Two Everdeens

by abbythebear

Summary

After a few requests and a lot of encouragement, I have written a part two to my Everlark drabble, "Just a Bartender," in which witch Katniss falls for human Peeta. A month after Peeta and Katniss finally get together, they recall the night he learned about her magic.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

PRESENT DAY --- OCTOBER

It had been exactly four weeks since the night of Katniss and Peeta’s first kiss. In the time since, her trips to Delly’s Tap became more frequent and she quickly realized there were more than a few perks to dating a bartender-slash-bar-owner. Obviously free drinks were at the top of Johanna and Prim’s lists, but Katniss preferred some others. Similar to the one after she sang to Peeta, trysts in the office became a regular occurrence, much to Katniss’ delight.

Katniss and Peeta only took two days to meet her “three date rule” and grew incredibly close during the first month of their relationship. Adjustments were made on both ends. Katniss tried to compromise and share her time, although her stubborn nature hindered that a bit. Peeta, on the other hand, was learning to be patient with Katniss and allow her to become more comfortable with their new relationship status. The two spent most of their nights together and Katniss began to let him in, in a way she didn’t know was possible.
As far as Katniss was concerned, tonight, the night before Halloween, was like any other night. To what seemed like the rest of the population, it meant parties, dressing up, and debauchery. Prim and Johanna loved the anarchy that came when Halloween rolled around. They were costumed perfectly as something slutty Katniss couldn’t remember, completely wasted, and probably stoned if she were correct. It wasn’t something they did often, and she didn’t approve, but Katniss could have sworn she saw Ryan with a joint earlier.

At the moment, she was hiding in the manager’s office, waiting for Ryan and Peeta to clear out the bar and lock up. Katniss heard the DJ give the final, final call that the doors were closing, but knew it would be another 20 minutes or so before the rest of the group joined her. The other girls were out front “helping” with crowd control, so she made herself comfy on the couch she had become very familiar with during the past month. A smile graced her lips as she thought of Peeta, just outside the office, probably calling cabs for those too drunk to drive while wiping the bar clean. Her eyes closed as the roar of the crowd on the other side of the door slowly died down. It wasn’t long before she heard the door open and the heavy footsteps of her boyfriend entering the room.

“You okay in here?” Katniss opened her eyes when she felt the couch dip beneath Peeta’s weight. His blonde waves were askew and he looked tired, but he was beaming at her. It was the special smile he showed only to her. It was the one where his eyes crinkled at the corners, and it made her heart flutter every time.

She lifted her hand to rest on his cheek and slid it up to his hair as she spoke. ‘Yeah, babe. I’m good.” His smile got just the slightest bit wider, as it always did when she called him by a nickname of some sort. It was very out of character for Katniss to use a term of endearment with anyone other than Prim, but she found that Peeta was changing her thoughts and habits on much more than just nicknames. “Everything good out there?” Katniss asked, nodding toward the door. “Mhm,” Peeta hummed as he took the bottom of Katniss’ braid in his hand. He leaned forward to press a chaste kiss to her forehead as she smiled, happy to finally have him to herself. Katniss breathed a sigh of relief she didn’t know she needed, and did almost every time he walked in the room.

Katniss typically paid no mind to men, love, or relationships; her main focus was keeping Prim in school and the bills paid. She had never fallen for someone, and the way she cared for Peeta so freely and openly scared her to death. In a short amount of time, Peeta had changed her entire attitude towards love, relationships, and the future. When Katniss really considered it, though, their relationship was probably a long time coming, with well over a year of friendship and flirting under their belts.

As he leaned in to kiss her again, this time meeting her lips with his, her breath hitched as she felt the fire between them ignite. It was a slow burn at first, but it never failed to lead to an all-consuming blaze. She was baffled at how easily they could go from slow and sweet to yanking each other’s clothes off. In the past, she would have never considered acting this way in general, let alone in public. But with Peeta, everything was different. Katniss was quickly realizing that since they had known each other, his influence had bled into almost every aspect of her life.

She tasted Budweiser mixed with spearmint gum as his tongue slipped past her lips. It seemed like a disgusting combination, and she didn’t know how he could stand it, but the taste screamed “Peeta” and Katniss could not get enough of it. Inhaling, she found his scent of sweat, cinnamon, and a touch of body wash leftover from the shower they shared earlier. Between his taste, touch, and smell, she was on sensory overload as she pushed him against the back of the couch.

“I love you so much, Katniss,” Peeta managed to get out between kisses. She was used to hearing it by now, and had finally stopped tensing whenever he told her. It took Peeta five dates to tell
Katniss he was in love with her, but he assured her there was no pressure to return the sentiment. He was happy as long as she cared for him and as long as they were together. Katniss swung her leg over Peeta and settled onto his lap, running both of her hands through his already tousled hair and down to his shoulders. With another kiss, she hummed and smiled, finally accepting his admissions of love.

