neighbors

by windowlattice

Summary

AU- The games never happened and there is no Capital. Haymitch and Effie are high school teachers who have neighboring classrooms and a rather unusual relationship.

Notes

Heyyoo! This is my first fic I have ever published so please bear with me! I appreciate any and all feedback :) Depending on the reviews / hits I receive, I may format this to be a multi-chapter fic and add a bit more. You can find me over at tumblr under the blog name windowlattice, a former NSFW blog which is being switched over to my personal / fandom and is currently under construction. -- (imaginary bonus points to anyone who can spot the Sweeney Todd reference in dialogue towards the end) enjoy !!!

School had let out several hours ago and Effie was still in her room, curled up in the big chair at her desk that she usually graded in. For the first time in her life, she had given up. Had these kids listened to anything she had taught them across the past week? The bright colors and array of fonts plastered on her classroom walls that normally brought her such joy were making her head spin. She drew her knees closer into her chest, letting go of a deep breath that she had been holding in. She wanted nothing but the best for her AP class and when they weren’t getting those high marks she felt the weight sitting on her shoulders. Was it her fault that she wasn’t teaching the material properly? Did they just refuse to listen because they didn’t care? Whatever it was, she needed
incentive.

It wasn’t long before she heard a gentle rapping on her closed door.

“Come in!” She said brightly, since there was a possibility that a coworker or boss could pop in. She didn’t want one of them to see the one and only Effie Trinket in a rut, did she? The mahogany door opened slowly to reveal Peeta, the sweet eleventh grade boy who stayed for math help after school.

“Hey Miss Trinket, how are you? Um, Mr. Abernathy asked me to come over and get the stack of worksheets that he left in the printer.”

Oh shit, she thought, Peeta can not pick up on this. None of the students could. It was already spelling out trouble for the both of them even though Effie was convinced all evidence was hidden. Peeta was a smart boy, however, and Mr. Abernathy’s papers had no business being in Miss Trinket’s copier; he had a fully functional one of his own in the back of the class. Plus, those two hated each other. Everyone knew it. Effie smiled to herself; it was only a little show they put on to mask what real feelings were stirring. Her smile increased upon remembering last night’s encounter. He had left his papers in here because they were in his hands when something came up. He stopped in after hours just to say goodnight on his way out but one thing led to another and

“Oh, I’m sorry love, I trailed off for a second there.” Effie could feel her face becoming red.

“The papers are right over there in the bottom tray”, she said with a little more fervor than before, gesturing to the machine in the far corner. She watched intently as Peeta grabbed the stack, tapping it against the table to line the edges up in his hands. Such a sweet boy, Peeta Mellark. Nothing’s wrong with needing a little extra help, is there? When Peeta decided that tutoring would be the best fitting option, he came to talk to Haymitch. Word on the street was that he was a numeric genius and mediocre in everything else, and Effie knew him well enough to confirm.

“Miss Trinket, are you alright? You look absolutely exhausted!” Shit. Peeta was still in there. How long had he been watching her daydream? The concept of time was beyond her at this point.

“Just heaps of grading to do, that’s all, dear. Almost done anyways.” He exited her room promptly with a tiny smile and a nod of his head.

“Wait, Peeta?”

“Yes?”

“Are you and Haym- I mean, Mr. Abernathy, finished for tonight?”

“Actually, we were going to pack up once I brought him these papers. He offered to give me a ride home.”

“Oh, that’s so nice of him! Can you do me a favor? Can you take these field trip forms up to the student services office on the second floor?”

“Sure thing.”

“But before you go, send Mr. Abernathy over here for a sec. A student used a lot of numbers in an essay and my mind is lost.”

“Can do, Miss Trinket. Be right back.”

Good, she thought, this is going to work. You are a clever woman, Effie It’s at least a ten minute
round trip to the office wing. None of her students used numbers in their essay. Effie picked up
the one she was working on, Katniss Everdeen’s, and flipped to where she left off. It started off
excellently with the quote “Passion is Energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what
excites you.”

She kept thinking about that damn quote. She got her purple pen out that she used for good marks
and underlined the beginning of Katniss’ paper. She wrote a cute little note next to it in cursive
that read “Super impressed with this line, Everdeen! You got me thinking.” And it really did.
After commenting, Effie pushed the paper away towards the top of her desk so she could think.
Focus on what excites you, she replayed it in her mind over and over. Maybe this will help me
chill out a bit. Maybe she couldn’t bring herself to finish grading because she was focused on
Haymitch. She put her face into her hands and cringed at the thought but she’d rather be blunt and
honest with herself. Focus on what excites you. How could she not become excited when his
hands were everywhere on her last night, with such care but yet such authority, in this exact room
while the nearby teachers had gone home?

