

The Hunger Games

(from the novel by Suzanne Collins)

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FADE IN... on a PROLOGUE - words on a screen:

"The cause was a rebellion - called The Dark Days - the thirteen districts of Panem rising up against the Capitol.

The rebellion was crushed. One District, the 13th, was destroyed entirely. The other twelve barely survived.

When it was over, The Capitol decreed that those twelve Districts - as a brutal reminder of their treasonous rebellion - would forever suffer a punishment, once a year.

It was called The Hunger Games."

As those last words linger, we SMASH TO:

...a nightmare. Please, God, let it be a nightmare. We are:

EXT. ABANDONED RESORT TOWN - DAY

We're RUNNING through a battle-zone. BODIES right and left, strewn on a street. We keep running, dodging death itself.

An ARROW just whizzed by us, barely missing, banging noisily into what used to be a newsstand. Another arrow buzzes past.

Running, desperate - hearing our own footsteps, our shallow breaths and groans of fear. There's another body on a sidewalk, semi-impaled. This is a perfect Hell.

It used to be Aspen - 300 years ago. Abandoned now, overgrown *
with foliage, decaying, dead.

We run around a corner, our heart rate spiking -- a KNIFE, hurtling at us out of nowhere. PFFFT! It buries itself into our left arm. The pain is searing. We falter...

But we have to keep running, have to get to safety. Our eyes darting, looking for somewhere to hide--

Old Coffee Shops, Ski Rental Shops, Yogurt shops - skeletal now, covered in vegetation, their windows long since blown away. Death waiting inside all of them. Then:

A SPEAR, thrown from what used to be a second-story window. We DIVE OUT of its way. It just misses us. But we've landed on that wounded arm. More searing pain.

We get to our feet. Please let this end. Behind us we hear VOICES YELLING: "Get him!" We don't look back. Just can't. There's a corner up ahead. Safety. We reach it, turning...

...to find a WELL-BUILT KID of 17 awaiting us, with a SPIKED MACE in his arms. He swings it at us - *at our head...*

THEN - POP! - BLACKNESS, like a video feed shorting. We are: *

EXT. DISTRICT 12 - TOWN SQUARE - DAY

A bleak Town Square in what used to be Coal Country, known now as "The Seam" - a colorless world of sagging buildings and cinder streets; even the trees seem gray here.

Despair, poverty, hunger... And TV. A huge screen in the heart of this Town Square, where 2,000 townspeople just watched that horrific death, live and in color.

Their eyes are blank, lifeless. Years of struggle and death etched into every face - as we hear the VOICE of famed broadcaster CLAUDIUS TEMPLESMITH:

TEMPLESMITH (THRU TV)
Oh, that's too bad. Sage Blanken goes down, knocked out by that Prospero boy from District Three - who certainly is handy with a mace! Once again, both Tributes from District 12 are out. But at least they got one into Day Two this year!

2,000 townsfolk, watching the bloodbath on that huge screen:

A GIRL darts across another overgrown street in that abandoned resort town. The long tongue of a WHIP lashes out, trying to trip her. She bounds over it...

...as we start drifting through this Town Square...

TEMPLESMITH (THRU TV, O.S.)
Don't forget, friends, to VOTE for your favorite Tribute! The cost is six Florins - or eight Florins once The Games are down to the Final Four.

We come upon a cluster of TOWNSFOLK, surrounding a stunned WOMAN. This is CORRINA - her face white with grief.

...because it was *her son that just died on that big screen*.
A WAIL rises out of her - pure agony. A keening shriek... *

...as KATNISS EVERDEEN walks past without turning. She's 15, lean and hungry, with steel-gray eyes and a long dark braid - a *fighter*, robbed of her little-girl years long ago. *

On her right is that huge screen, broadcasting more of the spectacle. On her left, NEIGHBORS lead a shell-shocked Corrina away. Katniss continues through the Square. *

...to find her sister, PRIMROSE EVERDEEN, (11, barely hanging on to some innocence.) Prim quietly watches the Games. *

KATNISS

I'm gonna go catch some dinner.

PRIM

Can I come?

KATNISS

It's sweet that you keep asking -
when you *know* I'm going to say no.

PRIM

You're gonna have to teach me
eventually, Katniss.

KATNISS

"Eventually" is a long time from now,
Prim. Look in on Mom.

Prim nods. Katniss drifts out of the Town Square, onto what was once a viable Main Street, bleak now. Behind her, 2,000 people keep watching The Games in a semi-hypnotic fog.

...except for one: PEETA MELLARK, a broad-shouldered boy of 16, whose eyes, now and forever, are following Katniss - as:

TEMPLESMITH (THRU TV)

Yet another disappointment for the
folks from Coal Country and their
sotted mentor, Haymitch Abernathy...

INT. HAYMITCH'S QUARTERS - GAMES CENTER - SAME (DAY)

HAYMITCH ABERNATHY, 40, watches the broadcast from inside a *fishbowl*. The walls around him are WINDOWS, looking out on: *

The GAMES CENTER, Mission Control for "The Hunger Games."
Huge screens. Data. Dazzling technology.

Haymitch eyes it bitterly, slugs down some pale alcohol, as:

EXT. DISTRICT 12 OUTSKIRTS - MEADOW/FOREST - DAY

An untended MEADOW gives way to a large CHAIN-LINK FENCE that stretches on forever. On the other side of it, FOREST.

SIGNS line the fence: "No Trespassing Beyond This Point."
"Violators Will Be Electrocuted." "Poaching is a Felony."

Katniss, unimpressed, throws a stick at the fence. Nothing happens. She crawls under it, scooting in unharmed.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

She heads for a felled LOG, reaches into its hollow. Feeling for something, then extracts it:

A BOW, and ARROWS, wrapped in a sheath of plastic.

EXT. FOREST - CLEARING - DAY

Katniss is a born hunter. A born climber too. With her bow and arrow slung on her back, she climbs a tall tree, navigating the branches like a monkey.

EXT. TREE - BRANCH - CONTINUING

She settles, 30 feet up. Great vantage-point. And there it is, below - a WILD TURKEY. Katniss draws back her bow...

EXT. ANOTHER CLEARING - LATER DAY

The dead turkey has been tied to a stick, resting by Katniss's side. She's behind a ROCK, scouting her next kill:

Two large gray RABBITS. Maybe 30 yards from here. Katniss lines one up, draws back her bow. Tension in the string...

...when, suddenly, a HAND is placed over mouth. *Someone has just come up behind her, out of nowhere.* A BOY, whispering:

GALE ("BOY")

You're good. But I'm still better.

This is GALE HAWTHORNE, 17, her best friend/hunting partner. Handsome, dark-haired, he loves being with her, (more than he'd ever admit, even to himself.) Loves teasing her.

*

*

*

...until she bites his finger, playfully.

*

GALE (CONT'D)

Ow!

KATNISS

How do you do that? How do you move without making a sound?

GALE

I'm lightfooted.

KATNISS

Get to work.

She gestures to the two large rabbits, drawing back her bow. Gale draws his as well. They fire at the same time...

EXT. CREEK - LATER DAY

Six rabbits on a stick now, and a second Wild Turkey. Gale and Katniss sit by a stream, eating fresh-picked greens. He's about to eat one when she yanks it away.

GALE

What'd you do that for?

KATNISS

That's Fawn's Leaf. You wanna throw up all night?

GALE

I'd rather eat the rabbits, ya know? *

KATNISS

Great. And what would we have to trade with?

A lousy reality. He pushes the rest of the "meal" away.

GALE

I didn't watch this morning. Is the Blanken kid still in it?

(Katniss shakes her head)

So we're out again. Like every year.

KATNISS

I think the guy from 2 is gonna win.

Gale draws his bow back, indulging in a juvenile fantasy: *

GALE

One day, one of these'll be aimed at Claudius Templesmith. And another one at Seneca Crane. The last one at President Snow. No more Games.

KATNISS

Right, except your name's gonna be entered -- how many times? -- forty two times in the Reaping next year?

GALE

My family needs grain and oil, Katniss. Yours too.

Then, in a blur, Katniss grabs her bow, wheels around, and aims fifty feet over Gale's head: PFFFFT. Just bagged a SQUIRREL, high up in a branch. She starts to climb toward it.

GALE (CONT'D)
Don't bother. It's too...
(she's already gone)
High.

Katniss is halfway up the tree. Gale sighs, *to himself*:

GALE (CONT'D)
Or we could just stay out here...

KATNISS
Oh. I almost forgot.
(tony Capitol accent:)
Happy Hunger Games! And may the odds
be--

GALE
--ever in your favor...

She climbs, disappearing up that impossibly-tall tree.

EXT. ANOTHER CLEARING - LATER DAY

They head for the electric fence with their haul. Katniss spots something - bends down for it:

Purple berries, growing at the base of a tree. She eyes them, then picks a few, putting them into the pouch on her hip.

Gale watches her... silent... until:

GALE
We could do it, ya know.

KATNISS
Do what?

GALE
Leave the District. Stay out here, in the woods. We could make it.

KATNISS
Who'd take care of Prim? And my mom?

GALE
No, I don't mean now. Obviously. I mean, when Prim got older.

KATNISS
Didn't really think this through - did you?

She's trying to diffuse it. He reddens a bit.

GALE

Unless you'd rather move into town
and marry a coal-miner. Or a baker.
Have ten kids or something.

*
*
*

KATNISS

These are my options?
(Gale's silent)
And I'm never having kids. With
anybody. Not in *this* world. But
thanks.

*
*

They share a look...until an odd SILENCE suddenly falls...

The birds in the forest stop singing. Nothing moves. Eerie.

...Then a BLUR, racing past us in sheer terror.

It's a RED-HAIRED GIRL, (her name's LAVINIA), Katniss's age,
but dressed differently. *Running for her life now.*

*
*

KATNISS (CONT'D)

What was--

That fast, Lavinia is gone, racing for the fence. Katniss and
Gale whip around, to see what's chasing the poor kid.

*

There's nothing back there.

...until they hear it, *from above...* A HOVERCRAFT. Huge, its
propwash blowing treetops sideways over the fleeing Lavinia.

*

Katniss and Gale hide behind a rock-shelf, watching, as the
VOICE of an UNSEEN OFFICIAL booms from inside the craft:

UNSEEN VOICE

Surrender! You are to be returned to
The Capitol for adjudication!

*
*

Lavinia is frantic, almost at the fence... *when a GIANT NET*
drops from the hovercraft like a rock, enveloping her.

*

She looks to Katniss and Gale, her eyes desperate. *Help me...*
Gale starts to rise - but Katniss yanks him back down.

KATNISS

They'll kill you.

Before Gale can reply, the net tightens, yanking Lavinia into
the air. And she's GONE, into the Hovercraft, abducted in
mere seconds. Katniss just stares. We DISSOLVE TO:

*

INT. "THE HOB" - LATE DAY

Used to be a COAL WAREHOUSE. Now it's a BLACK MARKET: carts offering food, salt, coats, herbs - and all of it *dicey*.

The feeling is hushed, dark, desperate. Gale trades with a woman named GREASY SAE: some greens for a chunk of PARAFFIN.

Nearby, Katniss barter with a bread-seller named OPEQUON, who is eyeing her dead rabbits, evaluating two side by side.

OPEQUON
Looks narrow to me. I want that one.

KATNISS
That one's spoken for. This is the one I'm trading.

OPEQUON
Looks narrow to me.

PEETA (O.S.)
I'll give ya two for it.

Katniss and Opequon turn: here's Peeta Mellark, approaching with *two loaves of bread in hand*. Katniss appreciates the offer. Opequon doesn't, glaring right through Peeta, as:

OPEQUON
I was offering one.

PEETA
I think it's worth two.

Opequon grumbles, goes. Katniss grins as Peeta hands her the loaves of bread. (One of them is slightly black on top.)

PEETA (CONT'D)
This one's a little burned, so we couldn't sell it anyway.

KATNISS
What happened to your eye, Peeta?

Peeta'd been trying to conceal it, but he has a SHINER...

PEETA
Oh. Just wasn't looking where I was going.

She nods, hands over the rabbit. It's time to move on...

...So how come Peeta's still standing here?

PEETA (CONT'D)
I'll see ya, Katniss.

KATNISS
'Night, Peeta. Thanks.

He drifts off. She goes in the opposite direction. Gale, not far from here, takes note, then returns to his trading.

We FOLLOW KATNISS, through this warehouse of starving crumb-sellers, when something catches her eye:

Corrina, the woman who lost a son this morning, sitting on a stool, her eyes haunted - as her husband TYGART hawks some meager-looking CHESTNUTS.

Tygart is in a fog, but Corrina is catatonic. Katniss pauses, torn... then makes a decision. She passes by Tygart, and:

KATNISS
These'll help her sleep. My mom takes 'em.

She hands over two of the PURPLE BERRIES she picked today - and she's gone... before Tygart can even say thank you.

EXT. DISTRICT 12 - PEERLESS STREET - NIGHT

Katniss pulls a rickety wagon over cinder streets. A TRAIN rumbles outside town, loaded with coal. On its side:
"District 12 Coal - Powering the Capitol for 300 Years."

