The Light of Day

by Maidenjedi

Summary

Effie Trinket returns home.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

Where is Haymitch Abernathy? Where is Katniss Everdeen?

I told you, I know nothing. I'm just the escort. I'm just the escort.

You know.

Oh, no, God please no, no no

Effie? Effie? Help me. Help me. HELP ME!

No, oh no

The light...!

She opens the door to her apartment and walks in.

The air is stale, though blessedly clear of any rotten smells. She isn't entirely sure how long it's been since she last set foot here. It has been weeks since she was...freed...and before that, she is
still uncertain. But she closes her eyes, takes a deep breath, and forces the thought from her mind. She is back now, that's what matters. That she is here at all.

She takes her shoes off, sets them by the door, which she then locks. The deadbolt doesn't seem sufficient, and she makes a mental note to get a stronger, more complicated security system than just locks.

It is day, so she does not turn on any lights. The windows in the main room face south, and while the view is nothing special, the light coming in is considerable. That's something, she thinks. Something worth savoring. All that natural light.

She looks around, feeling an unsettling dissatisfaction build in her chest. Nothing is missing, everything is where she left it, but it all looks cheap. Meaningless.

She shakes her head, and walks to the bedroom.

Here, evidence that this is (was), in fact, a place where someone lives (lived). The bed is unmade, clothes litter the floor near the closet door, which is open to reveal considerable extravagance. On the dressing table, a jar of cream eye make-up has been left open and is dried out, the once whimsical pink turned a crusty, dried-blood red. A green wig has fallen to the floor, and a golden one lays discarded on the tabletop. In here there is a smell, of perfume and sleep and make-up and hairspray. Familiar, formerly comforting smells. She breathes in, and sneezes.

The bathroom is to the right, and she goes there next. Where the bedroom was chaos, the bathroom is order defined. It is painted a woody, light green, and the lighting recalled sun breaking through trees. It has a woody smell, from endless candles burnt while she took baths. It is her favorite place in the apartment, and always had been, because it is so utterly private. Privacy comes at a premium in the Capitol, in her life.

She closes the door, and turns to stare into the mirror above the sink.

This is Effie Trinket, District 12 escort, fashion icon, occasionally sought-after expert on etiquette and protocol. She realizes the image before her is blurred, and when she blinks to clear her vision, tears spill.

Her wig is new, and it itches. It's skewed ever so slightly, sitting more heavily on her left side. Her make-up is flawless, but so heavy under her eyes that up close, it is clear that she has had many sleepless nights. Her outfit is beautiful, a fit-and-flair that she was assured would set the tone for the upcoming season, but it has padding in places she never needed it before, because she is unnaturally thin. She puts her hands on her hips and winces when she feels the bones.

So this is Effie Trinket, she thinks again. Or what's left of her.

She reaches into a drawer and pulls out cotton pads and a green bottle, and begins to remove her make-up. She starts with her eyes, peeling off the butterfly eyelashes, rubbing away the layers of concealer. Then her lips, her cheeks. She scrubs her neck and hands clean. She pats herself dry with a cotton towel and looks up again to face herself in the mirror.

Sad eyes. Trembling mouth. Her hands are shaking.

Her wig now looks completely wrong, so she reaches up to remove it. Then the bald cap, all the pins. She places the pins in a dish next to the sink. She throws the wig and the bald cap in the trash can behind her.

And she jumps five inches and yelps like a scalded cat when she hears a knock at the apartment door.
Clutching her chest, she goes to it, back through the mess in the bedroom, closing that door behind her, and to the clean, white sunlight in the main room.

The knock again. Really more of a light rap. Had that been the thing that caused her to jump so violently, set her heart racing?

"Effie, it's me."

His voice. Haymitch's voice.

How many times, in there, had she heard it? Pleading with her, scolding her, screaming, begging? Over and over, Haymitch's voice, in various stages of agony or hurt betrayal. It had been weeks since...and she knows what is real and what is not, but his voice still shatters her.

"Hay....Haymitch. Just a minute, I'm hardly decent." She reaches up to her head, the matted blonde locks there. Maybe he had seen her like this, in there, that day, but she couldn't be sure and anyway, he'd never seen her like this before that. She looks around for something to cover herself. There is nothing lying anywhere, and she is keeping him at the door.

I am Effie Trinket, and I will open this door.

She does not open the door.

"Haymitch, I don't think this is a good idea."

