Be My Shelter

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Summary

Peeta and his father leave their terrible past behind and move to Silver Lake, which is a small town that is closer to the center of Panem. Peeta is going to visit Silver Lake High at the time of a new beginning semester in the end of summer. Peeta is hurt and the past left him traumatized. Can he find someone that will heal his wounds and provide him shelter? (A Peeta/Cato Lovestory) Peeta x Cato; Cato x Peeta

Notes

First of all, this is my first Peeta/Cato constellated Fanfiction on this side and it's based on the OC Characters from the Hunger Games. I hope you will like it, but please don't have too high expectations!
If you want to read more from me and this story, leave a review (you can always give suggestions and criticisms to improve the plot) and then I'll of course update the story with new chapters from time to time.
Also, I do not own any part of The Hunger Games and all credits based from this story (characters, etc.) go to Suzanne Collins. Thank you for this amazing series!
See the end of the work for more notes.
Peeta unpacked the last carton with the inscription 'Kitchen' and stowed the final pair of dishes into the cupboard. He sighed silently and glanced over to his father who was standing in the hallway. He looked back at Peeta and then smiled softly at before he made his way towards the cellar door. Peeta, who still stood in the kitchen, turned around and looked at all the empty cartons that formed stacked hills that made their way up to the entrance. He was relieved that they were finally finished with unwrapping and tidying up the most important things. Even though Peeta felt like a huge load was taken off his shoulders, a queasy feeling started to spread in his stomach at the same time. The thought of a new high school, new surroundings, new people and new adaption scared him. He knew he had to start all over again and he hoped it would be easier this time.

One year ago Peeta's family made a summer vacation in their beach house in the Hamptons. On their last night a terrible storm raged down the coast. Peeta and his father just came back from a walk at the sea and ran towards the building as the disaster took its course. A terribly loud lightning forced a huge fir to crash into the roof of the beach house. Tragically Peeta's mother and younger brother Lucas had been inside the house which was right in front of their eyes all of a sudden wrecking into million pieces. Peeta and his father had to observe how the huge dark, almost black tree destroyed everything underneath with an explosion-like, crashing sound.

Peeta and his dead screamed, called their names and screeched for help in hope of getting answers or callbacks from their loved ones but the only sounds that were audible were the whistling wind, the smashing wood and the loud sobs coming from Peeta's and his father's mouths.

Within seconds the vacation house had been completely destroyed and Peeta's mom and Lucas had to be dead in seconds. There were no doubts.

The final reason to take the step to move to Silver Lake, which is closer to the center of Panem, occurred when 3 months ago a terrible incident happened to Peeta. That one dark and lonely night was meant to change Peeta's personality and life forever.

Peeta stepped towards the kitchenette and took a medium big carton, which was laying on the kitchen table, into his hands. He looked at the white note that stuck on top of the cardboard, and read its inscription to make sure it was the right box. It said 'Peeta's Stuff'. He picked up the carton and left the kitchen.

Peeta walked down the empty, grey hallway that was only filled with a black wooden shelf and a few pairs of shoes. When he reached the stairs he blunderingly stumbled over the first step which caused him to let the box fall to the floor whereupon a few things fell out of the carton and scattered on the ground. Peeta kneeled down and put the things back into his package. After that he took the box back in his hands and walked upstairs. When he entered the first floor he immediately focused his gaze on the white wooden door that was at the end of the hallway. He stepped towards the bright door, pressed the door handle and walked into his new room.

It was bigger than his old room but also scarily blank and silent. It had two big windows that were hidden behind grey curtains and a pale big burgundy red carpet laid on the dark parquet floor and gave the room a slightly warmer feeling.

Peeta's glance traveled up to his new bed that had bed linen and cushions in the same red color as his new carpet. It stood in the right corner by the right side of the door and had a chestnut brown dresser with a white lamp on it. Next to the lamp stood an alarm clock and the drawers of the
dresser were still empty. On the opposite side of the room there were a hazelnut brown desk and an equally colored chair that stood next to a big white shelf. The walls in the room were plain white and had no wallpaper.

Peeta turned his head and looked at the few moving boxes that stood next to the door frame and were filled with his clothes, books and other several personal things. Peeta sighed tiredly at the thought of still having to unpack his stuff and let himself fall on his new bed, which was very soft and padded with many pillows. He loved to feel secure and protected; a feeling he didn't sense for a while and if so only found in his bed under the sheets, where the warmth was comforting his body.

Although Peeta still had to unbox a lot of cartons he yet needed to catch some fresh air and clear his head. He stood up from the red bed, grabbed his black wool jacket and walked out of the door.

After Peeta ran down the stairs and walked into the kitchen he saw sat his father sitting on one of the kitchen chairs while eating an apple and flipping through the local newspaper.

Since Peeta's mom and Lucas died, something between Peeta and his father had changed. His father started to give less and less attention to Peeta as he retired from his son to sink his sadness in alcohol. Sometimes there were days or even weeks where Peeta's fathercompletely ignored his son.

When Peeta needed his father he had never been there to help and comfort him. Actually no one was there to comfort and care for Peeta. He was always left alone in his room, crying and sobbing into his pillow while his father seemed to be trapped in his own paralysis, isolated from the rest of the world. His father would have been completely unreachable if there wasn't the job that was necessary to earn at least the little money they needed to live.

It was the night 3 months ago that shook Peeta's fathers out of his sphere. It came to a point where Peeta's dad couldn't ignore his son anymore, but the thought came too late as the damage had already been done.

The move seemed to improve the relationship between Peeta and his father but the wounds were still deep and it would take for them to be healed up.

As part of the new change Peeta's father opened the 'Mellark Bakery', which was a component of the new house and placed on the opposite side of the building. Peeta's father was a baker and saved enough money to build up his own business.

Peeta promised his father to help out in the baker as it would distract them both from their terrible past and memories and in the end there was enough work to do. Also it was an attempt to pull them both back together, which was the final reason why Peeta agreed to the whole thing.

Peeta's father looked up from his newspaper and peered expectantly at his son.

"Dad, I need some fresh air. I'll be back in about twenty minutes. Okay?"

"Of course, but make sure to take your phone. Call me when you feel bad or would like me to pick you up somewhere. Write me a message when you're on your way back home."

It annoyed Peeta how obviously his father tried to make up for every time he missed to be there for Peeta. His dad was trying too hard and Peeta couldn't forgive his father very soon, even though he'd been lucky that someone finally cared for him.

"I'll be fine, don't worry." Peeta forced a small smile on his lips in attempt to calm his father.

"Yes."

"Okay, then… I will go now." He already made his way to the entrance door when his father's
hand on Peeta's shoulders stopped him.

"Peeta, listen. Things changed and this is a new start, a new beginning. We can do this. This time together." His father put his second hand on Peeta's other shoulder and continues to speak. "I know I haven't been fair to you at all. I should have been there for you and I know I wasn't. I can't tell you how sorry I am and I know that I should have known that something was wrong with you but my vision was blurred. When I noticed what was up it had already been too late."

"Dad, I-

"Peeta, listen! What I want to say is that I'll be by your side. You can always feel free to come to me and share your thoughts, opinions and feelings. Just once I want to be a real father for you and look into your eyes without feeling guilty even though I know it won't be ever possible. I love you my son."

Peeta nodded and inhaled deeply. "Thanks for your words, dad. I just don't know how to act with all the changes. It was tough to deal with all the stuff by myself. I needed you."

Peeta's father lowered his head and looked to the ground. Peeta stepped back which causes his dad's hands to fall of Peeta's shoulders. Peeta gave a last glance towards his father, who still looked down in shame, and then turned around to walk out of the house.

He didn't know why but Peeta felt angry and hurt. He quickly walked through the streets and tried observe the surroundings but most of the time he kept his sweatshirt hood on his head and looked down to his feet. The farther Peeta moved away from the new house the more frightening it felt.

As Peeta was just about to turn around and go back home he spotted the little coffee shop at the corner on the opposite street. The thought of a hot coffee sounded good so Peeta crossed the street and entered the coffee shop.

When he stepped in a hot, sweet smell welcomed him warmly. He was glad the store was very empty; two girls were sitting in the left corner in front of the window and another girl stood at the glass cabinet in front of the little cupcakes and cookies. Peeta walked to the cabinet and stood right next to the girl. She had ebony brown hair that was tied into a braid and hung casually over her right shoulder. She had an olive skin tone that matched her hair really well.

"A latte macchiato with extra milk, please." Peeta ordered in a tired tone and looked up to all the different coffee varieties that were lined up on the black shelf that hung on the wall.

"Of course, one moment, please." The woman behind the showcase smiled warmly and turned around to create the coffee.

Peeta was surprised by how friendly the service was. He slightly turned around to look at the room. The two girls that sat on the window disappeared and the girl with the braid next to him still peeked at all the delicious cakes. There was a calming silence in the shop and the only audible sound was the brewing coffee.

"Which one would you take?" A playful voice filled the silent air which caught Peeta's attention. He slowly turned around to see who the girl was talking with but since he was the only person left besides her she must have meant to address him on purpose.

"Hmmm? Which one?"

"I-I-I don't know." Peeta mumbled. It still frightened him to talk to foreign people, especially after
what had happened.

The girl looked up from her place and glanced thoughtful at Peeta. "Let me think, you're new, aren't you? Yes, I'm sure. I have never seen you before."

Peeta nodded awkwardly and hoped he didn't have to explain himself about why he came here. "I'm Katniss, nice to meet you." The girl said. She stretched her hand out and smiled towards Peeta.

For a few seconds Peeta just stared at the outstretched hand and then looked into Katniss' eyes. She had beautiful deep grey eyes with a shade of blue. Katniss already had a questioning look on her face while she waited for Peeta to take her hand.

"Peeta." He took Katniss', hand and shook it. Out of some reason she smiled widely at him. "Peeta what?"

"Peeta Mellark. We came here yesterday night. My father owns the new Bakery, which is a couple of streets from here." Something made Peeta feel comfortable around Katniss and he started to release his tension.

"Aah, I see. So, since you're new in town I guess you will go to Silver Lake High which is starting tomorrow since it's the begin of a new semester and we're at the end of summer. A good time to come here. Otherwise it could be hard to get used to all the new impressions. Silver Lake is a beautiful little place. You're going to like it here." Katniss played with her braid.

"From what I've seen Silver Lake is nicer than where I used to live before." Peeta sighed and looked down at his feet. "A lot nicer."

"Oh really? Where are you fro-"

"You're latte macchiato is ready – with extra milk. That would be 2,50$, please." The service handed Peeta the drink and gave him a wink. Peeta was relieved that Katniss had been interrupted since he really wasn't in the mood to tell where he was from. At least not yet. Peeta paid immediately and turned back to Katniss.

"Katniss, I need to go, I'm sorry but my dad is waiting already. It was nice to talk to you nonetheless, bye!" Peeta left the shop and received an awkward wave from Katniss, who was stunned from Peeta's quick disappear.

Peeta drank a sip from his hot macchiato while he fastened his steps so he would be back soon. He didn't want his father to worry unnecessarily but unluckily Peeta had spent ten minutes in the coffee shop and would at least need another fifteen minutes to reach his new house.

The warm drink tasted amazing and Peeta already knew this would be a shop he'd visit more often. As it became late a cool wind started to fly over the streets so Peeta pulled the hood over his head and fastened his steps once more.

While he took a few more sips from the hot drink he thought about Katniss and how nice she'd behave towards him. Maybe she could be his first friend here in Silver Lake.

Peeta was so concentrated on his thoughts that he didn't notice another fast walking person that was crossing the street and aiming straight towards Peeta.

"Watch out!"
The loud call ripped Peeta immediately from his thoughts and he quickly looked up to see what was wrong but suddenly he felt an extremely hard resistance like he ran into a wall and lost his balance.

The impact took over Peeta like a brutal slap and his vision blurred for a second before he fell to the floor and landed harsh on his bottom. A sharp pain spread in Peeta's backside and bone and tears were already about to build up in the corner of his eyes but he pulled himself together not to cry in front of a stranger.

Startled from the shock he looked up to the person he ran into. Unluckily Peeta spilled his hot coffee all over the clothes from the now brown-stained guy, who was obviously outraged and looked down at Peeta.

Then Peeta saw the annoyed, angry stare that was coming from the taller guy and Peeta felt awfully frightened. He didn't know how to react and how to get out of this situation so first of all he tried to find his balance and stand up.

"Shit, are you serious?! DAMN! Can't you take fucking care?! Your fucking coffee is splattered all over my body!"

"S-s-sorry. I-I didn't s-see you. I-I'm s-so sorry!" Peeta weirdly stuttered. The smaller blonde managed to regain his balance and stand on his feet. Peeta now had a better view of the person in front of him and was surprised by the impressive beauty. The boy had beautiful ice-blue piercing eyes, bright blonde angelic hair and a very athletic and hard muscled body. He was taller than Peeta and had broad shoulders.

He looked expectantly at Peeta and waited for him to say anything but Peeta knew if he would try to explain and excuse he would probably burst out in tears.

It's been a while since Peeta had been so close to a person and found himself in such a threatening situation that it scared him immensely. He definitely didn't want a repetition of what happened months ago.

"S-Sorry, I-I-I need to g-go." Peeta managed to mumble in a hoarse tone and he then quickly turned around and ran off.

"HEY! Where do you think you're going! Wait!"

Peeta heard the other guy call after him but that only alarmed Peeta more to speed up his pace.

"I'm Cato, who are you?" The athletic guy screamed but Peeta was already too far from Cato to hear his words.

At the next crossroad Peeta made a small break and supported on the street lamp. He was panting and gasping heavily in a desperate attempt to recover his breath and be able to walk home. He sprinted for a few minutes through the streets and was now completely exhausted.

When Peeta was able to breathe again he looked up from the streetlamp and tried to orientate his location but as soon as Peeta looked at the different alleyways he didn't recognize any of the streets.

He had no idea where he was.

Time flew by and it became scarily dark and the night was already dawning. Peeta was lost and the street signs became hard to recognize because of the lack of light. The last time he'd been completely alone in the dark without any protection something awful happened.

An awkward feeling started to build up in Peeta's stomach. It crawled up to his throat and tied it up which caused Peeta to breath heavily.

He made a few steps forward until he reached a faded, old bench. He sat down and tried to concentrate on his thoughts to prevent them from bringing the memories of that one cold night back up.
With each second Peeta felt worse as the suffocating feelings in his throat and stomach increased its pressure which forced the blonde boy to crawl into the corner of the bench in a frustrated attempt to find shelter. He pulled his legs to his torso and pressed his knees to his chin.

Peeta felt the need of release and the urge to free himself from the tension that was dazing his senses. His eyes burned and a single tear slipped out of his eyes. Hundred more follow in seconds and totally blurred his vision. The silent cries turned into loud panting sobs which Peeta tried to hide in his lap.

The terrible memories were brought back and penetrated Peeta’s brain brutally. How could they do what they did? What they did to him. How could they do that? How they screamed his name and trapped him in their power. They were five against one.

Peeta had been in so much pain and now he felt it all over again without it actually happen in real. His sobs became more desperate and loud; he didn't know what to do. Peeta sat alone on the bench, far apart from his new home, sitting in the unknown. Peeta wasn't able to form a clear thought neither make a productive movement. He was in a paralyzed shock.

Suddenly Peeta heard hectic squeaky tires driving through the alleyway. At once huge, glaring white lights were shining right into Peeta's eyes, which caused him to blink heavily. In the meantime it became pitch-dark and Peeta's eyes got used to the dark surrounding.

"Peeta! Oh god, Peeta!" A shaky voice echoed from the bright lights and Peeta only barely realized the words as his sobs sounded loud in his own ears. Nonetheless Peeta thought to remember that voice. It was his father.

The last thing Peeta remembered were strong arms that looped around his body and carried him into the car. He'd been sat on the backseats and everything went black as soon as the car drove up.
Mystery And Confusion

Chapter Notes

Finally here is the 2nd Chapter. Sorry for the long wait, but I hope you will enjoy it!

Peeta opened his eyes as soon as he awakened from his sleep. His head ached badly and his vision was still heavily blurred wherefore he shut his eyes again. The memories from last night faded his mind and his brain tried its hardest to recollect a correct order of what had happened. Peeta brought his hands to his still closed eyes and rubbed and massaged those several times in order to adapt them to the bright light and soothe the uncomfortable sting in his eyeballs. When the burning feeling in Peeta's eyes had calmed, he straightened himself into a sitting position and observed his surroundings.

Eventually Peeta was lying in his bed in his new room. The deep burgundy red cover was still lying on top of his torso. He starred down his body and noticed that he'd been wearing simple boxer shorts and a grey t-shirt.

Then the blonde remembered that it was his father who picked him up from the alleyway yesterday after he'd been having a nervous breakdown on the bench. Peeta's father must have brought him into his room, exchanged his clothing and laid him down in Peeta's bed. Peeta felt ashamed and embarrassed of what happened the night before and he was extremely relieved and thankful that his father found him in the dark.

Peeta's gaze travelled to the right to his night clock which announced that it was still early in the morning. School would only start in two hours and Peeta had enough time to get ready for it. He stood up from the bed and walked over to one of the cartons, which were still placed next to the door frame, to grab out a towel and take a warm shower. He still had to unpack the remaining boxes and stow his clothes and a few other things in his drawer.

Peeta went out of his room and walked down the hallway until he reached the next door on his left. He opened the door with a silent creak and walked into the bathroom. Also this room was bigger than the old bathroom and it had its own shower. Since the whole floor was like belonging only to Peeta he had the whole bathroom for himself. He stripped off his shorts and t-shirt and made his way to the shower now fully naked. Peeta turned the faucet on and a few warm drops immediately landed on his head, which were followed by even more water drops that formed to a soft and comfortably warm water stream which trailed down Peeta's stocky chest and abdomen until the water graced his groin and then flew down his inner thighs downwards to his feet. Peeta took a deep breath and inhaled the warm water vapor. He leaned his head back so that the water was now trailing down his neck. He stayed like this for a few seconds until he let the water pour on his face. The warm water soothed and eased Peeta's muscles as well as his headache; a hot shower always helped him out. He leaned down to grab the shower gel and shampoo and started to wash himself.

About ten minutes later Peeta was standing in front of the mirror in his bathroom and dried his body with the mellow, yellow towel. After that he went for his head and tried to rub off most of the moisture. Within seconds he dried the wetness out of his wheat blonde hair. Sometimes,
depending on how the light fell onto Peeta's head, his hair became a slight golden shade. He put the towel into the laundry bucket and grabbed for the hairdryer. Peeta blow-dried his hair just for a few seconds so it would fall naturally into his face and would dry in a quicker pace. After Peeta took his boxer shorts and t-shirt into his hands, he decided to walk out of the bathroom and dress up.

Back in his room Peeta took out blue denim jeans, a white t-shirt with round neck and a simple dark blue wooly sweater which underlined Peeta's blue eye color, and a fresh black socks and a black boxer brief. He stripped the clothes on and added a splash of his favorite cologne on his neck left and right. Peeta then took a glance to his clock which said it was 7AM. He had to be in school in an hour so he should go get downstairs, grab the last things together and find a good walk to his new high school. Peeta swung his school bag over his shoulder and walked down the stairs.

He stepped into the kitchen and was stopped by the glare of his father who seemed to be waiting for Peeta for a few minutes already.

"Peeta we need to talk." His father said as he stirred with a spoon in his coffee.

"About what?" Peeta asked as he walked over to the fridge to take out the orange juice. He knew what his father wanted to talk about but Peeta hoped he could avoid that discussion.

"Don't act like everything was normal, because it's not. What happened yesterday? You told me those mental breakdowns had stopped!"

"They did! It was just the new dark surrounding that scared me. I promise it won't happen again, I just lost things. Dad, it's nothing you should be worried about. Okay?" Peeta tried to end this conversation as soon as it started.

"Peeta you're wrong, it is indeed something to be worried about! You will not go to the new school today but instead we will drive to the city and search for psychological help."

Peeta's mouth dropped and he frowned about what he had just heard-
"Are you serious right now? After all that had happened you want me to get a psychologist that recalls all the shit of my past? Too late, you should have thought about it when you drowned yourself in self-pity and alcohol and left me alone in my room for several months."

"Peeta you don't understand-"

"No, now it's your turn to listen to me!" Peeta yelled and threw a hateful gaze towards his father. "Once in my life I've got the chance to start all over. I want to leave the past behind and go on, we will never be able to change what had happened. Just because you found me sobbing on a bench at night, it doesn't mean that I'm a wreck. When I needed help no one gave it to me, I was all alone and had to deal with the shit by myself. I will go to school and I will leave now." Peeta walked towards the kitchen table, grabbed an apple and made his way to the entrance door.

Peeta's father stood up and aimed towards his son and grabbed him by his arm. "Peeta Mellark, you're my son and you're only sixteen years old, which means that you're still not of age. You're going to do what I commend you, I'm your father!"

"Oh really? It didn't feel like I had any father at all over the last year." Peeta yelled and freed himself from his father's grip, who was stunned by his son's certain statement. "Sometimes I wish I had died in the vacation house as well as mom and Lucas. It would have saved me a lot of pain and sleepless nights."
Peeta furiously stormed out of the house and slammed the door behind him. He swung the backpack over both his shoulders and walked down the sidewalk. He didn't understand his father at all, he was such a dickhead. In an attempt to calm him down, Peeta looked at his watch to see if he still got time to get a latte macchiato at the coffee shop which he'd seen yesterday down the street.

It was only 7:12 AM. Without even knowing how he could reach the school the fastest he decided to first of all take a stop at the coffee store.

A few minutes later Peeta came to the corner with the cute, little shop on the opposite street. He crossed the street and opened the big glass door. A silent ring sounded as the door went open and Peeta stepped inside. The familiar scent of hot, sweet coffee welcomed his nose and the sound of brewing coffee filled the air.

Next to the glass cabinet there stood the girl Peeta met yesterday. Katniss peeked through the glass and looked at all the delicious, diverse cupcakes and cookies once more.

Peeta decided that a talk with the girl would be a good distraction; also maybe he could go to school with her, but of course only if she wanted to.

He walked towards Katniss and tapped on her shoulder.

"Good Morning Katniss."

She turned around to meet the barely familiar voice.

"Ohh Peeta it's you, good Morning! Nice to see you again, I kind of thought I'd seen the last of you after yesterday."

"Sorry I had to leave so quickly. My dad gets mad quickly when I'm not home on time." Peeta's voice fell hoarse and he nervously fumbled with his fingers.

"Ah, it's fine. Don't worry. So should we go to school together or do you want to order anything?" Katniss asked and turned her body towards the exit.

"Well actually I wanted to order a latte but it seems like I forgot my money anyways, so let's just go." Peeta said the truth; he did forget his pocket in his room.

"Nah, it's fine. I take it for my account." Katniss turned around and walked towards the showcase. "One latte macchiato, please." She ordered.

A few seconds later the latte was ready to-go and Katniss paid two dollars. She walked towards Peeta and handed the coffee to him. "Here you are."

"Thank you so much! That's probably the nicest thing someone's ever done for me." Peeta confessed and took the hot cup into his hands. The warmth directly spread through his fingers which gave him a comfortable feeling. It was a very windy late summer day so the warm coffee was a perfect thing.

The two left the coffee shop and began their walk to school. For a while there were only the sounds of their footsteps, the silent howling wind and Peeta, who sipped on his hot coffee, audible.

"So Peeta, are you excited because of the new school?" Katniss asked and interrupted Peeta from taking another sip.

"Well, to be honest yes I am and not only a bit." Peeta admitted. He felt so comfortable around Katniss that he even thought about telling her his story one day.

"Don't worry. I'm sure it'll be fine. All in all the students are quite okay and at lunch you can for
"Thanks Katniss. What kind of people are there? I mean, are there any of those typical cool teens?"

"Well, yeah there are a few but I think every school has them. There are Marvel, Gloss, Glimmer, Cashmere, Clove and for sure their headquarter Cato Hadley. You should beware of him; he's very muscular and edged, very strong, he has bright blonde hair and ice blue eyes with a gaze of a killer. He's one of those bad boys you wouldn't want to cross on the school hall during the break."

"Uhm...killer gaze, blonde and a muscular build? That actually reminds me of the guy I ran into yesterday. Was he like this tall?" Peeta asked as he motioned a height with his hand which he placed one head over his in the air.

"Ohh, yes that was definitely him! He often jogs and walks around this area here, but did you say u ran into him? What happened?" Katniss turned her head to look into Peeta's face.

"Well, I -- you know I had to hurry, so I kind of ran and on the next corner I bumped into him and spilled my coffee all over his body and clothes. I don't know he seemed to be very angry and outraged so I just stood up and ran off. He called something but I didn't hear it. I was really scared. Damn; I should have guessed that he goes to the same high school. Now I probably got some problems. Great..." Peeta's voice fell silent and he almost fell like throwing up.

Katniss seemed to notice Peeta's sudden pale face color. She touched his shoulder and turned him around.
"Hey, hey it's okay. He isn't that cruel, you need to really upset him so he's after you. Just act normal and behave carefully towards him, maybe he even forgot about yesterday. You should just know that he already broke a few noses so better don't let him attack you physically."

"Katniss I'm sure that was upsetting enough, who wouldn't be fucked up if someone spilled hot coffee all over your stuff and who would forget something like that? This Cato guy probably will confront me as soon as I step through the school door."

"No, don't worry. We've got Gale, Finnick, Johanna, Madge and Annie on our side and together we're at least as strong as Cato and his folks. So there is no reason to be worried, the luck is in our favor."

"Thanks Katniss, you really calmed me down. At least I shouldn't worry as long as I'm still not in school."

"Exactly." Katniss said and winked.

After a few more minutes of walking they reached the high school and stepped into the entrance hall.
It was 7:55 AM and in five minutes Peeta should be in his first class, though the matter was he didn't even have his timetable yet.

A few people aimed towards Katniss who Peeta thought would be a few of her friends. One of the boys had ebony brown hair, grey eyes and an olive skin tone just like Katniss herself. The other boy had bronze-brown and slightly curly hair; he was tall and had a very stocky build. Then there was a girl, who had blonde shoulder-long hair, which curled towards the end, and bright blue eyes. They seemed to be friendly, but Peeta wanted to avoid any further discussion about whom he was and where he came from so he quickly turned around to Katniss.
"I will just stop by the school office, get my timetable and introduce myself to the headmaster. See you later at lunch." Peeta whispered into Katniss' ear.

"Okay, good luck. We're always sitting on the right side of the windows." Katniss said back and Peeta nodded with a smile.
"Bye!" She called as Peeta walked off.

Peeta reached the hallway with the red door that had 'SCHOOL OFFICE' written on it. He went to the door and knocked gently. The door immediately opened.

"Ah, you have to be Peeta Mellark, am I right?"

Peeta nodded.

"Hello Peeta and Welcome to Silver Lake High. We've got the best education in the whole town I tell you that right now." The man laughed and stretched out his hand to Peeta. "I'm school Principal Mr. Plutarch Heavensbee. Nice to meet you, Peeta."

"Thanks Mr. Heavensbee, I really like it here. It seems to be a nice school." Peeta said and shook the Principal's hand.

"Well, I hope so!" Plutarch laughed again. "I am very busy at the moment, but my guidance counselor Ms. Effie Trinket will tell you all the important stuff and give you your timetable. See you soon, Peeta."

The man smiled and tapped Peeta's shoulder before he walked off and left the hallway.

"Hello Peeta, I'm Effie Trinket but you can just call me Effie. Welcome to Silver Lake High. Here's your timetable. Your first class will be geography with Mr. Abernathy." The woman in a pink and white costume with platinum-blonde hair said as she gave a piece of paper towards Peeta. Her voice was very high and her tone sounded nearly fake-friendly.

Peeta mumbled a 'thank you' when Effie already grabbed out a stack of books and a big notebook and pushed these into Peeta's hands, who let out a silent sigh.

"Yes, I know these are quite heavy but they are only for your best. Those are your now belonging education books. The one on top of the stack is a book about rules and instructions of Silver Lake High. Oh and before I forget it, this is your code for your locker. The code is '1234' and your locker number is 74. Don't forget to change the code as soon as you opened it. Now hurry up and go to class!" Effie put the key on top of the rulebook and pushed Peeta on his way.

"Thank you, bye Effie." Peeta said as he stumbled towards the lockers. His number was 74 so it was on the left side. It was already a few minutes after eight so he had to hurry.

Finally he found his locker and turned the number wheel until the lock clicked and the small door opened. Peeta threw his books inside except the geography book and quickly shut the door. He gave in a new code, '1375', and looked at his timetable. Mr. Abernathy's s geography class is in room 102.

Peeta hoped the teacher wouldn't be in class already and ran down the hallway as quickly as he could.

He just ran around the corner as he suddenly met a harsh impact and fell down to the ground. Peeta looked up to meet the same ice-blue piercing eyes he'd crossed yesterday after he spilled the coffee all over the boy's body.

"Holy crap, aren't you the dude who ran into me yesterday as well? I can all too well remember that you spilled your hot drink over my clothes!" The blonde tall guy said with an angry but also
playful voice.

Peeta felt even more frightened than yesterday and he didn't understand how he could be so stupid and run into this guy again.
"I-I'm so sorry, I-I-"

"You still owe me a new top, you know that right?"

"Of c-course, I-I, but I d-don't … have a-anything w-with m-me." Peeta mumbled and forced himself to stand up, but the blonde brute was still way taller.

"Hey, know what? It's fine; I've got enough money to buy me a stack of new tops just because I want to. Just take care of yourself the next time you cross a corner." The opposite boy said and had a mysterious smile on his face.

"I-I d-don't understand… so-" Peeta was confused but he had been interrupted.

"You should go to lesson; you don't want to be too late for class, do you?" Cato asks and turns around to walk down the hallway where Peeta came from.