As he lifted the hem of her Delly’s Tap t-shirt, Katniss raised her arms in the air to assist Peeta in ridding her of the item. Before they went too far, Katniss looked intently at the doorknob to see if it was locked. Finding it was not, a flick of her wrist secured the lock, and Katniss was free to return her attention to Peeta.

“What? You don’t want a repeat of last week?” Peeta asked playfully as he nipped at her bottom lip. Pulling away, Katniss shoved Peeta’s shoulders to push his back into the cushions as he let out a loud laugh. She knew he was teasing, but she was still mortified that Prim walked in when she and Peeta were fooling around completely naked.

Scowling to cover the smile that threatened to break through, she adjusted her position to gain some leverage on Peeta and keep him against the back of the couch. “You just had to go there, didn’t you?” She demanded as he continued to laugh, seemingly unaffected by her discomfort and change of direction.

“I’m sorry, Katniss,” Peeta tried to stop giggling, “but it was funny. And Prim doesn’t care! She told me she’s happy I took you off her hands.” Katniss frowned at his words, wondering if her sister had actually said that to Peeta or if he was just trying to placate her. He slid his hands down to rest on her hips and encouraged her to rock her hips into him, wanting to keep their game going.

Halting his movements, Katniss looked Peeta in the eye as she asked her next question. “For real? Prim said that?” Seeing that he may have touched a sore spot for Katniss, he took her face in both of his hands and planted a soft, loving kiss on her nose.

“Well, yeah,” he said softly as he smoothed her hair off her face. “But not in a bad way. She doesn’t want to get rid of you, but she wants to see you happy. Besides, Prim loves me.” The worry lines disappeared from Katniss’ forehead as he spoke. She knew his words were genuine and true, and her smile began to make its return. Peeta had an incredible way of calming her irrational fears, one of the many talents he possessed that Katniss was grateful for.

“At least one Everdeen loves me,” Peeta teased with a wink. Katniss rolled her eyes as she moved for her shirt on the other end of the couch. Her shirt was just out of reach, so Katniss stood, smoothed her jeans, and re-braided her hair. As she tidied herself, Peeta adjusted himself in his pants, knowing their moment had passed for now.

With her shirt back on, Katniss returned to Peeta’s lap, this time sitting on him as though he were Santa Claus. She ran her fingers through his hair, massaging his scalp, and was quiet for a long moment, considering her next move. There was something she had wanted to tell Peeta for a few weeks, but couldn’t find the right words or the right time or the right anything.

“Can I tell you a secret?” Katniss posed, as she absentmindedly continued his massage.

“You can tell me anything,” Peeta replied lazily, clearly enjoying the treatment his scalp was receiving. Feeling Katniss’ hesitation, Peeta reached up to grab her right hand. Bringing it to his lips, he placed a kiss to her open palm, a sweet habit he started their first night together.

“I’m not good at… Ya know…” Katniss started.
“You’re not good at talking, I know,” Peeta finished for her, nuzzling his head into her hands like Prim’s stupid cat Buttercup. “It’s difficult for you and that’s okay. There’s no rush.”

“I want to tell you about the first time I knew.” This caught Peeta’s attention as he stilled.

“Knew what?” He asked, genuinely curious and maybe slightly suspicious.

“Knew that I was a goner,” Katniss whispered, as if her feelings would disappear if she spoke of them too loudly.

A proud smile crossed Peeta’s face. “I do believe ’goner’ was my word,” he said with a kiss to her lips. “But I’ll share it. Tell me.”

“Do you remember the night we had our first conversation about my superpowers?”

Peeta smiled again, bigger and brighter this time. He remembered the conversation well, although it was almost a year ago. He remembered feeling completely embarrassed at himself, but in awe as she told him her story. That was the night he really fell in love with Katniss, although he would never tell her that and scare her away. For Peeta, hearing that she felt something for him as well—especially back then—was overwhelming.

“How could I forget?” He asked; an invitation for Katniss to continue.

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FLASHBACK --- JANUARY

“So, like,” Peeta began, “This magic thing. What do you call it?”

Katniss snorted as she took a sip of her drink. “What do I call it, Peeta?” He flushed and looked away, clearly embarrassed. A chuckle escaped Katniss as she plopped next to him on the couch. She knew she was in for a long night at the Mellark brothers’ house when Peeta asked her if they could talk about ‘what Johanna had told him,’ so Katniss figured she would make herself comfortable. “Sorry, that was rude. I told you I’d answer your questions and I will.” He let out a sigh of relief, and for a second Katniss felt guilty for laughing at him.

“Well I just… I don’t know, Katniss. This is kind of a lot to take in.” Katniss nodded as he continued. “I really want to try to understand this, but I can’t do that on my own. You have to give me some help.” Katniss nodded again in agreement, taking a gulp from her half empty glass of whiskey. After several moments of silence, Peeta spoke again. “So… Talk to me. Please?”

“I know you’re right. I do.” Katniss hesitated before she continued. “I’m not very good at talking, but I’ll try, okay?”

Peeta grinned. “That’s all I ask.”

