If I Have You

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Summary

Everlark, months after their divorce. Written for the F4LLS charity drive.

Notes

This was written in a real rush to meet the original deadline, so I apologize for the quality.

“Peeta?”

He’d been on her mind, like always, and then suddenly he was in front of her, hunched over on a park bench and cupping his face with his hand. She approached him carefully, as if he were a wounded animal. Maybe he was one now after the number she did on him. She’d heard all about what a difficult time he was having since the divorce became official. He still ran the bakery all day, but apparently his nights were spent drinking too much and picking fights with any man in the bar. It was nearly impossible to reconcile Peeta, her Peeta, with that image.

Just when she was close enough to reach out and touch him (not that she did), he lifted his head and drank her in, and for a moment, he looked so happy. Relieved, too. And then he seemed to remember just what they’d been through and the look fell from his face just as quickly as it came.

She was able to see him better with his head tilted upwards under the bright streetlamp, and her heart broke at the sight before her. His lip was bloody, his eye blackened. There was a seeping
cut on his cheek and another near his chin. The stench of vodka overpowered her senses, and she’d never seen him look so unraveled.

“Oh Peeta,” she said, unable to stop herself from trailing her fingers down the uninjured side of his face. “What did you do?”

He squinted, staring up at her as if he was trying to discern whether or not she was real. “Katniss?”

Oh god, she hated herself. She hated herself so much in that moment. For what she’d done to him. For what she’d done to them. For ruining the best thing in her life.

‘It’s for the best,’ she had told herself as she signed the divorce papers. It was the same thing she forced herself to think every time the stick told her, again, that she was not pregnant.

She reasoned he’d be better off without her in the long run, free to go off and have a family with someone else, someone who could give him everything he had always wanted without a single doubt that she wanted it, too.

It hurt more than anything to imagine him having the life they once planned for together with someone else, but she couldn’t afford to be selfish. She’d leave town, she reasoned. Once she had the money saved, she’d move to the other side of the country and try to forget about what she had and what she almost had.

‘I can’t do this anymore!’ she cried as she curled herself up in a ball on their sofa.

*He wrapped his arms around her, tucking her against his chest and resting his chin on top of her head as he rubbed her back. ‘I know how hard this is on you and I’m so sorry. But we almost have enough saved for another round of IVF. We can try it just one more time and-’*

‘No,’ she told him, shrugging out of his embrace. ‘No, I don’t want to do this anymore. I’m done, Peeta.’

She saw his face fall before he could cover it, but then he was nodding and trying hard to disguise his disappointment. ‘Okay. Okay, I understand. Maybe we can talk about adoption again in a few months.’

*The searing memory of the day in the hospital, when the birth mother changed her mind the instant the newborn was placed in her arms, reignited her. Now, she thought. Do it now, for him as much as for yourself.*

‘I mean, I don’t want to do this anymore,’ she said, her voice surprisingly steady as she waved her hand between them. ‘Maybe there was a reason we couldn’t have a baby together.’

The questions began immediately. Then the pleas. Then the tears. It hurt her more than he would ever know to do it, but she just kept repeating that it was for the best. She couldn’t give him what he wanted. She couldn’t be what he needed. And she loved him far too much to let him settle for just her.

“I don’t think I’m in love with you anymore,” she’d managed. It was the worst lie she ever told, but immediately effective. His defeat was nearly instantaneous. This sweet, gentle man had lived his entire life before her not sure he was even worthy of the love he wanted so desperately and offered so willingly, all because he never had a family like hers.

But now he would, someday. Just not with Katniss.
A small sob wracked his body as he hunched forward, just as he was now. It had taken nearly all of her resolve to not fling herself in his arms and tell him that she hadn’t meant a word of it, that she loved him more than anything and always would.

Instead, she told herself, again, ‘It’s for the best,’ and walked out of their home and straight to their tiny town’s lone lawyer.

Now, several months later, their divorce was final. He still lived in their house on the other side of the city while she stayed at her friend Madge’s apartment until she had enough money to make her final escape. The joint custody of their hometown was taxing since their mutual friends were quick to tell her how terribly Peeta was dealing with the end of their relationship, but she’d avoided seeing it with her own eyes until that moment.

She sat next to him on the bench, her knees bumping his as she shifted closer, tired of denying herself of the need to be near him. If their friends thought this was hard on Peeta, they had no idea what it’d been doing to Katniss. Madge had woken to the sound of Katniss’s sobs that first night she was away from him, and she’d cried every night since. There was no relief in her rationalizations because she missed him with everything she was.

