Prim's Heart

by herainab

Summary

“Prim’s heart gave life to Lily. Lily gave life to me and because of Prim I became a dad. It took three of us for Lily to be here.”

The Everdeen's and Mellark's lives collide in an unexpected way.

For Prompts In Panem - The Farewell Tour

Day 7 - Dreamscape Week - Prompt - Rats

Katniss

The high speed car chase was live on television. Everyone's attention seemed to be on chase in the lunchroom of the office. Workers stopping for their after lunch coffee were trapped by the chase involving two stolen cars and nearly a dozen police cars. It had just crossed into Washington's border where road spikes had been laid on the road in hopes of slowing the two cars down. It was crossing into its first hour and no one had seen a chase like this before. And as editors and publishers, they thrived off of action and drama. This police chase gave them just what they were looking for after a slow day of reading manuscripts and meetings with clients.

The vehicles avoided the road spikes and continued on. The roads had been cleared from traffic to ensure safety but as the cars approached the city, it'd become harder for traffic control.

Oohs and ahhs sound from the workers and she feels the urge to roll her eyes. She was never one to
get excited over things like this. She found it stupid and a waste of resources and work time. People were fickle and thought the prospect of a high-speed chase was the greatest thing in the world.

She binned the tea bag and picked up her cup of tea to exit the lunchroom. Now was the chance to get some editing done while everyone was on the other side of the building getting aroused by the car chase.

"Oh shit! Fuck they're not slowing down!" Johanna curses from the doorway as everyone else gasps.

Katniss turns her attention to the screen and watches the unfolding of one of the cars t-boning a parked hatchback at full speed and with the second car rear ending the first car, causing more carnage to the parked civilian. The car is crushed around a pole and the chase comes to a quick end with the police surrounding the cars. The live coverage ends abruptly and everyone is shocked at what they had seen.

"That can't be good." Johanna's speaks.

Katniss feels for the innocent driver of the car and the other civilians who had to witness the collision.

She returns to her desk, setting her mug down and returns to the manuscript she was reading.

It's almost two hours later when her office phone rings. It was five o'clock and the office was completely deserted. Her assistant had left just fifteen minutes ago.

"Katniss, it's some doctor in Seattle. He wants to speak to you. He says it's urgent." Johanna speaks on the other line.

"Did he say what it's in regards to?"

"No it's private but very urgent."

"Put him through."

The line connects and she speaks' "Katniss Everdeen."

"Ms Everdeen, my name is Doctor Abernathy. I'm trying to get into touch with your parents but I can't seem to."

"They're on a cruise. Is there something I can help you with?"

"It's about your sister, Primrose."

"What's wrong with Prim?"

"I think it's best you come to Seattle. Immediately."

She catches the first available flight to Seattle. Johanna's drives her to the airport, Katniss too unfocused to think. Prim's phone was going straight to voicemail and she didn't know anything else.

"I can come with you." Johanna tells her as she pulls up outside the terminal.

She shakes her head. "I'll call you when I land.

"Keep me posted." Katniss nods. "And I'll get onto the cruise ship company."
The six hour flight was dreadful. She was too nervous to eat or sleep. Her eyes bore into the back of the chair in front of her and she waited. Her parents cruise ship was docked at California and they’d be flying to Seattle, arriving a couple of hours after Katniss.

The plane landed just after 8 and she moved quickly to the pickup zone where a car service was waiting for her. She is driven to the hospital and she runs into the building and to the front desk.

"Hi, Doctor Abernathy called. My sister is in the hospital."

The receptionist looked up from her screen with an unimpressed look.

"I'll need to see some ID first. And what is your sister's name?"

"Primrose Everdeen."

Her face changes instantly and Katniss passes over her driver's license and the receptionist hands it back quickly and is soon on the phone.

"Miss Everdeen's sister is here." She says into the receiver. "Certainly. Okay thanks." The phone is placed down on the caddy and she looks up.

"He's just finishing up with a patient. Why don't you take a seat?"

Katniss looks at the waiting room and then back at the receptionist.

"Can you please tell me if she's alright?"

The receptionist's face twists with emotions and she shakes her head slightly.

"Sorry. I'm in no position to answer any questions."

She nods, picking up her bag and moving to the waiting room. The TV replays the police chase and the accident.

