The Knife and the Mockingjay

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Summary

Cato is one of the last tributes in the deadly arena of the 74th Hunger Games. A strange incident occurs and Cato is whisked into a world where Katniss and Peeta are his friends and he is a wrestler in Panem High. His girlfriend, Clove is nowhere to be seen. Can he figure out what has happened before it's too late? (AU x Modern)
Hello, everyone!

This is my first fanfic for the Hunger Games and thanks for checking it out. I wanted to try something different so here it is! I hoped you liked it! :)

DISCLAIMER: I do not own the Hunger Games. Anything you see and read belongs to their respective owners. I own nothing. (This will follow for the immediate chapters that follow.) Pop culture and other media references are not mine and go their respective owners.

This story was originally posted on March 18, 2014 (on Fanfiction.net). I was at least 15 years old when I first began this. It has been under revising and under construction of newly corrected chapters made to suit understanding for your benefit. At last, I hope you enjoy the revised version of *The Knife and the Mockingjay*.

_prologue_

Rue looked up at the sound of a booming cannon.

The pouring rain splashed onto her small, dark frame, making her shiver slightly.

The Capitol's seal appeared in the holographic sky and Rue watched in utmost horror as Thresh's picture showed, then faded along with the following Capitol anthem. Thresh had been like a big brother to her, even though she didn't know him that well. He'd wanted to protect her and let her win.

"Young children should not be reaped," he'd mumbled one day at the training center, glancing at the Career Pack, who were hacking away at dummies. "That just adds more fuel to fire."

Rue began to weep into her sock-encased hands, grateful for the fact that it was raining and the Capitol couldn't see her cry.

Katniss.

Peeta.

Cato.

Rue.

Rue admitted that she liked Katniss and Peeta. Even though Katniss was completely oblivious to the fact that Peeta actually did -

**BOOM! BOOM!**

The silence was shattered by the sound of two more cannons. The hidden mockingjays nestling in the tall trees in the arena whistled her familiar 4-noted lullaby; the one she'd taught Katniss. Rue craned her neck to see just in time to know whose cannons had gone off: the "Star-Crossed Lovers" from District 12 were no more.
Rue sucked in a shaky breath, raising three fingers in the air with her left hand, saying her goodbyes to Katniss, Thresh, and Peeta.

But then Rue remembered: Foxface. The girl from 5 was clever and still out there.

How could've she forgotten?

A sudden shriek pierced the air, and Rue was on her feet, alert. She wanted to climb up the tree but after all it was a thunderstorm, lightning and all. The screams got closer and closer. Mutts, it had to be. Sure enough, there was a flash of red; Rue let out a grunt as she flew to the ground, the weight of a body of top of her. She looked up into a pair of green eyes. Foxface as Katniss called her, but Rue recalled that the girl's name was Finch. Finch scrambled off of the tiny District 11 tribute, then did something Rue did not expect. Finch pressed her hand to her own mouth and swallowed. A cannon shrieked into the air, and looking more closely, saw a handful of familiar berries in the pale, now lifeless hand of Finch. The girl known as Foxface had committed suicide with Nightlock.

But why? When she was so close to winning? Rue couldn't think about that anymore as a loud growl interrupted her thoughts. As quickly as she could, she dashed towards the silver Cornucopia. Rue climbed on top of the large structure with some slight difficulty, then turned once she got to her feet. Cato stood behind her, bloodstained, his favorite silver sword in his hands.

Rue knew that she was going to die. She had no weapons. Her slingshot had disappeared. Rue was no match for this large, sadistic Career from District 2.

She closed her eyes. "Make it quick," she whispered.

Rue felt the metal underneath her feet shift under the weight of the Career coming towards her. She felt Cato wrap his hands around her neck . . . then nothing. Rue opened her eyes curiously. Why wasn't Rue dead yet? She saw Cato staring at her.

"I can't kill a little girl," he spoke for the first time. The dark brown eyes met with the blue. The sword in the brutal Career's hand clattered to the floor. "I'm already broken," he continued, an insane giggle - or was it a laugh? - escaping from his thin lips. "They've killed them, killed her, killed me. Except for you. You can, you can . . . ."

Cato stepped towards her, and Rue immediately took a step back. "I'm not gonna . . . See, they've turned us. Made us into killers. Clover, she - she was mine, you see? And they took her. They took her. But I've been thinking: one more kill and it'll all be over. But who am I to fathom what they want?"

Cato looked up at the dark sky. "YOU WANT A GAME?! FINE, THEN! I'LL GIVE YOU A SHOW!"

Rue had no time to react as then the sword was in his hands, Cato leapt forward - "WE'RE ALL JUST PIECES IN YOUR GAMES!" - and then the Mockingjays sang the final note in her lullaby.

This was the end. The Grand Finale they all were waiting for - so everyone thought.

Because everything was just getting started.

A huge white aura blasted between the last two remaining tributes, sending them flying off their feet, off the Cornucopia. The mutts growled with glee, then for some unknown reason, began to retreat back into the forest until they were all gone. Cato slammed back into a tree; Rue seemed to fly for a brief moment before she came in contact with the hard ground. Her eyes fluttered. A shadow entered her blurred vision.
"Sorry, little bird," the deep, rumbling voice said as then Rue felt herself being carried in strong arms before she completely blacked out and became oblivious to her surroundings.
Chapter 1

Rue woke to the sound of whistling. She sat up quickly, her back aching, sore from her days in the arena.

"Careful," a voice said. Rue blinked her eyes, then rubbed the sleep from them. "Cato?"

He nodded. "Yeah," he replied. "Don't . . . ask so many questions. You'll give me a headache."

"What?" Rue was confused. She thought back to the last thing she remembered: Thresh's face after being blasted backwards from some weird burst of aura. Looking around more, she saw that she and Cato were in a pure white room with no furniture of any kind, nor door or windows that she could see.

"By the way, your friend's alive. I saw him too . . . I think." Rue frowned. Cato's voice sounded unsure, like he doubted what he had seen. Maybe he didn't trust himself. Cato knew that she didn't believe him, but she would see soon enough. He wasn't crazy. Was he? Cato whistled softly to himself. Rue snapped her head up at the four-noted lullaby emitting from Cato's mouth.

"How do you know that?" she demanded.

"Well, it's not a secret. We could hear that dam - dang whistle every time you two called it," said Cato. He avoided looking at the District 11 girl. He was careful not to say Katniss' name. After all, he was the one that killed both the Girl on Fire and Lover-Boy.

Cato cleared his throat. His fingers twirled, the ghost of his sword in his hands. Of course, it wasn't there in the room with them. It was gone, along with his special armor. The little girl in front of him was wary and alert as if she was ready to bolt at the first chance she got. He didn't blame her, it was one of the things he admired about her. Rue, the way she jumped from tree to tree like a bird. Like a . . . Mockingjay, he realized. Maybe it was no coincidence that the Girl on Fire and this girl teamed up. After seeing Thresh, Cato hoped to see Clove again. He needed his other half with him. When he had his breakdowns, she was the one to calm him. But they were dead. They were all dead. So how could he explain seeing Thresh? Recalling Thresh carrying Rue, he was also reminded of the fact that someone else had helped him too, right before he lost consciousness. So how did they get into this room and where were they? Rue watched Cato stare at her. He seemed to be lost in thought. She realized that he was much cleaner than he had been in the arena; no blood or mud splattered across his face, his blond hair was cleaned up and styled neatly, his signature smirk of his scrawled on his lips. But when Rue looked into those eyes that were so much like Peeta Mellark's, she saw a cloud of darkness over them.

"We're all just pieces in your Games!"

She guessed that the District 2 Career had finally seen the Games for what they truly were, and they had broke him. So Rue gathered up the courage to ask the question that had been nagging at her ever since the Games started:

"Why did you hate Katniss and Peeta so much?"

Cato looked at her in surprise. "I never hated them. Okay, maybe I did. But . . . We were jealous, you see? They could show their love to the world while we Careers were stuck behind the sidelines."
Rue let that sink in, coming to an conclusion. "You were in love," she said.

Cato nodded, running his hands through his spiked, messy blond hair. "We all were. Careers aren't supposed to show any kind of weaknesses during the Games. But yes, we were in love. Marvel was in love with Glimmer, I was in love with my Clover . . ." Cato smiled wryly as he continued, "Finch was in love with Thresh."

"Uh, what now?" Rue asked, flabbergasted. "Did you just say that Foxface was in love with - "

"Thresh? Yes, I did. Apparently, they formed a secret alliance, hidden from the cameras, from us... When those mutts killed him, I heard him scream for her."

The little girl had wondered why Finch committed suicide. Now she knew.

"I never knew . . ."

The sound of a door sliding drew their attention towards the center wall in front of them. A woman in black combat boots stepped towards them and smiled. The two tributes had their mouths agape.

"Katniss?" Rue asked.

Cato shook his head furiously. "No! No! No!" he chanted. "You can't be Katniss. Katniss was like hot. Hotter than you. Er, I mean - she's a bad-ass with a bow. And - and she's a brunette!"

Rue arched an eyebrow, shooting Cato an incredulous look.

"Uh, thanks for the compliment, Cato, " the woman said. "Now if you too would follow me, I can explain everything."

The blond-haired woman turned but Cato stopped her.

"Why should we go with you?"

"Because," Blondie said, looking at him straight in the eyes, "You'll be seeing everyone again. Even your Clove."

_**oOo**_

Stepping out into the brightly lit, almost cheerful hallway almost seemed like an insult considering their days in the arena.

It was eerily silent except for the two tributes footsteps echoing down the corridor.

Rue shot a glance towards Cato, who was walking besides her. He walked his normal, cocky stride, except Rue noticed that Cato's hand was trembling. Without thinking, she slipped her tiny hand into his, which earned Rue a look of surprise. But Cato did not let go, for he felt warmth spread throughout his whole body. Stopping, the blond haired woman with the identical braid to Katniss' turned to face them.

"What you're about to see may shock you. Prepare yourselves." The woman turned, waving her hand in a single sweeping motion in front of her.

A loud hum, a slight click, and a door opened. "Okay. Go right in. Oh, and my name's not Katniss. It's Iris."

Cato and Rue watched the not-Katniss walk away and entered the room.
They thought they had prepared themselves; they were wrong.

A mixture of emotions ran throughout them; Rue saw familiar faces that she’d thought she’d never see again:

Katniss.

Finch.

Peeta.

Thresh.

She ran to them, tears streaming down her face.

The four tributes embraced Rue into a group hug, earning "Aww-s" and laughter.

Cato saw his friends: giving Marvel a high five and a quick bro hug, and Glimmer, a short embrace.

But his eyes searched for her. Then he saw her. There she was, his Clover. The short, petite, knife-throwing brunette he had fallen in love with in the Games stood a few inches away from him. He dashed towards her, cupping her face with his hands and held her tightly. He was happy. To have her close again.

Marvel and Glimmer whooped loudly.

Meanwhile, across the room, Rue chatted about the Games with Thresh cutting in to tell the rest. It was Marvel that helped Cato into the hovercraft. The feed had been lost in all the Districts and the Capitol.

The whole country was on the verge of rebellion, Haymitch Abernathy spoke as he appeared behind Thresh.

Cato entwined his hands with Clove's pulling them across the room to see what was happening, Marvel and Glimmer following closely behind.

"... We'll meet Finnick Odair and his wife, Annie Cresta when we pick them up. To be fairly warned, try not to mention Annie's Games, or else she'll go off somewhere in her mind. Finnick's the only one who can call her back."

Cato cut in, "What's happening?"

As Haymitch tried to explain once more, Cato noticed Katniss and Peeta exchanging worried looks.

And he had this feeling that whatever the feeling was, it was not about him. Cato had the strangest revelation that it was about something much bigger.

They thought they were safe. After all, they had not been attacked since the end of the 74th Hunger Games.

All hell broke loose.

Gunshots rang out, plunging the room into total darkness. Screams and shouts of pain were heard as bullets whizzed and streaked by. The lights flickered back on and Cato scanned the room.

There were no major injuries, they were lucky to avoid getting killed. A tribute had his earlobe
gazed and another had a bullet pass through her arm, but she'd live, Cato thought.

Feeling a hand on his shoulder, he saw Marvel.

Looking into the eyes of the former District 1 tribute, Cato knew something was up, the way Marvel and Glimmer had been glancing at each other when they thought Cato wasn't looking. Like Katniss and Peeta.

*What if?*

Cato pushed the thought away.

No, it wasn't true, he chided himself. They were all here.

Weren't they?

"Rue?" Cato called out, letting go of Clove's hand.

"Can you come here?"

Rue had been examining the District 4 - her name was Coral - girl's arm wound when Cato's voice broke her thoughts.

Rue headed towards Cato. He grabbed her hand, pushing the little girl behind him.

"Cato?" Clove asked, stepping towards him.

"What are you doing?"

Rue did not understand what was happening.

Cato shook a finger towards Clove, ignoring her question.

"On the day that you died," Cato started slowly. "What was the last thing I said to you?"

"Cato, what's -"

"WHAT DID I SAY?!" Cato roared.

"I love you," Clove answered.

There was a very pregnant silence in the air.

Cato stared at the girl in front of him. "No," Cato whispered, "That's not what I said at all."

Then Cato managed to wrap an arm around Rue, pushing them both to the floor, as then he heard a voice say almost distantly, "Fire."

A gunshot rang out from outside the room, from the hallway, and a bullet streaked through the now-open door, hitting Clove in the shoulder. Clove cried out in pain and fell to the floor.

"What?" Rue managed to choke out, in shock of what she had just seen. Cato had watched Clove get shot, and wasn't doing anything.

"They're mutts!" he spat out as more gunshots spewed forth.

Haymitch, Katniss, Glimmer and Peeta all lunged for him, their eyes changing colors. Cato shot to
his feet, pushing Rue through the door. Something grabbed his ankle, sending him crashing down. Rue froze.

"GO! GO!" Cato yelled as Mutt-Clove crawled on top of him.

Cato watched as Rue took off, then turned to the impostor. Her dark-brown eyes were a glowing red, teeth sharpened into points.

The mutt growled as Cato wrapped his hands around her - its - throat. It wasn't Clove, he reminded himself.

The mutt went limp as it became dead weight. Cato threw it aside, breathing heavily.

