Love Throughout the Ages

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Summary

Katniss Everdeen has just completed her PhD at Oxford and decides to head north to Scotland before heading home. Where she travels to and who she meets will change her and the fate of a clan forever. This is an Everlark fanfic with a little bit of Outlander thrown in. Disclaimer: I own nothing.
Chapter 1

Chapter 1 - Prologue

The stories have been handed down over generation through the centuries. Each culture tells them differently, but the content of the stories are all the same. Sometimes people disappear, loved ones, children, wives girlfriends, husbands and loaners. They travel, or so the stories say, not to somewhere else, but to sometime else. Sometimes the missing come back; days later, weeks later, months later. They come back changed, perhaps different, telling fantastical tales or horrible nightmarish sagas, or not saying anything at all having gone mad, sometimes they don't ever return. In Scotland, the stories talk of the stones having the power to transport people through time. It is said that these people received the ability from the faerie folk, that have blessed or in some cases perhaps cursed; humans with an anomaly in their blood giving them the ability to travel through the stones. Places like Craig na dun or Stonehenge are said to be such places where the ancients marked sports on earth. Spots where there is a convergence, a wrinkle that allow travel to occur. It is said that Egyptians built pyramids on these locations; the Incas built them as well. The ancient Greeks built temples such as the Parthenon to their deities, the Norse temples such as the Uppsala to their gods. The Chinese and Indian cultures had their own ways to mark the spots of convergence and their own gods to blame the loss of their people on. The Native American Indians marked the spots where their spirits held power with trees and stone.

The stories are cautionary tales. Remember children they are places to avoid at the full moon. The tales are passed down from elders to children, from shaman to the tribe, from medicine woman to mothers to children over bonfire, over hearth, over drink. The stories get written down so they become part of daily life of stories of tradition of religion. Time passes and the stories meant to caution become fables, become myths, become something ancient people believed in. The cell is discovered, Einstein and Madame Curie pave the way, and the age of science and reason relegate tales of caution to fanciful bedtime stories, meant to entertain not caution. Faeries are banished to the tales of princesses and princes and happily ever after. And it’s the 21st century and stones that mark the convergence are places of interest to tourists. And there is always an explanation when someone goes missing, even when they come back.

At the age of ten Katniss Everdeen felt she was invincible. It was the 1990's her parents weren't rich, but they weren't poor either. Her dad was a school teacher, her mom a nurse and they lived in a small town just west of Boston. Her father was mostly Wompanoag and her mom was the typical American beauty, blonde hair, blue eyes of Scottish descent, but with enough other stuff to say she was American. She and her perfect little sister Primrose were a perfect mix of her parents, although they each had their own flavor as her mother likes to put it. Katniss inherited the dark lush straight hair, the piercing grey eyes and the slightly darker skin tone of her father, while her sister was fair all over like her mother. It was their bodies and their facial features that marked them as sisters and showed the beautiful mixture of their genetics. The girls were lithe and athletic, built for running through the woods, their bodies strong yet graceful as the deer that ran besides their ancestors. Their facial features were delicate like their mother and they had a certain softness and curve to their athletic bodies that set them apart from their more pure Native American counterparts.

James Everdeen always told the girls they were lucky he was more than 80% Native American and it was verified and documented, that meant they were more than 25% Native American, which gave them access to government grants for college. "It is not charity to utilize the opportunities given to us because of our descent. It is reparation for the injustice done to your ancestors and accepting that is
not wrong, but honors the memory of those we have lost. Work hard in school to take advantage of these opportunities to give yourself a better life, just as I have done.” James had been one of the tribe that had taken advantage of the grants; he had gone to school and ended up with a MA in history and education. He was the history teacher in their high school and had made sure that his daughters were not only aware of their ancestry but their mother's as well. He spent time with Katniss in the woods (Prim was only 6) teaching her to track, bow hunt and to appreciate the bounty of nature but to respect it as well. He taught them to sing to nature as his family did, they were ‘singers more beautiful than birds’ and such had a special place in the tribe. The girls spent time during the summers at the Wampanoag reservation were Katniss and Prim made many friends with their relatives and other’s in the tribe. Katniss and Prim were raised Catholic and Wampanoag a combination of their parents’ beliefs, and although Katniss felt more of a draw to her spirit world, she respected her mother's Catholicism.

Katniss had many friends of both Native American and American, her father's best friend Hunter Hawthorne was a car mechanic; he owned and ran the local garage. He and his wife Hazelle, who was also Wampanoag, lived in the same town west of Boston, three doors down to be exact, and the girls were friends with their four children. Gale was the oldest and 2 years her senior, Rory was two years her junior and Vick was the same age as Prim, Posy their youngest and their only girl had just been born. Katniss was best friends with Gale, but her best female friend was Madge Undersee. Madge was a girl in her year that was Caucasian and the daughter of a prominent business man and family of old money, blue blood to be exact.

The most influential thing in Katniss's life was not her heritage or her friends, but the love of her parents. The love that her parents had for each other was epic and something very comforting. Her mother's parents were not happy that she married a man of race, or race other than their own that is. It was ironic that they called themselves American yet looked down on the Native American that was their son-in-law. Either way with or without their permission Lilly married James and was left without parents. It was their love that influenced Katniss, she watched and observed her parent's marriage, it became the standard that she would hold to, why get married without that love, that dedication. Katniss knows what can exist and she won't settle for anything less.

At the age of eleven Katniss saw the ugly side of life and the hard side of love, of soul mates. Cray Matthews a local elderly bachelor, who her mother had always told her to stay away from, was discovered to have sexually assaulted a 15 year old girl on school property. Her father, who had been working late detention had heard the calls for help and had discovered the man raping the girl. After rescuing her by knocking out Cray, he involved the police. Cray was arrested and charged, but out on bail he stormed the local donut shop one Saturday morning, where James, Hunter and other men liked to get their morning coffee and town gossip. Her father was shot and badly injured and in the ensuing chaos, Cray took his own life. Her father went into a coma and lost half a leg.

Her family was devastated, her mother was wrecked. For months while her father was in a coma recovering her mother didn't work dedicating herself to his recovery. Katniss took to foraging and hunting for food as her father taught her to keep her family fed. But it was her father's brother Haymitch that stepped in to help. He cared for the girls and got Lilly psychiatric help while her father recovered and when the summer ended and he came out of the coma and her dad was able to return to the school to teach, although the limp he had from the prosthetic slowly became less noticeable it never went away.

The years went by and Katniss and Prim worked hard in school, Katniss was valedictorian of her class and went on to win a place at Harvard along with a full scholarship from the Native American Scholarship fund. Her best friend Madge also was accepted at Harvard and the two girls went off together to begin their lives. Her other best friend Gale Hawthorne had graduated two years earlier, had decided to stay home and take over the family business, he was angry when Katniss accepted the
scholarship money. Chastising her, he made it clear that she was "accepting charity from the government that oppressed her people".

It was at her graduation party that Gale told her that he had developed feelings for her. Katniss was stunned, she had no idea that her best friend liked her like that and she had no idea how she felt, so she did what she thought was right, she put him off. Katniss explained that she had to concentrate on school that she hadn't really thought of having a boyfriend, perhaps they should think about it and revisit this the next summer when she is home for summer break. Gale agreed saying he would wait, Katniss told him not too, that if he felt something for someone he should explore it; they should make sure that their feelings are real.

After a grueling year at school where Katniss made Dean’s list both semesters she came home to find Gale asking her the same question. So she tried, they both tried, but the relationship was not what she wanted in a relationship. The night that she lost her virginity to him was the night she knew. Katniss loved her friend, but she knew in her heart they didn't have what her parents have, but it was easy, familiar and she didn't want to hurt him. They continued having a causal relationship for her entire remaining three years at Harvard. They both saw other people but always came back to each other in the summer that is until her senior year.

Katniss continued her friendship with Madge, who also attended Harvard, living with her all four years. Their sophomore year they added another roommate, Johanna Mason a girl who complimented them both and made for a trio of friends that rivaled the three musketeers. Katniss majored in molecular biology and worked as an undergrad under the tutelage of Professor Carl Beetee, it was rare that an undergrad would get a position in the lab, but Katniss was top of her class. So when Dr. Beetee inquired as to what her plans were for after graduation it didn't surprise him that Katniss had applied to graduate schools.

What did surprise Katniss was his interest in one of the Universities she had applied to, the University of Oxford in England. Apparently the renowned professor Dr. Carla Wiress was his cousin, "I'll put in a good word for you." Katniss thanked him profusely exclaiming that she didn't want to impose and that he had already done so much for her already. "Nonsense, dear girl, you are like a granddaughter to me, it’s nice to see someone who is talented and works so hard as you have for me all these years go forward with their life, that is a reason I became a professor, to mentor after all."

Katniss was shocked and elated when she got the letter that she was in the PhD program at Oxford, but she was knocked speechless when she read the accompanying scholarship letter. Not only was her tuition, books, and room and board paid for (although she was to be a dorm monitor), she was given some money for incidentals. Prim had just been accepted into the 7 year med program at Boston University on full scholarship so she did not need to stay for her.

Directly after Madge, Johanna and Katniss had graduated from Harvard they had moved into an apartment in the Back Bay. The building (as well as several surrounding buildings) is owned by Madge’s father, rent is cheap (well almost non-existent) and the apartment is large for the three girls. The reactions from her friends and family when she told them she was headed to England ranged from deliriously happy (her mom, dad and Prim), super happy and excited (Madge and Johanna), grudgingly proud (Uncle Haymitch) to angry (Gale).

Apparently Gale was under the impression that after she finished her four years ‘at that snobby school’ she would get a job and marry him, have his children and settle down. She saw ‘settle down’ as settling, in the end Katniss broke it off. She had tried to tell him over the years that their relationship was not long term, so how could he not support her? What kind of friend wasn’t happy for her, the opportunity to get a PhD at one of the most renowned Universities in the world, free of
charge? Gale was mad; he claimed he didn't know they weren’t long term, clearly ignoring the times she reminded him where she told him. He felt their love was a forever and destined they were soul mates, she told him it was not. He told her he loved her, was in love with her and had been for a long time; she told him she loved him as a good friend, but that she was not in-love with him and never had been. He told her that everyone expected them to get married, that her family wanted them to be together. He said he would wait, she told him not too.

As Katniss had departed for Oxford, Madge and Johanna said they would keep her room available, only using it for guests or the occasional short-term sublet. During her time at Oxford, Katniss traveled home during Christmas break only twice, she made friends, dated a few men and even thought she fell in love once. At the end of three wonderful years at Oxford in the lab of Dr. Wiress, Katniss submitted her thesis. Another 8 months and she had her PHD in physiology and was an expert in mitochondria with a job offer at Boston College. It was April and she had a job to report to in mid-August, her dream job teaching in a University, it was an instructorship, but still it was faculty track. It was her mother who suggested the trip, a relaxing jaunt through the countryside of Scotland. And why not, she was there and she could get those rubbings her mother wanted. She could see the places in the stories she had heard so much about. She could visit her 'clan's' castle on the isle of mull. And with very little convincing from her family followed by a promise from Madge and Johanna that they would have her room ready for her in their apartment, Katniss mailed all her belongings back to Boston, packed up her Kelty backpack and took a train to the North, to the land of the faeries and all the bedtime stories her mother had told her over the years.
Chapter 2

Scotland was beautiful; it had a wildness that was inherent in its people that they get from the terrain. The rugged beauty, the sea, the fields of heather, the rolling hills mixed in with the towns. The Scottish were friendly people with their pubs, whiskey and little bit of rebellion mixed into their personalities. Katniss felt a kinship to these people, they were part of the UK, but they didn't want to be nor were they silent in regards to the matter. It was similar to her father's people, they were Americans, but they didn't always like it. They had their own language, Gaelic, she had hers, and it was a similarity that bound them as people of two differing cultures.

Katniss woke with a sense of peacefulness; the hostel where she is currently staying is clean and with the exception of two 19 year old Americans on holiday, empty. It has been three wonderful weeks of traveling about the countryside, she started in Edinborough and met some of her 'family' that lived there, they were obviously distant relatives on her mother's side, but they were nice, hospitable people who delighted in the new found American cousin. Early this morning she was heading up to a place called Craig na dun, it was another one of those standing stones places like Stonehenge. Some might think it boring to visit another circle of rocks, but Katniss found these places peaceful, spiritual, she could hear the rocks singing to her. Her Native American side would say that she was one with Nature and could communicate with it through her song; she missed those small rituals where she would commune with nature as she did on the reservation or in the woods at home. The night is a full moon, the best time for her to talk with her spirits. So Katniss found herself getting up before dawn, grabbing her backpack with all her belongings and taking a small taxi out to the site. She sends the taxi on its way, figuring she will just board one of the tourist busses back to town when they start running in a few hours.

The sun was just beginning to peak over the edge of the world as Katniss entered the circle, she could instantly hear the singing from the stones. The spirits were speaking to her loudly demanding her attention, her song. So she joined them, head thrown back, voice loud and clear in an answering chant of ancient origin. Her pack still securely attached to her back, Katniss could feel the energy flow through her. Yes this place was special; it was one of those places where the spirits speak to the people. One of those special places her father taught her to love, to respect. Her heart began to beat in synch with the pulses of energy she felt coming from the large center stone. Perhaps she should be afraid, and if she was not the spiritual person her father taught her to be, perhaps she would be. But this experience did not feel much different from the rituals her father's people would perform, the felling of a tree, the creation of a mishoon all to take a trip to Nantucket as her people would have done before the advent of the white man.

Right now she can feel the power of nature, the singing of the spirits mixed with her song and she is unafraid, she is empowered and as she sings she reaches out and touches the tallest center stone. Suddenly the feeling of flying and drowning and running are thrust upon her, the song of the stones overwhelming her senses beyond anything she has ever felt until all at once her life and body were being torn asunder finally she became overwhelmed and then there was nothing but black.

Chapter End Notes
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Chapter 3

Bright sunlight hurts her eyes as she blinks back, *Jesus how long has she been out? Her body aches as if she just ran a marathon and she can’t sit up a weight heavy on her back. Damn if it’s just her backpack*, moaning and aching she slips her arms out of the straps and sits up. She is still there at Craig na dun in front of the tall rock, but the sun has definitely risen and it is at least 9am? What the hell, Katniss can’t believe she passed out, it’s not like she drank anything and she wasn’t that tired. The intensity of the rocks’ song floods her mind and it reminds her of some of the rituals she has been a part of where people have been so overwhelmed with emotion (more like from the alcohol they drink, but whatever) that they have passed out, so perhaps it was that. The whole situation seems strange, surreal even that her observation skills are fuzzy at first.

_Something is wrong, something is different_, and she thinks to herself bending down to grab her pack and swings it over her shoulders. Then it hits her like a ton of bricks, _where are all the people, the tourists, surely a bus should have dropped off a batch by now?_ Looking around she makes her way to the path that leads down to the road. _Where is the path? Dammit she must have gotten turned around;_ Katniss slowly and methodically begins to circle the stones looking for the path. As she does she begins to sing, it’s a song her father taught her, it calms her and right now she needs to be calm.

It’s her second time around the circle that she notices something else, its awful damn quiet. Where is all the background noise, the cars from the road off the path, the people? All she can her are the sounds of nature and although it reminds her of home, hunting trips to Northern Maine with her father it’s a little disconcerting at a tourist stop in Scotland.

Katniss pulls put her iphone and turns it on, _no signal, what the fuck?_ It is while she is staring at her phone in disbelief, because she knows she had five freaking bars when she got out of the taxi and walked up here, that she almost misses it, the faint rustle of a human. The second she hears it she freezes, _fuck_, slowly as to not alert her potential attacker that she knows what is coming, she tucks her phone back in her pack and begins to lower her pack to the ground while grabbing a penknife from the easy access pocket. Katniss has taken self-defense, she is strong and is a runner, she ran cross country and can run like a deer through the woods. Katniss is not tall but she isn't short either, she stands about five foot seven of long lean muscle, she is mostly legs. It’s her hunter's senses and her quick reactions that have always benefited her in self-defense courses, although she has never had to use them in real life.

Whirling quickly as her potential attacker, no attackers, get close, she startles them taking them off balance. The men are outfitted as though they are in a period drama and it throws her off, *Jesus they stink.*

"What are you and what are you doing on the King's land?" The question is so absurd she starts to laugh, this must be a joke, she eyes them, still alert with her knife in hand. Both men are slight and look underfed; certainly one is shorter than her although he is broader, with mouse brown hair and beady brown eyes. The second is about her height a little lanky with darker brown hair and watery blue eyes that rake over her body in a way that is disconcerting.

"I said what are you? Are you are whore?" the one that is eyeing her hungrily that speaks to her.
What? A whore, what the hell would give him that idea, she is in skinny jeans, a long sleeve t-shirt and her combat boots. They are the ones that looks out of place, in red uniforms, the word red-coats pop into mind.

"No I'm not a whore, I'm a tourist. What the hell did I run into, a costume drama filming? Are you doing a reenactment? I am NOT part of whatever weird ass thing you got going on here." she uses her strongest sounding voice while giving them what Madge calls ‘her patented Katniss death glare of get the fuck away from before I run an arrow through your eye then gut you’ look.

The shorter one looks at her like she is speaking Chinese or something and then turns to the one that frightens her just a little bit more. "William, I have never seen a lady dress or talk like this, a common whore either? Do you think the commander would like a tourist, whatever that may be?"

"I think the Commander would be pleased if we brought in this tourist" the taller one, whose name was apparently William was licking his lips as he pulled a sword from his belt. A sword, what the fuck, that goddam thing looks real, not a prop, where are the goddam cameras, where is the fucking director? "I think Commander Jack won’t mind if we play a little with this tourist before we bring her in" William's statement breaks into her thoughts and the predatory look in his eyes lets her know what he means. Katniss starts to sweat and just a little bit of fear begins penetrate her anger, crap she needs fucking help, and her goddam bow is disassembled in its case in her backpack. What she wouldn't give to have it strung and on her back right now.

"I am an American you imbecile and if you fucking touch me I will have the goddam consulate up your asshole faster than you can blink." That outa do it, no one in their right mind in the UK would touch a freaking American, we helped them win both world wars and they know it.

"I don't know what an American is, but you are beautiful even if you are not dressed properly and I mean to have a little fun with you." William starts to advance on her with that sword while his friend looks on with a wolfish grin spreading over his lips.

At that Katniss does what she does best, spins and runs, while screaming bloody murder. She doesn’t know if there is anyone to hear her, but if she can just get to those woods across that field she can possibly find a tree and climb, maybe these idiots can’t climb like she can. Crap, she can hear them right behind her, yelling obscene things about her. Push fast, leap, run, Katniss run, is in her head, when something hard hits her back causing her to trip and fall losing her knife along the way. A rock, one of them must have thrown a fucking rock, she's scrambling to get up as fast as she can while screaming as loud as she can, but her fall gave them that second they needed because her legs are suddenly tackled.

She is rolled over and slapped, pinned to the ground, so she starts to fight and fight hard; there is no way she is going down without a fight. The man, William, howls in pain when she bites him, then screams in agony as she gets her knee in his groin. Rolling off her in pain she starts scrambling up to run when a sword is suddenly pressed to her throat. Fuck, the other guy is grinning down at her; suddenly she is punched in the guts and shoved to the ground. The sword is at her shirt and short guy uses it to rip down the front of her shirt effectively exposing her, well she would be if she wasn't wearing a sports bra.

She looks up as the guy starts unbuckling his belt and pulling him toward her, desperately she starts kicking and screaming again, jesus, this fuck is going to rape her.

"Hurry up Harry, I want my turn with the tourist." William is there grabbing her arms to help this asshole, there is rage on his face as he wrenches her arms back causing her to scream in agony. As she starts kicking harder she can feel the men suddenly stiffen and then she hears it a battle cry, not unlike that of the Wampanoag but very much like the one she had heard demonstrated in Edinburgh
at the museum she attended. Then she can hear it and feel it at the same time the pounding of horse hoofs. One of the men clobbers her on the head causing her to feel dizzy; both men drop her to face what is coming fast.

Katniss groggily raises her head to see a man on a horse riding toward them and in her lightheaded state all she can think of is the covers of those stupid romance novels that Madge likes to read. The books where the covers all sport the obscenely good looking man in some sort of historical garb getting ready to rescue the damsel in distress, who turns out to be the love of his life. There is blonde hair flowing and a white loose shirt and a freaking kilt and muscles, so many muscles and a face chiseled from stone. What the hell, if she hadn't just been attacked she swears this is a fucking BBC drama. It has to be right, who in the fuck looks that good? The man dismounts and draws a sword, while the horse is still galloping, for fucks sake, and stalks toward the assholes that were attacking her yelling at them in some language she has never heard in a voice that makes her knees weaker than they already are.

Jesus, get it together Everdeen, get the fuck out of here. Katniss quietly attempts to rise on wobbly legs with the intent to make her way back to her pack and run to the nearest police station, when William, turns to her and grabs her hair by the braid and forces her to the ground.

"Stop" the guy from the horse yells at her attackers, his accent is odd, but strangely beautiful. He raises his sword and points it at the men and it’s the biggest sword she has ever seen, well bigger than the swords these guys have.

"This tourist is our prisoner, Highlander; we have no business with you." William, who is still gripping her hair, declares towards the approaching blonde haired Adonis, but Katniss can hear the fear in his voice.

"It is my concern if the lassie says it is, ye ken." His voice is deep commanding and, oh fuck, her lip is bleeding and her head must be off because this man in turning her on.

"Help, please help." Katniss barely gets out and instantly blonde Adonis attacks with the freaking sword. William drops her hair and rushes in to help his friend, who is losing badly. Get your bow Everdeen, the voice of reason penetrates the fog as she watches the man take on both these men easily. He is wielding the sword in one hand while his other has somehow produced a long knife. She begins to scramble backwards keeping her eyes on the fight, completely fascinated. The blond is tall compared to the red-coats, he has got to be a few inches over 6 feet, and his shoulders are broad in a way that speaks to labor. Finally Katniss reaches her backpack and quickly pulls out her bow case and instantly starts to assemble it while keeping a wary eye on the fight. As she finishes stringing the bow and throws her quiver on her back an unearthly howl of pain erupts from William. Katniss watches in fascination and horror as the blonde pulls the short knife from the one man's chest as he simultaneously spins and slashes the other across the belly. Both men drop to the ground and Katniss is aware of the blood and a high pitched scream, a scream that she suddenly realizes is hers as blonde Adonis turns his gaze on her and starts to stride towards her, bloody swords and all.

"Quiet Lassie, there may be more about." It’s all he gets out before she draws an arrow back causing him to halt.

"Stop, don't come any closer…or I swear to god I will shoot." finally she has her voice back as she straightens up her back and lines the arrow up with is heart.

"Aye I mean ye no harm" Katniss watches as he slowly bends down and places his weapons on the ground, his face breaks out into a broad smile that exudes a gentleness that is in direct contrast with the blood spattered on his shirt and hands. "Dé an t-ainm a th' oirbh, mo maise?"
"What?" Katniss has no idea what he just said, but it sounded so beautiful and for some reason she knows she can trust this man.

"What is your name?" the highland lilt paired with the deepness of his voice makes the simple question feel like so much more. His eyes are so blue they are piercing, looking into her soul yet simultaneously showing her his in the same moment.

"Katniss, my name is Katniss Everdeen" at that she lets her arrow point down her attention diverts back to the dead men lying not far off in the distance. It suddenly all hits her, she has no idea what is happening, what has happened to her. "Are they dead?"

"The Sassenach? Aye. Do ye have anything decent to put on?" The man looks chagrined and shy as his cheeks turn pink while he waves a hand at her chest. "I dinna hold wi rape, that is what they were doin aye?"

Now it was her turn to blush, not because of her shirt, she runs in her sports bra all the time, but the memory of the attack and the way the man is looking at her or well trying not to look at her. "Yes, umm...I do" she looks down and realizes her favorite tee-shirt is ruined, "fuck it, I can’t believe those idiots, and this is my favorite shirt." She starts ranting as she drops down and begins digging into her trusty Kelty for another shirt. It’s warm now so she pulls out a short sleeve yoga t-shirt, pulls off the ruins of her shirt and throws on the new one all while muttering about how the goddam BBC is gonna get a bill for her shirt and she might just sue them for their actors going crazy.

Jumping up she throws her quiver and bow over one shoulder and her pack over the other, "right well, thanks for the help, but would you mind pointing me in the direction of the nearest bus stop, so I can go report these assholes to the local police. My stupid phone has no service all of a sudden and I am obviously in the middle of your docudrama or whatever the fuck it is..." she trails off when she looks up and sees him looking at her like he has no idea what she is saying but is entranced all the same.

"I dinna ken what ye said, Miss. Katniss Everdeen?" her name slide off his tongue like honey and he is so sincere she begins to get worried, she studies him standing there and really looks at him. He looks like one of actors at the museum, his sword is huge like one of those claymores she saw on display and the long knife looks suspiciously like one of those dirks, he is wearing a kilt and belt, not one of those decorative ones that the men at the pub were wearing but the kind with the long back, it looks well-worn with one of those man-purse sporran thingies. He has on leather boots, that look homemade and his shirt has no buttons, but has ties at the neck and the wrists. Nothing looks modern about this guy including the way he talks and the fact that he came here on a freaking horse. Looking around she remembers the changes in scenery that she was noticing before. No car sounds, a denser forest, no trash cans, no sign of modern anything, no fucking people. Well except for the assholes that tried to rape her and the blonde sword-wielding Adonis here.

"Ummmm, where am I? This is Craig na dun?" She looks at him hopefully, Jesus maybe this is a dream.

"Aye, this is Craig na dun." His answer gives her only a little bit of relief, because if she is here, where is everything else?

"What is your name?" she might as well know his name, she can’t keep calling him blonde Adonis even if it’s in her head.

"Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark, laird of Dalcross, third son of Lord Mellark, clan Mellark. Ye can call me Peeta or Mr. Mellark." He keeps diverting his eyes away from her and his cheeks are still stained pink as if she was indecent and the action has an endearing quality. "Miss..
"Oh I'm not married, ummm, but my family is in the US, I just finished my PhD down at Oxford University and I am touring Scotland, my mom's family is from here."

The look Peeta gives her is incredulous. "Miss, I studied at Oxford and there are no lassies there."

"What the fuck? Is this guy serious what the hell? "Oxford started allowing women to attend classes in the 1870's and the first full matriculation was in the year 1920, which means women have been going there for almost 100 years, you dolt. It's the 21st century not the 17th century."

Peeta's eyes widen at her statement and he looks at her carefully, studying her very being. "No it is the 18th century, 1744 the year of our lord to be precise." he sounds out each word slowly so there is no mistaking his meaning.

"No...nonononono" Katniss begins to chant falling to her knees she looks desperately around her, it makes sense now, her brain says while a long desperate "nooooooo" keens from her throat. Tears start to drip down her cheeks and she looks up at Peeta through watery eyes, "how did this happen? I was just there, and the rocks were singing and...Jesus its 2014, I swear to god... and look, look I have an iphone 5s" she's rambling as she digs through her Kelty and pulls out the phone and shoves it in his direction. "Look, look and oh my god, am I being punked? Is Ashton gonna jump out, does he still even do that? Is there a Scottish Ashton? Please tell me I am being punked." She desperately looks up at him, Peeta has walked closer and is standing just over her with eyes that are sad, he bends down to kneel on the ground beside her.

"Miss...lassie are ye hurt?" His statement just makes her angry; she is not hurt she is in some nightmare where nothing makes sense.

"I am fine, I look, and I am not crazy, look I am from 2014 see?" At that she holds out her phone for him to see and his eyes grow wide as she starts touching the screen and opens up the calendar app, "look its May 15th 2014, see?" She watches as his eyes widen in wonder as he stares at the object in her hand.

"What is that?" he points at her phone like it is some sort of devil’s device, and if it’s true, if she really is in 1744 it may truly be something from the devil to him.

"It’s my cell phone, everyone has one, and you can call people on them and talk to them" he's looking at her like he has no clue what she even means. "Ummm if I live in Edinburgh and you live in..."

"Dalcross" he answers her prompt.

"Dalcross" she continues, "and I want to talk to you, I pick this up and dial your string of numbers, every phone has their own sequence of numbers, and I can talk to you on your phone, my voice goes here and your voice comes out here."

"A Dhia" his voice is low and he sounds incredulous, but perhaps he believes her a little. So she goes digging through her pack again and pulls out two books, an eyewitness guide book and her well-read ‘History of Scotland’. Handing them to him he first opens the guide book and his eyes get even wider and his hands start to tremble, then he picks up the History book and begins to thumb through it, suddenly he drops it and stands quickly.

"Are ye a faerie or a witch?" His eyes narrow in suspicion at her as he takes a slight step back.

"No no no, I'm neither, I'm just a girl, I swear on my rosary. I don't know what happened and I just
want to go back." Tears start cascading down her cheeks again; she hasn't cried this much since her
dad lost his leg.

"Your Catholic then?" he seems to soften at that knowledge.

"Yes, well, my mother is, my father is Native American, but she brought me up Catholic, I am
confirmed and everything."

"Aye, that is good, the Sassenach do not like papists, but we highlanders are Catholic. Ye said ye
mother's family is from here, what clan?" he seems to be opening back up toward her, not so wary of
her.

"Umm MacVey?" she is hesitant to answer, how much should she tell this Peeta, he seems OK, at
least he hasn't tried to rape her like the others, or call her crazy...yet.

"Aye, MacVey, clan Maclean of Duart. Bas no Beatha, I ken them well enough from the games.
Duart is well south of here many a days ride."

"The games?" what is he talking about?

"Aye, when the clans send their best warriors to the gathering, and take part in contests of skill and
strength for the honor of the clan."

"You take part in these games? They have them this early on?" It sounds like the Highland games,
that she wanted to see while she was here.

"Aye, clan Mellark has not lost the games since I grew so big, ye ken?" and she does ken, because
looking at him she knows he is a specimen, and if this is truly the 1700's men are smaller, definitely
shorter, and the way he handled that huge sword.

"I am traveling to Craigievar, clan MacKenzie. I would be honored to offer ye my protection Miss.
Everdeen of clan Maclean. Ye would be a guest of my Uncle and of course myself." Peeta stands
and gives her an elegant bow and holds out his hand for her.

"I just want to go home, go back..." Katniss looks at him willing him to understand.

"Dinna fash, mo maise, I give ye my protection. If the stories are right and it was the singing stones
that brought ye on the night of the full moon, then they will send ye back again, the next full moon,
when the stones sing again." with a grateful smile she takes his hand, his touch is warm and causes
fire to run up her arm as he pulls her to her feet. The sensation hits her in the heart as well as her core
causing all sorts of feelings, as she looks into his eyes in shock, she can see he feels it too. Katniss
knows desire, she knows lust, but she has never reacted to a man the way she has reacted to Peeta's
simple touch of a hand.

"Are ye sure the faeries havna brought ye to me? Miss. Everdeen, ye are the most bonnie lassie I
ever set my eyes on." The voice soft and his eyes are so earnest and her body is on fire for this man,
but this is all too much. He really is the embodiment of Madge's stupid romance novel heroes,
flowing locking included, that this thing cannot be paid attention to, she has a life, a job back waiting
for her in 2014, in Boston. Nothing should distract her from that, she has worked too hard, plus any
man that looks like this and says things like this is a player, regardless of whether it is 1744 or 2014.

Pulling her hand free from his grasp she bends down and grabs her pack shoving the books and her
now worthless iPhone in it. Straightening up she looks into his eyes, so freaking blue that she thinks
there is no way they aren't contacts... except there is no such thing as contacts now, "so how long
will it take to get to Craigievar village?"

"Three days riding, and its Castle Craigievar, mo maise" at that he whistles sharply and walks over to where he left his sword and dirk, He quickly wipes the blood off in the grass, strides over to a small stream washes the blood from his face and hands. Like a freaking movie when he stands his horse is suddenly trotting up to him and begins to nuzzle him playfully, "Gu leior" he playfully tells the horse.

"What did you just tell him" Katniss asks him?

"I told him 'enough', this horse will not stop until the laddie has got a treat, ye ken?" his laughter is infectious and she finds herself laughing with him.

"Miss, do ye no speak any Gàidhlig?" he asks her curiously, "your ma dinna teach ye?"

"No my mother doesn't know Gàidhlig, that is Gaelic right?" she answers him; her cheeks must still be red with blushing from touching his hand.

"Aye, it tis" he looks at her his eyes twinkling and reaches over to grab her pack from her. "The horse can carry two, but can ye put the bow aside so it dinna poke me in the eye?"

"Oh yeah, sorry," she reaches over and takes her pack back, and pulls out the box; she quickly disassembles the bow and places the quiver and bow in storage. After stowing everything safely she hands him her pack. She watches as he easily handles it, she knows its heavy, it’s her hiking pack, and she has everything in it she needed for this trip. His muscles ripple and god he is fucking gorgeous, every bit of him has her mesmerized.

"Ye dinna have ahhh..." he trails of looking embarrassed, so she stares at him until he continues, "any different clothing"?

Ohhh, she gets it, what she is wearing although normal for her time, probably won’t do for this time, "Ummmm, no, I mean everything I have is pretty much a variation of this. This is what girls in my time wear, actually this, well it’s fairly conservative".

"It is?" his eyes bug out at her as he realizes that she is not going around in some state of undress in front of him as he looks her up and down. "Ye are saying that lassies wear less?" How in the world he makes that statement, tinged with horror, fascination and shock sound so sexy she has no idea, it must be the Scottish brogue.

"Well yeah" she then goes on to describe several outfits she has seen at clubs, well to be fair they are all Johanna's outfits but....

His mouth opens and closes like a fish during her depiction and his eyes look like they might pop out of his head that is turning a brighter shade of red each second. When she finishes he just looks at her quietly for a bit before he talks again. "I think we might visit with a family I ken to obtain something more suitable for ye, aye?" With that he grabs her by the waist and picks her up as if she was a small child and places her on the horse, and within seconds he is behind her reaching around to grab the reigns. Katniss can’t help but notice the men he easily dispatched back in the field.

"You killed two men at once, without as much as a scratch."

"Aye, it wasna much of a fight against those two Sassenach, it wasna like I was fighting men."

"What do you mean?"
"I hold that any man who forces himself on a woman isna really a man at all."

And that was all Katniss needed to know about the man sitting behind her.

Chapter End Notes

I own nothing, Everlark or Outlanderwise. I have not done a ton of research, this is for fun. If you don't like something or you think it is not accurate, I'm sorry?

Dè an t-ainm a th' oirbh, mo maise = What is your name, my beauty
Chapter 4

Riding on a horse was harder then she remembered, her ass hurts, her legs hurt and she is pretty sure her thighs are chafed. How this guy behind her does it in a skirt she has no idea, the only good thing has been the constant conversation. Katniss has talked more to Peeta in one stretch then she has to well, pretty much anyone including Prim.

He asked her about her studies in Oxford and when she started to explain them to him he made this Hmmmpphh noise and when she looked back at him in surprise he just shrugged and said that he had no idea what she was saying. So she started simpler, began to explain where science has gone, the abridged version obviously. He asked her questions and she answered, most importantly he listened to her. When she finally got to where she could explain her PhD work in mitochondria, he was able to ask questions that were clever and it was clear that he listened to her. It was a nice change, most of the men she knew kind of glazed over when she started talking about her work, they either pretended to listen but didn’t really or just interrupted her and changed the subject. It was obvious to her this man was intelligent, so she asked him about his studies. He went to Oxford study what today would be considered the classic and philosophy. He was well versed in Homer, Plato and Socrates; he also had a gift in languages, something Katniss was not very good at. He spoke French, German, Gaelic, English and Italian. He also knew Latin and Greek, which is fairly unheard of in her time, but apparently is a must for gentlemen of his time. He was also knowledgeable in poetry and literature and he quoted William Dunbar to her, apparently if there are no TV or video games, you memorized literature for fun?

The whole ride Katniss kept an eye out for any sign that this was some complex prank, but the further they traveled with no signs of any civilization the more she came to accept that this was perhaps real. As the sun started to make its way down, her stomach started to growl at that Peeta began to chuckle and pulled his horse off of what was kind of a path and stopped in a grove. "We will camp here tonight" it was a brusk statement and suddenly he was on the ground beside her and before she could react his hands were burning on her waist and she was again lifted from the horse and delicately placed on the ground. Without wasting words he began removing things from the back of the horse, first handing her the kelty before removing his own bundle. He removed the bridle and slapped the horse on its rear and Katniss watched it walk calmly off to the nearby stream to drink.

Peeta then began to pitch what Katniss thought was a very crude looking camp. She watched him in fascination as he worked quickly and efficiently enthralled by the ease with which a man so large moved.

"Stay here, I will fetch some wood for a fire." Then he grabbed a very lethal looking axe that Johanna would be jealous of and strode off. Looking around Katniss sighs and pulls out her North Face Asylum Bivy, a one person tent that weighs about a pound and her Kelty sleeping bag that weighs about 2 pounds. She hadn't planned on backpacking in Scotland, but she was never sure of the cleanliness or availability of the Hostels she planned to stay in so she came prepared. It only takes her a few minutes to set up her tent so she then pulls out her bow and re-assembles it, food might be helpful, specifically meat, and if there is one thing she knows how to do, it is hunt. Pulling out her deerskin leggings, mantle and moccasinash, she enters her tent and dons her Naive hunting gear.
Katniss had planned on hunting in the Highlands, she had been told it was a great place to hunt and she had researched some lands where it was allowed, but she figures it might be OK to do it anywhere in 1744. Just as she exits the tent fully garbed and re-braiding her hair, Peeta strides back into camp carrying wood with a rabbit on his belt.

He startles when he notices her and looks her up and down and then looks over at her tent wide eyed with curiosity and a burning intensity she can’t interpret.

"Ye changed" he gestures towards her his hands going up and down her body.

"Oh I figured I would go hunting for food although it looks like you beat me to it." She gestures towards the rabbit on his belt.

"Oh, aye scarit the little bugger when I was gathering wood, and got em with my knife," he pulls out a small knife from his belt she hadn’t seen before. *Good god how many weapons does this man have on him at any given time?* "What is that" he asks pointing at her tent.

"Oh it’s my tent, look." Katniss unzips it and shows him the rain flap and the sleeping bag inside when he bends down to look inside. She watches as he fingers the material in wonder when she tells him it is water proof and that her bag will keep her warm even in the winter. "Oh and the whole thing is super light less than three pounds!"

"Pounds as in money?" his voice belies confusion *oh crap that’s right they don’t do pounds, what do they measure weight in?* "Less than one quarter stone?"

"As light as ye are then" she looks at him and his tone and face are teasing, "but ye are verra tall for a woman."

"People are generally taller in my time, the average male is about this tall and the average woman is about this tall” she uses her hand to estimate about 5’ 10” for a man and then about 5’ 5” for a female.

"Aye, so I would still be tall in your time." his grin is blinding, *how are his teeth so nice in this age where there is no oral hygiene?*

"Well yes. but not abnormally so, one of my best friends, Gale, is about this much taller then you" she measures out about an inch and there are a fair number of women that are your height, maybe not your breadth but..." she blushes at the fact that she just made it apparent that she noticed his shoulders, which are so very delicious.

"Aye? Women my height, do they find husbands?" At that Katniss just laughs and starts to talk about the men in the NBA and the NFL and how big they are.

Peeta looks a little chagrined at this, "Aye well I am used to being big, but it is not all that important, well except at the games." He looks at her with that shy smile that speaks volumes then goes to make the fire.

"Tell me about your clothing." he points to her outfit. At that Katniss launches into the story of her hunting clothes and how she shot the buck herself, tanned the hide and helped her mother stitch the clothing. She talks about how she likes to hunt in this outfit, because she feels closer to her ancestors. The clothing help her feel at one with the woods, that they help her blend in, make her a better hunter.

"Huntress" Peeta says looking at while cooking the rabbit he had deftly skinned, "ye are Diana come to life, with her bow, your eyes silvery like the moon she is known for..." he looks down clearly a little embarrassed about what he said.
"Well it looks like I don't need to hunt now, since you caught that rabbit." Katniss says smiling breaking the tension. "I'll get up early and get something for breakfast though."

"I can do that for ye, a lady such as yerself shouldna be" Peeta is quick to exclaim.

"No, I want to go, I find it peaceful" she interrupts him, placing a hand on his shoulder to stop him from saying more.

"I dinna suppose if I told ye no it would stop ye from goin?" He looks hopefully at her with a little smile on his face.

"Now you get the picture, Katniss Everdeen, most stubborn woman alive. At least that is what my friend Gale says, and well to be honest my friends Madge, Johanna and Finnick say the same thing." She suddenly snorts with laughter at herself and looks over at the wide smile on his face as he looks at her while still roasting the rabbit.

"How old are you?" Katniss asks, he looks fairly young, but this body and jaw are mature she thinks he might be about her age.

"Twenty-four, I'll be twenty-five on this ninth of June. And yourself Miss-tress, do ye mind me asking your age?" He is always so polite and she really likes that about him, perhaps chivalry truly is dead in the 21st century, but this Miss-tress and Miss. Everdeen shit has really gotta go.

"Peeta please call me Katniss and I turned twenty six a week ago on May eighth. Tell me more about yourself, your family, your home, are you engaged, do you have a girlfriend." those last questions just spilled out without her permission, like her subconscious wants to know if this man is single.

"Ye mean am I intended, No, I am not. I have been waiting for a lassie to love the way my father loved my mum, ye ken?"

"I understand, my parents love each other very much, it is a love that is special and timeless, and I also want that. I refuse to settle for anything less."

"I canna see ye settling for anything, Miss Katniss" Fuck, the way he said her name how it rolled of his lips with that brogue makes her want to kiss him, but instead she just laughs and instructs him to stop saying Miss that her name is just Katniss. "Now please tell me about your family."

With that Peeta hands her some of the cooked rabbit, the best part of the meat she notices and launches into stories about growing up the third son. Apparently his older brothers were from his father's first wife an arranged marriage within the clan; she died in childbirth trying to give him a third child not two years after the second was born. Sadly the child died along with the mother.

His mother was the sister of the laird of the MacKenzie clan, his father met his mother at a clan gathering two years after his first wife died and they fell in love with each other immediately. The MacKenzie men were in the midst of arranging her marriage to another man in their clan, when his mother and father stole off and ran away together. They performed a hand-fast marriage and hid out from her brothers at the Mellark castle until it was clear she was pregnant. Then they were married by a priest since no one could then object to their marriage. He was that baby, his mother then gave his father a daughter before she died of sickness years later. He was sixteen when she died, his sister fifteen, his father mourned her for years and did not remarry he died a year ago still mourning his Iona.

The way he describes things make the pictures come alive in her mind, he is a born story teller like the elders of her tribe. He describes his brothers to be broad like him, but of shorter stature, blonde
but with straight hair. His father had been broad, moderate to tall about 3 or 4 inches shorter then him and his brothers are about that height maybe the second a smidge taller. It was his mother and their family that brought the height, she was almost as tall as his da with fiery red curly hair and bright blue eyes, his Uncles were taller than he, but more slender.

"I was lucky ye ken, I got my father's strength, courage and name but, my mother's height, wiles and eyes. Although my hair is my father's, my beard is my mums, my brothers call me leòmhann, it means lion. Like the big cat, aye?" he grins at her as he says this, "they tease me for my curly blonde hair and red beard, sayin it looks like a lion's mane. After my first games, people took to callin me that as well, I dinna like it at first, but now I dinna mind so much." at that statement his grin turns feral almost as if he was a huge cat.

"Leòmhann" Katniss tries the name out on her tongue, it definitely fits him, and she likes it, "I like it, and now that I look closely I can see the red in your scruff." There wasn't much there but she could see it in the firelight.

Peeta looks over at her shyly over the firelight, she can see his blue eyes burning then he speaks "Before I found ye I was riding and I heard the most beautiful singing, it sounded like a faerie or an angel and I stopped to rest and listen. The song ended and I mounted to leave, not long after I heard ye screaming for help. The singing; that was ye." Although he posed the last as a statement there was a slight tilt to his head as though he was asking for confirmation.

"I was singing before those two men found me, yes. Whether or not it was me that you heard, well that is another question." She’s pretty sure she is flirting with him, which is odd, because she really doesn't flirt. Katniss has never felt the need to, never felt the draw towards a man enough to try and flirt. Johanna and Madge have dressed her up and taken her to clubs. Men have asked her out, but all out flirting, no, not even with Edmond, the guy she thought she might have been in love with at Oxford.

"Can ye sing again, so I ken it was you?" He looks so earnest that she acquiesces, her father is a phenomenal singer and she isn't half bad, she knows her voice has a siren quality about it. Her friend Finnick once told her that her voice would make sailors jump into the sea with desire. So she sings, something simple an old Scottish folk song her mother taught her.

Twas on a Monday morning,
Right early in the year,
When Charlie came to our town
The Young Chevalier.

Charlie is my darling, my darling, my darling.
Charlie is my darling, the young Chevalier.

As he cam' marchin' up the street,
The pipes played loud and clear.
And a' the folk cam' rinnin' out
To meet the Chevalier.

Charlie is my darling, my darling, my darling.
Charlie is my darling, the young Chevalier

Wi' highland bonnets on their heads
And claymores bright and clear,
They cam' to fight for Scotland's right
And the young Chevalier.

Charlie is my darling, my darling, my darling.
Charlie is my darling, the young Chevalier

They've left their bonnie highland hills,
Their wives and bairnies dear,
To draw the sword for Scotland's lord,
The young Chevalier.

Silence pervade the night when she finishes the song and his eyes glisten in the firelight, "Aye, twas you. Where did ye learn the song?"

"Oh from my mother, she taught me a few Scottish folk songs. I don't think that this one has been actually written yet. You are still wearing your kilt, so Bonny Prince Charlie hasn't lost yet. Oh crap, should I even tell you that? What if I am screwing up the future by telling you things?"

"When we get to Craigievar, dinna be talking about the future ye ken. People might be mistaken ye for a witch. I think ye should tell people you are visiting from the colonies and yer man servant was killed by the Sassenach soldiers, and that is how I found ye. Ye should wear what you are wearing now till I can get ye something decent. It looks like the pictures of the Indians in books."

"We are Native Americans not Indians." she hates it when people call her half Indian or worse redskin.

"Aye, I suppose ye are in your time, but in mine ye are an Indian." Peeta looks at her pensively then quietly asks "Ye sure he loses?"

"Yes, and he loses badly, the Scots lose their rights to wear their plaids. The clans and Scottish customs are banned and the games are stopped for 40 years, many men will die." She hears what she is quickly learning to be a reply of some sort; it is a cross between a grunt and a harumph.
"Time for sleep, privy tree is that way" for such a verbal man sometimes he communicates in as few words as possible. He points then gets up and gathers up the rabbit remains and walks in the opposite direction of where he pointed. Katniss knows he is disposing of the rabbit away from camp, most likely burying it to prevent an animal from wandering into their camp looking for food.

Katniss grabs a wipe from her pack and heads off, even though she has used leaves before, she prefers not to if she doesn't have to and she always packs extra paper.

He arrives back just as she does and with a quick 'good night' she ducks into her tent, before she can zip up the tent she sees him grab a blanket and lie directly down in front of her tent, with his huge sword in one hand and the dirk in the other.

"You are going to sleep with your weapons?"

"Aye, ye needn't be worried, I will protect ye, mo maise."

As Katniss fell asleep her first night in a strange world, knowing she should be nervous, but she wasn't, knowing that the Leòmhann was guarding her all night long.

Chapter End Notes

I own nothing.
Chapter 5

Katniss woke before the sun broke into dawn, grabbing her bow she makes her way out of her tent careful not to disturb the hunk of man sleeping directly in front of the entrance. She looks down expecting to see him sleeping and instead she see blue orbs staring back at her startling her. "Oh your awake, I was just going to try and get us some food."

At that he stands up, re-sheathes his weapons and quickly walks in the direction of the privy tree gesturing for her to wait. Within moments he is back and stands there looking at her expectantly, quietly.

"OK, I'll be back", she turns and begins to creep into the forest, she gets about a few hundred yards and turns realizing he is following her. Looking at him in confusion she whispers, "You don't have to follow me."

"I dinna think ye need me too, but I want to." his voice is soft and insistent, but not demanding.

"If you aren't quiet enough or you can't keep up, I will send you back." at her statement he just stands and looks at her and doesn't say a thing. It's funny but Katniss is pretty sure she knows what he is saying just by his expression, she can already read this guy fairly well, and it seems that he might know how to handle her as well.

So she turns and resumes her foreword creep taking notice of her surroundings looking for small game trails, scat or any other sign of prey. Above her she can hear some chattering, squirrels, looking up she can see a few, but they are red not grey and look a little smaller then what she is used to, if she can't find something else a couple of them will do. Every once and a while she glances back to see if he is still there, and he is, she can't hear him, which is pretty amazing for a man of his size to move with such stealth, but perhaps it makes sense he probably has had to hunt for food most of his life.

For the next 20 minutes or so she just assumes he will be behind her and really concentrates on the hunt, she finds a small game trail, rabbit or hare, she thinks and begins to follow it. It's not long before it jumps out in front of her, a large slightly odd looking hare and immediately she has it shot through the eye. The rustling above catches her ears and she bags two of those red squirrels seconds later.

Turning she sees Peeta standing there his arms crossed over his chest with a broad smile on his face and he looks like he is asking if she is done.

"That's enough for this morning don't you think? “ And she matches his smile and watches as he walks off to collect the squirrels while she grabs the hare.

"Those Sassenach dinna hava chance if ye had your bow out." She smiles broadly at the statement, because it is an acknowledgement that she can more than likely defend herself.

She watches as he expertly pulls the arrows from the squirrels and hands them to her he then quickly skins and guts the animals while she does the same with the hare. Silently they both turn and begin to walk side by side back to the camp. After a few minutes Katniss turns and looks at him as they walk together, his hair is glinting golden as the sun begins to stream through the leaves above.

"You know how to use a bow, don't you?"
"Aye, I learned all manners of weapons as a child, I have never seen a person shoot like ye just did, verra fast and verra precise."

"Thank you" she beams internally at his praise, "do you want to try my bow?"

"Ahhh" Peeta stops walking and rubs the back of his neck with his hand, "it is verra small for me and it is a verra nice bow, I wouldna want to break it."

"You won’t break it, just give it a try." She isn't sure why she is so insistent on him trying her bow, she is usually very protective over it, she never lets anyone touch it, not even Gale has ever touched her bow. "Here, try and hit that knot in the tree over there." She says while practically shoving the bow in his hand.

Although he seems a little reluctant Peeta does take the bow from her, touching her hand in the process, causing those tingly sensations to shoot up her arm as they do every time they touch. Holding it correctly, he tests the bow strength and feels the weight of her weapon. He is right the bow is too small for him and looks a little ridiculous in his huge hands, staring at those hands her mind wanders to Johanna, who would instantly be commenting if his dick was as big as his hands. Tentatively he strings an arrow pulls back and lets it fly. It comes close, hitting right below the knot, when he looks at her handing back the bow he just shrugs and walks off to retrieve her arrow.

"You are right; the bow is way too small for you. You looked ridiculous, as if it was a child's toy." He grins at her and hands her the arrow, turns and finishes the short trek back to their campsite and immediately stokes the fire and begins to cook their breakfast.

He watches her in interest while cooking the meat as she rolls up her bag and disassembles her tent, it doesn't take long and although breakfast passes in silence, it is the comfortable kind. It isn't long before she finds him lifting her back onto the horse with him quickly up behind her, and this time when he reaches around to grab the reigns she finds her body slightly melting into his as if it always was behind her and she finds that she fits just perfectly.

Looking back she sees a smile on his face that she matches and as the horse sets out she resumes their conversation wanting to know more about this man, this leòmhann that sits behind her. "Tell me about your weapons" she asks with a light laugh knowing that he most likely could talk endlessly and will keep them occupied for hours. She is also hoping that it will maybe distract him from the fact that she is probably a little closer to him than necessary. Although it feels to her that perhaps he is holding her a little tighter than necessary and his mouth is perhaps closer to her ear than it was yesterday.

The days ride passes quickly with Peeta first telling her about his weapons and how he learned to fight with his brothers. How he needed to learn to be quick and smart with his weapons since he was so much smaller than them. He told tales of their wrestling bouts, where sometimes they would gang up on him. The day he grew bigger then Ryan, Peeta said he was seventeen was the day they stopped calling him the little slug. The day he was able to hold his Claymore with one hand was when they stopped challenging him to fights. His oldest brother was Donall, named after this father and the middle was Ryan and although both were hard on him they both loved him very much. Donall now sat as head of the Mellark clan as Lord Mellark at castle Urquhart, his middle brother, Ryan holds a large plot of land just south of Urquhart where he is laird and Peeta was given a small Estate to run that belonged to his mother just north of the Castle. Both Ryan and Peeta pledge their allegiance as well as their allegiance of their men to Donall who is head of their family. Ryan was the bother who nicknamed Peter, Peeta, apparently he had trouble with his r's as a child and the name stuck, but "I feel I am more a Peeta, then a Peter".

Katniss learned that a Claymore, or the big freaking sword, was meant to be wielded two handed,
but a man who could wield it with one had a distinct advantage. She learned that all the Mellark boys had attended Oxford for learning because their father thought that educated men less likely to be cruel to those who served underneath them. Both of his brothers were married, the oldest was an arranged marriage to a woman named Aileen Brewster. Ryan was married to his sweetheart Lainie who was also a Mellark, but not of obvious relation. "A verra distant cousin" Peeta had said with a smirk.

When he talked about his sister was when he really lit up, she was sweet and had strawberry blonde hair, and her name was Dolina, although they called her Delly affectionately. Although she was one year younger than Peeta she was married to his childhood best friend Seumas Gordon who had been injured in battle with the Ross clan some years before. Seumas was the 3rd son of a farmer and had not a lot of prospect, but Delly had fallen in love with him at a young age. So Delly was the lady of Dalcross until Peeta married. She lived there with her husband and two sons, the oldest being young Peter. Seumas and Delly ran his farm and tenants when he was not there. He was frequently out doing the clan business for his brother Donall and dealing with other clan lairds. In fact he was on his way to Craigievar on business for his brother, he was to meet with a fellow clansman Machar Mellark who has been there for a year on some sort of loan to clan MacKenzie, Katniss didn't understand the particulars and politics behind that arrangement.

"Machar is loyal to the Mellarks, but he lost his wife years ago and his children are grown. He is good at politiking with Uncle Fingal, the laird and his brother Uncle Ewan. He is rough but verra smart ye ken?" Peeta explained to her, "Ye can count on his protection if I am not near ye. One of us will always be near you, mo maise."

"I though you said your Uncle would offer me his hospitality through you?" she asked a little confused as to why he felt she needed him or his lackey by her side all the time.

"From what I can gather women in your time are almost equals of men?"

"Well yes at least in my country the law protects them as much."

"Here if a man wanted to be marrit to ye he could just take ye and wait till ye are pregnant whether ye wanted it or no. If a man wanted to lie with ye he could whether ye wanted to or no, there are no laws agin rape."

"Oh, I see so you think I might be in danger there?"

"Miss-tress Everdeen, you are the most beautiful, most captivating woman I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. Ye will be in danger where ever you are, men will always be wantin to bed you and women will most certainly be jealous of ye."

"If what you say is true than how can I trust anyone, even you?" she grinned as she said it because as far as she is concerned Peeta is the most honorable man she has ever met.

"Mo maise, I may wanta bed ye, but I willna do it if I am not marrit to ye first. I willna marry ye if you are not willin. Me mum was verra strict about respecting women and gettin a wife, I willna disrespect her soul even if I want ye verra badly." at the end of the speech he turned the horse off the path as he had the night before, "and Machar is loyal to me, he willna touch ye if I say no." he waited a beat before continuing "I have also seen ye use that bow and skin a hare with a knife, I wouldna feel safe layin beside ye if ye didna want me." The last statement made her laugh out loud and she could hear and feel him chuckle behind her.

Like yesterday she found herself delicately placed on the ground and her bag handed to her. Peeta gave her a soft smile, pulled out that axe and went off to get wood for a fire. Katniss quickly
prepared for the fire and set up her tent. Grabbing Peeta's bedroll she set it up in the same place he
had slept the night before in front of her tent. Figuring that even if she told him it wasn't necessary he
would do it anyway. There was no need to hunt, but she wandered around and grabbed some of the
local greens that she knew were healthy and good to eat. She found a patch of mint and grabbed
some to chew on.

When Peeta got back he had not only collected the wood but had somehow found and killed a game
bird he called a partridge. There was a stream nearby and she volunteered to fill their canteens so she
could go wash.

"Dinna take too long mo maise, I will miss your company." Katniss very much doubted this
considering he initially was taking this trip on his own, but she liked it when he said such things.
Bathing in the spring she began to think of all the things he had told her over the day, but her mind
kept coming back to the last thing he had said. That he wanted her very badly, but he wouldn't sleep
with her if they weren't married. Was that true or was that more hypothetical? Does that mean he
wouldn't sleep with any woman unless he was married to her or a woman that he considered one he
wanted to marry? Did women have sex before marriage here, well respectable women? Obviously
women who were prostitutes did or women who were raped or this hand-fast marriage thing.
Although that was a marriage of sorts at least a promise of marriage, sort of like an engagement
where the couple lived together?

It was clear the man was very attractive; even she the ice queen could see that. Katniss was very
attracted to him, but it wasn't just the way he looked it was his mannerisms, the way he carried
himself, the kindness that just oozed from his pores along with the very essence of man. She can just
picture in her mind the way Madge or Jo would react if they ever met Peeta. Madge would go into
adorable flirtiness mode immediately and Jo, well Jo would just jump his bones. If this was the type
of man that was written in the pages of those stupid romance novels that Madge reads, when Katniss
gets back she plans on reading every single one.

Dinner was ready when she returned to camp and just like the day before they slid into an easy
conversation. This time it was Peeta who asked about Katniss's life and her family. She told him
about growing up in her small town, her parents and how her mom's family wasn't happy with her
marrying a man of race and how they basically wrote her out of the family when she married James
anyway. She went into her mother's family history how they came to America after the battle of
Culloden and found their way to just outside of Boston. She talked about spending her summers with
her father's tribe and her customs and rituals. Of course she talked about Prim and how much she
loved her, how cute she was as a blonde haired, blue eyed girl on the reservation. Most surprising
though, Katniss didn't shy away from talking about her father's accident, her mother's reaction and
how her Uncle Haymitch found the girls living on food Katniss would hunt or gather. It was a tough
time for her and Katniss didn't like to talk about it with anyone, in fact not many people know about
her mother's near abandonment only about her father's injury. Even her best friend Gale had no idea
what happened, only Madge, who had noticed her weight loss when she returned to school. Madge
who was patient and quiet enough to wait for the story to really hear about it was the only one that
knew. Now, Katniss found herself telling a virtual stranger someone whom she had known for only
a few days about that period in her life. Peeta didn't judge her just listened to her story, let her talk.
He did not show pity and Katniss had a feeling his life had always been harder than hers.

When she finished the tale, he stood up looked at her and turned his back toward her then he took off
his shirt. To her horror he was horribly scarred from what looked to be some sort of punishment. "A
Sassenach soldier" he put his shirt back on turned back around and looked at her, "I was traveling
and taken prisoner, the soldiers they like to harass the Highlanders. I am a big target, one of them
took a liken to me, ye ken." he raised his eyebrows at her and she gasps when she gets his meaning.
"He gave me a choice a flogging or a buggering. I chose flogging. Everyone has scars, mo maise,
some are visible and some are no"

With that he stood up grabbed the leftover food and went to bury it away from camp. Katniss watched his broad back walk away from the fire into the night. Her heart hurt for him, but she knew he would be alright; sometimes physical injuries heal better then emotional ones. As she lost sight of him she turned and made her way into her tent feeling safe with the knowledge that while she slept he would be outside guarding her from harm.
Chapter Six

Morning found her early as usual, Katniss was well rested, but ready to be done with this horse travel, she never appreciated modern transportation as much as she has the past few days. Her butt really hurt as she exited her tent she noticed that Peeta was already up warming the roasted squirrels she had shot from the day before.

"Morning, Miss-tress Everdeen, we will be at Craigievar today." His voice was cheery, perhaps too cheery it made Katniss think that perhaps he was not enjoying this trip as much as she was, just this thought made her heart ache a little. That their time alone was something he wanted to come to an end, her normal insecurities surfacing. Katniss was not a traditional beauty, not like Madge or her sister Prim, with their fair hair, blue eyes and porcelain skin. Darker skinned, brown almost back hair with grey eyes Katniss always thought of herself as the ugly duckling, no matter how many times Madge or her sister told her that she was an exotic beauty she never believed them. To her exotic was code for not very pretty but smart and nice. How Katniss thought this with the number of men that hit on her or rubbernecked at her in appreciation was something her friends never understood, but unless the men blatantly asked her out Katniss remained oblivious, even then she figured most men were attracted to her brains. *It doesn't matter I will be going back to 2014 in a few weeks anyway.*

"A cousin of mine is marrit to a lassie whose mother recently lost her other daughter, she lives not but a little ride from here, it may be that she has clothes for ye. Mrs. Baxter can help ye dress."

Katniss looks at him questioningly, "why would I need help dressing?"

Peeta rubs the back of his neck with his hand, clearly a nervous habit, and his cheeks tinged pink. "I dinna ken, Delly has always needed help dressing so I..." he trails off while one hand just waves towards her body like she should understand.

At that he handed her some squirrel and took off towards the trees excusing himself, presumably off to take care of his morning business. *Huh, that was odd,* she thought as she sat down to eat the breakfast. When she finished he still wasn't back so she brushed her teeth with some water from the canteen and unraveled her braid and began brushing out her hair, contemplating what type of outfit would require help dressing. Brushing her hair out always soothes her and soon she finds herself humming a nameless tune. Standing when she finally has all the tangles out Katniss begins to re-braid her hair, putting it in her standard braid that wraps around and hangs over her shoulder tying it off she looks up to see Peeta at the edge of the clearing leaning up against a tree staring at her with a soft smile on his face.

When their eyes meet he stands squares those oh so broad shoulders of his and strides deliberately back into camp and begins to silently pack up for their journey. They work quietly together and soon she finds herself being lifted back onto the horse with him quickly settling in behind her. "Ye may no be a faerie or an angel, but ye sing like one." His voice was soft and tickled her ear in the most delicious way causing heat to pool in her center making her squirm and if the man behind her knew what he was doing to her he didn't make any motion to show he did.

A few hours later they were approaching a small cottage in a clearing, beyond the fields that were obviously planted with crops Katniss could make out the top of a stone castle, that didn't seem too far off. Probably half an hour ride by car, by a horse carrying two people, she had no idea. There was an elderly woman in the yard who was tending chickens; she turned to see the approaching horse.

Katniss could tell the moment that she recognized a friendly face, a smile grew on her face and she
yelled out a cheery halo. Katniss figures that halo is probably hello in every language.

"Halo Mrs. Baxter, Ciamar a tha sibh?" Peeta calls out to her, clearly happy to see this woman. The woman breaks out into conversation; she seems to be answering Peetas's question and then starts asking a bunch herself, with Peeta laughingly replying. The topic of the conversation gets to her as the woman waves a hand questioningly at her and Peeta answers with an embarrassed sounding laugh. They talk for a few minutes then the woman is hustling Katniss inside the cottage. She goes to the fireplace where something is cooking in a black pot over a hearth fire spoons something out and hands it to Peeta. Before Katniss can blink she is ushered into a back room and the woman is grabbing what looks to be clothing out of a trunk. With humming and clicks of her tongue she seems to settle on a few different garments, then turns to Katniss and starts to try and pull off her clothing.

Startled Katniss shrieks and runs out of the room back to where Peeta is and stands behind him, followed by the woman who seems to be admonishing her as if she was a small child, but Katniss has no idea what she is saying. "Ahh Mrs. Baxter, Miss-tress Everdeen doesna speak gealic." He then turns to her and patiently speaks, "Mrs Baxter is just going to help you dress, mo maise." At his last statement Katniss sees Mrs. Baxter’s head snap and look curiously at Peeta, she wonders what he keeps saying, Katniss figured it was a nickname of sorts she has wanted to ask him before, but she keeps forgetting. "It will be fine, just go with her. I will be right here." And with that he sits down and starts eating what looks to be some sort of stew.

I can do this, I can get dressed, and besides how hard can it be getting dressed. Minutes later when Mrs. Baxter is tightening a frigging corset squeezing the breath out of her she wants to eat those words, no wonder women need help dressing; this thing is ridiculous. And when the final layer, a green gown, is placed over her, laced up and Katniss turns to look into what is a crude mirror she cannot believe her eyes, she has curves. Katniss can’t move, but she has curves, her breasts are way too exposed for her comfort, but they are pushed up and look good. "Here ye go child" the woman hands her a bundle of what is another gown in a vibrant red Katniss starts to blush. "Oh no, I cannot take two gowns from you, this one is too much. I cannot pay you for for this one." At that Mrs. Baxter looks at her, reaches up and pats her cheek affectionately, “Laird Dalcross said he will be payin for ye clothes. That ye are his special guest.”

