Rebel Yell

by Maidenjedi

Summary

Gale, watching.

Notes

More gen than not. Kind of leapt into my head.

He's out in the woods, where he knows who he is and what he wants.

But he trips, springs a trap, and he avoids it because it was one of the early ones they obviously forgot about or lost, from when she couldn't tie a knot to save her life.

She ties them right now, he's noticed.

- He brings back a quail, and he should sell it, get a good trade, enough bread and cake for a week or more. But he takes it to Prim and she gives it to her mother, and they give him the feathers for trade.

He'll do okay, he got a rabbit, too.

There's always the tesserae.

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"Maybe next year," he hears someone say, in the Hob, "maybe next year, they'll stop. Maybe it will be enough."

Tawson's jaw is twitching and there are people whispering and someone is going to tell, someone's gonna trade Tawson's audacity for the gods only know what.

Nothing like that should ever be said so loudly, even here, even where the Peacekeepers are content to let teenagers run outside the fence to hunt. That's proven, when Tawson's home is raided the next day and he and his wife sit in the stocks for a week with nothing but water.

Maybe next year, thinks Gale. Maybe next year, we will finally have had enough.

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The girl on fire.

They talk about her, they whisper. In districts like four, her name is a talisman.

In the Capitol, her name is a brand.

And back home in District 12, her name is a swear word. People lower their eyes, a few of the superstitious cross themselves like they are warding off demons. Because she's bringing attention to them? Because she's making them proud and making them hope? And they know better, in 12.

Not all of them. Some of them have gone to the Hob looking for pins like hers, and they gleam in the sun.

The same day the Games begin, three men die in the mine. The canary stopped singing.

The knockoff mockingjay pins tend to tarnish. When the fire chases her and the District holds its breath, someone takes off a pin and lays it on the dirt, grim resignation setting in when she's not even injured yet.

He picks it up, and it pricks his hand and makes it bleed.

"Go. Go! GO, DAMNIT!" They are all yelling, as if she can hear, and they are willing her to escape, and later Flickerman is laughing at the recap.

"Well, it looks like Katniss Everdeen is just plain hard to kill, doesn't it folks? How about that running! Isn't she something, that girl on fire!"

District 12 murmurs its assent.

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The gods of Panem are television, fame, and fortune. Maybe beauty, too, but he doesn't see beauty in Panem. In the wilderness, maybe. In her eyes.

She's looking up like she knows exactly where the cameras are, and maybe she does, and she salutes like she's saying "fuck you" and there's a shout in the back of the room, a little like triumph
but quelled so quickly it hardly happens. Prim's eyes are wide, she's thinking how that girl was her age, and she raises her hand in salute to her sister and no one stops her.

It was gruesome. Not the worst of the deaths, not even for this Games, but it takes away the breath of the most hardened mine worker, the most jaded Peacekeeper. And maybe it sparks something in a few of them, but he's not going to count on it, and he watches as they fall back, they continue on as if no, it doesn't matter at all.

"Part of the price," says Greasy Sae. "Part of the deal."

They are all made to worship the gods and offer sacrifice, as if they may one day reap reward.

Reap.

But not really, not ever. No reward. Only revenge. Again and again, for crimes so old there is no one to say how it really happened.

He can't imagine what kind of god would want this.

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When he was a kid, there was a tribute from the Seam who made it to the final eight.

And then the final three.

And then it was just him, and a girl, maybe she was from District 2, and she was injured but ravenous for the kill. It almost didn't matter, because his knife was quicker. Hers was just surer.

She raised her fist in triumph and that look, that terrible look, haunted Gale so much he woke screaming from nightmares.

His father came in, to quiet him, and on the third night of this neither of them had really slept and Gale's father wept. He actually wept, this huge hero of a man, whose little boy was scared of monsters who were real. They existed. They hunted.

"Not my son. They won't. I promise. I swear it. They will not."

That is rebellion. That is how it begins. Gale knew it that night and hatred, not fear, burned in him, because who makes fathers cry? What good, what purpose does it serve?

Gale often wonders how many fathers make that promise. When the girl from 11 died ("Rue," he whispers, "her name was Rue"), was her father watching? What kind of promise did he make?

The game in the forest go still when Gale throws back his head to yell.

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Flickerman cuts in. "Well, folks, I don't know about you, but I am amazed. I am stunned! I am so enthralled! Never have I seen this kind of thing, we are in unprecendented territory, and how WILL it end?! We have to take a break for our sponsors, but before we go, let's watch that again. Look at her face, citizens! I ask you, is that not the face of a girl who just realized from whence comes her fire? And we all know, Peeta Mellark's time is running out. Will she find him? Will she save him? Will they survive it all together, these star-crossed lovers, will they make HISTORY?!
Stay tuned, don't move a muscle! We'll be right back!

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He manages to bite his tongue, when they come with the cameras.

"Oh, Katniss and Peeta? She never noticed him! This is the first time! Yes, their first kiss DID give me the chills! So sweet!" Delly's voice is so loud.

He thinks, he wouldn't be able to hear it, in the woods.

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He sees it coming, the thing with the berries. Because of course she would. She was a rebel, deep down, though maybe he knew and she didn't. And now everyone would know, and she wasn't coming home. Not really.

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"Do you think you could, really, if you were ever chosen?"

"You mean, if the odds were not in my favor?" His voice lilts like Effie Trinket's and Katniss laughs.

"Yeah."

"I would have to, wouldn't I? If I believe in anything, if I mean what I say when we're here, in the woods. I'd have to prove to them that they haven't won and they never will."

Katniss stares at him, as if trying to see through him, and she smiles a little. "I think I could, if I had to. Show them." But it is easy, after all, to talk, and hidden in her voice is Prim's laugh and Prim's voice and there is no way, no way, no way. He nods and her face falls a little. "You know, though." Her voice is back in the District and it makes him so sad.

"Yeah."

The sun is rising behind her and they must get back. Only a week until Reaping Day. They have a lot to do, just in case.

They walk in step as they leave, and he takes her hand, for the first time, for the last time, whatever it is. She doesn't brush him off.

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