Losely based off bride wars and split into two parts. Katniss and Delly are best friends who force Peeta, Delly's little brother, to play groom with them in order to create their dream wedding when they are kids. Follow their story as promises are made, hearts are broken and wedding plans are destroyed causing a war between the two friends. PIPs. for The Language of Flowers.
August 1993.
I’m not very friendly. I insisted that school wasn’t necessary but daddy and mommy think it is. I’ve been here all day and now I just want to get home but the school teachers say we are in recess so I can’t go home yet.

“What’s up with you?” asks a big boy looking down at me.

I don’t answer because I don’t think he really wants to know so I just look down again and that’s when he pushes me. I fall back and it hurts really bad, so I get up fast and I’m ready to push him back when a blue eyed boy with golden hair stands in front of the other big boy and pushes him back. He seems to be very strong because I watch the bully stumble a little bit back.

“You can’t do that to girls!” blue eyed boy with golden hair tells him.

“You won’t tell me what I can do!” he says and that’s when he punches the little boy in the face. I see him stumble back with a hand on his mouth. I prepare to go on his defense when a girl stands up in front of us and looks at the other boy.

“You punched my brother?!?” she screeches and we all flinch.

“He pushed me first” he answers and I can tell that he is scared.

“Listen to me!” she yells as she punches him in the face and he falls to the ground. The girl immediately sits on the other boy’s stomach holding his hands down and resumes talking. “If you ever touch him again, I will tell the teachers and my mommy and my daddy and I am going to hit you so hard that you are going to regret it, okay?!” she asks and the boy can’t do anything else but to keep looking up at the blond girl with a dazed look.

“Are you okay Peety?” asks the girl turning around to where the boy is sitting now next to me. I kneel down and notice that he is bleeding.

“I’m okay” he says “Just get off Thom or you are going to get in trouble” he tells her slowly.

“Apologize!” she yells and the boy under her nods.

“I’m sorry Peeta” he says slowly and Peeta, as I know he is called now, only nods with what he tries to make a smile but he can’t really because he winces when his busted lip starts to bleed a little again.

“Are you okay?” Peeta asks me as his sister kneels next to us.

“I’m okay” I answer slowly. I want to tell him that I could’ve taken care of it but it seems ungrateful and besides I don’t want Delly to hit me too.

“Are you sure?” Delly asks. I can only wonder why she isn’t checking her little brother.

“I am” I nod and she gives a hand to me and the other one to Peeta.

“Come on”, she says and we start walking inside. “We are going to be friends” she tells me as we sit outside the nurse’s office waiting for Peeta. I just turn to look at her without saying a thing.

I don’t know if I want her to be my friend. I’m actually a little bit scared.
“Will you?” she asks me and I turn to look at her. I nod. “That’s good. Then you can help me take care of Peety too” she says with a smile. “My name is Delly Mellark and that one inside is my little brother Peeta Mellark”

“Like the bakery?” I ask and she nods enthusiastically.

“Yes! Yes! My mommy and Daddy own the bakery! You can come over and we can play and have tons of sweets and cakes…but we will have Peety to make them because I’m not good at that” she smiles.

“Okay” I answer. I think I will like this girl.

“Okay, I hope you know that we are going to be best friends forever” she says as she hugs me and I shrug awkwardly in her embrace. I don’t think so but I let her think it anyway.

June 1997.

“Come on, come on, come ooooon!” Delly is pulling Peeta’s arm as she makes him come upstairs into her room. We are playing wedding and we need a groom since she doesn’t want to be groom and I don’t either. She takes the list and checks where it says groom as we now have him. That’s a list we made a while ago it which it says all the things that we need to have the perfect wedding.

“But that is a girls game!” says Peeta walking in front of Delly.

“That’s why you will be the groom! So it will be a boys game too!” she tells her and even when I know that something like that won’t convince Peeta because he is too smart for that he nods and walks into the room smiling at me. I smile back.

It turns out that even though I am on a “phase” as mommy calls it in which I do not like boys and boys don’t like girls I really really like Peeta.

A couple of weeks ago Delly and I went with our mommies to a bacholette party or something like that…the mommies played games as Maysilee, my aunt, walked around with a white dress that made her look like a princess. She told stories of how she met her fiancé and my soon to be uncle Haymitch. It’s a story like one of those out of the fairy tales that Delly and Peeta’s parents read to us when I stay over. We decided then that we are going to find a prince too and get married in that same place where aunt Maysilee’s party was held and have a happily ever after.

Ever since that day we play wedding almost every day and we make Peeta our groom. We know we are going to have to find Delly a husband….we are thinking about telling Thom. I will marry Peeta. Or that’s the plan right now. Peeta does not object. He asked if he could make the cake and when I told him he could he agreed. So I’m going to marry Peeta when we grow up and we are all going to be together forever.


Delly fell asleep a couple of hours ago and that’s when I decided I would run and be alone. I want to be alone.

I still can’t believe that my daddy is gone.

The closet door opens and there is Peeta standing with my little sister Prim on his arms. His eyes are red rimmed and his cheeks blotchy but still he smiles at me.

“Prim’s been looking for you” he tells me and Prim turns around fast and extends her arms towards me. She hasn’t said a word since we told her that Dad has gone to heaven.
I take her in my arms as Peeta gives her to me slowly and looks to the floor. She hugs me fiercely and buries her face in the crook of my neck. I hear Peeta sniffing and I look up just as he is closing the closet door. “Peeta?” I ask him and he looks at me. “Will you stay with us?” I ask him and he nods entering the closet and closing the door behind him. He sits on the floor and places his arm around me.

I hear Prim’s even breathing and I know she fell asleep. I’m scared. That’s all I can think about. I’m scared of being alone. I’m scared of losing people. Now is my dad but…what if I lose Mom or Prim or Delly or…Peeta? What would I do? I don’t want anyone to leave. Can’t they stay with me…?

“Always” he answers and I turn to look at him. Did I say that aloud? “What?”

“I will stay with you, always” he answers and that’s when I feel it running down my cheek. The first tear I’ve shed since I found out my Dad was gone. “Don’t be afraid Katniss. I won’t ever leave you!”

Peeta hugs me tighter. I know Delly is my best friend and that Peeta is my friend by extension. I mean, all these years it’s been her who has been in charge of taking me to her home and talking and doing all those things girls do. Even when Delly is older than me she always finds the time. Peeta is there because Delly is. We are friends but we’ve never talked to each other without Delly in the room or anything so he telling me this breaks me.

I bury my face in the curve of his neck and shoulder and breathe in deeply through my tears. He smells like sugar and cinnamon and something that is just Peeta and I feel better. I feel comforted and like nothing can touch me here.

I don’t know how long it’s been when I finally stop crying. “Thank you” I tell him hoarsely and he shakes his head. “That’s what friends are for” he smiles.

“I don’t know how you knew what to tell me when I needed it the most” I tell him wiping my nose with my sleeve. “I just pay attention” he says slowly.

“So you saw…” I tell him and feel him nod.

“She is going to get better too…you’ll see…this can’t last forever” “I’m not getting married…” I tell him. “She’s…a mess Peeta and all because of being married to dad and us…and she can see him in me and that’s why she won’t look at me and I don’t know what to do!” I rush to tell him. I didn’t even tell that to Delly.

“Katniss…everything will get better. You will see. You are not alone…and stop thinking about marriage and kids…we are 12 for god’s sake!” he says and I smile because he is right but I don’t think how much I meant what I just said.