Peeta was stunned, confused and shocked. Was that the boy Katniss said that was threatening, dangerous and should be bewared?!
But Peeta was ripped from his thoughts when the blonde turned around. Peeta looked expectantly at him and almost feared that the boy had changed his mind.

"What's your name?"

"P-Peeta. Mellark. Peeta Mellark." He said confused and tried to find out what the tall blonde was up to.
Cato suddenly smirked that mysterious smile again and took a step back.

"Welcome to Silver Lake High, I'm Cato." He said and then turned around and left the corridor.

"I know." Peeta thought. He knew this name already. Katniss had mentioned it to him previously but Peeta would have never matched this name to the person he just talked with. Even yesterday after Peeta had spilled the coffee all over Cato, he seemed to be a killer machine but from what Peeta had just experiences, Cato was way nicer than he had ever imagined. Was there anything that changed Cato's mind or were people just wrong about him? He would probably have to find out by himself.

The school bell rang and the first two lessons were finally over. Mr. Abernathy was a really nice and cool teacher, but his geography lessons were extremely boring. Katniss also had geography with Mr. Abernathy and luckily the seat next to her was free. As soon as Peeta stepped into the room, Katniss had waved him towards the empty seat next to her, but Peeta had to introduce himself to class with two sentences before he was allowed to sit down.

Outside the geography class Katniss caught up with her friend Madge, who was the blonde girl Peeta had seen earlier this morning. They greeted each other and then all three made their way to the cafeteria.

"So Peeta, do you like it here?" Madge asked as she waved her hair from her right shoulder.

"Yeah, I like it. People are pretty nice towards me." Peeta said and smiled.

Katniss quirked an eyebrow towards Peeta, who had a wide smile on his lips.
"What's up, Peeta?"

"Well, I told you about Cato this morning, right? Before class I ran into him again…"

"So? What did he do?" Katniss asked and her face filled with shock.

"Nothing. He actually did nothing; he asked me for my name and welcomed me to Silver Lake High. He said I wouldn't need to pay his top, because he would have enough money to buy him as much as necessary."

"Wow, really? Are you sure that was Cato you ran into, like completely sure? That doesn't seem to come from Cato at all." Katniss asked and played with her braid.

"Yes it was him; he even mentioned his name towards me." Peeta responded and looked at Madge.

"That's so weird; normally Cato would have thrown you up the wall the second you bumped into him. Though it's good he didn't, that would have been a fucked up first day." Madge said and smiled.

Peeta nodded and Katniss just said how lucky he was.

Then they reached the cafeteria and they were aiming towards the table with Katniss' friends.

"So, there we are Peeta. This is our table. Let's sit down; I want to introduce you to everyone."

Peeta nodded nervously and stepped to the group of people.

"Everyone, that's Peeta Mellark, he came here this weekend and now he's visiting Silver Lake High. He is really nice so let's welcome him. This is Gale, Finnick, Annie and Johanna." Katniss said and winked towards Peeta.

They all greeted Peeta in a chorus of 'His' and he greeted back.

Peeta put down his school bag and geography book next to Katniss' seat.

"Get you something to eat. You just need to take something from the counter with the food on it. I need to write down homework for my next class so could you get me a salad, please? That would be really kind." Katniss pleased and Peeta nodded.

Peeta went to the counter with the food and got himself spring rolls. They were his all time favorite food. When he wanted to take the last salad for Katniss, suddenly a tall guy pushed him harshly to the ground, which caused him to throw his food on the floor.

Peeta looked up to see Cato with a row of other smirking people standing behind and next to him, which looked like as if they could be the school elite.

"Back off, newbie. Want to take the last salad? Well, you should know who's in charge. We are. This is our salad." Cato said and laughed loudly. He took the salad and threw it on the floor.

"Well, I'm not hungry for salad right now. What a pity, but now you can have it." Cato kicked the salad towards Peeta.

"W-what? I-I didn't d-do a-anything. L-Leave m-me alone!" Peeta stuttered and his heart was beating loudly.

"Fuck off, Cato and leave him! Congrats it's just his first day and you already managed to ruin his impression of our school. Now you've done your job and you can piss off." A boy yelled. Peeta
turned around to see that it was Finnick who came to help him.

"Be careful Finnick, you don't want me to come for you, do you? But fine, I think this newbie had enough, let's go guys." And with that Cato left the cafeteria with his folks behind him.

Finnick helped Peeta up and guided him to the table. A few minutes ago Peeta was hungry as hell but now he felt like vomiting.  
"Thank you Finnick." Peeta mumbled and Finnick responded with a smile.

Back at the table Katniss took Peeta's hand and asked if he was alright. Peeta said yes, he was just totally confused and shocked.

"But what happened? I mean, you told me he was nice to you this morning, right?" Katniss asked nervously.

"I don't know Katniss, I have no idea, I just know that I will avoid Cato for the rest of my school life." Peeta answered and took his school bag as the bell rang to say that the next two lessons are going to start. He waved goodbye and walked out of the cafeteria.

The rest of the school day was quite okay.

After lunch Peeta had two hours of math lessons and unfortunately he sat two seats further next to Cato. The teacher was Mr. Beetee, who was quite lame but clear and well organized at explaining. After that Peeta had two lessons of his favorite subject with Katniss. It was nothing else than arts. Their arts teacher was Cinna, who liked to be named just by his forename.

After school Peeta and Katniss exchanged numbers and they walked home together. Both noticed that Katniss only lived two streets from Peeta apart which meant they could meet each other and learn together often.

When Peeta came home his father wasn't there but a white note with a message laid on the table. 'Please take the bakery this evening. I'm out and we need to earn money. You know how to make the buns and cookies. Bye – Dad'

"Great." Peeta thought, but he didn't have a choice. He walked upstairs to his room and sat down on his bed. He put out his math homework and started to work on the first task when suddenly Peeta's phone vibrated in his pocket.

He picked it out to find a text message from Katniss.

- Hey Peet, want to come over and talk? Got pizza -

- Hey Katniss, I would love to but I need to do homework and have to work at the bakery later, next time of course -

- Aw, okay. See you tomorrow then. Have fun with your homework – K -

Peeta sighed, he really wanted to catch up with Katniss but he couldn't skip the work at the bakery.

An hour later Peeta finished his homework. He went downstairs, through the kitchen and living room and finally to the backside of the house to open the door that led through the house and into the bakery. He then walked to the front door of the bakery and turned the sign to 'OPEN'.

This evening there were only four customers.
Two women who lived in the neighborhood ordered cherry tea and biscuits, a girl from school Peeta had seen at lunch bought two breads and completely to Peeta's surprise Effie Trinket entered the bakery to order a big vanilla cake with pink frosting and butter cream. She said she needed it for a birthday party for someone from her family.

Not it was 8PM and the bakery was about to close. Peeta still didn't hear anything from his father. He went into the kitchen and was just pushed the last tray of buns into the oven so they would be fresh tomorrow in the morning. After that he started to do the dishes when suddenly the door of the bakery opened and the all too familiar ring sounded through the room.

Damn, Peeta forgot to turn the sign to 'CLOSED' and lock the door. Since it was his own fault he couldn't leave the customer. Anyways he and his father needed the money so either way he would help the customer, but after that he would definitely shut the door.

"I'm coming, one moment please." Peeta called and dried his wet hands with the kitchen towel. He hopefully thought that the person just wanted to buy bread or something.

When he walked through the kitchen door frame and into the bakery he stopped for a moment, surprised with who stood in front of him.

It was Cato and he had this mysterious smile on his lips. Just the sight of this killer machine already brought Peeta's knees to wobble. He decided to treat Cato as a normal costumer and not to show how confused and frightened he really was.

"How can I help, we're actually closed." Peeta said bluntly.

"Hello Peeta. You sound angry, is something up?" Cato asked with a playful tone.

"Cato, I don't want any trouble. So, please tell me what you need so you can leave and I can clean the kitchen." Peeta said sternly. It felt weird to say Cato's name after the little time they actually know each other.

"Good good, because I don't want any trouble as well. I don't need something, but I came here for a certain reason. I hoped I would meet you here."

"M-me? W-what? If y-you don't want anything y-you can l-leave r-right now, because I'm not up f-for any fights." Peeta stuttered as his fear seemed to grow bigger.

"You don't need to worry; I'm not going to hit you or something." Cato said in a calming tone as he stepped closer towards Peeta.

"What do you want then?" Peeta asked and his fear seemed to shrink, instead his curiosity and confusion grew even more.

"I want to excuse, I'm sorry that I threw you to the ground, I shouldn't have done that. It was the pressure by my friends, who wanted me to show you who the leader is." Cato explained silently and stroked his left arm while he looked to the floor. "I'm sorry."

Suddenly Peeta felt another feeling that spread in his stomach. It wasn't threatening or cold but warm and calming. Did he just feel that Cato looked cute?

He shook the thought off and went back to reality.

"Yeah... it's fine. Just don't do it again, that would be uhm nice." Peeta awkwardly said. Cato was someone he didn't understand at all. What was he going for?

"I won't. See you tomorrow then, Peeta." Cato said and winked. He turned around and left the bakery as quickly as he came, leaving Peeta, who didn't even have the time to respond, alone in the bakery.
Peeta walked to the front door, he locked it and turned the sign to 'CLOSED'. He then went back to the kitchen and finished the dishes quickly.

An hour later Peeta laid in his bed. He was really exhausted from the work at the bakery. While he tried to fall asleep he couldn't free his thoughts from Cato; the mysterious boy, who confused Peeta's mind.

On a further note Peeta wanted to know more about this Cato guy. He had something that awakened his interest. What was that? What was the special something that had Peeta all tied up about Cato?
He wanted to find out as soon as possible.

Chapter End Notes

Any suggestions, criticisms, wishes for the 3rd chapter or the further plot? Explain in the comments!
Feelings

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

he next three days went by quickly.

On Tuesday when Peeta came home from school, which luckily ended without any uncomfortable incidents between him and Cato, his father was finally back.
Peeta asked him where he’d been, but he didn't give any real answers instead of excusing by saying it'd been something businesslike or by changing the conversation to any non-essential topics.
Peeta was curious and suspicious about where his father went the past day and night, but anyway he wouldn't find out unless his father would tell him, so Peeta's only option was to wait and see.

The next day on Wednesday Peeta felt sick and ill so he didn't go to school and stayed at home. He lay in bed all day and drew some sketches, but slept most of the time. Peeta noticed that his father wasn't home and once more he'd been alone all day. In the afternoon Katniss came over and she gave Peeta his homework. Then they both were talking about school gossip and Katniss occasionally told Peeta that Cato and Finnick had a fight in the cafeteria. Eventually Cato called Annie a 'whore' wherefore Finnick punched Cato into his face which led to a battle between the two different sides. Peeta was unsure what to think about the current situation; he wondered why Finnick became so easily aggressive around Cato and why Cato called Annie a whore out of nothing. In the evening Peeta's father came back without losing a word on where he'd been whole day and acted as if everything was normal.

On Thursday Peeta was able to attend at school again.
His first four lessons were geography and arts in which both Peeta sat next to Katniss. The lessons were pretty boring and unspectacular.
During the breaks Peeta got to know Katniss' friends closer and he found out that Gale, Finnick, Madge and Annie were very nice people to talk with. For Peeta it seemed like Annie and Finnick had a special connection but who was he to judge two people he yet only knew for two days.
Johanna didn't talk much and she seemed to be annoyed by some discussions at the table, but now and then she gave Peeta a small smile. In the meantime Katniss mumbled something about a party on Friday, but Peeta didn't really listen when Katniss was talking about it. He also didn't expect to be invited, but he wouldn't want to go there anyway.
In the last two lessons Peeta had his history class for the first time. Unfortunately no one he knew had this course as well so he had to go to the room alone. When he arrived at the history class almost every student already had a seat, but Peeta of course had no one to sit next to.
By the next two minutes everyone seemed to have found the perfect seat but Peeta still didn't find an empty place. The only empty spaces were next to a red-haired girl, two strangely looking guys and, to Peeta's surprise, next to Cato. The teacher walked in and when he saw Peeta standing in the middle of the room he advised in front of the whole class to "Please sit down next to Cato Hadley." Peeta let out an inner groan and made his way to Cato's table. After the fight, Katniss had told Peeta about, Peeta was once more confused and insecure what to think of Cato.
Was he a nice guy like he'd been acting towards Peeta in moments when they were both alone or was Cato a complete dickhead, who liked to play with other people and was only looking for stress and problems? Peeta didn't know.
He walked towards the empty seat next to Cato and silently sat down. Cato looked at Peeta and made the mysterious smile that Peeta knew all too well by now. Peeta shakily nodded in Cato's direction and then looked back to the front, where the teacher stood. During the teacher's speech Peeta found out that the woman in front of them was Mrs. Cresta. Peeta wasn't sure if it was
Annie's mother that stood in front of them, but he would ask Annie later. Mrs. Cresta seemed to be a very nice and lovely woman, Peeta thought she explained well and that she had a good handling with the students. During the two lessons Mrs. Cresta most of the time was holding speeches and showing presentations about the most important historical facts they would have to know by the end of this year's semester. Peeta didn't exchange a word with Cato but instead he noticed that Cato was observing and staring at him very often. It kind of unsettled Peeta and he became awfully nervous every time Cato's eyes found Peeta's face. Of course Peeta never responded the gaze but still he'd been immensely confused why Cato was looking at him all the time. When the bell rang Peeta stormed out of class and made his way home. When he'd been there, he texted Katniss about that but she replied Cato had always been a weird guy so Peeta shouldn't worry about such a thing.

In the evening Peeta did his work at the bakery and when it closed he went to bed.

Another day began, today was Friday the 1st in the beginning of September.

As usual Peeta stood up at 6AM and took his morning routine, which included showering, dressing up and getting ready. When Peeta finished his routine he walked down the stairs and stepped into the kitchen. He ate a banana and drank a glass of orange juice. Again Peeta's father wasn't at home this morning but Peeta didn't really bother. He was still confused and wondered if this was still some part of "playing-the-disappointed-dad" card, but in the end Peeta knew his father couldn't go on like this forever and sooner or later Peeta would know where his father had lately spent his time.

By now it was 7:26AM and Peeta should meet Katniss at the coffee shop in a few minutes. He put on his jacket, grabbed his backpack, an apple and walked out of the house. It became windier and also the temperature fell a bit. Slowly fall was present and clearly recognizable.

While Peeta walked down the street he noticed that the wind was way stronger than he'd thought, it constantly flied into his hair and eyes. Luckily Peeta wore a scarf today or he'd probably freeze to death. He didn't mean to remember that the autumn wind had ever been so forceful at such an early time in September, where Peeta used to live before, the wind only became that strong in mid-October.

When Peeta crossed the next corner, he already saw Katniss' braid waving in the wind from afar. He noticed she got the same problem with the heavy wind as him. All the time she had to stroke several strands of hair out of her face to get a clear vision. Peeta crossed the street when Katniss saw him and waved.

"Hey, Peeta. How are you?" Katniss asked and took Peeta into a short hug.

"Hey Katniss, I'm fine, what about you?" Peeta asked while he stroked a strand of his messy hair out of his forehead.

"Pretty much the same, though this wind is killing me."

"Yeah I know what you mean, it's extremely windy." Peeta mumbled while he held his scarf in front of his mouth.

"So, which subject have you got in the first two lessons?" Katniss asked while the both were walking towards school.

"History." Peeta replied and exclaimed an annoyed sigh.

"Cato, right? Why don't you try to kind of get along with him?" Katniss asked and stroked another strand of hair out of her face.
"Wait, didn't you say I should be careful around him? Especially when he just came into a fight with Finnick I don't want to heat things up." Peeta replied and thought about the consequences that it could have if he'd say something wrong in Cato's presence.

"Yea, but every time you'd been alone with him, he acted nicely towards you didn't he? I mean he even came to the bakery to excuse for what he did back in the cafeteria so I guess he can't be too upset about you. Just try to get into small talk, when you're stuck in sitting next to Cato for at least this semester you should definitely try to get on a good way with him."

Peeta thought about it deeply; should he try to get along with Cato to find a way to make the history lessons at least a little pleasant without worrying about how to act around Cato? It could go wrong but if he didn't try it, it wouldn't work between them as seatmates anyways. While Peeta was deep in thoughts he noticed that Katniss was right.

"I guess you're right… but still I'll be careful." Peeta said. He was lucky he found someone like Katniss in the new school. She was super nice and helpful as well.

"Of course I'm right. Trust me; I am sure it will only pay well."

A few minutes later they already arrived at the school. Peeta got his stuff out of the locker and made his way towards the class room. When Peeta reached the floor he already saw Cato walking through the door frame into the class. Out of a sudden Peeta's heart started to thump loudly, he knew he had to start a conversation with Cato in an attempt to get with him on a good level.

Then also Peeta walked through the door frame and into the class room. He walked to his table, where Cato already sat, and placed his schoolbag next to his chair. Before he sat down he looked at Cato and surprised noticed that Cato already stared at him. There was an awkward moment when they both just observed the other one until Peeta sat down with a racing heart.

"Hi Peeta." Cato finally said.

"Uhm…Hey…Cato." Peeta weirdly greeted back and turned to his backpack to grab out his books and pencils. Mrs. Cresta was still not there. When Peeta turned around again, Cato was still looking at him.

"What?" Peeta asked calm and raised his eyebrows that underlined his confusion.

"I think your drawings fell out of your sketch book. You didn't seem to notice, did you?" Cato asked and had a playful smile on his lips.

Peeta looked down at his feet and indeed there were laying one, two, three sketches he drew when he'd been ill and stayed home. He picked the drawings up and stuffed them back into his sketch book.
Peeta looked again at Cato and into his eyes, blue clashing with blue.

"I-Thanks." Peeta mumbled and broke the gaze. He scratched the back of his neck and looked at the front to see if Mrs. Cresta had arrived, but to Peeta's surprise she still didn't.

"Do you draw a lot?" Cato asked and motioned in the direction of Peeta's sketch book.

This was Peeta's opportunity to get into a conversation with Cato to loosen things up. "W-well, yes, I do kinda. I actually always draw when I've got the time and when I don't have to work at the bakery or make any homework."

"I see, looks good." Cato said and stroked through his bright, platinum blonde hair.
Peeta smiled about that and thought about how to keep the conversation going. "So… how about you?" Peeta carefully asked.

"About what? Oh, you mean what I like to do?" Cato asked and Peeta nodded. "Well I mostly play basketball, do jogging and work out. One would say I'm quite a sports freak, but honestly I can relax and calm down the best while I'm doing any sporty activities."

"Sounds good." Peeta answered.

Cato smiled and in the same second Mrs. Cresta stormed into the room.

"Sorry everyone, I was having an accident with my car, but everything's fine now. So, let's start with the lesson." Mrs. Cresta said and took out her history book.

Finally the school bell rang, which marked the end of the lesson. Peeta became really eager for the break and couldn't wait until the lessons were over. He stuffed his things into his schoolbag and stood up.

"Bye, Cato." Peeta said and expectantly waited for Cato's response.

"See you soon, Peeta." Cato replied and winked.

Peeta then left the class room and walked towards the cafeteria to meet Katniss there. When he arrived at the cafeteria Katniss waved at him and Peeta stepped to the table.

"Peeta you know Maja, don't you? She's in our geography class and she is throwing a party at her house tonight and the whole school is invited! You need to come with us!" Katniss said and made a pleading gesture with her hands.

"Katniss, I don't know, I'm not really in the mood for a party, I think I prefer to stay at home and –"

"Peeta! No excuses, c'mon it is Friday Night and you plan to stay home? No way, you'll go with us and have some fun."

"Katniss, I don't know…"

"Pleaaaase Peeta, trust me it'll be fun!" Katniss said and looked at the others to support her.

"Yes Peeta, it will be funny, you need to go with us or you'll miss something." Madge said and smiled towards him.

"Come on Peeta, It will be cool." Gale added.

Well what else could Peeta do when even Gale asked him to go to the party? Peeta sighed. "Okay, fine, but let's not stay for too long, okay Katniss?" He asked and sat down next to her.

"Perfect, I am happy you're coming with us! This will be great!" Katniss said and then slightly bent over to Peeta.

"By the way, how did it work out with Cato?" She asked in a whispery tone.

"Good, we had a nice little conversation. I think I'll get along with him throughout this semester." Peeta replied.

"That's great. See I was right all the way." Katniss exclaimed.
Suddenly Peeta had been hit by a crumpled paper ball. He immediately turned around to see Clove standing there, right next to Cato, Glimmer and Marvel, holding a salad in her right hand. Confused and Surprised, Peeta didn't know what to say before another small paper ball hit his right shoulder.

"Hey newbie! Want this salad?" Clove shouted and all the others laughed. Peeta quickly looked at Cato who laughed as well, Peeta felt betrayed, disappointed, he didn't know how to describe how he felt, he knew since the beginning that Cato wasn't better than any other of his friends.

In the next second a small salad bowl fell directly in front of Peeta's feet and he had to bend to the right side to not be hit by the glass.

"God, Fuck off you idiots!" Gale screamed and threw the previous paper ball back at them.

Then the school bell rang and Clove, Cato and the rest of them disappeared laughing.

"God I hate them so much." Katniss said while she kicked off the other paper ball that laid on the ground next to Peeta. "Are you alright?" She asked as she gestured towards Peeta.

"Y-yeah. F-fine. The bell rang, see you after school Katniss. Bye." With that Peeta disappeared, still mad and annoyed because of Cato. How could someone be so self-centered?

Peeta was already upset and now he had two lessons of biology and math. The day couldn't become any worse.

Four lessons later the final school bell rang and the lessons for this day were finally finished. Peeta left the math room and walked out of the school building. When he walked through the exit he saw Katniss already waiting at the banister. The sun came out and in the meantime it became way warmer than it had been this morning.

"Hey, I've been waiting for five minutes already, come on let's go, we haven't got all day!" Katniss said as she grabbed Peeta's arm and pulled him on the way.

"Katniss the party is only starting at 7PM, so why do we have to hurry so much?" Peeta asked as Katniss speeded up her pace and pulled him after her.

"Peeta we need to get us ready for the party and put out something nice to wear; it's okay that I am coming home with you, isn't it?"

"Uhm sure, my dad probably won't be home anyway, so why not. Don't you take the party a bit too serious by the way?" Peeta asked as he brought Katniss to slow down her steps.

"Of course not! It's the first party after summer and it's your first party in Silver Lake so we should definitely leave a good impression."

"Who cares about it though? It's not that I need to impress anyone."

Katniss stopped for a moment and let out a demonstrative groan. "Well, mainly we get ready for ourselves and also just because it makes fun, don't you agree?" Katniss asked and turned around to Peeta.

"Kinda." Peeta replied and smiled slightly. He hasn't been out for months, so maybe it could get
funny indeed.

"See? Then let's go to your home and get ready."

After bit more than twenty minutes they reached his house. Peeta stepped towards the door, put his key into the lock and turned it until the door opened. He entered the house at first to make sure if they were alone. He called for his father but he didn't reply and the house was scarly silent.

Peeta turned around to face Katniss, who just walked in, and shrugged his shoulders. "He isn't home. My room is upstairs, just follow me."

Peeta walked upstairs and Katniss followed him, when they entered the room they sat down on the bed. Luckily Peeta unboxed the last cartons from the move when he'd been sick, so now everything was at its place.

"I like your room." Katniss said as she stood up and walked towards Peeta's wardrobe. Katniss opened the doors and looked through Peeta's clothes. She picked out several things, held them in front of her face and then decided whether it would be party-fit or not. Now and then she stored a few pieces of clothing on her right arm while she was searching for matching things. This went on for a few more minutes and Peeta was just about to ask Katniss if she was ready, when Katniss turned around with a full outfit in her hands. She picked out black tight jeans, a dark deep blue T-shirt, a dark grey cardigan and mud-brown camo boots.

"That is perfect. It's elegant and casual; the deep blue tee will emphasize your blue eye color." Katniss said and threw the stuff onto the bed, right next to Peeta.

"So, get ready, I'll go home and get dressed as well. Gale and I will pick you up at seven and then Finnick will drive us to the party."

"Isn't that a bit late? The party itself already starts at seven." Peeta raised his brows.

"Oh Peeta, being belatedly is part of going to a party. That is kind like a golden rule." Katniss said while she threw her bag over her shoulder.

"Oh. I didn't know that." Peeta replied as he followed Katniss down the stairs.

"No problem, Peeta. Therefore you've got me, right? Okay, see you later then." Katniss said and left the house.

"Bye!" Peeta called after her as she walked through the door. She waved and then Peeta closed the door.

What would he do in the next three hours while waiting for Katniss and Gale to pick him up? Peeta really hoped the party would be funny, but then again the whole school was invited, which meant that Cato and his friends would probably be there as well. Ugh, he didn't want to see Cato at all. Peeta still felt so silly for believing Cato and he could get along well with each other, but instead of changing his attitude, Cato laughed at Peeta and let his friends throw shit at him. Now when Peeta thought of it he wished he'd never agreed to that party, he was definitely not in the mood for it. Whatever it was too late now anyway, so he should try to make the best out of it.

In the next three hours Peeta took a shower, put on the clothes that Katniss picked out and watched some TV. It was about 6:30PM when Peeta got a text message.
Peeta laid his phone aside and walked to the kitchen. His father didn't come home yet so Peeta made himself something to eat. He made two sandwiches with cheese, beacon and salad and now still had a half one left.

In the kitchen he took out a plate, took the sandwich and went back into the living room in front of the TV and ate his bread.

A few minutes before seven, the door finally rang. Peeta grabbed his black outdoor jacket and opened the door. There stood Katniss and behind her was a big black jeep wherein Finnick sat at the weel and Gale on the passenger seat next to him.

"Let's go, do you have all your stuff?" Katniss asked and Peeta nodded.

Peeta looked down at Katniss and she looked great. She wore black leather leggings, black ankle boots, a midnight blue sequin crop-top and underneath that she wore a black top. Above it all she wore a woolly, grey kind of parka coat. Her hair was as usual in a beautiful braid and her makeup was simple as always, except that she wore shimmery midnight blue eye shadow, which playfully underlined her grey eyes in an alluring matter.

"You look great Katniss." Peeta said and received a smile.

"Thank you, honey." She replied and pulled Peeta out of the door frame.

Peeta locked the door and then they walked towards the car.

They stepped in and Peeta had been greeted by a joyful 'Hi' from Finnick and a small smile from Gale.

The car drove off. Peeta assumed it was Finnick's car since he was driving and also seemed to be a bit older than the rest of them.

"How long does it take to Maja's house?" Katniss asked.

"About fifteen minutes." Finnick replied haltingly, he seemed to be very concentrated on the road.

There was a long silence in the car until Peeta had to get rid of a question.

"Guys, you think Cato and his friends will be at the party as well?"

"Hmm, I'd say so. But don't worry, they won't bother you unless we're in your near." Gale said.

"Right Finnick?" He asked while tapping at Finnick's shoulder.

"Yeah, right." Finnick answered. "Cato's a hypocrite, a douchebag, an idiot and a complete braggart. In real he isn't as far as daring and adventurous s as he claims to be. Let's not start to talk about his friends."

Somehow Peeta bothered the way Finnick talked about Cato. Of course Cato lost all sympathy for him as well and hands down Cato's friends were awful, but those insults Finnick threw at Cato were kind of harsh and judgmental. Maybe Cato had his reasons to act the way he does.

Hey wait a second, why did Peeta even care about this? Wasn't Cato the one who played the nice guy just to get Peeta's trust in order to take the piss out of him and laugh at Peeta at how pathetic he actually was?
Or was Peeta wrong all the way and Cato claimed to be someone he is not and in the end he's after all proper and friendly? Peeta was more than confused and why the hell was he spending so many thoughts on Cato? Peeta brushed his thoughts off and came back to Finnick.

"Well, sure Cato's mean, but don't you think those words are quite harsh? I completely agree with you about his friends, those are some real idiots, but maybe Cato isn't as brutal and ruthless as he seems to be?" Peeta carefully asked and first didn't notice the doubtful gazes he received, even Finnick turned around for a second to give Peeta a dumbfounded look.

"Are you serious? It's probably because you don't know him as long as we do, but trust me; Cato doesn't have any good characteristic at all." Gale half laughed and said.

"Hey, maybe Peeta's right and Cato is just misunderstood." Katniss stated and added a bit of lip-gloss to her lips.

"Katniss, don't you start as well please…" Gale replied and chuckled as if the thought of Cato actually being nice was totally out of this world and unreal.

"Well, Gale I am just -

Suddenly Katniss was interrupted.
"We're there everyone, let's go, I am quite thirsty now." Finnick spoke as he stopped the car and turned the car key.

"Okay, let's go." Katniss said and stepped out of the car door. Peeta did the same and Gale and Finnick followed them as well. The music was already audible the second they got out of the jeep.

They teamed up and walked towards Maja's house door. Gale rang the ball and a few seconds later the door opened with a loud pull.

"Heeey, you're there, Madge told me you were coming, come in everyone and get something to drink in the kitchen." Maja said as she waved the four teens into the house.

They walked down the hallway and went through the left door frame which led to the living room. As they entered the living room the music got extremely loud and it looked like almost half the school was already present. Peeta observed the room and looked out for Cato and his friends, but to Peeta's relief he couldn't find them.

Besides the ridiculous loud music Peeta noticed the uncomfortable heat that dominated the room and made the thought of stepping into the crowd and dance more than nauseating.

In the right corner there was a small seating area where Madge, Annie Johanna and a few more people, who Peeta didn't know, were talking. Katniss, Gale and Finnick were walking towards Madge and the rest and Peeta followed them.

"Hey Madge!" Katniss said and hugged her friend.