They sat in silence, the only sound being the distant chirping of crickets. Words would do her no good now, but just being in his presence was soothing.

“Give me one more night,” he whispered.

She looked over at him, not sure she heard right, but beneath his battered face, he seemed surprisingly sober.

“What?” she asked.

“Stay with me tonight. Be with me one more time.” He looked away as he tugged at his hair, and she noticed his knuckles were bloodied as well. “Please.”

As absurd as the request was, her natural, instant response was “Okay,” and it was out before she could stop herself.

She took his hand and refused to meet his eyes, sure that it would break the spell and one of them would come to their senses. It was a warm night, the fresh air mild and comforting. She’d taken a walk to clear her head; now that she was hurriedly leading her ex-husband to the small hotel downtown, it was safe to say the excursion did nothing for her mental health.

She was quiet at the front desk as she waited for Peeta to fumble with his wallet for one his credit cards. The clerk, Leevy, was a known gossip, and Katniss was sure that the news would be spread across the county before they’d even finished tonight. Such was life in a town as small as theirs, but it was a minor price to pay in light of the alternatives: doing this in their former home with all the haunting memories, or not doing this at all.

His gait was heavy- more so than usual because of the alcohol- as he escorted her to the elevator. The whole time, his hand stayed knotted with hers, just as it’d been since she first took it, and one of the reasons they spent 15 minutes trying to check in. He just couldn’t seem to let go of her hand.

Inside their rented room, she extracted herself gently so she could retreat into the bathroom to take a deep, calming breath.

“Here,” she told him quietly as she returned with a damp cloth. “You’re still bleeding a little bit near your eye.” Her natural instinct was to nurse his wounds herself, but she fought those
feelings just as she had for the last few months.

He took it from her and sat on the edge of the oversized bed. “I’m a mess,” he embarrassingly admitted as he wiped his face. “I can’t keep doing this.”

She nodded in understanding as she watched him grapple with his feelings, and it seemed like this might be one of his first steps toward moving on. It was what she told herself she wanted, and she did, but deep down, it stung. Maybe it was another testament to how selfish she was that she found relief in how hard he was taking the divorce, even if she orchestrated it under the guise of it being in his ultimate best interest. The complexity of human emotions made such a mess, she thought. It hurt to see him hurting, but it also felt good to know he wasn’t able to just casually stroll into a new life without her.

Peeta dabbed at his bloody knuckles with the washcloth now, not looking up at her as he hissed at the contact. “I’m sorry, Katniss,” he said quietly after a few moments. “You don’t have to stay. You don’t owe me anything.” It was all said so earnestly, never an attempt to guilt her for breaking his heart.

“I want to stay,” she confessed, careful with the look she gave him after. It was obvious by his expression that he didn’t believe her, and she sighed before admitting something else only because the ink on the divorce papers was already dry.

“You were so quick to accept that I wasn’t in love with you anymore. I’m sorry for that. I’m sorry I lied to you and I’m sorry you believed it.” His blue eyes were more focused now, and she saw the hopefulness growing there, but she couldn’t have that, either. “We can’t be together anymore,” she stated firmly. “But I’d like one more night with you, too.”

His shoulders sagged slightly, and as he rose from his seat to stand in front of her, she waited for that first touch to begin their night. But he wasn’t touching her. Instead, his eyes searched her face as he stood a hairbreadth away, and it felt like he studied her for an eternity. It was too much, too intense for her to take, so she pushed herself up on her toes to press a kiss to his mouth.

He hesitated for only a moment before returning the kiss just as fervently as they fell into each other. It felt amazing to be so physically close to him after convincing herself it would never happen again. As her lips parted to move more easily with his, she hoped that tonight would be like the old times. Like after they began dating, when everything was exciting and new and they couldn’t get enough of each other. Or like after they were married, when everything was comforting and familiar, and they still couldn’t get enough of each other.

But not like they were in the most recent years, after they started trying for a family and suddenly that was all their lives revolved around. Katniss had been determined to give Peeta a baby, and it turned into an obsession when proved more difficult than she anticipated. She always thought the hard part would be later, after the baby arrived. She had no idea that trying to get pregnant would be what started to destroy her.

So she doesn’t want it to be like all the other times before she ended things, when it was always about trying to conceive and never each other. It became all carefully timed and scheduled couplings, and she’d insist he be on top again as she placed a pillow under her hips and ignored the hurt in his eyes.