January 2006.

I walk the long hallway that leads to Peeta’s room. Delly is worried. Ever since they found out both their parents were gone he hasn’t talked to anyone or eaten or really done anything. He has been locked up in his room. I only saw him at the burial and that was it.
I can’t help but to think about that day not so long ago when he told me that he would always be with me. That’s why I’m walking down this hallway with a cup of tea with no sugar on my hand. As he has been with me through the years I plan to be there for him.

“Peeta?,” I ask as I knock on his door. I wait a couple of seconds but hear nothing. “Peeta, please?” I beg. I wait for another couple of seconds but when nothing seems to happen I open the door. I am going to be there for him whether he wants me to or no.

The room looks empty so I walk to the adjoining bathroom and notice that it is empty too. I turn around and look to the closed closet doors.

“Of course” I mumble to myself. I walk over to the closet and open the door. He is there and he has his eyes closed so I place to tea cup in the small table next to his bed and then get in the closet closing the door behind me.

I sit on the floor of the closet and notice the uncomfortable position in which he is sleeping. I position his head on my lap somehow and start stroking his hair. Tears continue to stream down his cheeks and I wonder if he is awake but I know he isn’t. I use my thumb to take the tears away and that is when he opens his eyes. They are red dimmed with dark circles under his eyes and a far off look.

“What are you doing here?” he asks in a whisper.

“This is my always” I tell him hoping he is going to understand what I’m trying to say. He nods but doesn’t move his head from my lap.

We stay there in silence. The only sounds in the small closet are his small whimpers and his ragged breathing. It hurts me to see him that way.

“You need to eat something or at least drink something” I tell him and he shakes his head. “Yes you do. Come on” I tell him but he clings to my legs.

“Please” he tells me shaking his head.

“We can lie back in the bed like this” I tell him as he sits.

We get out of the closet and sitting in the bed I pass him the cup of tea.

“Thank you” he says sipping the tea.

“My mom made it” I tell him and he nods. I take the opportunity to really look at him as he sits in front of me sipping the tea. It’s been a couple of days but his lack of sleep and food are noticeable. He looks pale and sick…and above all you can tell he has lost a couple of pounds.

“Thank you” he repeats and after taking what he seems to decide that is his last sip he places his head on my lap and closes his eyes.

It’s weird how my stomach flutters. This isn’t the moment to be feeling something like that so I push that feeling away and start stroking his hair while his eyes remain closed.

“How is Delly?” he asks.

“She’s cried a lot and is keeping herself busy…you know how she is” I tell him.

“I wanted to be strong for her. I didn’t want to cry…like you did. But I couldn’t…I’m not strong enough…”
“You are…you are just dealing with this in a different way Peeta…there is not a book written on how to deal with a parent death, you know?”

“I know…I just…”

“Shhh! You are not weak”

We remain silent until I hear his even and deep breathing.

The door opens and there is Delly standing in the threshold.

“Is he asleep?” she asks me and after Peeta’s opportune sigh I nod. “Thank God! He hasn’t slept a wink since…you know…he has nightmares that have been keeping him awake”

I look down at Peeta sadly. I understand what he is going through. I know how close he was to his parents. I know what losing one causes to a person I can’t even imagine what losing both of them can do to a person. I brush his hair off from his forehead.

“Will you stay with him?” Delly asks me her eyes glaze over. She looks exhausted.

I nod as I answer in my head: always.


“I’m worried” I tell her exasperated after she shakes her head.

“You are crazy! Marigold and James have been amazing!”

“I know James is…but Marigold…”

Delly shakes her head. Marigold and James are his aunt and uncle that became Delly and Peeta’s tutors. Since Delly wasn’t eighteen yet when her parents passed away; they needed someone to be in charge of them if they wanted to stay here.

A month after their parents died Marigold and James were named tutors and moved into their house. Mom was worried like I was at the moment but after meeting Marigold and James she felt relieved. They both were great people. It hasn’t changed in regards to James. Marigold is another story.

It’s not lost on me how she looks at Delly…and how differently she looks at Peeta. Ever since they moved here Peeta’s been different. He keeps his distance and is constantly alone in his room. Peeta has not been the same ever since his parents died. He acts all happy and friendly in school like nothing is wrong but it is a façade. I know it. Delly knows it.

“Why do you think there is something wrong? Peeta’s been weird since my parents passed away…he is acting weird now but it’s the same weird” she tells me as she continues scribbling.

“I saw bruises Delly” I tell her placing my hand on top of hers stopping her writing.

“She must have slipped or something you know he is clumsy” she says shaking me.

“Dell…you’ve been busy with all the things you have to do and with Thom so I understand if you haven’t noticed but…”

“Kat…you barely talk to Peeta or see him anymore…how could you have possibly…” she is right. After his parents died he locked himself up but he would still talk to me all the time. He
would tell me about anything or everything and even when it didn’t look to the outsider like we were friends we were. He turned into a Delly for me, a secret Delly…because the only people who knew of our close friendship were him and me.

“Girls” smiles Marigold from the door with a big smile. “Dinner is ready!”

“Thank you!,” Delly smiles standing up. “I’ll let Peeta know”

“No, he isn’t home. He is late...that kid!” she huffs frowning but she looks weird and I decide I’m not staying for dinner.

I can’t sleep thinking about Peeta. Even though I know it is really late and my mom wouldn’t approve I slip my shoes on and go out for a run. It’s midnight and it’s perfect because it’s quiet and there is no sound that can trouble more my thoughts than what is already troubling them. I jog in front of Delly’s house and I notice that the lights from the basement are on. I look back again because it’s really weird. All the lights in the house are off…maybe they forgot to turn them off. I jog over there and decide to turn them off from outside with the switch close to the door that leads to the basement. I remember how we used to play so much down there so their parents decided to put a door so we could get in from the garden too.

“That is not an excuse you worthless piece of shit!” I hear the loud voice and I look around wondering how is it that no one has woken up with how loud the voice is. Then I hear a loud crash and I run to the door looking through the small window next to it.

Peeta is on the floor and Marigold is standing in front of him.

“I told you!,” she spats as she kicks him hard in the stomach and Peeta squeezes his eyes shut. He doesn’t even make a sound. “Stand up! Be a man!” she says grabbing him by the collar of his shirt and scratching him as she pulls him up. He winces again but Marigold doesn’t seem to be fazed by his pain…it’s like it doesn’t affect her to see him in pain, like she doesn’t care…

She pulls him up again and I don’t know how she does it Peeta is tall and bulky so I know it probably is no small feat.

“I don’t want you to come this late ever again! Did you hear me? And least of all with the excuse of an art project…art…” she says with disdain picking up a canvas that is sort of shining…probably still fresh. “This is a piece of shit!” she yells at him and picking up a tube of paint.

“Please don’t!” sounds Peeta’s broken voice. He isn’t standing anymore…he is on his knees and his arms are around himself like he is preventing himself from falling to pieces.

Marigold just squishes the tube of black paint and starts smearing it all over the painting definitely ruining it. She laughs at Peeta’s broken expression. Marigold is just plain cruel.

“That will show you!” she says and swats his head one more time before leaving through the stairs. I hear the door slam and kneel where I am.

Now everything makes sense. The bruises…Peeta hiding…he doesn’t want anyone to see…least of all Delly. Marigold has been hitting him for God knows how long. Why isn’t James doing anything? I hear sniffing and I stand up again to see Peeta in the same place where she left him breathing hard and with tear stained cheeks.

