Every memory, but now they fall

Posted originally on the fanfiction.lol at https://fanfiction.lol/works/1312.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	General (non relationship-focused), Y/N (reader insert)
Fandom:	Bleach (Manga)
Relationships:	Coyote Starrk/Reader, Lilynette Gingerbuck/Reader, Coyote Starrk & Lilynette Gingerbuck
Characters:	Coyote Starrk, Lilynette Gingerbuck, Reader
Additional Tags:	Memory Loss, Amnesia, Hollows are Miserable, Touch-Starved, Loneliness, Instincts, Reader-Insert, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD, Self-Hatred, Headcanon, Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms, Depression, Mental Health Issues, Denial Of Feelings, Bonding, Cross-Posted on AO3
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2020-11-23 Words: 2,935 Chapters: 1/1

Every memory, but now they fall

by InvertedPhantasmagoria

Summary

So they walk. Alone in the empty whiteness of Hueco Mundo, they pretend for a little bit like things were the way they used to be.

And then, Lilynette sees the body.

“Hey, Starrk, there’s someone over there!” she calls out, then promptly goes tearing off through the sand. Starrk tries to yell after her, but soon sees that she’s *right*. There’s a body lying prone in the sand.

When he catches up, Lilynette has rolled the body onto its side. Halfway covered in sand as it is, something quickly becomes apparent. There’s no mask in sight, and no hole visible-- but at the same time, there’s not enough reiatsu for this to be a Shinigami. It clicks in Starrk’s head abruptly; this is a human. A *human* in Hueco Mundo, who somehow hasn’t been eaten yet. A human who’s entirely unconscious in the sand.

Notes

Hi hi! o3o Another tumblr request here.... This one is pretty short, but also pretty fluffy, and way less fucked up than my usual~ It was a prompt that I'd had sitting around for *ages* and needed to get taken care of, so here we are! Amnesiac!Reader in Hueco Mundo for reasons unknown, plus a fair amount of bonding with Starrk and Lilynette. I want to note, though, before we even get started, that Lilynette is the same age as Starrk, I tend to write her as his equal/just as powerful, and also Kubo's choices disgust me. -3- Let's give Lilynette some respect, okay? And no warnings this time, just lots of Hollow angst~

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Hueco Mundo has always been dark and vast. Starrk remembers well his days of existing nowhere but its endless sands. He... remembers less of when he was alone. Before Lilynette. Before *himself.* They've never been able to tell which of them was the original-- or even if either of them were. For all they know, whoever they were before was someone entirely different.

When he's sent on missions into that darkness, Starrk feels a pain of melancholy familiarity. He has a pack now, in a sense. He was supposed to not be alone. And yet, somehow, things are no better than they were before.

This time, Starrk and Lilynette are out on 'patrol', as Aizen called it. They're to explore the sands in search of something strong enough to take back and make into another Arrancar for the army. Probably to replace someone. It's always to replace someone. Starrk is safe in that sense. There's *nothing* as strong as him, no matter how much he hates that fact. He'll always be alone in that, no matter how much he longs to be weak.

"Hey... Starrk?" Lilynette asks out of nowhere. The two are walking, not bothering to Sonido for a bit. It's nostalgic to wander aimlessly again.

"Yeah?" he sighs in response.

"Do you miss it?"

"Miss what?"

"Being out here. Together. When there was no one but us, no missions, and no one to listen to. Just you and me." Lilynette speaks in a low, hushed tone, like she's voicing some horrible secret into the air.

"...yeah," Starrk manages at last. It feels weird to say it. "I miss it. Even where we are... nothing has really changed."

And it hasn't. Uniforms, missions, and the constant clamor of Las Noches are the only things that are much different. Starrk still sleeps. Lilyeneter still roams and bothers him endlessly. And, of course, neither of them have anyone who they can call a *friend.* The loneliness prevails.

So they walk. Alone in the empty whiteness of Hueco Mundo, they pretend for a little bit like things were the way they used to be.

And then, Lilynette sees the body.

"Hey, Starrk, there's someone over there!" she calls out, then promptly goes tearing off through the sand. Starrk tries to yell after her, but soon sees that she's *right.* There's a body lying prone in the sand.