What? Katniss had no idea that Peeta was paying for her to be clothed, how will she ever pay him back? He has already done so much for her she can't possibly allow him to do this, but she will not embarrass him in front of Mrs. Baxter, because looking around she sees that this woman needs some money for these clothes. "Thank you Mrs. Baxter the clothing is very beautiful" she compliments the woman and follows her out into the kitchen where Peeta is sitting and waiting. As she walks in she sees his eyebrows rise as he looks at her up and down a slight smile appearing on his face after inspecting her he turns to Mrs. Baxter and bows to her.

"Mrs. Baxter ye did a fine job wi’ Miss-tress Everdeen. Thank ye verra much for your help." At that he hands her a small pouch that Katniss is sure has some coins in it.

At that he takes the bundle of clothes from her and strides outside and begins fastening it inside a blanket he has wrapped around her backpack, disguising it the best he can. "Come here, mo maise, it is still a few hours ride to Craigievar, and I have many a thing to do when I get there, including bathing before supper." His smile is easy as he grabs a hold of her waist and easily places her on the horse like he has for the past few day, except that her legs are on one side of the horse, she is effectively riding side saddle and it annoys her so friggin much, that and the corset is digging into her side and breasts. The whole thing annoys her and as soon as they are out of earshot she starts complaining.

“This corset thing is the worst frigging thing in the whole world, why do women wear this shit, no
wonder men think we are useless. I can't move, I can't breathe and it is digging into my side and it hurts my breasts. Fuck I have to ride sidesaddle too, now the side of my ass hurts. Dresses are useless, and I’m mad at you, you know." Katniss turns her head to look at him and as she does she sees him try and hide what must be a smirk that was on his face. "God dammit, you are laughing at me” she seethes, "do you enjoy seeing me in pain? Not only that, I am still mad at you. You paid for these dresses and you never told me you were going to do that. How am I supposed to pay you back? Shit, you have already done so much for me, although now that I am in this dress, I think the fact that I am WEARING A CORSET might be enough payback for you."

At that Peeta just burst out laughing his deep voice resonates through her body making her react in a way she really doesn't want to. Why does this man have to be so sexy when she is mad at him, it is freaking infuriating. He is shaking in laughter behind her and his hand that is wrapped around her waist tightens causing even more fire to run through her veins pissing her off even more. "Thanks a lot Peeta, now you are laughing at me, I look like an idiot. Can I just change back into my deerskin please?"

"Katniss, Katniss" he chuckles deeply into her ear, "I am not laughing at you. I have never heard a lassie say such things and complain so much about a dress. Ye are verra bonnie when ye get angry. Your cheeks get red and your voice gets all fiery its verra becoming. Ye dinna look like an 'idiot' in the dress, to me ye look like a right bonnie lass."

Katniss snorts at that, "What's a 'right bonnie lass'? Is that a compliment orrrrr not, because it sounds like something you would say to like a ten year old girl not a woman."

Peeta has the decency to look chagrined, but he grinned at her anyway after a minute. “Ye don’t take compliments well do ye lassie? I was just tryin to say that ye looked pretty.”

“Fine, well Thank you, but I don’t have to like wearing this torture contraption.” Katniss huffed at him.

“No ye don’t, but if ye please, it would be smart to wear a dress while we are at Craigievar, my uncles are a suspicious lot and ye don’t want any unwanted attention.”

“Fine, but I don’t have to like it, do I?” She acquiesced reluctantly.

Peeta’s chuckle rumbled deep through her, “No ye don’t, mo maise, no ye don’t.”

It took about 3 hours of riding before they entered the gates of the castle and about a second for Katniss to come to the conclusion that the movies were totally wrong as to what life at a castle was like. There were chickens and animals and people and dirt and everything was in some sort of organized chaos. There were no ‘Halt, who goes there guards’ but as soon as they rode in several men wandered out with swords casually at their sides. One of the men grinned and yelled “Fàilte Leòmhann, Cìmar a tha thu” to them in greeting, this of course caused Peeta to start calling back in Gaelic. Soon an older rough looking man with dark blonde hair and broad shoulders came striding out to them calling out “‘S fhada bho nach fhaca mi thu, mo charaid!”

Reaching the horse he gives Peeta a look that Katniss can only interpret as ‘who the hell is this?’ Peeta starts speaking again in rapid Gaelic and ends with, “Machar, please meet Miss. Katniss Everdeen, from the American colonies visiting her family the MacVey of clan Maclean. Miss-tress Everdeen this is Machar Mellark. Machar, Miss-tress Everdeen is under my protection, ye ken?” Katniss can hear the inflection in his voice and Machar studies her quickly and gives Peeta a look followed by a quick nod of his head. This apparently satisfies Peeta enough as Katniss can feel his muscles relax behind her and suddenly he has dismounted, as quickly as he usually does. Reaching up he lifts Katniss from the horse and begins to remove their rolls, while calling over what looks to
be a stable boy.

While Peeta busies himself instructing the boy, Machar turns to Katniss and bows elegantly taking her hand with a “your servant Miss-tress”.

Katniss attempts a sort of curtsey that she had seen Mrs. Baxter do and smile at him replying with a soft Thank you.

“Master Mellark, good to see you!” a woman’s voice rang out. Katniss looked up to see an older stern looking woman with her hair piled high of her head approach them.

“Mrs. Effie, Ciamar a tha thu!” Peeta replied back launching yet another conversation in Gaelic.

“Miss-tress Katniss, this is Mrs. Euphemia Baxter, she is in charge of the running of Craigievar for my Uncle Finngall MacKenzie. Mrs. Effie, please meet Miss. Katniss Everdeen, from the American colonies visiting her family the MacVey of clan Maclean. Can ye please see to her comfort, she is my guest, I would like her to be placed by me and Machar, can ye do it?”

Effie looks a little sternly at Peeta, the woman has less of a Brogue then others, “This is not exactly proper Master Mellark.”

“Aye woman, but she is under my protection and I want Miss. Everdeen between me and Machar.” Peeta’s voice is usually very friendly, but at that moment he was commanding. When he drops his voice deeper and uses a little power and this certain authority he puts in his voice Peeta can command attention and to Katniss, it is sexy as hell.

“Here, Miss. Everdeen’s things.” Peeta hands her disguised backpack to Machar and then turns and addresses her. “Mo maise, Mrs. Effie will attend to your needs and Machar will be with ye as well. I have need to see my Uncle Fingal, I will see ye this evening at supper in the great hall.” He turns and looks at Machar and then glances at Katniss, “Make sure Miss Everdeen is seated next to me.” At that he spins and strides away into the depths of the castle. Taking a deep breath Katniss turns to look at her new ‘friends’ with a smile to see that they are both staring at her, both with a question in their eyes and she has no idea what it is.

Mrs. Effie provides Katniss with a room, it’s small and a little drafty, but it has a window and a fireplace for warmth in the winter. Most importantly there is a bed, unfortunately the mattress is stuffed with something lumpy, but it is way better then sleeping on the ground and the linens look clean. In fact Mrs. Effie looks like she hates dirt, which Katniss can appreciate right about now. The woman takes one look at Katniss and orders a girl to fetch a bath, to which Katniss almost moans in appreciation, until the girl shows up with the actual bath. It's a tub, the kind she and her friends would throw ice in to chill their beers and sodas during summer bbq's. There is a pot with warm water, tepid really, and a pot with cold water. Katniss almost breaks out in tears thinking about showers, she feels like that deer Ian in the animated movie that Prim made her watch over and over with the bear and the deer with one horn becoming friends, 'where is this safe place, this land of garage', Katniss just wants the 'land of hot showers' back in her life.

A nap and an incident where Mrs. Effie comes in and brings another one of those torture devices called a dress to help Katniss dress for dinner has the woman trilling 'manners' at her after Katniss swore during the lacing bit and she is being escorted down to dinner by Machar. He doesn't have much to say and for that fact alone she likes him. The hall is large and bustling with people, there are long wooden tables with benches and everyone is making their way to find a spot. Right away Katniss notices there is some sort of hierarchy, there is a slightly raised table at the head of the hall with a few comfortable chairs with backs to them, the positioning reminds her of the head tables for the wedding party at receptions. A very pretty young strawberry blonde woman is sitting in one chair
and an older dark haired woman is in another. Machar pulls her over to a table that is near the head table and he gestures to a place where she guesses she is to sit. A hush settles over the crowd as two men followed by a teenage boy and Peeta enter the hall. The men are tall, lankier then Peeta but as tall as he, the two men have deep red hair and the boy has a dark auburn, but all four have similar eyes. His Uncles she surmises, they make their way through the room and everyone who was standing makes their way to sit. Peeta's Uncles make their way up to the head table, surprisingly the older one sits near the young woman and the other man and the boy sit near the dark haired lady. Peeta just walks over and takes his place at the seat next to her that Machar had saved.

"Ye look refreshed, mo maise and that dress is very becoming on ye." Peeta looks at her with a twinkle in his eye, he must have bathed as well, he looks clean, shaved and his curly fine blonde hair is definitely clean. It is actually a little poofy and Katniss can imagine the lion’s mane that would surround his face if he let his beard grow.

"You look refreshed yourself, thank you."

Machar then addresses Peeta in Gaelic and the two begin a hushed conversation to which she can understand nothing, while food is being served family style. Pig there is definitely a slab of pork in front of her, some assorted vegetables, more meat (a game bird of some kind) and bread. Sounds of eating and conversation fill the hall and Katniss settles in to eat and people watch, one of her most favorite pastimes. Not that she was a shrinking violet or a wallflower but Katniss preferred to be watching the action instead of being in the middle of it. In college she broke out a little, her small group of friends were fun and they attracted attention with Johanna and Madge looking beautiful and Finnick O’dair as the male heartthrob, the four of them could always manage to have a good time, but it was her nature to sit back a little more and watch; it calmed her.

Finally their initial conversation over, Peeta and Machar began speaking English and included her in on the conversation. Peeta subtly pointed out his Uncles and their wives, apparently the strawberry blonde was Fingal’s 3rd wife, unfortunately the first and then second had died in childbirth leaving him without an heir. Evan on the other hand had a son with his first wife, the boy’s name was also Evan, he was Peeta’s younger cousin and a strapping 16.

Toward the end of dinner when it looked like most people were full and were mostly talking and picking at the food Peeta abruptly stood, “Come mo maise, let me introduce ye to my Uncles.” His hand extended to her, leaving no room for argument, so she took his hand and let him lead her up to the table. After the introductions, which were fine Fingal and his wife were nice enough, but Evan’s gaze left her feeling a little exposed, he didn’t bother to hide the desire or hunger in his eyes when they swept over her body and when he kissed her hand in greeting. It was blatant and Peeta moved closer to her almost possessively, his body positioned behind her to one side and a hand hovering over her waist, not touching but claiming her none the less, she appreciated the gesture. Turning to return to their seats, Peeta guided her through the people now walking around, it was then Katniss noticed them. A small group of young females clearly gossiping and glancing at her, their eyes were harsh and they were not afraid of giving her death glares. It might be a different time but Katniss can recognize a jealous group of girls regardless, something’s are the same in all cultures, and clearly petty teenage girls are universal.

Moments after they sat down a few of the tables were pushed aside and a fiddler materialized. A merry jig was struck up and several young couples made their way to the floor and began to dance. Katniss watched them while Peeta and Machar converse lightly with the people around them. Then suddenly it was as if it was high school all over again as the four girls flounced up, batting their eyes and fawning all over Peeta. They were speaking Gaelic so Katniss had no idea what they said, but Katniss could recognize flirting that was not being reciprocated in any language.
One of the girls touched his arm and Peeta loudly proclaimed in English, “Your right Bonnie, it is 
rude of me not to be dancing.” He stood up and held his hand out to Katniss, “mo mise, care for a 
turn?” while giving her a mischievous grin.

“Oh, I am not sure I can dance like that, I have never….” She trailed off when she was interrupted 
by one of the prettier girls with dark blonde hair.

“Ye can dance with me,” the girl practically spit in Katniss’s general direction while smiling sweetly 
at Peeta.

“Aye, well ye didn’t let Miss-tress Everdeen finish talkin, and lassie I think ye may be too young for 
the likes of an old man like me.” At that he didn’t wait for Katniss to answer, he just reached down 
and picked her up by her waist, placed her on her feet and led her onto the dance floor while 
whispering “I told ye the lassies’s wouldna like ye verra much.”
Chapter 7

A/N: Sorry this took so long, bit work and I’m trying to finish my other story and kids, well you get the idea. Please review. Happy Summer! Also translation page at the end.

Chapter Seven

A week then two passed by quickly, in the mornings Katniss could see Peeta in the courtyard through her window working on his fighting skills with the other men. There was always a gaggle of girls on the edge of the space watching the men train. Peeta was gone during the rest day with the exception of just after lunch when he would take her for a walk in the surrounding countryside. The rest of the time she would help Mrs. Effie by gathering herbs in the garden for her or gutting and skinning food that would be brought to the kitchens. Katniss liked her, she was no-nonsense and very strict about etiquette, which normally would annoy Katniss but it meant that Mrs. Effie treated guests with respect, which was more then she could say for a lot of the young girls at the castle. But it was the walks with Peeta that were quickly becoming her favorite time of day. They would walk and talk freely and just generally get to know each other, their time together was relaxed. Peeta would ask her questions about her life and she would ask him about his. She learned what his favorite color was, the orange of a sunset, and that he always double knots his boot laces, ‘I dinna want to trip in battle’. She tells him that her favorite color was forest green and that she feels most at home in the woods. That she is like her father and her sister is like her mother and that she hates her sister’s cat, Buttercup.

That morning one of the young girls had been particularly nasty to her, so during their afternoon walk Katniss asked Peeta about his fan club.

“There are several girls here that want to date you, but you don’t pay them any attention, why?”

“Date?” he asked looking at her clearly not understanding her meaning.

“Umm, court; maybe that is what you do?” At that understanding flashed in his eyes.

“Ohhh, court, aye. I dinna like them, they are nasty lassies that see me as a body or a home. They dinna listen when I talk to them, those lassies, they like to look pretty but there is nothing in the head.”

At his statement Katniss burst out laughing, “Oh yes, they are nasty little jealous things, aren’t they.”

“Aye, they are MacKenzie clan too, it would no be good for me to marry a MacKenzie lass, I wouldn’a last through the night.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Ye notice Uncle Fingal has no heir?” He raised his eyebrows at her.

“Well yes…?”

“So who do ye suppose will become laird when he is gone?” Peeta prompts her.

“Well, his brother Evan or little Evan, right?”

“Aye, but little Evan is young and unproven, while his father is not well liked. So when the clan gathers to decide on a future laird they might look for another alternative. To them I have just as
much right as young Evan, more maybe, my mother was older then my Uncle Evan and very much loved. I am also battle tested; and better liked then Uncle Evan.” He took a deep breath looked at her and continued, “But I am a Mellark, so I am not an option, I dinna want to be an option. If I married into MacKenzie clan, it might look like I was settin myself up to be the next laird, even if I dinna want it. I am then a threat to Uncle Evan and young Evan, I would then have to be removed, ye ken?”

“Really? Your Uncle would kill you if he thinks you might want to be laird, even though you don’t want to be?” Katniss was aghast her mouth agape at the idea, it was barbaric.

Peeta looked at her and nodded, “Besides, I dinna like those girls verra much, I prefer a lassie I can talk to and one who can sing like the angels.” Katniss blushed at his statement, every once in a while Peeta made it very clear he was attracted to her. He didn’t do it all the time, but Katniss found a thrill run through her body every time he did.

“Tell me about this date, is that what ye do for courtin in your time?”

At that Katniss launched into an explanation of dating in 2014, hook-ups that lead to dating, one night stands that might not, casual dating, becoming a couple, becoming exclusive (boyfriend and girlfriend), dating that might lead to an engagement, engagement. She told him what people do on dates; movies, dinner, talking, getting to know each other etc…”

“So are ye dating or engaged to a man back home?” Peeta asks her with a slight frown on his lips.

“No, I broke up with my boyfriend almost two years ago. We became friends at orientation for Oxford and started dating in the spring of that year. I thought we were getting serious, but I went home for Christmas between my second and third year. When I was home I didn’t really miss him. At first I didn’t think that was odd, I only had two weeks with my family and I missed them very much. I was on the plane flying back and I was thinking about all the things I would do when I arrived in Oxford, meet my girlfriends at a pub, go to the lab, even the meeting with my advisor was on my mind. When it hit me, I wasn’t thinking of Edward and seeing him. He had been my boyfriend for over 20 months and I hadn’t missed him, nor was I thinking of him. It was bizarre, I came back to Oxford and waited three days before I saw him and when I did, well, it wasn’t the same. I wanted to make it work, he was nice; I liked him, we got along and enjoyed each other’s company, but something was missing. So I called it off after giving it a chance for another month. He was angry at me, but it was the right thing to do, in the end I wasn’t in love with him. For the next year and a half I went out on a few dates, there was nothing serious. I mostly concentrated on my work.”

Peeta nodded then looked at her, “Do ye wonder why God brought ye here through the stones?”

Katniss nodded because of course she had wondered why she had gone through to another time and place. Was it random, did it have a purpose, was it her father’s spirits or her mother’s God or fate or just happenstance? Katniss talked about her thoughts with him, discussed with him at length whether or not it had meaning at all and if it did what it could be?

“I think God brought ye here for me.” It is a simple statement, but causes Katniss to pause and turn and look at him, they are seated on the ground in a beautiful meadow filled with heather. Peeta’s hair was blowing about in the light breeze, he had not shaved since their first day at the castle and his beard was growing in, glowing red-blonde in the sunlight. The intensity of his blue stare gave him the true appearance of his name. The Leòmhann, a lion, he was beautiful, a fierce hunter and an alpha male, the apex of masculinity.

“I would like to bring ye home, to Dalcross. I love ye. I want to marry ye, mo maise.”
Looking at him Katniss can tell this was not a joke, *Jesus, he is serious. He wants to marry her, he loves her.* The thought sends shots of pleasure through her; this shocks her even more, because if she was being honest with herself she wants to be with him too. “But we haven’t known each other very long, how can you want to marry me?”

“I knew from the moment ye pointed your arrow at me heart that I wanted to marry ye. Your arrow pierced my heart and I fell in love with ye. When I heard ye sing, I knew I was a goner. I can walk and talk with ye like this for the rest of my life. I love ye and I want to bed ye…verra badly, so much so that my heart thumps faster in my chest when I look at or think of ye.”

Everything he says is wonderful, it makes her heart sing and it made her wet, faster than it had ever happened before and that was just from his words. “I…I…but I plan to go home, through the rocks.” Katniss looks at him, his face is serious, and beautiful oh so beautiful.

“I ken” it was a soft acknowledgement of their situation. Peeta takes a deep breath and looks at her; those blue eyes were burning into her soul. “The moon is full in 12 days, I can take ye to craig na dun. But, the moon will be full in July as well. It is a 6 days ride to Urquhart, I have to speak with Donall. It is another day to Dalcross, it takes 3 weeks for the bans, we could be at Craig na dun in July for the full moon… if ye want me.”

Her mouth hangs open and gapes at him, at what he is saying, “You would leave this, your home, your family, your friends, everything you know… for me?”

“I would follow ye anywhere to anytime, anyplace, mo maise.”

The last words catch her attention, a few days after they got to Craigievar she asked him what he was saying. He laughed and just told her it was just a name, she interpreted it as a nickname and before she asked what it meant he had diverted her attention elsewhere and she had forgotten to follow up. “What does that mean, mo maise, when you call me that? I know you implied it was a nickname of sorts, but what does it mean.” Katniss watches as Peeta’s cheeks turned pink under his beard and she can see it in his ears.

“**My beauty**”

“**Ohhh**” she has nothing to say, her breath is stolen from her lungs, and her body thrumming. This man claimed her as his at the outset and she didn’t even know it. Normally Katniss would be upset, she is nobody’s anything, she does not belong to a man, and she is an independent woman, but something thrills her about belonging to Peeta so that it doesn’t upset her, but excites her.

“I dinna ken what I can do in your time, but I can raise bairns and labor. I can take care of ye and love ye like my Da loved my mum. I have been waitin to feel like this with a lassie and now I do, with ye Miss. Katniss Everdeen, so will ye be marrin me?”

Katniss sucks in a breath and takes a good look at the large man in front of her. His eyes speak of warmth, laughter and home, but there are things she doesn’t know about this man, he loves here in this time. “This is all happening really fast, I don’t know what to say, but I know I don’t want to say no. I like you, a lot. I find you attractive and funny, intelligent and easy to talk to. I feel like you know more about me then some friends I have had for years. I have told you more about myself then anyone, ever and I have never felt so comfortable doing it. But we’ve never dated; you’ve never even kissed me.”

“Ye said dating was goin places and getting to know one another, aye?” And as soon as he said it Katniss knew where he was going with that statement, they have been dating, it wasn’t formally discussed, but they have been going on daily walks for weeks, talking and laughing. They have been
eating dinner together every night, granted other people are there but...they have danced and talked and laughed.

She lets out in a breathy laugh, “Fuck, we have been dating.” A small smile takes over her face, why did she not see it? Looking over at his smiling face and golden curls and ruddy beard, she thinks about what it would be like to leave to go home. The thought of going home makes her happy, but the thought that she would never see him again... well it hurts, it physically hurts to think of leaving him and she would miss him. Damn it, if he just didn’t sneak up on her, dig in and root himself into her heart.

“I am not saying yes, I need some more time, but maybe we could go to Dalcross and I will answer you then.” His smile lights up his face and brightens her world to her very core, shit she is in deep, she was not this kind of girl, and she was not impulsive. It took her a year to agree to date Gale, her best friend and someone she had known all her life. Now here she was considering marrying a virtual stranger, someone she met a few weeks ago. Is she an idiot? When she thinks about it though, from the moment she saw him she could feel it. The few times she has touched his hand has made her feel more alive than sex with any man she has ever been with. He can get her wet with a look or a few words or sometimes, it is the tenor of his voice. And when he laughs it just goes through her body like fire.

“We leave tomorrow, no maise. I plan to woo ye along the ride so when we arrive in Urquhart ye will have said yes.” His voice is low and husky as he stands and holds out his hand to help her to her feet and looking at his eyes she wonders if he is as effected by her as much as she is by him. Her gaze quickly flits over his kilt while he is helping her stand and although it is difficult to tell she is pretty certain he is hard.

"You still have yet to kiss me." she says looking at him, his hand still holding hers.

"I ken, ye havna agreed to marry me yet." He looks at her and she can feel the fire in his eyes penetrate to her very soul. Is this what her parents felt when they first met, this inexplicable attraction, and this absolute desire?

"People kiss when they are dating." At her statement he raises his eyebrows in question.

"Why?"

"To determine if they are compatible physically besides mentally." He answers with the Mmmpphhh grunt that she has come to associate with all Highlander males version of nonverbal communication.

"Do they bed each other before they are marrit as well, like ye were sayin before, is that true?"

"Sometimes" his mouth falls open at her words, crap maybe he expects me to be a virgin. Are girls virgins when they go to their marriage bed in this time? "Have ye been bedded?" his question is soft but not harsh.

"Yes... most girls lose their virginity before they are 18, it was later for me. Does it bother you? Do you want to take back the proposal?"

"NO" he is quick to respond, "Would it bother ye that I am?"

"That you are what?" The question comes falling, tumbling out of her mouth just as she realizes what he means; they are still standing close together chests heaving a little more than they should. "Ohhh, no I don't care." His breathing is harsh as he looks down at her, she can feel the blood coursing
through him and through her. Perhaps it is her breathing that is harsh and the sparks are still flying through their joined hands. "You still haven't kissed me." She whispers the statement and it comes out breathy with need, her cheeks heat up even more then she thought possible embarrassed by the longing in her voice.

She feels the light touch of his hand on the side of her face, a caress so gentle it's a whisper. His eyes so very blue she is lost in an endless ocean.

"Only one kiss, mo maise, before we are wed." She barely hears it as his lips descend down on hers, a feather light touch that burns her body. His lips ghost over hers, first over the top then the lower lip, while his hand winds its way into her hair and around her neck and chin. Katniss tilts just slightly and darts the tip of her tongue out to taste his lip causing Peeta to emit a low deep throated groan. Control snaps and he deepens the kiss slanting his mouth against hers their lips molding together as if they were made for one another. No awkward nose bumping or teeth just passion and wet and heat. Peeta takes control of the kiss and dominates her mouth nipping and licking and their bodies have moved flush against each other. Katniss can’t think as he plunders her with his tongue and suddenly he is sucking on her bottom lip as he pulls back he tugs it with him. Releasing her lip he leans his forehead on hers as they both pant to catch their breath.

"Wow" it’s the only thing she can think of in the moment her mind is so befuddled. She had never been kissed like that before; she never knew a kiss could make her feel like that. It was a kiss that ruined her forever burned into her soul like hot iron searing flesh.

"Is that a yes?"

And as she looks up into his eyes, she knows what the answer will be, today, tomorrow, a week from now or years from now and she allows her heart to answer for her…”Yes”.

Translations: Tha gradh agam dhut = I love you, mo maise = my beauty, mo cridhe = my love, M’anam = my soul, Mo bhean = my wife
Chapter 8

That night at dinner Peeta is radiant, all smiles and happiness and when she looks over to see Machar looking at her she knows he knows. Honestly, she is a little giddy herself, because she has finally allowed herself to admit what her heart has known since she saw him galloping toward her on that horse, that she is in love with Peeta Mellark. As dinner winds down, Peeta excuses himself to go bid his Uncles and family good-bye. She watches as he leans over and has a whispered conversation with Fingal MacKenzie. As Peeta speaks to him she can see a rush of different emotions go over his Uncle's face, disbelief, annoyance and finally stubborn acceptance? Then Peeta leans closer and says one more thing in his Uncle's ear causing him to snap his head in her direction and then look back at his nephew. They grin at each other and Fingal stands and pats Peeta firmly on the back. As Peeta makes his way back over to her; Katniss watches as Fingal subtly raises his glass to her in a toast of sorts.

It wasn't until she went to bed that night that she begins to panic. What the hell is she thinking she hasn't known him three weeks and she agreed to marry him, in Scotland... in 1744! How would that even work? How would he exist in her time? He would be like 284 years old. So she thinks about her parents, how happy they are with their marriage. They had met just after her mom had graduated high school, when she started nursing school. Her father was at the teacher’s college and her mother was at the nursing school. They were wed before the end of their freshman year. Her mother had told her once that she fell in love with her father the day she met him. He was singing in the quad, demonstrating a Native American song. ‘I fell hard for his voice and then I went to introduced myself to him. We went out for pizza and I fell in love with the man.’ Katniss always liked the story of how they met and how they both instantly knew they were it for each other; maybe this wasn’t so crazy after all. Katniss fell asleep dreaming of that kiss and beyond.

The journey to Urquhart starts early the next morning; Peeta had presented her with her own horse and promised that as soon as they were far enough away from the castle she could change into her Native dress. Machar was also traveling with them, Katniss was a little disappointed in that, but Peeta insisted that it proper that they have an escort. ‘His business is finished with clan MacKenzie, now clan Mellark has all the information we need to decide our fate.” So they set off, three people on three horses and as they rode they conversed. Away from the castle Machar Mellark was much different person. At the Castle he seemed dour and didn’t talk much, in fact to Katniss he was just a shadow behind her when Peeta wasn’t near. Here out on the open road, he is all smiles, jokes and conversation.

Machar likes to tell stories of Peeta as a young boy, which causes a ton of embarrassment for Peeta but plenty of mirth for her. She learns how Peeta would practice all the time with a claymore when he was little; apparently the sword was bigger than him. Peeta refused to practice with the smaller wooden swords because his older brothers used the real ones, so he should too. The way Machar described Peeta practically dragging the sword that was taller than he to the practice dummies because it was so heavy had her almost falling of her horse laughing uncontrollably.

When Machar first saw Katniss in her deerskin with her bow on her back his mouth dropped open and he couldn’t say anything, he must have stood there gapping for a good 5 minutes before he just grunted and wandered off shaking his head. Later that afternoon while they are riding quietly Katniss drew her bow and took down a hare in flight. His eyes bugged out of his head and he turned to Peeta who was grinning at Katniss, that he finally said something. “Finally, ye found a good match for ye boy. It took a huntress to match the Leòmhann.”
Six days of traveling was hard and to be honest she missed riding with Peeta on his horse sitting in front of him. She missed the contact and yearned for the quiet moments they had during their daily walks. Now they are never alone, always with a chaperone, although she was told it would be same at Dalcross until they were married.

Urquhart castle was similar to Craigievar, with the exception of their welcome. As soon as they were within sight of the stone fortress Peeta’s grin grew and he kicked his horse forward into a trot and she urged her horse to do the same. As he came into the gates he yelled out in Gaelic to the men coming to greet them, Machar did the same. Lots of happy yelling ensued, hugging and laughing. Soon two broad almost identical men were striding out across the yard both calling to Peeta. The three stride to each other and grasp each other in manly hugs slapping backs and smiling. The men have straight blonde hair, but the resemblance is clear, these are his older brothers. At Craigievar Peeta had to go greet his Uncles, here his brothers came to meet him. Soon all three were striding over to her with smiles on their faces as she sits on her horse.

Reaching up Peeta lifts her off the horse and sets her down next to him, his hand hovering protectively or possessively on her shoulder. “Donall, Ryan I would like ye to meet Miss-tress Katniss Everdeen, from the American colonies visiting her family the MacVey of clan Maclean. Miss. Everdeen, this is my oldest brother Donall Mellark laird of Urquhart of clan Mellark.” Katniss curtsied as she had learned to do and he kissed her hand. “And this is my other older brother Ryan Mellark.” Ryan bowed to her as she curtsied and he kissed her hand as well. Both men then looked at Peeta inquisitively after they inspected her in her deerskin clothing most likely noting the bow and quiver hanging off her back.

“Miss. Everdeen is my betrothed.” His grin was wide when he said it and both his brothers turned to stare at Peeta like this was a joke. It was Ryan who broke the awkward silence, “Aye, ye have been busy, have ye no?” and then burst out laughing. Katniss then looked at Donall, who was not laughing, he turned to his brother and put a hand on his shoulder and said something in Gaelic to him in a serious tone. There was then the unavoidable conversation that Katniss couldn’t understand, but Peeta would tell her about later, it went on for a good five minutes with both of his brother’s glancing back and forth between Katniss and Peeta. She knows she heard the words Craig na dun and Sassenach, so she figures he was relating the story of how they met and who she was.

At the end of the conversation Peeta then looks at Katniss seriously, “Mo maise, I would like to show my brothers your book, if ye let me?”

“Oh the history book, sure, if you think it will be OK?” Katniss didn’t know if she was tampering with history or not, but this was Peeta’s family and she figured it would be a way for them to trust her and like her.

“Aye, it will be fine, I have been thinking about what we will do with Prince Tearlach, he was the reason Machar was at clan MacKenzie and the cause of my business there.”

The older Mellark brothers were looking at her curiously but were polite and not in any way ogling her like Evan MacKenzie did when she first arrived.

“Miss. Everdeen it is my honor to have ye as my guest at Urquhart. As laird of clan Mellark, I welcome you as the betrothed of little Peeta here.” Donall said formally while taking a jibe at his little brother, since Peeta really wasn’t little Peeta at all. He was inches taller than both his brothers, and his build was just as if not more broad then them as well. Peeta’s arms, shoulders and legs more muscled then them, even though clearly both of them were also very well built. The Mellark boys were definitely built for strength.

Donall then turned and clapped Peeta on the back while gesturing to several boys around to take care
of the horses and their things. “Come Leòmhann, I am sure ye and Miss. Everdeen are tired and hungry and we have much to discuss.”

A room and a bath was provided for Katniss as it was at Craigievar, a woman named Mrs. Fitzgibbons was sent to attend to her dress. Katniss made sure to wear one of the gowns Peeta had bought for her from Mrs. Baxter. Mrs. Fitzgibbons was also a little more forgiving with the lacings of her corset, making Katniss instantly like her. When she was finished the woman turned to her, “Miss Everdeen, ye must be a rare woman to have captured the heart of our leòmhann, many a lassie has tried to catch or trap him. His heart is rare, like his mother’s, if ye take care of it, he will take care of ye.” With that the woman left and said she would send a lass to fetch her for dinner.

Dinner was similar to that at Craigievar, with the exception that Katniss and Peeta were now at the head table. She met Donall’s wife, Aileen, and instantly liked her. There was a gaggle of children that all looked like a cross between Aileen and Donall, two boys and two girls. They were seated and eating at a smaller almost child sized table a few feet from the ‘head table’ and was attended to by several pre-teen to teenage girls. Again as with clan MacKenzie there was a pack of girls that followed Peeta’s every move, giggling and laughing and obviously interested in him.

In the middle of the meal Donall addressed the members of his clan and then welcomed back Machar and Peeta from their travels. He then congratulated Peeta on his upcoming marriage. Then he introduced her as a guest of clan Mellark and as Peeta’s betrothed. At that announcement there was some hushed murmuring as well as obvious glancing her way. Sitting next to her, Peeta smiled down at her and whispered, “Aye, now there’s a whole new gaggle of lassie’s that won’t be liken ye.” They both just laughed at that and Katniss glanced around and saw several of the young ladies in the hall giving her death glares, one was even crying.

“How many of these girls thought they would be Mrs. Mellark?” she whispered to him.

Raising his eyebrows he looked at her, cheeks growing pink, “I may have kissed a few lassies here, but I never gave them reason to think they would be my wife. I am not the only man to have kissed them either.”

“Just kissed?” she enquired while raising her eyebrows at him and smirking.

“Aye, just kissed, and not like I kissed ye, mo maise.” At that he took her hand in his and brought to his lips and kissed her knuckles gently, while staring in her eyes, it was a very intimate gesture. It also caused a fresh wave of tears from one or two of the ladies in the hall. “I have already spoken with father Innes, he will publish the bans tomorrow and for the next two Sundays, and then we can be wed the next day. Father will wed us at the Dalcross church, Delly will be wantin to be there, and it is my home. That will give us a week to put things in order and time to travel to Craig na dun before the July full moon. It should only take 4 days ride to get there, but we should be early so we dinna miss it.

“You have been doing a lot of planning” she replied as she smiled at him.

“I figured ye will be doin the planning when we get to your time? And I want to be wed to ye as soon as the church allows.” Peeta’s soft reply betrays his excitement to her and his inability to wait to be with her makes her heart soar.

Later that evening Peeta escorted Katniss to a sitting room that looked like it was Donall’s private study. Peeta had requested that she bring her history book so she had it in her hands. When they arrived it was only Peeta, Katniss, Ryan and Donall. Immediately Peeta launched into a long explanation of the MacKenzie and their Jacobite leanings. He then relayed all the details of his Uncles involvement including raising funds and an army for Prince Charles to make a bid for the
crown. Donall and Ryan asked many questions about the details of the MacKenzie involvement. Peeta then went into what Machar had learned which involved the other clans that the MacKenzie’s were getting involved and who they were pressuring.

Peeta then took a deep breath, looked at Katniss and then launched into the unabridged version of Katniss’s appearance at Craig na dun and when she had come from, not just where. He detailed everything about her that made him believe her and convince him she wasn’t a witch or a faerie. During this explanation Ryan and Donall started giving her the side eye, like they thought that maybe she was crazy and had bewitched their brother. Then Peeta showed them the history book with its color pictures and photographs, he turned the pages until he reached the section that detailed the Jacobite uprising and the consequences that Scotland will face after the ill-fated Bonnie Prince Charlie loses. Peeta sits back and reaches out grabbing her hand, while both his brothers silently read the section.

After they finish they just sit and stare in silence, you can tell they are just processing everything, and then Peeta speaks.

“Prince Tearlach is coming. The MacKenzie’s have sworn for him and they are raisin an army they are expecting the Leòmhann of Scotland to join the cause. I tried to warn Fingal, but he is stubborn as an ox. The Sassenach are looking for traitors, they already have me as a Jacobite so I canna declare for the king. I am sworn to you, Donall, my clan and to Scotland. Clan Mellark is not yet declared and ye can decide Donall what ye want to do. My Uncles expect me to fight and if I stay I must fight, but we will lose. Everything will be takin away from us and given to the crown and I will die. I canna stop this, but I can save Dalcross, I can help save clan Mellark.” Peeta looked at his brothers and then her and blinked slowly. Standing up he begins to pace his hands combing through his hair casing it to stick out all over the place. His mane apparent, his blonde hair and red-gold beard framing his face and as he paces his muscles tensed and sinewy, he looked like a lion stalking ready to pounce.

“If I give Dalcross to young Peter Gordon, they canna take it away. He will no be a traitor to the crown or to Scotland, he is too young and Seumas canna fight, Dalcross will be neutral. The Sassenach will be looking for a way to beat me, my name is known and I am already considered a traitor in their circles. Fergus Cameron hates me, ever since I embarrassed his son Fergusson at the games last year and the Camerons have sworn to the crown. They have put the bug in the commanders ear that I am a secret Jacobite and with the MacKenzies as my Uncles, I canna refute it. Machar was able to intelligence that I am the only Mellark the Camerons have named; ye and Ryan are no named as traitors to the crown…yet.”

“If bloody Fergus hadna been boastin that his gomeral son Fergusson could beat the Leòmhann at the claymore and wrestling, he wouldna been shamed. He is a fool; no one has beaten a Mellark in wrestling since before grandda.” Ryan burst out clearly frustrated with the whole situation.

“True, but wee Peeta here didna have to beat him so quickly or at least let the clot-heid get a point on him.” Donall said while turning and giving Peeta a side eye.

“It is not my fault he sits back on his heels. I coudna let him score a point on me in the claymore if I tried, Fergusson is slow and it woulda been obvious I was letting him get a point.” Peeta cried out, “How was I supposed to ken it would make his father so mad he would turn a fellow Scott into the Sassenach.”

“Aye, that man has always been a snake, slippery and all for himself and his.” Donall, then turned and looked at Ryan, “I dinna want to declare for the crown, but to declare for Prince Tearlach, it will end our clan. We need to talk more.” At that he turned to Peeta and put his hand on his shoulder,
Katniss can see that Donall takes his older brother and leadership position very seriously. “So ye have made up your mind then, what ye will do?”

“Aye, I will go with, mo maise, to her home. I will miss ye, but I canna live without her, and she needs to go back. I dinna think we can change all of history with this knowledge,” Peeta points to Katniss and the book, “but I think we can give clan Mellark a chance at a good fate.”

“Miss-tress Everdeen, Thank you for sharing your book and knowledge, I would like to finish reading this book, if ye don’t mind?” Donall smiled at her, it had been a while since she was spoken to.

“That is fine, I don’t need it now.” Katniss smiles at Donall and tries to hide her yawn, it is late and she is tired. She looks over and sees Peeta smiling at her fondly.

“Time for bed, I see my betrothed is tired and so am I, the ground does not make for a comfortable bed. Come, mo maise, I will escort ye to your room.”

“I will accompany the lady, to her separate chambers.” Ryan stood up and looked at his brother a knowing grin spreading across his lips, “just so wee Peeta here doesna forget which chamber is his.” At that he started laughing, cackling really and in that statement Katniss could see that Ryan was a little like her friend Finnick, just an awful tease who lives to poke and prod at people. Donall joins in on the laughter as red creeps up Peeta’s neck and onto his cheeks and starts sputtering. “I havna…I wasna goin to…”

“I know ye wee bairnie, I just like to see ye get all red.” Ryan clapped him on the back and then offered his arm to Katniss, “Come my lady I will escort ye to your chamber. Donall and I have some things we need to talk about with wee Peeta here before his weddin night.” And with that he escorted her out chuckling to himself, and she could hear Peeta sputtering behind her with Donall’s booming laughter following them out the door.
Chapter 9

Sorry for the wait. Please review.

Chapter 9

The next morning found Katniss meeting with the Mellark clan priest, Father James Innes. He had met with Peeta yesterday and wanted to talk to her before reading the Banns at Mass. Katniss was aware of the history of the Banns, although it had been done away with years before in the church. The meeting was pleasant; the questions that Father Innes was asking her were fairly simple, baptism, communion, confirmation; he was just making sure she was a catholic. Once he was satisfied she was of faith his questioning took on another bent. Had she been married before? No. Was she aware of any blood relation to Peeta? No. Was she being threatened or coerced into this marriage? No. Does any other man have a prior claim on her? No. The questions went on, marriage is for children, will she raise them as children of the church etc…etc… The time went quickly and finally Father Innes was done with his inquisition, he excused himself to get ready for mass. He told her that he felt confident with her and he confirmed that he would initiate the Banns at Mass today. Then he reminded her to abstain from engaging in any carnal activities before the wedding as he took her leave.

Mass was interesting, the general idea of it hadn’t changed, but it was much longer and different then what she was used to attending. Katniss was seated between Lainie and Aileen, and Peeta was seated between his brothers. The Banns were read and no one objected, although there were very pointed glares from several of the young ladies in the parish. Soon they found themselves back on the road on their way to Dalcross.

The entire ride Peeta chattered on and on about Dalcross, his farm, the people under him, his sister and best friend and his nephews. At one point Katniss stopped her horse, Peeta stopped and looked at her questioning, “Is there something wrong, mo maise?”

Katniss took a deep breath and looked at him “Are you sure you want to do this? Marry me; leave your home, your family, your friends, everything you know. Peeta, my time is different, very different from yours. Even modern day Scotland is different, but the US…America…it is even more different. This is a big change for you and I don’t think changing your mind and coming back is really an option once we are there. It is painful, going through the stones; I don’t think one can make multiple trips back and forth. So are you sure you want to do this?”

“Yes” Peeta looks at her his hair flopping in his eyes slightly, a small indulgent smile on his lips. “If I stay, ye will go and I will have nothing. I love ye verra much. No one needs me here. Delly has Seumas and her bairns. Donall has Aileen, their bairns and Urquhart and Ryan has Lainie and the wee bairnie on the way. If I am gone, it is better for Donall and clan Mellark when Prince Tearlach comes, he can make a decision without the pressure of clan MacKenzie.”

“So you are sure then?” Katniss asks one more time to make sure.

“Aye, mo maise, I am sure. Are ye sure ye want me?” Katniss swallowed at his question, this is a big decision, but she is sure, because she needs him. Around him she can breathe, she didn’t even know she was holding her breath before she met him, but she was in a way. Holding back from loving, from breathing in another, making them part of you.

“Yes, because I need you, I want you.” It is a simple answer to his question, she hasn’t told him that she loves him yet, but she can see that he knows. Her statement has told him everything. Peeta beams
that huge smile at her and turns his horse, cocking his head to indicate that she should follow.

Dalcross lands are beautiful, rolling hills a beautiful river and the land being worked by farmers. As they passed people out working they would turn and holler a friendly ‘Halo, me laird’ at him. Peeta would greet them back, all of them by name. “It is important to know your tenants and the people that are workin for ye. They need to know that ye care for them and their wellbeing. That ye are there to protect them.” Peeta tells her as they cross through a field of heather, “My Da would remind me of this every day when I was a wee one growin’ to be master of Dalcross.”

As they crest a hill on the field Peeta’s face breaks out into a huge smile. Katniss looks down and sees a manor style house; it is a large stone, but cozy looking home with several out buildings a few barns and fields surrounding the place. “Dalross” the reverence and joy in his voice is palpable when he whispers the name of his home. “When my Da marrit me mum he gave her Dalross as a weddin present, it was in her marriage contract that Dalross would go to her heir. It would remain part of Urquhart and under clan Mellark protection, but it belonged to her, outright. Now it is mine.” At that he suddenly gave a whoop and kicked his horse into a gallop across a pasture, letting out that undulating cry she had heard the first time he had appeared. Katniss kicked her horse into a trot to follow him watching as chickens scattered and two children and a woman came running out of the house.

“Peeta!” Came the joyful cry from the woman who was more waddling then running as he leapt of his horse and into the yard in front of the house.

“Delly!” he cried out as he picked her up and spun her around as Katniss finally caught up to him. “Look at ye, another wee one coming, Seumas has been busy! Where is my brother?” Cries of Uncle Peeta, Uncle Peeta were being loudly proclaimed as two very boisterous boys with strawberry hair clamored around his legs.

“Out at his mother’s cottage, fixen something. The woman refuses to leave her home and come live here wi us, stubborn ox.” Peeta laughs and turns to Katniss joy emanating from his pores and he lifts her gently off the horse. Katniss can actually mount and dismount a horse by herself, but the one time she did it, Peeta got all grumpy, saying that he likes to do it, she should let him. So she lets him, she is pretty sure it is just an excuse for him to be close and to touch her, but she doesn’t mind.

“Delly, this is Miss. Katniss Everdeen, from America, my betrothed. Katniss this is my wee sister, Delly Mellark Gordon.” Delly’s mouth opens in shock as she stares at Katniss for a minute. Katniss is unsure how she will react; right now Delly is Miss-tress of Dalross and when Peeta marries his wife will become the lady Dalross, effectively replacing her. Of course Delly doesn’t know they are not staying but…

Suddenly Delly is shrieking and throwing herself at Katniss, Delly’s arms wrap around her and Katniss finds herself in the tightest hug. All the while Delly is shrieking in what she is pretty sure is happiness and shock. After Delly finally releases her death grip hug on her, she immediately grabs Katniss’s hands and starts leading her towards the house while yelling at Peeta. “Peeta, take care of her things and tend to your horses wi’ little Peeta and wee Brian. I need to be tendin to my new sister.” At that she gives Katniss a huge smile and they enter the house with Delly chatting all the way.

After a tour of the house that took twice as long as it should have, but Delly is a talker, a super happy talker. Delly was telling Katniss everything she felt she needed to know ‘to be the lady of Dalross’. Finally the tour ended in the parlor and Delly sent a young kitchen maid off for tea and snacks for the future ‘Lady Dalross’ and as they sat down Peeta walked in carrying her travel bundle.

“Delly, what room de ye plan to put Katniss in?” he asks her patiently interrupting Delly’s incessant
chatter, at this point Katniss isn’t even sure what she is talking about.

“Oh, well I dinna ken, it is your house, Lady Katniss, which room would ye like?” Delly looked at her expectantly, and honestly Katniss does not remember the tour well enough to even guess which one is appropriate, plus it really is Delly’s house not hers.

“Oh, which one would you think best for me Delly?” Katniss asks diplomatically.

“‘Oh, the green room, don’t ye think? I believe ye said ye liked that room didn’t ye?” Katniss isn’t sure, but green is her favorite color so she might have said that.

Katniss agrees and Peeta leaves to go settle her things in ‘the green room’ and his things in his room.

As soon as he leaves the room Delly turns to Katniss and squeals, “Oh this is so exciting, we been waitin for Peeta to finally find a wife, when will ye be getting marrit? How did ye meet? Tell me everything.” And with that last statement Delly actually shut her mouth folded her hands in her lap and looked to Katniss, as if she expected her to just launch into the story.

Katniss begins by telling her an abbreviated tale of how they met, which Delly listens to all with appropriate gasps when she was in danger and sighs when she was rescued. As she was getting to their arrival at castle Craigievar, Peeta walked in and sat down next to her and tea arrives. For the next hour Peeta and Katniss told Delly the story of how they met and became betrothed, while Delly interjects with questions here and there. Giggling when Katniss relays the dinner at Urquhart and how there were some very angry and sad young lassies.

“Aye, many a young lassie has been trying to catch our Peeta’s heart, most want to be Lady Dalcross or they like the thought a bein with the Leòmhann of Scotland, ye ken? I like how ye dinna try to trap him, can I hear ye sing?” Delly skips around a lot; she is a little scattered, but nice. Katniss likes her a lot, she can see how much she idolizes Peeta, and as her boys run in and out Katniss can see what a happy home this is.

Seumas comes in and after the two friends greet each other enthusiastically, introductions are in order again. Seumas Gordon is less enthusiastic then his wife, but still very welcoming, of course no one could be as enthusiastic as Delly about anything. He congratulates Peeta and tells him how pretty Katniss is, making her blush.

“Aye, well after dinner, I need to sit down wi’ both of ye and talk about my trip to Craigievar and what our Uncles have been doin. Seumas, can ye tell me what I have missed while I have been gone from me home?” He stands up and Seumas launches into a story about a barn while the two walk off and head towards the barns.

“It is always like this when Peeta comes home, he needs to know what is goin on wi’ his tenants and Dalcross. He misses home, but Donall needs him to be doin clan business, Peeta is trusted and since he doesna have a family it is easy for Donall to send him. Now that ye will be marrit, Donall canna send him away so much. Can ye help me getting dinner ready, or do ye need to rest from your travels?”

Katniss immediately decides to join Delly in the kitchens and helps her prepare a hearty stew for dinner. Delly is happy to see that Katniss can skin animals and is a strong and hard worker. “Most of the silly lassies that wanted to marry Peeta are useless on a farm. Peeta needs a strong, smart woman, not a silly lassie, who will be as much a girl when she is forty as when she is eighteen.”

Dinner was a more casual affair then at Craigievar or Urquhart. The family sits around a large table in a dining room in front of a roaring fire, while the stable boys and kitchen lassies eat in the kitchen
before they head home, either to their room in the stables or at their nearby homes with their families. The family laughs and chats and little Peeta and Brian talk over each other trying to be the one to tell their Uncle Peeta stories of the mischief they have gotten into. Tattling on each other that so and so got their behind walloped by their Da for some trouble or other. Laughter and good conversation took up the meal time and Katniss found herself truly enjoying this home and these people. It made her sad to think that she will be leaving these people and taking their Peeta, the boys favorite Uncle and Delly’s most beloved brother from them, but then she realized that he would be taken anyway, either by war or through the stones back to her time. Dinner was over before she knew it and the boys were sent to bed, protesting all the way that they should stay up because Uncle Peeta just got home.

After they settled into the parlor, Peeta pulled out some of his family’s whiskey and poured some for everyone, including Delly. Katniss looked nervously, it was not know yet what fetal alcohol syndrome was, but she already felt protective of Delly and her little family.

“It is not healthy for the baby to drink alcohol while you are pregnant. You can have a little, but not much. The child can get a disease called fetal alcohol syndrome and it causes all sorts of developmental problems.” She said it softly and gently as both Delly and Seumas turned to look at her with disbelief on their faces.

“Katniss is most likely right,” Peeta cuts in, “she is educated in medicine and science.”

“Educated?” Seumas questions, “They let lassies become educated in America?” his disbelief strong in his tone.

“Aye, well Katniss went to Oxford University, like me, but we need to talk about something important and ye need to listen to the full story. Donall and Ryan already know everything and what is goin to happin.” Peeta then launches into the full story of Katniss and where she came from, how she was pulled from the stones. What she has that made Peeta believe her and then he talks about the History book, which he pulls out. He must have got it at some point from her bag and brought it down. He sits down and shows it to Delly and Seumas, leafing through the book until he gets to the same section he showed his brothers last night. The couple is quiet while they read and then when they look up they just stare at Katniss.

“Ye were sent by god to save us.” Delly softly acknowledges that what Katniss and Peeta have been telling them the truth.

“Are ye a faerie?” Katniss laughs at Seumas’s question, because it was Peeta’s question too when he first met her.

“No, no…I am not, and for your information, Peeta thinks I was sent by God for him.” She smiles teasingly at Peeta and then at Delly and Peeta has the decency to blush.

Rubbing the back of his neck while sheepishly grinning “Aye, well you’re the most beautiful lassie I ever saw and ye pointed an arrow at me like ye were the goddess Diana come to life.”

“So Prince Tearlach will lose.” Seumas sighs, “And we will be under England’s rule with these Acts of Proscriptions.”

“Aye, but not everyone will lose their homes and land, Seumas.”

“Ye canna fight against Scotland, against the true Stuart king, he is God’s king, the pope’s king.”

“I ken, but I canna fight for him if we want to keep Dalcross or if I want to live. The MacKenzie are
in it thick as thieves and they expect their nephew to be as well. They already told Prince Tearlach that the Leòmhann of Scotland will lead his army to victory.” Peeta gets up and begins his pacing, much like he did last night when talking with his brothers.

Suddenly he stops and looks at his sister and brother -in-law, “I plan to leave, to go wi’ Katniss back through the stones. I cannna live without her and I willna ask her to leave her life just to have me die here. I will sign Dalcross over to little Peeta. No one can make him fight or call him a traitor, the English cannna take it away from him and the Scots cannna call a five year old a coward for no fighten in the army.”

At that statement Delly gasped and threw herself on her brother, “No Dalcross is yours, it belongs to ye, we cannna take it from ye.”

Peeta hugged his sister close to him and looked over at Seumas who seemed to grasp the situation a little more than Delly or was at least less emotional about it. “If I stay Dalcross will be takin from me and given to the English, but I have the choice to give it to my nephew, to keep it in the family. To save it from the English, I choose that future my wee Dolina.” Peeta stood there and hugged Delly while she cried in his arms.

“How long till ye go?” She softly asked when her crying ceased.

“The moon will be full on the twelfth of July, Katniss and I will attempt to go then. But there is more we need to do and plan for in the next few weeks and one of them is my wedding. Father Innes published the first Bann this morning and my bride needs a dress, so will ye help me with a dress and a weddin feast wee sis? Donall is sendin the clan lawyer to help and Seumas and I will be plannin the transfer and how to survive the next few years of war and famine, Katniss said she will leave the book to help our family, clan Mellark survive and prosper.”

“Yes, I can help with a dress, for your beautiful bride and I will plan the weddin feast, but Peeta, I want ye to be given Dalcross to the Gordons in trust for ye. So when ye get to the future ye can have it back, I willna take no for your answer. When the lawyer gets here I’ll be wantin to be involved and I willna take no for an answer.” At that Katniss realized that this bubbly woman has just as much determined grit and stubborn headed as her brother; it made her like Delly even more.

Over the next few weeks the lawyer came and drew up the documents and worked with the family. Katniss took as much time as she could writing down things she knew over the history that would keep Dalcross viable. “Scotch”, she told Delly one evening, "will become a huge export and money maker for Scotland in the future.” She went on to explain that Whiskey from Scotland will be known as Scotch and that only whiskey made in Scotland will be allowed to be considered as Scotch. She talked about the high cost of whiskey aged in barrels and single malt and how people will pay hundreds of dollars for old bottles. As she was discussing this she was silently thanking her Uncle Haymitch and his love for fine Scotch and his love of lecturing about said passion.

Katniss took the time to teach Delly what she knew about the healing properties of the local herbs, her mother’s passion was homeopathic medicines and liked to talk about it at the dinner table. She told Delly about germs and, keeping things clean and sterile, especially wounds that the boys might get. She discussed the planting of potatoes and how it would help them through the upcoming famine while many people would die. Katniss introduced the idea of vitamins and a balanced nutrition, showing Delly what types of food should be eaten daily for optimal health. Delly was smart and soaked it all in, making lists and charts, writing down the wisdom of 270 years that Katniss was giving to her, so that her family would thrive. Katniss write down other things too, invest in Apple early on and hang in there, Microsoft and IBM. She wrote down GE and Ford motor cars, the great depression. Maybe this would be considered insider trading, Katniss wasn’t sure, but in her short
time with the Gordons she had come to love the family dearly and since she was taking away their beloved laird, Katniss vowed to give them as much information as she could.

During this time she also was able to take time to go hunting with Peeta, take walks with him and have long conversations after dinner in the parlor, while being supervised of course. After dinners Delly and little Peeta have convinced her to sing one song for them. The first one she sang was the hymn Amazing Grace, Delly cried and the look on Peeta's face was of such pure adoration that she had no misgivings in making it a nightly ritual. Every night she makes sure to sing a hymn, Katniss is pretty sure that a modern song may be inappropriate.

During the three weeks together she falls more and more in love with her lion. She learns of his possessive nature when it comes to her, she learns of his playful and nurturing sides when he spends time with his nephews. Katniss can see that Peeta will be a wonderful father and it makes her heart swell with happiness. Katniss watches him work on his sword play, his mornings are his time with his claymore and his exercises, and she likes watching him work and vows to find many physical activities for him to do, like chopping wood with his shirt off. During their walks she takes time to try and get him up to speed on world history and what life is like in the 21st century. Transportation, homes, school, gender equity (or at least striving for), racial equity (still working on it), politics, computers, culture, movies and music everything he needs to know.

At least with the last one Katniss can show him, she has her iPod nano and the battery is still good, she had left it off the whole time. The first time she puts the ear buds in his ears he pulls them out and almost starts freaking out, she started with some Mozart she had on her playlist, nothing to radical. He wanted to know where the musicians and instruments were, and then she explained recordings and bytes, hesitantly he let her put the buds back in and slowly a huge smile crept onto his face. After that he wants more, so she follows it with some Beethoven and then Tchichovsky. Finally she throws on some rock and roll for him, starting with some early Beetles, something mild and definitely non-offensive. It was the day she scrolled to Joan Jett and pressed play that his eyes opened in total shock, "That’s a lassie singin?" Katniss figured Brittany Spears and Katy Perry may have to wait a bit.

The second Banns are read and in the evenings Katniss tries to help as Delly works on her wedding dress. "It is mums wedding dress, but ye are so tiny it needs a little takin in." The dress is beautiful, not a typical white wedding dress, it is an ivory underlay with a light tan over dress that is almost shimmery gold with a beautiful leaf pattern embroidered into the cloth, she is fairly sure it is silk. Unfortunately the dress still comes with a corset and stays and all the 1700's contraptions that annoy her to no end. Perhaps we will have a second wedding, where I can choose the dress.

Katniss also discovers that all the beautiful paintings that cover the walls were painted by Iona, Delly or Peeta, apparently artistic talent runs in the family. "Maybe you could be an artist when we get to my time." she tells him one day after admiring the wedding portrait he had painted of his sister and Seumas.

"I can paint for a living?" he asked her increduously.

"Yes, if you want to do that." Katniss looks at him, he is standing behind her closely and they haven't kissed since that first one. But she has been burning and aching for him physically in a way she has never experienced before and he is just so very close. Taking a step back into him Katniss feels his body warm behind her all hard muscles and round edges and it feels good. Peeta must feel it too because he hasn't stepped away from her. She feels his hands snake around her waist, pulling her closer into him and she feels a soft groan in his chest. Spurred on by the way the groan reverberates in her body, she grinds her hips back into him slightly and instantly feels his hardness. It is big, she is pretty sure it is the biggest she has ever felt, and her motions elicit an even more delectable low
throaty noise to come from him.

"Katniss...I...ooohhhh" his hands clench on her hips and still her motions, stepping back he puts some space in between them.

"Father Innes wouldna approve." His voice is labored as if he is trying to keep himself under control.

"Probably not, but I couldn't help myself", she looks up smirking at him.

"Ye will be the death of me woman" he scolds, but she can see his smile out of the corner of her eye.
Chapter 10

The third Banns were read and the date for the wedding was set for the next week. A few days before the wedding Katniss took some time to go hunting for a deer for the feast, Peeta following her of course. She likes how he leaves her alone, but is still there if she needs him. She does not have to worry if he will be behind her or not, she just knows he will, there is not a doubt in her mind. It feels good to implicitly trust someone and how quickly he has gained that trust is just another sign to her that the decision to marry him, although hasty, is the right one.

After about an hour or so of stalking, Katniss sees a beautiful buck, it’s not the type of deer that she is used too, it’s a red deer and he is magnificent. She easily gets it down with one shot to the eye, the deer takes off before he drops. As she approaches him and goes to slit his throat she says the Wampanoag prayer of thanks that her father taught her. When she stands up she feels Peeta’s presence behind her as she turns to see him a proud smile on her face, she notices his smile mirrors hers.

"I enjoy hunting wi’ ye, mo maise, ye are verra graceful and beautiful to watch. Will we be able to go huntin together in your time?" He asks as he bends down and starts to help her field dress the deer.

"Of course we can, we can go hunting with my father and my tribe, I am sure they would love for you to hunt with us." She watches as Peeta bends down and somehow manages to get the huge buck across the back of his shoulders and stands up as if the buck weighs nothing, which is amazing because she is pretty sure the deer is well over four hundred pounds. They take off walking for the house.

After about 20 minutes of walking Peeta pauses and then takes a deep breath and addresses her "Do ye think, your family will be upset wi’ ye, marrin me without their consent?"

She pauses and takes a moment before answering him, it is something she has thought about, how her parents would react when she comes back married from her trip to Scotland and after being away for almost two years. Taking a deep breath she answers him honestly, "I think they will be shocked at first, they will be confused and it may be that they will be angry initially. But long term, no, I don’t believe they will be angry with you or me. Whom I marry has always been my decision, my parents may question the speed of the marriage, but they will not question my choice in partner. They have never second guessed my decisions when it came to my love life. I will say my father was a little disappointed that things didn't work out with Gale, but when I told him that what I felt for my best friend was more of a brotherly love, he supported my decision."

"My mother on the other hand will be disappointed that she didn't get to plan the wedding, and that they were not present at our wedding, but I have been thinking about that. I think when we get back I would like to plan an informal reception for my friends and family, so everyone can meet you and celebrate with us. Is that OK with you?"

"That sounds wonderful, anything ye want to do mo maise, is fine wi’ me. I want ye to be happy."
"I am and will be happy as long as I have you, my Leòmhann."

The days flowed quickly by and soon Katniss found herself being laced into the wedding dress by Delly. Tradition dictated that the wedding couple travel to the church together and when they arrived, Katniss was greeted by what seemed to be all of Peeta's tenants, his brothers and their families, and several people from Urquhart. As they walked up to the church they were approached by his brother's and the Mellark clan lawyer with their 'marriage contract'. The lawyer went over the contract with her and Katniss was surprised to see several clauses in the contract. The contract was heavily in her favor, in case of dissolution of marriage based on infidelity or if divorce is initiated by Peeta. Katniss gets everything, including his title. Peeta loses everything, when she questioned this clause the lawyer stated that this was a standard clause, put in contracts. It prevents men from straying from the marriage bed and protects the rights of the lawful children and heirs of the marriage. She is a little shocked at this, but Katniss sees the sense in the clause. How many marriages would be still viable and happy, how many affairs would be prevented if there was a negative consequence for destructive behavior.

"I wouldna be worrin about that", her soon to be sister whispers to her, "Peeta is the most faithful man and he loves ye unabashedly, he would never stray."

"Thank you" she replies to Delly, "these types of marriage contracts are not done in my time. It never occurred to me to be worried that Peeta would stray." Looking over she sees him dressed in his dress kilt, a white shirt and a beautiful dark green coat that accents his strong broad chest the color accents one of the colors in his Mellark plaid. A beautiful strip of plaid crosses over one shoulder and across his chest and is pinned with a striking pin that all the men of the Mellark clan are wearing. In short he is devastatingly handsome and Katniss is almost sure that these last few weeks in this country are a dream, there is no way she should get to marry this man in front of her, no way he should be looking at her with that adoring gaze and slight smile on his lips. The looks that say I am yours and you are mine.

The contract is signed by both parties and they enter the church, the ceremony is not much different from the catholic ceremony of today. As she takes his hand and they say their vows a sense of peace settles over her and as she looks up into his eyes and sees joy radiating off of him, Katniss couldn't be happier. The ring is a surprise; it is a beautiful silver band that is etched with a vine that winds around it. When Katniss asked about his ring earlier he had informed her that men don't wear wedding rings. She informed him that men in her time do and that she expects him to wear one when they get to her time. He just smiled at her indulgently, "as you wish mo maise."

What is a little bit of a shock is the blood vow, she knew it was coming, Peeta warned her, told her to repeat after him and that it would be ok. Unfortunately no one bothered to tell her that a blood vow meant actually drawing blood. Donall walked up to alter and Peeta handed him his right arm. As Katniss is watching, Ryan comes up behind her and grabs her right arm and before she can blink Donall had a cut on the inside of Peeta's arm and Ryan puts an identical cut on hers. Peeta reached over and clasps his hand on her upper arm in some adult version of blood brothers. Donall then took a long white linen cloth and bound their wrists together.

Peeta began then to slowly speak in Gaelic his words hold the rhyme and rhythm of a poem. It is beautiful and Katniss is beyond moved, even if she has no idea what they are saying. As Katniss finishes what must be the last stanza, Father Innes smiles at them and finishes the ceremony with "ye may kiss the bride". Katniss watches as Peeta's face leaps into a huge smile and she feels her heart began to thump in anticipation of his lips. And when they land on hers, she does not hold back and neither does he.

A loud ruckus of cheers breaks through the haze of their kiss and she can feel Peeta start to smile
against her mouth, their arms still bound together and their blood mixing, she still has no idea what they said, but she is sure Peeta will tell her later. As their lips part identical grins appear as they rest their foreheads against each other. “Tha gradh agam dhut, mo maise, mo cridhe, M’anam, Mo bhean, aye. I love ye, my beauty, my love, my soul, my wife, always.” His voice is deep and soft reverberating and shoots directly to her soul and it is the most beautiful thing she has ever had anyone say to her.

“And I love you, my leòmhann, and my husband.” At that he sweeps her up into his arms and carries her out of the church bridal style with Katniss laughing the entire way. After a short ride Katniss finds that Dalcross has been transformed for a feast. There are long tables and benches in the courtyard, the place has been swept and wild flowers have been strewn around the place bringing a natural beauty to the scene that she appreciates. This is much better then roses and bouquets and a fancy wedding venue, crosses her mind. Off to the side she sees her buck is being roasted over a spit, it has clearly been there a while as it looks and smells ready to eat, a large pig is also roasting to one side, while several chicken are roasting on the other fires.

