**Summary**

Firefighter/Paramedic AU: New paramedic, Katniss, arrives at Ladder 7 to start her first job in the field. She immediately falls into a close group of firefighters and fellow paramedics but one person in particular catches her eye. Top-notch firefighter and the one person who can really get under her skin, Johanna Mason.
Exposure

The day had finally arrived. Just 48 hours ago Katniss had passed her final comprehension exam and now she was walking up to her assigned fire station: Ladder 7, Panem Fire Department. Her mother had been a nurse, her sister was determined to do the same, and she was now a paramedic. Everyone around the family always said that caring for others must run in the blood.

She gripped the handle of her bag tightly, took a deep breath and opened the side door to the common area only to be greeted by yelling.

“There’s no fucking way he was out! His foot was in the green the whole time!” A female voice.

“Are you blind? Half of his foot was out!” A male voice.

“Let’s just wait for the review.” A different and calmer male voice.

Katniss walked down the hall towards the noise. On the wall were several pictures of the engines at the station, of firefighters attending parades and putting out fires, and one of the “Firefighter of the Month”: Johanna Mason. The picture showed her to be a very proud and confident woman, her dark hair tied in a ponytail and with random red streaks. Her deep brown eyes were intense, her grin attractive and together they dared anyone to mess with her. Katniss stared another minute before she snapped herself out of the entrancement and continued down the hall, entering what seemed to be a living room.

“Are you kidding me? Bullshit.” The source of the female voice threw her hands in the air, obviously yelling at the television again. She stood from the couch and was immediately identifiable. They locked eyes as the woman started walking towards the kitchen. The same smirk from the picture in the hallway appeared on her face. “Fresh meat is here, about damn time.”

Everyone in the room turned their heads to look at Katniss. A tall and tan man stood from the same couch, giving her a large smile as he walked over to her. His bronze hair was flattened, probably from wearing his helmet at a call. “You must be Katniss Everdeen. Paramedic, yes?”

She simply nodded. “Pleasure to meet you. I’m Finnick Odair, firefighter. Over at the table is Gale Hawthorne.” A gruff looking but handsome man with dark tousled hair gave a small smile and raised his hand in a silent hello. “He is one of your fellow paramedics on this shift. Across from him is Cressida, just Cressida. She is a firefighter but mostly works as Incident Commander and with public relations.” Half her head was shaved and green vines were tattooed in the shaved area, behind her ear, and down her neck, disappearing under the collar of her shirt. Cressida didn’t acknowledge her, seemingly too entrapped by the noise of her headphones and the laptop in front of her. “And in the kitchen, most likely scavenging for something to eat her anger away with, is Johanna Mason.”

As if on cue, she walked out with a high-stacked sandwich on a plate. “Call me Jo or Mason, no need for the Johanna bullshit. Who are you?”

Katniss felt a flutter in her stomach when Johanna acknowledged her. “Um, Katniss Everdeen. Paramedic.”

“A paramedic. You ever worked in a firehouse?” The woman took a full bite from the sandwich, leaning her weight on one leg as she stared intensely at Katniss the entire time she chewed. “No. I did all my training rotations at hospitals.”
“Well, let me tell you this, Everdeen: it is a different beast here. There are no comforts of a hospital. You work in the field here. And if you make a single mistake, I will personally take pleasure in ripping your throat out.” She took another bite of her sandwich, not once breaking the eye contact.

“I see everyone is getting along already.” A voice sounded from a doorway to Katniss’ right. A man with shaggy dirty blond hair and patchy facial hair appeared. “Chief Haymitch Abernathy. Welcome to Ladder 7.” He greeted Katniss with a firm handshake. “You will come to find that we have a very…. diverse group of personalities here, the most vibrant one coming from the always joyous Johanna Mason.” Finnick chuckled as Katniss and Haymitch shared an amused look.

“Now, I have some paperwork for you so let’s get that done and I can go back to sleeping.”

After signing off on paperwork and receiving official orders, Katniss made her way down to the garage to check out the ambulance. She pulled herself up into the back compartment and started looking through the drawers, familiarizing herself with item locations.

“Need any help?”

The voice made her jump. It was the guy that was sitting at the table inside.

“Hawthorne, right?”

“Just call me Gale.” He stepped up into the back of the bus and sat on the bench next to Katniss.

“So, where are you from?”

“District 12.”

“Same. I thought I recognized your name from somewhere. Your father worked with mine. They were-“ He seemed to realize what he was saying, as if remembering that this was the girl whose father died in a work accident. Katniss sighed at his hesitation. She hated when people pitied her.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t-“

“No, no. It’s fine, it’s cool. Where is everyone else from?” She poked around through a drawer before closing it and opening another one.

“Cressida is kind of unknown, we have theories but nothing exact. Jo is from 7, Finnick from 4, Haymitch is also from 12. The other guys are from all around, I can’t remember all of them. Most of them will gladly chat with you.” His smile was sweet and sincere. Katniss smiled back, glad her partner seemed like a good person to work with. And not the gruff he originally seemed to be.

A sharp ringing filled the station and immediately everyone sprung to life. Gale assisted her down from the bus and they ran to the cubbies where the uniforms lay ready, all except for hers. It was back near the truck. “Crap.” She ran to her bag and began yanking the heavy pants over her navy blue station pants. The legs twisted up as she struggled to get them on. Gale was luckily there to help her.

“Can’t get your gear on by yourself, Everdeen? I didn’t know you needed the royal treatment.” Johanna’s voice called out from over the alarm, a teeth-showing grin across her face. Katniss’ eyes were glued on the woman as she took in Johanna with her full turnout suit on. The woman walked away towards her assigned engine and Katniss watch her climb effortlessly into the passenger seat of the truck.

She finally got the pants on and pulled the suspenders over her shoulders. Grabbing the jacket, she
hurried to the other side of the ambulance, jumping in the passenger seat.

“What do we have?” Johanna leaped out of the engine, following Cressida to the storage areas on the engine with the breathing apparatus sets. She pulled one out and slung it over her shoulders, Finnick right next to her doing the same thing. Cressida made several calls over the radio before turning to them.

“Looks like a potential compartment fire, class is unknown. Five floor residential apartment. Neighbors are saying the fire was coming from the fourth floor and that the three residents from the apartment are not present. One older male, two children. The other trucks will survey the bottom floors, you two are heading up for rescue.”

“Got it.” Finnick looked down at Johanna before they walked towards the door of the apartment complex. “Two in.”

“Two out. Let’s do this.” Johanna looked up at him as they put their oxygen masks and helmets on. The duo clanked the heads of their axes together and stepped into the complex, walking step by step with each other. As they ascended the stairs it became hotter and louder, an obvious sign that the fire was close.

“Approaching fourth floor.” Johanna spoke into her radio as they turned the corner of the stairs. They were met by a fire at the end of the hall, it slowly making its way through the wall and doorway to the apartment. “Let’s go through the apartment next door and see if we can break the wall to the apartment with the fire.”

Finnick nodded as they both checked their oxygen masks, taking careful steps towards the first door on the right. It was already open and they now rushed to get to the farthest wall, knowing their time frame was closing. Once found, they began hacking at the wall with their axes, alternating swings. As soon as the wall was compromised, they switched to the pick sides and started ripping it away.

Fire greeted them on the other side, where an oven was glowing from the heat of the flames pouring from it.

“PAR on Engine 7. Over.” Cressida’s voice broke from the radio.

Johanna answered. “Engine 7 has PAR, A-OK. Over.”

“Received. Over.”

“We have a Class C fire, electric stove. Turn off building power. Over.” Johanna waited a moment before receiving a confirmation.

Finnick stepped through the hole first and made his way from the kitchen, closely followed by Johanna. The biggest rule was to always keep your partner in verbal and visual sight. That person was your buddy and your lifeline when things got bad. Both Finnick and Johanna took the buddy system seriously, following it from the first day of training when they met each other. They were inseparable ever since, being partners for six years.

They searched the apartment thoroughly, stepping into the final room that was still untouched by the fire. As soon as Johanna stepped closer to the attached bathroom, she yelled the screaming of a scared child. “Here!” Finnick rushed to the attached bathroom, where a man and two kids sat in the corner huddled together.
Johanna pointed two fingers at Finnick, him immediately understanding to grab the children. He agreed and picked up the young boy. He could not be any older than five. His sister reached up towards Finnick and he picked her up with his other arm. Johanna had taken his axe and was now helping the father up but realized he was not stable. A deep burn was on his face and chest, the fire having incinerated part of his shirt. She bent the barely conscious man over and kneeled down, positioning her shoulder underneath his hip so he would fall over her shoulder. While straightening up slowly, she grabbed onto his pants, pulling his legs into her chest. Finnick waited for the all clear before they moved towards the building exit.


“Wilco.”

Within minutes they were outside and greeted by the station paramedics. Gale and another medic assisted Finnick with the kids. Katniss jogged over to Johanna, immediately starting to assess the man on her shoulders. Johanna did not stop walking until she made it to a stretcher, resting the man on it with Katniss’ help.

Johanna pulled the mask down and pushed it to the side of her neck. “Unidentified male. Has third degree burns on the right side of his face and across the chest. Not in stable condition.”

“He is likely to go into shock.” Katniss ordered another paramedic to prepare fluids and oxygen in the truck. Her and Johanna pushed the carrier over and collapsed it before lifting it into the bus. She quickly worked to get gauze on the area to help keep it from infection. Katniss mumbled to herself. “What am I missing…”

Johanna watched from outside the truck. “It’s a third degree burn on his face and upper body. What would you do if it were on his leg?”

Katniss looked at her with a blank face, showing obvious signs of beginner’s anxiety.

“Elevate his upper body, brainless.” She rolled her eyes and walked away, but not quick enough to see Katniss glare deeply at her.

Katniss sat at the dining room table in silence as everyone else congregated in the kitchen, chatting. After a few minutes of watching her ice melt, everyone began to take a seat at the table with food. She continued to stare at her water until a full plate was placed in front of her. “Get over it, Everdeen. We all stumbled on our first day but now it is time to eat.”

She looked up to see Johanna looking down at her. Her fitted navy blue station shirt showed off her muscular shoulders and arms. Katniss started to wonder how the rest of her muscles looked under that shirt and those pants.

Johanna sat down next to her. “Quit staring at me, brainless. I know I’m hot but damn, control your eyes.” She simply grinned even more and winked, causing Katniss to blush and finally look away. Right about now, she wanted to curl up in a fettle position, embarrassed with how attracted she already was to this girl.

But, she was distracted now. The group shared stories about their first days. Some of them terrifying and some of them hilariously unfortunate.
Her first 24 hour shift was over and Katniss crashed down on the couch in the common area. Just as she opened a book to read, Cressida, Johanna, and Finnick all walked through with duffle bags in hand.

“Everdeen, what’re you doing? Why are you still sitting around?” Finnick sat on the back of the couch, looking at her.

She shrugged. “I don’t have a place around here yet. I figured I would stay in the barracks until I found one.”

“No, no. We all live half of our lives here, no reason to stay the entire time. Come on, get your bag. You’re coming home with us. I can’t let you stay here listening to alarms all the time.” He gestured her to get up and she did, rushing to gather her things. They were soon walking out the door, with Cressida and Johanna walking ahead, snickering and laughing with each other.

“Does she hate me?” Katniss glanced at the man. He seriously was an Adonis, someone that you would see in one of those firefighting calendars that people swoon over.

“I don’t know, why don’t you ask her?”

“Why would I ask anyone that? You don’t just ask people if they hate you.”

“Fine. Hey, Jo, do you hate Katniss?”

They all stopped walking and Johanna turned around, looking Katniss up and down. Katniss did the same, taking in the girl outside of her uniform. Converse shoes, skinny jeans, forest green v-neck shirt, hair down and layered, reaching her shoulders. She stood with a hand on her hip.

“You’re a little hard to swallow. And I don’t take to those whimpering for pity because she forgot how to do something. It’s not all about you, Everdeen. But if you don’t buck up next shift, consider yourself done.” She turned around and continued walking with Cressida.

Katniss stared straight ahead. “So….. she hates me.” Finnick simply shrugged and started walking away. She jogged to catch up. “Wait, what do you know that you are not telling me?”

He stopped and turned to her. “Nothing at all. Why does it matter? Why do you care if they hate you?”

“Fine. Hey, Jo, do you hate Katniss?”

They all stopped walking and Johanna turned around, looking Katniss up and down. Katniss did the same, taking in the girl outside of her uniform. Converse shoes, skinny jeans, forest green v-neck shirt, hair down and layered, reaching her shoulders. She stood with a hand on her hip.

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Katniss had no answer to the questions other than that she was already smitten with Johanna after only 24 hours. And Finnick figured it out.

“You have a thing.” He raised his eyebrows and smiled. She nodded slightly, not really knowing why she trusted him with this information. Though, Finnick was obviously the calm and collected soul of the group so why not trust him? “After a day and you already have a thing for Jo? Welcome to the lives of every other female in the city.” He now wrapped his arm around her shoulders as they started walking again. “I wish you luck with that endeavor. She is a very difficult person to pinpoint. Six years of being partners and I still don’t understand her most of the time.”

“So, how are you so close?”

“Well, she is very simple but so simple that she is complex. Get what I mean?” He frowned as Katniss shook her head. The man sighed and thought about his next words for a minute. “She is
simple. She dedicates her life to her job, she cooks and eats, she watches sports. But, she is so simple that it all goes full circle and turns into a puzzle. Jo puts so much into the two or three things that she loves that she leaves little to no room for anything else, whereas majority of us have all of these little things going on. And to be frank with you, all of her relationships have ended because she is her job and she cannot turn off. Jo is a simple, yet complex creature but she is the greatest friend I have ever had.”

They walked in silence, Katniss processing all the words in her head. After walking a few more blocks they finally made it to the apartment. Cressida and Johanna had already gone inside but Finnick stopped Katniss before they went in. “Look, we have a thing in firefighting called back burning or backfiring. It is where you intentionally fight fire with fire. For a moment, it causes things to burst into chaos but when the two fires meet, they extinguish each other. It goes from this loud roar to a peaceful silence.”

“So, kind of like the whole two negatives make a positive?” Katniss looked at him skeptically.

He grinned back at her. “Pretty much.” He opened the door and they walked up the stairs to the apartment. It was large, with an open foyer that led straight into the living room where Cressida and Johanna had already crashed on the couches. To the left was a hall to two bedrooms and to the right was an open concept kitchen and dining room with a door to another bedroom in the far left corner.

“Finnick, where is Annie?” Johanna asked as she closed her eyes.

“At a gallery, getting one of her shows set up and then staying with her grandmother for the night.” He turned to Katniss. “Annie is my girlfriend, soon to be fiancée but don’t tell her that. She just got her first art show at a gallery in downtown. It opens Friday night and we are all going, including you.” His eyes lit up with joy just talking about her and it made Katniss both sick in disgust and overjoyed to see someone so in love.

Cressida stood up and walked to the kitchen, grabbing four beers from the refrigerator. She handed one off to each of them, intentionally giving Katniss one last. “So, tell us about yourself.”

“Um, well, what do you want to know?” Katniss twisted the bottle cap off and took a sip, puckering her lips at the bitterness.

Cressida tapped the top of her bottle. “Family first, as always.”

“Mother and younger sister, Prim.”

“And where do they live?”

“Back in 12.”

“Any fun facts or talents?”

“Um…. I am really good with a bow and arrow. And I can’t whistle.”

Johanna looked taken aback and interrupted Cressida’s questions. “You can’t whistle? Everyone can whistle.”

“I can’t whistle.”

“So, if you were in some random freak situation where you had to whistle to save your life?”

“Nope. Can’t whistle.”
“Prove it.”

“By what? Not whistling?”

“Yes. Please not whistle for us.” Johanna sat with her legs crossed and at full attention on the couch, beer bottle in hand.

“Fine.” Katniss tried to whistle a simple tune but only air came out, no sound. The two other girls held back their laughter.

Finnick patted Katniss on her shoulder. “Don’t let them pick on you. It only encourages them.” He threw a pillow at Johanna as she finally unable to hold her laughter in any longer.

Hours passed and several beers later they were all gathered around the coffee table, laughing at the card game they were playing. Katniss looked up at the clock. “Crap. I was going to call my sister.”

“Crap? Did y’just say crap?” Johanna stared at her in what looked like confusion.

“Yes?”

“Who the hell still says crap? It’s shit. Say shit. Go on, say shit.”

Katniss looked around but only found Cressida and Finnick staring back at her and Johanna with amused looks. “Shit?”

“No. No. Seriously, say shit.”

“Shit.”