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at the same time, there's not enough reiatsu for this to be a Shinigami. It clicks in Starrk's head abruptly; this is a *human.* A human in Hueco Mundo, who somehow hasn't been eaten yet. A human who's entirely unconscious in the sand.

And the longer Starrk looks at you, the more his chest begins to feel tight. He... hasn't seen a human before. Not this close. Watching your peacefully-closed eyes and slack mouth, Starrk begins to feel very strange indeed. An emotion he can't place wells up inside of his chest.

"Hey... they're asleep," Lilynette says. "I think this is a person, Starrk. Like, an actual *person.*" She sounds about as stunned as Starrk feels.

"Yeah, I think so too. There's no mask and no hole."

"Wh-What do we do with them...?"

Any normal Hollow would eat you. But then again, normal Hollows aren't *already* so strong that nothing wants to come near them. Starrk has become very good at ignoring the gnawing pit that is his stomach, and Lilynette has done the same. Eating won't help them. And with no need to get stronger, learning to forget the taste of blood does them better than anything. It's not like it would go away if they were to choke down enough.

And then, you start to stir. Starrk watches your eyelids twitch and your face scrunch up. A strange lump finds it's way into his throat.

"Wh-Where am I...?" are the first few, slow, mumbled words out of your mouth. Starrk feels the softness of your voice wash over him and shivers. He sees Lilynette shake as well. A human. A live *human.*

"You don't know?" Lilynette asks when Starrk can't find words.

"Mm-mm. I... don't remember anything."

Lilynette gives Starrk a lost look. How do they explain this? Hueco Mundo is no place for the living, and breaking the news to you that you're in the world of what happens to the most unfortunate dead feels cruel. Starrk swallows with a dry throat and tries to think. Aizen will want to know about you. Maybe that's a start. And... being blunt is probably for the best.

"You're in Hueco Mundo," he sighs. "It's more or less hell. You're not dead, though, so it's not like you belong here. As for *who* you are... do you know your name? Or... anything?" He's hoping. He's really, really hoping.

"N-No... I don't think I do. Nothing. My head is j-just... blank." You look up at Starrk with anxious confusion and way too much trust.

This isn't *fair.*

"Well, the guy in charge of us will want to see you and ask some questions, I bet. Can you walk okay?" Being this close to something *living* is making whatever instincts Starrk has go haywire. He swears he can hear your heartbeat from where he stands. It's temptation and agony in one.

“I can come with you?” you ask with so much hope that Starrk wants to turn around and not look back. Are humans supposed to be this innocent?

“Yeah, that’s the plan,” he says, trying to ignore the flash of mixed excitement and dread that crosses Lilynette’s face at his words.

“Okay, th-thank you. Um... may I ask who you two are?”

“Coyote Starrk. Primera Espada, although that won’t mean anything to you for a bit.” Starrk sighs again. This is getting depressing. But at the same time, the life in your eyes is doing things to his insides that he doesn’t like.

“Lilynette Gingerbuck. Uh... I’m Starrk’s sister, I guess. At least that’s how you humans would think of it.” Lilynette gives an awkward, sort of tense smile. She’s excited, but just as unnerved as Starrk, for sure.

“Humans...? So you mean you’re not?” you ask with far less terror than Starrk would have expected. Maybe being without your memories is making you a little less likely to be afraid of them. “Sorry for so many questions, but... I really don’t know what’s going on right now.”

“We’re Hollows. Arrancar, at this point,” Starrk explains. “We were people at one point, I guess, but then we died and wound up here. No memories of what we used to be. Hollows are all that live here, so... yeah. You’ll get tired of all of us soon enough. Oh, and most regular Hollows will want to eat you. Arrancar... less likely, but still a possibility. You’re human, so you’re prey.” Saying all of this feels awful, but what else can he do?

“Oh... okay. And you d-don’t want to eat me?”

“Nope. We both got tired of that a long time ago.”

“Yeah,” Lilynette chimes in. “I’d rather be *friends* with a human than eat one.” She’s smiling for real now. Starrk almost winces at the sight.

Don’t trust like that.