"A police chase has ended tragically with a 22 year old female rushed to hospital in a critical condition. The drivers of the car were also taken to hospital for treatment. Police remain on the scene investigating what happened. There's no news regarding the condition of the victim but we'll be sure to report on her condition when details are released."

She sits, her leg bounces with her nerves and anxiety builds inside of her body.

She had to be okay, she just had to.

What felt like hours later, a doctor approached her. He was older, years of treating patients had taken its toll on the man. He looked completely exhausted.

"Ms Everdeen, I'm Doctor Abernathy."

"How is she?"

"How about we go somewhere a little more private and...

"No, please just tell me. She's not okay is she?"

She listens to the steady beeps of the machines. Hears the respirator. The sound of her sister’s heart beat.
"It's unlikely she'll ever wake up again and if she does..." He begins. "She'll be needing round the
clock care, nurses, feeding tubes. She'll have no motor functions or ever be able to walk or properly
talk again." He explains. "I'm so sorry Ms Everdeen."

Katniss nods and wraps her arms tighter around her body. She was never good at this stuff. She
always was flighty when it came to injuries or blood. And now, all this medical jargon and talk about
life support. She doesn't understand it. She needs her parents here because ultimately they have the
final say.

"Would you like anything Ms Everdeen?" Dr Abernathy asks.

She shakes her head and sinks down into the plastic chair.

"If you need me just get the nurse to page me." He tells her moving to the door of the CCU. "Ms
Everdeen, I'm sorry this had to happen to your sister."

She nods, barely acknowledging him and stares at her sister, watching as her chest moves.

But it's not really herself that's moving her own chest, it's the respirator, the machines opening and
closing her lungs. Placing a steady flow of air into her body to keep her body running while they
wait.

She was going to be a doctor. She was going to do great things. She was beautiful, smart and so
caring. She didn't deserve this fate. Or for her life to come to a standstill because deep inside her, she
knew this wasn't good. And despite the wish to keep her sister alive, the alternative didn't sound so
appealing.

And that was if her sister would ever wake up.

Her parents were still two hours away and in the space of two hours a lot could happen.

The door opens to the room and a nurse step inside quietly.

"Ms Everdeen, I've just got to take her vitals."

Katniss nods, giving her permission and watches as the young dark haired nurse records her sister's
stats and vitals. She works quietly and quickly and is out the door before her presence is actually felt.

She's back again ten minutes later.

The fourth time the nurse enters she speaks to Katniss.

"Can I bring you anything?"

"I'm fine."

"My name is Annie." She introduces.

"Katniss."

Annie smiles softly. "Katniss, your sister, I know she might be alright but have you considered
anything yet?"

Katniss shakes her head. "Not until my parents arrive. I need them here."

"Understandable. I'll be here when they arrive. If you need anything, just ask Katniss."
When Annie comes back in the sixth time she brings a bottle of water, sweet tea and a muffin.

"You need to keep your strength up. You need to take care of yourself too."

Annie turns to leave. "Annie, thank you."

"No worries."

She drinks a greedy gulp of water and forces some of the muffin down. She washes it down with the sweet tea.

When Annie steps back in again, Katniss is first to speak. "My sister an organ donor, right?" Katniss asks.

"Yes." Annie replies.

"She's selfless like that. Always giving and wanting to help people out." Katniss speaks. She swallows the lump in her room throat and takes a sip of water as she watches Annie work. "How many lives could she save?"

"A lot." Annie tells her. "It depends on the family and their wishes but she could save up to a dozen lives or improve the quality of life of others from other donations."

"Other donations?"

Annie exhales. "Eyes, skin... Things like that."

Katniss nods and looks over at her sister whose body is battered and bruised. She's unrecognisable. "People donate skin?"

"Yes. It goes to those who need skin grafts. Like burn victims and such."

"Do a lot of people donate skin?"

"Not enough." Annie replies. "There are not a lot of organ donors either."

"Is there someone in this hospital that could benefit from an organ donation?"

"I'm not technically allowed to say."

"You don't have to say anything, you can just nod."

Annie smiles and nods her head slightly.

"Is there more than one?"

Annie shakes her head.

"So the rest would go across the country?"

"Yes."

Katniss looks over at her sister again and back at Annie. "Thank you."

