Hope Is A Mist

by titania522

Summary

Peeta Mellark is the Victor of the 72nd Hunger Games and Mentor of District 12 Tributes. During the 74th Games, he goes to great lengths to protect Katniss Everdeen, the female tribute. But even when she wins, there are some things he can't protect her from. Written for a short fic writing meme requested by everlarkfangirl17.

Notes

Prompt 31 prostitute/client au

Canon Divergent

Warning: Allusions to sexual coercion and forced prostitution

Peeta Mellark forced himself to watch, though it was nothing short of heartbreaking. When the male tribute from District 12, Vale Roth, was cut down during an ambush by the Careers, Katniss Everdeen, the female tribute, had essentially had a momentary mental breakdown, almost getting herself killed in the process. They'd only just lost Rue, their District 11 ally, during an attack on the Cornucopia where the Careers has set up camp. The offensive maneuver resulted in the
destruction of all the supplies and weapons provided by the Capitol at the start of the Games. Vale had had to drag Katniss from her body but not before she’d laid the little girl in a bed of flowers and given the child the three-fingered salute. After the death of little Rue, Cato’s cruel murder of Vale had been the thing that nearly broke her.

The tributes from District 12 had stuck together throughout the entire 74th Hunger Games and it had been a strong alliance. She was an agile tree-climber and skilled hunter while Vale, the son of the town blacksmith, had been strong and resourceful, able to construct diverse objects like axes and lean-tos with nothing more than wood, rocks and grass. They’d manage, through cleverness and the help of Rue, to outlast all the other tributes except for the Careers.

Their survival had also been due in no small part to the help of District 12’s only living mentors, Haymitch Abernathy, the 53rd Hunger Games’ Victor, and Peeta Mellark, Victor of the 72nd Hunger Games and the youngest male tribute ever to win, a distinction that had previously belonged to Finnick Odair.

Peeta worked hard for all of his tributes, guided by Haymitch’s expertise. However, ever since Katniss had been reaped, he had made it a personal commitment to go any lengths necessary to ensure that she win her Games. By the time she’d entered the Arena, he had called in favors, created personal debts and in one case, used blackmail to make sure that she, and by association, Vale, lacked for nothing. To see her emotional collapse after Vale’s murder terrified him, for at that point, there was nothing more he could do to help her. And Peeta was sure he would not be able to remain intact if something happened to her.

So it was with horror that he watched Vale die. Katniss had literally been emotionally crushed, swiftly climbing a tall tree, refusing to move again.

It was only after a silver parachute from Peeta containing a small loaf of raising nut bread arrived that she picked herself up and kept going. It was a secret message between the two of them - they knew what that bread meant and why he was sending it. It was enough to help her piece herself together and move on, if not for her, than for her family - and for Peeta.

She defeated Cato with a combination of luck and a very sharp arrow. Chased by horrible muttations, she made it to the Cornucopia and took him out, but only after a scuffle that included him nearly strangling her. She caught him by surprise by stabbing him with her arrow and pushing him off the metal structure. He hadn’t died right away but spent the long night slowly being eaten by those muttations and Peeta knew she still heard his screams in her nightmares. When she couldn’t stand the sound of his agony any longer, she brought herself to do what she’d previously thought unthinkable and shot Cato in cold blood, effectively making her the winner of the 74th
When the final cannon went off, Peeta went weak in his one good knee - after having lost his left leg during his Games - and raced to await the arrival of the hovercraft that would bring her back to the Capitol, not as a faceless, poor girl from District 12 but as a Victor. Haymitch had emptied his flask and accompanied him, his scowl deepening as Peeta’s heart raced. Haymitch sensed the boy’s elation and shook his head sadly.

“No, the real games begin,” he muttered ominously. Peeta’s face hardened but he wiped the expression away as Katniss descended from the hovercraft and flung herself, weeping, into his arms.