The feast is merry, children are running around laughing, a man is playing jigs on a fiddle and the food is abundant and delicious. After Katniss and Peeta have eaten their fill, they begin to walk around and thank the guests for coming. As they are making their rounds little Peeta runs up to her followed by a gaggle of children, some she is able to identify as his cousins, and the others she has no idea who they are. Hugging her legs tightly he starts begging “Lady Katniss, lady Katniss, can ye please sing? My cousins’ dinna believe me and Brian that ye have the voice of an angel.” Looking down at his adorable face and his puppy dog eyes that are so similar to Peeta’s she finds she can’t say no.

“OK, but I don’t have the voice of an angel.” Katniss tells the young boy who starts whooping with joy.

“Aye, ye do, mo maise,” Peeta whispers softly in her ear sending a delicious chill up her spine. “But only one song, wee Peeta, then the lady Dalcross and I need to retire for the evening.” Peeta then grabs wee Peeta in one arm and wee Brian in the other and sits down at the nearest table with them both in his lap and then looks at her expectantly.

Katniss searches her mind for a song, she is tired of hymns and she doesn’t really think they would be fun for a wedding. Most modern songs are a little too risqué, but there is one she had loved to sing before she had been whisked here and thankfully it needed little accompaniment. Sitting down across from Peeta and her nephews she begins to beat out a slow rhythm on the table as the rest of the pack of children settles in around her to listen. Katniss closes her eyes, One, two, One two, the beat echoes in her mind as the words of Ed Sheeran’s beautiful thinking out loud falls from her lips.

When your legs don't work like they used to before

And I can't sweep you off of your feet

Will your mouth still remember the taste of my love

Will your eyes still smile from your cheeks

And darling I will be loving you 'til we're 70

And baby my heart could still fall as hard at 23

And I'm thinking 'bout how people fall in love in mysterious ways
Maybe just the touch of a hand

Oh me I fall in love with you every single day

And I just wanna tell you I am

So honey now

Take me into your loving arms

Kiss me under the light of a thousand stars

Place your head on my beating heart

I'm thinking out loud

Maybe we found love right where we are

Opening her eyes she is instantly met by Peeta’s blue glassy eyes, a smile of contentment on his lips. Looking around she can see the children staring at her with big wondering eyes, mouths quiet.

When my hair's all but gone and my memory fades

And the crowds don't remember my name

When my hands don't play the strings the same way, mm

I know you will still love me the same

’Cause honey your soul can never grow old, it's evergreen

Baby your smile's forever in my mind and memory

Her smile grows as she thinks about loving this man for the rest of her life and how lucky she is to have met him, perhaps it was fate, kismet or god’s will or something of a force beyond her knowledge that brought her here to him. Looking up she can see that Donall and Ryan are now standing behind Peeta listening, their wives and several friends are there as well. Her voice drawing a small crowd as it always does when she sings for people, like her father’s voice does when he sings.

I'm thinking ’bout how people fall in love in mysterious ways

Maybe it's all part of a plan

I'll just keep on making the same mistakes

Hoping that you'll understand

Her eyes close again, enjoying the crescendo of the music, enjoying the way this part of the song builds, allowing her to use the power in her voice.

But baby now

Take me into your loving arms

Kiss me under the light of a thousand stars

Place your head on my beating heart
I'm thinking out loud

That maybe we found love right where we are, oh

So baby now

Take me into your loving arms

Kiss me under the light of a thousand stars

Oh darling, place your head on my beating heart

I'm thinking out loud

That maybe we found love right where we are

Oh maybe we found love right where we are

And we found love right where we are

The last two lines fade to softness and out to nothing, her hands stop beating out the rhythm and her
eyes slowly open while allowing a smile to slowly overtake her face as she looks at her husband and
then down at wee Peeta and Brian grinning broadly in his lap.

“I TOLD YE, I TOLD YE THAT SHE HAD A VOICE OF AN ANGEL!” Wee Peeta yells as he
jumps off his Uncle’s lap and then dives onto one of his cousins, where they both instantly start
wrestling. In a flash all the children are up and running causing a chuckle to run through the adults in
the crowd.

Wee Brian is the last to leave; he jumps off of Peeta’s lap and bounds over into her arms and gives
her a hug and a kiss on the cheek declaring, “I am goin to marry ye Aunt Katniss when my mum
says I can.” Then he is gone his chubby legs flying across the yard after the rest of the kids.

Donall is the next to speak, “my wee brother is right, ye do hava voice like an angel, Mrs. Mellark.”
He then turns to Peeta and states, “It is time for Delly to be helpin your wife get ready. You can have
whiskey with Ryan and I while she gets prepared.”

Delly is instantly at Katniss’s side and grabs her hand and starts leading her toward the house,
“Come sis, let’s get ye ready. The men will take care of Peeta and bring him up to you soon.”

Delly brings/drags her to what must be Peeta’s bedroom, the laird’s room, and begins to help her
remove the wedding dress. There are several layers and laces and knots and Katniss has no idea even
how to even instruct someone how to take this dress off. Finally Delly has most of the dress off, the
corset and petticoat are still on over her shift, which is really just a long shirt and is supposed to pass
for underthings.

Just as Delly is finishing up with releasing her hair from the complicated pinned up braid it had been
styled in for the wedding the door bursts open and a very red-faced Peeta is pushed into the chamber
followed by his brother Donall. Peeta no longer has his coat and plaid sash on, all he is wearing is his
shirt, kilt, belt, and socks, but his hand does have a glass with what looks to be whiskey that he is
nervously nursing as he stands there and looks at her.

“Get on wi it, ye wee gommeral, I wanna get back to my wife.” Donnal gives his brother a nudge on
his shoulder moving him closer to Katniss.
At this her eyes grow wide as she realizes that neither Donall nor Delly seem to be leaving, but have walked to the edge of the room and are standing…waiting…by the door.

“Wh…what…are you staying to watch?” she is horrified and her terrified gaze instantly goes to Peeta’s nervous eyes asking for an explanation, but it is Donall that speaks.

“Aye, witnesses for the consummation so that no one can contest the marriage or get it annulled. Usually Ryan is the witness with me or someone from the other clan, but Peeta thought ye would be more comfortable with Delly.”

“Oh dear god, you aren’t joking…Peeta tell me this is a joke.” She looks at him desperately hoping that this is a joke, but something in her heart tells her it is not.

When his hand goes to the back of his neck and begins to rub, she knows this isn’t a joke, and as Peeta’s face gets more red as if that were even possible, he begins to stutter at her, “Aye…well…ye don’t have…ummmm…witnesses…then…ummm?”

“NO” she forcefully gets out between gritted teeth.

“Then how do ye certify the consummation?” she turns when she hears Donall’s question, her eyes ablaze. She has been waiting, dreaming of this moment, every night since Peeta asked her to marry him, well before that even, and these people intend to watch?

“You believe the couple.” She grits out.

Donall looks at her thoughtfully, skeptically, “Aye, we’el I willna be havin the laird of Dalcross’s marriage being contested or annulled based on non-consummation. But I can respect your traditions. Delly and I will be right outside the door, to give ye time to get to it. But as head of clan Mellark, I will no overlook this detail, Delly and I will be witnesses, even if for a moment. This is the best I can do.” He looks at her sternly while Peeta just stands there red-faced sipping the whiskey.

“Fine” Katniss looks at Donall her tone stern and her scowl is magnificent, “But then you leave us alone, there will be no more need for ‘witnessing’.”

“I dinna like to witness, my lady, there will be no more witnessing after tonight. Peeta, you call me when ready.” Then Donall gave her a stern look and he and Delly step out of the room leaving the door cracked and her alone with a very anxious and chagrinned Peeta.

“You didn’t tell me about this part of the consummation”, she sternly says as she crosses her arms and scowls at him.

“Ahhh…I didna think…I needed to…” he stutters looking more and more like a chastised child by the second. “we are…I mean…ye still…uhh…ye will let me…I no want an annulment, mo maise.” He blurts at her eyes going glassy as if he is going to cry.

Her heart melts a little at this so she moves to him, her arms going around his neck. “I don’t want an annulment either; I am just a little shocked that is all. And yes I am still going to let you…” she watches as any tears that had started to gather in his eyes disappear and a wide smile appears on his face. “But here is what is going to happen”, she begins to explain as she takes his glass from his hands and sets it down while leading him over to the end of the bed, then she leans up towards his ear and softly finishes her statement. “We are going to consummate now without a lot of extras, then when the witnesses have gone, I plan to make love to you. Then after that, I plan to fuck you until we both pass out from exhaustion.”

She watches as Peeta’s eyes grow wide in disbelief and then quickly darken in arousal. He then
looks down and takes in her state of undress and almost begs her, “mo maise, help me get the rest of this clothing off ye, now.”

Their hands both scrabble at the laces of her corset, once loosened she turns and his hands fumble quickly at the knot of her petticoat and then the hip pads. Suddenly the clothing is on the floor and she is only in her shift. Turning back around she begins to help him remove his belt, which drops noisily to the floor and then she works on the buckles of his kilt, while he loosens the ties at the neck and wrist of his shirt. As soon as the kilt hits the ground Peeta’s mouth is on hers in a desperate searing kiss, one that betrays his eagerness and nerves, but still manages to almost make her forget that there are people who expect to watch this. His hands are at the tie around her neck that holds her shift up and he has it loosened in seconds. Pulling back he looks at her in awe and a hand tugs the shift over one shoulder exposing one of her breasts to him causing a low pained groan to fall from his mouth. His lips are back on hers and the heat and fire just in his kiss is so intense, her body quickly responds, seeping for him. She runs her hands from his neck over his broad shoulders, down his muscled chest and abs, allowing one to go back and grab his perky ass, while the other finds his throbbing member.

A groan starts low in his chest and reverberates into her as she wraps her small hand around his member, she can tell he’s thick, and as she moves her hand up and down she is pretty sure he is long too. A magnum for sure, Katniss thanks god that she is not a virgin with Peeta, it would be painful, but now she just salivates at the thought of him inside her. Suddenly he pulls her hand away from him and his hands start urgently pulling up her shift up to her hips, then his hands are on her ass, she is lifted into the air and then thrown back onto the bed. He is still in his shirt and she in her shift, but she can see the desperation in his eyes as he crawls up between her legs and over her that he cannot wait anymore.

Peeta suddenly stops his eyes wild, feral and swings his head toward the door which is still just cracked open and chokes out a desperate “Donall” his voice cracking. Not waiting to see if his brother or sister actually open the door his head swings back to look at her. His mouth smashes against hers kissing her desperately, wet, sloppy and full of so much desperation and enthusiasm. She can feel one elbow near her head as he tries to keep weight off of her, while the other is between them pulling up her shift and his shirt, so there is nothing in the way. Peeta is up on his knees slightly and she feels his hand touch between her legs gently feeling around, looking and when he finds her wet slit, she hears him moan. Desperately he grabs his cock and uses his hand to find her entrance, normally Katniss would help, but he has her pinned with his weight and it is clear he wants to do this and she won’t embarrass him or upset his brother by exposing her experience.

And as he finds her wet and waiting he enters quickly with a desperate cry of pleasure. Katniss squeaks in surprised at being so suddenly filled, and god is he big, she is more full then she has ever been. His moves are desperate, awkward but full of a joy and passion Katniss has never been privy too. Peeta’s uncoordinated pounding into her feels good, so good inside her body, and he keeps hitting that spot that feels so very good. His animalistic groans and grunts are loud and feed her pleasure. Suddenly his thrusts become more powerful and erratic as he calls out “Katniss…Katniss…Kaaataaatiiss” then his body stills in pleasure above her as she feels him cumming inside her. Looking up at him his eyes are scrunched closed and his mouth hanging open in abject pleasure and it is the most beautiful orgasmic face she has ever seen.

His breath heaving, he collapses on top of her and they both hear the door shut loudly. Their heads both turn to look toward the noise and see that they are completely alone, moments later a loud undulating war cry is heard both in a male and female voice which is followed by a loud burst of hooting and hollering. At that Katniss turns back to Peeta, grinning up at him she breaks the silence in the room,” so I guess they announced the consummation?”
Beaming down at her, still breathing heavily, his wild curls sticking out every which way and to his forehead, still inside her “Aye, no one can contest the marriage now, ye are stuck wi me, mo maise.”

“I guess I can live with that, except that you’re smashing me.” Katniss lets out a sigh of relief as Peeta pulls out and rolls off to the side of her. She feels him grab her and pull her to him, soon they are face to face both on their sides, nose to nose Peeta kisses her softly on her lips.

"Did ye enjoy it, M’anam?” his question is soft, and she can tell he is concerned about her.

"Yes, I did very much." she waits a beat or two then asks, "did you, did you like it? Was it what you thought it would be?"

Peeta sighs and groans at the same time causing wonderful things to happen to her insides, soon, she tells herself, soon this man will give you the orgasm of your life. He just needed to figure it out first and we needed to get the other people out of the room. "It felt like nothing I have imagined, being inside ye, so soft and warm, squeezing me so tight. Hearing your noises and feeling your body. No, it was nothing like I imagined. I couldna imagine it to be this wonderful.” He pauses and looks at her, "but I feel like it shoulda lasted...longer maybe? Was I doin it right?” He bites his lower lip and looks up at her through his long golden lashes.

The look he is giving her is making her squirm with need, he is so sexy and he does it without being conscious of what he is doing. "There is not one way to do it, correctly. And it will last longer with more experience and practice. There are sometimes when it will be fast and quick, other times when it will be languorous and last forever and there will be times when it will be intense and hard alternating with a slower easier pace for a long period of time. We control the pace, mood, depth and strength of penetration and position.” she looks at him as her body begins to respond to the way he listens to her, taking in everything she has to say as if it is the most important thing in the world. Although his eyebrows crinkling together in confusion at her last statement.

"Position?” he asks her, "ye mean there is another one then what we just did?"

His innocence is a huge turn on to her; Katniss never thought she would find herself in a situation where she was more experienced sexually then her lover. Katniss was timid in her youth when it came to sex and it took all of that first summer after her freshman year at Harvard for Gale to convince her to have sex. It had been OK and had hurt a fair amount. Later on she learned that Gale had not really taken the time to get her appropriately prepared for him. She had been too dry, to tense, and in reality he had focused more on his goal of taking her virginity and getting off then he did on preparing her, even though it was in no way his first time. She hadn't known this at the time and thought the pain was normal and her subsequent reluctance to be sexually intimate with anyone for a long time puzzled her friends Jo and Madge. During a 'girl’s night in’ evening where the three girls had indulged on two bottles of wine, Jo got her talking and managed to pry the story from her. Horrified, Jo and Madge then proceeded to set her straight. That was not normal, it will not always feel that way, and then continued to give her advice.

"Oh there are several, but we can just start with one or two tonight.” she watches as his eyes darken with lust again at her words. Getting up she walks quickly to the door and then checks to see if anyone is outside. Closing it she drags a chair over and wedges it under the door knob. Turning back to face the bed she reaches down and pulls the shift over her head exposing her naked body to Peeta for the first time.
Chapter 11

A/N: Sorry for the wait lot of crazy things going on in my life. I hope to update more often for you all. At least every other week until this is done.

Chapter eleven

His eagerness had him scrambling across the bed and in front of her before she could blink; his powerful frame inches from her, but not touching her. Katniss could sense his hesitancy to just grab her, and for now that was fine, she wanted to explore him first anyway.

“Take off your shirt; I want to discover my husband’s body.” And again he complies instantly with her demands, exposing his delectable pale skin and muscles to her. “First I am going to take my time getting to know your body, where you like to be touched by my hands and by my mouth.” She instructs as her hands ran over the broad frame of his magnificent chest. “Then, I expect you to do the same to me.” Her hands run down his sides then grab onto his perfect ass as she peaks around to get a good look at it without clothes. Peeta starts moaning as she kneads the flesh and she watches in delight as his eyes begin to roll up in the back of his head. “Now, we are going to make love, with long slow strokes, until we both cum crying out in pleasure.” His eyes flash open and a shaky gasp falls from his lips as she moves her hands around his hips and rest on his cock standing proud once again.

At that her eyes leave his and she starts to explore starting with his face, kissing his strong jaw, sucking down his neck and licking his Adams apple. Her hands then began to caress his shoulders, touching and outlining the defined muscles. Working her way down his chest with her hands and lips she discovers spots that make him moan and quiver, when she gets to his abdomen, Katniss spends some time getting to know a perfect six pack and this wonderfully appetizing v in his hips and this soft reddish blonde line of hair that leads down to her prize.

Moving around to his back, she then does the same thing starting from the nape of his neck and working her way down to his ass. His ass is as fine naked as it is clothed, his ass would look perfect hugged in jeans, she muses. Kneeling down she takes her time teasing him by exploring his muscular quads and calves that just speak to power. Making her way around his body to the front she then slowly starts to ascend up his legs and finally comes to his cock. And it is marvelous, long and thick, definitely the largest she has ever had or even seen. He is uncircumcised, that was to be expected for the time, but he is clean. Katniss takes him in hand and looked up to see Peeta staring down at her with a mixture of awe, adoration, love and a bit of trepidation on his face. While staring in his eyes she takes a long lick up the underside along the vein and finishes at the weeping slit. His mouth drops open, a deep groan escapes and she can feel his legs tremble and she briefly wonders if she can make his legs collapse with just her tongue and lips on him.

“Katniss… A Dhia… Katniss…mo…mo…mo…m…maise” drops from his lips in a wonderful husky tone as she wraps her lips around him and takes him in and out several times while sucking, taking him in as far as she can, her hand squeezing what she cannot fit. Releasing him with a pop she looks up at his pleasure tortured face with what she is sure is an extremely smug grin on her face.

“Ye canna…do… that…torture” he huffs out at her as she slowly stands up to face him.

“I can and will do that anytime I want”, she states confidently, “you belong to me. If I want you to fuck my mouth, then I hope you will do that, because you are so very delicious.” Her sudden confidence is shocking to her; it must be this man in front of her. He has her thinking of doing all sorts of sinful things she never wanted to do before, in fact giving blow jobs was something she
always considered more of a chore then an enjoyable act. But with Peeta she wants to suck him off, her mouth is practically salivating for him.

“Is it my turn, now?” Peeta asked as his gaze hungrily swept over her naked body and when she nodded her head in assent he groans and leans in to kiss her. “Your body is mine,” his possessive whisper send chill down her spine as his kisses begin to caress her cheek and neck. He thoroughly tastes and tests her skin, one hand wrapped in her hair holding the back of her neck and the other slowly rubbing up and down her arm. Katniss notices that every time he finds one of her sensitive spots he goes back to it, testing as if to make sure of what he found. As he moves across her collar bone in a long lick his hand brushes up to her breast and cups it in his hand.

“Perfect, I ken it would fit in my hand, ye are made for me, mo maise.” His words and gentle kneading cause a fresh wave of wetness between her legs. Peeta’s plump lips suddenly wrap around a nipple and her knees to weaken and buckle slightly. His hand that is behind her head is suddenly around her waist helping to keep her upright. “Please tell me…tell me what ye like.” He quietly pleads while his lips are against her nipple sucking gently.

“You can suck…a…little…harder.” She pants at him, moaning with pleasure when he does.

“Like that?” his eyes lift to hers as his mouth drags across her skin to capture her other nipple into his warm mouth.

“Oh god, yes like that,” she manages to get out as the heat begins pooling in her belly as his lips slowly descend down her stomach and his tongue swirls into her bellybutton erotically.

“I have been thinking of doin many a thing to ye, since the day I first saw ye.” He straightens up and moves to her back and gathering her long hair to one side, he begins a long slow exploration of her back with his lips, while one hand wraps around her and kneads her breasts, one mound then the other. As he makes her way down onto his knees to her ass, he stop and she hears him sigh, “perfect,” before attacking it with his lips, licking and kissing as if he wants to eat her alive.

Finally, his large hands wrap around her hips and he gently turns her so that she is facing him, looking down she sees that his head reaches her breasts and he is looking at her with such lust it almost takes her breath away. Then his lips are on her skin again and he is working his way down to the promised land, but when he gets there he pauses slightly and she can hear him inhale her scent.

“Ye smell like me and you combined, so warm and wonderful.” He buries his nose in her hair nuzzling her like a horse and he catches her clit with his nose causing fire to burn in her veins and gasps to escape her throat. Stopping suddenly he tilts his head back to peer up at her, unsure of what he has discovered and then he continues to look up her as he rubs his nose back into her hitting her clit over and over. Mewling in response, she rubs her hips closer as she feels him smile, clearly pleased with what he has discovered.

As he continues to shake his head his nose stimulating her clit she feels herself building and she begins to weep desire. Trying to get closer, closer, oh god just get closer, grabbing his hair in her hands she lifts her left leg over his right shoulder and uses her calf to pull him closer. Discovering her heat open to him he takes a tentative lick tasting her while still nuzzling her clit. “Ohhh” and she is crying out because she is close, so close, “do that again…don’t stop…fuck…don’t…stop.”

Immediately his tongue begins lapping her pussy in earnest while his nose is stimulating her clit. “It’s coming, oh fuck, Peeta, fuck. I’m cumming, ohhhhhhhh,” crying out in ecstasy as the dam bursts and weeks of pent up sexual tension release in a body wracking orgasm. Fire spreads out through her body as she stiffens and spasms under his tongue. The only thing holding her up is him. As she comes down from her exquisite high she sees him looking up at her in awe and confusion.
Trembling she lowers her leg from his shoulder and tugs on his hair to get him to stand and as he reaches her mouth she pulls him in for a heated kiss, because dear god she is going to get another orgasm out of this as she slowly walks him backward to the bed.

“Are ye…are ye hurt?” he asks when she releases his lips to lowers herself to the bed and crawls back on it.

“Hurt? Oh god no, that was perfect.” She purrs at him as she crooks her finger for him to follow her. She giggles lightly as he eagerly crawls up after her almost panting in anticipation. Grabbing his erection she runs his hands up and down a few times as she guides him back to her heat. “Slowly” she breathes the word into his ear as he enters her, quickly at first, but deliberately slowing at her command. Reaching up for a kiss, she wraps her legs around his back and hooks her ankles together to help guide his movements. “All the way out, all the way in” she softly chants in his mouth as she stares in his beautiful blue eyes. She watches as understanding blossoms in his eyes and he starts to take control of the rhythm and depth, he settles onto his forearms on either side of her head. He settles into long slow strokes and slowly begins to kiss her, plundering her mouth with his tongue in sync with his cock. At the end of each stroke she tilts her pelvis slightly causing him to hit that spot deep inside her that will make her see stars. “Yes…oh…yes…ughhh” fall from her lips every time he hits that spot, his brow is crinkled in concentration and she can tell he is trying to feel and understand her body. Every stroke brings her closer to the edge, he continues to hit that spot and his hard pelvis bone rubs against her clit on every stroke. She is spiraling closer and closer to her edge again. Crying out “Peeetaaaaah” as she is driven into ecstasy again she sees stars as she feels his pace falter while her inside grip him in spasms.

Forcing her eyes open she sees him staring down at her in incredulity her insides still quaking as the aftershocks rock through her body, he has stilled above her feeling the full effects of her orgasm as her legs have pulled him into her body. Relaxing her legs she starts to encourage him to move again, still staring at her he starts moving his hips again, faster and harder. Grunting and hammering he quickly works his way to his finish in a flurry of hard thrusts and shouts as she feels him spurt inside her as his eyes clamp shut, then he collapses on her again.

This time mindful of crushing her he quickly rolls off her body and gathers her into his arms, panting and peppering her face with light sloppy kisses as they both catch their breath.

“Mo maise, will ye tell me what happened to ye?” she opens her eyes to see a puzzled look on a very satisfied, very happy face.

“You mean my orgasm?” she asks and when she sees his forehead crinkle and a he gives a confused nod she continues. “You know how when you finish and your body explodes with feeling?”

“Aye, when I put my seed in ye.” She smiles at his statement and nods yes then continues, “Women have a similar thing happen but without the seed, a feeling builds, pleasurable pressure until it bursts like broken dam and fire shoots throughout your body and my muscles spasm clenching you inside me.” A slow lazy smile spreads out over his face and she can see the male pride seeping from his pores.

“Does it happen every time you are bedded by a man?”

“If the man is a very good lover, but you don’t have to have your cock in me for that to happen. Like when your nose and tongue were nuzzling and lapping at me, it happened then. Also it can happen to women many times, we don’t need to….ahhh…reload like men."

“So, if I practice a lot, I get to watch ye and feel ye do that over and over?” This time his question has a mischievous lilt to his voice, he knows the answer to his question.
“Of, course, only rules are that I am the only one you can practice with. I expect faithfulness in our marriage.” He nods seriously at that statement, “and that you plan on giving me many, many orgasms for the rest of our lives.”

“I dinna ken about bein marrit in your time, but in mine ye are faithful. Of course there are some fools that amn’, my uncle Ewan is one such fool, and some that are mean to their wives. But I love ye, and will be faithful to ye, just as I promised to God I would.” She catches his lips and he leans over and kisses her softly and earnestly. “I am startin to understand what ye said about controlling the way I bed ye. I could feel my love move from me to ye through my body, I thought my heart would burst wi’ feelin for ye.”

His hands tangle and play with her hair as they talk quietly, Peeta telling her how much he loves her, how quickly he fell in love with her, why he loves her and how he loves her more every day. She tells him all the things she loves about him and how she fought falling in love with him, because she thought they couldn't be together. Then Peeta is kissing her again, her tongue exploring his mouth and his hand is on her breast. It is amazing to her how quickly he turns her on, gets her wet, how much she wants him. She has never been one to go more than twice in an evening, unless her boyfriend initiated it, but here she is horny as hell just from kissing this man. Shifting Katniss pushes him onto his back and is straddling him before he can even protest. He is hard already so very hard, so she grabs his erection, guides him to her entrance and sinks down on him with a grunt. Peeta's face shows complete astonishment as he looks up at her, like he is unsure what to do, his hands land on her hips. Using his chest as leverage she plants her hands right on his pecks and starts to move, and when she swivels her hips against his Peeta emits a spectacular moan. His eyes dance between her face, her breasts (which are bouncing from her movement) and to where they are joined. It is like his senses are on overload and he is not sure what to do or where to look. Katniss likes being on top, she is in charge of her pleasure, her ex, Edmond, liked it too; he liked her doing the work.

Straightening up, she starts rocking against him and her hands go to her breasts and begin to knead and play with her nipples, after a few moments Peeta is knocking her hands away and taking over as his hips start surging up, pushing his cock further into her while she rides him. Clearly Peeta will not just sit back, but enthusiastically participates as much as possible, maybe that is because they are in love, maybe it is because he was a virgin, but whatever the reason that makes him respond so enthusiastically is fine with her. "Mine" he says to her as he mimics how she was touching herself. It feels good, so good as she rides him and he fills her to the hilt stretching her in ways she didn't know where possible. As she feels her orgasm build, she snakes her hand down and starts to rub her clit, "feels so gooooood" she manages to moan her head thrown back and her eyes shut as her ecstasy builds. Then her hand is being knocked away from her clit and she feels Peeta's hand clumsily rubbing her as he chokes out, "show me". Taking her hand and placing it over his, she guides his fingers to right where she wants them, right over that nub and shows him the rhythm she likes. Soon he takes over completely and growls out that one word again, "mine".

Suddenly she is over the edge and the force of her orgasm causes her to cry out in pleasure, there are no words to form as she continues to writhe over him, her body contracting over and over. Looking down she can see him staring at her intently at her as if he is trying to figure her out, memorizing what makes her tick, or in this case cum. It isn't but seconds later that his hands are on her waist pulling her down as he starts to drive harder and faster up into her, crying out as he empties himself for a third time into her.

Peeta pulls her down, hugging her to him as he recovers his breathing. "Ye just taught me a second position, aye? I like it, watching ye move on top of me. I get to watch your breasts bounce and your beautiful face and I like watchin myself move inside ye." Peeta moves and adjusts her so that her head is on his chest and his strong arms are around her, their legs tangled together. She can feel his cum start to leak out of her. I should get up and clean myself, but I don't want to move, are the last
things she thinks before she falls asleep to his steady breathing and the thumping of his heart.
Chapter 12

Sometime during the night or perhaps early morning Katniss wakes to find Peeta hovering over her, before she can fully wake up he is kissing her. “I woke up and I want ye, can I have ye?”

“Yes” she sighs as his lips descend down on her neck and slowly make their way down her body. He stops for a while and worships her breasts for a while before continuing down. Finally settling down between her legs, his nose nuzzles in and she can feel and hear him take a long inhale. Looking down she can see his eyes sparkle with mischief as they catch hers, “mine” he whispers as she watches as his thumbs spread her apart and his tongue take a long confident lick. A sigh escapes her lips and with a smile watches as her husband takes his lesson from earlier and learns how to completely devour her.

Chest heaving, she observes the satisfied smirk on his face as he climbs up and over her. Leaning down he kisses her tenderly on the nose and enters her in one swift motion. It is fast and hard, Peeta cum deep inside her with a cry of her name from his lips still glistening from his midnight snack. “Good night, Mo bhean.”

The next time Katniss awoke it was to sunbeams dancing across her face and bare skin, looking over she sees Peeta beside her deep in slumber with a soft smile on his lips. The light making his blonde hair shine while the red in the stubble on his chin glow. She chuckles thinking to herself that he is the perfect mixture of the two, the angel in his blonde hair and innocent blue eyes and the devil in the red beard and sinful physique. Rolling over she pads over to the window and looks out onto the courtyard below and sees the morning hustle and bustle starting to erase the remnants of last night festivities. It is July 1st, which means her wedding was on June 30th, Peeta thought the next full moon was July 12th. It would take 4 days to travel there and he thought it would be prudent to leave a day early, so they are planning to leave on the 7th. Seven days from now and if she is being honest with herself she already misses his family.

“Morning Wife” the deep voice still gravely with sleep greets her as his arms slip around her shoulders holding her close to his naked body, then he produces a necklace with a single large pearl hanging from the center. He places it around her neck, “for ye, it was my mother’s now it belongs to my wife.”

“It is beautiful Peeta, Thank you.” Sinking back into his embrace and warmth, she feels his hardness poking her from behind. Cocking her head back and to the side she eyes his sleepy lids and bed head hair, teasing him by wiggling her bottom and saying in a faux shocked tone, “again my lord”? “Aye, again and always wi’ ye mo maise, but it better be quick before we’re roused for breakfast and the farewells of my brothers.” Suddenly she is swept up into his arms bridal style, thrown on the bed and mounted with a moan. As if he was a fortune teller, the door knob jiggles and wee Peeta is yelling “Uncle Peeta, Uncle Donall says to come down stairs. Looking at her with a smirk on his face he continues his thrusting, picking up the pace a bit. “Aye…We’el be …down… in…a…bit” he manages to get out as he is midway to giving her a morning orgasm.

“Ye clean up; I’ll send Delly up to help ye dress.” He is smiling down at her as he finishes dressing, “if ye can walk mo maise.” She scowls as he starts to make his way out of the room guffawing as he goes.
After Delly helps Katniss dress for the day she comes down to see her husband with wee Brian on his lap eating breakfast with his brothers. She is a deliciously sore from their activities of the night/morning and she hopes it doesn’t show too much in the way she is walking. Ryan and Donall look up when she enters the room both of them sporting grins that are way too devious for her comfort. Uncomfortable under their knowing gazes she makes her way over to the table and gingerly sits down and starts to heap her plate with food. Ryan opens his mouth and sucks in a big breath, but before he can say anything Peeta speaks.

“I wouldn’a say anything Ryan, my wife doesna like to be teased. She is the best tracker I have ever met and she took down that stag wi’ one arrow, then slit the throat and gutted it wi’ me.” And after flashing his lion like grin he goes back to shoveling food into his mouth.

Donall and Ryan did get some good natured ribbing in at Peeta’s expense, but they left Katniss alone. They did take a long time with their goodbyes, and when Donall hugged Katniss good bye he asked her to take care of his wee Peeta for him.

The next seven days go quickly with Delly insisting that she paint their wedding portrait, so they have to pose for her for a few hours a day. Peeta is seated on a chair in the formal parlor, while Katniss stands behind him, her pearl around her throat. The painting is beautiful although unfinished when the leave. The days have Peeta taking the time to tie up loose ends on his estate. Additionally, he makes sure to show Katniss his entire estate. During a trip to the stable she discovers something that she never noticed before. Apparently real Highlanders go commando under their kilts, and when she asked Peeta about undergarments he looked at her in disbelief.

“Wouldna that constrict a man’s mmmmpphhhh?” he gestures his hands towards his crotch in explanation of the grunt.

“Oh well, I don’t know? I don’t have one.” She smirks at him.

“No, no ye don’t mo maise. I like ye fine wi’ what ye have.” He replies as he gives her a kiss, that quickly turns heated, and soon he is pulling up her skirts while pushing her towards the hay. Pushing on his chest Katniss steps away and walks over to a half stall, turning her back to him she reaches down and pulls her skirts up to her waist and bends over the stall. Looking back she gives him a coy smile and wiggles her ass at him, and declares “position three”.

He is behind her in two giant steps his hands cupping the curves of her backside, and somehow manages to grunt out “like a horse”? As he flips up the front of his kilt, feels for her pussy and groaning when he finds it wet. This time he slowly enters her, allowing her to savor every inch of him. He is gentle and slow as his hands find their way to her breasts and then one slips under her skirts and makes her cum hard while rubbing her clit, before figuring out how to take her hard by holding her hips.

After that Peeta finds many opportunities to have her during the day in a multitude of places, the stable, the meadow, by the lake. And Katniss finds that she rather liked the easy access a kilt in combination with her wearing a skirt gives them. She vows to buy more skirts when she gets back to her time; Peeta has already expressed a desire to continue wearing a kilt over pants whenever possible.

On the third day as they lie panting behind a haystack, their sweat cooling in the breeze, Peeta turns and asks her a question. “Do you think ye are wi’child, mo maise?”

“Oh, ummm no…I guess we haven’t discussed this yet, beyond wanting children. You know that little white pill I take every morning?” He nods in assent and looks at her curiously; she takes a deep breath and continues. “That is a birth control pill, it prevents me from getting pregnant if I take it
daily, and it is also useful in regulating my monthly bleeding. My mom put me on it when I was sixteen; I would get horrible cramps and mood swings. Plus I think she was wary of my relationship with my best friend, Gale. He is two years older and she knew he was attracted to me and to be honest he had a little bit of a reputation as a ladies man. I had no idea he felt that way, it hadn’t crossed my mind, to care for him as other than a brother or best friend. But my mother was cautious, she knew I had big plans academically and an accidental baby would derail that.”

“So no there is very little chance I am pregnant, plus it is not my fertile time of the month. After we get back and settle you into my life and decide we are ready then I will be happy to get off the pill and try for a baby.”

“Many wee bairns?” he looks at her hopefully, “a wee Katniss, a wee Peeta and more?”

“At least two, we will negotiate for more.”

“Mmmppphh”, he grunts as he settles her into his arms, “I want many wee bairns wi’ ye, my wife.” Looking down at her with that face splitting grin he then goes in to kiss her and they end up practicing behind the hay some more.

Their last night at Dalcross found them packing up a trunk, Peeta put things in it he wanted to have that they couldn’t carry with them. Locking it and putting the iron key in his sporran, he hoped that the trunk would make through 270 years and back to him. Wee Peeta, to whom Delly had explained where they were going, looked at them and stated very seriously, “Dinna fash Uncle Peeta, I will tell my son to never touch your trunk.”

The morning had Delly in tears, which Katniss expected, but what she hadn’t expected was that her eyes would water when faced with saying good bye to her sister in-law. Katniss was never one to show emotions, Madge has always said that she had a blank face that could rival a poker master. It was watching the goodbye between Peeta and Delly that had the tears leaking from her eyes; discreetly she wipes them on her sleeve before schooling her face back to its regular scowling self.

Machar Mellark rides with them, the ride is long; and it is good to have another person with them to take care of things like hunting, scouting and firewood. Although it does cut into their privacy, Peeta and she find plenty of opportunity to be alone to make love. Sometimes he takes her into a wooded glen when they stop for lunch, or off behind some trees mid-morning, and every night he takes her in the tent.

The first night they were on the road and Peeta crawled into the tent with her not hiding his amorous mood, she scolded him in a hushed voice. “The tent isn’t a private room; we can’t do this with Machar right outside.”

“We’el ye just havta be quiet, because I aim to bed ye, wife.” And when his hands pinched her nipples under her shift she forgot the reasons why she didn’t want to make love to him and instead rode him hard. She didn’t object again.

Since their first night together Peeta has become increasingly dominant, not in a bad way, but in a way that turns her on, he more and more frequently takes the lead in their sexual encounters. Although the product of a patriarchal society, Peeta is clearly progressive when it comes to how he treats women how he sees her as his partner. His one nod to the times he has been raised in, shows in his possessiveness of her, she is his wife, “mine” he likes to say. It shows in the way he glowers at men who take too keen an interest in her. He calls her Mo bhean, my wife, as much as he calls her mo mais. It is the way he does it that is such a turn on, Katniss has free reign, but god help a man that would hurt or hit on her. He indulges her, but he possesses her body frequently, he worships it, always making sure she has pleasure first if he can. He is a generous lover to her and even though
Katniss has never been one to be a fan of possessive behavior in past boyfriends, when Peeta does it she finds it endearing.

They finally arrive at Craig na dun in the late afternoon of the eleventh, Machar helps them make camp and spends the night. In the morning he and Peeta say their goodbyes before he heads off back to Mellark lands bringing their horses with him. They spend the day hunting, talking and making love.

As the sun sets they pack up camp. They sit and enjoy a freshly killed rabbit over the fire and Peeta lifts her skirts and makes love to her, long and slow while staring into her eyes, all his love and emotion pouring from his body to hers, making her come twice before he releases. “If I do no make it wi’ ye, I wanna remember ye this way. Tha gradh agam dhut, mo maise, mo cridhe, M’anam, Mo bhean, aye. I love ye, my beauty, my love, my soul, my wife, always.” Quietly reciting to her what he told her at their wedding.

As the moon rises higher in the sky she can hear and feel the rocks come to life. Looking over at him she sees the red gold hair on his body rise in response, she knows he can hear and feel it too. Her backpack goes on her shoulders and she belts it securely. And she helps him secure his blanket that he has bundled with items to his back with a rope that they brought, his claymore on his back and his dirk at his side. He turns her into him and removes his long plaid wrap that has been over his shoulder. Peeta takes it and wraps it around her waist and then his, once, twice and then ties it tight, securely binding them together. He takes his clan pin and fastens it to her dress over her heart.

“I willna lose ye.” It’s a soft statement, but she can feel the power and conviction in his voice. His right arm snakes around her waist and grabs her holding her close; her left hand mimics this action. Her right and then his left hands twin their fingers together and he looks at her the singing getting stronger beginning to penetrate her body, her soul. Then she begins to sing in the language of her ancestors, she sings of her mother, of her father, of her sister. She sings of home, of her love for her husband. Her singing begins to resonate with the stones, the noise and rush in her ears overcoming her emotions, but she doesn’t stop singing of her family and home. Her eyes are closed and her face turned up to the sky she feels Peeta place his head in the crook of her neck as he tries to get even closer to her almost as if he is trying to make their bodies one. The roaring and rushing begins to overtake her senses, ripping apart her insides as she takes their joined hands and reaches out and touches the stone.

Sir, your lawyer is on the phone for you?”

Peter Gorden looks up from the papers her was reviewing on his desk at his secretary who has stepped briefly into his study. Looking over at the clock he can see how late it is, but he has been waiting for this call.

“Thank you, Lucas, you can go home now.” With a sigh he picks up the phone and greets his families’ long time lawyer and uncle. “Uncle Brian, how was your trip?”

“Exhausting Peter, I am getting to old to go flying everywhere for the family business. I want to retire like your father just did, or at least semi-retire. When will your younger brother, Donall be done with law school?”

“He has one more year, Uncle, and then I need you to train him please, before you go leaving this newbie with another newbie to run the family business.” He chuckles a bit, “I just took this position over last year, and Da is still coming in every day.”
“We’el we don’t want ye to ruin what eight generations of Gorden’s have built.” He can hear his Uncle chuckling on the other end and can picture his whitening strawberry blonde hair and merry blue eyes twinkling.

“What about the next generation? Did you find what ye needed to verify our papers?” Peter sighs into the phone, he is tired and he wants to go to bed. Taking over as the head of the family business is exhausting; it is the most profitable and well run private business in Scotland. His family has persevered and flourished over hundreds of years, due to unparalleled foresight and solid investing. Currently, his Uncle is all the way in America and the time zones are different.

“Aye, bonny baby girl, born yesterday, May the eighth, 1988 at Mass General, the parents, Lilly and James Everdeen are ecstatic.”

“Good, good when is your flight home? We have some paperwork to put in motion here.” Peter sighs as he reaches down and unlocks the bottom drawer of his ancient desk and extracts the fragile documents.

“Wednesday, I have to meet with the lawyers in our Boston office here and make sure everything is running smoothly on the US side of operations.”

“Good, why don’t ye come over for dinner Friday night, Elizabeth will be wanting to see you, and we can discuss our business over some whiskey.”

“Aye, get out the 1853 bottle and I will be there. See ye soon laddie.”

Peter hears the phone click at his Uncle Brian’s farewell and he gently sets the phone in its cradle. Peter looks over the old documents that are carefully preserved in plastic. After putting them down, he starts to peruse a time worn text, his family’s guide through the ages. A book that hasn’t been published yet, that hasn’t been written yet, by a tenured Cambridge professor who will not receive his PhD for another two years. Leaning back in his chair he runs his hands through his hair, mussing his curls and end with scratching the back of his neck, a habit his father passed down to him. Glancing up he scans the study his eyes viewing the accumulated art and items a family accumulates over time. His eyes come to rest on a well-preserved portrait, one of the most prized pieces in the Gorden collection. The wedding portrait of his many time great Uncle, his intense blue eyes staring down at him, familiar in that identical ones have been staring back at him all his life when he looks at his, father and uncle, his brother and when he looks at himself in the mirror. His wife, exotic and beautiful stands behind him, her eyes a pool of liquid mercury. Directly below the portrait sits a trunk, old, weathered, beautiful and locked; the key having been taken 245 years ago. It is only a matter of waiting, he muses to himself, and the first event was verified this evening, now it will just be a matter of time.

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“Hey…hey, wake up” the words move from her subconscious to her conscious as she feels someone shaking her shoulder. Prying her eyelids open she is met with bright sun causing her to blink rapidly and squint up at the form bent over her that is gently shaking her awake.

“Awesome, you’re not dead” she finally is able to focus on the figure sees a college age kid, looking down at her his hair in that floppy Justin Bieber style.

Groaning she goes to sit up but feels she is attached to a great weight, and she suddenly realizes the warmth that is behind and surrounding her. “Peeta!” crying out in a panic as she tries to turn in what she now realizes are his arms clutching tightly around her, his plaid still tied tightly around them. At her voice she feels him stirring while the kid hovering over her is holding onto her shoulder helping
her try to sit up. Peeta’s eyes suddenly snap open, quickly taking in her then the kid behind her. Roaring he attempts to leap up, but is still, thankfully, tied to her and most likely is as physically sore as she is.

“Woah, dude calm down!” The kid backs away startled at the man who looks wild and is trying to quickly untie them while reaching for his dirk.

“Dinna touch my wife!” he barks out as Katniss realizes that Peeta could be dangerous when trying to defend her. His reaction is understandable, the time he grew up in is dangerous and strangers rob, rape and kill. Hugging him quickly in an attempt to calm him with her touch and to pin his arms, she starts talking in a soothing tone.

“Peeta, Peeta it’s OK he was just trying to help us, he thought we were hurt!” she feels his muscles relax from the tightly coiled spring ready to launch into action, to a mildly tense state.

Turning while still holding onto Peeta she looks at the kid, taking him in he has jeans and a Duke University tee-shirt on, an American good. “Sorry about that we have been under a lot of stress lately, can you tell me where we are?”

“Craig na dun, the touristy spot, in Scotland” he side eyes her a little, “You sure you guys are OK? Do you want me to call the police or an ambulance or something?”

“No were good, thanks, I have my cell in my pack. I’m sorry, my name is Katniss and this is my husband Peeta, we are newlyweds… and we may have lost track of time. Can you tell me what day it is?”

The kid laughs, “I get it, went on a bender, yeah its Sunday. I’m Craig by the way, doing a summer abroad over here, going to be a senior at Duke.”

“Cool, Duke’s a good school; I went to Harvard and just got my PhD at Oxford. So just to be clear it’s July 13th?” she asks while laughing trying to keep cool and not give off an ‘I just time traveled through some freaky rocks’ vibe.

“Yup” Craig pops at her then he waves at their clothes, “you guys headed to the games?”

Looking up she peers at him sharply as she digs out her iphone from the pocket she stored it in and powers it on, 5 dots of service, awesome! “Yeah, as you can tell my husband is Scots” she motions to Peeta who is hovering protectively behind her, glowering as he makes a mmmmpphhh noise, his typical Scottish grunt. “Reenactment clothes”, she explains as he gestures to their attire, “You know when the next bus to the village should be here?”

Craig pulls his own smart phone from his pocket and looks at the time, “fifteen minutes, if it’s on time.”

“Awesome, thanks! Craig, thank you so much for your help! We’re just gonna head down the path to the stop, I kinda have the munchies.” Katniss smiles at him and takes Peeta’s hand, which is shaking slightly and starts to pull him towards the path. As they get to the edge of the circle she turns back and asks one more thing, “Craig, just to be sure, it is 2014 right?”

“The year?” he replies with a confused cock of his head.

“Yes, the year.” She asks looking as confident as she can while gripping Peeta’s hand tightly.

“Well, yeah course it is, that must have been one hell of a bender.” He hollers back.
At that she bursts out laughing, “It sure was, you have no idea, no idea!”

As they arrive at the bus stop she takes a big breath and breaks out into a huge smile, *they did it!* “Thank god, we did it, I only missed two months! We can do this!” At his silence she turns and looks at him and seeing the look on his face as he stares at their surroundings, she starts to worry. Grabbing his face in hers she forces him to look at her, leaning in she gives him a rough kiss before breaking away and placing her forehead on his so he is forced to look directly in her eyes and nowhere else.

“Peeta, are you hurt? Talk to me, is this too much?” she desperately asks her voice shaking in fear.

“It is different, verra different.” He manages to get out, she feels him calm further as he takes her in. His arms wrap around her in a hug and he leans in holding her close, then his lips capture hers in a passionate kiss.

“Yes, but it’s OK, you’re with me, just stick with me and breathe, OK?” She takes deep breaths and encourages him to take them with her; soon he is relaxed in her arms. Lifting his head he takes a look around, she sees him take in the road the bus stop, the physical change in landscape.

“I ken this was comin, ye told me and I am still scarit. I canna imagine what it was like for ye, when you first found yourself in my time, alone and ye didn’t even ken, what had happened.” He pulls her into his chest and coddles her against his body, “it hurt too, I didna expect that, I still ache all over and my head hurts.”

“Yeah, me too. Don’t worry, we’ll catch the bus and head into town, there’s this really nice cafe that serves a wonderful breakfast. I think we need to eat and sit down for a minute. Then we can head to the car rental place so we can head up to Dalcross and see if your trunk survived. Oh and one more thing, we should wrap your claymore and dirk in your roll. People don’t carry weapons around; I actually think it might be illegal.”

After they get his massive sword and deadly dirk concealed he gathers her in his arms, “I love ye, mo maise.” His declaration is punctuated by a soft kiss on her nose. “Now, tell me more, abou’ what I am seein.” She talks until the bus shows up, on time, it’s only nine in the morning.

As they descend from the bus she looks back and takes in the wonderment and slight fear. He was anxious the whole bus ride, but did very well except for the death grip on her hand as she stepped onto the side walk still holding his hand she glanced briefly around. It had been two months since she had been here, two looong months, and she needed to orient herself so she could find that café. Looking to her left she sees the friendly sign, MacKenzie’s coffee. *Shit, I didn’t even realize, Peeta is probably a relative to a ton of these people.* Looking up at him, she smiles softly, “let’s get something to eat” and leads him down the walk.

Sliding into a booth, she picks up the laminated menu in front of her and starts to look at it. “Eggs, definitely eggs, and waffles with sausage” she smiles looking up at him. Peeta is still staring down at the menu puzzled, “Peeta”? Startled his eyes glance up to meet hers. “Do you know what you want to eat? You can choose anything that is listed on the menu.”

His eyebrows rise at her and he goes back to looking at the menu, glancing back up he looks at her, “Can ye do it for me?”

“Oh, of course, yes” she didn’t realize how hard this would be for him, they ate what was available on the farm, they hunted or what was given to him at taverns along the road. “I think you will like the hungry Scotsman, it has oatmeal, that’s like your parritch, and eggs and bacon.”
“Can I help you” a young blonde, adorable waitress walks up to their table, taking them in the 
waitress immediately ignores Katniss and begins fluttering her eyes at Peeta giving him a big smile. 
Leaning over to give him a glimpse down her shirt she touches his hand, “what can I get you 
honey?” Peeta gently pulls his hand back and keeps his eyes up and looks toward Katniss.

“My wife kens what I like.” At that the girl looks back at Katniss and sees the ring on her finger. 
Katniss watches as her eyes dart back to Peeta’s hand looking for a ring then she turns and looks 
expectantly at Katniss.

“I’ll have an order of scrambled eggs, waffles and a side of sausage with coffee; my husband (she 
makes sure to emphasize the word) will have the hungry Scots breakfast with tea, no sugar no milk”, 
the girl smiles and walks away to go put their order in.

Katniss leans across the table and grabs Peeta's left hand, rubbing his ring finger absently she smirks 
at him, "I think we had better get you a wedding ring sooner rather than later."

For the first time since they have come through the rocks Peeta gives her a genuine smile, "Whatever 
you want, wife."

"Are you OK, really you seem a little freaked out. Are you sure this is something you want?” her 
eyes go to the table in front of her and her hands slide into her lap, her hands wringing themselves 
together.

She felt the presence beside her, then the weight on the bench next to her, and then her butt was 
being scooted over while a warm comforting arm went round her shoulder. His finger was under her 
chin lifting her face up to greet his. Eyes smiling softly with love, warmth, depth his soul exuding 
from them, blue into grey. "Mo maise, everything I want is right here beside me. I gave ye my 
blood vow, I ken this would happen, I wanta be wi’ ye, always. It is overwhelming, ye ken, but I 
canna live wi’ out ye at home.” And with that he kissed her sweetly then asked, "What is next, 
wife?"

A plate full of steaming food materializes in front of her and the flirting waitress goes to set Peeta’s 
food on front of his original seat in across from her.

“Aye, ye can serve me here, Miss.” And just like that, the confident Peeta is back. The waitress 
looks at him while he settles himself next to her, his arm around her shoulders protectively, and that 
smile, the feral one that makes him look like his nickname curls around his teeth.

As they eat she takes out her phone and first checks her emails and answers any important ones. 
Then she takes a moment to shoot a few off to her friends and family. She then finds the nearest car 
rental place; luckily it is only a few blocks from here. Not far from the hostel that she had stayed at 
before. Pulling up the maps app she begins to plot their course to Dalcross.

“How many days of travel do we have, mo maise?” Peeta asks as he finishes up the last of his 
breakfast and settles his body closer to her. Katniss understands what he is doing; reassuring himself 
with her touch, the feeling of her next to him is grounding him. Just like when they rode the horse 
together, when she first met him, his touch helped her understand and feel the reality.

“Days, oh no it will only take about three and a half to four hours by car, we will be there this 
afternoon.” His eyes blink owlishly at her as he soaks in that bit of information, then his brows pinch 
together as he tries to understand. “Cars don’t need to rest and they go much faster than horses, 
faster than that bus we were on this morning.”

Looking around as he gathers his thoughts she sees him take in the people around her, turning back
to her he gives her a quick kiss leans in and whispers in her ear, “I think ye should change into the clothing I first saw ye in, ye ken? But more importantly, where is the privy here?”

She leans in and whispers in his ear, while discreetly pointing to the door to the men’s room, she makes sure to remind him of what he will find in there and how things get used. Nodding quietly he gets up and with the grace that speaks to power, he strides over and disappears into the room. While she is waiting for him Katniss reaches under the table and pulls up her backpack and goes digging through it pulling out a pair of jeans, bra, tee-shirt, underwear, socks and her combat boots, oh how I have missed you my lovely boots and clothing.

Katniss doesn’t miss the way women in the café take notice of him as he strides back to their table. Sitting down across from her because her bag is on the seat next to her he gives her a huge smile. “What?” she asks because he looks like a kid that just got everything he wanted for Christmas, or to be more accurate he has that same giddy look on his face that he had after he lost his virginity, absolutely gleeful.

“Water came outa the…faucet, when I turned the knob like ye said. It was HOT!” His smile is infectious, Katniss has missed running water but most of all she has missed hot, steaming showers.

“Remember what I told you about showers?” She watches as he nods and then sees the expression on his face change when the connection of what she told him and what he just experienced hits him. “Tonight we will find a place to stay that has a shower, and if we are really lucky, it will be big enough for both of us at the same time.”

His eyes grow wide and then his face turns predatory as he licks his lips at her. “Ye plan on teachin me something new tonight, mo maise?” Katniss gathers her clothing in her hand and stands up to go to the bathroom herself, bending down she whispers in his ear.

“Yes, shower sex…wait here while I go use the bathroom and change.” As she saunters away from him she glances at him over her shoulder to find that his gaze is glued to her retreating ass.

When she comes back changed into clothes from her time, they pay the bill, Katniss taking the time to explain the denominations of bills and coin she is using and leave the restaurant hand in hand. As they walk down the street towards the car rental place, Katniss shows Peeta how the map works on her iphone and how the blinking blue dot is the two of them moving along the earth. “Ye canna get lost.” He breaths out fascinated as he holds the phone gently in his large hand. Looking up she sees a pharmacy, I could really use some more deodorant…and tampons…and toothpaste, runs through her head. Grabbing Peeta she pulls him into the pharmacy and grabs a hand basket and heads off to the deodorant isle.

“I need some personal hygiene stuff, I ran out or are close to it in the two months I was gone.” Katniss explains as she grabs what she needs, looking at him she then walks over to the men’s selection and gets him some as well. Peeta gently takes the basket from her arm and waves her on, “at your service my lady, I will carry your things.” She smiles at his gallantry and kisses his cheek and moves on to collect not only the things she needs, but items he should have as well. When the get to the razor section she explains and points out all the modern versions and then asks him what he would like. “Can I use my razor?” Katniss looks at him, he has a straight edge, but they both get the job done. “Sure why not?”

Again he carries their bags when the exit the store and he watches the blue dot in gleeful fascination all the way to the car rental place. Standing back, he lets her do all the talking with the guy behind the counter; he does glare at the sales guy though. If the guy had any intention of hitting on her, those thought s would have run from the guys mind as the warrior standing possessively behind her makes it clear she is taken.
The car is compact, but cheap and she throws their items in the back seat. She sees Peeta observing her carefully, making sure to mimic her, so his inexperience wouldn’t be glaringly obvious.

So she subtly gestures to the passenger side and she gets in the driver’s side. It takes him a minute along with instructions from Katniss to deal with the seat position so he could be comfortable (or more to the point actually fit into the car). After that she turns on the car and sighs thinking that this trip to Dalcross will be much easier on her ass than the last. Plugs in her phone to the USB port in the car, adjusts the map and sets the GPS to driving mode, she is not sure Peeta would be actually good at giving directions yet. And with an absolutely hilarious panicked look on his face, she takes off north to Dalcross.
Chapter 13

“A/N: I apologize for being away for so long. My professional life has gone through a lot of changes recently, including me starting graduate school. Not an easy feat with 2 kids, a husband, dogs and a new job! Enjoy and please review.

Chapter 13

“Sir?” Peter looks up from his work to greet his Butler at the door of his study. It was Sunday and he didn’t like working on the weekend, but his secretary Luke had just retired after over twenty-seven years of service and he found himself checking over his schedule for the week. His sons, Peter and Brian have already left for the Braemar Gathering to take place in the games with the rest of the Mellark clan. The games don’t start until the Friday, but there is a fair amount of preparation to do, plus Pete and Bri like having time to hang out with their cousins before the contest. Peter will join them as one of the ‘lairds’ of clan Mellark, but he won’t leave until Thursday.

“Yes?” he asks, Mark has been his family’s butler for 40 years, the man is a Mellark, and a most dedicated employee.

“A car came up to the gate with a young married couple; they claim to be of clan Mellark. Apparently, an ancestor left them a trunk? They also wanted to tour the manor grounds. I asked the guard what they looked like and the man apparently looks very much a Mellark and has a broad Scots accent. The man also tried to speak to the guard in Gaelic, Charles only knows a little, but it is clear this man is fluent. The woman though is clearly an American.”

Peter stands up and glances at the portrait and then the trunk his heart beating wildly, “you let them in, yes?”

“Yes, I know you don’t like tours on Sunday’s, but they being family it seemed OK. Shall I give them the normal tour?”

Peter was already walking out of the room and heading toward the courtyard, “No Mark, I think this couple I shall meet myself. I have a feeling he will be able to give us a historical tour of the Dalcross grounds, better than we ever could. Would you ring up Effie and ask her to make up a guest room? Insist she prepare the ‘laird Mellark’ room and inform her we will be having guests for dinner. Also can you find Elizabeth for me, she should be riding the grounds, notify her that we have visitors.”

Mark gave him a funny look and then with a clipped, ‘yes sir’ went off to attend to his duties. Peter took a huge breath and swallowed the lump that had formed in his throat. The timing was right, he knew this day was coming, or all the trustees of Dalcross estate knew it. Pete and Bri know it, but being presented with the actual event has his stomach in knots. As he exits the house into the courtyard he sees a small compact rental car making its way into the parking area of the cobblestone courtyard and stop.

A beautiful young woman with long dark hair braided so it lies across her shoulder easily exits the car from the driver’s side. Her clothing is modern and Peter immediately sees her swirling silver eyes, ones that have watched him work for many years. There is a pause as he sees her lean back and pokes her head in the car, instructing her companion. Peter watches as the man clumsily opens the door and then slowly unfurls his body from the car. The man moves like a great cat, slow, with purpose, strong and agile and able to pounce at any moment. His hair is wild blonde curls, long and
plaited in a style that has long gone out of fashion, his beard is a week old and bright red. His eyes a bright, bright blue that even pale his own; regard him with interest. He is taller than most Mellark clansmen a trait clearly inherited from the MacKenzie side, and his physique is broad and powerful. Wearing a Mellark plaid kilt and sash with the Mellark pin gathered at his shoulder. The man’s nickname is well earned; as there is no more doubt as to who the couple is that are walking toward him hand in hand. Jesus Christ, the Leòmhann has truly returned.

“Welcome to Dalcross Estate, I am Sir Peter MacKenzie Mellark Gorden the eighth. Trustee of Dalcross and Mellark Distillery for clan Mellark. I hold all in trust for the rightful laird of Dalcross. I hear you are of clan Mellark lineage and are here to tour the grounds.”

“Aye” the man’s accent is broad and speaks to being born and raised in the highlands. The man bows while showing a leg, a graceful and old gesture of respect and greeting. “Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark, laird of…” he stops at that and looks at Peter. “We’el I am of clan Mellark, ye can call me Peeta and this is my lady, Katniss Elizabeth Everdeen Mellark, just marrit these two weeks.”

Two weeks, the rocks must have returned them the same day they left. “Will you come in to the manor home and join me in my study for tea and cakes? You both look as though you are tired and perhaps thirsty from your journey. Was it long?” Peter turns and ushers the couple through the door. He watches as Peeta moves instinctively through Dalcross manor directly to the study, not needing direction at all.

“Aye, the trip was verra long and a wee bit painful, Master Gorden. Thank ye for having us in your home.” Peter walks over to the wall behind his desk and pulls the rope that rings the housekeeping bell, calling for tea. He gestures for them to sit on a leather loveseat that is across from him, the wedding portrait is behind them, out of their view, but directly in his. Having the two sitting in front of the portrait leaves Peter no doubt in his mind that this is his seven times great uncle sitting in front of him.

“I believe you told the man at the gate that there may be a trunk for you here?”

“Oh aye, it would be verra old and it has the initials PBAMM etched on the brass lock. I was hopin it wasna lost, my nephew wee Peeta promised me he wouldn’t let anyone touch it.” Peter watches as Peeta discretely glances around looking at the room, was he looking for changes or things that are familiar?

“Ahh yes, no one has. Well it has been moved a few times over the years during renovations to modernize Dalcross, but I believe you will find it against the wall behind you.” Smiling softly he watched as the couple look at each other disbelief and relief and a smile graces both their faces. They both stand up and turn and it is clear the first thing that catches their eyes is their wedding portrait.

“Ohh Peeta, it’s beautiful.” The musical voice of the woman who has been relatively silent until now gasps as she leans into her husband’s side. Peeta’s arm goes around her shoulders as they walk to the portrait together.

“Delly is…well…was a beautiful artist.” Peter can hear the tears in the large man’s voice. He watches as Peeta opens his sporran and digs through it pulling out an old iron key. His hand caresses the trunk before he uses the key to unlock it.

“Peeta” Katniss’s hand stills Peeta’s arm before he opens the trunk her voice soft and gentle, “Peeta, not everything may have survived in good condition, OK?”
Peter watches as Peeta raises a hand and caresses the woman’s cheek then catches the large pearl that hangs around her neck, the same pearl portrayed in the portrait, “Aye, mo maise, I ken”. Peeta then opens the chest and he and Katniss drop to their knees and begin going through the chest.

And because the scene in front of him is just so beautiful and he knows it is time to hand everything back to the man and woman who have given so much to his family. Peter speaks with tears in his eyes and love in his heart, “Welcome home, Lord and Lady Dalcross, welcome home.”

Peeta stands and turns at the man’s voice behind him and asks, “Ye ken who I am, then.” He watches as the man, Peter, nods and then points his wedding portrait on the wall.

“If I didn’t know it from the descriptions of you in the stories passed down from father to son, then that picture, your wedding portrait, painted by my many times great grandmother Dolina, would be enough.” Katniss let out a soft chuckle beside him and placed her hand comfortably on his forearm getting his attention. Looking down he sees his beautiful wife beside him, her eyes sparkling at him. “Peeta, Delly said her sons and grandsons would know and that they would never forget you. Your sister is just as pigheaded, stubborn and determined as you are. How could you have doubted her?” Of course, she is right, runs through his mind, but the day has been long and he has had to absorb a lot.

“Mr. Gorden, thank you very much to you and your family for keeping Peeta’s chest safe over the years. It has been a long exhausting day, especially for my husband. This life and everything in it is very new to him. Honestly for us twenty-four hours ago we were in 1744. During last night’s full moon, our bodies were ripped and torn at as we passed through some sort of wrinkle in time, and but for the grace of God we made it here, back to my time. I think what Peeta and I need now is to find an Inn where we can eat and go to sleep. Would it be possible for us to come back tomorrow and collect Peeta’s things and perhaps tour the grounds, maybe the family burial plot?” Peeta looks down at Katniss, she knew exactly what he needed, what they needed. He was emotionally and physically exhausted, seeing Delly, Seumas, wee Peeta and wee Brian’s final resting place, is something he needs to do, but it can and needs to wait.

“I have already seen to the preparation of a room and dinner for you the two of you. I will not have the rightful lord and lady Dalcross staying at an Inn. This is your home, emotionally and legally.” The man Peter, standing in front of him looks and sounds like his sister so much that it hurts, but he cannot have this he told Delly it was wee Peeta’s home.

“I didna give wee Peeta Dalcross so I could have it back.” He says looking at the older man in front of him, his family.

“The Gorden family has been the caretakers of this estate, waiting for you to come home for 270 years. I will not be the man that shames my father, my grandfather, and all the other Peter Gorden’s before me. Beside we owe you and your wife so much. It is because of you that we and clan Mellark kept their lands after the failed uprising of 1746. We prospered through famine, wars, economic downturn. We built a thriving business that supports many clan Mellark and have made many a Gorden extremely wealthy, including myself.” Peter’s voice became more forceful and his skin blotchy red in his conviction, that’s the MacKenzie side the splotchy skin, he thinks as Peter walks over to an ancient desk and pulls some items out of a drawer.

“My book! It survived, I can’t believe it, look Peeta it survived!” He can feel Katniss’s excitement as she leaves his side and walks over to the desk to see her book. He goes over to stand next to her, the book looks old and fragile, it looked new a week ago. He watches as she opens the cover to see
her name written at the top of the inside, 'Katniss Everdeen', but it is what is written underneath that catches his attention.

"Is that...?" Katniss breathes out softly while staring contemplatively at the list of names that follow hers in the book.

"Aye, the first name it is wee Peeta, then that must be his son." Peeta answered her; it was amazing what he was looking at.

"Yes" he looked up to see Peter Gorden the eighth looking at them, "and every other Peter Gorden that has come after him." He points to the last name on the page, "this is me, I signed this 27 years ago when I took over for my father. That is his signature."

Peeta looks up at this man who is probably old enough to be his father, "Ye look like Delly, it's in the eyes, ye ken?"