Annie leaves her again and Katniss follows her out of the room to the bathroom and to make a phone call to Johanna.
"What's happened?"

"It was her in that accident. She's not good. She's on life support at the moment."

"Will she wake up?"

Katniss silence answers her question.

"Do you want me there? I can be there."

"No, stay."

"You know, I can be there if you want. I don't mind at all Katniss."

"No, mom and dad will be here soon."

There's a long silence between the two friends.

"I'm so sorry Katniss."

"I know. I better get back to her."

"I know it's the last thing you'd want but keep me updated."

"I will. I'll talk to you later."

She ends the call and sinks into the plastic chair in the waiting room. A man, a little bit older than her sits in front of her. His eyes are glassy and cheeks red. His own phone is pressed to his ear.

"You better get out here." The man says into the receiver. "It's not good. They've given him just a couple of weeks to live. And without a donor... Mom please come and say goodbye to him. He needs his family now more than anything and I can't do this alone anymore. I'll organise your flight, just get here."

The phone call ends quickly and the man lets out a strangled sob.

Katniss looks around the waiting room and with no one in sight she crosses the floor and sits down beside the man who has his face buried in his hands.

"Can I get you anything?" Katniss asks him.

The man sits up, brushing the few tears from his face.

He shakes his head. "Maybe you could forget that you saw a thirty-one year old man crying."

Katniss smiles at him and gives him a comforting pat on his shoulder. "I don't even know what you are talking about."

He smiles and sits up in the chair, stretching his legs out in front of him.

"I'm a good listener." She tells the blond haired man. "My name is Katniss."

"Scott." He returns. "I'm sure you have family somewhere, considering this is the CCU."

"I do but I need a moment to myself." She explains.

She goes to speak but he beats her to it. "My 29-year-old brother is currently in heart failure. He's got
a week, maybe two weeks left. We thought we'd have more time but he's taken a turn for the worse and our odds of receiving a donor heart in time is slim."

"I'm so sorry."

"It's been a long time in the making but it's still hard to..."

"I know." Katniss says. "You just never expect it to happen."

He nods, letting out another sob. Katniss consoles him because he has no one and she knows she'll have someone. It's the least she could do.

Scott's phone rings in his hand and he sighs at the name. "It's my other brother. I should probably take it."

"Go ahead." She tells him.

He answers the call and stands out of his chair and makes his way outside.

Annie finds her way into the waiting room and sits down beside Katniss.

"You all right?"

Katniss nods and keeps her eyes on Scott until he disappears out of sight.

"Making friends?"

"Consoling. That's what people do in the CCU." Katniss tells Annie and turns to look at her. "Is something wrong?"

"No. Everything is the same. You're parents are about an hour away."

She nods nervously. It was getting late in the day.

"I'll be there beside you Katniss. Us doctors and nurses are here to support your family through this time. We'll support you no matter your decision."

Katniss chews her lip for a moment and let's out an exhale.

"Could my sisters heart save his brother?"

"You know I can't answer that."

"You can nod or shake your head."

"Okay." Annie replies.

"Could my sister save his brother?"

She watches Annie hesitate and then nod her head slightly.

Katniss sucks in a heavy breath and looks away from Annie. She watches Scott enter the hospital again and he looks more distressed. He doesn't deserve the pain of his brother dying.

But neither does her sister deserve to have her life ended over something that is uncontrollable.

Her parents arrive and she breaks down the minute she embraces them.
"It's not good." She tells them once she's controlled her emotions.

The doctor explains to her parents about Prim's condition and the next stage of treatment.

"Do you think she'll wake up?" Her father asks.

"It's hard to tell Mr Everdeen. She could wake up or she might never wake up. If she does, it'll be a miracle if she functions 60 per cent at least. She'll require round the clock care and have no way of life. She'll be wheelchair bound and it'll not be a life for her."

"But she could still be fine." My mother says almost too hopeful.

"She could be. We don't know for certain. Her results aren't looking too promising."

"So you're giving up on her?"

"Of course not but your family have a big decision to make regarding the next stage of care." The doctor says. "Please excuse me."

My mother and father sit at Prim's bedside, holding her hands and kissing her. They talk to her and pray for her.

But inside I slowly begin to grieve because I'll never have the same sister. And even though she'll live inside, on the outside... It'll kill me.