Ian (the District 3 tribute whom Cato had snapped his neck) slammed him into the floor, tile spewing everywhere. His District partner, Kalia, grabbed Cato, both of their eyes turning silver. More mutts began swarming him. Cato yelled in pain. They were no match for his physical strength; they were stronger than him. He was weak. Cato was going to die.

Mutt-Marvel and Mutt-Glimmer eyes' were gold, sharpened teeth - they both seriously needed to brush their teeth - were opened wide as they prepared to take a bite.

Cato screwed his eyes shut.

*I'm coming home, Clove,* Cato thought. *I'll be there soon, wherever you are . . .*

Then an unmistakable sound whizzed through the air.

Cato opened his eyes just in time to see a silver arrow pierce Ian's head.

Kalia hissed angrily as her nails scraped Cato's face. The mutt was pulled back screeching as Cato felt himself being helped up. He saw a man in his late twenties or so, with bronze hair and sea-green eyes. Cato had no time to shout out a warning as a mutt leapt towards the man's back but the man did not need it.

He turned, thrusted his weapon forward, the tips of it ramming to its desired target.

The mutt howled as the man tossed it aside. People in grey uniforms came surging in, carrying guns. The man whistled to someone in the crowd; someone tossed him back 2 weapons: a sword and a trident. Cato wanted to slap himself for not recognizing the District 4 Victor: Finnick Odair.

"This yours?" Finnick asked teasingly as Cato nodded.

Finnick handed it over, then went back to attacking the mutts.

Cato prepared himself as Mutt-Katniss charged towards him. A knife sailed from behind him, nailing the center of Mutt-Katniss' forehead.

*Bullseye.* Only one person he knew could do that.

Cato turned seeing the familiar brunette. He was unsure.

What if it was all another trick?

So, he asked the same question he'd asked earlier. He remembered that the cameras were focused on him and Clove as she laid dying. Clove kept her voice low when she answered. Cato felt joy spread through him, and kissed her.
"Hey, look at the lovebirds, Marvel! They're at it again! While we're killing all the mutts! Hello, a little help here?!" Glimmer's voice rang out.

"Glim, shut your damn mouth for once! We don't need to be hearing every single thing you see!" Marvel retorted back.

There was a loud wail as the last mutt was struck down by no other than Thresh himself. Cato was seething inside.

Why had he and Rue been ushered into a room where the mutts had been pretending to be their friends only to attack them later?

Why hadn't they been attacked the minute they stepped in the room?

The real Katniss Everdeen stepped through the door, armed with a silver bow and arrow curled in her hands.

Cato recalled the blond woman who looked eerily similar to her but had said her name was Iris. He made a mental note to tell everyone later.

"What the hell happened? No, screw that! What the hell is happening? How did we get here?" Cato yelled.

"Now is definitely not the best time. This isn't a safe place. We need to go," Katniss said, raising her bow higher.

Cato raised his sword; Clove tightened her hand around her knife, then bent down, offering Rue a knife. Rue was surprised, but took it. At least she'd have a weapon. Nothing attacked them on the way out, or up onto the stairs.

"This is too easy," Clove muttered as they ascended another flight of stairs.

Pushing through the roof doors, Glimmer tried to explain, "The Capitol can't exactly . . ."

"Let us get away," Marvel picked up.

"Since we are the tributes of the 74th Hunger Games," Thresh finished.

"All of the Victors knew about this. They formed a plan, to get us out so the Rebellion could take place. I am the Mockingjay because of the token I wear. The District 12 Volunteer who was never suppose to volunteer in the first place and then fall in love with Peeta Then we found out about 13. They wanted to help. We just need to get on the hovercraft we have."

It was daylight, Cato and Rue could see once they reached the roof, stepping outside.

Indeed as Katniss had said, a hovercraft was waiting and they all boarded and strapped themselves in as the engines roared to life and then, they were flying up into the air.

Clove squeezed his hand for reassurance. Rue was sitting next to Thresh.

Cato's eyes flickered from face to face. He remembered the ones he had killed.

He saw Katniss and Peeta talking and wondered what they were talking about. Then Cato felt his seat lurch.

**BOOM!**
Cato smelled smoke. He immediately knew that something bad had happened.

Another noise erupted and they were all screaming as the hovercraft started spiraling down.

Then -

Darkness.

"...GET UP!"

Cato struggled to open his eyes. It was Clove's voice, in pure panic mode. He thought he could feel her hands shaking him, trying to rouse him, but he couldn't open his eyes.

No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't.

"GET UP!" Clove shouted, her voice somewhat becoming distorted. "C'mon! Get up, Cato! Please! PLEASE! Don't you leave me! Not like this! Get up! Get -"

Then her voice disappeared completely and Cato was left all alone in the dark, sinking into a whirl of dreams and fantasy.
Chapter 2

Cato never wants to wrestle in the first place.

Sure, he is great at it, but it is nothing compared to the dream he really wants: to be a singer. But Brutus, his coach and mentor, will never let him live up to it. And neither will his parents.

Cato sighs, running his hands through his messy blond hair, then holds up his fists, punching the bag that his friend, Marvel, is holding in place.

"You seeing Glimmer tonight?" Cato asks, grunting with concentration as he continues to punch the bag.

"Yup," Marvel confirms. "She's so . . ."

He searches for a word, so Cato offers, "Bitchy?"

"Vain?" Thresh's voice calls out as he walks in and sets his bag down, and takes his seat in his favorite spot in the bleachers.

Marvel glares at his two friends. "No," Marvel says, "She's so glimmerific! Get it?!"

Thresh and Cato groan and roll their eyes, cracking a small smile for Marvel's sake.

Marvel has the bad habit of cracking jokes that are terrible for them both.

Cato throws a few more punches, wipes his face with a clean towel, collecting his things as he chugs down his water bottle.

Cato takes in the place of his sanctuary: Mockingjay Gyms, founded and built by Haymitch Abernathy before he turned into an alcoholic.

"I'll see you guys later. I need to go home," Cato calls out, throwing the empty bottle into the trash, throwing a playful jab to Marvel's head, which Marvel dodges.

Walking a short distance to where Cato parked his silver Porsche, he throws his duffel bag in the backseat and closes the door. Cursing immediately, Cato realizes his car keys are in the backseat.

His special new "state-of-the-art" prototype car locks the doors automatically, which he thinks is the dumbest thing his father ever created at Capitol Companies. Couldn't the car have at least waited until he was inside?

Cato places his phone on top of the hood as he searches his pocket for the spare keys. Once, he gets them out, they fall out his fingers. He groans in annoyance and bends to pick them up. When he gets the keys, Cato looks up just in time to see a person run across the top of his Porsche, snatch his phone, and take off into District 12 woods. In reaction, Cato does the most obvious thing: he goes after the thief.

"HEY!" Cato shouts, his legs pumping at high speed. "WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK
Cato follows the sound of branches snapping as then he makes it into a small clearing. No one else is there, and Cato looks around carefully. For the strangest reason, he has the feeling that whoever took his phone is still there, just hidden. He turns and pretends to walk back to his car. The minute he does, he hears a grunt as well as the sound of a person landing on their feet.

Cato spins back around to see a girl standing there. Her face is streaked with mud, her hair looks like he hasn't been washed or brushed in years, her body crouched like she is preparing to attack.

In the girl's right hand, is Cato's phone. The girl bares her teeth, her lips curves into a snarl. She is gone when Cato blinks.

Glancing around, Cato notices something else: the tree he is standing besides has a small knife - the kind used for stabbing - sticking out of the bark. A few more inches to the left and Cato will have been dead.

He gulps, pulling the knife out with his sleeve using the handle, goes back to his car and drives to the police station.

All the while as he drives, he can't get the girl's murderous dark brown eyes out of his mind.

_oOo_

"So what exactly happened?" Officer Davids asks in a monotone voice.

Cato grits his teeth together in frustration.

"Weren't you just listening to everything I said a few minutes ago? I told you: a crazy girl stole my phone and tried to kill me with this knife!" Cato growls, slamming the dagger down on the desk.

The other officers working glance up at the commotion.

"Do you want to file a report?" Davids continues in a bored voice.

Cato wants to punch him, but then he'd land himself in jail. And he can't have that. Not while he's on the road to getting a scholarship.

Cato stares at the officer in disbelief. "You're kidding me, right? You're damn right I want to file a report! I would like to know who stole my phone!"

Officer Davids sighs. "You may want to take with Officer Everdeen. Everdeen, get over here and help this boy!"

A grey eyed man with dark brown hair comes up to him. "Hey, Cato. What can I do for you today, son?"

As Cato explains, he notices a bulletin board on the back of the wall. There are MISSING papers stapled on top of others and as Cato moves towards them as he speaks, he flips through the papers until he pauses at one.

"That's her," Cato says, turning to face Katniss' dad.

John Everdeen frowns, glancing at the paper Cato is referring to. "Her? Are you sure, Cato?" he asks.
Cato nods.

"She has the same eyes and looks older, but yeah, that's her. I'm pretty sure."

"Cato, the girl in the **MISSING** flyer has been missing for almost 8 years. How do you know it's her?"

Cato can't explain it but he says, "I just do."

_**oOo**_

They find her in an abandoned treehouse in the woods by Mockingjay Gyms, pulling her out screeching and flailing on national television.

It takes almost three months to get her to remember her name, one year to get her to be able to speak proper English, and by that time, Cato is a junior. Judging by her **MISSING** poster, she is sixteen years old today. Cato watches the event on TV unfold with his classmates in Panem High cafeteria. At lunch, there's gossip: who she is, what happened to her. Especially, the "Careers": Glimmer, Cashmere and Gloss Marks, the most popular and blond trio in the school. Cato used to be one of them, but then found out who they really were.

Shallow and conceited.

Although, Cato did know Glimmer wasn't like her brother and sister; she was a rebel and was currently dating Marvel.

Ever since then, Cato was considered an outcast, which was how he met Katniss, Peeta, Marvel, and Thresh in the first place back in freshman year.

As he sits down, Marvel changes the topic: "Her name's Clove."

"How'd you find that out Marvel?" Katniss asks, taking a bite out of her apple.

"He was up all night researching. You know there's a new site called... *The Missing Tributes?*" Peeta explains. "It's a website dedicated to finding kidnapped or missing children or teenage runaways."

"They figure out a cool slogan?" Cato jokes.

"Yeah. They actually do have one. *May the odds be ever in your favor*," Katniss says out loud as Thresh nods in confirmation.

"Okay. So here are the facts we do know: Her name's Clove, and she's sixteen, according to what the news tell us."

"And she may or may not had been under the alias, Isabelle Fuhrman," Peeta cuts in. "I saw a move last night that had a girl that looked like her. I recorded it, so we could watch it at Katniss' place tonight."


Katniss and Peeta's face turn red as the three males chortle with laughter.

"Have you been telling them about our sex life?" Katniss demands as her grey eyes flash with anger.

"*No, Katniss! I swear to God!*" Peeta exclaims.
A voice stops them. Turning to the large TV on the wall, the cafeteria becomes deadly quiet as the news reporter comes on.

"Breaking news. We have just received word that Clove Somes has escaped from Panem Mental Institution. She is presumed to be armed and dangerous. If you see her, call the police immediately. Do not approach her. I repeat: do not approach. We thank you for your cooperation. This is Effie Trinket reporting for Panem News at 12:45."

Chatter resumes but voices are in a panic, shouting across the room as people try to make sense what is going on. Questions are flying about whether students should evacuate or stay in the school building. Neither happens as an football assembly is taking place when lunch is over.

"Well . . ." Katniss sighs. Then a ringtone plays. Katniss pulls out her flip phone, glancing at the caller ID.

She looks confused, looking at Cato. "Didn't you say your phone was stolen?"

Cato nods.

Katniss has her thinking face on and Cato doesn't like it one bit. Then without warning, she presses the phone to her ear. "Hello?"

_I think it's Clove_, Katniss mouths.

"Hello?" Katniss repeats in a calm voice. "I can hear you breathing." She pauses, considering her next words. "Is this Clove?"

Katniss hits speakerphone and the group all lean in to hear. Cato hears the sound - definitely a girl - whimpering, crying, and breathing heavily.

There's a crackle of static tuning in and out as Katniss adjusts the volume on her cellphone.

"Go away," a voice says, barely audible. Then the phone goes off, dial tone sounding.

"We need to find her before they do," Cato gets to his feet, speaking as he tugs his jacket on, heading out the cafeteria doors.

"Did he just say what I think he said?" Katniss asks.

Cato can hear the others scrambling to catch up with him.

"Whoa, man! Going into District 12 woods alone? We're going with you, " Marvel protests, blocking Cato's way in the empty hallway.

Katniss whacks Marvel's head. "Am I the only one that has any sense at all? Once we see her, we back the hell up and go and call the police," Katniss says.

Cato looks at his friends. He is feeling impatient.

"Look, she called for a reason, Katniss," Cato says pushing Marvel out of his way. He starts to walk again.

"Why are you interested in some girl that you barely know?"

"_I DON'T KNOW, ALRIGHT?_"
The three exchange startled glances towards each other.

"Now, are you guys in or out?"

There's silence in the empty hallway.

Everyone after lunch will be heading outside to the football assembly. No one will miss them, Cato thinks. Something of excitement and fear rushes through Cato.

What if the teachers find out?

Marvel, Thresh, and Peeta are in. The four males look expectantly towards Katniss.

She groans. "Fine. I'll go for Peeta."

The boys grin ear to ear and rush through the doors.

The last thing they hear before they reach Cato's car is Katniss shouting:

"But if she kills us, it's all on you idiots."

Chapter End Notes

I hoped you enjoyed this chapter. As for now, this is all happening inside of Cato's head if that wasn't clear enough. It will soon jump back into the "present" time when he's awake.

Please take a second to leave a kudo or a comment. They always makes me post and write faster :)
A few minutes later, the group is in the District 12 woods in the place where Cato last saw Clove, but the escapee is nowhere to be found.

"Maybe she isn't here," Katniss suggests.

"Maybe not. Did you really have to bring your bow and arrow for this?" Cato says, glancing at the braided brunette.

Katniss shrugs. "You know my dad likes deer jerky, Cato. I'll take one today if Clove doesn't show up," Katniss interjects.

"This isn't the apocalypse, Everdeen!"

"Shut up!" Katniss laughs.

Then a whooshing sound stops the group in their tracks as a knife sails towards Cato. He reaches out and grabs the handle mid-air, throwing it aside. A figure dashes through the trees in front of them and the group reacts instantly. Katniss loads an arrow from her quiver and shoots after seeing her target.