There are no streetlights on - no power to feed them - but that HUGE TV in the Town Square is on, as always... beaming The Hunger Games, death as entertainment. A CROWD watches.

Katniss walks by without looking up.

EXT. HOLLER ST. - KATNISS'S HOME - NIGHT

Small, crammed in, untended. Katniss leaves her wagon in the yard, where a small GOAT is tethered.

INT. KATNISS'S HOME - NIGHT

Dusty, unkempt. At a table sits MRS. EVERDEEN. She's 40 but looks 60, deadened by grief and fear. Katniss enters.

KATNISS
I'm home.

PRIM
Katniss!

Prim runs in, hugs her older sister. The bond here is deep.

KATNISS
Look what I traded for.

*

Katniss holds up TWO THREADBARE COATS she traded for today.

*

PRIM
Whoa! Coats!

KATNISS
Yours are both so worn. Let me see if
it fits.

Prim throws hers on. She's swimming in it.

PRIM
Perfect!

KATNISS
Mom?

No reply. Katniss crosses to Mrs. Everdeen. A cat, BUTTERCUP,
(mashed-in face, half an ear missing) jumps in the way.

*

*

KATNISS (CONT'D)
Move, Buttercup.

PRIM
Be sweet with him.

*

*

KATNISS
Why, did he catch a mouse today? Did
he do anything useful?
(Buttercup hisses a bit)
Another mouth to feed.

*

*

*

*

*

She pushes Buttercup aside without much fanfare, then puts
the other coat across her mom's shoulders. No reaction.

PRIM
What about you, Katniss?

KATNISS
Mine's fine. Stand up, Mom. Let me
see.

*

*

MRS. EVERDEEN
I don't like you going to The Hob.
(Katniss rolls her eyes)
Peacekeepers're gonna shut it down
eventually.

*

*

*

*

Katniss looks to Prim, who loves being in on a joke:

PRIM
Eventually is a long time from now,
Mom.

KATNISS
And the Peacekeepers trade there too.

Mrs. Everdeen nods blankly. It saddens Katniss and Prim.

KATNISS (CONT'D)
C'mon, Prim. Help me with supper.

INT. KATNISS'S HOME - DEN - LATE NIGHT

The girls share a bed in the Den. Looking down from a mantle is a picture of their FATHER. He had kind eyes...

PRIM
Katniss?
(Katniss waits)
What happens if they call you at The
Reaping next year?

KATNISS
Why would they call me?

PRIM
I'm not dumb, Katniss. I know that
every time you take out tesserae to
get us stuff it means your name's
gonna be in there more times next
year.

KATNISS
Don't worry. There'll be people with
their names in there lots more times
than me.

PRIM
Still.

KATNISS
Ssshhh.

Prim falls silent. But just for a second.

PRIM
Katniss...?

KATNISS
Mmm-hmmm.

PRIM
Will you sing it?

KATNISS
Which one?

PRIM
The one Dad always sang?

KATNISS
And then you'll sleep?

PRIM
I promise.

Katniss clears her throat, then:

KATNISS
*Deep in the Meadow/Under a willow/
A bed of grass/A soft green pillow/
Lay down your head/Close your sleepy
eyes/When they open again/The Sun
will rise...*

Prim's eyes close. We DRIFT THROUGH this home... to find:

Mrs. Everdeen is across the room, wide awake, listening... *

KATNISS (CONT'D)
*Here it's safe/Here it's warm/
Daisies guard you from every harm/
Dreams are sweet/They all come true/
Here is the place where I love you.*

Mrs. Everdeen quietly weeps - pure dread. We GO TO BLACK:

...over which, a SUPER: **"One Year Later."** Then SMASH TO:

EXT. LOCATION UNKNOWN - MORNING

INSERTS, in rapid fire:

A COMBAT KNIFE - placed on what looks like a brass table-top.

A SPEAR - lain carefully beside the knife. *

A SPIKED MACE stands against a sheer wall. *

Lastly, a BOW and ARROWS are hung on a hook. Someone is
preparing an arena for The Hunger Games. We CUT TO: *

EXT. FOREST - LOCATION UNKNOWN - MORNING

A pack of WILD DOGS prowls menacingly. These things are HUGE, the size of bulls. With fangs and hungry eyes.

But they're being tracked - by a pair of HUNTING RIFLES, 200 yards away. Darts are chambered into each rifle... as: *

INT. CAPITOL - GAMES CENTER - MORNING

SENECA CRANE, a dark genius, looks over his domain. *

This is Mission Control, (seen from the windows surrounding Haymitch's quarters last year.) It's NASA on steroids: huge screens, data, massive electronic coverage. *

On an ILLUMINATED BOARD we see 24 EMPTY SLOTS, two for every District. Names will go here; two from District 12... Seneca eyes it, then spots something that irritates him greatly: *

An assistant, BETTO, is *virtually drawing* on a monitor (it's a hobby) - unaware that Seneca is in the vicinity... until Seneca leans in and angrily deletes Betto's screen. Uh-oh. *

SENECA *

You're here to work, Betto. *

(Betto gulps) *

Unless you think all those Tributes are just going to kill *themselves*. *

He walks away. Betto's too shaken to blink. *

INT. KATNISS'S HOME - MORNING

A quiet, somber feeling in here, like dressing for a funeral. Katniss steps into a worn blue dress. Prim, now 12, tucks a white blouse into a skirt. Their mother opens a wooden box.

MRS. EVERDEEN

I thought you might like to wear this, Prim.

She shows Prim a GOLD MOCKINGJAY PIN. Beautiful.

PRIM

Why do we have to dress up for the reaping?

MRS. EVERDEEN

It's expected.

(offering the pin)

Take it. Dad loved mockingjays.

PRIM
What if I lose it?

Mrs. Everdeen shrugs. Prim takes the pin, tries to fix it to her blouse, but her trembling fingers won't co-operate. So Katniss steps in and does it for her. *

KATNISS
We'll pin it on tight. There.

Katniss turns away - but Prim grabs her hand, urgently:

PRIM
They can't take you. Tell me they can't take you.

KATNISS
Don't worry, Prim. We've used up all our bad luck already.

The sisters study one another, then Prim turns away.

KATNISS (CONT'D)
Tuck in your tail, little duck.

Prim's shirttail sticks out. Katniss takes care of it.

PRIM
Quack.

KATNISS
Quack, yourself.

Katniss hugs Prim tightly - letting on for the first time how unnerving all this is - then kisses the top of her head.

KATNISS (CONT'D)
Can't be late, right?

EXT. DISTRICT 12 - TOWN SQUARE - MIDDAY

Packed - by the 8,000 RESIDENTS of District 12. They fill adjacent streets too. CAMERA CREWS look down from rooftops.

In front of the Justice Building we find a PODIUM, three chairs, a microphone... and two large GLASS BALLS, containing thousands of slips of paper. On each slip, a name... *

Katniss guides a white-with-fear Prim through the crowd. There's a grim buzz in the air, a shared tension. PEACEKEEPERS in white uniforms herd everyone along: *

UNNAMED PEACEKEEPER

All candidates stand with the others
in their age group! Twelve year-olds
here! Thirteens here!

...as we realize that the only people in this Square are CHILDREN. 12 to 18. *Adults stand outside the ropes.*

Mrs. Everdeen is one of them, staring blankly.

Katniss guides Prim through. ANOTHER PEACEKEEPER steps in.

KATNISS

She's twelve.

He tugs Prim away. She calls out to Katniss, desperately: *

PRIM

They call your name - you run, okay? *

KATNISS

I'll see you at dinner. Dress casual.

A reassuring smile - it helps - until Prim is led into the herd of twelve year-olds, waiting together. Katniss turns away, passing one tense teenage face after another, as: *

MAYOR UNDERSEE speaks into the microphone on the podium: *

MAYOR UNDERSEE

My Friends of District Twelve, in
anticipation of the Seventy-Fourth
Hunger Games, I welcome you to
Reaping Day...

Tepid applause. His speech continues, in b.g., as Katniss drifts through. Not far from here are the EIGHTTEENS, maybe 200 kids, trying not to look terrified. Gale is among them.

It's just a look between him and Katniss, but it's loaded: "*I hope it's not you.*" Gale smiles a thin smile. Katniss turns away, finds her place in the herd of SIXTEENS. *

Plenty of posturing around her, all of it hiding terror. *

MAYOR UNDERSEE (CONT'D)

This Day, like The Games themselves,
provides us a chance to reflect on
the costs of our violent rebellion
all those years ago, and to be
grateful for the kindness now shown
to us by the Capitol. It's a time for
both repentance and for thanks.

Behind Undersee on the stage is EFFIE TRINKET, (her suit lime-green, her hair pink.) Beside her is an empty chair... until:

HAYMITCH

'Scuse me. Sorry to be late.

Haymitch Abernathy stumbles on to the stage, inebriated. The TV CAMERAS ZOOM IN on him... as Mayor Undersee continues:

MAYOR UNDERSEE

By law, each District is required to send one boy and one girl into the Games each year. 24 young people, fighting to the death until one emerges victorious - bringing great pride, and great material reward, to his or her District. Joining me now on stage is the only Tribute from our fair District to have ever done so. Please welcome Haymitch Abernathy.

Haymitch rises drunkenly and gives the mayor an enthusiastic slap on the back. But when he tries to hug Effie, he ends up lurching across her and slamming into the empty chair.

And it all just went out LIVE, across Panem. The kids stifle nervous laughter.

...as Effie, tight-lipped but professional, straightens her wig. And Mayor Undersee does his best to go on.

MAYOR UNDERSEE (CONT'D)

I'm sure whoever's chosen today will - under Haymitch's steady guidance - represent our District well.

Katniss tightens. Another look to Gale.

MAYOR UNDERSEE (CONT'D)

Now it's my privilege to introduce our tributes' escort. Joining us from the Capitol, Miss Effie Trinket.

One hand steadying her wig, Effie trots to the podium. Bright and bubbly, she speaks in a stilted Capitol accent.

EFFIE

Happy Hunger Games! And may the odds be EVER in your favor! I know you're all excited, so let's get right to the drawing! Boys first this year!

*
*

Nobody breathes. Hardened coal mining families - *terrified*.

*

Even the COAL-TRAIN on the elevated track a few blocks away has come to a stop, its CONDUCTOR watching.

Effie squeezes her eyes shut, sticks her hand in the ball on the boys' side, and plucks a name out.

CLOSE ON Katniss, jaw clenched, fingers crossed at her side.

EFFIE (CONT'D)
The boy tribute from District Twelve
is--

We PUSH IN on Gale, as...

EFFIE (CONT'D)
Peeta Meelark!

...which is when we find Peeta, *just a few feet from Katniss* - she'd somehow not noticed him before.

But she turns - just in time to see his face go pale... A GROAN goes up from his PARENTS, outside the ropes.

TWO PEACEKEEPERS come to collect him as he steadies himself. Katniss can't meet his eye, can barely mutter:

KATNISS
Sorry, Peeta.

Somehow he breathes out a smile, despite the horror. It surprises her. Then Peeta's gone, and:

EFFIE
I'm sure Peeta will do a wonderful
job for us. Now, the ladies!

Not far from here, PEETA'S MOTHER has just fainted dead away. Her HUSBAND is trying to revive her. Every boy who *wasn't* chosen - except for Gale - is sagging with relief.

...as Peeta mounts the stage silently. And Effie digs her hand into the GIRLS' GLASS BALL, and...

EFFIE (CONT'D)
The Girl Tribute from District Twelve
will be...
(Katniss gulps...)
Primrose Everdeen!

And the world simply stops. Time itself seems to hover.

Katniss freezes, replaying it in her head. Must have heard it wrong. Prim too - a look of utter confusion on her face... *

*

PRIM

*

Katniss?

*

The Square is deathly SILENT. No one can believe what they just heard. Mrs. Everdeen staggers. Gale just stares, dazed:

*

*

GALE

(mumbled, to no one)

But... her name was only in there
once.

And here's Prim, lost, surrounded by TWELVE YEAR-OLDS...

*

PRIM (CONT'D)

*

Katniss?

*

Katniss slumps backward, dumb-struck. ANOTHER GIRL steadies her. Everything's spinning. Then she sees - dimly - TWO MORE PEACEKEEPERS bulling their way through the 12 year-olds...

*

*

Prim's face fills the huge tv screens - a lost little girl, her head swimming. The Peacekeepers begin to pull her away.

*

And all Prim can think to do is tuck in that loose shirttail again as she's tugged through the crowd... We PUSH IN on Katniss, the world crashing around her - until:

*

*

KATNISS

(top of her lungs)

I volunteer!

Hold it. Everything just stopped again. All eyes - even those of the cameras - now find Katniss... whose voice seems to be operating on its own.

KATNISS (CONT'D)

I volunteer as tribute!

No one replies. On the faces of Gale, Peeta, Effie, *everyone* - shock. Katniss heads for the stage, almost in a trance.

GALE

Katniss...

Katniss keeps walking - all eyes on her - nearing her sister, who is too dazed to reply. Can barely mutter:

PRIM

No...

Katniss walks right past her. Peeta watches from the stage.

KATNISS

My name is Katniss Everdeen. I'll represent District Twelve.