Annie finds me outside on a coffee run. Her shift was due to end at midnight.

"I can stay the night, keep you company."

"Go home and get some rest." I tell her. "We'll be fine."

She nods and reaches into her pocket, handing over a piece of paper.

"Here's my number. Call or text me anytime. I'll come right back if you need me." She says. "Stay strong."

I deliver coffee and meet the new nurse. He's youngish and loud. And he's nothing like Annie. He's insensitive and doesn't know where to stop. My father politely asks him to leave and he does, telling us he'll be back later.

I silently hope he isn’t and move closer to Prim’s bedside and touch the cold arm of my little sister. And deep inside I know, this isn’t the right thing.

“Mom, Dad, we need to make a decision.” I say, breaking the silence. “The right decision.”

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**Peeta**

Scott is sound asleep, in a cot at my bedside and the television is on. The volume is low and a 24-hour news channel plays. A breaking news story flashes across the screen. The same news story has been playing for the whole day.

A 22-year-old medical school student is fighting for her life in this exact same hospital after a high-speed chase. The 22 year old lies in a coma, most likely down the hallway from I. And where the
student was struck, was just outside the bakery I frequented during my work breaks and the same place where I collapsed just nine months earlier.

I had been pushed and persuaded to go to the doctor having felt terrible for months. My co-workers, my brothers and my ex-girlfriend all told me to see a doctor.

I feel a sudden pang of sympathy for the family who will have to deal with this for the rest of their lives. And the sheer hell they must all be going through. I know that it’s the hardest part of a life-threatening ordeal: seeing the distress etched in the faces of your loved ones. And I know, in this case that the greatest burden has fall on my brother, Scott, who has barely left my bedside during this entire nightmare.

He’s been the only one strong enough to stay with me.

*Please, don’t me die. And please save this poor young woman. Please give her the strength to recover…*

I wince in pain as I shift ever so slightly during my silent prayer. I look up at the old, white ceiling, and then turn my head to the side. I’m eye to eye with the technology keeping me alive: the tubes, the heart-rate monitor with its blinking lights, and the LVAD, a machine that helps my own weakened and enlarged heart pump blood through my body.

I am reminded- as if I could never forget - that I am totally dependent on this machine, 24/7. Only days before, my doctors had given me my death sentence. If a heart didn’t arrive in the next week or two, I will almost certainly die.

Just 12 months earlier, I had been a fit young man with my whole life ahead of me and the happiest I could ever remember being. I was finally flourishing in my career after years of slogging it. I had finally become an interviewer on-air and rising steadily in the world of media. I was becoming a respected journalist and personality. The station had regarded me as one of its most valuable and versatile assets. I had finally moved in with my girlfriend of two years and we were planning our life and future.

We had been living together less than three months when I became ill - and in the space of two or three weeks I found I was barely able to walk up the steps to my apartment, or get through a day at the studio without nearly collapsing. And nine months ago on a walk down to the bakery, just across from the studio I had collapsed and was rushed to hospital, unable to breathe. An ultrasound operator stared back at me in disbelief.

“My God, how are you still alive? Your heart is huge.” She cried out.

Cardiomyopathy I was diagnosed with, the doctor’s relating it to a genetic condition and linking it my father and grandfather who had died in their early forties from heart conditions.

And now, just nine months after falling ill, I too wish I had just suffered a heart attack and died.

I was a changed man and I can no longer look at myself in the mirror. At the sunken cheeks, grey skin, the deep, dark trenches under my eyes. My once powerful, five-foot-10 frame, 198-pound frame has been reduced to a barely recognisable stick figure, weighing barely 154 pounds.

I was slowly slipping away and I wished it would come sooner. I was tired of living in this body and ready to end the pain my family had to endure each and every day. And I’m sick of the suffocating air that smells of death.

I wake the next morning watching more news reports on the high-speed car chase which still remains
the headline. The woman had her family at her bedside and has now been identified to the world.

Primrose Everdeen.

A picture flashes up on the screen of the beautiful blonde-haired, blue-eyed girl who has become the victim in this crime. She had her whole life ahead of her and now she has been reduced to a hospital bed and will mostly likely never leave.

I shut off the TV and stare at the ceiling, feeling exhausted.

I hardly dream anymore.