Katniss waited a moment, preparing herself for the conversation ahead. She should have denied all of this the week before when Johanna revealed to Peeta and Ryan in a drunken stupor that they, along with Prim, were witches. She could have blamed Johanna’s unstable nature and her reputation as a pathological liar—she probably could have gotten away with it, too. When it came down to it, though, there was something in Peeta’s eyes, from the minute they’d met more than six months ago, that compelled her to tell the truth.

“Okay, um, I guess I don’t know what I call it,” she stated, but it sounded like more of a question. This was harder than she thought it’d be and they were barely started. Katniss had never been in a
situation where she had to explain herself; no one outside of their family and very close family friends from back home in Twelve knew they were witches. “I don’t call it anything, really. I’ve had these…abilities…my whole life, so it’s always been second nature.”

“So since you were born you’ve been able to do things?” He asked.

“I mean, not when I was an infant,” Katniss teased with a smile. “But yes, throughout my childhood, for as long as I can remember. Prim and Johanna, too.” Peeta took another sip as he digested the information she had just given him.

“And what all can you do?” The confused expression on Katniss’ face told Peeta that she needed clarification. “As in… Are there any limits to your powers?”

Recognition dawned on her face as Katniss explained further. “Well… I can’t bring anyone back from the dead. No interfering with people’s health, either,” she spoke absentmindedly, as if checking off items on a list. “Basically nothing major pertaining to health or the body. I can’t cure cancer, but I could conjure up some Tylenol for you, that kind of thing. Prim has a knack for healing, but it can only go so far. I also can’t make someone fall in or out of love… Oh, and I can’t alter the course of my own life.”

Peeta silently stood and went to refill each of their glasses. The conversation had just begun and he already felt in over his head. This was a whole new world opening up to him; things he’d only ever known to exist in books, movies, or television. Katniss was opening up to him, but her answers only brought up more questions. Peeta was desperate to know more about Katniss, her family, and actual witchcraft.

He had been admiring Katniss from afar since she, her sister, and her cousin began frequenting Delly’s when the bar opened eight months ago. Three weeks ago, things changed after Peeta spotted some frat boy asshole trying to drug Prim. He knew Katniss was grateful, but there seemed to be a change in her. She spoke more, smiled more, and they even began texting back and forth most days. No matter how he felt, though, he needed to get through this night and this conversation before things with Katniss could go anywhere.

Peeta broke the silence as he made his way to join Katniss back on the couch. “What about spells?” She quirked an eyebrow, seeing the blush rise in his cheeks. “Or a wand?” Katniss was forced to duck her head in an attempt to hide the laughter threatening to escape. When she looked up to Peeta, annoyance was written all over his face.

“Come here.” Katniss patted the seat next to her, inviting Peeta to take a seat. She took her drink from him and sipped from the straw. He didn’t hesitate to sit with her, their thighs touching. Well at least he’s not afraid of me, she couldn’t help but think. For a moment, she was able to put some of her reservations aside.

“I want to show you something.” He nodded, and she lifted her glass so it was right in front of them. Taking her right index finger, she made a clockwise motion into the air, and with that the straw stirred her drink clockwise. He let out a small gasp of surprise and Katniss gathered the courage to look him in the eye. In his expression, she found wonder, awe, and respect—no fear or judgment, which had been her fear in showing him this side of herself.

“M-may I?” Peeta asked, reaching for the glass containing the moving straw. Katniss handed him the glass and watched intently, the only sound the few ice cubes clinking against each other. It was fascinating to watch him as he held it up in every which direction, seemingly trying to grasp the fact he was witnessing real magic. “Oh… My…” He quickly grabbed the straw and removed it from the glass, making Katniss cease her movements. When he replaced the straw, she resumed her swirling, this time counter-clockwise. Finally, his eyes met hers and a wide grin took over
Peeta’s face. “This is fucking awesome,” he giggled, and Katniss joined him, feeling for the first time in a long time that maybe it was awesome.

Once past the initial shock of seeing Katniss in action, Peeta grew more curious than before. She spent well over an hour dutifully answering all of his questions, even though some of them were goofy and downright puzzling. Are you immortal? he had asked. No, I’m pretty sure only vampires are immortal, she had joked. Because of that little comment, they were ten minutes into a debate, each on their separate sides of the living room, on whether or not vampires were real.

“BUT IF YOU LOOK AT THE FACTS!” Peeta yelled as the door flew open when Johanna and Ryan entered, having returned from dinner.

“PEETA, THERE ARE NO FACTS!” Katniss returned. She turned her head in brief acknowledgment of the two, lowering her voice but speaking with just as much conviction. “Look, we’re basing all of this off of The Vampire Diaries, True Blood, and Twilight. I don’t think any of them are particularly factual.”

Peeta fumed, “Don’t you dare! I hate fucking Twilight! I was only talking about True Blood and Vampire Diaries. You’re the one who brought that other shit into this!”