EFFIE

Well, bravo! Brava! Quite a gesture! And there's nothing in the rules forbidding it, is there Haymitch?

Haymitch, his drunken brain catching up, shakes his head.

So Katniss keeps coming... even as Prim grabs her.

PRIM

No, Katniss! No! You can't!

KATNISS

(pulling herself free)
It's okay, Prim.

PRIM

(not letting go)
You can't! I won't let you!

All of it going out LIVE. Gale steps forward. His eyes meet Katniss's - another loaded moment - and he does what she's begging him to do... pulling Prim away.

GALE

I've got her.

The Peacekeepers lead Katniss away. Prim shrieks, crying:

PRIM

No! Don't take her! Don't!

Gale carries Prim off as Katniss mounts the steps.

EFFIE

I bet my buttons that was your sister, wasn't it! Don't want her to steal all the glory, do we? Let's give a big round of applause for our latest tribute!

No one claps. Instead, they do *something else* - a gesture:

In unison, the people here touch the three middle fingers of their left hand to their lips and then hold it out to her. It is a gesture of immense respect. Also a fond farewell.

Katniss acknowledges it silently from the stage. Then the NATIONAL ANTHEM begins to play through LOUDSPEAKERS.

Peeta is beside her. Gale is suddenly a world away. And she is fighting back tears as we CRANE UP... until she's just a tiny dot in this Town Square...

*

INT. JUSTICE BUILDING - SITTING ROOM - DAY

Katniss is escorted into an elegant room by A PAIR OF PEACEKEEPERS who retreat and stand guard at the door. She sits on a velvet couch. Then *Prim and Mrs. Everdeen enter.*

Prim runs across the room and buries her face in Katniss's lap, awash with tears. Katniss holds her tightly. Mrs. Everdeen is outside the hug, too bereft to function.

KATNISS

It's gonna be okay, Mom. You'll have the money from Prim's goat-milk. And Gale will bring you game.

Mrs. Everdeen half-nods, breaking down in sobs.

KATNISS (CONT'D)

Listen, Mom.

PRIM

Don't go, Katniss...

KATNISS

(grabs her mom)

Listen to me!

(Mrs. Everdeen turns)

You can't do to her what you did to me. You can't disappear on her like you did when dad died - because there won't be any me around to look out for everybody.

That registered. We can see Mrs. Everdeen take it in...

MOTHER

I know. I won't, I--

KATNISS

Whatever happens, whatever you see on the screen, you have to fight through it and take care of her!

Another nod. Prim clasps Katniss's face in her hands.

PRIM

You have to take care, too. You're so fast and brave. Maybe you can win.

KATNISS

(trying)

Maybe. Then we'd be rich as Haymitch.

PRIM

I don't care if we're rich. I just want you to come home.

(Katniss nods)

You will try, won't you. Really, really try?

KATNISS

Really, really try. I swear it.

Prim unlatches the MOCKINGJAY PIN from her dress and pins it on Katniss with trembling hands.

PRIM

Wear this. It'll be like having a piece of me with you.

Katniss nods, blinks back a tear.

KATNISS

Prim, there're some things you're going to have to take care of now. The trading. That's gonna be you.

(Prim's eyes go wide)

You know what to pick in the forest. There are Katniss-plants by the creek; a bunch about *this big* is worth a loaf of bread at The Hob. Make sure you always bring back strawberries for the Mayor. He'll tell the Peacekeepers to leave you alone. But you have to check the fence with a stick EVERY time you go through it; one of these days they're gonna turn it on. Have you got all that?

*
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Prim nods, sort of. Katniss tries to lighten things:

KATNISS (CONT'D)

And take care of Buttercup, okay? He's gonna be so sad without me!

*
*

Prim almost smiles. Almost. Then the moment shatters:

FIRST PEACEKEEPER

That's all you get. Let's go.

He moves in. The family joins in a final, desperate embrace.

PRIM

You're gonna keep the pin on, right?

Katniss nods. Peacekeeper pulls Prim and Mrs. Everdeen away.

PRIM (CONT'D)

And you're gonna come back?

KATNISS

I love you. *

And they're gone. The door slams shut. Katniss stands there, her arms hanging limply at her sides. Utterly alone.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER (DAY)

The Square is empty now. The Podium set has been struck. Mrs. Everdeen, trying to be strong, leads Prim away...

But Gale remains out here, alone, distraught. Staring... *

...at *Katniss*, barely visible through a second-story window in the Justice Building. It's a final, wordless goodbye - until she's pulled away. We hear the sound of a TRAIN, as... *

INT. TRAIN - KATNISS'S COMPARTMENT - MOVING - EVENING

Katniss sits in silence on a train doing 250 m.p.h. Out the window we just see darkness. *

Then a light knock on her door, and Effie Trinket's voice:

EFFIE (O.S.)

Dinner's soon! Please bathe!

Then Effie's gone. Katniss rises, in a fog.

INT. TRAIN - KATNISS'S COMPARTMENT - BATHROOM - CONTINUING

Katniss drifts in. *Everything in here is new to her.*

There's no tub. Instead... a shower. Huh? She hits a knob - shocked when water comes out. She literally recoils.

And there's her reflection, caught in the bathroom mirror. Feels like a stranger looking back at her. We CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN - DINING CAR - MOVING - EVENING

Katniss, freshly showered, sits in a dull green jumpsuit, her mockingjay pin on it. Effie and Peeta are here. No Haymitch.

Before them is the biggest meal Katniss has ever seen: lamb chops, carrot soup, mashed potatoes, green salad.

EFFIE

Eat, please. Food's always so scarce in the Arena, you want to go into The Games with some meat on your bones.

Katniss and Peeta begin - awed by the quantity.

PEETA

Where's our mentor?

EFFIE

Haymitch is taking a nap. It's been an exhausting day.

On a MUTED TV behind Effie, we see a NIGHTLY ROUND-UP of coverage from all the Reaping Ceremonies across Panem today: Twelve Districts, each selecting a lucky boy and girl...

A monstrous boy from District 2, a fox-faced girl from 5, a boy with a crippled foot from 10.

And, most hauntingly, a 12 year-old girl from District 11. She has brown skin and soulful eyes. Katniss just stares...

Then, clips from the District 12 Reaping. Katniss herself. And Prim. And Peeta... And Haymitch, stumbling on stage.

Her mentor. A drunk. It's unsettling as hell...

KATNISS

Is he going to tell us what to--

EFFIE

I'm thrilled you two have such decent manners! The pair last year ate everything with their hands! It completely upset my digestion.

KATNISS

Hungry people don't think much about manners.

Effie tightens. Peeta's silent - his eyes riveted on the TV.

EFFIE

(re: news on TV)
Checking out the competition, Peeta?

PEETA

Just the Careers.

EFFIE

I'm afraid I don't know what that--

PEETA

(yes you do)

The Tributes that are trained for the Games by their Districts.

EFFIE

No Districts do that.

Bullshit. Katniss and Peeta know it. But Effie tries:

EFFIE (CONT'D)

That's just a rumor. Everyone knows District training is illegal.

KATNISS

Then why do the winners always come from One, Two, and Four every year?

EFFIE

The Tributes from the wealthier Districts get more Sponsors, that's all. So they get more help. There's nothing sinister about it.

She just lost them, officially. More tension... as Haymitch stumbles in - hammered, as usual.

HAYMITCH

I miss supper?

Tense silence. He takes a seat, sets his drink down, unfolds his napkin - reflexively reaching for a bottle of white Gin.

...but Peeta, just as reflexively, grabs Haymitch's hand. It shocks the hell out of everyone - mostly Peeta himself.

PEETA

Sir, I think we'd both prefer it if you didn't have anymore to drink. You're supposed to be advising us.

HAYMITCH

Here's some advice. Don't die.

He bursts out laughing. Katniss looks to Peeta.

PEETA

That's very funny.

He throws Haymitch's glass to the floor, shattering it.

PEETA (CONT'D)
Only not to us.

Haymitch considers that for a moment, impressed, then slugs Peeta in the jaw, knocking him from his chair. Haymitch reaches for the bottle...

...just as *Katniss stabs at his hand with her knife*, barely missing flesh. The knife digs itself into the table. SILENCE.

Everyone awaiting an explosion from Haymitch... until:

HAYMITCH
Well. Did I actually get a pair of fighters this year?

Katniss and Peeta weren't expecting that. Haymitch eyes her.

HAYMITCH (CONT'D)
Can you hit anything with that knife besides a table?

Katniss yanks the knife from the table and throws it at the far wall. It sticks between two panel-seams. Haymitch rises, circles his two Tributes, studying them.

HAYMITCH (CONT'D)
I'll make a deal with you two. You don't interfere with my drinking, and I'll stay sober enough to help you. Is that fair?
(they nod)
You'll have to do exactly as I say. About everything.

Effie puts some ice in a napkin, hands it to Peeta for the BRUISE reddening his jaw.

HAYMITCH (CONT'D)
No. Let it bruise. People will think you've been mixing it up with the other Tributes before you've even entered the Arena.
(Peeta sets it down)
When we get to the Capitol, you'll be put in the hands of stylists who'll prepare you for your presentation. Their work is vital.

KATNISS
Right. 'Cause it's a beauty contest.

HAYMITCH

Yes. It is. And the people who figure that out tend to be the ones who survive. Are you through now?

That shut Katniss up. Haymitch looks right through her.

HAYMITCH (CONT'D)

The best-looking tributes get the most sponsors. And sponsors are my only means of helping you once you're in The Arena. Understood?

...which is when Katniss sees something out the window - a landmark, *recognizeable to us...* It's Chicago.

Or what *used to be* Chicago. Across Lake Michigan we see the skeleton of a city. *Decayed, lifeless*. An empty ghost town.

Haymitch approaches the wall, eyes the knife Katniss threw.

HAYMITCH (CONT'D)

Is this where you were aiming?

KATNISS

More or less.

HAYMITCH

Good. Eat.

Katniss picks up a lamb chop *with her hands*, devours a bite, then wipes her hands on the tablecloth. Effie sighs. CUT TO:

EXT. DISTRICT 12 - MARSHALLING YARD - NIGHT

A COAL TRAIN, in a grimy part of The Seam. We PUSH IN, to look at its payload, a bed of BLACK COAL...

...with a STOWAWAY atop it - Gale. He throws a look at:

*

...Prim, who stands at the fence of the marshalling yard. She nods, "Go." He nods back, then ducks out of sight.

*

*

The train pulls out of the yard, into dark night.

*

INT. CAPITOL - TRAIN STATION - DAY

Katniss tries to hide her awe, but it's an effort - because we've just pulled into *The Capitol* - and it is dazzling. Wealth and excess. Splendor. Even this TRAIN STATION.

Everything gleams, overly bright. The colors look like candy. Beautiful MUSIC drifts through hidden speakers. The CITIZENS here are well-dressed, well-fed. And attentive:

They stop, and wave at us. (The arrival of a Tribute Train is a very big deal around here.) Adults, kids, waving at us.

Katniss, looking out the window of her compartment, can't quite bring herself to wave back.

But Peeta can - leaning out of his window, right next to hers, waving graciously. The crowd loves it. Katniss doesn't.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - MOMENTS LATER - DAY

Haymitch and Effie lead the two junior celebrities through the station. Feels like another planet to Katniss.

They pass a VIRTUAL NEWSSTAND. One face appears on DOZENS OF I-MAGAZINE COVERS: "Seneca Crane - the genius behind the Hunger Games." Something tells Katniss to study this face...

A GIRL passes by, Katniss's age... with two healthy parents, clean hair, a poodle on a leash... and an ice cream cone in her hand. Licking happily.

KATNISS
(re: ice cream)
What's that?

Effie laughs, certain that Katniss was kidding.

EFFIE
Silly!

But Haymitch knows better. He leads them away. We CUT TO:

EXT. CAPITOL - TRIUMPH AVENUE - DAY

Katniss just saw her first RESTAURANT. Ever. A clean place where families eat... as she and Peeta are driven down the biggest street in The Capitol.

Think Emerald City - but with a sinister underbelly. The colors are heightened and saturated. The architecture is immaculate. People are grinning. But it all feels synthetic.

KATNISS
Now I know where all that coal goes.

EFFIE
Let's get you two cleaned up already!
You're being presented today!
(MORE)

EFFIE (cont'd)
(Katniss eyes her)
No one's going to sponsor you looking
like this, Katniss. Could you blame
them?

A look from Haymitch tells Katniss not to fire back.

INT. CAPITOL - REMAKE CENTER - PREP ROOM - DAY

Rippp! A woman named VENIA yanks a strip of WAX off our leg.

VENIA
(pitched Capitol accent)
Sorry! But you're just so hairy!

Katniss is naked, silent. And surrounded: eyebrows plucked by
a man named FLAVIUS, nails shaped by a portly woman named
OCTAVIA - (each with that same pitched Capitol accent.)

FLAVIUS
You're doing very well! If there's
one thing we can't stand, it's a
whiner!

Katniss doesn't reply - *she hasn't said a word in hours.*

OCTAVIA
(gossippy, to Venia:)
I'll tell you who'd be fun to prep.
That Glimmer girl. The tall one.
She's gorgeous! Those eyes!