But during my sleep I dream of a dark-haired, silvery-eyed woman. She’s startling and has this effect on me. She sings to me, comforting me in the meadow that used to be near my house, as the sun goes down. She smells of vanilla and spring. She holds my hand and curls into my warmth, hearing my heartbeat under the palm of her free hand. I feel warm after months of feeling icy cold and I feel the warmth spread through my veins and my body. I embrace the radiant woman and relax as she breathes new life into me.

That afternoon, I’m woken from a deep slumber. Scott is nowhere to be seen and I look around the room as if another presence is around but there’s nothing. I feel warmth burning into my arm and a vibrant air filling my once dull room. Someone has been in here.

And it suddenly feels like the warmth I felt in my dream. And I catch a scent of vanilla and spring. My sense of smell has been terrible for these months but I catch the scent of vanilla and spring still lingering in my hospital room.

I turn my attention up to the television screen and the news still plays as a live cross is coming to this very hospital. Jason Everdeen stands before the cameras and reporters outside. He looks younger than I expected, but his face is grey with anguish.

“My name is Jason Everdeen, and I am Primrose’ father,” He says, fighting back sobs. “My wife and eldest daughter thank you for your well wishes and support during this time. The doctor’s have said Prim is brain dead; she is on life support.” He swallows. “My wife, Violet and my daughter Katniss, and myself have decided to switch her life support off but we have decided to donate Prim’s organs, saving hopefully dozens of other lives. Our daughter wanted to save lives. And to keep her legacy alive, we’ve decided this is the right way to do it. And in her passing, she’ll save dozens of lives and live on within them.” Jason explains, wiping his eyes. “And I understand there is a man waiting for his heart right upstairs, a 29-year-old; and he will be receiving his heart tonight. And I’m hoping it will keep him alive. I would like you to know this is going to tie my family and myself to Seattle forever…”

‘29-year-old’ are ringing in my ears. Who else could the impending heart recipient be but myself? I’ve been in hospital twice now in the past nine months; I know all 35 people on the waiting list and I’m the only 29-year-old.

I frantically push down on the buzzer, Annie comes rushing in with another nurse.

“I’m getting a heart; I heard it.” I declare.

But they are too preoccupied with my monitor that shows my heart rate has soared from 60-70 beats per minute to a dangerous 150.

“It’s not true.” Annie states, trying to calm me down. “There’s countless of tests that have to be done to ensure compatibility.”
At about 6pm, Doctor Beetee Latier and Scott enter my room. Scott is trying his best to suppress his smile.

“You won’t be eating dinner tonight Peeta.” Doctor Latier tells me. “You’ll need to fast for the transplant operation that will take place early tomorrow morning.”

I can’t help but ask the obvious question. “Am I receiving Primrose’ heart?”

He refuses to tell me whose heart it is. “Give your phone to me.” He demands. “You’re brother has already given me his.”

I comply with his wishes and give me my phone.

Scott explains to me when Doctor Latier leaves that due to the publicity surrounding Primrose’ death and the impending transplant of her organs, including myself, a known TV personality in Seattle, the last thing he needs is a media circus.

Scott urges me to get some rest while he goes home to shower and rest before my surgery.

But for once I can’t fall asleep. Annie preps me for my surgery and she gushes over the fact that I’m finally getting my heart.

“I bet you’ll be glad to see me leave.” I laugh.

“You’re my favourite patient Peeta, I’m kind of sad to see you leave.”

“You can admit that I am a pain in the arse.”

“I’d never do that.” She tells me, grinning. “I did have something I wanted to share with you though.”

“Yeah?”

“We’re getting our baby.”

I smile. I know how hard her and her husband Finnick been waiting for a baby of their own. They had been on the waiting list for almost two years now and were waiting with every breath for that phone call. And Finnick was a fellow technician here at the hospital. He had a soft spot for me and some evenings while he waited for Annie or was on call and was completely quiet, he’d come and visit me for a game of cards or a chat. He had told me about their bad run at IVF and decided they’d adopt a child instead to bring some love into their home.

“That’s brilliant Annie. I’m happy for you guys.”

“We met the mother just last month and she’s chosen us.”

I can see her holding her composure because it could all be taken away and I silently pray for them.

“I can’t wait to meet the little Odair.”