"No I didn't know, but it is nice to know. There are so many questions I have for you and your wife." Peter looks into his soul, it is similar to what Delly could do, not many people could look into him, Delly, Ryan, Donall, Katniss and now this man.

"Peter, Mark said we are having guests for dinner?" Peeta glances over to the door to see a dark haired woman enter the room, she is pretty, not Katniss pretty, but it is clear when she was younger she was very attractive.

"Elizabeth, come meet our guests." His nephew Peter goes over to the door and takes the woman's hand and escorts her in the room. Putting his hand on Katniss's shoulder they turn to properly meet the woman, who must be his wife.

"Hello, I'm...bloody hell" the woman, Elizabeth, stops mid-greeting and slaps her hand over her mouth and stares at them. She then turns and looks at the portrait and then quickly back to them, she does this a few times. A gasp then escapes her lips, when she notices the open trunk and strides over to it quickly. "It's open, the key, where did you find the key?" she asks turning to her husband.

"Elizabeth, I would like to introduce you to our special guests; Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark and his wife Katniss Elizabeth Everdeen Mellark. Apparently he has had his key with him in his sporran."

"The Lord and lady Dalcross", the woman breathes it out in a soft breath. "I knew this was coming, you have been telling me, but I guess I only half believed it?"

Peeta walks up to the woman, bows and takes her hand and gently kisses the back. "Ye can call me Peeta, thank you, Mrs. Gorden for takin care of my trunk. My wife, lady Dalcross and I are verra pleased to be here and are verra grateful for your hospitality." Then he gave her a smile and turned her towards Katniss, "My wife, Katniss Mellark." He watches as Katniss and Elizabeth then shake hands greeting each other.

His nephew then addressed his wife, "My dear, these two have had a very long day and are exhausted and hungry. They were planning on staying at an Inn tonight, but I insisted that they stay here."

"Of course, please stay here this is your home. The laird’s bedroom has been waiting for your return home. Come why don't you go up and rest before dinner, it won't be for another few hours any way." Elizabeth placed a comforting arm on Katniss's arm and began to lead her to the upstairs. "Is there anything you need, fresh clothes? I will have the Stable lad bring up your things from your
He watches as Katniss's face breaks out in a grin and then gives him a coy smile, "Well, we really could use a long hot shower. I haven't had a hot shower or even a hot bath in months and Peeta, well he has never had a hot shower." Following them out he begins to note the changes that have taken place over the years, the things on the walls, photographs, Katniss calls them. As they make their way up the stairs he listens to what Elizabeth is telling her.

"The manor has been fully modernized over the years, the intent has been to keep the place as close to the original as possible. Of course, to get bathrooms upstairs some changes had to be made, but the downstairs has been left pretty much the same layout. I think a hundred years ago, or about, one of the Peters, I am not sure which, put on addition. Dalcross is used for entertaining for Mellark Distilleries & Exports, so more space was needed. Oh, here we are, your room."

Peeta looked about, it was his old room, a little different but this is definitely it, the bed is different, the linens too, but the chest of drawers where he kept his things was still there. "This is my room." he looks at the woman who smiles at him like he is a child just starting to understand something.

"Yes, it has been waiting for you, my laird. Welcome home." At that she turns to leave, meeting the stable boy and an older man, carrying their things. His bundle, Katniss's backpack and their bag of things she purchased earlier are placed just inside the door.

"Dinner is at 6:30, you should find some clothes in the chest of drawers. We cannot wait to talk to you some more."

He looks over to Katniss who has wandered to a door that wasn't there before and opens it and walks in. "Ohhh Peeta, come look." her exclaim of delight has him curious; when he looks he sees a privy room, with a sink, a toilet and a large glass enclosure. She turns and looks at him with delight in her eyes and explains, "It's a two person shower".

After Katniss had told him it was a shower she opened the door and started turning knobs, water flowed from the ceiling and he found it fascinating. He watched the pounding water as she played with some other knobs on the wall, "feet and towel warmers!" was followed by a giddy laugh. She ran back into the room and came back with the bag from today. Peeta watches as she pulls out various things and places them on a shelf inside the shower with the water. "I am so shaving my hairy under arms and legs; it has been way too long." The room was getting hot and steamy like a laundry room; he could feel his skin getting damp.

Katniss looked at him smirked and then suddenly started removing her clothes. In moments she was naked and untwining her hair from the braid, he stared as her long wavy hair, hair that infatuates him so much fall free down her back and just brushes against the top of her perky round bum. Stepping into the shower she turns and gives him one of her radiant smiles, cocking her fingers tells him, "come on Peeta hurry up and get in here with me." Shower sex, the words echoed in his brain from earlier as he made quick work of his clothes while watching her through the glass.

Stepping in the hot water poured from above onto his head, it's like being in the rain, only it is hot, at first the water stung his skin, but the hot water massages his muscles and he begins to understand the appeal of the hot shower. He looks over at Katniss, pouring some liquid from a bottle into her hand, and then he watches in fascination as she rubs it on her hair sighing, soon he watches as her hair lathers up and that's when he realizes it is some sort of soap. Her naked body in such close proximity is making him hard and when he watches the bubbles cascade down between her breasts and then make their way over her belly and down further he feels hypnotized. Stepping close to her, carefully because he immediately realized when he first got in that the floor is slippery; he bends down and takes a nipple into his mouth. He feels her hands glide into his wet hair, weaving her
fingers through and gripping his head pulling slightly. Sighing he moves his mouth to her other breast while his hands go to her hips so he can pull her up against his erection. "Peeta" her voice is soft and sexy as she pulls back his head so she can look down at him, "can I wash your hair"?

"Yes" he groans out. How she manages to make everything she says go straight to his cock he will never know. It has been like that since she first came into his life, her arrow pointed at his heart may not have actually pierced the flesh but the arrow of cupid pierced him just the same. Taking some more of the liquid she rubs it on his hair, massaging his scalp, while kissing him and rubbing her hips against him. "I love shower, I can run my hands all over your wet body." he groans out, his hands wandering everywhere.

"Time to rinse, lean your head back and close your eyes." he does as she instructs and he feels her hands help rid his hair of the soap. Suddenly she steps away and she watches as she rinses her hair, he she reaches for another bottle and pours out a thick white paste that she then rubs on her hair and then does the same for him, "That is greasy", he tells her while reaching for her again.

"It's hair conditioner, it keeps my hair soft and manageable, easy to brush through. Now rinse again, this time he mimics what she did to herself as they both rinse together. Grabbing for her he asks what he has been dying to know, "ye said shower sex this morning". Looking at him she smiles and leans into kiss him.

"I did…and we will, after I shave, I want you to watch me shave." He does, and it is with great fascination that he watches her remove the hair from under her arms and legs. As the razor moves over her skin his dick gets harder and his hand wraps around it instinctually, gently stroking. Soon Katniss gently removes his hand with a soft, "not yet, soon" and glides his hand across her freshly shaved skin, it is soo soft, smooth. With those thoughts he looks up into her swirling silver eyes and asks, "now?" A light chuckle is her initial response before leaning in and capturing his bottom lip and sucking on it and moaning out a 'now' in response. His hands are all over her body as she tugs at the hair on the back of his neck. He canna breathe or think with his lips on hers, and the way she is sucking on his tongue, *I think I might die.*

"How", he manages to gasp out, because if he is not in her soon he will explode.

"Like we did against the barn door" her whispered response send chills throughout his body while the hot water is still pounding down on them, the steam swirling and warm is intoxicating.

"Standin up", he confirms while bending down and grabbing her by the upper things. Using the back wall as support, he pushes her against it, her small delicate hand is grasping him, guiding him into her and he asks, "Katniss, will it always be like this, feelin so verra good?"

"Yes, yes I think it will, with you it will", and he believes her. Her chest is the perfect height for him to suck on her nipples while he pumps into her, and he can watch her face at the same time. He loves making her orgasm or cum as she calls it as much if not more then he loves planting his seed inside his woman. Her legs lock around his waist so he can support her with one arm while the other slides between them so he can rub that magic nub of hers he first discovered with his nose. He watches her face as he brings her over the edge and when she clamps down on him he follows soon after, his body singing with ecstasy. As they finish cleaning, Peeta thinks at how happy he is to have found Katniss, his Katniss, his wife and he lets her know by telling her over and over how much he loves her.

*I like watching her sleep*, he muses watching her mouth slightly open taking in air and drooling just a wee bit. After the shower they had lain on the bed for a slight nap before dinner. Cuddled in his arms Katniss immediately fell asleep, but Peeta's head was racing, so he found comfort in watching her rest. Before Katniss, he had always wondered why he had yet to fall in love. It wasna from lack
of available, bonnie or interested lassies, he just never fell in love. There was many a young girl that he had kissed or had kissed him, many of them eager for more and willing to give him more of themselves even without the promise of marriage. He knew there were many girls that would have eagerly married him, some had even come right out and said it, but he didn’t feel the same. His father had once told him that when he met the right lass, he would ken, he said if Peeta wasna sure, then she wasna the right one. He was getting old too, and there had been more than one occasion, with his body wantin so much more than just kisses or his hand, that he almost said, this lass, she could be good enough. But he didna, and the day he saved Katniss from the Sassenach soldiers and she threatened to shoot him with an arrow, he had thanked God for his patience.

His desire for her was so great he had to keep leaving her at the campsite to go relieve his desire for her. The weeks that he courted her before she said yes, he abused himself awfully, his thoughts had never been so pointed, so detailed, so sinful and they were all about her. The weeks before he married her were similar, although he was better able to control himself armed with the knowledge that she would soon be his. The moment he married her, when then priest proclaimed them as man and wife, he felt a huge weight lift off his soul, he didna ken it was there. As he watches her nose flare slightly and whistle in her sleep he is pretty sure that this, what they have between them is not typical between a man and a woman. How much he wants her, how much he needs her, how much he wants her to need him, it is almost overwhelming at times. Making the decision to come back here with her was easy. Easier for him than he is sure she thought it was.

Dinner is pleasant, he likes his nephew Peter and his wife Elizabeth is a verra gracious host. They ask him questions about his family, what they were like. He pointed out traits and features in Peter that came from different family members. Katniss and Elizabeth discussed marriage and they tell stories of how they met and fell in love with their Mellark clan men. After dinner Peeta agreed to have a whiskey with Peter in the study and their wives accompanied them with their wine glasses. Peeta asked Peter for advice on what kind of work a man with his education and training could do in this time. He is worried that his father in law will think he is a ne’er do well and will be displeased with him as a son-in-law.

"I can help with that." It was then that Peter told him of the family business, Mellark Distilleries & Exports; that they had used Katniss’s advice and Peeta’s whiskey recipes to create and sell a line of single malt whiskey, referred to as scotch. The scotch known as ‘The Dalcross’ is the most famous and bestselling, though they have several others varieties. Over the years they have purchased other distilleries and thus make several different labels. They also became the leading exporter of the stuff and act as exporter for several smaller companies in Scotland. Peter said that the Gorden family followed Katniss's advice and held onto bottles of each batch and currently has bottles of 'The Dalcross' from almost every single year of production going back to 1765. Apparently the 1776 year is the most coveted in America and a single bottle cost one hundred thousand pounds, Katniss choked on a sip of wine when Peter had said that piece of information.

"Yes, we have done very well, the Gorden family, using not only your book, but advice. The investment advice you gave us, to get in early with Apple, Microsoft and IBM as well as companies my parents invested with before, have made us extremely wealthy." His nephew looked at his wife with a soft smile of appreciation; he then cleared his throat and continued. "It has made you wealthy as well."

"I am no wealthy, I did save some coin and hid them in my trunk, but it isna much. I will no be takin your money or home." he bristled slightly, he wouldn’a receive handouts from a nephew, even if he is 25 years older than Peeta.

"Ahh, well here's the thing," Peter looked at him, "you wouldn’t be taking my money. In the year 1786 when Mellark Distilleries & Exports formed as a true corporation it was decided by the first
Peeta Gorden, Dolina's oldest son, he drew up papers that said the company was 51% yours and the rest to be his. Over time that 49% has been divvied up between sons and passed down from father to son and then later to daughters, but we all have enough. He put in the papers that the oldest Gorden son would stand instead for your 51% ownership. I am the eighth to act in your stead, but legally it belongs to you. I couldn't keep it if I wanted too and you cannot ask me to keep what my family has held in trust for you. My brother, Donall, is the family lawyer; he already has laid the ground work for you to exist in this time. You have a birth certificate. You were born June 9th 1989. You have a degree in languages and classics in Oxford that you received in 2008 and you have a marriage certificate that says you were married June 30, 2014."

Peeta was stunned he had nothing to say, he just looked at the man in silence, and then he began to cry, Katniss quickly came to his side and is rubbing his arm. "I told Dolina, it was wee Peeta's, I didn't expect anything."

"She knew that, and that is why she did it, why wee Peeta did it. They saw the horrors the other clans went through after the failed uprising. They survived the famine because of Katniss; we survived and prospered because of you. Over the years our family and clan Mellark has become known as the luckiest clan in Scotland. The Gordens know it wasn't luck, it was you and your wife."

Peeta then listened in awe as Peter told them of a large trust fund that is in his and Katniss's name, waiting for him. His share of the profits saved and invested over many, many years.

"My laird, you were wondering what you could do to support and take care of your wife. You can support her by working for your company and with your trust."

"I do no ken, how to run a company." He states softly, and then he looks at his Uncle. "But ye do."

"Yes, and I can keep running it if that is what you like, I have need for a trusted man in the Boston office, my nephew is there now and wants to leave in a year or two. I think you could train with him and take over for him, I trust you more than anyone I could hire, you are kin. I think the two of us could figure out how to manage, but I will require one favor from you. And I need it starting Friday through next week."

Peeta looked at his uncle and perked up his brows, "Ay, what do ye need from me?"

"I need the Leòmhann of Scotland at the games, clan Mellark has not won in a long while. And I would be very happy to put the Campbells in their rightful place.

A huge predatory smile crept up on his face, "Aye, I can do that. I dinna like the Campbells much myself; a right lot of clot-heids if ye ask me." And for the first time since he arrived Peeta felt as if he would find his place in this world. All of a sudden he gets a wonderful idea.

"Peter, can lassies compete in the archery competition of the games?"
Katniss lay curled into her husband, sweat drying on her body. After dinner and all the revelations in the study she and Peeta excused themselves for bed. When they entered the room Peeta had immediately pounced on her, and made love to her as if they hadn't had sex in days, as opposed to just hours. He is getting more confident and comfortable with sex and it shows in how vocal he is becoming during sex. He not only asks questions, but now he talks to her, tells her how much he loves her, how beautiful she is, begging her to come for him. He started by going down on her, something she thinks he really likes and is getting very good at. He then lifted her legs up around his neck and then went up on his knees, lifting her ass off the bed he took her with one hand underneath her while alternating playing with her breasts and clit with the other.

As she lay there, Peeta spooning behind her while his lips gently caress her shoulder her mind wandered to what he had been discussing with Peter before it was revealed that Peeta was majority owner of Mellark Distilleries & Exports and they had a very hefty trust fund waiting for them, hefty to the tune of over fifty million pounds. All that was mind boggling, but it was something else she was thinking about.

"Peeta are you really worried that my parents won’t accept you if you can’t provide for me?" she feels him take a few deep breaths before he answers.

"Yes, I am, or maybe I was. Your family is important to you, I ken that. I wouldna want your father to think I marrit you to take advantage of ye, so that you would provide for me. It is important for the family of a woman to respect her husband; I have seen what happens in the marriage if they don't. I want your father to be proud of your decision, to be proud of me. When I marrit ye I was laird of Dalcross, I ken I wouldna be anymore when we came here. But it wasna clear to me what that would mean until we came. Ye were spendin your money to feed me, to buy me the soap and ye had to bring me here, I canna drive."

Katniss turned to him in bed, brushing his sweaty hair from his forehead. "But none of things mean anything to me."

"I ken, mo maise. But I'm a man, and a proud, stubborn one at that, I wanta be takin care of my wife, of ye. I dinna ken about the business much, but I am a fast learner and I ken my numbers and business in general verra we'el. My pride can have me take the position in Boston, learning from my kin, and I will put ye in charge of the trust, it seemes like a verra lot of money. In my time, that is more than I would dream of havin, but what does it mean here?" he looked at her with such earnestness and trust; she was still in shock with the amount of the trust. She did feel some pride in what had been saved and built; it was mostly done on her advice. Peter had told her the amount they had made with the tech stock investments alone, which boggled her mind.

"Peeta, that trust is a lot of money, we could live comfortably, not extravagantly, but very comfortable for the rest of our lives on that money alone and still have some to leave to children, we wouldn't have to work. I do want to though, I worked hard for this position and I want to see where teaching goes, I have always wanted to be a college professor."

"Of course, mo maise, as ye wish. I would like to try my hand at business too, I dinna want to sit home all day. Unless ye give me lots of bairns and ye need me to care for them." The grin he gave her was a goofy one, sweet and full of mirth. He always has that smile out when he talks of babies. "So ye think your family will think I can take care of ye?"
"Peeta, yes in fact, they might think I married you for the money, it is so much." Katniss looks at him, well her dad might anyway, when her mom and sister take a look at Peeta, they will not think it is for money alone.

"We can tell them ye didna ken until after we marrit, that is true, I didna ken." He laughs a little bit at this and kisses her lips softly pulling her closer.

"Well we need to figure what we plan on telling people about how we met and got married anyway, I don't think 'Katniss was sucked back in time through some singing rocks, met and married her husband after he killed two English soldiers and brought him back through said rocks to then find out they were wealthy from the prophetic advice she gave her husband's family will really work."

"I agree. We can tell them we met when ye were traveling through Scotland. I thwarted two men who were harassing ye, fallin in love with ye immediately. Then I followed ye around Scotland, being charming and attempting to woo ye, until ye agreed to marry me. I grew up on a remote Scottish estate, I didna ken about the business or money until we were marrit. My parent's didna want me to grow up wi' out ken the value o' hard work and they didna want a woman marrin me for what I had. I wasna given or even told about my inheritance until after I was marrit. Ye think that will work?"

"That's pretty good, except you forgot the part where I thought you were the most attractive man I had ever seen the first time I saw you." Katniss brushes her hand against his collar bone and then lets it travel down his arm twining their fingers together before she looks up into his eyes. They made love once again before they fell asleep.

The next few days they spent with Peter and Elizabeth going over the changes in the estate and details regarding the business. Apparently, an ancestor of Donall Mellark had some monetary trouble, too many mistresses followed by a very messy divorce, and he had almost lost Urquhart, but Mellark Distilleries & Exports had stepped in and purchased it, it had been turned into a tourist destination and the headquarters/main offices for the company.

The morning that Peter took them to the family burial plot was hard for both of them. Peeta took it especially hard and wept on her shoulder for a long while. Katniss pointed out to him, how long they lived, how full their lives must have been. How much they loved him and how Dolina would most likely be upset with him, for being sad.

Peter spent time acquainting Peeta with the business and reacquainting him with the games, as they are held now. He also went over the laws of today, how he really can’t carry a sword, or dirk or even his sgian-dubh, his sock knife, around in public. He cannot kill people, even in self-defense and definitely not for just looking funny at his wife. Then he went over proper protocol with regards to meeting people and dealing with the population in general.

Peeta is giddy with the prospect of fighting again and has taken to getting up early and working with his claymore outside and generally exercising. Katniss encouraged him to start running with her, they match well together and the years of horse or leg being his only source of locomotion meant that they could easily run 5 to 6 miles together at a comfortable pace while chatting. It was during the second run that Peeta asked to know about her ex-boyfriends or lovers as he called them. Katniss was initially mortified and did not want to talk about this subject with him, but his reasoning was solid.

"I dinna want to be at a disadvantage if we end up meeting with one of these men. I want us to be united, I dinna want him to think he ken something about ye that I dinna."

So, she told him on their runs, first about how her high-school friend Cato Armstrong had invited her
to Senior Prom, as friends. They shared a kiss, both agreed it wasn't good for either of them, they are still friends. Then she told him of her relationship with Gale, the relationship she didn't really want but felt pressured into. She told him about Darius, her first fling at Harvard and how he was still a part of their group of friends and sends her emails and texts. She told him about the other inconsequential random dates, she didn't do one night stands, both at Harvard and Oxford, and then she told him about Edmond. She had already kind-of told him about that one, but she went into detail so Peeta really knew where her head was. "And then I met you, and you swept me off my feet, without even kissing me. Then you kissed me and I knew there was no one else for me, that you had snuck up and burrowed your way into my heart and soul and the only way to get you out was to cut a piece of me off."

On Wednesday, the day before they had planned to leave for the games Donall, Peter's younger brother and lawyer for the company arrived at Dalcross. After introductions and small talk, which included Donall's express wish that clan Mellark fair better at the games then the Campbells, he pulled out a briefcase. It was filled with a mound of paperwork and documents for them to sign and to keep.

He gave Peeta a copy of his birth records and schooling records, ones that were altered with dates from this century. He gave them a copy of their marriage license for official use and had one framed for them to keep. He had a new and updated version of their marriage contract, "I had to change the terms so that this was a modern and legal version, but the spirit is the same." After reading it, and signing it together, Donall scanned it, kept the original and printed out a copy. "You might want to show this to your in-laws, if you think that they believe you may have married their daughter for your own personal gain."

"I need a picture of you for your passport and papers so that you can go to the US and live with your wife." Donall then pulled out a small digital camera and took a few pictures using a blank background. Katniss asked Donall to show him the pictures on the back since he has never seen a camera before. Then he pulls out an ipad and another set of papers for them to sign, while he pulls up the Royal Bank of Scotland and starts logging in while talking, "here is your login information, password and PIN numbers. You have several accounts set up; one is a checking account, where I transferred about 5 million pounds from your trust fund, so that you have some available cash now." He looks over at Peeta and then at Katniss, "I think you need to buy him some clothes other than the two or three kilts and two shirts he brought with him."

"Yeah, he does need some more clothing and I need to get him a wedding ring. We will need to purchase a plane ticket for him for when we head to Boston. I bought my ticket months ago, but I am sure the costs have skyrocketed. But...that still seems like an awful lot of money." Katniss is not very comfortable with the amount of wealth that has fallen into their lap. Although this will make her life easier, and perhaps she can help Prim out as well.

"I have already purchased Peeta a ticket for your August 1st flight out of London on BA, I have also upgraded you both to first class", Donall looks over at Peeta and then back at Katniss with a big grin on his face, "I don't think the laird will fit in an Economy seat. There is an office of the Royal Bank of Scotland in Boston, they can help you with anything you need, and we are a preferred family. Citizens bank is their partner in the USA so your checks and debit cards all come from there. Katniss, here is the information you will need to give your employers for direct deposit and such. Taxes will be done by the clan lawyer, having your money in two different countries is not a simple 1040 form." He hands her another folder with that information, with cheques and two debit cards already there, one says Katniss Mellark the other says Peter Mellark; she notes the PIN number for hers and puts his away. "Everything is activated; we already took care of it for you."

The main trust fund is viewed here" Donall goes back to showing her the screen, "and your checking
is here, moving money from the trust fund to the checking must be done in person, for security reasons, of course you can always call me and I can take care of it for you, if you are too busy to get to the office. I have set up bill pay already for your Amex cards, already activated and available for your use." She is handed two American Express Centurion cards, otherwise known as a black AMEX, something she has heard about but never seen. Her hands are shaking when she takes them from Donall.

She takes them both and has Peeta sign the back of his after demonstrating by signing hers. "Is that it?" There can't possibly be anymore right?

"Oh yes, there is just a little bit more, here is the paperwork for your change of name form and information for your government. I already spoke with the US consulate and I do not believe you and Peeta will be hassled with regards to this marriage. Scotland is not really a country people marry US citizens to get away from, especially not heirs to the Mellark Distilleries & Exports fortune. Sign, here, here and here and we will get that filed and taken care of for you." Katniss signs where he has indicated and hands the papers back to him.

"Oh, and two final things, I took the liberty of checking and it seems you have no vehicle upon your return to the US. Am I correct?" What the fuck is he MI-6?, she thinks scrunching her face up, because what can this guy not do, he and most likely a team of minions have taken care of paperwork and financial stuff it would have taken weeks for her to do all in a matter of days. And he is right because she gave her 10-year-old Camry to her sister when she left for Oxford.

"Yes, I gave my car to my sister when I left; I am just going to buy a used car when I get back."

"No need Mrs. Mellark, I have arranged for a car to be waiting for you at the airport when you return. Mellark Distilleries & Exports has an agreement with Jaguar Land Rover Company, I took the liberty of ordering you a Range Rover Sport, it’s safe and is one of the best SUV’s in snow and ice. I have the dealership registering it in your name, since Peeta here cannot drive yet, although I advise that you enroll him in a driving course when you get there. All Mellark Distillery executives are provided with a car, this is not preferential treatment." He chuckles and looks over at Peeta who has stretched out in his seat lounging like a cat.

He had worked out hard this morning with his claymore and a sword and dirk. The other sword was a smaller, lighter and slimmer version of the claymore and apparently, this competition required different maneuvers then with the claymore. Katniss has no idea what the difference is, but she loves watching him. After their run, he spent two hours on a horse named Diablo, because there is a horse riding aspect of the competition and apparently Peeta needs to know his horse. She found him rubbing himself over the horse, 'so they could get to ken each other'. All she knew was that horse is the devil, he was aptly named and only a few people could ride him, one of them being Peeta, ostensibly, he is the horse whisperer.

"Yes, I’ll have my dad teach him and then enroll him is driver's ed." She sighs and looks at him, is he sleeping with his eyes open? Is Peeta seriously taking a nap with his eyes open, while his bunch-of-times great nephew is giving them access to their life?

"Good because the laird of Dalcross should really know how to drive. Oh and finally the last item of business, lodging." Katniss jumps in and interrupts him, "I actually have a room in an apartment with two of my best female friends, I plan for us to live there while we look for an apartment for the two of us." Finally, she has something already planned out, proud of herself for having this already taken care of. But I will need to get a new bed, she thinks as she remembers her twin waiting for her at Madge and Johanna’s place, maybe I can use this guy’s ipad and order a bed to be delivered to the Apartment before we get there.
"That is wonderful, but actually I was going to offer you an ownership opportunity. My son, Alexander, whom you will meet tomorrow at the games, is the current head of the Boston office. He is an excellent businessman, but not very lucky in his love life. He fell in love with a girl in Boston and had planned to marry her, unfortunately it fell apart." Katniss wonders what this has to do with a housing opportunity. "He had prematurely purchased a brownstone in the desirable section of Commonwealth Avenue, within a few blocks of the Public Gardens. Now he wants to leave and is saddled with the property, he got it for a steal, because the place needs major renovations. It is currently a single-family home and has several parking spots in the back and a roof garden. Since you have a place to live, he could sell it to you for what he paid for it and then you could renovate it as you like. What do you think?"

What does she think? She has no idea, no fucking clue. How much does this place even cost? What will it cost to renovate it? "I am not sure, I think I would have to see the property, find out how much it will cost to renovate it. Perhaps talk to some contractors and then discuss this with my husband."

They both look over at the Leòmhann of Scotland, the rightful laird of Dalcross, who at that moment decides to snore with his eyes open. Katniss then looked back at Donall Gorden, "yes I think I shall wait for a decision until my husband is awake." Smiles overtook both their faces and then they were both laughing, quietly, as the head of man before them hits his chest and his eyes finally close.

Looking back at Donall she asks, “Can I borrow your ipad? I need to order a bigger bed for the apartment in Boston.”

The games were exhilarating, people everywhere, some dressed in period, some not, but almost all the men wore kilts. This made Peeta feel more at ease. The Braemar Gathering and Games was the largest and most prestigious of the games that are held in Scotland, well at least that was what Peter told them. The gathering location was only a few hours away by car, Katniss and Peeta had gathered what they needed out of Peeta’s trunk and packed up their rental car. Katniss planned to return the car in London after they stopped in Oxford.

The Mellark clan had rooms booked at a nearby hotel and had arranged for a hearty breakfast and Dinner to be served in a reserved conference room. Peeta was immediately welcomed into the fold of his nephews and cousins, most Gordens knowing who he is and most Mellarks just accepting him as a long-lost grandson of the first Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark, the Leòmhann of Scotland. Peter introduced him as the true laird of Dalcross and majority owner of Mellark Distilleries & Exports earning him immediate respect among the clan and his peers. The ages of the men competing ranged from 18 to 40 plus years old and the Mellark genes of strong shoulders and blonde hair with blue eyes runs strong through most of the clan, although it was clear that the MacKenzie side brought height. The Gorden’s tended to run a little taller with narrower shoulders, while the Mellark’s averaged at about 6 feet plus or minus a few inches.

Peeta was immediately entered in several of the key events; the claymore, the sword and dirk, wrestling, combat horseback riding, and a few others that required throwing heavy things that he thought he would do well at. Peeta insisted that Katniss be entered in the more prestigious general archery competition, as opposed to the female only competition, the former awarding more points to the clan. A few of the Mellark clansman balked at this, but he had been adamant that she can compete with the men. During the practice session Katniss silenced all, even the loudest of the dissenters, and was welcomed into the clan fully not only as Peeta’s wife and lady Dalcross, but as a
competitor in her own right. The young men all take to calling her Auntie while treating her like a sister. It felt good to have a bunch of brothers, she never had any growing up and none would dare hit on her, even if they wanted too. Peeta nipped that in the bud right away when he first introduced her as his wife. “Katniss is your Auntie and my wife, ye ken? I dinna take kindly to any one touchin my wife, I willna care if your kin or no.” Then he grinned at the lot. Katniss is always amazed how Peeta can make a smile look like a threat.

The first thing they did after checking in and meeting the family was drive into the small town and go shopping. Elizabeth escorted them to a boutique that sold traditional highland clothing. Katniss made sure that Peeta not only purchased more traditional kilts, but some of the more modern ones as well. She purchased him some modern dress and casual shirts, sashes, garters socks and compression shorts for under the kilt. Peeta’s only input was the plaids, they had to be Mellark colors, and there were three variations he found acceptable. The other thing he took part in purchasing was gleefully choosing a new sporran, Katniss and Elizabeth watched him laughing and teasing that he was like a woman choosing a new purse.

Katniss, eager to have some skirts to wear around Peeta, also looked at and selected several female versions of kilts. When her hand pulled out beautiful lightweight wool, black watch plaid kilt Peeta stopped her. “My wife will no be wearin the Campbell plaid, ye get Mellark colors.” As they go to check out Katniss discretely whispers for him to watch how she uses the credit card, when she pulled out the shiny new black AMEX she watched the sales clerk visibly react.

Elizabeth then took them to a department store, where they purchased a large suitcase for Peeta and a smaller one for Katniss to store their new purchases, a wallet for his money and cards, and several modern style clothing, to which he just replied with a Mmmppphhh at her, but she insisted. She made him try on several things including jeans, which Peeta didn’t like, arguing that, “they constrict my…ye ken?”, while waving at his crotch blushing. She purchased them anyway because they made his butt look delicious. Katniss also made sure that he had several exercise tee-shirts and tank tops to wear while competing. Lastly, she made sure that he purchased a few new pairs of shoes, dress loafers, running sneakers and boots, the last of which he enjoyed choosing. Katniss then encourages him to use his card to make the purchases, and on the way back to the hotel with their purchases she explains the credit card, how it is used and how they pay for the items.

That night back at the hotel, Peeta initially had a fit at the length of the skirts she had purchased. “I dinna want other men sein the legs o’ my wife”, he grunted at her while disdainfully eyeing the skirt she was modeling for him.

“You need to get over yourself,” she replied coolly, hands on her hips. “I told you what women wear in this time, you saw plenty women today wearing less. I am not going to walk around in a floor length gown or long pants in the July heat, because you don’t like men looking at my legs. For Christ sake, even Elizabeth has a kilt like this and she is at least fifty years old.”

“Och, I dinna like it, ye belong to me.” He shot back crossing his arms over his chest clearly digging in his stubborn Scottish heals.

“Yes, I am yours, you…you…clot-heid, and you are mine. Do you think I like watching all the women staring at you? And you, refusing to wear anything under your kilt, giving all those lassies a peak if the breeze picks up. Do you think I like that?” Katniss spat back at him, there is no way she will back down from this.

“No, ye dinna like it, but I dinna like the shorts, they smash my balls.” He explains while cupping his balls and giving her a look that is bordering on pouting. The vision of wee Peeta, when he would start stomping his foot at Delly suddenly flashes through her head, causing Katniss to burst out
laughing at him.

“You look like wee Peeta when he would throw a tantrum,” she giggles at him. This causes him to pout even more. “Katniss I dinna like my balls bein smashed,” he whines, which causes her to laugh even harder.

“Oh, Peeta I’m sorry,” she goes to him and pulls him into a comforting hug, holding his head to her chest. “I’m sorry, but it is the rules for certain events that you have to wear those shorts underneath. You don’t want a Campbell grabbing your balls in wrestling, do you?”

The thought has the Leòmhann, shivering in horror and looking at her like she is insane. “I didn’t think you would. Now, you will wear the compression shorts under your kilt. I will wear my kilts, for the archery competition I will wear my shorts underneath, and you will not be a big baby about it. I promise, I will never wear anything too revealing, that is not who I am. You are just going to have to trust me on this, OK?”

His fingers flex gripping her sides in response, “Och, I dinna have to like it” he then follows that with a big sigh and turns his eyes at her using his puppy eyes and pouty mouth, “But your right, ye ken more about this then me. That dinna mean I have to like all the men lookin at ye.”

The first full day of the games brought the first several rounds of the wrestling tournament, with which Peeta and most of clan Mellark breezed through. There were also some preliminary fights in the Claymore competition. It was this competition and the sword and dirk that the Mellark clan was most eager to win. Their current best swordsman being Alexander, the nephew who runs the Boston office. He is a very nice young man, but is not really even expected to take top ten. While watching the first few claymore contests where Peeta easily won, with a smile on his face she made an observation and questioned Peter who was standing beside her, his son Pete on her other side.

“Why are they all using two hands?” when she first saw Peeta fight he used one hand, wielding the sword easily with his dominant left hand, while handling the dirk in his right.

Peter side eyes her while keeping his eyes on the match. “The claymore is a two-handed sword, very few can lift it with one hand let alone yield it with precision. The one Peeta has, that he brought with him, barely made it through inspection, and it was almost over regulation size and weight. The fact that it is an antique piece forged in 1735 helped it make regulation.”

“Why do you ask?” Pete asked from her other side.

“Well, when I first saw Peeta fight, when the soldiers had attacked me? He used that sword, in his left hand, while wielding a dirk in his right. I just wondered why he was fighting two handed now and was using his right hand as his dominant one?” As she said this both men turned simultaneously to stare at her then turned back to the current match to see Peeta easily disarm his opponent for a clean win.

“He is left handed?” Peter asks as they watch Peeta first shake his beaten opponent’s hand then start make his way over to them with a big lopsided grin on his face, she nods in answer.

“And he can handle that sword one handed?” Peter enquires starting to sound giddy.

“Oh yes, without a problem.”

“Well, it seems the Leòmhann is playing these games with a little bit of strategy.” Peter declares softly.

At that moment Peeta reaches them and lifts her up with his free hand planting a big kiss on her lips.
while declaring, “I’m hungry, mo maise, I need to eat before the sword and dirk this afternoon.”

Katniss looks at her watch, it is only eleven in the morning, but Peeta has already participated in three wrestling and four claymore matches. “The Food isn’t set to arrive at the tent until noon, but I think the luncheon booths may be opening now, or do you want to head into town and get something to eat?”

“We’el, first I want to watch the next four fights, wee Alex is saying that they all have top competitors in them, and I want to see how they handle their sword, ye ken? Then I will eat here and maybe take a nap in the Mellark tents.” Each clan had set up little mini campsites for the competitors and their families and depending on the size of the clan have even had the foresight to have food provided. Clan Mellark had such a site set up, a large open tent with folding tables and chairs, where luncheon food was set up along with several coolers filled with ice, water bottles and Gatorade. The young men had also brought with them several bottles of Scotch, all hailing from Mellark Distilleries & Exports of course. There were also several smaller ‘privacy’ tents that blocked out the sun and had pads set up for taking naps during the day.

Peeta stands behind Katniss his arms about her waist and his claymore on his back, watching the matches. Occasionally, Peeta would make a comment regarding the fighting style of the men or ask a question about the personality or what clan the competitor might come from. When the competitors of the third match take the field, she could feel Peeta tense in excitement, “See there, mo maise, that big gommeral? That is Fergus Campbell, Alex said he has won a few years in a row and is expected to win this year. I wonder if he is as big as a clot-heid as Fergusson was.”

Katniss turned to watch the enormous man that Peeta had pointed out, he was tall, at least 6 feet 5 or taller, with very large muscles, the man clearly lifted weights. He reminds Katniss a little bit of her High School friend, Cato, minus Cato’s friendly smile and intelligent eyes. As the man fights, she could feel the muscles in Peeta’s body react subtly to the sword play that was on the field. Fergus Campbell was powerful, but not graceful or quick, he held the sword in both hands, but occasionally would drop one hand to show the crowd he could wield it with one. The match was quick and Fergus won with an easy disarm, gloating over his win the large man lumbered over to his clan and was greeted with enthusiasm by his family and a pack of female admirers.

“Did you see what you needed to? What do you think, can you beat him?” Katniss questions in a hushed tone, while Peter and Pete bend their heads in towards them in conference.

“We’el he is slow and clumsy when he goes one handed. He is verra strong and depends on that to win. His technique is basic and he is prideful. Aye, I can beat him.” Katniss looks up at his face smiling down at her, his comments were made objectively and he wasn’t boasting.

“Are you sure he isn’t holding back so that people underestimate him?” she asks giving him a small smile.

“No, I dinna think he is the type o’ man to hold back for strategy. What do ye think nephews?” Peeta asks, consulting Peter, Pete and Alex, who had just joined them to watch the last few fights.

It is Peter that answers, “No, I do not believe he is the strategic type, unlike you.”

Peeta raises his eyebrows at Peter in challenge or perhaps just in question, “Och, ye think I am holdin back do ye?”

Peter chuckled at him, “Oh, I know you are. Your lovely wife here asked why you weren’t fighting one handed. Then she informed us you were left handed, not right as you have been fighting.” Peeta gives Katniss a glance, where she responds by shrugging her shoulders and saying, “Well I
didn’t know the rules and I saw the way you fought those two redcoats.”

“I didna ken ye were payin that much attention, mo maise?”

Katniss snorts and looks up at him with a coy smile on her face, “You came riding up on a horse, leapt off mid-gallop…wielding your sword, and saved me from two nasty men. The entire time, I swore you were a BBC movie star because you looked so damned good doing it, until you killed them that is. Of course, I paid attention.” At that Peeta tips his head back and lets out a full bellied laugh and is soon joined by rest of the group including Katniss.

The next few days flew by; Diablo had been brought down in a trailer along with another horse, named Chief, Pete’s horse. Pete came in first and Peeta came in third, both men earning significant points for clan Mellark. On Tuesday Peeta easily wins the wrestling, some hammer throwing event, and the sword and dirk. The last of which requires a lot of finesse with the sword while blocking the dirk attack. After the easy win Peeta shakes the hand of his competition and quickly makes his way over Katniss, who is waiting for him on the sidelines, without any warning he throws her over his shoulder and is striding back to the Mellark site. He promptly claims a napping tent, loudly declaring that no one is to bother him as he lays Katniss on a mat inside. He immediately zips the tent closed then crawls over her on his knees, swooping down for a bruising kiss.

“I need ye badly, mo bhean, can ye be quiet while I bed ye?” he pants while one hand easily pushes up her mid-thigh length kilt and immediately starts to rub her clit, while the other pulls up his kilt revealing that he has, once again, refused to wear anything underneath and that his cock is at full attention and seeping. As soon as she nods in permission, he pulls the crotch of her panties to the side and groans as he takes her. Leaning down he kisses her desperately thrusting deep inside her. Stilling inside her he looks down at her with wild feral eyes “I canna be gentle, mo maise, I love ye”. Pulling almost all the way back out, he then slams back into her and sets a bruising pace. He immediately reaches down and starts to rub her clit, and Katniss can tell this isn’t going to last long. Wrapping her legs around his waist, her hands grip his biceps, finger nails digging in she holds on as he rides her like a lion claiming his lioness. He quickly finds his release, finishing with several short hard thrusts and a groan that is bordering on an animalistic roar. He then quickly pulls out pushes back on his knees still holding her panties aside and then goes down on her vigorously until she is silently pulsing in pleasure.

Opening her eyes, she watches as he gives her a lazy smile while crawling up beside her, lips gleaming. Lying down on the mat beside her, he pulls her into his side spooning her, nuzzling her neck while whispering softly into her shoulder. “Ye were so beautiful, watchin me fight, and your skirt is letting me see your legs, and your smile so perfect. All the men watchin ye, I couldna take it anymore, I had to claim ye as mine.” And at the end of his whispered declaration he promptly falls asleep.
Chapter 15

The archery competition is held on the morning of last day of the games and the final matches of the Claymore will conclude the games in the afternoon. The clan scores have been close, but clan Mellark is ahead at the start of the day with clan Campbell close behind. William Campbell, the current laird, has been in a fit all week whereas Peter Gorden and Ryan Mellark, the current titular laird of Urquhart, are euphoric. Bets are made on the outcome of the final two events, bets that included scotch, a classic jaguar and large sums of money. That morning found William boasting that his son, Fergus, will not be beaten by ‘a nobody from clan Mellark’, even if he is the rightful laird of Dalcross.

Peeta just shot William his catlike grin at his insults, stood up and said “ye are an awful like your many times great-grandfather Fergus, he bet against the Leòmhann of Scotland and lost. I wouldna bet against his direct relation if I were ye, aye?” And with that he cocked an eyebrow and sauntered off with Katniss to get her entered in the Archery competition.

“How can you be so confident that you are going to win?” she asked him after they were out of earshot of the portly, balding man.

“Because mo maise, all these people learnt to fight for fun, for competition. I learnt so I could protect my family, my clan, so I wouldna die.” His expression is serious as he looks down at her, “it’s the same as your archery, they practiced for sport, ye perfected yer shot so ye wouldna starve. That’s a big difference, ye ken?” The wisdom echoes in her ear giving her confidence as he leaves her with a soft kiss on her cheek in line with her competition to go watch with his family.

Looking around Katniss notices she is the only woman in the main competition, there were a large contingent in the female only event yesterday. That was won by Dalcross’s daughter; the Mellark clan is hoping for a sweep in the archery events, there is only one contestant allowed per clan in this event. Katniss watches as the archery course opens up, targets appear and disappear, they move away, behind and around obstacles. There are twelve targets and each archer is only allowed twelve arrows. The targets are made to look like animals, rabbit, fox, elk, birds, even a squirrel all hidden in a fake forest. The organizers run the giant target display once through so the competitors can see all the targets once before the event begins, but they are warned that the pattern and location the targets appear is random and will not be the same twice.

Katniss listens to the rules; the competitor with the highest points accumulated wins, if in the event of a tie then a shoot off will take place. A bull’s-eye is a hit in the area of the animal where the kill is fast and quick with the least amount of meat spoilt from the kill. The eye is the ultimate bull’s eye which is worth 4 points, and then the score decreases from there a hit in the neck earns 3, then heart two and a basic hit earns one. Katniss concentrates on staying calm by using her yoga breathing while the event gets underway. The order in which they are competing is pulled from a glass jar; each clan that has entered a competitor has a slip of paper in the jar. A very old woman sits and pulls a name out after each person’s turn. The archer, David Maclean from clan Maclean goes forth and is good, very good. He hits eleven of the targets most of his kills are in the neck and a few are close to the eye.

The morning moves slowly for her, but finally they are at the end. Clan Mellark is the last clan to go, but she doesn’t mind. The ‘animals’ move at a constant speed, they are slower than a normal animal and the eyes are bigger than they should be. So when she walks up to the shooting area and nocks her first arrow she allows the calm to take over. There is no one in the forest but her and her
husband as he quietly stalks behind her, protecting her. Then boom, boom, boom the targets appear and her focus narrows to each one as it appears. Just as quickly she shoots and reloads, hitting each target with deadly precision until there are no more arrows as she reaches back to her quiver. Taking a deep breath, she relaxes and allows her vision to expand outward, taking in the course in front of her, the applause of the crowd slowly eking back into her consciousness.

The judge runs out into the course and begins to count her kills; one, two…five…eight…eleven, twelve. At the announcement that she has hit the primary target on eleven targets, the neck on the twelfth; she allows a smile to creep onto her face. Walking off the course she heads to the bull pen where her competition has been watching her shoot, they congratulate her on her win. David Maclean approaches her and drops into a deep bow in front of her, “Congratulations my lady Mellark that was the best shooting I have ever seen. I would love to escort such a beautiful and talented woman to tonight’s celebrations, perhaps you can give me some private shooting lessons later this evening?” He takes her right hand and kisses it lingering a little too long while looking up at her with hopeful and lustful eyes.

“I don’t think it is appropriate to ask that of a married woman, nor am I interested.” Katniss states calmly as she pulls her right hand from his and wiggles her left-hand ring finger adorned with her wedding band. Her eyes flicker up and catch the looming figure of her husband striding purposefully toward her. He is smiling, but his eyes have that dangerous glint in them.

“Oh, married, well indeed that is just bad luck for me, who is this lucky man that gets to call you wife?” David Maclean says in a tone that is just a little too familiar for her, standing just a little too close for her liking.

“That would be me” the familiar voice of her husband replies for her as he approaches, his tone challenging with a hint of ice all disguised by control. “Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark, Laird of Dalcross, the Leòmhann of Scotland. I see that ye have met my wife, Katniss Mellark the lady Dalcross.” His arm slips around her waist and pulls her close to his side, “That was beautiful shooting, Mo bhean.” Peeta says in a softer tone directed at her, then leans over and kisses her forehead. His eyes go back to the other man and narrow, glittering dangerously and Katniss notices that his claymore is strapped to his back and she wonders if he is wearing that sock knife of his.

“I am David Baxter Maclean, of clan Maclean, from the Isle of Mull. I was just asking Katniss here for private archery lessons.” The man did not back down, oh my god this guy is an idiot, she thinks as she looks at Peeta visibly bristle, so she interrupts as quickly as possible forcing a laugh. “I told him that would be inappropriate to ask of a married woman.” She followed her statement with laughter as if to turn the whole conversation into a joke.

“Aye, it would be inappropriate, and her proper name be Lady Dalcross to ye” Peeta smiles baring his teeth, eyes narrowed and focused, “but I wouldna mind given ye lessons wi’ the claymore after I win this afternoon, if ye care to indulge me.” And with that scarcely veiled threat hanging in the air, Katniss takes her husband’s arm and quickly guides him away towards the rest of the Mellark clan that is waiting to congratulate her.

Walking towards the claymore competition finale, she can tell that Peeta is not nervous at all, he is wound with excitement and full of energy. They are being followed by a large contingent of the young males of clan Mellark. After the debacle with Mr. Maclean this morning, Peeta had a discussion with several of his nephews. It actually wasn’t much of a discussion more like a task they were all required to complete, guarding Katniss from all men while Peeta is fighting in the finals. It wasn’t hard for him to get the young men to go along with his request; Katniss has noticed that there is a fair amount of hero worship amongst his ‘younger’ relatives.
Katniss immediately told him that she ‘could fend off being hit on by idiots with bad pick-up lines and horrible come-ons by herself, Thank you very much.’ “I can take care of myself Peeta, I don’t need a body guard, or in this case several bodyguards.” Her arms crossed, chin jutting out defiantly giving him her patented Everdeen scowl of ‘Fuck you’.

“I ken ye can take care o’ yourself, mo maise, it’s for my safety.” He argued, at that statement she looked suspiciously at him, waving a hand at him to continue with his reasoning. “I need to have full concentration on the fight or I could lose or get hurt. I canna do that if I am worrit about some clotheid makin indecent proposals to my wife. It reminds me of the two Sassenach.” His eyes are sincere, voice soft as he makes his way over to her and gently uncrosses her arms and places them around his neck, sliding his arms around her waist, kissing her lips softly. “I love ye, mo maise, please humor your husband.”

“OK” because when he puts things that way, when he speaks softly and is just worried about her because he loves her, it is OK. And that is how she ends up completely surrounded on three sides by Mellark men with the exception of Emmy Morgan, Pete’s girlfriend of two years and more recently, fiancée. She had arrived yesterday just in time to see her boyfriend win the riding competition with chief. Katniss likes Emmy, she is a year younger then Prim and will be starting her last year at Oxford. She met Pete when he was a 4th year and she in her second. Pete is currently finishing his Master’s in Business as she finishes her degree in math.

The conclusion of the claymore competition consists of 2 semi-final matches and then the final. The four highest point winners from the preliminary rounds are matched together. The highest rank paired with the 4th best the 2nd with the 3rd, the winners of those two matches will then fight for first place. Her Peeta is currently ranked 2nd and Fergus Campbell is in 1st. Standing at the rope barrier she watches as the largest crowd of spectators she has yet to see at these games gathers to watch. Fergus starts with a roar, hammering down on his competition, a hefty man from the Grant clan. His strokes are sweeping and forceful, grunting and cursing, she can hear him trash talking his opponent and it seems as if he is wielding an axe, not a sword. Fergus gains points by fiercely attacking and forcing the man backward out of the painted circle. In doing this enough times he finally gains enough points to win.

Peeta’s competitor is a man from the MacDuff clan, He is big and burly and from what Katniss can remember from earlier fights he has a similar style to that of Fergus. The two man face off holding their swords two handed and when the whistle goes off, MacDuff charges at Peeta raising his sword high and bringing it down as if to forcefully disarm him, but Peeta sidesteps the charge to the left, while dropping his left hand from the sword and uses his right to angle his blade at rapidly descending MacDuff claymore. When the swords hit and metal clangs loudly Katniss watches as the muscles in Peeta’s shoulders and arms flex and bulge, causing her body to react in need. Unfortunately, she can hear the tittering of women in the audience who also seem to be reacting. This fight is different than the last; force is met with finesse, strength with speed, and when the cat has finished playing with the mouse, there is a spin, a pounce and a roar that results in a stunned man who finds himself suddenly disarmed, by a man who fought one handed holding the sword with his right hand.

Alex, who is just behind her, leans in and asks quietly, “are you sure he is left handed?”

To which she replies with a smirk on her face, “oh, without a doubt.”

Peeta makes his way over to her, smile on his face, barely sweating. “I have some time to rest before the last match.” She hands his water bottle to him wordlessly smiling back, watching as his Adams apple bobs while he drinks. Looking around she can see a small gathering of young ladies have moved their way closer to the tight knit circle of Mellarks. Leaning down Peeta gives her a sweet
kiss on her lips, strands of his hair have come free from the tight formal plait she did for him this morning, just the way Delly had taught her.

“Your hair is coming loose, do you want me to fix it for you?” she asks while caressing his cheek gently.

“Aye, that’ll be good,” at that he turns and grabs a nearby chair and sits down in front of her so she can fix it for him. As she runs her fingers through his curly blonde smooth locks she hears him sigh. Looking down she can see his eyes are close, a soft smile on his lips and a contented expression on his face.

“Look at you Mellark, having your hair braided like a girl.” Comes the taunt from across the way, Fergus clearly trying to get him all riled up before the match.

One eye opens lazily as he regards Fergus’s juvenile comment “Aye, if ye had a woman like mine, ye would let her be doin anything to your head, like a lassie or no. I like my wife playin with all o’ my hair, but ye woulda ken about that, would ye, ye wee laddie.” The reply is said in a lazy relaxed voice as if Peeta is making a little bit of a show of how relaxed and unaffected he is. Katniss finishes and kisses the top of his head then walks around to the front of him and plops herself in his lap.

Peeta’s remark has clearly flustered Fergus along with the fact that he just seems to be ignoring him, as Peeta nuzzles into her neck and wraps his hand around her thick braid like a rope. Two nights ago he had discovered how to use her hair as a reign of sorts when he rides her from behind. She had never had anyone do that before and it was intoxicating, so as he tugs slightly on her braid it is more of a promise then a tease.

“Well, I’m not stupid enough to tie myself down to one woman. Why have one? When you can have many?” Fergus calls back over boasting, his arms are draped over two very pretty but seemingly vapid young ladies. Peeta lifts his head from her neck and then just starts to chuckle, which quickly turns into a full bellied laugh, his arms tightening around her thick braid like a rope. Two nights ago he had discovered how to use her hair as a reign of sorts when he rides her from behind. She had never had anyone do that before and it was intoxicating, so as he tugs slightly on her braid it is more of a promise then a tease.

“What are you laughing at, what is so funny?” Peeta has clearly been able to get in Fergus’s head by just laughing good naturedly at his statement.

“Aye, well, the marrit men here ken. Ye canna understand the difference between the beddin of a silly lassie and the beddin of a wife. Stop crowin abou’ and get this done, ye wee laddie.” At that Peeta theatrically draws his claymore, bows elegantly to the judges then turns and throws a kiss at her.

Smiling she watches as he holds the claymore, more aggressively then he has in the past, one handed, his left dangling at his side, though Katniss can see his fingers of his dominant hand twitching. Pulling out her iphone she sets it to record the contest thinking it would be fun to show her sister, Madge, Jo and Finn.

Fergus answers his challenge with a growl and stomps onto the field getting into position, “get ready to lose”. At the whistle Fergus charges fiercely tightly gripping the large sword in his paws. His swings are powerful and would easily disarm a lesser man, but Peeta matches each blow, with as just a powerful swing. The crowd watches as the display of brute strength is matched with in equal force, but applied with finesse and skill unequaled by any swordsman there.

Fergus begins to get angry as his attempts to force Peeta out of the ring are thwarted and he growls
and grunts in frustration, he starts to hurl insults in an attempt to upset his smiling foe. On the other side of the spectrum Peeta seems to be enjoying the battle, calm and cool he matches the large man blow for blow and lets the man’s insults roll of his back. Finally Fergus yells an insult of epic proportions that has the crowd gasping at the crude remark. “Your wife is an ugly whore.”

Katniss watches as Peeta tenses in anger his face getting red, eyes narrowing to slits and the smile dropping off his face. His voice turns low and deadly, “Dinna insult my wife.” Katniss watches as the two alpha males circle each other battling for dominance.

“She’s a whore and when I win, I’m going to fuck her.” Fergus’s eyes glint thinking that he has found the way to upset the man in front of him.

Katniss watches as Peeta lifts up the sword in front of him making a big show of moving it from his right hand to his left. His grin becomes feral and his voice is harsh, “Come then ye wee gomeral, ye willna be touchin my wife. She’ll be cutting your throat and skinning ye before ye even touch her.” The entire time he has been swinging the claymore easily in his left hand.

Fergus’s eyes have grown as he watches how easily Peeta has been swinging the large claymore in his left hand, a look of fear has entered his eyes and Katniss can detect the increase in sweat from here. Sensing the question in the man’s eyes, Peeta’s grin gets even wider as he moves getting ready to pounce, “Aye, in case ye were wondering… I’m left handed.” The realization that he has been toyed with hits Fergus the same moment that Peeta springs, his attack swift, and Fergus can barely react. They clash in a fury of steel limbs and frenzied movement and within moments Fergus is disarmed and down on the ground with Peeta’s foot on his chest and sword at his throat.

Chest heaving, eyes gleaming, teeth bared and challenge answered with a growl Peeta looks positively savage. To the female creature, it is simultaneously frightening and arousing to watch as an alpha male asserts his dominance over another male of the species. So, as the judges declare the victory, Peeta stands sheaths his sword in a way that shows ease and practice turns and stalks off the field heading directly for her, while eyeing the surrounding crowd. She watches as he approaches her, his muscles bulging from exertion, a thin sheen of sweat glistening on his skin, and his aggression in her defense has her biting her lip and clenching her thighs together. When he sees her reaction his smile is nothing short of fabulous and feral, so that when he gets to her surrounded by her gaggle of body guards, she isn’t embarrassed when he just picks her up with one arm and walks off with her legs dangling towards the parking lot, because she is the spoils of war in his arms.

After a private and very primal celebration of his claymore victory back in their hotel followed by a more sensuous celebration of her archery victory in the shower, the laird and lady Dalcross dressed in their Mellark ‘dress’ plaid kilts join clan Mellark at the Gathering Celebrations. There was food, some traditional; roast boar and mutton, cabbage and potatoes and some not so traditional like the hamburgers and hot dogs on the grill. Clans mingle and Scots are now again just that a Scotsman, everyone is happy and eating, the rivalries of the previous six days set aside. The members of clan Mellark are particularly joyful, as they sit and eat, wine, beer and scotch flow freely and as Katniss looks around at the tables of other clans, most seem to have a bottle or two of ‘The Dalcross’ some aged 20 years, others 16 or 10, but regardless, the majority of the scotch here is from Mellark Distilleries & Exports, and some brands that they do not export. They stay in Scotland, and if people want to drink it, well they have to come to the highlands.

Katniss sits next to Elizabeth Gorden and across from Emmy, soon to be Gorden. The conversation is light although it is frequently interrupted by people who want to congratulate her on her archery win or Peeta’s multitude of wins. Looking up she sees her husband in the midst of his clansmen, basking in the glow of achievement and the satisfaction of being completely satiated. Looking up he catches her eye and she gives him a quick wink before returning her attention to the conversation of
her table mates. Emmy is currently displaying her beautiful engagement ring, to her soon to be mother in law and Katniss, the two women fawn over her ring. As they are discussing the ring and Pete’s proposal, Katniss feels his presence behind her as he lowers himself to the seat next to her and perches his chin on her shoulder, just listening to their discussion.

They are content to just be near each other as the chatter and socializing goes on around them. Then the master of ceremonies gets up and begins to talk, the chatter quiets, but doesn’t cease. The games are successful, the clansmen are happy, Scotland is thriving; and on and on. Then the time to present the cup to the clan with the most points is upon them and she can feel the excitement in the people around her. People that have done more than just accept her as family they have welcomed her with open arms, made her feel at home and it’s nice. Coming from such a small insular family Katniss has always reached out to her extended family of the Wampanoag tribe, or the small family of friends she created at Harvard, now she can add her extended family of clan Mellark in Scotland.

Peeta, Peter and Ryan the three heads or lairds of the clan all get up to accept the cup for clan Mellark. Peeta stands between the older men standing tall and strong between them, he insisted on wearing his full dress regalia this evening, most of the men are in traditional garb, but Katniss knows he most likely is the only one there who is commando under his kilt. Because if there is one thing she has learned over the past 6 days, it is that Peeta hates having his balls smashed, as he so delicately puts it.

When they finish posing for the formal picture, Peeta holds the trophy up over his head, throwing his head back he lets loose his long undulating war cry then yells “Clan Mellark is here!”

“Trust and Go Forward!” Roars a deafening answering call from his fellow clansmen.

As the night wears on the older members and families with young children of the clans leave for the evening, tables and chairs get pushed back from the center of the room. A DJ appears out of nowhere and begins to play modern dance songs, effectively turning the large tent into an outdoor club/wedding reception/prom. Emmy jumps up and drags Pete with her to join the other couples and single people dancing to some good old standard JT. Katniss loves dancing, and she is pretty good at it too, she has a natural knack for rhythm and as Johanna will plainly put it, ‘you’ve got moves Everdeen’. In fact Katniss enjoys going out to clubs and bars with Madge, Jo and Finn, although she would never admit it to them. She always puts up a fight, in the end conceding and secretly pleased, if only because she gets to dance. She could care less about the drinking and the hookups, and having some random guy trying to grind up on her, but the dancing, she can just lose herself in the music. Moving to Peeta’s lap they sit and watch the couples grind, sway, and jump to the music, she makes it a point to explain how the couples are dancing together. Whispering in his ear, how they are moving, while tapping on his leg the beat so that he can feel it, she knows when they get to Boston the girls (and Finn) are going to want to go out and meet up with their other friends from college.

She tells him about her high-school friend Thresh a big quiet boy, who played on the football team. Thresh was very soft spoken, except when he was singing or playing music or talking about music. His voice had a throwback gospel quality, but could handle rock like Lenny Kravitz. They became friends in the school choir, the two of them carrying the school to competition after competition. She told Peeta how he shocked everyone in school, except Katniss, when he turned down a few big ten Midwest schools when they recruited him for football. He opted for Berkeley College of music, majoring in classical strings and teaching, apparently, no one knew he played the violin, beautifully, except his mother. Upon arriving at Berkeley, he immediately formed a band, they would moonlight in some of Boston’s dives. Sometimes, when she needed a stress relief, some cash, or when he needed her to help him out, she would sing with him. They had a few songs he would cover, where Katniss would sing. They even had a beautiful rendition of Landslide originally by Fleetwood Mac.
where Katniss would sing and play the piano and Thresh would accompany her on his electric viola. They had stayed in touch during her time in England, now he was teaching music at an Elementary school during the day and moonlights on the Weekends with his band. He was excited for her to sing with them again, she was too, they had been singing together since the 3rd grade choir. Katniss was also excited to meet his girlfriend; he had met her the first-year Katniss went away to Oxford; and they have just moved in-together. She was a pretty girl named Rue, and a good friend of Prim’s.

Katy Perry’s California Gurls comes on and Katniss can’t control herself any longer, jumping off his lap, she turns to see her nephew Bri. Brian is young, barely 20 and has a huge case of adorePeetaaitis, grabbing his hand she pulls him up. "Come on Bri help your Aunt Katniss show your Uncle how to dance, so he can go to clubs with me.” Brian is the perfect choice, happy, youthful and very respectful of his new hero’s wife. Hands always where they should be and body at a perfectly respectable distance, while laughing and teasing his Uncle.

Peeta lounges in the chair watching her dance, his legs are stretched out, demurely crossed at the ankles, leaning back in the chair a lazy smile on his face, arms crossed, which is causing his pecs to bulge, not that Katniss notices or anything, while slowly sipping on a scotch. He doesn’t even notice a small posse of very brave girls inching closer to him, or he does notice and doesn’t care, Katniss loves that about him, it does not matter how many attractive girls are around he only ever has eyes for her. She watches as one brave girl moves just a little closer and then with a deep breath walks over and sits down in the chair next to him. The girl is pretty, but Peeta does not even turn his head, eyes focused on her, with a comfortable smile on his soft, kissable lips. The girl tries to get his attention by saying something, Katniss thinks she was congratulating him on his claymore wins and then introduces herself. Peeta barely glances her way letting out one of his Scottish grunts she loves so much. The pretty blonde doesn’t give up though because then Katniss is pretty sure Miss Blondie asks him to dance. His head turns to regard the girl sitting next to him an impassive look on his face, and then he points at her out on the dance floor and says something. Katniss catches the words; my wife and archery on her husband’s lips. The girl’s eyes grow wide as she regards Katniss on the dance floor, now dancing in a circle with Bri, Pete and Emmy with ‘I wanna throw my hands up in the air sometimes singing aaayooo, time to let go’ blasting around them. He then turns back to look at her the other girl forgotten and his smile is back on his lips. I really need to get him a wedding ring, flits through her mind.

She is hot, sweaty and about ready to call it quits, but when Prince’s classic ‘Kiss’ comes on, well she sure as hell isn’t sitting down and she is tired of Peeta being…over there. So she crooks her finger at him, silently asking him to join her. The scotch gets set down and his strong sinuous legs stand as he stalks over to her on the dance floor. Leaning down towards her, she grasps his hair and turn his head so she can talk in his ear, “Come on, you are going to learn to dance with me”. Not waiting for a reply, because she really does not need one, she knows he will comply; Katniss places his hands on her hips. Moving close to him so their bodies are not quite touching, but are close enough that she can feel the heat emanating from him, she starts swinging her hips to the beat of the music. Arms wind around her waist to the small of her back and his splayed hands burn through her clothes leaving her skin tingling. Her hands glide their way up his chest and then reach around his neck so she can play with the soft curly hairs on his neck, pulling his head so that their foreheads are touching, softly singing the sensual words to him she encourages him to move his hips in tandem with hers. It takes him a few moments to get the hang of it and he is a little bit awkward, a shy, soft, sexy smile is on his lips as his eyes bore into her soul and they move together. Katniss knows that since it didn’t take him long to figure out the rhythm of their lovemaking, it won’t for this either.

The next morning she wakes up in her favorite way, with Peeta’s head between her legs and his hands tweaking her nipples. After a very satisfying orgasm, she rides him lazily to his and her
completion as he whispers words of love and devotion in Gaelic. Breakfast is a nice calm affair, they sit with Peter and his wife Elizabeth, and it seems that not many of the young ones are awake after last night’s festivities yet. While Peter and Peeta discuss details of the Boston office as well as the shipment of some prime scotch as gifts for her family as well as for business dealings. They discuss Peeta and her returning each year for the Games and how he plans to move the yearly board meetings to coincide with those dates so they can wrap their yearly business while they are in Scotland. Katniss then takes the opportunity to ask Elizabeth where she should get Peeta a wedding ring.

“Oh that is easy dear, when you get to London, take him to Tiffany’s on Old Bond Street. Make sure you ask for Catherine, she has been very helpful to me for years. I will call and let her know to expect you two. She will not rip you off and any jewelry you buy will be of wonderful quality. Now tell me what are the rest of your plans until you leave?”