VENIA
I know! And those white white teeth!

OCTAVIA
(to Katniss)
I have to admit it, I had the tiniest
thrill when they pulled your sister's
name at The Reaping!
(Katniss tightens)
I mean, her precious little face! I
just couldn't stop thinking of all
the ways we'd get to dress her and
make her up! Little Rose Everdeen!

VENIA
I know! Me too!
(at Katniss)
Not that we were disappointed when it
turned out to be you! No. Now that
we've gotten rid of all that hair and
filth, you're not horrible at--

KATNISS

Prim.

Katniss's first word. In hours. The others eye her.

VENIA

I'm sorry?

KATNISS

It's Prim. And she hates make-up.

A beat... Then these three howl with LAUGHTER. Peals of it.

VENIA

You're hysterical! Let's go get
Cinna!

They vanish. Katniss, alone and naked, grabs a robe.

Then she notices - she's being watched:

Three stories above this room, visible through its glass ceiling, FIFTEEN PEOPLE look down at her from an interior balcony - each of them sipping a cocktail...

These are the GAMESMAKERS - studying the Tributes in *each* Prep Room without expression. (Seneca is not among them.)

Katniss eyes them, utterly unnerved. Afraid... until:

CINNA (O.S.)

How despicable we must seem to you.

She turns. Standing in the doorway is CINNA, (30). He seems decent, unaffected - even his voice. But she's wary. *

CINNA (CONT'D)

Your braid - who did it?

KATNISS

My mother.

CINNA

It's beautiful. Classic. We're not going to touch it.

He enters, hits a button. The top of a table splits in two and ANOTHER HUGE MEAL appears; Katniss won't react to it. *

CINNA (CONT'D)

I'm Cinna, Katniss. I'll be your stylist - which means I'm here to help you survive. Are you hungry?

KATNISS

I'm scared.

That came out reflexively, shocking her. Cinna's touched.

CINNA

I know.

He smiles warmly. That fast, a trust begins to grow.

KATNISS

How'd you get stuck with District 12?
I know all the stylists hate it.

CINNA

They lack imagination. Katniss, I asked for District 12. I wanted the challenge, and not because I like those stupid *coal-miner* outfits the Tributes from Twelve always get presented in. Right?

He might just be sincere. Human. He seems it. They sit.

CINNA (CONT'D)

I have an idea, but it's going to require you to trust me a little.

(a beat)

Are you afraid of fire, Katniss?

Yes, she is. On her face, we CUT TO:

INT. REMAKE CENTER - UNDERGROUND - NIGHT

Katniss wears a black unitard, knee-high leather boots, a cape of orange and yellow. Peeta's in the same outfit...

...as they stand on a CHARIOT. Four horses up front.

Up ahead, ANOTHER CHARIOT vanishes around a corner into the BRIGHT-LIGHTS of a street outside. But *our* Chariot hasn't been sent out yet. Cinna grins, excited.

CINNA

It's not *real* fire, of course. Just some synthetic flames Portia and I came up with. I want them to remember you. Be right back.

He steps a few feet away, where a woman named PORTIA fusses with a FLARE that seems to be malfunctioning. The two of them tinker with it as Katniss and Peeta wait, anxious.

KATNISS

What do you think about this?

PEETA

I'll rip off your cape if you rip off mine.

KATNISS

Deal.

CINNA (O.S.)

Okay, got it! Here we go!

He approaches, that flare LIT now. Katniss's eyes go wide.

CINNA (CONT'D)

Meet Katniss Everdeen - the Girl Who
Was on Fire!

He lights their capes on "fire". SYNTHETIC FLAMES suddenly rise up around us - looking awfully real.

CINNA

It works!

Thrilled, he makes a SSSSST sound at the HORSES up front. They begin to trot - and we're moving.

...all of it before Katniss can adjust to the fact that *her cape is now burning*. Cinna calls out to them:

CINNA (CONT'D)

Heads high! Smiles! They're going to love you! Oh, and hold hands!

...as we're pulled through MASSIVE OPEN DOORS and onto:

EXT. CITY CIRCLE - NIGHT

A wide boulevard - filled with CHARIOTS bearing the OTHER 11 PAIRS OF TRIBUTES, gliding ahead of us gracefully.

But none of *those* Tributes are on fire - which is why CHEERING CITIZENS, ten-deep, now *gape at the sight of us*, dazzled. Katniss has to SHOUT:

KATNISS

Shouldn't Haymitch be around to protect us from this sort of thing?

PEETA

Last thing I want is Haymitch near an open flame! Here.

He takes her hand. The CROWD ROARS: "Twelve! Twelve!" It's thrilling. Cinna gives a thumbs-up.

Katniss glances to her left, where a GIANT TV SCREEN gives her an oversized look at herself and Peeta, in flames. A gasp escapes her lips. *Is that me?!*

The crowd blows kisses, calling out her NAME now: "*Katniss! Katniss!*" It gives her an odd feeling of *hope*. A CITIZEN throws her a red rose. She catches it, blows a kiss back.

A HUNDRED HANDS reach up to catch her kiss. Wow. She looks down, noticing now that she is squeezing the color out of Peeta's hand. She releases it - until he stops her:

PEETA

No, don't let go of me. I might fall out of this thing!

KATNISS

Okay.

It feels now like every eye is on Katniss and Peeta, as:

INT. TV BOOTH - OVERLOOKING THE STREET - SAME

*

A BROADCAST BOOTH, like you'd see at The Rose Parade. CLAUDIUS TEMPLESMITH is doing play-by-play live. He has a special guest tonight: Seneca, doing "color".

*

*

TEMPLESMITH (ON TV)

Tell me, Mister Crane. What are you looking for at this point in the proceedings? What characteristics in a Tribute catch your eye?

SENECA

I'd imagine I'm looking for the same things bettors look for: athleticism, intelligence. Except my goal is to deliver a great event, as opposed to picking a winner.

TEMPLESMITH

That you do, Sir. That you do. Your Games can *always* be counted on for great drama and breathless pace!

(inside joke:)

And even on those rare occasions when they hit a slow patch, we know we can count on you to liven things up - when appropriate of course.

SENECA

Now, now, Claudius. Don't go starting trouble! You know that my Gamesmakers and I would never do *anything* to influence the outcome of The Games.

TEMPLESMITH

Just now and then! Only now and then!
(laughs...)

Dazzling display tonight from District 12; the crowd certainly seems taken with it. That's the girl who volunteered for her sister, hmm?

SENECA

Quite a thing. Probably the biggest moment District Twelve has given The Games in a few decades. Sad to say.

*
*
*

BACK TO KATNISS - cheers from the crowd flowing over her. It's an overwhelming experience - noise, light, energy. Then:

INT. TRAINING CENTER - CATACOMBS - MOMENTS LATER

Massive doors close behind us. The parade's over. *Silence*.
And the letdown is profound:

*
*

Buzz-kill, just like that as Katniss now faces ALL THE REST OF THE TRIBUTES. 22 children, most of whom will soon be dead.

They exit their chariots, disrobing like strippers backstage at a bad club. Katniss lets go of Peeta's hand.

PEETA

Thanks for keeping hold of me. I was getting a little shaky there.

KATNISS

It didn't show.

PEETA

You should wear flames more often.
They suit you.

That said with a shy smile that Katniss can almost believe. She removes her flaming cape. Above her is another HUGE TV:

TEMPLESMITH (ON TV)

Hopefully, she'll be the picture people remember from The Reaping - as opposed to Haymitch Abernathy's stumbling drunkenly on to the stage!

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*

Katniss notices the dark-skinned girl from District 11, RUE, just a child, looking awfully shaky as she removes her costume. For some reason, Katniss keeps staring at her... as:

SENECA (ON TV)

Frankly, that's something I wish
hadn't been aired. The Games are
meant to be family entertainment,
after all.

*
*

Katniss tightens, sick inside.

...which is when Haymitch and Effie arrive.

EFFIE

That was wonderful! Wonderful! I knew
there was a pretty girl under there
somewhere! And you too, Peeta.

Katniss barely heard that - still watching Rue...

EFFIE (CONT'D)

I always say, if you put enough
pressure on coal it turns to pearls!

KATNISS

Oysters.

*

EFFIE

Hmmm?

KATNISS

Pearls come from oysters.

*

Effie tightens...

Across the room are Tributes we'll come to know: CATO and CLOVE from District 2. GLIMMER and MARVEL from District 1 - all of them sculpted athletes. Katniss looks to Peeta.

KATNISS (CONT'D)

There they are. The Careers.

EFFIE

I really wish you'd stop using that
term, Katniss. It's unsportsmanlike.

Katniss notes a FOX-FACED GIRL from District 5, and a steely-looking kid from District 4 - call him BRAVURA - as a woman enters: CALLOWAY, carrying a large box. Effie sighs.

EFFIE (CONT'D)

Ugh. Paperwork!

CALLOWAY

Mentors, I have the Pre-Games Packages - please distribute them to your Tributes. All forms must be completed before entering the Training Center: burial preferences, organs to be donated, et cetera. There are also six personalized condolence cards in each package. If anyone needs more, please see me.

This said as if she were handing out sandwiches.

Katniss spots the tiny little wisp from District 11 again. Rue, whose hand is trembling so badly from fear that she *drops the papers her MENTOR just handed to her.*

The boy from District 11 is THRESH: huge, iron-strong... and kind. He calms Rue with a smile, grabs the papers for her...

...as Katniss watches, unable to turn away...

EFFIE

Don't let her distract you; it might just be a stunt.

(Katniss studies Effie)

Johanna Mason, a few years ago - she wept through the whole Training Week, never saw such a scared little puppy! Then Day One of the Games she hatcheted six kids in two minutes! And won! Sign, Dear. It's late.

Effie hands her a pen and the papers. Katniss glances at them, then at Peeta. He nods. She takes the pen...

... when she's brushed aside, rudely, by Cato - as he and the other Careers (Districts 1, 2, and 4), blow out of here.

She watches Cato go, then signs the papers...

EXT. COAL TRAIN - MOVING - DUSK

Gale, atop that bed of coal. He's hungry and cold. As the train pulls through a RURAL TRAIN STATION, he peeks out - and *sees something odd on the station platform:*

*
*

Those WILD DOGS - the size of bulls - we saw them hunted not long ago. A few of them sleep in chains on the platform, *drugged*, being loaded into TRANSPORT CAGES by HUNTERS.

Gale gets just a glimpse of it as the train pulls away...

INT. TRAINING CENTER - LOBBY - LATER EVENING

Effie lectures Katniss and Peeta while touring them through the TRAINING CENTER. Haymitch is here too, but only barely.

EFFIE

This is the Training Center, your home sweet home until the Games begin! Breakfast at seven, training during the day; at night you'll be making appearances. Do either of you have any special skills?

*
*
*

PEETA

Skills?

The place is teeming with SUPPORT STAFF - to clean, to bring towels, etc. Something odd about them though. Katniss takes notice... as Effie continues, with no help from Haymitch:

EFFIE

A talent that might be of use in the Arena. Anything.

PEETA

Katniss can shoot. Bow and arrow.

EFFIE

Then please don't go near one until Evaluation Day! Right, Haymitch?

*
*

Haymitch nods absently. So Effie has to continue:

*

EFFIE (CONT'D)

No need to let your competition know your strengths, you see?

*
*
*

KATNISS

Isn't Peeta my competition too?

Effie sighs, waiting for Haymitch to pounce. Forget it. The guy has checked out; it's less painful than engaging...

EFFIE

No. He's not. As of tonight he is your partner.

(Katniss doesn't get it)

The crowd loved you two as a couple up there. And where the crowds go, Sponsors follow! So from now on, you'll be joined at the hip - all through your Training Period.

Peeta nods. Katniss doesn't.

EFFIE

What about you, Peeta? Any special skills?

PEETA

I work all day. My father's bakery.

EFFIE

Oh. And what do you do for him?

PEETA

I make cakes.

HAYMITCH

That should come in handy - if you ever need to frost someone to death.

Katniss eyes Haymitch, *Thanks for chiming in.* Then:

KATNISS

He can wrestle. I've seen him. He's strong.

*

HAYMITCH

Congratulations. No wrestling during training. Confine yourselves to knot-tying or something.

*

*

*

Two CUSTODIANS pass by, pushing carts. Again, something odd about them - a dullness in their eyes...

EFFIE

As you can see, there are Avoxes all over the Training Center. They're here to make your stay more comfortable. So don't hesitate to--

KATNISS

What's an Avox?

HAYMITCH

My Goodness, what a rube.

(Katniss tightens)

Avoxes are criminals of the State, traitors. They work - and they don't bitch - mostly because their tongues've been cut out.

That sickened Katniss. She suddenly takes a second look at a TOWEL-BOY she'd just walked past, his eyes lifeless.

KATNISS
Doesn't look like a traitor to me.

HAYMITCH
I wonder if you might become less
sullen at some point.

*
*

No reply. An ELEVATOR OPENS. They enter.

EFFIE
Katniss, we really are all you've
got. You should treat us as friends.

Katniss's look says, "Not too likely."