I try the door and it opens.

“Peeta?” my voice sounds broken…that’s how I feel at seeing him that way. It hurts.
“Katniss,” he says wiping his face. “What are you doing here?” he looks at me with wide red rimmed eyes.

“I was…I just went out for a run” I tell him slowly and he nods.

“Please…” his voice begs.

“You need to tell someone” I tell him as I kneel in front of him with the first aid kit with me. He looks down and shakes his head.

“She is not like this with Delly…and they are the closest thing to a Mom and Dad that Delly has…I can’t do that to her!” he tells me but I shake my head.

“You can’t do this…you need to tell someone…Peeta…” I tell him as I dab on a particularly nasty head wound that probably was made before I showed up.

“No” he repeats. “I’m fine…this is nothing…” he says but he can’t quite convince anyone as he winces.

“How long Peeta?” I ask him and he looks at me. I know he knows that I won’t give in on this.

“Two months after they came to live here…she always brings me to the basement…where no one can hear. As long as she doesn’t hurt Delly I don’t care Katniss…I don’t…” he says slowly but I just shake my head because I can’t believe no one noticed before.

“Peeta you need to…They could name other tutors or name Delly yours…she is old enough Peeta…Things could get better!”

“They could get worse” he tells me wincing.

“You don’t know that” I tell him.

“Neither do you” he answers simply and he is so full of reason that I don’t say anything else.

“Promise me!” he begs. “That you won’t tell anyone! I can handle it Katniss…I will leave in a year and I won’t have to stand this anymore…Promise me!” he takes my hand in his and I can only nod.

“For now” I tell him, because as I am promising that I won’t say a thing I am swearing to myself that If this gets worse I will tell the authorities. Of course I don’t tell Peeta this. “But you have to promise that you will come to me”

He does come to me, every single time with a new bruise or bump or anything. I feel bad for him, it hurts me to see him so hurt but since I promised I stick to it. I stick to the secret.

We start spending time together again. This time I invite him over or ask Prim to do so in order to get him out of that house. It’s amazing how different we are but how much time we can spend without getting bored of the other. I can only describe the feeling of being with Peeta as happiness. Prim has been teasing me about it but I just shut her up. Everything is fine…everything is as fine as can be with Peeta getting beaten by Marigold.

That is until things get out of hand.

“Open the door!” yells Prim from the couch as we hear insistent knocking.

“Why don’t you do it?!” I tell her scowling but go to the door to open it myself. As soon as I open
“Peeta?” I ask and hear him wheezing. Something is wrong. “What’s wrong Peeta?” I ask him as I pull him away from me.

Prim curious as she is comes to the hall and her eyes widen as she looks at him.

“What’s wrong?” she asks and turns all serious and professional. She is going to be an amazing doctor one day. She stands on the other side of Peeta and we walk him to the bathroom.

When we sit him on the toilet we both gasp at his condition. He looks terribly pale, his nose is bleeding and his lip busted. He is holding his middle and breathing with difficulty. One of his fingers look like it is in an awkward angle and his hand seems to be swollen.

“What happened to your hand?” she asks.

“She…stepped on it” he says slowly without meeting our eyes. Prim’s fill with tears and mine fill with rage. How can someone be so cruel?

“Katniss go get some ice” she says as she walks out of the bathroom too.

We both run back when we hear retching and just as we get into the bathroom he starts vomiting.

I kneel next to Peeta.

“A concussion…I’m going to call mom” says Prim as she leaves the bathroom.

“I’m fine” he insists between gasping and retching and vomiting. I feel useless as I can only rub his back circularly between his shoulder blades as if to soothe him.

Mom is just getting home from her last shift and after checking Peeta out and finding the enormous bump in the back of his head we take him to the hospital.

Peeta has a concussion, an assortment of bruises, a busted lip, a bleeding nose, a couple broken fingers and a couple of cracked ribs. My mother calls child services.

“You are fine,” I tell Peeta sitting next to him in his room in the hospital. He is under observation for his concussion, so he has to stay.

I hate myself right now. Why did I wait for this to happen? Why didn’t I tell anyone something to prevent this?

“This isn’t your fault,” he tells me sleepily probably due to the pain medication they are pumping into him.

“I should’ve told someone Peeta…I should’ve done something…” I tell him as I take his good hand. He squeezes back weakly.

“You couldn’t…I made you promise” he smiles with his eyes closed. “Thank you Katniss” I stay with him the rest of the night. Not even when Delly shows up I go away.

I stay with him the rest of the time too, as he heals and as they rule Marigold unfit for tutoring. They send her to jail where she is to spend the next three years. The cruelty of her ways earning her that much time. I wish they would have locked her forever.

That night she hit Peeta she lost control. She had never quite beaten him that way. She normally aimed for places that no one would notice or that wouldn’t seem suspicious. But that day she
waited for him in the basement. She pushed him into the wall and started hitting him in his head with a sculpture that the same Peeta had made; she kicked him while he was on the floor disoriented due to the big hit to his head and when he tried to stand up placing his hands on the floor she stepped on his fingers until she heard them crack. She laughed at him for his pain and then proceeded to kneel in front of him and started slapping his face. As disoriented as Peeta was he managed to get up and run out of the basement.

He told me the whole story while he was in my house where Prim got in charge of nursing him back to health. We discovered in a bad way that he had nightmares about that night too and it was one of those days as he woke up shaking and crying that he told me how she hit him. Before that day every time he came to me with a new injury we would talk only about trivial things but that day he told me the whole story.

“Don’t worry Peeta…I won’t let her hurt you ever again” I tell him as I stroke his hair and he sleeps peacefully. “No one will ever hurt you again”.

March 2008.
“Well well well…look who is here to see…”

“Me” Peeta says as he walks behind Delly and hugs me. “I invited her over for pizza and movies since you’ve been ditching us for Thom the whole week” he tells her and I laugh.

“You guys haven’t scheduled anything with me yet…” she says smiling as she looks at her phone as if checking and imaginary schedule; Peeta takes Delly by the waist carrying her into the living room.

“Let me goo!” she says as she squirms trying to be let down. “Let me goo Peety!” she tells him as she tries to tickle him but fails.

“You are staying with us today!” he informs her. “We even got your favorite movies and all so you are telling Thom that you are staying with us”.

I shake my head at their antiques. Thom, the bully who brought us together, is Delly’s on and off boyfriend since God knows when. Now Delly going to College with him has taken her away from us. It’s not like we are busy…it’s our last year of school but still we miss her a lot. It’s funny but even though I miss Delly a lot Peeta has been there all the time.

It may seem weird but we’ve been spending a lot of time together publicly and I’ve even been staying over when Delly isn’t here to have projects and stuff done.

“So000” Delly taunts as I come back from my thoughts and Peeta tells us that he is going to make pop corn and get the beverages. “You’ve been spending a lot of time here…”

“You ditch us…so I have to find new company” I inform her as I take a twizzler.

“Just company?” she arches her eyebrow quizzically.

“Yeah, why? Spit it out Delly” I tell her as I sigh. I know her enough to know that she wants to tell me something that is obvious for her but that I am probably oblivious to.

“You…are different with him Katniss” she tells me serious. I know that she keeps that serious face to let me know this is not a joke. She is not teasing.

