Make It Real

by titania522

Summary

Summary: Katniss has always had a little problem committing to Peeta. For his birthday, she finally decides to change that.

Notes

Written for Court81981’s birthday; It’s not every day you can reach out to those you most admire. Many in this fandom consider you a model, a mentor, and for a lucky few, a friend. Thank you for being so kind and taking the time out of your very busy life to help me. It means the world to me.

It was either this or chocolate but, sadly, the chocolate would have probably melted.

See the end of the work for more notes

“Give me the usual, Haymitch,” said Katniss as she flung herself down on the bar stool, leaning her travel bag up against the counter and flipping her suit jacket over the luggage handle. Haymitch raised his eyebrows at her abrupt entrance.

He set the glass down on the bar and poured her a hefty shot. “Johnnie Walker Gold, straight. So where are you off to?”
“Not off to. I’m getting in from Herzogenaurach, Germany. We just landed a huge advertising contract with Puma.” she scooped up the shot glass and downed the smooth, malty liquid, which alternately soothed and burned her throat. She tipped it towards Haymitch so he could refill it.

“Weren’t you just here on Monday? How do you go to Germany and come back in 4 days?”

Katniss shrugged. “That’s just how we roll. Listen, put that on my tab, will you? I have to go.”

“You going to China now? What’s your hurry?” he groused as he refilled her third shot despite her protests.

“Peeta’s flying in tonight.” She stared into the shot glass, swirling the liquid, which reflected its deep amber color through the prism of the thick glass. It was always like that with her. One week, she was in Panem, relaxing at Abernathy’s Swill with Haymitch, the owner, and her best friend, Johanna; the next she was halfway across the world, passport and carry-on set in hand without even a text message to warn anyone, except Prim, her little sister. Well, there was Peeta too, of course, but that was different. They texted and called each other all the time and if she was lucky, they’d cross paths as they traveled to the opposite ends of the world but otherwise, Katniss tried to keep things simple with him.

To that point, it had been a perfect lifestyle for her. Katniss wasn’t one for long-term commitments, though, as Johanna pointed out, she only had one friend-with-benefits so technically, she was in an exclusive relationship with Peeta, even if she didn’t want to call it that. But Katniss would argue that they were both free to be with whoever they wanted, if the opportunity came up. They were just too busy to find that opportunity and so that was why they always seemed to end up together.

And so, every now and then, the stars aligned and they were able to meet. Peeta was an art curator for Panem’s Museum of Fine Art, which kept him in all the god-forsaken corners of the world, negotiating art exchanges, procuring pieces of artwork and generally operating in the lofty universe of human patrimonies. Katniss’ job was less exalting but just as demanding - she was the head of legal underwriting for Capitol Media and was very good at her job. She had more Sky Miles than God because she was the prime mover, sealing deals and binding contracts at the end stages of negotiation. It wasn’t the glamorous face of advertising - Katniss abhorred being the center of attention – but nothing happened without the blessing of her legal team. Between her and Peeta, she was sure they had managed to criss-cross the entire inhabited surface of the earth.

Haymitch’s voice interrupted her thoughts. “Ah, boyfriend’s in town. How long?”
“He’s *not* my boyfriend.” Katniss groused her familiar refrain. “A couple of days. He’s on a layover on his way to Seattle and he’ll be here in a few hours.”

“He’s laying over alright,” chuckled Haymitch crudely, to which Katniss responded with a withering look. “Well, whatever you want to call him, bring him down for Trivia Night on Saturday. The Wandering Gonads are short a couple of players.”

The Wandering Gonads was the local trivia team and when Katniss could, she liked to pitch in for a couple of rounds, especially when one of the other members, Johanna, Gale, Madge or Finnick, weren’t able to make it. Katniss and Peeta were favorite pinch players because she was a virtual repository of useless trivia and Peeta’s work made him a wiz at all sorts of quotes and esoteric minutiae related to his work. It also got them out of bed and amongst people, which was good for them as a non-couple.

“We’ll stop by if we can,” she said, standing up and collecting her things. “I have a surprise for Peeta’s birthday tomorrow so we might be tied up.”