There's a shout.

Thresh and Cato find Clove with her shirt's sleeve pinned to the tree behind her with Katniss' arrow.

"Nice shot, baby," Peeta breathes out, placing a kiss on his girlfriend's cheek.

Katniss smiles.

Clove is struggling and lets out a wail.

"Guys, put whatever you have in your hands down," Cato orders.

But the group only takes three large steps back.

Cato turns back to Clove, raising his hands to show her he means no harm.

"Remember me? You took my phone?"

Clove's eyes dart from Cato, Marvel, Thresh, Peeta, Katniss and back again.

"I'm going to take that arrow out of your shirt, ok?"

"Cato-" Marvel warns.

Cato ignores Marvel's warning and pulls the arrow out. Within seconds, he lets out a cry of pain as Clove's palm connects with his nose and blood splutters out. Clove dashes away, dodging Katniss' arrows. The group chase after her, hot on her trail, and in that moment, Cato forgets all about his bloody nose.
They stare up in amazement as they watch as Clove scales up a tree with seamless effort.

"Holy Mother Russia! That's some Spiderman shit right there!" Marvel shouts.

The group dashes through the forest, glancing up occasionally from time to time at the tree tops. Clove is nowhere in sight. The rustling stops and there is absolute silence.

Suddenly, there's a crack of a branch that startles them. The group stares in disbelief at the person who is unexpected.

"Glimmer?" Marvel shouts. "What the hell are you doing here?"

"Hi," Glimmer says meekly. "Uh, what am I doing here? I came to find out what my boyfriend and his group of misfits were up to in District 12. By the way, what are you doing here?"

"Looking for that girl earlier."

Glimmer raises her green eyes at them. "You've got a death wish," she smiles. "I'm in."

"Whoa, whoa, whoa! Who said you could join us?" Katniss asks.

"Uh, I did, thank you very much."

"Your girlfriend sucks," Katniss mutters to Marvel.

"Yeah, well, you're not exactly a ball of sunshine too yourself, Everdeen," Glimmer retorts.

"You little -" Katniss growls out as she storms towards the former blond-haired Career.

Peeta grabs her arms and pulls her back.

"HEY!" Cato roars. "Enough! Stop whining like a bunch of seven year olds and get a hold of yourselves! We're here to find Clove, alright?!"

Silence.

Glimmer stares at him, then says in a barely-audible sing song voice, "Jeez. Someone needs anger management."

Cato scans the area with intensity. He feels like he's missing something, but what?

Glimmer breaks the silence. "Speaking of crazy girl . . . Was that the girl that just passed me a while back?" She jerks her thumb back in the direction she came from. All four heads whip towards the blond girl, in disbelief.

"Are you serious?!" Cato yells.

"You just decided to mention this now?!" Marvel chimes in.

Thresh shakes his head sadly.

The group start to run in the direction Glimmer had entered from, but she stops them.

"Sorry to break it to you, but she stole my car," she says.

Katniss groans. "So much for finding Clove. Well, I'm gonna go and see if I can get some deer. I'll see you guys later. Are you coming, Peeta?"
"Yeah. Cato, we'll drive your car back to your house when we're done."

The two go off in another direction, chattering about something as they walk away.

Cato sighs. "I need a drink."

"The Hob?" Marvel asks.

"The Hob," Cato agrees.

_oOo_

Down a mile from Mockingjay Gyms, there lies a building called The Hob.

It was a club for teens and adults alike, only serving alcohol to adults at night. The only drinks teens could order were sodas, water, and apple juice (Cato's favorite). After all that had happened today, he needed it. So there they were, sitting around their usual table, Katniss and Peeta arrived just twenty minutes later having found no deer to take home. A few minutes later, the DJ announced the karaoke machine was up and running.

"Any volunteers?" the DJ asks.

"I do!" Glimmer shouts, standing up from her chair, and ignoring all the stares. She walks to the stage.

"Shoot me now," Marvel mutters under his breath, pressing his face against the table before deciding to come back up for air.

Thresh and Cato give Marvel sympathetic looks from their seats around the table.

Music begins to play and Glimmer opens her mouth to sing.

Surprisingly, her voice wasn't all that great, and was off-key at times but she could still carry a tune.

"Make me whole again

Open your eyes

Taunted by the shadows of your life

Cold and far away

But you're not even mine

Undo everything and take me high above

Never believing what they say cause I'm

Counting the days to meet you on the other side

I will always be waiting

until the day that I see you on the other side

Come and take me home
I'm not giving in
I want you back

Holding together by the shards of our past
Stole my heart away
I can't let you go

Break these chains and let me fly to you -!

High above the world below
Over and over in my mind

Counting the days to meet you on the other side
I will always be waiting
until the day that I see you on the other side
Come and take me home

I am so lost without my place inside your heart
I won't survive
I need to know you hear me
Awaken and release my love

Counting the days to meet you on the other side
I will always be waiting
until the day that I see you on the other side
Come and take me

Counting the days to meet you on the other side
I will always be waiting
until the day that I see you on the other side
Come and take me home . . ."

There's a nice (and polite) round of applause as Glimmer takes her seat.

"I'm next!" Peeta declares. Then he takes the microphone as he races up onto the stage and sings:

"Oh,
Well imagine,"
As I'm pacing the pews in a church corridor,
    And I can't help but to hear,
No, I can't help but to hear an exchanging of words:
"What a beautiful wedding! What a beautiful wedding!" says a bridesmaid to a waiter,
"And, yes, but what a shame, what a shame the poor groom's bride is a whore."

I'd chime in with a
"Haven't you people ever heard of closing the goddamn door?!"
No, it's much better to face these kinds of things
With a sense of poise and rationality.

I'd chime in,
"Haven't you people ever heard of closing the goddamn door?!"
No, it's much better to face these kinds of things
With a sense of . . .
Well in fact,
Well I'll look at it this way,
I mean technically our marriage is saved
Well this calls for a toast
So, pour the champagne
Oh! Well in fact,
Well I'll look at it this way,
I mean technically our marriage is saved
Well this calls for a toast,
So, pour the champagne, pour the champagne
I'd chime in with a
"Haven't you people ever heard of closing the goddamn door?!"
No, it's much better to face these kinds of things
With a sense of poise and rationality.
"I'd chime in,

"Haven't you people ever heard of closing the goddamned door?!!"

No, it's much better to face these kinds of things

With a sense of poise and rationality again.

"Haven't you people ever heard of closing the goddamned door?!!"

No, it's much better to face these kinds of things

With a sense of poise and rationality again . . ."

"Whoa, that was kinda dark," Cato amuses.

When Peeta returns to his seat, all Katniss says is: "Did you just call me a whore?"

Peeta laughs and says in a serious voice, "No, baby, I didn't."

"Good." Katniss kisses him. When she pulls back, she gives him a stern look. "Because I would've killed you."

Cato has this sudden urge to sing. Make himself known. "Thresh. Marvel. Will you back me up?"

The two boys nod. They've always talked about singing the song that Cato had written.

Cato is nervous as he sits down in front of the crowd. He tries to ignore all the people watching him and swallows.

"Um, this is a song that I wrote. I hope you'll like it."

He takes a deep breath and thinks, Screw it. I can do this.

"Written in these walls are the stories that I can't explain
I leave my heart open but it stays right here empty for days
She told me in the morning she don't feel the same about us in her bones
Seems to me that when I die these words will be written on my stone
And I'll be gone, gone tonight
The ground beneath my feet is open wide"
The way that I been holding on too tight

With nothing in between

The story of my life

I take her home

I drive all night to keep her warm

And time . . . is frozen

Marvel and Thresh: (the story of, the story of)

The story of my life

I give her hope

I spend her love

Until she's broke

Inside

The story of my life

(the story of, the story of)

Written on these walls are the colors that I can’t change

Leave my heart open but it stays right here in its cage

I know that in the morning now I see us in the light upon a hill

Although I am broken, my heart is untamed, still

And I'll be gone, gone tonight

The fire beneath my feet is burning bright

The way that I been holding on so tight

With nothing in between

The story of my life

I take her home

I drive all night to keep her warm

And time . . . is frozen

(the story of, the story of)
The story of my life
I give her hope
I spend her love
Until she's broke
Inside
The story of my life
(the story of, the story of)
And I been waiting for this time to come around
But baby running after you is like chasing the clouds
The story of my life
I take her home
I drive all night to keep her warm
And time is frozen
The story of my life
I give her hope (give her hope)
I spend her love
Until she's broke (until she's broke inside)
Inside
The story of my life
(the story of, the story of)
The story of my life
The story of my life
(The story of, the story of)
The story of my life . . ."

Cato feels happiness spread throughout him once he sees the standing ovation.
"Give it up for Cato!" the DJ announces.
He hears snippets of conversation as he passes by.
"... Great voice . . ."
"He's like soooo hot . . ."

"... Hire that guy to sing every night in here!"

He sits back down, Marvel and Thresh following suit. The DJ comes up to him as music starts to blare over the speakers.

"Young man, Cato, is it? Would you consider a job working here?"

Cato is in shock and Marvel has to punch his arm. "Y-Yes." Then he clears his throat and says firmer, "Yes."

The DJ nods approvingly, sets up an interview appointment, leaves and returns to his spot on the stage.

"Way to go, Cato!" the group cheers.

Cato smiles, a real smile, the first since the group had met him.

But deep down, he feels sadness and pain for some reason that he cannot explain why.

_oOo_

Songs (in order of appearance):

  1) The Other Side
     Performed by: Evanescence

  2) I Write Sins, Not Tragedies
     Performed by: Panic! At The Disco

  3) Story Of My Life
     Performed by: One Direction
Chapter Four

My Immortal

After an exhausting day of wrestling practice and school, Cato finally heads to the Hob. for his job.

It had taken Cato awhile to get a handle of it, but he loved it. Basically, all he had to do was show up, sing for as long as he wanted, then that was it. But he needed something else to do, so he asked Finch, the redheaded girl who managed the bar, if he could help. She had gladly agreed.

Now, Cato is wiping down the bar, and heads to the direction of where his friends are sitting. He sees Marvel and Glimmer making out at a table nearby.

"Hey, guys," he greets them as he hands a girl, Lya, a regular, her order. "You want anything?"

Marvel and Glimmer don't reply; Peeta says, "No thanks. We're good. But our man Thresh is getting some." Peeta points to where Thresh is. Cato looks over and sees Finch twirling her ponytail and laughing at whatever Thresh is saying.

"That boy. Oblivious as ever," Cato snorts. "When is he ever gonna learn?"

"Maybe we should tell him," Peeta suggests.

The two glance at Thresh and say in unison: "Nope."

"So, how is Katniss?" Cato asks.

"What do you mean?"

"Dude," Cato gives his friend an incredulous look. "Don't tell me you forgot."

"Shit," Peeta curses, then looks around wildly.

"She's here?! Dude, get her outta her before she ruins my reputation!"

"Seriously?! Screw your reputation! I gotta find Katniss! Katniss! Katniss!"

Cato glances around and spots Katniss on the stage.

"Peeta! Over there!" he yells to get his friend's attention. Peeta turns to Cato and follows his gaze and starts to head towards the stage.

Katniss just sits there, her sobs entering the microphone in a loud feedback, singing in an incoherent voice.

"I'm so tired of being here

Suppressed by all my childish fears

And if you have to leave

I wish that you would just leave
'Cause your presence still lingers here
And it won't leave me alone
These wounds won't seem to heal
This pain is just too real
There's just too much that time cannot erase

[Chorus:]
When you cried I'd wipe away all of your tears
When you'd scream I'd fight away all of your fears
And I held your hand through all of these years
But you still have all of me
You used to captivate me by your resonating light
Now I'm bound by the life you left behind
Your face—it haunts my once pleasant dreams
Your voice—it chased away all the sanity in me
These wounds won't seem to heal
This pain is just too real
There's just too much that time cannot erase
When you cried I'd wipe away all of your tears
When you'd scream I'd fight away all of your fears
And I held your hand through all of these years
But you still have all of me
I've tried so hard to tell myself that you're gone
But though you're still with me
I've been alone all along
When you cried I'd wipe away all of your tears
When you'd scream I'd fight away all of your fears
And I held your hand through all of these years
"But you still have all of me

Me, me, me . . ."

Thresh comes up behind Cato. They watch as Peeta scoops up a still sobbing Katniss in his arms, and walks off the stage. Peeta walks through the parted crowd, nearing his friends. "I'm going to take Katniss home. I'll see you guys later." And then Peeta leaves, and the club resumes back to life.

Finch is suddenly standing in front of Cato. "I don't mean to be rude, but what was up with your friend? I've never seen her like that before."

Cato shares a glance with Thresh and says, "A few months ago, Katniss' little sister, Prim - short for Primrose - was working at the Panem Memorial Hospital, when a gas leak exploded. She didn't make it." Cato finishes, and takes a sip of apple juice.

"Oh," is all that Finch says. She looks on the verge of crying. Cato wonders if someone she knew had also died in the same gas leak but doesn't pry. "Please excuse me."

The two watch her leave, and see Marvel and Glimmer still kissing, cracking small smiles.

"That sounds close

I know that you've taken my lead

Am I so easy to read

My eyes must be speaking your name

My touch must burn like the flame

I believe

That love doesn't come when you plan

Here I am

Caught up with these feelings I don't understand

Is it the beat or the beat of your heart

Is it the music or is the body talk

How did you move me and when did it start

Is it the beat or the beat of your heart . . ."

Everyone whips their heads towards the singer. Cato's smile fades and the chuckling stops. The club is deadly silent. Not a muscle moves. Because there's no telling what she'll do.

Clove sits there on the stool, her dark brown eyes never leaving Cato's. He can see the hatred in her eyes, the glint of a small dagger in her right hand.