“Different how? We are friends, he is your brother…I just spend time with him because he is your brother!” I tell her defensively.
“You just spend time with him because he is my brother? Are you fucking kidding me?” she is laughing at me.

I know that is not the only reason I spend time with Peeta but I don’t really want to acknowledge any other reason that may exist. I just don’t want to.

“You are in denial” she laughs shaking her head. “I don’t know Kat…It just…you seem different when you are together…I mean…”

“I don’t know what you are talking about” I tell her as I remember how my stomach flutters whenever Peeta gets too close to me or when he smiles and that dimple shows up on his cheek or when he laughs and his eyes crinkle in a special way.

I know things are weird with Peeta because our friendship has been the gossip of school for a while now. Everyone is saying that we are together and stuff…we are not…I always deny it and Peeta stays quiet…sometimes he blushes and I wonder if he is embarrassed to be paired up with me or what.

“Katniss?,” Delly looks at me knowingly.

“You know I would never be able to look at him that way…he is like my brother and besides he is not my type” I tell her as I munch on the twizzler.

“What do you mean?”

“I don’t like him” I tell her with all the honesty I can muster. “I could never like someone like him”

“But I…”

“Which movie do you want to watch?” Peeta asks coming into the living room. He looks everywhere but at me and I wonder if maybe he heard our conversation.

July 2008.

I somehow lost Peeta. You can’t lose something you don’t have but that is how I feel when it comes to him.

He spends his time locked in his room and preparing applications and getting acceptance letters.

Today I’m heading to their home to a little reunion so we can say good bye to Peeta properly. He is leaving a whole month early so this is the perfect time to talk to him and get everything to how it used to be but throughout the party he expertly avoids me…I miss him.

I stay over but when all I seem to be doing is turning around in the bed for hours I get up. Sleep seems impossible knowing that Peeta is in the same house but I can’t go talk to him or hug him or just be in the same place. I want to consult him so many things. He was always my go to person when it came to advice, Delly doesn’t need to know that, but I can’t now and it hurts.

I go for a glass of milk and put my robe on. I see him sitting in the living room watching some tapes. I can see his mom and his dad and Delly and him playing in the sand and laughing. He looks so little, just the way he looked when I met him.

He leaves tomorrow Katniss say something! I tell myself watching him there.

“Hey” I utter and he stiffens pausing the video. He turns around and looks at me.

“Couldn’t sleep?”
“Not for long,” I say. I pull the robe more securely around me. He knows that just like him I have nightmares too. He just knows so much about me.

“Want to talk about it?” he asks. I wonder if he means why I can’t sleep for long or why he is avoiding me. Right that moment looking at him there just so close I shake my head. When Peeta holds out his arms, I walk straight into them. It is the first time since he started avoiding me, since I talked with Delly that he’s offered me any sort of affection. That day of the movies he stayed away from me and has been doing it ever since. I wrap my arms tightly around his neck before he tries pushing me away. Instead he pulls me in close and buries his face in my hair. Warmth radiates from the spot where his lips touch my neck, slowly spreading through the rest of me. It feels so good, so impossibly good, that I know I will not be the first to let go.

And I’m not. He is the one who lets go of me.

December 2013.

“Peeta is coming too” Delly tells me as she dips a fry in my ketchup.

“He is’!” I ask and she looks at me with a small smile.

It’s been five years give or take since I last saw Peeta, since he was the one to let me go. At first I thought we would remain friends…that maybe that night had fixed things since after he let go of me we stayed talking the whole night, but it wasn’t the case. As soon as he could he left the next day.

I still miss him so much to this day. No one needs to know that.

“He is living here again, I did tell you that didn’t I?” she asks and I shake my head. Suddenly my mouth feels dry so I take a couple of gulps of water. “Well, he is…he is so handsome Katniss…If I do say so myself…I mean I have to say it because he is my brother but still”

“Yeah, I saw the pictures” I tell her and I know she is right. Peeta looks stunning but I can’t be thinking like that now that I am getting married. How that did even happened after all the swearing I did?!

We are just having lunch because we got a call from Effie Trinket’s office, the best party planner of all times according to Delly.

We walk over there and we sit in her office while we wait for her to come in.

“So…why do you think she is calling us back?” Delly asks me as she checks the list that she has in her hands and I roll my eyes.

“Is that the list we made when we were kids?” I ask her and she smiles happily.

“I really don’t know what I’m doing so I’m leaving it all in your hands” I tell her as Effie Trinket with her golden hair and her weird clothing comes into the office and sits in front of us. She is a beautiful woman but I swear she would look more beautiful if she weren’t using that much make up.

“Welcome, welcome” she greets us as we sit and smiles at us. “I called you back because my secretary seems to have made a mistake” she tells us and immediately we both stiffen.

It’s taken ages to plan these weddings each a week apart from the other and we have already paid
for the food, the flowers and the music. We cannot change any of them now.
“What mistake?” Delly asks her tightly and Effie seems to be sweating if that’s possible.

“The weddings were booked for the same day” she says simply and looks sadly at the both of us.

“WHAT?” we ask in unison. This is the worst thing that could’ve happened for us.

“I’m so very sorry girls”. She says as she takes my hand and Delly’s. I don’t really see how that is going to fix any of this mess. I turn to look at Delly and see that she is thinking way too hard. I bet she’s come up with a thousand different plans in the last minutes.

“The only other available date in the Panem Plaza is in June…2015” she says slowly and we both look up.

“What?!” we utter in unison again. Delly looks sharply at Effie and I am pretty sure that I’ve got my best scowl on my face.

“I am so sorry girls. Honestly, I will compensate you in any way I can…I may have a solution…I found a last minute cancel in the Panem Plaza”

“Fine! I’ll take that one!” says Delly fast, relief flooding her voice.

“It is the same date as the other one you already have…at the same time” she says slowly.

“This is stupid!” I yell as I stand up and take my briefcase. “You are supposed to be the best and you mess up like this!?”

“Katniss”, Delly looks at me warningly.

“What!? Dell you know she…”

“I know this is my responsibility Miss Everdeen and I promise that I will find a solution for this” she tells me seriously. “This had never happened before and I will see to fix it as best I can” she tells us.

We part ways with Effie. She promises Delly and I that she is going to fix this.

“What do you mean that there’s nothing she can do?” I look at Delly’s sad face.

“She can’t do anything Kat…She tried even bribing them but there is no other date in the Panem Plaza…she said that we either do the weddings the same day or one of us gets married in a year” she tells me looking at her hands.

“I…” I don’t know what to do. It seems to me that we don’t have another choice but to cancel one of the weddings.

“I won’t cancel my wedding” she answers when she looks at me. Of course my best friend doesn’t need me to say anything to know what I am thinking.

“I won’t cancel either”, I tell her frowning.

“Why don’t you cancel it?!” she yells at me and I know that any chance of solving this amicably is lost. We are going to fight over this and I don’t think any of us is going to win. “You didn’t even want to get married!” she slaps her thighs.

“Why don’t you?” I ask her with a scowl.
“Don’t be selfish Katniss be there for me!” she tells me. “I don’t have my parents just my brother and you… I need you there…” She says as she makes those puppy blue eyes that I hate so much and remind me so much of her brother. I wince. I know she is right. I look up at her ready to concede when I see her small smile.

“Don’t do that Dell!” I yell at her. I know her enough to know that even if her previous statement is true she is just saying it right now because she knows that the way she always gets me to do what she wants. It’s always been like that.