XXXXX

Katniss might have managed to get her wits about her after Vale’s death, but she’d left behind an unrecoverable piece of herself in that Arena. Her first night in the tribute center was horrible, filled with screams and sobs. Haymitch often spent his nights getting drunk in the living room, so the white liquor buffered him from the worst of it. But Peeta did not have the luxury of drunken deafness and soon burst through her cabin door.

“I’m sorry!” she said, wiping her tear-stained face. Her covers were in disarray at the foot of her bed. “I didn’t mean to wake you.”

Peeta looked at her in sympathy. “It’s okay, I get them, too.” He lingered a moment longer before turning towards the cabin door.

“Peeta?” Katniss called out. “Would you...would you stay with me?”

He looked at the way the terror of her nightmare still lingered over her, making her look tiny and even frail. He traversed the space between them, pausing just long enough to pick up the duvet and readjust it over her again before climbing into bed, opening his arms to welcome her. She crawled into the protective space he created, sinking against him with a visible sigh of relief. She was warm and soft - things she tried so hard not to be during the day.

Each night, she continued to ask him to stay until one evening, he simply came to her bed without having to be asked at all and never had to ask permission again.
After a period of recuperation, Katniss was expected to attend the many parties organized in her honor. Haymitch, Peeta and Effie escorted Katniss to each one, guiding her through the treacherous new world of politics and double-talk. Cinna dressed her in the most alluring fashions, always with a hint of the fire that became her trademark. They met the famous and the powerful, encounters that Katniss handled with aplomb, even though Peeta knew, behind closed doors, she could care less about who thought she was pretty. The only real evidence of her insecurity was the way she clung to Peeta as they moved through their functions.

But keeping up appearances was something everyone in Panem was good at, especially if you were a tribute from the poorest outlying district of the country. You made sure to behave because you learned quickly how easy it was for accidents to happen, either to you or to your family. And apparently, Victors were more susceptible than others to these kinds of misfortunes.

At the Winter Ball, Katniss received a request for a private meeting with President Snow. Peeta wanted to accompany her but Haymitch shook his head.

“Don’t. He wants to see her alone.”

Katniss caught the look in Peeta’s eye, his frustrated desire to protect her. But Peeta had known, even before the Games added their own special horrors to their dreams, back when they were children and he had watched her from afar, that there was something irresistible about Katniss and he wasn’t the only one to perceive it. No, he was powerless and could not protect her from this, no matter how much he schemed and connived.

So when she returned from her private audience with Snow, pale as the fine marble columns of the President’s mansion, Peeta knew that the reality of being a Victor had been revealed to her. He took her away from the Ball and back to their quarters in the Tribute Center, where Katniss, without removing her dress, balled herself onto her bed, neither crying nor speaking but frozen like a block of ice. It was with significant coaxing from Peeta that she finally undressed and when he held her that night in his arms, it was like holding a statue cut from the same marble as those columns in the mansion. His heat was not enough to bring her back to life. If she returned, it would be when she was ready.
“I lied to President Snow,” she whispered two days later as the sun was just breaking over the skyline of the city towers. Her voice was scratchy from disuse. She’d spent the last few days going through the motions of functioning but hadn’t spoken to anyone, not even to Peeta, during that entire time.

Peeta turned his head to look at her upturned face, her straight, black hair fanning over his shoulder and arm. She was warm again and he clasped her tightly, happy that she had returned to him.

“How so?” he asked.

She propped herself up on her arm and looked down at him. “He asked me if I was a virgin,” she said, a blush of shame lighting up her cheeks.

Peeta swallowed hard, trying to keep the bile from rising in his throat. “What...what did you say?” he croaked out painfully.

“I told him I wasn’t,” she said in a voice barely above a whisper. “He laughed, saying that it was too bad because he could charge...more...if...if...” but the words died in her mouth. Peeta caught the narrowing of her eyes, the way her features were slowly transformed by anger. “I wasn’t going to give him or his cronies the satisfaction.” she said forcefully.

