Love, Katniss

by abbythebear

Summary

Modern AU. Peeta and Katniss have been best friends since they were five years old. They are making their way through life, with some missteps along the way. Will their friendship be able to withstand the tests of time and distance? Follow their adventures through their pivotal years, as told by them.

Notes

This is a piece for Movies in the Month of May hosted by everlarkianarchives. It is inspired by the movie "Love, Rosie" starring Lily Collins and Sam Claflin. This story was requested by loving-mellark over on tumblr (who has some kickass fan art, so go check it out!), so I hope it doesn't disappoint.

See the end of the work for more notes

Peeta - 5 Years Old

Our family moved into the house behind the Everdeens' when I was five years old. After a weekend of messing around with my two older brothers while my parents unpacked, we sat down
to a family dinner on the back patio. The house was in a modest, middle-class neighborhood; nothing fancy or over the top. Blocks were lined with ranch style or story houses instead of the new subdivisions where every house looked the same.

We lived on the same block, but our houses were one behind the other, so we essentially shared a huge back yard with the house behind us. The property line still gave us a decent-sized back yard, and my parents had promised us a new play set for our new home. I was doodling on the patio with the chalk set I had dug out when I heard my mother curse under her breath. My head shot up, ready to scold her for saying a bad word, when I saw the reason for the expletive.

Our new neighbors were walking up to the patio, a plate of brownies in hand. There was a tall man with dark hair and dark eyes, and a petite blonde woman who looked like she belonged to my family. The woman held what seemed like a newborn baby, and the man held the hand of a girl who looked to be about my age. The girl also had dark hair, which was braided in pigtails, but her eyes were a silvery gray that reminded me of the moments right before a thunderstorm.

Dad hopped up from his chair to greet our new neighbors, always the outgoing and pleasant one of my parents, while my mom looked on, acting…not so pleasant. She didn’t like the new neighbors from the moment she met them, and I still can’t understand why, but dad liked them, my brothers liked them, and I liked them. I especially liked the girl.

Even though dad owned a bakery and we had a Tupperware container full of brownies in the kitchen, he graciously accepted the plate and handed them out to my brothers and our neighbors. As the adults sat down to chat, my brothers ran off to play in the yard, and the girl joined me on the ground where I resumed my drawing.

“Hi,” I smiled at the girl, who brought over two brownies on a napkin my dad had given her. One for me and one for her. I liked her already.

“Hi.” She was quiet, but never gave me the impression she didn’t want to be my friend.

“I’m Peeta,” I said with a mouthful of brownie. We both started giggling at the jumbled sounds coming out of my mouth.

“Like the bread?” she giggled even more. My brothers teased me a lot about my name, and as a child it hurt my feelings, but not when she did it. She just thought it sounded funny. I nodded in answer to her question.
“My name’s Katniss,” she tried saying through her mouth of the chocolate treat.

“Like the cat treat?” I asked, and we both started belly laughing.

“No!” She stressed once her mouth was clean. “Kat-niss!” She enunciated each syllable so there was no doubt as to how to pronounce her name.

“Katniss,” I repeated and she nodded her approval. “I like your name, Katniss. Do you want to be my friend?”

Katniss nodded her head eagerly, grabbed a piece of green chalk, and joined me in my picture. We decided to color some dandelions, as they were the only flower that was really blooming in our neglected back yard. It felt like we stayed like that for hours, but it was really probably only 20 or 30 minutes.

It’s funny… When we’re kids, we’re able to make friends so easily. Someone is in your general vicinity, and he or she is nice to you, so you play and become friends. Katniss and I bonded that night over brownies, dandelions, music, and so much more. I knew even that day that this girl, Katniss, would be something special to me for the rest of my life. And so began a beautiful friendship.

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**Katniss - 11 Years Old**

Peeta Mellark had been my friend since the day he moved to town. They lived in the house behind us, and we spent more nights than I can count drawing, putting on plays, baking, and climbing trees together. So on the first day of fifth grade, when he completely ignored me in school, I thought he was ill.

After school, I took a can of chicken noodle soup out of our pantry and walked to his house, prepared to be his nurse, since I knew his mother wouldn’t take care of him. She never did.

When I knocked on the door and a boy from our class, Marvel, answered the door, I was confused, but still made my way into the house. My observation skills were quite dull back then, but it didn’t take me long to realize what was going on when there were two other boys from class
in the living room with Peeta. Peeta, who was laughing and playing with the rest of them. He had no fever, no sad puppy dog look in his eyes; he was totally fine.

“What is Katniss doing here?” Marvel asked, emphasizing my name like I was a contagious disease they all were being exposed to.