“What?!” she asks innocently.

“You know what…” I look sideways at her.

“I can’t change the wedding and neither can you” I tell her. “We’ve both paid some things and you know…”

“You can cancel!” she tells me. “I’ll pay for what they charge you Katniss just change the wedding please?!” she asks of me and I sigh.

“Look, I gotta go…I will have to talk about this with Gale… just let’s think about this, okay?” I ask of her and she nods slowly.

I have a strange foreboding sense… something is going to go wrong.
Part II. Of bride wars, reunions and destiny.

February 2014
I feel the sun on my face and I pull the covers over my head. Of course Gale left the drapes open. I hate when he does that, he knows it…he just doesn’t care.

Lately everything has been bad between us; and the doubts I had before have only been growing exponentially.

I never wanted to get married. My dad died and I could only think what the result of loving someone that much and losing the person meant. I never wanted what a marriage entailed, I mean the unconditional love and the kids thing were just not for me. But then I met Gale and even when I didn’t love him that way I cared about him. To this day I can’t tell you that I love him in that way because I’m not sure that I do, at least not how he expects me to. I’m not capable of that kind of love and even when I’ve told him through the years that we’ve been together he has never believed me. He thinks that I just don’t know how that kind of love looks like, how it feels and that is why I tell him that I can’t love that way.

I have to admit that the reason I said yes when he proposed was this. Just because I’m not really sure that he isn’t right…because if he is…am I just letting the person I love the most go? Delly told me that wasn’t reason enough, but in the end Gale stubbornness won over and I said yes.

I don’t know how I feel right now. I just know that everything is reason for a fight and that we can’t agree on anything. Life has been a hell these past few weeks. Gale is mad all the time and he doesn’t get why any of the things that we have to do for the wedding is important. He is stressed all the time and he just shuts me out once he comes home, he doesn’t want to listen to me rant about Delly, he just doesn’t want to listen to me at all.

Things are wrong on so many levels that I feel like crying and I never cry.

Add to things with Gale, the fact that Delly and I are not on speaking terms. We’ve done terrible things to each other these past few weeks. It all started with her paying and picking her save the dates cards when we agreed we would think about what to do. Obviously she didn’t wait to hear what I had to say, she just assumed that I would give in. Being the stubborn person that I am, I got mad and after we yelled at each other in front of our other friends (Johanna really enjoyed that) we wouldn’t talk to each other.

The war between Delly and Me had just begun.

I want to make clear that I didn’t start with the sabotage. I only started after she told everyone that I was pregnant and I started getting all those toys and baby stuff. That’s when I messed up with her weight. I started sending boxes of chocolates and butter and all those things that I know she has a weakness for so she would gain weight. Then she messed up with the band I had chosen to play at the wedding, she offered them more money and got them. So in return I messed up with her tan and even went as far as taking pictures of her lobsteresque look. Add to that the fact that I messed up with her hair too as the guy at the salon didn’t pay attention and went to use the green dye I placed in the bowl instead of the silvery that she wanted to apply to her blond hair.

I don’t think any of that matter anymore. Right in this second all I can think about is that we are getting married on the same day at the same time and that she won’t be there for me and I won’t be there for her. I miss her so much.

I wish I had someone to talk to. I look to my phone; my screen still has the picture of me and
Delly at Central Park smiling like crazy when we finished our first 5k race. I mark one and press send.

“Delly Mellark’s office” answers the voice. I know it’s her assistant.

“Hey, Darius…can I please talk to Delly?” I ask but there is so much noise in the background that it doesn’t surprise me when he repeats his previous line.

“Delly Mellark’s office” he repeats. “Hello? I can’t hear you! Can you call back later please?” he asks and as I get ready to tell him who I am he hangs up.

I sigh and feel miserable. The sun is shining bright in the sky and yet I feel a shiver run through me. I try to think of good things…things that are making me happy right now but I find none.

This war, as any war, has had casualties. Sadly they are just Delly and me. No one else has been hurt by this situation but us and I don’t even know if I want to get married anymore.

“Perfect!” I hear the voice and look up. Time has passed and it doesn’t sound the same but I know that voice. “Be careful!” I follow it and right there in front of me is Peeta Mellark. “Just blow it so it will cool off, okay?” he asks of the little girl that blushes as she nods her head. She can’t be more than 5 and he’s charmed her.

I don’t know what to do. I’m frozen where I am sitting and I can’t keep my eyes off of him. He looks all grown up. I mean, obviously we have all grown up, but not seeing him for so long really has me looking at him. He is a little taller and broader if even possible, his eyes are the same sky blue that I remember and his hair even when it looks a little darker is long and tousled. He is wearing shorts and a white v neck that looks absolutely perfect on him. I shake my head. I have to get out of here. The nervousness that fills me up creeps up on me unexpectedly and as my hands and all of my body starts to sweat I stand up to leave the place and never look back. I don’t quite understand what I am feeling so I need to run.

“Bye” he smiles and just in that moment as I am planning to run but my eyes are still glued to him he looks right into my eyes.

“Peeta,” I whisper his name so I’m sure he didn’t hear me saying it but I see him smile, his eyes shining. He starts walking to where I am standing taking me in.

“Katniss Everdeen soon to be Hawthorne,” his smile turns sad. “You’re here” he says as he stands just a few centimeters away from me and never taking his eyes off of me. Maybe that’s our thing, just take each other in. “You really are here” he says as if he doesn’t believe what he is seeing.

“As are you,” I smile too. I want so desperately for him to open his arms so I can hug him like I did all those years ago before he left and I didn’t see him again. I want so desperately for him to hold me even if he is going to be the first one to let me go again like he did all those years ago. But he doesn’t open his arms; he doesn’t even try to touch me, or to do anything more than look at me and keep smiling. It is as if there is an invisible barrier that is keeping us apart.

“Do you…maybe want to have a tea or something?,” I smile at his offer of tea remembering clearly that he doesn’t like coffee.

“Sure,” I say and I smile actually feeling content for the first time since all this fiasco started.

“She misses you,” he tells me as he takes a sip of his tea, no sugar like he always took it.
“Have you seen her? Did she tell you? Of course she did! She is your sister! Please don’t hate me
I didn’t mean to…”

“Stop! You are going to give yourself something…” he smiles. “Yeah, she told me. She called me
when she gained those 5 pounds”

“Ugh” I hide my face in my hands.

“It’s okay…I didn’t understand how she could eat all that butter…the cookies I get…but the
butter…It’s her fault that she gained that weight” he says laughing and his laugh makes me smile.

“I’m really sorry about that…and the green hair and the tan…”

“You really did a number with her! I laughed so hard when I saw her…she was like an oompa
loomp, you know? She wrestled me when I told her” he chuckles.

“I was going for lobster red but now that you mention the oompa loompas,” I laugh. “I’m really
sorry for all those things…”

“I know…besides she played dirty too. She told me that she told everyone that you were pregnant
and went as far as to call Prim your aunt May and Haymitch”

“Yeah,” I answer now laughing at remembering. “Aunt May and Haymitch yelled at me for
almost an hour. They even bought a new phone to be able to talk to me at the same time because
they couldn’t with just their cord phone” I tell him and he chuckles again. His laugh is beautiful.
“And Prim…”

“She told me what she did,” he tells me shaking his head. “You don’t know how much I mocked
her for that,” my face falls at his words. “What’s wrong?” he asks looking around in case my
sudden change is due to someone or something.