From there, Lilynette helps you to your feet. You’re shaky and obviously disoriented, but not hurt. Lilynette manages more gentleness than Hollows are really supposed to, while Starrk... doesn’t dare to touch you.

Right up until he thinks about how you’re going to get back.

“Okay... it’s a long way back to where you’ll be staying. We travel through bursts of speed that humans can’t do, so,” Starrk swallows hard, “can I just carry you? I’m strong enough, don’t worry about that, but... yeah. It’d be easier, if you’re okay with it.” The thought of *touching* you is something all new. Holding someone without doing anything to hurt them...

“Yeah, sure. If you’re sure it won’t be trouble to you.” Your trusting smile is too much. Lilynette’s cheeks are faintly flushed as well. The two of them, Starrk thinks, really are of one mind. They’ve always been the same.

Touching you, even through clothing, is a shock to Starrk's nerves. You're *warm.* As soon as you're in his arms, that fact becomes clearly apparent. The all-too-human heat of you sinks into him like a wave and takes his breath away. This close, he can feel your pulse and take in your scent from inches away. You settle into his hold and wrap your arms around his shoulders. Your face buries against him, and Starrk can't *think.*

"Hold on," he says, even as he wants to put you down and end this.

With Lilynette in tow, Starrk Sonidos away. Your body is warm against his chest, and maybe, just maybe, he isn't as coordinated as usual. Loneliness is a thing with teeth, and right now, longing is biting down.

. . .

Starrk drags you back to Las Noches and brings you to Aizen. It goes about as expected. Aizen smiles in that peaceful way that never leaves his face, asks you a few meaningless questions that don't tell much at all. You explain that you don't remember anything, not even your name, and have no idea how you wound up in the middle of a desert of the dead. Aizen calmly says that, for the sake of understanding what happened, and of course, because of your lack of memories, you'll stay there for a while.

At first, Aizen is ready to call some lower-ranking Arrancar to watch you. You're not a hostage and have no intentions of running away. You're not valuable enough to be guarded closely. There's no reason to waste important personnel on entertainment and mere curiosity.

And then, you say, "Wait... um, c-can I stay with Starrk, please?"

"Why do you ask that?" Aizen asks with that same smile. Starrk feels a shiver run through him. No one has ever wanted to stay with him before.

"He found me. He and Lilynette. They're good people, and I trust them, so... I'd like to stay with them, please. I'd be scared here on my own." You glance over at Starrk as you say it. He can't look you in the eye.

"Very well," Aizen says, and makes it final.

. . .

You trail after Starrk as he walks back to his quarters. Lilynette had waited in the room, as usual, but hearing a second set of footsteps following his leaves Starrk unusually tense. He needs a nap. Falling asleep and forgetting that any of this is real sounds good. Avoiding the problem altogether sounds better, even if all he dreams is nightmares, like usual.

"Starrk, welcome back!" Lilynette chirps when he opens the door, but freezes as soon as she sees you there as well. "You... they're still with you?"

"I wanted to stay with you," you say. "And that man let me."

Lilynette's eyes stay wide. She hesitantly approaches you as Starrk goes right for his pile of pillows. He's going to sleep this off and pretend like nothing in the world is different. You

can entertain Lilynette for a while.

“You... you wanted to stay with us?” Lilynette asks with a hope so fragile that Starrk squeezes his eyes shut. She’s a part of him. They think the same, no matter how different they are. Hearing his own shreds of hope in her voice is painful and shameful all in one. He knows better than to trust.

“Mhmm. You were nice to me, so I didn’t want to go anywhere else.”

You say it so *easily.*

Lilynette whines in a sound so soft that no human could make it out. Starrk hears it though, and rolls over to hide. They’re lonely. They’re both so, so lonely, and having someone, even a stupid, clueless human offering *this* up without a second thought is just too much. Lilynette trusts where Starrk is jaded and unable to do it, but for both of them, it *hurts.*

“Yeah...” Lilynette mumbles, for once unable to muster up her typical energy. She has to be just as in shock as Starrk is right now.

“I’m kind of tired, so I’ll probably need to rest soon, but... would you like to show me around?” you ask Lilynette. “I’d appreciate it. Since I don’t know anything about this place, it’d be nice to see a bit of it.”