EFFIE (CONT'D)
Well try and pretend!
(calmly smiling...)
See? Like this. I'm smiling at you
even though you're aggravating me.

INT. TRAINING CENTER - ELEVATOR - CONTINUING

Haymitch presses "12." The car starts to rise, quickly.

HAYMITCH
Twelve. Like the District. We get the
whole floor.

Katniss is unimpressed.

HAYMITCH (CONT'D)
You should listen to Effie, Darling;
you need to be liked this week. If
the people like you, you'll get more
Sponsors, and Sponsors pay for the
Gifts that might just keep you alive
once you're inside The Arena -
assuming *I like you enough* to send
them and *Seneca likes you enough* to
let me. So a little less... disdain
would make sense here. Wouldn't it?

Katniss pauses. Haymitch, Effie, and Peeta studying her...

KATNISS
My eyes.

HAYMITCH
Hmmm?

KATNISS
The organs I just agreed to donate.

*

The doors open. Katniss bursts out. They watch her go.

INT. CAPITOL - TRAINING CENTER - KATNISS'S ROOM - NIGHT

A clean, well-appointed room. Katniss enters, miserable.

Dinner is waiting here for her. On a silver tray. Steak, rice, salad... and a scoop of ice cream.

She *smashes the plates to the floor.* Backs away, reeling.

But that fast, her door opens - and a random, anonymous AVOX (female) enters with a tray. The Avox kneels down to clean up the mess. Katniss turns, embarrassed.

KATNISS

Oh. I can do that. It's my...

The Avox starts cleaning, gathering broken pieces...

Katniss can't take it. She bends down, and starts helping with the clean-up. Two girls, silently fixing a mess.

...until something takes Katniss's breath away: the *face* of this Avox - because we've seen her before.

She is *Lavinia*, the red-haired girl netted by that hovercraft in the forest last year, while Katniss did nothing to help... *

And now she's an Avox. Her tongue cut out. *Cleaning up a mess made by my tantrum.* Katniss sags, ashamed.

KATNISS (CONT'D)

I...

But there's nothing to say. Lavinia dips a napkin in some water, reaches for Katniss's hand - Katniss noticing only now that she'd cut herself when she smashed the dishes. *

Gently, slowly, Lavinia cleans Katniss's wound - Katniss too chagrinned to speak. Receiving kindness from a slave. *

KATNISS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I should have saved you. I should've tried.

No reply, of course. But there's a faint response in Lavinia's eyes. Then she takes the tray from the room. *

Katniss, alone again. It all feels like a horrifying dream.

EXT. TRAINING CENTER - ROOFTOP - LATER NIGHT

A door opens. Peeta steps on to the roof of the building.

...to find Katniss alone, eyeing the brightly-lit city below.

PEETA

Must be what a city looks like when
they leave the power on.

Katniss nods. Can't quite participate in small-talk.

PEETA (CONT'D)

If you were thinking of jumping,
don't bother.

He picks up a pebble, tosses it off the roof... It bounces back in mid-air, as if it'd hit an invisible wall.

PEETA (CONT'D)

Plasma field.

KATNISS

They're worried about our safety.
It's touching.

PEETA

I guess you're not too happy with our
support team.

KATNISS

I just don't like pretending. In a
couple days I'm gonna have to kill
you or you'll have to kill me or--

PEETA

Stop. I would never do that, Katniss.
I couldn't.

*
*

That threw Katniss, the certitude of it. She's silent.

PEETA (CONT'D)

I'm not going to let all this change
me - or turn me into something I'm
not.

*

KATNISS

You're not planning to kill anybody?

PEETA

No. I'll kill, like everyone else; I
can't go down without a fight. But, I
want the Capitol to see that they

*
*

(MORE)

PEETA (cont'd)

don't own me, that I'm more than just a piece of their Games. Ya know? If I die, I'm going to die *as myself*. I'm not gonna turn into a monster in there. 'Cause then they win.

*
*

KATNISS

They've won already. Don't you know that?

PEETA

What I mean is, you can count on me.

KATNISS

Well don't count on me, Peeta. I'm gonna do whatever I have to to get home again.

PEETA

Good. You should. But there's nothing wrong with letting people help you.

KATNISS

Right. I know. I'm supposed to smile a lot and try to charm everybody - or convince them what a great-looking *team* you and I make. And why? So my death will be more interesting to them. I can't do that. Can you?

(Peeta lets that go)

They're sending us in there to kill each other. *Oh, and on the way, give us some human-interest stuff too.* Sorry. When I die they can just say, "Well, there goes that sullen girl from District 12. Too bad we didn't get to know her better."

*
*

PEETA

What if going along might... give you a better chance to survive?

KATNISS

If that's all it takes, Peeta, I'm pretty sure you'll be the one who's still standing at the end.

That wounded him. She leaves him alone on the roof...

INT. TRAINING CENTER - GYM - DAY

A MASSIVE SPACE: stations set up for archery, knife-throwing, fire-building, rope-climbing, botany, wrestling, sprinting. The Tributes will be evaluated here. They file in now...

...as the Gamesmakers chat by a buffet. We find Haymitch, sampling the DRINK CART... until he sighs, and turns:

Betto is right behind Haymitch - ready to emasculate:

BETTO

It's touching, your dedication to
your Tributes. Makes me wonder why
Tributes from 12 always seem to lose!

He gestures to Katniss and Peeta, now entering the facility, *the only Tributes in here unaccompanied by a Mentor*. Great.

Haymitch puts his drink down, crosses the facility - unmoved by the looks of disdain from his fellow Mentors. He reaches Peeta, and a glaring Katniss. No "Hello".

HAYMITCH

You two will be evaluated last. The Gamesmakers are usually tired by then - you'll just have to get their attention somehow. Should be a good fit for you, Katniss, 'cause it's the only pre-Games event that won't require you to be pleasant.

Katniss notes the other Tributes: Cato, Clove, Marvel, Glimmer, Bravura... scoping the room out, undaunted.

KATNISS

That mean you want us to try today?

HAYMITCH

Absolutely. Your very best. Get a good score, and Sponsors will notice. Good luck! And may the odds be--

KATNISS

Thanks.

INT. TRAINING CENTER - GYM - DAY (VARIOUS)

QUICK CUTS - of *several Tributes being evaluated*:

-Glimmer, slicing a mannequin's head off with a sword.

-Cato, lifting a boulder, smashing it to the ground.

-Marvel, throwing a knife twenty yards at a target. Bullseye.

-Clove, sweep-kicking a MALE SPARRING PARTNER. He goes down.

-Thresh, crushing a mannequin with a swung mace.

-Rue, using stones to start a fire.

-FoxFace, racing through an obstacle course. Fast and agile.

-Bravura, hurling a trident. Another bullseye.

The GAMESMAKERS keep score, sort of. Some DRINKING has begun.

INT. TRAINING CENTER - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

A clock ticks. Peeta sits against a wall. Katniss paces, turns a corner, finds a water fountain. Leans in, until:

*

SENECA (O.S.)
Well. Miss Everdeen.

Seneca, a foot away. Smiling. Katniss tightens. All her bravado suddenly gone...

KATNISS
Sir. Hi...

SENECA
Brave thing you did, volunteering for your sister like that.

KATNISS
Thank you.

SENECA
You know, it's funny. I can control everything about the Games - except who's in them. So whenever we get a Tribute with a... compelling personal story, it's always very gratifying. How have your accommodations been?

KATNISS
Fine.

SENECA
Good. And have you seen any of the Evaluation sessions today?

*
*

KATNISS
Oh, no. We've been in a Holding Room all day. I think the Judges don't want us checking out the competition.

*
*
*
*

SENECA
Can I tell you a secret?

*
*

Huh? Katniss nods. Seneca leans in, and whispers:

*

SENECA (CONT'D)
You just met him.

*
*

Then he's gone. Katniss's hands are suddenly shaking...

*

INT. TRAINING CENTER - GYM - MOMENTS LATER

Katniss enters the gym. The Gamesmakers barely turn. Some of them tipsy now, most of them eyeing the BUFFET to their left.

She crosses to the ARCHERY STATION, grabs a bow and arrows, takes aim at a DUMMY fifty yards away. Only half the Gamesmakers are even watching. She fires.

...and misses left. A few more Gamesmakers turn away.

Irritated, she makes a slight adjustment in the bow.

...and fires THREE RAPID SHOTS - hitting the Dummy in the heart, then the head, then severing the rope by which it hangs - but the Gamesmakers still aren't watching - because:

GAMESMAKERS
Hey!/That looks wonderful!/It's about
time!/Fresh Meat!

An AVOX just walked in with a ROASTED PIG on a tray. The Gamesmakers now have their backs completely turned to Katniss. It's infuriating - and her reaction is instant:

She grabs an arrow, takes dead aim... and lets it fly.

THWAK! The arrow hits the APPLE in the pig's mouth, *pinning the pig to a wall* - as the Gamesmakers drop to the floor in frightened surprise. Silence hovers...

Katniss, as shocked as any of them, drops her bow.

KATNISS
Thanks for your consideration.

She heads for a door - passing Haymitch.

HAYMITCH
Smart, Katniss. Real smart.

KATNISS
What can they do to me - kick me out
of The Games?

HAYMITCH
No. But they might do something to
your mother. Or to Prim.

That stopped Katniss flat...

HAYMITCH (CONT'D)
The Capitol doesn't appreciate
dissent. Haven't you noticed?

Just then she realizes... that *Seneca has been watching from* *
one floor up. Dread rockets through her now. She runs out... *

INT. TRAINING CENTER - KATNISS'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Katniss enters, shuts the door, slides down to the floor.

And she lets it hit, *for the first time*, the terror and
despair of all this. Tears come - in a wave, shaking her...
Just a lost, frightened kid - sobbing... when:

EFFIE (O.S.)
Katniss? Katniss?

Effie, at the door, banging on it. Katniss can't move...

KATNISS
Please go away. Please...

Effie keeps at it. Pounding. Katniss sobs, to no one...

KATNISS (CONT'D)
I wanna go home. Prim, I wanna come
home! *

Lost, as the sun sets on the artificial candy Capitol...

INT. GAMES CENTER - SAME

Seneca enters Mission Control. Everyone tightens. Electronic
BOARDS are alive with incoming data.

SENECA
The Pre-Val scores have all been sent
to your screens. Please see that
they're posted.

Betto looks at his screen. On it, a NUMERICAL SCORE beside *
the name of every Tribute. Cato got a 10, Glimmer a 9, Marvel
a 9, Rue a 7, Thresh a 10, Bravura an 8, Peeta an 8...

...but there's no score beside Katniss's name. Betto pauses. *

BETTO
Sir? Katniss Everdeen? *

SENECA
Yes. Give her an Eleven.

Silence in here. Maybe they heard him wrong. Seneca waits...

BETTO
Um... Sir?

*

SENECA
If she gets to a bow and arrow in
there she's a very legitimate
contender.

That felt like a lie, but no one's going to say so.

SENECA (CONT'D)
Just post it.

No explanation. He just heads for his office...

INT. TRAINING CENTER - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

EYE SHADOW, applied to Katniss's closed eyes - as we HEAR:

EFFIE (O.S.)
Head up high, your hands should never
be off your lap. And posture, very
important. Strength and femininity.

CINNA (O.S.)
Thank you, Effie. Katniss, you can
open your eyes now.

Katniss's eyes open now... and she is stunned:

...by HER OWN REFLECTION: arms stenciled, hair woven in a
lovely braid down one shoulder, make-up subtle and elegant.
And a jeweled DRESS, accented with tongues of fire.

Not pretty. Not beautiful. *Radiant as the sun.*

EFFIE
Well there you are! A pearl!

Cinna is beaming. His team squeals with delight. Katniss
still hasn't spoken. Just too floored. Cinna gets it.

CINNA
Give us a moment, all right?

His team EXITS. Effie shrugs unhappily, follows them. Now
it's just Cinna and Katniss. She still hasn't spoken.

KATNISS

I look like....

CINNA

Like the girl you were meant to be.
Let me see a twirl.

She twirls, almost allowing the thrill of it.

CINNA (CONT'D)

Oh Katniss...

(she blushes)

I hope the Sponsors really see you
tonight. Like *this*. The real you.

KATNISS

Haymitch says I'm sullen and hostile.

CINNA

You are - around Haymitch.

(that helped)

Forget him tonight. Once those
cameras are on, try to pretend you're
talking to a best friend back home.
Do you have someone like that?

KATNISS

Yeah. His name's Gale. But he hates
all this.

CINNA

He loves you, though. Doesn't he.

KATNISS

I dunno.

CINNA

Well, when you see me sitting in that
audience, *pretend I'm him*. Can you do
that?

(she nods)

Listen, I lied to you the other day -
about the reason I asked for District
12. It was you, Katniss. What you did
for your sister, how brave you were.
Tonight requires... a different kind
of bravery, okay?

(that registered)

Let them love you out there. It might
just save you.

EXT. AMPHITHEATRE - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Katniss joins the OTHER TRIBUTES, each made-over, backstage at an AMPHITHEATRE. Peeta, in a black suit with flame accents, nods to her. No one else acknowledges her at all.