“You talk to Prim much?,” I ask and he turns serious too. Suddenly something behind me seems
to be the most interesting thing in the world.
“Yeah…we’ve kept in touch through the years,” he answers and that sad smile from the beginning
comes back again.

“Through the years? You mean since you left?”

“Yeah” he nods again.

“I…Why…?”

“Peeta!!” a super model like girl places her hand on his shoulder and smiles at him. My stomach
feels queasy, I feel hot and suddenly everything around us seems shiny. Everything is turning and
turning or maybe is just my head. “How are you handsome?” she asks batting her lashes and he
smiles.

“Johanna” he smiles and she hugs him from behind pecking his cheek and looking up at me.

“Who is that?” she asks as she ruffles her brown hair and looks at me.

“This is Katniss” I wonder how he will introduce me and I don’t know why I care. I shouldn’t
right? But I do.

“Katniss…Delly’s Katniss?” she asks and I feel something swell in me at the fact that she knows
who I am.
“Yeah,” Peeta answers looking at Johanna’s face that is just millimeters away from his. Everything starts turning again as she turns to look at him and I bet they look like Cyclops to each other being so close face to face noses touching.

“I see” she says as if Peeta’s eyes told her all that she needed to know. She turns to look at me and smirks. “Johanna Mason” she says not letting go of him.

“Nice to meet you” I answer clenching my teeth.

“She’s my…” he starts but I stand up cutting him off.

“I have to go” I say fast, avoiding to look into his eyes or at Johanna who is smirking again. I just need to get out of there.

“So soon? But…” he sighs and from the corner of my eyes I catch his sad smile again. “Wait for me?” he asks of Johanna and she plows down into the table sipping what was left of my tea and nodding.

“Bye Delly’s Katniss” she says and I wave to her looking at Peeta who comes to walk with me a few steps.

“Listen…Delly is sad…she feels really lonely lately without you there…I just…If you need to talk to someone count on me, okay?” he asks as he takes out his wallet and offers me a business card with a small smile.

“Thank you” I say as I give back what I hope is a smile.

“Mellark!” yells Johanna from the table.

“Bye Peeta” I say as I turn around to not look back.

The ugly feeling that started wrenching my gut when I was sitting with Peeta in the café follows me home.

Gale as always comes home grumpy and without an appetite. He just groans when I start telling him that I tried calling Delly today.

“You shouldn’t be trying to talk to her. You should let her be and move on with your life”

“She’s my best friend ever since I was four years old, Gale”

“I know but I think you should move on. She wasn’t a good influence on you anyway. You completely changed when you and she got back to live close here in the city”

“I didn’t change”

“Yes you did! You just don’t realize that you did…and frankly Katniss I don’t like this new person” he says and turns around in the bed and all I can see is his back. I huff and take my pillow and blanket and go to the living room to sleep on the couch.

It’s been two weeks since I saw Peeta and every day ever since I saw him there I’ve been playing with his business card and debating whether I am going to call or not. Every time Gale bad mouths Delly or every time something goes wrong I reach for the card and start debating whether I should call or not.

Peeta, I sigh. My stomach somersaults. I don’t know why but knowing that he is close and seeing him again after all this time has awaken something in me. I start thinking about those last days before he left for college and how much he changed. How if maybe he would’ve told me what
was wrong and if he would have used the right words everything would be different now. I start imagining that he liked me, like Delly claimed he did, and that instead of pushing me away he tells me how he feels and how all that ends up in us being the ones together now, not me and Gale. Every time that thought comes to mind I want to kick myself in the head. I know those are not good thoughts. I love Gale and Peeta has Johanna. But still the “what ifs” of the past follow me every hour of every day. I feel sick.

When Gale doesn’t show up at the jewelry where we had an appointment to choose the rings I finally crack. I take out the business card and call Peeta. I need someone to talk to, I feel so alone.

“Hello?” answers the voice tiredly but it still manages to sends a thrill through me.

“Emm…Peeta?,” I ask as I fiddle with the business card in my hands.

“Yes? Katniss?” he asks.

“Yeah…I just…”

“You want to talk?” he asks and I just sigh in the phone. He always knew me so well and it seems like that has not changed. “Let’s meet then, half an hour fine for you?”

“Yes”

“I’ll meet you there, where we saw each other today”.

Oh, how I missed him. Peeta has always been there for me and I am glad that even after all these years he still is. I just hope that his girlfriend doesn’t show up again this time. Something twists in my stomach at the thought of Johanna and how she had surrounded him with her arms and how close her face was to his. I huff. I better hurry.

March 2014

It turns out that one meeting with Peeta turns into five different meetings with Peeta. We catch up on the things that have happened while he was gone. He tells me stories about Delly and Thom in college that I never heard of before and he even tells me stories about Prim that I’ve never heard before.

“So you had to pick her up? I am going to kill her!” I slam my fist on the table.

“Hey, hey! She did the right thing! She couldn’t drive so she called me to pick her up! Your sister is one funny drunk!” he laughs. “An incredibly honest one too!”

“What did she say?” I ask but he only shrugs. I know better than to push for information.

“Katniss…what’s wrong?” he asks. His eyes shine with worry as he takes the hand that is on top of the table. “You didn’t call me at five am to talk about Prim being drunk as funny as that is” he sends a smile my way.

How do you tell the guy that you just reconnected with a month ago that you’ve been thinking about him nonstop ever since you found him again. How do you tell him that just recently you figured out that all those things that you felt when you were both so young were not nothing but were something really big that you started feeling for him but that you threw out the window because you were too scared. How do you tell him that you think that you are falling for him when you are getting married to another guy in two months?
It’s very simple actually.

You just don’t.

So I just shrug and smile as I swear to myself that as I did before I will bury those feelings and I will shut the hell up. I am marrying Gale in two months and Peeta is my best friend’s brother. That’s it. Nothing else is happening.

May 2014
“No! Why did you do that?! That isn’t like you Katniss!”

“We were just having fun, Gale”. I huff as I wipe my face with a towel removing all the make up that sticks to my previously sweaty face.

“You went to a stripper club and danced on the stage against Delly because you were having fun?!” she hates how he makes the name of Delly sound like if it is a dirty word.

“Yeah, I was just having fun. I had tons of fun!”

“You lost, Katniss! You made a fool of yourself in front of all those people just because you wanted to beat Delly and now you tell me it was just because you were having fun. Don’t be stupid, will you?”

“Did you just call me stupid?” I ask my mouth agape and my face hot with anger.

“As a matter of fact I did. When we get married I expect you to stop talking and thinking about Delly and to start behaving like you used to. Not like this empty bimbo that you’ve become”.

I take my blanket and my pillow and as many times these past few months I camp on the sofa. I sink my face in the pillow and scream. When did he transform into this monster?!

When I first met him he was a male version of me. We had a great relationship and soon became very good friends. Then he asked me out on a date, scared that he would push me away if I said no, I said yes. After that…everything is history. We’ve been together for 3 years now and still, whenever he acts like this I just don’t know him. I don’t know who I am marrying.

My phone vibrates in my hand and I smile as I read the text.

Peeta Mellark: So Delly beat you dancing on a strip club? I bet she cheated! I expect pics asap! Lol

You are not getting any pictures. It was humiliating. I type back and press send.

Peeta Mellark: Humiliating? What are you talking about? I bet it was fun! :)

My eyes fill with tears as I turn to look at my bedroom door. Just with those words he’s said what I expected from Gale when I told him the story earlier.

