to
murmur final goodbyes to them and close their empty eyes, or maybe it's for katniss, all the way
up above him but still trapped beneath the surface, suffocating in the dim hallways, her wings torn
raggedly away, her tragic future already all planned out by coin and her war maps. he cries and
cries until he vomits, nothing but bile to heave up, splattering into the steel bucket he's hunched
over, the cold metal pressing into his bed warm skin. a woman with grey, seam eyes comes in to
take away the tainted bowl and replace it with a clean one. haymitch knows what he looks like,
vomit on his cracked lips, eyes red and swollen, snot probably dripping off his chin. he can't bring
himself to care.

there's a night when he can't catch his breath and ghosts come whispering. the doctor listens to his
heartbeat and takes his blood pressure, muttering to the nurses to keep an all night watch on him
and leaving his patient with a reassuring press of a hand to haymitch's sweaty forehead. haymitch
tosses and rolls, tangling the sheets around his legs, shoving away the extra blankets the nurse tries
to wrap him up in to sweat out the fever. they retreat back behind their one way glass window,
and haymitch hunches himself into a ball, squeezes his eyes shut against the blurred faces that leer
in the shadows. his little brother. maysilee with blood dripping from her neck. all those dead kids
he failed, sending them out each year, knowing they'll be returning in a box. he's so tired. he's so
so tired and he wants to just die already.

he gets a flu. the doctor tells him it's completely normal. that his immune system is way down and
he'll be just fine in a few days. haymitch glares and curses and coughs through a painfully raw
throat. his head throbs dizzingly and for forty eight hours he does nothing but lie as still as he can
and stare up at the ceiling, imagining splintering cracks breaking through the rock and metal, tons
and tons of earth and buildings all crashing down to bury him under their weight. the doctor's
right, of course. after four days he wakes up to find his nose has stopped dripping and he doesn't
match each breath with a hacking cough. they take him to shower, let him wash away the
infection. he thinks he's already started to rot from the inside out years ago. it's too late to try and
scrub him clean now.

plutarch comes to visit him a couple of times, sitting in a chair besides haymitch's bed of horrors
and smiling that smug smile of his, like he knows something you don't, like he's about to pull the
rug out from under you and take great delight in your screech of fear. katniss is struggling,
plutarch tells him. haymitch didn't except anything else. her insides have been torn out from her
and she's been left open, bleeding all over the floor. he can see her, walking the floors above him,
a shell of a person. he has to close his eyes when he remembers how old she is. both of them,
peeta too. just children.

by the end he's pacing his room, a caged animal ready to rip apart anyone stupid enough to enter
it's space. the doctor speaks to him low and slowly, burns the rules into his brain, is not hesitant to
tell him of the consequences if they found him with any drugs or alcohol. haymitch sits in the chair
the doctor insisted he take and twitches. he has a chronic sore throat. pain sits deep in his sinews.
he accepts it like an old friend.

the guard that leads him out is silent, and haymitch has to take a few glances to be sure it's not one
of his ghosts shivering into view to drape it's icy fingers around his neck. the man leads him to an
elevator, haymitch's hand still warm from where the doctor had shaken it, solid and tight,
congratulated him on his recovery. he flinched at the word. this isn't recovery. this is living hell. he
wants to throw himself down the elevator shaft. he doesn't though. he thinks of katniss, up above
him. alone. his mockingjay needs him. so he stays alive another day, thinking of the crisp sunlight
of 12 as he and the guard rocket to the top of the endless tunnels in the elevator, but never quite
high enough to scratch the surface, choosing instead to stay down and breathe in stale air, and
begin to stoke the sputtering coal of a single district uprising into a roaring blaze of rebellion.
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