“Ah, yes. I imagine booty calls like kinky surprises, too,” quipped Haymitch, watching for her reaction.

“He is not a booty call!” she hissed fiercely which only made him laugh more.

“Well, whatever he is, we could use the back-up. I don’t want to lose to The Exploding Ovaries again. Smug little shits.” he tossed out as he turned to wipe the counter behind him.

“Yeah. Cato and company are a solid collection of asses.” Katniss agreed as she dragged her things out of the bar and went home to get ready.

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One of the things Katniss hated about her work was the number of times she came home to the stale air of a closed apartment. The minute she got in, she had to open all the windows and clear it out because it suffocated her and triggered her claustrophobia. Her father died in a mining explosion when she was young. As a result, she spent years having recurring nightmares of being crushed under the weight of heavy stones, choking on the debris. Stale air and closed spaces made her physically ill. Airplanes were an exception because she perceived the openness of the sky,
like a bird soaring, even though she was inside the cramped confines of the aircraft.

As she showered, she thought of Peeta and felt her heart do a tiny dance in her chest. She hadn’t seen him in three weeks. They’d exchanged emails, spoken daily and texted each other constantly but it was no compensation for not being with him. Technically, they were just friends, but the way Katniss reasoned, she missed all her friends when she didn’t see them. That was, of course, perfectly normal. She just happened to miss Peeta a whole lot more than the others. And that was starting to mean something to her.

She put on her peach underwear set, the one she knew Peeta liked. He’d certainly told her enough times that she looked good enough to eat when she wore the lace-trimmed thong and push up bra, which was exactly what she was hoping for tonight. She put in an order for Indian take-out, arranging to have it delivered at about the time Peeta said his flight would land. She wanted everything ready before he arrived because tonight would be special and she did not want anyone interrupting them once she finally had him in her grasp.

Katniss figured she must be getting her period early because she was feeling particularly sentimental as she looked around her apartment. Here was the replica of Boticelli’s Birth of Venus that he’d brought her when he returned from a trip to Florence; there was an antique plant book he’d picked up in an Irish Convent. She looked down at the valley of her now well-supported breasts to see the grey pearl he’d given her when he’d gone to Indonesia, the one she never took off. She’d given him the smart phone he now used, because she’d gotten tired of the jitterbug flip-phone he’d been using for the last three years. It seemed her life was littered with all the moments they had built together and it was getting harder and harder to ignore the fact that without him, the entire tenor of her life would change. And it was no longer a change to which she could remain indifferent.

Katniss pulled on a white camisole and loose white cotton pajama bottoms over her semi-naked form. Taking the spare key that hung in the key box next to the intercom, she placed it under the mat outside, in the spot where she and Peeta had both agreed he could find it. Reclining against the sofa pillows, she was determined to rest while she waited for his cab to pull up outside.

Katniss thought back to all the years they had been together. Had they really known each other so long? She calculated the time from their senior year in college when she’d first met him. She remembered he was still working in his father’s bakery part-time to pay his way through school. She had just turned twenty-one years old but she was already determined to have a career that would pull her out of the grip of poverty she had known her whole life. Four years of legal studies passed after they graduated while Peeta worked on his post-graduate degree, the whole time squeezing each other in between bouts of studying, exams, thesis-writing and student teaching. Then they landed their respective dream jobs and here they were, three more years of running around like two crazy chickens.

Any other two people would have been bored of each other by now. But Katniss felt the same
excitement now that she felt the first year they were together, when love was like a shiny new toy to be played with at every opportunity. At a certain point, the traveling and working made a committed relationship too difficult to envision and they’d decided to have an open relationship. Katniss in particular found it less stressful than trying to keep a commitment to Peeta. And yet, in any given moment of free time, they always found their way back to each other again. It dawned on her that it was a monumental waste of time to continue in this way.

Katniss’ thoughts kept wandering around this particular idea as she dozed off, the jet-lag finally catching up with her. She woke once to receive the food order, leaving it in the oven to keep warm and setting a bottle of Pinot Grigio in the fridge to chill. She returned to her nap, which was fragmented and filled with random moments with Peeta – the summer they took a cruise together to Mexico, the weekend they toured the lighthouses in Rhode Island, an image of him trying to study in his dorm room, something Katniss was always successful in disrupting when the urge struck her.