". . . That sounds close

Night falls and I seem to change
Near you, I'm acting so strange
I know we've only just met
But dreaming has gone through my head
You and I see nobody else in the place
Met your smile
Answer this question, don't read on my fate
Is it the beat or the beat of your heart
Is it the music or is the body talk
How did you move me and when did it start
Is it the beat or the beat of your heart
Sabes que te quiero y sin ti me desespero
Eres tu mi todo y yo sin ti me muero
Eres mi alegría en cada despertar
Yo quiero a tu lado yo poder estar
Is it the beat or the beat of your heart
Is it the music or is the body talk
How did you move me and when did it start
Is it the beat or the beat of your heart
Is it the beat or the beat of your heart
Is it the music or is the body talk
How did you move me and when did it start
Is it the beat or the beat of your heart
Is the beat of your heart
Is the beat of your heart
Is it the music or is the body talk
Is it the music or is the body talk
Is it the music or is the body talk
But Cato has been taught never to show fear in moments of distress. This is one of those moments because: a) Clove is handy with a knife, Cato knew that. After all, she'd been aiming for him that day in District 12. Cato did not understand why, but he had a feeling that this had something to do with him and b) his friends. They had been with him during her chase.

Clove was her for either him . . . or them.

The song finishes, but Clove still keeps her eyes on Cato, then slides off the stool, off the stage and slowly walks towards the door.

As if it's not his own, his voice rips free: "CLOVE!"

Clove stops in her tracks, and slowly turns her body slightly, a half sardonic smile on her face.

"Just between you and me, right?" he asks in his loudest tone, stepping over the bar counter top, then jumping off, heading towards the armed girl. Cato spreads his arms out. "Well, go on!" he coaxes out.

"Cato, what are you doing?" Thresh whispers.

Cato ignores his friend. Marvel and Glimmer are staring wide-eyed in horror.

"Just go on . . ." Cato choke out. "Kill me. That's what you want to do, isn't it?"

Then the strangest thing happens: Clove laughs. "Why on earth would I want to do that?" Clove speaks for the first time. She steps closer to Cato. He is confused.

"Then . . . what do you want?"

"I want you and your friends to help me find someone. One of you knows where she is."

"Who are you looking for?" Thresh asks directly to Clove.

"My sister," she replies, "Her name's Rue."

Then she jams her knife into Cato's throat.

_oOo_

I know what I must do.

I must win.

For her, us, them.

But I must die too.

I have no choice.

There is no other way.

The Games have begun . . .

Cato wakes up screaming. Sweat drips down his forehead. He pauses to catch his breath and sees
Marvel and Thresh leaning over him.

"You okay, Cato?"

Cato forces a smile and says, "Yeah, I'm fine. I was just doing that to psych you guys out."

"Cato, mate, you don't have to lie to us," Marvel says.

Cato grits his teeth together and snaps, "I'm fine, okay?" Couldn't they see that he wants to be left alone?

Thresh and Marvel exchange worried looks. "Well, then, get up. You're gonna be late for work."

Cato sighs, running his hand through his spiked messy hair. He tugs on a fresh pair of jeans and a T-shirt. He had fallen asleep after wrestling practice, crashing onto his bed, after beating Marvel and Thresh at a round of *Call of Duty*.

As he hops into his car, he can't shake the dream that he had just moments earlier. And also, something about a . . . Game?

It had seemed so real. He touches the part of his neck that Clove had stabbed and exhales deeply. Parking his car in his designated spot, Cato begins his day of work at the Hob.

He greets Finch as usual, and starts wiping the bar down for her, when Cato has a sense of deja vu. He expects to see Peeta sitting there in front of him and chides himself for being so stupid. Cato knows that Peeta is at home with Katniss, helping her get through her day of depression, the day that her little sister, Primrose Everdeen had died.

The rest of the afternoon and night goes by in a blur.

Cato is just heading out when he realizes he had forgot his jacket. He decides to go around the back way. Cato opens the closet door once inside, grabbing his jacket, when something catches his eye. Flickering the light on and pushing the door open wider, he is met with a sight.

Clove Somes is sleeping on the floor behind a pile of boxes, a knife curled in her hand. If you weren't looking in the boxes, you probably wouldn't have seen her.

Cato knows he should call the police.

But then he thinks: What if she escapes again? Then he won't be able to find her.

Cato has to know why he's having these strange dreams about her.

Cato won't call. Instead, he goes to another back room, grabs an empty basket, collects a few foods, a couple bottles of water, and tears out a scrap piece of paper and writes:

*To Clove and Rue*

*From: Cato*

Cato doesn't know if Rue is real, but it's a chance he's taking. He places the basket by an empty spot by Clove's legs, then grabs a spare pillow and blanket from the back room. As he does, Cato sees cigarette burns on Clove's arms.

Suddenly, Cato is angry at whoever did this to her. He wants to make that person pay.
The door closes with a slight click and the closet plunges back into darkness.

_oOo_

SONGS (which I do not own!)

1) My Immortal
   Performed by: Evanescence

2) Is It The Beat?
   Performed by: Selena (Quintanilla-Pérez)
"Who Did It?"

Chapter Five
"Who Did It?"

Cato thought the game would never end.

Pinning one of the competitors from one of the other schools didn't help release him of his frustrations or his anger boiling inside. Winning the first place trophy didn't feel him up with joy.

He was full of rage, a ticking time bomb ready to burst at any moment.

So, the first thing Cato does once leaving the gym is to punch Gloss Marks' face.

And oh boy, did it create quite a scandal.

Brutus grabs Cato off of his fellow peer and drags him out of the gym, ignoring Cashmere's screeches as she tries to help her brother.

"Get offa me!" Cato yells, wrenching his arm out of his mentor's grasp.

"What the hell's wrong with you boy?!" Brutus shouts, "Never have I seen you act like this since -"

"Don't bring that up Coach, please." Brutus sighs, just as the rest of the team shows up, ready to board the bus back to Mockingjay Gyms.

"I'm sorry, Cato. But -"

"Can we just talk 'bout this tomorrow, Brutus?" Cato turns, banging on the bus doors with his palm. The bus driver opens the doors and the team clambers in. Even though this is a celebration moment, the ride is mostly sat in silence, much to the confusion of the rest of the Panem High wrestlers.

_oOo_

"Can you hear me, Cato? I don't know if you can hear me, but that's all right if you can't. I just want someone to talk to. If you can hear me, please, I just want you to listen . . ."

The speaker's voice shifts to the melody tones of Clove singing "Is It The Beat?" from the previous dream. Then the most strangest of all: Cato sees his best friend take off while Clove lays on the ground, almost motionless, her chest rising in a shallow rhythm.

Cato jolts himself awake, with a gasp parting his thin lips. He sits there in the silence, eyes wandering about, trying to make sense of this all. He shifts back down onto his pillow and takes a deep breath.

It takes Cato a long while to be able to return back to sleep.

_oOo_

After a long day of school plagued with last minute exams and finals, Cato heads to Mockingjay Gyms. It's another practice day since there will be another game next week; Cato has already done his part, it's time for another fellow team-mate of Panem to shine.
"MORE LUNGE!" Brutus barks at Marvel as the boy throws another deadly spear at the target dummy in a different room section away from the wrestling mat/boxing arena.

Cato picks up a sword in his hands and practices a few swings in the air, imagining fighting an invisible opponent.

Mockingjay Gyms also has the curiosity of training students in combat with every weapon there is imaginable - mostly it is for self-defense courses, but to also be prepared for anything. You never knew when a zombie apocalypse could happen and you needed a way to kill the Undead.

Thresh is standing in front of the wrestling mat, strong arms crossed over his gigantic body structure, waiting for his turn, peering out of the corner of his dark brown eyes to watch his two friends; Katniss, Peeta and Finch are sitting on the bleachers, calling out encouragements to their friends. Cato takes a sip of water from his bottle and turns around only to find the sword he had just placed on the bench moments ago has vanished. Cato blinks to make sure his eyes are not playing tricks on him and even checks the floor. But his sword is gone. Cato hates it when people take the things he owns using without permission. Well, technically, he doesn't own the sword, but he sometimes has a spur of desire that makes him think the sword was made for him.

Cato looks around again and roars, "WHO THE FUCK TOOK MY KNIFE?!"

He storms towards an innocent bystander - someone named Alyssa - and grabs her by the collar of her shirt, continuing his little rampage, "You took my knife, Alyssa! Give me my knife!"

Someone taps the angry boy's shoulder.

It's Thresh.

Thresh has a small smile on his face and holds a finger out, jerking it upwards. Cato is confused, then looks up towards the ceiling. A little girl, no more than 12, is lying across the rafters hanging along the ceiling; only the quick and the smallest and nimble could get up there; Cato notices the girl holding his sword in her small hands. Suddenly, Cato feels very stupid for getting so worked up over a little thing. He exhales, walking away to grab a new bottled water, mumbling, "I need a drink."

_oOo_

By the time Cato returns from the kitchen, the little girl has climbed down from the rafters and now is chatting with Thresh. As Cato nears closer, he can see the girl is African American, thin, and small for her stature.

"I'm looking for someone. One of you knows where she is . . ." Clove's voice echoes in his mind.

Had he predicted the future in some way?

No, Cato scoffed and shook his head at the ridiculous thought, there were no such thing as the supernatural.

He studied the two, and it seemed the girl had taken a liking to Thresh, burying herself in his arms whenever someone walked past them.

Cato steps in front of their view. "Hi," he says, hoping to get the girl's attention.

The girl peeks out from underneath his friend's arms.

"Cato, this is -" Thresh begins.
"Rue," Cato blurts out.

Thresh shoots him a confused look. "How'd you know that?"

Cato shrugs, "I could be Harry Potter in disguise. I could be psychic for all you know."

"But Harry Potter has black hair and green eyes and wear glasses," Rue points out.

"Hence, the disguise," Cato replies back to her, "How do you know who Harry Potter is?"

"I may have been living in the woods for a year or so, but I'm not stupid. There were freaking movie posters everywhere."

"Oh."

Thresh chortles, "He-he! Ha, she sure told you!"

"Shut up," Cato hisses, "And for the record, you might wanna explain to me how you know Rue."

"I caught her climbing into kitchen window one night. And for some reason, every since that night, this little girl keeps following me around." Thresh looks down as Rue smiles at him.

"And you've been helping keep her safe?" A voice cuts through the room from behind Cato. Cato glances behind him and sees Clove, looking cleaner and a bit nicer than the last time he'd seen her.

Clove walks to Rue, holding out her arms as Rue pulls away from Thresh and runs to the former escapee. The two girls embrace.

Thresh answers, "Yes ma'am. I couldn't leave a little girl all alone by herself. God knows what would've happened. Some men just take advantage."

Clove nods. She turns to Cato. "Thank you . . . for the gift."

"You're welcome, Clove."

Cato likes the way her name dances on his lips, the way he just wants to stretch it out and repeat it over and over again.

Clove. Clove. Clove.

Help me.

Clove sits on the bench, next to Thresh, saying hello.

"What the hell?" Cato blurts. "You two already know each other? Why am I the last to know about everything?"

"Because you're an idiot," Clove smirks.

"Again: What the hell? You don't know me," Cato growls.

Before Clove can shoot back a snarky comment about his mother, Brutus comes over.

Cato prays for a brief moment that his mentor won't recognize Clove, that he won't turn her in to the police.

After all, Cato needs answers.
"Are you interested in training combat with us?"

Clove shakes her head. "No, thanks. I'm just visiting. But I'd love to someday."

Brutus stares at Clove. "I think we all know you're not visiting, sweetie."

_Crap._ Mentally, Cato curses himself.

"Brutus -"

"Just listen -" Thresh starts.

"Now I oughta be picking up the phone and be calling that number right now. You boys know better." Cato and Thresh hang their heads, ashamed. "But," Brutus continues and the boys perk up. "I won't do that. There's two sides to every story and Heaven knows I won't trust what the damn media says, twisting up everybody's words and thoughts around . . ."

Clove only looks at Brutus in a calm manner. "So you want to hear my side of the story," she says. It wasn't a question; it was a statement.

Brutus glances at Clove. "I think it needs to be told."

Clove is silent, her dark brown eyes on the floor. "All right. As soon as everyone leaves."

Brutus immediately whirls around, clapping his large hands together and yells, "PRACTICE DISMISSED! Y'all go home now. Yes, even you guys."

Muttering and the sound of feet shuffling out the doors, the trainees, the visitors, the parents, and the wrestling team are soon gone. The only ones left in the building are Brutus, Cato, Clove, Katniss, Marvel, Peeta, Thresh, and Rue.

Clove shifts in her spot on the bench, clearing her throat.

"When I was ten, I had just finished wrapping up a film called _Orphan_ under my real name Isabelle Fuhrman, when this car came and crashed into my parent's car on the way to the premiere. They didn't make it but I did. Soon, I was sent to live with this guy. He seemed nice at first when I met him with the social worker, but when the doors closed, he showed his true colors. He told me that I was dead and that my name was Clove. He - He forced the other children to - to fight each other to the death for food. He made me clean up all . . . so much blood . . . I said no and he killed one of Rue's sisters . . ."

She took a deep breath, letting out an exhale, then continued her story. "The first time I escaped, he had one of the older teens - his name was Romulus Thread - grab me and made him burn all ten cigarettes of his on my arms til I apologized for running away. Then he locked me in this room for 'bout a week without food. Rue caused a distraction and helped me escape, and we've been on the run ever since. Please sir, don't make go back there. Please. I'll do anything. I'll even clean this place."

"Calm down girl. I'm not gonna make you do anything you don't want to do. Just tell us who the sorry bastard is and we'll lock his ass up."

"I'm afraid you can't do that . . ." Clove bites his lower lip and exchanges a glance with Rue.

"And why not?"
Clove shakes her head.

"Who did it?" Cato asks.

"I can't -"

"Who did this to you, Clove?" Cato presses.

"Please . . ." Clove covers her ears with both of her hands.

"Who did it?" Thresh asks.

"Who did this to you?" Katniss chimes in.

"Coriolanus Snow." It's barely a whisper but it's heard.

Startled, the group look at each other, then they all look at Clove simultaneously in disbelief.
Chapter Notes

Double update, because why not? ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter Six

How To Save A Life

"So, let me get this straight," Marvel begins.

The group is sitting in the cafeteria of Panem High, without the exception of Clove, Rue, and Glimmer, trying to let the new found information from Clove sink into their brains.

"You're telling me that Coriolanus fucking Snow, Alma Coin's brother and Mayor of Panem is the one who abused Clove and Rue for God knows how long?" Marvel continues.

"Apparently," Katniss murmurs.

"And he forced the other children who lived with him to fight each other to the death? That's so fucking messed up."

"I knew something was off with him. Didn't I tell you, Peeta? The guy's as shady as a unicorn," Katniss says.

"Will the real Slim Shady stand up?!" Peeta calls out, earning several stares.

The group cracks out into laughter, then the chuckles fade into silence.