“NO. With emphasis, ya have ta say it like y’mean it, Ev’deen.” Johanna was very much drunk and it was made obvious not only by her slurring but by the way she was swaying as she talked.

“SHIT.”

“There ya go! Look, I got miss perfect pure girl to cuss!” She stared at Katniss. “Say fuck.”

“No, I’m not going to entertain your need for me to cuss. I need to call my sister.” Katniss stood up from the couch but immediately found herself back on the couch and pinned down. Johanna was straddling her and pressing her wrists into the cushions.

“Say it. Say fuck. Quit being such a baby ‘bout it.”

This was something Katniss had not been expecting but what did she have to complain about?

“Fuck.”

“No, ya have ta say it with emphasis. Find tha spark inside of you and scream it.” The girl stared down at Katniss with intense brown eyes, waiting for her to respond. “With emphasis. Find your spark and scream it.”

“Fuck.” Katniss swallowed and tried again. “FUCK!”

“Perfect.” Johanna smiled in contentment and got off of her to stumble away to the bathroom. “I’ll be right back.” They never saw her again until the remaining three of them decided to go to sleep. Katniss cautiously opened the door to the bathroom and saw Johanna leaning against the bathtub,
asleep.

“Should we move her?”

Finnick shook his head. “You can try but you probably won’t come out alive. If I were you, I would go steal her bed because she won’t be up for a while. Good night, Katniss.” He smiled and walked off towards the room connected to the kitchen.

She walked to the room in the hallway that Cressida did not go into. As soon as she opened the door the scent of pine and forest hit her nose. It was comforting and felt only natural that Johanna’s room would smell like trees and forest. All around the room were training certificates and medals hanging on the wall. A desk with a closed laptop sitting on top. Three bookshelves filled and overflowing with books. Next to the bed was a lamp and Katniss turned it on before turning off the overhead light. On the stand with the lamp was a picture of a family she presumed was Johanna’s by the fact that she stood in the middle, no older than eight or nine, with a hatchet in her tiny hands. Her dark brown hair fell over her shoulders, her brown eyes were brighter than ever, and her smile was huge.

Katniss looked up to find Johanna standing in the doorway. “Oh, I’m sorry. I’ll go sleep on the couch.”

“No, it’s a big bed and two fit in it better than one.” Johanna walked forward as if she was still half asleep and drunk, stumbling and falling onto the bed proceeded by crawling and digging at the covers until she was under them.

Katniss sat on the bed and pulled the covers over her. Reaching over to turn off the lamp, she wished Johanna a good night.

“G’night.” The mumble was barely audible but it made Katniss smile in amusement.

The day off went by quickly and when they returned for the next 24 hour shift, it was busy and relentless. They arrived at the third scene and Katniss stepped out of the bus, looking at the fire in awe. It spanned over several buildings, spreading fast. Quickly, she took to action and joined the other paramedics assisting those who had escaped from the building. A family stood near the front of one of the fire engines so she made her way to them with her medical kit.

Her foot snagged on something and caused her to trip, falling forward. As she went to stand up, yelling immediately came from next to her. “Watch where you are going! Don’t cross over the hose lays, only an idiot does that. And you just yanked the connection out of my hands!” Johanna was standing next to the engine, her face lit with anger. “Did they not teach you about situational awareness in your class, brainless?” Katniss lay there for a second, trying to keep her cool but this was the fourth time Johanna had yelled at her while working on a scene and she was getting tired of it. “Well, don’t just lay there! Get out of the way!” She stood in frustration and grabbed the medical bag, storming off as fast as possible.

One person died at the fire under Katniss’ watch and she felt the weight of it. Her first death while on duty. As the trucks pulled into the station, Katniss jumped out of the passenger side before Gale could turn the engine off. She started walking towards the common area door when she heard Johanna start piping up.
“Chief! Get Katniss and I off the same shifts. She keeps making stupid mistakes and you know how-“

Katniss did not know what happened but when she snapped to realization she had pinned Johanna against the wall with her forearm, gripping at the girl’s shirt. “Can you stop? I can handle being yelled at every now and then but you seem to find stupid reasons every time we get a call. I don’t need you to criticize what I know I did wrong. I’m not the idiot you think I am.” Katniss’ words were said through gritted teeth and her grey eyes stared daggers.

Johanna smirked and tilted her head, far from intimidated. “There’s that spark of fire I have been waiting for.”

“Just lay off me, okay?”

“And when was I ever on you? Surely I would have remembered that.” He smirk grew wider as Katniss felt her body betray her by blushing.

“What is wrong with you?” She stared each other down until Johanna answered.

“You.”

“That doesn’t even make sense!” Katniss rolled her eyes before letting go and walking away, frustrated with today already. If she needed to fight fire with fire, she was willing to do just that.

Johanna walked into the kitchen and started looking through the pantry for something to eat. Between working on the fires and working out, she was almost always hungry. Finally, she found a snack and took a packet of crackers from a box. Turning to leave, she found Finnick leaning against the counter near the doorway.

“You could be a little nicer to her, you know that right?” He crossed his arms and raised his eyebrows.

“Yeah, I could but why should I?” Johanna shrugged and shoved an entire cracker in her mouth.

“Because she was top of her class, she is very intelligent, and a damn good paramedic. She is one bound to be the best one we have ever had here.”

“So why doesn’t she act like it?”

“Because you are always yelling at her and making her already stressful job a lot worse.” He reached forward and grabbed a cracker form the packet in Johanna’s hand. She glared at him before shoving another in her mouth. “Just, calm it down. We all know you are alpha of the firehouse.”

“Fine. Okay.” She shrugged and started walking out of the kitchen but Finnick stopped her.

“Oh, and also apologize to her. Okay?” He pushed passed Johanna and left before she could protest.

She yelled at him anyway. “Fine, but it’s not going to be a very good apology!”

There was a distant chuckle and response. “Of course not.”
Johanna stared at the hall that led to the different barracks rooms and rubbed her tired eyes. Katniss was an anomaly to her. She knew the girl was holding something back, there was no way someone was that pure and kind in this day and age. It bugged her.

Taking a step forward, she made her way to the room Katniss was in. Johanna opened the door quietly and looked at the girl in her bed facing the wall. She smiled slightly at how peaceful and cute she looked curled up under the covers. Despite thinking of that, she walked over and sat carelessly sat down at the end of the bed by the girl’s feet. “Hey, you asleep?”

Katniss stirred but kept her eyes closed. “I was. Why? Come to yell at me about how I’m sleeping wrong?” She curled her legs up closer to her and Johanna chuckled.

“No. I came to apologize, brainless. But, if you’re going to be a smart ass about it, I’ll leave.” She leaned forward and went to stand but Katniss reached her arm behind her and laid her hand on Johanna’s arm.

“No, just tell me whatever you were going to say.”

Johanna sighed deeply. “Look, I know I am a hard ass and I have no inhibitions on what comes from my mouth and that makes it hard for everyone to deal with me, especially if you are not used to it. And I understand why you are tired of me yelling at you but when I feel that my job is compromised, I want to remove the problem right away.” They sat in silence for a minute before she continued. “That picture you were looking at the other night, that was my family. They died in a house fire right before I left for college. I never ended up going. I immediately dropped out and became a firefighter instead, thinking that if I couldn’t save my family’s life, well, I could at least save others.”

Katniss turned around to lay on her other side facing Johanna, her hand never moving from the girl’s arm. Johanna didn’t complain, Katniss could touch her any day at any moment for however long she wanted. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry, it’s not your fault. It happened and there is nothing to do about it.”

“It still has to hurt though.”

“It does but pain passes. Just like what you feel right now about the man that died today.” Johanna placed her free hand on Katniss’ and absentmindedly started rubbing the top of it with her thumb.

“No, it was my fault. I should have known there was a potential for cardiac arrest. I was negligent.”

“There is always a chance of cardiac arrest. It is an extremely stressful situation to be in. Look, if you think his death was your fault then you need to find a new career. It will happen, sometimes often and sometimes not. But, as a paramedic, it is your job to get the person to the hospital in a safe manner and some days you will not even make it from the scene before they die and you have to understand that.” Johanna shook her head and looked at her feet. “There are some days where Finnick and I get to that person inside and it is too late. We have to work in a very tight time frame and sometimes it is just not fast enough. You need to understand that it is not your fault.” She glanced up at Katniss.

“Thanks. That means a lot.”

“The first few shifts are rough but you will make it through. You’re tough. Want a cracker?” Johanna offered the packet towards Katniss.

“Um, no, thank you though.”
“Look, just take a cracker.” She pushed the packet closer to Katniss’ face and held it there until the girl finally took one. “You can hide it under your pillow or flush it down the toilet but never turn down food from me. I don’t offer food to just anyone.” She stood up while patting Katniss on her side. “Only special someone’s.” Johanna gave a smile and a wink before walking out of the room without another word, knowing that she left Katniss speechless given her dumbfounded expression.

Katniss lay in her barracks bed, staring at the ceiling, wishing that she were in a private room where no one else would walk in.
Combustion

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Shortly after their interaction, that night was filled with one call after the other. Fires, car wrecks, minor and major emergencies. Johanna let her arm hang out of the open window as Finnick drove back to the station. Fall was approaching so the night air was beginning to cool off despite the warm days. Trees weren’t changing yet but they would soon and Johanna couldn’t wait. After the trees changed, they would be bare and snow would fall and that meant her favorite season of winter would arrive.

Her fingers wiggled and she enjoyed the air flowing through them; it felt freeing as her mind wondered. Mostly to thoughts about Katniss. She knew the girl liked her, or so she hoped. After using very questionable deductive reasoning, it had been narrowed down to Katniss having some form of something towards Johanna. But, her brain often deceived her when it came to more than just potential one night stands.

“What’s running through your mind, Jo?” Finnick’s voice filled the headset she had on, completely vanishing the picture of Katniss she was mentally drawing.

“Just work.” She hoped the cover was good enough.
“Just, it doesn’t matter.”

Cressida’s chuckle was no audible over the headset. “Doesn’t matter, as she waves her hand absent-mindedly through the wind.”

“Nope. Not good enough. “Just, it doesn’t matter.”

Cressida’s chuckle was no audible over the headset. “Doesn’t matter, as she waves her hand absent-mindedly through the wind.”

“Seriously, it’s nothing. Leave me alone.”

“Oh, someone is sensitive. Are we poking a sore spot or a soft spot?” Finnick smiled devilishly. “I’m going to go with soft. Very soft. So soft that she wants to touch it…” The other woman laughed at her own comment and Finnick joined in.

“Seriously. Shut the fuck up. I’m exhausted and I don’t want to talk about it.” Johanna brought her arm back inside and just stared through the windshield.

“Jo, just tell us. No one else is in the engine but us three, plus you know I’m going to bug you later when we get back to our room.” Cressida had a point and Johanna knew it. If she didn’t say anything now, it would eventually be said later.

“Fine. It can’t leave the engine though.” She waited for both of them to agree. “I am infatuated with Katniss, but more than just my usual I want you as a fuck buddy for a few nights kind of way. She is something more and I like the feeling but I have never actually felt like this before and it’s new and intimidating.”

“I knew it!” Both Finnick and Cressida stated loudly together.

“What? How? Do you think she can tell?” Johanna turned to Finnick in fear.

“Why don’t you ask her? Better yet, why don’t you just do your kingpin move and kiss her, see what happens. What’s the worst scenario? You get new shifts?” Cressida once again had a point but she couldn’t just do that.
“I could but I think I’m in far too deep to just kiss her and hope it works.” Johanna stared out the side mirror and saw the ambulance coming up beside them, slowly passing by. She looked inside to see Katniss leaning across Gale, making a funny face and waving at them hysterically. A smile peeked across her face in amusement.

Finnick chuckled. “Well, she’s definitely a dork, that’s for sure.”

It was close to 0400 when they finally arrive back at the station. Everyone was silent while taking care of the vehicles and supplies, wanting to go to bed. But Johanna couldn’t sleep. Her mind was rushing around, thoughts of Katniss keeping her awake.

She thought about how soft her hand was when she touched it.

She thought about the sincerity that always filled the girl’s face.

She thought about how intense the girl looked at the scenes. Katniss had finally taken control and proved herself tonight.

She thought about her in uniform. Johanna was so used to seeing everyone in uniform but seeing it on Katniss was a whole new view. The light blue button up shirt fit her shoulders snug and showed off her toned arms. It was nearly fitted to the rest of her as well. And the navy blue pants rested perfectly on her hips. It was a vision she never wanted to lose sight off.

As Johanna’s eyes finally began to close, a faint screaming could be heard. She quickly jumped from the bed and left her room, padding down the hall to the source: Katniss’ room.

The screaming happened again and Johanna opened the door to find the girl still asleep but twitching actively. She shut the door as she walked in, immediately heading towards the bed, touching Katniss on the shoulder. “Hey, wake up.” Johanna shook the girl lightly a few times before she finally jolted awake.

“Johanna. What… what are you doing here?” Katniss’ eyes were wide open and filled with panic.

“You were screaming so I came to make sure you were alright.”

“Oh.” Katniss looked to be in a half-asleep state of confusion as she looked around the room. There was an extended moment of silence between them.

“Well then, if you’re good now, I’m going to go and finally sleep.” Johanna went to walk away but Katniss grabbed her wrist tightly, keeping her from moving any farther.

“Don’t go. I don’t want to be alone right now.” Only a bit of moonlight fell in through the window but the faint light showed Katniss’ eyes to be glossed over. Her voice trembled, almost begging Johanna not to leave.

And so she didn’t leave. She sat down on the side of the bed. “What has shaken you up, Everdeen?”

“That man from earlier. He was in my dream and it all happened again. It all happened again.” Katniss moved her hand down from Johanna’s wrist and entwined their fingers together, gripping tightly. They fit nicely together and Johanna liked the feel. The girl’s palms and fingers were calloused but the tops were smooth. Her breathing was still filled with panic. “Jo, can I ask you something?”
If you want to ask something, just ask.”

“Can you lay with me?” The tremble in her voice was doubled now.

She didn’t know what to do. “Sure.” Now she knew, after the words exploded from her mouth. She kicked herself mentally. Katniss moved over as Johanna lifted the covers and tucked herself into the bed. As she lay down, Katniss immediately clung to her, laying her head gently on Johanna’s upper chest and shoulder while wrapping her arm around the girl’s stomach. The warmth filled Johanna. This felt perfect. It took every ounce of self-control to hide her contentment as she wrapped her arm around Katniss, pulling her in closer. “It’s going to be okay. The first one is the hardest to get past. You just have to remember that the amount you save outweighs the ones you can’t. I know, I promise.”

The girl slightly nodded and gripped at a handful of Johanna’s t-shirt. It was obvious that she didn’t want to talk about it but instead wanted silent comfort. Her forehead pushed into Johanna’s neck and as she exhaled, the air moved across her neck, sending her to wishing they were doing more than just laying there. As sleep overcame her eyes, her cheek rested against Katniss’ forehead.

Katniss woke up to find only herself sprawled across the bed. Johanna was gone and she couldn’t help but wonder how long the girl stayed. Did she leave right after Katniss fell asleep? Did she just wake up and recently leave?

She sighed and dragged her feet out of bed but remained laying down with her face in one of the pillows. Then the station alarm went off. “Ughhh… stop! I’m so tired.” The door open and Johanna stood in the doorway.

“I was coming to see if you were awake but it seems you can’t decide. Off-job call.” She left the door open and walked away, leaving Katniss to throw on her boots and a new work shirt. Katniss rushed down to the garage and as soon as she walked in, Gale jogged up to her.

“No need for turnout gear. This call is for a car accident.”

“Good.”

Gale stared at her in shock. “Good?”

She realized what she said and shook her head. “I did not mean it like that. It’s just… I’m just… Come on. Get in the ambulance and drive.” Johanna’s engine was pulling out of the garage as they shut the doors to bus. Gale turned the engine on and flicked the sirens and lights on.

It was silent for a few minutes until Gale spoke up. “So, I heard you yelling last night. You alright?”

Katniss looked out the windshield. “I’m good. Just had some rough sleep.”

“If you ever need to talk, I am willing to listen. “

“Thanks. I’m good though.” With that, she ended their conversation and leaned her head against the window, wishing she was leaning against Johanna instead.

The accident was a quick site to attend and they were all back at the station shortly after. Everyone
had attended to their vehicles to make sure they were stocked and ready for the next crew shift. They made their way home and crashed. Cressida went straight to her room to sleep and Johanna immediately changed from her work clothes and into a pair of loose basketball shorts and some retro band t-shirt. She lay down on the shorter couch and turned the TV on, flipping through the channels. Finnick had changed clothes and left to meet Annie for lunch. Katniss decided to take a quick shower and change into comfier clothes, joining Johanna in the living room. She lay on the longer couch, facing the other girl but using all of her strength to watch the TV instead.

