

Healing

An alternate season finale

Von Handtuch-Queen

Kapitel 1: Waking

First, all Betty sees is white.

The white becomes a ceiling. There's beeping. She's worried. Where is she? Wasn't she fighting? Wasn't there screaming? She was at the Farm, she-
"Betty? Oh god, Betty."

Her eyes move left and there he is. She knew he'd come for her.

"Jug." Her voice isn't quite there, but he smiles and holds her hand a bit tighter.
"You're okay, Betts."

Betty's in the ICU. A drip feeds liquids and pain medication to her. There are machines behind her, beeping away and keeping track of her breathing and the beat of her heart, displays blinking merrily.

Her hair is down and lays open across her pillow, skin pale and face sunken in. She looks small in the hospital bed.

Jug sits in a chair next to her, holds her hand and waits.

When the hospital staff tell him to take a break and go home, take a shower, eat dinner and get some sleep, he refuses. When they make him leave the room, he hovers nearby in the corridor until Veronica shows up to take his place and brings Reggie to take him back to Elm Street with strict orders not to allow him back until he took proper care of himself and ate for at least three people.

She doesn't have to stay in the corridor for long, a nice nurse lets her back into the room, where she stays for close to two hours, seated next to a sleeping Betty, staring at displays keeping track of vitals in ways she didn't quite understand, but interpreted no changes as good signs.

Jug, freshly showered, fed and with an overnight bag over one shoulder Jellybean packed for him, comes back so quietly, for a moment Veronica doesn't notice him. He just stands there half behind her and watches Betty with her.

She wakes again, later. It's darker. There's still beeping and she's still in the same room. Outside in the corridor, she can hear a few quiet steps. Is she alone? She tries to move her hands and touches another. Jughead is still there, sleeping, his hands holding her left.

He looks tired. She can't be sure in the dark, but there's a shadow on his face that

could easily be a black eye. Was he hurt?
She lets him sleep and watches him breath.

Betty wakes. It's light. Over her is a white ceiling, a lamp. The walls are white as well and there's a window with daylight shining in. A table with flowers. She's definitely in a hospital. A real hospital. Not the Farm's Chop Shop at the Sisters of Quiet Mercy. It's a new room. It's quiet. No loud sounds, no screams. She can hear a street somewhere outside and steps from outside of the room, as if someone walks up and down a corridor, rolling something around.

She tries to move and sit up, there's pain.

A pair of soft hands finds its way to her upper arm, gentle and slow.

"It's okay. You're okay. Now. And safe." It's not Jughead, it's Jellybean Jones, nervous but calm. "Hey. You're in Riverdale. At the hospital. I'll- I'll get you someone."

Jellybean makes eye contact with her once more then she's out of the door. It barely closes before it's opened wide and a stroller, she hasn't seen in use for way too long, is pushed in, Jughead right behind. Hat askew, he looks tired and way too young. In a way they all are.

"Betty. You're awake."

"Good morning, my brave Hellcaster." She wants to say, but all she manages are a few weird noises. She swallows and tries again. "Juniper's okay?"

Jughead parks the stroller and moves close to her. "Yeah." He smiles and brushes a few strands of her hair out of her face. "So's Dagwood. And so are you."

She looks at him and smiles. They were okay.

Jellybean brings a doctor with her when she reenters the room and smiles proudly at them both.

"I'll make sure these two find home okay." She says and leaves the room pushing the stroller carefully.

Betty looks up at Jug, obviously asking what that was about.

"Cheryl will be taking care of them for the next few days. Just until Polly's better."

The doctor coughs to remind them of his presence and demand their attention.

"Miss Cooper, you're going to be just fine."