“You like The Vampire Diaries?” Johanna interjected, not bothering to hold in her cackle. “Fuck off, Johanna, that Elena chick is hot,” Ryan defended his brother. Johanna’s eyes flashed at him in a challenge. “Why haven’t you answered any of my questions about witchy things, Joey?”

“Because you make up stupid nicknames like Joey.” Johanna rolled her eyes as she flopped into the recliner. Katniss laughed out loud as Peeta stared on in amazement. Turning to her cousin, Johanna asked as she set her feet on the coffee table, “What has young Peeta learned so far, Brainless? Did you have the Harry Potter talk yet?”

“No! I asked her about spells and wands and she completely ignored me!” Peeta whined. Katniss’ eyes grew wide as she watched Peeta go into full on toddler mode, huffing and pouting as he threw himself down on the couch.

“First of all, asshole,” she shot at Peeta, “I didn’t ignore anything you said. I gave you a demonstration and a lesson so you could better understand.” The four, or was it five?, whiskeys had taken hold of Katniss, completely ridding her of any filter. Fortunately for Peeta, the drinks also made her giggly, so he could tell she was only having fun with him and not legitimately angry.

“Ooo, a show and tell?” Johanna cooed suggestively.

“You stay out of this,” Katniss pointed at her. “Fine, Peeta. Ask your questions, since I’ve apparently been ignoring you. Even though I’ve been answering your questions for, like, an hour!” Peeta rolled his eyes at her as she sat next to him again.

“Fine. What’s your favorite spell?”

“And where’s your wand?” Ryan chimed in. Katniss and Johanna exchanged a look that asked who should take on the question. Johanna crooked a finger at Ryan, who was still standing behind the couch.

“There are no wands, hon,” she explained delicately as he took a seat on her lap. Peeta’s face looked like that of a kicked puppy, while Ryan’s expressed complete outrage. Johanna patted his hair to soothe what was obviously a huge disappointment for him.
Peeta looked to Katniss for answers. “I don’t understand… Then how do you do spells? Do you just say them, or what? This makes no sense, Katniss.”

Placing her hand over Peeta’s to lessen the blow, Katniss detailed for the brothers that most of their magic is not achieved through spells. Between simple gestures and their minds, the Everdeen clan have mastered their craft without the use of “all the hocus pocus.” Ryan sat in silence, still dumbfounded by the revelation that the women do not use wands. Peeta, on the other hand, would not accept this answer. He simply could not fathom that anyone could do magic without either a wand or spells.

“You mean to tell me that if you say ‘accio whiskey’ for that bottle right there,” he pointed to the almost empty bottle on the kitchen island, “that it’s not gonna come to you?”

“That’s exactly what I’m not saying, Peeta. ‘Accio whiskey!’” she said with a slight nod toward the bottle. As it floated through the air to the couch, Katniss tried to further explain.

“See! I knew it!” Peeta grinned. It was beautiful, wide and bright, and Katniss liked to believe he saved it just for her. “It worked!”

Smiling back, she continued, trying to focus on the point she was going to make. “It did work; you’re right. But it would have worked even if I hadn’t said ‘accio whiskey.’ All I have to do is nod my head or whatever else.”

“No,” Peeta shook his head violently. “I’m not buyin’ it, Kat. There’s no way.”

“Yep,” she nodded.

“No,” he argued adamantly, seemingly sure of what he was saying.

“Peeta,” Katniss pleaded, a hint of irritation now in her voice. “It would have come regardless.”

“Speaking of coming,” Johanna interrupted, patting Ryan’s ass to get him to stand up. “This is boring. Let’s go, Ry baby,” she said as she led him to the bedroom, leaving Peeta and Katniss to themselves once again. The living room was quiet while he did some heavy thinking.


“I can do it again, but you’re not listening to me. I don’t need to say a spell for the whiskey to come to me,” Katniss declared with a huff. “Did you not see me with the straw? I didn’t use a spell then!”

Looking offended, Peeta rallied back with determination; “Well I just assumed there wasn’t a spell for that!”

Katniss’ patience was wearing thin, but she promised Peeta she would make an effort to answer his questions. She was really trying, but at what cost to her sanity, she wondered. Katniss inhaled deeply as she straightened in her seat, preparing to change the direction of this conversation, which was clearly going nowhere. Taking note of her actions, Peeta mimicked her and sat up as well.

“Peeta…” She began, losing focus as her eyes made contact with his ocean blue ones. Katniss placed a hand on his thigh, something she may not have done were they not several drinks in. Realizing the gesture, she went to remove her hand, but Peeta grasped it and placed it back. At the touch of his hand, she lost her breath. There was an electricity there she had never felt before, even with her one serious boyfriend. All thoughts left her head and the only things she could concentrate on were the blue of Peeta’s eyes and the smell of whiskey on his breath. That fucking
“Katniss…” Peeta prompted. As she opened her mouth, a loud thud came from the room Johanna and Ryan disappeared into five minutes before. Peeta looked like he might burst from holding in his laughter as Katniss let out a groan.