Peeta Mellark: Don’t worry! Thom is already keeping her feet on the ground. A $100 says she cheated! I wish I would’ve been there to see the show! :)

I’m pretty sure she did. You didn’t miss a thing don’t worry! I answer as I sigh.

I know I am playing with fire. Since I realized that I may have feelings for Peeta that I shouldn’t, I’ve tried to convince myself that I have to avoid him. I clearly haven’t been able to do it. It’s just that every time Gale fucks up and makes me feel bad about myself Peeta always picks me up with
a few kind words or a smiley face. I need him. I can’t let him go.

Peeta Mellark: Breakfast tomorrow?

How about we go out right now? I send without thinking. I know he has to open the bakery tomorrow so I am expecting him to say no when I look at my watch and notice that is midnight.

Peeta Mellark: Why not? Meet me at the bakery in 15.

My wedding is in a couple of weeks. I stand up and put on my running shoes. I look to the door and to the pictures around the living room wishing things between me and Gale were still the same as they were when we were in college, not perfect by any means, but at least okay. I sigh. Things are not okay with Gale now and I can’t marry him like this. I can’t keep on pretending. It won’t be good for either of us. I stand up send a last text to Peeta and take a deep breath. This isn’t going to be easy by any means.

Make it an hour. My last text says.

When I get to the bakery he is standing outside with his golden retriever Bobby who notices me first and starts wiggling his tail happily.

“Someone is excited to see you,” he smiles as he lets go of the leash and Bobby rushes to me.

“I know you can’t live without me” I tell the dog as I scratch his belly and he wiggles his tail. The first time I met the golden retriever he jumped right into me and we’ve been friends ever since.

“I was talking about me, but whatever” he answers rolling his eyes and shaking his head simultaneously. I smile looking up. “Do you want to go somewhere in particular?” he asks curiosity feeling his features.

“I just wanted to talk,” I say standing up and I start walking without really thinking where I’m going. Peeta just follows me.

“Is everything okay?” he asks as he catches up to me.

“I wanted to ask you something and I need you to answer honestly” I say and he gives me a look that I can’t quite decipher. He doesn’t answer immediately and I know he is thinking about what and how he is going to answer. He’s always done that thing of thinking before talking, something I wish I could do myself.

The thing is that I’ve had enough of doubts and second guessing. I remember Prim’s words of a conversation we had earlier today.

“You can’t marry someone just because you don’t want to lose him Katniss. Marriage is more than that. You have to love him, you have to trust him, there has to be understanding and not just companionship. If you marry someone just because you want their company…that would be stupid. You better get a roommate and save the trouble”. She told me serious.

“So you think I have to do it. You think I have to call this wedding off”.

“I am not going to tell you what to do. You know perfectly well what you want and what you need and I am not going to get in the middle of that. I don’t want to be the person that you blame for everything going wrong if things don’t turn out the way you expect them to”.

“I would never blame you. But I need someone to tell me what to do!” I had said exasperated.
“No one has ever been able to tell you what to do”. She chuckled and so did I. “You know what you want…go for it Katniss! But be 100% sure that this is what you want to do and finally be happy!”

“What do you mean with finally be happy?” I question scowling even though she can’t see me I know she knows that I am scowling.

“You’ve been miserable for the past few months. A bride to be shouldn’t look the way you do and shouldn’t be having as many trouble and as many doubts as you are having. Just do what will make you happy! Stop thinking about the rest of the world, think about you!” she had said and I nodded.

“You are right…thanks Prim” I had said feeling a sense of pride rising in me.

Enough is enough.

Whatever the result of this conversation is I know I’ve done the right thing.

“Okay, ask away”

“ Took you long enough” I smile nervously.

“I’m scared” he admits as if he knows what I’m about to ask.

“Why did you push me away and left early all those years ago?”

He looks stunned.

“I…Katniss…we shouldn’t talk about this now. It doesn’t really matter anymore…it doesn’t change anything”

“You said you would answer” I say giving him a look that I hope conveys how important this talk is for me.

“I…I heard it all, okay? I heard how you told Delly that you just hung out with me because I am his brother and that you would never look at me like that…Katniss the only thing I could do was stay away from you…it hurt too much to be close to you and pretend to be your friend when I wanted more…I couldn’t stay close, okay? I am not that strong” he looks down as if recalling what he felt that day so long ago.

“Why didn’t you just tell me that you heard? I could’ve explained…I could’ve…”

“What? Explain to me why you were rejecting me without me telling you how I felt? That wasn’t necessary…or would you have told me how you only saw me as a brother…what would you have done? What Katniss?” he demands of me locking his eyes so full of pain with mine.

“I don’t know…I just…don’t know…”

“This isn’t fair” he says shaking his head and patting Bobby who seems restless sensing the tense air around us.

“What?!?” I look up startled.

“We don’t have to talk about this. This doesn’t have to happen ever again. It doesn’t matter right? Why would it matter? We are just friends…” he says looking right into my eyes as if searching for answers. Answers that I want to give, answers that I want to yell at him so he can understand how
things have changed.... But I can’t. My words are choking me and I can’t say anything. I should say something because I can see in his eyes that he already gave up once and that he isn’t even thinking about the possibilities that can come out of this situation.

“Because…because I need to know why you let me go first…because maybe if you hadn’t…” he doesn’t let me finish.

“Maybe if I hadn’t what? he asks and his eyes are glassy but his face is red and his eyes are icy blue. He thinks I am being unfair, he probably thinks that I am doing this just to hurt him again. To push him away like I always do with people.

“I just…”. What would’ve happened if he wouldn’t have let me go that day, if maybe he would’ve told me how he felt…If maybe I wouldn’t have been stubborn and I would’ve admit what I felt for him; how different things would be right now. I wouldn’t be miserable but happy. Happy with him.

“You just what? Tell me what you want?!” he yells pulling at his hair. I don’t think I just act and that’s how I find myself in his arms, pretty much in the same position as we found ourselves in when I said good bye at his house all those years ago.

“I want you!,” I whisper.

“What?,” he mumbles against my hair but he doesn’t let go.

“I want you…That day we saw again for the first time…I started to think about when we said good bye…how I felt that day….how I didn’t want you to let me go…and I started to wonder what would’ve happened if maybe you really had a crush on me and you would’ve told me how you felt. How different everything would be right now. Instead of marrying Gale maybe…I don’t know” I sigh burying my face into his shirt and inhaling his scent.

“Katniss…” he says as he pushes me away from him and I feel a cold running up my body and filling my lungs threatening to choke me as it escalates. I separate from him and look him in the eyes. This rejection hurts more than I thought possible. I have nothing left here so I just turn around and despite of him calling for me I just run and head to the only person who can hear me and understand right now.

What did I expect?! I expected him to tell me that he felt the same way I do. I expected him to tell me that he had a crush on me then…that he feels something now too. That it’s not just my imagination. And then what? And then…Maybe it should’ve been me. Maybe I should’ve told him this time. Not that it would’ve changed anything but maybe I should’ve. It doesn’t matter anymore. I am too late.

“Katniss?,” I fall into her arms and I feel like I am coming back home. Just like her brother Delly has the power to make me feel safe and better even in the worst of times. “Katniss what’s wrong?” she asks and I bury my head into her shoulder as I ask for forgiveness.