"But seriously . . . even if what Clove says is true, can we trust her? I mean, she's been living in the woods and missing for seven years. How do we know we can trust her?" Katniss asks.

"We can't - " Marvel cuts in.

"We can," Cato says softly.

The group stares at him. He swears he sees Peeta cock his head toward Katniss, nudging her to speak to Cato, to slap some sense into him.

"Again with this," Katniss says. "You barely know the girl. She doesn't know you and you don't know her."

"But I do."

Katniss glares at him. "Then would you please enlighten the group? Go on."

Cato knows if he says from a dream, that they would laugh. If they were normal, which they would not.
"I keep having these dreams," Cato explains. "I keep seeing her. I don't know why."

He expects everyone to be looking at him with horror or even laughter, but there's nothing. Everyone looks shocked.

Marvel stands up and reaches out to Cato with his arms open wide. "Cato, my man . . . I could kiss you right now."

"Uh, ew. And, what?" Cato pushes Marvel away.

Katniss exchanges a glance with Peeta. "We thought we were the only ones having weird dreams."

"Me too," Thresh murmurs.

"Ditto," Marvel tells him. "Glimmer! We're not crazy!" Marvel suddenly screams out.

"Do I count?" a voice asks. It's Finch. She sits down next to Thresh, just as Glimmer flaunts over ignoring her brother and sister as she flips a quick "bird" to them when the teacher patrolling isn't looking. Then she kisses Marvel square on the lips, watching out of the corner of her eyes as Cashmere and Gloss's jaws go slack.

"You too?" Cato asks Finch. The red haired girl nods.

"Before I met you," Finch tells him, "That's sort of why I hired you. I just needed to find out more . . . ."

Cato is thinking about how they could all could have weird dreams. Was it such a coincidence that he met the others in the first place and vice versa?

"Hey, Cato," Glimmer nudges Cato's shoulder. "Isn't that . . . ."

Cato turns his head around to see a familiar person standing in the doors of the cafeteria. He slowly gets to his feet and walks towards the newcomer.

"Meredith?" he asks. "What're you doing here?"

Meredith was an old friend of his and hadn't been since . . .

Meredith, a short brunette, looks up at him with tears in her eyes. "I'm so sorry to come up unannounced, but . . . ."

"What?" Cato is getting impatient.

"It's about your brother, Conner. He left something for you."

_oOo_

"Do you think we should smack him or something?" Marvel's voice is asking.

"Marvel, shut up!" Katniss exclaims. There's a loud of a soft smack and a cry of "Ow! What the fuck, woman? You're evil."

Cato is sitting in a hallway, his back pressed against the wall, letting Meredith's information sink into his brain.

"It's about your brother, Conner. He left something for you."
Conner seems to be showing up everywhere today. Cato feels the letter in his pocket, feel like it is burning a hole in him. He has to read it so he tugs it out as carefully as he can and opens the letter.

**Hey lil bro.**

*If you're reading this, this means I'm already dead.*

*This isn't your fault.*

*Don't blame yourself because you couldn't save my life.*

*Truth is I was already drowning.*

*I know you like to sing so I wrote you a song.*

*I want you to sing it to Mom and Dad, okay? It'll explain everything.*

*I will be watching over you wherever I am.*

*Wherever I am, I'm proud of you.*

Love, Conner

Cato feels tears begin to threaten his eyes but he forces himself to blink away the tears. He hands the letter to his friends so they can read it.

"Can you call my Mom and Dad and tell them to meet me at the Hob? Like now?" Cato chokes out.

"You're skipping?" Marvel asks.

"Yeah."

"We're meet you there, I guess," Glimmer says.

It's a quarter to noon before his parents actually show up at the Hob.

Cato's mom embraces him quickly. "Your friends called us. What's going on?"

"Let's go inside and we'll talk."

Cato's dad grabs his arm. "Young man, there's no reason why we can't talk out here. You better have a good reason for meeting us in this filthy place and for pulling us out of work."

Cato wrenches his arm way. "Like I said; let's go inside and we'll talk." Cato walks inside the Hob without another word. He makes his parents sit in one of the tables in front of the stage, then goes to the stage.

He taps the microphone as then it emits a loud feedback, but nonetheless it gets everyone's attention.

"Um, hi. My name is Cato for those of you who don't know me. I'd like to sing a song that my brother Conner wrote. He committed suicide last year."

Music begins to play and Cato closes his eyes and sings:

**Step one, you say, "We need to talk."**
He walks, you say, "Sit down. It's just a talk."

He smiles politely back at you
You stare politely right on through
Some sort of window to your right
As he goes left and you stay right
Between the lines of fear and blame
You begin to wonder why you came
Where did I go wrong? I lost a friend
Somewhere along in the bitterness
And I would have stayed up with you all night
Had I known how to save a life
Let him know that you know best
"Cause after all you do know best
Try to slip past his defense
Without granting innocence
Lay down a list of what is wrong
The things you've told him all along
Pray to God, he hears you
And I pray to God, he hears you
And where did I go wrong? I lost a friend
Somewhere along in the bitterness
And I would have stayed up with you all night
Had I known how to save a life
As he begins to raise his voice
You lower yours and grant him one last choice
"Drive until you lose the road
Or break with the ones you've followed."
He will do one of two things
He will admit to everything
Or he'll say he's just not the same
And you'll begin to wonder why you came
Where did I go wrong? I lost a friend
Somewhere along in the bitterness
And I would have stayed up with you all night
Had I known how to save a life
Where did I go wrong? I lost a friend
Somewhere along in the bitterness
And I would have stayed up with you all night
Had I known how to save a life
How to save a life
How to save a life
Where did I go wrong? I lost a friend
Somewhere along in the bitterness
And I would have stayed up with you all night
Had I known how to save a life
Where did I go wrong? I lost a friend
Somewhere along in the bitterness
And I would have stayed up with you all night
Had I known how to save a life
How to save a life
How to save a life

Pouring all the regret, the sadness, the guilt, the anger, the dreams that were shattered, the ones he had kept inside of him for so long for so many years . . .

Cato finally opens his eyes and glances at his parents. He doesn't care right now but he knows he'll get a talking to when he gets home. When he tries to approach them before they leave, all his father says is, "Go back to school, Cato."
But Cato can see the pain in their eyes and he watches as they drive away.

His friends are waiting for him and wondering what happened.

"Well?" Thresh inquires.

"How'd it go?" Marvel asks.

Cato gives a nod; a nod that the five of them - not including Finch - know what it means. It means that Cato broke through to his parents.

Meredith had left sometime during the song. Cato doesn't know whether he will see her again, but he wants to thank her for handing him that letter.

Katniss, Finch, Peeta, Thresh, Marvel, Glimmer and Cato decide to head back to Panem High. Miraculously, there's no sign that the teachers even know that they had skipped. What kind of school is this? Cato thinks, but he's glad no one suspects anything.

Cato realizes he forgot his Chemistry textbook and heads to his locker before Mr. Beetee will stop him.

Cato spins his combination: 3 - 23 - 12 and it opens.

He spots his textbook near the bottom and scoops it up when he hears a lone pair of footsteps heading in his direction. Just as he closes the door, he smells a familiar scent and turns.

"Principal Coin," he says.

"Cato," Alma Coin greets him, her cold grey eyes making his hair stand on edge. "My brother would like to speak with you. He's in my office. I'll tell Mr. Beetee where you are."

Cato watches Coin walk away. Everything about her was grey: her hair, her clothes. Cato wonders if the woman ever wore a happy color in a day of her life. Chuckling at his foolishness, he enters Principal Coin's office and finds a visitor he dreads: Mayor Snow.

Well, that escalated quickly . . . Cato thinks to himself. Shit.

Mayor Snow gestures to the chair across from him. "Please sit."

Cato sits down after a few seconds of hesitation. Snow opens up a folder. "Cato Richardson, 17 years old, lives with Jakub and Cile Richardson; Conner Richardson, deceased. A very nice boy, your brother was, indeed. Such a shame. Of course, you already know that, right?"

Cato grits his teeth and musters out, "Yes, sir."

Here is the man who abused Clove and Rue, countless others, and murdered them. Cato wants to strangle him right now but stops himself from leaping over the desk. And he had no right to be talking about Conner like this.

"Your mother and father both work at Capitol Companies, I assume?"

Cato nods.

Snow leans forward slightly, his puffy lips parting. "Imagine what I could do with a phone call. Everything they have worked for - poof. Their jobs - gone. Their bank accounts - drained. And a single little credit card registered to you, that you have been using secretly. Oh, look at that, you
spent $2000."

"You wouldn't dare -"

"Oh, but I can. You see, Cato, you have something of mine that I want back. Two something of mine, really. I want them back. I know you know who I'm talking about."

"Sorry, no. I have no clue who you're talking about," Cato spits.

Snow whips out a cell phone and presses it against his ear. "Antonius, would you please drain -"

"Okay, okay!" Cato interrupts. "What do I need to do?"

"Simple. All you need to do is to bring Isabelle and Amandla back to me." Amandla? That must be Rue's real name, Cato speculates. He has to think up a plan and quick.

"If I bring them to you . . . they'll be safe won't they?"

Snow nods. "I always hold my promises."

You lying abusive bastard. Stop lying!

"I'll bring them to you tonight at nine then," Cato replies.

Snow smiles or at least tries to smile, Cato doesn't care. "That's all. Thanks for having a chat with me, Cato. Off to class."

Cato returns to Mr. Beetee's classroom and takes his seat. Within seconds, he feels the vibrations of his cellphone, indicating he has a text.

CATNIP

U OK?

Cato glances at Katniss, who is sitting two rows back with Peeta. He shakes his head in a perceptible nod.

CATO:

GATHER THE OTHERS. MEET MY HOUSE AFTER SKOOL.

"IF WE BURN, YOU BURN WITH US."

Cato adds the last part as his signature, but really it is Code "Oh-my-God-we're-royally-screwed-and-Snow-is-on-to-us. We-need-to-think-up-a-plan-and-fast-or-we'll-be-goners."

Katniss and Peeta glance at each other then they both give thumbs-up.

Cato reverts his attention on Mr. Beetee. "My daughter, Johanna, will be visiting from Collins College to talk to all about -"

"Sex?"

"Spanish?"

"Enchiladas!"
Mr. Beetee sighs in exasperation. "No, no, and most definitely not, Mr. Underwood. No, my
daughter will be helping you figure out survival skills along with Collins' head trainer, Atala, and
two of her friends, Finnick and Annie. If any of you hormonal boys make a move on my daughter,
you'll wish that you'd never been born. And that's saying a lot since I won't be the one doing the
hitting."

Silence.

"Now, I want you to finish pages 389-400 tonight for homework and it's due at the end of class
tomorrow!" The bell rings on cue. "Castor, Pollux, don't forget your books!"

Cato hops into his car and drives to his house. It's a two-story house, Victorian-style. Cato freezes
when he walks in. His parents are standing there. Then all of a sudden, his father pulls him in for an
embrace, and he's in shock because his father is crying. His mother embraces Cato, tears streaming
down her face.

"We're such bad parents, aren't we?" His mother asks him. Cato doesn't know what to say.

"We made a deal with our bosses. Your mother will work Tuesdays, Fridays, and Sundays and I will
work Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays. That way one of us can spend time with you. We been
doing some talking and we decided that this will help bring us more closer."

"What do you think of that, Cato? I know you may feel angry for us for not giving you the attention
you've needed, but we're trying." Cile Richardson speaks in a hopeful voice to her son. "We want to
be better parents to you."

"Help us, son," Jakub says, hands on his son's shoulders. "Please help us to be better parents to you."

Cato exhales deeply, letting out the breath he didn't know he was holding. "All right. But under one
condition: you'll be nice to my friends whenever they come over."

"Of course, Cato. We'll try our best. Now, your mother and I have to go back to work but we'll see
you tonight, OK?"

"Thanks, Dad. Thanks, Mom."

Cato is not sure what emotion he's feeling now. He heads to the freezer and heats up a plate of
boneless chicken wings and carries it up to his room, hearing his parents' cars fade away. Cato nearly
has a heart attack when he stumbles into his room, sits on his bed and glances up, ready to take a
bite, and curses.

"You can't be showing up here announced, Clove. You gotta knock or something." Clove
suppresses a smile. "Did my parents know you were here? How'd you get in here in the first place?"

"No, they never realized. And uh, I climbed through your window, dickhead."

Cato places a hand over his heart. "Ouch. That's hurtful, Clove."

"Cato?" a voice calls.

"Up here!"

A few minutes later after watching Clove devour what is left of the chicken wings, the group go over
the plan once more.
"Do you get it now, Marvel?" Katniss asks.

"Yup. Lo jack the Mayor's car and we'll be off to merry, merry Narnia, folks!"

Clove scrunches up her nose. "What's Narnia?"

"The girl knows who Harry Potter is, but not Narnia?" Marvel asks in disbelief.

"That was Rue, not me," Clove corrects him.

"Whatever," Marvel groans, and then begins to launch into the tale of The Chronicles of Narnia, in the shortest way possible.

"You guys know what to do now?"

Everyone nods.

"Guys, we can do this," Katniss encourages.

_We can do this_, Cato thinks.

Can't they?

_oOo_

Later that night at precisely nine on the dot, Cato heads to Snow's mansion, with Clove sitting besides him as he parks and pulls the key out of the ignition.

"You ready?"

Clove shakes her head. "No. But even if this means helping save the others, I'm doing this for them."

Suddenly, Cato reaches out, cups her face and kisses her. Then he pulls away, seeing her shocked face. "For good luck," he explains and lying a bit. The pair get out of the car, head inside the mansion, and wait for Snow.

The plan was simple: knock out all the guards (peacekeepers as Snow called them) and then pretend to rob the mansion, after cutting the phone lines, tie up Snow and let the other children escape.

"SNOW! WE'RE HERE!" Cato yells at the top of his lungs. Clove shifts on her feet behind him, tensed.

Mayor Snow appears on the balcony above them. "Isabelle... How I've missed you. But where is Amandla?" Rue was at home with Thresh's sister.

"She's coming," Clove spits out hatefully, "And my name's Clove. Like you said, Isabelle's dead."

Snow laughs. "Snarky as ever, Isabelle. Now return her to me, Cato, and we will forget everything that happened earlier."

"Sorry," Cato says. "But there's been a change of plans."

Then, all hell breaks loose.

