From the Rubble

by thehangrywriter

Summary

Short Drabble/Oneshot. Peeta fights to keep Katniss alive after an accident during the first games. Only 4 tributes remain.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

He had been sitting on a rocky ledge hidden by a small copse of bushes. The berries sat in a small pile by his side, untouched until she finished her hunt. Katniss was a ways below him, near the bottom of the ridge, her bow prepped and ready for a shot. He had seen the rabbit scurry away, but he knew she’d catch it. He watched her stalk on silent feet and wondered if any of the others could see her from a hidden spot like he could.

Peeta barely felt the ground beneath him shake, but out of the corner of his eye, he saw the pile of berries shudder. It quaked almost imperceptibly and he watched with a strange fascination as the perfectly round top berry trembled for a moment before falling. It bumped its way down, rolling between the other rounded bodies, before settling at the bottom. He blinked a few times and looked away from the small pile. He felt as though he were waking up after a brief sleep, aware but disoriented.

It was the sound of rocks snapping as they crumbled that jolted him all the way back.
After his slow-motion episode with the berries, life sped up to dizzying speeds as he watched the top of the ridge begin to collapse in the wake of the tremor. He yelled for her. Her bright eyes jerked up to look at him and he knew immediately that she saw. He watched in horror as the hillside raced towards her. He saw her try to run. He saw it catch her.

"Katniss!" The rocks beneath his feet felt loose but they had stopped moving almost as soon as they had trapped her. He ran and screamed and dug until his hands bled, yelling her name like a man gone mad. He could hear the whooshing of his heartbeat in his ears and not much else. Anyone could be out there listening, but he couldn’t stop himself. It was as though he were a passenger in his own body as he fought to find his girl with the dark braid beneath the jagged slabs of rock. He sobbed at the first glimpse of her dirty olive skin amid the bleak gray slate. "Katniss!"

He didn’t know how it could be possible for her to be alive. As soon as he felt her heartbeat push against his fingers on her neck, he felt his knees give in. The fight drained out of him as he collapsed in an exhausted heap beside her. He gripped one of her limp hands with his, the other clutching at his heaving chest as he stared wide-eyed at the spotless blue sky. Berries. Where were the berries?

He wasn’t sure how long he lay there beside her. Time didn’t make much sense. His haze was broken by the sound of ruffling debris to his right. The rabbit. It was alive. Katniss. "Katniss." He whispered, turning towards her. They needed to get out of here. They couldn’t lie in the open until the games ended, hoping to survive until Foxface and Cato killed each other. He had to get her out of here. "Katniss, I’m here. I’m here."

Peeta carried her as gently as he could. She hung limp in his arms, her head tucked into his shoulder. He sang to her. He walked for hours, looking for somewhere they could hide. He sang and walked until the sun had disappeared from the sky. "We’re almost there, Katniss."

The cave saved him a second time. It was right where they’d left it, mercifully safe and dry. He carried her through its gaping mouth and settled on the ground. She was as still as she had been when he’d pulled her from the rubble. "Katniss," he called to her softly, rubbing the top of her arm through her jacket with the arm he’d looped around her back, "Katniss, we’re here."

He was bleary with exhaustion as he held her in his lap. He rubbed her arms and kissed her face as he murmured to her. "Katniss, please. I need you to wake up," he told her, lips pressing against her hairline. "Come back to me, Katniss. Please come back. I need you here." He talked to her the whole night. He told her stories about his past. He tried to bribe her with promises of endless cheese buns. He talked and talked into the silence, trying to coax her awake with his voice and his touch. Was this like what it felt to lose one’s mind?

He wondered dimly if the Capitol audiences were eating this up like he thought they might.
Were they hoping she would die? Did they enjoy watching him talk himself insane, begging her to wake up and look at him again. He could almost imagine the headline. *Tribute’s Dying Moments in Lover’s Arms*. He wondered just how exciting the show was for them. Did he look as crazed as he felt?

The sun was coming back into the sky when she moved in his arms. Her eyes opened and looked at him in the early morning light and he swore he’d never seen anything so perfect. “Peeta.” Her voice was little more than a ragged whisper, but it brought him to life again after what felt like an endless night of dying. She closed her eyes as he kissed her forehead and chanted her name. She was alive.

He shouldn’t have cried, but he did. He wept with relief as he pressed his face into the top of her head. He felt like he was dying. He hadn’t slept or eaten or drank in days. He felt suffocated by the emotions that tore at his insides. He didn’t know how he could possibly last any longer. They were both half dead already. Only her warm weight in his lap kept him from hysteria. She was alive. He needed to press on for her. When the cannon fired for the twenty-first time, he felt the animal surge within him. Two and a half weeks of pent up terror and anxiety had him wound so tight he was positively feral with the need to survive. He loved this girl. He loved her more than he loved his own soul. He needed to keep her alive and he needed to stay alive to do so. They were so close. They needed to go home.

“We’re going to go home, Katniss. You hear me? I am going to get you home. Just stay with me, ok? Just stay with me and I’ll get you out of this.”

The warmth of her lips pressing up against his neck in a soft kiss was all the fuel he needed. He knew he would kill for her.

End Notes

Just a little ramble about how things may have looked if Katniss were the one needing rescuing and care. I’ve considered doing a short series of these ”moments”, so if you like it (and want to see more), drop me a line! Constructive criticism is always welcome.

Find me on tumblr at: thehangrywriter.tumblr.com

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