She leaves me and I sit up in my bed with the TV playing a late night talk show. I hardly pay attention to the screen to deep in thought when I catch a movement out of the corner of my eye.

It’s the family. The Everdeen’s. Mrs Everdeen cries into her husband’s shirt and their daughter follows behind them, tears running down her cheeks. She looks into my room and stops for the briefest of seconds as she gazes at me. She’s the woman from my dream. Dark hair and silvery eyes.
She smells of vanilla and spring. She radiates with life.

I suck in a breath.

*Thank you.* I mouth to her.

She’s taken aback and smiles at me before following behind her family, leaving the hospital for home.

My new heart begins beating at 6:23am.

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**Scott**

Doctor Latier hands me back my phone post Peeta’s surgery. My brother is recovering well and Doctor Latier couldn’t be happier for him.

“Thank you.” I tell him.

“My pleasure.”

He leaves me to my phone and the amount of messages left on my phone from well-wishers. Most of them relieved for Peeta who has received, at the 11th hour, his heart transplant.

But there’s one person, judging by the long line of missed calls, who seems particularly determined to speak to me.

I’m curious and call the number back, only to find myself hearing Jason Everdeen, politely introducing himself.

“I’m sorry for interrupting you at this high emotional time.” He begins to say. I go to apologise but he stops me. “I wish to meet up before we fly back to Chicago. We’ve already asked the hospital if we could see Peeta, but we hear his health wasn’t up to it yet.”

I agree to meet them at the hotel they are booked into for the night before their flight.

It’s the very least I could do, they gave me my brother.

My brother Rye had flown in early this morning with his family, my mother refusing to come and see Peeta.

In the taxi ride over I was a nervous wreck. Rye grips my arm with his hand and my fiancé holds my other hand, and we step out of the taxi together.

The minute we meet the Everdeen’s we relax. We sit around the hotel’s boardroom all together. Some of their family had flown out to be with them and to say goodbye to Prim.

We wind up talking for hours, hugging, crying and sharing many stories.

“Prim was committed to organ donation. She had been since she knew what it meant. And ironically, we had discussed the issue over dinner just months before after her graduation from college.” Jason explains.

“It was Katniss who pushed us to make our decision.” Violet tells me smiling. “We were clinging to the small bit of hope the doctors had said but deep down we knew we had to really consider our options. We were losing time the longer we dwelled and decided as a family what Prim would really
want. And this is what she’d want.”

We all embrace again on leaving and I thank them graciously.

I hold Katniss in my arms a little longer than anyone else.

“I’ll never forget this Katniss. You’ve given me the best gift in life.” I whisper in her ear.

“Enjoy your gift Scott.”

We watch them leave for the elevator to take them up to their room after an exchange of our numbers.

Piper urges me to go to the hospital to be with Peeta tonight but I decline and take her home. Rye instead goes to our brother’s bedside and I hold my fiancé in my arms and we finally set a date on our wedding after I had put it off for months and months, too scared to commit if something had happened to my brother.

A few weeks later, the Everdeen’s come back to Seattle. Their daughter has been laid to rest and the family are slowly getting their lives back on track.

Peeta is still recovering and the doctor’s say he could be home in a month’s time.

We all meet at the hospital in one of the boardrooms. Peeta no longer has that grey look to his skin. His eyes are no longer sunken and his skin is warm. He is slowly gaining weight and looks to be his actual height again. He looks like the same Peeta again.

To say it’s an emotional reunion is an understatement. Everyone gets to meet Peeta finally and he embraces the Everdeen’s hard, thanking them for their gift of life.

Violet Everdeen is the last to embrace Peeta. She takes to him slowly and sits down beside him. She’s silent and we all watch Violet and Peeta. Peeta stares at the woman.

“Can I feel your heartbeat?” She asks.

Peeta nods and guides Violet Everdeen to his chest and holds her hand in place and she smiles as she feels the heartbeat of her daughter. She sobs with tears rolling down her cheeks but tells us they are happy tears.

The rest of the family feel his heartbeat and relish in the fact that their daughter lives on.

And I can’t help but watch the way Katniss lingers longer. How Peeta gazes at her like she hung the moon. He allows her to listen to his heart and she leans her ear against his chest and we catch the sound of laughter escaping her lips. Peeta is soon laughing and the two embrace for a longer while.