Five people storm in armed with armor wear and weapons: a spear, a sword, and a bow and arrows.

"You must be idiots." Snow says. He presses a button in his hand. Nothing happens and he presses it
again. Again, nothing.

"We knocked out all your guards and cut the phone lines. No one's coming to help you Snow."

Marvel and Thresh pull out coils of rope and begin tie Mayor Snow, bounding his hands together behind his back.

Clove heads to the room where she knows everyone is held at and opens the door. "Come on! You're free!" she screams.

Bodies of young kids come swarming out like a swarm of flies, running to the door, to escape from the horror they have endured for all those years.

"I will serve Snow!" A voice shouts. Cato turns to see a tall lanky boy about a year older than him curl his hands around Clove's throat. "Die, bitch!"

Cato wastes no time and yanks the boy - Romulus - off of Clove. Romulus' head hits the wall with a crack and he falls unconscious. Clove stands up.

"Thanks," she murmurs. "But I can take care of myself. You don't need to protect me every now and then. Besides, I'm handy with a knife."

And sure enough, another one of Snow's brainwashed kids charge at her, ready to attack. Clove throws the knife and hits its specified target.

There's arrows flying, fists punching, groans and grunts of pain, blood splattering; it's a fight to the death. Only the ones who remained would win. There's a total of six bodies lying on the floor, all either unconscious or dead.

Marvel and Thresh haul Mayor Snow to his feet when they're finished.

"Say goodbye to your world of luxury, Snow," Marvel growls.

_oOo_

The FBI conduct a thorough investigation of Snow, and find more than 300 bodies buried on his property.

Coriolanus Snow sentenced to life in prison, after more witnesses come forward, all thanks to a guy and his group of misfits. He won't ever see the light of day again.

Three months later, Snow is found dead in his cell after apparently choking to death on his own blood, due to the poison he used on his enemies. But Clove is happy that he won't hurt anybody again, especially her and Rue.

Cato walks to Clove's new house, in which she is living with Katniss and her parents. He turns to her and kisses her.

Clove looks up to him with her dark brown eyes. "Thank you for everything. Thank you for giving me friends . . . a home . . . a family . . . You."

Cato smiles. "Clove," he starts, but she interrupts him.

"But you have to wake up now, Cato."

What?
"What?" he chokes out, confused.

"Wake up," she repeats, her figure becoming ghostly. The background around them disappears in a swirl of smoke. "You're in a coma. Wake. Up."

Wake up.

Wake up.

Cato clutches his head with both hands and screams out the top of his lungs: "WAKE UP!"

_oOo_

DID YOU EXPECT THAT? OF COURSE, YOU PROBABLY DID!

Song:

*How To Save A Life*

Performed by: The Fray

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for everyone who left kudos on this! That makes me extremely happy knowing people are reading this! :)
Wake up.

Wake up.

Cato clutches his head with both hands and screams out the top of his lungs: "WAKE UP!"

Forcing his eyes open, Cato has now awakened. The smell of disinfectant spray in the air, the groans and moans and cries of other patients, feeling the thin hospital gown covering his body. Cato realizes he's in the hospital. He recalls the hovercraft spiraling down in the air, a huge explosion . . . then nothing.

Clove. Where is she?

"Clove?" he rasps out, desperation creeping into his voice. "Clover?"

A face appears in front of his. It's her, still as beautiful as ever, face unharmed. "Cato?" she asks.

"Clove!" Cato breathes out in relief.

"Hold on. Don't sit up. I'm going to get a doctor. I'll be right back." Clove's footsteps recede. Cato feels his ears pop and he can hear a bit more clearly. Someone's screaming. Very painful screaming, in total agony.

Ignoring Clove's request, Cato carefully props himself up, feeling groggy as he resumes tucking a pillow under his sore back just as Clove returns with a doctor in tow.

"Hello, Cato. My name is Dr. Aurelius, I'm the head doctor here. Do you know where you are?"

Cato had observed his surroundings and came to an conclusion to where he was. "District 13," he replies, slurring a little.

"Very good. Now -" But before Dr. Aurelius can continue, the screaming Cato had heard just moments earlier starts up again and Dr. Aurelius excuses himself, leaving Clove to try and fill Cato in on what he has missed after the explosion of the hovercraft.

"Who is that?" Cato asks, meaning about the screaming coming from somewhere. The screams are echoing in the hospital and it breaks his heart.

"Um. . ." Clove starts, glancing at him.

"Who is it?" He feels so, so tired and he wants to fall back asleep, but he forces himself not to.

"It's . . . Marvel," she finally answers. Clove sits by Cato's legs, taking one of his hands. "When the hovercraft went down, he got burned badly. They used up all the morphine. . . Glimmer's doing what she can, but . . . without the morphine, it's not going so well. Marvel's suffering . . . I - You've been out for nearly a week. You wouldn't wake up. I thought - I thought you were dead. Dr. Aurelius said you were in a coma. Katniss is trying to find a way to get in the Capitol. "
At the mention of his best friend suffering, Cato feels like a hand has grabbed his heart and is twisting it. "I want to see him."

"It's not a good -"

"I want to see him," Cato says harshly. He knows he needs to rest, to stay in his hospital bed. But he can't. Not when his best friend is in agony. "He's my best friend. I owe him that much. Please."

Clove hesitates. "Alright. I'm going to be right back." She wheels back a wheelchair. "Your legs aren't strong enough for walking yet." Cato climbs in the wheelchair, and just before they leave the infirmary, Cato takes Clove's hands into his and kisses her. "Thank you, baby."

Clove smiles. "I'm glad you're not dead, dickhead."

"Same to you, Crazy Girl."

_oOo_

Marvel is screaming again. As Cato and Clove near the entrance to Marvel's room, they wince at the agony they hear.

The minute Cato is wheeled into Marvel's room, he immediately wishes he hasn't come. He forces himself to look at his friend - his brother - who is badly burned, bandages wrapped around his entire being.

The smell. He knows he will not forget the smell of burned flesh. His best friend's flesh. What has been Marvel now sits in his place, a human being whose face is unrecognizable, whose face is now red with his own blood seeping through.

"AAAAAAAAAAaaaahhh!"

Marvel screeches as he jolts upward in pure agony as the nurses try to hold him down.

"Where is the goddamn morphling?!!" Dr. Aurelius orders. "Glimmer, close the door!" Cato and Clove watch in horror as their friend continues to thrash and writhe in pain while Glimmer tries to soothe Marvel with tears in her eyes.

The doors burst open once more then shut quickly as they came, a nurse rushes in, holding a medium-sized wine bottle in her hand. "Abernathy found this in an abandoned closet," the nurse tells Dr. Aurelius.

Dr. Aurelius takes it, inspecting the bottle and opens it. "It'll be good for now. Hold him down." Dr. Aurelius fills the syringe with the leftover alcohol and injects it into Marvel's IV line.

Marvel's body begins to calm down and relaxes in the bed. The nurses begin to clear out, gathering the bloody bandages strewn across the floor. Dr. Aurelius claps a hand on Cato's shoulder. "That should be enough for tonight. Let him get some rest, Cato. He desperately needs it." Then Dr. Aurelius exits the room, closing the double doors, leaving the four of them alone.

Cato pulls Clove to him, letting her sit in his lap, wrapping his arms around her. "How is he?" Cato asks Glimmer softly.

Glimmer sighs and wipes her tears away as she sits down on the chair besides Marvel's bed. "He's . . . suffering. I can't stand seeing him like this," Glimmer replies. "Oh, God."
She breaks down sobbing. Clove gets up from Cato's lap and hugs the blonde girl.

"He'll be okay, Glim." Clove murmurs as she tries to comfort her.

"I'd like to think that. If we were in the Capitol now, the doctors there would be able to fix up Marvel in a heartbeat. But we're not in the Capitol and we can't fix him. Honestly, I think the reason he's held on this long, is because he was waiting for you to wake up, Cato."

"Hey, Cato," a voice whispers. Cato turns his head to see Marvel blinking.


"I'm fine, Marvel. Let's just -" Rest, Cato starts to say. Then one of Marvel's burned hands reaches out and grabs the collar of Cato's shirt, pulling him closer to Marvel. "I can't . . . stand it . . . anymore. Listening . . . to my girl cry. Take care of her, please . . ."

"Marvel. You're gonna be - " Cato starts. All right. You'll make it.

"I know I'm dying," Marvel hisses, "I'm not . . . stupid. Just . . . put me out of my misery . . . okay? Okay?" Marvel takes a sharp intake of breath, one of pain. "Glimmer."

Cato wheels himself backward as Marvel whispers something into Glimmer's ear. Clove's hands are on the handles of his wheelchair. The blonde girl tearfully nods to him, then carefully kisses his forehead on top of his wrappings. "I love you," Glimmer whispers.

"Clove?" Marvel asks.

"Yeah?"

"Bye, Crazy Girl . . . Tell Katniss, 'I'm - I'm sorry'," he finishes and takes out his IV from his arm and takes off the heart monitor on his right index finger. Without the morphling being injected into his body, Marvel has no way to soothe the pain and Cato has no idea why he wants to die in extreme agony. He starts to rise from the wheelchair, but a loud beeping sounds. Then bodies are clamoring in, shouting and orders flying about, double doors clicking shut with a thud, the threesome being ushered down the grey hallway and being shoved into a large room labeled as "CONTROL ROOM".

Marvel's screams of agony are heard continuously behind the doors, echoing and bouncing off the walls and the hallways.

It is a sound no one will forget.

_oOo_

Marvel is cremated, since they could not go up above and bury him in the radioactive ground. District 13 held a small ceremony in the small church area on Floor Six that only consisted of Alma Coin (the head of 13), Katniss, Rue, Thresh, Finch, Cato, Clove and Glimmer. Glimmer weeps and weeps, unable to control her wails, but manages to say her goodbyes to Marvel, kissing his urn, which was placed on a table.

"Marvel was my first real friend in District 1. He was so annoying when I first met him . . . He would always come over to where I was in training and just talk. About anything. He made me laugh
and I felt like I could be myself around him unlike the slut I called. I didn't realize he was in love with me until he told me on the train. He said, "*If I die in the arena and you live, cremate me and spread my ashes in District 4. I've always wanted to see the ocean.*" Glimmer bursts into tears again.

Clove goes up and comforts her. Clove looks at the microphone and bites her lower lip awkwardly, unsure how to start her eulogy. "I didn't know Marvel that well, but he saved my life from the District 6 guy in the arena. So, thank you, Marvel. I won't be able to repay that."

Clove's voice wavers on the last word as Glimmer and Clove return to their seats. Then it's Thresh's turn.

"I didn't really know Marvel that much at first. All I really knew was that he killed Rue from Clove's yakking mouth. Time out for a sec." Thresh shrugs his shoulders and holds out his hands to emphasize a point, "Clove, if you're gonna kill somebody, don't do a whole villain monologue thing and wait. That's what got you killed in the first place. Just kill the freaking person, ok?"

Clove pouts. "I was gonna put on a show, duh. Sorry about that, Katniss," she says, realizing her mistake as the words poured from her mouth.

Katniss makes a face, waving her hand dismissively. Her body language told the opposite. "I'm over it."

"Anyway, back to the point, once I got to know Marvel, he was a funny person, loved his family and was handy with a spear. He loved you a lot, Glimmer. We'll miss you, Marvel. And to the Capitol -" Thresh mimicked one of Marvel's inappropriate gestures, causing a disapproving stern look from Coin and smiles from the rest. Cato cracks a smile and a small chuckle comes out. It's like Marvel's in the room with them, trying to help lighten the mood.

Cato gets to his feet, stands in front of the microphone, clearing his throat awkwardly. "Ahem," he says. Cato suddenly feels like he can't breathe so he adjusts the tie around his neck. "Marvel was my best friend. He still is. We met in one of those rare moments where the District 1 and District 2 trainees could train together. It was like we were long lost brothers or something. He was like the brother I never had." Cato clears his throat again. "Marvel was one of those person who didn't want to kill anyone but when it came to it . . . Well. It's kill or be killed. Like people say, the Games change everyone. I know you never saw this side of it, Katniss, but he was sorry. He had to put on a show for the cameras. That's what we all have to do eventually. Marvel said one time to me, "This is gospel for the vagabonds/Never-do-wells and insufferable bastards/Confessing their apostasies/Led away by imperfect impostors/Don't try to sleep through the end of the world/Bury me alive/ 'Cause I won't give up without a fight," Cato recites from memory. "He hated the Games and the Capitol. But I know right now Marvel wouldn't want us moping around sitting here like a pair of brain-dead mutts. He would want us to be kicking President Snow's ugly wrinkled ass and his group of Lady Gagas!"

Cato isn't sure where that last part came from, but it has rolled off his tongue nonetheless. President Coin stands up, facing Cato, her grey eyes staring into his.

"That's very nice, Cato. But unfortunately, "kicking President Snow's ugly wrinkled ass" is going to have to wait. We need to get Peeta and the others back from the Capitol. We have a rescue team -" As if on cue, a soldier walks in. "President Coin, the rescue team is back."

Katniss, Thresh, and Finch quickly head out the door towards the direction of the rescuers and disappear from sight. President Coin turns back to Cato, Clove, and Glimmer. "Get some rest, you three. You'll need some strength for your training tomorrow." Glimmer takes Marvel's urn in her
arms, and carefully cradles it.

"Good night," Glimmer whispers, dried tears on her cheeks as she and Coin both leave.

The District 2 tributes are left alone. Cato shakily stands up from the wheelchair. It takes him a couple of tries but the strength has returned into his legs and he can walk normally.

"Screw you, wheelchair. I don't like you," he says.

"I don't like you either, Cato," the wheelchair replies back.

Cato glances at Clove in disbelief. "Really?" he asks incredulously, cocking an eyebrow.

Clove shrugs innocently. "What?"

The two find Cato's room and close the door behind them. Cato is sitting on his bed, staring down at the floor after taking his shoes, shirt, pants off and changing into another shirt and sweatpants. Clove wraps her arms around him and he breaks down.

The two cry for their friend together, holding on to each other for comfort for the rest of the night.

_ oOo _

11:13 P.M.

That's what it reads on the ancient alarm clock. Cato is awake, staring at the dark shadows shimmering across his room's ceiling while Clove rests her head on his chest, awake also, but keeping quietly as to not disrupt Cato's thoughts.