...except for Rue, in a gossamer gown with wings, who offers her a nervous smile. Katniss mouths to her: *"You look nice."*

Rue blushes, as a MAN rushes past. He is CAESAR FLICKERMAN - his face painted white; his hair, lips, and eyelids powder blue. His suit dotted with tiny light bulbs. We hear:

TEMPLESMITH (O.S.)
Ladies and gentlemen, your host for
the evening, Caesar Flickerman!

EXT. AMPHITHEATRE - BROADCAST STAGE - CONTINUING

LOUD APPLAUSE. Peppy music. A STAGE with 24 CHAIRS on it...

...as Flickerman bounces out, urging more applause...

FLICKERMAN
Thank you, and welcome to the show!
I hope you've brought your appetite
for fun, because tonight I go one-on-
one with the Tributes for the 74th
Hunger Games! And here they are!

More APPLAUSE - as the Tributes walk on stage, single file, filling those waiting chairs. Katniss is almost on stage when *Haymitch tugs at her arm* - eyeing her and Peeta.

HAYMITCH
Remember, you're still a happy pair -
so act like it.

Peeta nods. Katniss too, sort of. Haymitch pushes them out.

...onto the Stage, where APPLAUSE echoes, CAMERAS everywhere. In the Balconies are the Gamesmakers. Katniss braces herself, all too aware that all of Panem is watching:

EXT. CITY CIRCLE - NIGHT

Nothing moves. CITIZENS watching on giant screens.

EXT. DISTRICT 12 - TOWN SQUARE - SAME

Every citizen of The Seam, watching, hoping... as:

EXT. AMPHITHEATRE - BROADCAST STAGE - NIGHT (VARIOUS)

Marvel, interviewed by Flickerman. 23 other Tributes waiting. *

FLICKERMAN *

Marvel, we hear so much about
alliances formed during The Games -
tributes banding together in the
early stages. Do you have a strategy
in that regard? *

MARVEL *

Seems really weird to me, joining up
with people you're supposed to be
competing with. I think I'd be better
off just killing them. *

FLICKERMAN *

Oh my... *

Laughter and applause from the crowd - as we CUT TO: *

-Cato, getting his turn now: *

FLICKERMAN *

Cato, you're from District Two, which
has produced the last two winners of
The Games. Does that bring any burden
with it for you? *

CATO *

(calm as Tom Brady:)

It is a great responsibility, a lot
to live up to. But it's also a
privilege - to follow in the
footsteps of such great champions. I
just have to match their intensity. *

Warm applause. Katniss hates this guy already. We JUMP TO: *

-Foxface, the red-headed girl from 5. *

FLICKERMAN

So your name's Marissa but everyone
calls you Foxface. Because you're a
redhead?

FOXFACE

No, Sir. Because I'm tricky.

Sly grin. *She holds up his wristwatch.*

FLICKERMAN

My watch!

He looks at his bare wrist in astonishment. The audience LAUGHS appreciatively. We CUT TO:

-Bravura, flexing huge arms for Flickerman to gape at:

FLICKERMAN

Can you really lift two hundred pounds?

Bravura grabs Flickerman and lifts him over his head. Wow.

FLICKERMAN (CONT'D)

I guess he can!

Big applause. We CUT TO:

-Rue, in that gossamer gown, a shy butterfly.

RUE

I'm very hard to catch. And if they can't catch me, they can't kill me. So don't rule me out.

FLICKERMAN

I wouldn't in a million years, Darling.

He puts his arm around her and kisses the top of her head. An AWWWWW rises from the crowd. We CUT TO:

-Thresh, arms crossed with hostility, staring straight ahead.

FLICKERMAN

Do you have a weapon of choice, Thresh?

THRESH

I like knives.

FLICKERMAN

Any special reason?

THRESH

I think you should be close enough to look somebody in the eyes when you kill them. Distance is for cowards.

*
*
*

FLICKERMAN

Perhaps I'll just scoot my chair a few inches farther away from you!

Big laughter and applause. Thresh sits. Flickerman looks to Katniss, who wipes her hands nervously on her dress.

FLICKERMAN (CONT'D)
And now, from District Twelve, the
girl who was on fire, Katniss
Everdeen!

Katniss crosses to Flickerman amidst APPLAUSE.

FLICKERMAN (CONT'D)
Katniss, when you came out in the
opening ceremonies, my heart actually
stopped. What did you think about
that costume?

And Katniss goes blank. Silence. Uh-oh...

Then she spots Cinna, in the audience. That helps.

KATNISS
You mean after I got over my fear of
being burned alive?

The audience LAUGHS.

FLICKERMAN
Yes. Start then.

KATNISS
I thought Cinna was brilliant and it
was the most gorgeous costume I'd
ever seen. I couldn't believe I was
wearing it. I can't believe I'm
wearing this either!

Katniss looks to Cinna, who makes the tiniest circular motion
with his finger, *twirl for me*. Katniss hesitates... then:

She twirls. The Audience eats it up.

FLICKERMAN
Oh do that again!

She does so. More love from the Audience.

FLICKERMAN (CONT'D)
I would give you, and that dress, an
ELEVEN - which reminds me of your
Training Score. Tell us about that.

Katniss pauses demurely... then:

KATNISS

All I can say is, I think it was a first.

FLICKERMAN

Are you at all afraid it might put a target on your back? *

KATNISS

I doubt my fellow Tributes paid much attention to it. *

FLICKERMAN

Brave girl! Let's go back to the moment they called your sister's name at The Reaping. And you volunteered. Can you tell us about her? *

Not an easy thing to do. Katniss gathers herself...

KATNISS

Her name's Prim. She's just twelve. And I love her more than anything.

FLICKERMAN

What did she say to you after The Reaping?

KATNISS

She asked me to try really hard to win. And I swore I would.

FLICKERMAN

I bet you did. I bet you did.
(that hovers...)
Sorry we're out of time. Best of luck, Katniss Everdeen, Tribute from District Twelve!

BIG APPLAUSE. Cinna gives Katniss a thumbs up. She sits, as: *

FLICKERMAN (CONT'D)

And welcome Peeta Mellark!

More applause. Peeta rises. Katniss watches him go... *

FLICKERMAN (CONT'D)

Peeta, you were covered in flames as well, hmmm?

PEETA

Yeah, but it's different for me. I run the ovens at my family's bakery.
(MORE)

PEETA (cont'd)
So I catch on fire two, three times a week anyway.

The audience LAUGHS. Katniss is watching, assessing him.

FLICKERMAN
Then you're used to danger.

PEETA
My *mother* - when we don't get our deliveries made on time - that's danger.

More LAUGHTER. Peeta is shockingly good at this...

FLICKERMAN
Do you have a girlfriend back home?

PEETA
No.

FLICKERMAN
A handsome lad like you? There must be some special girl. Come on, what's her name?

Peeta sighs, charming the crowd. Katniss just a spectator.

PEETA
Well, there is this one girl. I've had a crush on her ever since I can remember. But it's not reciprocated.

Crowd MURMURS sympathetically.

FLICKERMAN
Oh. She have another fellow?

PEETA
I don't know. A lot of boys like her.

FLICKERMAN
So here's what you do. You win, and return home in triumph. She can't turn you down then, eh?

PEETA
Actually, with *this* girl, winning won't help me.

FLICKERMAN
Why ever not?

PEETA

Because...she came here with me.

What?! We PUSH IN ON Katniss; her eyes wide: *Me! He means me!*
The STUDIO CAMERAS bore in on her, capturing forever her look of surprise and protest. The CROWD sighs.

...as Peeta milks it, staring at his shoetops...

FLICKERMAN

That is a bad piece of luck.

PEETA

It's not good.

FLICKERMAN

I can hardly blame you. It'd be hard
not to fall for that young lady.

More applause. Katniss smoldering. Peeta smiling nervously...
A few in the audience weeping now.

FLICKERMAN (CONT'D)

Wouldn't you just love to pull her
back up here and get a response?!

(the CROWD roars)

Sadly, rules are rules, and her time
is up. But best of luck to you, Peeta
Mellark - and I think I speak for all
of Panem when I say our hearts go
with yours.

PEETA

Thank you.

He returns to his seat. The crowd cheers. Katniss stares
straight ahead. A BAND starts playing the NATIONAL ANTHEM.

Everyone in the building rises - but the SCREENS in here are
filled with a single TWO-SHOT, Katniss and Peeta, the newly-
minted stars of this show. On her face, burning, we CUT TO:

EXT. AMPHITHEATRE - BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

BOOM! Katniss puts both palms into Peeta's chest, knocking
him backward. He falls into a potted plant, cutting his hand.

PEETA

What was that for?

KATNISS

You had no right to do that!

Effie and Haymitch rush over, alarmed.

HAYMITCH
What happened?!

PEETA
Nothing. I fell.

Haymitch pulls Peeta up, noting the blood on Peeta's hand.

KATNISS
Did you put him up to this?

HAYMITCH
I wish I had. It played great.

That angered her even more. Peeta stays silent.

EFFIE
You owe him a *thank you*, Katniss. You just crossed-over out there!

KATNISS
What the hell does that mean?

HAYMITCH
It means he just gave everybody outside District Twelve a reason to give a damn about you.

KATNISS
He made me look weak.

HAYMITCH
He made you look desirable, which *might* be enough to save your life tomorrow. The Star-Crossed Lovers from District 12. Sponsors go for--

KATNISS
But we're not Star-Crossed Lovers!

HAYMITCH
Then fake it. Because whatever those people want to buy, it's our job to sell it to them. Understand?
(a beat)
Or would you rather do it your way - and die?

Katniss eyes them both... then walks away. We DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRAINING CENTER - KATNISS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Katniss, alone. It's the night before the Games, and she's a wreck, no chance of sleeping. Staring at that Mockingjay pin.

Then, a knock at her door. Must be Peeta. Great. She crosses to it, annoyed. Opens it.

That fast, her jaw drops - because:

Gale is standing here. Cleaned up. Dressed like an AVOX.

GALE

Hi, Katniss.

Before Katniss can formulate a reply, we CUT TO:

INT. TRAINING CENTER - DINING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Haymitch sits alone - buzzed, not hammered - until:

EFFIE (O.S.)

You really ought to get some sleep
tonight, Haymitch.

Effie. She seems less pitched than usual. More genuine.

EFFIE (CONT'D)

Are you sober?

HAYMITCH

Basically. Mostly. Had to honor my
pledge to our Tributes.

(no reply)

Besides, tonight is not about booze.
It's about bread and circuses.

EFFIE

Huh?

HAYMITCH

Somebody asked a Roman emperor once,
"How do you get a public to give up
all its rights without a protest?"
And he said, "Easy. Just give them
bread and circuses."

EFFIE

Haymitch! Govern yourself! People
could be listening.

And she goes. He pounds his fist on the table...

INT. TRAINING CENTER - KATNISS'S COMPARTMENT - RESUMING

Katniss pulls Gale into her room, scared to death for him.

KATNISS

How did you--

GALE

A coal train. Then I stole an i.d. to get around the city.

KATNISS

That was reckless, Gale. They kill people for infiltrating the Capitol.

GALE

I thought I could help you.

KATNISS

You can help me by taking care of Prim and my mother. I can't do this if I'm worrying about--

*

GALE

It's Prim that asked me to come. She wanted you to see something.

*

*

KATNISS

Oh.

He extracts something from inside the jumpsuit he's been wearing. Four pieces of ARTIST'S PAPER. He lays them out:

*

FOUR DRAWINGS OF KATNISS stare up at us now. Sketches, lovingly rendered. Beautiful... She sags a bit.

KATNISS (CONT'D)

Gale. You shouldn't've--

*

GALE

I didn't draw them, Katniss. Peeta did. We saw his Mom throwing them into a dumpster after The Reaping.

*

Katniss is silent; it's a lot to take in.

GALE (CONT'D)

You don't like trusting people; I know that. But this time you should. He'll protect you.

*

*

KATNISS

How do you know?

GALE

Guys do dumb things sometimes, when
they're...

The sentence fades; he can't finish it. Tons going unsaid.

KATNISS

We didn't get to say goodbye, before.

GALE

No. And I'm not gonna say it now.
'Cause I'm planning to see you again,
after The Games. Okay?
(she shrugs, doubts it)
You're the best hunter I know,
Katniss. Even better than me. You
know how to kill.

KATNISS

Not people.

GALE

How different can it be, really?

That hovers. They're both sad as hell.

KATNISS

You should go. There's a curfew.

GALE

I'm serious. I'm not saying goodbye.

KATNISS

Then...

She puts those three fingers to her lips, offering him *that same wordless gesture*. He nods, eyes welling. Returns it.

Then he opens the door. And *her eyes go wide once again*:

...because Lavinia is out here, waiting in the hall. Gale
nods to her - which tells Katniss that Lavinia *is the one who*
got him into this building. Hence Katniss's utter awe.

GALE

We'll be watching...

Katniss is speechless. Lavinia can't acknowledge it. Gale
nods, smiles... then follows the Avox down the hall...

INT. CAPITOL - JUVENAL CASINO/SPORTS BOOK - LATE NIGHT

A decadent showplace, acres of brightly-lighted darkness.