“Hey there, princess, having some trouble?” Oh god, I invited him over. That’s right. Just breathe,
Effie, you’re fine. Her knees went weak. Today he looked especially sharp due to the staff
evaluations earlier in the day. His button up mirrored the deep green of a pine tree and
complemented his grey slacks rather nicely. His hair had even been washed, neatly combed, and
parted down the middle.

She began to write a mental list of things they could do in ten minutes.

He appeared orderly and tidy as a whole, other than the fact that he seemed mildly disoriented. He
wouldn’t drink until the end of the day when everybody was gone and it was just him, her, and
Peeta in the grade eleven hallway. His left hand had a death grip around a stainless steel coffee
mug.

“Too many papers to grade and the majority of them hurt my eyes. I can’t seem to focus.”

He was coming over to her desk area now, his scent becoming more redolent. He smirked and ran
a hand through his hair.

“Isn’t that too bad? It’s probably this damn room, Trinket. These bright colors everywhere are
even making me sick. You teach high school AP, not kindergarten.”

“Well, that’s probably because you’re hungover, Abernathy.” Effie was in no mood for this and
did not hesitate to snap at him. He set the mug that he was holding onto her desk and gestured to
it.

“What do you have in there?”

“Not coffee.”

“I knew that.”

“Just drink it, Trinket.”

Oh, great. He’s trying to inebriate me. But Effie couldn’t say no to Haymitch, ever. They had
never made it a rule or even discussed it, but she just had to give in. The power exchange was
fucked.

She took a long sip from the mug and set it down, not breaking the eye contact between the two of
them even once. She did the same thing with her eyes yesterday, only during something else, and
that’s what started the entire chain reaction. It was champagne. The pink kind was the only kind
that Effie would voluntarily drink. Any time she had drank something else it was under the instruction of him.

She didn’t even tell him that it was illegal to have here because she was used to his ways by now. He got away with anything and it made her furious but also excited her to no end. She could feel him looking at her.

She watched him intently as he came closer to her, behind her desk chair and out of her view. Her heartbeat quadrupled because he could do anything and she wouldn’t even protest. She couldn’t see him at all now, just feel the heat radiating from him onto her back and shoulders. He was that close. All five of her senses were going wild.

Touch. The cool exterior of the cup she had just set down.

Taste. Pink champagne and nervousness on her tongue.

Sight. Only blurs and haziness now.

Hearing. The uneven breathing of two people.

Smell. Whiskey and pine and something unfamiliar. Motor oil? Smoke?

She said nothing and her eyes were shut and her mind became sporadic and lost and now his finger was tracing her jawline as he stood behind her still, starting at the very bottom and swiftly curling up around her ear. She felt his fingers on her scalp, close to her part, snaking back and forth gently. They found a spot in between her thick layers of blonde hair and clenched, smoothly brushing the strands as he drew his wrist back. Her eyes were blissfully closed and she thought of something to say, remembering to speak to him carefully. One wrong word and he would go home, and she didn’t exactly want that. Dealing with a perpetual drunk this often made her realize that it was not a job for everyone.

“You’re drunk. Again.” His hand was back in her hair and she still didn’t have a view of him but the sensations of touch were all too strong. She could feel him twisting strands of her hair and… braiding it?

“Yes.”

“Haymitch, have mercy, you don’t know how to braid hair to save your life and you’re going to knot mine…” She didn’t dare admit to him that she was lost in pleasure.

He, as usual, did not listen. He let out a little laugh, reached again for the champagne and this time, with Effie’s hair all pulled up in his right hand, held it up to her.

“You need to drink this. It will help you, you know what, just take the whole cup. I don’t really need it back. Think of it as… a gift.”

She felt quite sad when his hand unraveled from her curls but he made up for it by tucking some pieces behind her ears, being cautious of her many earrings that could get caught. He then placed a single kiss on her cheek.

“You need to drink this. It will help you, you know what, just take the whole cup. I don’t really need it back. Think of it as… a gift.”

Haymitch left without saying goodbye. He made his departure prominent by bumping into the
corner of a desk and swearing quite loudly. Did he really just behave affectionately to her? The alcohol would soon kick in and she could forget about grading for just a night and probably the majority of tomorrow. She couldn’t stray away from thinking about how he had treated her, and how it probably meant nothing to him. But for her, it meant the world. It meant that someone cared. Even if that care was drunk, confused, incoherent care, he still cared. Whatever was she going to do with him? Or to him, she thought. Everything was corrupt.

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