They had a week left until they were to leave for Boston, her home. Luckily, yesterday Donall had presented Peeta with his passport as well as documents that allowed him to live in the US indefinitely with his wife as well as work at the Boston branch. They would take off that morning and stop off in Oxford for a few days, staying at a small Inn within walking distance of the campus. Katniss needs to meet with Professor Wiress one more time, plus she wants to hit the book store and pick up some books for Peeta to read as well as more gifts for her family. She also has plans to meet up with her good friends, Cecelia, Seeder and Chaff for luncheon at a pub before they head down for a few days in London. Katniss had booked a hotel room for them in a nicer part of London, on recommendation from Elizabeth. It was one of the nicest and most expensive places she had ever stayed at, but even with all the money she now had access to Katniss was still very frugal. She booked a standard room with a King bed, no suite or anything fancy.

The remaining members of the Mellark clan have been slowly trickling in to breakfast, so Katniss and Peeta start making their farewells. Alex quickly chats with them, telling Peeta that he will be back at the Boston Office on August 18th and he gives them his contact information as well as a list of places he thinks Peeta would like, including a club that would allow him to train with his swords. The Highland Society of Boston would definitely accept them as members and he promised to email the president about their arrival in Boston. Peeta spends some time quietly talking to Pete, Katniss has noticed that the two have gotten close over the past few days and she finds it gratifying knowing he has found a pseudo family to help replace the ones he gave up to be with her. Soon they found themselves on the road heading towards Oxford, music playing and the two of them laughing together as only lovers can.
Chapter 16

Chapter 16

After an 8-hour drive that they broke up in two halves by stopping for lunch they arrived at the small Inn Katniss had arranged for them to stay at. The place was cozy and family run, the kind of place that had a fire going in the common room and tea always available for guests. During the ride Peeta had taken the opportunity to ask her about the different modern things that he has seen so far. Katniss has noticed he loves running hot water to the point where he is a little obsessive over it, and after being deprived of it for two months she gets it. He also likes electric lights, sometimes he is like a toddler that has discovered how to use a light switch, turning it on and off, on and off almost to the point of irritation. He likes the food mostly and he likes the convenience of modern transportation, but cars still tend to freak him out a bit.

They head out for a quick meal at the closest pub and then end up heading back to the Inn for a quiet night. Katniss takes the opportunity to answer and send email to her family and friends, organizing their return. She reactivates her old cell service at home and adds a line ordering two new phones, the new iphone6, so that they will be there when she gets back. Obviously, her current phone won’t work back in the states, and then she spends some time group texting with her sister and mom while her head lies in Peeta’s lap as he plays with her hair.

“Mom, Dad and Prim have arranged a cookout for me when I get home. They invited the neighbors, friends and people I haven’t seen in a while.” She relays to him while frowning at the screen.

“Have ye told them about ye getting marrit over that…thing?” he asks while waving his hand at her phone.

“It’s a cell phone Peeta and…No, I want to tell them in person, with you there. I don’t think a quick, ‘sure I will bring the potato salad and my new husband’ message is really the way to go.”

“Do ye want this gathering?” he asks looking a little concerned as his hands still in her hair.

“Yeah, I miss my friends and family and it is a great way to see everyone again and a nice way for people to meet you. Mom wants to have it on Sunday afternoon and we get into Boston on Friday. Jo and Madge have already told me we are going out Saturday night with the gang from Harvard. I just want some time for my parents to meet you before this cookout.” She emits a long sigh thinking about it, they probably will have to cut their night a little early on Saturday and head out Sunday morning to meet with Mom, Dad and Prim then.

“OK, I am just going to tell them that we will be out for breakfast then, we will just have to get up early and drive out to meet them.” She starts typing furiously on her phone, “there I just let them know that I will be out for breakfast around 9 and that I wanted some time alone with them and that I had some important news to talk to them about.”

“Och, so I am ‘important news’?” he smiles down at her, brushing the back of his hand against her cheek softly.

“The most important” she answers following up with a kiss, that leads to her phone sliding off the bed and onto the floor and finally, a few hours later, they are asleep.

Friday morning finds them with a nice lazy morning, Katniss doesn’t have much to do, and she doesn’t plan to meet up with Dr. Wiress till tomorrow and her friends tonight for an early dinner.
She does have to head to the campus book store, the computer terminals as well as the pharmacy for a refill of her birth control. *That’s another thing for the list, she thinks; find a PCP, Dentist and GYNO, Do not forget birth control,* she carefully adds to the growing list in the small notebook she keeps in her purse.

When she and Peeta finally extricate themselves from under the covers and get ready for the day the sun is already in the sky so they just stop at a coffee shop for scones and tea before heading to the campus. The first stop is the book store where she picks up a basic world history, American History and a general Science textbook. The books are for Peeta so he can start catching himself up on what has happened over the past 270 years, so he doesn’t look like, or feel like an idiot. Then she buys a few more Oxford University apparel things for her family and friends. The day is beautiful and Katniss need to check her email, beyond what she can do on her phone. BC has emailed her a packet of stuff for her to look at before orientation and she wants to print it out. Plus, she needs to check up on the delivery status of the bed and stuff she ordered so that Jo and Madge can let the delivery guys in. Leaving Peeta lying on the grass in the quad reading the American History book she makes her way over to the computers in the library and quickly takes care of her chores.

An hour later she is exiting the building papers in hand, and heads to where she left Peeta. Looking out over the expanse of green grass, she can see him lying on the ground thoroughly absorbed in the book. When they arrived on campus he had felt instantly at home, a fair number of the buildings were there when he attended Oxford. As she casually strolls across the grass towards him she hears her name called out behind her. “Katniss!” *Shit, Edmond, crap, maybe if I keep walking he will think I am someone else.*

“Katniss Everdeen” the voice is getting closer and unable to ignore so Katniss turns, continuing to walk backwards, to see Edmond. His backpack thrown over a shoulder and he is hurrying to catch up to her.

“Hey” she casually says when he finally catches up to her, still walking backward, Katniss is pretty sure she is fairly close to Peeta now.

“Hey” he says brightly, “I am so happy I ran into you. I was worried you had already left for the states, I haven’t seen you around and you didn’t come to say goodbye.”

“Well, I spent the past 3 months touring Scotland. We just came back here for a day or two before leaving next Friday.” She hears Peeta mmmpphhing so he must not be far away.

“I well, uhh I wanted to say… I’m sorry, you know. For how mad I was after we broke up. I loved you Katniss… I still do.” *Fuck he’s got that pleading tone out, please don’t whine,* is all she can think as she hears Peeta slowly, but loudly approach them, *he is being loud on purpose.*

“You know, I was hoping that, maybe we could give us another chance. I mean I know you are moving to Boston, but I finish my physics doctorate soon and I am sure I can find work there.” Edmond’s voice trails off as she sees him eye Peeta who has just come up behind her placing his hand on her shoulder.

“Katniss…Who is this?” Edmond asks as his eyes narrow in suspicion and he looks up at the imposing figure behind her.

Just as she is about to answer Peeta steps forward, hand extended like Peter had taught him to greet people. “Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark, Laird of Dalcross and you are?” his voice is friendly and non-threatening, professional and firm.

“Edmond James, Katniss’s ex-boyfriend… wait a minute, Mellark… Dalcross like in the Scotch?”
“Aye, that is my clan’s Scotch.” Peeta shakes Edmond’s hand firmly then steps back slightly behind her and gently places a possessive hand on her hip. She watches as Edmond takes in the gesture and she sees his face flush in anger, but Edmond has always been able to keep himself composed.

“Oh, so you two are dating, I see.” He turns from Peeta to Katniss and directs his next question at her his voice nasty, “so are you breaking up with him when you head back to the US this Friday”?

A grunt is the only answer Peeta gives in response to that nasty comment as Katniss addresses the situation. “Ahhhhh, No. Peeta is my husband, he is coming with me.”

“Husband?” the disbelief is palpable as Edmond stares open mouthed at her. “You’re married?”

“Yes”, a soft smile crosses her face and she looks up to see Peeta with a mirrored expression looking down at her. “We were wed on June 30th, it’s been almost four weeks, now.”

“You’re married?” Edmond’s question is more challenging this time and his eyes are harder as his eyebrows pinch together.

“Aye, her proper name is Katniss Elizabeth Everdeen Mellark, the lady Dalcross; ye can refer to her as ‘lady Dalcross’ or Mrs. Mellark.” Peeta answers the question, his tone is still polite but Katniss can tell he is marking his territory, she knows Peeta knows who Edmund is or who he was to her.

Edmond’s response is a scrunched-up face as if he smells something nasty, “Well then I guess I know the answer to my earlier question, then. Jesus, Katniss, married? I didn’t even know you were dating anyone.” His voice fades off as he thinks for a moment, “Are you pregnant?”

“This was no ‘irregular marriage’, the bans were published, ye ken? I dinna like the insinuation that we marrit so a child wouldna be a bastard.” Peeta’s voice is hard, but not raised. “I met my lady in Scotland and I fell in love wi’ mo maise immediately, I then courted her til she agreed to marry me.”

“Courted her?” Edmonds voice held a certain amount of disbelief.

“Aye, it was a very proper courtship ye ken, I only kissed, mo maise once before we marrit. The lady’s reputation was no compromised.”

At that Edmond’s eyes became wide and before he could say anything more Katniss stepped in. “We fell in love, quickly, and were married by a priest in a church, with his family and friends present. There was no other reason besides that we love each other. I really do not have to explain this to you; we broke up almost two years ago and you were really nasty to me for months after. We just came from the Highland Games where we competed and spent time with the Mellark clan, his family is very happy for us.”

“I see” Edmond draws out the words, “well then…Congratulations are in order I guess. What do you plan on doing in Boston for a job, what is your degree in, where did you go to University.” His tone is conciliatory, sort of, but he puffs back up a little at the end, Edmond, is smart and he knows it, his field of physics is theoretical, complicated and very Einstein-esque.

“Classics and Language, I went here. I will be runnin the US side of Mellark Distilleries & Exports, from our Boston office.” Peeta easily replies, he took a long time to study who he is in this world and really it is not that much different from what he would have been if had never met Katniss. “My nephew will take care of my estate in our absence.”

“Languages, which one did you study?” Edmond knows French well enough, Katniss knows this, but she understands that he needs to work this jealousy out.
“I can speak French, German, Italian, Gaelic, Latin and Greek; I can speak a little Spanish, but only enough to talk to the pope, ye ken.”

Edmond flushes a little at Peeta’s answer and then tries to go for a different approach, “so your clan gave you a job with Mellark Distilleries & Exports”.

Katniss knows that Peeta understands that Edmond is trying to embarrass him, and there is no need for Peeta to be rude, he did get the girl after all. “We’el, my nephew is runnin the company, but since most of it belongs to me, and now to my wife, ye could say I gave him a job.”

Katniss steps in quickly because there is no need for a pissing match, “look Edmund, you’re not my dad, and there is no need to give my husband the third degree. I hope you are doing well with your theorem. I enjoyed getting to know you and being your friend, I still have my Gmail account if you want to get in contact with me for some reason or another. But Peeta and I really need to get going we have some things to do, our plane leaves early Friday morning from London. Perhaps Peeta and I will see you sometime.” And with that she takes Peeta’s hand gently in hers and walks away.

Walking into the Pub she sees Cecelia, Seeder and Chaff over in the corner booth and waves at them as she walks over, Peeta in tow. She met the three of them at orientation as well, Chaff and Seeder are in her department, both damn close to getting their PhD’s and Cecelia, or Lia as she asks her friends to call her, was in Chemistry, she finished her PhD just after Katniss and now has a job at a big time pharmaceutical company. The three have been besties since they met and they were there for her during the Edmond breakup. Chaff leading the way to the club, 'Come on girlie, all of us are going to find some man candy tonight'. And they did, well Chaff and Lia did, he is now living with his man candy a very nice construction worker named Blight and Lia married hers a year ago.

Sliding into the bench seat next to Seeder, Katniss leans over and kisses each on the cheek in greeting, while scooting over to make room for Peeta. Chaff is the first to say something eyebrows up, eyes appraising Peeta up and down. "Damn girl, I knew I should have gone to Scotland with you, if this is what you get for a souvenir. Lia, why didn't you tell me that this is what men look like in your country?" Then he leans over the table holding his hand out in greeting, "Hi I am Chaff and in no way am I attached to anyone."

Katniss just bursts out laughing at his normal antics. Chaff likes to play and seem silly, but the guy is freaking brilliant when it came to microbiology. "OK, now that I have the chance, guys this is Peeta. Peeta these are my good friends Chaff, Seeder and Cecelia, we just call her Lia. Peeta is my husband." The last statement causes mouths to just fall open in disbelief, Seeder, ever the sensible one looked at Katniss and said, "I didn't know you were seeing anyone before you left on vacation."

"I wasn’t, I met Peeta while I was on vacation" then Peeta launches into the tale of how he met Katniss, minus the time travel of course, a natural story teller he has them all enraptured including her. Ohhing and ahhing, laughing and sighing the responses of her friends are perfect while he tells the story.

"Woa woa woa, you said you brought her home to Dalcross?" Lia, who is Scottish, asks after the story is finished.

"Aye” Peeta responded, "That is my farm."

"Dalcross. Dalcross manor of clan Mellark." she insists looking at him strangely.

"Aye, Dalcross is my home and left to me by my father." Peeta answers calmly.

"My mother took me touring the highland manors and castles a few years ago, we went there,
Dalcross isn't a farm it's a manor home." Lia challenges him slightly.

"To some maybe, but to me it is my farm, my nephew Peter Gorden, is there now."

"Peter Gorden, as in President of Mellark Distilleries & Exports, Peter Gorden." Lia counters, talking slowly almost as if she is disbelief of what she is hearing; Seeder and Chaff are hanging on her every word. At this point, Katniss jumps in thinking her friend doesn't believe him.

"I met Peter and his wife Elizabeth and a bunch of his other nephews, Brian, Peter's younger son, is in his third year here at Oxford. They live there but made it pretty clear that Dalcross belongs to Peeta."

"What is your name?" Lia asks slowly, she has always been a mother hen type and was especially nurturing to Katniss during the whole Edmund debacle.

"Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark, Laird of Dalcross, the Leòmhann of Scotland." his introduction is always followed by a curt polite head nod, and if he was standing he would have bowed to her.

"The Leòmhann of Scotland? To be called the the Leòmhann of Scotland you have to have won wrestling, sword and dirk AND Claymore at the Braemer Gathering Highland Games, no one has done that in years." she sits back muttering clan Mellark under her breath looking a little stunned.

"I ken, I did, this past week." He answers quickly adding, "and my lady Dalcross won the archery competition for clan Mellark, we had a very good showing this year. Beat the Campbells, a right lot of clot-heids, they deserved it too." Then he smiles at her, not the charming one he had been using all evening to charm her friends, but the one that makes him look like a lion that is getting ready to eat you.

"Oh that's right, I videoed his claymore final. Here want to watch?" she pulls out her phone at their nods, Katniss plays it for them, she loves the part where Fergus realizes that he had been played and Peeta just takes him down, that is her man, thank you very much.

"Damn, remind me never to piss you off or say anything nasty about our Katniss." Chaff speaks silently; he has taken the phone from her and keeps rewinding a certain section to watch, cocking his head as if to get a better look at something. Suddenly he asks, "what do you wear under your kilt?"

Peeta's response is a grin, a chuckle followed by a cheeky "nothing".

"Wait wait wait" its Cecelia again, "so if you are laird of Dalcross and are a Mellark, are you a part owner of Mellark Distilleries & Exports?"

"Aye, I am told I am majority owner." 

"Fuuuuuck" it's said as an exhale as Lia sits back in her seat.

"What? What does that mean?" Seeder asks, she is originally from California and a 'Yankee' like Katniss.

"That means Katniss is buying dinner." Lia smiles as she sits up, "aren't you Nissy?"

"Yeah, I guess I am." Katniss replies smiling softly, acknowledging to Lia, what she now knows.

"I want to hear more about you two", Chaff jumps in, "like how is married sex? Is it better than Engaged sex or just dating sex? Enquire-ing minds want to know."
The rest of the night is just pure fun and Katniss just enjoys the acceptance of Peeta from her friends. Chaff is of course flabbergasted that Peeta was a VIRGIN before their wedding night. It was pretty funny he had no word except, 'impossible' which he kept repeating over and over to himself quietly for a while. Peeta easily shared that tidbit of information, when he was asked about his previous girlfriends. He didn't seem embarrassed at all that he had been a 25 year old virgin, stating "I am proud that the only woman I have bedded is my wife."

When dinner ended and Peeta casually pulled out his AMEX black and gave it to the waitress with the check, just like she taught him too, her friends gave her the wide eye, which she ignored. Hugs, tears, kisses, promises to email, visit and keep in touch, a moment where Chaff hugs Peeta for a little too long causing Katniss to giggle and then the two were on their way back to the Inn for evening. A long explanation of Gay rights and equal marriage followed the dinner to which Peeta just replied, "We'el it dosna bother me, as long as I have my wife". And for someone who was brought up in the 18th century Katniss found Peeta to be pretty damn liberal.

Katniss woke up before Peeta the next morning, her head on his chest his arm curled around her. Katniss decides that this morning might be a good time to introduce Peeta to the morning wakeup blow-job. She actually made that up, as if that was a thing she did, because it wasn't, ever, but his morning wood looked just so...appetizing. So when he woke with a groan looking down at her, he smiled and tried to pull her up.

Releasing him with a pop, she gave him a smile, "nope, this morning I plan to suck you until your toes curl", and promptly takes him back in her mouth moaning so he could feel the vibrations. She can feel him start to breathe harder and when she glances up she sees that he is staring down at her, adoration and love in his eyes, it spurs her on, sucking, licking, and twisting what she can’t take in, because her husband is damn big. His hands are in her hair holding and caressing her, whispering and groaning in Gaelic. She can make out some words, 'A Dhia... mo cridhe...bhean' drip from his lips along with other words, they sound like a poem. Katniss feels his head begin to swell so she takes him in a little deeper and at the same time Peeta starts desperately swatting at her head, "mo maise...I...I...move" so she hollows her cheeks and sucks just a little harder and he explodes inside her. Swallowing several times quickly she releases him licking her lips, she looks down to see him shaking and his hands pull her up towards him.

"Tha gradh agam dhut, mo maise, mo bhean." then she is on her back and his mouth is on hers as his hands start to explore. Her back arches off the bed as he enters her after his mouth has her worked up and moments later she is pulsing around him in pleasure.

Later that morning they check out of the Inn and walk back towards campus, Peeta watches their stuff while she finishes some edits with Prof Wiress on the article they are sending to a medical journal. Then they are on the road to London, where she drops off the rental car and makes her way to Brown's Hotel. They are side eyed by the porters as they walk in carrying, gasp in horror, their own luggage and make their way up to the check in.

"Can I help you?" the woman asks when they get to the desk and Katniss can see the disdain dripping from her words as she looks them up and down. Katniss has shown Peeta how to do this back at the other Inn, and she has already told him she wants him to do as many of the transactions himself while she is around to help him, she also knows he was raised to not take shit, not let anyone look down on him so he steps up with confidence.

"Aye, my wife and I are here for our room." then he gives her the sweet blinding smile that can drop panties for miles.

"Name on the reservation, please" the woman answers politely, giving Katniss and her Kelty
backpack an uneasy glance.

"Peter Mellark, The Lord and Lady Dalcross" he answers his shoulders back bearing a proud countenance.

The woman types quickly and is suddenly snapping at the nearest porter to grab their things. "Ah Mr. Mellark, yes here is your reservation, may I have your card and passport?"

Katniss watches as Peeta digs into his sporran and pulls out his passport and wallet, then pulls out his card and hands it to the woman. The anger from being dismissed based on outward appearances has him stating, "Ye may call me Lord Dalcross and my wife Lady Dalcross...Miss."

"Oh of course I am sorry." The woman fiddles with his card nervously swipes it and hands it back, then takes some information from his passport and hands it back as well. They are then handed two plastic keys for their room and escorted to their room, by a spindly Justin. Katniss tips him after he brings their bags into their room. Looking around she can see that it is cozy and comfortable and very elegant. Then grabbing his hand they make their way back down the elevator, with Peeta pushing the buttons…gleefully, although when the elevator starts moving he gets wide-eyed and looks a little green for a second.

Walking over to the concierge, Katniss is greeted by a smiling young man. “Hello, how may I help you today?” The young man’s voice lacks any condescending overtone unlike the woman at the front desk. They haven’t changed clothing so they don’t look any different.

“Yes, thank you, can you tell me how to get to the Tiffany’s on Old Broad Street?” Katniss is on a mission, Peeta needs a wedding ring and stat, she sees the way women eye him and the empty ring finger on his left hand.

“Sure no problem here let me show you.” He pulls out one of those walking maps and a blue highlighter and traces a very short path to their destination. Turning she sees Peeta behind her, running his hand through his hair smiling. His hair is a little unkempt, the last time she saw it cut, Delly did it.

“Oh and I was wondering, my husband here needs a haircut,” looking up she sees a slight horror pass over Peeta’s face, “I was hoping you would know a place where they specialize in men’s hair, specifically more old fashioned cuts, more in the highland style?” She sees Peeta relax slightly although he still looks a little wary. One of the things he noticed about men in her time, besides wearing clothes that ‘smash their balls’, is the short hair styles and he doesn’t like it. “I dinna want my hair cut like that, mo maise, my ears will get cold, ye ken?”

Katniss understands, besides she loves his unruly locks, loves running her hands through his hair, and loves that it gives her something to grab and hold onto when he is devouring her.

“Of course, I believe who you really would like to see is Cinna Lawrence, he is a stylist, a designer of sorts. The BBC uses him for their”, he pauses and glances up at Peeta, “historical drama films.” His shop is on New Broad Street, here”, he makes a star on the map, “my sister is an intern in his shop. He is usually booked out way in advance, but I think he would make an exception for your husband, Cinna loves historical styles. I can make a call and let them know you are coming?”

“That would be wonderful, Thank you” Katniss smiles at him and discretely presses a tip into his palm.

The weather is nice, although it looks like it might rain later, although that is not a surprise, it is London after all. Old Broad Street is nice, a shopping haven, Madge would be crying with
unrestrained happiness right about now, Katniss thinks as they walk through the door of the shop that is home to the famous little blue box.

“Can I help you”, they are greeted by a smiling older woman with silver streaks in her dark brown hair.

“Yes, I was told to ask for Catherine, my niece-in-law Elizabeth Gorden recommended her and said she would be letting her know we were coming.”

“I am Catherine, you must be the lord and lady Dalcross, Mrs. Gorden called me a few days ago to let me know to expect you.”

Katniss let out a sigh of relief, “Yes well, my husband here needs a wedding band. When we were married we did not have a men’s ring. I want something that is close to mine, but more masculine, obviously.”

Catherine takes a look at Katniss’s slim silver band and studies it carefully, looking up at her with her glasses perched on her nose she comments, “this is a very beautiful, but very old ring, it is handmade, using older techniques”.

“Oh, yes it is from his family, I believe it was made in the early 1700’s. Is that right Peeta?”

“Aye, it was made in 1719, it is inscribed on the inside, see?” He delicately slides it off her finger and inside it is hand scribed with ‘Iona, 1719’, then he places to back on her finger kissing it as it sits on her hand.

“I have just the thing”, Catherine begins, “first let’s get lord Dalcross sized.” The woman pulls out a ring of bands in different sizes, assesses Peeta’s finger quickly, pulls off a ring and lets him slide it on his finger. “Perfect, just as I thought.” Catherine then leads Katniss to a case filled with men’s wedding rings as Peeta starts to wander the store. “I think this is the one”, she pulls out a wide band, it is plain with soft rounded edges and very masculine, “now this is Platinum, not silver, but that just makes it more durable. I have a feeling your husband is very active, yes?”

“Oh yes” Katniss blushes slightly thinking how active he is, but that is not what the woman meant “he is always outside doing work, he never shies away from manual labor.”

“He doesn’t look like the type to sit behind a desk all day and avoid physical tasks.” And Catherine is right, he doesn’t, his muscles speak to manual labor to work, not just a pampered man who doesn’t like to get his hands dirty.

“It is perfect, Peeta, what do you think?” He comes wandering back over and looks down at the ring in her hand.

“Do ye like it mo maise?” he asks her a smile on his lips.

“I do” she replies.

“Then I like it, not fancy, very masculine.” He leans over and kisses her forehead as Katniss looks back at Catherine,” do you have one in his size, that he can try on?” the one from the display case would barely fit on Peeta’s Pinky finger. His fingers are long and thick, they accentuate his large hands nicely. They are perfect when he uses them on her body.

“Of course, I will have that brought to you right away.” An assistant comes over and Catherine instructs the woman as to the style and size. “Is there anything else you want to look at today?”
They respond at the same time, Katniss looks over to Peeta her brow furrowed in confusion. “Did you see something else you liked better; we don’t have to get that one Peeta.”

“I like the one ye chose just fine, but I want to get ye something.” He replies pulling her hand into his and leading her over to another case. The case is filled with rings; beautiful… diamond… engagement… rings.

“Peeta, I don’t need a ring, I already have one.” She holds up her hand with the beautiful silver ring, the ring that belonged to his mother.

He replies quietly so no one can hear but her. “I ken, but I saw Elizabeth and ye talkin to Emmy and she showed ye her ring. I didna understand, what it was, I talked to Pete and to Peter and they told me about the custom of engagement rings. I asked if it was done in America, they said it is. After talkin with them I think it would be good for ye to have one, people will be takin our marriage more serious. I also think ye would look beautiful with one on your long delicate finger, like Emmy does. Pete told me he acquired hers here, said the lassies like the ‘little blue box’. I like taking care of ye, let me do that.”

“Peeta really I don’t need one, they are a lot of money.” Katniss argues with him, she doesn’t need one, no matter how pretty they are.

“If I had met and courted ye now, when I asked ye to marry me wi’ a ring, are ye sayin that ye wouldna wear it?” He argues back softly.

“Well, no, I would wear it, but we are already married Peeta.”

And he answers her in a firm no-nonsense way that lets her know there is no arguing about this. “I ken, and I’m getting my wife a ring to wear; now do ye want to pick it or will ye let me choose?”

“Well if you were going to propose with a ring would you have picked it out to be a surprise?” she asks curious as to what he would say.

“Aye, I would have surprised ye, mo maise.” He replies a soft smile on his lips.

“Then surprise me.” She decides and enjoys the grin she gets in return.

He strides over to the case where Catherine is standing and starts pointing and talking in a low voice, the two look like they are conspiring to do something evil. Catherine starts walking over to where she is standing and asks, “Do you know your size?” Katniss shakes her head no in response and lets Catherine size her. The hushed discussion resumes and Katniss watches as Peeta nods his head and a huge smile appears on his face. Catherine sends her helper back to fetch something else and then calls Katniss over as she pulls out the ring she had chosen for him. Peeta slips it onto his finger and Katniss thinks it is perfect. “That is the one, we’ll take it.”

Catherine takes it back and starts to write up the sales slip, when the woman arrives back with what must be Katniss’s ring. Peeta turns his back to her and takes a look at it, she sees him turn his head back and peak at her with a mysterious grin on his face, and he turns back around and nods his head in a vigorous affirmation.

“OK, well then how would you like to pay for these, separately…together…?”
Peeta interrupts her, “Together, I will pay for it, it is from the same account anyway, am I right mo maise?” Peeta looks to her for confirmation she just nods her head realizing she never even asked about the price of his ring, then it dawns on her she really doesn’t have to, but she wants to anyway.

“Wait, umm Catherine, I never got the price of his ring.” She calls out walking over to the woman at the fancy desk that seems to be their idea of cash out station.

“I apologize, lady Dalcross, of course. Here you go.” She hands Katniss a piece of paper with the price written in pounds, she does a quick calculation in her head, *Jesus, that’s a lot*, she thinks in shock, hoping that her face does not betray her thoughts. “OK, yes that is fine” she answers trying not to sound shaky.

“Excellent, I will just ring you up then. Lord Dalcross?” she looks expectantly at Peeta who then roots around in his sporran for his wallet, pulls it out and pulls out the black AMEX, to which the woman smiles and runs it through the machine. “Would you like us to start a file on you here?” Catherine asks, “We will have your finger sizes and past purchases on file, so that it makes gifting easier. Additionally, we would be able to provide all information to your insurance if any issues arise.”

“That is a wonderful idea, thank you; I am assuming that Peter and Elizabeth are on file as well?” Katniss asks.

“Oh yes, I will be forwarding the information of your purchases to Donall Gorden, your lawyer for insurance purposes as requested by Elizabeth.” Catherine informs them setting Katniss’s mind at ease slightly. “You will be able to enter any Tiffany’s in the world, and inform them that your main account is here, and then your purchases will automatically be put in your file and sent to the designated lawyer for insurance.”

Peeta signs the charge, pocketing her ring that she has yet to see in his sporran and Katniss makes sure the ring is on his finger before they head out. “Feel better mo maise?” he asks as he holds her hand in the crook of his arm as they walk down the street.

“Yes, now the whole world knows you are taken.” She replies cheekily

“Aye, we’el, ye ken it dinna matter, I have always been ‘taken’ by ye, mo cridhe.”

Katniss feels a little apprehension when they arrive at the nondescript, unmarked building that is supposed to be Cinna’s, but when they enter and see a place that can only be described as a zen atmosphere she feels better. A rock water fall is off to one side, cozy looking couches and chairs make up small intimate meeting spaces and the colors scheme is warm, with earth colors that relax you instantly. Many people seem to be working moving about in a brisk purposeful manner, but they aren’t rushing or making you feel unwelcome. A woman with beautiful tribal tattoos on her face approaches them asking if she can help them.

“I think so”, Katniss replies, “we are just in town for a few days and we are staying over at Brown’s hotel, the concierge recommended this as a place to get my husband’s haircut. Apparently, you specialize in more traditional styles, like my husband’s hair?” Peeta had asked Katniss to plait it for him this morning, and with his kilt and white shirt, one of the ones he brought with him, he looks like he belongs in a BBC drama.

“I can see, is he an actor in a period film?” the woman asks letting her eyes flit over Peeta quickly, admiring his form.

“Uh, well no, he is from the highlands of Scotland and grew up on an isolated estate where they
follow traditional clothing and styles closely.” Katniss answers carefully as she watches this woman appraise her husband. “I’m sorry we don’t have an appointment, but I was told it might not be needed?”

“Octavia, please don’t keep this lovely couple waiting.” A quiet but commanding voice interrupts them and as Katniss looks to the owner of the voice she sees a very handsome man walking toward them, dressed all in simple black clothing his dark curly hair cut short around his head. His mocha skin is beautiful and his golden eyes offset by what looks to be a hint of gold eyeliner catches Katniss eye. The man extends a hand to them in greeting “Cinna Lawrence, please have a seat, would you like some tea, or coffee?” Katniss declines as he leads them over to one of the seating areas, “now how can I help you”.

Katniss watches as his eyes keep flitting toward Peeta, with almost a gleam in his eye as she re-explains their situation.

“Oh Pish posh you don’t need an appointment, it is preferential, but when it comes to working with hair like this” he points to Peeta’s hair and then strangely to hers, “and a lovely couple such as yourselves, I can find the time.” He then pulls Octavia aside and sends her off somewhere.

“Thank you very much, we really appreciate it.” Katniss likes this man instantly he is quiet unassuming, but has a presence like an artist.

“Now please I would love to know who I am working with here.” Cinna smiles and turns to Peeta. Peeta immediately gives Cinna one of his beautiful smiles and introduces himself and then her, using their full names and titles. Katniss is going to have to talk to him about this; he doesn’t need to introduce himself like this all the time.

“I dinna want a haircut, but my wife says I need it, ye ken? I dinna want to look like all the men wi’ the short hair. I would like to plait it if I need to be formal.” Peeta is polite as he looks at Cinna dubiously most likely taking in his short hair.

“What a delicious Highland lilt” he looks over at Katniss winking, “of course I wouldn’t dream of cutting this hair, but your wife is right it needs to be cleaned up. I just worked on a project with the BBC on a Scottish documentary on the 1746 uprising with Bonny Prince Charlie; I have a good idea what we need to do.” Then he turns and begins to appraise Katniss, his forefinger rubbing his chin in contemplation, “now you, he begins to speak have the most beautiful hair I have seen in a while. You have Native American blood, yes?”

“Oh yes, my father is about ¾ Wampanoag, how can you tell?”

“Your hair, skin and eyes, the coloring is very distinct and beautiful, but your mother she is Caucasian, perhaps Northern European decent?”

“She is an American, but she traces her roots back to Scotland, she looks very different then me, blonde haired, blue eyed.” She replies

“I can see it in your facial features, eye shape, etc. The combination is very beautiful; you are a very lucky man, lord Dalcross.”

“Ye can call me Peeta.” Katniss notices that Peeta only requires that people call him by his official title when they are putting on airs, she can tell he likes this Cinna. “Aye, I am the luckiest man in the world.”

“I would like to work on your hair as well”, Cinna turns back to Katniss, “I would love to keep the
length, trim off the ends even you out, but then add some layers up front, nothing drastic. A la Kate
Middleton, what do you think?”

Katniss agrees and he brings them into a back room where Octavia is waiting, he has her set Peeta
up, washing his hair etc. and gets him seated for the cut. While he is waiting, Cinna pulls out a
sketch book and begins quickly sketching. He gets up to quickly cut Peeta’s hair. He takes off some
length leaving it just above the shoulder and shapes it. While he is doing this Octavia washes
Katniss’s hair and combs it out prepping it for a cut. Cinna quickly moves on to her, he takes off
about an inch and then quickly adds long layers in the front, it frames her face nicely. When he is
finished, he instructs Octavia in blowing her hair dry and then disappears for 20 minutes and when
he comes back he is followed by a young man with bright orange cork screw hair, who is pulling a
garment rack full of clothing.

“Now I know you didn’t ask me too, but my dear, I just couldn’t help it you are so very beautiful,
muse like even. I have a few outfits that I designed for my fall/winter collection which I believe was
made just for you.” He immediately has Flavius, cork screw hair, start laying out the outfits, some
funky, some professional, everything is just beautiful. Cinna stands there and appraises her as each
outfit is held up by Flavius, and with a hand wave or a nod the clothing gets divided into two piles.

“Excellent, now these outfits are just perfect for you, there is a mix of clothing for work, dinner dates
and casual. I wasn’t sure if you were planning on going shopping for a wardrobe like most women
who come to me, but this is my passion. Now I do not design men’s clothes but I can send you with
suggestions on what he should have in his wardrobe.” Cinna pauses looking over at Peeta, “unless
he only wears kilts?”

“Yes, he pretty much only wears kilts, but really I am not so sure about the clothes for me.” Katniss
states, some of the outfits would be perfect for work; her wardrobe does need an update as Madge
and Jo have been telling her for years and she would have to actually go shopping. It is very
tempting.

“Do you live here in London?” Cinna asks.

“No, we will be heading back to Boston in less than a week; I have a job at a University teaching in
the biology department. It is my first real job, I just got my PhD.”

“Boston is a very stylish city, you could go shopping there, I can write up some instructions as to
what you should buy.”

“No!” Katniss bursts out, “No this is good, I hate clothes shopping. Thank you.”

Cinna smiles at her, “excellent my dear, now what is your shoe size and I will have Flavius, collect
the shoes to go with your wardrobe. We can settle up out front and deliver your items to where you
are staying, so you don’t have to carry them.

Cinna escorts them out front and then then hands Katniss a bill to look over, considering what she is
getting, it actually doesn’t look that bad. As Katniss pays Cinna and writes down where they are
staying, Flavius appears with her wardrobe in tow, packed in two roller suitcases.

“I don’t like putting purchases in bags”, Cinna explains, “I prefer boxing them or packing them in
suitcases for my clients that are traveling, it is part of my service.”

After that he makes her promise that they will come back and see him next year when they are in the
UK, tells her that instructions for maintaining their hair cuts are packed, he recommends Portia’s
salon in Boston. Additionally, he has placed a guide for her wardrobe, what goes with what etc.
Then he slips her a piece of paper with a store name and an address, Nichole de Carle, “for your foundation garment needs, I have written instructions as to what pieces you will require to accompany your new wardrobe.”

The rest of the day went smoothly except for the visit to the lingerie store; Peeta was escorted to a room, with other men, where there was cheese, crackers, scotch and comfy chairs. Katniss was taken to a room where a woman measured her then, brought her bras, underwear, hose with garters and some pieces that were most likely for night wear, ‘guaranteed to get her husband in the mood’. Purchases made with pink cheeks and promises of delivery to her hotel. After that ordeal, Katniss and Peeta found the nearest pub where they sat and ate dinner, talked and Katniss de-stressed with some wine.

After they arrived back in the hotel, Katniss threw herself on the bed with the map and started planning their next few days. She had some sightseeing she had wanted to do, there were a few things she had missed in her 4 years at Oxford and a few places she wanted to take Peeta. As she worked, he sat down on the bed next to her and a ring was set down on the map she was writing on. It was beautiful, so beautiful she couldn’t breathe. A large round diamond was in center, surrounded by a ring of small pink diamonds, which was then surrounded by another ring of clear diamonds, the band also had small stones set in it half way down.

“It is called the soleste, like the sun. Ye are my sun, I need ye to live, like all life needs the sun.” He takes the ring and slides it on her finger, the setting is raised just enough so that her silver band slides under it and the platinum goes well with the sliver of her wedding band.

"It is beautiful", she sighs Katniss is still staring down at it, "Thank you"

"Ye marrit me, Tha gradh agam dhut, mo maise, mo cridhe, M’anam, Mo bhean, aye. I love ye, my beauty, my love, my soul, my wife, always." The map is folded and put to the side as Katniss stares at the ring. She looks up to see Peeta taking off his shoes, then his shirt, and then finally he unbuckles his kilt and lets it fall. Extending out his hand his voice soft, "come, mo bhean, let me make love to ye".

He pulls her up to stand in front of him, them bends down and removes her shoes, her socks. Her pants and underwear are next as he reverently slides them down her body helping her step out of them. Katniss watches as he places a soft kiss on her abdomen, then standing he removes her shirt and bra. Bending down he picks her up bridal style, softly gently as if she were the most precious thing on earth and could break and then lays her in the center of the bed. Hovering over her he looks down into her soul and kisses her, slowly, deeply with purpose. Leaving her breathless he breaks the kiss and with his forehead on hers "I plan to make love to ye all night, if ye let me, mo bhean."

"I'll allow it" she replies a soft smile on her lips.

"Good" and then he does until they see the sun start to rise in the sky.
"I don't get it, are you sure she doesn't want to be picked up at the airport?"

"Jesus, Madge you read the same email I did, Katniss just asked us to please be home for the delivery of some furniture she purchased and said she would be home this Friday during the day."

"Yes, but I don't understand, I said I would take the day off work."

Johanna turned and looked at her roommate of the past 7 years, she never understood Madge's protectiveness over Katniss. She has reasoned it has something to do with what happened to Katniss's dad years ago. Madge and Katniss have been friends since kindergarten, but there is something more, something she doesn't understand. Turning back, she watches as the delivery men are being bossed by some woman, a designer, from the furniture place bosses them around.

"It is Monday evening; how did she manage to get them to deliver after hours?" Madge asks.

"I don't know Madge." The delivery men are setting up a bed, a King-sized bed, it is wooden and sturdy. The bed is dark wood and a sleigh style; they have also brought up a matching dresser and two bedside tables.

"Mrs. Everdeen, is an important customer, we hope to get more of her business someday." The woman apprises them then continues directing the men, one of whom Johanna has been making eyes with and wouldn't mind having him help her with her bed. The bed set, brand new box spring and mattress are set up, then the woman whips open a bag and starts to make the bed, with sheets and blankets, pillows, and fucking throw pillows.

"Miss. Everdeen" Madge corrects the woman.

"Oh yes, sorry, it must be a mistake on my paperwork" the snotty woman replies and continues to set up the room with lamps and then they clean all the packing stuff up.

"Please let Mrs...sorry...Miss Everdeen know how the delivery went and that we are very eager to work with her again, anytime." The woman sniffs. Johanna smiles politely as she signs the paperwork for the woman. Closing the door as they leave Johanna heads back to the room where she sees Madge standing at the entrance of Katniss's room.

"Look at this" Madge says quietly, "Maybe I should just surprise her and pick her up."

"Madge", Johanna says quietly to her friend "what is this really all about? Come on, you know she can take care of herself; she has been living in England for four years without us. Making friends, dating and getting a PhD for Christ's sake, she can find her way home. She knows where we live, she has a key and she made sure we had a parking spot for her. She even bought a big girl room, what gives? Really."

"Do you think she will be mad at me?" Madge's voice is quiet and a little meek; even though she doesn't say it, Jo knows what she is talking about, but it is best to let Madge admit it, say it out loud.

"Mad at you for what?"

"For dating Gale." Finally, she admits it, but not the whole truth, the true source of her insecurities.
"Hawthorne? No, she dumped him and you know she wasn't even serious about him, he was a convenience. Personally, I think she will be happy you are dating him, but Madge be honest you aren't really dating him, not in the exclusive sense of the word."

"Fine, no we are sleeping together, and I would like a commitment." Madge admits.

"Madge" Jo turns her friend to face her, "I think your fear here is that if Katniss comes back and shows any interest in Gale at all, or even if she doesn't, that he will drop you like a hot potato, am I right?" she sighs looking at one of her best friends in the world nodding in reply, besides Katniss of course. "Look I have said it before and I will say it again, you need to think you are enough, good enough for him or any man you want. Don't be second fiddle; don't allow him to treat you as such. Demand the first fiddle status, because you deserve it. Katniss won't begrudge you dating Gale; she has never been the jealous type. Besides she dated other PhDs at Oxford with delicious accents, she is Dr. Everdeen now."

"Yeah, you are right. I can't believe she bought herself a big girl’s room. And she did say she was just going to sleep when she got here, jet lag or something. I guess we'll just see her when we get home from work." Madge brightens up looking at Jo the gleam back in her eyes. "The three girl-skateers back together again, I have missed her. What do you think her surprise is?"

Johanna just sighed again, smile on her face. "Madge, I don't know, I read the same email as you. If I knew I would tell you, but if I had to guess, I think it probably has something to do with her new job at BC or maybe regarding that paper she and her professor were working on getting published. Come on, let’s get dinner and then go to bed, I have a meeting bright and early with a senior partner in my firm. And you have to deal with a bunch of rotten snot-nosed kids."

Johanna watched as Madge left the room, then she took one look around and closed the door with a small smile, Katniss was coming home and they would see her in four days. Barreling down the hall she yells out, "Come on Princess let’s get Pizza, we have a Saturday night rager to plan for the return of Brainless!"

Opening the door to her apartment after being gone for four years is like a huge weight off her shoulders. Dragging one of her rolling cases behind her she makes her way through the modest entrance hall, through the living room to the hall that leads to the bed rooms. Entering the last one on the left she instantly sees her new bed, nightstands and dresser, everything is set up and ready to go like she requested, which is good since she is exhausted. Walking back through the apartment to get the rest of the luggage as Peeta lugs it all up 3 flights of stairs she takes a look around. Even though she didn't live here very long before she left, it still feels like home, looking around she sees and feels the presence of Jo and Madge in this apartment and it is comforting. Pictures of the three of them on the wall, mugs on the counter that are very familiar and stuff that is just them is scattered around.

Getting to the door she sees Peeta carrying the last of their luggage up the stairs, he looks exhausted, she is too, but at least she was able to sleep a little bit on the plane, Peeta did not. He was pretty much awful on the plane, first she had to deal with the fact that he had to pack his weapons in a special case and check them through in the hold, luckily, they could come on the same flight and were labeled high priority, Katniss had them labeled as collector’s items, expensive antiques, not weapons. He does not like being separated from all his weapons, even his small sock knife wasn't allowed and it put him on edge.

Looking through the windows while they were waiting to board at the terminal put him off, "we are goin' to fly over the ocean in that?" When she answered in the affirmative he grunted in disdain and glowered at the plane. If that wasn't enough, he hit his head entering the plane after being
overwhelmed by all the people at the airport. Thank goodness Donall had the foresight to book them in first class, so there were fewer people to witness his mini panic attack when the plane catapulted down the runway and took off into the air. Then there was scotch, which Katniss thought might help him calm down. All that did was make him accuse the guy across the isle of looking at Katniss, 'I dinna like ye lookin at my wife like ye want to bed her'. Soooo, there was some apology scotch purchased for the guy across the aisle and Peeta also partook to the point which they became best friends, and as Peeta regaled his new best friend with stories of highland intrigue, Katniss took a nap.

When they arrived at Logan International she had to tear him away from David, the new best friend, because David was clan Munroe, or at least had some Munroe in him at some point in his ancestry. When they arrived at the bag collection belt, Katniss was relieved to find a man with a sign that said Mr. and Mrs. Mellark. He was from the Range Rover car dealership and had paper work for her to sign, so she put Peeta on the job to wait for their bags, how he was still drunk she has no idea, it takes a LOT to get him drunk. The car was forest green with leather seats and she could tell it was the top of the line trim package. When the salesman handed her the keys she was almost shaking because it was too much. Finally, they retrieved their bags got everything in the car, including Peeta, and made it back to the Apartment.

Now that she is there, and Peeta (sort-of) survived his trip across the ocean, she takes him on a quick tour of the apartment. She shows him the picture of she and her friends together and he holds her, knowing that coming home is emotional for her. It’s a little after one pm and Madge and Jo will be home after 5. Madge is a teacher at an elementary school and Jo is just starting her career as a lawyer as a junior associate at a law firm. Madge has an after-school program she runs and her school passes by Jo's firm, they carpool on Fridays, which is good because Katniss wants some time to settle in before she sees her friends and Peeta needs to sleep.

Entering her, well now their, room Peeta turns to her with a sad smile on his face, "I wasna verra good at the flying mo maise. I am sorry, I do love ye."

His confession is adorable, because yes, he was horrible at the flying thing, he has a right to be. It is a lot to ask of a man who just learned that flying was possible, let alone just learned that transport other than horses was possible. "I love you too, it’s ok. We won't have to fly for another year OK?"

"Oh Thank God", he exclaims, "We don't have to take one to see your family then?" the relief palpable on his face.

"Nope, just the car, let’s take a nap" she smiles at him as he bends down onto his knees in front of her and starts to remove her, shoes, socks then pants. Standing he removes his shoes and socks as well. Then he removes the rest of her clothing and then his, "I am tired, but I want to worship my wife first, if that is acceptable."

Nodding in acceptance she allows him to lead her to bed, he lays her down and worships her, his mouth slanting over hers in a searing kiss his hands wandering kneading her breasts. His mouth begins ghosting across her face to her ear then down her neck, reaching her pulse point he sucks lightly causing a moan to course through her body.

"I love your little noises, mo maise," he whispers into her skin as he makes her way across her clavicle licking, sucking and kissing his way down to her breast where he suckles her nipples, blowing gently after biting down lightly on one then the other, eliciting a slight squeak from her. "I love yer little mouse sounds" he teases her then she watches him as he makes his way down her body with his lips leaving a trail of fire on her skin. Nuzzling her center, his nose hitting her clit, starts the burning to quickly build. "I love the way ye smell, so earthy and something just ye, mo cridhe, and I love the way ye taste" he mumbles as his tongue takes the first lick.
"Peeta...oh...please" she begs, his tongue worshiping her and she is close, the pressure building until he sucks her clit into his mouth and she explodes with a prolonged groan as the waves coursing through her. "I love the way ye groan when I first enter ye" and finally he enters her, resting his weight on his forearms on each side of her head. His blue eyes heavy lidded staring down into hers as he slowly pumps in and out dropping sweet kisses on her nose and lips. Katniss lifts her legs and wraps them around him. Lifting her hips to meet each stroke so that he hits so deep she sees stars when she comes again, moaning his name. "You are mine wife" his declaration punctuated with a deep groan as he comes deep inside her, his face rapturous, eyes open as he jerkily finishes. Wrapping her into his arms, he holds her to him, exhausted, satiated and happy they fall asleep on their bed wrapped in each other bare to the world.

Katniss wakes to find a few hours have gone by and turns over to see Peeta sleeping like a log with a small smile on his face. Not wanting to wake him she slowly extricates himself from his grasp, he barely moves so she gives him a light kiss on his forehead. I need a shower, she thinks as she gathers her toiletry bag and begins to dig through her boxes for shorts and a tank. August in Boston is hot, luckily their apartment has central air, Mr. Undersee remodeled these brownstones years ago and made the apartments high end so he could collect a higher rent and attract a professional clientele.

The shower is heavenly and Katniss wrings her hair out and leaves it to air dry. Collecting what laundry she can find she then heads into the small laundry room/pantry that is located off the kitchen and starts what is to be sure the first of many loads. Heading back to the kitchen she fills and starts the electric kettle so she could make a pot of tea to put in the fridge so she can ice it down. Madge and Jo have been putting the packages she has been shipping to herself in her room; quietly she locates the one from Verizon and grabbing her small calendar/notebook heads into the living room. It doesn't take long to unpack the new phones which she promptly plugs in to charge while she sets about making the ice tea. Activating the phones doesn't take long, but she knows it will take time for her phone to upload everything from her old phone that she had stored in the cloud. While her phone is synching Katniss takes the time to set Peeta up with an itunes account and put important numbers in his. Texting her phone from his she then adds apps she knows he will need or just wants him to have. Switching out the laundry she heads back into their room to set about unpacking, quietly because Peeta is still sleeping. The jet lag, no sleep and scotch having put him in a coma. She can hear the front door open so she quickly leaves her room closing the door behind her, because Peeta is sprawled on their bed naked. And she knows if she doesn't get to the girls first they will not hesitate to walk into her room and that is a sight she doesn't want them to see, especially since they don't even know about him yet

Making her way down the she can feel the nerves start in her stomach, how are they going to take this? Madge and Jo have known her a long time, Madge since they were five, and this is not something she is sure they would even fathom her doing. It has been four years, she hasn't even seen them in almost two. Will their dynamic have changed? Will she not know them? Will they not know her?

When she walks into the living room her smile grows, Madge and Jo are putting their stuff away talking quietly, and they probably don't want to wake her up. Katniss is awake, and she missed her friends so very much so she catches their attention with a "hey guys".

"KATNISS!" Madge shrieks out at the same time Johanna booms out a jubilant "BRAINLESS!"
Rushing towards them Katniss finds herself giving and being engulfed in a massive wonderful three-way hug. Madge is squealing, Johanna is cackling and Katniss's laughter may or may not have some associated tears that she is desperately holding back.

"Oh my god Brainless, look at you" Jo booms out finally breaking the hug and holding her at arm's
length, "Dr. Brainless, it looks good on you."

"You cut your hair", Madge jumps in, "Look you layered the front, and it looks great."

Katniss just laughs at the two of them, "come on I haven't changed that much, look at you two. Madge you look gorgeous as ever and Jo you're growing your hair. Besides I had to change my haircut, the Dutchess Kate cut is so in in London, I just had to do it." Katniss is beaming at them, the butterflies are gone, nothing has really changed, and nothing can change their friendship.

"Oh my god, tell us everything, what have you been doing how was Scotland?" Madge continues to squeal out happily her arm still around Katniss touching her to make sure she is really standing in front of her.

"Screw that', Jo jumps in, "I want to know what you brought us from England."

"Katniss?" Peeta's deep voice, thick and scratchy from sleep and sounding worried is accompanied by her door closing and his heavy sleepy treads walking down the hallway.

"In here" she answers immediately almost forgetting that her friends are by her side as she is quick to answer him, quietly praying he is not naked.

"Mo cridhe, ye were no beside me" he rumbles as he walks into the room head down as he is buckling his kilt around his waist, "Ye ken I like to wake ye up wi' my tongue..."

"Peeta", she interrupts him mortified, looking up he sees her with Jo and Madge, both have frozen, mouths hanging open, eyes wide in complete shock.

"What the fuck!" Madge squeaks. While Johanna barks out "tell me that is my gift, please; tell me that is my gift."

Peeta is frozen standing in place kilt mostly buckled hanging low on his waist exposing his abdominal muscles and that delicious v that Katniss likes to lick. His hair is wildly disheveled and he looks freshly fucked and oh so yummy. Peeta seems to quickly come to his senses and Katniss watches as he puts on his most charming smile and quickly finishes buckling and tucking his kilt. Katniss takes a few steps towards him as she moves to meet him. Madge looks dazed and Jo, well Jo is looking at him like she wants to eat him alive.

Walking up to them he bows gracefully, his charm full on, "ladies, I apologize, I dinna ken any one else was here but mo bhean, or I woulda been more presentable. Ye must be Miss. Madge" turning he bows to her and takes her outstretched hand and instead of shaking it kisses the back. Turning to Jo he says "Miss Johanna" followed by the same courtly bow and a kiss on the hand.

Jo and Madge both turn to her and all she can think to do is raise her hands up shaking them in some sort of failed jazz hands and weakly says "surprise".

"I want one" Johanna states looking at her while Madge’s mouth gapes and then she grabs her left-hand screeching "What's this? Look at this!"

Gently she retracts her hand from Madge and goes to step back beside Peeta his right arm sliding around her waist. Madge is staring at her hand muttering and Jo is licking her lips and words like climb and tree and fuck are coming out of her mouth. "Guys!" she sharply says trying to get them to pay attention, both of their heads snap up to look at her. "Guys" she starts again in a normal tone now that she has their attention. "I want to introduce you to Peeta." Peeta smiles down at her and then he turns his attention back to them.
"Peeta?" Madge says quietly looking at him.

"Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark, Laird of Dalcross. Mo bhean has told me so much about ye bonnie lassies."

"Mo bhean?" Jo asks trying to replicate what he said, failing slightly.

"Aye, my Katniss, mo bhean, my wife."

The room is quiet as they stare at her; Madge is the first to break the silence, "Wife? As in you're married?"

"Yes" Katniss confirms in a quiet but confident voice.

At that Johanna breaks out in a loud cackle, "Oh my god! I don't think you need to be worried about Brainless being mad at you Princess. Holy shit; Brainless you married one fine hunk of man."

Katniss takes a look over at Madge who seems to be processing something, a slow smile creeps onto Madge's lips.

Johanna breaks free and walks over to the kitchen opening a cupboard she pulls out a bottle of wine, "Madge" she calls out, "Order Thai, lots of fucking Thai, we are gonna need Thai and wine to give Braveheart here the third degree to see if he is good enough for our Katniss, before I decide whether or not to kill him."

At that statement, Katniss turns to him leaning up on her tiptoes and gives him a soft kiss on his lips, "Peeta, why don't you go take a shower and put some clothes on OK?"

"Och, will ye be joinin me, mo maise?" his voice is low and so sexy as he slides one hand into her hair cupping her jaw in his large hand while the other slides round her waist to her lower back pulling her into his body and lips.

"I already took one; I'll just be out here. I put your stuff in the bathroom, I laid out a towel for you… and Peeta" Katniss pauses looking at him a little sternly, "please wear something under your kilt."

"Hmmmpphh, fine, only because I love ye" he grumps leaning down and gives her one last kiss turns and stalks off down the hallway grumbling about smashing balls.

Katniss turn to see Jo standing in front of her, hip out, toe tapping, arms crossed; Madge is across the room on the phone apparently ordering their Thai "What. The. Fuck." Jo barks out accentuating each word but a wicked grin is on her face, Katniss can't tell if she is angry at her or not.

"Jo, it's not that big a deal" she sighs at her. Jo turns and walks over to the counter and fills three glasses of red wine almost to the brim. Picking up one she promptly takes a large gulp as she hands another one to Madge who has joined her at the kitchen island.

"The Thai will be here in thirty" Madge states and then takes a long pull from her own glass before turning and addressing Katniss, "Not a big deal, Katniss? We didn't even know you were dating anyone. I didn't get to go to your wedding; I wasn't IN your wedding. Do your parents know you're married, does Prim?"

Defeated Katniss goes over and grabs the third glass and takes a sip, "No, no one knows but you guys, I wanted to tell you in person, I want to tell my family in person. Look guys this is a big deal for me, you know that. I have been waiting to find love, a love like my parents, and I have. It was important to his family that we get married before we left, so we did."
At that Madge reaches out and grabs her left hand again and brings her ring up to her face to study it, "Did he buy you this ring? It's Tiffany's isn't it?"

"Yes" Katniss answers Madge warily.

Johanna sighs and looks over at the blonde, "Madge you haven't been looking at engagement rings again have you?"

Madge doesn't answer; she just walks over to the coffee table and picks up a tablet and starts searching. "Madge, let's focus on the important things here. Like where the hell do you find a man like that? Katniss I get it, wanting to fuck that man blind, Jesus, the muscles, his blue eyes, those abs, his voice, I don't even know what he is saying with that accent, but it is sexy as fuck. But you didn't have to marry him to do that… Wait, are you pregnant?"

"NO! I am not pregnant. Jesus Jo, I was Peeta's" Katniss starts before she is interrupted by Madge.

"Is that a Soleste?" she asks lifting up her head and looking pointedly at Katniss

"Yeees" she answers uneasily, "you aren't looking up my ring are you?"

"Yes, I am" Madge answers pointedly, "What size is that stone?"

"I don't know, Peeta picked it out."

"Wait here" Madge directs and them as she goes marching off to her room and returns with a colored pamphlet.

"You have a pamphlet?" Jo sighs at Madge in exasperation, "Madge you know you need to get the guy to commit before you go picking out rings."

"Shut it, I was shopping and I happened to wander into Tiffany's and picked up a few things for reference, and right now I am glad I did."

"What does it matter what size it is?" Katniss asks her friend as she grabs her hand again and is holding it up to a size chart.

"It makes a difference", Madge says looking up at her, "I guess 2 carats." She then picks up her tablet again and starts tapping.

Jo takes over the conversation again, "I mean marriage Katniss? How do you know he isn’t using you for a green card or money? Can he get a job, is he even financially viable?"

"Fuck" Madge cries out startling them both, she looks up eyes wide "I think he’s financially viable Jo. Katniss that is a sixty-five thousand dollar ring."

"WHAT?" Jo jumps in, grabbing her hand and the pamphlet, then goes over to the tablet and grabs it from Madge and stares. "Katniss, that's a sixty-five fucking thousand dollar ring. Is that possible?"

"Yeah, probably."

"Wait, Madge? That car that’s parked in Katniss's space, the one I was going to get towed. You know the green range rover."

"Don't tow that car, it's mine" Katniss bursts out, interrupting them.
"Yours" Jo repeats, "the super fancy luxurious Range Rover is… yours"?

"Well, I didn't pick it out; all executives in his family’s company get one." Katniss breathes out.

"Mo maise?" Peeta's voice comes drifting down the hall. "I canna wear this" his voice is pleading as he walks into the room one of the t-shirts she bought him taught across his broad chest and powerful biceps, one of his newer lightweight kilts on. He is walking kind of funny, clearly uncomfortable. Leaving her friends she walks over to him as he runs his hand through his damp hair, “the shorts they are smashin my mmmmpphhh.” He complains lowly.

“Peeta, you put on the boxer briefs, not the compression shorts right?” She asks soothing him.

“Aye, but it’s smashin me, see?” He takes her hand and puts it under his kilt and places it directly on his package, his eyes are pleading with her to understand his predicament. The cotton does feel a little stretched out.

“Peeta you are fine” she replies removing her hand from his package and then reaches up to stroke his cheek, “the cotton will stretch OK, you are just a little more well-endowed than most men so we will find you a more comfortable kind.” Do they make special underwear for men with large packages? She questions in her head and then it hits her, Jo would know.

She turns to see that the two girls are looking at them; Madge is sucking down wine, while Jo is just smirking.

Crap, I'm not sure if I want to ask Jo this question, but Peeta looks so miserable so she just sucks up her pride and cringes slightly while asking. “Jo, do you know if there is special men’s underwear for…ummm…the well-endowed man?”

“God Dammnnn” Madge breathes out while Jo leans her head back and bursts out in laughter.

“Damn Brainless, are you telling me that what Blondie is packing is too big for his shorts?”

“The shorts are smashin my balls, and I dinna like it!” Peeta bursts out like a petulant child, “and my wife, says I haveta wear something under my kilt.” He then turns to her jutting out his bottom lip, “mo cridhe, can I please go take them off, I like being free, and not all smashed.”

“Fine”, she acquiesces, “But if I find something more your… size, you will wear them OK?”

His eyes light up in happiness and he picks her up around the waist and kisses her soundly on the lips. “As ye wish mo maise.” Putting her down he spins and bounds down the hall entering their room.

Turning back she sees Jo smirking at her, “to answer your question Katniss they do make under wear for him, now tell us. How big is big?”

To that Katniss smiles mischievously and whispers, “bigger then I have ever had or seen.”

“Bigger then Gale?” Madge whispers out her eyes wide in wonder, up until that point Gale had been the biggest Katniss had seen.

“Oh yeah, by a lot” Katniss gets a little dreamy for a second thinking about her husband, then she snaps back into focus when she hears Madge murmur, “Jesus that’s big”

“Wait, how do you know how big Gale is?” her eyes narrow as she stares at her friend and watches as a bright pink flush starts spreading over her friends pretty pale skin. “Oh my God!” Katniss breathes out a smile creeping on her face, “you finally slept with him! You have to tell me everything. Are you dating? Is it serious?”
Johanna jumps in “see Princess, I told you she wouldn’t be upset with you for screwing tall dark and handsome.”

Screwing up her face in confusion Katniss looks over at one of her oldest friends. “Why would I be upset? I mean it took me a while to figure out that you had a thing for him, which I am sorry for. If I had realized how much you liked him years earlier, I never would have let him convince me that he and I should try dating. I have no claim on him, nor do I want to. I’m happy for you Madge.”

At that point Peeta strides back into the room his gait more natural than it was before, and before Katniss can do anything Jo whirls on him and points to the couch menacingly barking out orders, “You, Blondie sit. You are going to tell us how you met and fell in love with brainless here”, she points at Katniss, “and convinced her to marry you. You will answer our questions about you, so we can decide if you are good enough.”

Peeta slowly sits down on the couch, looking at Jo and Madge a little uncertainly, his right arm shoots up and wraps around her waist tugging her down gently into his lap. Whispering into her ear he asks, “Bhean, dinna leave me alone with these lassies, the dark haired one is scarier than Delly when she would get all bossy.”

“Who is Delly?” Jo asks pointedly, they had heard everything he said, because they are right there.

“My little sister, Dolina” Peeta answers, “She is verra bossy and a little bit scary when she is tellin ye what to do.”

“Fine, good, a sister” Jo answers. “Now I want to hear how you met.”

“Aye well, I was takin a ride through the highlands to visit my Uncles, when I heard the most beautiful singing…” Peeta begins telling the story, he talks about how he rescued her and then Katniss threatened to shoot him. “I couldna help it, I fell immediately in love wi’ her. So then I had to follow her around Scotland, courtin her, and every day I fell more in love wi’ mo maise. I was no goin to let her get away, so I set out to ken as much about her as possible. We took long walks, and talked, we ate dinner’s together, had dates.” Peeta sighs and looked down at Katniss nuzzling his face into her neck for a moment, “I asked her if she would come wi’ me to Dalcross, my home, that I wanted to marry her, that I was goin to woo her, that I loved her. I wanted to bed her verra badly.”

Katniss butt in at this point, “it wasn’t hard to fall in love with him. Peeta is kind, intelligent and he listens to me, even when I talk about my science, which I know can get boring for most people. Peeta took the time to get to know me. I was apprehensive about getting married so quickly after meeting him, but I knew I didn’t want to say no. And when he kissed me for the very first time, I well… I knew he was the right man…the only man for me. I have never felt so alive from just a simple kiss.”

“Mo maise, kisses wi’ ye are never simple, I give ye all my love in every kiss and every touch.” Peeta responds to her, “you are m’anam, ye ken that.”

Turning back to Jo and Madge, the former is grinning the latter is all glassy eyed, Peeta continues. “When Katniss said yes, I took her home and she met my clan. My guardians said I couldna go wi’ Katniss unless we were marrit first and I dinna want to wait. So we talked to Father Innes and we waited the required three weeks so he could publish the banns. We went on more dates and I showed her around Dalcross, we went huntin together. My huntress even shot the buck for our wedding feast, and then we were marrit, this past June 30th, in front of God, my family and my tenants. It canna be annulled, we consummated the marriage that night, when my wife took my innocence.”
“Why wouldn’t your family let you leave without marrying Katniss first? You could have come back here and lived together and married here.” Jo asks carefully the lawyer in her coming out.

“We’el, I kent that Dalcross was mine, but I didna ken about the share in Mellark Distilleries & Exports or my trust fund. To protect me and my family’s business I wasna to be told or given my inheritance until after I was marrit. That way I couldna be taken advantage of, my guardians wrote up the marriage contract and made sure that the marriage was binding so it couldn’a be annulled.”

“I want to see this contract” Jo barks out, at that Peeta nodded and went to get it. Jo quickly whirled on her, “Katniss I can’t believe you signed a pre-nup without letting me or your Uncle Haymitch read it first.” At that Peeta came back in with the legal document and hands it to Jo who begins to scan it.

