Swan Song

by flythroughflames

Summary

In-Panem AU. Capitol escort Katniss Everdeen and tribute stylist Peeta Mellark share a moment before their first Hunger Games. Written for Prompts in Panem, August 2014. Day 4 - Green.

It's here. Today's the day.

Katniss can hardly believe it, really. It feels like just yesterday she was tending to the Presidential Grounds with her father, the groundskeeper of the Presidential Mansion, listening to her sister play on their modest upright piano in their family room, and just living simply. As simply as a Capitol resident could.

It feels like just yesterday she received the letter, a letter from one of President Snow's advisors, congratulating her on receiving the honor of being selected as the new Capitol Escort for District 6 in the 74th Annual Hunger Games. An honor she didn't ask for, she didn't sign up for.

An honor she knew refusing was not an option

And here she is now, her glossy black hair, streaked with neon green at the behest of her stylists, coiffed in an intricate updo, painful strappy heels on her feet, and the uncomfortable bodice of her dress pinching at her skin, waiting for the Games to begin in the reception area just outside the Gamemakers' quarters.

Katniss takes a shuddering breath before closing her eyes.

She doesn't know if she can handle it.
She doesn't know if she can handle watching her tributes, the children who she was never meant to meet, never meant to have built a relationship with, die

She feels the plush cushion of the bench she's sitting on dip with the weight of another person next to her, but keeps her eyes closed.

If she keeps her eyes closed, she doesn't have to see any of it happen. Doesn't have to see children kill other children in a twisted form of entertainment.

Katniss never gave much stock to the Games before she was assigned this job. She would watch them sometimes with her family, and go out to see the tribute parade when she was younger, but she really never paid it much heed.

How things have changed.

"You okay?" a soft voice asks, and her eyes fly open. Peeta Mellark offers her a small, sad smile and squeezes her bare knee, in a gesture she supposes is meant to be comforting. She allows it though, leaning into his touch and reveling in the heavy warmth of his hand, rather than slapping it away like she knows she would do under any other circumstances.

It's funny, she supposes. They had known each other for years, a result of being in the same class at school, but she had never spoken more than ten words to him in all the time she had known him. But she and Peeta are in the same boat now. It's his first year being involved in the Games, too, having been designated as the lead stylist for the District 6 tributes.

She nods slightly. "As ready as I'll ever be. How were they?" she asks.

Peeta swallows heavily, his hand still perched upon her knee. "They didn't talk much. I don't know if Marko even registered I was there. I don't blame them, though."

Katniss nods again, before looking around the room. She scans its occupants, before narrowing her eyes on their district's mentors. Their eyes are glazed over, their yellowed skin sagging from their thin frames as a result of their years of morphling addiction. Peeta follows her gaze, and his eyes harden. He opens his mouth to say something, but the mechanical voice of the countdown to the beginning of the Games interrupts him.

Peeta swallows roughly before standing up abruptly. He holds his hand out for Katniss to help her up.

"Ready?" he asks gently, and she nods, grasping his hand to pull herself up before they make their way to the large screen in the middle of the room.

The camera pans to the tributes, fear and resignation painted on some of their faces, savagery and bloodthirstiness on others.

Katniss sees Nova and Marko on their pedestals, looking surprisingly tranquil as the countdown ticks on.

She hopes they'll at least make it out of the initial bloodbath.

Peeta squeezes her hand, his grip as sweaty as hers, as the horn blares, signaling the beginning of the pandemonium.

Katniss closes her eyes and hopes it won't take long.
A/N: I'm toying with making this the beginning of a (brief) WIP. Please let me know what you think! xoxo

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