Peeta looked dumbstruck, eyes wide and mouth hanging open like a guppy. He sputtered for a second or two before I came to his rescue and saved him the embarrassment of telling his new friends he was actually friends with me.

“I was just returning his soup,” I slammed the can on the dining room table. “Bye,” I snapped, making a hasty exit.

Once home, I went straight to my room and cried. When my mom eventually made it upstairs to check on me, I was a mess. I had just lost my best friend—my only friend, really—and I was utterly devastated. How many times had Peeta and I promised to be friends, ‘always’?

I sobbed into my mom’s lap for what seemed like hours, until the doorbell rang.

“If that’s Peeta, I’m not home,” I wailed, using a line I’d heard on a television show.

“And where am I supposed to say you are?” My mom sounded amused, but my eyes hurt so badly from crying that I couldn’t make out the look on her face.

“Anywhere! I don’t care!” I screamed and buried my head into my pillow.

The bedroom door clicked shut and my mom’s footsteps faded as she descended the stairs. I heard voices, and I was sure it was Peeta at the door. I said a silent prayer that she wouldn’t let him up to my room, although it was probably fruitless. She seemed to like him more than she liked me some days.

A few minutes later, the door opened and my mom came in. I gave her the best look of disgust I could muster.

“Well?”
"That was Peeta."

"Ungh!" I grunted. "How dare he!" My anger was replacing my sadness, and I was ready to track him down and give him a talking-to. "Did you tell him I wasn’t here?"

"I told him you didn’t want to see him, and maybe he should try back tomorrow,” my mom relayed calmly. How could she be calm at a time like this?, I remember thinking to myself.

"Tell him not to bother," I grumbled. "He’s not welcome here."

"Katniss,” my mother chastised me. “Peeta is always welcome here, just as any of your friends are. Even if he hurt your feelings, he is still like a member of this family.”

I scowled in response. My anger was still present, but my desire to throw a temper tantrum was waning the longer I sat in bed.

"He asked me to give you this."

"I don’t want it,” I said immediately.

"Okay, then I’ll leave it here.” She placed the folded up piece of paper on my nightstand and turned on my lamp in favor of the overhead light. Somewhere in all of this, the sun had gone down and it seemed to be time to wind down for bed.

“Goodnight, Katniss. I love you,” my mom called as she slipped out the door.

I stared at the note for a good three minutes before giving in and opening the darn thing. It was a note with a second page, a picture, attached. I looked at the drawing before reading his words, taking in the beautiful colors of the dandelions he had sketched with his colored pencils. Peeta was a very talented artist, much better than I, and had a knack for drawing pictures of nature.

Flipping to the next page, I noticed his words covered almost the whole sheet of loose-leaf paper.
What could he possibly have to say to me?

Dear Katniss,

I’m sorry for ignoring you in school today. It wasn’t nice of me, and I would hate it if you ignored me just to talk to some new people.

Mom told me I had to start making more friends, and the boys told me that it’s not cool to be best friends with a girl now that I’m eleven. I wish we could’ve played together this afternoon instead. All they want to do is play video games and talk about things I’m not interested in.

We were supposed to go hiking today, and I’m sorry if you had to go alone.

I’m really sorry, Katniss. I don’t care if being friends with a girl isn’t cool. I won’t do it again if you forgive me.

I’ll see you tomorrow. I hope?

Love, Peeta

“Shoot.” I muttered under my breath.

Peeta’s note was heartfelt and explained a lot. I should have known his mother would try to keep us apart again. She did this every school year, and it was getting on my nerves. His brothers, on the other hand, were just crazy. I had no doubt they gave Peeta this information to mess with him because he was the youngest of them. They played whatever cruel jokes they thought were hilarious, and Peeta was left to deal with the aftermath.

I searched through my trapper binder for a blank sheet of paper and a pencil. I knew that Peeta wouldn’t abandon me.

It wasn’t difficult for Peeta and I to find a way to stay friends, even though we had to pretend otherwise until school let out each day. During the trying years of junior high, we studied together
most nights after school, excepting his mandatory play dates with the obnoxious boys his mother had set him up with, and we continued our baking lessons, drawing, hikes, and otherwise. From that first day of school in fifth grade, though, it seemed we were more inseparable than before, at least once the final bell rang. We even passed notes between classes when we’d see each other in the halls every day, but that was our only interaction during school.

That first note I wrote him was the most important one, though.

Peeta,

I forgive you. Friends?

Love, Katniss

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End Notes

Thank you very much for reading. I hope to have the next part out within the next week or two.

Thank you also to katnissdoesnotfollowback for being a sounding board and helping me get my ideas straight. You're a savior!

Come say hi to me on tumblr: abbythebear

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