She woke to the feel of warm hands on her, caressing her face. She should have been startled, perhaps afraid that a thief might have taken a sudden interest in her hair but she recognized that touch above everything else and sighed contentedly.

“Peeta…” she whispered sleepily as she stretched.

“From this slumber/she shall wake/when true love’s kiss/the spell shall break,” he whispered into her hair, making her shiver and chasing the last tendrils of sleep away. He made good on his implied promise and pressed his lips against hers, kissing her deeply. She tasted the mint on his tongue, which made her greedy for his mouth, for it was the flavor she most preferred. He was soon stretched over her, his travel things piled next to the sofa in an unceremonious heap.

“I missed you,” he said as he pulled her camisole off, his own button down dress shirt following soon after. Katniss raked her fingers through the hairs of his chest, balancing on one elbow as she covered his nipple with her lips, her tongue licking designs over the tightening tip. He groaned in response, which made her more determined, attacking his other nipple, biting down gently on him.

“Fuck, Katniss! Give a man a chance,” he hissed, then laughed, pulling back from the overwhelming sensation.

Katniss smirked as she pushed him off of her, both of them ending up on her thick rug. She straddled him, grinding herself into his erection. She glanced up at the mantle clock and saw that it was midnight. Smiling down at him, she whispered, “Tis now the very witching time of night/At this hour lie at my mercy all mine enemies.” She captured the skin of his tender earlobe in her lips and sucked it gently, causing him to moan.
“Am I your enemy, Kat?” he gasped as her lips traversed the skin of his neck and shoulders.

“If by my enemy, you mean the one who I should conquer then, yes, you are my sworn enemy.” Her lips continued their descent, along the trenches between his ribs, traversing the open plain of his stomach. She dipped her tongue into the valley of his navel and moved still further, following the trail of his hairs that tickled her nose as she found the stiff evidence of his desire trapped beneath his pants, which she undid with impatience and pulled off of him.

“You are so sexy when you quote Shakespeare,” he murmured.

She blew gently on the tip of his cock, watching with satisfaction as it tensed in response. “Indeed,” she said, as if speaking to his uncomprehending member.

“Smart and sexy,” he groaned loudly when she licked him from the base of his cock to the very tip, repeating this over and over until he could not get any harder. She took him in hand and rubbed him gently along the length of his shaft while she captured his sack in her lips and sucked gently.

“Katniss…” he hissed, grabbing a handful of her hair and guiding his cock into her mouth. She captured his length and bobbed her head rhythmically, the sensation of his heated member striking the back of her throat exciting her and flooding her core with moisture. She shifted her position so she was kneeling next to him, continuing to work his engorged cock with her hand and mouth as he pulled the now moist material of her panties aside and dipped his fingers into her wetness, earning a whimper of pleasure from Katniss as she sucked him harder. She moaned loudly against his cock as he found her swollen clit and circled it, pressing gently and bringing her to orgasm almost instantaneously.

Peeta maneuvered Katniss’ still quivering body onto the carpet and, rummaging in his discarded pants for a condom, impatiently rolled it on before moving her underwear to the side and plunging deeply into her. He pulled down the straps of her bra and freed her breasts, sucking on them as he rolled his hips, hitting all her sweet spots before slowing down, painfully drawing out his strokes.

“Tell, me, Katniss.  I need to hear you say it,” he growled in her ear.  “Tell me what you want.”

She looked straight into his deep blue eyes, impatient to end this slow torture. “You know what I want.”
“Say it,” he demanded, slowing still further, his own body quivering for release, making Katniss whimper with frustration.

“Fuck me. Make me come. Hard.” she hissed while clenching her internal muscles around him mercilessly, making him groan aloud in agony.

Shaking his head at her quiet challenge, he pushed her legs open, his hips rearing back to make good on her demand. Contrary to his normally calm and sanguine nature, he fucked her as hard as he could. The sound of their colliding bodies mixed with their heavy grunts and moans filled the apartment and soon Katniss felt the coil in her belly tighten and then burst. She buried her fingers in Peeta’s curls and pulled hard, her tightening muscles and waves of release speeding him on to his own finish as they called out to each other in their heady ascent until they dissolved into each other, both collapsing into a pile of sweaty, boneless limbs and limp satisfaction.