“Wait a minute”, Jo stops reading looks up at Peeta then back down to the document then back up to him. “This says that if you file for divorce or give cause for Katniss to file for divorce that she gets everything, your share of Mellark Distilleries & Exports, your trust fund, Dalcross and your title? The only thing you are entitled to keep is a job in your families company? Then it goes on to say that in case of dissolution of marriage that any children from this union are the only true Mellark heirs. If you were to remarry, that your clan would not consider it a valid marriage and any offspring would not be recognized as Mellark heirs? The only exception is if you become a widower.” Her voice has a tone of disbelief to it, “why would you agree to this?” Jo asks Peeta.

“That is the standard marriage contract in my clan. I dinna plan to divorce, my wife, nor do I plan to do anything to make her want to divorce me. I have always planned on being marrit only once, the church does not sit wi’ divorce or infidelity, nor do I.” Peeta states very plainly to Johanna.

“How much is this trust fund worth, how much are we talking about here.” Jo asks while looking at Peeta quietly observing him.

“Ahh we’el I maybe fell asleep when Donall was goin’ over the details, but I put Katniss in charge of our money.

“Katniss?” Jo asks looking at her.

“What” Katniss replies, knowing full well what Jo wants to know, “you know Jo it really isn’t any of your business.” Katniss starts to reply but the glare that Jo sends her way is so sharp she just sucks in her breath and answers. “The trust is just over 50 million pounds and Peeta is the Majority owner of Mellark Distilleries & Exports and Dalcross is a large estate and manor home in Northern Scotland.” Katniss paused and looked at them and then continued her tone changing from informative to pleading. “Please don’t talk about this with anyone; I don’t want people getting the wrong impression. I married him because I love him, not because of his wealth.”

Jo sucks in her breath through her teeth while Madge’s jaw drops open, “Please guys” Katniss asks her tone softer than before, “I trust you not to say anything.”

“We won’t, no we won’t” Jo breathes out handing the contract back to Peeta who gets up to put it away, “well at least we know this wasn’t a green card or a sponge off of you thing.”

At that the buzzer rings and Madge leaves to go collect the Thai, passing out plates and Napkins Katniss notices that Jo is quiet, too quiet for her. When the food arrives Katniss tells Peeta what the dishes are, warning him which ones are spicy, As they all sit down to eat in the living room around the coffee table, Jo look up her eyes trained on Peeta, who’s attention is on the food and on Katniss.

“Peeta” it is Madge who speaks up her tone serious, “you said something that I would like you to
clarify.”

“I will try my best Miss” he replies, putting his plate down and looking at Madge ready to answer her question.

“When you talked about the marriage you said ‘that it can’t be annulled because you consummated the marriage that night, when your wife took your innocence’.”

“Aye, I did” Peeta answers, Katniss looks over at him proudly he is so calm in the face of the Spanish inquiry.

“What did you mean, when you said ‘my wife took your innocence’?” Madge asks slowly, and she has Jo’s attention now, she has stopped chewing and is staring at Peeta intently.

“It means what I said; I was a virgin on our weddin night. Katniss said she didna mind, when I told her before we were marrit.”

“A virgin” Jo and Madge echo at the same time followed by Madge asking, “How old are you?”

“I am five and twenty, one year younger then mo bhean.” Peeta replies easily, while lifting Katniss who is seated next to him up off the couch and onto his lap.

“Holy shit, Brainless, you hit the fucking jackpot. I want one.” Jo bursts out then turns to Peeta, “do you have any brothers?”

“Aye, I did… but my family is gone.” Peeta says quietly then takes a deep breath and smiles. Katniss looks at him, knowing what he gave up for her; he gave them up, his family.

“Peeta has a large number of nephews though; I met them all at the highland games.” Katniss then launched into telling the girls all about the highland games, the clans, the competitions, the festival like atmosphere. The girls were fascinated with her stories of the people and the competitions.

“Wait, so you are telling me people still fight with swords and throw axes and do archery? And the men are all doing it dressed like that.” Jo asks teeth gleaming while pointing at Peeta.

“Oh yeah, I mean they aren’t trying to kill each other just disarm their opponent, but it is still pretty scary. Look, I’ll show you, I videoed Peeta in his match for first place.” Katniss gets out her phone and brings up the video and starts it for the girls.

When the video is finished, Jo looks up at Peeta who had been eating quite heartily, “Jesus you don’t like people saying anything bad about Katniss.”

Peeta looks up from his plate and fixes her with a stern gaze, “No, No lady should be insulted in the manner that clot-heid Fergus insulted mo maise. Especially not my wife, I willna tolerate that behavior towards my lady Dalcross. I gave my blood vow, that she has the protection of my name, my clan, my body and if need be, my life. Katniss is my wife; I will defend what is mine.”

“You’re all right Blondie.” Jo declares, "You know Brainless, I wasn’t planning on going out to your parents welcome home-slash-graduation BBQ on Sunday, but I think I want to be there now.”

They spent the rest of the evening laughing and talking, Madge and Jo getting to know Peeta and Katniss telling them about Scotland and England. Finally Katniss gets Madge to spill the beans on her and Gale.

"So how serious is it?” Katniss asks Madge when the topic finally moves from Peeta and her to
"Well we have been seeing each other off and on for about two years." Madge starts to explain.

"Two years?" Katniss breathes out in disbelief, "how come you never told me before now?"

"At the beginning it was more like we would just hook up occasionally, but we have been seeing each more often lately spending the weekend together every couple of weeks and we have been spending a lot of time together this summer, during my off time at work." Madge explains. Madge is a teacher and although she doesn't have to work most of the summer she does have to do a week or two of summer school. "I'm really hoping that we would start getting a little more serious, perhaps make this thing exclusive and maybe go on some real dates."

"Oh Madge, I hope so too, but don't, umm you know let him make the decisions. If you want something more exclusive, make sure you tell him. Gale is the kinda guy that just gets comfortable in a relationship. And as women our biological clocks are ticking a lot faster than men." Katniss advises she really hopes Gale isn't just using Madge for a casual thing, because she knows how much Madge likes Gale.

"What does that mean, mo maise, biological clocks?" Peeta interjects, so Katniss quickly explains the phrase to him. He sits pensively and looks at the ladies.

"I dinna ken if that is true. I want wee bairns wi' ye, I feel the longing for ye to be round wi' my child, I dinna want to be old wi' bairns. I want to be old wi' grandchildren." Peeta thinks for a minute then continues, "It may be that men need to find the right lassie to feel that longing though, whereas a lassie feels the pull without a man."

"I think my womb just imploded" Jo interjects, "and on that note I am exhausted. Shopping for Blondie in the morning?"
Katniss makes her way into the kitchen to see Jo and Madge sitting at the table their morning coffee mugs in hand.

“Morning” she yawns while reaching into the cupboard and pulling out her favorite mug. Pouring herself some coffee she adds some sugar and cream and makes herself comfortable at the table.

“I’m surprised you’re up” Jo replies smirking at her over her own cup of coffee. “I don’t think I have ever heard you make noises like that before.”

“Shut it Jo” she retorts and then quickly lifts her mug to her lips to cover up the smile threatening to overtake her face. Because, yeah, she probably never has made noises like that before, of course she had never been fucked like that before Peeta.

“Where is Blondie now? I am pretty sure he was awake earlier unless all that grunting was you…” Jo needles.

“He fell back asleep, OK? Happy now, little miss nosy pants?” she scowls at her.

“Actually, I am happy. I am happy for you. You look cheerful and satisfied; this is the post-coital look you deserve to have on your face. I mean after that disaster that was your first time, followed by what was the nice but oh so bland sex that was Darius, well…I am just happy for you.” Jo answers, stunning Katniss at the lack of lewdness and surprisingly caring tone in her voice. “Of course, you know we are going to need details.”

Katniss smirks because this is the Jo she knows, “Of course you do.”

“I want to know what it is like taking a guy’s virginity” Madge blurts out her face reddening. “I mean is it awkward and awful?”

“No, it was nice and sweet, I think male virginity is highly underrated.” Katniss smiles demurely at her friends, pauses and takes a sip of her coffee watching them stare at her intently. “What he lacked in experience he more than made up with enthusiasm and the ability to rebound quickly.”

“Damn” Madge mutters, “but did you have to teach him everything?”

“No, I mean he asked some questions and I answered them, but he’s a quick learner and wants to please me. I mean come on, sex is natural and instinctual. I think he enjoys seeing me orgasm as much as I like having them. And I swear I have never cum so hard. And he has never climaxed without making sure I have too.” Katniss looks back towards her room and lowers her voice slightly, “Look, I don’t know if he would be totally comfortable with me talking about our sex life. Peeta is going to stay here and get situated while we go shopping today. He kind of hates shopping and he needs to relax after the plane debacle, especially if he is going to survive going out to the bar.
tonight.”

“Fine, but if the guy is gonna stay here and we have to hear you two, then I want details.” Jo whispers at her menacingly.

Wincing in shame Katniss turns to her two best friends, “I am sorry for just dumping this on you; we are considering finding our own place. I promise and we’ll pay half of everything.” Katniss apologizes looking at both her friends, “I mean I am sure suddenly having a male flat mate thrown at you is an inconvenience.”

Johanna just barks out a laugh while Madge is shaking her head no, “Katniss it’s not an inconvenience, we missed you.” Madge replies, “Besides this is way better than the parade of men Jo usually brings around here, he is your husband, not some total stranger.”

“Hey, I wouldn’t talk missy”, Jo playfully chides her “it’s not like there haven’t been plenty of men doing the walk of shame after basking in the glory that is Princess Madge over the years.”

“Well in the meantime, if you need some noise canceling headphones let me know, I still have mine after rooming with you two over the years.” Katniss announces standing up, “now if you all will excuse me, I am going to go wake Peeta up so I can go take a shower. You know Madge, I never appreciated the size of the showers your father had installed here, but I am going to now.” With that she bounces off to her room and husband, not 10 minutes later they are in the shower. Peeta is on his knees and her left leg is over his shoulder while the hot water is cascading down over the two of them. And Katniss can’t really give a damn who can hear her when Peeta’s tongue brings her over the edge.

The Copley mall is busy, but the three girls easily move through the crowd from store to store. The first place they went to was one of those overpriced department stores that Katniss would never have purchased anything in before, but according to Jo they carry the special underwear. Katniss has a very red-faced conversation with the salesman about ‘pouches’, but the concept seems like it will work. And because there is no way Peeta is going out to the bar with them tonight without wearing something under his kilt, Katniss purchases a variety of the brands they carried for the ‘well-endowed’ man. Her embarrassment could have been worse; being married made it a little more tolerable, because the male salesman deals with wives shopping for their husbands all the time. Just as Katniss thinks she has escaped the store, Madge drags her to the jeans section or the ‘designer denim boutique’. The jeans here cost a lot, so Katniss just watches as Madge and Johanna tried on a few pairs each. Finally after Madge’s insistence that Katniss try on a pair of the overpriced denim because, “I promise you Kat these jeans do amazing things to your butt and legs” and she wouldn’t stop bugging her so Katniss tries on a pair to appease her.

“Dammit Madge”, Katniss mumbles as she admires herself in the three way mirror.

“I’m right aren’t I” Madge’s laughter floats through the changing room area.

“Yeah you are, crap now I feel like I have to buy these.” Katniss grumbles as she makes her way out of the stall to her friends, her cutoff jean shorts back on.

“Your husband will thank you later Everdeen” Johanna laughs, “Although from the sound of it he likes you best when you don’t have your clothes on.”

“Oh shut it and my last name is Mellark now”, Katniss replies, but there is no bite in her tone.

“So what was Blondie doing to you in your shower this morning to stimulate all that singing?” Jo jokingly prods as the three of them walk over to the saleswoman to purchase their items.
“The queen” she replies cheekily, because she knows it is a favorite position of Jo and Madge.

“Ohh Blondie is good with his tongue and needs a magnum?” Jo asks wryly.

“Yup” she grins back popping the p at them as she turns back to the counter handing the woman her credit card.

After Katniss finishes her transaction and moves aside to let Jo purchase her jeans, Madge suddenly grabs her hand and pulls it to her face. “Katniss is that what I think that is?” Madge asks while looking at her card. Her question has Jo turning around and poking her head in to take a look.

“Yeah, it is” Katniss sighs thinking, maybe I need to get another card just for everyday shopping, I’ll call Donall about this when we get back.

“You know what this means Undersee”, Jo says while smirking at Katniss, “it means Mr. and Mrs. Mellark will be taking care of tonight’s dinner and bar tab.”

“Fine Mason” Katniss snarks back at her, “but only if you call me by my formal title.”

“Oh, and what would that be? Mrs. Mellark?”

“You may call me ‘the lady Dalcross’’ at that Katniss sticks her nose in the air and pompously strides away, but doesn’t get two steps away before she busts out into uncontrollable laughter. “Oh God please don’t, that sounds so…so…BBC.” The three girls walk off in peals of laughter as they go to find a coffee shop so they can gossip some more about their lives.

“Katniss, can ye tell me again, who will be at dinner and then who will be out at the bar?” Peeta asks her as they get ready for the evening out. Peeta had spent most of the day unpacking and reading the history books Katniss had purchased for him in Oxford while she was out with the girls. Then she spent the remainder of her time unpacking while Peeta snuck kisses.

“Dinner will be us, Madge, Jo. Our friends from college Gloss and Cashmere, they are twin brother and sister. Jo’s latest man, Bernard, but he hates his name so everyone calls him Brutus, we knew him back in college and he and Jo have been going on and off for years, I guess they are currently on right now.”

“Did ye date any of these men?” he asks her in a soft voice.

“No, I think Gloss may have been interested at one point, but I wasn’t. He got over it quick enough; last I knew he was dating our mutual friend Enobaria. I don’t think she is coming tonight, but she might show.”

“Ye said there would be more people at the bar?” Peeta asks as he adjusts himself as he straps on his kilt. The underwear she purchased him was deemed acceptable, but she knows he would prefer not to wear anything. Looking up at him she smiles, he looks hot. Katniss had picked out a white t-shirt that fit him snugly in all the right places and one of his lighter kilts. His hair washed and brushed back wet had dried in beautiful waves. He was freshly shaven to nicely highlight his strong jaw line that just entices her so much that she wanted to lick it.

“The bar, mo maise?” Peeta asked again snapping her out of her inner thoughts and drooling session.

“Oh yeah, sorry, I just need to do this first…” she walked up to him and raised herself onto her tiptoes and kissed his jaw right under his ear.
“Ye can do that anytime ye like” he replies looking down at her his strong arms encircling her waist. 

“So the bar”, she starts as she goes back to brushing her hair. “Remember the guy I was telling you about, Thresh, the one from my high school that I sing with? His band will play in the early part of the night, and his girlfriend Rue will be there.”

“Aye, does that mean ye will be singin?” Peeta asks a glint in his eye.

“Potentially, if he asks me too, I haven’t sung with him or his band in years.”

“I love to hear ye sing” Peeta says as he comes behind her wrapping his arms around her and pulling her into him.

"I know, just let me finish getting ready." She drops her robe to reveal one of the new panty bra sets she had acquired in London.

"Och, are ye wearing that under ye clothing?” he all but drools looking at her, Katniss smirks to herself thinking that the saleslady was right.

"Yes, I am" she flirts shamelessly, "you will be the only one to know what’s going on under my clothes."

"You’re killing me, mo maise" he groans as he reaches out to grab her. Escaping his grasp Katniss wiggles her finger 'no' at him teasingly.

"My really good friend Finnick will be there too with his fiancée Annie, they just got engaged. I think you'll like him, he is a joker and an instigator, like Ryan. Supposedly, Darius will be there too with his new girlfriend, I think Madge said her name is Finch.” She pulled her shorts over her hips and finishes tucking in her orange frilly tank that Madge had made her purchase, 'because it looks fabulous with your skin'. "Just to let you know Darius and I dated in college, we broke up 5 years ago. There really wasn't anything there, he's a nice guy, but he and I together were bland."

"I think I remember ye tellin me about him." Peeta looks at her pensively almost nervously.

“Relax, Peeta, there is nothing for you to be nervous about, everyone will love you. Madge and Jo already do. Plus the only one you need to impress is me and I married you so….” She smiles sweetly at him and watches as he relaxes his shoulders and smiles back at her.

“Tha gradh agam dhut bhean”

Dinner was fun; they all met at a small mom and pop Italian restaurant in the North End. Once her friends got over the initial shock of finding out that Katniss had went ahead and gotten married they all had fun. Cashmere was upset that she never got to be a bridesmaid, but she did enjoy fawning over Katniss’s ring. As Katniss had predicted Gloss was way over her and was very much in love with Enobaria, he even asked Peeta how he knew Katniss was the one and how he picked the perfect ring. Most importantly, everyone liked Peeta, especially Brutus.

Apparently Brutus was a Maccloud or had Maccloud in his ancestry and was very interested in the Braemer games. Brutus competed in Highland games competitions that were held in America but he had always wanted to go to Scotland and compete. Then Madge had said something about how Katniss had a video of Peeta winning the claymore, so of course they had to watch it. This resulted in a very one-sided bromance that Brutus was quickly developing for Peeta and brought on a discussion regarding the other events that he won. And although Peeta tried to focus the conversation on the fact that Katniss was the first woman ever to win the open archery competition and that she did it with the highest score ever, Brutus kept bringing it back to Peeta.
“So you won, the Claymore, the sword and dirk and the wrestling?” Brutus asked.

“Aye” Peeta replied warily.

“Wait so does that mean that you are the current ‘lion of Scotland’? I don’t remember when the last person was able to claim that title.” Instantly Brutus was on the phone looking up googling the ‘Lion of Scotland’. “It looks like there haven’t been many men in the history of the games that have held that title, maybe three or four including the original one. It says here that when the games were brought back after they were banned and the title was given in honor of the original lion of Scotland, who was also a Peter Mellark. Apparently he was tall and strong for his time and dominated the games and he was nicknamed the Lion of Scotland, because of his hair.” Brutus paraphrased from the website he was reading on his phone.

“Aye, that would be my direct ancestor.” Peeta nodded at him, “It is said I look just like him”. He turned and smirked at Katniss as if to say, ‘I am him’. “The correct title is Leòmhann of Scotland; his nickname was Leòmhann, no lion.”

“Cool”, Brutus says and turns back to his dinner, “Maybe you can show me your Claymore sometime?”

At that statement, Jo burst out laughing at the obvious double meaning causing Brutus to turn red. All the rest of the table joined in and finished their dinners and gathered themselves up to head off to the bar.

It was still very early when the group from dinner arrived at the bar, Katniss pointed out Thresh and his band that were playing off to the side. Thresh was singing while playing bass guitar and the band was playing what she is sure is some of their own original music. They were good and had definitely improved in her absence. The last time she had heard them play was two years ago when she came home for Christmas. As they walk over to the bar she catches Thresh’s eye and he nods at her she smiles in return, he has been a great friend in her life. The group wanders over to the bar and Katniss sets up a tab for the group, at Jo’s insistence of course. Peeta was happy that they had Dalcross Scotch and of course had some, while Katniss just went for a cosmopolitan.

The group stood together at the bar and just enjoyed listening to Thresh’s band while continuing conversations from earlier. Brutus of course planted himself on the other side of Peeta, because the bromance was alive and strong.

“I am beginning to think that Brutus would rather go home with Peeta then with me.” Jo whispered in Katniss’s ear as she stood next to her.

“You picked up on the man-crush he has for Peeta huh?” Katniss teased her friend, “unfortunately for Brutus it is very one-sided, I am not sure how Peeta feels about him, but he is very averse to being buggered.” The statement just made Johanna giggled and they stood enjoying their drinks as they watched Thresh’s band finish their set and take a break and then go back to chatting heads together as her hand on her other side holds Peeta’s.

“Everdeen” the voice is low and deep and Katniss looks up at the greeting to see the mountain that is her musical friend before her.

“Thresh!” she says excitedly a huge smile on her face. “Good to see you.” Katniss quickly pulls Thresh in for a one-armed hug while still holding Peeta’s hand. “Actually”, she starts takes a big breath and then continues, “it’s Katniss Mellark now” as she tugs gently on Peeta’s hand to bring him forward. Thresh’s eyebrows shoot high with curiosity, but there is no judgment in them. There wouldn’t be, he was never the type of guy to make any assumptions about people, he had enough
people doing that to him all his life.

“Peeta, I want you to meet my friend Thresh Adams, he is the guy I told you I would sing with, we’ve been friends since we were about, what, 10 years old?” She looks up at Thresh smiling as Peeta holds his hand out to shake as he formally introduces himself.

“Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark, laird of Dalcross, ye can call me Peeta.” Peeta’s left hand is still holding on to hers tightly, and it is the only thing that lets her know he is nervous. Thresh is a big guy, granted it looks like he has lost some muscle from their high school days, but he is still big, you can’t hide his six foot six hulking frame, like you can’t hide Peeta’s broad shoulders and huge arms. And even if Thresh only has 2 inches on Peeta he is still an intimidating guy.

“So you’re married?” Thresh asks looking at her as nodding ‘yes’ in reply. “Huh well congratulations” he replies brightly, “I’m happy for you Katniss, although I thought I would get to play at your reception.”

“Well it was in Scotland…” Katniss breaks off when she sees a petite girl with wild curly black hair and huge round chocolate eyes slip up in next to Thresh. “Oh, you must be Rue!” Katniss exclaims. “Your pictures do not do you justice, nice to finally meet you, I’m Katniss Everdeen…er…Mellark now” she stammers greeting the woman.

“Oh, I know who you are”, Rue smiles back at her mischievously, “Thresh and Prim have told me all about you, and in fact we are going to your welcome back BBQ at your parents tomorrow. Plus, Prim just adores you and has pictures of you all over her dorm room. I’m so happy to be finally meeting you in person!” Katniss instantly adores Rue, she is warm and genuine and cheerful and beautiful, she is everything that Thresh deserves and she tells him so.

“Prim didn’t say you were married?” Rue says in confusion after Katniss introduces to the big Scotsman at her side causing Katniss to wince a little.

“Well that is because she doesn’t know yet, no one in my family does. We just got married a little over a month ago in Scotland and I plan on telling them tomorrow.” She looks and watches as Thresh and Rue each raise an eyebrow in a gesture that articulates ‘explain’. Katniss starts in on the story of how she and Peeta met, conveniently leaving out the time travel, Peeta chimes in with a few details of their first meeting and starts to talk about how he instantly fell in love with her when arms snake around her waist and she is lifted into the air in a huge hug.

“Kitty Kat!” her assailant yells out as if she didn’t know who would greet her this way and a huge smile overtakes her face. She laughs back as she looks at Peeta her eyes pinning him to his spot. His eyes look angry and his muscles are tensed ready to explode in violence at the person holding her.

“Put me down” she says as sternly as possible while trying not to laugh. As soon as she is on the ground though Peeta moves quickly his body between her and Finn, his arms crossed across his chest in a show of male dominance.

“Katniss, do ye ken this man?” his voice is low and dangerous and the brogue very prominent as he stares down Finnick who is looks shocked into silence, which is really a first.

Gently she places a hand on Peeta’s arm and says calmly, “Peeta, this is Finnick one of my closest male friends, remember I told you about him and his fiancée Annie?” At that she watches him visibly relax as he looks gently down at her a sheepish grin creeping up on his face “Och, Aye I remember.”
Peeta turns to Finnick, who is still quiet which has to be a new record Katniss muses, and formally bows to him then holds his hand out. “Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark, laird of Dalcross. I apologize if I scarit ye, I dinna ken if ye were hurtin mo bhean.” At that Finnick turns wide eyed and looks at Katniss then turns back to Peeta and grabs his hand in greeting, “Finnick O’Dair and I really am not one hundred percent sure what you just said.”

At that Katniss just bursts out laughing, “His Scottish brogue takes a little getting used too, Finn please meet Peeta, ny…husband.” At that Finn bursts out laughing, clearly thinking that she is joshing him, but then he notices they aren’t laughing and he awkwardly stops laughing and looks at her in amazement.

“Wait… really? You’re not joking? You’re married?” he looks at her then turns to look behind him mumbling “where’s Annie? I need Annie to hear this.” Katniss watches as he walks off quickly and returns with Annie in tow. “Tell Annie what you just told me”, he demands while looking suspiciously at Peeta who is beside her with his arm possessively wrapped around her waist.

Katniss introduces Peeta to Annie, who looks at Katniss open mouthed for a minute then turns to look at Peeta her eyes going up and down his body appraising him and then back to Katniss this time with a wicked smile. “Congratulations Katniss!” she cries out and flings her arms out and captures Katniss in a tight hug whispering in her ear, “Oh my god, he is fucking delicious, you are going to have to tell me how this happened.” Releasing her from the hug she then turns to Peeta, “Annie Cresta, Finn’s fiancée, I cannot wait to hear the story of how you two met and married”.

At that Peeta further relaxes one of his sweet lopsided smiles appearing on his face.

“Katniss” Thresh interrupts his deep voice grabbing the groups’ attention. “Although I would love to hear the rest of the story I need to get back out there for the last set. I was actually hoping you would join us for a few songs. What do you think some remixed Carrie and a few Joan songs for shits and giggles?”

“I’m a little rusty, you sure the guys wouldn’t mind?” of course she wants to play a few with them, she has missed this part of her life. Turning to Peeta she asks, “Do you think you would be OK if I left you here to play a few songs?”

“Aye, of course mo maise, ye ken I love to hear ye sing. I can take the time to get to ken yer friends.” He leans down and gently kisses her just as Johanna waltzes up to the group with Madge.

“Ladies, I’m going to sing a few songs with the band would you mind keeping Peeta company?”

“No problem brainless. Fish boy, glad you could make it! Did you hear the news about our little kitty kat growing up and getting married?”

“I did” Finn replies, “but I’m still a little confused about the whole thing.” he looks over at Peeta who is looking at Katniss like she is a goddess brought to earth, “but I may be getting an idea…”

“Come here Blondie”, Johanna tugs at Peeta as Katniss starts to walk away, “have you ever seen Katniss perform before?”

“I have heard mo maise sing many a time; she has the voice of an angel.” Johanna snorts at that as she looks up at the love-struck man who is watching Katniss walk to the makeshift stage area and great the band.

“Well she does have a beautiful voice when she sings hymns, but have you ever heard her rock out
before?” the look of confusion he gives her is comical, it’s almost like he doesn’t know what rock out means. “I didn’t think so; you’re in for a treat. She can sing rock like no one can.” She feels a hand at her elbow and hears a voice in her ear.

“Jo” Finn hisses, “What the hell is going on here? Is Katniss OK? Is this marriage a problem?”

Discretely she turns to Finn and whispers in his ear, “Katniss is fine, its good Finn, really it is. You can be happy for her, wait till she tells you the story, it’s so adorable. I wouldn’t be surprised if fairies and unicorns were born when they met. Seriously, I know it’s a shock, but its good believe me.”

“Oh thank god” Finn breathes out but he still sounds wary, just as Katniss steps up to the mic a guitar hanging round her neck.

Jo watches as Madge and Annie chat quietly, most likely about Peeta as she watches the two girls eye him surreptitiously occasionally. Looking around Jo notices that a fair number of the women in this bar are eyeing Peeta with interest and it’s no wonder, the man is damned fine. If it wasn’t for the fact that he is married to her best friend she would try and have a go. It is clear though Peeta has no notice for any other girls as his gaze is locked on his wife. Jo smiles, she likes that about him, it is like he doesn’t even know that women are flouncing in front of him to try and attract his notice, all he sees is Katniss.

“So, we have a special treat for you guys tonight” Thresh’s voice breaks through her thoughts, “a special guest who hasn’t performed with us for years is recently back from getting her PhD in England. Katniss and I have been singing together since we were ten years old and she agreed to sing a few songs with us tonight.”

As the small crowd in the night club applauds with drunken enthusiasm, Jo watches as Katniss turns to the mic and address the bar shyly. “Thanks Thresh, guys, everyone, please bear with me, I haven’t played with the band in two years. Needless to say, I’m a little nervous, so we are going to start with a song Carrie Underwood performed back in 2005 but with a harder twist to it.” At that Johanna watches as Katniss’s fingers peal out a guitar rift that introduces a rocked-out version ‘Before he cheats’ while Thresh starts up his electric viola and Katniss begins to sing.

The audience always stills when Katniss begins to sing, her voice deep and full with a raspy quality that she can affect into her rock songs. “A Dhia…”breaks through her thoughts and she sees the huge man beside her still and Jo watches as his mouth drops open his eyes wide in astonishment.

“What does that mean?” Jo asks Peeta nudging him to get his attention.

His head whips around as he stares at Jo then back at Katniss and replies “What?”

“What does… A Dhia…mean?” she asks attempting to pronounce what she heard him say.

They watch as Katniss plays the guitar and struts while singing, “it means ‘my god’.”

“She is really good isn’t she?” Jo prompts Peeta who for some reason is beginning to look panicky.

“Och, Aye…a little too good. All the men are a lookin at her with wonton lust. I’m no sure I like the way these clot-heids are starin’ at my wife.” He almost snarls the last sentence. Jo looks up at Peeta who has taken what looks like a predatory stance, ready to pounce if anyone gets out of line.

“Calm down cowboy, no one is going to do anything; she is just performing a song.” She can tell he is tense and she is a little worried about it, “Finn”, reaching over she grabs him and pulls him next to Peeta. “Finn, explain to Peeta here that Katniss is fine, that none of these, what did you say, ‘clot-
heids’ are going to bother Katniss.”

“Dude chill, Katniss is fine out there.” Finn says looking at Peeta warily, “Are you OK?”

Peeta turns and gives Finn an incredulous stare, “I dinna like the way these men are lookin’ at my wife.” Then he turns back to look at Katniss his eyes narrowed slightly as if he is sussing out any imminent threats to Katniss while muttering to himself in Gaelic.

“What language is that?” Finn asks Peeta. Jo isn’t sure if it’s true curiosity or if Finn is just trying to distract him.

“Gàidhlig”, Peeta responds, “Most people ken it as Gaelic, the language of the Scottish Highlands”. The song winds down and ends and the bar burst into cheers and they hear Katniss talk above the crowd.

“Thanks, what do ye say we kick this party up a notch with a little classic rock and roll.” The cheers continue as the familiar guitar rift starts up the familiar Joan Jett song. At that Madge dances up to Jo, “come on chica let’s dance.” Madge pulls her forward to the edge of the dance floor with Annie and Cashmere leaving Peeta with Finn, Brutus and Gloss back at the table by the bar and when the familiar words get sung by Katniss she can’t help but sing along to the classic tune while dancing.

Midnight, gettin' uptight, where are you?

You said you'd meet me, now it's quarter to two

I know I'm hangin' but I'm still wantin' you

Hey Jack, it's a fact they're talkin' in town

I turn my back and you're messin' around

I'm not really jealous, don't like lookin' like a clown

I think of you ev'ry night and day

You took my heart then you took my pride away

I hate myself for loving you

Can't break free from the things that you do

I wanna walk but I run back to you

That's why I hate myself for loving you

Ow! Uh

Peeta glances over at Johanna, Madge, Cashmere and Finn’s fiancée, Annie as they dance to the song being sung by his beautiful wife, they are dancing in the midst of the mob in front of the stage. The whole scene here is completely foreign to him, the way the women, and men, dress and act so casually is very foreign to him. The possibility that some couple might meet here, go home and bed each other and then never speak again is so against his entire being it hurts to even think about. As he scans the room and observes the behavior of the people in front of him all the while he keeps one eye completely trained on Katniss, completely alert for any danger that might present itself to her.

As he stands there surrounded by Katniss’s friends he also takes stock of Finnick beside him, Peeta is
unsure of him. He reasons the way Finn entered by grabbing Katniss from behind and pulling her into his arms initially put a very bad taste in his mouth, but Katniss has told him that Finn is a very good friend of hers. That the man has never dated her, of which he is very grateful, and that he is very much in love with his fiancée Annie, who Peeta can admit, is a very beautiful girl in her own right.

“Finn what’s up!” Peeta glances over to see a medium height red-headed man walking up to Finn with a huge smile on his face. Peeta can tell instantly the man physically is not a threat and he is trailed by a smaller moderately attractive woman who also has flaming red-hair. Irish, Peeta immediately thinks the red is too orangey to be the deep red of Scotland, or at least his mother’s clan.

“Darius! Good to see you man. When did you get here?” Finn replies easily, at that Peeta takes a little more notice of the newcomer, he is sure this is the man Katniss did date at one point

“Just in time to see our Katniss perform. When did you guys get here?”

“Mmmpphhh” Peeta can’t help but let out a grunt at his statement, "our Katniss what does he mean by that? She is my Katniss."

At that Darius must notice Peeta standing beside Finn, because suddenly Darius is smiling at him his hand stuck out in greeting towards Peeta.

“Hey, I'm Darius.” Peeta took his hand looking at the guy with suspicion.

"Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark, laird of Dalcross" he replies as politely as possible.

"What's a laird?” Finn asks including himself into the conversation.

"Och, we'el it’s a title, I am my peoples’ protector and provider. They work and live on my land and I protect and care for them, and they pledge their loyalty to me and my clan.'"

"Kind of like a feudal lord?” Darius asks, "Is that even a thing anymore?"

"Aye, it is. My proper name is lord Dalcross." The current song ends and Katniss breaks through.

"I think we all love a little rock and roll, don't we?" then Peeta turns back a small smile on his face as he watches her launch into another song.

_I saw him dancin' there by the record machine_

_I knew he must a been about seventeen_

_The beat was goin' strong_

_Playin' my favorite song_

"She's pretty good, isn't she?" Darius casually asks him, "Do you know Katniss?"

At that Finnick snorts out in laughter, "yeah he knows her."

"I ken her verra we'el" Peeta replies a big grin on his face, "Katniss is my wife." As soon as he says it the red-head’s eyes bug out of his head and he chokes on the beer he is drinking.

"WHAT?" he all but yells at Peeta.
"Och, ye heard what I said, Katniss is my wife." He turns to Darius standing up to his full height and folding his arms across his chest then gives him one of his grins that Katniss says looks more intimidating then friendly.

“How come I knew nothing of this? Finn did you know about this, did you go to the wedding?” Darius looks a little upset and the red haired woman at his side does not look happy with Darius's outburst.

"I just found out myself, Katniss said she and Peeta here would tell us the story when she is finished." Finn replies looking askance at Peeta.

_I love rock n' roll_

_So put another dime in the jukebox, baby_

_I love rock n' roll_

_So come an' take your time an' dance with me_

Peeta glances back at Katniss and notices that there is a noticeable group of young men gathered close to where she is singing, he really isna very comfortable with all those men so close to her.

_I love rock n' roll_

_So come an' take your time an' dance with me_

The song ends and he watches the large smile on her face as she scans the crowd and finds him their eyes meeting. "Thank you very much" she says, "for allowing me to play for you. Now we can get back to The Mockingjay's." She starts to remove the strap that has been holding the instrument that she has been playing and at that motion he turns to the two men beside him and bows as politely as possible.

"Pardon, but I need to escort mo bhean back here, we will return in a moment." At that he determinedly makes his way through the crowd his eyes never leaving his wife. By the time he arrives at the front of the crowd she has finished talking to the members of the band and is making her way happily towards him.

"Peeta" her smile is infectious and she is so joyful he canna help but return her smile and when she reaches him she launches herself into his arms ignoring all the men around them trying to get her attention. It is almost as if she dosna notice the way all the men here look at her. "Oh my god that was so fun", Katniss laughs and throws her head back as her picks her up, his hands around her waist holding her body possessively close to his, _mine_ he thinks as he glares at the men around them, causing them to scatter like baby bunnies. As he begins walking back towards her friends carrying her, her legs wrap around his waist as she giddily tells him how much fun it was playing with Thresh again.

He can see Finn and Darius have been joined by the rest of the group that they had arrived here with including Brutus. Peeta doesna overly like the guy, he seems excessively interested in Peeta's status as the Leòmhann of Scotland, but at least he is an ally of sorts.

"What did you think?" her voice breaks through his thoughts and he looks at Katniss smiling at him
her face just inches from his.

"I always like it when ye sing mo maise, but I like the song ye sang at our weddin." He answers and leans in kissing her lips gently, her lips respond to his as she sighs into his mouth. The way she is wiggling in his arms isna really helping him at all, but perhaps they can go somewhere private for a minute or ten.

"The songs were a little much for you huh?" she asks after pulling her lips from his and leaning her forehead against his, a small smirk on her lips.

"It wasna the songs so much as it was the suggestive nature of the songs and the way the men were looking at ye as ye moved up there. I didna appreciate the sexual way ye looked up there, ye ken ye are my wife." He tries to look sternly at her, but honestly the second she threw herself in his arms and the moment he kent how happy she was his anger dissipated.

"Of course, I know I am your wife" she answered softly her mouth puffing warmth against his ear, "I know you are the only one who gets to see what I’m wearing under my clothes."

"Mmmppphhh" he tries to protest but he can only manage the halfhearted response as his body gets warmer. "I need to find a place to be alone wi’ ye for a wee bit mo bhean. Ye are wigglin too much in my arms and it feels verra nice."

"Katniss" the call breaks them out of their intimate bubble, as Katniss turns to look at the group of people waiting for them her head craning to look over her shoulder. Peeta scans the group quickly, some look amused, a few are suspicious while Darius just looks downright irritated. Peeta figures that he must have never really got over Katniss although he did bring a girlfriend with him this evening. At that he shifts her in his arms slightly murmuring, "drop yer legs mo maise". Her head turns back to look at him his face and hers so close and as she drops her legs he pecks a kiss on her nose and he spins her so that her back is held close to his chest, his hands on her hips and only then does he slowly place her on the ground directly in front of him.

Katniss turns and looks up at Peeta after he places her gently on the ground; he is just adorable when he is possessive.

"I think we all deserve an explanation here, Katniss." She turns to see it is Darius who is speaking, _hey when did he get here_, she happily thinks but she is a little stunned by the vehemence in his tone as he continues. “What the hell; you go to England for four years and come back married and no one knows about it until you show up with this…this…skirt wearing dude as your husband? How do we know he isn’t taking advantage of you or something?"

“Oh my god, tell the story again Katniss!” squeals Cashmere, “they told us over dinner, I mean guys you really should have been there, it is so freaking romantic.”

“Show them the ring!” Madge bursts in leaning on her and Katniss can tell her friend is a little bit tipsy especially when she grabs Katniss’s hand and pulls her forward so everyone can see the ring.

“No show them the video of the claymore match”, Brutus busts in, “and dude it’s not a skirt, it’s a kilt. Really don’t be insulting to the Scottish heritage, Peeta here is the current Léomhann of Scotland, that means lion, it’s a really rare to be awarded the title don’t be dissin it.” Katniss hears Peeta chuckle slightly under his breath as Brutus butchers the pronunciation, but he only squeezes her tighter to him so she can feel his desire.

“Mo bhean” he breaths gently into her ear, “Alone?”
Gently she shakes her head, there really isn’t a place to go here and she hears him sigh in resignation as he straightens up behind her.

“Darius, when did you get here? It’s good to see you!” She smiles at her friend/ex and makes her way over to him giving him a quick half hug before looking at the pretty red-headed girl next to him. Her features are sharp and remind Katniss of a fox. Turning to her she flashes the girl a smile, “Hi, I’m Katniss and this is my husband Peeta. You must be Finch, I have heard so much about you.” She really hasn’t but the statement seems to make the woman relax towards her slightly.

“So, I think I promised you all a story?” She says turning to Finn, she is speaking loudly. Thresh and his band has resumed playing, but they are far enough away from the band and in a semi-quiet area of the bar. As she notices the semi-irritated to confused expressions of her friends she sighs inwardly to herself, I need a drink to get through this, turning back to look up at Peeta she asks him politely. “Peeta could you order me another cosmopolitan, heavy on the lime, at the bar?”

“Aye mo maise, I may get another whiskey?” he raises his eyebrows at her, his last statement a question, he knows they have to get up and get going early tomorrow to see her family before the party. Nodding her assent at his question she gives him a smile as he heads off to the bar, taking a deep breath she turns back to her friends and sees them looking expectantly at her. Well at least some of them are Gloss, Cashmere, Brutus and Madge are off to the side talking to themselves, when Madge sees Peeta head towards the bar Katniss watches as she calls out to him and follows him there, most likely to get her own drink. Finn, Annie, Darius and to a lesser extent Finch are looking at her expectantly and Jo just stands there with a devilish smirk on her face.

Katniss started telling them the story of how she and Peeta met. “OK so you know I finished my PhD work and defended my thesis in April? Well mom suggested that I spend some time travelling in Scotland, go see her roots, since I was already over there. So I did, on like my third week of travelling I got up really early one morning and went to see these Scottish ruins by myself, up until that time I had never had any issues travelling alone so I figured it would be OK.” She continued and described (leaving some parts out) the events of her attack and subsequent rescue, by this time Peeta had returned with her drink and interjected his description of her threatening to kill him with her bow.

“It was if the goddess Diana herself had come to earth and I instantly fell in love with her. So I decided to become her friend and escort her around Scotland.”

“On a horse?” Finn questions Peeta abruptly.

“Aye, we’el… I dinna ken how to drive, I dinna have to.” Peeta tries to explain.

“We only traveled on horse some of the time. The train system works really well there, you don’t even have to rent a car if you don’t want to, plus it was a different experience being with a native and seeing the terrain that way. Anyway that’s not important, so we spent a lot of time together talking, eating, going on dates etc…” Katniss continues with the story detailing how Peeta had asked her to marry him and how he took her to Dalcross, his farm, then how his family suggested they get married right away. How wonderful their wedding was, simple and perfect and Peeta talked about how Katniss shot the deer they ate at their wedding feast.

“Then Katniss popped Peeta’s proverbial cherry!” Johanna jumped in her voice filled with glee at being able to relay that information.

“WHAT?” Finn Annie, Darius and Finch all yelled out in unison.

“Johanna that specific information really isn’t relevant to the story.” Katniss chastises her friend,
“not everyone needs to know that.”

“Oh yes they do, I think it is very relevant.” Johanna argues back.

“How, how is it relevant?” Katniss counters.

“It shows that Blondie here isn’t a player, horn dog or that this was a lust induced decision.” Johanna declares emphatically but then her smile turns mischievous, “plus I just like to talk about this. I mean come on, when I met you; you were the most pure person I had ever met. You didn’t even want to talk about sex and you used to turn bright red and start stammering when anyone would talk about it. So I like to think about this scenario, it’s actually pretty funny. Who would have thought that someone that looks like Blondie here would be a virgin at 25?”

“You know maybe I don’t want to widely divulge the details of my sex life, perhaps that is something I want to keep between my husband and me.” Katniss countered back, she can feel Peeta getting tense behind her.

“You know the details of my sex-life” Johanna bites back.

“Jesus Jo, I couldn’t NOT know about your sex-life, even if I tried not to, you tell everyone, everything about it.” Katniss starts snipping at her right back.

“Mo bhean…” the hand on her hip squeezed slightly and Peeta’s voice was deep and authoritative, it was his panty-dropping tone, or at least it is to her. “Miss. Johanna, I dinna care if people ken I was a virgin before I married mo maise. I dinna think she cared that ye and Madge kent the information either, but clearly she doesna like that ye tell everyone. I ask that ye respect my wife and no talk about it, ye understand?” Katniss watches as one of her closest friends, the one who never gets embarrassed, seems actually embarrassed. Katniss is even more shocked when Jo nods in acceptance of Peeta’s request that she just stares at Jo, her mouth unable to create words. “Mo bhean would ye like me to continue the story?”

Peeta’s prompting whacks her out of her staring at Jo and she turns her attention back to the group at hand, who seem to be very interested in the whole exchange, especially Finn, in fact he looks like he is getting ready to say something, which is probably inappropriate and since half of what Finn says is inappropriate it is a good guess that what he would say would be so she jumps back in to finish up the tale.

“Why didn’t you wait and get married here?” Annie finally asks after Katniss finishes her story.

“We’el I dinna ken at the time, but I am an heir to Mellark Distilleries & Exports and a… what did ye call it, mo maise?”

“A trust fund” Katniss answers for him.

“Aye, a trust fund, my parents set it up so I wasna to ken until I was marrit, I didna think I could come to America with mo maise without bein marrit, and I canna be wi’out her. So we were marrit in Scotland by my clan’s priest and then I was told about the business and trust by the family lawyer. It makes things easier for us here ye ken?”

“OK, first of all” Finn starts out, “what the hell does ‘ken’ mean, it would make it easier to know what you just said.”

“Know”, Katniss replied quickly, “he didn’t know about being the heir or his trust fund.”

“OK, well what about mo maise or mo bhean, I’m pretty sure he is talking about you but what does
it mean.” It’s Annie this time that interjects asking politely.

“Och, mo maise just means my beauty and mo bhean is my wife it’s the Gàidhlig, ye ken.”

“Oh my god Katniss that is so romantic!” Annie bursts out then turns quickly to Finn and slaps him on the chest, “Why don’t you have any nicknames for me in another language? I want a pet name in another language, like French, how about French?”

“I don’t know French!” Finn cries out, “Why do you need one in French?”

“Mon amour” Peeta replies smoothly a beautiful Parisian accent rolling off his tongue.

“What?” Annie and Finn exclaim looking at Peeta.

“Mon amour it means ‘my love’ in French.”

“Ohhh Finny, I love it, call me that! Pleeeaaase?” Annie pleads, and Katniss knows Finn will do it because he will do anything for Annie.

“How many languages do you speak?” Darius asks inquisitively “and what will you do for work here in Boston.”

“I am fluent in English, Gàidhlig, French, Italian, German and a wee bit of Spanish, and that makes what five maybe six if ye count Spanish. I studied languages at Oxford; I have been told I have a talented tongue.” Peeta ticks them off as he tries to answer Darius question.

At his last statement Johanna snorts loudly and says, “We’ve heard the effects of your talented tongue.”

“Jo shut it” Katniss bites back, but she has to hold back a smile, because, yes, his tongue is very talented.

“I will be runnin the American office for my family’s business, it is located here is Boston. My nephew, Alex, is runnin it now but will be headin back to Scotland soon. I didna need to marry mo maise, I wanted to, I desired to, she is the most beautiful and amazing woman I have ever met. I had many a lassie interested in me back in Scotland ye ken, but I didna fall in love wi’ anyone until I met Katniss. I kent I had to have her, I had to marry her.”

“Huh and you feel the same way Katniss?” Finnick asked.

“Yes”, she sighs, “I have never felt this pull, this sort of physical, mental and emotional attraction or been this comfortable with anyone in my whole life. I knew I loved him fairly quickly and I figured why wait? If you know that it is right, you know, I’m not a naïve eighteen year old girl. I’m a 26 year old woman with a doctorate; I’ve dated enough to know what feels right and what doesn’t. When I thought about not seeing him, not being with him, well I couldn’t imagine it. I never wanted a huge wedding anyway, that’s just not me.”

“Well Katniss if you’re happy, I’m happy” Finn pronounced joyfully, “I’m just a little sad that I didn’t get to jitterbug at your wedding reception.”

“Hey, it could still happen. If my parents want to hold a reception, Peeta and I have no qualms about that. Then you can shake your booty all night long.” Katniss laughs at him shaking his butt in demonstration.

“Ohh can I be your maid of honor?” he asks affecting his best feminine pose.
“Ahh no, that would be Prim’s position, but you can be the flower girl if you want, but you will probably have to fight Posy for that one?” At that they all bust out laughing, even Peeta has a smile on his face, though he isn’t sure who this Posy is, it sounds like she might be a girl and he kens what a flower girl is.

Finnick watches as Johanna leaves the dance floor and walks over to their table to grab some water and quietly stands next to him. He has been watching Annie dancing with Madge, Cashmere, and Rue. Darius is dancing with Finch, but he is glaring at Katniss who is dancing with Peeta (although he is not very good). Brutus and Gloss are helping Thresh pack up their equipment in the Mockingjay van outback and most likely smoking something too.

“So what do you really think about him?” Finnick discretely asks Jo, although it really isn’t a casual question. He is a little concerned; Finnick has been friends with Katniss since their freshman orientation. He and Katniss had been put together in a small group for the activities portion of the day and he had been immediately drawn to the quiet serious and very attractive girl. Admittedly, he knows he went up to her because she was gorgeous, almost as pretty as he was, but her body language that screamed ‘approach at your own risk’ also was intriguing to him. He instantly started flirting with her, which was met by a scowl, and her rejection was a shock to him. Women always fell over their feet to get to him, so then he took getting her as a challenge.

It didn’t take him long though to completely change his tune, her brains, paired with her wry wit and her ability to overlook his physical attractiveness was so appealing he no longer wanted the challenge of conquering her. He genuinely wanted her to be a friend and not a fuck. After a period of time where Katniss was standoffish around him, where she was definitely on edge with regards to him, she slowly thawed and allowed him into her little world. And just as he suspected once you got into the little world of Katniss, she was a ball of fun and a fabulous friend.

Katniss was unlike any of the other girls he knew, serious and smart, but completely and wholly pure. It was her sense of self though and her fierce friendship that was worth the effort of stalking her on campus. After he ingratiated himself into her life, Katniss introduced her to the beautiful Madge Undersee by saying: “No Finn, Madge and I have been friends since Kindergarten and I don’t want anything to get in the way of our friendship, so just no.” And with those simple words from her Finnick put Madge Undersee on his short list of ‘do not fuck’. Later that semester Johanna joined their little group completing a group he didn’t know he needed. The four of them have always been there for each other, Finnick being one of the girls and the three of them the best wing ladies ever. Katniss was the one who helped him understand how to have an actual relationship when he first met Annie and fell head over heels for her. And he has missed her over the past four years while she was off in England getting her PhD, he knew she would come back different, but married? Cripes, it’s a lot to take in.

Turning his head Finn watches this Peeta guy, trying to get a read on him. He is good looking, almost as good looking as Finn is; Peeta’s strong, definitely stronger than he is; the muscles in his arms, chest and back are large. From watching the video he knows the guy knows how to wield a sword, which is a little weird, but Brutus seams into it, it’s some sort of Scottish thing. In fact he is fairly certain the guy can fight and he immediately decides he does not want to be on the receiving end of one of his fists. He is smart, Finn can’t even remember how many languages the guy said he is fluent in, not knows a bit, but full on fluent, he went to Oxford for crimency sake.

The hair and kilt are a little old fashioned, but they seem to work for him judging by the number of girls that are eyeing him like a piece of meat. The accent works for him to, judging by the way the ladies swoon when Peeta speaks, although Finn knows that’s common, even Annie likes the British, Scottish and Irish accents in the movies. The interesting thing is that Peeta does not notice or if he notices he doesn’t care about the way the other girls are paying attention to him or trying to get his
attention, his focus is centered squarely on Katniss. That’s not to say that the man is oblivious of his surroundings, it is the exact opposite, it is as if he is always aware of his surroundings.

This baffles Finnick a little; it isn’t as if they are living in a time where there is constant danger. They live in New England in a nice section of Boston and Peeta grew up in Scotland, which Finnick guesses is akin to growing up in Canada. People are happy, polite and have goofy accents; there is not a lot of danger. Nobody hears of the horrid living conditions in Scotland, that place is all about Scotch, rolling hills of heather, kilts and the bagpipes. Maybe back before the 19th Century the warring clans with intrigue and the imposition of the British rule it was a different and perhaps even a dangerous place. Finn narrows his eyes as he watches Peeta quickly scan the room his eyes immediately back on Katniss, the man is a warrior, and he holds himself as such.

“I like him” Jo starts slowly, “not just because he is a delicious piece of man-candy. He is clearly in love with our Katniss, and I don’t think I have ever seen her smile so big over a man. That smile, the one she is sporting right now, is the one reserved for Prim.”

Finn looks over at his adorable friend, “she looks pretty happy, yeah?”

“Yeah, but it’s more than that.” He watches as Johanna takes a deep breath, “I don’t think I have ever seen her in love before, and you know about her sexual history, the beginning was a little, umm painful, basically put her off sex for a year and then dull. And she is reserved as hell.”

“Yeah, I remember it took us a while to talk her into trying it again. Then, Darius happened and although I like the guy, there really weren’t any fireworks between the two.” Finn nodded taking a sip of his scotch and water.

Johanna looks at him and then a huge grin appears on her face, “Well virgin or no virgin, that guy right there” she points at Peeta who happens to be happily nuzzling Katniss’ ear as he stands behind her, “has our little Katniss singing so loud I need noise cancelling headphones.”

“Really?” Finn breaths out the word its long and drawn out and he looks at Jo who is nodding with enthusiasm.

“We had to go shopping and get him underwear for the well-endowed man, because he is used to wearing nothing under his kilt and the normal boxer briefs were, and I quote ‘smashin’ my balls’. I’m not kidding either.”

His mouth falls open and he closes it when he realizes Jo is smirking at him. He allows a large grin to creep onto his face, “Well good for her, she deserves it. It’s about time; someone can make our little songbird trill.”

Jo looks at him taking a swig of what he thinks is vodka or possibly gin and watches as she pensively looks into her glass studying the swirling liquid. “Seriously though, I read their marriage contract. It’s like a Scottish pre-nup; it is very much in her favor… legally. Basically if he does anything to cause a divorce, she gets everything. Her children are the only legitimate heirs unless, he is widowed and remarries, but even then her children are the primary heirs.” She takes another long pull from the glass, “I asked him why he would sign it, and his answer was along the lines of: That is the standard marriage contract in his clan. He doesn’t plan on divorcing her nor do anything to make her want to. And that he only plans on being married once, and the church does not like divorce or infidelity.”

“Wow” Finn smiles a little, “a guy with morals. He is a little old fashioned, but I think her ‘rents will like him.” They both smile and watch Peeta pick Katniss up and easily carry her to over where they are standing setting her down gently as if she is a precious delicate princess, and most likely she is to
Reaching for her drink Katniss smiles at the two of them, she is completely aware that Peeta is hovering right behind her. “Hey Finn, you’ve been holding up this table long enough.”

“Yeah well, I had swimming this morning and again tomorrow morning. I promised Annie I would save some energy for her.” Finn makes it a point to waggle his eyebrows at the small group.

Katniss just sighs shaking her head at him clearly attempting to hide her smile from him; he has annoyed her like this many times in his life. “We probably need to get going soon anyway”, Katniss says and he can hear the wistfulness in her voice. “We have to get up early to make it to my parents’ house for breakfast tomorrow. I think it might be a good idea to introduce them to my husband before the welcome back celebration.” Her eyes twinkle with mirth and her tone is teasing but Finnick can see the underlying insecurity in her eyes and body tension.

“Kitty Kat, you are 26 years old, with a PhD from Oxford for god’s sake, you have a faculty position at a prestigious University. You have been making decisions, good decisions for years now and you are an adult. So, you got married without any of us there and it is a little annoying, and I am pretty sure that is what may bother your parents, not your choice. Peeta seems like a good guy,” he nods to the guy behind her smiling slightly, “your parents will support your decision, maybe feel a little put out, but I am sure if you let them plan a celebration where I am the star bridesmaid everything will be fine.”

“Thanks Finn”, Katniss replies and gives him one of those soft kitty hugs he has come to rely on over the years, “you’re right, we’ll be fine.”
Chapter 19

The cool water rolls down her throat and soothes her voice, Katniss loves singing Joan Jett, but it can be hard on her voice. Pulling out her phone she checks the time, fifteen minutes and then we need to get going, she thinks to herself as she looks back at the mass of people on the dancefloor including her group of friends that she has dreadfully missed. Rolling up onto her tip toes she leans into her man and gives him a quick kiss on his chin. “I’m going to go dance for a few more songs before we have to leave, you wanna come with or stay here with Finn?”

“Ye go ahead mo maise I will just be waitin here for ye.” Peeta smiles softly at her. She is so very happy to have found him; it is so unbelievable a story that she wouldn’t believe it herself except that she experienced it.

Suddenly the familiar sound of the guitar rips through the air signaling the beginning of ‘American Woman’ and Katniss turns to Jo finding a smile that matches her own. “Lenny Kravitz” she shouts.

“Coolest Man Alive” Jo returns to her and the two run out into the circle to meet Madge who is dancing with Annie and Cashmere. The girls all squeal in delight and dance together.

“Fuck”, Katniss bursts out whipping her head around angrily to see a guy standing behind her with his back to her. Confused she turns back around to her friends and continues dancing, I swear someone just groped my ass, she frowns as she thinks to herself, maybe I imagined it. Then she feels hands on her sides and the body of a man grinding up behind her and the man is definitely NOT her husband.

“What the hell” she asks whipping around to see a guy behind her smiling down at her, his friends around them looking like they are trying to break into her circle of close knit girlfriends. The dude is dressed like some frat douche and he chuckles like one too as Katniss pushes him away. His hands go up in defense and he smiles cockily at her, “just trying to dance” he laughs as he reaches his hands back down towards her waist, “You don’t mind if me and my friends join you girls?” He leans in closer as she backs away and she can smell the liquor on his breath.

“Not interested” Katniss bites out pushing back, “none of us are” she speaks loudly and forcefully while glaring so he gets the drift quickly before…

Suddenly the hand that was attempting to grab her waist has a large hand gripping the wrist. “Get yer hands off” Peeta’s voice is forceful as he steps between her and annoying frat boy creating space and then stands defensively between her and the girls and the rest of the idiot’s posse.

“Back off dude, you don’t own her” the guy sounds like a kid next to Peeta, even though he looks around their age.

“I’m married” she tells frat douche ducking into Peeta’s side point at him next to her with her thumb “to him…and most of the girls here are taken.”

“So…that means you can’t dance?” frat douche says sarcastically giving Peeta the once over stink eye. “I mean your dude is wearing a fucking skirt and…is that a man purse?”

Katniss steps to the side slightly as soon as she felt Peeta’s muscles tense and bunch, this guy is an idiot, she thinks as she looks over frat douche’s semi-muscled/semi-fat frame. She realizes the guy is one of those types with a largish frame and what she calls fat muscle, where he looks stronger and
fitter then he actually is and unfortunately with this guy his feeble mind believes the lie his body tells. There was no way this guy could even come close to touching Peeta; he is a trained warrior, not some guy who lifts in a gym.

Luckily for frat douche Peeta just stares him down until a friend of frat douche, one who clearly has more brains then the hereformentioned butt-touching dance-attempting idiot, appears and drags him away to another more willing group of girls. Katniss watches as Peeta semi-relaxes, but his guard remains heightened she can tell as she sees him scan the room subversively. Glancing down at her watch Katniss figures it is time to call it a night, the rest of the group will most likely stay at the bar longer, but she and Peeta need to be up and out early. She would also like to show up at her parents’ well rested and not looking like she is hung over or exhausted.

Katniss takes Peeta around with her to say goodnight to their friends. She makes plans with Cashmere to go shopping for professional clothes next week. Cashmere has impeccable taste and is an executive at a woman’s clothing company. Cashmere promises that she will go over Katniss’s current wardrobe and then they will shop for pieces to augment the wardrobe needed for a faculty member at a renowned university.

Madge and Jo both promise that they will be at her parents’ house tomorrow. Her friends will be taking separate cars since Madge is planning on staying with Gale for a few days plus she needs to spend some time with her father.

“How many people?” Katniss cuts her off as her stomach starts to get sick.

“Thirty or forty maybe?” Madge muses at her, “but really the number seams larger then it is, I mean the Hawthornes alone are 6 and your family is four making it an even 10 so really she only invited twenty or thirty and some won’t come.”

Katniss quickly glances up with concern at Peeta thinking that the number of people might be too stressful, but he looks calm. Of course, dealing with people is his thing, he is congenial and people like him and he does have all that experience being a laird, so it probably won’t bother him as much as it bothers her. Katniss hates attention and tomorrow the focus will be on her, not only for her academic accomplishments but for her news. Although knowing that she has Peeta to share the attention with makes her feel a better.

They finish up the rest of their goodbyes quickly and head out the door with Finn and Annie accompanying them. Finn saying he has to get up early in the morning for swim. At the taxi stand they make plans to get together for dinner, just the four of them, a double date. And then finally, finally they head back to the apartment alone.

“I like yer friends maise they are verra nice and verra protective of ye.” Peeta says softly in her ear as they sit closely in the back of the Taxi, his deep voice buzzing in her ear causing goose bumps to appear.

“Yes, they are” Katniss replies to him in a voice just as sensual. “You did a great job charming them all tonight.”

“We’el they are important to ye so I want them to like me.” Peeta answers as the taxi pulled up to the apartment building.
“I knew they would like you” she replies as they made their way in to the building

As they enter the apartment Peeta following Katniss, she feels his arms snake around her waist pulling her body close to his. Peeta is nuzzling her hair from behind whispering sweet nothings in Gaelic. Over the past few months she has been picking up words here and since Peeta uses Gaelic a lot when they are intimate she is getting a pretty good understanding what he is saying in the throes of passion.

“How long” Peeta groans at her as he licks and nibbles her ear while his hands roam her body. “How long till the others are home?” his hands are more insistent now, one is palming her, while the other kneads a breast.

“An hour or two…maybe longer she gasps out” it is barely eleven and she is struggling to stay standing. Suddenly she is in his arms his mouth on hers as he walks back to their bedroom.

“Good, I want to make ye sing for me, mo bhean, and I plan to be as loud as I want when I plant my seed in ye.” Peeta sets her down on the floor in front of their bed and quickly strips her tank off to reveal the white lacy bra she is wearing. Groaning he stares at her unashamedly, “all night I waited to see ye in this again. Ye are so beautiful and all mine.” His hands slowly make work of her shorts revealing the matching barely there panties eliciting another groan from him that goes straight to her center.

Dropping on his knees in front of her, Peeta slowly and sensually removes her sandals. Caressing her legs he nuzzles her center and she can feel him inhaling her scent deeply and then blowing moist warm air that just increases her desire, her hands instinctually bury into his soft hair. Slowly he stands and his mouth is moving over hers so wonderfully Katniss wonders if she can stand. His mouth and tongue are on her breasts and she can barely contain herself.

“Wife”, Peeta pants into her skin as she struggles to remove his clothing while he worships her body. “Let me make love to ye till ye scream.” At that he sweeps her into his arms and proceeds to do just that.

The tendrils of sleep slowly pull back as she feels a tickling on her belly and then in-between her thighs. Blinking her eyes open to the burgeoning morning light her hands immediately travel down to grasp Peeta’s hair as he sensually kisses her sensitive skin. As she makes contact with his hair Peeta’s eyes snap open and catch hers, then with a mischievous smirk he spreads her folds and takes a long lick. Rolling her eyes back in her head Katniss tightens her hold on Peeta’s golden hair and braces herself for quite a ride. Peeta’s tongue works magic and just as Katniss is about to fall over the edge he pulls away and raises to his knees. He grabs her knees and pulls her up to him and enters her quickly and it didn’t take long until she is clenching his glorious cock as he shouts her name in ecstasy.

Falling down beside her they both work to catch their breath as he stroks her hair gently and whispers terms of endearments in-between landing soft feathery kisses on her face.

“I love ye wife” affection in his tone that make her heart leap. Glancing at the clock she groans in frustration.

“I love you too, husband, but we have to get going. I want to be there early so we can spend time with my family without any interruptions.” At that she rolls out of bed and extends her hand, “come on let’s take a quick shower and get ready to go.”

Peeta is sitting on the couch as he carefully ties his boots, Katniss has observed him since their
shower as he meticulously grooms and dresses for meeting her family. Peeta immediately chose a
dress kilt in the Mellark colors and pairs it with a white dress shirt. Then watching while she
dresses in a cute sundress as he grabs his dress jacket, pulls on those tall socks, garters and ties his
hair back in a cue. Then he starts to gather his weapons, first the decorative sgian-dubh is placed in
his sock and then he grabs his Claymore and straps it to his back.

“Umm Peeta?” Katniss asks looking at her warrior, “why are you dressed for a battle?”

“I’m no dressed for battle, no maise.” Peeta answers her confidently, “I dinna have my dirk or short
sword.”

“Then why do you have your Claymore and sgian-dubh? You don’t plan on injuring anyone at the
party do you?”

He laughs a great deep belly laugh at her, “No, I dinna plan on it, but I want to make a good
impression on your family. I am dressed formally as a man and a laird of my clan should when
meeting his wife’s family.”

“OK, just don’t stick anyone with a weapon.” Katniss giggles at him and returns to her room to grab a
white t-shirt and extra clothes for him to wear later at the BBQ figuring he won’t want to wear his
more formal coat and shirt while eating Hamburgers and hot dogs. Then she quickly stuffs a few
extra clothes in the bag for herself into their overnight bag and walks back to the living room just as
Madge and Jo came staggering out of their respective rooms and down the hall making a beeline for
the coffee that she had brewed earlier.

“So you guys are off?” Madge says almost moaning into her mug.

“Yes” Katniss said rinsing her mug and placing it in the dishwasher. “You guys will be there later
right?”

“Yeah” Jo said sipping her coffee carefully. “No way would I miss this, your parents’ shindigs are
the best.”

As they drove closer to her parents’ house Katniss can sense Peeta getting nervous. When they
finally got off the highway they entered her hometown Katniss took the time to point out the sights to
him. They drive past her elementary and Highschool and through the downtown where she points
out the local hangouts that she frequented as a teenager. When she finally pulled into the cul-de-sac
that her family lives on she begins pointing out homes and all the neighbors that lived in them.

At a little before 8 am she pulls into the driveway of her parents’ modest two-story home, it is an
older home built in the 40’s but her dad maintains it nicely and her mother’s gardens are beautiful.
The best part about their home is the land that their backyard abuts acres and acres of woods zoned
as undevelopable, making it feel as if they lived on a private estate rather than a two acre lot on a cul-
de-sac in a suburb town west of Boston.