"I was supposed to kill him," Cato amuses aloud. "Why couldn't I do it, Clove? Why couldn't I kill him?"

"Maybe he didn't want you to, Cato. Maybe he was tired of you killing," Clove answers back, craning her neck to look at her boyfriend.

"What happened?" Cato asks, changing the subject, to try and push Marvel's death from his mind, guilt twisting his insides. "What happened when I was out? How did me and Rue get out of the arena? You're supposed to be dead. You all are."

Clove opens her mouth, her dark brown eyes flashing an emotion too quick for Cato to catch before she composes herself. "Cato, remember on the way to the hovercraft, that Katniss and the others explained to you why?"

Cato thinks back before the accident - was it an accident? - happened.

"The Capitol can't exactly . . ."

"Let us get away," Marvel picked up.

"Since we are the tributes of the 74th Hunger Games, " Thresh finished.

"All of the Victors knew about this. They formed a plan, to get us out so the Rebellion could take place. I am the Mockingjay because of the token I wear. The District 12 Volunteer who was never suppose to volunteer in the first place and then fall in love with Peeta Then we found out about 13. They wanted to help. We just need to get on the hovercraft we have."
"Yeah," Cato tells her. "I remember, but I don't understand. What are you trying to tell me?"

Clove props herself into a sitting position, facing Cato. "Our mentors gave us a slight modification in our trackers that made us appear to be dead. The weapons in the arena were designed to look and harm tributes realistically but in reality, they would cause no internal or physical damage to us. When we awoke from the caskets after being shipped back to our homes, we have our one of our mentors explain to us what happened. Then they took us to District 13. We were watching the last minutes of the arena before the Capitol dropped a timing bomb on you and Rue. We realized that when our screens turned black and the feed cut out, that the Capitol were onto our plan - or District 13's plan. President Snow gave the order to create fake mutts that were replicas of us, then kidnapped you two and put you guys into a fake room. He wanted to see if you guys could figure out they were mutts. They were programmed to attack when one of you figured it out."

Cato lets this sink in, trying to process all of this.

"Cato?" Clove prompts. "You all right?"

Was he all right? Hell no, he wasn't all right!

Cato sits up, leaning back against the headboard. "So basically, District 13 created a fucked-up plan to stop the Hunger Games, and then got us out and then the Capitol found out and kidnapped me and Rue before you guys could get a chance to. The trackers paralyzed us when we "died". And the mutts were mutts. And when the hovercraft went down, it was because of the Capitol, I'm guessing. And Marvel's dead. Did I miss anything else?"

"Peeta was kidnapped by the Capitol when the hovercraft went down. I think the rescue team got him out. C'mon. Let's go see Peeta." Clove stands, slipping her shoes onto her feet. She grabs Cato's hand and pulls him so he's standing.

The two exit their room, start down the hallway and enter the adjoining room that connects to Peeta's room.

A guard is blocking the door. "You're not authorized to enter, Soldier Richardson and Soldier Somes."

"Why not?" Clove demands.

The guard jerks a thumb to the right. "Look for yourself," the guard says, as Clove and Cato stand in front of the one-way mirror. Peeta is in there handcuffed to his bed. His lips are moving but Clove and Cato can't hear anything until the guard flips a switch.

Somewhere, a speaker crackles and emits: "She's a mutt. A mutt. SHE'S A STINKING MUTT! SHE'S A STINKING MUTT! SHE'S GOING TO KILL US ALL!"

The guard flips the switch again and it's quiet once again.

"What happened to him?" Cato asks.

The guard shrugs. "Dunno. Ask President Coin. But there are speculations and rumours going around that the Mellark boy's been hijacked. He tried to strangle Soldier Everdeen earlier upon their reunion. I think it's best if you two return to your rooms."

Cato and Clove do.
"Hijacked?" Clove wonders out loud as they crawl into bed, flicking off the light. "You think the Capitol did that to you and Rue when you were -"

"I don't know. I really hope not," Cato interrupts.

"I mean, you're not seeing anything you're not supposed to seeing right?"

"You mean, besides you?"

Clove is quiet. "Can I ask you something? What was it like . . . when you were in the coma? Did you see anything? Or was it all darkness? There were couple of times you stopped breathing and I thought . . ."

Cato embraces his girlfriend and kisses her. "I'm sorry I put you through that. But being in the coma, it was . . . weird, but kinda nice at the same time. I was a wrestler and a singer in a place called Panem High School, and Panem wasn't Panem; it was a country called the United States of America. My parents were still sorta jerks. Katniss, Peeta, Thresh, and Finch were my friends. And you and Rue were runaways on the run from Snow. And then there was that time you stabbed me in the neck."

Clove smiles. "That's so me. I'm sorry about that," she says.

"Don't be. C'mon, we got training tomorrow. Let's go to sleep."

Within a few minutes, Clove is asleep, and Cato is still awake.

It takes a while to fall asleep, realizing that he's still alive and with Clove safe in his arms.

_oOo_

Song: This Is Gospel

Performed by: Panic!At The Disco
Harder to Breathe

Chapter Notes

This chapter may be a bit confusing. It will be explained on in later chapters. Hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter Eight

Harder to Breathe

"Can you tell me your name?"

A pause. Then the voice starts up again.

"Do you know why you are here?"

Another pause, but this time slightly longer. Dr. Aurelius tries again.

"You are here because of the upcoming evaluation which determines your ability to leave District 13. Do you understand this, Cato?"

At the mention of his name, Cato looks up with fury, then glances back down, his face softening.

"Bring pride to my District," he speaks finally. "That's what my father always told me. Is he dead?"

"No. I'm afraid not," Dr. Aurelius replies, then continues, "I need you to concentrate, Cato. Can you do that for me?"

Cato curses underneath his breath, muttering, "Son of a bitch should've died when I was in the arena."

"And how does that make you feel?"

Cato shifts his weight around on the couch. "Mad, I guess. He wants me to be someone I can't be. Vicious. Brutal. A murderer. Just because Brutus is my uncle doesn't mean I have to be like him. How many people did Brutus kill in his Games? 16."

Dr. Aurelius scribbles something down in the notebook he is holding. "Go on," Dr. Aurelius gestures to Cato, waving his hand in a circular motion.

"I still remember everyone that I "killed". District 6 male, Jason. District 10 female, Lacie. District 3 male and female, Kalia and Ian. District 4 male, Reed. District 11, Thresh. District 12, the Star-Crossed Lovers, Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark. Then it was me and Rue, the Final Two. She reminded me of my little sister. I see it everyday in the halls when I walk past everyone, their faces say it all. They are still scared of me and I don't blame them. I'm scared of myself too. I realize that I have already become the monster everyone already fears me to be. I am a cold-hearted killer."

"How did you meet your District partner, Clove Somes? I understand you two already knew each
other before the Reaping."

Cato chuckles as he recalls the memory. "It was a training day . . ."

_oOo_

_Cato had just finished practicing with his sword after hours, watching as he sliced dummy after dummy when a slow mock applause drew his attention. He stiffened, turning to see a petite brunette standing there behind him. The girl continued her applause as she walked toward Cato. As she came closer, Cato couldn't help but notice faint freckles scattered across her face. He had a thing for girls with freckles."

"Nice," the girl said to him, her voice dripping with sarcasm.

_Cato immediately knew that he was going to like this girl. She had three things he liked in a girl: she was a brunette, had those cute looking freckles and had sarcasm. Nobody could go wrong with sarcasm."

"I bet I could do a better job than you, Pretty Boy," the girl remarked.

"You think? Try me," Cato shot back, trying his best to impress her.

_Cato also knew that he was the best swordsman in the whole Training Academy. There was no way in hell that this girl could beat him. Cato was about to hand her his sword - which was a rarity - but the girl shook her head and smirked, like she knew something he didn't and walked away from him."

_Cato watched in awe as the girl drew a dagger - a very sharp one - from the inside of her sleeve, raised it high above her head, and threw the dagger in his direction. Cato caught the hilt but wasn't prepared for the next one that came after. He ducked just in time as the point pierced the wall behind him. He knew if he hadn't ducked, he would've been a goner."

_But Cato was impressed. He hadn't seen this type of skilled knife-throwing since brother and sister, Gloss and Cashmere's back-to-back Games."

_He smiled. "You have my attention now. That was a crazy move though. You could've killed me."_ 

_The brunette shrugged her shoulders, arching an eyebrow. "That was the point, dickhead." But whether she meant by getting his attention or nearly killing him, Cato didn't know. "I'm going to volunteer for this year's Games."_ 

"Really? Me too," Cato blurted out without thinking. Well, technically he wasn't lying. That was assuming if he could volunteer in time before someone else did. Cato wanted to punch himself right there and then.

_The girl raised an eyebrow again as if she didn't believe him. "Hmm. Well, I got to go. See you later, dickhead."_ 

_She turned."

"Wait!" Cato called out after her. He handed her the daggers. "Um, will I see you again?"

_She smirked. "That depends," she replied, giving him a quick scan. "I'm Clove."_ 

"Cato," he introduced himself. They shook hands.

"See you tomorrow, dickhead."
"Oh, I definitely will, Crazy Girl," he called out after her.

I most definitely will.

_oOo_

... And the nicknames just stuck. She helped me with my training and I helped her with hers. We had a lot in common; we both hated our fathers, who were both trying to make us volunteer. Her father was a Victor, you see? I don't remember which Game he won, though. But her family still lives in the Victor's Village. By the time the Reaping began, we were already in love. When another name was called, she volunteered and I volunteered because I couldn't let her go alone. It was better if she knew it was me and not a stranger, even though she wouldn't hesitate to stab so-called stranger in the back when it was called for."

Clove smiles from the couch she is sitting on when Cato glances her way, but he doesn't say anything and waits for Dr. Aurelius to finish whatever he is writing so he can leave.

"Are we done?" Cato asks impatiently, rising from his spot from the couch.

"Cato. You haven't answered the question. Sit back down and then you can leave when you can leave when you've answered the question." Cato gives Dr. Aurelius an intimidating stare, but the doctor doesn't budge.

Can't he see that he doesn't want to answer the question? Clenching his jaw, Cato forces himself to sit back down.

"Good. Now we can proceed. How are you dealing with your grief?"

Cato thinks for a moment, trying to complement the question.

How does he feel?

He's angry.

Pissed.

Sad.

He's hurting.

He feels like a part of him is gone. He wants to get up and kill someone, to get up and break something. Just anything. But he tries to lie anyway.

"I'm fine," he says. "There. I answered the question."

He heads to the door, ready to leave, to push the unspeakable question to the back of his mind but Clove stops him in his tracks.

"It's okay, Cato. You can tell him. You need to let it out. It's okay." Cato stares into those dark brown eyes, exhaling heavily, whirling around.

"YOU WANNA KNOW HOW I FEEL?! I'M FREAKING PISSED OFF! I WANNA PUNCH YOUR FACE OFF! I WANT TO KILL PRESIDENT SNOW! I WANT TO BURN THIS PLACE THIS DOWN! IT'S GETTING HARDER AND HARDER TO BREATHE AND I - I -!"

"Break the lamp," Clove calls out.
Turning to face her, he snaps, "Don't tell me what to do!"
"You can't keep pushing this away!" Clove screams back in his face. "Tell him how you really feel!"
"Shut up Clove!" he roars back, seething. He grabs the nearest lamp and throws it in her direction.
"TELL HIM!" Clove cries out, ducking the lamp. "I'm trying to help you!"
"STOP HELPING ME! I'M DOING JUST FINE ON MY OWN!"
"TELL HIM NOW, CATO!"

Cato pants, clutching his head with both hands, on the verge of pulling his hair out, pacing the room back and forth. Finally, he lets out a scream of frustration and looks at the District 2 girl, the one who has stood by him since the day they first met. He looks at her. "Clove, please. Don't leave. I'm sorry."

Cato plops himself down onto the couch, head in his hand, trying to regain his breathing under control.

"Cato," Dr. Aurelius says. Cato forces himself to make eye contact and succeeds for a few more seconds before his eyes flick down again.

Dr. Aurelius looks worried, eyebrows curved into a frown. Cato wants to cover his ears and block out the words he knows are coming next. Dr. Aurelius tries again, leaning forward.
"Cato. Clove isn't here."

The blue eyes flick and meet with the doctor's.
"It was my fault," Cato whispers. "I killed her."

It was suppose to be a simple mission. Go to District 2 and try and get them to turn against the Capitol. But while that did happen, it didn't go as planned.

_oOo_

Rue is sitting in one of the church pews. She stares at the empty space where Clove's casket soon will be. Then a hand is on her shoulder and Rue sees its Thresh.

"Hey, little bird. We gotta go so they can . . . prepare."

The two District 11 former tributes walk out of the church giving it one last look before the doors shut and they join up with the others (especially who insisted on wearing his handcuffs).

"Guys. We can do this. We need to do this. For Clove," Rue says.

"And for Cato," Thresh finishes. "He needs us."

_oOo_

"You ever wonder what it would be like?"

_Cato looks down at his girlfriend who is resting her head in his chest._

"What what would be like?"
Clove turns her head, glancing at him. "You know. Having a normal life, like in your dreams. No more Hunger Games. No more Capitol. No more . . . what did you call them? Lady Gagas? Well, no more Lady Gagas. We could have a normal life. No killing for fame. We could settle down. Maybe get married."

Cato shoots Clove an uneasy look when she lays her head back down and isn't looking in his direction. He hopes that isn't a hint she knows. That she knows about him planning to propose to her.

He wants her to be surprised.

But now he won't get to have the chance.

"My fault. My fault. I shouldn't have waited, Clove," Cato mumbles to himself. He glances at her spirit, her ghost, whatever the fuck she is. "I'm sorry."

Then he realizes that Dr. Aurelius is still with him, watching, recording everything in his notebook of his. He immediately gets to his feet, grabs the good doctor by the collar of his shirt and shoves out the door, throwing his notebook at him, which hits a startled Dr. Aurelius in the face. "GET THE FUCK OUT OF MY ROOM!"

He slams the door shut, then proceeds to break any furniture he can get his hands on, punch at the walls, anything. He turns to see Clove behind him, different from what she looked like just a few moments ago. She wearing her tribute outfit she wore in the training center before the Games, dark brown hair tucked into a ponytail, a dagger in her hand. Her eyes have lost all empathy, only blood lust and murder remain. This is the Clove he hates.

"Leave me alone," he tells her, his back pressing against the wall.