"Hii, finally! We almost died out of boredom. The people here are dancing and drinking like there was no tomorrow, but luckily you're here now." Madge replied and pointed at the crowd.

Peeta turned around and observed the room, Madge was right, everyone was going completely crazy. They drank vodka out of bottles, spilled it all over the floor and on the dancing people. Some were already heavily making out with each other while dancing so shameless that the dance floor quaked and trembled.

Peeta looked back at Madge, who just pressed Katniss and Peeta a bottle of lemon beer into their hands. Gale and Finnick denied the drink and went to the kitchen to get something else instead.
A few seconds later they came back with a bottle of vodka from which they both took huge sips. "Are you serious? You really aim to get drunk, don't you?" Katniss snapped and rolled her eyes.

"To be honest I do and Finnick here does as well." Gale snickered and patted Katniss' cheek. "Indeed." Finnick said in a husky tone and took another sip from the bottle.

"Seems like those two really don't take long to get drunk." Katniss whispered to Peeta and both chuckled.

"Let's get this party started!" Someone screamed through the whole room. Peeta and the others turned around to see Marvel standing at the entrance, carrying two bottles of vodka and another green liquor in his hands. Right behind him stood the rest of the gang and of course Cato, who had a six pack of beer in his hands, stood next to Marvel. Peeta turned around in annoyance and also Katniss, Madge, Gale and Finnick seemed to be pretty pissed about the fact that Cato and his folks attended the party.

The time passed and they were all talking and chatting about gossip and other unimportant stuff. Peeta all the time stayed with Katniss and Madge and throughout the evening he tried to avoid Cato and his friends as much as possible. After opening another bottle of vodka Gale and Finnick became obviously drunk, they started to dance along with the music while fooling around and making weird dance moves. Peeta, Katniss and Madge then also moved to the music and it seemed like this could become a funny evening. The two didn't drink much which was good for Peeta since he never really felt comfortable drinking in public and in presence of so many foreign people.

"I have an idea!" Katniss suddenly said as she waved Gale, Finnick, Johanna and Annie to her. "So, why don't we play 'Spin the Bottle'?" She asked.

"Puurrfect idea." Gale hummed and put his arm around Finnick.

"Let's sit down guysss." Finnick warbled and took another big sip out of his vodka.

"Okay… but we need a bottle!" Madge said and threw her blonde curly hair over her shoulder.

"Already have one." Maja said as she stepped towards them with a few other people behind her.

"Great! The more people the funnier." Katniss said and turned around to Peeta. "You'll play with us, don't you?" She asked.

"Umm, of course, just let me get something to drink. I will be right back, you can already start." Peeta said and walked towards the kitchen.

In full honesty, Peeta really had no desire to play 'Spin the Bottle' with a bunch of foreign teens and people he just knew since almost one week. He only really know Katniss; Gale, Finnick and Madge seemed nice, but Peeta didn't really get to know them yet. However, Peeta had no other option than to play with them, if he didn't he would seem as shy, prude, boring, anxious or whatever, either way it wouldn't end positive. While Peeta walked past the whole crowd that danced in the middle, he noticed that everyone seemed to be drunk or at least tipsy and additionally there was an oppressive heat reigning the air, which became even warmer than when they first entered the party. The music became louder in the meantime and drinks, broken glasses and other liquors were spread on the floor. Peeta didn't think the party would escalate so soon. A few people were already laying on couches, either making out with each other or laying in some kind of sleep to transpire the drunkenness. God, weren't that only two or three hours since the party started?
When Peeta finally entered the kitchen, the window was opened and a pleasant cool air hit his face.

Peeta stepped to the kitchen bar and looked at the different liquors. Most of them were vodka, compari, cocktails and other alcoholic drinks that Peeta couldn't quite identify. There were also thousand bottles of beer, but Peeta didn't really enjoy the original taste of normal beer. He looked under the table and there finally stood a case with flavored beer. Peeta took out a grapefruit beer and then looked for a bottle opener. It had to be somewhere; it would be quite pointless if there were so many bottles but no opener to actually open those bottles.

"Do you search this?" A voice appeared, somehow familiar to Peeta.

Bewildered Peeta turned around and unexpectedly looked at Marvel. What would Marvel want from him, why couldn't he just leave the bottle opener at the table?

"Uh...Yes". Peeta mumbled afraid.

"Take it." Marvel said and threw the bottle opener to Peeta; it landed next to Peeta on the kitchen bar. Still confused Peeta didn't think of taking the opener right now and at once Marvel walked a step closer to Peeta. What was he going for?

"Uhm..." Peeta murmured but Marvel already interrupted him.

"You are shy Peeta. Why don't you give me the opportunity to let me explore your inner-beast?" Marvel said in a hoarse tone, his voice in a playful sound.

What?! Peeta's heart pounded loud, what did Marvel just say? He couldn't be serious, was he?!

Then all of a sudden Marvel leaned down to Peeta. Their faces were only a few inches apart and Peeta was adhered to the wall so he couldn't move forwards or to the side, his heart was beating loud and fast.

"Marvel, what-" Peeta tried to interact, but Marvel shushed him. Peeta's voice was clearly frightened.

He looked right into Marvel's eyes and their expression scared Peeta. They were filled with lust and need and Marvel's lips formed to a greedy smile.

"I'm sure you're a wild one." Marvel whispered in a purring tone, he raised his hand and brought it up to Peeta's face, but right when he was about to touch Peeta's cheek, Peeta quickly pushed Marvel from him.

Shocked from this act Peeta stormed out of the kitchen without taking the bottle with him, his heart was racing and he could feel it pounding up in his throat. Thoughts went wild in his brain and as he entered the living room everything seemed different.

The room was even more filled with shameless dancing people and the lights were out, only a few headlights lighted the room. The heat became even more oppressive and suffocating, the music boomed louder than ever before and it almost clouded Peeta's senses. With heavy breaths Peeta looked out for Katniss and the others, but they were nowhere to be seen. He looked at every corner of the room, but they were gone.

Peeta's breathing became heavier and faster, he panicked in thought of being left alone. Quickly, Peeta wanted to make a search upstairs, but when he reached the stairs he suddenly tripped over a beer bottle and fell against the banister with a harsh impact. For a few seconds he laid there in an attempt to recollect his senses; the music became an inaudible, roaring, awfully loud sound that was mixed with a pounding high pitch which sounded in Peeta's ears. A terrible pain spread in Peeta's forehead and hands which cushioned his fall.

When Peeta got up everything was blurred, white stars were in his vision and the high pitch
became even louder and the noisy music hammered even harder onto Peeta's head. At once Peeta could feel a knot tying up in his lung, which made breathing even graver than it had been before. All of a sudden the vulnerability, the intimate attack by Marvel and the loneliness gave Peeta a flashback from that one night three months ago; he suddenly lost things and started to hyperventilate. Peeta's stomach trembled and he was about to throw up. He couldn't take it anymore and ran completely dazed and breathless out of the house. As he reached the sidewalk he crashed down on his feet from exhaustion and nausea feeling. He desperately tried to regain his breath which was accompanied by loud sobs and coughs. Peeta felt as if his body would totally shut down and leave him completely alone without every ability to retrieve control over himself.

Then suddenly Peeta felt firm grip on his shoulder and the sudden friction caused him to wince. He looked up and saw Cato, who was resting his hand on Peeta's right shoulder.

"Peeta? Are u alright?" Cato said in a soothing tone. "Cato? What are you-?" Peeta half cried, still breathless and unable to finish his sentence.

Cato then helped Peeta up. "Are u okay? Do you plan to go back in there?" Cato asked and put his arm around Peeta to help him being able to stand.

"No, I'll go home, but why do you even care?" Peeta choked out and slowly regained his breath.

"You can't walk home by yourself at that state, I will walk you home." Cato replied, completely ignoring Peeta's question.

"Why do you care?!" Peeta asked again, this time way more aggressive. "You play nice and in the next second you mock and laugh at me, so please just leave me alone." Peeta said and tried to free from Cato's arms, but he really had a strong grip.

Cato sighs. "See, Peeta. It's not that easy, but let me explain it, please."

They shared a gaze and Peeta nodded slightly, enough for Cato to go on. It's not that Peeta wasn't annoyed anymore, but still he'd wonder what Cato had to tell.

"You know, since I can remember my parents have never really been there for me. They were always busy with their jobs, giving brunches and parties, traveling around the world for important meetings and sometimes staying away from home for several months. When I was younger we often had to move from town to town so they could perform their jobs, because of that I also had several nannies. To date, my parents don't really care about me, they feed me with their money; money I don't need and have more than enough of and that's everything I get. I used to build up walls around me and now sometimes I don't know how and why I act and do things the way I do. I didn't want to come off as weak to anyone, so I started to become part of the "cool kids" and build up this whole "bad boy"-image." Cato made a short break and looked down at Peeta. "I never wanted to harass you Peeta, I'm sorry for anything we've done. I will tell Marvel, Clove and the others to let you alone of course. You don't deserve it. Sometimes I don't even know what things I'm doing and I'm sorry that it hit you this time. You're the first one I'm telling this about, so please don't spread it around."

Peeta was perplexed, things started to make sense now. Did Cato say the truth? But why should he invent something like this, that wouldn't make any sense. No one would like to give out such a story about oneself. Peeta understood now and he somehow felt really sorry for Cato.

"Cato, I understand and it's okay. I forgive you; I mean it wasn't that of a big deal anyway. Thank
you for telling me though." Peeta said and received a relieved smile from Cato which Peeta returned.

"Do you feel better now; do you think you can walk on your own?" Cato asked and removed his grip from Peeta.

Peeta made a few test-steps but everything seemed to be alright again. His breathing was even and calm, his nausea feelings were gone and he could walk in a steady pace.
"Yes, I think so. Thanks." Peeta answered.

"Would you now tell me what happened in there?" Cato asked and had a serious look in his eyes.

Should Peeta tell him? Somehow he felt the commitment to tell Cato the truth since he'd been doing the same. What could go wrong now anyway?
"Well, basically I went to get something to drink and there happened something strange which immensely churned me up, so I stormed out of the kitchen to see the room completely changed…well at least in my eyes. I looked for Katniss but she was nowhere and I couldn't find the others as well so I was left on my own and I started to panic. I wanted to search for them upstairs when I suddenly stumbled over something and fell against the banister. The fall caught me off guard and I only felt a blur. When I stood up my vision was filled by white stars, I felt nauseous and I started to hyperventilate. I had to get out so I ran outside and crashed down at the sidewalk…and then you came."

He decided to leave the part with Marvel out, because who knew for what it was worth, and while telling this, Peeta noticed he must have seemed like a complete freak, who couldn't even stay alone for a few minutes.

Cato nodded understanding. "I see, but why did you react so harsh to this? That couldn't be everything if it caused you to hyperventilate and panic."

A few seconds of silence filled the night air. The streets were empty and they were the only two people that were on the streets.

Peeta of course knew the answer to Cato's question, but could he trust him? Could he tell him the reasons?

Peeta knew they weren't close, but he needed someone to understand his character and personality. At this moment Cato seemed to be the only one that could perceive and comprehend this.

Peeta took a deep breath, knowing all too well what he would have to re-experience in the following minutes.

"A year ago my mother and my younger brother Lucas died in an accident when our summer vacation house had been destroyed by a terrible storm. Ever since then I felt lonely, lost, completely left to myself and awfully empty. I thought my life would end as well and I didn't see the sense in life anymore. I'd been suicidal and time was cruel. My father drank himself in alcohol and didn't care about me anymore and I had to go through this all by myself." Peeta took a breath, a single tear rolling down his cheek.

"I thought it couldn't become worse but destiny proved me how wrong I'd been. I was bullied at my old school and one late afternoon in summer when it had already darkened, I had gotten detention, because the bullies claimed I'd stolen one of the guy's phones. When detention was over it had already been dark, I had a very long school day and the detention took up to two hours, because the supervising teacher forgot the time while he'd been correcting exams. When I left the school and walked down the usual alleyway to get home, suddenly a hand pressed my mouth shut and two strong arms pulled me into the bushes. There I looked right into the face of five students with white masks on, each one seemed to be older than me and altogether they were ten times as strong as I was. Three of them kept hold of me while the two others were hitting me several times.
They beat me up until I choked blood and every part of my body was either bruised or bloody. After that I had a few fractures and an open, steady bleeding wound on my head and left alone on the cold, wet grass. If that one pedestrian hadn't found me, I probably would have died there. I was brought to hospital and stayed there for two weeks. I assumed my attackers were the bullies, but they were never punished since I didn't have any proof and the attackers had white masks and black clothing on that hid ever little evidence. The police said it were probably anonymous attackers that were walking around in the park at that late night and just took use of me. The students from school who used to bully me of course had all alibis that night and in the end everyone said I was still traumatized by the death of my mother and brother so that I didn't see things correctly and tended to make wild conclusions. For sure, deep in myself I knew that it was them, but no one believed me. Of course that's why they never found my attackers and described this incident as unlucky. "When Peeta said the last sentence he fought with tears but couldn't keep them in.

"God Peeta, oh my god I am so so so sorry." Cato muttered and grabbed Peeta into his arms who couldn't prevent the cries and sobs even more.

Shocked, Cato tried to soothe the smaller boy down. "Shhh, Peeta. It's okay, you're safe, I'm here with you, nothing will happen." He said while stroking Peeta's back in a calming movement.

They just stood there on the side of the street, Cato who held Peeta and Peeta who cried into Cato's shoulder.

After a few minutes Peeta probably let out all tears he had left and actually wondered about the position he and Cato were in, but to Peeta's surprise he liked it and right now needed it more than anything else. He didn't have any human contact in months and it felt good to have someone who embraced him with warmth and comfort. Peeta supposed it was some normal reaction anyway if someone had been told such cruel things by another one, who right after telling it, burst out in tears.

When Peeta's tears became less and the sobs stopped, Peeta decided to free himself from the embrace.

"I'm sorry, I lost things." Peeta stuttered and took a deep breath.

"Hey, it's fine. I am sorry for all the things that happened to you, this is so terrible, I'm really so sorry, I don't even know what to say." Cato replied and scratched his forehead.

"It's alright, you don't have to be sorry Cato and it's not your fault anyway. I shouldn't have told you that." Peeta said as they continued their walk to Peeta's house.

"No Peeta, you shouldn't blame yourself for what was done to you. People are cruel and reckless and they should burn in jail for what they did, especially those who labeled you as 'traumatized' so that you couldn't make right decisions for yourself. That's so blinded and silly; I can't find the right words." Cato looked down at Peeta and noticed the vulnerability he radiated.

"I assume you didn't tell that anyone before, did you?"

Peeta shook his head. "You're the first one I told that since I'm here." He let out a breath.

"And I feel relieved." He added.

Peeta looked up and smiled at Cato. Cato smiled as well and warmth spread in Peeta's stomach. They stared at each other for a while, blue clashing with blue a second time, but this time Peeta realized how beautiful Cato's eyes were; they had a light shape of an ice blue with a splash of a turquoise crystal-clear ocean blue. Peeta noticed Cato was looking at his eyes the same way he'd been looking at Cato's eyes and a light blush occurred on Peeta's cheeks. Then Cato smiled which turned into a chuckle.
"What?" Peeta asked, a smile on his lips as well.

"Nothing, just… your eyes are beautiful." Cato said and stared right again into Peeta's eyes.

Peeta blushed a deep red and he couldn't hide the huge smile that started to form on his lips.
"Thank you." Peeta mumbled, almost inaudible.

"No need for." Cato replied and slightly grazed Peeta's right hand with his own.

The rest of their walk they spent next to each other in silence, but it was not an uncomfortable, embarrassing silence, more a pleasant, enjoying-each-other's-presence silence. Peeta didn't know what happened but he suddenly felt different about Cato, there was something about Peeta that made him curious to know more about Cato…and maybe even a bit more than that.

At some occasions Cato's hands slightly grazed Peeta's and sometimes their hands brushed so obviously together that Peeta had the appearance Cato did it on purpose, but when he looked up he saw Cato looking straight on the street and only a playful glisten in Cato's eyes revealed him, but Peeta wasn't sure if it were just the streetlamps that reflected in the taller blonde's eyes.

"There we are." Peeta said and interrupted the silence.

"Hm?" Cato asked and looked at Peeta.

"There is my house." Peeta replied and pointed to the bakery at the corner.

"Oh right, Mellark Bakery. I'll bring you to the door." Cato said and followed Peeta to the house.

They walked behind the bakery where Peeta would be able to enter the house. They stepped the sidewalk along and then followed the small stone path, which led past a few flower beds to the small terrace where the door was placed.

They stood awkwardly in front of the door, both not sure how to say goodbye to each other.

"I enjoyed the walk." Cato said and smiled innocently.

"Me too." Peeta said and blushed.

"You think you would give me your phone number?" Cato asked and already picked out his phone.

"What? Y-yes, of course." Peeta said, his blush got worse and he quickly grabbed Cato's phone and typed in his number.

"Thanks." Cato smiled and grabbed the phone. "I'd really like to repeat this, Peeta." He said and slightly brushed his hand against Peeta's, this time definitely on purpose.

Peeta blushed even more if that was even possible and almost forgot to answer. "Y-yes, I would like that as well."

Suddenly Cato leaned forwards and pressed his lips on Peeta's. Startled from the sudden contact Peeta immediately stepped back, his cheeks were on fire. Cato had a bewildered expression on his face but his eyes were still glistening playfully.

Peeta walked another step back, he looked at Cato with a sweet innocent smile on his lips, he opened the door and walked inside. Before he shut the door he gave a last look at Cato, who had his mysterious, playful grin on his mouth that Peeta already knew so well.
Peeta then closed the door and as soon as he was inside he let out a deep sigh. He walked upstairs and his thoughts were only about what just happened. Did Cato really want to kiss him? Peeta really liked the walk and he definitely got very interested at Cato, but did that mean to kiss him all of a sudden? Though as Peeta thought it through, the memory of how Cato's lips felt on his own, even if it was just for a tiny second, was more than nice.

It was just that Peeta pushed back because he'd been caught off guard and the kiss didn't feel right, it was too early. If it would ever happen then Peeta would want it the right way, it should be perfect.

One thing was clear though, Peeta felt completely warm, protected and secure around Cato and he didn't want to miss this feeling.

An hour later Peeta was laying in bed with a just finished sketch in his hands. Meanwhile it was 1AM and Peeta got really tired, the day exhausted him and everything he now needed was to have some rest.

Peeta's father was already sleeping when Peeta came home, so he only took a shower, got ready for bed and then drew a little sketch of Cato, which he now held in his hands.

Suddenly Peeta's phone vibrated and he received a text message.

- I enjoyed talking to you, would u like to hang out with me tomorrow? – Cato

As Peeta read the message his heart pounded slightly heavier. He also enjoyed talking to Cato, very much even… would he want to see him tomorrow again? Peeta thought about it and he really urgently wanted to see Cato again.

- I would. Will you pick me up? -

A few seconds later Peeta's phone vibrated again and he already got a reply.

- I'll be there 2PM, good night ;) -

Wow, was that a date? Did Peeta have a date with Cato? He shut his handy, laid it down next to him on the bedside table and closed his eyes. Tomorrow would be a great Saturday.

Chapter End Notes

So finally I finished this Chapter!! Did you like it? I defintely had fun writing it! Suggestions, critics... please leave a not then down in the comments! x
Revelations

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Peeta woke up to a noisy vibrating sound that was coming from the bed table on the left. Still dazed and tired, he blinked several times with his eyes, which had a tough time adapting to the bright light coming through the two big windows.

He rubbed the sleep out of his eyes and grabbed his phone from the table. He unlocked the lock-screen and first of all took a look at the clock. To Peeta's surprise it was 11:30PM, he didn't expect to sleep so tight. A smile graced Peeta's face as soon as he remembered the last night and thought of the date he'd have with Cato later that day.

When Peeta checked his phone he noticed that he had missed about ten calls and got thousands of text messages from Katniss, asking where he'd been and if he was alright. By the hectic of yesterday's night, he completely forgot to tell them where he'd gone. Peeta checked the missed-calls list and noticed that the last call from Katniss was two minutes ago, so he decided to call her back.

Peeta typed in Katniss' number and after a few seconds he already heard the tonewait from the other side. After a few more callsigns someone finally picked up.

"Peeta! It's you, oh my god finally! How are you, is everything alright? I was so worried, where did u go?" Katniss asked, her excitement clearly audible.

"Slow down, Katniss." Peeta chuckled. "Let me explain it to you."

"Yeah, it better be a good explanation." Katniss said with a more serious tone in her voice.

"It is. So hold on." Peeta said. "Last night, when you were planning to play pin-the-bottle and I went into the kitchen to get something to drink I met Marvel there and… well … something happened which made Marvel one of the reasons why I wanted to leave. Then I also started feeling very sick and dazed so I had to catch some air and…"

"Wait! What did Marvel do that made you wanna leave?" Katniss insisted.

"Th-that doesn't really matter, j- just… when I went outside of the house I kind of broke down on the sidewalk because of my nauseous feeling and I tried to regain my consciousness when out of a sudden Cato came from behind and tapped on my shoulder…" Peeta decided not to tell Katniss the whole thing about Marvel; that boy was definitely drunk and unknown about what he did, so why should Peeta build up any unnecessary stress?

"Who… Cato?! Really?"

"Yea sorta, but well let me finish… , so… he was super caring and he demanded to walk me home because I felt so bad. When we walked home we…"

"Wait … he walked you home? So you two were alone the whole time? Peeta, am I right with what I'm thinking?" Katniss asked with a playful tone.

Peeta could feel himself blush but he ignored Katniss' question. "Uhm Wait… so we kind of um… well we… I don't know, we got to know each other more and Cato is so much more than
everyone thinks. HE HAS feelings and he is really sensitive and… well; when we arrived at my
house and stood in front of the door, h-he w-well…he…"
Peeta could feel himself blush heavily and he started to stutter.

"He did what? What?!!" Katniss almost screamed.

"He… he well, I don't know how you'll feel towards it and I never told anyone about my feelings
so…"

"Peeta, just say it! What did Cato do?"

"He… Cato kissed me, but…” Peeta stopped as Katniss' shrill voice already interrupted him.

"I knew it! I just knew it!" Katniss said and her laughter came through the telephone line.

"Wait, what did you know?" Peeta asked.

"You were always defending Cato when there was no reason for and the way you stared at him
and talked about him, I knew you had something for him! It was so obvious!"

"Wait a second, was that why you told me to 'get along with Cato'?"

"Maybe?" Katniss sarcastically asked and they both chuckled.

"But seriously Katniss, how did you notice that I had a… umm …. thing for Cato? I mean I didn't
even notice that by myself?! Just yesterday night I realized how beautiful and nice he really is…”
Peeta's voice fell silent.

"I assumed it the whole time but I just really knew it, when I saw the way your eyes were
sparkling and your smile was shining every time I mentioned Cato."
Katniss sounded completely
excited.

Peeta blushed even harder and a certain thought came into his mind.
"Katniss… so… it is not a problem for you that I like…boys?" Peeta asked carefully, feeling
slightly nervous.

"Oh Peeta, of course not! I don't even care about that. You're amazing and you're a great friend,
don't worry. I will of course support you. You have to live your life and do your own decisions
not anyone else's."

"Thank you so much Katniss. This really means a lot to me." Peeta said with a smile on his lips.

"So… how did his lips feel?" Katniss asked, emphasizing the last two words.

Peeta smiled. "Well, it wasn't a real kiss; he only slightly graced my lips, because I immediately
pulled back…”

"What? Why did you do that? I mean, that was like one of those perfect high-school-movie
moments!"

"Yea, but he caught me off guard and surprised me a lot more than just a bit… but even though
the moment our lips touched was only a millisecond, I knew that it felt right."

"Aww you sound so cute, then I hope you'll get your real kiss very soon."

"Oh… I don't know, I mean I don't want to force and rush things, I will let it come naturally. Oh,
by the way I have to hang up now, because I will meet Cato later and still have to get ready."
"Whaaat, you are already meeting Cato today? Omg, this is so exciting, Peeta what are you going to wear? What are you going to do with him? When it's over, you must tell me how it was!" Katniss half screamed and panted.

"God Katniss, calm down, you're making me even more nervous. I have no idea what to wear and of course I will call you after that. Then, talk to you later!"

"Bye, Peeta, have fun and stay safe and don't forget to call me!"

"I won't, bye Katniss!" Peeta said and received another goodbye as he hung up.

When Peeta ended the call it was already 12:10PM. Cato would pick him up in less than two hours so he had to hurry by getting ready.

In the next about one and a half hours Peeta took a shower, picked his outfit - casual black colored denim jeans, a blue wooly sweater and black boots – and styled his golden blonde hair which was simply laid to the side.

Once he was ready he walked downstairs to have a little snack. He opened the fridge and grabbed out an apple. While he took a first bite he scanned the floor in an attempt to find his father but as usual he was nowhere to be seen. Peeta still had to kill half an hour so he decided to call him. He grabbed out his phone and dialed the number but no one picked up the line.

Peeta tried to call for several times, but even after the third time no one picked up except the robotic female voice message on the mailbox. Peeta was getting annoyed and the absence of his father became overly suspicious.

Peeta decided to leave a note before he would leave the house so he grabbed a piece of paper and a pen and wrote down the following words.

'I'm at a friend. Can we talk later? It's urgent! -P'

Peeta folded the paper once and wrote down 'Dad' on the white, blank side. He was just about to lay the note down on the table when suddenly the door bell rang.

Peeta turned around to look at the alarm clock; it was only ten minutes before 2, so Cato came a bit too early but that didn't really matter to Peeta. The waiting made Peeta terribly nervous so he felt really relieved when Cato finally arrived.

On wobbly knees Peeta walked to the door, his hands were slightly shaky and a mix of excitement, joy and fear overcame him. Peeta was afraid if Cato would still like him when they were getting to know each other closer and whether Cato would find his personality interesting. Could Peeta anyhow be able to satisfy Cato in any way? Why did Cato even want to see Peeta? To him, Cato looked like a Grecian goddess while Peeta thought he himself looked like a fool.

Peeta tried to get rid of these thoughts but no matter how hard he tried he couldn't shake them off. Peeta took a deep breath and then turned the door handle and opened it.

At once Peeta looked straight into Cato's ice blue eyes and out of nothing all the excitement and fears seemed to fade. Peeta was met with a bright smile, white teeth shining and blue eyes glistening in the sun light. A certain unknown warmth and secureness spread in Peeta's stomach and it felt great and exciting in a positive way.

"Hey, Peeta." Cato smiled ever so charming.

"H-Hi, Cato." Peeta stuttered, a coy smile on his lips.
"How are you?" Cato said and gave Peeta a playful smirk.

"Uhm… good, thanks. How about you?"

"I feel great." Cato replied.

Peeta turned his head and looked up to Cato. Cato smiled playfully at Peeta, his eyes demonstratively wandering from Peeta's face down to his feet while inspecting every inch of his body. Of course Peeta noticed the stare, his hands got slightly sweaty and he was unaware of how to reply to the situation. Once Cato was back up at Peeta's face, he looked right into the blonde baker boy's oceanic blue eyes; Cato's smile got wilder as he noticed that Peeta was staring back right into his eyes and responded with a showy wink. In response, Peeta blushed heavily, he tried to hide his blush as he looked down to the ground and smiled nervously, but when Cato purposely touched Peeta's left hand, the smaller boy's blush got even stronger and no matter how hard Peeta tried, he wasn't able to hide his red flaming cheeks.

"Everything alright?" Cato asked, his tone playfully innocent.

"Y-yes of course. When are we at yours?" Peeta asked nervously while taking a look on his phone to realize that they've already been walking for ten minutes.

Cato smiled. "Right there."

Peeta looked up and Cato pointed to the house on the opposite side.

The view stunned Peeta. The house was huge, it wasn't just a house but a villa; it had a plain white, shiny quartz facade and marble slabs marked their way through the big garden to the terrace which was supported by two small columns and to top it all there was even a little garden pond that flowed right next to the marble slabs.

"Wow" was everything that came to Peeta's mind at such a sight.

Then Cato led Peeta over the street, through the garden and finally to the door on the terrace. Cato opened the door with his key and stepped in.

"Wanna come in?" Cato asked charming.

Peeta nodded and still in awe, he followed Cato into the house. As soon as they were inside, Peeta's stare was wandering around the amazing entrance hall.

Cato must have noticed Peeta's amazed observing, as he stopped and looked at Peeta with a smile.

"Yeah, yeah, I know. Told you my parents are rich as hell. Unfortunately that is probably the best thing about them." Cato snickered.

"Wow, I see. I'm impressed." Peeta replied astonished.

"By the way, my parents aren't at home so we are alone the whole time; they are spending the rest of the week in Milan because of any meetings or something like that." Cato added.

Cato motioned towards Peeta to follow him. They walked into the living room, where a huge TV screen was hanging on the wall, a big white sofa with faux-leather pillows and a dark woodened table, probably mahogany, was placed in the middle of the room on a huge white faux-fur rug.

Peeta looked around the room and his gaze stopped at the TV when a certain thing caught his attention.
"Oh wow, is that a play station?" Peeta euphorically walked to the game console with a grin on his face.
"How is it? I never played on something like that! Is it fun?" Peeta asked, inspecting the play station carefully.

Cato laughed and Peeta turned around to check what made Cato chuckle.
"You're cute." Cato said. "If you want to, we could play a round or two?"

Cato's comment caught Peeta completely off-guard once again and he blushed ever so red.
"Uhm… y-yeah, I'd really like that." Peeta murmured. With Cato, Peeta always got nervous so easily; Cato had this huge ability to make Peeta feel totally sheepish and bashful with just a single comment.

"Okay, great. I will get you something to drink then, I'm right back." Cato winked and disappeared into the kitchen, which, Peeta assumed, must have been just as huge and beautiful as everything else in this villa.