A few minutes into the show, Johanna sat up and looked at Katniss. “Want to play a game?”

Katniss blushed, not knowing how to answer the question. “Uh…”

“Video game, you fucking pervert.” The girl way amused by the redness spread across Katniss’ face.

“Oh. Sure, yeah. What kind?” She felt like a complete idiot now and there was doubt Johanna thought the same thing of her.

“Some racing game I picked up at the shop.” She turned the console on and threw a wireless controller at Katniss, who caught it clumsily while sitting up. “Press X to go, use the left analog stick to steer. Pretty simple.” Johanna returned to the couches with another controller but was now sitting right next to Katniss. She pressed a few buttons and they were soon picking out what car the wanted, its color, and any add-ons. Katniss had never really played games growing up and was usually mediocre at them so she decided to add a rocket shooter even though she had no idea what button to use for it to work.

The race started and it was two of them plus several other computer players. Johanna was extremely concentrated on the game, her tongue sticking out of the side of her mouth as she moved with the controller. Katniss smirked and started pressing random buttons until she figured out how to use the rockets. Once she figured it out, she started destroying everyone and was catching up to Johanna.

It was the final lap and the girl next to her was cursing to herself, determined to win. As the finish line approached, Katniss pressed the rocket button and blew Johanna’s car up right in front of the line, passing her to get first place. She smiled to herself and looked over to the girl.

Johanna looked at her with irritation. “What the fuck was that?”

“What was what?” Katniss was confused on why she was angry about losing.

“Seriously? You blew my car up right in front of the finish line. Who the fuck does that?”

“I don’t know. I didn’t know it was that important. It’s just a game.” Katniss immediately regretted her words as Johanna glared at her.

“Just a game. Just a game? It’s not just a game. It is between winning or losing, and I do not lose. I do not ever fucking lose and you don’t even care about winning. If you cared about winning, then this would be a whole different story but you don’t even care about winning and you fucking blew up my car anyway. What kind of fucking shit is that? Are you serious?” Johanna rubbed her eyes in frustration.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t know it was that big of a deal. I thought we were playing for fun. I will let you win for now on. I’m sorry.” She tried to make amends but Johanna just grunted in even more frustration. She just gave her a side-glance and rolled her eyes. “No. You can’t just let me win because then it
is just as good as losing. No one gets joy from a pity win.”

“So, what do you want me to do?”

“Just play the game!”

“I was playing the game!” Katniss was seriously confused. If she played the game and beat Johanna, she got angry, but she couldn’t lose on purpose because she would also get angry. “You are confusing.”

“Just play.” Johanna glanced at her again and pressed start, creating a new race.

They raced for an hour, it eventually escalating into both of them standing and screaming at the screen for their cars to go faster. It was a championship race that would determine who was the ultimate winner of the day.

“Fucking go! You piece of shit car! DRIVE!” Johanna was nearly in the television as she screamed with adrenaline.

Katniss was turning her arms with the car steering, thinking it would help for some stupid reason.

“GO GO GO! FASTER!”

“COME ON! COME ON! FUCKING GO!” Johanna and her were standing shoulder to shoulder, leaning forward with intensity. The girl hip bumped Katniss and caused her to drive into a building, slowing her down.

“Oh, you bitch. If you want to play like that…” Katniss righted her car and used a speed boost. “Whoa. Watch out world, Katniss is out for blood and she’s cussing while she does it.” Johanna hip bumped her again but Katniss responded this time with a shoulder check, causing the other girl to stumble several steps sideways. Katniss passed her and started jumping up and down as the final lap signal appeared. Johanna went to push her but she quickly stepped out of the way and hurried to get on the other side of the coffee table away from the assaults. But she was followed and both of them started taking cautious steps around the living room to get away from each other while focusing intently on the game. They were neck and neck, their cars now bumping each other in hopes that one of them would lose control.

“Shit, shit, shit!” Johanna started shaking her controller as she yelled.

Katniss was tense, watching the race come down to the wire. As the cars passed the finish line, her car was ahead by a nose. She threw her arms in the air and jumped on the couch. “YES! YES! YES! IN YOUR FACE, MASON! I BEAT YOU, FAIR AND SQUARE!” She ran in place on the couch, doing a random celebratory dance.

Johanna shook her head and laughed at the sight. “Yeah, yeah. You won. I get it. No need to blow the roof off. Holy shit.” Katniss continued to dance and Johanna watched in amusement. “You are a brat, you know that, right?” The girl walked towards Katniss but Katniss simply ran across the couch to jump to the other one. Except when she went to jump, the couch moved and caused her to miss her step, sending her belly flopping onto the floor. With that, Johanna doubled-over in laughter, tears running down her face.

Katniss closed her eyes in embarrassment but started laughing as well. A door opened and they both turned to see a half asleep Cressida walk out of her room. “What is going on?”

Both of the girls looked at each other and burst into laughter again. Johanna shook her head and laughed at the sight. “Yeah, yeah. You won. I get it. No need to blow the roof off. Holy shit.” Katniss continued to dance and Johanna watched in amusement. “You are a brat, you know that, right?” The girl walked towards Katniss but Katniss simply ran across the couch to jump to the other one. Except when she went to jump, the couch moved and caused her to miss her step, sending her belly flopping onto the floor. With that, Johanna doubled-over in laughter, tears running down her face.

Katniss closed her eyes in embarrassment but started laughing as well. A door opened and they both turned to see a half asleep Cressida walk out of her room. “What is going on?”

Both of the girls looked at each other and burst into laughter again. Johanna caught her breath. “Katniss went to jump from one couch to the other but the couch moved and she landed face first –SMACK! Right on the ground.” She started laughing again.
“Really? What are you, two fourteen year olds? Quit jumping on the couches.” The woman rubbed her eyes. “I’m trying to get some sleep before Annie’s gallery opening tonight. Maybe you should do the same.” She turned around and walked back to her room.

“No need to be a cranky bitch, Cress.” Johanna yelled out, winking at Katniss. A muffled yell came from the room. “Fuck you, Jo.” “Every party needs a pooper and that’s why we invited you!” She yelled back again and was met with silence. Johanna looked at Katniss and smiled. “So, what are you wearing to the gallery tonight?”

Johanna helped Finnick with his bowtie and dusted off his shoulders. “Very dapper, fine sir.” They smiled at each other before Finnick looked up with a stunned face. She turned to see what he was staring at and understood immediately. Katniss was now standing in the living room, wearing a floor length red dress. A slit ran up to the middle of her thigh and it had two thin straps accenting her strong shoulders. It fit tightly to her, pushing her chest up and hugging her hips just right.

Johanna tried to wipe her sweaty hands on her dress pants discreetly. Her heart raced and her stomach turned. She took in the loose brunette curls framing Katniss’ face, the red lipstick that matched the dress, and the black eyeliner that made her grey eyes pop even more than usual.

“How do I look?” Katniss seemed a little uncertain of herself.

“Absolutely stunning. You’ve made Jo lose control of her jaw.” Finnick complimented with a large smile, stepping around Johanna. He placed his hand on her shoulder. “You might want to pick it up off the floor.”

Johanna snapped out of her hypnosis and blinked several times to try and erase the very sexual visions from her mind. “Good. I mean great. You look great. You look wonderful.”

“Not only did she lose her jaw but she complimented you three times in a row.” The man took Katniss’ hand and kissed her knuckles lightly. “I have never seen that before.”

Cressida walked out of her room ready to go and all four of them made their way to the gallery.

“Katniss, this is Annie.” Finnick stood proudly next to his girlfriend, her brown hair flowing around her shoulders and her sea-green eyes bright.

“It’s nice to finally meet you. Finnick has talked about you being a great medic at the station.” Annie extended her hand for a shake. Katniss accepted. “Thank you. It is nice to meet you as well. The gallery looks amazing, I can’t wait to see more of it.”

“Feel free to eat the food and drink the champagne while gazing.” She smiled but Katniss’ noticed a quirkiness hidden behind it. Both Annie and Finnick excused themselves and left Katniss looking around. She saw Johanna looking at a painting, chugging a glass of champagne and immediately grabbing a new glass, chugging that one as well.

“You know you are supposed to sip the drinks while at these events, right?” Katniss seemed to surprise Johanna as the girl jumped and turned around.

“Oh, I know but I don’t want just a sip.” Johanna’s response made Katniss’ question what she
really meant but she ignored it and looked at the painting on the wall instead.

“Annie has some beautiful work.” It was a painting of the ocean with fishing boats in the distance. The brush marks were intricate and the colors vibrant. Out of her peripheral, Katniss witnessed Johanna down two more drinks. Then she felt a hand on her lower back.

Johanna leaned into her, lowering her voice. “I’m going to be honest with you on why I’m drinking so much. You look hot and at this exact moment, I want to find somewhere in this building where I can fuck you. But, I am drinking because I know it won’t happen.” She almost walked away but Katniss grabbed the girl’s arm, dragging her through the gallery and to a nearby staircase. They climbed it and opened the first door to what seemed to be an art storage room. As soon as Katniss closed it, Johanna shoved her against the door and pushed herself against Katniss, their lips closing in together. Almost immediately, their tongues met in passion and Katniss grabbed the sides of Johanna’s face, walking them backwards until Johanna’s back slammed into a shelf.

Their tongues continued their fierce dance as Johanna grabbed Katniss’ hips and pushed her against a nearby wall. One of Johanna’s legs rested between Katniss’ and her thigh grinded against her, making Katniss moan into the girl’s mouth. Johanna grabbed Katniss’ wrists and shoved them against the wall above her head. Her lips moved from Katniss’ mouth and across her jaw line to the spot just below her ear. More groans came from her as Johanna now lightly pulled at her ear with her teeth. She felt the girl grin against the side of her face as she whispered. “How long have you been wanting this?”

Katniss shivered at the light air in her ear. “Since I first saw you.”

“That’s what I thought.” Johanna’s whisper and intense brown eyes were seductive. Her lips now moved to Katniss’ neck, her teeth lightly biting until her collarbone, where she caressed her lips across it, the extremely light touch making Katniss tense.

“Jo. Do it, no more teasing.” Her voice was already filled with desperation.

Johanna looked at her and grinned. “Do what?” Her lips immediately returned to her collarbone as she made her way up the undiscovered side of Katniss’ neck. She rested her lips against Katniss’ ear. “Do what?”

Katniss pushed her hips forward against Johanna’s thigh as she shivered from how turned on she was. “Fuck me.” Her eyes met with the girl pinning her to the wall. “Fuck me.”

“You should know by now –” she kissed right behind Katniss’ ear, finding a sweet spot that made her shiver “- I don’t take orders.” Their eyes met again and Katniss noticed a wicked grin on Johanna’s face. “Do what?”

“Fuck me, please.”

“You are a quick learner.” Johanna’s hands moved from Katniss’ wrists and the left one moved immediately to her left thigh where the dress slit was. Her fingers barely touched Katniss’ skin but the presence was enough to make the girl shiver again, her eyes closing tightly in want.

“Jo, please. I need you now.”

“You can wait.” Johanna teased her and kissed her on the jaw line as her hand slowly snaked up and down her thigh, tracing small circles for a minute before moving her panties aside. Her fingers now traced the outside of her needs and Katniss pushed against Johanna, who moved her hand out of the way.

“Jo… please… I can’t take any more. Please.” With that, one of Johanna’s fingers pushed against her sex, moving in circles around the nub. Katniss moaned and tensed with pleasure, wrapping her
arms around the girl. Her finger now moved down and was joined by another before Johanna pushed them inside, moving in a perfect rhythm now with Katniss’ hips. Her other hand reached down and moved the dress out of the way as a finger began rubbing Katniss’ nub again.

She felt weak and her legs trembled with pleasure. Loud moans escaped from her as she moved against Johanna. “Jo… don’t stop. Don’t stop.” Her arms gripped tightly around Johanna as her body finally gave in. Johanna’s name was screamed from her mouth as she fell weakly against the girl after orgasm.

Johanna held her tightly and was sweating from the heat between them. They both looked at each other again and smiled, kissing each other lightly on the lips a few times. “We can continue this after the event?”

Katniss grinned and nodded. “Of course. I have to return the favor, after all.” She grabbed Johanna behind the neck and pulled her in for a deep short kiss before walking out of the room, leaving the girl behind and wondering how she was going to keep her hands off of Johanna until the end of the night.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for the continued support and reviews. You guys are amazing! :) It looks like the other Joniss au I have been working on will be posted soon. It is sort of reality based and is quite the adventure. As for this one, it has a while to go so you have plenty of time to enjoy it.

Please continue to send reviews, whether public or private. Cheers!
Katniss gathered with the crowd as they all stood around a small stage. Finnick waited in front of the mic, playing with his bow tie, obviously nervous. As the last of the crowd trickled in, Johanna appeared at Katniss' side. She looked adorable in her black dress pants and green and white checkered button-up shirt. The sleeves were rolled up and pushed above her elbows. It was casual and looked good on her. Their gazes met and Johanna winked with a half grin causing Katniss to blush. The girl seemed like trouble in the end but if trouble felt as good as she felt earlier, it was welcomed.

Finnick cleared his throat in the mic. "Hello. Thank you all for joining us tonight. It is an absolute pleasure to see Annie getting this much support from friends, family, and even strangers we have yet to meet."

"As most of you know, this is her first installment of hopefully many to come. She has been working hard day in and day out on her pieces and on making sure she succeeds at what she loves to do, and I admire her deeply for that. It's one of the many reasons I love her so much." He gestured for her to join him on the stage and she did, taking her usual spot right next to him.

"Annie is truly an inspiration. Despite hard times and moments when she thought everything was impossible, she has produced breath-taking art. Her strength amazes me and gives me hope for a brighter future. And so, on a night that means so much to her, I only hope to make it perfect." Finnick dropped to one knee while pulling a small box out of his pocket. He opened it and smiled widely up the shocked girl. "Annie, I love beyond the seven seas. Will you marry me?"

She nodded and agreed without hesitation. They hugged tightly and Finnick pushed the ring onto her finger. Everyone clapped and cheered. Johanna put two fingers to her lips and whistled loudly. She then hurried her way to the stage and embraced the engaged couple.

Katniss watched them interact. It was adorable how much Finnick and Johanna acted like siblings. They had a give and take relationship, where each paid the other back eventually. It reminded Katniss slightly of how she and Prim interacted.

The rest of the night was spent looking at Annie’s pieces and drinking too much champagne. It was fine though, Katniss thought, she would need to liquid courage later in order to pay Johanna back for earlier.

Finnick and Annie were staying at Annie's parent's beach house to celebrate their engagement and Cressida was out spending her night at a few bars with friends, leaving Katniss and Johanna to themselves. They both laughed at the convenience as they walked up the stairs to the apartment. Johanna pushed the key into the door and unlocked it, letting Katniss in while trying to pull the key back out. As she stepped through the doorway, Katniss shut the door and locked it before turning towards Johanna.

She grabbed the girl by the shoulders and pinned her against the wall, looking slightly down at the now wide open brown eyes. Katniss rested her lips against Johanna's ear and whispered to her. "I know you don't take orders but you will now. I want you to feel the struggle of not being in control. Understand?"

Johanna grinned, her body tensing under Katniss' grip. "I didn't know you could play this game. What happened to you being innocent?"

"There are sides of me that people don't know. Also, I have had… a lot to drink."

The girl chuckled in response. "So, what happens if I don't let you take control?" Johanna moved her face so that they were staring intensely at each other. Katniss could see the dare in her eyes.

"I will find a way, trust me." Katniss leaned down and bit lightly at Johanna's neck and smiled as she flinched in pleasure. "Now, go lay on the bed." She let go and watched the girl walk away to
the bedroom. Her heart pounded with nervousness as she followed. This was a completely new experience and it was bound to be a disaster but she had to one-up Johanna and it seemed sex was the best way to get the upper hand with the firefighter.

Johanna lay on her side facing the door, a smile across her face. "Now what?"

She shut the bedroom door, locking it as well. "Watch." Katniss pulled her heels off and unzipped her dress, pushing one shoulder off at a time and letting it fall slowly around her feet. She revealed herself in matching black bra and underwear. As she stepped away from the dress on the floor, she walked over to the bed and pushed Johanna back against the mattress with one hand. Her thighs straddled over Johanna's waist and immediately the girl rested her hands on them, rubbing them lightly. Katniss grabbed her hands and pushed them away. "No. Part of this is that you don't get to touch me unless I give you permission. Understand?" She looked down at the Johanna who was already squirming from not being the one in control and from being turned on. The girl simply nodded. "What was that?"