It was Peeta’s turn to lay like a stone in the bed, staring up at the ceiling. His mind spun in dizzying circles. He was good at strategy and he could be persuasive, but in the end, he was just as powerless as she was. He had hoped her lot wouldn’t come to this but hope was the evening mist that dissolved in the fierce heat of the rising sun.

“Have you ever been asked by President Snow to do that?” she probed. By then, the sun was a blazing ball of raging fire in the sky.

“A few times,” Peeta said, still staring at a point in the high ceiling. “The prosthetic puts people off but not everyone is deterred.” They lapsed into tense silence, both quiet but with thoughts that exploded riotously in their heads.

When he couldn’t stand it anymore, he asked, “When?”
“Soon,” Katniss fidgeted with the corner of the blanket. “The problem is, I’ve really never been
with anyone. I never wanted to before....” Her voice trailed off as she reached out and turned his
face towards her. “But now that I have to, I don’t want my first time to be with some old,
disgusting pervert.”

Peeta stared up into her grey eyes, so close to him he could see the fine lines of her irises radiating
out around her pitch black pupils. There was an earnest, imploring expression in her eyes that he
was quick to understand but not believe. His mind flashed back to that day in the rain, when they
were both so very young. She’d been starving and he’d tossed the loaves of raisin nut bread to
her. They’d never spoken of it but that act had bound the two of them together and in his heart, he
knew that if she asked, he wouldn’t deny her this, because what they’d started in the rain that day
was still between them now.

“Katniss…?”

She responded, not in words but by lowering her head and kissing him lightly, the tang of sleep
still clinging to their mouths. Something like the sound of a wounded animal escaped his throat as
he reached up to run his fingers through her hair. He luxuriated in the feel of her unbearably soft
lips against his, the warmth of her lithe body so close to him. When she pulled back, her eyes were
hooded and her breathing came in quick bursts. He sat up suddenly, forcing her to lean back to
keep from colliding with his head.

“Katniss, I’m no better than they are if you feel forced to do this with me,” he gasped, his body
reeling from the expectation of having her, realizing that it was something he’d always wanted, a
secret he hid from himself to keep his heart safe in case she died in the Arena.

“This is what I want!” she said with vehemence. “At least, I choose to do this with you.”

“But...would you have, I mean... if this weren’t happening?” stammered Peeta.

Katniss stared thoughtfully at him and he watched as she actively searched herself. When she
appeared satisfied with her answer, she nodded. “Yes, It would have happened anyway. It
wouldn’t have been so soon, but it would have happened.” Katniss took a deep breath and
struggled with something before winning an internal battle with herself. “When I think...of
doing... that...I have a hard time imagining...anyone else...except you.”

Peeta let her words sink in, working against his disbelief, before capturing her hand in his. Given
the circumstances, he concluded that maybe this was as good as it would get for them. Leaning
towards her, he returned her kiss of earlier - a slow, deliberate kiss that stole the breath from her
lungs. He pressed her back onto the bed, deepening the connection as his hands roamed over her
body. She trembled beneath his fingers and he angrily fought off the image of her first time with a cruel, lecherous thing having his way with her - her fear, instead of inspiring pity, perhaps exciting the man even more.

At least Peeta would give her something to remember.

He peeled her clothes off her body, hungrily touching every inch of her skin as it was revealed to him, like the unwrapping of a gift. His lips followed the trajectory of the exposed skin, covering her with hot, moist kisses. Katniss’ trembling changed and it was no longer fear that moved through her but desire - hot, and fiery - and so she yielded herself up to him.

He kissed her breasts, lapping and biting them, discovering along with her what would bring her the most pleasure. She pulled him down towards her, wrapping her arms and legs around him as she kissed him, his rigid cock brushing against her wet core, bringing him to the brink of delirium.