While Cato was in the kitchen, Peeta inspected the huge living room, or better, the living hall. His eyes flickered over the bookshelves at the walls. Not even a single framed photo of Cato or his parents was standing anywhere.

"You're still standing? You know that you're allowed to sit down, right?" Cato asked as he walked back into the room with two glasses of lemonade.

"Oh uh, sorry. I guess I didn't want to be impolite or something." Peeta said as Cato handed him one of the glasses.
"Thanks." Peeta mumbled and smiled slightly.

"You're welcome - and please, just feel at home. Also, to be honest, I don't think there's a way that you could ever be impolite." Cato winked and sat down on the sofa as he patted the place right next to him.

Peeta smiled and nodded as he sat down next to Cato. He took a sip of his lemonade while Cato reached under the table and brought out two white controllers.

"Here, take it." Cato said as he gave one controller to Peeta.

"Thank you." Peeta took the controller and turned it a few times in his hands to take a closer look at the shaping.

"So… I thought we could play Mortal Combat? There we can fight with each other and… oh hell – I'll of course defeat you like right away, but why not give it a try, no?" Cato laughed and started the intro of the game.

"Who says that though? I might win and then I'd like to see your dumbfounded face." Peeta chuckled.

"Hm, well that ain't gonna happen, but okay, we'll see and yeah, most probably you will even win." Cato said sarcastically.

"Yes! We will see." Peeta replied in the same tone Cato used.

Then Cato quickly explained to Peeta which buttons are needed for which actions and then pressed on 'PLAY'. The title melody of the game started and in an instant, both had characters that were standing in front of each other in a kind of temple-styled dungeon.
Cato directly aimed towards Peeta's character and made the first hit.

"Omg! Wait, that's unfair. I forgot how to go forwards while fielding a hit. Now take this!" Peeta exclaimed as he proceeded towards Cato's figure and placed the first punch.

"Ha!" Peeta screamed, which Cato responded with a laugh.

"Why are you laughing?" Peeta asked.

"That's why." Cato replied with a grin, as he quickly ran towards Peeta's character and hit him to the ground.

"Hey!" Peeta said as he took over his controller and desperately tried to break free, but all he could do was observe as Cato punched his figure to death.

'GAME OVER' appeared on Peeta's side as soon as the life indicator went on zero.

"That wasn't fair, that was cheating and you distracted me on purpose!" Peeta complained.

"Proof it?" Cato snickered.

"You're an idiot." Peeta said jokingly.

"Oh, what did you just call me?" Cato asked sternly.

"Nothing - it was just a joke." Peeta half laughed, half spoke.

"Yeah, of course. Then this will be nothing as well..." Cato brought his hands up to Peeta and as he leaned closer to him, Cato started tickling him all over his torso.

Peeta replied with uncontrolled laughing as he vainly tried to turn away from Cato's tickle attack. "Stop!" Peeta screamed but he was already interrupted by a sound of his own laughter as Cato tickled even harder.

"Cato... stop... I can't... stooop!" Peeta laughed as he squirmed away from Cato's fingers, which always found new spots where Peeta was super ticklish.

"Hahahaha – Cato! Seriously, stop!"

"Nope! You called me an idiot!" Cato answered with a huge grin on his face; obviously enjoying to tickle Peeta to death.

Suddenly Cato found an extremely ticklish spot which made Peeta startle heavily as he jumped away from Cato's grip and, because of the quick rotation, both fell off the sofa and at once they were laying on the ground; Cato on top of Peeta, both laughing at the funny situation.

When they finished laughing, they were still smiling and panting out of exhaustion. Peeta tried to regain his breath from the heavy tickle attack as he closed his eyes.

When Peeta opened his eyes and re-caught his breath, he directly looked at Cato. Both looked each other deep in the eyes; blue clashing against blue once again. Peeta looked up at Cato, and Cato looked down at Peeta. Cato's eyes traveled down to Peeta's lips and then back to his eyes; he then brought his right hand up to Peeta's check and gingerly stroked it.

"You know, I'd really like to repeat that one from yesterday." Cato almost whispered.

"Me too." Peeta replied in a similar whispy tone which was all that Cato needed to pursue each other's desire and in a second Cato's lips were pressed down on Peeta's, both inhaling the moment
and laying into the kiss.

Peeta felt fireworks, butterflies, shooting stars and burning fires all at once. An incredible, lustful and passionate warmth filled Peeta's stomach and made its way up his spine and neck and reached its peak where both, his and Cato's lips, were touching and fire sparks marked the collision.

The boys shortly parted their lips to take a breath and look each other into the eyes, but it didn't last long as Cato was already crushing his lips down on Peeta's again. This time though with more force and more passion, whereupon also Peeta increased his pressure on Cato's lips as his lust was steadily rising.

Peeta brought his palms up to Cato's neck and Cato supported his hands on Peeta's cheeks. The air around them was getting hotter with each second and then suddenly Peeta could feel Cato's tongue that was licking his upper lip and asking for entrance. Peeta opened his lips and Cato directly entered Peeta's mouth. Their tongues found each other and were fighting for dominance, even though both the boys knew that Cato would win the battle anyway. Eventually Cato conquered Peeta's tongue and explored his mouth.

As their kisses got even more intimate and impassioned, Peeta let out silent pants, which sounds were alluring Cato even more, so he increased his force every time Peeta made a noise.

A short time later they separated their lips and stared each other deep in the eyes. Both were heavily panting and enjoying the lustful moment as the pleasure was clearly visible in their eyes.

"That… was… amazing…" Peeta gasped, his eyes widely opened and a big smile on his lips.

"It was." Cato said huskily as he buried his right hand in Peeta's golden hair.

Cato got off of Peeta and stood up. He stretched his hand towards Peeta, who thankfully took it, and helped him up.

"You know what?" Cato asked; that playful smile on his lips once again.

"What?"

"How about we order some pizza? That kissing-session made me really hungry." Cato said.

Peeta blushed slightly "You're serious?" He laughed.

"Yes, except you object?" Cato grinned.

"No… I mean, I am quite hungry myself." Peeta had to admit.

"See?" Cato laughed and walked over to the telephone.

About fifteen minutes later, the pizza man arrived at the door. Cato stood up from the sofa and walked towards the entrance door. He paid the deliver and brought the pizza inside.

"Can I help you?" Peeta called at Cato, who was right now in the kitchen.

"No, thanks. Get yourself comfortable, I'll be right back with two plates and pizza." Cato called back.

Peeta loved this sofa, it was so soft and comfortable and it also looked beautiful. Cato's house in general was extremely beautiful and Peeta couldn't deny that he was slightly jealous of such an amazing villa.

"Here it is." Cato walked into the room and placed the pizza on the mahogany table.
"I didn't realize I was so hungry up to now." Peeta stated as he looked at the pizza.

"I know right." Cato replied as both grabbed their first slice of pizza.

"Mmmhhh, it tastes amazing." Cato mumbled with a full mouth as Peeta took a bite of his piece as well.

"It does." Peeta answered after he gulped his bit.

When Peeta finished the last bit of his pizza slice, he noticed that Cato was watching at him closely.

"What?" Peeta asked ever so innocently.

"Nothing, just… you've got some melted cheese on your lip. Wait a second."

Peeta raised his eyebrows when Cato suddenly slowly leaned in; surprised, Peeta stayed in his position and let Cato come closer. In a second Cato was just only a few inches apart from Peeta's face and he looked right into the baker boy's eyes and then down to his lip. Cato brought his mouth down to Peeta's so that it was only a millimeter distant from his own. All of a sudden Cato brought his tongue out and licked over Peeta's upper lip as he traveled down with his tongue to Peeta's lower lip and then took the piece of cheese with his teeth from Peeta. Cato nibbled carefully on the smaller blonde's lip, and then gulped the piece down.

Cato leaned back and looked at Peeta, who was blushed all over his face. He felt so sheepish and embarrassed, but a tiny little part of him was slightly aroused. A feeling Peeta never really had before, a feeling that felt just right.

"Uh…Th-thanks." Peeta stuttered unaware of how to response to this situation.

Cato winked playfully and took another pizza piece into his mouth. "Shall we watch a horror movie?" Cato asked with a mouth filled with pizza.

Peeta nodded. "S-sure!" He stuttered, still processing the act.

Cato then disappeared to get the movie and turned his head to wink at Peeta as he walked through the door frame.

A few minutes later Cato was back in the room with a DVD, which Peeta already looked curiously at.

"What are we watching?" Peeta asked.

"Carrie." Cato said. "It's the new version with Chloë Grace Moretz as the main character. I heard it's a really scary movie but let's see."

"Ohh, okay. That's great to be honest. I wanted to see that movie for a while now." Peeta replied.

"You do?" Cato asked.

"Yeah." He nodded.

"Then today is your lucky day." Cato said, as he jumped over the sofa and sat down next to Peeta, so that their shoulders were only a few inches apart, and then started the film.

The movie was a film adaption to Carrie from 1976 which is originally a novel from Stephen
King. The plot is mainly about a 16-year old girl, who recognizes her satanic powers throughout the movie and struggles with her mother, who is strictly catholic, and the kids in high school, who use to bully her tremendously.

In the beginning, Peeta was quite concentrated on the movie but sometimes Cato mad an attempt to brush his hand slightly over Peeta's which distracted him completely from the film. At a time they sat directly next to each other and Cato put his arm around Peeta. Peeta, who couldn't avoid Cato's immense physical contact anymore, turned his head to look straight into Cato's eyes. Cato made notice of that and looked into Peeta's eyes as well. The baker boy's heart pounded loudly a second time this evening and in an instant Cato pressed his lips down on Peeta's another time this evening. While the movie came totally forgotten, they shared another few kisses and then pulled back to take a breath. Cato then pulled Peeta into his lap and their kissing got even more passionate and heated.

They were making out for a few more minutes and this time Peeta was pressing his lips down on Cato's. Cato was a just about to strip off his shirt when Peeta's phone suddenly rang. Startled, Peeta pulled back from Cato's lips and hopped from his lap. Peeta noticed that something hardened hit his thigh, but giving it not much attention, the smaller blonde quickly picked up the phone.

"It's my dad." Peeta said when Cato looked at him with a questioning expression

"Hello? Dad?" Peeta asked.

"Hey Peeta. You said you'll be back in the evening. Where are you? I'm waiting." His dad said on the other line.

"Uhm… I was with a friend." Peeta said as he looked at Cato to see his reaction who grinned playfully.

"You think you can come home now?" Peeta's father asked but in a way more demanding than asking.

"Yeah… sure. I will come home now. See ya." Peeta answered and hung up. He stood up from the couch and grabbed his jacket from the table.

Cato looked at Peeta and raised his brows.

"I-um… sorry, I need to go." Peeta said and stroked his right arm.

"Now already?" Cato asked.

"Yeah, my dad sounded quite upset. I don't know, maybe I'm wrong, but I don't want to challenge it."

"I see." Cato said as he stood up and walked towards Peeta. "Well, it was a nice evening. I truly enjoyed it." Cato added.

Peeta smiled and walked to the entrance door. Cato followed him of course and as they reached the door frame they stopped for a second.

"I … really liked it as well." Peeta stated as he blushed slightly.

Cato thought Peeta looked unbelievably adorable in this moment and he tried his best not to kiss those soft lips in front of him. He didn't want to come off as needy or pushy, even though they already shared a few many kisses this evening.
"We should repeat that any time soon. I will message you later." Cato said as he opened the door for Peeta.

"Yes..." Peeta whispered. There was a short moment of awkward silence where none of them knew what to do. Peeta then just tried to break the awkwardness and made his way down the entrance steps.
"Uhm... so, see you then." Peeta said as he waved and walked down the steps.

Quickly, Cato followed him and grabbed his wrist. He turned Peeta around and presses his lips on the smaller ones. First, Peeta was surprised but then leaned into the kiss. After a few seconds they broke the kiss and Peeta smiled widely.

"You didn't think there'd be no goodbye kiss for me, did you?" Cato asked and grinned ever so playful.

Peeta blushed. "Good night, Cato." He said and bit his lip as he turned around to leave the place. Cato smiled and watched as Peeta walked through the houses' garden.

About fifteen minutes later Peeta arrived at his house. When he opened the door with his key, he saw his father, who stood right in front of him in the hallway with an awaiting expression.

"Hello Peeta." He said.

"Uhm, hey. Were you waiting for me?" Peeta asked.

"Yeah, I was. We need to talk."

"I know, that's what I left on the note for you – did you read it?"

"I did. I think you noticed my absence over the last days."

"Yea, of course I did. Where have you been all the time?" Peeta asked as he put off his jacket.

"I did some preparations. We have to change something." Peeta's father spoke and walked into the kitchen with Peeta following him.

When they sat down at the kitchen table, Peeta curiously raised his brows towards his father, who cleared his throat.
"The last days, I was driving back and forth between our new home in Silver Lake and our old town where we used to live before."

"What? Why would you do that?" Peeta asked bewildered.

"Peeta, you need help from someone who can help you with your current state. I found a perfect psychological institute for young teenager like you that will take care of you. I made things clear so that you don't have to live in the institute the whole time, so you can stay with grandmother."

"Wait! What?! Are you serious right now? Dad, I don't need anyone's help! I'm super okay; I just want to move on!" Peeta screamed and stood up from his seat.

"Peeta, stay calm! Listen! You have to make up with your awful experiences and the cruel things that happened to you. I am not in the position to help you out of this hole and that is why we need some extra help. I prepared everything this week so we could still drive tonight. And we will drive!" His father exclaimed with a serious tone.
"Are you blind? I don't even know what to say – do you even take one single look at me? Silver Lake is doing good things for me, I don't want to move again and I definitely don't ever want to go back to this terrible place. Just let me stay here! I need a normal life and a real father that cares for me – not any doctors; I just want to move on!" Peeta whined, tears collecting at the edges of his eyes, but he wouldn't allow them to come out, not yet in front of his father. It would just prove the weakness and hurt that Peeta's dad sees in his son.

"No buts! I thought over this many times. Get up your room and grab your things together and pack your suitcase. We are leaving in ten minutes!"

"Can you even consider yourself as my father? What the hell is wrong with you, can't you see that I am trying to go on with life and you give your best to destroy that all over again? How could you do this to me? I'm your son!"

"Peeta, I just want the best for you. You can't understand my decision now, but soon you will be thankful." His father uttered as he demonstrated towards the door for Peeta to go upstairs.

There was no room for debate and Peeta knew he lost and what his father said would be happening for real. He'd never see Katniss or Cato ever again and he would be locked with doctors 24/7 for the next few months. How could anyone live like this? Why did his father want this? At the end of it all he was his father and he should want the best for Peeta and not the worst, shouldn't he?

Peeta rushed out of the room, banged the kitchen door shut and ran upstairs. As soon as he was in his room, he broke down to his knees and burst out into silent cries. He didn't want this at all and was forced completely against his will. His dad should give Peeta what he needs at such a tough time which is for sure not any psychological institute, but a caring and loving father who is there for Peeta and doesn't take him away from everyone and back to their old cruel town where Peeta lost everything and everyone.

When Peeta gets up from the floor a certain idea comes to his mind which made his pulse race and his mood change. "Cato." He quietly whispered as he quickly ran over to his suitcase, stuffed in the most important things and put on the other black jacket he had in his room.

Peeta didn't want to obligate and follow his father's crazy ideas of making up things. Peeta didn't need psychological help and his father had to see this. It was getting better, the nightmares were disappearing since he'd been in Silver Lake and all he needed are people that cared for him and those people did Peeta found here. Peeta checked at the door whether his father was coming up wasn't. Peeta already carefully opened the window and took his luggage bag, but before he wanted to climb out of the window to go to Cato, he took out a piece of paper and started writing.

- I won't come back until you won't see that I don't need any psychological help. I need a real father and I need this, a new beginning and a new life where no one judges me because of my past. -P –

Peeta left the note on his desk and crawled out of his window. If he was lucky enough he maybe could stay at Cato for a few days; hopefully long enough until his father would get rid of that sick idea.

The thought of leaving and escaping from his dad, made Peeta feel awfully guilty but he knew that there wasn't any other option. Of course the last months weren't easy for both of them and at the end of the day Peeta loved his father, but the only feelings he had left for him right now in this moment were anger, disappointment and pain, in such a harsh way that it terrified Peeta.
When Peeta climbed out of his window frame, the emotions took over him and tears flooded down his cheeks. He'd never thought he would have to flee from the most familiar person in his life.

While Peeta was crying he ran as fast as he could. Peeta didn't really know why he was running in the first place, it was obvious his father wouldn't be able to catch him anyway, he didn't even know about any person that his son met here already. It was more than just reaching Cato as soon as possible, he was escaping from the sadness, the past and eventually indeed from his father, who reminded Peeta every day of the cruelty they've met in the bygone year.

About ten minutes later Peeta reached Cato's house. Peeta didn't know how late it was by now but the sky looked as black as onyx and the air was deadly silent. He walked through the front yard and as he stood in front of Cato's house door, he inhaled deeply and knocked on the heavy frame. Peeta felt extremely exhausted and tired, the salty tears already dried on his cheeks and now and then a single drop would still find its way out of his eyes. Peeta just hoped Cato would let him in.

A few seconds someone opened the door. A Cato only in boxers, being shirtless, stood in front of Peeta, and gazed completely bewildered at what he was seeing. Peeta, whose eyes were red from crying, tears glistening on his face, stood there helpless with a big bag in his hands.

"C-can I p-please stay here for a while... I-I've got nowhere to go." Peeta managed out while sobs started to come out as he raised his voice.

Cato immediately wrapped his arms around Peeta and pressed him close to his chest and brought him inside.

"Sure Peeta, come in. Don't worry, whatever it is we can fix it."

Inside, they sat down at a table and Peeta told Cato everything that happened between him and his father. Cato was super caring all the time and tried his best to cheer Peeta up.

Later that night Peeta calmed down. He didn't care about his father anymore, he was just happy to be with Cato at that time. Eventually they sat down on the couch and Cato put on a movie to soothe Peeta. At a time Peeta fell asleep on Cato's bare chest. Cato then switched off the movie and carried the sleeping Peeta into the bedroom. They then went to sleep in the same bed and were lying next to each other.

Suddenly in the middle of the night, Cato woke up to silent but painful sobs. The sounds came from Peeta and it broke Cato's heart.

He slid over to Peeta's side and turned him around to look in his face. Peeta was obviously half-sleeping and half-crying; maybe he was having a gross nightmare as his brain was processing the things his father said to him and maybe also other, even worse things that Peeta experienced in his life.

"It's alright, don't worry we will find a solution." Cato whispered as he wrapped his arms around Peeta and pressed the smaller blonde to his chest so he could rest his head on it.

Cato slowly stroked Peeta's scalp through his golden locks which seemed to relax Peeta's muscles as his breath was becoming even and slow. Half asleep, Peeta nestled himself into Cato's torso and after a time both fell to sleep again as Peeta was enclosed by Cato's strong arms.
Sooo, I know it took way too much time! But I hope you liked the chapter! Do you want a 5th Chapter? Any ideas/suggestions? Tell me! xx
It was early in the morning when Peeta opened his eyes hesitantly as he woke up from the terrifying nightmares that plagued him all night long. The garish sun rays blended Peeta but soon he adjusted to the bright surrounding and opened his eyes. Thoughts of yesterday butted into his mind and a deep shadow of sadness encased him as he hid his face in the white pillow. He took a moment to inhale the scent deeply in an attempt to soothe his brain. The cushion smell like fresh laundry and flower meadows, an odor Peeta could smell all day long. Coming back to senses, Peeta realized he was more than glad to have Cato by his side.

Sleepily, Peeta turned around so he laid on his side. Cato stared at Peeta, who yawned widely, which to Cato looked like an adorable puppy that just awoke from sleep. He smiled at the blonde baker boy who Cato thought looked extremely cute right now.

"What's up?" Peeta asked hoarsely.

Cato grinned even brighter; he questioned himself how someone that just woke up could be so pretty and sweet.
"Nothing really... Good Morning, Peeta."

"G'mornin." Peeta mumbled while he slipped closer to Cato to snuggle into his bare chest. Cato embraced the smaller blonde slightly and stroked his golden locks.

"We need to get up, sleepyhead." Cato said whereupon Peeta grunted loudly as he grabbed a pillow beside him to stuff the cushion over his head.

"Do we really need to get up already?" Peeta murmured through the fabric.

Cato laughed as Peeta theatrically turned off from his chest and rolled to the opposite side of the bed.

"So, I'll take a shower. You should get up so we can talk about what we're going to do afterwards." Cato said as he slipped out of the blanket.
Again, Peeta grunted in response and out of a sudden the bed got lighter as Cato stood up and went into the bathroom nearby.

"Alright, alright, I get it, but when I'm out of shower, I'll make sure to get you out of bed, lazy head." The taller blonde said when he headed towards the bathroom.

"Hey mister, you won; I'm almost up now anyway." Peeta said annoyed as he rubbed the sleep out of his tired eyes while he straightened up into a sitting position.

Cato smiled victoriously as he looked at Peeta over his shoulder before he slipped into the bathroom.

While Peeta listened to the sounds of the rattling water that came out of the other room, he couldn't help but imagine Cato being naked underneath the shower. Quickly though, he shook the thought off and checked his mobile phone.
He got a new message from Katniss, asking how the date with Cato went. Peeta typed in that it was great and that he's still sitting in Cato's bed at his house. Not sensing the obvious innuendo, he sent the text message to her and laid the phone aside.
At the same time the water stopped streaming which must have meant that Cato finished his shower.

A few minutes later Cato stepped out of the bathroom with only a white towel draped around his waist. His skin was still wet and his hair just slightly dried. A few water drops that didn't got dried off, still ran down Cato's body, framing the muscled curves on his body.

Peeta's eyes were amazed by such a sight and he couldn't help but stare at Cato's appearance from top to bottom. Cato's body was amazing. His chest was beautiful, it had enormously sculptured pecs, all his six, almost eight, abs were immensely defined and slightly graced by an bright blonde happy trail, which was barely visible, and Cato's huge biceps was bulging by every movement, showing a small, long vein go down the curvature. Peeta also noticed the big bulge that protruded through the white towel that was held on by one of Cato's hands.

Cato snickered. "Peeta? You're alright?"

"W-What?" Peeta asked, caught by surprise. Of course Cato noticed Peeta staring at him, how stupid was he to do that so obviously?

"Did you just check me out?" Cato asked playfully.

"Uhm, n-no just, I-I guess I feel kinda' hungry." Peeta said in excuse, desperately trying to hide the obvious. He knew by that point that his cheeks blushed a deep red but he ignored it.

Cato laughed. "Okay, sure. I wouldn't mind though, I can understand why you're looking at such a great sculptured body like mine." He said when he turned his waist to stretch his back muscles while looking at his own body in approval.

Peeta blushed even harder but didn't say anything, he felt awfully embarrassed. Cato then dropped the towel, but luckily, Peeta thought, he wore some undergarment beneath. Cato put on a t-shirt and his training shorts and turned back to Peeta.

"Then, would you like me to get you something eatable?" Cato asked.

"Y-Yeah." Peeta nodded; happily enough that Cato changed the topic.

"Okay, be right back." He winked as he walked out of the room and down the stairs.

Couple of minutes later Cato came back upstairs and walked through the door of his room while he held a small tray filled with food in his hands.

"So, I got some berries, mostly strawberries and did some sandwiches, I hope that's fine. I couldn't really find something else that was suitable for a nice breakfast." He said as he laid the tray down on Peeta's thighs and sat down next to him.

"Thanks, that's more than fine." Peeta replied sincerely and looked straight into Cato's eyes.

"Hey, you felt so bad that I thought I could do you something good." Cato answered and Peeta smiled.

"You'd like a strawberry?" He asked Peeta, who nodded a little confused.

"Open up." Cato said.

Peeta did as he was told, he hesitantly opened his mouth and Cato pulled the berry into his mouth. Peeta had to meet the fruit so he first had to suck on the red pulp to enclose it completely with his mouth and then bit the strawberry off its stem. Cato seemed to enjoy the act as his typical cocky, playful grin graced his lips. Peeta blushed slightly and then also Cato ate a strawberry enjoyable. When they finished eating the berries, Cato gave Peeta one of the sandwiches who willingly took
it. Cato took the other sandwich and for a while they ate in silence.

Once they ate up, they talked about random stuff. According to Cato's demand, Peeta told Cato about his friendship with Katniss, that she was the first person in Silver Lake to gladly welcome him in the new surroundings. Peeta asked Cato what he thought of Katniss, but Cato said he didn't have any real opinion about her since he only knew her as a friend of Finnick. As they came to that point, Peeta thought he could ask Cato something specific about that.

"Cato, I'm curious about what's up between you and Finnick, why do you hate on each other so much?" Peeta asked.

"Well, there aren't any real current reasons why, it is more a rivalry dispute between us. In the past, we had some conflicts and these still seem to last."

"Oh… I see. Don't you think you could just stop with it?" Peeta asked shyly.

"Uhm, well when he'll be the one to stop annoying me, then I'll be the one to stop harassing him." Cato answered cockily.

Peeta who was obviously not satisfied with Cato's statement just nodded. He didn't want to build up any unnecessary fights which didn't belong to his interest.

Changing the topic, Peeta laid the tray aside and turned around to Cato.
"So... boyfriend, what are our plans for today?" Peeta asked innocently as he looked up into Cato's eyes.

"Huh, boyfriend?" Cato asked surprised as he leaned slightly back.

Peeta's eyes widened, he became totally flustered and the heat rushed immediately to his cheeks which glowed right away in a deep, rosy red.
"Oh, uhm, I just, well, I thought-" Peeta stuttered out of embarrassment and looked down to his hands that fiddled nervously with the hem of the blanket.

Suddenly Cato leaned forwards and, to the baker boy's surprise, hushed Peeta. He looked up and the taller blonde smiled playfully before he slowly brought his lips to Peeta's. Cato kissed Peeta gently, using no tongue, but doing a sweet kiss that was bringing butterflies to Peeta's stomach. After a few seconds Cato pulled back slowly.

"Well, boyfriend… what would you like to do?" Cato smirked as he emphasized the word 'boyfriend'.

Peeta smiled widely, his cheeks only mildly blushed and Cato returned the smile, but both the boys were completely ripped off their emotions when suddenly the door bell rang.

Peeta looked confused. "Who could that be?" He asked innocently.

"Damn, that has to be Clove." Cato replied realizing. "I totally forgot about her, damn!"

"C-Clove?" Peeta gulped.

"Yeah, she told me she'd stop by this morning." Cato said as he hurrying put on a pair of denim jeans and a black t-shirt.

"So, what should we do- I mean, what should I-"
"Peeta, calm down. I'll take care of it." Cato said as he walked out of the room. He went downstairs and nonchalantly opened the door.

"Hey there Cato, what the hell took you so long?" Clove asked as she stepped into the doorframe.

"Yeah, sorry, I was, uhm, upstairs and put some clothes on." Cato said awkwardly.

"Ooooh, you were naked." Clove warbled when she stepped into the entrance hall.

"Well, not really, just um…"

"Cato, is something wrong? You act kinda weird and absent." She said as she aimed straight to the refrigerator in the kitchen to grab out an orange juice carton. She took a big sip before she put the carton back into the fridge and grabbed an apple from the bowl of fruits on the counter.

"Clove, I met someone," Cato stroked his arm and followed Clove into the living room.

"Uhhh, a handsome toy boy?" She asked and took a big bit of her apple. "Gosh, I didn't know I was hungry as fuck." She babbled with the food in her mouth.

Cato smiled. "No Clove, it's a bit more serious. Just follow me into my room, okay?" He pleased.

"Okay? Sure." Clove nodded and followed Cato upstairs into his room. The blonde basketball player opened the door and stared at the boy on his bed. Peeta gave a confused look right before Clove entered the room.

A dumbfounded Peeta sat on Cato's bed underneath the white blanket, exchanging glances between Cato and Clove.

"Peeta? The new kid?" Clove asked in misbelieve, looking at Cato, who nodded and then back at Peeta.

"So, are you two like a thing?" She asked.

"Yeah, he is kind of my boyfriend." Cato stepped to Peeta as he grabbed the baker boy's hand and gave it a tight squeeze. Peeta smiled happily about the fact Cato stood up for him.

"Well, when you like him Cato, he can't be that bad at all." Clove said as she walked to Peeta and stretched out her hand "Nice to really meet you, Peeta."

"Nice to meet you, Clove." Peeta said and smiled kindly.

"You know Peeta, it's really funny. At one point, you laid in front of Cato on the school canteen's floor and now you're the one laying underneath Cato in his bed. How ironic." She said as she started laughing when Cato joined her to laugh heavily whereas Peeta didn't really get the joke and blushed immensely which made Cato and Clove laugh even harder.

"What? U-uhm, n-no, we didn't do that." Peeta said nervously.

"I was just kidding, don't worry. Though I doubt Cato can resist a plump ass like that for long."

Clove jokily snickered and Cato tried his best to prevent himself from exploding into laughter which didn't hold on long while Peeta's blush only got even redder.

The two pulled themselves together and Cato sat down next to Peeta while Clove kept standing at the wall next to the bed.

"So you two lovebirds, what are your plans for today?" Clove asked.
Cato turned around to Peeta and raised his brows. "Peeta, did you want to do anything special?"

"Well, I am going to meet Katniss at the park later, would you maybe like to join us?" Peeta asked.

"Naww, Peeta, is that really necessary?" Cato asked.

"Oh Cato, come on! I got to talk to Clove so you should be able to do the same with Katniss." Peeta said.

"To be honest, I'm with Peeta on that point, Cato. He's right, it would only be fair. Not that I like that Katniss girl – really – but to be fair you owe your boyfriend a talk with his friend." Clove said and raised her one brow when Cato looked at her dubiously to check if she was being sarcastic or not.