"I understand." Johanna's voice was shaky but still drippng in an abundance of confidence. "Good. You are a fast learner." She smirked as Johanna's eyes went wide from her own words being used against her. "Now, take off your shirt."

The girl abided and unbuttoned her shirt, pulled it off, and threw it on the floor. Katniss looked down at the moonlight covered skin. Over her heart was a tattoo of a Maltese cross and her last name in cursive under it. She took in the muscular chest and shoulders, wanting to kiss every inch of skin on the girl. Her hands moved to Johanna's pants and undid the belt, button, and zipper without ever breaking eye contact. She moved back and pulled the pants off then resumed her straddling.

Johanna's hands moved to Katniss' legs again and immediately they were pushed away. "You know better than that." Katniss' fingers slowed moved downward from the top of Johanna's collarbone to the points on her hip bones, stopping to caress small circles against the soft skin. Johanna whimpered at the touch. "Fuck..."

Katniss removed Johanna's bra with one hand and used the other to start rubbing softly at the girl's already erect nipples. She leaned down and started kissing downward from her sternum. Her lips pushed and grazed along Johanna's toned stomach.

"Fuck... Kat." Her stomach tensed and released as she reached out next to her, gripping at the sheets on the bed. "Stop, please."

"Why?"

"It's too much."

Katniss leaned forward so her face was directly over Johanna's. "Can you not handle a little teasing? You can dish it out but you can't take it." Johanna's face cringed and her hips moved upwards in frustration.

Katniss went right back to teasing the girl below her. Nipping at her hip bones as her hands moved softly but strategically over the bare skin. Johanna continued to moan and whimper and grab at the sheets in frustration. "Kat, please..."

"Please what?"

"Please fuck me."

Katniss rested her chin on Johanna's stomach and looked at the need in the dark brown eyes staring down towards her. They were begging for release. "Not yet."

The girl sighed and shifted her hips around. Katniss moved her legs between Johanna's and continued dragging her lips, making the girl below twitch and tense. She ran her lips down her left thigh as a hand traced along her right.

"Please. Please, Katniss... fuuuuck." Johanna's hands were now reaching behind her head, grabbing tightly at the sides of the pillow as she pushed her face into the fabric to muffle her frustrated moans.

Katniss stopped for a moment and enjoyed the view of Johanna struggling. But she continued on quickly, wrapping her arms under Johanna's thighs. She kissed along her hips as they rose to meet each touch.

Katniss moved down and moved her tongue into Johanna, tasting her. Her tongue moved in
circles around the other girl's clit. Johanna reached down and ran her fingers through Katniss' hair but Katniss reached up and grabbed her wrists, pinning her arms to the bed. This made Johanna groan again in frustration, a sound that turned Katniss on.

Katniss took her time, moving slowly and enjoying the moans coming from Johanna's throat. She let go of one of the girl's wrists and moved her left hand to Johanna's sex, lubricating two fingers on Johanna's wetness before inserting them without warning. Johanna gasped and her back arched. Katniss looked up. "What are you not going to do?"

Johanna's eyes were tightly closed and her mouth open as she breathed heavily. "Touch you. I'm not going to touch you."

"Good. One more time and I will stop and you will deal with it." Katniss began to push and pull at Johanna as her hips moved with the rhythm. Gradually, she got faster and faster and Johanna's moans got deeper and deeper. She grinned as she watched Johanna's hands grip the sheets with white knuckles, trying her best to not touch Katniss.

As Johanna started to reach her orgasm, Katniss started to move her thumb over the nub. This sent Johanna over the edge and into screaming profanities with Katniss' name in between. Her body arched and twisted.

After the strong reaction, Johanna's grip loosened on the sheets and she opened her eyes, staring at Katniss. "Holy shit, Everdeen."

Katniss smiled and crawled on top of Johanna, leaning down to kiss her. After the exchange she lay down and rested her head on Johanna's chest, listening to her still rapid heart. "Three days and this is where we are at already?"

Johanna cautiously wrapped her muscular arms around Katniss, as if waiting for them to get pushed away but when they didn't, she let one of her hands move around her back aimlessly.

"Don't get too much hope from it. I don't really do relationships."

"Why?" Katniss moved her hand to the back of Johanna's neck and started playing with the loose hairs.

"Being a firefighter and all. It's too hard to think about what would happen if I died and left someone behind. Also, I have a handful of exes that would tell you I am a bitch with nothing but bad intentions."

"You know you don't have to be in a relationship to leave someone behind, right?" Katniss started to really wonder about Johanna's past. There was now obviously more than what met the eye and the girl was good at keeping it locked away though. To anyone outside of her bubble, she seemed collected and serious. To Katniss, she really was complex, as Finnick mentioned. And what were these potential bad intentions?

"It's not the same." Johanna looked at her with deep brown eyes filled with a past. She pushed loose strands of hair behind Katniss' ears and a small smile appeared. "Now, how did someone as innocent as you learn to be so good at this?"

Heat flashed across Katniss' face in embarrassment. "Um, movies, books. I don't know."

"Not experience?"

Katniss started to sink away but Johanna pulled her back.

"It doesn't matter brainless. But I'm pretty sure you deserve better treatment than earlier." Johanna rolled them over and pushed Katniss on her back, beginning their long night of wearing each other out.

Katniss once again woke to an empty bed but this time, there was the smell of breakfast floating in the air. She was hungry and thirsty and a little sore from the night's activities. As she stretched in bed, she looked down to see giant hickey's on her hips and thighs. The door to the bedroom began to open and she quickly covered herself with the sheets.

"Calm down, brainless. Just me." Johanna walked in. She was wearing a pair of her knee length workout shorts from the station and a black v-neck shirt. Katniss did not understand how someone could look so good wearing any outfit. "Do you like waffles?"

"Yes."
“Good! How many do you want?”

“Uhhh… how big are they?” Katniss was hungry so she didn’t want to not ask for enough.

“About the size of your face.” Johanna smiled playfully. “Seriously, they are big.”

“Are you calling my face big?”

“Maybe… maybe not. Look, I will make a bunch of them and you can eat as many as your want. You should go take a shower. I’m thinking we go into the city today since you haven’t been there yet.”

“Okay! Sounds great.” Katniss had been waiting for when she would have the opportunity to adventure into the city and see what everyone talked about. As Johanna left the room, she gathered fresh clothes.

The door opened again and Katniss did her best to cover herself with a nearby blanket. “By the way, Finnick is moving out tomorrow because he and Annie got the lease for the apartment across the hall. Cressida is moving to his old room. If you want, we can add you to the lease and you can move into Cressida’s current room and we can get all of your things out of storage. Sound good?”

“Sounds great.” Finding a place to live took a lot less time than Katniss thought it would.

Katniss took a bite of the giant waffle, amazed at how fluffy and tasteful it was. It was the best breakfast food she had ever tasted.

"Family recipe. I make the greatest waffles." She must have made a face given Johanna's reply. "I am going to take a quick shower while you eat.”

Katniss nodded as she swallowed a large forkful of food. "Okay.”

"Good. We will leave in about an hour then take the train in to the central station, walk around from there.” Johanna walked by and grazed her hand along Katniss' thigh.

Katniss tensed and relaxed at the touch but shortly tensed again when the main door opened and Finnick walked in. "Good morning, beautiful Katniss Everdeen.” He smiled at her as he walked into the kitchen only to lean against the counter in front of the bar too. "How are you this morning? Did you have a friend over last night?"

Katniss continued eating, hoping the mouthfuls of food would cover her blushing. "I'm good, and no.”

"Last night would have been the perfect night for it. Everyone bubbly from the champagne, art everywhere, there were a bunch of attractive people at the gallery." He kept prying for some reason while staring at her. They just stared at each other before Finnick picked up a waffle and started eating it. "Right. Jo in the shower?"

"Yep.”

He walked off to the bathroom and opened the door, stepping in and closing it. She heard Johanna yell at him to get out but he didn't step out until several minutes later, covered in water. He simply smiled at her and continued to his bedroom to change.

Finnick opened the door to the bathroom "Jo?"

Johanna pulled the curtain back enough for half of her to be visible. "Finnick, get out! How many times do I have to tell you to stop cornering me while I'm in the shower?"

"You can never tell me too many times.” He gave an arrogant smile and she rolled her eyes.

"So what do you want now?"

Finnick stepped closer to the tub. "I see you made your mark on Katniss already?"

"And how do you know?"

"Well, she is wearing a tank top and is very oblivious to the giant hickey just below the back of her neck. And I only saw her interacting with one person last night: you.” Finnick sat down on the closed toilet seat and looked up at the naked girl. "And not that I was looking but you have some nice marks on you as well."
"It's nothing." Johanna put some conditioner in her hand and started lathering it through her layered hair.
"Is it nothing for both of you?"
"Yes. Now quit being a nuisance."
"I'm pretty sure it's more than nothing. She very obviously has more than just sexual need unlike a lot of the other girls you have slept with." Finnick was met with a large splash of water to the face. He stood up and moved to a safer corner of the bathroom.
Johanna opened the shower curtain completely. "It's nothing. There is nothing else."
"Jo, think about it: you two work together, you will be living in the same apartment together. Can you seriously tell me there will be nothing else involved? I'm going to call bullshit on you if you think that."
"Two people can fuck and not have feelings!"
"They can but Katniss isn't like you, Jo. She has emotions. She doesn't just detach them from everything. Can you not read people at all?" They stared at each other, waiting for the other to talk.
"We talked about it last night. She knows and nothing else is happening."
"Okay. If you say so, but when you start developing feelings, don't come moping to me about them."
"I won't because nothing else is going on. Now, get out so I can finish my once peaceful shower."
Johanna yanked the curtain closed.
"Got it." Finnick walked towards the toilet again and flushed it, causing the pressure and temperature of the shower to change.
"Finnick! You're a jerk!" He laughed as he left Johanna scrambling to move out of the way of the scalding shower stream.

Chapter End Notes

I am back! I apologize for the neglect I have put upon this story and you guys. A lot has been going on and I am finally getting everything sorted. Despite my hiatus from updating this, I have been writing down ideas and clips so it is basically fill in the blanks at this point. That means I will be getting back to regular updates!

So, I listened to three songs over and over and over again in order to set the tone for this: Down Boy by Yeah Yeah Yeahs; Come On Closer by Jem; Bad Intentions by Niykee Heaton. Just thought they deserved the credit.

Please continue to give feedback via comment or PM. :D
"You just put the ticket in and it will read it and give it back to you." Johanna demonstrated by putting her train ticket in a lot in the front of the reader. It popped out through the top. As she pulled it out, the waist-high gate in front of them opened and she walked through.

"How do I know it will give it back?"

"You have plenty of money on the ticket, it will give it back. No come on, brainless, or we will miss the train!"

Katniss slowly put the ticket towards the slot and sighed with relief when it popped up through the top. She walked through the gate with suspicion.

"Whoa. One would think you've never been on a train before." Johanna pushed her jokingly.

"I haven't...." the brunette whispered and looked at her with a plain face. Johanna stared back at her, obviously confused about how this could be.

"You are fucking with me, right?"

"No. I have never been on a train. My district is not exactly rich and I had no excuse to travel out of it." She shrugged and looked around the station. There were business people reading newspapers or talking on their cellphones. A group of teenagers stood in a circle, texting and talking with each other.

They loaded onto the train when it arrived a minute later and sat at seats near the door. "It's about three or four stops before we get to the downtown area. So, tell me about paramedic school. How did you do?" Johanna looked at her with full attention, a rare thing that ever happened at the station.

"Well, I got a perfect score on my exam and ended up missing one thing on the practical. Ended up second in my class."

"What did you screw up?"

The way Johanna asked made it seem like she thought Katniss always messed up, like she meant to add 'this time' at the end. There were times when her mind raced and that led to her often second guessing herself. "It was a stupid mistake. I did not tighten the straps on the crash pad tight enough."

Johanna chuckled. "Great job. I bet the dummy loved that when they fell off."

"It was not my best moment." Her face became red with embarrassment.

"Then what was?" The question was genuine this time and put Katniss on her heels even more.

When she looked over, Johanna was still staring at her with interest. "During training shifts, we had a really big accident to respond to and I did a successful emergency rapid sequence induction. I even got a compliment from the nurses which never happens."

"Very impressive. Man, those nurses can be so damn fussy. I'm glad I don't have your job. I
would be fired purely for yelling at nurses too much."

"It takes all of my will to not yell at them." Katniss looked over and found Johanna smiling in amusement. It made her smile as well, knowing the once hard ass was a bit more impressed by her. She watched Johanna fiddle with her cell phone. "What had you originally planned to do? You know, at school?"

Johanna's eyebrows furrowed and she sighed before stuffing the phone in her back pocket. "Forestry. I'm not going to do firefighting forever; eventually your lungs get tired. Maybe after I am done with this I will finally go to school and get back to my original plans."

"Why not just become Chief? You seem to love being at the station."

"I have thought about it but I don't like being this close to the city. I miss the trees."

Katniss understood exactly what she meant. The suburban area outside of the city was crowded and there was little in terms of actual nature. It made her long for home a little more than she originally thought. Her eyes moved from the girl next to her to the window as they pulled into the station.

"This is us." Johanna stood up and grabbed her hand, pulling her lightly out of the train car. Katniss' heart raced from the touch as she now stared at their hands, fingers entwined. As she was pulled through the commuter traffic, Johanna turned back to her. "I didn't want you to get lost behind me." She was thankful for that because this stop seemed to be a popular one.

They made their way through the exit turnstile and up the stairs to the city. As they approached the top, the buildings appeared taller and taller and eventually surrounded them. Katniss looked up, awestruck with how tall they stood. The architecture was intricate, a mix of both classic and modern.

"This is Victor's Plaza. It is the center of the city. Corporate business district is that way," Johanna pointed towards a bunch of skyscrapers before turning around and pointing the other way. "That way is the art district and that is the way we are going." She squeezed Katniss' hand and they started walking down the busy sidewalk. Johanna rounded off random facts about the city as they walked.

The day went by quickly as they ventured from museum to museum. First contemporary art, then history, and then an interactive science exhibit. They stopped by a small sandwich shop for a light lunch and then started meandering towards a more downtown area. "So, there are a few spots of the city that have been… culturally integrated. I think you might like this part of the city."

Katniss' eyes widened with surprise as they turned the corner. The buildings lining the street became very modest in design, majority of them with apartments above storefronts. They passed by a confectionery shop that had signs stating they had maple candy, an antique shop, a bakery. It reminded her of walking through the quaint downtown back home.

Johanna stopped in front of a tavern restaurant. "You interested in trying this place?" She glanced over to see complete excitement in Katniss' eyes. The joy made her smile. "Come on." They walked inside and were overcome with the sound of a live band jamming out a folk tune. Several people were dancing an accompanying jig. It was open seating so they sat near the band, just far enough away to still hear each other talking.

"Jo, how did you know about this?" The shocked girl looked around, trying to hold back tears. She had been missing home since moving and this place was exactly what she needed. The walls held pictures of the forests and mountains and miner's tools. Everything reminded her of home.
"Gale brought a few of us here a few months ago. There was no music last time, though." She nodded her head over to the band and then smiled up at the waitress that approached them.

"What are your specials?" Katniss asked before even looking at the menu.

The waitress thought for a moment before remembering. "All of our beers on tap are half price right now, as well as our bowl of lamb and dried plum stew."

"You have lamb and dried plum stew?" The enthusiasm in Katniss' voice was surprising. "May I get a giant bowl of that with some toast?"

"Of course, and for you?"

Johanna looked down at the menu. "Well, I was not expecting decisions to happen so quickly… umm… can I just get the house steak with a side salad?"

"Yes, I will get that in to the kitchen."

"Thanks." She smiled and then looked over at the band. "This song seems nice."

"It's called the Hanging Tree. The dance that goes with it is fun. It has really dark lyrics, if you listen." Katniss commented before looking up at a now standing Johanna.

"Teach me." Her hand extended out and took Katniss' as they walked towards the dance floor. The acoustic guitars strummed a fast beat while the banjo player picked away. His voice was low and the lyrics flowed from him like molasses.

"Okay. I will take lead, I guess." Katniss hesitated putting her hand on Johanna's waist. She had never led before and she did not want to embarrass herself now after a pleasant day. Her left hand held Johanna's up as they moved closer together. It felt warming, having the shorter girl so close. If it would have been appropriate to kiss her for as long as possible on the dance floor, she would have. Instead they moved at half tempo to the song, Katniss showing Johanna where to step, before moving them to the full tempo. The song finished and they started dancing to the next one until the food was brought to the table.