“I’m so sorry for everything I did…you were right I didn’t want the wedding and I shouldn’t have gotten so mad. I should’ve just let you have the date and be brave and I never should have let everything get as far as it did with Gale…I’m sorry please…”I beg.

“Katniss,” she says softly as she caresses my hair. “There is nothing to forgive,” she says smiling.

“Yeah! Not even for making her look like an oompa loompa for a few days!” says Thom who is coming toward us with a cup of tea in his hands. I laugh as I wipe my tears.

“I’m sorry about that…about all of that” I say and they both shake their heads.
“I forgive you for that too…” she shoots daggers at Thom with her eyes. “Even when it gave this one over here the time of his life! He took pictures! Do you want to see?” she asks and we sit as Thom shows me the photos in his phone. Suddenly there is one of Peeta laughing as Delly sits on top of him really looking like an oompa loompa; him being so tall makes her look really small on top of him. My laugh catches in my throat.

“I’ll leave you girls alone” says Thom as he places pajama pants and an old ratty shirt in my legs and one in Delly’s.

“What happened Kat?” she asks and I look up into her eyes.

“Gale and I started fighting every day…he wouldn’t help me with anything wedding related and whenever I tried talking to him about you and me he would always push me away…and change the topic or get really mad. I didn’t have anyone to talk to…I tried talking to you but I couldn’t get you in your office”. She looks at me waiting patiently for me to continue. “I started doubting what I was going to do. I mean you shouldn’t have so much trouble with the person you are going to marry. That’s when I bumped into Peeta”

“Yeah, he told me the day he saw you that you two had chatted for a while”.

“I was desperate Dell. I needed someone to talk to so I called him. Prim gave me his number. Out of nowhere we started spending a lot of time together and preparing the last things for the wedding. We never talked about how weird he got all of a sudden when he was about to leave for school all those years ago. It was like we both were avoiding the topic”.

“I bet he was avoiding it” she tells me as she takes my hand. “You know by now that he heard us that night, right?” she asks and I nod. “He told me. He was heartbroken Kat and the only thing he could think about was getting away from you. It didn’t seem as a bad idea in the beginning but you two were miserable. I tried to convince him to talk to you about his feelings but I just scared him away because that’s when he decided to leave early”.

“You tried? Even after all those things I said about him not being my type and those things?”

“Katniss…I know you like the palm of my hand. I know you didn’t mean those things. It was just your stubbornness showing its ugly head. I knew you loved my brother. I knew he loved you. I think you both love each other now too”

“He doesn’t…” I say slowly as one of the pieces that my heart has shattered into falls off.

“He is in love with you silly” she smiles and I look up my eyes widening.

“He isn’t”

“Oh, Katniss…he still is” she smiles sadly. “I’ve never said anything because it isn’t my place. Inside I was always hoping that you two would find the way to each other again and you would leave Gale behind once and for all”

“You did?!?”

“I am your best friend and he is my brother. I know you guys better than I think you know yourselves and trust me Katniss…I knew that was the best case scenario”

“But Gale…” Gale.

“What about him? You are marrying him in two days right? It doesn’t matter what Peeta feels
now...you’ve made your decision”

“I’m not getting married” I say in a whisper.

“You are not?!” she yells standing up her eyes wide and mouth agape.

“I called it off”

“When?!”

“Today”

“But...but you...”

“Gale was in love of the person he thought I still was Dell. He didn’t get me now and that’s why we fought all the time. He wanted me to be someone I am not anymore. How long would it have been before the bubble burst?”

“I’m sorry Katniss. Was that because of our war?”

“It sort of was...” her eyes widen with guilt. “But it wasn’t at the same time. It brought a side of me and him that either of us knew we had. You can’t marry someone you don’t know. And the most important thing Dell...I can’t marry him if I am not in love with him like I should be.”

“Like you should be...but you said you didn’t know how being in love felt...so how comes...?”

“I think I’ve know for a while” I tell her as I remember how I felt all those years ago with Peeta by my side and how he made me feel all those times we met in the past couple of weeks. I don’t understand how I could be so blind for so many years.

“Oh...you mean...Ooooh!”

“Yeah...”

“But you thought he didn’t feel the same...and you still left Gale?”

“Leaving Gale was not something I did because of Peeta...I mean not only because of him...but because I had to. For myself”

“I see”

“I don’t know what to do now...I kind of ran away from your brother...”

“I heard” she says smiling. “But what do you mean with not knowing what to do now? Isn’t it obvious? You go to my wedding and sweep my brother off his feet!”

“Dell” I say but I know she is right so I just smile.

“Delly looks beautiful doesn’t she?” asks Annie as we sip our champagne in the table.
“She does” I smile. She truly looks stunning. Like a real life Barbie.

“She’s always been beautiful” says Peeta as he sits next to me.

I nod and I try to decipher if we are on good terms or in bad terms.
“Can we talk?” I mouth and he smiles nodding.

We reach the balcony that has a beautiful view. There’s a lake that reflects the light of the full moon, so much that it looks like a mirror.

“It was you who let go this time” he smiles with a bitter smile.

“I got scared” I answer and he smiles ruefully.

“You don’t have to be. I wasn’t rejecting you Katniss, I was just trying to be a good person because I didn’t want you to do something that you would regret. Gale…”

“I called off the wedding”

“I know that now” he tells me with a smile.

“I tried to drown my feelings for you when we were younger… I tried so hard that I even lied to myself Peeta. I am older now and it seems like I never learn because I tried to do the same again. It didn’t work… again!” I say with a small laugh. “I love you Peeta and I’m sorry it took me so long to realize about it and to get back to you…”

“Thank God for that Brides War” he laughs as he opens his arms to me. I smile falling into his embrace and sinking my face on his shirt as he sinks his in my hair. “I was planning to tell you yesterday how I’ve felt all this time, you know? And then when you hugged me that way and what you told me I just knew…”

“That I loved you?”

“Yes, that. But I knew too that I had my chance now. That this was it for us”

“This is it for us?”

“If you want to” he says.

“I’ve always wanted to. Even before I realized…”

“Then this is it” he smiles as he hugs me tighter as if he never is letting me go.

I hope that after all these years and after all of the things that have happened he won’t let me go. Because even if he does I’m fighting for him, I don’t care if I have to start another war.

June 2015.

“I don’t want to know Katniss!” she yells placing her hands over her ears to keep my voice away and I smile as I shake my head.

“Why not? I had to listen to all of the things that you did with Thom in your honey moon… even before that you told me the things that you guys did and scarred me for life”.

“Yes, but this is my brother we are talking about!” she yells and people turns to look at us in the restaurant.

The waiter comes and places two wine glasses in front of us.

“Oh, no no no!” says Delly “I can’t drink!” she says and I look at her my eyes widening at her smile.

“You are pregnant!? I yell.
“Yes, don’t tell me that you are too!!! You always said you were never having kids!!!”

“No, Dell” I shake my head. “I’m not pregnant” yet. I add.

Her face falls and then she starts asking me about what we did in the honeymoon despite just telling me seconds ago that she didn’t want to know.

I shake my head and smile. I might not be pregnant yet. I might have always said that I wouldn’t have kids but I’m not so sure anymore. My life is so amazing with Peeta that he might be changing my mind about that too and I couldn’t be any happier than I am right now and I owe everything that I have now to that war with Delly that brought to me new light about myself, that brought back my true love and that brought to me more happiness than I thought I could have in a lifetime.

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