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Together, they warmed the naan bread and curry chicken while Peeta told her about the beautiful Buddhist treasures that were still being destroyed by Muslim extremists in Afghanistan. His museum was one of many that had volunteered to house the remaining artifacts in an effort to save the treasures of an entire people at risk of being erased forever.

“It’s tragic, really, Katniss. These were monolithic statues that have stood for hundreds of years and resisted every kind of natural disaster and yet here were these religious factions, with no interest at all in human accomplishment…it boils my blood!” he said angrily.

“I know, but you are doing the best you can, right? That’s all you can do.” Katniss said, running her hands through his hair, which had grown longer than usual. She loved it when he let his hair grow out – he had the thickest blond hair she’d ever seen and she could spend endless hours toying with his curls.

She sat in his lap as they ate, feeding him the bread as he told stories about driving through Kabul, trying to pack the artifacts safely onto the cargo planes. It was all very dramatic to her and so different from her work reality, no matter how many planes she got on. It made her problems seem mundane in comparison. His passion for doing the most possible good only made her admire him all the more.

As they spoke, they were interrupted by the buzzing of Peeta’s phone on the counter. Katniss furrowed her eyebrows as she glanced at the time – it was two o’clock in the morning. Normally, she didn’t touch his phone or computer – she respected his privacy enough not to do that. But she could not imagine who would have business with him at that time of the night. The fact that Peeta
became suddenly tense brought her to alert and, without thinking through her decision, she stood up and grabbed the phone, swiping the screen.

“Why is a Cashmere Thompson texting you at this hour of the night?” she asked suspiciously.

Peeta sat in quiet confusion in his chair, slowly wiping the curry from his lips. “She’s an assistant historian at the museum. We’ve been working on setting up the Afghan exhibit…”

“I get that, Peeta, but she is sending you multi-media messages at 2 in the morning on a Friday night.” Katniss stared at the closed yellow electronic envelope, which taunted her with its contents. Something poisonous was twisting its way through the pit of her stomach and she felt the blood rush in her ears. She should have calmed down, perhaps breathed deeply and counted to ten before pressing the screen over the text message but she didn’t. She opened the message and as its contents became comprehensible to her, she could only stare at it, mouth agape, for a full ten seconds. The look on her face caused Peeta to jump up out of his chair in time to catch the phone as she flung it at him. She stalked off to her bathroom and slammed the door behind her, trying to keep her heart from bursting out of her chest.

“Katniss, open up! It’s not what you think! Shit, Katniss!” He tried to get into the bathroom, but she’d locked the door behind her. She leaned heavily against the door, trying with all her might not to humiliate herself by crying.

When she was finally able to speak again, she called out, “What the fuck am I supposed to think when some chick is sending you pictures of herself half naked? How should I interpret that, Peeta?” She flung the door open to look into his wild face, her breath coming in angry bursts. “Why does that girl think it’s okay to take a selfie of her saggy ass in her bra and underwear and send it to you? Explain that!”

“Katniss, look, we’ve been out a few times for lunch and such but I haven’t done anything with her…”

“’Lunch and stuff?’ What was on the fucking menu, Peeta? You?” she was close to balling her fists and stamping her foot in rage, something she was resisting with Herculean effort.

“Okay, it’s true. She’s shown some interest and I haven’t exactly turned her down. Look…” Katniss pushed past him to the living room where she started to collect his things. “Katniss, will you just listen to me for a minute!” he stood in front of her as she made her way to the door of her apartment with his luggage and clothes in hand, ready to launch everything onto the landing.
“I said STOP!” he shouted, freezing her in place. He had never raised his voice to her in all the years they had been together. He was panting now and took a deep breath to regain his composure.

“Katniss, we have been doing…this…” he twirled his finger around to indicate the both of them “…for eight years. Eight long, fucking years. You are the one who said we were together but free. You are the one who didn’t want to commit to one person. You are the one who didn’t want to move in together because you said it would interfere with our careers. Basically, every time there was anything that even remotely resembled a commitment, you put the brakes on it. Maybe…” Peeta closed his eyes. “Maybe I’m tired of acting like this is just one long hook-up.”