The day out ended with them stopping off at the bakery to get a baker's dozen of sticky buns and then at the candy store for maple candies before getting back to the train station.

When they returned back to the apartment, they found that Finnick had already moved out and Cressida had moved her room to Finnick's old one near the kitchen. Both of the coworkers sat in the living room, staring at them with wide smiles. Cressida tossed a beer to Johanna and smiled widely, her eyes filled with mischief. She then tossed Katniss a beer. "Shall we?"

Johanna grinned. In unison they all yelled, "One, two, three, FIRE!" They went scattering around the room. Katniss stood there in confusion and decided to just follow Johanna. "No! Do not follow me! Go stand by that lamp."

"What?!" This made no sense to the girl as she tried to figure out what was happening.

"Lamp! Now!" Johanna pointed to a lamp next to the couch and Katniss ran to it, still confused. The three opened their cans and took a drink, so she did the same.

Finnick was standing next to another lamp. "Ladders up!"

"I don't understand!" Katniss yelled out over the noise.
"Hold out one to five fingers!" Cressida stuck three fingers out in front of her and started looking around. Katniss put two, Finnick put five, and Johanna put three as well. "Jo, drain the fire hydrant." With this, they both chugged their cans to empty and threw them in a paper box next to the chimney. They grabbed new drinks from the coffee table.

This homemade game went on for a couple of hours before they were all wasted and lying on the floor, trying to hold incoherent conversations during a sluggish game of truth or dare. Cressida tapped Johanna on the shoulder. "Truth or dare?"

"Dare, as always." Johanna smirked with sly eyes.

"Okay." She paused for a moment, obviously collecting her drunken thoughts. "I dare you… to strip down completely… and run a lap around… the outside of the building… while wearing THE FIRE HELMET!"

"Good one!" The small, drunken girl stood up and stumbled over to the firefighter helmet hanging over the fireplace. She put it on her head and started stripping as she made her way to the door. First her shoes and socks, then her shirt and pants. Katniss stared at her muscular back as she pulled her bra off before her eyes drifted south towards Johanna's now naked butt. She wanted to run her hands down that smooth skin.

Cressida and Finnick stood up and followed Johanna, laughing the entire time. Katniss stayed on the ground until they were gone before getting up on her hands and knees to crawl towards Johanna's bedroom. Surely the girl would not mind her sleeping in there one more night. She yanked herself onto the bed and lay face down, inhaling the scent of pine as her head spun from the alcohol.

The three drunkards busted back into the apartment minutes later, still laughing. "Kat!" Johanna's voice rang through the apartment until she walked into her bedroom, the click of a closed door behind her. "Katniss..." She crawled on top of the girl and started kissing the back of Katniss neck. The intimacy made the hair on the back of her neck stand where the warm lips touched. A pulse ran from her chest to stomach and down between her legs.

"Aren't you too drunk?"

"I am neverer too drunken to have sex." Her words slurred as she felt up Katniss' back, running her nails lightly across the goosebump covered skin. Katniss sighed and rolled herself over to look up at naked Johanna, who instantly slammed their lips together.

Their tongues met, Johanna's energetic until just a minute later when she stopped. Katniss moved her head away to find that the girl had fallen asleep. "Jo?" There was no answer. "Jo?" She nudged the sleeping body and only received a deep sigh in return. "Okay, come on. Let's just get you in bed." As Katniss went to move, Johanna woke up a bit.

"No, no. Let's do thissss." Her lips formed together signaling a kiss but she was out once again before even making it to Katniss' lips.

"Okay. Sleep." The brunette moved from under the shorter girl and shifted her around until she was under the covers with her head on the pillow. When she climbed back in bed, Johanna moved towards her and swung a leg over Katniss. Her face was now pushed into Katniss' shoulder and an arm was flung over her body. Light snores and sighs exited the girl, which made her smile in amusement. Johanna was actually adorable and loving when she let her guard down. It was Katniss' favorite thing about her.
The next morning was rough but easily cured with several glasses of water and the sticky buns bought the previous day. Katniss joined Cressida in the living room to watch television and nap off the headache. Johanna slept until a few hours before their shift started. They all freshened up with showers and a light meal of leftovers before heading over to the station.

It was colder than the day before, leading Johanna to put her yellow turnout pants on to stay warm while taking care of the engine. She had on her long sleeve navy blue station shirt with her red suspenders on to hold up the pants. Katniss could not help but stare at the girl as she worked silently; it did not help that their night was cut short due to Johanna falling asleep.

Her mental undressing of Johanna was cut short when the station alarm went off. She sighed with exhaustion and mentally vowed to no longer drink with the three fire fighters she'd come to call friends, one more so than the others.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter is a bit rushed, I know. It was hard to get through but I needed a bit of a development link outside of workplace for them. Thank you for waiting so long between updates! I apologize for neglecting AO3 a bit.

Thanks for all your patience! And as always, reviews are always welcome. Also, you can find me on tumblr at d7victor.
Within a month, Katniss had moved into the empty room across from Johanna and settled into a routine. She and Johanna had become inseparable. They napped together at the station and on off days they played video games or curled up on the couch to watch television. Unless there was a sports game on, then Katniss watched Johanna sit on the edge of the couch and yell.

But, despite their closeness, there was something saddening about it all. Johanna never asked Katniss out. She would take her on dinner dates, cuddle with her while planting smalls kisses on Katniss’ neck, and they hooked up two or three times a week, but Johanna never asked her out. Katniss thought about this all the time and it was starting to frustrate her.

"Hey, you alright?" Gale's voice broke into her thoughts. They had stopped for lunch at a nearby gas station and were eating in the rig.

"I'm fine." She answered quickly and shoved the sandwich in her mouth, hoping to prevent talking about what she was thinking.

"Yeah, right. You were distracted the entire last call. What's going on?"

She chewed and chewed until it was impossible to do so anymore. "I don't understand Johanna."

Gale huffed to himself in bemusement. "None of us understand Johanna."

"You seem scared of her."

"Scared, no. Intimidated, yes. Before you came along, she would always rub her shoulder on me or wink at me, calling me gorgeous and a piece of meat she'd like to sink her axe into. Also, she was a lot meaner before you."

Katniss tried to hide her smile. Johanna was very open about sexuality, giving her an overabundance of confidence. "She was meaner?"

"A lot meaner. Haymitch made her go to anger management for a while and even that didn't work. We have had to replace the table downstairs three times in four years. She used to throw it across the room after returning from bad calls." He rolled his eyes and continued eating.

"Why has she calmed down because of me then?" Katniss was confused. Her own tension had calmed down ever since she started having sex with Johanna but Johanna had been having sex long before Katniss arrived at the station.

"You seem to be someone she cares about. She loves Finnick a lot. They are like brother and sister and will die for each other. It's insane how close they are. But she really cares about you."

"Is there a rule against dating in the workplace?" The words came out suddenly and Katniss immediately regretted them.

She could tell that Gale became tense at the question. "It is not encouraged."

"Oh." The conversation was spare by a call coming in over the radio. They immediately wrapped their sandwiches and made their way over to the location in a nearby neighborhood.
As they parked in the street and ran to the back of the rig to pull out the crash cart, Johanna and Finnick pulled up in the engine, lights flashing and no siren. Katniss always thought it was silly for a fire engine to attend to a non-fire situation but they do help. If the job became overwhelming, they could jump in as fellow medics.

The four made their way to the front of the house, knocking. The door opened swiftly and a young woman let them in. "When did she start showing symptoms of a heart attack?"

"Um, twenty minutes ago? She was complaining about chest pains and shortness of breath." The woman had obviously been crying by the crackling in her voice.

Katniss nodded, knowing that this was probably a false alarm. "It's okay. We will take care of your mother. What were you doing beforehand?" She entered the living room where the older woman lay on couch.

"We were cooking. We are trying to figure out an old family recipe."

Katniss kneeled down next to the couch and smile. "Ma'am, how are you feeling?"

"No need to call me ma'am, dear. Sae works just fine."

"Sae is a nice name. I'm Katniss. How are you feeling?" She started pulling out a stethoscope from her equipment bag.

"Oh, my chest hurts and it is hurts to breathe."

"I'm going to check your heart beat and lungs with this. Take as deep a breath as you can."

As Katniss quickly examined her, a quick beeping noise went off in the kitchen. Johanna made her way to the noise and looked up at the fire alarm. "This is about to die."

"Oh, I will have to get my husband to replace it." The young woman looked over at it.

Finnick chimed in. "No need. We can do that. Have you replaced the batteries in any of others?"

"No."

"We will go ahead and replace those ones as well." Finnick left to go grab batteries from the engine.

Katniss checked the woman's blood pressure and sighed. "Well, it looks like you are not having a heart attack. It seems to just be a good case of heart burn. It should pass in the next hour or so, keep relaxing, take some antacid, and drink lots of water."

"We are are so sorry to inconvenience you!"

"It is our job to make sure you are healthy and safe." Gale smiled at both of the women.

"Dear, not that I minded you checking on me but why didn't you let the handsome man do it instead?" Sae winked at Katniss, causing Gale to blush.

"No prank calls just to get him over here, okay?" Katniss winked back at her and they made their way to the rig and to the station.

Cressida was sitting outside, looking over paperwork. She didn't bother looking up from it. "False alarm?"
"Like most of them." Gale plopped down in one of the foldable chairs and unwrapped the rest of his sandwich from lunch.

They sat in silence of the station, only Cressida's humming occasionally filling the air. An engine approached and pulled into its garage spot. Finnick and Johanna climbed out of the monstrous truck, laughing at something.

Katniss watched Johanna walk to her hook on the wall and remove her turnout jacket. She placed her helmet over it and walked towards the table, catching eye contact with Katniss. Her lips formed a grin and as she walked behind Katniss, her fingers ran under the collar of her jacket, pulling it lightly in the direction of inside where she disappeared to.

She sat for a moment, trying to figure out if Johanna tugged on her collar because she wanted her to go inside as well. A minute of debating passed before finally deciding to follow. She walked in and Johanna immediately started pushing her towards her sleeping compartment.

Johanna shoved her into the room and locked the door behind her. Before Katniss had the chance to question what was happening, Johanna grabbed her by the waist and leaned against her, reaching up to plant her lips hard against Katniss'. The taller girl was taken aback but happily accepted the intimacy. She stepped forward until Johanna was pinned against the desk. Her hands absentmindedly moved to the suspenders as they kissed each other deeply. Johanna moved them so they switched spots. She yanked at Katniss' pants and pulled up her shirt, planting hungry kisses along her hip bones as she knelt down. Involuntary moans escaped her mouth.

Katniss looked down at the Johanna, who was slowly pulling down her pants, trailing the fabric with her lips. Goosebumps ran down her spine as one hand gripped on the ledge of the desk and the other at the back of Johanna's head. She squeezed at the soft hair more as the girl below started to move her underwear out of the way, each kiss getting dangerously close to her center. Her mind started to run off as she closed her eyes in anticipation. There was a loud beeping and overhead announcement blocking her thoughts though. Katniss' eyes snapped open at the realization that it was the station alert system going off.

"Are you fucking kidding me?" Johanna rested her head on Katniss' stomach and sighed in frustration. She pulled away to look up at the girl. "Duty calls." She stood up and pulled the suspenders back on, nearly face to face with Katniss. As she exited the room, she looked back. "Let's do this again sometime."

Katniss stared at the doorway while tucking her shirt back in and buttoning her pants. It was not fair that Johanna had this much control over her. In a strange way, she didn't mind it but her common sense was screaming for her to be careful.

"So, we are dealing with a bunch of drunken college kids?" Johanna confirmed over the radio.

"Correct. Should be a fun call." Cressida's voice was filled with sarcasm.

Finnick pulled up to the house and they both stared at the sight. It will filled to the brim with people holding cups and entertaining each other. There was a large bonfire lit in the large backyard. "Since when did house parties with bonfires start in the afternoon?" Finnick questioned as they stepped out of the truck.

"Hell if I know." Johanna slammed her door shut and looked over at the ambulance, admiring Katniss rushing around before heading into the backyard. Everyone started rushing away as they approached. "Who is in charge here?"
"I am. What's the problem?" A guy walked up behind them. "What seems to be the problem, Officers?"

Johanna turned and looked at him. "We are not cops, we are firefighters. The problem is that you have a noise complaint, meaning the cops are on their way here, and there is an oversized bonfire in your backyard that seems to have no permit. We ask that you put it out or else we will."

The young guy scoffed. "I'm not ruining my party by putting out my bonfire. We spent all morning building that."

"Then we will put it out for you and we will report to the cops that you failed to abide by the city laws and disobeyed the fire department." Her face was stern as they challenged each other.

"Hey! I got more kerosene for the fire. I think the canister is leaking though." Another student came walking up, holding a large container that was clearly leaking. Police sirens sounded in the distance. "Are you narcs? Did you just rat us out to the cops?"

Johanna closed her eyes to calm herself for a moment. "I have been standing here this entire time and not once called in on my radio. Are you really asking that question? Now, we are putting out the fire."

Everyone in the house started to rush out across the street and to their cars as the police pulled up to bust the party. As they walked to the front yard, a car came gunning down the street, colliding with another that was pulling out to get away. It was obvious that gas started leaking from the car that was crashed into and both of the firefighters pieced things together.

"Move the rigs!" Finnick called out, signaling to Gale that is was an emergency. He rushed to the engine while Johanna ran towards the cars. She looked down at the ground and saw trails of kerosene. There was a spark coming from the speeding car. The entire scene was now a ticking time bomb.

She yanked open the driver door and noticed he was unconscious. Her mind raced in several directions. The driver could have a neck injury but it was her job to get everyone out of the cars. She decided to leave him for last, instead opting to help the others while she waited for assistance. Johanna moved quickly, carrying and dragging the other students out of both the cars and to a safe distance.

Finnick finally arrived and helped her carry the driver out of the car, holding his neck steady while advancing towards Katniss and Gale. "Is that everyone?" Finnick looked around and made eye contact with the only unconscious victim. She started to glance around frantically. "Are we missing someone?" She nodded. "Where are they?"

"The trunk."

"The trunk?"

"We didn't have any more room in the car so he crawled into the trunk."

Johanna did not waste time by adding a comment about their stupidity. She ran towards the car as fast as she could. "Mason!" Cressida's voice yelled out. Flames were starting to grow under the car but that did not stop her. She got to the trunk and tried to open it but it was locked. Her mind buzzed. There was little time left until an explosion. Then it clicked. She rushed to the front of the car and fumbled around the front seat until finding the lever to pop the trunk open. Johanna rushed back and lifted the door. A teenager stared up at her with absolute fear in his eyes. She grabbed him by the front of the jacket and dragged him out of the trunk, not bothering to be gentle.
With little effort, Johanna picked him up over her shoulder and started running from the cars. "Mason! Get down!" She did as Cressida said. Johanna threw the teenage boy down and jumped on top of him, covering his body with her protected one. One of the cars exploded and the sound made her ears ring and back burn from the heat. Shrapnel fell around them, once piece cutting through her turnout jacket sleeve. Once it was safer, she stood and picked the boy up, running the rest of the way to the station's EMTs.

Johanna sat down and tried to control her breathing and calm her shaking body. Cressida rushed over to her. "Mason, are you okay?" She simply shook her head as she continued to gasp for breath. "We need an oxygen mask, now!"

Katniss stormed through the common area and right into Johanna's firehouse compartment. She walked over to the girl and ripped the pillow from under her head. "What is your problem?" She pelted the pillow on top of the girl's stomach.

"What is your problem?" Johanna glared up at her.

"I watched you run towards a flaming car that was about to explode and it exploded when you were barely far enough away from it. What is your problem?" She knew it was ridiculous of her to ask.

"It is my job to save people. That kid would have died." She sat up, rubbing her sore eyes.

Katniss picked up to pillow and hit Johanna again with it. "You could have died!"

"You are yelling at me because I could have died?"

"Why wouldn't I being yelling right now? What if you died? What if I had to drive you to the hospital in a body bag?" Tears filled Katniss' eyes as she sat down on the bed in defeat. Johanna pulled her into her arms and leaned back, holding her tightly. Katniss cried and she pounded her fist into Johanna's shoulder. "I hate you so much."

Johanna chuckled softly. "Yeah, yeah. I hate you too, brainless." She held onto Katniss until the both fell asleep until the next alarm.

As the shift ended, Haymitch called both Cressida and Johanna into his office. They sat down in the two chairs opposite his desk. "Okay, let's make this quick." He sat down and started shuffling through a few folders. "I am coming up on my retirement soon which means I need to find people to move up. Cressida, I want you to become the new station Chief and Johanna, I want you to become Cressida's replacement as Incident Commander. What do you two think?"