Cato groaned. "Fine, fine. I'll do it. Peeta, when will you meet her?"

"Actually…” Peeta grabbed his phone to check the time. "…in half an hour."

"Oh, Already? I actually planned to hang out a little with Clove for a while." Cato said.

"If you'd like to, I can meet with Katniss now and you could come later on to join us so you have a bit of a spare time with Clove." Peeta suggested.

"Is that okay for you?" Cato asked.

"Yeah, Cato and I can meet another time as well." Clove added as she took another bit of her apple which got almost forgotten in her hand.

"Guys, really, it's fine. Katniss and I could stand some alone-time as well, we've got some things to catch up."

"Okay, great. Don't worry, Peeta, I'll make sure Cato won't check out some other guys while we're walking around downtown." Clove winked and Cato rolled his eyes.

"Good." Peeta laughed. "Okay see you later then, Cato. Bye Clove." Peeta waved.

"Bye bye, Peet." Clove said.

"See you later, Peeta." Cato winked at Peeta before he left the room.

Today was a cold autumn Sunday. Luckily, Peeta grabbed a scarf before he left Cato's house. There was a cold wind that blew through the trees. Peeta took out his phone to send Katniss a text message.

– Hey Kat, will be at the park in a couple of minutes. C U –

Just when Peeta sent the message he softly bumped into another person. He looked up to see Finnick standing in front of him.

"Oh, hey Finnick. Sorry, I didn't see you coming around the corner." Peeta looked down at Finnick; he was wearing sweat pants and a tight sports top, which clung to his muscles.

"Hey Peeta, no problem, I could have watched out as well. What are you doing here?" Finnick asked.
"I'm here to meet Katniss, how about you?"

"Oh, I was just jogging around the block. Where did you come from?"

"I-uhm actually came from Cato's house. Why?" Peeta asked confused.

"Cato?! Peeta, be careful with that guy, he is not a good person to deal with." Finnick said in a sudden stern tone.

"What? Finnick, what are you talking about?" Peeta questioned dumbfounded, totally irritated about Finnick was actually trying to say.

"Listen Peeta, just forget it." Finnick looked around. "See you at school tomorrow." He turned away and walked down the street.

Bewildered, Peeta stood there for a moment, thinking about Finnick's warning – or whatever it was supposed to be.

He got a text message from Katniss that remembered him of what he was actually doing here, so he went around the corner and moved down the street until he reached the entrance of the park.

Katniss stood there, seemingly waiting for a couple of minutes already. As soon as she saw Peeta, her face brightened up.

"Heeeey." Katniss said softly while she embraced Peeta into her arms.

"Hi Katniss, how are you?" Peeta replied as he hugged her back.

"Good, thank you, but how are you though? You've got a lot to tell me Peeta, how was the date?" Katniss asked and brushed through her braid before they sat down on a bench.

Peeta smiled. "The date yesterday was simply perfect. Throughout the whole evening Cato was so nice and caring. We played a game on his play station which of course I lost and when we afterwards sat down on the couch, he started tickling me and suddenly it ended up with Cato lying on top of me. He told me he wanted to repeat the kiss from the day before and at once he leaned down to kiss me."

Katniss gave a sharp yelp. "Oh my god, Peeta this is so clichéd but incredibly romantic at the same time! So tell me, how does he kiss? You have to tell it all!" Katniss bobbed with her knees euphorically.

"Well... he is a good kisser." Peeta said, blushing slightly.

"Just good?" Katniss asked. "Peeta, I want to hear details!"

"All right! He... is amazing. He manages to be so gentle and passionate at the same time." He raved.

"Aw Peeta, I am so happy for you, but by the way why didn't you call me earlier? I thought we agreed that you would call me right after the date!" Katniss insisted.

"Well, yeah... actually I stayed the night with Cato and..."

"WHAT?!" Katniss shrieked as she interrupted the boy beside her. "God, Peeta, you already stayed the night with Cato? Well, that escalated quickly!"

"Katniss, no... we-", but Peeta was interrupted again.
"I mean, I get that you're young, experimental teenage boys and all, but did you at least use protection?" She asked dumbfounded.

"Oh my god, Katniss! Listen! We didn't do any of those...things! I just slept in his bed without doing anything inappropriate." Peeta explained distinctly.

"God, Peeta, calm down you nervous kitten! No need to freak out. At the end of the day I would be the last person to judge you." Katniss said as she undid the tousled braid to remake it with another barrette.

"So when can I actually meet Cato? I definitely have to get to know him closer." She exclaimed while doing her hair.

"Actually he will join us later if that's okay for you?" Peeta asked carefully.

"Oh, sure!" Katniss looked up. "That sounds great. By the way, are you like something serious now?" She questioned.

"Yeah, I'm his...boyfriend." Peeta blushed and remembered the feeling of Cato's lips on his own.

"Aww, Peeta, I'm truly glad for you, you must be feeling so happy right now." Katniss said cheerfully.

"Well, I really should, but actually I don't feel as great as I'm supposed to do. Things are really complicated at the moment. The reason is not Cato though; it's my dad who gives me grief." He paused.

"Why, what happened? Peeta, tell me, what's wrong?" She asked concerned.

Peeta took a deep breath and paused for a second before he told Katniss about everything. He talked about every detail that happened in the past and also about the violent attack by the students that Peeta fell victim to. He told Katniss about the way his father isolated himself from Peeta and how Peeta had to struggle through the tough and painful time all alone on his own. He told her about the current problems between him and his dad which occurred as Peeta's father wanted to take him to a psychological institution for teenagers and force him to completely give up his life a second time, but all that Peeta wanted was the possibility to start a new life. He told Katniss that he escaped from home and left a note for his father in an attempt to change his mind.

"Oh Peeta, I had never thought that you've such a difficult past behind you. I'm so sorry that all this happened to you and I really hope you can fix things between you and your father, it's awful that he doesn't want to listen to you." Katniss compassionately put her hand on Peeta's left shoulder to express her sympathy and support.

"But, hey, I'm sure it will fix out soon, Peeta." She said.

"Thank you, Katniss." Peeta whispered in response. He gave a weak smile and lost in his thoughts, he considered if things were ever going to be alright again.

There was a moment of silence where both sat next to each other, listening to the autumn wind that so ever slightly shook the trees and rustled through their soon-golden-brown leaves.

"So, Katniss, are there any news about your love-life as well?" Peeta asked attempting to change the subject.

"Well, actually there are..." She grinned coyly. "Gale and I are texting a lot lately and it seems like things are getting flirty between us."
"Oh my god, Katniss, you and Gale? Really?" Peeta asked euphorically.

"Yeah, I've got a crush on Gale for a little while already now and we're also going on a date very soon." She swarmed happily.

"Katniss, that's so awesome! You two are like the perfect couple."

Katniss laughed. "Oh Peeta."

"Katniss seriously, I bet one day you're gonna be together, then you're gonna marry and one day you will be one of those families that live with their six children on a small, idyllic farm nearby the deep green forests and beautiful, sparkling rivers." Peeta said as he started chuckling himself.

"God Peeta, you're hilarious." Katniss snickered.

Both laughed heavily but caught themselves after a few minutes.
"But honestly, I'm really happy for you and Gale." Peeta uttered and brushed a few strands of hair out of his forehead.

Katniss smiled "Thanks." She replied sincerely.

After a few minutes the two friends got off the bench and started walking through the park as they talked about random stuff.
They were so deep in conversation that neither Peeta nor Katniss noticed the heavy silhouette that entered through the other entrance of the park, on the opposite to where Peeta and Katniss stood.

"PEETA!" A loud, angry voice sounded through the park.

Torn from from their talk, both Peeta and Katniss looked up to see who the sharp voice belonged to.

"Katniss, that's my dad!" Peeta realized frightened, unaware of what to do.

"What are we going to do now?" Katniss questioned worried, but Peeta just shook his head. He stood there paralyzed while staring at the man in front of them as the distance between them and his father got less and less.

In an instant, Peeta's father stood right in front of them.
"Peeta Mellark, You'll follow me now!" His dad demanded and pulled roughly on Peeta's left arm.

"Stop it, dad! I am not going with you." Peeta hissed, trying to loose from his father's grip.

"You are! Peeta I was so scared and worried about you – this is only a reason more to give you to a professional custody."

"Let him go!" Katniss jumped forwards and tried to hold Peeta back by his other arm.

"Have you gone mad? Dad, why can't you see the obvious? The only thing that I'm awfully scared of is YOU!" Peeta screamed, loud and harsh.

Mister Mellark cringed for a second and loosened his grip from Peeta. Immediately, Peeta sprang back to Katniss and looked startled at his father. He seemed to think over Peeta's words.

"Peeta…I – no, you need to come with me!" The older man said as he aimed towards Peeta again but suddenly a tall silhouette stood in front of Peeta, protecting him.
"Mister Mellark, stop!" The figure said. Peeta looked up to see that it was Cato who pushed himself in front of Peeta.

"Look at your son." Cato said. "He looks terrified and scared." He paused. "But this emotion was and is only caused by you. Peeta had been hiding from you, because you want to force him to give up his new life and tear him away from newfound friends and a newfound school another time. All that Peeta really needs is the possibility to build up a new life in a new town with new people, new surroundings and most of it all a loving and caring father." Cato declared, staring right into Mr. Mellark's eyes. "The only things Peeta is suffering from are his father's decisions and not at all any past memories from a past life. Of course it's true, these memories are open wounds that can never really be completely wiped out, but they can heal into scars, processing the terror they once were caused off and only remain to stay a faded memory."

Peeta's father stood there, clueless and perplexed.

"Mister Mellark, please. Peeta needs you, he needs this – not a foreign psychological institution, lead by foreign people, back in the old town, being literally forced to be confronted with thoughts of the cruelty of the past every day." Cato stated calming.

Peeta came out from behind Cato, approaching his father and gently grabbed his dad's wrist, though Cato kept holding Peeta possessively back slightly by his right elbow. "Dad, please. Cato is right. Please dad, let me live this fresh begin here in Silver Lake, and give me the chance to open a new chapter in my life." Peeta begged, inhaling deeply.

He looked at his father, who looked down to his feet. Peeta wasn't able to read his dad which unsettled him extremely. His heart was racing; he hoped they could have convinced his father.

"Won't you say anything, dad?" Peeta asked hopelessly, feeling tears soon approaching his eyes, but he almost couldn't finish his sentence when all at once strong arms embraced Peeta's body. At first, he didn't notice what had happened but once Peeta released that it was his father who so deeply enclosed him, he grew into the hug.

"Oh, Peeta." Mr. Mellark breathed out, loosening the hug. "I am so incredibly sorry. I was so blinded and so awfully wrong. You were right since the beginning. I don't know how to make this up to you, Peeta, but never forget that from now on I will always be here for you. But there's one thing Peeta, listen..." He paused and looked at his son. "Issues like those you experienced can't simply be thrown off. When I notice that you will start feeling depressive and suicidal ever again, we will get you professional help right away, Peeta." His dad whispered in a volume that only Peeta could hear it.

Peeta smiled and nodded understanding, so many emotions overcame him all at once but the most outstanding were relief and happiness. Finally, his beloved father listened to him and this feeling was indescribable.

"Dad, I'll be home in the evening." Peeta said.

"Okay, Peeta, see you later. This time you can be sure to expect me at home." His father smiled and left.

Peeta turned around to Katniss and Cato, looking at both of them with a huge smile on his lips. Right away Peeta ran towards Cato and hugged him deeply.

"Thank you so much." He whispered into Cato's ear, inhaling the taller blonde's scent.
"No need to thank for. I've told you it will all be alright." Cato replied and held the smaller boy fixed in his arms, thinking how beautiful and sweet Peeta looked right now. Cato wished he could eat up his boyfriend's lips right away here in public but he didn't know how Peeta felt about this, also he didn't necessarily want to risk being seen kissing another guy. It was not that Cato felt ashamed of Peeta or his own sexuality, but he only came out to Clove yet and didn't want to make a big fuss out of it, especially not in a city like Silver Lake, where within a few hours rumors are spread everywhere.

Eventually, Peeta wanted to pull out of the hug, but Cato only released him a few seconds later, remembering Peeta he was his boyfriend. Once Peeta was free he smiled at Cato who grinned back ever so cockily.

Peeta then turned to Katniss and hugged her as well, expressing his happiness.

They left the park and Katniss and Cato got the chance to get to know each other closer.

"Cato, what you've just done for Peeta was amazing. You really seem to be the right person for my Peeta pie." She joked, hearing Peeta groan in the background.

Cato laughed, he loved teasing Peeta.
"Well this cutie there…" Cato pointed at Peeta "…definitely has to make it up for me later though." He winked at Peeta, who blushed ever so innocently.

"Don't go too wild with him; you know Peeta is a nervous kitten." Katniss snickered.

"God, guys! Can you please stop this weird friend-boyfriend conversation, it's getting unbearably awkward!" Peeta hissed, his face pink and flustered.

Chuckling loudly, Cato expressed how much he did in fact enjoy teasing Peeta and also Katniss seemed to find it really funny as she laughed just as noisy.

Soon they arrived at Cato's house and later on also Clove joined the round. They talked, joked and laughed and the evening was really enjoyable for everyone. Also, Katniss and Clove seemed to go along surprisingly well and didn't even snap one time at each other.

Some time around 22:00PM the girls left the house and Cato and Peeta were left alone, sitting on the couch.

"Ughh, Cato I'm so tired, I wish I could just stay here." Peeta groaned.

"Well, why don't you just do it?" Cato asked, leaning closer to Peeta.

"You know I promised my dad to get home by the evening and it already is really late."

"But you could just message him and tell him that you'll be home in the morning." Cato suggested.

"I know, but…"

"You know school has been cancelled tomorrow 'cause the teachers are having some sort of educational trip, so we are in no hurry at all." Cato purred, his fingers crawling up Peeta's chest until they reached his chin, the smaller blonde shivering slightly beneath the older boy's touch.

"Eh, uh…okay, okay! You convinced me, I'll message him."
Peeta took out his phone and typed in a message, addressed to his father.

– I'll stay the night at Cato's; I'll be home in the morning. See ya, P –

Moments later there came an answer.

– No problem, see you tomorrow. Good Night, dad –

"Okay, green light. I can stay here." Peeta announced happily.

"Great, do you remember how I said you would have to make it up for me later?"

Peeta nodded.

"Good, because I wasn't joking." Cato said before he threw himself on Peeta.

Cato nibbled on the lower lip of the boy beneath him and shortly after that kissed him passionately and fiercely. Peeta moaned quietly and yearning, automatically increasing his pressure on Cato's lips, but Cato already took lead and dominated the other boy as he slid his tongue inside Peeta's mouth. Cato started touching Peeta's body which aroused both boys even more. Peeta melted under Cato's touch and unconsciously rocked himself against Cato, which caused Peeta to moan even louder. God, Cato loved hearing those innocent, needy and most of it all sexy sounds and he would do everything to hear more and more of these. Cato wasn't sure if Peeta knew how seductive he actually was, but it drove Cato crazy.

Suddenly, after a few more moments of passionate making out, Cato pulled back and left his boyfriend's moist, plump and swollen lips cool down by the chilly air.

"Why… did you stop?" Peeta murmured, his chest moving up and down in an attempt to regain air.

"You know I love making out with you at least as much as you do, but I think we are both fucking tired and need some sleep." He explained, knowing all too well how much he teased Peeta by abruptly stopping the making out session.

Peeta nodded tiredly, maybe Cato was right but he wouldn't have minded some more contact with his boyfriend.

Cato smiled at the beautiful sight of Peeta. "I'll get us something to drink, be right back."

He already left the room when Peeta allowed himself to shut his eyes for a few seconds.

When Cato was back in the room with two glasses of water, Peeta fell already asleep.

"Okay, that's probably your way of punishing me." Cato whispered as he took a big sip of one of the glasses before he picked Peeta up and carried him bridal-style up the stairs.

Carefully, Cato laid Peeta down on his bed in his room and shut off the lights. He took off Peeta's jeans and sweater so it would be more comfortable.

Afterwards, Cato got ready for bed as well and took off most of his clothes as he laid down next to Peeta and slipped under the sheets. Enclosing the golden-haired boy next to him, he nestled himself in the crook of Peeta's neck and soon fell asleep as well.

Chapter End Notes
Sorry for the long wait, guys! I know it took long, but it's never easy to finish a chapter until one's really satisfied! Do you want a 6th Chapter? Any ideas/suggestions? Tell me down below! xx
The next morning Peeta left Cato's house early to be able to spend some time together with his dad before he'd have to leave for a business meeting concerning most of the bakeries in Panem.

As he walked down the street, he still lingered in memories of how he woke up next to Cato. Cato stroked Peeta's hair as he met him with a tender kiss and uttered a hoarse 'Good Morning' in that typical morning-voice which Peeta noticed he liked a lot. Cato seemed to be the one to always wake up before Peeta.

The blonde baker boy was happy that Cato had been so understanding and sweet about the fact that Peeta had to go so soon. To make it up to Cato, Peeta promised to come by in the evening and bake some choco chip cookies for Cato later. The taller blonde agreed with that happily and said goodbye to Peeta in a deep, lovely kiss.

Now Peeta was just about to hit the corner of the street of the bakery and then he'd be finally at home.
A minute later, he arrived at the door and rang the bell. His father opened the door smiling and enclosed Peeta in a tight hug.

"Peeta, I'm glad you came." His father said.

"Well, we agreed on that, didn't we?" Peeta replied.

"Yeah, but I wasn't sure if you would come here after all that happened." His dad said, sounding disappointed by himself.

"Of course I would have come. I mean, what happened was awful but after all you're still my dad." Peeta smiled weakly and stepped inside before he followed his father into the kitchen.

"I know I said that already but Peeta I really am sorry for the way I acted." Mr. Mellark turned around and supported his elbows on the kitchen counter. "I should have listened to you right away and shouldn't have doubted your health."

"Dad, it's fine. You excused several times. We really don't have to stick around that topic for the next few days."

"I wasn't sure you would accept my apology." His dad explained.

"Well, I really don't see why I shouldn't have accepted it. I'm just happy we're here right now. I really want to forget the past and move on and I am glad you'll be part of it." Peeta uttered smiling.

"Of course I will." His dad said, looking warmly at Peeta the way Peeta used to know his father. "By the way, don't you want to tell me a bit about your new friends?" Mr. Mellark asked his son as he walked around the kitchen bar and took out some of his new recipes which he wanted to present in the meeting later.

"Well, that girl's name is Katniss. She was the first person to welcome me in the new school. She's quite funny and spirited." Peeta explained.
"Yeah, she seemed so. It's noticeable that she cares for you." Peeta's dad said smiling as he fiddled with the collar of the blazer jacket he'd wear later to tighten it.

"When are you leaving anyway?" Peeta asked.

"Uhm…" He looked at his watch. "In about thirty minutes." His dad exclaimed.

Peeta nodded understanding.

"…So, how about your other new friend?" His dad asked, concentrated as he grabbed the iron out of one of the drawers and started ironing the collar.

"Oh, yeah… I still wanted to talk with you about that guy yesterday." Peeta said, fiddling uncontrollably with his fingers as he felt the nervousness building up inside of him. Peeta reconsidered many times whether he should tell his father about his feelings or not but right now it felt like it was the right moment to confess what had to be said.

"Okay, what's up? Cato was his name, wasn't it?" His father asked, moving the iron down from the collar to the sleeves.

"Yeah …" Peeta mumbled, suddenly doubting if he was entirely sure about this whole thing, but there was no turning back. He would say it. He had to.

An awkward moment of silence followed until Peeta's dad stopped ironing his clothes for a moment and laid the iron aside to look at his son. Peeta's face color faded immensely and out of a sudden he looked extremely sick. Mr. Mellark raised his eyebrows questioning.

"Are you alright? You look like you've just seen a ghost."

"Uhm… well…" Peeta couldn't find the right words to begin his sentence.

"Are you alright? Is something wrong with that Cato boy?" His father asked, sounding suddenly concerned.

"No…" Peeta looked down to his feet, his heart pounded massively. His throat felt awfully tight and he gulped complained. Finally Peeta raised his voice. "Uhm…well… Cato…he is my boyfriend…" Peeta muttered anxiously. "…thus I'm gay." He slowly looked up to his father, scared of his reaction.

Mr. Mellark smiled and walked towards Peeta to deepen him into a hug. Relief came over Peeta as he accepted the hug gladly.

"I know." His dad said quietly.

"What?" Peeta slowly pulled back. "How did you know that?" He blurted out.

"Oh, Peeta." His father snickered. "I may not be the best father, but still, I notice when my son is attracted to the person in front of him."

Peeta blushed slightly.

"...Then, it's not a problem that I like guys?" He asked, rising his brows reassuring.

"Peeta, as long as you're happy, I'm happy. I actually assumed it for a little while already."

Peeta breathed out deeply as all the tension left his body. "I was so nervous you'd reject me because of this." Peeta admitted with a weak voice.

"I would never, Peeta. You're my son, I love you and I will always support you. It doesn't matter
if you're in love with a girl or a boy, as long as you love the person everything is alright." His dad uttered, embracing Peeta into another hug.

"Thanks dad." Peeta mumbled into his father's chest "It really means so much that you're standing by me."

"Come; sit down with me for a second." His father said as he sat down at the kitchen table. Peeta did as advised and sat in front of his father.

"So… this may sound a little awkward, but you two use protection, don't you?" His father asked with a serious tone.

"W-What?!!" Peeta broke out dumbfounded, fearing the subject his father might want to talk about. "What do you mean?"

"Peeta, don't act silly. You are two young homogeneous teenager boys; of course you will come to a point where… you might explore each other's … appearances. So, to make sure, you're being safe, right?" Mr. Mellark asked uncomfortably. Seemingly the conversation was just as awkward for Peeta as it was for his father himself.

"I-I, well…" Peeta stuttered, he'd never thought his dad would mention such a heavy subject at this time.

"Peeta, I know that's a weird situation to talk about with your dad – but we have to discuss it, it's necessary."

"Right…" Peeta blushed. "…but we didn't do any of these things."

"So, you didn't have any sexual intercourse with Cato, yet? Alright, but you're not planning to get sexually active with other boys, are you?"

"Of course not. Cato would be the only person I… uhm, would be planning to have sss… this with. Don't worry… I know how to protect myself and I'm sure he does as well." Peeta answered, trying really hard to sound as normal as possible.

"Are you sure Cato does know about that, because-"

Peeta cut his father off. "Yes, dad I'm sure. It's okay. We'll be safe."

"Okay, I just want you to be educated about this subject. There are many incurable diseases which are transmitted through sex."

"I know dad, thanks. It's fine; I'm not twelve years old anymore." Peeta grumbled out.

"You're right." Peeta's father breathed out, smiling nostalgically.

"I have to leave in a bit, do you have any plans for tonight?" He asked.

"I wanted to go and catch up with Katniss, but I thought maybe she should stop by in the evening and join us for dinner? Her parents are out and her sister is at a sleepover party so she'd be alone tonight anyway." Peeta suggested.

"Yeah, of course, that would be nice. I shall be back home in the evening." Mr. Mellark agreed and got up from the kitchen table as he took a look on his watch.

"Oh, I will have to leave now." He said as he put on the just ironed blazer jacket, grabbed his briefcase and took a bottle of water from the kitchen counter.
"Oh okay. I can get some nice treats for dinner from the grocery store around the corner if that would be helpful. You wouldn't have to get in a hurry once the meeting is over."

"Yes that's a good idea." His father exclaimed with a smile. He walked to the door and opened it nonchalantly. "Bye, Peeta. See you tonight, I'm glad we're doing this."

"Me too, see you later, have fun and good luck." Peeta hugged his dad and closed the door behind him.

It was late-midday when Peeta finally gathered up to catch enough motivation to go to the supermarket. The whole afternoon, Peeta mostly did nothing. He took the spare time to shower, do most of his homework, watch some TV, eat a few snacks now and then and most of it all simply relax.

The reason he eventually agreed on getting ready to buy some stuff at the supermarket was that afterwards he thought he could stop by Cato's house and spend the rest of the afternoon together with him before he would have to get home to prepare a few things for dinner. Even though he'd just seen Cato this morning he already felt like he missed his appearance.

Either way, it was already a quarter past four p.m. so it was time for Peeta to leave the house and follow his plans. Since it was a warm but windy fall day, Peeta simply grabbed his black jacket, got his phone, pocket and keys and shut the door behind him.

Right now, he was the only one outside on the streets, but usually there wasn't much going on there as Peeta and his dad were mainly surrounded by elderly people that were living around this block. On a further note this was quite a convenient situation because the most pensioners were getting their daily coffee & cake at the Mellark Bakery which of course made a great business for Mr. Mellark. Also Peeta's cookies and chocolate cupcakes were really wanted as they were the most sold pastries at the bakery which helped to give it a good reputation as well. Sometimes Peeta had to prepare some extra trays over the weekend so they could refill the showcase constantly on a daily basis.

Peeta already saw the sign of the small grocery store from afar, if he read it right it said "Capitol Mart" and was written in a yellow, almost golden, italic font.

He walked over the street and crossed the small parking lot as he stepped inside the store through the automatically, to-the-side opening doors.

Since Peeta had never been inside here before he first of all looked around the store to get a general overview of the shop. Even though it was being called small, for Peeta it looked like a damn labyrinth. He tried to figure out where the different kind of foods where being stored at but after a while of struggling to recognize the various grocery shelves, he decided to just go for it and orientate himself by going chronologically through the several corridors.

He decided to go left and ended up in the vegetable, fruits and bread section. Peeta grabbed a few tomatoes and two fresh baguettes before he walked around the corner. There he met the first chest freezers and at the end of the corridor he saw a familiar, big and muscular statue, though the typical bronze blonde hair betrayed him. Maybe Peeta would be able to get to know a bit more about that Finnick and Cato feud.

Without thinking Peeta aimed straight towards him and patted him on the shoulder.

"Hey Finnick." He said, smiling at the other guy.
Finnick turned around immediately, smiling back at Peeta. "Oh, hey there, Peeta. What are you doing here?" He asked, balancing his right arm casually on the chest freezer next to him.

"Well, obviously doing the same thing as you. I'm getting some groceries for dinner later with Katniss and my dad." Peeta uttered as he pointed at Finnick shopping basket.

"Oh right, of course." Finnick snickered. "Wish you a nice dinner then. We unfortunately ran out of milk so pity me had to go to the supermarket and get some new packs of milk…and well, a few other things, too." He smiled and looked down at the several fruits he had in a little transparent plastic bag.

"I see." Peeta replied. He looked down to his feet for a second and then looked back up to find eye contact with Finnick again. "Actually, I wanted to ask you a specific thing." Peeta explained, chewing on his bottom lip.

"Okay. Sure, spit it out." Finnick frowned bewildered.

"I thought a lot about what you've been trying to tell me yesterday. What exactly did you mean by saying I should be aware of Cato? I know I don't have to be – but uhm… what makes you say that?" Peeta asked nervously.

"Peeta, it's fine. It's nothing, just forget about it. Some rocks one just shouldn't turn over." Finnick brushed it off.

"Finnick stop dodging me. I already talked to Cato but all I found out was that there has been an unnecessary and stupid rivalry between you which still seems to carry on."

"Oh, so that's what Cato said?" Finnick chuckled. "Well that is like not even half the story."

"Finnick, tell me – what has been going on between the two of you?" Peeta insisted.

Finnick looked thoughtfully onto the ground as if he considered something hardly. Before Finnick raised his head to finally speak up, he stopped immediately as he caught a glimpse of something specific.

Peeta raised his eyebrows questioning as he followed Finnick's gaze and turned around to look right into Cato's face which looked anything but pleased.

Cato stared at Peeta and Finnick for a second before he headed straight to Peeta. He grabbed the smaller boy's hand and pulled him about two feet away from Finnick. Possessively Cato increased the pressure on Peeta's hand as he held the boy harshly to his side.

"Ouch." Peeta moaned quietly.

"What are you two talking about?" Cato asked tensely, ignoring the fact he had just hurt Peeta.

Surprised by Cato's sudden almost aggressive reaction, Peeta thought it would be the best to not tell Cato what they have been talking about just moments ago.

"Um, nothing important, Cato. Really…. we were just-" but Peeta got interrupted by Cato shushing him forcefully.

"I'd really like to hear Finnick telling me what you two were so intensively chatting about." Cato insisted, looking angrily at his bronze-haired rival.

"Well, Cato, we were just discussing things from the past and talking about the oh-so delightful
memories us two made together." Finnick stated ironically, grinning at Cato tensing up at his words even more.

"Finnick, don't provoke me!" Cato hissed, tightening his grip around Peeta's hand.

"Cato, let's go! You're hurting me." Peeta exclaimed emphatically.

"Oh Cato, you better behave. Peeta won't be as naive as the last one had been. Better play a safe game." Finnick teased, pronouncing each syllable provocatively.

Cato tried his best not to rip off Finnick's head right away. "Finnick, stay the fuck away from Peeta and don't you DARE channeling me!" Cato hissed sharply and finally followed Peeta's advice as he walked out of the supermarket without giving Finnick another look and tore Peeta along with him in his fixed grip, leaving Peeta's supplies back in the grocery store.

Outside, Peeta eventually managed to free himself from Cato's grip. His hand throbbed slightly and it felt achy but at the moment all that Peeta cared about was how the fuck Cato just acted.

"What the fuck was that, Cato? Have you gone mad?!" Peeta hissed at Cato, who took him behind the corner of the small mart so they could talk alone together in silence.

"Peeta, calm down, you don't understand it anyway." Cato replied; suddenly back to his casual, calm, cocky self.

"Yes, that's the point! I don't understand it because no one can tell me what the heck is wrong with you two!" Peeta explained demonstratively.