“They’re fucking in the next room, aren’t they?” She asked horrified, just realizing the meaning to Johanna’s words. Peeta nodded, tears of laughter now filling his eyes. “That is not okay!” Katniss laughed in defeat.

“I’m used to it, Kat. Just wait til they start talking.” Peeta howled in laughter at the look of horror on Katniss’ face.

“Can I tell you a secret?”

Suddenly serious, Peeta gave a curt nod. “You can tell me anything.”

“You know that J.K. Rowling made up all the spells that are in the books, right?” Katniss had to tread lightly, afraid of another outburst. “I’ve been doing this longer than the books have been out.” Peeta hung his head; the thought hadn’t occurred to him in his drunken haze. “I’m sorry to disappoint you,” she admitted with sincerity.

“You could never disappoint me,” he replied earnestly. “But what else can you do? I want to see more.”

More than happy to move past the tension that came about since they were left alone again, Katniss rolled eyes. “I can do a lot. What do you want to see, crazy?”

A half hour later, Katniss was in the middle of making pasta for her and Peeta from the couch. Yes, kind of like Molly Weasley, he forced her to admit, when Johanna emerged from the bedroom in Ryan’s t-shirt and a pair of boxer shorts. “Thank God,” Johanna yawned. “I’m starving!”

“You’re sick,” Katniss glared at her cousin, receiving a wink in return.

“What... What do you mean?” Peeta asked.

“That is it?!” Johanna yelled in annoyance. Peeta looked confused and Katniss gave him a sheepish smile, her cheeks flushing from embarrassment instead of the alcohol this time. “Jesus, Kat! Did you even tell him any of our stories from high school or college or anything?!”

“What... What do you mean?” Peeta asked.

“She’s been holding out on you, buddy,” Johanna crowed, patting him on the shoulder. “But don’t worry—I won’t.” Johanna proceeded to fill in Peeta on the true nature of their powers, which had very few limits. While they managed to remain discreet, Johanna and Prim loved using magic when they could, whereas Katniss preferred to only use it at home, if at all. Katniss slouched into the couch a little more with each revelation, hoping Peeta would not be upset with her for withholding some of it. Luckily, Johanna and her stories enthralled Peeta so he didn’t have a chance to be angry.
“I’m willing to bet Kat didn’t tell you she’s one of the most powerful witches to come from our bloodline, either?” Johanna posed the question as more of a statement.

Peeta gulped, eyeing Katniss, who was almost lying flat she was slouched so low in her seat. “That’s a bet you would win, yes.”

“Hah! I knew it!” Johanna laughed, obviously irritated. “You told me you were going to be honest with him, you dumbass,” she directed to her cousin with a pointed stare. Katniss struggled to sit up from her position, but managed to do so to defend herself.

“I have been honest with him,” she stressed. “I’ve tried, but you know I don’t know how to talk about this shit.” Johanna rolled her eyes.

“Whatever. I do.” Johanna skipped to the stove to empty the boiling pot of water into the sink. Katniss and Peeta remained close to each other on the couch, sitting in silence, afraid to look at each other, as Johanna plated their midnight snack. Ryan emerged from the bathroom wearing pajamas and made himself comfortable in the recliner without a word to either Katniss or Peeta.

“Alright, Blondie. Let me tell you some stories about our little Kitty Kat,” Johanna taunted as she made her way back to the group, three bowls of pasta in her arms. “Hmm… Where to begin…” Katniss stared down at her hands in her lap, dreading where Johanna would take this conversation. Wherever it was, Katniss was sure that she would make it embarrassing. “Oh! What about Boggs’ class…” Johanna raised her eyebrows at Katniss who grinned back.

“What?” Peeta asked, oblivious. “Who is Boggs?”

Snickering, Johanna answered for her cousin. “Katniss, I’m sure, would like for you to believe she doesn’t use her magic against people, but that’s just not true.” Peeta’s eyes widened as his brother sucked in a quick breath, obviously thinking of something truly terrible. “Relax, you two! She’s not a murderer or anything… At least not technically,” she finished with a wink to Peeta.

“Oh my god,” Katniss muttered under her breath as she shielded her eyes from the curious gazes of the Mellark brothers and the shit-eating grin of her cousin.

“Are you going to tell the story? Because the look on Katniss’ face is so guilty right now,” Ryan laughed as Katniss’ pink cheeks turned red from both laughter and embarrassment.

“I am, as a matter of fact. Thank you for asking,” Johanna batted her eyelashes at Katniss, who refused to acknowledge anyone in the room until her heart stopped pounding and she was sure her cheeks had returned to their normal color. “There was this girl, Clove Parker, and she was quite the asshole…”

Johanna launched into the story of the pool scandal that rocked District Twelve High School in 2007. In great detail, with slight exaggerations here and there, Johanna told the boys about the “absolute highlight” of Katniss’ and her senior year. Some sophomore girls in P.E. class bullied Prim and her best friend Rue, who were freshmen, for no reason other than they were not part of the right clique. Once Katniss and Johanna got wind of the mean words thrown the younger girls’ way, they took different approaches. Johanna slammed the bullies with words of her own in the hallways, between classes, at extracurricular activities; basically anywhere she could harass them, she did.