Turning the key off she looks at Peeta as he sits there quietly looking at her childhood home, then her
head swivels back to the left to look at the front door, Katniss takes his hand and squeezes it gently
looking at the man beside her, “no matter what happens I am your wife”, she whispers into the early
morning air. A soft smile answers her and is all the courage she needs to open her door.

Climbing down out of her car she stops by the hood as Peeta crosses over the front to meet her,
strapping his claymore onto his back after it spent the ride in the back seat. Hand in hand they walk
to the front door. For a nanosecond Katniss contemplates knocking, but she never has and there is
no reason to start now so she opens the door and lets her and Peeta inside. Immediately the smell of
Bacon sizzling and freshly brewed coffee assaults her senses and she hears Peeta’s stomach growl lightly as she leads him to the back of the house towards the kitchen.

Stopping just short of walking through the doorway she quickly surveys the scene, her mother is standing at the stove her back to them and her father is sitting in his seat at the table his head buried in the paper a steaming mug of coffee in front of him.

“Good to see some things never change” Katniss says as she steps into the room with Peeta trailing behind her slightly, her right hand still tightly held in his strong hand.

“Honey!” her mother quickly turned off the burner as her father leaps out of his chair. Both of her parents are on her in seconds enveloping her in a hug that forces her to drop Peeta’s hand so she can hug them both back.

“I’m so happy you’re home” her father greets in her ear.

“Happy to be home dad” she says as she hugs them both a little tighter. Her parents release her and pull back both beaming at her with glassy eyes.

“Let me look at you, my baby all grown up.” Her mother’s eye’s tear up slightly as she notices her father stiffens slightly eyes glancing just behind her.

“Hello” her father says a little more formally releasing her even more to take a step back.

Katniss takes the opportunity to reach back her hand instantly finding Peeta’s and she pulls him into the room beside her.

“Mom, Dad I want you to meet Peeta Mellark.” And before she can even continue the introduction Peeta steps forward and nods formally to her parents as she had seen him do in Scotland.

“Mr. Everdeen, Mrs. Everdeen it is a pleasure to make your acquaintance. I am Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark laird of Dalcross of Clan Mellark at your service.” Peeta then bows deeply to her father and then takes her mother’s hand and respectfully brings it close to his lips, but does not touch his lips to the back of her hand out of respect for her status.

Her father nods at Peeta and narrows his eyes at him before turning those steely eyes on her asking for an explanation, while her mom seems overwhelmed by either his manners or sheer physical presence or possibly both.

Katniss opens her mouth, but words don’t really come out, her throat is suddenly dry. She is not afraid to tell her parents she just doesn’t know what to say…exactly. Luckily Peeta notices her gaping like a fish and always knows what to say or at least will always protect her.

Peeta’s arm slips around her waist in support, whether to support her or him, and he pulls her closer to his side. And then he opens his mouth

“I am verra pleased to finally be meetin the parents of mo bhean; my Katniss has told me many good things about ye.” Then Peeta’s stomach growls…loudly.

Her mother recovers first and ushers them both over to the table, “Oh my, you must be hungry, come in please sit and eat. Prim, Katniss’ sister, is still upstairs sleeping.” Her mother then turns to her, eyes wide in question, but she continues. “She, Rory and Vick were out late last night, I’m sure your sister will be down soon, she cannot wait to see you.”

Her mom watches Peeta pull out a chair for Katniss and her eyes soften in approval as Peeta
attentively guides Katniss down and pushes the chair in for her before removing his claymore and then sitting down by her side. Her father is already back sitting in his seat and is dreadfully silent as he stares at the two of them across the table.

“Katniss” her father speaks slowly turning his eyes to her before continuing to speak. “I was unaware that you are dating anyone, let alone in a serious enough relationship to bring him home.” He sits straight in his chair with his hands clasped in front of him on the table. Her father’s tone is measured, non-judgmental but he clearly wants answers as does her mother who is placing a platter of scrambled eggs on the table then stands behind her father a soft hand on his shoulder. Her father then turns to Peeta and addresses him in his best father voice, “I would like to hear how you met my daughter and a little bit about the man who my daughter has brought home.

“Daaad” Katniss starts, slightly insulted at the fact that she is not being trusted as an adult. “You do know I am 26 and have a PhD and a job at a University.” Oh god that sounds like a whiny kid, not an adult.

“Mo maise” Peeta says turning to her his voice soft and placating, “yer father has a right to enquire and ken who I am. Its wi’in his right and I dinna mind answering his questions, I expected nothing less.” During his small speech, her mother has softened and sits down beside her father and begins scooping eggs and bacon on plates for Peeta, Katniss, and her father before finally serving herself.

Katniss watches as Peeta in between healthy bites of breakfast tells her parents the abridged, pre-agreed on version of how they met, in his highland manner that entertains and enthralls all manners of an audience. Her parents smile and nod appropriately at how he came to her rescue only to have Katniss pull an arrow and threaten him.

“And she was the bonniest lassie I ever did see pointing an arrow straight at my heart, her eyes fierce and sparkling silver like the flash of a sword. I thought she was Diana or one of her wood nymphs risen to life, I was prepared to sacrifice my life to the goddess incarnate if it was her desire.” Her parents chuckle at that as Peeta gives her one of his looks that communicate how much he loves her before he continues the story.

“After realizing that Katniss wasna a goddess, I then offered my services as a personal tour guide. The stubborn Lassie didna quite agree wi’ me, but eventually I convinced her to let me accompany her to Castle Leoch and introduced her to some of my family…” Peeta continues the story talking about how he had fallen instantly for Katniss and made the decision to take the time to court her. He then talked about their walks and horse rides, he told them the first time he saw Katniss hunting in her deerskin and how he had to reevaluate whether she was a goddess. He tells them about bringing her to Dalcross to meet his family. Katniss interjects here and there during the story to add her perspective, how Peeta was a wonderful hunting partner, how he showed her around Scotland and how beautiful his estate was.

Peeta bends down and eats a second helping of eggs and bacon when her mother takes the opportunity to speak. “So now you are here visiting the US with Katniss as your tour guide? Are you two dating?”

Peeta puts his fork down gently and sits back in his seat; Katniss catches his quick nervous glance at her and she sees how anxious he is. Using the napkin on his lap he delicately wipes his mouth then places his left hand on her shoulder as if he is trying to garner strength from her touch and perhaps he is.

So in answer to her mother’s spoken question and her father’s probing eyes Katniss reaches across the table and places her left hand on her father’s hand clearly displaying her rings, although the large engagement ring with sparkling diamonds dwarf the plain wedding band.
“Ohh” her mother gasps her hand flying to her mouth and then delicately leans down and pulls Katniss hand up to look closer at the rings. “Its beautiful honey” Katniss sees the soft smile her mother gives her than Peeta, “you’re engaged.”

“Married” Katniss says softly and her mother and father look quickly at her. She feels Peeta’s hand on her back and as she peaks up at him she sees him smiling down at her softly giving her the strength she needs to turn back to her parents “Peeta is my husband. We married in Scotland and he has come here…to be with me …in Boston.”

“I canna live wi’out mo maise.” Peeta says softly looking at her in that way that makes her heart skip and thud faster in her chest.

“Ohhh” Katniss turns to see her mother’s hand is over her mouth and tears in her eyes. Looking over she sees her father is looking at them, his eyes have narrowed and his face is unreadable.

“How do I know you are good enough for my daughter” James Everdeen’s voice is edged in steel. Katniss tenses for she knows this tone, the quiet before the storm. “How do I know you aren’t using her, that you aren’t some scoundrel or con artist?”

“Daddy” Katniss dpeaks quickly her tone harsh and her voice loud ready for a fight, but Peeta’s hand on her shoulder and his words stop her from going off on her father.

“Mo bhean, it is fine.” Peeta then starts digging in his sporran while he addresses her father. “I am no clot-heid. I went to Oxford and graduated with a degree in languages and classics. I fell in love wi’ mo maise the moment I saw her, she is all I want in this world and will do anything for her.” At that he pulls out a paper and hands it to James, “This here is our marriage contract, it was written by my clan’s lawyer. Everything I own belongs to Katniss, she has my love, devotion and blood vow.”

Katniss and Peeta wait patiently as James and Lilly Everdeen read the contract in her father’s hands. Impatient as she is Katniss knows that her father needs to read uninterrupted.

James Everdeen’s eyebrows inch up as he reads through the contract that Katniss knows is highly in her favor. She watches as he looks at her mother to see if she is finished before he sets the document down beside his and then looks at Peeta his hard voice has lost some of its edge but not all.

“What will you do for work here in the US, this document is very much in Katniss’s favor, but are you financially stable enough to take care of my daughter and any children you may have together?”

Peeta coughs and his face tinges red in slight embarrassment, “Aye, I can support mo maise and any bairns we may have, she dosna have to work at all. I am the main heir to Mellark’s Distillery & Exports and will be runnin the US office located here in Boston. I have also given mo bhean control of my trust fund; she kens the specifics regarding those funds better than I. Here are the statements that Donall said to give to ye…I may have…fallen asleep when Donall was goin over the details…” Peeta cuts himself off sheepishly and blushes a deep red while rubbing the back of his neck.

Katniss chuckles at him and turns to see her father is not laughing but seems to have softened towards her husband. “Excuse me” she says and then gets up and goes to her father’s liquor cabinet that has long since lost its lock, Opening it she finds several Scotches including a 12 yr Dalcross, pulling them out she sets them in front of her father and bends down to point out the ‘Mellark’s Distillery’ written on the back of each bottle.

“Your family makes these Scotches?” he asks and Katniss can tell her father is having a hard time keeping his tone from showing that he is impressed.
“Och, Aye the Mellark clan has been making whiskey for hundreds of years.” Bending down Peeta pulls out one of the bottles he had remembered to bring with him as gifts. “We brought this for ye as a gift, it is the Dalcross Private Reserve, aged 25 years. It can only be purchased in Scotland.”

James Everdeen takes the gift and looks at it before gently setting it down beside him. Then her father takes the second set of papers that Peeta hands to him and begins to look them over. Suddenly he coughs and his eyes bulge out then he hands the papers to Lilly who immediately has a similar reaction while he speaks. “That is an awfully lot of zeros, I guess you aren’t with my daughter for money.”

“I can see that you love each other very much” her mother says quietly, “you look at my daughter in the same way that James looks at me.” Lilly Everdeen pauses and takes a deep breath and then continues, “But why did you have to get married in Scotland?”

Peeta looks over at Katniss and then answers for the both of them. “When Katniss said yes, I took her home and she met my clan. My guardians said I couldn da go wi’ Katniss unless we were marrit first and I didna want to wait. I ken that Dalcross was mine, but I didna ken about the share in Mellark Distilleries & Exports or trust fund. I wasna informed about or given my inheritance until after I was marrit, so I wasna swindled. My guardians wrote up the marriage contract and made sure that the marriage is binding so it couldna be annulled.”

“That is understandable” her father answers Peeta. “So, if you had to marry there why couldn’t you wait for us to come over so we could attend your wedding?”

“You know I’ve never wanted a large wedding.” Katniss replies noting the dampness in her mother’s eyes. “And I realized that I loved Peeta. I loved him like I’ve always dreamed about, always wanted to feel. I have always wanted what you and Dad have. I never wanted to settle for anything less. I just knew I couldn’t live without him.”

Her father the ever-perceptive man looks right into her eyes, those eyes that can get the truth out of any delinquent teenager let alone his daughter. “There is more to this story that you two aren’t telling me.” Her dad then turns to Peeta, “if I find out that my daughter isn’t happy or you coerced her in anyway…” he stops leaving the threat hanging in the air and then turns his piercing steel orbs on her. “I don’t know why you couldn’t wait for us.”

Katniss can see the heartbreak in his eyes and it only takes a sniffle from her mother before she breaks.

“You’re right there is more to the story.” She starts and then takes a deep breath her decision is made, “there is a very good reason why we married before we left. I want you to listen to everything I have to say, before you judge or ask questions.”

Katniss then launches into the real story starting with the stones and how they called to her. How she woke up disoriented and everything was different. How she was attacked by the two soldiers and Peeta saving her by killing them. How she realized she had been transported back through time to 1744. She goes into detail about their trip to Leoch and meeting the MacKenzie side of his family. How Peeta asked her to marry him and agreed to leave with her. She tells her parents of their subsequent trip to Urquhart and then Dalcross to meet his brothers and sister his nephews and clan members. Their marriage and blood vows on July 1 of 1744 and how they prepared his family to withstand the tides of time and war. She describes the physical pain of coming back through the rocks and their trip back to Dalcross. She describes Peeta meeting the descendants of his sister and brothers. How the Gordon’s had built a dynasty on the knowledge Katniss and Peeta had left their forbearers and how they were waiting for them to return. Finishing with the games and their flight back to Boston and then with a final statement, “look, Peeta and I would prefer to stick to our story
where we do not talk about time travel. You two and Peeta’s family, who have been preparing for his return all their lives, are the only ones who know the truth and it is better kept that way.”

Katniss talks for a good half an hour with no interruptions and when she finishes the silence that follows is deafening and makes Katniss slightly uncomfortable, she is afraid that her family will not believe her, then her father speaks.

“I have heard many stories of my ancestors told by our tribal elders about the power and magic of places where time and worlds converge. Although the logical part of my brain has always thought they were stories, my heart could feel their truth. I can feel the power and spirits in places during our rituals. I can feel the pull of the moon and hear the songs in ancient places.” Her father stops and then looks at Peeta and asks, “What year were you born?”

“I was born in 1719 the year of our lord.” Peeta replies simply.

“You gave up your family, your friends, your people, your home and everything you know to travel to a time and place you know nothing about. A time that is completely foreign to you and all you know?”

“Aye, I would give up anything but mo maise and a life with her. I will follow her anywhere to anytime she asks.” Peeta answers her father while placing his arm protectively and possessively around her shoulders, “I ken ye are angry, but I will no give her up. Katniss is my wife before god and my clan, our union was witnessed and consummated. I dinna believe in divorce and it canna be annulled.” Katniss holds her breath waiting for a response but what her father says surprises her.

“I am not angry” her father says, “Admittedly, I was initially upset, hurt and very wary since I could tell that we weren’t getting the whole truth. But any man willing to leave everything he knows and travel to a place so completely foreign just to be with the woman he loves is a man I can respect. A man I am willing to trust with my daughter.” At that her father stands and walks around the table and offers Peeta his hand. Peeta immediately stands and grasps her dad’s hand in greeting, but her father surprises them all as he pulls Peeta into a hug. “Welcome to the family…son.”

The smile that breaks on Peeta’s face is radiant and lightens up the whole room. In turn, her mother hugs him and thanks him for saving her daughter and for loving her as much as he does. Katniss hugs her father and mother as they both congratulate her and tell her how happy they are for her.

“You know” her mother says directing her comments to Katniss after they have all sat down and resume eating, well at least Peeta has, he is on his third helping. “The person who is going to be the most upset is your sister; she will be distraught that she doesn’t get to be your maid of honor.”

“I figured as much” Katniss says as she nibbles on some bacon. “Peeta and I have already discussed having a reception of some sort in celebration of our marriage. Prim can plan it to her heart’s desire, with me having final veto power of course. Peeta and I are willing to foot the bill as well.”

“That sounds like an excellent compromise” her mother agrees as she and Katniss begin to clear the table.

“Peeta” her father says standing, “why don’t we take a walk outside so we can get to know each other better.” Katniss watches as her father gives Peeta a smile of acceptance as Peeta agrees and stands, but before he follows her father to the back door leading to the back yard where he is waiting with the door open Peeta quickly walks over to her and gently kisses her on the lips.

“Tha gradh agam dhut mo maise.” And with another soft kiss to her forehead he spins and straps his sword to his back then follows her father outside.
Katniss and her mother wash and dry dishes at the sink side by side in peaceful silence, while they both watch their husbands talk outside. Katniss’ father a slim muscular man who maybe reaches 6 feet tall, with dark skin and hair next to Peeta with fair and golden coloring, all six foot four of powerful muscle and broad shoulders. The two men are opposite in personalities as they are in appearance, James Everdeen is reserved and speaks quietly while Peeta’s jovial nature and broad gestures are so very Scottish.

“He is very handsome. What did he say to you?” her mother says while nudging her shoulder mischievously in a gesture more like a sister than a mother.

“Yes” Katniss breathes out shakily because just looking at her husband as he talks animatedly with her father gets her worked up. “He said ‘I love you my beauty’ in Gaelic. I love his eyes” she says turning to her mother, “the blue is so brilliant and I can read all the emotions he is feeling in them.”

“I agree” her mother says “his eyes are captivating. His body also leaves little to desire, he is very sexy.”

“MOM” Katniss blurts out shocked at her mother’s statement turning to see the twinkle in her eye.

“Hey, I may be old, married and in love” her mom says giggling, “But that doesn’t mean I can’t appreciate a man whose body is a work of art. Beside I have always thought men in kilts are sexy.”

“Oh my god” Katniss giggles in shock, “please don’t tell me that is why we watched Braveheart so many times?”

“Potentially” her mom grins back at her. “So, tell me more about the two of you. Is your sex life good?”

Katniss can feel her skin heat up and knows that her cheeks have turned bright red under her olive skin. Looking down at her hands in the soapy water she takes a breath before she answers.

“The first time he kissed me, I felt as if I had never truly been kissed before. All other kisses I ever experienced before just… paled in comparison. I felt nothing and everything at once, my mind went blank but at the same time I felt every emotion, every nerve in my body tingling with emotion. I knew immediately that he was the one for me, we fit so perfectly and when he ended the kiss my body was just screaming for more.”

“Go on” her mother says smiling at her leaning back against the counter handing the towel to Katniss then crossing her arms.

Her eyes wander to the window and she can see Peeta draw his sword and hand it to her dad. They stand close together as Peeta points to different inscriptions and symbols on the sword, no doubt explaining their meaning to her dad.

“The second time he kissed me was after we were married, when the priest said he could kiss the bride. The first time we made love was on our wedding night when we consummated the marriage.” Katniss looks at her mother a little uncomfortable with the topic of conversation, but living with Madge and Johanna has loosened her up over the years. “He was a virgin.”

“Oh my” her mother exclaims as she peeps out the window. “Are you telling me a man…that looks like that…waited for his wedding night?”

Katniss just nods in response and she can feel a slight smile form on her lips, but before she can continue a noise calls their attention to the kitchen door that leads into the hallway. Katniss watches as her sister Prim, blearily eyed and no doubt hung over shuffles into the kitchen and heads straight
for the coffee pot.

Prim wastes no time pouring herself a cup of coffee and then quickly takes a long drink before pausing. Still looking in the coffee mug as if it holds the key to ridding her of the blinding headache Katniss is sure Prim has, her sister speaks in a raspy voice that screams ‘I drank way too much last night’.

“How much time do I have before you think Katniss will be here?” she grumbles eyes blinking as Prim takes another sip of coffee.

Katniss takes a look at her watch and then glances at her smiling mother before she speaks, “Oh about an hour and fifteen minutes ago.”

Prims head snaps up as she squints at Katniss before putting her coffee down and launching herself at Katniss. “You’re home!” Prim says loudly and then groans as she releases Katniss before rubbing her temple. A hand with two Advil in its palm snakes between Katniss and her sister has Prim groaning in thanks, “Thanks mom, I need those.” Prim quickly downs the 2 pills of mercy chased by a gulp of coffee. “Why I thought keeping up with Rory and Vick was a good idea, I’ll never know. Did you guys already eat? Where’s dad?” Prim asks as she sinks heavily down into a chair at the kitchen table.

“We did” Katniss says as she lowers herself into the chair across from her golden-haired sister as her mom places a plate of bacon and eggs in front of Prim before sitting down next to Katniss.

“And your father’s outside getting things ready for the BBQ this afternoon” her mother says in a semi-stern voice. “Something you promised to do before you went out with the Hawthorne boys.”

“I know” Prim says while delicately eating her eggs, “and I’ll get on that soon enough. Of course, now that Dr. Everdeen is home she can help as well, after all it is a party for her.” Prim looks up at Katniss smiling and Prim looks a little more alert then moments ago.

“You look different” Prim suddenly blurts out pointing the tines of the fork in her hand at Katniss while studying her. “You cut your hair differently and you’re wearing a skirt.”

“I did and I am” Katniss says picking up her coffee while smiling at her sister. “I’ve missed you little duck.”

“I’ve missed you too.” Prim replies “and I want to hear everything about Scotland. Was it fun? Did you do anything exciting there?”

Katniss releases a soft snort at the same time her mother does, she glances over at her mother and her mom starts chuckling the same time she does. It feels good to be home, Katniss thinks to herself.

Standing up Prim grabs her mug and walks over to the counter to pour a refill. On her way back to the table Katniss figures Peeta must have caught Prim’s eye as she glanced out the window because Prim suddenly stops and takes a step towards the window before pointing and stating, “What is that”?

“What is what, honey?” her mother says in a voice that conveys she has no idea what Prim is talking about but Katniss catches her eyes sparkling with mischief.

“Why is there a tall, extremely muscled, gorgeous, sexy, blonde man shirtless wearing a kilt swinging a huge sword around while dad watches in our back yard?” Prim is staring out the window, her mouth open and Katniss thinks her sister might be drooling. “Oh my god” Prim practically moans, “that is the hottest thing I have ever seen, please tell me I am not hallucinating.”
Katniss stands and walks over to stand next to her sister who doesn’t seem to care that her questions haven’t been answered as Prim seems to be in some sort of ogling trance. Katniss watches as her Peeta, who is the hottest thing ever, thank you very much, demonstrates something with his claymore for her father.

“Oh” her mother exclaims who has taken up residence peering out the window on the other side of Prim. “That is really ummm…quite the sight.”

“Mother!” Katniss can’t help but chastise her mother whose eyes seem to drink in her husband’s admittedly very fine form.

“Is that a six-pack set of abs?” Prim questions tilting her head left as if that will help her get a better look.

It is at that moment that Peeta glances up and must see all three of the women standing and staring out the window, lowering his sword he sends one of his big smiles towards them and waves waiting for Katniss to wave back before he turns back to James.

A light must go off in Prim’s brain or at least her hangover might have receded enough for her to be able to put two and two together because Katniss suddenly finds Prim’s beaming smile in her face. “You brought a man back from Scotland?”

And Katniss can’t help but smile back as she answers her little sister, “I did little duck.”

“Wow” Prim says as she turns back to the window in time to observe Peeta and their father wander over to a wood pile. Peeta gestures at her dad and then grabs an axe embedded in a stump and then immediately starts chopping wood as her dad walks smiling over to a pile of folding chairs where he starts to set them up around several tables.

Katniss, Lilly and Prim stand at the window quietly for a few more minutes watching Peeta’s muscles flex as he quickly begins making his way through the stack of wood.

“So is he your boyfriend?…” Prim says pausing for a minute. “A friend?… Is he single?”

No way in hell is he single; Katniss thinks her eyes seeing red momentarily before she takes a calming breath to answer her sister. “He is not single, he is mine.” Katniss says holding out her left hand for Prim to see before continuing. “I met Peeta in Scotland; we were married a month ago on his estate in Northern Scotland.”

Prim gapes at the ring like Madge did, her jaw open and almost to the floor before it snaps shut and she begins to babbling. “Katniss this ring is gorgeous, do you know the size of the rock and are those pink diamonds? Crap how much did this thing cost? Is that Platinum? Wait.” Prim pauses and then looks up at her, “did you say married?”

“I did”

Still holding her hand in a death grip Prim’s mouth flaps like a fish for a few moments before her eyes go back to the giant rock and she points to the small silver band. “Is that your wedding band?”

“Yes” Katniss replies gently prying her hand from her sister and removes the engagement ring which she hands to Prim then gently removes the small silver band to show to her mother. “It’s a family heirloom” she tells her mother as she discretely mouths ‘his mother’ while pointing out the inscription and date on the inside and then shows her the intricate vine design etched around the antique silver.

“Does his family know when it was made? Prim asks still clutching the diamond ring in her hand.
“It was made in 1719, for Iona MacKenzie Mellark, see the inscription here.” She shows her sister.  

“Wow” Prim says, “what about this ring? Is it a family heirloom too?”

Katniss chuckles at her sister, “not even close. Peeta bought that from Tiffany Co. about a week ago when we were in London.”

“Tiffany” her sister’s eyes grow wide. “Wow, wait…WAIT…YOUR MARRIED?”

Katniss figures everything must have entered Prim’s sleep deprived, slightly hung-over, diamond dazzled brain and realization is starting to hit. “Yes, I am Prim, Peeta asked me to marry him and the only way he could come with me was if we married in Scotland.”

“But…but…I am your sister” Prim exclaims her voice getting louder and more belligerent. “I have never met your husband and I wasn’t in your wedding. This is wrong. Mom, tell Katniss that she can’t do this. Aren’t you and Dad mad at her?”

“Prim, calm down” Katniss watches warily as her mother places a hand on Prim’s shoulder. “Your father and I have heard their story and explanation for the marriage in Scotland and we approve. We like Peeta and he is clearly in love with your sister and your sister with him.”

“But I WASN’T THERE” Prim shouts out clearly exasperated looking at her and then their mom wanting an answer from either of them, an answer she wasn’t going to get.

“I know Prim” Katniss says trying to soothe her sister, “but Peeta and I are willing to have a reception here and you can plan it if you want.”

“Yes?” Prim asks her eyes narrowing on her sister. “Am I in charge?”

Oh dear god, Katniss thinks, she can get waaaayyy out of hand if I let her, but she wants to placate her sister as well. “Yes, you can be in charge, but I have veto power and everything has to be within reason of course.”

Instantly the narrowed eyes and searching looks are wiped from Prim’s face and is replaced by the joyful expression that Katniss loves to see on her sister’s face.

“Oh dear god, Katniss thinks, she can get waaaayyy out of hand if I let her, but she wants to placate her sister as well. “Yes, you can be in charge, but I have veto power and everything has to be within reason of course.”

“Mom” Prim says almost a little devilishly, “do you and dad have a budget set?”

“Actually,” Katniss interrupts before her mother can answer. “Peeta and I will be paying for everything.”

The raise of a single eyebrow is disconcerting as Prim looks her over, her eyes flit back to the rings that now sit on Katniss’ finger. “So what is the budget?” Prim asks her.

“Uhhh” she tries to think, but Katniss has no idea what a budget for this kind of thing should be. “I don’t know” she looks at her mom, “how much is reasonable, mom?”

“Well” her mom starts while begining to organize the kitchen for this afternoon’s picnic. “Your father and I have some money saved for a potential wedding, but that was for the whole shebang. How formal do you want this event to be?”

“OH, NO” Prim butts in immediately “if we left it up to Katniss it will be a picnic like today. Just give me a number and I’ll work with it.”

“An average wedding costs about 25K.” her mother said softly knowing how much money affects
her oldest daughter.

“Oh, OK” Katniss said thinking before Prim interrupts her.

“Do you need to check with your husband?” Prim’s voice knocks her out of her contemplation. Twenty-five thousand dollars is a lot of money even with their wealth Katniss thinks it a waste, but she deprived her parents and her sister a wedding.

“No, I don’t need to check with Peeta” Katniss answers her sister’s question confidently. “How does 15 thousand sound Prim” she asks noting the question in her sister’s expression, “but that is a hard ceiling. Not any higher.”

“Are you sure?” Prim asks her.

Sighing she answers her sister, “yes I am sure. Now do you want to meet your brother in law?”

Prim emits a girly squeal that has Katniss cringing in pain in response, but she opens the back door and walks towards her husband with her sister hanging on her arm, literally hanging on her arm. When Peeta sees them approaching he puts down the axe and wipes the sweat that has gathered on his forehead with the back of his wrist. Again, all Katniss can think of when the scene unfurls in front of her is some BBC miniseries, like Pride and Prejudice with that super-hot actor, who is not as hot as her husband.

Her husband bows and formally introduces himself as he is apt to do. Prim gives her a ‘that is so hot look’ before she turns back to Peeta and starts talking to him. As Katniss had predicted Prim and he begin having a very animated conversation. Both of them have similar personalities, outgoing and happy, although Peeta’s is tinged with the reality of death and being raised in dangerous times.

Peeta grabs her waist gently and pulls her next to him so that she is slightly in front of him and his arms encircle her gently holding her to him. Leaning back into him is comforting and Katniss revels in the vibrations of Peeta’s deep voice resonating through his chest as he and Prim converse. Not really paying attention to the exact words of their conversation Katniss understands the general gist of their topic, their relationship. Prim is interrogating Peeta about everything; how they met, why he loves Katniss, where he went to school, what he does for work.

At some point her parents have joined the small group; hand in hand. Lilly and James listen in to the interrogation, while occasionally asking their own questions. At one point Prim asks about his home, Dalcross and is answered with a long wordy description of paradise on earth as he talks about the meadows of heather, fields of wheat, horses, cows and his people.

“Your people?” Prim asks confused.

“Aye as laird I am responsible for the management of my lands and tenants. I am responsible their welfare and provide them with jobs, they live on my land and pay rent to my estate. It’s a verra old system, but it still works. I provide for them and in return I have their loyalty their pledge to me as their laird and my clan.”

“Huh” Prim responds “so you have a title?”

“Aye” Peeta replies grinning, “I am titled Lord Dalcross and your sister is the Lady of Dalcross, but ye may call her lady Dalcross.”

Grinning with mischievous delight Prim giggles at her sister, “Lady Dalcross?! Oh Katniss it’s like a Jane Austin book.”
“Kind of’ she chuckles back at her sister leaning over and poking her in the belly.

“Och, your sister is verra much my lady.” Peeta protests squeezing her affectionately, “Ye should a
seen her at the Braemer games. She was magnificent, beaten’ all the men in the Archery
competition. I had to scare off her admirers that flocked to get her attention.”

“I want to hear more about the games.” Her father asks.

“Mo maise was spectacular” Peeta boasts making the story of her win sound like a harrowing tale
where the honor of Clan Mellark was riding on the outcome of the match. Her father looks full of
pride as Peeta weaves the simple story into an intricate dance using his unique way with words.

“Ahhh” Katniss exclaims giving Peeta a small elbow in the gut, “what Peeta isn’t saying it that he
won three competitions himself and has been bestowed with the title ‘the Leòmhann of Scotland’, a
very rare honor.” Smiling internally Katniss enjoys watching Peeta squirm in discomfort as she sings
his praises regarding his performance at the games. And although Katniss is not as good with words
as Peeta is she does manage to capture the attention of her small audience. Not one to be outdone
she pulls out her visual aid to her story and shows her parents and sister the claymore video.
Pulling into the familiar driveway he parks next to an unfamiliar dark green car. He has enough wealthy clients to have a vague idea how much a car like can cost. He can feel his knees pop and creaks that wander up his spine as he climbs out of the older well-kept Ford F-150 that works on the reservation and his thriving law practice. Looking at his older brother’s house makes him smile simultaneously feeling the joy of love of his brother and his family and the ache from heartbreak of a woman he lost long ago.

Turning he observes the familiar blue Camry that Katniss bought and paid for by herself, drove for years and has now been driven by Prim for the last four years. That car is in stark contrast to the forest green Range Rover with a top of the line trim package parked behind the Everdeen sisters’ car. He briefly wonders who the car belongs to before concluding that it must belong to Katniss’ friend Madge Undersee, although he could have sworn she drove a Volvo. Damn, he thinks shaking his head at his lazy morning, he had hoped to arrive this morning before any guests. Haymitch wanted to spend some time with his family before the distractions of others arrive. Most importantly he wants to spend some time with his favorite niece.

Haymitch knows he is not supposed to have a favorite, but he can’t help it, and it isn’t that he doesn’t adore Prim. He does, he absolutely adores Prim, and he loves that sunny blonde like she is his own and would do anything for her. He and Katniss have always had a connection; their closed off, shy natures are similar. Katniss looks more like he and James, darker complexion, silver eyes and long straight dark hair, she is the epitome of Wampanoag except for the delicate features she inherited from her mother.

From the time she was young Katniss has always hung with the men of the tribe, learning to hunt unlike Prim who wanted to be in conventional medicine like Lilly. So, because of her tomboy nature Katniss spent more time with the men and boys of their tribe then the women. Although her gift in tracking and her talent with the bow isolated her apart from her peers. The girls unable to understand her shy tomboy demeanor and the boys their fragile egos that couldn’t take her superiority in “male” activities, it only further solidified the strange bond he had with his niece.

Growing up Haymitch listened to his older (half) brother talk about his plans for furthering his education by taking advantage of the grants available for Native Americans. He stood silently as he heard the disagreements between James and James’s best friend Hunter Hawthorne about accepting the grants for education. Hunter called the grants charity to ease government guilt, while James called the grants recompense for the past atrocities against their people. They were splitting hairs, both of them, but in the shadow of their arguments Haymitch learned the value of words and well-crafted arguments. In the end Haymitch can say he still isn’t sure if the grants are blood money or recompense, but either way he is grateful that he took advantage of the opportunity. It is law degree paid for by those grants and his subsequent thriving law practice that allows him the time and monetary resources to serve underprivileged Native American clients, to help and give back to his people.

Haymitch has always known that Prim would be fine, her kind heart, intelligence and friendly open personality would serve her well in life, it was his fiercely independent Katniss that he worried about. He has not always worried about her, not even when he found her starving, hunting for food and trying to keep Prim fed with food from her bow after James was shot. It was her friendship and later relationship, no that wasn’t quite the word; it was her involvement with the eldest Hawthorne
boy that worried him.

Haymitch liked the Hawthorne family; they were good upstanding citizens and an old respected, traditional family of their tribe. Growing up he had watched Hunter metaphorically shoot himself in the foot many a time due to his strong opinions and his hot temper. When Hunter married Hazelle the tribal elders thought it was a good match and it was, Hazelle moderated Hunter’s temper enough so that he stopped commenting on James and then Haymitch’s choice to utilize the government assistance to become educated.

Haymitch watched Hunter’s family grow up alongside of James observing the interactions of the children and was dismayed to see Gale take an interest in his oldest niece. It’s not that he didn’t like Gale per se, he wasn’t a bad kid, but Haymitch could hear the opinions of his father in his words and the hot temper that mirrored his father’s during his youth. But it was the stubborn streak and confidence that the kid had inherited from Hazelle coupled with a wild streak and extreme good looks that caused Haymitch to pause.

Gale had always liked to be the dominant one when the children played while growing up and his alpha tendencies manifested even further when the boy hit adolescence and naturally he became a ladies-man. So, when Haymitch detected the shift in the way Gale regarded Katniss he worried that she would get lost in a relationship with that boy. That she would listen to him, instead of her parents about taking advantage of the opportunities before her and get the education that she wanted. Luckily Katniss also had a stubborn streak a mile wide and had already made up her mind to attend Harvard regardless of her ‘best friend’s opinions’.

Katniss had a few other friends besides Gale and it was her friendship with Madge Undersee and her musical connection with Thresh Johnson the school’s football star that prevented his emotionally shy niece from being a social outcast. He observed Gale pursue Katniss romantically for her four years at Harvard and watched as Katniss finally reject Gale for Oxford. Although that wasn’t what she was doing, that was what Gale accused her of doing, and it put a strain on his niece.

Oxford has been a god-send for her, the academic challenge for his intelligent niece notwithstanding, but emotionally. Oxford allowed her to grow and become even more independent. And when Katniss was last home over two years ago she was involved with a man on her terms that she then broke up with when she returned to Oxford. Katniss told her family that she wanted a love like her parents and wasn’t going to compromise until she found the man for her.

This confidence in knowing who she was and what she wanted gave Haymitch hope. But Haymitch still worried, she was his favorite niece after all and now that Katniss was home and single he worried that Gale, regardless that he has been screwing Katniss’ best friend, will hunt her again. Haymitch knew in his heart that a relationship with Gale Hawthorne would not make his niece happy in the long term, the Katniss he knew would get lost.

Walking into the quiet house he can smell the diminishing scent of bacon and breakfast. Surprised to find the kitchen empty he notices the counter littered with items that are clearly for this afternoons BBQ, but then his attention is caught by a bottle. “Crap” he grunts to himself, “that’s some damn fine scotch.” Peering closer to the label he notes that he has never seen this age and label of “The Dalcross” before and wonders if it one of those bottles that you must buy in Scotland, god bless his niece if that is true.

Laughter filters in from the open window above the sink and he immediately recognizes his older brother’s melodically infused voice. His brother’s talent was not one that he had inherited, considering they were half-brothers and James had most likely obtained that gene from his father since their mother couldn’t sing to save her life. Walking over to the counter he grabs a mug from
the cabinet above the coffee pot and helps himself to a mug of joe. Adding some sugar, he looks out the window into the backyard and startles slightly at the vision in front of him.

Outside by the woodpile that is now split and neatly stacked, a job his brother had asked his help to complete, James’ arm is around Lilly’s shoulders in a familiar stance that has comforted Haymitch for decades. Prim stands in front of her parents holding what looks to be a phone and all three are focused on what must be a video or pictures of some sort. Katniss stands to the side pointing and talking most likely narrating whatever she is showing her family. It is the 5th member of the party that catches Haymitch’s eye, he had expected to see Madge Undersee, Johanna Mason or even Finnick O’Dair standing with his family, but instead he sees an unknown man. A tall, muscular, blonde haired man in a kilt and no shirt is with his family, a huge smile on his face. Interesting, Haymitch thinks as he gets his shock under control, noting the way that the man is standing behind Katniss hands on her hips denoting familiarity and possession, so Katniss has brought home a man.

Narrowing his eyes, he immediately begins to scan James and Lilly for their attitude towards the man, instantly noting the laughter in their faces and the relaxed posture. Huh, James must like this boy if he isn’t aiming a bow at the boy’s face for touching Katniss, runs through his mind as the scene unfolds. James doesn’t even flinch when the blonde guy drops a soft kiss on the top of Katniss’ head causing her to lean her head back and smile goofily up at his face that is looking back at her with a similar smile.

Having disciplined his shock he figures it’s time to head out side to see what this new development is and how long this boy might be sticking around. As soon as he steps through the back door he sees the boy stiffen and notice his approach, although he doesn’t say anything Haymitch watches as the boy edges Katniss slightly to the side putting his huge body between hers and Haymitch as if he was the threat.

“Wuneekeesuq!” he hollers the Wampanoag greeting when he reaches half across the yard. Katniss’s head snaps up and a beautiful smile breaks out onto her face as Katniss greats him with a happy ‘Uncle Haymitch’. Breaking free from the blonde guy and the group it only takes her a few strides to meet him with a great big hug.

“I missed you” she says smiling up at him as she leans back her hands on his shoulders, her sweet smile so rarely given, yet so wonderful when seen on her face.

“Missed you too sweetheart”, he replies chocking back the lump in his throat. Glancing back over his shoulder he steals a glance at the big guy, noting how much bigger he is in person. The guy is built like the actor that plays Thor in those movies he secretly likes, because they are based on the comic books he read as a child. Of course, he would never tell his brother he watches those movies…

“Uncle Haymitch” Katniss exclaims all smile and warmth, more so then he has ever seen her, either Oxford was good for her or this guy was. “Let me introduce you to Peeta.”

Turning out of his embrace Haymitch watches as she grabs the man who has walked, no stalked really, up behind her a smile on his face. “Peeta this is my Uncle Haymitch, remember I told you about him?”

“Och, mo maise I remember.” The Scottish brogue and the use of a different language startles Haymitch for the second time today, but nothing could prepare him for when the boy formally bows and introduces himself to Haymitch. “Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark, Laird of Dalcross, but ye can call me Peeta”.

Shocked Haymitch blinks his eyes once twice and looks at the man in front of him his hand
extended. Slowly Haymitch reaches out and takes his hand, well now he knows where the fancy
Scotch came from. “You’re a Mellark, from Mellark Distilleries and Exports?”

“Aye, I am” Peeta responds to his question releasing Haymitch’s hand from a firm grip.

“Nice Scotch you brought” Haymitch watches the smile come over the boy’s face. “How involved
are you in the business?”

“Majority owner and I will run the Boston office; my nephew runs the company for me.” Peeta
answers him truthfully; again, shocking him. Haymitch hasn’t been surprised this much in forever.
Years of being a lawyer have honed Haymitch’s bullshit radar; he can detect a lie like no one else
can. But this guy being the majority owner of an internationally ranked and privately-owned
company is surprising to say the least.

“Haymitch” his niece says, a tenderness to her tone that has him focusing his attention on her. “Peeta
is my husband.”

OH, now **that** has his attention, he quickly looks at James and Lilly who seem happy with this
development. James is over protective of his girls and his acceptance of this means something to
Haymitch. And well now what Haymitch had been worrying about as he made his way over here is
rendered moot, mostly since now he needs to interrogate this guy and see to the validity of their
marriage.

Turning to Katniss he asks maybe a little too gruffly, “You sign a prenup?”

Her stubborn chin in the air Katniss meets his gaze head on steel against steel, “No, we have a
marriage contract.”

Thrusting his hand out he turns his gaze up at the boy in front of him, “let me see it.” Haymitch
watches as the kid digs through his Scottish man purse/fanny pack noting no tension in his shoulders
and face as he hands the offending papers to him. Roughly he grabs the papers and wanders over to
one of the tables and chairs set for this afternoon.

“Johanna’s already gone over them.” Katniss follows him defiance in her tone.

“Johanna’s been a lawyer about a minute compared to me, sweetheart.” He lets the acid into his
voice as he plops down into a chair takes a swig of his coffee and pulls out his glasses from his front
pocket and begins to read. The boy gracefully lowers his huge bulk across the table from him
confidently. Out of the corner of his eye he sees him tug Katniss onto his lap while watching him
read.

No, he thinks to himself shaking his head, *this cannot be valid. If it is, it’s one hell of a contract in
Katniss’s favor, he thinks as he begins to peruse the second set of papers, financials. Squinting he
looks back at the main account balance and then re-reads part of the marriage contract. Back and
forth he rereads them several times looking for a loophole or wondering if the number of zero’s he is
seeing is perhaps a mirage.

“These financials are in pounds correct?” Haymitch looks at this boy, no man, Peeta, across the table
and then at his niece perched happily in his lap.

“No” his niece responds.

Sitting back, he rubs his hands over his scruff thinking carefully on what to say next. “I didn’t
realize making scotch was so profitable.” **OK that’s not what he wanted to say exactly,** he internally
rolls his eyes at himself but it works because the boy gives him a grin bordering on feral.
“Aye it tis, are ye done wi’ the contract? Do ye need to talk with Donall my nephew and lawyer?”
The boy’s voice is low, strong, confident, and let’s a tinge of amusement shine through the heavy brogue.

“No” Haymitch answers, “so I am guessing that fancy car in the driveway is yours then?”

“Fancy car?” Prim’s high voice pierces through the quiet Sunday morning, “you have a car?”

Katniss laughs at her sister’s excitement, “yes we do and we have gifts.”

At that Prim grabs Katniss’s hand pulling her off Peeta’s lap tugging her in the direction of the garage exclaiming, “let me see, let me see and you have gifts?”

Peeta is out of his chair following his wife dutifully as Haymitch rises and walks up to James and Lilly following the three younger adults at a slower pace.

A steady hand, one that he has grown up with and depended on all his life, lands on his shoulder as they amble toward the driveway the gesture is followed by his brother’s melodious voice. “He is in love with her Mitch; he gave up a lot to be with her. He left his family and life behind to be with our Nissy. The way he looks at her, talks to her it is as if she is the center of his universe.”

A snort escapes him before he can stop it and Haymitch looks to see his brother’s looking at him in confusion, “Like the way you look at Lilly?” he clarifies causing Lilly to snigger quietly.

“Yes” James beams.

“What about her, she said she didn’t want to compromise…wanted a love like yours.” He asks.

“Have you seen her Mitch?” Lilly asks. “Just watch her around him and you will see how she just comes alive at no cost to who she is as a person. It may be quick, but it’s real, she didn’t even know about the money until after they were married. Hear them out and listen to their story,” she softly tells him as they walk around the corner of the garage onto the driveway where Prim is being just silly over a car.

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“Why don’t you boys set up the outside” her mom breaks in looking at her watch, “Katniss and Prim, I could really use some help inside getting the food ready.

“Sure” she replies still holding all the gifts her sister brought her from Scotland and England. Still in a daze she watches as her dad, uncle and her new brother-in-law head out to the back yard. She watches as her mother puts an arm around Katniss’s shoulders and walks with her towards the house away from the lovely car that now belongs to her sister. No one has told her the specifics regarding the financials of her new brother-in-law, but the ring on her sister’s finger, the 15K wedding budget, his job, and the car that is behind her as she follows the other women in her family into the house speak to either a very irresponsible person or someone with wealth. And from the little she knows about Peeta and from the lot that she knows about her sister, Prim is leaning heavily towards the latter.

Walking into the kitchen she is immediately given directions to begin cutting the potatoes for her mother’s red bliss potato salad and is handed a 10lb bag of pre-washed round red tubers. Looking over Prim sees that Katniss has already been assigned the task of cutting up peppers; the red, yellow orange and green crisp veggies surround the cutting board like the beginning of a rainbow. Her mother has a hunk of pink ground beef in a bowl and is sprinkling it with salt, pepper and the other spices that her mother adds to make the best burgers around.
“Is that meat from Chestnut farm?” Katniss breaks through the silence. Chestnut farm is a local family owned operation that has heritage meat and animals that graze and wander free.

“Of course,” their mother answers, smiling indulgently at the beef as if it is another person in the room. Then her hands delve into the hamburger deliciousness working the spices throughout in a move familiar to her. Prim opens the cabinet below her and grabs a second cutting board and a large pot then she selects her favorite chef’s knife from the block and begins to cut.

The kitchen is devoid of chatter but filled with the sounds of the three women working together and Prim can feel the relaxed atmosphere in the room.

“So, Katniss” Lilly breaks through the silent reverie, “please finish telling me about your wedding night, you know the conversation we were having before Prim interrupted us this morning with her hangover.” Red infuses into the perpetually tan skin that Prim has always been so jealous of. Katniss has always been able to darken in the sun in that natural way that people pay money to get sprayed on. It’s odd though Katniss has always been jealous of her fair skin that pinks and turns red in the sun. Prim knows that the red is not from sun but from embarrassment her sister’s eyes downcast and a familiar scowl on her face.

“Katniss” Lilly prods silently, “There is no need for embarrassment over sex, and you are a married woman. And I know that discussing your sex life with your mother is not cool or fun but I want to help. Make sure you are truly happy with all aspects of your marriage; besides I have thirty years of marriage sex experience.”

Prim’s ears are burning up for her sister at that statement and pity sits deep in her stomach. Prim knows how shy and uncomfortable her sister is about all things sexual. Prim wasn’t even aware of her sister’s experiences until a few years ago during a girls’ night where she visited Madge and Jo at their apartment. Several cocktails had Madge talking about her recent exploits with Gale and wondering why Katniss’s initial experience with him was so bad. Slowly throughout the conversation Prim gained the understanding that the first time Katniss had sex was a horrible experience, which had shocked Prim since Gale’s prowess was legendary in town.

“So” her mother continues with a prompt, “his kiss made you forget your name and he was a virgin on your wedding night. Were you OK? It wasn’t uncomfortable or painful because of his inexperience?”

“Virgin?” Prim echoes the word at her sister, “he was a virgin?” the last statement comes out of her like a squeak. Prim and her high school boyfriend had lost their virginities to each other at Senior Prom after dating since 7th grade. Caleb Armstrong is Katniss’s friend Cato’s younger brother, he had been a wonderful first boyfriend and although they broke up when he went off to play football at UCLA and she went to BU for college they remained friends. Their first time had been awkward fumbling and a little bit painful for her and embarrassing due to his quick turnaround. Prim couldn’t imagine being with a man that was a virgin when she wasn’t and that the Norse god out there waited till his wedding night.

Sighing softly Katniss puts the paring knife down and turns leaning her back against the counter and pauses before she speaks softly.

“Peeta was a virgin when we were married, he believes very strongly in marriage and children having a father. He never wanted to do anything where he would accidently bring a child into this world tethering him to a woman he doesn’t love.” Prim watches as a soft smile creeps onto her sister’s lips a light dancing in her eyes gives her sister’s normally impenetrable expression a softness that is rarely seen.
“Our first time was a little awkward because the consummation needed to be witnessed according to the customs of his clan. His family wanted there to be no reasons for anyone to contest the marriage of the Laird of Dalcross. It was awkward, but I convinced the head of his family to leave the room and to only look in to confirm the act, it was done with the most respect they could give us.”

At that her mother stops shaping the burger patties and Prim put down her knife, wow, is all she can think while her mother just murmurs, “that is a very old school”.

“But it was still wonderful” her sister says softly “he didn’t hurt me and was sweet and joyful, if a little awkward and desperate.”

“Has he been able to make you orgasm?” her mother asks looking concerned.

“Oh god yes!” her sister blurts out and then suddenly looks mortified at her own enthusiastic answer. “The first time was the only time he hasn’t…ummm…Peeta is a very quick study and is a very unselfish lover. He is also very ummm…blessed…in size.” Katniss chokes out and then quickly turns back to cutting the peppers.

“How blessed?” Prim asks because curiosity runs rampant through her, Meow be my middle name.

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“Just…he’s big OK?” Katniss blurts out at her clearly uncomfortable as hell her voice then softens a bit. “He is the largest I’ve seen, but really what we have isn’t about that. Peeta is special; he listens to me when I ramble about my science, where most people’s eyes just glaze over. He is romantic, sweet, funny and likes to watch me hunt; he doesn’t think it’s weird.”

“So, what you are saying” Lilly cut in gently, “is that you both are madly in love with each other and the fact that you have incredible sex is just a bonus.

Her mother’s statement causes a flushed smile to creep onto her sister’s face, “Yes” Katniss said quietly,” it’s like that.”

Prim stands quietly observing her sister retreat into her own mind, Katniss is all softness and smiles and at that moment Prim knows that she had never seen her sister in love before and now what she is witnessing is just that and it fills her heart with happiness.

The next few hours are filled with chopping, cooking and assembling all sorts of salads including potato, macaroni, green and fruit. Playful and friendly chatter filled the kitchen, Katniss telling Prim and Lilly about her experiences in Oxford and then Scotland. Laughter and love surrounded her as they catch up with each other’s lives, a mother and two daughters. Occasionally a burst of masculine voices or laughter filter through the window and the women stop and peer out the window to peek at the men; it seems to Prim that her new brother-in-law is charming her father and surly uncle.

The back door opens and her father walks in followed by Uncle Haymitch and then Peeta. Her father and Uncle Haymitch look fresh as daisies but Peeta is sweaty and smiling. Apparently, her father and Uncle used the young man for the heavy labor. Not that she would blame them, the man is ripped. A quick flit of green envy runs through her blood as she admires her sister’s husband his chest, abs and arms are glorious. He quickly walks across the room to where her sister is sorting paper plates and plastic utensils and bends over to kiss her.

Prim bites back a gasp at the sight before her, if Peeta’s chest is a nod to artistic masterpiece come to life with muscle and smooth male skin peppered with blonde curly hair, then his back is an ode to war and loss. Thick white scars covering muscles speak of pain and suffering, the lines crisscross over his back marring his perfect physique, looking around she sees the sadness in her mother’s face as well as the set lips of her father and Uncle.
Someone at some point purposefully hurt her sister’s husband. Quickly she schools her face understanding that this man does not want her pity, nor does he care about the marks that mar his otherwise perfect body. The idea that Peeta does not care nor hide his scars demonstrates a lack of personal vanity, it speaks volumes as to who he is a person.

“So, are you all done out there?” Lilly asks going over to place a soft kiss on James’ face. Prim watches with a small smile, she has always loved the easy affection between her parents. And like her sister Prim has always wanted a love like her parents and she refuses to settle for anything less.

“Yes” her father replies picking a small cherry tomato out of a greens salad and popping it into his mouth. “How much time do we have before the guests descend upon us to welcome home our daughter, Dr. Everdeen?” A low clearing of Peeta’s throat and a raised eyebrow on Katniss’s face has her father smiling and correcting himself the amusement in his voice shining through. “Dr. Mellark. It will take me a bit to get used to it Kat. I’ve been practicing saying Dr. Everdeen since you successfully defended your thesis.”

“He really has” Lilly teases her husband and their father. “We are just so darned proud of you honey.”

“Thanks mom, dad” Katniss replies then she turns toward their father and uncle with an amused cough, “so it seems you two had Peeta do all the heavy lifting.”

“I dinna mind, mo bhean” Peeta replies brushing a strand of Katniss’s hair back behind her ear. “Although I do need to clean up before your guests arrive. Did ye bring the extra clothes in?” Prim loves the soft lilting brogue it is sexy and soothing.

“Yes, I did, your bag is upstairs in my old bedroom.” Katniss replies and Prim can see Katniss is clearly hungrily eyeing her husband’s sweaty chest.

Lilly answers James’ earlier question by stating “People should be arriving in about 45 minutes. Katniss why don’t you take Peeta upstairs and show him your room and the bathroom so he can take a quick shower?”

“A shower?” Peeta states almost as a question towards her sister. “Will ye be helpin me?” the intent clear in his sweeping gaze over Katniss making her blush prettily from head to toe.

“Ummm...Come on let me show you where the bathroom and my old room is.” Katniss says visibly affected by her husband’s gaze and grabs his hand pulling him towards the stairs in what looks like a hasty retreat. Peeta seemingly unaware of anything else around him follows easily and only two steps up the stairs he quickly picks Katniss up causing her to emit a shriek and runs up the stairs with her over his shoulder and disappears around the corner.

“Humph, newlyweds” Uncle Haymitch grunts out while her mother and father stand in shock. “I suggest we start taking all the food outside” he continues gruffly, “if those kids are anything like you two were as newlyweds I recommend we give them some time and get out of hearing range.”

Prim looks up at her Uncle as he quickly moves to the kitchen with all three remaining Everdeens, including herself, follow him. Prim quickly grabs the stack of disposable plates and another stack of plastic cups and walks outside with alacrity.

Twenty minutes later a very composed and satisfied looking Katniss joins them in setting up the food outside. Not ten minutes after a smiley and jovial Peeta bounds out back to join them first stopping to kiss ‘mo maise’ on her head.
“What are you saying?” she asks her brother-in-law as she eyes him, or really ogles him, *is it even appropriate to ogle your brother in law?* Peeta is in a snug white t-shirt paired with a slightly different kilt. He also has on those high socks with little garters and boots, tucked into one of the socks is his knife. Peeta told her the name of it, but when she tried to pronounce it she failed miserably so Katniss whispered to just call it the sock knife.

“My beauty” Peeta replies easily while looking over softly at Katniss and brushing a loose strand of her hair back behind her ear. “Mo bhean, or my wife, is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen.” He explains to Prim as he follows Katniss around trying to do things for her.

“You should have seen Annie last night when she heard Peeta use his nickname for me”, Katniss jokes. “She got mad at Finn and asked him why he didn’t have a romantic pet name for her in another language. She requested French, to which Finn replied that he didn’t know French” Katniss giggles a bit, “so Peeta told them ‘mon amour’ is ‘my love’ in French. So, don’t be surprised if Finn is now calling her that.” The story causes everyone to laugh out loud; mostly Prim is fascinated by this giggling soft Katniss that allows Peeta to give her nicknames.

Not a minute later Prim hears the sonic boom of Johanna Mason announcing the arrival of her and Madge. The two friends immediately hug Katniss and greet Peeta before going over to chat with her parents. Jo then greets Haymitch and Jo immediately asks him for advice with a new case she is working, Haymitch has been a mentor of sorts to the young attorney. While Madge wanders over to her with a glass of Lilly’s famous spiked lemonade. Prim and she sit back and watch as various neighbors and friends wander in to the backyard.

“When will your boys get here?” Madge asks smirking as she delicately sips her lemonade.

“They are not ‘my boys” Prim quickly replies, she, Rory and Vick are like the three musketeers. They flank her in age Rory is two years older and Vick is two years younger, Rory is a good guy and works in his father’s auto shop, but Vick has bucked the trend and is in college, BU college of Engineering, on scholarship. While his choice raised the ire of his oldest brother thus straining the relationship with the oldest very alpha male Hawthorne, Prim is proud of him and his choices. Although she enjoys both of their company very much she finds that her feelings are sisterly. How could they not be, they grew up with the boys as extended family here in town and at the reservation. The three of them are close and the boys over protective when it comes to her dating, it can get annoying sometimes.

Madge snorts her response and raises her ‘oh yeah?’ eyebrow at her calling her on her bull, because perhaps they are her boys. Prim decides to ignore the eyebrow and go on the attack instead, “they will be here soon. What about your man?”

“Ugggh” Madge groans out, “He is not officially my man…yet…or hopefully...I don’t know. Gale has a problem with commitment. Anyway, he has to close up the garage with his dad and will be a little late; he should be here in about an hour.” Madge then pointed her beer bottle towards Katniss and Peeta who are talking with an elderly couple; they were friends of the family and neighbors and had been the first to welcome the Everdeens to the neighborhood with a good old-fashioned Apple Pie. “How do you like your brother-law?” Madge asked her.

“I like him so far” Prim replied “I don’t really know him though. I am pissed they got married without me being there.” She answered truthfully. “What about you and Jo, what do you think?”

“I like him” Madge said with a small smile.

“Me too” Prim sighed back, “although what’s the protocol on ogling your brother-in-law? I mean... look at him.”
Madge let loose a bunch of giggles, “you should have heard Jo when she first saw him. Wanted to
know if he was her present and then she kept mumbling that she wanted to climb him like a tree.”

“I wish I could’ve seen it,” Prim sniggers back.

“I’m happy for your sister” Madge continues looking out across the yard. “Peeta is a good guy, he
loves her and I have never seen her so happy or so open with a guy or with anyone really, except for
you.” Madge bites her lip and looks at her; Prim can detect the slight hint of guilt in her gaze.
“Honestly, I am a bit relieved too.”

“Prim sucked in a breath of realization, “so you think Gale would have…” she trailed off at the
thought.

“No…Yes…No…. I don’t know. Part of me thinks that he hasn’t committed because he has been
waiting for Katniss to come back and part of me thinks he is just averse to commitment or
commitment to me.” Madge sighed heavily her pretty shoulders bowing slightly, “I really like him
Prim, and I have since high school.”

“I know” Prim consoles as she sees Katniss and Peeta make their way to the back of the yard
walking with Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong, Prim expects to that Cato and his wife Clove accompanied
by Colt their 3-year-old will be along shortly.

“I don’t know any more about what goes on in Gale Hawthorne’s big fat stubborn head any more
then you do. But what I can say for certain is that even if Katniss hadn’t brought home Peeta she
never would have wanted to get back together with Gale. And she certainly would never tolerate
him using you as a substitute for her. She loves you too you know.” Prim replies sending Madge a
knowing smile just as she sees four Hawthornes enter the back yard. Waving brightly at them to
catch their attention Rory, Vick and Posy make their way over to where she and Madge are stationed
by the drinks and chips, while Hazelle walks over to her mother and father.

“How’s your head Primmy?” Rory teases as he lopes up with his long stride. He has reached Gale’s
height and Vick is just an inch shorter. The biggest shock is Posy, Prim swears that the girl grows
taller every time she sees her. At fifteen Posy has to be almost five feet ten and Prim thinks she
won’t stop until she is six feet tall.

“It’s fine now, no thanks to you two idiots.” She wrinkles her nose at them and then grimaces as the
two boys each pull a beer out of the color. Vick pulls out a coke and hands it to his sister who looks
utterly bored tapping away on her phone as a 15-year-old at a family gathering is apt to be.

After happily greeting Madge with hugs and small talk, although Prim notices Rory gazing at Madge
a little inappropriately, the three settle in next to them and scan the backyard while helping
themselves to some chips with Guacamole and salsa.

“Where’s the girl of the hour?” Rory asks his mouth full of chips and salsa.

“Close your mouth Ror. Don’t be gross” Prim chastises before she points over to where her sister is
talking to Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong. “Katniss is right over there.”

Rory and Vick eye’s both squint a bit looking where she is pointing while Posy just plays on her
phone.

“Chatting with the Armstrongs, huh?” Rory comments, “Hey that’s not Cato or Caleb. Who’s the
big blonde dude in the skirt, a cousin of theirs?”

“Nope” Prim replies popping the ‘P’ “that is Peeta. Katniss brought him back from Scotland.”
“Whoa” finally Posy speaks her mouth hanging open slightly, “is he that hot close up? or…”

“More so” Prim replies while Madge interjects a “yeah he is.” Prim takes a sweep over her brother-in-law. The white shirt clings to his muscles and stretches taught across his biceps and strains across his broad chest. The kilt he is wearing is shorter than the one he was wearing this morning and sits low on his hips, and does not dip down in back, revealing muscled thighs and calves

“What so…is he her friend? How do you bring home someone from another country?” Vick jumps in looking seriously confused about the whole thing.

“They met in Scotland…fell in love…and got married.” Madge elucidates before Prim can respond.

“What?” all three Hawthorne children burst out in confused unison. Rory the unofficial spokesperson for the younger siblings starts speaking slowly disbelief in his voice while staring across the yard at her sister and Peeta as they approach Hazelle.

“Katniss is married? To that guy over there?”

“Yes”, Prim responds happily, “she is happy and in love and so is he.”

“Wait…So you are saying that Katniss, your sister, one of the most cautious and reticent people I have ever known. Goes to Scotland for vacation meets and then marries a man she barely knows?” Rory continues shaking his head in disbelief.

“Yes” both she and Madge answer at the same time.

Vick pipes in next “Wait…this makes no sense. I mean it took Gale, who she has known her entire life, a year for him to convince her to date him. Sorry Madge. And she just marries this guy out of the blue and brings him home?”

“The fact that Gale had to convince Katniss to date him should have been a sign, Vick.” Madge bursts in her voice trembling slightly with justified peevishness, “Katniss may have been naive and unaware with regards to men, but she could never be considered stupid when it comes to her own heart. She only agreed to date him because she thought she would lose his friendship or that she owed him. They really weren’t meant for each other and she knew that long before he did.”

“Sorry Madge I didn’t mean to upset you”, Vick apologizes softly “and I agree they weren’t meant to be together, no matter what Gale thinks.”

“What do you mean by that?” Madge sucks in her breath turning to face Vick looking up at him challenging his statement.

“Nothing” Rory quickly butt in, “it is just that for so long Gale thought he and Katniss were inevitable, until she left for England and broke up with him.”

“They would have had to have been an exclusive item for them to actually break up Rory.” Prim jumps in while observing Hazelle’s stiff hug and forced looking smile as Katniss introduces Peeta to the woman they have thought of as a second mother. “Besides, Gale has been dating Madge for two years now. Do you really think Gale would make a move on Katniss again, a move that would have him effectively dumping her best friend for her?”

“God no!” Posy sniffs out in disdain. “That would be such a dick move and Gale would never do something like that. And if he did, Katniss would never forgive him for treating Madge like that.” The girl spits out with venom in her voice. “Besides I like Madge with Gale, and I hope it becomes permanent.” Her voice softens as she turns to Madge with girl-worship in her eyes. Posy has always
adored Madge and when she was younger she was convinced that Madge was a Princess.

Prim wonders when Posy grew up as she watches the couple advance towards the group hand in hand, Peeta looking down at Katniss as if she is the moon, sun and earth combined. Katniss releases Peeta’s hand and quickly strides the last few yards with a huge smile on her face her arms outstretched welcoming hugs.

“Rory, Vick, Posy, I’ve missed you” quickly Katniss hugs the three shocked Hawthornes. Katniss does not hug. “Posy, I can’t believe how tall you’ve gotten. I swear I still think of you as the little girl I used to babysit, not the high schooler who is taller than me.” Prim watches as the Hawthornes gape at this new side of her sister in amazement.

It wasn’t that Katniss is so very closed off or bereft of love and compassion; the opposite is true in fact. Katniss is full of love, compassion and loyalty and anyone that breaches her walls and enter the circle of people she trusts, have a loyal and reliable friend for life. Katniss is just not known for physical displays of affection, when people try to hug her she normally turns into a stiff tree.

The time spent in England has been good for her sister, Katniss had to make new friends and trust people she hadn’t known her entire life. Prim noticed the subtle change in her sister when she was last home two years ago. Apparently Chaff her friend from Oxford was very touchy feely and that had helped her sister; since he wasn’t going to hit on her, she was able to relax a little. Her relationship with Edmond had helped loosen her up a bit as well; again, her sister had entered a relationship that became physical without any of her oldest friends nearby as a pillar to lean on. Although Prim is positive that Peeta is responsible for most of her sisters less closed off demeanor. Love looks good on her.

“So” Katniss addresses the group blindly stepping back into Peeta’s chest knowing he was just there, his left-hand curling around her waist, an easy smile that turns content when Katniss leans her head familiarly back between his defined pecs. “I am sure that you heard the news from Madge and Prim, so I guess introductions are in order: Peeta this is Rory, Vick and Posy Hawthorne. Guys, this is Peeta, my husband.”

As is his custom Peeta steps forward keeping his left hand on Katniss’s arm, he shakes hands and introduces himself formally to her friends that are close enough to be family. Posy all but faints on him, fluttering her eyelashes and turning red as a teenage girl is apt to do when faced with a male specimen that is Peeta Mellark.