Both of the women looked over at each other in shock. Cressida nodded. "I accept the offer."

Johanna grinned with pride. "I also accept."

Chapter End Notes

I hope you are all getting ready for a big thing to happen. Consider this a warning to start stocking up on tissues. Will it be good or bad? Well, I can't tell you that much.
Reviews/feedback are always welcome! Cheers! :) 
Find me on tumblr at d7victor.
Katniss entered the apartment to find Johanna fast asleep on the couch, with one arm over the side and the other behind her head. The remote to the TV rested on her chest and moved up and down with her heavy breathing. Her mouth was slightly open and light snoring sounds filled the room. Katniss smiled to herself as she put the groceries down in the kitchen. Johanna was always tired now. Between new job training the past few months, her actual job, and helping Finnick and Annie with their upcoming wedding, the girl was spread thin.

Cressida's bedroom door was closed, meaning she was there and likely napping as well. Katniss hummed to herself while she put the food away, making it quick so she could crash on the couch and choose what to watch before Johanna took over the remote again. She carefully picked the remote up from Johanna's chest before plopping herself down on the other couch. After a minute of channel surfing, she decided on a cooking game show.

There was stirring on the couch next to her and she looked over to see Johanna slowly stand up and move to the couch Katniss was on. Without really opening her eyes, she slowly lay stomach down on Katniss, pushing her face into the girl's chest. One of her arms wrapped around Katniss' back while the other lay limp over the edge of the couch, as usual. Small, sleepy groans sounded from her mouth.

"You are pathetic and adorable." Katniss ran her hand through Johanna's short hair on top of her head. She had buzzed the sides and cut it into a mohawk, mostly because the temperature outside was starting to warm up and the shortness helped her stay cool while on duty. Katniss was admittedly a bit shocked when she came home the previous week to find the originally shoulder length hair completely gone.

"No, I'm not." Johanna's soft mumbles were accompanied by a nudging of her head.

"Yes, you are."

"No. Stop it."

"Okay, fine." She stopped running her hand through Johanna's hair and pretended to go back to watching the show. It was only a short amount of time before Johanna grabbed Katniss' hand and placed it gently on top of her head, signaling for the girl to continue.

"I didn't mean stop that."

Katniss snickered and started playing with and twirling the small strands with her fingers, occasionally rubbing over the buzzcut peach fuzz on the side. The girl on top of her started breathing slowly and deeply, falling fast asleep again.

Moments like these were both the best and the worst. They were essentially dating but Johanna consistently refused to make anything official. Katniss had asked why repeatedly but it always ended in an argument. Johanna didn't want the attachment or anything that solidified her to a mold.

Katniss knew it was unhealthy to continue their friends with benefits routine. It was becoming emotionally draining but the physical benefits helped relieve her stress and anxiety from work. And in the fight between emotion and common sense, emotion always won. She thought about bringing it all up again this weekend after the wedding but for now, she watched the rise and fall of Johanna's breathing and slowly drifted off to sleep as well.

"Finnick. Calm down. I packed everything and Annie double checked." Johanna tried to push the
man out the door but he kept rushing around his apartment, second guessing everything. "Everything? Tooth paste?" He looked Johanna in the eye with complete seriousness. She stared right back. "Yes. Tooth paste, brush, floss, mouthwash. Everything except the bathtub and sink. Now, out the door and into Cressida's car downstairs." She grabbed his arm and dragged him out the door, immediately grabbing the keys from his hand and locking the apartment behind them.

"Jo, what if I-"

"No! Downstairs, now." He complied and began walking down the stairs to where Cressida and Katniss were already waiting in the car. Johanna had called dibs on the front passenger seat so jogged around to the other side of the car and jumped in, immediately adjusting the radio station. Finnick sat in the backseat with Katniss. He legs nervously shook as he stared out the window. "Hey, it's going to be okay." Katniss looked at him with a smile. "I hope so. What if she changes her mind?" The man chewed on his bottom lip in concern.

"Annie is not going to change her mind."

"Hey! If Annie changes her mind, I'll marry you instead. Simple as that." Johanna turned and looked into the back seat. She had a huge teasing smile on her face. Both Finnick and Katniss stared at her. "What?"

"Really, Jo?" Finnick shook his head. Johanna pulled her sunglasses off. "What? It was a joke. She's not going to change her mind. Have you seen how much that girl loves you? I'm pretty sure I haven't seen a day go by where you two were not together since meeting. If she could come to work with you, she would."

"Really?"

"Really. And calm down. You are going to have your wedding and get married to the girl of your dreams and have beautiful child and we are all going to hate you for how perfect your life is. Now, quit worrying and let's get out of town!" Johanna put her sunglasses back on and turned back around, cranking up the music.

Cressida finally got into the driver's seat after getting out to pack Finnick's bags in the trunk. She shook her head as she pulled the seatbelt across her. "Jo, what did I tell you about changing the station?"

Johanna grinned and rolled down the windows. "I already have to listen to you at work, what makes you think I can handle doing it out of work? Let's go! We have a wedding weekend to get to!"

She laughed and put the car in drive. "Okay, okay. We're going!"

It was the big day. Finnick was finally getting married. Johanna looked in the mirror as she tied to ocean blue and green striped bow tie around her neck. She pulled it tight and turned towards Katniss, who was putting on make-up. "How do I look?"

The brunette smiled. "Very nice. Except one thing…," she put down the mascara and straightened out the tie and shirt collar, then brushed off the girl's shoulders. "There we go."

"Thank you. Hair looks good?"

Katniss nodded as she looked at the carefully styled mohawk. "Yes, looks great."

"Okay, I'm going to go help Finnick now." Johanna gave Katniss a quick kiss on the lips. "Love you." She went to walk away but stopped dead in her tracks. Her eyes went wide as she turned around slightly to look at Katniss' reaction. She looked just as shocked but also slightly heartbroken. "I… I didn't mean… shit, look, I have to go help Finnick. Can this conversation wait?"

"It's fine. Go do your best man duties." Katniss ushered her out of the bathroom and out the door. Johanna walked down the hall and smacked herself on the forehead. She had managed to keep those words to herself for a while and inevitably they slipped out. And the look on Katniss' face shattered her to pieces.
Airy music filled the room after everyone seated themselves. The procession started, everyone smiling as they slowly walked down the aisle. Johanna ushered the maid of honor, both of them holding back laughter at something she said as they walked in. She winked at Katniss as they passed by and Katniss smiled. Johanna took her place just behind Finnick. They exchanged a few words that were obviously meant to ease his nervousness. Finnick clasped his hands behind his back as he stared at the end of the aisle. A soft, orchestrated piece began playing and everyone turned towards the end of the aisle. Annie walked into view and admiring gasps came from the crowd. Her brown copper hair fell over her shoulders in tight curls and the wedding dress flowed behind her, picking up slightly as she walked. Katniss looked over to see Finnick in tears. He wiped them from his eyes and smiled the biggest smile she had ever seen. Johanna also had a giant smile and glossed over eyes as Annie walked down the aisle with her father. At the end, he gave her a hug and a kiss on the cheek before sitting down with his wife. The soon to be married couple smiled at each as the Reverend began the ceremony.

Johanna stood at the front of the room and looked out at everyone. She lightly tapped the spoon in her hand against her glass to quiet the room, bringing the attention forward. She put the glass down and picked up the microphone from the table. "Alright, so Finnick asked me to prepare a speech but he should know by now that I don't really prepare for these things. So here goes nothing." Finnick sighed and shook his head while chuckling up at her. 
"I met Finnick a handful of years ago at the academy. We were instant friends and have been pretty inseparable since then. Then, one day when we stopped for lunch after a call, he met Annie. And she stole only some of his attention away from me." The crowd laughed, knowing that it was an obvious understatement. Johanna turned and smiled down at the couple. "I remember the moment when I knew you two were in love. We were in the city and you were just walking hand-in-hand in front of Cressida and I, and Finnick leaned over and planted a kiss on Annie's cheek without warning, and you two shared the most disgustingly sweet smile. And I thought that this is what it looks like to love someone, this is couple meant for each other. It was obvious that you two would be together forever. You are both amazing people with hearts of gold. And I cannot wait to see where you go from here. And I hope this is the worst day of your future together." Finnick immediately stood up and pulled Johanna into a tight hug. He kissed her on the forehead and they chuckled at each other. "You are wonderful, Jo."
"Thanks, I know. Don't forget about me, okay?" She winked at him. "You're too loud to forget."
"Don't be mean." Johanna tapped his arm and moved around to Annie, who gave her a tight hug and thanked her. She started to walk back to her table where Katniss was sitting and playing with the table cloth. Her dark brown hair was down and out of the usual braid, with some strands pulled back to keep them out of her face. Her make-up was simple, nothing too elaborate or overbearing. When she reached the table, Johanna bowed slightly and smiled down at the girl. "May I ask you to dance?" Music started up and everyone around them started walking towards the dance floor. "Come on, are you going to miss a chance to dance with me?"
Katniss smiled. "I guess not." She took the hand extended out to her and stood up, Johanna dragging her to the middle of the room. Finnick, Annie, and Gale soon gathered around them and they danced in a group, joking and laughing with each other. After a few songs passed, Johanna was grabbed by Finnick and the two started swing dancing, amazing everyone around them. And at the end of the song, they hugged and went back to the group as the songs slowed down.
"May I cut in, gorgeous?" Johanna grinned and raised her eyebrows at Gale, who was dancing with Katniss. His eyes widened slightly before he stepped back. "Yes." She stepped in and took Katniss by the hand to pull her.

Katniss rested her free hand on Johanna's shoulder. "When did you learn to dance like that?"
"When Finnick and Annie first started dating, he wanted to impress her. So, I took swing dancing classes with him so he would have a partner to learn with."

The brunette chuckled and shook her head. "You are adorable."
"Will you quit calling me adorable? You have started saying that a lot." Johanna continued to blush and avoided eye contact with the girl she held close.
"That is because you are." Katniss moved her hand from Johanna's shoulder and poked her lightly on the nose. "Very adorable."

The shorter girl wiggled her nose as she groaned in even more embarrassment. "What the hell was that?" Katniss did it again. "Stop." Johanna moved her head out of the way as she tried to playfully poke her nose again. "Stop, stop, stop. You're ruining the moment." She grabbed Katniss' hand and placed it back on her shoulder before pulling Katniss even closer. Their foreheads touched as they swayed slowly to the music, Johanna closing her eyes as Katniss hummed to the song.

"Things are pretty much done. How about we leave? You look hot as hell in that dress. I want to rip it right off your back." Johanna whispered into Katniss' ear, the smell of champagne and liquor clear on her breath. The words made Katniss squirm. She quickly gathered her clutch and started walking from the reception hall, Johanna following close behind. The night was about done and the only people left were those chatting after sending the newlyweds off.

They both waited silently at the elevator, giving each other side glances until the door opened. Johanna stood to the side so Katniss could get on first, but as soon as the doors closed, Johanna pushed the employee button so the lift would go straight to their floor. Katniss anticipated exactly what would happen afterwards and countered by grabbing Johanna's waist and pulling her close so her butt pressed against Katniss' thighs. There was a benefit to her being taller as her lips gently pressed against Johanna's right ear. "How bad do you want me right now?"

She could feel the shorter girl's body tense up and then melt with arousal. "You have no fucking idea."
"That's why I am asking. When we get to the room, you better be prepared to show me." Katniss moved her hand down Johanna's chest to her hips. She lightly pushed her away and admired the fact that Johanna looked completely taken aback.

The elevator door opened, Katniss leading the way to the room. They walked in and Katniss immediately grabbed Johanna by her shirt to push her down on the bed. She pinned her there, looking down at the set of brown eyes staring up at her. "It has been a while since we have played by my rules."

Johanna lifted her chin in contemplation, sizing Katniss up. She grabbed the hand pinning her down and pushed it out of the way. Katniss immediately fought for control again but Johanna got to her feet and rammed Katniss backwards into the desk directly behind her. They fought until Johanna was flipped around and bent over face down on the desk. Katniss held Johanna's wrists to the table top and leaned forward slightly. "Now, I was going to be nice and give you the comfort of a bed but if you would rather be bent over a table, we can do that too."

Johanna grinned. "I like this better anyway."

Katniss let go of one of the girl's wrists and reached around her hip, slowly unbuckling her belt. She watched Johanna's eyes close and her body rise and fall with deep breaths. Her pelvis pushed against Katniss' hand as she moved to undo the dress pants. Her fingers traced along the band of Johanna's underwear, pulling a soft moan from the girl. She purposefully moved her hand across from hip bone to hip bone. "Do I need to tease you at all?" Katniss asked, knowing that Johanna
was more than ready. It never took much in the first place. Johanna licked her lips. "No."
"No, what?"
She scrunched her face. "Why do you always do this?"
Katniss removed her hand from Johanna's underwear and leaned forward. "Because someone has to teach you manners, baby girl."
"Fuck." Johanna pushed her butt against Katniss, signaling that she wanted nothing more than to be touched.
Katniss grinned. "What is it? Do you want something?"
"Katniss… fuck. Please." Johanna opened her eyes and glanced over and up at the brunette gazing down at her.
The power trip made Katniss feel invincible. Majority of the time Johanna had the power but when it came to sex, Katniss could snap her fingers and Johanna would be on her knees and begging in an instant. Or bent over a table. It was a newfound glory of hers.
She pulled the pants and underwear down with force. Her eyes admired Johanna's smooth and muscular legs, as well as her nicely toned butt. Katniss' hand moved down Johanna's back and through her legs until she was running her fingers through her wetness.
Johanna emitted another groan as her hands gripped at the table top. Katniss leaned forward and ran her free hand through Johanna's short hair, gripping it tightly. Then she pushed two fingers into Johanna and used her hips to accent the motion, pushing them into and up against the girl. There was a thud from the desk hitting the wall but that didn't distract either of them as Katniss did as Johanna requested. "Grab on to the table edges."
Johanna did so, her knuckles turning white from the death grip. Katniss pushed and pulled harder and harder until it felt like the desk would break through the wall. She grinned as Johanna moaned and cried out in pleasure, her pelvis grinding against Katniss' hand.
"Fuck, Katniss… fuck!" Her hands found new gripping spots on the desk as she pressed her forehead into the table. Katniss tugged at her hair. Johanna's legs were starting to shake from the exertion. But the thrusting continued as much as the involuntary sounds that came from her.
Katniss' right hand moved from Johanna's hair and moved around Johanna's front, going straight for her clit. The moment her finger moved around it in a light circle, Johanna lost it. Her legs finally gave out but Johanna caught herself thanks to the hold she had on the table. She screamed various profanities, her body shaking as Katniss slowed down.
As she came down from her orgasm, Johanna opened her clinched eyes and tried to catch her breath. Katniss leaned over her. "I'm not quite done yet, sweetie."
Johanna stood up before Katniss grabbed her by the arm and turned her around, pushing her onto the bed. She sat up with her elbows propped behind her, taking in the view of Katniss slowly stripping off her heels, dress, and lingerie. Soon followed Johanna's shoes, pants and underwear before Katniss shoved her back onto the mattress. She straddled over the boney hips of the girl below.
Her fingers slowly undid the bow tie and buttons of the now wrinkled white dress shirt before pulling them both off. The front clasping bra was easy to remove. She looked down and her eyes were met with a pair of intense brown ones looking like they were willing to do anything. "Now how bad do you want to please me?"
Johanna's hands ran up Katniss' thighs, the light touch bringing Katniss to sigh. She pushed her hips up and rolled so she was now on top. Her face was just above Katniss'. "Let me take control now, I promise it will be worth it." She began to leave soft kisses down the girl's jaw and neck, moving slowly down her chest to stomach to thighs. She took her time, enjoying the tensing and shuddering of Katniss' body below her. Johanna's mouth kissed between Katniss' legs before her tongue began to pleasure her.
Katniss gasped as her back arched slightly from Johanna's tongue moving slowly around her clit. Her fingers ran through Johanna's short hair as she pulled her closer. Johanna responded with more movement of her tongue, pulling moans from this girl she worked on. She slowed and sped up and slowed again, feeling Katniss grind her hips as she moved towards orgasm. Her back
arched again and fingers gripped tighter at Johanna's hair while she gasped for air. As Katniss lay there trying to catch her breath, Johanna crawled up the bed and lay on her back beside her. She lifted her arm and Katniss instinctively rolled to her side and rested her head on Johanna's chest. Johanna wrapped her arm around Katniss' back and nuzzled her face against the top of the girl's head. They lay in silence, falling asleep slowly from the exhaustion and alcohol.