“That doesn’t explain that Cashmere skank…” growled Katniss.

“Yes, it does! What is stopping me from trying to date other people who might see me as more than just a convenient fuck?” he said. Katniss began to protest but he continued. “No, honey, I’ve done everything to show you I want us to be more than what we have here but you won’t even refer to me as your boyfriend in public.” Katniss deflated at this because, it was true. “How long did you think this was going to last?”

Katniss scowled, defiant but slowly relenting. “I don’t know.”

Peeta sat her on the sofa and looked at her. “Listen, I’ve never done anything with Cashmere or anyone else. She’s probably drunk and anyway, I was more flattered than interested. We can even call her together and ask her if you want. But she’s not the issue.” He took her hands in his, peering into her clear, grey eyes. “Do you…do you even love me?”

Katniss pulled back, a reaction that caused a wave of anguish to wash over Peeta’s face. She hated that word, had hated it ever since she was eleven, when she saw what love had done to her mother after her father had died. A woman who was once a phenomenal, attentive mother and wife was reduced to an emotional zombie by a crippling depression, unable to care for herself or her children. For love. Katniss’ throat constricted and instead of telling him what she knew was true in her heart, she froze in terror.

Meanwhile Peeta stood up, running his hands through his hair, his face having gone pale. “I’m going home now. I’ve got stuff to take care of before heading to Seattle on Monday.” He said this in a flat voice as he grabbed his keys and phone and knelt to put on his shoes.

Katniss shook her head. This wasn’t right. It wasn’t the way she’d planned things. She was stupid and weak but she loved him, she knew she did. She stood up suddenly and touched his arm. “Wait. I have something for you.” She ran to her bedroom and got the gift she had set aside for
him for his birthday.

Handing him the package, she folded her hands in front of her and watched as he studied it. “Open it. I was going to give it to you later,” she said shyly. He slowly unwrapped the soft orange gift paper to find a blue ring box inside. When he flipped the box open, a look of shock overtook his features. Looking back up at her, his eyes were glassy and bright with tears.

“I’m not…good…ah, you know…” Katniss stuttered. “I’m not good at saying something. You know that. But…just…stay.” She shook with fear that perhaps it was too little, too late.

Peeta pulled the key out of the padded box where it rested like a genie on a soft pillow attached to a key fob of the word *Home*. “Is this…?”

Katniss nodded, the tears spilling finally from her eyes. “They’ve been long for me also…these years…and somewhat unnecessary. It was just, I was always so scared…”

He stopped her from speaking with his lips as he crushed her to him and devoured her mouth. She tasted the curry chicken, the crisp white wine and his need for her as he squeezed her almost painfully to him.

“Then just say it, Katniss. Please, I need to hear it. Make it real for me,” he begged her.

“I love you, okay?” she burst out. “I love you. A thousand times, I love you! And I want you to live with me. So, please, just stay.” Katniss took a ragged breath. “And get that girl the hell off your phone!” she exclaimed through her tears.

Peeta laughed, a deep, happy laugh that rolled through Katniss’ exasperation, causing her to relent and chuckle along with him. “Why am I laughing, Peeta?”

“Because, you’re impatient even when you’re declaring your undying devotion to me,” he dissolved into further laughter, the sound rumbling through his body.

“Oh, fuck off!” said Katniss but blanched in panic at her own words. “No! I mean…I mean stay, don’t go but…feel free to fuck off symbolically…not, you know, literally…”
“I understood you the first time,” he smiled, running his hands through her messy hair, pulling her towards him. “Anyway, I have the magic key to your lair now. I can fuck off or not as I please.”

“It is an insane amount of power,” she said as she kissed him again, lingering over the tender skin of his soft lips.

He pulled back with a twinkle in his eyes. “I’m completely jet-lagged and behind on my Downtown Abbey. You up for a binge on Netflix?”

She wrapped her arms around his waist, unwilling to let him go far. “My desires are yours to command, my lord,” she quipped but her eyes held his with the most serious intent, the intensity so bright, he could not find it within himself to joke with her any further.