“Wow” Rory says while shaking Peeta’s hand, and although Rory might be an inch taller and Vick is Peeta’s height it is clear how much broader shouldered he is then the Hawthorne boys. How much more muscled, more mature and how he seems to emit a more raw male essence, Prim wonders if it is his age or his experience in life that projects this sense of male and predator. “Katniss married, it’s a little bit much to take.”

“Not really” Katniss answers with a smile, “I am just lucky to have found the man I am supposed to be with.

“Mo bhean is tú mo chroí agus anam” Peeta gazes adoringly down at Katniss whose quicksilver eyes sparkle back up at him clearly understanding what he just said. Prim only recognizes the words ‘Mo bhean’ which she knows means ‘my wife’; she sees Posy practically swoon as Peeta swoops down and quickly but softly kisses Katniss.

“So” Rory interjects clearly taken off guard and discombobulated. “What do you do for work? Umm… Prim said you came from Scotland, what will you do?”
“Aye, I am from the highlands and left my estate wi’ my nephew. I will be runnin the American branch of Mellark Distilleries and Exports in Boston.” Peeta answers easily a smile on his face, “and a’course takin care of mo bhean and any wee little bairns she is willin to give me.”

Vick scrunches up his face an turns to Katniss, “so are you?” his question fading into the afternoon air.

“Oh no” Katniss shakes her head vehemently “not until we are ready.”

“Ahhh” Vicks easy smile returns and his shoulders relax slightly.

“Katniss said I get to plan their wedding reception” Prim bursts forth. The statement causes Madge to squeal out asking to help.

“Of course,” Prim wiggles her eyebrows at Madge, “I’ll need all the help I can get making sure that Katniss doesn’t try and turn it into an outdoor BBQ.” This statement causes Madge to laugh; Prim has always thought that Madge’s laugh was lovely. Her uncontrollable giggles start a domino effect and within minutes everyone is chuckling.

“EVERDEEN” the familiar loud deep male voice burst through the yard catching their attention, the outburst is quickly followed by another “EVERDEEN!” This time a higher pitched child’s voice calls out obviously repeating the older male’s voice which suddenly bursts into laughter.

Striding towards them Cato Armstrong is laughing, sporting a huge smile carrying a mini-me on his shoulders. Colt Armstrong looked exactly like his father with the exception of the blue of his eyes which are the exact replicate of the petite dark-haired woman that is following them carrying a large tote, that undoubtedly contains all things needed by a toddler. Cato met Clove their freshman year of college, it was cliché, he was on the football team and she was a cheerleader, although one who was more like a gymnast then a typical cheerleader.

Cato claims he fell in love instantly watching her flip across the field, he pursued her and convinced her to date him and then they were married for their senior year of college. Clove Armstrong claims that she never had a chance to say no, that she blinked and there was a ring on her finger. No one believes her flippant denial; she is just as in love with Cato as he is in love with her. After college he moved her back home to their small town where he took over his dad’s construction business; Cato has expanded it into the regions premier construction company specializing in restoration of older homes and turning them into luxury residences that reflect their historical origins with modern conveniences blending into the background.
A huge smile bursts onto his beautiful wife’s face as the large blonde man strides towards them with a small child perched on his shoulders. Peeta instantly relaxes as he realizes the boy is this man’s son and the woman trailing them, his woman, most likely his wife based on the fact they are both sporting rings. Men in his time don’t wear rings to signify that they are married, but Peeta is beginning to appreciate the custom. It allows him to expediently ferret out men who are single and thus more likely to make a move towards his wife.

Katniss had informed him this morning on their drive to her family’s home that another failed suitor, or ex-boyfriend as she had called it, would be present at this family gathering. After meeting Darius, who clearly was not over his wife, Peeta has decided to be wary of all ex-suitors. This man, large though he may be, is not a threat, the adoring glances he gives his woman and son marked him as a happy and content man. Plus, Peeta kens this is not the ex-suitor, that man’s last name is Hawthorne and the oldest sibling of the three he just met. All Hawthornes seem to be tall and lanky with dark hair and olive skin a shade or two darker than his wife’s with darker grey eyes.

“Dr. Katniss Everdeen” the blonde haired, blue eyed man booms out, “Welcome home from across the pond.”

“Cato Armstrong” his wife greets, “it’s good to see you too. Clove, it’s been too long.” Katniss quickly greets the man’s wife with a short hug before turning her eyes to the little guy perched on Cato’s shoulders. “Who is this huge boy on your shoulders Cato? That cannot be Colt, he was just a little baby the last time I saw him, this boy is much too big to be Colt.”

The little boy answers very seriously, “I am Colt and I am free, daddy says I am a big boy.”

“That you are little man, that you are.” Cato chuckles as he lifts the boy off his shoulders and places him on the ground in front of him his hands placed on the wee boy’s shoulders. “Colt meet Dr. Katniss Everdeen one of daddy’s oldest friends.” Peeta smiles to himself as the little boy puts his hand out to shake saying, “Nice to meet you Dr. Katin…iss.”

“Nice to meet you too” his wife says as she crouches down to his height and shakes his hand. “But your daddy is wrong, my name is not Katniss Everdeen anymore it is Katniss Mellark.” She says smiling while standing up to greet Cato with a quick hug while reaching back for his hand.

Stepping forward he takes her hand and stands behind her in a position that supports her, letting her take the lead, yet allowing him to claim possession of her in a subtle way. He loves how she naturally falls into his body, fitting just perfectly to him, trusting him and soothing his anxiety in meeting all these people who love his wife.

“Cato, Clove and Colt Armstrong I would like you to meet my husband, Peeta” she says allowing him to introduce himself. Katniss kens he likes to introduce himself in the way of his people; it is much more formal then here in her time. He initially attempted to forego the formal introduction to assimilate to her time, but it made him uncomfortable so he has continued with the way of his family.

“Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark, Laird of Dalcross. It is verra nice to meet ye.” He offers his hand to Cato who shakes it with a smile and then takes the lady Clove’s hand and bends to it before crouching down to proffer his hand to the wee leanbh, “Aye what a fine strappin’ laddie ye are.”
The wee laddie takes his hand his eyes wide, “Daddy, what he say?” The question comes out soft, although the boy isna scarit of him, which is good. Katniss just chuckles and answers, “He said that you are a fine strapping lad and that means you are a strong big boy.” The laddie straightens his shoulders at her words a look of pride in his eyes as Katniss continues conspiratorially, “don’t worry he has a heavy accent and it takes a while to understand what he is saying, sometimes even I don’t know what he is saying.”

The little boy studies him quietly as wee ladies are ought to do and then says, “he does sound funny.” Peeta bursts into laughter at the laddie’s accurate statement as his mother rushes to correct his manners softly instructing Colt to apologize.

“Oh it is no a’ problem Mistress Armstrong, I am sure I do sound verra funny to the wee laddie. He hasna been exposed to the highland Brogue and no bhean does inform me that I can be hard to understand.” The woman smiles at him in that way that makes it clear that she is still deciphering what he just said and he waits patiently for her to understand.

“Well accent or no, it’s nice to meet you.” Cato says all smiles as he then turns to Katniss. “I cannot believe you are married, you look happy. This is awesome!” Peeta relaxes; this guy is one of the few that has accepted his married to Katniss with no question. That has been the one irritation during this process, the questioning of his marriage to Katniss, or more succinctly the questioning of his intent. At home or in his time when a man introduces his wife, no one questions the reasons for the union. Peeta understands Katniss’s parents and family questioning and their apprehension, and he would be upset if they weren’t suspicious of him. But when others, who are not so close, question them, suggesting he is using her or that she is perhaps with child, it upsets him because it is insulting to Katniss’s intelligence and honor.

Cato’s wife immediately inspects Katniss’s rings along with the young lassie, Posy; this seems to be a thing that ladies feel is important. He is verra happy he decided to buy mo maise that ring; not only does it look beautiful on her long graceful finger but all the ladies praise it and compliment his wife, which makes her smile.

“How did you to meet and get married?” Clove asks Katniss, the woman is much quieter than her husband but Peeta can tell she is sharp as a whip and most likely runs the house and her husband from the background and that Cato will do anything for her, as it should be.

Katniss launches into the abbreviated version of the story they have been telling people all afternoon. He interjects here and there adding his opinion, but allows her to lead the story and conversation. At the conclusion of the story, Cato claps him on the shoulder and says softly, “I am glad you were nearby to intervene and prevent Katniss from getting hurt.”

“Aye, so am I” he replies instantly liking the man even more. Katniss sinks back against him as conversation flows. Peeta learns that Cato and Clove have been married for 5 years and that she is pregnant with their second bairn. He learns that Clove teaches English at the high school with Katniss’s dad, but is planning on taking a year’s leave when their second child is born. Clove teases Katniss and Cato about their one date, senior prom, they went as friends and how they both feel like a brother and sister. The fact that Cato’s wife feels no insecurities with regards to this Prom, he will have to get more information about what that is later, further confirms his positive feelings towards the couple.

Colt asks for food and Clove strides off towards the grill and the table with all the food to get her boy something to eat. Katniss and Cato began a conversation regarding potentially fixing up Alexander’s Brownstone. Katniss and Alex had chatted at length regarding the home he had purchased in Boston, and what he thought needed to be done to renovate it. They had yet to agree to purchase it,
they hadn’t even seen it yet and they needed more information. Peeta liked the idea of a place of their own; although Jo and Madge have been verra generous he would like something more private with his wife and possibly bigger for the many bairns he plans to convince her to have.

As his wife leans back into him, his hand laying on her hip with his thumb circling bare flesh just under her shirt at the waistline of her skirt, he allows his mind to wander. Her body against his reminds him of their verra quick tryst in her room before he took that shower. He loves when she wears skirts; it makes access to his wife so much easier than those pants she likes to wear. He didna plan on bedding her in her parents’ home in the middle of the day, but the mention of a shower and the visual her legs had offered him all morning had shut his brain off. So, when he carried her over his shoulder up the stairs and her legs were dangling so tantalizing down his torso…

Peeta allows his mind to replay the way she rode him on the floor of her bedroom. Katniss had chosen the floor because her childhood bed squeaked, he is not sure he wants to know how she knows that. And since he didn’t want her on the ground he insisted she ride him, god he loves that. Her breasts bouncing, her eyes sparkling and, fuck he was getting hard again just thinking about it. His hand still on her waist as he infinitesimally backs his hips away from her body so she canna feel him, after his shower he decided to forgo the constricting article of clothing named ‘underwear’ that she insists he don. He had worn it this morning and was OK with it, the new ones she had procured for him were much better than the original ones. The first set were horrible, he hated them, not only did they smash his balls and prevent movement that he was accustomed to, the leg openings were too small for his thighs.

Objectively he understands why she wants him to wear them; she doesn’t want him to inadvertently “flash his privates to the world” as Katniss has told him. Clearly, he gets the concept, he wouldn’t want anyone seeing her ‘privates’, that view belongs to him only, she is his wife for heaven’s sake. But even though she is conservative in dress compared to other woman in this age he still thinks she divulges way too much flesh for others to see, besides a brief flash from him will not put him in danger, as it would her.

The newer ones with the pouch dinna smash his balls in his normal state (the leg openings still irritate him dammit), but they start to constrict when he begins to respond to his wife and then they become uncomfortable verra fast. And since he is easily aroused when he is near his wife, it makes much more sense for him to go without. So, he has, although right now all he can mull over is if she can tell he isna wearing them when she tempts him and of course that isna helpin either. Because the vision of her discovering him without the damned underwear, is of an irritated Katniss and an irritated Katniss, although difficult to deal with, is a vision to behold.

So, when he sees the man and his fiancée that he met last night, Thresh and Rue he reminds himself, arrive and make their way over to them he breathes a sigh of relief as Katniss steps away from him temporarily before settling back against his side as opposed to her leanin’ her delectable backside into his groin.

After the standard greeting Rue bounces off towards his new sister Primrose. The two are apparently close friends and off they go towards the food talkin and jabberin away as females are want to do. Meanwhile Katniss and Cato resume their conversation with regards to the home renovation. He supposes he should care more, but he really dosna, he figures what Katniss wants he will give to her, wi’ in reason, just as long as they have one a’ them big showers that fit the two of them and large enough to allow him to bed her in it. In fact, he thinks, I need to enquire about the possibility.

“Do ye think ye can have a shower like in the laird’s room back at Dalcross?” he asks his wife during a break in the conversation. Katniss turns her head and looks up at him and since she kens what he is thinking, a verra appealing flush creeps up her neck and settles in her cheeks.
“You want a shower like that?” she asks her cheeks heating up even more.

“Aye, I do mo maise, verra much.” And he canna help but follow his reply with a kiss to the tip of her adorable nose. Her ensuing squawk is absolutely adorable and causes his thoughts to wander down a path he shouldn’t be thinkin about durin the gathering, so when she turns back to Cato and asks about the shower, he is a little relieved.

“Well it depends” Cato answers slowly a knowing glint in his eye. “If the brownstone is a complete gut we can do anything that you want that fits in your budget. If it isn’t, then it all depends on if the current bathrooms are large enough to accommodate that size. AND, and this part is usually the deal breaker, if the diameter of the piping providing the water will allow for the multiple jets you want. Either way bathrooms or kitchens are expensive. Do you two have a budget after purchasing said brownstone in Boston? Property like that is expensive regardless of condition. Cato erroneously looks at Peeta for the answer to this piece of information, so Peeta just looks at Katniss for the answer

“I guess that’s the rub, isn’t it?” Katniss replies for them both, “the price of the property is fairly inexpensive compared to what I have seen advertised and it will be a private sale, so no one will incur brokerage fees or lawyer fees since Mellark distilleries lawyers will handle it.” At Cato’s raised brows and hand wave that says explain she continues, “Peeta doesn’t just work for Mellark Distilleries & Exports his family owns it, with Peeta being the majority owner.”

Cato gives a low whistle at her explanation and turns to him saying, “I do appreciate a fine scotch and “The Dalcross” is my absolute favorite.”

Peeta claps him on the shoulder with a smile and says, “Aye we’ll then, ye will be joinin me, James, Haymitch and the men in sharin’ the scotch we brought from Scotland. This one ye can only buy in the Highlands and is exquisite.” This declaration brought a big smile from his new friend, who then turns back to Katniss so she could continue their discussion.

“Well what we want to make sure of, is if we buy the place and put money into the renovations, will it be worth it? We can buy the property and afford renovations using Peeta’s trust fund, but I don’t want to make a bad investment. Would you come with us when we look at the place and give us your professional opinion?”

“Of course,” Cato replies with ease “in fact I will suggest we bring Thresh in on this, he has been doing a bit of moonlighting for my company when school is out and has a great eye for reno’s. I find that having another eye when I look a place over helpful, I hate surprises and it is less likely that something will be overlooked when two sets of eyes go over the place.”

His wife sighs in relief and graciously thanks the two of them. Grabbing his hand, they take their leave of Thresh and Cato, who needs to attend to Colt, and she introduces him to a few remaining people who have arrived during their conversation with the Armstrongs. After a verra nice conversation with an elderly couple a young woman enters the back yard with a child older then Colt in tow.

“Oh crap” Katniss says under her breath.

“Is there a problem mo maise?” he asks slightly concerned.

“No, not really” she says under her breath, “but see that woman there.” He looks over at the tall blonde woman, who is showin skin like a prostitute, with a child who looks to be about seven or eight in age.
“Aye, ye mean the woman who is no lookin decent?” Peeta asks just to make sure.

“Yes, that is Glimmer Cahill we went to high school together and she dated the quarterback Marvel Cahill. They went to college together and she became pregnant their first year so she dropped out. They got married just before their son, Jack was born.”

“They were no married before she became wi’ child?” Peeta interrupts her curious as to where this story is goin, as they watch her walk over to Cato and Thresh greeting them with kisses on the cheeks.

“No” Katniss answers a bit of sadness in her voice. “She and Marvel gave it a go for a year or two, but him going to college and her raising a baby was tough, plus she is extremely spoiled and manipulative. He joined the Marines to make money for the family; he felt it was a good option since they would pay for his education after he put in a few years.

“Within a few months of him joining she began to have an affair with a rich older man in town, most likely believing that he would give her money or things while Marvel was away or perhaps she was lonely, I am not sure. Anyway, Marvel found out and they ended up getting a divorce. He was heartbroken, ended up getting shipped off to war and never came home. He died a hero, but that young man will not remember his father. Plus, now, Glimmer has been on the hunt for a replacement, since the older gentleman did not actually want a wife, and she flirts with every guy even married ones.” At this Katniss’s eyebrows crease together putting adorable crinkles on her forehead.

“Aye” he says trying to reassure his beautiful wife, “I dinna want another woman but ye, I am yers just as much if no more than ye are mine. And wife…ye are mine.”

“Kaaatniiiss” calls a high-pitched cloying voice that instantly grates his nerves and hurts his ears followed by the woman, his wife decidedly does not like, sashaying on ridiculous shoes over towards them. As she approaches Peeta can feel her gaze rake over him like he is on a platter to be consumed. It’s a feeling the nastiest of lassies from home would cause with their gaze and he did no enjoy it then and he dosna enjoy it now.

“Katniss it’s so good to see you” the woman whose breasts are practically visible through her shirt says in a voice with fake affection dripping like venom from fangs. “Dr. Everdeen, how droll. Come now, my dear, please introduce me to this delicious friend of yours. My name is Glimmer Cahill.” Her voice becomes cloying and her eyes flutter at him as she walks in front of him her breasts jutting out, so he takes matters into his own hand before his wife explodes.

“Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark, it is nice to meet a friend of my wife, Mistress Cahill” Peeta says formally forgoing taking her hand and giving her a quick bow, that would be considered a brush off in his time and culture, while putting his arm possessively around Katniss’s waist. “I would prefer that ye call Katniss by her marrit name Mellark, no Everdeen if ye would.”

This takes the woman by surprise slightly but she recovers quickly, “Please call me Glimmer all my friends do”, the woman all but purrs at him, “Oh Katniss you’re married, to this man? How did you get so lucky as to land a man this fine, and with such a sexy accent?”

Katniss tenses at the insult and he can feel himself bristling with indignation, no one insults his wife. “Ye have it wrong, Mistress Cahill,” Peeta retorts deliberately emphasizing her more formal name, “I am lucky that the most beautiful woman I have ever seen consented to be my wife. I will no have anyone implying anything else.”

“Well I didn’t mean” Glimmer stutters at him as she turns red.
“Ye most likely didna mean to insult my wife?” his tone dripping with condescension, “Katniss says ye are a widow and I ken how the grief can make people say things they dinna mean…” Peeta trails off looking at her with fake pity.

“Oh, Katniss I’m sorry I didn’t mean to insult you.” The woman turns to his Katniss, her demeanor changed.

Katniss relaxes replying softness in her tone, “That’s fine Glimmer, I am truly sorry about Marvel. I am glad you and Max could come and celebrate my homecoming and doctorate.” Katniss then asks Glimmer about Max, her child. It is then when the woman starts to talk about Max, that you can see who she could be without all the adornments, it is at this point that Madge and Jo join the conversation.

As he is listening to Katniss chat with the women a hand claps down on his shoulder, spinning he sees his father-in-law, James smiling at him. “Peeta come join us over by the grill, I was hoping you could share some of that scotch with me and my friends.” Looking over he sees, Katniss’s Uncle and some of the other older men that he has met today talking amicably. “Katniss do ye mind if I go wi’ your father for a nip of whiskey?” he asks her politely.

“Of course, go have fun with the men.” She smiles sweetly up at him. So, with a soft kiss on her lips he and James go inside the kitchen and grab some smaller cups and the bottle and head back toward the men after a quick detour to ask Cato and Thresh to join them.

He helps James pour and distribute the whiskey all around and has Peeta give them all a quick explanation of the Scotch they will taste. After reassuring the men that they are opening only one of the many bottles he brought from this batch and are not putting out James. James puts his hand on Peeta’s shoulder causing him to pause.

“I would like to propose a toast to Peeta, my new son, a man brave and smart enough to marry my daughter Katniss. Welcome to my family.” James’s words are followed by all the men saying the word “cheers” and taking a sip of whiskey.

“Thank ye for welcoming me” he replies a smile on his lips, “and for your daughter; the most beautiful and intelligent lassie I ever met. I will cherish her always. Slàinte.” He raises his glass towards James and lets the smooth burn of the whiskey slip down his throat.

Compliments on the whiskey ensue from the surrounding men and James asks Peeta to talk about the Braemar Games. Peeta has always liked storytelling and Katniss says he has a knack for it so he dives right in. First, he explains the clan rivalries and the different events, James asks him to show the guys the claymore moves he had demonstrated this morning. It felt good to pull his claymore from the sheath, he had left it off his back for the gathering at Katniss’ request, and she was worried his being armed might intimidate some of the guests.

Glancing across the yard Peeta sees Katniss eating with Johanna, Madge, and Cato’s wife catching her eye she sends a smirk at him as he demonstrates the different holds to Elder Mr. Armstrong and Cato as well as Haymitch and Mr. Undersee, who he has discovered is Madge’s father. After placing his Claymore aside Peeta goes into detail describing the Archery competition and how Katniss had bested all the entire field of men and is the first woman to ever claim the title. He thoroughly enjoys telling this part of their trip and he can see the pride on the faces of James and Haymitch, his new family.

When he gets to the last event James asks Peeta to show the video, and although Katniss has loaded this video (this invention being the most fascinating thing he has ever seen…a moving painting) on his eye pone (or phone whatever the word is) but he still had really no clue how to use the thing, yet.
So, he hands it to James and pleaded with his eyes to help him...subtly. With complete understanding James takes the eye phone from him and made the video appear on it for the men to watch.

After the video completes there are a lot more follow-up questions, such as if holding the sword with one hand is a large advantage over two hands? *Not unless you are strong enough.* And how long has he been training? *All his life.* Who taught him? *His father, brothers and fellow elder clansmen.* What does the title the Leòmhann of Scotland mean and what is its origin? *His ancestor was the original Leòmhann and was named for his blonde hair and red-gold beard, which Peeta has inherited.* And the questions continued until James announces that the last batch of burgers is done and he dutifully follows the men over to the table with the food.

Since he observed Katniss eat with her friends and had seen most of the ladies eat as well he felt comfortable loading his plate with food carefully following the lead of the other men. Peeta can eat a lot and he suspects that Thresh and Cato can as well so he allows himself as much food as they have. “I don’t know about you” Cato says as he leans over towards him and mock whispers loudly, “but I plan on coming back for more. Mrs. Everdeen is a wonderful cook.” Peeta immediately nods in the affirmative and follows his father in law over to the tables and chairs he helped set up earlier.

He sits in a spot that allows him to observe the entire back yard including the gate that separates the front from the back. Although Katniss has articulated to him that danger does not lurk around every corner like it does in the highlands, he is not quite so comfortable as to let his guard down. Protecting his woman is his highest priority and he will not allow her hurt or danger if possible. So even though Katniss will say that he is silly he is still going to be on high alert.

Mrs. Everdeen is a wonderful cook and though he is not quite used to the type of foods that people eat in this time he still wants more. Looking across the table he sees that Cato is down to his last bite as well and is eyeing the table across the yard that the food is set on. Cato catches his eyes and gestures with a head bob to the table as if to say ‘more?’.

“Aye” Peeta replies with a laugh, “My new mother in-law is a wonderful cook.” At that Cato rises with him and they head back over to the table and start loading their plates up with food at about the same time the two young Hawthorne boys start piling food on their plates as well.

“Where’s your dad and Gale?” Cato asks the two Hawthorne boys. *Katniss is right,* Peeta thinks *there are a lot taller men in this time then his, but some are a little scrawny like these Hawthorne boys.*

“Closing up shop, should be here soon.” the slightly taller boy Rory says grabbing a roll from the table and taking a quick bite. “They’ll be hungry when they get here, good thing Mrs. Everdeen always makes too much food.”

Peeta watches the two boys walk back over to where Prim is standing and flank her like guard dogs do a dinner table. “Are both those boys courtin’ Primrose?” Peeta asks Cato befuddled at the way the two men act.

Cato chuckled, “Ahhh no, they aren’t dating her, nor do they want to, I don’t think either do anyway, though I like your word courting. Rory and Vick treat Prim like a sister and they are more her annoying overprotective brothers. My little brother dated Prim all through school and for the entire 6 years they were together those boys gave him a hard time.”

“They do seem overprotective for men that are not relatives or a husband” Peeta observed.

Cato stops serving himself and looked at Peeta sideways, “Have you had a chance to meet Gale
Hawthorne their older brother yet?"

"Och, no" Peeta supplies, "We arrived from Scotland Friday and I met her parents for the first time this morning."

"OooKayyy" Cato starts out looking a little hesitant, "Let’s just say, the protective behavior that the two younger Hawthorne’s exhibit towards Prim is nothing compared to the protective behavior Gale Hawthorne displays for Katniss. Only difference is that he is possessive of her not just protective."

This comment immediately causes Peeta’s hackles to rise, Katniss is his wife, and only he may be possessive of her.

"Why?" he asks turning to face Cato trying to remain calm.

"Not sure why exactly." Cato answers rubbing a hand over his chin in thought. "He has always been that way though, always been an ass to me regarding my friendship with Katniss. Thresh too. Got real angry with me when he found out I was Katniss’s prom date even though we were going as friends. Took me aside and threatened me. At one point I thought it was because they were all Wampanoag and he considered himself leader of their little group, but I am pretty sure that is not the reason. As we got older I caught wind of the fact that the main reason Katniss did not have boys asking her to date was because he was preventing them from asking her, scaring them off if you will. It was one of the reasons I asked her to prom."

Cato paused then looked at him as they started to head back toward the table. "Mostly I believe he wanted her for himself. I think he has always assumed he and Katniss would end up together, not that she encouraged that thinking, and she didn’t. Katniss and he together would be a bad thing their personalities are too similar, except…I like Katniss. Personally, I think Gale can be an ass."

Peeta sucked in his breath as his mind absorbs the information that Cato has just provided to him. It matches the story that Katniss has told him regarding her view of her relationship with Gale but he does have one question for this unexpected but wholly welcome ally. "I was told that he has been datin’ Miss Madge Undersee, ye dinna suppose it is possible that the man might still want my wife?"

"I’m not sure I’d classify what he and Madge are engaging in as ‘dating’. Sleeping together is more like it, and honestly Madge deserves way more than that type of relationship. I can’t see why Gale would even think that Katniss would even entertain the thought of seeing him if he dumps her best friend." Cato said under his breath as they both sit down, "but I’m not sure he has given up that Katniss and he will one day be together." Cato said taking a bite of potato salad and chewing thoughtful, "although her returning home married surely should dispel any notion that he might have a chance with her. Especially with the way she looks at you."

The last statement makes Peeta smile cockily, "Aye and how does my wife look at me?"

"Like you are the sun on earth, plus you look like that movie star the girls always droll over, you know the one that plays Thor?"

"Is that a compliment?" Peeta asks the man in front of him warily.

"Sure" Cato said chewing, "my wife thinks that guy is hot and that you look like him, and Clove always knows what she is talking about. My wife is perfect." Cato beams as he looks at his wife across the way and waves for his son to join him at the table. Peeta smiles as he watches Colt barrel over towards them like a bull, launching himself at his father. All smiles Cato lifts his son up onto his lap and turns back to eating while asking his son what he had for lunch. He smiles at Katniss as she Clove and Madge enter the back door of the house, no doubt doin’ what women folk do
Minutes go by and Peeta senses movement over by the gate looking over he sees two tall men opening the gate and walking through. Peeta stiffens and although he has never met them he immediately knows they must be the Hawthorne father and his son Gale, since all the boys look alike. He watches as the father makes a beeline for James and the table they are sitting at whereas the younger stops and glances around the yard.

“Hunter, glad you could make it!” His father-in-law stands up and greets his friend amiably. A bunch of the other men stand and greet their friend and neighbor. And Peeta ever conscious of his manners stands to make the man’s acquaintance while keeping an eye on the younger man who has gone off to the food table.

After Cato shakes Hunter’s hand, the man looks over at Peeta and turns to Cato and asks, “Is this a cousin of yours?”

“No, no” James laughs amiably, “Although I guess the fair coloring and large size might make one think that. Hunter Hawthorne I’d like you to meet my son-in-law, Peeta.”

Peeta extends his hand and gives the guy a friendly smile, “Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark, a pleasure to meet you. Ye can call me Peeta.”

Hunter clasps his hand with a look of confusion on his face and asks, “son-in-law?”

“Aye, Katniss is my wife. We married a month ago in Scotland and have returned here to live in America.” Peeta replies searching the man’s eyes for anything dubious, but the man just turns to look at James inquisitively who is smiling and has his hand on Peeta’s shoulder showing masculine support.

“I know, it was a surprise to us too!” James exclaims, “My Katniss is in love, thought I’d never see the day. You know Katniss she has always known what she wants and when she decides something, she just does it. They had the wedding in Scotland with Peeta’s clan, but Prim and Lilly are planning a reception here so we can celebrate.”

“Well congratulations” Hunter says studying Peeta intently. “What do you do?”

“He makes this!” Katniss’s Uncle Haymitch bursts in a little drunkenly thrusting the bottle of ‘Dalcross, Private Reserve’ towards Hunter. Confused slightly, Peeta looks askance over at Haymitch, he wasn’t drunk moments ago. He makes a quick study of Haymitch as Hunter takes the bottle and reads the back where Haymitch had indicated he do so, it is a tiny glint in Haymitch’s eyes that reveals the trick. The man is falsifying drunkenness, Peeta cautiously observes Haymitch who is intent on Hunter, oh he dosna like the guy, and the revelation makes things a little clearer except it begs the question why dosna Haymitch like Hunter?

“So, your family is Mellark Distilleries?” Hunter enquires a barely detectable note of disdain in his voice. “And what will your family have you do here, if all scotch is made in Scotland?”

Ahhh a silver spoon complex, Peeta has seen thin many time over his years, specifically when he was a student at Oxford.

“I will run the existing Boston office, it is the headquarters for our North American exports, but my family, no gave me the position. I and now mo bhean…Katniss are the majority owners. Although, I would like to run a farm again” Peeta adds a little wistfully.

“Show him the sword!” Haymitch slurs out gleefully and Peeta side eyes Katniss’s uncle trying to
figure out his game, the man is up to something.

“I dinna really think anyone wants to see” Peeta replies reluctantly.

“Hey, I want to see it in action” Cato calls out encouraging him with Thresh following it up with an enthusiastic “me too!”

Looking over to gauge his father in law’s emotions on this development he finds James smiling amicably. James nods his head at Peeta and then says, “just show them what you were demonstrating to me this morning.” Then as Peeta goes to grab his sword he hears James say to the men at the table. “You’re in for a real treat Peeta is a true artist and a trained warrior.”

“Aye, we’el Cato keep a strong hold a yer wee bairn.” Peeta calls out as he turns relaxing as he hears the familiar metal sound that comes from pulling his beautiful claymore from its sheath. When he looks up he sees attention is immediately on him from the guests. Even the male guests, and not just the ones at the table, he can see all three of the Hawthorne boys their eyes fixed on him from their different places in the yard. You subtle, wiley bastard, he thinks, this isna about Hunter, this is a warning to Gale and his kin.

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“Hurry up dad” Gale calls to his father who was taking his sweet old time finishing up the paperwork on an older Toyota Camry they had just finished fixing. Hunter looks up and gives his son, that look and then just continues with his paperwork without a word.

The car was for the Cahill’s youngest boy who was heading back to college soon. Their oldest, Marvel, had married his high school sweetheart, Glimmer, got her pregnant and joined the Marines. Returned home from a middle east hell hole to find his wife having an affair with old man Cornelius Snow. The thought of Glimmer and that old wrinky man getting it on makes Gale shiver Blecch. Marvel then got divorced and then went back to war only to die in service. Ever since then his father, and pretty much everyone around town, treats the Cahill’s and their grandson Jack with kid gloves (with the exception of Glimmer) giving them discounts and taking extra good care of them.

Katniss had been friends with Marvel, inexplicably in Gale’s eyes. Katniss has always had more male friends then girlfriends which annoyed him. First there was Thresh the football player/ musical genius who sang in the school choir with her. The two led the school choir to many awards and Katniss even sang in his band and they played instruments together. That friendship he understood, their musical connection was although annoying… tolerable.

Then there was Marvel and Cato, the two sports jocks/popular guys. Those two were always dating the cheerleaders and popular girls that made fun of the tomboy part Native American Katniss and her middle-class family. Those friendships started on the childhood playground because Katniss played with the boys (she also could climb a tree faster than they could much to the admiration of 8-year-old boys). The friendships had somehow survived the more rigorous social pressures of junior high and later the more socially landscaped high school. The friendship didn’t mean that Katniss attended the cool parties or that Cato and Marvel were fixtures at the lunch table where Madge and Katniss ate their lunch together alone. It did mean that in mutual classes they would chose to pair up for group projects. They would meet up for early morning runs together and that it was known that Cato and Marvel would not tolerate anyone being overtly mean to Katniss. That last part annoyed him the most, he was Katniss’s protector not some boys who used to play tag with her on the playground.

So, when Gale found out that Katniss was going to Prom with Cato he was shocked. He had assumed that Katniss wouldn’t go. Katniss Everdeen hated school functions, dances, cheesy romance and dresses. And the prom was all four of those things rolled into one big anti-Katniss event. Cato
almost always had a girlfriend, usually some blonde bubbly thing that Gale may or may have not slept with if she was in Katniss’s class or older. When Gale had asked her about it Katniss had said that Cato had asked her earlier in the year, he wanted to go as friends. He felt that going to the Prom with a good friend, someone who you would always like instead of a girlfriend who would invariably become an ex much more relaxing and fun.

Unfortunately for Gale it was just at the point when he realized that Katniss was his, or at least was supposed to be his eventually. And his in the way that meant marriage forever, the epiphany had surprised him. He had always thought of Katniss as a little sister, an annoying little sister who could keep up with the boys, but recently that had changed. They had been out at the reservation and had participated in an annual hunt. Katniss had been the one to bag the buck her arrow right in the eye, which had semi-irritated him they had both shot at that buck simultaneously but it was her arrow that had been true.

Later that evening during the feast Gale watched as Thom, a fellow Wampanoag who was home from Brown University (yuck) went over and talked to Katniss. He watched in horror as Thom flirted with Katniss, told her how she had grown up to be a beautiful woman and then chatted with her about college. The whole thing made his skin crawl; he had never seen a guy flirt with Katniss, of course when they were in high school together anyone who had the courage to ignore her scowl never made it past his glare.

The last year and a half after he graduated from school and been at the Garage full time learning how to take it over Katniss had been at school and he didn’t know if boys did flirt with her. He knows she hasn’t had a boyfriend, but just watching her easily flirting back with Thom was like a punch in the gut. She should be flirting with him; it was at that moment that he realized that he and Katniss were destined for each other. There was only one problem: convincing Katniss.

A few months after his revelation he had decided to just tell Katniss about his change in feelings as well as his planned change in their status from friends to boyfriend/girlfriend. When he arrived at their house he walked in on a strange scene, Katniss was modeling a dress for Prim. A dress that he was informed was her PROM dress and that she was going with Cato. He felt another kick in the gut. He figured this wasn’t the time; he would wait for her graduation which was only a month away.

The day of her graduation he was ecstatic until he found out that Katniss wasn’t really on board with his plan, which just shocked him. Then she pissed him off with the whole Harvard thing, why she needed to go to that fancy school on the blood money of her people no less, he had no idea. Why she couldn’t just go to the local community college and get a degree, marry him and get a job locally was a mystery to him.

It took him her entire freshman year at Harvard to convince her to date him and they gave it a go over the Summer. She had even given him her virginity at the end of that summer so he was a little shocked when she wanted to break it off when she went back to school. Wanted some time to think, she wasn’t sure of them as a couple, she wanted to concentrate on school, blah blah blah. It irritated him to no end but he let it happen, they were fated to be together.

Then Darius happened and that relationship was encouraged by those college friends of hers, Johanna and Finnick. He hated Finnick totally distrusted that preening college pretty boy. Even if he was at Harvard on financial aid, he still must be a privileged ass. Then there is Johanna, he hates her, she wouldn’t even fuck him when he offered at that one party he drove all the way to Boston to attend. Those two along with Madge were always encouraging Katniss and keeping her away from him.
But he tolerated it all and waited but then Katniss totally pissed him off and left for ENGLAND to get a PhD, left him. What. The. Fuck. It still pisses him off when he thinks about it. Then Edward happened (what stuck up prick calls himself Edward instead of using the nickname Ed or Eddie? A pretentious girlfriend stealer from England that’s who) and The Everdeen’s talked about a potential engagement during one Sunday cookout.

But Edward was given the ole heave ho and Katniss spent the last two years single, or at least she wasn’t seeing anyone of note enough to report to Prim (who tells everything to Rory and Vick). And now she was home taking a job at BC, he had hoped for the local college but BC was well within commuting range of their smaller town, just hop on the commuter rail or Turnpike and Bamm you’re there.

The only difficulty was Madge, he had been so mad about the whole Edward thing that he had slept with Madge. He had meant for it to be a one-off, but Madge was exceptional in the sack. So once led to twice, then a weekend, then every few weekends, then it seemed as if it were a regular thing. It has been great, he and Madge are compatible sexually and they can actually chat, she is pretty great and she never demands that they label their fling. They aren’t in a declared monogamous relationship and they have no labels, but Gale had recently had the feeling that Madge wants more, which is odd since she hasn’t asked for anything more in the two years they have been fucking around. Weirdly though he can’t remember the last non-Madge girl he has slept with and for some reason his parents think he and Madge are in a relationship that is ‘going somewhere’ at least he heard his parents talking about it one night.

So now Katniss is home and he still enjoys Madge, enough to make him think that if Edward (sneer) had been permanent there might be something to pursue with Madge. But there isn’t a permanent and Katniss is coming home single. Five years away and she is coming home available and that must be some sort of sign that their relationship is pre-ordained. But he isn’t an asshole; he can’t just break off sleeping with Madge and ask Katniss out, now that she is home.

So, Gale has a plan, step one, reinstate himself as Katniss’s best friend. Step two slowly disentangle himself from Madge and then distance himself, maybe casually date one or two people over a month or two to make some space in between. Step three; after an appropriate amount of time has passed reintroduce Katniss to the idea of them. It is a masterful plan with one small possible potential glitch. What if Katniss found someone during the time he needed to execute step one and two? He somehow needs to prevent this, but this wasn’t like in high school where he could warn off all her potential dates. Katniss is going to be a teacher at a major college with other professors and stuff, hopefully most of them are married and she will start feeling old…

“Why are you in such a hurry to get there?” his father’s gruff voice startling him in his scheming.

“No reason in particular, just hungry for Mrs. Everdeen’s burgers.” Gale replies his voice catching slightly.

“Is Madge going to be there?” his father asks him his intense gaze making Gale squirm uncomfortably.

“Umm yeah, she and Johanna are already there, why?” He answered nervously wondering where his father was going with his line of questioning as he pinned Gale with that same steely look that Gale has learned to use himself.

“Ah, did the three girls drive in together?” his father asked again with his gaze still riveting Gale to his spot.

“Noooo”, Gale said checking his phone texts for confirmation. “Katniss drove home early for
breakfast early with her parents and Prim. Apparently, she had something important she wanted to talk with them about this morning.” Madge had told him the information earlier and when the tweedle dum and tweedle dee had returned from their night with Prim they had confirmed the information. He watches as his dad slowly goes through his routine of closing the shop, checking things Gale has already finished. Gale is seriously getting irritated at his father’s lack of alacrity and he is sure his impatience is showing.

“What are you thinking?” his father’s question is direct and Gale knows what he is talking about it, but decides to play it cool.

“I’m thinking the burgers will be gone by the time we get there, I already took care of everything dad.” Gale grumps at him not even trying to disguise his impatience.

“Lilly and James will make sure we get burgers.” His father stats coolly, “you didn’t answer my question. What are you thinking?”

“About what?” Gale stalls throwing in an evasive maneuver.

His father sighs at him giving him that look before he asks again. “What are you thinking regarding Katniss being back? And about your relationship with Madge, her best friend, and a wonderful young lady in her own right? And the fact that you have always thought you and Katniss are inevitable?”

“Wow dad, way to hold it back.”

“What are your intentions?” his father repeats. “I will have you know that your mother and I like Madge.”

“Are you saying you don’t like Katniss?” Gale snaps back.

“No, you know we love Katniss, but you have been seeing Madge for almost two years and you haven’t committed to her. And part of me wonders if you haven’t because of Katniss. So, my question stands, what are you thinking?”

Gale sighs and looks at his father then leans back on the counter closing his eyes for a moment and gathering his thoughts before he answers. When he opens his eyes, he finds his father’s gaze on him, his father is looking at him with support and non-judgment so he just starts spilling it all. Everything he has been thinking about for the past month all comes tumbling out, including his plan. After he has spilled his guts out his father is silent for a moment obviously digesting his word vomit.

“No woman deserves to be the consolation prize in a relationship, think of how you feel about both of them. Try to figure out if it is Katniss you are in love with or the idea of the two of you together? Also, do you really think you would be happy as Katniss’s backup plan? Even though Edward isn’t in the picture anymore, she didn’t choose you years ago. Why would her feelings have changed?”

Gale just grunts at his dad to which his reply is a gentle hand on his shoulder and a soft, “just think about it son” before turning and walking to the parking lot and the car.

Pulling up into their driveway Gale notes the number of cars at the Everdeen house just two doors down. The ride home had been filled with shop talk and Gale and his dad continued the discussion right up the Everdeen driveway where they both came to a stop. Gale and stares at the car then looked over at his dad looking at it as well.

“I thought Madge drives a Volvo?” Hunter questions.
“She does” Gale answers “that’s her silver S80 over there,” He gestures towards the street that is lined with cars. “And that’s Katniss’s old car now Prim’s, and that is Haymitch’s truck.”

“James and Lilly didn’t get a new car” his father finishes his eyebrows scrunched together. “Not that they would pay almost 90 grand for a car.”

“Maybe it is Johanna’s” Gale concludes. “She is a lawyer and makes a ton of cash, lives with Madge in the apartment owned by Mr. Undersee.”

“Most likely” his dad says starting to walk to the gate that will let them in the back where they can here laughter and conversation. “It’s a damn nice car.”

“Sure is” Gale grunts out as they make their way into the back yard. His dad immediately walks over to the table where James is sitting surrounded by Haymitch, Cato, Thresh, Mr. Armstrong and other guys. Glancing around as surreptitiously he looks for Madge and Katniss, but sees neither. He does see his brothers flanking Prim who is talking to Johanna. Feeling the sting of his father’s questions earlier Gale immediately heads over to the food table and begins to fix himself a plate of food.

Hearing an odd clang of metal Gale looks up to see an unfamiliar man pulling a huge sword from a sheath on his back, weirdly the guy is wearing a skirt.

No, it’s a kilt, Gale corrects himself as he remembers Madge telling him about how the Scottish fashion is making a comeback when Katniss prolonged her stay in the UK by touring Scotland for a few months.

Discretely he takes a look at the guy who is moving the sword around with an ease that speaks to familiarity trying to recognize him. The guy is tall and muscular and completely unfamiliar, after studying his features Gale is convinced he has never met the guy, which begs the question why is he here?

The crowd of the men around him include his father, Mr. Everdeen, Mr Abernathy, Thresh and Cato holding his son. Cato seems to be friendly with the sword guy and Peeta wonders if they are related, like a cousin or something. Looking around the yard he notices something disturbing Gale notices that the women in the crowd are staring at the new guy with a distinct interest in their gazes, even the older women. Sneaking closer while trying to look uninterested Gale studies kilt guy while making it look like he is interested in his food.

The guy has fair coloring and looks like Gale assumes a guy wearing a kilt would look like. Blonde hair, blue eyes even Gale can admit kilt guy is good looking, movie star good looking if he is being honest. Bulging muscles and the longish hair with a non-pretty boy face kilt guy looks similar to the actor who plays Thor in the new Marvel comic movies that Posy loves (she even has a poster of him on her wall). Skulking closer he intends to hear the conversation but stops when the back door opens and out walk Madge, Clove and Katniss and as soon as he sees them he immediately forgets about kilt guy.

Katniss, his Katniss, is there laughing and talking with Madge and Clove and she is different then he remembers her. Her hair is different, still in a long single braid she now has pieces framing her face purposefully. Her face is open and she is clearly happy and content and most surprisingly there is a confidence emanating from her that is truly appealing. Gale is now more positive than ever that he and Katniss should be together, emphasizing the need for him to enact his plan.

Making his way towards the three girls, one of them his current lover and the other his best friend and forever. Gale tries hard not to let Katniss’s newfound confidence and effortless beauty distract him from his task. Grabbing her and kissing her senseless will not fly even though his body is itching to do just that, instead he saunters up as casually as possible and greets Madge first with a
quick kiss to her cheek before leaning in and pulling Katniss into a huge hug. Releasing her he greets her with a smile “good to have you home Catnip.”

“Gale” Katniss responds to him with a bright smile on her face “Good to see you too, it has been too long!” Gale internally smiles at her greeting and the smile she bestows on him “glad you could finally make it.”

“You look great” he smiles at her and took a step back next to Madge and greets Clove. There was no way he would look like an asshole to Katniss by disregarding her friends or instantly snubbing Madge because he is sure Katniss knows that he has been sleeping with her, those two have always told each other everything.

“Happy to be home” he asked her while subtly looking her over trying to catalog all the details that make up Katniss and pick up anything different other than the obvious.

“Yes, I am happy; it has been too long since I’ve seen my family and all my friends. I’m excited to start work and get back into the swing of things.”

“How about your trip to Scotland and your flight home? Did you pick up any good souvenirs?” He asks taking a bite of his potato salad trying to be as casual as possible because he swears she is blushing at his question causing his heart to beat faster.

At his questions Katniss giggles, a sound he is sure he has never heard from her lips, the delicate noise resonating in his balls; yeah, they were meant to be together. He sees her wave to someone as she blushes harder before she speaks.

“Scotland was amazing” she sighs wistfully “and yeah you could say that I brought home a souvenir.” At her statement she giggles again this time with Clove and Madge joining her obviously they have knowledge of what she brought home. “The flight was a little rough though; someone had a difficult time adjusting to air travel.” Katniss’s last statement was said in a teasing way her voice raised slightly as she gazes just behind him a teasing smirk on her face as though she is talking to someone else.

“I ken I wasna verra good at the flying mo maise, but I did apologize many a way when we got home. Do ye want me to apologize to ye agin’?” The deep voice speaking behind him startles Gale causing him to turn and see kilt guy with his sword in hand walk past him to stand directly by Katniss. He watches in shock as the guy slips one of his muscled arms around Katniss’s waist as if he does it every day. Then the guy has the gall lean over nudge Katniss’s nose and kiss it before he turns and gives the group a smile.

Gale’s body instantly tenses with the arrival of this asshole, how dare kilt guy touch Katniss like that and why the hell isn’t she shrugging him off. Fuck, Gale thinks, she is into this dude. Where the fuck did he come from? Katniss just stands there smiling up at the guy with a stupid dopey smile on her face while Madge and Clove smile at them and what the hell did he just say? They were on the plane together?

Madge breaks into his brooding with a nudge and a giggle “Gale, meet Katniss’s souvenir”.

Gale is pretty sure his eyebrows are at his hairline and his eyes are doing some crazy things. Someone better explain what the hell Madge means and what kilt-guy just said for that matter before he explodes, is all Gale can think before Katniss speaks again.

“Oh sorry!” Katniss smiles at him after she tears her eyes off of kilt boy and finally turns her attention back to Gale. “We’ve been making introductions all day. Gale I’d like you to meet Peeta, my
husband.”

Shocked, Gale is shocked, because he isn’t sure but he thinks Katniss just called kilt guy her husband. What the fuck? But before he can clarify what he must have misheard the stupid guy steps forward with his hand out and starts speaking.

“Peter Brian Alexander MacKenzie Mellark, Laird of Dalcross, but most people call me Peeta. It is a pleasure to meet another of mo bhean’s friends and the lovely Miss Undersee’s beau.”

“What?” Gale says his head rearing back and ignoring the outstretched hand; he really hates this guy already. “What did you say just now and what did you say before?” Then he turns to Katniss and asks “did you say your husband? Did I hear that right, that you are married to this…guy?” He can’t even think of an insult he is so out of whack right now and did the guy say the word beau?

“GALE!” Katniss admonishes him, “be polite. I understand that Peeta’s accent takes a bit getting used to but it isn’t that bad. He just introduced himself and said he was happy to meet you. Earlier he was teasing me since he was nervous on the plane, it is an inside joke.”

Her chastisement of him has Gale seething and Katniss still hasn’t addressed the husband statement, which he really wants to know about, as of right now, but Katniss has her hackles up and the kilt guy still has his hand extended and a dopey grin on his face. So he turns to the guy and takes his hand in a hard handshake expecting to get the upper hand on the goofball saying “Gale Hawthorne”. But what Gale found instead was that Peeta has a grip that could easily hurt and that his eyes told Gale that Peeta is astute and not to be underestimated. The intelligence scrutinizing Gale through blue eyes momentarily catches him off guard and when he blinks and opens them again the eyes looking at him held that innocent gaze that Gale almost didn’t believe the moment had happened.

“Aye, I ken who ye are” the lightness in kilt-guy or Peeta’s voice is tempered with an edge Gale recognizes as Peeta continues to address him. “And to answer your question, Aye, Katniss and I are marrit.”

“Fuck, married Katniss? MARRIED?” Gale can’t help but burst out and he immediately regrets not controlling his temper when he feels Madge tense at his side then step away completely. He doesn’t want to be the asshole, but does no one else see the absurdity of Katniss being married to kilt-guy?

“No, don’t you Gale me. Does no one else see the absurdity of this? Why is everyone standing around like this is normal. You went away single and came home married and none of us know this guy? What if he’s a user or…” Gale stops his rant for a second when a horrific thought fills his head and it causes him to peer at Katniss’ belly as if that will alone give him the answer he requires.

“NO I’m not pregnant.” Katniss bursts out at him and her words cause something to shift in her husband, even thinking the word makes Gale shudder.

“Why do people assume that we are marrit it is because ye are wi’ child?” Peeta states and even Gale can feel the guy’s anger come in waves. “I dinna like it.” And the last statement has Gale swinging his eyes from Katniss’s belly to the asshole in front of him.

“You don’t like it?” Gale starts his voice dropping low and as menacing as possible while trying to size this guy up. “I don’t like you” he manages to grit out as he stands as tall as he can feeling a little smug that he has an inch or two on the guy.

Gale steels himself as he takes stock of the situation; something is off there is no way his Katniss just
up and married some guy, but he needs to speak to her alone. “Katniss I need to speak to you, alone.” He grits out as nicely as he can noticing the crowd of their friends and family.

“Gale?” Madge’s voice behind him reminds him of the way this might look to her. And although it kind of is the way it looks he doesn’t want to be that asshole so he turns to Madge and bends over to look her in the eyes and softly takes a hand.

“Katniss is my best friend and I don’t like this situation, just let me make sure this is legit, OK?” Gale soothes while stroking her hand with his thumb, Madge visibly deflates as the tension leaves her body and a small smile appears on her face. Then he turns back around and faces the asshole and his Katniss.

Let’s walk over there” Gale says looking at Katniss as he points to a corner of the yard.

“Fine” Katniss retorts, “But Peeta comes too.”

Fuck, he thinks as he takes in her determined posture and upturn of her adorable chin and he knows she is not going to budge on this one and he manages to grit out his own “fine”.

All three walk over to the edge of the yard and Gale makes a concerted effort to take deep breaths in order to calm his temper. He resolutely keeps his eyes staring at the woods so that he does not look at them in their matching skirts, but the thought that they match purposefully has now invaded his mind and eats away at his control even as he tries to extinguish his fire.

“Why the fuck are you wearing matching skirts?” Fuck, he can’t believe those are the words his brain started with. Apparently neither can Katniss based on the scowl mixed with look of confusion that is fixed on her gaping mouth, which is at least silent, thank god. Unfortunately Katniss’ silence means that the asshole, formally known as kilt-guy, gets to speak.

“They are no skirts. It is a kilt. And this is the plaid of my clan, Clan Mellark. And My wife is wearing the mark of my clan, because she belongs to me.” The guy puffs out his chest and crosses his arms across his chest in an attempt to dominate with his size and his voice is hard and eyes full of challenge.

Gale can feel his nostrils flare as he takes in the words asshole speaks; Katniss is not his, who is this guy? Vibrating with anger he opens his mouth to speak but is interrupted by a very irate woman with silver eyes.

“ENOUGH” Katniss’ voice is commanding and his mouth snaps shut quickly tearing his eyes off the asshole and slams them onto Katniss. Her silver eyes flare with rage as he observes her take a calming breath and then turn to asshole.

“Peeta, I think Gale is concerned about my welfare, just as my family and friends were and we need to be sensitive of his feelings. Gale doesn’t know you and when he does I am sure he will approve of our marriage just as everyone else has.” Katniss’s voice softens as she talks to Peeta and Gale watches as Katniss’s voice softens, her stance changes as she leans into Peeta while she gently berates him.

Peeta drops his arms from across his chest and brings a hand up and cups the back of Katniss’s head and Gale wants to puke when the guy drops his forehead to touch Katniss’s while his other hand reaches down and pulls up her left hand that Gale notices has a huge rock on her left hand. When Peeta speaks the voice is softer and pleading making Gales stomach churn even more. “I ken mo maise, but I dinna like it when people imply we marrit because of a bairn, it upsets me when yer friends imply that ye are a woman of loose morals.”
“No one is implying that it would be Katniss’s fault.” Gale states his anger rising with the bile.

“Enough” Katniss exclaims turning to Gale. “You are not my father or my brother” she continues looking at him. “My parents are happy with Peeta, they are happy with my choice” she continues staring him down and making him feel like one of the squirrels caught in her sights.

“Peeta is my husband…and I love him.” Gale can feel his chest deflate in defeat as Katniss continues. “So I am not sure why you feel you have the right to question me or my decisions if my family is fine with them. Both my father and Uncle Haymitch approve, so you should too.”

“It’s my right to protect you” Gale replies desperately trying to regain control of the situation, “you have always been mine to protect.” Oh crap, he really didn’t just say that last part aloud did he?

“No” answers Peeta instead of Katniss. “It is no your responsibility to protect Katniss. She is my wife and I have pledged my life to protect and care for her. It is my responsibility as her husband.” The guy stalks up to Gale blocking Katniss from him standing in a challenging manner that has Gale bristling.

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“Peeta” Katniss says in a warning tone and places her hand on his forearm. She doesn’t like the way Gale is acting but Peeta is acting a little bit like a Neanderthal. Turning she looks up into his eyes and sees her husband glowering at Gale and his defensive posture.

Irritated at the possessiveness and how Peeta answers for her Katniss really sees the man she married, the predator and the protector, her Leòmhann and she instantly understands that this is who he is. Asking Peeta to back down and not be the dominate male is not an option. Even though her man is surprisingly modern when it comes to some things, such as her working, he is essentially a product of his times. In Peeta’s mind Katniss does belong to him and he will fight her battles and protect her because that is what he promised her before his clan and God. Katniss realizes she cannot demand that her husband back down, but she can try to control the situation because she just knows if this altercation turns physical that Gale will lose. Gale is tall, strong, a born tracker and decent fighter, but Peeta is a trained warrior a fact that Gale does not understand.

So Katniss turns towards Gale and attempts to placate, “Would you like to know how we met and married?”

Gale turns his eyes on her and she startles at the intensity she finds there, the anger and hurt shining at her that is quickly reigned in before he speaks in a sharp voice. “Do you think that will help?”

“Yes, I do” Katniss says firmly, “everyone here has heard the story with the exception of you and your father. I would love for you to hear it as well.”

“Fine” Gale spits “although I am not sure that it will do any good. How do we know this guy isn’t taking advantage of you to be a US citizen or even takes advantage of you financially?”

“Mmmpphh” the familiar Scottish grunt is Peeta’s reply which he then follows up with a stern look at her.

“No, I would verra much like to ken if this man is angry because he feels like a brother to ye or if he feels he has a claim on ye.” Peeta replies bristling with anger. “It is my right as your husband and Lord to ken the intentions of every man surrounding my wife.”

Anger instantly courses through her at Peeta’s words before Katniss takes a calming breath. This is
Peeta, a man born and raised in the 1700’s where women belong to first their father’s and then their husbands, there is no use getting angry at him. Plus he really does have a right to be angry, the way Gale has been possessive of her, as if he has some ownership over her is bullshit. Gale isn’t a product of his time, he was born in the 1986 and thus has no excuse. Katniss makes the decision to let Peeta handle this, but she plans on making sure there is no physical violence.

Leaning up on her tip toes she kisses Peeta’s angrily pursed lips softly, once, twice and then lowers herself back to her heals before acquiescing. “You do have that right. Why don’t you and Gale have a private talk where you can assure him of our marriage? No fighting allowed, Peeta. I’m serious don’t hurt him, this isn’t home.”

He answers her by crossing his arms over his chest and nodding at her while ‘Mmmpphhhhing’ and then turning his eyes to Gale who is just looking at her wide eyed and open mouthed.

“You want ME to talk to him?” Gale questions her, disbelief in his face.

“Yes” her voice is firm and low leaving no question in her voice. “Fix this Gale, Peeta is my husband. I love him, prove to him that your concern is for me as a sister not as a lover.” She spun on her heal and takes two steps before wheeling back around her finger pointed at him for emphasis. “Watch your temper Hawthorne, no fighting and don’t provoke him into anything physical.” Gale snorts at her in disbelief and she shakes her head at him. “Seriously, You. Won’t. Win. Why don’t you start by asking Peeta to tell you how we met?”

At that Katniss stalks away back towards the house leaving the two men there to work it out. Catching her mother’s questioning glances Katniss heads on over to where her parents are standing with the Hawthornes.

“Want to tell me what that is about?” Her mom asks referencing the epic standoff between Peeta and Gale at the edge of woods.

Huffing in exasperation Katniss looks over at Hunter and Hazelle and gives them a smile which she is positive is more like a grimace. Shrugging her shoulders she answers in as neutral tone as she is able “Gale seems to think that Peeta married me in order to use me for some unknown gain or nefarious plot. While Peeta is under the impression that Gale is angry not because he has brotherly feelings, but more…” Katniss pauses trying to think of a way to put it without insulting his parents, “more amorous intentions” she finishes while giving the adults an apologetic look.

“I left them there to hash it out, with instructions not to get physical. I specifically made it clear to Peeta not to hurt Gale.”

Hunter grunts in disbelief at Katniss before answering, “Gale can handle himself Katniss, I’m sure he could hold his own against Peeta.”

Katniss shook her head slowly at Hunter before answering Hunter looking him square in the eye. “Yes, Gale can handle himself against a normal guy, but not Peeta. Peeta is a trained warrior Hunter. He can handle all sorts of weapons in combat. He just won multiple combat competitions at the Highland Games. Before that I saw him take down two trained soldiers simultaneously, by himself, with. That. Sword.” Katniss points to the sword that Peeta is now propping against a tree as the two men eye each other warily. “Granted he was defending me from being attacked, but since Gale is with Madge and has no interest in me romantically then this won’t be an issue.”

Katniss looks up to see a look of worry pass over Hunter’s face that is quickly replaced by his unreadable stoic expression. Taking a quick peak she sees that Hazelle is looking fondly over at Madge who is still talking with Clove while eyeing Peeta and Gale.
“Think that’s a good idea sweetheart?” Katniss swung her head to see her Uncle’s concerned grey eyes on hers and motioning towards the two men who look like they still have not said a word.

“No” she replies chuckling slightly, “but they need to work it out. Peeta is an alpha male and is used to having his people follow him, he needs to do this himself. He sees Gale as someone who wants to encroach on his territory, once he realizes that Gale doesn’t want me, Peeta will be fine.”

Peeta takes his time studying Gale who seems to be standing there frozen in anger. Katniss has said that what she had with Gale was over years ago, but that does not mean that he isn’t jealous. Katniss is his but this man had her first; Gale had her virginity, the same gift that Peeta gave to Katniss.

Never taking his eyes off of Gale, Peeta slowly leans his sword against the closest tree. Having his sword in hand probably isn’t the smartest thing when talking with Katniss’s supposed ‘friend’.

“The day I met Katniss I was two days in on a trip from my estate to my Uncle’s home, which is several day’s journey by horse. I had just finished packing up the camp when I heard the most beautiful singin’ so I waited and listened until it ended. Just after I had mounted and started on my journey I heard a woman screamin for help.” Peeta stopped and looked over at Gale who is looking at him as if he isn’t sure if he should walk away or listen.

“O’ course I rode toward the screams, I ken a woman was in trouble, it was early morning and there were no many people up and the area is not well populated. As I came out of the woods I saw a woman being attacked by two men.” Peeta grits his teeth and closes his eyes momentarily at the horrible memory of Katniss pinned to the ground by the redcoats.

“She was being held down by one man while the other was trying to rape her” At that statement a growl of anger comes from his adversary and Peeta can see the anger in flashing in Gales eyes.

“I dispatched both men as quickly as I could, but while I was fighting the woman ran to her pack and pulled out a bow. So when I was finished with the men and I turned towards her in concern… I was met with an arrow pointed at my heart. I thought she was the goddess of the hunt, Diana, come to life, with her dark as night hair and flashing eyes silver like the moon. I instantly ken I would give my life for this woman.”

Peeta pauses and looks Gale directly into his eyes so he could see his conviction before he continues. “I had never fallen in love with a lassie before, you understand. It was immediate and absolute, it was fate. I courted her like a gentleman and respected her reputation. Then I asked her to marry me and Katniss said yes… wi’ no hesitation.” Peeta notices the pain that slams through Gale but he takes a breath and soldiers on, “Our wedding consummation was the first time we were together, other then a few kisses. We did no marry for lust, or because I had defiled her and were caught, or for any monetary gain. We marrit for love and when I took my vows before God I meant them. When I took the blood vow before God and my clan, I meant those too.”

“What is a blood vow?” Gale interrupts him with venom in his voice but Peeta has noticed his stance no longer looks like he is going to attack.

“That our blood is the same, she is mine and I am hers. I give her the protection of my name, my clan, my body and my life if need be.

“Katniss also took vows that are similar, that she is mine and under my protection as her lord and husband.” Pausing he looks at Gale and gives him a hard look. “I can take care of my wife financially, I have a good position and more wealth then I can imagine. I am the Laird of Dalcross...
and my wife is the Lady Dalcross which gives her all the privilidges that entails. I was a virgin before my marriage, I take faithfulness seriously. So ye needn’t be worried that I am takin advantage of her.

“Now that that is cleared up, I’m asking if ye are a friend to my wife… if ye are a friend to our marriage? What are your intentions? Because my wife thinks ye are a friend and only a friend, but I am no convinced. I see the way ye look at her and I see the way ye reacted to the news of our marriage. Her parents and Uncle approve and ye are no family, so it makes me suspicous as to why ye feel ye have a right to be upset. According to my wife there was no promise between ye, and ye have been a courten Misstress Madge for a while. So ye tell me, what are your intentions toward my wife?”

Peeta ends by standing straight and tall looking Gale head on. His hands are twitchen to throttle the guy so he crosses his arms across his chest to prevent himself from taking an errent swing. He promised his wife he wouldn’a hurt the guy, so he wilna start anything. BUT if the guy starts something, Peeta will be sure he is the one that ends it.

“Katniss is one of my oldest friends” Gale bites out at him not really answering Peeta’s question at all.

“I ken that, she told me. She also told me ye are an ex-suitor. I’m askin if ye want my wife.”

Silence is the answer from the man staring back at him. And Peeta doesn’t like it.

“Do ye want my wife?” He asks again his tone harder as he shifts his stance. Dropping his arms he makes himself as intimidating as possible, smirking internally when he sees Gale flinch, even if it was minutely before the guy got control of his body again.

“If ye canna answer then I assume ye do.” Peeta starts again after he is met with more silence accompanied by a stony stare.

“If ye do want my wife then ye are not her friend and if..”

“I am her friend” Gale hisses interrupting Peeta.

“NO” Peeta firmly interrupts as he tries to get his meaning across. “It is my duty as her husband to understand all the relationships my wife has with men that are no her family. If ye want my wife then ye are no a friend to our marriage or to Katniss. I have met many of her friends such as Cato there and his wife. He dosna want my wife, he has greeted me and welcomed me as Katniss’s husband. Cato is a friend.” Peeta pauses and then continues, “I willna allow my wife to believe that ye are her friend if ye want to bed her… So I’m askin’ one last time, because I am no going anywhere. Do ye want to bed my wife?”

Peeta watches as emotions run the gamut on the face of the man in front of him. The silence is telling, but he is allowing this man more time to answer then he would normally for the sake of his wife. Finally the look of defeat seems to win out although a fair amount of defiance still remains in his posture.

“No” Gale responds to his question. Peeta is pretty sure he is only partially telling the truth, but he is going to take it.

“Good, then ye can remain in our lives.” Peeta answers but then leans in slowly and as menacingly as possibly, dropping his voice as low as possible. “But if I find that ye ever attempt to touch my wife in an innappropriate way or make a pass at her…” Peeta stopped and let the threat hang before
continuing, “ye will regret it.”

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