"Let's go take a walk on the beach. We have yet to go down there." Katniss looked up at Johanna and rested her arm across the girl's stomach. She ran her fingers across the bare skin, watching as it tensed from the contact. Johanna just laid there for a second before sitting up and running her hand through Katniss' hair. "We can go in the morning?"
"How about now? No one will be down there."
Johanna was still in silence for a moment, contemplating if she really wanted to get out of bed and put clothes on. She could feel Katniss holding back excitement though. "Alright, let's go." She pushed her legs over the side of the bed and used the momentum to stand up while Katniss hurried to get dressed. Johanna didn't feel like searching for new clothes so she just slipped on her dress pants and shirt from earlier, not bothering to tuck it in. As she rolled up the shirt sleeves, she watched Katniss pull on a loose fitting cotton dress. "You look cute."
Katniss looked at her with surprise and then blushed. "Thanks."
They made their way out of the room and down the hall, hand-in-hand. It was a quick path to the boardwalk, their room being on the first floor of the small beachside in. When they made it to the sand, Johanna took off her shoes and rolled the legs of her pants up while Katniss pulled off her sandals. "You know, I have actually never been a fan of the beach." Johanna put her hands on her hips and looked out towards the ocean.
"Really? Why?"
"The sand gets everywhere." Katniss started walking for the beach, turning around to look at Johanna, who eventually followed.
"You know what I have always wanted to do? Sit in a lifeguard stand." She made her way to the nearest stand and started climbing the ladder, sitting on the bench at the top. Katniss threw her shoes up to Johanna and climbed it as well, sitting down while Johanna pulled a flask out of her back pocket. She took a swig before handing it over.
"Why do you binge drink so much?" Katniss took a sip of the pungent liquid. "It feels cleansing. You know, cathartic and shit."
"That's not exactly healthy."
"Thank you, Miss Paramedic." Johanna leaned back against the railing and put her arm behind Katniss, pulling her closer. She looked out at the crashing waves. Katniss rested her head on Johanna's shoulder. It was strong and sturdy just like the rest of the girl. She felt Johanna's hand move slowly up and down her arm.
"Did you mean it earlier? When you said that you love me?"
There was a beat of silence. "Yes."
"Jo, I don't know if I can do this anymore. I can't handle you claiming to love me but not wanting anything more than sex and attention." Katniss sat up and pulled away, looking at Johanna with nothing but a serious expression. The girl simply stared back at her with a straight face.
"Okay."
Katniss looked at Johanna in disbelief. "Okay? Is that it?"
"Yes."
"You have nothing else to say?" Katniss was distressed and wondered how there were no other words.
"I just don't know what to say. There is a lot going on and I really didn't want to fight about this on my only weekend off in a long time."
Katniss started shaking her head. "Fine. Whatever." This was the end of her patience. For being a confrontational person, Johanna managed to avoid conflict at all cost, making excuses every time things got heated. She stood up and climbed down from the stand. "No more… whatever we are. We are done."
Johanna sat there staring down at her. "Kat, we can talk if you want to talk."
"No, you have nothing else to say so let's leave it at that. If you don't even want to try, then that is an obvious sign that we are done." Katniss stormed off down the beach and back to the hotel.
Johanna stayed sitting in the lifeguard's stand and looked back out into the dark abyss of the ocean. She took a few deep sips from the rum-filled flask. Her mind was racing from what just happened. It felt painfully like an actual break-up.
"Hello?"
A voice below caught her off-guard. She glanced down at a blonde haired girl. "Yeah?"
"I overheard that girl yelling and just wanted to come check up on you."
"Oh. I'm fine."
"Break-up?"
"Nope. Not technically, I guess."
The girl below started making her way up the stand. "Do you mind if I sit?"
"I guess not. Rum?" Johanna handed her the bottle when she sat.
"Name is Cashmere." The blonde took the metal container and took a few swigs.
"Johanna."
"And what do you do, Johanna?"
"I'm a firefighter."
Cashmere smiled and moved closer, placing her hand on Johanna's upper thigh, moving it slowly to the inside. "I love firefighters."
Johanna raised an eyebrow while looking down at the creeping hand. Her stomach twisted. The girl was attractive and before Katniss, Johanna would have already had her tongue down her throat. But even just thinking about that made her feel like she was betraying the girl she actually loved. "Look, you're hot as fuck but--"
"Oh, come on. You need some comfort, it's obvious. Let me be that comfort." Cashmere leaned forward and pushed her lips against Johanna's.
It felt oddly refreshing to feel someone else's mouth against hers. It wasn't the same feeling though; not the same taste, not the same perfect feeling. She suppressed the disappointment and stopped for a moment, her lips still grazing the girl's in front of her. "Are you sober enough to drive? Let's go somewhere else."

Chapter End Notes

Notes: this chapter was a bit difficult to figure out so apologies if it feels rushed. No worries, joniss is end game so you're not wasting your time if you came here expecting joniss. Just give it a little more time.

Reviews are very much welcome. Thanks for continuing to read!
Burn Out

Chapter Notes

Note: Major Character Death.

(This was super difficult to write and I apologize in advance. It's for the benefit of the plot though. Don't blame me, blame Suzanne Collins!)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

In hopes to gather her clothes and belongings, Katniss opened the door to Johanna’s room but was immediately taken aback when she saw another girl lying naked in the bed. She looked from the girl to Johanna, mouth agape. Their eyes met as Katniss let out a scuff of disbelief. “That’s just fantastic, Johanna. Fucking great.” She slammed the door shut and heard Johanna stand up while yelling several explicit sentences. Katniss stood in the hall and watched as the random girl darted from the room and apartment. She glared at the hungover girl, who was standing in the doorway, arms crossed and eyes glaring.

“What the hell was that, Everdeen?”

“What the hell was what?” She reached forward and grabbed Johanna’s shirt, pushing her into the room before slamming the door shut again. She then shoved her and sent the girl stumbling backwards. “What the hell was that, Jo? You’re messing around with other girls?” Johanna gave her a confused look. “We’re not dating. And if we ever were, you specifically said so last night that we were done… so why does it matter?”

“Because it does! It just does.”

“You knew this would happen. And you have known since the first night we hooked up.” Johanna took a step towards Katniss but Katniss only shoved her away again.

“No. You don’t fucking move! Let me tell you why it matters: it matters because I love you, Jo. And I know you love me as well. You have said it under your breath so many times when you thought I was asleep and it breaks my heart every time I hear it. And you’re fucking scared because you don’t want someone to miss you if you died in a fire like your family. Well, guess what, shithead? There are several people who would miss you. You don’t have to be in a relationship for people to care about you!” Tears were running down Katniss’ face as she took a deep breath.

“Kat, it’s not-,”

“You shut the fuck up and let me finish!” Katniss felt deep internal satisfaction when Johanna left her mouth open in shock. “I don’t want to be the girl that you parade around because you’re fucking her. I’m not your trophy. I’m not your puppet. But do you really care what I want? Do you ever consider if I want to be the girl you parade around because you simply love me? Because that is what I want! And I’m tired of going along with what Johanna Mason wants because that’s not putting me first and I’m tired of always putting others before myself. So we are going to do it my way now: either we are dating and in a relationship or this friends with benefits shit between us is done. Now figure out what you want and you better mean whichever one you pick because it will be your final answer.” Katniss stormed from one bedroom to the next, shutting and locking the door, immediately falling into a crying heap on the floor. She knew what she had become part of when they first started but it wasn’t what she wanted, not anymore.

The worst part was that Johanna wanted the same thing. They both wanted to be together, to only be with each other. To actually be the couple they already acted like.

She secretly hoped Johanna would come to the door but she never did. There were several loud noises in the common room and a loud shutting of the apartment door. Johanna had left and they
didn’t talk the rest of the day. Before Katniss knew it, she was heading to the station to get her shift schedule changed.

Three weeks came and went and Katniss and Johanna moved around each other like ships in the night. If they were in the same room, they silently acknowledged each other’s existence but made zero contact, not even the slightest hello. This was not what Katniss had wanted but maybe the silence is what she needed to think everything through.

It was rare to be in the other’s presence though with their different shifts. Right now, Johanna was at work, probably looking hot in her turnout gear while Katniss sat on the couch at home in her sweatpants, watching an overrated drama series she had never heard of and eating handful after handful of popcorn.

It was getting late and she began nodding off to sleep before her phone went off, jolting her awake. Her blurry eyes tried to focus. The station. She answered quickly. “Hello?”

“Everdeen, this is Chief Abernathy. You are on call and we need you right away. Large fire. Hurry to the station, Hawthorne will be waiting.” His voice sounded rushed and distracted with paperwork shuffling in the background.

“On my way!” She jumped up and changed into her work clothes before darting out of the apartment.

The fire was spreading quickly. Flames stretched high into the air as firefighters on the roof cut out vent holes. Fire roared from every part of the multiple buildings it spanned across. It moved violently as it caught the wind.

Cressida spoke into the radio because the scene was too loud for face-to-face conversation.

"Looks like a basic Class A but it is spreading fast. We have been assigned side A of the building. You need to be quick. We will be getting the hose laid and ladders raised for when you exit. Questions?"

Johanna placed the helmet on her head and tightened the inside fitting crank. "None. Ready to go."

"Okay, get to it."

"Roger." Johanna and Finnick took off as Cressida began directing the crew on hose lay.

"Charge the paddles!" Katniss instructed as she pushed rhythmically on a woman's sternum. Once the electrified paddles were ready, she took them in hand. "Clear." Everyone took a small step back at the signal. The paddles shocked the woman and brought a pulse back. It was weak but it was there. "Get air assistance on her. Keep her steady until you get to the hospital." She jumped out of the bus and shut the doors hard behind her, walking to the next person who needed assistance as it drive off.

The fire was the largest one Katniss had ever seen. The roaring noise it made was enough to raise the hair on her arms, as well as the crashing sounds coming from the inside, which she assumed was the building collapsing in on itself. People with scrapes and bruises stood around the scene, staring at what was once their home. Katniss frowned at she witnessed families crying with each other.

But, there was no time for looking anymore. The radio signal started going crazy and screaming came from the other side of the device. Everyone outside started looking around at each other, wondering who the screaming was coming from. All of the firefighters and medics were accounted for. Then the voice became clear on the radio and panic surged through Katniss.

“Johanna!” She sprinted towards Cressida. “That’s Johanna! Where is she?”

Cressida looked around and realized that Mason and Odair were not in their assigned locations. Horror ran across her face. “Oh no.” She picked up her radio. “We need a rescue team on side A stat.”

"Ladder 7, Mason and Odair, you are clear to enter. Look for signs of cause and any victims. Stay alert." Cressida's voice crackled over the radio.

"Roger." Johanna grinned at Finnick as they both hastily threw on their tanks. "So, Annie is really
"pregnant?"
"Yeah. She told me this morning when she came by the station for lunch. We go to the doctor in a few weeks to get her first check-up, make it all official." Finnick's eyes were brighter than ever, something Johanna thought impossible. The stupidly large smile on his face was contagious as she found herself smiling too. Annie and Johanna were not great friends but she was willing to be close to anyone of who made Finnick so happy. "How are you and Kat?"
Johanna sighed and shook her head. "We are still not talking. I really fucked up but it's not my fault, we are not actually dating. I love her, I really do, but I don’t know if I can do a relationship. It’s been years and I don’t exactly have a great track record."
"You know, every moment is a perfect moment to say I love you to someone." He looked at her with sappy eyes.
"That is disgusting." She grabbed the axe from its handles in the engine cabinet.
"I love you, Jo. I hope you know that. You are the second love of my life following Annie. The sister I never had." He grabbed his axe from the cabinet.
"I love you too, Finn. You're the brother I got to have." They smiled at each other for a moment, taking in their friendship before pulling the breathing masks on. "Two in."
"Two out. Always with you." Finnick responded in conscious habit as they clanked their axes together before walking into the building.

The entire thing radiated extreme heat as they stepped in. The sound of the fire inside was deafening. They both turned their radios up in order to hear each other and Cressida.
"What in this building could have caused such a hot fire? Imagine the flash point given this much damage." Finnick stepped into a room to the left, Johanna following close behind. They inspected the room for any stranded people. “All clear.” The pair moved from room to room until there were none left at the end of the hallway. No stranded victims were found and they couldn’t make their way up the stairs because they were already unstable. “Let’s get out of here before something-,”
A loud cracking noise was heard as they exited the last room back into the hallway. The pair looked up with curiosity. There was a banging and then crashing sound in the space above them. Before Johanna knew what was happening, Finnick hustled towards her and pushed her out of the way.

They were both slammed to the ground. The impact knocked Johanna’s breath and vision from her. She blinked her eyes rapidly in hopes to focus them but there was only dizziness. She sat up slowly, screaming as a sharp pain shot up and down her left leg, sending her to lay back down in writhing agony. With as much care as possible, she propped herself up on her elbows and looked down at her leg, instantly gagging at what she saw. It was broken and the bone could be seen pushing against her skin. Johanna looked to her right.
"Finnick!" She reached over as far as she could and pushed his arm frantically. “Finnick! Are you alive?” He moaned in response. Her hands were shaking as she rushed to turn on her radio.
"Engine 7, 10-53. Engine 7, 10-53. Help!"
There was no answer, just static noise. Johanna looked over at Finnick as he stared back at her. Then she looked up at the ceiling, noticing a fire moving in the upstairs room and making its way towards the opening. Her heart started pumping with fear and anxiety. The thought that this was the day she was going to die scared her. And if she could get herself unstuck, there was no way she was leaving Finnick behind. She pressed the radio on again. "Engine 7, 10-53. I repeat, Engine 7, 10-53."
There was more static noise but Johanna ignored it when she realized Finnick’s breathing apparatus was pushed off his face. She reached over and started fumbling with the mask. He was starting to struggle under the wood, obviously wanting to escape. "No, no. Stop. If you move you will make it worse. We will get you out of here." She looked at his tank and realized the tube was sliced, making it useless. The fire started picking up above and around them, sending her into panic. Finnick seemed to not be fully aware of his surroundings. "Okay, okay." Johanna sat up slowly and yanked her tank off. She pushed it closer to her partner, carefully placing the mask over his face. She then carefully unbuckled his tank and pulled it off of him so he could lay completely back.
"Johanna, you have to go." The eyes previously filled with happiness before were now looking at her in complete fear.

"No! I'm not leaving you, you idiot! I don't have a choice anyway." Johanna lay down on her back again and watched the fire above grow a little more. She couldn't let them die by not trying to escape. And given the radio situation, there was likely no one coming to rescue them. Her eyes looked around as her hands moved along the ground, eventually finding her axe. She sat up and bit her bottom lip in pain when she accidentally tried to move her leg. With all the effort she could muster, she lifted the axe and sent it splintering into the wooden beam.

She yelped again as pain shot through her leg. But she pulled the axe out and sent it back into the wood, holding back her urge to scream again. The bone in her leg could be felt moving against her skin and nerves, making her feel nauseous. The chopping continued though. She had to get them both out of there.

"Finnick! Talk to me! Are you alive?"

"Yes." His voice was weak. "When you get free, just leave."

"No." She threw the axe blade into the wood. "We are partners. I am not leaving you behind! Two in, two out!" The beam started to give way and with one more chop, it was broken in half. Johanna used her axe as leverage and heaved the beam off of her leg. Her entire left leg felt useless as she rolled onto her stomach and used her right foot and hands to jump up.

"Johanna! LEAVE!" Finnick’s voice was demanding over the noise of the fire above them. It was amazing that he even had the strength left to get that loud.

Once standing on her right leg, she hopped carefully around Finnick and to the other end of the beam. "I'm going to get you out of here!" She grabbed her radio. "Engine 7, 10-53."

Johanna did not understand how the radio could be dead. She lifted the axe and sent it flying into the wood, but immediately lost balance and fell onto her bad leg. A blood curdling cry projected from her as she slumped over.

"Johanna, stop." Finnick's fingertips grazed her elbow.

"No." Johanna pulled herself back onto her right knee with the help of the axe stuck in the beam. She sat down with her legs open in front of her for balance. Her shaking hands pulled the tool from the beam before she started chopping again.

Johanna hit the wood repeatedly. The air started really filling with smoke, causing her to start coughing and for her eyes to start stinging. She stopped working and grabbed for Finnick’s tank. The masks fit larger than hers but she only needed something to keep her face from burning. A little bit of air flowed through it, which helped her regain her breath before going back to chopping furiously. With every hit came a rush of shock through her lower leg.