He walked her to the bed in the middle of the room, and as she leaned back, he sunk to his knees in front of her and pulled her to the edge of the mattress. As he removed her pants and began kissing up legs, all she focused on was the pleasure.

Her underwear was tugged off next, and she sighed happily as his head dipped between her
thighs, and as his tongue worked her over, she stared up at the ceiling and wove her fingers through his hair.

“Peeta,” she whispered over and over again. “Oh, Peeta.”

She knew he loved the sound of his name on her lips as she came, so she continued to chant as her body arched off the bed only a few short minutes later. It’d been too long, she realized. It’d been far too long since she was really with him, even when they were still married.

He didn’t stop tasting her after her first orgasm, but she needed to be closer to him, so she coaxed Peeta onto the bed with her. After taking off her top and helping him remove his shirt, she positioned him onto his side and moved to lie parallel to him, but with her mouth near the zipper of his jeans, and her body curved in so he could lap at her again once she spread her legs in accommodation.

It always took longer to get him fully hard if he had too much wine with dinner, so she anticipated it taking quite awhile tonight since he’d been drinking heavily. But he was rigid after a few swipes of her tongue along his length, and the soft moan he emitted as she used her hand in coordination with her mouth told her that he was ready.

They took their time with each other’s body, with Katniss’s lower half writhing against his face as she took him deep into the back of her throat. When he couldn’t take it anymore, he reached down to gently tug at her hair. “I’m gonna come soon.”

She smiled around his cock until he slowly slipped out of her mouth. “Do it.”

He rolled onto his back and took her free hand to maneuver her closer, so she sat up to straddle his hips. “This?” she asked once he was between her legs, but before lowering herself onto him.

“Yesss,” he hissed as he slid inside of her. “Fuck, I love it when you’re on top.”

She could hardly remember the last time she allowed them to enjoy this position, since she was always sure gravity would work against them. What a mistake that had all been. So much of what she’d done was just a massive mistake. She bounced up and down harder, remembering herself how much she liked to be the one controlling the angles, depth and speed. It was always easiest to come this way, and she was about to do it again as she switched to slow, deliberate grinding against his pelvic bone.

Peeta was biting his lip as he fought to wait for her, and then she was right there, begging him to come with her. “Now,” she cried out, her fingernails digging into his hard chest. “Now.”

As he shot into her, she fell forward, still clenching around his cock as they both moaned. It was amazing, and it hadn’t been amazing in a very long time, but it was also over far too soon. But he didn’t seem eager to let her go. They should have untangled their limbs and moved to clean up and redress, but he held her to him instead, his hot, heavy breaths fanning her hair. “I love you so much,” he told her. “I miss you.”

The events of the night and all the emotions were too much for her, and she broke down into tears. “I love you, too. More than you could ever know.”

“So why can’t we be together?” he asked.

Her exhaustion, mentally and physically, made it impossible to not reveal everything about her motivations, including how much it destroyed her to keep trying for a family when it was obviously not meant to happen for them. “I can’t give you what you want, Peeta,” she confessed.
“You’re what I want. You’re it. If I have you, I have everything.”

He kissed her shoulder as she held him tightly, and her tears were dry by the time they fell asleep.

Eight Weeks Later

She held the test in her shaking hand, staring down at it with disbelief.

When she was first late, she thought nothing of it. Her traitorous body never worked right, which was exactly their problem. But as the weeks passed, it got harder to squelch the growing hope that maybe, just maybe, it was happening for them. All the signs she searched for in the past were there now: the tender breasts, the aching back, the awful nausea. So she took one of the many tests they still had in the medicine cabinet of the master bath, and when the second line appeared almost instantly with the first, she held her breath and reached for another.

And another. And another, until they were all gone. She spent most of the day just making sure until she was surrounded by positive pregnancy tests and unable to stop smiling.

When he returned from work, Peeta found her in the bathroom, her back to him and those little white sticks littering the counter. It was a familiar sight on his end, and when she looked up in the mirror, she saw his reflection watching her cautiously. “Katniss? Are you okay?”

The worry was evident in his tone, and she knew he was probably imagining the worst, scared that everything they discussed in the past months was forgotten and things were just as they had been before she ended it that first time. But things couldn’t have been more different now.

She held up one of the tests and smiled. “Guess I should have been on top the whole time.”

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