And everyone else in the room can’t help but watch them bond, falling slowly in love with each other without them even knowing.

The Everdeen’s leave for Chicago again, trying to get on with their lives, making sense of it while I watch my brother make sense of his new life.

It takes Peeta another six weeks to summon up the courage to feel his own heartbeat, naturally without the aid of a machine.

He knows it’s crazy, but he’s fearful it’s going to feel like the machine.
I’m with him when he feels his own heartbeat, having summoned up the courage to put his hand on his own chest and feel his heart.

He’s silent for a while. Katniss sits beside him, she had come back for a visit, and he holds his hand. She had constantly felt his heart beating when she came for visits and encouraged him to do the same.

“How does it feel?” She asks him.

I watch from the plastic chair, placed at the other side of his bed.

“It feels warm.” He begins. “Reassuring.” He says slowly smiling. “It feels like a natural part of me.”

Katniss and I smile at him and know it helps him deal with the terrible survivor’s guilt now overwhelming him. The visits of Katniss remind him the real reason why he is mostly machine free and alive.

But she also helps him with the will to live.

“This is Prim’s heart. I have to look after it, to honor it. So much loss has led to this point. I won’t let her down.” He says aloud and I watch Katniss plant a firm kiss to his lips, catching my brother off guard.

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**Katniss**

Warm kisses are trailed down my neck and shoulder and I fall into the warmth of the person kissing my skin.

“I know you’re awake.” He murmurs against my skin and I smile, catching myself out.

I turn to his chest and place my hands on his bare chest, running my hand over his scar and resting it on his chest, his heart beats underneath my hand.

Since our relationship grew, I always found myself touching his chest and feeling his beating heart. My sister’s heart had given him his heart and I was given him.

I can’t imagine my life without him.

When he was discharged from hospital, I relocated myself to Seattle to be with him while he underwent the last of his recovery from home.

When he was strong enough to fly and undertake other activities he packed up his things and moved to Chicago with me. Some thought it to be fast, less than a year after we met but I couldn’t imagine my life without him.

I always thought that if the universe wanted someone to meet that they’d make it happen.

And despite the tragic nature of us meeting, we found love and a purpose to life. We made a promise to live out our lives to the fullest, most importantly for Prim and his father.

And we did.

He got a job at the television station in Chicago, just down the road from my work. He was stronger and healthier each passing day and a totally new man with a new lease of life.
He proposed to me a few months later on a trip to see his brother Rye and his family and we married in the September, 7 months later.

My father walked me down the aisle and Peeta embraced my father for a short while, Peeta thanking him as tears welled in both of their eyes.

I knew how hard it was for my father but deep down, I knew how happy my father was for the two of us to have found love after such tragic circumstances.

My father became a friend to Peeta and also a father figure, guiding him through life and encouraging him each day to become stronger and stronger.

Peeta and I found out we were expecting our first child a few months later. Peeta, I knew was fearful for the fact that our child could be unwell. And each passing day of our pregnancy he was worried. I reminded him to bask in the now and each scan proved our child to be healthy.

“If she’s a girl, I’d like to call her Primrose.” Peeta tells me one night as we prepare the nursery.

“There’ll never be another Primrose.” I tell him. “I don’t want the baby to have to live up to the name of someone else. She or he should have their own name.” He looked offended. “Peeta, I thought about naming her Primrose but I think our baby deserves to not be associated with another person. Prim will always live on no matter what.” I tell him. “What do you think about Lily Mae if it’s a girl? Mae was Prim’s middle name.”

Lily Mae Mellark was born on the 12th of August. My parents were the first to embark in the joy of their first grandchild.

And when we held our little girl, Peeta looked at our little girl and then to me, “Prim’s heart gave life to Lily. Lily gave life to me and because of Prim I became a dad. It took three of us for Lily to be here.” He tells me.

Lily had been a picture of health and happiness. She has big, bright eyes and beautiful raven hair. She’s loud and cheeky and loves her parents and grandparents.

When she’s 8 months old, our world was shattered.

That day, she wasn’t herself. She had been teething and was a little lethargic. We thought she was dehydrated and Peeta and I took her to the hospital.

“She’s heart is failing.” The doctor told us after an examination. Our little girl was sent straight to the ICU, hooked up to machines and monitors and given constant care to try and keep her well.