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“For 10 points, what is the name of the mischievous sprite in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*?” Haymitch had barely finished the sentence when both Katniss and Peeta jumped up.

“Ariel!” they shouted in unison.

“And like the baseless fabric of this vision, / The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces, / The solemn temples, the great globe itself—“ Katniss trailed off as the verses faded in her memory.

But Peeta was quick to pick up the thread, “Yea, all which it inherit—shall dissolve, / And like this insubstantial pageant faded,/ Leave not a rack behind…”

Katniss’ eyes brightened and she finished with him, “We are such stuff / As dreams are made on, and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep.” They dissolved into a heap of laughter.

“What a pair of nerds,” Madge said indulgently.

“Yeah, well those two nerds right there just made us fifty bucks richer,” Gale responded as he collected the money from a very sour Cato. “Lovely doing business with The Exploding Ovaries.”
“Bite me,” groused Cato as he, Clove, Marvel and Glimmer left to sit at a table in the corner of the bar.

“We should buy them a drink,” Peeta said.

“This isn’t the U.N., man. They didn’t buy us shit the last time they won,” Gale answered. “Haymitch, surprise us.”

“No, Gale!” Katniss protested as she elbowed him. “Last time you asked for a surprise, he but Tabasco sauce in our drinks.”

“Live dangerously, Catnip. It wasn’t that bad!” Gale chuckled.

Katniss turned to Peeta again, never letting go of his hand as they leaned into each other. Madge smiled happily at them.

“So where are you off to now, Peeta?” she asked.

“I’ll be in Seattle till Wednesday and then I’m coming back home. I have to find someone who’ll take over the lease on my apartment.” He gave a conspiratorial smile as Katniss blushed profusely.

“Uh-huh, and where would you be relocating to?” Gale said distractedly, counting his money again.

Peeta looked over at Katniss. “You say it,” he smiled, encouragingly.

“I…uh…asked my boyfriend to…move in…with me…”

“Oh my god! That’s amazing! Congratulations!” Madge gushed, hugging both Katniss and Peeta.

Gale looked around him in confusion. “Wait a second. I thought you guys were already living
Katniss eyes grew wide as Peeta and Madge burst into laughter.

“Really, Gale? What the hell! Haven’t you been paying attention?” exclaimed Katniss, thoroughly appalled at her oldest friend and his inability to keep the details of her life in order.

“Come on, you know you guys have been together since forever. I was sure you were all common law or married already or something.” At that moment, Haymitch brought each of them a drink that looked like a frothy, creamy treat.

“Here ya go, kids. This one’s on the house, in honor of Birthday Boy here. I like to call this The Blow Job.”

Everyone screwed up their faces as he left them with the Bailey’s and whipped cream mix.

“I was really going for it until he told me the name.” Peeta said as he examined the drink carefully, the thick whipped cream sliding down the cold glass.

“You can never get enough of those, can you?” purred Katniss, to which Peeta waggled his eyebrows in response.

As Madge and Gale studied their drinks, Peeta leaned into Katniss and whispered, “So, what do you think? Want to take this all the way?”

“Take what all the way?” At his penetrating gaze, Katniss’ heart began to race. “You mean…?”

His eyes softened as he took her hand. “I’m not going anywhere else. This, right here,” he squeezed her hand, “Is home to me, no matter what.”

“Peeta…” she whispered, her heart in her throat.

“Say it, Katniss. Make it real for me. ‘My every happiness depends on you.’” He caressed the
side of her face, holding all his hopes and dreams in the palm of his hand.

She couldn’t prolong the decision this time. The doubts and fears that once paralyzed her had long since disappeared. “‘And I’ve known for a long time that my state of happiness depends entirely on you.’ I’ll marry you.” She said tearfully as she pulled him into her arms, holding him tightly against her.

Gale grabbed his drink, sniffing it before holding it out before him. “Oh well, here goes. Happy Birthday, Peeta!” He downed his drink, leaving a thick creamy mustache over his lip.

Peeta looked meaningfully into Katniss’ eyes. “It is, man. The very best one ever.”

End Notes

I have to give a shout-out to my dear friend, solasvioletta, for betaing this story with me.

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