"I know Finnick tried to flirt with you and you obviously agreed to that, chatting happily among the lines."

"Hell no! I told you it was just a normal small talk!" Peeta insisted.

"It was not! I know you asked Finnick about what happened between the two of us. You should have asked me in the first place Peeta. Why did you right away run to Finnick in an attempt to get nothing but only lies?" Cato crossed his arms angrily in front of Peeta.

"You're being unreasonable, Cato! Of course I decided to talk to Finnick, because when I was asking, you couldn't even give me one useful answer. But – hey - don't worry it's not like I'm smarter about this whole thing now anyway, because neither of you could manage to involve me in your childish rivalry of cockiness!" Peeta raised his voice and turned his back on Cato as he brought his right hands up to his forehead in a thoughtful matter.

"Peeta, I'm totally reasonable!" Cato defended himself in an aggressive tone as he turned Peeta around by his shoulder.

"No, you're not! Finnick is my friend, why do you even worry about him so much? It's not that I am interested in him for a tiny bit! I don't get your overly possessive acting." Peeta stated as he looked deeply in Cato's eyes.

Cato avoided Peeta's gaze and looked down to the ground. He couldn't help but even though he felt raging, he also kind of felt guilty for not telling Peeta about the truth of it all. Peeta was right, Cato thought. Maybe, he was indeed not reasonable.

"Peeta, I think you don't get it-" Cato started but got interrupted.

"I want to be honest, Cato; Finnick does seem like a good person, so I don't get your point of
view. Is the reason you're not telling me about it, because in fact it was you that did something wrong?!” Peeta added accusingly, his tone sharp.

Unexpectedly, this got to Cato. He somehow felt hurt by Peeta for accusing such a thing but also he felt deep anger pounding in his veins, which although wasn’t directed against Peeta, more was it some kind of self-disappointment that Cato didn’t play with open cards and actually caused this situation by himself.

How could Peeta understand him in any way when he didn't know about his past connection with Finnick at all? Cato breathed in deeply and decided to tell Peeta.

Cato looked at the agitated blonde boy who chew nervously on his lower lip. Touching his waist gently, Cato looked deep in the baker boy's oceanic blue eyes in front of him.
"Listen, Peeta." He blurted out. "Last time I was in a relationship with someone, Finnick managed to bring us apart and made the person fall for him. Finnick spread rumors about me which made my ex detach more and more from me till I finally found him in the locker room with Finnick all over him." Cato gulped and paused for a moment.
"That bastard stole my then boyfriend who naively believed each of Finnick's lied and hypocritical words. Peeta, the reason I'm acting so intensively towards Finnick is because I know what big effect Finnick has on other people and he's not at all the charming person he claims to be."

Peeta kept quiet and just stepped forwards to hug Cato tightly. "I'm sorry Cato, I understand now. I'd never thought Finnick would be one of those guys. Don't worry, I will try to put some distance between me and Finnick."
Peeta stepped back. "I'm not the other guy and I would never hurt you like that." He said before Cato leaned in to give Peeta a sweet kiss.

"Thank you." Cato said as he pulled away from the kiss.

"No, I thank you for telling me the truth." Peeta uttered sincerely.

"It feels good to have it off my shoulders." Cato admitted, smiling cockily.

"You know, I was going to have dinner with my dad and Katniss later. Would you maybe like to join us? I think it would be a nice idea." Peeta asked and smiled sweetly.

"Sure, that would be fun." Cato answered.

"Great. Though, we still need some groceries 'cause when you pulled me out of the supermarket, I left all the supplies behind."

"Then we shall go in there again, shouldn't we?" Cato suggested.

"Right." Peeta smiled as they walked back into the grocery store.

Fifteen minutes later they left the mart with two big paper bags, filled with several treats and groceries for tonight, standing proudly in front of their chests.

As soon as they stood outside the store, Cato offered to carry both bags which Peeta at first denied but Cato succeeded to convince Peeta by saying that he still had to make up for not telling him the truth right away. Indeed Cato felt kinda an obligation to carry all bags even though it would be way easier if each was wearing one bag but Cato was stronger than Peeta anyways so he didn't see the need to let Peeta wear anything.

"Cato, seriously, I feel kind of stupid for letting you carry all the bags." Peeta said as they walked down the street.
"Peeta, really it's fine. I told you it's my pleasure to do so." Cato explained.

"Still, I feel so useless not helping you in any way. Normally, I'm used to carry everything around in the bakery." Peeta exclaimed.

"Yeah, that's why it should be enough already and let me just point out that we're not in the bakery."

"Luckily, we're not! I'm so glad the bakery is closed today – otherwise we couldn't spend this afternoon together." Peeta smiled.

"Yeah, that would be quite a shame, but honestly I think I had enjoyed coming into the bakery, seeing you standing there behind the tray, white flour covered all over your body, your cheeks pinky red from exhaustion and your ever-so-coyly lip biting while being concentrated on that damn dough roll that just won't fit into its form. What a beautiful sight that would be." Cato imagined, smiling cockily.

Peeta blushed immediately and tried his hardest to ignore Cato's allusion. "I-I'm n-never covered with flour all over my … body when I'm working in the bakery!" Peeta stuttered. "That would be so unprofessional!" He exclaimed as he caught himself before he chew on his lip again. This was an annoying habit Peeta got used to over the time. He didn't manage to get rid of it yet, most probably because he didn't know how to control it.

Cato laughed at Peeta's coyness which was adorable, funny and loveable at the same time. Peeta on the other hand though didn't seem to find this very entertaining.

"Shut up and carry those damn bags." Peeta hissed as he stepped up his pace, leaving the chuckling Cato behind with the two bags.

Quickly though Cato caught up his speed, still finding the situation obviously funny. Pissed-off Peeta was just as cute as flustered Peeta.

"Wait, Peeta!" Cato snickered. "We shall stay together; I might trip over a stone and can't catch myself because my hands are full, so you would have to safe me." Cato told.

"Well, it wasn't my idea to let you wear both bags, was it?" Peeta snapped.

"Oh, that's true." Cato snickered and also Peeta smiled, not able to stay mad at Cato for a long time.

"Was that everything?" Cato asked as he sliced the last two remaining tomatoes and split up the mozzarella cheese and added them into the salad bowl.

"Yeah, that should be it." Peeta considered thoughtfully. "I don't think we can prepare anything more." He agreed with himself.

"Yeah, I doubt that, as well." Cato approved as his gaze wandered over the table with the prepped food.

"So, we already did the tomato-mozzarella salads, we sliced up the baguettes and served the antipasti. I suggest we'll do the pasta and the Italian pesto when my dad and Katniss arrive so the food is fresh and warm."

"I agree." Cato smiled; Peeta was so into this, he really seemed to enjoy cooking and baking a lot.
"I love Italian food. It's interesting; you're not only good at baking but also at cooking." Cato said and stole one of the olives from the table.

"Well, first of all you didn't even try one of my baked things yet and secondly, I'm not that great at cooking actually. I always preferred baking, I don't know why. I suppose it lets me be more creative." Peeta explained.

"I see, that's nice… and Oh, you're right, you still have to bake me those promised cookies." Cato said playfully.

"Aw Cato, I know. I'm sorry, I'll do them in the next days, I swear. I didn't expect today to be so stressful." The golden blonde boy excused and walked to the fridge next to Cato to get out some orange juice.

"You know, we've still got half an hour to kill, what should we do?" Cato asked, placing his hands on Peeta's hips from behind and gave his boyfriend a gentle kiss on his right cheek.

"I… don't know." Peeta mumbled, enjoying Cato's proximity. "We can watch some TV?" Peeta suggested.

"Sounds good." Cato replied as he followed Peeta into the living room.

They sat down on the sofa couch and put on the TV.

After switching through what felt like thousand of channels and watching one sick joke after another, Katniss finally rang the door bell and shortly thereafter also Peeta's dad's car drove into the driveway, signaling his arrival.

Peeta switched off the TV and walked to the entrance hall, feeling pretty shaky. Peeta's dad would get to know his boyfriend on a better and more personal note which made Peeta really nervous since the last time Cato and his dad met wasn't necessarily the best situation.

Cato followed Peeta to the door and as he stood behind the smaller blonde, he gave a gentle kiss on the right spot of his neck, which soothed Peeta immediately.

Peeta hoped his father would get along with Katniss and especially Cato who Peeta hoped would be liked and accepted by his dad. In the end Peeta of course didn't really care whether his father would like Cato or not, but the aspect that your parent stands behind you and your partner as much as you do, was still nice to know.

Peeta just hoped that this evening would be more pleasant than he thought of it right now.

Dinner went by surprisingly quick, everyone enjoyed the food Cato and Peeta had prepared. Luckily, everyone seemed to get along with each other.

When Peeta and his dad were alone in the kitchen, he told Peeta that he really liked Cato and thought that he's a good guy and seemed to be the right person for him.

Peeta was happy and relieved that his father accepted Cato so much and throughout the evening Peeta's dad and Cato really had many conversations and the chemistry between the two appeared to be great.

Right now Cato and Peeta's dad were finishing off the dinner table while Peeta said goodbye to Katniss as she was about to leave the house.

Mr. Mellark really liked Katniss for her humor, jauntness and sincerity.

Peeta gave Katniss a tight hug before she said goodnight and walked out of the door.

Peeta then shut the door and walked back into the living room to see his dad and Cato walk out of
"We're finished, everything's clear." Cato said

"Thank you very much for your help, Cato." Peeta's dad uttered.

"Oh, no problem at all Mr. Mellark. It was my pleasure." Cato smiled and walked straight to Peeta to kiss his boyfriend softly on his cheek.

Peeta smiled appreciatively, even though he didn't expect Cato to kiss him in front of his dad so soon and Peeta watched closely at his father to check out his reaction to this intimate interaction but surprisingly Peeta's dad just smiled kindly and didn't seem to find the situation weird at all.

"I'd like to show you something." Cato whispered into Peeta's ear. "Outside." Cato added quietly.

Peeta frowned confused but didn't object and looked at his father.
"We'll be right back; we're having a walk outside." he said.

"Sure, enjoy yourselves. Make sure to take a key with you, I might go to bed before you'll be back." Peeta's dad replied.

"Okay, no problem." Peeta answered smiling as he took the key from the kitchen counter. "See ya later then." Peeta smiled but got stopped in his course as Cato raised his voice.

"Bye, Mr. Mellark." Cato spoke cheerfully. "Thanks for the invitation by the way, I really enjoyed the dinner."

"Oh, I enjoyed it as well and I actually have to thank you for preparing the food. It was really delicious." Peeta's father replied and winked at Peeta.

"Oh, you're welcome of course." Cato said and stroked Peeta's back while he stood next to him.

"Thank you Cato. I'm glad Peeta found someone that makes him feel happy." Mr. Mellark said sincerely.

"I try my best." Cato smiled and Peeta's dad laughed.

Feeling kinda out of this conversation – and, as usual, blushing slightly – Peeta started taking a step back to the door to signalize his will to leave.

"Okay Cato, I think we should go now, before it gets too late." Peeta uttered and already got hold of the door. "Bye dad." Peeta added.

"You're right. Okay, then goodbye, Mr. Mellark." Cato smiled.

Peeta's father chuckled slightly. "Bye boys." He said as the two walked out of the door.

"My dad really likes you." Peeta said pleased, looking up to Cato.

"You think so? I'm glad he does." Cato replied and helped Peeta above the creek that separated the well-covered meadow from the deep green forest.

"Well, he told me so in the kitchen. He really thinks you're a good person." Peeta concentrated on not falling into the water because of the slippery shore.

"That's great. I really like your dad as well." Cato told and led Peeta deeper into the forest. The feeling of the darkness in this unknown, kind of scary – even though romantic – forest, made
Peeta feel a bit unwell and heavy but he ignored his complaints. Something about these woods made Peeta remember something but he couldn't figure out what it was.

"Where are you taking me by the way?" Peeta asked, feeling rather confused since Cato didn't explain a single word as to why they are going here.

"Um… It's a surprise, we are there in a minute, but you will like it." Cato promised.

As told, they arrived at the place about a minute later and Cato was right. Peeta did indeed like it. They stood at a clearing on a cliff where sparkling moonshine flooded through the blank space, deep dark green trees were set around the place, their leaves rustling soothingly in the wind and the whole area was covered with soft, fresh moss.

"Wow…" Peeta breathed out. "This is beautiful."

"You like it? Lately, I found this spot here and I wanted to share it with you. As today is full moon, I thought it would be a nice time to go here tonight.

Feeling overwhelmed by his emotions, Peeta turned around in an instance and brought his lips gently to Cato's. Deepening the kiss, Cato got hold of Peeta's hips and pressed them close to his body. During the kissing, they sank deeper until they reached the ground.

Cato turned Peeta around so he laid beneath him on the soft, comfortable moss.

Luckily it was one of those warm fall nights when the last summer breezes streak over the land. It warmed up the whole ground and made the make out session on the soil even more pleasant.

Usually Peeta liked being dominated by Cato this way, it made him feel safe and protected but something about this situation made the unwell feel increase in Peeta's stomach. Ignoring the feeling, Peeta gave more pressure into the kiss whereupon Cato pinned Peeta's hands above his head. Out of a sudden the sick feeling became stronger and stronger and Peeta's heart started beating fast, faster than usual. While Cato melted into Peeta's lips and became more and more passionate, Peeta struggled hard between the warm and frightening feelings. There was something stuck in Peeta's mind that caused him these feelings but he wasn't able to find the reason before Cato put him into another heated kiss. Cato turned them around a second and a third time. Peeta, in such a position being pretty much at Cato's mercy, couldn't help but feel helpless but wanting at the same time. Cato didn't stop kissing Peeta's lips for a second while his hands started to fiddle on the hem of Peeta's shirt, baring an inch of skin with every bygone second but the more Cato's hands pulled up Peeta's shirt the more it felt like Peeta's throat tied up inch by inch. The feeling got heavier and heavier, his heard pounded louder and louder and his stomach felt like it laced up his guts more and more and a certain memory forced itself back into Peeta's brain until he couldn't bare it anymore and flashbacks of the past overcame Peeta's senses.

Suddenly Peeta jumped back from Cato, breaking down next to the tree beside him and sobbing achingly into the ground – the horrible images from the past now clear back in Peeta's mind. Shocked Cato stared at Peeta with wide eyes, worry and confusion filling his thoughts.

"P… Peeta?" Cato questioned startled. "Did I hurt you? Did I do something wrong?" He asked, crawling slowly back to Peeta.

"No…” Peeta got out between sobs and rasps.

"Was I too harsh? Sorry, I thought you were into it as well…” Cato uttered nervously as he reached Peeta's hands.
"T-That's… not it…" Peeta cried out, hiding his face in his hands.

"What's wrong?" Cato soothed and comforted Peeta's back as he put his arm around his sobbing and panting boyfriend.

Peeta pulled himself together, sniffling a few times before he looked up at Cato.
"D-do you remember… when I told you t-that I w-was b-beaten in the… dark alleyway in my old town…?" Peeta mumbled due to his sobbing sounds.

"Yeah, I do of course. What's up with it?" Cato stroked the back of Peeta's hand in a calming matter.

"I-I wasn't just b-beaten… they… they, Cato… they r-raped me." Peeta whined through uncontrollable tears. "They all f-five…. t-took … u-use of me…" Peeta cried out before he broke down in painful sobs into Cato's immediately enclosing arms.

Soon the night overcame them and Peeta fell asleep in Cato's arms. Since it was a warm fall night, Cato decided they could stay this night in the forest, at Peeta's state he doubted Peeta would be able to walk the whole way back home. They were using their jackets as pillow and blanket and Cato found a soft place covered with moss to lay on.

The confession of Peeta's sexual abuse shocked him more than anything else ever before. He felt an unbelievable rage and anger towards those cruel men that did this thing to Peeta. At the same time Cato felt uncontrollably worried and he was awfully sorry for Peeta. It hurt him to see Peeta like this. He couldn't understand how one could hurt someone so innocent, helpless and sweet.

Cato didn't really know how to make Peeta feel better from the cruelty and violence he experienced but Cato knew that now he would be there for Peeta all the time and care for him to make him feel safe, precious and beloved.

Cato could only imagine how hard it had to be for a victim of such a violent and abusing act to start a new relationship and be able to forget the past memories while trusting another person in such an intimate way.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you could wait 2 weeks, guys! I know it took very long again, but as always it's never easy to finish a chapter until one's really satisfied! Also school is killing me like, I barely find time for myself or even to write for a new chapter. 7th Chapter is in work! Any opinions/criticisms? Tell me down below! xx
It's been months and I know, I am so sorry! This took way too long but here is the new chapter, Chapter 7: Foul Play, which I hope you will enjoy as much as I enjoyed writing it! x

The past is a tricky thing. Sometimes it's etched in stone. And other times, it's rendered in soft memories. But if you meddle too long in deep, dark things, who knows what monsters you'll awaken?

It's been almost a week since Peeta broke down in the forest. After they stayed the night in the forest, Cato never left Peeta's side and tried to be with him as much as possible. Cato's appearance helped Peeta to keep himself away from getting pulled down by the past memories and instead stay focused on the present. With Cato, Peeta could shove the dark thoughts off; he was able to completely forget about the cruel past that caught up with him. In fact, Cato was Peeta's personal kind of therapy; his mood got better by each day he could spend together with his boyfriend.

As Cato's parents were still on several business trips, he had the whole house to himself, therefore Peeta was able to come and go whenever he wanted. Also, it was free to Peeta whether he wanted to sleep at home or at Cato's. Yesterday was one of those days where neither of them could let go off the other thus Peeta stayed the night at Cato's house.

Today was Friday and Gale would throw a party at his house tonight at which Peeta was invited as well. Gale and Finnick were best friends which meant that Finnick would be there too, making Peeta's plan of trying to avoid him not easy. Since it was revealed what happened in the past between Finnick and Cato, Peeta promised to part with his boyfriend's side. Although to not give Cato the feeling of being betrayed, Peeta didn't want Cato to be in the knowledge of his boyfriend having contact with his rival. Peeta didn't want to lie to Cato as well, so eventually Peeta decided to skip the friendship with Odair. Very to his miss favor Peeta doubted that Gale would ever allow him to bring Cato to the party so after all Peeta had to make up a plan what to do when he'd come across the muscular bronze haired swimmer.

"Wake up, sleepyhead." A gentle voice said, clearly obvious who it belonged.

With a soft morning-groan, Peeta stretched out his body as he thrust out his toes and flighty opened his eyes. Blended by the light, he yawned widely and at the same time rubbed the sleep out of his eyes.

"How-uuaaaghhh- ...late is it?" Peeta asked with another big yawn.

Cato smiled. "It's almost eight, pup. We'll be late for school if you don't get out of the bed now." He stopped what he was about to do and climbed carefully onto the bed towards Peeta, smiling
cockily. He lifted his boyfriend's chin and leaned down to give the smaller blonde a tender kiss on his lips.

"-But I don't wanna get up." Peeta broke the kiss and leaned back down on the sheets and rolled his eyes.

Cato smiled amused to himself which Peeta took notice of.

"What?" He asked desperately.

"Nothing, you just look really cute this way when your hair is a total mess in the morning." Cato said "...And hot." He grinned and Peeta blushed slightly.

"Don't be so shy, you are." Cato teased and sucked gently on Peeta's collarbone.

"Nughh- Whatever, we need to get dressed for school. I'll take a quick shower." Peeta replied and jumped out of the bed, leaving a dumbfounded Cato behind.

"You really know how to ruin a moment." Cato uttered.

"Maybe now is just not the right time to leave out one of you sexual frustrations on me." Peeta answered smiling, he self was pretty amused by his comeback.

"Oh, don't act like you're not as sexually frustrated as I am." Cato climbed out of the bed and grabbed Peeta by his waist.

"Oh my god, I'll be taking a shower before this escalates too quickly." Peeta said, storming off in direction bathroom.

"Good idea, I will join ya!" Cato called after his boyfriend.

"Skip it!" Peeta called back, before Cato could hear a bathroom door being closed and locked.

"Spoilsport." Cato grinned and went back to dressing himself up.

An half hour later the boys left Cato's house and Peeta glanced over to the bus stop which was at the end of the street on the opposite site. Soon he noticed no one was standing there.

"Damn, we must have missed the bus!" Peeta said. "Dammit!" He shrieked.

"It's fine Peeta, calm down." Cato snickered.

"Seriously? For a matter of fact, I definitely do NOT want to be too late to school." Peeta argued.

"Well, we won't." Cato simply said.

"Not the right time for your sarcasm Cato!" Peeta whined, scratching his forehead in a thoughtful matter.

"Relax you wandering bundle of nerves." Cato chuckled and received a stern look from Peeta. "I'm serious; we'll just take the car." Cato said.

"You have a car? You can drive?" Peeta questioned, totally surprised.

"Yeah, I just don't use the car very often." Cato explained.
"Ohh. I didn't know you had one...that's awesome though." Peeta replied.

"Yup. Now let's hurry, we don't wanna be late, right?"

"Right." Peeta smiled.

They walked to the garage which door Cato opened nonchalantly. The gate went up and a few cars – expensive cars as Peeta could recognize – showed up.

"Mine's right here at the front" Cato said and opened the car's doors with the automatic car keys. 

_of course. A black sports car, how could it be any different?,_ Peeta thought and smiled to himself.

"Hop in! What are you waiting for?" Cato gestured with his hand to follow him into the car.

Both strapped, Cato put in the car keys and started the motor before he drove out of the gateway.

Occasionally during long straight stretches Cato used to speed up his tempo a lot, making Peeta feel slightly unwell by the quick pace. He didn't say anything because he didn't want to annoy Cato. Somehow though Cato seemed to take notice of Peeta's nervous tension as he slowed down the pace and laid his free hand on Peeta's left knee in an attempt to soothe him. Peeta felt kind of embarrassed that Cato could read him so easily but deep inside him he appreciated Cato's behavior.

A few minutes later they arrived at Silver Lake High and the car pulled up at the school's entrance. The schoolyard was completely empty, everyone went to classes already. Cato and Peeta got out of the car, locked the doors and stormed off to the school's entrance.

"Cato as if we wouldn't be too late!" Peeta exclaimed in a hurry.

"Well, only a few minutes though." Cato justified himself while he tried to come after Peeta whose short legs took him surprisingly quick as Cato thought.

Before walking inside, they stopped in front of the door.

"Huh- we did it." Peeta called out as he regained his breath.

"Yeah, finally." Cato smiled, his eyes shining brightly at Peeta.

Cato leaned in closer to Peeta. He quickly looked around, checking if really no one was around that could see them.

"C-Cato." Peeta whispered. "…not here, somebody could see-"

"Shhhhh." Cato interrupted him. "Come here." He hummed and pressed his lips down on Peeta's. Reluctantly they separated from each other but they couldn't afford to be even later then they already were.

Cato opened the school doors and let Peeta inside before he followed him into the entrance hall.

"See you later at the break." The baker boy said smiling.

"See ya." Cato winked at Peeta who went off to the stairs on the left.

Finally the school bell rang. Mrs. Coin almost gave Peeta detention for being too late but since several students weren't punctual this day, she decided to give the whole class a huge lecture on
manners and of course also extra homework.

Peeta chatted along with Madge while they walked into the cafeteria to head to their group table. On their way, Peeta saw Clove and Cato standing at the water dispenser, they seemed to be talking about some funny things as both laughed heavily. For a specific matter of fact it made Peeta happy seeing Cato happy.

"Peeta, can you come for a second?" Cato asked as Peeta and Madge walked past them.

"Sure." Peeta replied. "I'll be right with you." Peeta said to Madge who nodded friendly before she moved on to the table.

"Hey-ho Peeta." Clove greeted.

"Hey Clove." He smiled.

"Was everything alright because of the little lateness?" Cato asked.

"Actually not really. A few more students were late and Mrs. Coin gave the whole class special homework."

"Ugh, I hate that bitch." Clove said, rolling her eyes.

Peeta snickered. "Same." He stated.

"What, really? That's too bad. It was all alright for me though. No detention, no nothing." Cato answered.

"You're serious? That's so unfair!" Peeta uttered.

"Well what can I say, Mrs. Trinket really seems to like me."

"She doesn't like you, she just has an eye for your muscles. The pink sugar ball just didn't quite get that you're obviously not interested in girls right now. Especially not girls of her age." Clove whispered the last sentence. "Same for Glimmer though actually. I think she just wants to get in your pants Cato." Clove chuckled.

"God Clove, Glimmer is just being friendly as always. Also, she's Marvel's girlfriend!" Cato explained.

"Yeah, sure. Glimmer had always have a crush on you, don't deny that Cato." She groaned. "Can't stand that bitch lately. You, Peeta?"

"Ooh… well um I don't really know her so well… I um guess her mood can be a little tipsy sometimes?" Peeta awkwardly said.

"A little tipsy? She's like the fakest 'look-at-me-I'm-sweet-and-stupid' bitch on this school. Dumb is never cute! I don't even know why I hang out with her?" Clove questioned herself.

"Because we're actually supposed to be friends with her." Cato laughed.

"You got a point there mister." Clove chuckled and Peeta snickered as well.

"I'll be at my table then." Peeta said.

"Okay, I'll meet you latest after school." Cato looked in Peeta's eyes.
"Yeah." Peeta smiled.

"God you two are disgustingly cute together. Make it stop." Clove spoke before she walked off to their table.

Both Peeta and Cato laughed. "I better go after her." Cato smiled. "Bye."

"Bye." Peeta responded and turned around to aim to his own group table.

"Hi Peeta!" Katniss shrieked and stood up from her seat to enclose him in a hug.

"Hey Kat." He said and sat next to her.

"Peeta you're hanging out a lot with Cato lately. I didn't realize you were on such a good level with him and his folks. Honestly, I doubt they are the right contact for you." Gale said bluntly.

"C'mon Gale, I'm sure Peeta can decide for himself who he wants to hang out with." Katniss protected him.

"But Kat, the last time Peeta came across this Cato-jerk, he landed on the cafeteria's floor." Finnick added while he looked straight at Peeta.

"I don't believe that's any of your business, Finnick. It's long ago since that happened so why do you care? I definitely don't!" Peeta stated annoyed, surprised by his own sudden reaction.

Finnick just smiled amused and Gale went back to his lunch.

What was that. Peeta was definitely confused. Finnick knew that Peeta and Cato are a thing – first why did he act like he didn't know and secondly why did he tell no one about it, not even Gale? Weren't they best friends? Not that Peeta didn't appreciate it but it left him perplexed nonetheless.

"He's right! Let him alone...both of you." Katniss said distinctly. "Anyway, what are the plans for the party tonight, Gale?"

"Well Catnip, lots of alcohol, dancing, sweating, loud music and…" Gale stopped and watched around carefully before he turned back to the table "...joints." He smirked.

"Drugs?" Madge broke out. "Gale, are you stupid? You totally shouldn't support drugs."

"Calm down Madge. Just a few joints...and well tiny bit cocaine." Gale admitted.

"Cocaine?" Madge whispered aggressively. "I'm so not going to snort this brainfucking shit." She announced.

"Madge for once in a lifetime will you ever free yourself?" Finnick groaned theatrically.

She rolled her eyes but Gale, Finnick and a few others on the table found it hilariously funny. Even Katniss had a small smile on her face but she'd never fall into her bestie's break.

"She's right though." Katniss agreed. "Finnick you're already super hyperactive in your normal state. I really don't want to get in touch with you while on drugs." Katniss snickered and Madge and also Peeta couldn't hold back a laugh.

"Funny, hm Peeta?" Finnick starred at him. "I really wanna see you reacting on drugs."

"Hell no I won't do drugs, Finnick. Just as I'll never smoke or do pot." Peeta exclaimed.
"Of course you won't." Finnick said sarcastically.

"Yeah, I won't!"

"We'll see."

What the heck, why was Finnick so weird and insistent about this? Peeta looked at Katniss who got just a confused expression as he had.

"Anyways Finnick, I hope you'll meet someone at the party to finally get rid of all the testosterone you've got going on at the moment."

"Ha-ha, good one, Gale." Finnick clapped quietly. "Still I hope there'll be some hot dudes and chicks on your party tonight." He grinned.

It was new to Peeta that Finnick was bisexual but in the end it didn't surprise him. He'd probably lay an eye on everything "eatable."

"You will have to find out yourself tonight." Gale chuckled.

"Finnick your thirst is real." Katniss stuck her tongue out at him who grinned satisfied.

"What can I say? I love all kind of butts." Finnick smirked.

"Okayy… so Peeta, you'll come too, right?" Gale asked.

"Yeah I think so," Peeta agreed.

"Great."

Then the school bell rang, they said bye to each other and went on to their next classes.

The school day went by quickly and Peeta's last class, which was PE, just ended. While most of the students left the showers already, Finnick and Peeta were the last ones left in the locker room.

Peeta was getting dressed while Finnick was putting on his pants on the opposite bench.

"Wanna know why I didn't tell anyone?" Finnick broke the silence.

"Wha-what?" Peeta asked dumbfounded. Why did Finnick have to talk with him now? He was almost finished.

"I'm sure you asked yourself why I didn't tell anyone about you and Cato… and not even Gale."

"Kinda." Peeta admitted now fully dressed.

"Well, because I simply don't think you two will stay together for a long time, Peeta. Cato isn't the loyal kind of relationship person, you know?."

"Oh shut up Finnick. You're not the innocent one here. Please just care about your own stuff."

"Oh and also I didn't tell anyone because…" Finnick stepped closer to Peeta, his voice got quieter. "…I think my chances on you aren't that bad." He smiled.

"Finnick, get the fuck off!" Peeta pushed him aside.
The bronze haired boy grinned. "How many people know that you're gay, Peeta?"