“Kitty, on the other hand… She waited it out, she plotted carefully, and came up with something truly brilliant,” Johanna continued, reverence in her voice. Peeta and Ryan were fascinated by the story, however unsurprised they were by Johanna’s retaliation to the mean girls. Katniss sat with a serene smile on her face, very much enjoying the trip down memory lane. She felt that maybe she
should have been embarrassed by the childish antics about to be revealed, but her excitement and pride grew with every gasp of surprise and grin of delight coming from Peeta.

“During the second semester,” Johanna forged on, “when the girls had to do the swimming unit in class, Clove and her little posse thought it was just hilarious how well Prim could swim and how…not well Rue could swim.” She scoffed and turned her attention to Katniss, “This one heard about it and apparently had a stroke of genius, because the next week, Prim’s first period PE class went to the pool, and guess what they found!”

“Clove…?” Peeta inquired, unsure if it was a rhetorical question, but also somewhat worried.

“Clove Parker’s brand-fucking-new VW Beetle! In the pool! Completely submerged!” By this point, Johanna was laughing so hard she struggled to breathe. “With all of her books and notebooks and everything in it!” Tears streamed down Johanna’s cheeks as she relayed the look of horror on Clove’s and her friends’ faces, as Coach Boggs tried to conceal his amusement at the spectacle.

Peeta glanced at Katniss, hoping her discomfort had gone away, to find her silently shaking with laughter. Her cheeks and chest were a nice shade of scarlet, her eyes watery as they met his, wiping underneath each to catch the tears before they fell. Peeta was sure it was the most beautiful he had ever seen her. The sheer joy on her face was contagious, as were the giggles coming from Johanna as she continued her story. Ryan was rolling on the floor, unable to control himself.

“Did they… Did they ever figure out who did it?” Ryan asked with glee. Katniss shook her head ‘no’ with a triumphant grin.

“The best part is that it took them forever to get the car out because the pool was in the basement,” Johanna struggled to breathe through her cackling. “But Clove refused to leave, and every time she would whine and say “why me”—which was way too often—Kat would set off the car alarm.” Peeta’s eyes widened, both in amusement and horror. He shook his head at Katniss in disbelief, to which she responded with a nod.

“Kat, I think that’s my favorite story I’ve ever heard,” Ryan praised. “Seriously… I don’t think I have laughed that hard in my entire life.”

Suddenly bashful, Katniss shrugged. “Rue is a good girl, and nobody messes with Prim. Those girls needed to learn a lesson,” she said simply.

“Well, I hope they got the message,” Peeta jumped in.

“Oh, they did,” Johanna answered for Katniss. “They haven’t talked to Prim or Rue to this day. Katniss Everdeen: gettin’ shit done since 2007.”

Ryan began to applaud, and Peeta and Johanna joined. Katniss chuckled as she shook her head and took a mini bow in her seat. “Thank you… I would like to thank the Academy…” The laughter in the room got louder before it quieted down while the group caught their breath.

“Oh my god…” Johanna said with caution. All three heads whipped to face her; worried something was wrong with her. “You guys, this one time in college Katniss put this douche bag’s motorcycle in the rooftop lot of an academic building.” At her peers’ silence, she rushed on, “No, no, no! They were redoing the top lot and the cement was still wet! She covered it so only the handlebars were popping out the top!” She was out of breath again from laughing through the story.

Peeta’s jaw dropped for what felt like the millionth time that evening. Every new thing he learned
about Katniss, including these crazy stories, only endeared her to him more. Katniss, seeing his reaction, laughed out loud before defending herself. “He deserved it!” She stood from her seat and walked to the kitchen to fill Peeta’s and her empty glasses with water from the faucet. “Let me tell this one,” she called into the living room where the other three remained.

When she returned, Ryan and Johanna had situated themselves on the armchair again, slightly calmer and somewhat in control of themselves. Katniss handed Peeta one of the glasses, not knowing which belongs to whom, which he eagerly accepted and brought to his mouth. Taking her seat next to him, she could not tear her eyes from Peeta as he took a long gulp of his water; his jaw clenched in just the right way to fluster her.

Shaking off the feeling, because she couldn’t possibly be interested in the funny, kind, and handsome bartender, Katniss began. “I took this Intro to Creative Writing course my sophomore year of college, and it was still considered a gen ed, so there were several nontraditional students in the class. This jerk Brutus was taking the class because it was a prerequisite for some film class he wanted to take. He was always interrupting the professor, would never shut up, and constantly criticized everyone’s presentations—and let me tell you, his presentations were shit.”

“Of course you would bring that up,” Johanna snorted.