He's been here before, before, but never for long and never sober. Effie has a vision of the last time, or maybe it's every time, Haymitch showing up at the door with tear-stained cheeks and liquor-soaked breath, his voice hitching a little as he says the names (Pansy, Fen, River, Joseph, and oh, too many more). She would take his hand, and lead him to sit, and once or twice he was still awake when she made it back with a glass of water or mug of coffee.

"It is a good idea. It's my idea. I want to tell you...why."

Why.

Why did he leave without her? Why did he never say a word to her? Why didn't he trust her?

"Tell me, then."

"From out here?"

"Yes."

And he does. He tells her about the very beginning, Maysilee Donner and the weeks after his Quell, about his girl and about Snow, and his voice is hollow as he speaks. He talks about the early days and the liquor and he tells her how Plutarch first approached him and about recruiting Finnick Odair.

He talks so long the light has shifted in the apartment. It is at its brightest now, the sun at an angle to blind anyone looking toward the window. Effie turns her face to it and listens to Haymitch.

Warmth returns to his voice as he tells her how much he had wanted to let her know everything, bring her in. "I almost did, so many times."

She knows, now.
He stops when he gets to the things she already knows, about the Quell, and how things went horribly wrong. No need to relive that, she thinks, holding herself tightly as flashes of Peacekeepers and a gag and no charges come to mind.

They are quiet. The light is beginning to fade in Effie's apartment, and her eyes close. She almost believes she is dreaming when Haymitch speaks.

"Effie? Effie, are you still there?"

"Mmm. Yes."

"Open the door?"

It's his tone that spurs her to action, unsure and so unlike Haymitch Abernathy: victor, drunk, and erstwhile rebel. She stands and puts her hand on the knob.

"Is it really you?" She presses her forehead to the door, and a forgotten pin from her wig digs back.

"I think so. Open up, decide for yourself."

She does.

Haymitch looks much as he usually does. Good clothes, rumpled and loose. His hair is clean but messy. It's late in the day and it shows on his face, the stubble a rough field across his chin and down his neck. But his eyes are clear, and there is no smell of alcohol.

"I came straight here, after the train left and I realized you weren't there. Effie, come with me."

This is the first time they've been alone together since the last night before the breakout. And that was only in an elevator at the Games headquarters.

"Effie...."

"Haymitch, I don't...I can't...I am not even sure...."

She frowns and crosses her arms over her chest. Why can't she put it into words, but also, why did he just not get it? She needs what is familiar, she needs reality, she needs stability.

Haymitch sighs and steps closer. Effie stands staring at the ground, her arms still locked around her, and Haymitch touches her face. He traces her eyebrows, rubs his thumbs over her lips.

"I need you."

She looks up at him. It's odd to realize that without her heels, she's shorter than him. Her eyes fill.

His hands go to her matted blonde hair, and he runs his fingers through it. She hisses in a breath, from surprise, from what could be pleasure if she chooses to recognize it.

"I need you," he repeats, more softly.

She reaches up and takes hold of his wrists, and brings his hands down. She doesn't let go, but threads her fingers through his.

"Haymitch, I don't know what I need."

He nods, shrugs. "It can't be this. The Capitol."
She shakes her head. He could be right. He might not be.

She begins to sob.

"Hey, what...."

"Haymitch, do you not see? If there ever was an Effie Trinket, she existed here. She was in this space. And if I am still her, this must be where I can feel it again."

He kisses her forehead and shakes his head. "No, no that is not true. I know Effie Trinket. She isn't contained to just one space, and one place in time. And you are her, Effie. You are."

She puts her arms around his waist and buries her head in his chest. He is real, she thinks. This is Haymitch Abernathy. And I am Effie Trinket.

No one is coming for us.

She pulls him inside, and they go to sit on the couch in the last of the early evening light. They will talk late into the night about their plans, where to go and how to live.

And most of all, they will be.

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Effie? Effie! She's here, Haymitch, she's here!

What did they do to her? Is that...where is her hair?

What a stupid thing....Reed, hand me that bag. The other one that we grabbed...yes. Okay, Effie. Effie, look at me, look at me sweetheart. Here you go. You need to put that on, I have no idea how that stuff works.

Haymitch, is she going to be....?

She's fine. There. See? Effie Trinket, as I live and breathe. And doesn't her hair suit her so well?

Haymitch, is that you?

End Notes

For now, I choose comfort.

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