"I don't think that's any of your business." In fact only Peeta's dad, Katniss, Finnick and obviously Cato and Clove knew about Peeta's secret.

"You know, if you'll act nice and follow my orders then your preferences will remain secret." Finnick explained, a devilish smirk on his face.

Peeta turned around to look at Finnick, he couldn't believe what he just heard. "What? Are you serious? Finnick, you're sick! I won't spend another goddamn second with you in here." Peeta replied angrily as he stormed out of the locker room.

In a steady pace, Peeta walked over the schoolyard and tried to find either Katniss or Gale. He had a question left.

Suddenly someone grabbed him by his arm and stopped him in his steps.

"WHAT?" Peeta asked aggressively, expecting Finnick to amplify his recent statement..

"Uh oh… Peeta? Are you upset?" Cato asked.

"Oh Cato it's you…No, it's nothing, I'm fine." Peeta breathed out relieved. Besides thinking that Finnick was totally out of mind, he actually felt scared of him by a tiny bit. Would he really expose Peeta if he didn't obey?

"You seem pretty tensed. Are you sure everything's alright?" Cato insisted.

"YES, Cato. Goddamit, yes. I'm fine." Peeta stroked his forehead.

"Woah. Okay, I didn't know I was unwanted." Cato said and was just about to leave before Peeta suddenly grabbed the taller blonde by his arm.

"Cato, please just come to Gale's party with me tonight." Peeta burst out. "I don't want to be all alone. Really, I'm sorry; I'm just a bit stressed at the moment." Peeta wished he could tell Cato about Finnick but he didn't want to encourage their rivalry.

"Peeta I don't know… I really would like to accompany you but I doubt Gale would even let me in there. I mean, I'm not even invited." Cato explained.

"Cato, please. Just come with me. I'll make sure Gale's fine with it. Pleeease Cato!" Peeta almost whined.


Peeta's eyes lit up. "Cato, you're the best! Thank you. You can't tell how relieved I am. Thanks!" Indeed, Peeta was happy that now he wouldn't be completely at Finnick's mercy.

"It's fine Peeta, you owe me some kisses for that later though" Cato stroked Peeta's hand.

"Of course." Peeta smiled and blushed a little as he returned the pressure on his hand.

"I'll call you later then." Cato winked at Peeta.

"Call you." Peeta smiled again and made his way down the schoolyard.

As he was about to make his way home Katniss messaged him to wait for her at the school entry.
Two minutes later the girl with the braid arrived.

"Hey Peeta, thanks for waiting. I was talking with Gale about a few things for the party." She explained.

"No problem of course. Just by the way, are you and Gale like a thing now?" He asked as they started to go on their way home.

Katniss smiled. "Well, we're not officially together but I feel like we are kind of a thing. I mean we kissed twice and text each other all the time."

"Katniss why didn't you tell me!? I'm so happy for you."

"Well, you know I didn't want to make a fuss about nothing. I am not really sure as what Gale thinks of us." She admitted sadly:

"Oh I understand. That's bad, I think you should ask him then, Katniss."

"True but I'm scared he doesn't want me to be his girlfriend."

"Oh Kat, I'm sure he does! Did you ever notice the way he looks at you? He even calls you Catnip with is like the cutest thing ever."

"Maybe you're right." She smiled gratefully. "I never took it that way; maybe I'll just ask him what he thinks we are."

"Of course I'm right." Peeta confirmed. "I've got a question Katniss. Do you think you could convince Gale to let me bring Cato to the party? I'd really love to go with him together."

"I don't know, Gale is very close with Finnick and they really stand by each other. You know about Finnick's and Cato's rivalry. I really like Cato but I have no idea if Gale agrees with me. I will ask him definitely but I can't promise anything." She said.

"Thanks, Katniss, that's all I want! And who knows, maybe you can influence him more than you think." Peeta winked playfully and Katniss chuckled.

"There's my house. We will see each other at the party right?" Katniss asked.

"Yes right, I will meet you there unless when Cato is allowed to come, then he can drive with his car and we can pick you up."

"Oh that's awesome! Bye then Peeta, will see you later." She turned around and walked towards her house.

"Bye Katniss, I will text you!" He called after her and continued his way home.

Two minutes later Peeta arrived at home, he opened the door with his keys and stepped inside.

"Hey dad, I'm home!"

"Oh, Hi Peeta! You're home already?" Mr. Mellark called out of the kitchen. "I just finished dinner."

"I'm coming." Peeta said as he walked into the kitchen.

"How was school?" His father asked.
"Fine. It was fine, nothing special."

"Any plans for today?" Peeta's dad asked as he divided the pasta on two plates.

"Yeah, I'm going to a friend's party tonight, his name is Gale Hawthorne. He's almost Katniss' boyfriend." Peeta smirked.

"Oh, okay. Have fun then! You know, don't drink too much and don't do drugs."

"Dad I won't. Plus I never did drugs before so why should I start now?"

"Yea yea, right. I just want to make sure you go safe. By that being said, make sure no one puts anything in your drinks and well if you want to be intimate with another person, well in this case Cato, always use a-"

"DAD! It's alright – please not another safe-sex talk, we had that already."

"O-okay, right, I am sorry, Peeta. Well, sometimes I forget how grown up you already are." His father smiled.

A moment of silence occurred and Peeta's smile faded into a thoughtful sad expression.

"I think a lot about them, dad." Peeta almost whispered. "And I miss them."

Peeta's father grabbed his son's hand. "Me too, Peet, me too. But we need to move on."

"I know… but sometimes I just can't help it." Peeta breathed in and his eyes got glassy. "They… died too soon." A tear fell down his right cheek.

"Oh Peeta." His dad leaned in to embrace his son in a deep hug, holding him protectively. "I feel your pain. So often I dream about them, I imagine they live with us here as a happy family: Lucas playing on his game boy, humbling his favorite melody and your mom sitting delightful in the kitchen with her golden locks falling down her graceful back while she's creating one of her beautiful drawings. But… then I wake up… and notice it was all dream."

"Dad. I have those dreams too." Peeta said and hugged his father even tighter. A few minutes later they freed themselves from the hug.

Mr. Mellark smiled at his son and Peeta returned a weak smile.

"Thanks for lunch, dad. I… should take a shower now." Peeta stood up from the table. "It was nice to talk about this with you." He said before he went upstairs and walked into the bathroom.

Soon it was seven in the evening and the party would begin in one hour. A few minutes ago Peeta got a text message by Katniss, saying that Cato would be allowed to come to the party. Katniss wrote it wasn't easy to persuade Gale but in the end a kiss could convince him.

_Katniss really is a friend_, Peeta thought smiling.

– Cato u r officially invited now. ;) x –

Peeta pressed 'send' and walked into his room to pick out his outfit. A few seconds later his phone already vibrated.

– Great Peet. Will pick you up with my car. – Cato sent.
Peeta typed another message.
– Can we pick up Katniss too? Told her we'll come past her house. –

Soon another reply came.
– 4 Sure, See ya. –

Peeta read the message and switched off his phone before he stuffed it into his pocket. He stood in front of his closet and chose out a white t-shirt and a denim blue casual shirt. Afterwards he walked back into the bathroom and styled his shiny blonde hair which he styled casually to the side.

Another half hour passed until Cato's car pulled up in the entrance. The door bell rang and Peeta walked downstairs to open the door.

"Hey baby." Cato said while he stepped inside. As soon as the door was shut he grabbed Peeta by his waist and kissed him gently on his lips.

"Hey." Peeta replied as they broke the kiss.

"Good evening Cato." Peeta's father coughed from behind.

"Oh, good evening Mr. Mellark." Cato responded awkwardly as he watched over Peeta's shoulder. He felt a bit as if he got caught doing something inadequate. But in the end it was Peeta's father and he saw him kissing his son already…well on his cheek.

"Um, how are you Mr. Mellark?" Cato tried to break the awkwardness.

"I'm good, thanks. Hope you're too?"

"Yeah… everything's alright." Cato smiled.

"Nice to hear that. Peeta, when will you be home?"

"Oh, I don't know, I guess something around midnight, might be earlier." Peeta replied.

"Good. Enjoy yourselves. And come home safe." Peeta's dad winked.

"Don't worry Mr. Mellark, I'll take good care of Peeta." Cato said with a smile.

"I hope so." Mr. Mellark laughed and Peeta rolled his eyes.

"Okay, let's go, we still have to get Katniss." Peeta uttered.

"Right let's go. Bye, Mr. Mellark."

"Bye, dad."

"Have fun boys, bye!" Peeta's father exclaimed as he shut the door behind them.

Inside the car, Cato kissed Peeta another time.

"What was that for?" Peeta asked with a smile on his face.

"I just think you're beautiful." Cato whispered.

Peeta's smile widened before he leaned in to kiss Cato again. Cato put his right hand behind Peeta's neck to deepen the kiss while Peeta's hands were stuck on Cato's chest and cheek. This
time their kiss was longer and more passionate.

"Okay. We should drive now." Peeta finally broke the kiss and both strapped themselves.

"Your wish is my command." Cato said and smiled playfully while he started the engine.

A couple of minutes later they arrived at Katniss' house. She already stood outside, waiting for the both of them.

Peeta waved at her through the window to get in.

"Hey guys." Katniss said as she stepped into the care.

"Hey, Katniss." Both boys said.

"Cato, thank you for picking us up that's really kind." Katniss added.

"No problem at all. Thank you for convincing Gale to let me join the party." Cato answered.

"Oh it was my pleasure. You're my Peeta's boyfriend, how couldn't I?" She laughed and Cato smiled as well.

"That's right." He said and rested his hand on Peeta's thigh which Peeta noticed to like a lot. It gave him a secure and comfortable feeling.

Soon they arrived at Gale's house – the music was already audible inside the car. Cato parked in front of the house and Peeta and Katniss got off the car. Peeta noticed that his boyfriend stayed inside, so he opened the car's door, giving Cato a questioning look.

"Is everything alright?" He asked.

"Yeah…well no. I forgot to close the windows in the kitchen. Someone could break in through the opened windows." He groaned annoyed. "My parents would kill me if anything was stolen. They always advise me to lock and close everything." Cato explained.

"Ohhh... we can drive back to your house and close the windows if you want? I'll come with you." Peeta suggested.

"No, no – it's fine. Stay here with Katniss, I'll do it on my own." Cato replied.

"But Cato really it wouldn't be fair if-

"Hey Peet, it's fine. Really. Promise, I will be back super soon. You guys go get some drinks and I will be back in about thirty minutes." Cato said.

"Are you sure about it?" Katniss threw in. "We really can go with you." She added.

"Yes, I'm sure. Still, I am only here for Peeta. It's not that I'd miss anything with the many friends I got here anyway." Cato chuckled.

"True." Peeta and Katniss laughed.

"Hurry up mister. I'll wait for you." Peeta smiled and received a peck on his cheek when no one besides Katniss was looking.

"I'll be quick." Cato winked and closed the car's door. He started the engine again and Katniss and Peeta saw the car driving off into the darkness.
"Okay, let's go." Katniss told to Peeta as they made their way to the house.

Some people were surrounded outside with beer cups in their hands while smoking cigarettes and other things which Peeta assumed to be some weird king of drugs. Peeta didn't know most of the teenager but he recognized Clove among them who uttered a dazed 'hello' towards the two when they walked to the house's door.

Now and then they stumbled over empty beer cans or stepped on tiny transparent plastic bags and small cigarette end that could only be joints. Some of the teenagers already were extremely high.

The door was open so Peeta and Katniss just walked inside. Gale stood at the end of the entrance corridor and turned around when he noticed someone coming inside.

"Oh, hey guys!" Gale welcomed them while he hugged Katniss and afterwards clapped on Peeta's shoulder.

"Gale, I appreciate you let Cato come as well. Thanks. " Peeta said.

"Yeah whatever. It's okay, P. Where is he though?"

"He'll come in a bit." Peeta replied.

"Fine. Get yourself something to drink, would you mind if I show Catnip something upstairs?"

Gale asked.

"Oh um no. Of course not." Peeta said.

"Can't Peeta just come with us?" Katniss asked.

"No Kat, it's fine. Cato will be here in a few minutes anyway." Peeta argued.

"Oh.. okay. We'll be right back." Katniss smiled appreciatively.

Gale nodded, he starred into Katniss' eyes as he grabbed her hand and led her up the stairs.

"Well then… let's get something to drink." Peeta mumbled to himself.

Peeta thought the music that was sounding loudly in the house was extremely gross. It was one of these trashy chart mainstream songs that play non-stop on the radio for at least half a year. If they'd be playing some Gaga or Beyoncé that would be really something – but nope, the mainstreamers always preferred dull chart hits.

Peeta came across a big doorframe and walked into the kitchen. He looked at the different alcoholic drinks that were placed all around the kitchen-bar. Nothing was very appealing to him. He then stepped to the fridge, opened the door and only found some light beer. Not really amused, Peeta closed the door of the refrigerator while he noticed that a specific person's silhouette made its way into the kitchen.

"Hey, I've still got some fruit punch, wanna have it?" A voice asked casually with a special playful tone that could only belong to one person.

Peeta turned around to the familiar voice. Of course it was no one else than Finnick.

"It had been emptied in the first few minutes; the people here are really thirsty."

"Finnick, what the hell do you want? I think I made a clear point that I'm not going to playing a role in your game." Peeta exclaimed sternly with a sharp tone in his voice.
"Peeta listen. I know I've been a jerk – a huge huge jerk and a total dickhead and I should never have said that. It was so disrespectful and ruthless…I know that was wrong." Finnick looked to the floor as if he felt guilty.


"I want to apologize. See, I just want to be friends with you. I know it's been a little complicated because of your relationship with Cato but I would never want to bring you two apart. I know the things I said in the locker room were fucked up. I just felt really attracted to you this morning and my brain kind of switched off. I don't know what I was thinking but Peeta, I wish you all the best with Cato and your secret of course remains a secret." Finnick explained while he fiddled with his fingers.

"Finnick…I'm clueless. I was really shocked this morning. I always thought you were one of the good guys. I mean, you are the flirty arrogant jerk nonetheless but you really scared me today. Cato is very important to me and I don't know if I can be friends with you against his will."

"Peeta, this is your life and if you would want to be friends with me Cato would understand it. You and Cato make the perfect match, and I support you – and you know why? Because I'm your friend and that's what friends do." Finnick smiled ever so charmingly.

Peeta chewed on his upper lip as he seemed to be thinking over something very thoroughly.

"C'mon Peeta. Please, forgive me. Let's start all over." Finnick said.

Peeta was always someone who believed in the good of a person rather than the bad.

"Okay Finnick, I accept your apology, but before we can really be friends I will have to talk to Cato first." Peeta replied.

"Sure! God, I'm so relieved. I was so worried you'd hate me now." Finnick admitted with a wide smile.

"Well it was close to that." Peeta chuckled.

Finnick laughed too and hugged Peeta who was caught a little by surprise. He blushed a bit and freed himself from the embrace.

"So, here is your punch." Finnick pressed the drink into Peeta's hands with a grin. "And I'll take this beer from the kitchen bar and let's clink the glasses on a new friendship."

"Yea… more or less." Peeta smiled and they pressed their cups together.

Due to his thirst, Peeta already drank down half the cup in one go.

"Tastes really good." He said as if he didn't expect that and emptied the other half in a quick move.

"Is there something special in it?" Peeta asked innocently.

"It is." Finnick grinned.

"What?"

"You'll notice." Finnick whispered into Peeta's ear.
As they walked out of the kitchen, Peeta started to feel a bit dizzy. His view got blurry and the people around him seemed to fade.

"F-Finnick… did you put something in my drink?" Peeta stuttered.

"Oh, nothing too bad. Just a little something to bring you in the right party mood." Finnick replied.

"Oh… okay." Peeta didn't really know what was going on. A nausea overcame him and he felt Finnick letting go off him. Suddenly, Peeta was all on his own and wandered through the corridor as his hands desperately clung to the walls for balance. The music sounded distorted in Peeta's ears and the people's screams echoed in his mind. His view got darker and blurrier with every second while cheering people walked past him.

Some time he stumbled up some stairs which led to a woodened door. Peeta opened the door and ended up in a dark room. Maybe it was Gale's room, he didn't know.

Peeta felt dazed and numb, the nausea got heavier with each second and he couldn't even remember how he ended up like this. He didn't know where he was, where everybody else disappeared and where he was actually going.

Suddenly Peeta bounced against something. It was hard and tall. He felt forwards with his hands and noticed the something was muscular and stocky.

"C-Cato? Is it you?" He mumbled.

"Yeah Peeta, what's wrong?"

"Nothing, you…sound different." Peeta uttered.

"That must be your imagination. You don't look healthy, is everything okay?" Finnick asked, a sneaky grin on his face. Peeta was easy to buy – his plan worked out, Peeta thought Finnick was Cato.

"I-I don't know what happened. Finnick was here and…and…Cato, I feel so sick." Peeta closed his eyes and leaned his head against Finnick's chest.

"Don't worry. I will make you feel better." Finnick whispered. He raised Peeta's head and pressed his lips fervently onto Peeta's.

Peeta who was left to the dark and almost knocked out, just let it happen and moved into the kiss. Finnick shoved his tongue into Peeta's mouth, invading his privacy and pushing him on the bed. He touched every single part of Peeta's body. Peeta didn't notice what was going on, in his mind it felt like he was dreaming. Dreaming of him and Cato. It felt so unapproachable and unreal, was this really happening? Finnick became more aggressive in his act and his kisses with Peeta got heated and impassioned. His tongue circled around Peeta's and his hands roamed above all curves of the smaller blonde's body. Finnick just wanted to pull down Peeta's pants when suddenly the door to the room flung open.

Light invaded into the dark room and Cato stood in the doorframe. Shocked, Cato's gaze alternated between Finnick and Peeta, noticing the bruises on Peeta's neck.

"C…Cato?" Peeta thought unclearly.

Cato saw red; furious anger built up inside of him and in an instance he stormed off to Finnick, attacking him straight with a harsh push that kicked Finnick to the floor. Peeta fell to the side and
landed on the couch. His eyes were struggling to stay open; he heard distorted screams, bones crashing on bones, hits and groans.

At once blood landed in front of Peeta with a splash. Whose blood was it? What was going on? Peeta tried to focus as much as he could; he recognized a blonde and bronze haired guy fighting heavily with each other. Were that Cato and Finnick? Concern and anxiety spread in Peeta's stomach. He tried to fight against the dizziness but his view got darker and blurrier with each bygone minute.

"You bastard! You drugged him!" Peeta could hear one of them scream followed by an echoing punch.

"He will never be yours!" The other hissed.

Giving up to the numbness that tore on Peeta's body, he closed his eyes while breathing even. The last thing he heard was a sharp painful scream followed by a terrifyingly loud crash before Peeta passed out.

Panic-struck, Peeta tore out of his sleep, breathing heavy and fast, his forehead was covered with beads of sweat. He quickly rolled over to the side and fell on the floor to grab the next nearest bucket. As he threw up panting, Katniss came immediately into the room followed by Gale. She sat down on the floor next to Peeta and stroked his back in a matter to comfort him.

"Katniss? Gale? What are you doing here? What am I doing here?" Peeta asked completely sober again while he looked up from the bucket and watched around in the room, noticing he wasn't at home.

Gale helped Peeta up and sat him back onto the bed.

"Peeta listen…" Katniss started with a concerned face. She looked like she didn't have much sleep at all. "There had been a fight…and an accident." Her voice became weak.

"What? Katniss I don't understand, what happened?" Suddenly all memories from yesterday flooded back into Peeta's mind; the party, Finnick, the fruit punch, the dark room, Finnick being all over him, Cato coming in and the terrible fight. The fight… how did it end? Peeta passed away, he had no idea what happened.

"Is Cato okay?" Peeta almost screamed, concern was in his face, his heart was never beating this fast.

"Peeta…" Katniss said softly. "Cato is in hospital. It's serious, he had a strong head injury and…" Katniss became glassy eyes "…he was operated, they've put him under general anesthesia and he should have woken up already but…he didn't." Katniss explained, a tear leaving one of her eyes.

Peeta looked pale, his face had no expression but tears already ran down his face even though the message hadn't really hit him yet, it seemed so unreal, it felt like he was back in this dazed, dizzy state. Helpless and numb.

Time stood still. Peeta knew it was his entire fault. That he could never forgive.
Hi everyone! A new chapter is out and I hope you'll like the update. Leave your opinions down below in the comments and enjoy reading! xo

„Peeta, you have to calm down!” Katniss shrieked.

“I’m so stupid!” Peeta screamed against the kitchen door while pounding his fists wildly into the wall. Hard.

He couldn’t stop even though deep blue bruises were already showing on his knuckles.

“Finnick will pay for this. I’M AN IDIOT!” Peeta yelled into the wall. His face was pale, his cheeks reddened and his eyes glassy.

“Peeta, please. It’s not your fault!” Katniss tried to soothe him but it didn’t work. Peeta only punched harder and harder into the stone cold wall. The skin on his knuckles was already ripping apart; tiny bloody stains began to appear on his hands.

“Why did I even let this happen? WHY?!?” Peeta cried out. He stopped for a second to lean his head against the wall before he started banging his head against the hard material.

“PEETA!” Katniss screamed frustrated.

Then, Gale stumbled frantically into the kitchen, tearing Peeta away from the wall and enclosing him in a tight comforting embrace.

“Hey Peeta, it’s okay. It will be alright; by hurting yourself you help no one. And definitely not Cato, that’s the last thing he would want you to do.” Gale said in a soothing tone while rubbing Peeta’s back.

Peeta leaned into Gale’s warmth; he trembled immensely and immediately started to sob into Gale’s chest while they slipped to the ground.

“I—I’m s-sorry.” He whined out and hid his face in Gale’s arms. Yet, Peeta and Gale have never been so close but right now Peeta was more than thankful that Gale was here for him.

Katniss and Gale exchanged a worrying look. They felt sorry for Peeta; they knew they couldn’t do anything for Cato’s condition except wait. The silence was tense and only filled with Peeta’s painful sobs and Gale’s calming shhs.

“I-I don’t want him to leave me.” Peeta said numbly through his sobs.

Katniss walked to Peeta and Gale and kneeled down to their size.

“Peeta, Cato will be alright, we will go to the hospital now and see how he’s doing. Cato is a tough person; he won’t give up so easily.”

All three got up, Gale and Peeta loosened from their embrace before he walked over to the sink and supported his arms on the kitchen bar.
“Katniss…” He began quietly. “I…I think I love him…” Peeta sniffed. “I-I’m afraid I will never have the chance to tell him.” A tear fell down Peeta’s face and on the sink, filling the room with an echoing splash.

“Peeta…” Katniss replied sadly. “Don’t think like that… he will wake up soon, I’m sure of it.” She paused. “And …I think he loves you back.” Katniss smiled.

A sad but wide smile also formed on Peeta’s face. “You think so?” He asked innocently.

“Oh of course.” She said. “Can’t be any different.” Katniss smiled reassuring.

Gale observed their conversation. He didn’t like Cato particularly, maybe that guy was better than Gale thought of him so far, but still he was not an innocent lamb. Nonetheless, Gale was sorry, not for Cato but for Peeta for not being able to be united with his love. Also he felt slightly guilty since he was the one at the party that tore Katniss from Peeta, leaving him alone with Finnick.

“Love is a strong word”, Gale thought. Did he love Katniss? He wasn’t sure of it but he wanted to be with her all the time.

Yesterday at the party when he and Katniss went upstairs, he told Kat that he wanted to be officially together with her. Katniss jumped of joy and they kissed passionately. He really felt very possessive over her; he wanted her to be his and couldn’t imagine to be separated from her. If Peeta felt the same but even much more, he had to be in terrible heart aching pain.

“Poor boy. Peeta has a warmth that was something comfortable and secure, no wonders Cato fell for him so easily” Gale thought.

Peeta touched his wound hands. They ached awfully. The open wounds burned and the rest of his hands were throbbing with pain. Peeta regretted his wall-attack immensely. He has never had his feelings under control and it was embarrassing enough that Gale and Katniss were witnesses this time.

Gale saw Peeta rubbing his knuckles. “We should bandage and disinfect that.” Gale said.

Peeta nodded ashamed.

“Let me get the stuff, be right back.” Gale walked downstairs into the basement.

Peeta was lost to thoughts about Cato; he hoped everything would be alright very soon. Katniss brought him a cup of coffee which Peeta accepted thankfully. He blew gently on the surface of the hot, strong drink before he carefully took a sip. In an instance, the liquid filled Peeta’s mouth and throat with a comforting warmth. This was the right thing now.

“Hey, I’m back.” Gale came up the stairs. “Show me your hands, P.”

Peeta put the cup on the table in front of him before he sat down next to Gale and stretched out his hands.

“Oh Peeta, you’ve really hit it hard.” Gale mumbled. “This might hurt a little.” Gale poured some of the disinfectant on a clean pad. He grabbed one of Peeta’s hands and dabbed the soaked material gently on Peeta’s knuckles.

Peeta hissed sharply and clenches his jaw. His brows were furrowed as the pain increased
“Next one.” Gale ordered as he took the other hand and performed the same procedure with Peeta’s right knuckles.

“Alright, so far so good.” Gale smiled encouraging. “Now just wrapping the bandages around your hands and you’re done.”

Said and done, Peeta relaxed when the pain on his hands eased. “Thanks.” Peeta said gratefully.

“Ahh no problem.” Gale brushed it off.

“Are you like doing something medical in your free time?” Peeta asked.

“Seriously Gale, those bandages look great.” Katniss agreed.

“When my father was still alive, we used to go hunting together in the woods; he taught me all those kinds of things in case of any injuries.” Gale explained, lingering back in the old memories with a sad smile.

Peeta didn’t know Gale’s father had passed away. Out of a sudden he felt extremely sorry for the grey-eyed boy.

An awkward silence followed until Gale said something.

“We should go to see how Cato’s doing, right?”

“Yea. Sorry for bringing up that topic by the way.” Peeta looked to the ground.

“No problem. I mean I do feel honored by you guys complimenting my medical skills.” Gale snickered.

Also Katniss chuckled and Peeta did so too.

“So… Gale, you’re coming with us, right?” Katniss asked and grabbed her jacket.

“Yes. Of course.” He said and nodded.

“Peeta, it is okay that we accompany you?” Katniss asked Peeta carefully.

Peeta looked up as if she’d just asked the silliest question ever. “Yes for sure. You’re my friends… I need you.” He replied.

Katniss and Gale gave him a soft smile before all three left Gale’s house.

The elevator opened with a ‘cling’ and an automatic voice announcement that said ‘Floor 5’. Peeta’s tension rose when they arrived in the floor Cato was supposed to be stationed at. The trio stepped out of the lift and walked further down the corridor.

“Room 528.” Peeta mumbled and broke the silence.

“How you know?” Gale asked confused.

“Clove… messaged me.” Peeta replied without looking at Gale. He knew Gale hated everyone from Cato’s clique – which was why Peeta was so grateful that Gale was so supportive
“Clove? Are you two like… friends now?” Gale asked and Peeta didn’t answer. “The heck, Clove is a bitch.” Gale added.

“She’s not! You don’t even know her.” Peeta hissed. He really didn’t need to argue with Gale about that. The hunter boy had been really friendly so far – he didn’t need to start being a jerk now.

“Ohh believe me I know her well enough to say she’s a terrible person.” Gale exclaimed sternly. “Is she here??”

“Gale, Clove is truly not that bad. She can actually be really nice.” Katniss parted with Peeta.

“Katniss - you too? No way.” Gale shook his head.

Peeta wanted to give a comeback but then they arrived at the waiting room in front of Cato’s corridor. They wanted to pass the waiting room but a young nurse in a white uniform came across their way.

“Can I help you?” She asked the trio.

“Yes, we’d like to see Cato. Cato Hadley. He’s supposed to lay in room 528.”

“Are you in any way related with Mr. Hadley?” She asked.

“Well, not really. We’re his friends.” Peeta admitted disappointed.

“Sorry, only relatives.” The nurse said right before she wanted to leave.

“Wait, please! I’m his…boyfriend.” Peeta said.

The woman in white stopped and turned around, she smiled. “Okay, come with me. That’s the closest we had today anyway. No family member showed up for Mr. Hadley.” She said. “Well, except one.” She corrected herself.

“One family member? Who could that be? His parents are on a business trip!”, Peeta thought.

“Oh and your friends have to wait here.” She pointed at Katniss and Gale.

Peeta turned around. “Sorry guys. I-um.” Peeta wanted to say he’d hurry up for them but he knew he wouldn’t. After all it was still Cato that was laying in hospital.


Taking a last glance at Gale who smiled encouraging, Peeta turned on his spot and followed the nurse into the corridor.

The closer Peeta came to the room the more nervous he got. He felt extremely sick, the unwell tension in his stomach and his heavily pounding heart made it hard for him to stay focused.

The nurse seemed to take notice of Peeta’s condition, as she took a worried glance over her shoulder; her following words were the best Peeta had heard this day. “Hey, you don’t need to
worry. Your boyfriend woke up about twenty minutes ago. He’s stable, only his head still aches from the operation.”

Peeta felt a huge stone being lifted from his chest; he even could hear a silent, strange sound slip out of his mouth that startled him at first. Kinda something between a sigh and a loud cry.

“We’re there. Room 528.” The nurse said.

For the first time this day he felt a heartfelt smile forming in the corners of his mouth, he stepped forwards, the nurse smiled at him as well and then opened the door.

Once the door was shut, a light weight crashed itself into Peeta’s body.

“Peeta!” Clove shrieked and walked towards the entrance to pull him into a hug.
“‘I’m so glad you’re finally here.” She said.

“Clove how did you get in here??” Peeta asked.

She smirked. “Hi, I’m Cato Hadley’s cousin, can I see him?” She imitated herself in an upper friendly voice.