Before he lost his sanity in the thrilling sensation of his erection rubbing against her, he slid down between her legs, slipping off the bed onto his knees and dragging her until her bottom rested on the edge. Katniss, whose chest heaved with excitement, nonetheless closed her legs in embarrassment, feeling more exposed than she’d ever felt in her life.

But Peeta separated her legs, running his hands over her solid thighs to calm her. When she was ready, he sunk his face into her folds, his tongue tracing designs along her lips. He tugged them, swirling designs with the tip of his tongue, lost in the taste of her. Katniss called out loudly, gripping the sheets until her knuckles turned white.

“You taste amazing,” Peeta said reverently. She, in turn, couldn’t give words to the way he made everything in her belly clench in expectation of something, a dream perhaps that she was chasing with her body. She could only respond with a moan of approval. When he sucked her in just the right place, she lost the desire to understand what he was doing and was carried away by a wave she hadn’t realized was building, a current so powerful, it overwhelmed her, crashing down on her and ripping her apart. The endless waves left her feeling boneless and profoundly satisfied.

Peeta wiped his lips on the blanket before crawling over Katniss’ body, leaving a trail of kisses along her stomach and ribs, across the valley of her breasts until he was face-to-face with her. Taking hold of himself, he rubbed himself against her now impossibly wet center. He left kisses along her shoulders and neck, whispering, “Are you ready?”

“I think so,” she answered breathlessly, her arms snaking around his neck and pulling him down to kiss him, the strange flavor of herself filling her mouth. She whimpered in anticipation, widening her legs on either side to receive him.
With as much gentleness as he could muster, Peeta sank into her. She’d expected it to hurt so she was surprised when the expectation of tearing and pain turned into pinching and the pleasurable feeling of being overly full. The sensation changed again as Peeta rocked into her, at first slowly, and then with more energy as he found his rhythm, one that transported both of them beyond the harsh realities of the moment and into a place where the only thing between them was skin and heat and desire.

Katniss felt the familiar build up, slower this time than before. Peeta held her gaze as he plunged into her, the warmth of her velvet walls coaxing him higher until he was close to his end. He kissed her over and over before bringing his lips to her ear and telling her how good she felt to him, how he’d dreamed of her ever since she sang the Valley Song in kindergarten, how he’d touched himself more than once with only the idea of her in his mind. Katniss wasn’t sure if it was his deep strokes or his words but she fell apart again, this time fully aware of the exquisite feeling of dissolving around him. At her complete dissolution, Peeta came also - a powerful eruption that caused him to cry out, his face twisted with the pain of his abandon.

Peeta’s body soon ceased it’s shuddering and what was left was a satiation that that reached down into his soul. He slipped out of her, the evidence of their union staining their sheets. Peeta grabbed a fistful of the thin blanket and cleaned them both, tossing the ball on the ground for the housekeeper to resolve. It was probably not the first or last time they would see such things.

When he settled next to Katniss, she turned and clung to him, her cooling body searching him out. Peeta understood and clutched her in return, loathe to imagine another set of hands on skin he had stroked to the perfect pitch of pleasure. He felt a murderous rage build in him, for what belonged to him even if she never said it in so many words. There were things people simply did not need to articulate for them to be true.

Katniss turned up to him, a slow, sad smile spreading across her face. “Thank you.”

Peeta bit his lip to keep from crying out in frustration and simply nodded his head in response.

Dissatisfied, Katniss pushed herself up to look at the tempest in his blue eyes. She studied his face for several moments, taking in the sweep of his forehead to the slope of his nose, her eyes landing on the cleft of his chin. Putting her forefinger in the space there, she whispered, “It’s only skin and bones. What matters is here…” she tapped his chest, “...and they can’t touch that.”

Squeezing his eyes shut, he pulled her down and crushed her to him, hoping for both their sakes that she could actually live with that belief. His heart burned with hatred and he secretly hoped that something enormous would happen, something so big that Panem would go up in flames.
Because this world deserved no better.

XXXXX

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!