“Yeah, okay! The palace is *huge*,” Lilynette grins, a sudden spike of cheer returning to her. “Starrk and I lived in the desert for a long time, so we’re still pretty new to here too. Starrk usually just sleeps all day like the lazyass he is. I wanna *do stuff*, though, so c’mon. Let’s go!”

It’ll be nice for her to have someone to play with, Starrk thinks as he hears both of your footsteps leave the room. It’ll be good for her.

Where Lilynette kept whatever happiness and energy their original had, Starrk is always dragged under a tide of exhaustion and deep-seated sadness that never really fades. Mustering up the willpower to move, to stand, to even *sit up* is hard most days. Most of the time, he wants to sleep forever and never have to think again. It seems easier than facing a world where he’ll always wake up to the other half of his soul and nothing more.

But as he settles into his pillows this time, it begins to sink in.

You’re staying with them. You’re staying with *him.* When he wakes up, there will be another person in the room-- and at that, a warm, *living* person with a heartbeat and a soft voice and smile that makes him feel too much.

Thinking of it all hurts. It won’t last. It *can’t.* No one stays. No one ever forms that connection that Starrk has longed for since before he was Starrk. His stomach aches with the perpetual feeling of starving. He should sink his teeth into you like the monster that he is, Aizen be damned. He shouldn’t let himself feel the faintest fragments of something else.

Starrk wants to sleep. He keeps his eyes closed and forces himself to breathe steadily. If you keep trailing after him, what is he going to do?

. . .

“Hey... um, can you wake up?”

Starrk is pulled out of his dreams to a faint pressure against his shoulder. He tenses for a moment in the residual traces of the nightmares that never leave. “Go away, Lilynette...” he mutters sleepily, then tries to roll over and avoid this. Dreams are better than cold, painful reality.

“It’s not Lilynette.”

Oh. *Oh.* In his sleep, Starrk had forgotten that someone else was there. You must be back from running around with Lilynette.

Starrk opens his eyes to your tired face.

“I got too tired, so Lilynette dropped me off here. She wanted to be out a little more, and she said I could just stay here. I’m exhausted.” You laugh. “I guess whatever happened to get me here really wore me out.”

What you’re getting at quickly makes sense. In place of a bed, Starrk has the nest of piled pillows that he shares with Lilynette. It was a tough argument and only afforded to him because of his status as Primera, but being able to bury himself in something, even if it’s not sand anymore, soothes Starrk’s nerves and makes his instincts quit aching so much.

But with no bed, there’s only one place where you can rest. Starrk sighs tensely. He’s tough enough not to have to worry about watching his back while he sleeps, and you *are* just a helpless human, so he’d be fine... but the thought of allowing someone other than his other half to sleep next to him does things to Starrk’s head that leave him shivering. His mind wanders much too quickly to how it would feel to have your warmth close.

“You wanna sleep, right?” he yawns.

“Mhmm. If that’s okay. It doesn’t look like you have a bed or anything...” Your voice trails off almost nervously, but still not afraid.

“Do what you want.”

This is actually happening, Starrk thinks as he feels you lie down on the pillows maybe a foot and a half away. You’re unsteady, probably not used to settling in anywhere like this, but you manage anyway.

And then, Starrk is lying beside someone. Not touching, but still closer to anyone not Lilynette than he’s ever been. You sigh and tuck your legs in, and Starrk shudders at the sound of your breath. His body and instincts long to either devour you whole or scoot over and slot himself against your human heat and never leave. Which one he wants more, he doesn’t know.

“Thank you,” you say after a few minutes of silence. “For letting me stay, and everything else. I’m scared, still... but I feel safer because you and Lilynette are here. I know that I’m not alone here. And I’m grateful for that, so thank you. Really.”

“Don’t say that,” Starrk mumbles. Wherever his heart is supposed to be aches worse than it ever has. He wants this more than anything.

You sigh again and go quiet. Starrk *wants* in a way that he never has. He’s not alone. At last, he’s not alone. No matter who you are, the most painful parts of him are suddenly stripped raw. Hollows aren’t supposed to be able to cry, but Starrk’s eyes sting with heat nonetheless.

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