“He’s alright, just extremely angry but right now he’s sleeping.” She whispered back. “I think you can cheer him up though.” She winked and gestured her head next to her, where a big white curtain was hanging in front of the bed, covering Peeta’s view to Cato.

Slowly he walked around the curtain. Cato was breathing evenly in the bed, his eyes were closed. His injuries looked terribly painful. A big white bandage was plastered around his head and had dark bruises and deep-red abrasions were covering his arms.

Peeta felt so guilty about all this. After all it was his fault Cato came in this situation. He should have never asked him to accompany him at Gale’s party.

“God Clove. What was actually happening? I can only merely remember anything.” Peeta uttered, worries in his tone.

“Of course you don’t. When we found you, you laid pale and exhausted on the ground of the corners of a couch. I was trying to wake you up but you didn’t respond at all. You were like totally knocked out, almost. Katniss and I brought you to Gale’s bed. We gave you some kind of anti intoxicant and while Gale and Finnick were taking care of Cato, we were staying with you.” Clove explained.

“What? Finnick took care of Cato? Why??” Peeta felt very helpless for not knowing what had happened while he was passed out.

“See, they had a fight and it was a very heavy one. Out of a sudden, some of us took notice of screams which were followed by an unbelievably loud bang. We were rushing outside the party room and as we arrived at the stairs the scene in front of us was terrifying. Finnick stood at the top of the stairs, whining, his clothes totally ripped apart, and Cato, covered in blood, laid passed out with his head in this splattered glass table. The act was understood as a physical confrontation that escalated due to alcohol. Finnick explained that Cato – allegedly – fell down the stairs accidentally.”
“Accidentally??” Peeta burst out. “Finnick did that on purpose, I’d bet it all!!”

“Peeta, I think so too… but there are no witnesses. Finnick insists on it being an accident. We can’t do anything against it.” Clove said.

“Oh damn. Fuck it, I hate Finnick. I hate him so much.” Peeta rubbed his temples. “He deserves a punishment. How could he do such a thing?” Peeta asked desperately.

“Peeta, Finnick is a person that would do anything to get what he wants. In this case it was you.” Clove rolled her eyes.

“But Clove… that freaks me out. He had put something in my drink, I just don’t know what it was but I totally lost my mind and control over my body. I was like knocked out but still awake. The next second I found myself in a dark room and he threw himself on me. I couldn’t stop it; I was like given to him without being able to withdraw myself. If Cato hadn’t come, Finnick would have gone further. I have it in my guts.” Peeta shook at the thought.

“I’m scared of Finnick.” He admitted and pressed his lips together to a tight line.

“I’m scared of Finnick.” He admitted and pressed his lips together to a tight line.

“He drugged you?? Oh my god, that explains why you’ve been so absent.” Clove realized. “Shit we should go to the police, Peeta. This is really serious! Who knows what else he will try to seduce you. This could have turned out to be rape!”

Peeta flinched at the word. It always reminded him of his past. Quickly he pushed the memories out of his head. “Ah-um… Nah. After all he is Katniss’ and Gale’s friend. Maybe I could talk to him. Probably he will just stop though, how did he deal with the accident?”

“First of all, Gale and Katniss are still friends with him? After what happened? That’s so wrong.” Clove said misbelieved.

“Uhm I don’t know. We haven’t really talked about Finnick yet, I woke up and then we directly drove to the hospital.” Peeta remembered his nervous breakdown this morning. Carefully sliding over his hands, his knuckles still burned terribly with each movement.

“What happened with your hands?” Clove asked predictably.

“Oh…um, last night I must have fallen…onto them.” Peeta explained awkwardly but Clove seemed to buy it.

“So you wanted to know how Finnick reacted?” Clove quirked an eyebrow, whereupon Peeta nodded quickly.

“Well, I hated how he pretended to care. He was like being so dramatic and guilty about Cato’s fall. He was constantly screaming ‘it was an accident’ and he yelled for Gale to call the ambulance.”

Clove snickered.

“He really did a good show, this hypocrite of an actor - playing the victim in this fight, faking the will to help Cato. As if he’d really care… but “ Clove leaned in closer to Peeta. “…I saw this glisten in his eyes. This satisfaction that he felt in finally overpowering Cato was easy to see- well at least for me and trust me I know what I’m seeing.”

“That’s so sick. He is sick.” Peeta commented as he rubbed his forehead. He had a big headache; it felt like his brain was crushing down on him.
Suddenly they heard a silent moan coming from the bed. They turned their heads looking at the almost platinum blonde boy. Cato was starting to move. His mouth opened, his head turned slightly and then his eyes followed slowly. The lights seemed to blend him but when he was able to focus, a big smile appeared on his jaw.

“Cato!!” Peeta almost screamed and rushed over to the bed, falling into Cato’s tight arms. His grip was really strong for someone who just woke up and had been through a heavy head operation few hours ago.

“Peeta.” Cato mumbled almost inaudibly.

“Cato, how are you feeling? I’m so glad you’re alright.” Peeta said, still in his boyfriend’s arms.

“I’m good! I mean, my head aches terribly but it’s all fine.” Cato replied.

“What I still don’t know, how did u get this head injury, why were u even being operated?” Peeta asked, carefully caressing Cato’s forehead.

“Well, I can’t really remember anything that happened after the collapse but Clove said when I fell down the stairs, I crushed into a glass table and they had to remove the glass splitters form my head.” Cato looked reassuring at Clove who nodded.

“I-I was so scared.” Peeta admitted and grabbed his boyfriend’s hand. “I thought I might have lost you.” Peeta uttered quietly.

“Hey, you don’t get rid of me so easily, Peet.” Cato soothed him and pulled him into another tight hug before he tenderly kissed Peeta.

“Guys, I’m still in here as well.” Clove hissed.

“Sorry.” Peeta blushed, leaning away from Cato who smiled satisfied.

“So, Cato can you remember whether Finnick pushed you intentionally?” Clove asked.

Cato leaned back; he was really thinking this through. “I… I don’t know.” Cato realized. “I can’t remember. I just know that we had this huge fight because I caught him pushing his tongue into Peeta.” Cato’s voice fell stern towards the end of his sentence and he looked right at Peeta.

“Cato, I’m so sorry that this happened, he had put something in my drink, I wasn’t myself anymore!” Peeta explained hurried.

“I know… you were totally knocked out. I can’t believe he got hold of your drink to drug you.”

“Well… actually I accepted a drink from him.” Peeta admitted.

“What?!” Cato’s eyes widened. “Why would you do that? I told you he is dangerous.” Cato said confused.

“Umm… when I was in the kitchen do get myself something to drink, I didn’t find anything, then Finnick came in and he offered me this fruit punch. He said it was the last one they had, everything’s been emptied already.”

“Peeta, there was no fruit punch. No idea where he got it from.” Clove added and left Peeta in
shock.

“B-but he seemed so… sincere!” Peeta insisted.

“Peeta what the fuck?! You didn’t want to get in touch with him, you said you’d keep yourself away from him, didn’t we agree on that?!?” The rage in Cato’s voice increased.

“Ah Cato, he excused several times! I thought he was really feeling sorry for everything. He said his behavior was wrong towards me.”

“Why in the first place did he excuse for his behavior towards you??” Cato interrogated.

Damn. Peeta forgot to tell Cato about the incident in the gym at school.

“Oh… um Cato I forgot to tell you something.” Peeta looked down to the floor and Cato quirked an eyebrow impulsively. “Yesterday when we talked after school, do you remember how upset I was?”

Cato nodded.

Peeta bit on his lower lip. Cato would be so mad about this.

“That was because Finnick said some super weird things to me. He threatened me and I just ran off…” Peeta breathed in “…before I bumped into you afterwards.”

“Are you serious right now, Peeta? Why didn’t you tell me? I’m your boyfriend!” Cato hissed.

“C-Cato. I- I didn’t want to make a fuss about it. I wanted to do clarify this on my own; it was something between Finnick and me.” Peeta replied.

“Peeta no you should have told me! Simply because I know Finnick all too well, I could have warned you. Can’t you see that Finnick is a dangerous person?? How naive are you?! And you really accepted his low key apology because of a fruit punch? How could you even talk to him after that?” Cato bombarded him with questions.

“I … don’t know. I thought he was being serious. He really seemed to feel guilty.” Peeta tried to defend himself.

“Goddamit Peeta!” Cato exclaimed loudly, Peeta almost flinched. “I told you NOT to trust Finnick! How often do I have to say this? Do you even listen to me? If you wouldn’t have fallen for him, then we – I wouldn’t be in this situation. I can’t believe you didn’t talk with me about the incident with Finnick in the gym.” Cato shook his head, raging at Peeta.

“We all know Finnick can be really a good actor.” Clove tried to help Peeta but she only received a death glare from Cato.

“Cato I’m sorry, I-“

“Peeta after all that how could you even let him talk with you??” Cato looked angry, upset. He really seemed to be mad at Peeta.

“I-“ Peeta began but didn’t know what to say.

Cato breathed in deeply. “Peeta, leave.”

“I said leave. So, go.” Cato repeated.

“C-Cato, are you serious? I never wanted you to get hurt.” Peeta said, his eyes were getting glassy already.

“Cato, calm down please.” Clove said.

“Clove this is none of your business. Peeta now exit my goddamn room, I don’t want you here right now.” Cato said penetrative.

“Fine!” Peeta answered shakily and stood up. “And you know what? Don’t call me when you’re out of here!” Peeta exclaimed with tears that were already running down his cheeks.

“I won’t!” Cato responded and in the next second Peeta flung the door open and stormed out before he shut the door with a loud bang.

Peeta came into the waiting room and saw Gale and Katniss looking at him with confused looks. Peeta stared at them back with blood-red eyes and wet cheeks, tears still recognizable on his face. He stood there in front of them for a second before he ran off to the elevator.

“Peeta??” Katniss screamed. She and Gale stood up from their seats and ran after him.

Right in front of the elevator they found Peeta crawled together, holding his knees to his chest, while he sobbed silently into his thighs.

“Oh Peeta, what happened?” Katniss asked as she kneeled down to hug Peeta intensely.

“He wanted me to leave.” Peeta whined “That’s what happened.” He sobbed.

“What?? Why that?” Katniss asked shocked.

Peeta pulled himself together and rubbed with his sleeve over his red eyes. “I…will tell you in the car. Can we leave?”

“Of course.” Gale simply said and helped Peeta up.

Meanwhile Katniss pressed the button for the elevator which shortly after arrived. They stepped inside the metallic cabin and drove five floors downwards which led to the parking lot. Soon they reached Gale’s car, hopped in and drove back home.

Inside of the car they all set in silence. Peeta sat on the backseat and leaned his head against the window. He watched cars and trees passing by while his thoughts clung to Cato. How could he throw him out of his room? Did Cato even love Peeta the way he loved him and most of it all did he still like him? Peeta felt so rejected and hated and reason for all of this was Finnick Odair. The worst person on this planet. Besides having no clue of where he stood with Cato, he was sure of one damn thing. Peeta would get his retribution and Finnick would receive his punishment.

“I need to know, Gale and Katniss did you talk to Finnick about yesterday? What did he tell you?” Peeta blurted out, not longer being able to hold it back anymore.
“Umm, I didn’t talk with him, Peeta. He went off with Cato to the hospital; I haven’t seen him since then.” Katniss said.

Peeta nodded. “Gale?”

“Well, me neither really, P. Last night I went with Finnick to the hospital while Katniss stayed with you, the only thing he said that must have been an accident of a fight that occurred when… um Cato found you making out with Fin.” Gale said absently while he focused on the street.

“That’s not true!” Peeta broke out. He breathed in sharply.

“Guys, I think Finnick drugged me. I still can’t understand he did something like that but it’s true.” Peeta said.


“Yeah, he had put something in my drink. When I started feeling dizzy I was asking him if there was something special in the drink and he said *something to bring me in the right party mood*.” Peeta explained.

“I would never betray Cato! He means…everything to me.” Peeta chew on his bottom lip.

Gale, neither Katniss couldn’t believe what they’ve just heard.

“Peeta is that really true?” Gale asked, even stopping the car to take a look over his shoulder at Peeta

“Yes! It is. Why should I make this up? Finnick is not as innocent as he pretends to be!!” Peeta exclaimed while he leaned forward, his voice strong.

“I always knew Finnick was crazy but that’s too much.” Gale mumbled, concentrated on his car.

“I-I’m shocked!” Katniss said. “What should we do about this though? Should we bring that up to the police?” Katniss exchanged startled looks between Peeta and Gale.

“That won’t work. I have no proofs Katniss and the drugs are already out of my system. I mean luckily nothing bad happened, right?” Peeta knew they had to clarify that on their own.

“Yeah but you never know what could’ve happened if Cato didn’t come!” Katniss argued.

“P is right though. The police can’t do anything about that now, still… it’s Finnick, right?” Gale replied. “He’s my best friend.”

“I can’t trust Finnick at all now. He totally lost my faith in him.” Katniss nonchalantly curled a strand of hair.

“I think we should expose him right in front of himself. We should bring that topic up to him all three together, don’t you think?” Peeta suggested.

“Maybe. But we should keep you out of that for now. I will talk to Finnick first; still I am the one with the closest relationship to him.”

“That’s a good idea, Gale.” Katniss said. “And Peeta you will deal things out with Cato. Tell him
what you’re feeling for him and I am sure things will go alright.”

Peeta said nothing for a few seconds. “I feel like Cato hates me now.” He mumbled, his voice weak.

“He won’t.” Katniss touched Peeta’s hand that rested on the middle bar of the backseat. “He didn’t know how to handle with all this. Of course he likes you a lot, he wouldn’t have reacted that harshly if not. Something must have hurt him badly; you just have to find out what it was. He cares for you obviously.” Katniss smiled.

“Thanks Katniss.” Peeta said smiling. “You’re right. It will be alright.” He convinced himself.

“Okay, we are back at home again.” Gale said while he stopped the car and switched off the engine as he turned around the car keys.

“I don’t know about you guys, but I am hungry.” Peeta said, laughing sheepishly.

“Oh me too!” Katniss and Gale said at the same time before they erupted into laughter.

“Cute.” Peeta commented, smiling at the two.

“Shall we order something?” Gale asked while they got out of the car.

Katniss nodded before she walked towards Gale. For the first time ever, Peeta saw the two exchanging a kiss which he thought looked super adorable.

“You guys are the sweetest ever.” Peeta commented, grinning at the two.

Gale and Katniss just smiled at each other while Gale threw his arm around Kat.

They walked inside Gale’s house and headed towards the kitchen. Gale’s kitchen was very bright, light flooded into the room through big windows with clear, white curtains, herbs were hanging down from one white shelf and there was an old wooded crossbow on the top of a shelf which caught Peeta’s mind. It must have been the crossbow from Gale’s father who used to go hunting with his son.

Finishing his observation of the kitchen, Peeta turned back around to Kat and Gale while fiddling with his fingers.

“Guys, I think I will call Cato now. I can’t get our fight out of my head and I want to clear out things between us.”

“Sure.” Gale said, walking over to the fridge, grabbing out some orange juice.

“We’ll order something in the meantime.” Katniss smiled encouragingly.

Peeta nodded and made his way back upstairs into one of the rooms. He took a second to stare at his location, there was a big king sized bed, red curtains and light woodened furniture. Maybe it was Gale’s mother’s bedroom. Did Gale actually have something like a stepdad? Probably but Peeta has never seen Gale with a sort of male parent, though he knew that Gale had many younger siblings. At least someone had to be caring for them, right? Where was Gale’s family right now anyway? Whatever.
Peeta grabbed out his phone, thinking of what he should say to Cato. What did Cato want to hear from him anyway? After trying to gather the right words, Peeta finally found what he wanted to say. Something that he should’ve said way sooner.

He dialed Cato’s number from his contacts and pressed on ‘Call’. It rang a few times until someone picked up on the other line.

“What’s it?” The person said sternly.

“Cato?” Peeta asked reassuring.

“Yeah. Peeta, is it you?”

“Um yes. It’s me.” Peeta was confused by Cato’s absent tone.

“Is it anything important you need to tell me?” Cato uttered.

Peeta didn’t say anything for a few seconds, wondering if it was the right time to say what he wanted to say.

“Peeta??”

“Ah-yes. Um, I wanted to talk to you. About what happened earlier.” Peeta mumbled the last sentence.

“Oh.” Cato dully replied.

“I-I wanted to say sorry. I should have told you about Finnick, I know I promised to stay away from him. I couldn’t really influence that though. Both time he kind of appeared out of nowhere. I didn’t think he would go that far.” Peeta explained.

“Peeta, listen I-“

“No, Cato, you need to believe me. I didn’t want to make you hate me. I’m so sorry.”

“Peeta, I could never hate you, I’m just disappointed. I’m your boyfriend but still you don’t trust me. I don’t know how to cope with that.” Cato answered his voice strong but firm.

“Cato I do trust you! I just wanted to keep this to myself because I didn’t want you to get in trouble.”

Peeta could hear Cato inhale deeply on the other line.

“Cato.” Peeta said. He hesitated a little but then finally said it. “I fell in love with you.”

For a few seconds there was no reaction on the other line. “Wh-what? Peeta, I have to hang up, someone’s coming into the room. I’ll call you back.”

“But Cato-“ and then it made a sound signalizing the end of the phone call.

Peeta put down his phone, looking startled at the display. “What was that?”. Clueless, he kept looking at the locked screen for a few more seconds before he pushed it back into his pocket. Did Cato in all honesty just seriously hang up when Peeta said he loved him?
With a mix of emotions Peeta left the room and came back again down the stairs. He walked down the small corridor and then entered the kitchen through the second door on the right.

Katniss looked at him, searching for an answer in his eyes. “How was it?” She asked.

“Cato is a jerk. That’s all. I just told him I loved him and then he didn’t reply for what felt like an hour until he hung up because allegedly someone came into the room.” Peeta hissed, sitting down on a barstool in front of the kitchen counter.

“What, really? That’s fucked up. He screwed it.” Katniss said plainly before she rose her glass to take a sip.

“I know right?!” Peeta hissed even louder.

Then the house’s door opened with a creak and steps followed that led to the kitchen. The paper bag in Gale’s hands rustled and he stepped through the door frame.

“Hey, guys I got us some bagels and—“ Gale stopped in the middle of the sentence, looking at a rather annoyed, angry Peeta and a confused Katniss.

“Umm… are you two alright?” Gale asked as he put down the paper bags.

“Peeta told Cato on the phone that he loved him and Cato simply hung up.” Katniss explained.

“He did??” Gale asked misbelieved.

“Yes. Well, it wasn’t exactly like that. He said someone would come into the room and he would have to call back later but to me it feels like a lame excuse to escape the situation.” Peeta chewed on his fingernails – his other bad habit when he was nervous or thoughtful besides chewing on his lip.

“That’s obviously a weak excuse.” Gale agreed. “And you should definitely let him call you back. You shouldn’t be the one running after him after that even though he’s in hospital.” Gale grabbed out the bagels and put them on the table.

“Yeah… you’re right I guess.”

“Of course I am, P.” Gale winked. “So, lunch anyone?” Gale gestured at the bagels.

“The hell yes!” Katniss warbled, putting her glass on the kitchen counter while dancing off to the table with the food, making Gale chuckle before he gave a pet on her cheek.

Peeta smiled at the cuteness before he sat down as well, ready to pull down some bagels.

An hour and a lot of foods later, they ended up for a walk in the park.

Gale decided it would be a good idea for everyone’s benefits to catch fresh air and get some exercise. So, they had left Gale’s house and walked further down a few streets until they occurred at a small lake surrounded by some trees and meadows.

“I love being here.” Gale said. “Besides the nasty mosquitoes, here are barely many people.”
“Why? It’s a nice place.” Peeta asked while ironically fighting with a sneaky gnat.

“Since the capitol stopped the running of this lake for bathing, there are rarely a lot of people in this place. Also the residential area around here became older – from time to time you can see a couple of seniors here.” Katniss explained, also trying to catch one of the mosquitoes that were flying around her head.

“Though still, in the morning you can see many people playing with her dogs on the meadow over there. Normally around this time, parents come here with their kids but probably because of the cloudy weather no one’s here today.” Gale clenched his jaw. “Except these two idiots down there.” His gale was focused on Marvel and Glimmer that were a several meters distant from them.

Peeta and Katniss who weren’t really fully part of the conversation anymore were fighting desperately with the flying gnats around them.

Gale chuckled. “Guys you need to stay calm, otherwise they won’t disappear.”

“That’s what we’re trying but those noisy bitches make it hard to stand still.” Katniss hissed while slapping hardly on her arm. “Ha! Gotcha.”

Both Gale and Peeta chuckled.

“Can you try catching mine too?” Peeta laughed. The other two joining him in.

“Oh, there they’re coming.” Gale mumbled, interrupting the group’s laughing and making a stern face. Marvel and Glimmer were a few meters in front of them.

Peeta noticed that Gale really seemed to have a problem with Cato’s friends or “clique” one might say.

“There must have been some serious trouble between him, Finnick and Cato’s clique in the past”, Peeta thought.

He himself didn’t really mind Cato’s friends, in fact he really liked Clove. Marvel though was a bit scary while Glimmer wasn’t really known to Peeta. Also Cashmere and Gloss weren’t all too familiar to him, but he knew they were siblings.

Overall, Peeta didn’t think they were super dangerous anyways, just as Cato, he thought, deep inside they had a loveable side.

They walked past Cato’s friends, Glimmer wasn’t really paying attention to them, only Marvel was looking – no literally starring – pretty awkwardly and penetrative at Peeta. The blonde looked to the right and left, just to make sure if Marvel was really focusing on him. When he looked back, Glimmer and Marvel were already behind them.

“Um is it just me or did Marvel look at Peeta like he’s just seen a ghost?” Katniss turned around for a last glance at the two behind.

“Marvel’s a strange person anyway, Catnip.” Gale brushed it off.

“No that wasn’t a normal stare. Trust me, I recognize that.” Katniss replied. “Peeta?”

“Um… well there once was a weird incident I had with Marvel but it’s really not worth to tell.” Peeta stumbled awkwardly. He wasn’t necessarily in the mood to remember this memory; Marvel’s stare was unsettling enough.
“Oh my god you made out…” Katniss stuttered.

“The heck? No!” Peeta brought his palm up to his forehead.

“What?? You slept with him? Oh my-“

Gale chuckled. “Oh, Katniss.” He whispered.

“Dammit Katniss! Where do you have your thoughts?! Seriously, no. It was completely harmless. Well, pretty much. Do you remember Maja’s birthday party from about two weeks ago?” Both Katniss and Gale nodded.

“Well before I left the party Marvel kind of flirted with me in the kitchen in a really weird way and he was obviously super drunk.” Peeta said.

“Well he didn’t seem to have forgotten it though.” Gale joked.

“Nope. Unfortunately not.” Peeta sighed.

“Marvel himself is a weird person. Doesn’t explain why he stared that awkwardly though… unless he wants to get in your pants.” Katniss joked, making her and Gale laugh heavily.

“Stop guys, I’m gonna vomit.” Peeta hissed but couldn’t contain a silly chuckle.

By the time the three were about to exit the park it was already early in the evening. Whereas Peeta really enjoyed spending some time together with Kat and Gale, he’d really like to go home now. He wanted to have some time alone for himself while he’d be waiting for Cato’s call. Indeed Peeta strongly hoped that Cato would call him later in the evening; otherwise he’d no clue as what Cato was defining them. “Friends? Best Friends? Hopefully none of these”, Peeta thought.

When they arrived at the gate that led to the street, they all stopped, looking expectantly at each other as in what they’d like to do now.

“Guys, I wanted to go home now. It’s pretty late already and I really have to catch up some sleep, plus my father probably still thinks I’m in the hospital and I really don’t want him to make a surprise-visit and find me actually not being in there.”

“Yeah I understand. Sure, go home, P. Katniss and I will probably just go to my house and relax a little as well.” Gale replied whereupon Peeta nodded.

“Alright.” Katniss said as she walked to Peeta and enclosed him in a deep hug. “Don’t worry about Cato. He’s probably still just a little confused and out of his mind because of the operation. He will call you as soon as you’re home.” Katniss said encouragingly into Peeta’s ear before she broke the hug.

Also Gale embraced Peeta in a brotherly, warm hug as a matter to say goodbye. “Katniss is right. It will go well.”

“Thank you very much guys, we’ll talk soon!” Peeta waved before he spun on his heel and began his walk home.

Soon Peeta arrived at home, the park was obviously not all too far from his own house.
He walked towards the door and stepped gently on the ‘welcome’-matt before he pushed the key into the lock. Once opened, he plucked his key quickly out of the door and walked inside.

“Hey dad, I’m home!” Peeta called without getting an instant reply.

“Dad?” He walked into the kitchen as a small white envelope caught his attention. Peeta’s name stood on top of the cover.

He tenderly opened the envelope and pulled out a small letter.

- Hey Peeta,

  grandma doesn’t feel good so I went there for a day. Glad to here Cato is alright and don’t worry I didn’t stalk you; I talked to Katniss on the phone while u were having your own call with Cato. I’ll be back tomorrow in the late afternoon.

  Love, Dad -

Awesome, now Peeta wasn’t only in a bad mood but also alone. What a great weekend. Maybe Peeta should have felt sorry for his grandma; maybe Peeta should have wanted to know what was wrong but right now in this moment Peeta only cared for himself. Was that selfish? Yeah most probably but he knew that was the truth. What was the sense in hiding the truth anyway?

Peeta made his way upstairs with a coke light in his hand. He opened the door to his room as he saw an all too familiar silhouette sitting on his bed.

“Cato??” Peeta asked surprised. “What are you doing here? How did you get in here?? Shouldn’t you be in the hospital???” He asked confused, placing the coke onto the table to his left side.

“I needed to talk to you, Peeta. The window was open so I climbed inside, I was hoping you were here but you weren’t. I decided to wait for you, the people from the hospital don’t know that I left my room, I’m on a secret mission one could say.” Cato grinned but received no laughter.

“What do you want?” Peeta asked plainly. He wasn’t in the mood for any games; Cato owed him a load of a big excuse.

“I need to tell you something. Well, I’ll make it short.”

“Shoot.” Peeta quirked an eyebrow.

“I’m sorry. For everything. The way I behaved, that I kicked you out of the hospital room and that I’ve said all those things. It’s not your fault, if it’s anyone’s fault – then it is Finnick’s. I know you always see the good in people; Finnick used that to his own benefits.” Cato explained.

Peeta wanted to stay cold but Cato really got to him. “You really mean that?” Peeta asked ever so innocently.

Cato smirked. “Of course.” He said and walked towards his smaller boyfriend and grabbed his hands.

“From now on I want you to know that you can tell me everything. I trust you and you can trust
me. I just was so upset about Finnick and concerned about you, I’m sorry for acting like a total jerk. I can be very tempestuous sometimes. I’m sorry.” Cato explained, leaning in closer to Peeta. “Do you forgive me, Peet?”

“Cato…I…” Peeta began. He relented. “Of course I do. You’re my boyfriend, how couldn’t I?” Cato smiled. “I’ve got something else to tell ya as well.” His blue eyes were glistening

“What’s it?” Peeta asked drawing circles with one of his hands into Cato’s palm.

“It was never easy for me to tell others about my feelings. In fact, I never said something like this to anyone ever before but Peeta, you really mean something to me. I should have said it earlier but in a way it scared me to reveal myself to a person in such an intimate way, but I want to return you words…” Cato looked down to Peeta’s lips and then back up into his eyes.

“I love you too, Peet.”

Peeta, full of joy, hugged Cato immediately. This hug felt perfect - warmth, comfort and love were transmitted through Cato’s strong arms that wrapped themselves around Peeta’s waist.

“I love you too, Cato.” Peeta responded happily while he looked up into the taller blonde’s eyes.

“I know.” Cato smiled and then pressed his lips down on Peeta’s.

This was their first kiss in official love. It was different from any other kiss they have ever shared before; this one was immensely passionate but sincere and full of love – a deep, meaningful and loving kiss between two lovers.

Never before did Peeta feel so good and right with someone in his life. He knew he’d never want to lose Cato, they were meant for each other, they needed each other and they craved each other.

It was a bound so strong; it felt like it could survive everything.
AUTHOR'S NOTE ON 'BY MY SHELTER' // UPDATE

UPDATE/AUTHOR'S NOTE

Hello everyone, it's me again, addressing all the readers of this fanfiction after being inactive for almost a WHOLE year. (OMG CAN U BELIEVE THAT?)

Anways, the reason for my loooong break is that I had my final exams, graduated and finished school and am only now fully free, motivated to continue my story/or start all over with a completely new fanfiction.

If anyone is reading this, I want to ask YOU, if you would like to see more updates on my recent (most recent at least) story „Be My Shelter” and see how Peeta's and Cato's Love Story in Silver Lake is developing throughout further chapters OR if you'd be up to a completely new fiction?

I thought of maybe starting all over with a Peeta x Cato story or actually create a story based on a Peeta x Gale romance? Maybe give Peeta x Katniss a shot? YOU tell me!

At the end of the day, I just wanted to know if any of you are still interested in the story and keeping track of it, because if no one actually wants to see how the story's going on, I don't feel like it would be worth it to update this fanfiction at all.

I'd love to read some responses, thoughts, opinions on this.
Love ya'll,

x

End Notes

Please leave reviews for the story and individual chapters, make sure to tell me your honest opinions or ideas. You can also leave suggestions of course! Your reviews would help a lot to make me keep going on with all of this. When I see that you sincerely enjoy my story, plot and writing, I'll make sure to update on a regular basis!

Also, I do not own any part of The Hunger Games and all credits based from this story (characters, etc.) go to Suzanne Collins. Thank you for this amazing series!

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