“So,” Katniss went on, ignoring Johanna, “there was this older woman in our class, Mags, who was amazing. She had written for a bunch of different newspapers around the country throughout her career and only took the class for fun.” She told the group that Mags was loved by everyone in the class except for Brutus and three of his lackeys, who were rude and disrespectful to both Mags and the professor. Their behavior annoyed and offended most of her classmates, and most of them wanted to seek revenge on the troublemakers. When a girl mentioned in passing that someone should key Brutus’ motorcycle, Katniss had a better idea. She assured her classmates she had a sure-fire way to piss him off and show him what an ass he was. “And that’s how his Ducati got buried in the rooftop lot of Heavensbee Hall.”

“How did none of you get caught? What did your classmates say?” Peeta asked in disbelief.

“Well it turned out he had enemies everywhere on campus. The campus police didn’t seem to care much once they realized what a dick this guy was. And my classmates? I made a few new friends that semester,” Katniss finished with a wry smile.

The group of four talked into the early hours of the morning. The girls told several stories from their past, hilarious and full of magic and mischief. Johanna had some stories of her own, but often referred back to Katniss’ antics “because they were better.” The boys shared tales of growing up in the bakery their parents owned, comparing the mayhem of their childhoods to a PG-rated version of The Hangover movies.

After his fifth yawn, Ryan announced he was exhausted and would be heading to bed, taking Johanna with him. Once the door was firmly shut behind them, Peeta turned to face Katniss. They still sat side by side on the couch, having gotten even closer as the night went on. Katniss faced him as well, both of them smiling bashfully when they realized they were alone again. The two were more relaxed, alcohol and laughter helped, but the tension was still there. It was quiet besides the sound of The Avengers playing on the television.

“So,” Peeta broke the silence. “You’re kind of a badass, huh?”

Katniss smiled as she felt the flush rise up her neck and into her cheeks. “Let me make one thing very clear. I use my powers for good, Peeta, not evil. I’m Thor, not Loki,” she said in complete seriousness.
Loving her reference, but not wanting to let her off easy, Peeta teased her. “Are you really comparing yourself to Thor? The god of thunder, one of Marvel’s greatest superheroes?” Katniss began to protest, but Peeta would not let her; this was too much fun. “Do you have a magic hammer? You’ve made it clear you don’t have a wand but we never went over other magical devices.”

“Peeta, you know what I mean!” Katniss objected, half-whining and half-laughing.

“No, I don’t think I do, Katniss,” he continued. “If you’re Thor, does that make Johanna Loki?” Katniss snorted at his insinuation. “Or is she more like The Hulk or Iron Man?”

“Oh, shut up already.”

“Is Prim Captain America?” He wouldn’t let up. Katniss tried to groan but ended up laughing at his joking, still shocked that he has somehow heard everything that night without kicking her and Johanna out of the place. “If you’re a superhero, your skills are obviously called your superpowers. Right?” he asked, playful and hopeful at the same time.

“Well,” she gave up, throwing her head back, “I have superpowers. Are you happy they have a name now?”

“Yes, I am,” he answered proudly. Katniss’ eyes were closed but she could swear, just from the sound of his voice, that he was grinning from ear to ear.

Patting his thigh, she responded sincerely, “Good. I’m glad.” Silence came over them, and Katniss’ hand still rested on Peeta’s thigh. She heard rustling and opened one eye to find him adjusting in his seat, looking at her intently. Scrambling to mirror him with one cheek resting against the back of the couch, Katniss felt her heartbeat pick up. Once she had settled, they sat in silence for who knows how long; it could have been ten seconds or ten minutes.

Katniss decided to take a chance and ask him the question she had been wondering about all night. “How is this okay?” she whispered. Peeta’s brow furrowed in confusion, so she clarified. “How are you okay with all of this, Peeta? Everything you’ve heard tonight, it changes things. I’m honestly surprised you guys didn’t kick us out.”

“You didn’t really think we’d do that, did you?” Peeta asked, hurt in his voice.

“No,” she answered honestly. She knew he was much too good to do that. “But you’re not afraid of me—or of us, or anything?”

Peeta sighed and raised his hand to remove a stray piece of hair that had fallen in her face. Shockingly, Katniss did not flinch at the intimacy of the gesture, as intimacy and feelings were something she avoided at all costs. His touch, however, set fire to her skin and it spread to her entire body.

“I’m not afraid of you, Katniss. I think it’s amazing. I… I think you are amazing.” With that, he leaned in a pressed a kiss to her forehead, just barely brushing her skin. Katniss closed her eyes and smiled, an internal war plaguing her. Half of her shut down the feelings; reminding the other half that she had strict rules that included no feelings, dating, or love. The other half told her to throw the rulebook out the window and enjoy the feeling of feeling good, because Peeta made her feel good. He made her feel sane and special, like someone; not like the angry, bitter, freak show spectacle she often felt she was.

“Thank you,” she whispered as he pulled away. He flashed his special smile…her special smile, she’d like to think, and her stomach fluttered along with the rest of her. With that, Katniss knew
she didn’t stand a chance at resisting him, no matter how hard she was going to try.

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PRESENT DAY --- OCTOBER

“Seriously, Katniss?” Peeta almost sounded angry. “That was a year ago!”

“It was ten months!” Katniss defended herself.