Finally, the wood gave way and with every ounce of strength she could muster, Johanna pushed it off of Finnick. She was no longer thinking but reacting with pure adrenaline. "Take a few deep breaths." Finnick did as asked before she removed the masks from them both. What was coming next needed as little extra weight as possible.

Finnick was moving in and out of consciousness as Johanna propped him up and sat behind him, one leg on each side. She put her left arm under his left armpit then reached up to grab the right of his coat collar.

Johanna bent her right leg and placed her foot on the ground then reached behind her as she kept sitting up. In one motion, she pushed with her foot and pulled with her arm. They moved along slowly but made it to the entry foyer just feet from them. Her vision was twisting and turning from heat and exhaustion. She pressed the button on the radio. "Help! Fucking help! Please save us!"

No one could hear the yelling and she knew that. Her eyes moved to the fire following them. The flames were pulsing. Her body felt like it was starting to fail her. Every muscle ached; her vision started to move in and out.
Finnick rested his hand on her own that gripped his jacket collar. “Finnick?”
“Jo.” His voice was no longer his own. It was weak and filled with no life.
“I’m sorry.” Johanna was shaking with fear.
“Why?”
“I couldn’t get us out of here.”
He tapped her hand lightly before grabbing it with a weak hold. “Take care of Annie.”
“Don’t say that.” She coughed from the thick air before realizing that Finnick’s grip was now loose. “Finnick?” There was no response. In panic, she grabbed his collar again and started pulling them closer to the door. Just feet away, her body finally gave in completely and her vision went completely black. Her hearing followed soon after.

Johanna woke up gasping for air. She tried to move but her body was strapped down and her head immobilized. Panic surged through her as she tried to pull away. Suddenly, there were faces looking down at her.

“Johanna, it is fine. We are about to put you in the ambulance and take you to the hospital. Johanna?” The medic talking to her was from another station and she had no idea who he was. Her eyes were wide in panic. “Finnick. Finnick!” Her voice broke. She tried to move her head and look for her partner but it still wouldn’t turn due to the holders. “You bastard, do not leave me! You cannot leave me! Finnick!” The crash pad was moving when she heard “vital signs not good” in the distance. “Finnick! Where is he? I need to see him!”
“Johanna. Calm down.” Katniss’ face appeared over her.
“Where is Finnick?” Johanna stared wide-eyed up at the girl but did not recognize who she was, likely from distress rushing through her.
Katniss looked down at her. “He is right over there. It is best you don’t—“
“I need to see him!”
“No, you really shouldn’t.”
“I NEED TO SEE HIM!” Johanna screamed at her, wild with panic.
“Get her in there quick before she goes into shock.” Katniss disappeared as the crash pad lifted into the ambulance.

“His pulse is going down!” Katniss yelled as they loaded the man into the back of the rig. She resumed CPR as another medic climbed into the ambulance with her. He immediately went to using the manual air compression bag to provide air to Finnick. “Charge the paddles.” Katniss looked at him and then the screens covered with Finnick’s stats.
“Clear.” The blonde waited for her to lean back before applying the paddles to the firefighter’s bare chest. Katniss continued her rhythm before, noticing the pulse did not change.
“It’s going to be a quick fifteen minute drive so hold on!” Gale climbed into the driver’s seat and started the engine, quickly flicking the lights and sirens on.
“Can you make it any faster? It looks like we don’t have fifteen minutes.”
“I will see what I can do! Katniss, this is Peeta. He is from our home as well and just finished up academy. He will be at our station for training hours.”
Katniss glanced up. He smiled at her. “Sorry this is how we have to meet.” His words were soft but she looked back down at Finnick without saying a word. She could honestly care less about a boy named after bread right now.

Within ten minutes, they pulled up to the hospital. Gale opened the doors and they pulled the pad out of the rig, handing it off to several nurses and doctors. Katniss followed them so she could relay any information on the man. They turned through several hallways and ended up in a large room where they worked on him in hopes to revive his heartbeat. Despite the efforts, it flat lined and his entire body shut down.

Katniss trotted after him. “Excuse me?”
“Yes?” He turned around to her and looked down in minor frustration.
“Do you know anything about Johanna Mason? She is the firefighter that came in here earlier from the same scene.”
He sighed. “I do but I cannot tell you anything about her.” The man turned to start walking again but Katniss stepped in front of him.
“Look, she doesn’t have any family. And her best friend just died in there and I’m one of the only people left in her life. Please, tell me her condition.” Katniss stared up at him. She was beginning to lose her patience.
“It is confidential information. You should know that I cannot tell you anything about her. Now, please move aside, I have other patients to see.”
“No. She was my patient on the scene and if you refuse to tell me anything about her condition, I’m going to report you for not providing a fellow care provider with vital information.”
He rolled his eyes. “You can’t do that.”
“You want to bet?” She was very much unsure if she could but she was not about to let her bluff become evident. Her gray eyes pierced his glare down at her.
He glanced around before leaning in slightly. “She is in surgery for her leg. It looks like we will be able to save it but it is going to be awhile before she can walk without assistance. Johanna is also in critical condition but she is stable. Her surgery should be done in a few hours. Come back then and I will make sure you can get into her room. Good enough?”
“Yes. Thank you.” Katniss walked around and breathed deep to keep herself calm. The doors to the ambulance bay opened as she glanced up at Gale. She shook her head before climbing into the back of the ambulance, sitting down on the bench. Her body doubled over and a wailing cry emitted from her. Tears pushed from her eyes as she felt a tight embrace around her.
“Katniss, breath.” Gale pulled her close. She struggled against him a few times, wanting to not be near people but after a minute it started to be exactly what she needed. Her body shook as she began to sob. “Kat, calm down. You’re sending yourself into a panic attack.”
“I couldn’t save him.”
“This is not your fault.”
“I couldn’t save him and Johanna may not make it either!” More sobs followed as she started to shake even more. Gale stayed with his arms wrapped around her though.
“It is going to be alright.” He pulled her head into his chest and rocked her lightly back and forth in hopes to calm her.

Johanna’s eyes flickered open. When the bright light flooded her vision, she closed them tight before slowly opening one after the other. Her head pounded; feeling nothing but nauseated as she looked around the room. To the left were a couple of machines, lightly beeping and constantly updating with numbers. She sighed as she looked down at the IV in her arm then down to where a cast enveloped her left leg up to her thigh.

Everything was sore. Bruises covered her arms and likely her blanketed legs. Her chest hurt when she inhaled and a small wheeze sounded when she exhaled. It didn’t help that the back of her throat felt that it had been rubbed raw with sandpaper.
As Johanna started to wake up more and become aware of her surroundings, she noticed a warm pressure on her right. Katniss lay there asleep at her side, her face pushed into Johanna and arm draped over her stomach. Her hand moved some stray hairs from Katniss’ face which startled the girl awake. She sat up to look at Johanna, relief in her eyes. “Johanna! How do you feel? Are you okay?” Her voice was filled to the brim with panicked.
“I’m fine.” The voice that came from Johanna was not hers. This was hoarse and deep, the opposite of her usual higher-pitch.
“You should try to keep from talking too much. The inhalation of smoke and the tube they had to use during surgery have probably made your throat sensitive and-,”
“Everdeen. Please… stop talking.”
Katniss stopped respectfully and looked down at the sheets. “I’m sorry.” Gray eyes looked back up to see tears swelling up in Johanna’s.
“Finnick?”
The question they both dreaded had surfaced. Katniss felt the pressure of tears starting to form.
“Um, Finnick… he had severe internal bleeding and one of his lungs got punctured by broken ribs and the smoke inhalation was too much. He- He didn’t make it.”

Johanna’s shoulders shrunk. Katniss began to cry once again over the loss. She crawled up closer to Johanna, who opened her arms so she could hold her. Johanna buried her face in Katniss’ hair as she closed her eyes tight. “I’m not ready for this again.”

Johanna was released from the hospital that evening after several long breathing tests to confirm that she was able to handle the usually simple task. There was permanent damage to her lungs from the smolder and she had a cough to remind her. While they were at the hospital, Cressida had told Annie the news on the night of Finnick’s death. The recent widow broke into hysteries for several hours. Not trusted alone, Cressida had moved Annie into their apartment until she could go home with her parents after the funeral.

Annie, Katniss, and Johanna fell asleep on the couches after returning from the hospital. Katniss awoke to find Johanna laying half on top of her and half on the couch, the girl's hand gripping tightly to her shirt. There was a rattle of keys in the lock before she heard the door click shut. Cressida soon appeared in her vision. The woman looked rough, eyes red but her overall composure was collected. "I'm glad they both got some sleep. If you can get out from underneath Jo, I will take care of them and you can go wash up."

Katniss nodded. She slowly shimmied out from under Johanna and rolled off the couch to the floor. As she stood up, Cressida sat down and let Johanna rest her head in her lap, stroking the short dark hair. She walked to the bathroom and shut the door, immediately locking it and then turning on the shower. Her clothes feel to a heap as she tossed them on the ground. The hot water from the shower relaxed Katniss’ tense muscles but that didn’t help her feel any better. Her eyes stared at the tiled wall in front of her as the events of the past two days hit her. She had been so focused on Johanna and Annie's well-being that this was the first time she could process what had happened.

Finnick was gone. Not temporarily. Not on a long vacation or business trip. He was gone, for good. No more waking up to him cooking breakfast with Johanna at his side. No more of them joking around with each other. No more pats on the back or giant hugs. No more full-hearted smiles. No more of Finnick. There was nothing left except Annie and their child. Katniss’ breath picked up and tears fell from her eyes, sobs emitting loudly from her. If this was how she felt after knowing him for several months, she could not imagine how the others felt. Her chest hurt and she grew weak from lack of air. As her legs collapsed beneath her, pain from the fall rang through her body. Katniss just stayed sitting, pulling her knees to her chest as she leaned against the tile wall, water falling over her legs.

A knock came to the door followed by a jiggle of the handle. "Kat? Are you okay?"

She glanced at the shower curtain as the handle was jigged more followed by a rustling sound of someone picking the lock. The door was opened then closed and she looked up to see Johanna slightly pulling back the fabric blockade.

"Kat." Johanna immediately dropped her crutches and grabbed Katniss’ towel before hopping on one foot to the faucet. The water was turned off, leaving the medic shivering in the tub. "Come on, let's get you dried off." Johanna helped Katniss up, wrapping the towel over her shoulders. "Okay, just dry off, I'm going to grab some pajamas for you."

Katniss nodded and slowly did as instructed between sobs. She had missed Johanna. She had almost lost her. And she was scared it would happen again. What if she returned back to firefighting? What if she got caught in a fire again? Finnick was no longer around to save her life. As Katniss rubbed the towel over her, Johanna returned with a change of clothes then left again. She was quick to change before heading to her own bedroom where Johanna was waiting, sitting in the bed attempting to prop up her plastered leg. Katniss pulled back the covers and crawled across the mattress until she was lying on her side, her body flush with Johanna’s. Johanna leaned down and wrapped her arms around Katniss. "If you need to cry, then cry. Let it out. I'm here for you too." She whispered in her ear and kissed her lightly on the cheek. Katniss
began crying again and Johanna held her tight. Johanna's clothes were eventually drenched as she didn't move, comfortable at the familiar feel of each other. "I'm sorry." The girl whispered in Katniss' ear as she held her tight. "I'm so sorry." Katniss rested her hand on Johanna's arm, more tears escaping from her. This was not exactly how she imagined the two of them confessing their love for each other but it was sincere. "I'm sorry too, Jo."

"If I would have died or lost you after everything that has happened between us this week, I could never forgive myself. I'm so sorry." Fear was dominate in Johanna's voice as she rocked both of them gently. The words "I'm sorry" kept repeating softly into Katniss' ear. "I know and it's okay."

Katniss and Johanna sat in the front pew next to Annie and Finnick's family. Cressida and the entire station crew sat behind them but all kept a focused stare forward. Johanna, on the other hand, rested her forearms on her thighs and hung her head and stayed staring at the ground the entire service. The priest shared the words of encouragement; his father stated how proud he was; his mother stated how much she loved him; Annie was unable to finish her prepared speech and sat back down in tears. It was now Johanna's turn to speak.

There was silence as she stood and walked slowly with her crutches to the podium. Her eyes were red and swollen with bags hanging under them. Her body looked exhausted and out of everyone there, she seemed to be in the worst shape. Katniss wondered if she would be able to finish her speech, given her silence the entire time.

Johanna scanned the crowd and nodded. "I never thought I would see this day. Finnick and I always joked that if either of us were to die, it would be me first. And it always seemed right. He had the family, the perfect girlfriend at the time- now wife, and now a child on the way. I really had nothing but my career and I was the one most likely to do something so incredibly stupid that it was be the end."

Johanna stopped to take a deep breath. “Our first day of class together was one to remember. A lot of people talk about love at first sight, for us it was friendship at first sight. We were inseparable. We were partners from that day one. We both graduated top two of our class, with me getting one point higher than him on the test. To this day he was convinced I cheated or rigged the system but we all know it's just because I lucked out.” The crowd chuckled lightly and Johanna smirked for a quick second.

"I never really told anyone anything about my life until I met Finnick. He was the first person to listen to me. He was the first person to know I was suffering without even having to ask me first. He was the only person not scared of me. One night when I was 18, a few weeks before my first week of college, I came home from hanging out with friends to find my parents' house on fire and multiple trucks doing what they could to save it but there was nothing left. So I dropped out of college and enrolled in a firefighter training program. If I couldn't save my family, I could save others. Finnick joined because he wanted to, and I quote "lay some hose and play with cool things". But, despite the comment, he was bright and funny and level-headed and able to diffuse the most stressful situations. He helped me grow. He listened to me, he taught me as I taught him, he believed in me when I had no one else, and he brought me into his family. And truth is he joined because he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps. He wanted to make his family of firefighters proud." She looked at his parents and they nodded to her with smiles. "We were sister and brother." Tears began to fill her eyes. "I, um, haven't shared this yet but before we went into the building that night, he told me that Annie was pregnant. His eyes were filled with joy and he believed in me when I had no one else, and he brought me into his family. And truth is he joined because he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps. He wanted to make his family of firefighters proud." She looked at his parents and they nodded to her with smiles. "We were sister and brother." Tears began to fill her eyes. "I, um, haven't shared this yet but before we went into the building that night, he told me that Annie was pregnant. His eyes were filled with joy and he was the happiest I have ever seen him. Then he told me he loved me. That I was the second love of his life, following what I like to think closely to Annie." She winked at the girl and the whole room chuckled again. "He also told me that every moment is the right moment to let someone know you love them. At the time, I
laughed at how ridiculous he sounded but now I understand. But I am happy that I told him that I loved him right after that. So, if every moment is the right moment then I must say this: Finnick and Annie’s families, I love you. To my station, I love you. To the friends of Finnick that I have never met, I love you. And Katniss, I love you." Johanna closed her eyes and took several heavy breaths, wiping tears from her eyes. She then looked at Finnick’s parents and Annie. "When it comes to last words, those are the ones I will always remember. Finnick was a hero. He pushed me out of the way. He saved me. And I just wanted- I just wanted you to know that I did everything I could to save him. I tried my absolute hardest and I’m sorry that it- it- it wasn’t good enough." She closed her eyes again before staring at the sheet of paper in her hands, trying to hold herself together. "He was an amazing firefighter, a perfect friend, the greatest brother, and an extraordinary husband and he would have been the best father any child could ask for. Thank you for coming here today to honor him." She walked from the stage and Finnick’s father immediately stood to meet her. They shook hands and he pulled her in close to whisper some words to her. She nodded and thanked him before returning slowly to her seat. Katniss grabbed Johanna's hand and entwined their fingers tightly together. They looked each other in the eyes. “I love you too.” The brunette whispered while squeezing her hand. The service continued for another ten minutes before Johanna stood again, joined by Cressida and four other crew members. They each took a handle on the casket and walked slowly down the aisle, Cressida in front. Johanna was the only one not assisting in the carrying due to her injury. Everyone filed suit and when they left the church, they found people lined up along the street in support. The ceremony passed through the city. Nearby fire stations had sent crews in dress uniform to salute them as they slowly drove by. Bagpipers and a drum band marched ahead of the hurst, which was followed by the engine Finnick used to drive. Cressida sat in the drivers seat now with Johanna in the passenger seat. Katniss had squeezed with them and sat between Johanna and the door. They sat in silence by request of Johanna, who stared out the window the entire time. There was nothing left for them to say.

Chapter End Notes

So hopefully you all enjoyed this chapter, despite the sadness.

I appreciate all of the feedback I have been getting on this! Please continue to read and review; I promise I will start replying to your comments. :)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!