GIANT ELECTRONIC BOARDS in here give us COLOR-CODED ODDS on every sporting event in Panem - numbers that change at dizzying speeds as bets come in from across the nation.

One electronic wall is dedicated solely to the Hunger Games.

There are "proposition bets" here - odds on which Tribute will die first, what the first cause of death will be, and an "over-under" on how many Tributes will fall on the first day.

And, of course, there are odds on who's going to win.

At the top are the favorites. Cato at 3-to-1. Marvel at 7-to-2. Thresh at 4-to-1. Peeta's way down, at 25-to-1. Even at this hour, the line at the BETTING WINDOWS is twenty-deep.

Haymitch stands in the back of the Sports Book, eyeing all those numbers... until his eyes land on the BOTTOM of the betting board, where the LONG-SHOTS are listed.

There, listed at 100-to-1... is Katniss Everdeen. *

Haymitch tightens. She's going to die, and he knows it.

INT. TRAINING CENTER - KATNISS'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Dawn breaks. Katniss awakens... and gasps:

...because *Haymitch is here, kneeling by the edge of her bed.* Hasn't slept all night. He leans in with quiet urgency:

HAYMITCH

When the gong sounds, get the hell out of there. The Cornucopia is always a blood-bath, and you're not up to it. Just clear out, put as much distance as you can between yourself and the others, and find a source of water. I'm not gonna send you anything you can find on your own.

Katniss nods. He's about to go on, when:

A MOUNTED TV pops on, "Reminding all Tributes to wake up and gather in the Lobby of the Training Center!"

Haymitch eyes it anxiously. Katniss too... until:

HAYMITCH (CONT'D)

Remember this - it's important:
You don't win in there by killing
people - despite what Seneca thinks.
You win by not dying.

(MORE)

*

HAYMITCH (CONT'D)

(Katniss nods)

Run. Hide. Cheat if you have to. Let them kill each other. But stay alive.

*

Katniss got that, every word. On her face, we CUT TO:

INT. HOVERCRAFT - FLYING - MORNING

The Tributes are airlifted in a HOVERCRAFT. No one talks - just eyeing one another, or the floor.

A NURSE carrying a nasty-looking SYRINGE approaches Katniss.

NURSE

Still, please. This is your tracker.

Katniss nods. Nurse injects her forearm, painfully, and moves on to Rue. Katniss stares out the window. Wilderness below...

Then the windows suddenly BLACK OUT - screens rising up.

PEETA

I guess we're getting close...

INT. TRANSPORT - MOVING - MORNING

A VAN, its windows BLACKED OUT. The Tributes ride in silence. Fists clenching, unclenching, feet tapping, throats clearing, Cato doing PUSH-UPS. The van disappears into a tunnel...

INT. UNKNOWN UNDERGROUND SITE - CORRIDOR - MORNING

A PEACEKEEPER leads Katniss to a door. On it, the words, *"This Launch Room was used on Day One of the 74th Hunger Games by Katniss Everdeen - Female, District 12."*

Peacekeeper opens the door, revealing a dressing room.

INT. UNKNOWN UNDERGROUND SITE - LAUNCH ROOM - MORNING

She's in simple tawny pants, light green blouse, brown belt, thin hooded black jacket, leather boots over socks. Cinna braids her hair. Katniss just stares. Numb silence.

CINNA

Expect some cool nights. The jacket's designed to reflect body heat.

She nods, tries to affix her mockingjay pin onto her outfit. But *her hand is shaking so badly, she can't do it.*

Cinna smiles warmly, takes the pin, affixes it for her.

CINNA (CONT'D)
Do you want to talk, Katniss?

She shakes her head. He takes her hand. There are no words.

Just dread, hanging... until *they hear a GONG* - and their eyes lock - *as the voice echoes loudly*:

TEMPLESMITH (V.O.)
Ladies and gentlemen, let the 74th
Hunger Games begin!

So this is it. She shuts her eyes tight. Opens them again. *
Cinna nods, trying to be of comfort. But he's fighting tears. *
Katniss moves to a CIRCLE cut into the floor. So scared... *

CINNA
I want you to know something - we're
not allowed to bet. But if I could,
my money would be on you.
(she half-nods)
Good luck, Girl on Fire...

She shakes, *terrified*, as the circle - a PLATFORM - rises,
pushing her up. The ceiling above her OPENS into darkness.

INT. CYLINDER - MOVING - CONTINUING

She stands on the platform, rising through a pitch-black
CYLINDER. Heart thumping. As she hears:

TEMPLESMITH (V.O.)
Tributes, the Arena is about to be
revealed to you. DO NOT leave your
platform until the countdown has
concluded. The penalty will be
severe.

The platform rises. Then, BLINDING LIGHT from above.
DAYLIGHT. Katniss's cylinder now emerges from blackness, to:

EXT. THE ARENA - CORNUCOPIA - CONTINUING

And she sees it, at last: the ARENA. It's a FOREST - to her
right is a LAKE. To her left, sparse piney WOODS.

And all around her, the 23 OTHER TRIBUTES, each emerging just
as she does, their platforms settling now. 24 sets of eyes
landing on the very same thing - 100 yards from here:

A giant golden CORNUCOPIA, its mouth 20 feet high, spilling
over with *life itself*: food, water containers, fire-starters,
medicine, blankets, backpacks, and WEAPONS. As we hear:

TEMPLESMITH (V.O.)
Good Luck! And may the odds be ever
in your favor!

A CLOCK begins to tick down. 60, 59, 58, 57...

Katniss scans the Cornucopia - all those weapons. Knives, spears, maces, clubs. And a BOW AND ARROWS...

40 seconds, 39, 38... There's nothing but a plain of hard-packed dirt between her and that bow, except the fact that the 23 other Tributes might be running for it too.

She swallows hard, her breaths shallow. Watching the others: Cato, Clove, Marvel, Glimmer, Thresh, Bravura - they all look so steely. Aren't they terrified too? They don't seem it.

But Rue does. The little thing is trembling. Fox-Face too...

20 seconds, 19, 18... The whole world is that bow. Katniss has to have it. Then she sees Peeta, looking right at her... *shaking his head as if to talk her out of running for it.*

Concentration broken, that fast. Katniss loses her edge.

Nine seconds, 8, eyes darting, 6, 5, hands clenched, 3, 2...

...until Bravura can't wait any longer. He steps off his platform just as the clock hits one, and:

...he EXPLODES, just like that. A LANDMINE - sending pieces of him spraying in all directions. The countdown stops.

No one breathes. Or blinks. We hear a CANNON BLAST.

Then the clock resumes - ONE, ZERO - before Katniss can regroup. And a LOUD GONG goes off.

...and it has begun. *The Tributes burst from their platforms, racing for the Cornucopia.*

It's a dizzying, chaotic blur - CHILDREN, running for weapons. We hear our first SCREAM. Katniss turns. A GROAN nearby - someone dying. CANNON BLAST #2.

There's a loaf of bread ten feet away, beside a folded up sheet of plastic and an orange BACKPACK. Katniss lunges forward, grabs the bread, the plastic, and...

Wait, there are suddenly FOUR HANDS on the backpack: hers and those of the BOY FROM 9. They grapple for it. Both confused, disoriented, desperate. His eyes narrow, determined.

Then a lost look crosses them. And red spray plumes from his mouth. He staggers forward, releasing his grip on the pack.

...revealing a knife in his back - thrown from 20 yards away - by *Clove, who has two more knives in hand*. Katniss freezes.

Then she wheels, sprinting away while throwing the backpack over her shoulders. We hear a deadly WHIZZING sound...

This knife implants itself in the backpack. Katniss keeps running, doesn't look back, leaving behind the horror of the Cornucopia. Adolescents killing each other.

And each time a body falls, another CANNON BLAST can be heard. Three, four, five... Katniss keeps running. We CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - MOVING - 20 MINUTES LATER (DAY)

*

Katniss still running. She pulls off the backpack and removes the knife, slides the knife into her belt...

*

*

EXT. FOREST VALLEY - MOVING - DAY

The land slopes down into a VALLEY. Katniss is jogging now, head on a swivel - looking for danger... or water.

Up ahead, she sees a rabbit. She reaches for her bow - out of habit. But she doesn't have one. Takes a tentative step.

Startled, the rabbit runs away. Katniss swallows hard.

EXT. TREE - DAY

Katniss sits, parched and panting. Opens the backpack.

The contents: One thin black sleeping bag, pack of crackers, pack of beef strips, bottle of iodine, box of wooden matches, coil of wire, sunglasses, a half-gallon water jug - EMPTY.

EXT. ANOTHER TREE - DAY

Desperately thirsty, she cuts into a tree with the knife, slicing away the outer bark to get to a softer inner bark. Not easy to chew, but it'll have to do.

EXT. A THIRD TREE - DAY

She rigs a TWITCH-UP SNARE at the base of a tree. In the distance, MORE CANNON BLASTS, several of them.

EXT. TREE BRANCH - NIGHT

*

Katniss, on a branch 50 feet up, bunking in:

*

She loops her BELT around a branch to secure her sleeping bag. Climbs in the bag...

*
*

EXT. CORNUCOPIA - NIGHT

Hours ago, there was a bloodbath here. Now all is still. Bodies lie on the ground, mere feet from the Cornucopia.

Then DUST kicks up, a furious gust of air... as a HOVERCRAFT descends. Tentacle-like ARMS extend from it, gathering the bodies one by one, pulling them up and in...

INT. GAMES CENTER - SAME

Seneca watches 13 SCREENS at once - monitoring each Tribute.

TEMPLESMITH (V.O., ON TV)
Night One ends with eleven Tributes dead, thirteen still in play. It's always thrilling to guess how it'll unfold from here, now that the jitters of Day One have gone and the Tributes have a moment to strategize. Their Mentors begin to play a role now too, scrambling to line up the Sponsors whose gifts might mean the difference between life and death. Certainly is a good time to have rich benefactors! By the way, for all you *gamblers* out there, the first three deaths today were the Boy from 4, and the Girls from 6 and 10. A 200-to-1 shot if you bet it as an Exacta!

EXT. TREE BRANCH - NIGHT (RESUMING)

Katniss is alone. NIGHT CREATURES chitter around her. Above her, IMAGES are projected onto the sky. FACES... of today's casualties: Bravura, and the Boy from 9, and others.

But *no Peeta*. Katniss sighs, relieved. The last face is replaced by the CAPITOL SEAL, as the sounds of the NATIONAL ANTHEM begin to soar...

INT. STAIRWELL - LOCATION UNKNOWN - NIGHT

Lavinia, the Avox, walks down a dank, dark STAIRWELL - Gale right behind her. Then Lavinia opens a door, revealing:

*
*

INT. AVOX BARRACKS - LOCATION UNKNOWN - CONTINUING

That fast, Gale is breathless. Aghast at what he's seeing:

An underground BARRACKS. Row after row of tin BUNKS, triple-stacked; swap the tin for wood and this'd be Auschwitz. Filthy. Scary. Home to 5,000 miserable INMATES:

Avoxes - of every age. In every bunk. Their spirits broken, eyes lifeless. Gale turns, stunned and humbled.

GALE

This is where they... keep you?

Lavinia nods. Gale's floored. She leads him to an empty bunk. *

EXT. ARENA - TREE BRANCH - PRE-DAWN *

Katniss, belted onto that branch, is awakened - by the sound of SNAPPING TWIGS. Her eyes bounce open, instant vigilance.

A GIRL TRIBUTE runs by, fifty feet below - tired, hungry, scared. The Girl finds a nearby rock to hide behind. Katniss stays still. SUPER: "**DAY TWO**".

Then, a distinct sound: two rocks being rubbed together, sparking. And... SMOKE, a thin wisp of it, rising up from behind that rock. Katniss mutters, incredulous, to no one:

KATNISS

Idiot.

The smoke snakes its way up. Her eyes close. We CUT TO:

EXT. TREE BRANCH - ONE HOUR LATER (DAWN) *

Katniss is awakened again - this time by the HEAVY FOOTFALLS of SEVERAL PAIRS OF BOOTS, coming right at her. Trouble.

She goes rigid, frightened to see SIX TRIBUTES down there, running this way - hunting as a pack. Not good.

They flank the large rock that the Fire-Starter is behind... and Katniss hears the rest: A shocked scream. A plea for mercy. "Please!"... Then death. Followed by a CANNON BLAST.

The PACK-MEMBERS emerge from behind the rock. Katniss can see their arms, legs - then faces - both Tributes from 1, both Tributes from 2, the Girl from 4. And their voices now:

GLIMMER

What's he doing back there?

CLOVE

He's such a romantic - maybe he's cutting her heart out!

The others laugh; then a THIRD BOY emerges from the kill.

And *Katniss's eyes go wide*. Utterly shocked to see:

PEETA

Let's go.

...Peeta. Face swollen, a bloody bandage on his arm, *fighting in a pack with these monsters*. A horrible betrayal.

Katniss is frozen. *I must be seeing things*. But she's not. It's Peeta. The Pack drifts away, as:

CATO

Okay. Now we find your girlfriend.

PEETA

I tried to tell you, she wouldn't be dumb enough to start a fire.