She bares her teeth and growls an guttural growl. "Avenge me," she growls back.

"I will," Cato promises, sliding down to meet the floor. Rage fills him up again but he wills himself to calm down. He can release his anger when he's bashing in President Snow's brains. Or stabbing him. Whatever kills the bastard.

Clove scoffs mirthlessly, kneeling down in front of him. "I'm not talking about Snow. Although he deserves that too. No," she hisses in his face. "Your friends. Where are they? They should be here right now. They don't care about you, Cato. They never have. They'll hoping that you'll be killed next. They pretend and they lie and they fear you. They want you gone. They think that we Careers are the murderers? Let's show them. They're all dead. They just don't know it yet. Avenge me. Avenge us." His blue eyes flicker to hers as he watches a smile creep on her face. "Pretty Boy," she mocks.

He stands up, turning to her. "Nice try, Clove," Cato says, heading to his closet to change. "But I'm not going to murder anyone . . . today. You're dead . . . and I'm going to your funeral. And that's that."

"AVENGE ME!" Clove screeches, advancing on him as Cato adjusts his black suit. Her face turns murderous. "YOU WALK OUT THAT DOOR, YOU WILL REGRET IT! I'LL MAKE YOUR LIFE HELL PRETTY BOY!"

Cato glances at the shade. "I'm already in Hell. See you, Clove."

As the door closes, the shade lets out a shriek of outrage and then incinerates in a shower of black dust. The dust is whisked by an unknown force and the door closes with a click and all is quiet.
Special thanks to that fangirl for leaving an awesome comment! :)
Chapter Summary

The battle of the Nut unfolds and the reason Cato blames himself is revealed. More secrets unravel.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Nine

Shatter Me

The storm rages on.

It has been that way since the last two hours and District 13 is not sure whether they can proceed with the plan.

Which is a stupid plan, Clove thinks. It's pouring rain, yes, but District 2 is used to these type of storms.

Thunder booms and lighting clashes past the clouds. Clove has has enough of it as the hovercraft lifts into the air. She rests her head on Cato’s shoulder, feeling him press his lips to her forehead as she closes her eyes. A giant shudder runs throughout the hovercraft and Clove jolts alert with a startled gasp, dagger held out in her hand. "Whoa. It's okay. It's just turbulence," Cato explains as one of her hands tighten around his.

She started to hate flying ever since the last incident when the Capitol bombed them out of the sky and Cato went into a coma. But this hovercraft is the only other transportation they have besides the Tribute train and that isn't exactly available.

President Coin stands up, her grey eyes cold as steel. Clove knows what type of person their District 13 leader is.

Cold, calculating, wanting more power. Just like President Snow.

They both have to die.

But Snow has to go first, as he has killed more than hundreds of unmemorable tributes in 74 years of Hunger Games.

Coin, Clove knows, is just getting started. Clove knows that the real plan Coin wants to achieve and submit is to let the Capitol feel their own Games. To show them what the Districts have been going through all these years. She needs to find a way to tell the others when Coin isn't around and out of sight of all the security cameras too. "We are arriving in District 2," Coin announces before sitting back down in her seat.
Sharing a look with Cato, the two exchange silent glances and smile. They are home. Katniss and the others have already gone ahead of them and are waiting at the Nut, which formed the Capitol's main military installation. The hovercraft groans as it comes to a complete stop and the hangar doors open. In front of them is a scene: the Nut is on fire. Screams and shouts can be heard from inside as people try to rush to safety. The train that loads passengers into the mountain stops and people file out, burned, injured, or in a panic. Clove and Cato see Katniss on a large screen in the middle of a speech.

"I'm not their slave," the man on screen mutters.

"I am," Katniss replies back. "That's why I killed Cato . . . and he killed Thresh . . . and he killed Clove . . . and she tried to kill me. It just goes around and around, and who wins? Not us. Not the Districts. Always the Capitol. But I'm tired of being a piece in their Games. These people are not your enemy! We all have one enemy, and it's the Capitol! This is our chance to put an end to their power, but we need every district person to do it!"

There's a heavy silence in the air as they watch Katniss reach her hands towards the man.

"Please! Join us!" she cries out.

They watch as the Girl on Fire gets shot from somewhere in the crowd and then chaos ensues. District 2 is turning on the peacekeepers and Clove and Cato rush to help. Knifes are hitting their marks, flying through the air; bullets are ricocheting everywhere, Cato's sword slices through amour as bodies lay strewn on the ground, dead or hurt. The two former tributes press their backs against the other's as they continue to fight off the peacekeepers who seem endless. Clove hears Cato grunt out in pain. She turns her head to see him holding his hand against his stomach. He pulls his hand away and they both see blood. "I'm okay," Cato promises, "It just nicked my side."

Cato's eyes widen as he starts to shout a warning, but then strong arms are wrapped around Clove. She twists and manages to throw a punch but she is dragged away from Cato. Clove sees several peacekeepers are holding him back, restraining him and he is struggling, but more and more keep coming.

Her knives are gone. She bites her captor's hand and is soon free. She runs into an alley and runs smack into a familiar person.

"Rue?!" Clove cries out as the little girl hugs her. "You're supposed to be back in 13!"

"I'm sorry. I needed to make sure Thresh was still alive! He's the only one I have left here!"

"I'm taking you to my house. You're be safe there in the Victor's Village. Don't move until me or Cato or someone else comes to get you." To get to the Victor's Village they had to go back through the Nut and out the other direction. Clove hated it, but her father being a Victor did sure have its advantages.

"Stay close to me!"

Clove grabs Rue's hand and they both begin to run. Clove ducks the speeding bullets passing over their heads, shoving aside a lunging peacekeeper. She had to find Cato and get Rue to safety. When they arrive at the Nut, they see that peacekeepers are diminishing quickly. She turns to face Rue, placing her hands on the tiny girl's shoulders, kneeling down to eye level. "There's a huge weeping willow to your left when you go down that street. Turn left when you see it. That's where the Victor's Village is. Go in the first green house on the left, the one with the green shutters. Tell my
mom that you know me. GO!"

Clove points in the direction of her house watching as Rue takes off. Clove looks around and plucks up a fallen dagger from the mud. As she straightens, she feels the pierce of a blade in her back. Her favorite weapon has now become her doom. She lets out a gasp of pain.

"Thought I told you to never show your face here again, you ungrateful brat. How the hell are you alive?"

Clove crumples face-down to the ground as the knife is then swiftly removed. She reaches for the knife that she has had, but it has scattered a few inches out of her reach.

"It doesn't matter," her father continues in his Russian accent. "You didn't win. You should've never come back. You let that District 12 rat get the best of you. You have disgraced your family. You were just a fool to believe you could change the world, dear Clover. Now look what I've had to do to my daughter."

Clove's eyes narrow and she manages to spit blood into his face. She takes that advantage when her father is blinded to kick him in his groin. He gives a roar of pain as Clove scrambles onto all fours, grabbing both knives that are now lying on the ground. Whirling around, Clove plunges both knives into her father's stomach.

"Goodbye, asshole," she declares.

Her father has managed to crawl to a wall after she pulls the knives out. He pushes himself into a sitting position. He gurgles, making a weird choking sound and blood seeps out of his mouth. Clove realizes he's laughing -- or at least trying to laugh.

"Watch your back," he whispers and exhales his last breath.

Clove turns around just in time for a body to slam into hers. She gives a yell of surprise when her back is slammed to the ground, feeling more blood pour out of her wound; she knows she needs to get it fixed and quickly. Pain shrieks across the side of her face and another fist strikes. Clove shoves with both hands, headbutting her attacker. She manages to get free and is on her feet, when all of a sudden the peacekeeper's hand snakes around her ankle and sends her crashing down again. She makes a wild grab for her knife latched onto her belt and plunges it into the peacekeeper's hand, who lets out a long howl of pain. Clove socks the peacekeeper and continues on, running through the surging, rioting crowd.

I need to find Cato, she thinks.

"CATO!" she screams. "CATO!"

Then she spots him with his sword, hacking at the peacekeepers. Around him, she can see Thresh throwing peacekeepers into each other; Finch, being sly and elusive as ever, jamming a Nightlock berry into Peacekeepers' mouths after pulling off their helmets; Ian, the District 3 boy, who is quick to throw back peacekeepers their own grenades; Glimmer, being fierce as ever, raking her sharp nails across peacekeepers she can get her hands on. The blond-haired boy from this home turns and sees Clove, smiling. Clove wheezes for a breath, weak from blood loss. She has a feeling that her father knew exactly where to hit her.

It was, of course, expected since he was the one who had taught her.

Cato has his arms around her and she wraps her arms around his neck for support. Clove raises her head and sees a peacekeeper holding a handgun, aiming at the direction of Cato's head. Her eyes
widen, her heart pumps wildly in her chest. Clove doesn't think, she just does. She turns her bodies around at the last minute when the gunshot goes off.

Her mind starts to replay every memory that she's ever had.

She remembers the day she first threw her first knife and recalls her parents beaming at her success.

Meeting Marvel and Glimmer for the very first time when she was 12.

Watching from the back of the crowd as she watched Cato take on everyone in the Training Academy, being in awe of him.

Having her first conversation with him.

Her first date with Cato. She'd never laughed that hard in her life as he'd been trying his hardest to impress her. He'd made a complete fool of himself but still she had liked that.

Her first kiss when she and Cato had been sparring after hours.

"I promise I'll do whatever it takes to stay alive. But if I don't, know that I tried my hardest, no matter what Dad says about me. Don't forget me, Sissy."

"And this year's female District 2 tribute is . . ."

The way her heart thumped in her chest as she volunteered; the way her name rang in the air; the way no one dared challenged her.

When she heard Cato shouting her name and then afterwards volunteering.

Being angry that the Girl on Fire and Lover Boy could show their love and that the Careers couldn't.

Her first time.

Hearing Claudius Templesmith announce that two tributes from the same District could live and be Victors and after leaving Cato and Clove to reconcile in their joy, that they could go home together.

Images and voices blur by faster and faster in her mind, like a hundred of fast-forwarding movies being played on at the same time.

She can pick out the moment when the hovercraft went down, screaming for Cato to wake up, hearing and seeing Marvel screaming in agony as he was lit on fire from being doused from the leaking fuel from the ripped hole from the wrecked hovercraft engine.

Feeling relieved when Cato finally woke up.

Her father . . . "You were just a fool to believe you could change the world, dear Clover. Now look what I've had to do to my daughter."

Her vision of having a normal life with Cato without anymore Hunger Games.

Seeing that peacekeeper point his gun at Cato . . .

"Stay with me, Clover!"

I will, Cato. I w --
"What is the status of Cato Richardson? Is he stable?"

The soldier called Galileo replies back, "I'm afraid not, ma'am. You saw how he went on that rampage after Clove Somes was killed. Killed every single peacekeeper left without breaking a sweat. The others had to calm him down. Should we proceed with the plan?"

"The plan goes as scheduled. We will not deviate in anyway. Continue with Operation Alpha. Cato Richardson must be contained as we unleash the plan when they get to the Capitol. And Galileo?"

The soldier turns his attention back. "Yes, ma'am?"

"Do not fail me."

The casket is closed.

Later, when the service is finished, Clove will be cremated.

The church is completely full this time (perhaps because people are afraid that Cato will butcher them in their sleep if they did not show up). Cato stands in front of the microphone like he did last time at Marvel's funeral, except this time Rue is by his side.

In the front row, there's Glimmer, tears rolling down her cheeks, sitting rigid; Thresh and Finch keeping quiet, while Katniss is recovering in the hospital; Peeta is sitting alone by himself in one single pew, a guard standing nearby in case he has another attack coming.

Rue watches as Cato stares at Clove's casket. He had asked for it to be closed and she knew why. At the last minute after arriving at Clove's house, Rue had decided to go back and help.

When she got back to the Nut, to where she'd last seen her friend, She saw Cato holding Clove in his arms.

The fighting around them had ceased, Rebels and Peacekeepers alike, like they couldn't believe what they had just witnessed. Rue stepped closer and saw that Cato had one hand gently cradling Clove's head, blood seeping past his fingers.

"Clove. Clove. Clover. Stay with me. You can't leave. Not like this," Cato was mumbling, shoulders shaking slightly and Rue realized he was crying. She ran and knelt in front of them. Clove's dark eyes were open, her eyes still lingering on Cato's face. He gently laid his girlfriend, his lover, his rock, on the ground.

Cato's face transformed into stone cold fury. "Stay with her," he growled between clenched teeth. He rose to his feet, picking up his fallen sword as he went and started storming towards the peacekeeper that fired the gun that was meant for him.

Rue looked down and closed the District 2's fallen tribute eyes with her small fingers, recognizing a familiar dagger resting in Clove's half-open palm.
It was the same knife Clove had given Rue to defend herself with the day they escaped from the Capitol. It was the same knife Rue had given Clove back the day before Cato had awoken from his coma. Rue could hear the screams as Cato struck down peacekeepers left and right. It was the Cato she didn't want to see again. Glancing around, she saw her image projected onto the big screens on the homes around the Nut.

She pressed three fingers to her lips and raised her hand high in the air.

_oOo_

"We lost a friend, a sister, a lover," Rue starts. "But she won't be forgotten. Clove saved my life. And I can't ever repay her back. When I first saw her, I had the impression she was the typical Career that we all see in every Hunger Games. That you all were. But when I was spying on you guys. -"

"You were spying on us?" Cato asks incredulously.

"Uh, yeah . . ." Rue admits sheepishly, "But I realized that there were so much more to you guys. That we all had the same common goal: we all hate the Capitol and President Snow. That everything was a show and you were scared, too, just like the rest of us."

Then it's Cato's turn.

His pale blue eyes wander over the people sitting in front of him. A shadow moves in the back and it draws Cato's attention and he just stares.

Standing there, strutting like she knows all, is Clove. Her dark brown hair cascades down her waist in waves, over the white dress she is wearing, her pale feet bare. She smiles encouragingly towards Cato.

But Cato continues to stare. He knew he is hallucinating. This is his figment of imagination.

"I can't. I'm sorry," he says finally. He steps off the stage, walks through the shade and pushes the double doors open and is gone.

_I can't. I'm sorry, Clove._

Chapter End Notes

Special thanks for reading! :) I apologize for uploading this super late but I finally graduated and now have more free time until August (college, whoo!)

Please _drop by the archive and comment_ to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!