“Ten months that we could have been together, or been making progress or something! Why didn’t you say anything?”

She looked away, ashamed. “Because I didn’t know what to do. You know I’d sworn off all of this long before I met you. And, honestly, from the beginning you were different, but everything… changed that night.”

“How so?” he inquired.

“That night…” She still refused to meet his eyes. “That night I just knew I wanted you. That I wanted more, and that you would be worth the risk,” she spit out quickly, before she lost the nerve to say it. Willing herself to take a leap of faith and allow herself a minute of bravery, she continued. “In high school I liked to have fun with my magic and do silly things and try to be carefree, but once we moved out of Twelve, I kind of shut down. Around here, it seems like everyone has something to say about witches or vampires or whatever—especially the Everdeens. After a while, it wore me down and I stopped loving it and I stopped having fun. You brought me back from that. You made me love my powers again and it was like the world had righted itself.” Peeta did not answer right away, but Katniss searched his face for a response. She saw what was probably the brightest smile to grace his beautiful features since she’d known him.

He brought his hand to her face, brushing his thumb along her bottom lip and up to her cheek. “Since the first time you walked into this bar, all I’ve wanted was to make you smile. I forgive you. We have each other now.” Katniss nodded emphatically at his words. After a moment of hesitation, he continued, “Has it been worth the risk so far?”

Katniss’ hands trailed up Peeta’s neck and held his face as if it were as fragile and valuable as a precious gem. “More than worth it,” she responded, meaning it with every fiber of her being. She pulled his face to hers, kissing him slowly and sweetly; a kiss that promised her words were true and her feelings were real.

“So tell me the exact moment you knew,” Peeta said, squeezing her side to make her jump just a little in his lap. She pushed him away, knowing he was teasing; his effort to lighten the mood was an obvious attempt to make her more comfortable. Katniss couldn’t have felt more grateful to find sweet, charming, considerate Peeta.

“Knew what?” Katniss played dumb.

“Oh, you know…” Peeta suggested, wiggling in his seat as he raised his eyebrows in a challenge.

“You’re never gonna let it go, are you?” Katniss sighed with mock exasperation. “I say a few nice things to you and it goes all to your head!”

“Nope! At least not for a while,” he laughed as she rolled her eyes. “Maybe when you tell me you love me, oh…ten years down the line.” His joking about such a serious matter made Katniss feel
at ease instantly.

“Well I guess you’ll never know, will you?” she said with a playful air of finality.

Releasing a dramatic sigh with a pout, he returned, “No, I guess not.” Peeta smiled and pressed a kiss to Katniss’ forehead, pouring all his love and devotion into it. “You’re pretty amazing, you know?” he stated, despite adding a question at the end.

Katniss looked away as her cheeks warmed, still not immune to Peeta’s sweet and romantic side. “I feel like I’ve heard that one before,” she teased, returning her gaze to his. “But I think you are pretty amazing.” She returned the gesture, kissing his forehead. Peeta rolled his eyes at Katniss, making her giggle because it was so out of character for him. “Did you just roll your eyes at me?” She asked, playfully smacking his chest.

“Only doing what you do 90 percent of the time we’re together, sweetheart,” he replied with a smirk.

“That’s not a very nice thing to say, Mellark,” Katniss said, adjusting her position so she was straddling him again. Pointing her right index finger to the door, she swiped left to ensure it was locked.

“It’s still locked.”

“Just checking,” she smiled, leaning it to kiss him, but pulling back at the very last second. “I think maybe I need to teach you a lesson for all your sass lately.”

“Mmm, I hope so,” he came back with, sounding giddy.

Peeta pulled Katniss close and wrapped his arms firmly around her, knowing she wouldn’t fight him. He was positive she wanted this—all of this—just as much as he did.

While they sat in comfortable silence, Peeta’s words from earlier struck her, “Prim loves me. At least one Everdeen loves me.” She played with the curls at the nape of his neck. Katniss’ gaze followed her fingers as they caressed his features. His eyes drifted closed as she traced his hairline, down the strong line of his jaw, coming to rest at his lips. Their breathing was the only sound in the room and the warm air escaping his lips steamed the pads of her fingers. His long blonde lashes cast a shadow beneath his eyes, drawing her to outline his left eyebrow. The tickle of his heavy lids fluttering open startled her slightly, and her breath caught in her throat as he pinned her with his stunning sapphire gaze.

Gathering all of her courage, Katniss spoke up, needing to get out the words before she had a chance to stop herself. “Peeta?”

“Yes, babe?” He asked softly.

Looking into his eyes, “You know that two Everdeens love you, right?”

Peeta beamed as he brought her in for a long, heated kiss. Between the smile on his face and the happiness in her eyes, Katniss knew that taking this chance with Peeta was most definitely worth the risk. They both knew there was always a chance the odds wouldn’t be in their favor, but spending their time like this—together—was a far better choice than spending it apart.

End Notes
Thanks, as always, to jamiesommers for her amazing editing and friendship.

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