The next 48-hours, we watched the doctors do everything that they could for Lily.

And as Peeta’s heart failed quickly, Lily’s did the exact same and her tiny heart gave up on the 17th of April.

It had become another defining moment, all together as tragedy unfolding in the intensive care unit.

My parents had remained by our side for those 48-hours. They stood by us and never left, stepping up and supporting us through the same tragedy they had felt at losing their own daughter. My father stuck to Peeta. My mother to me. They never once left because of their own grief. I watched them grow as they stood by our sides.

And despite having just lost my sister before, I now understood what it meant to lose a child.
And I had watched them look into our eyes and see themselves, a reflection of time and irony from years before when they said goodbye to Prim.

We took time for ourselves after Lily’s death. We did a little bit of travel and living, promising to make our lost family lives count. And we added Lily’s life to the promise, to make the most out of her short life in our own life.

I look up at my husband and smile at him. He kisses my lips softly and rests his own hand on my stomach. I catch sight of two frames on the bedside of Prim and Lily and smile.

My smile grows wider at the movements from within my womb and Peeta kisses the bump where our unborn babies are growing inside, months away from making an appearance into the world.

It took all our strength to decide to try for another baby; scared they would have the same fate as our Lily Mae. Scared we’d have to face the heartbreak of losing another baby.

But we didn’t want to miss the chance to become parents and tell our children about their Aunt Prim and their sister Lily. We want the chance to watch them grow and be inspired and love and laugh.

And 6 weeks later when our little boy and girl arrived healthy, I pushed aside the nerves and anxiety of losing them.

I held our son and daughter, Jack and Charlotte, in my arms and kissed their tiny hands and faces and promised them the world as they had given me the world.

And like Peeta said, Prim’s heart gave life to our children. Our children breathed life into us. And because of Prim, we became parents. It took three of us for our children to be here.

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**Peeta**

Katniss lies with her head pressed against my chest. She still has this effect after years of knowing each other and I love the fact that I get to fall asleep next to her. We lay in the yard of our house. It’s a warm summer’s day and the sun is starting to go down. Our bellies were full after dinner and our toddlers chase each other on their chubby legs. I inhale the scent of her skin and catch the scent of vanilla and spring and also the slight smell of the lotion she uses on our babies.

She feels my heartbeat under my shirt and holds my hand.

Ever since my operation, I’ve never felt cold. I’ve always felt warmth and life radiating within my body. Katniss has been the cause of life always spreading throughout my veins.

She had told me that she found out about me before her parents even arrived at the hospital. It was her who fought for Prim to have her life ended in peace rather than the family wait out for their daughter to possibly wake up.

And despite Prim giving me my heart. It was Katniss who made it possible. She gave me my life. And even after the weeks and months of feeling that survivor’s guilt, she lifted me out of that funk and reminded me how beautiful life could be.

I kiss the top of her head and squeeze her tighter to me, bracing our bodies as our little terrors jump on us, screaming in pure joy as they attack us.

Katniss carries Charlotte upstairs to bed and I follow behind with Jack. Our little toddlers were exhausted after their after dinner play and we knew they’d sleep well.
We step into their room, the two of them were inseparable and had been since we brought them home. They depended on each other and were better together. Katniss tucks Charlotte into owl-covered sheets and I tuck Jack into his dinosaur-covered sheets.

Katniss presses kisses to our daughter’s face and crosses the room to cover Jack’s face in kisses.

They both fight to keep their eyes open but won’t sleep unless they hear a story.

They knew the story of Katniss and I but were too young to fully understand it.

But we knew in a few years time they’d understand how we truly met and the reasoning behind our meeting. They ask questions about my scar and why there are only just pictures of Prim and Lily. They’ll ask about their sister Lily and what she was like. They’ll ask questions and we’ll tell them the truth but remind them the reason they exist today.

And their little brother who they can now just feel squirming underneath the skin of their mother’s growing stomach will also know and be reminded of why he exists today.

The three of them will be cherished everyday because they were a gift.

And we’ll tell them, Prim’s heart gave life to you children. You gave life to us and because of Prim we became parents. It took three of us for you three to be here.

We kiss the tops of their heads and wish them sweet dreams as we step out of their bedrooms and go to bed, thankful for another day together.

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