With that they're gone. Katniss is livid, reeling, as:

INT. DISTRICT 12 - THE SEAM - SCHOOLROOM - DAY

Prim sits at a ragged desk in a threadbare SCHOOLROOM. Her whole class watches The Games on a beautiful TELEVISION. So Prim is watching her sister, as:

TEMPLESMITH (ON TV)

Pack-hunting is a sound strategy; we see it every year. But it's the first time I can recall a Tribute from Twelve being included in one. *Katniss* seems pretty shocked by it too! Some boyfriend, that Peeta! Ouch!

Templesmith chuckles. Prim just shuts her eyes, whispers:

PRIM

Katniss...

EXT. TREE BRANCH - RESUMING

Stillness. Then the top of this tree begins to blow sideways - *
Katniss has to hang on, literally. A WHOOSH OF AIR.

...it's another HOVERCRAFT, descending. The arms extend from it, disappearing behind that boulder. Next thing Katniss sees is the body of Fire-Starter Girl, vanishing into the craft.

EXT. FOREST - LATER DAY

A SCORCHING SUN overhead - Katniss panting as she walks.

*

*

She pulls those SUNGLASSES from her backpack, tries them on. *

They distort her vision entirely. She puts them back again, drags herself to the site of the SNARE she'd set up. Inside, a dead rabbit. She grabs it, wearily.

EXT. FIRE-STARTER SITE - DAY

She cooks the rabbit over the still-hot coals of the fire left behind by the dead girl.

But no smoke rises from it because she's rigged a CLOTH over the fire, propped up by sticks, to absorb the smoke.

Her lips have cracked. She coats them with grease from the rabbit. Swallowing is an effort, like razors in her throat.

EXT. FIRE-STARTER SITE - LATER DAY

She wraps up half the rabbit, puts it in her pack. Steps out from the tree's shade... into that killing sun again...

EXT. GLADE - TWO HOURS LATER (DAY)

Parched, weak, she snaps a branch in two, turns it into a walking stick. Up ahead is a patch of BERRIES. At last.

She kneels down, grabs at them, *just about to pop them into her mouth...* when she stops herself. She knows these berries.

KATNISS

Nightlock.

She tosses them away and keeps going.

EXT. GLEN - HOURS LATER (DAY)

Katniss sags against a boulder - lips burning, eyes shut, sun beating down on her. What comes out is a barely audible plea:

KATNISS

Water, Haymitch. Please...

INTERCUT WITH/INT. GAMES CENTER - HAYMITCH'S QUARTERS - SAME

Haymitch, of course, is watching. Effie eyes him.

HAYMITCH

Water she can find on her own...

He pours himself a cup of COFFEE, slugs down a bitter gulp.

EXT. MUDDY PATCH - AN HOUR LATER

Katniss stumbles, weary. The ground starts to spin. She keeps moving, leaning on that stick.

Then she drops, collapsing. Silence.

INT. GAMES CENTER - HAYMITCH'S QUARTERS - SAME

Haymitch just saw that, of course - Katniss, in a heap...

INT. ARENA - MUDDY PATCH - RESUMING

*

Katniss is flat on her back, delirious. We MOVE IN ON HER FACE - then down her shoulders, an arm, a hand, fingers...

...when we notice that they're moving in something. Mud.

That means water. Her eyes SNAP OPEN. She rolls on to her stomach and starts to crawl, urgently, trying to find the source wetting this ground. Crawling in mud, like an animal.

Up ahead, a tangle of plants. She plows through it, to:

EXT. ARENA - POND - CONTINUING

And there it is, a POND. But she doesn't drink from it.

Instead she grabs her WATER-JUG, fills it. Drops an IODINE PILL into it - and starts counting:

KATNISS

One, two, three, four, five, six...

Still counting. The patience is inhuman.

INT. GAMES CENTER - SAME

Seneca, watching - along with 15 bored Gamesmakers...

SENECA

How long since our last event?

BETTO

Eight hours ago, Sir. The girl from Seven, behind the rock.

*

SENECA

Then we're due. On my signal...

EXT. ARENA - POND - FIVE MINUTES LATER

Katniss, waiting before she can drink the water safely...

KATNISS

Two-hundred ninety-eight. Two-hundred
ninety-nine... Three-Hundred.

Now she can drink. She empties the jug into her mouth, almost crying from relief. One long delicious chug.

She refills it, drops another Iodine pellet in. Starts counting again. One, two, three--

...until a THUNDEROUS SOUND snaps her head around. She turns:

...toward a horror -- TERRIFIED ANIMALS, bursting out of the woods in a STAMPEDE, coming this way...

Because a *WALL OF FLAMES is behind them* - mountainous, fast-moving - a FOREST FIRE, barrelling at us.

Katniss is spun around and nearly trampled by the panicking animals. She turns, fleeing, carrying that jug like a football, her backpack bouncing on her back.

EXT. WOODS - MOVING - CONTINUING

Suddenly, everything around her is on fire, every tree... She dodges a burning BRANCH, jumps over a burning LOG. But the tail of her jacket catches on fire.

She dives to the ground head-first, rolls over twice to smother the fire. Then she's off again, running alongside the animals, their panicked screams adding to the terror.

INT. DISTRICT 12 - SCHOOLROOM - RESUMING

Prim, watching. It's unbearable. Around her, silence.

EXT. WOODS - STONE OUTCROPPING - MOMENTS LATER

Katniss gets to the other side of a huge rock - nothing burning within fifty yards of her. She sags back, gasping.

Searing pain in her chest, but she's unburned. She stuffs the water-jug back into the backpack.

...until a strange thin HISS cuts the air. She looks up.

...as a FIREBALL whizzes within an inch of her head, IMPLODING on the boulder behind her.

This wasn't part of the forest fire. It was MAN-MADE, the size of an apple... and it was *aimed right at her*.

She bolts up, sprinting away. Hears another HISS. Flattens herself to the ground as a SECOND FIREBALL surges over her, slamming into a tree, instantly immolating it.

She gets to her feet. Running. Gasping. Smoke everywhere. A THIRD HISS - this fireball so close *it takes six inches off her braid. But she keeps running.* No animals in sight now.

Fire on all sides of her. Up ahead is the edge of a CLIFF -- we can't see what's below it. A FOURTH HISS cuts the air...

She runs blindly, eyes burning. The FOURTH FIREBALL blazes across her left calf, setting it on fire. Instant agony.

Fire bearing down on her, that precipice up ahead... Another HISS - another FIREBALL coming at her. She's running, crying, dying. And here comes the cliff. It's that or burn to death.

SHE JUMPS, blind, no idea what's below -- that last FIREBALL barely misses her. *Then she sees what's beneath her:*

A VALLEY FLOOR, 500-feet down. Death. She plummets, helpless.

INT. GAMES CENTER - RESUMING

Seneca and his Staff watch her tumble through the air... Seneca allows a grin, because he knows what's coming:

EXT. ARENA - CLIFF - FALLING - RESUMING

Katniss, falling, hurtling into oblivion, eyes shut...

...when suddenly, she LANDS, in mid-air, bouncing up as if she'd hit an unseen TRAMPOLINE.

Actually, she *has*. It's another PLASMA FIELD - stretching across this vast chasm. Christ. Katniss bounces on it gently now - in utter shock.

A STEEL LADDER has been drilled into the face of the cliff from which she just leapt. She eyes it, awed.

INT. GAMES CENTER - RESUMING

Seneca beams. The Staff applauds. He shrugs modestly.

EXT. FOREST - POOL - LATER (EVENING)

Katniss is on solid ground again, lying on her belly, her hands plunged into a tiny pool.

The flames painted on her nails are chipping off. Good. She's had enough of fire now. She sits up, cuts the remains of her pant-leg away, braces herself... and nearly faints:

SEARED FLESH stares back at her. Her CALF, bright red. She tries to breathe, but can't. Agony is coming; she knows that:

She grabs the PLASTIC SHEET from her backpack, folds it into a palm-sized square. Puts it in her mouth, bites down...

...and *plunges the leg into the pond*. The pain is awful - her eyes tearing. But she leaves the leg in there.

She swallows a gulp from her jug. Refills it again, drops another Iodine pellet in. *Functioning...*

She empties her backpack, starts inventorying all her belongings again. Methodically. It's comforting somehow. She looks around, spots a TALL PINE. The sun's setting...

INT. CAPITOL - GAMES CENTER - MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

A quiet night-shift. Betto at his monitor. Then something suddenly amuses him. He looks at his watch and calls out:

BETTO

Whoa. 10:36. You're an hour ahead of last year's time, Haymitch. Good!

Reveal Haymitch - standing in the doorway, an object of scorn in here. Another Staffer, DELANO, grumbles.

DELANO

Damn it.

Delano tosses Betto a 2-Florin COIN, (paying off a wager.) Betto chuckles. Haymitch nods, used to it by now...

HAYMITCH

My Tribute needs medicine, for her leg. I'd like to see Seneca--

BETTO

As always, he anticipated your request and ruled on it before he went to bed. But you can feel great about staying sober long enough to advocate on her behalf. Well done.

Laughter from the Staffers cuts right through us...

HAYMITCH

May I see him tomorrow then?

BETTO

Tomorrow you'll be face-down drunk,
just like every year. Please do let
us know the exact *time* you take that
first drink, though, 'cause we have
an actual office pool on that one.
(more derisive laughter)
See ya next year, Haymitch.

*

A public undressing. And Haymitch can't fire back. He turns and leaves. Laughter follows him out the door.

EXT. WOODS - PINE - SUNSET

Katniss climbs, wincing each time her calf hits bark. Agony.

EXT. WOODS - PINE - BRANCH #1 - EVENING

Fifty feet up. She settles painfully atop her sleeping bag. The Capitol Seal fills the sky above. The Anthem plays.

She closes her eyes, her hand clutching Clove's SERRATED KNIFE. We DRIFT DOWN, to that burned leg...

EXT. WOODS - PINE - BRANCH #1 - LATER NIGHT

Katniss is half-asleep, her leg aching... when she hears SPLASHING below. Her head snaps around. She looks down...

...to see the CAREER PACK: Cato, Clove, Marvel, Glimmer, a GIRL FROM 4... and Peeta. All of them looking up at her.

CATO

Well whaddaya know?

Katniss tightens. Glimmer draws back that BOW.

MARVEL

Don't bother. I got her.

He starts to climb the tree - pure menace, coming at us.

Katniss is already fifty feet up, but there's ANOTHER BRANCH 30 feet higher. She puts the KNIFE in her teeth, and climbs, painfully, her calf searing. She endures it.

*

Marvel, less nimble than Katniss, crashes back down to the ground, taking a low branch with him - as Katniss reaches:

EXT. PINE - BRANCH #2 - CONTINUING

She settles in, protected by height and foliage. But:

GLIMMER

I'll get her.

Glimmer, her blue eyes blazing, fires an arrow - straight up. The arrow misses Katniss narrowly, runs out of steam, hits its apogee, and starts to fall back to Earth.

Katniss grabs it in mid-air, and waves it mockingly at The Careers. Glimmer smolders.

PEETA

Let her stay up there. She's not going anywhere. We'll deal with her in the morning.

Cato shrugs. The Careers drop their gear, settling in.

Katniss is stuck now, 80 feet up. The Careers make camp...

INT. CAPITOL - CITY CIRCLE - BAR - LATE NIGHT

BARFLIES watch the Games. At a table in the corner Haymitch sips quietly. Defeated. Numbing himself... until:

GALE (O.S.)

What a coward you are. *

Haymitch looks up, and gets a shock: Gale - standing here. Haymitch is so thrown, he can't think up a reply.

GALE (CONT'D)

She needs *medicine* - before that leg gets infected.

HAYMITCH

It's Treason - sneaking into the Capitol. Punishable by Death. Don't you know that?

Gale nods. Haymitch eyes him with drunken awe.

HAYMITCH (CONT'D)

And you risked it? *For her?* My, my.
(no reply...)

Two boys in love with her. I wish I'd known. It would've played great during the interviews. *

GALE

She could die.

HAYMITCH

Kid, she's not likely to survive long enough for that burn to be the thing that kills her.

Gale, his eyes now murderous, plants himself beside Haymitch.

GALE

You're supposed to be *helping* her - sending her what she needs.

HAYMITCH

If the Gamesmakers approve it. If *Seneca* approves it.

GALE

Then go to Seneca.

HAYMITCH

I just did. He said no. And asking again would be viewed as an act of dissent.

Gale reacts - awe and disgust. Haymitch reads his mind:

HAYMITCH (CONT'D)

Yes, I'm a coward. And a drunk. I doubt you'd do any better on your twenty-fourth Games.

He gulps down the rest of his drink. Signals for another. So it's over. But Gale won't let up:

GALE

Our fathers died together - in the mines. Did you know that?

(Haymitch shrugs)

It's how I met her, getting our condolence medals from the Mayor's Office. She was twelve - with a little sister and a mother who was falling apart. We started hunting together, to keep our families fed. I'll tell you something about her and those woods, they're the only place I ever saw her smile; she has a *talent* for them. The other Tributes don't know that yet, but they will. Personally, I don't think they have a *chance* against her. She's too good - if she has two legs to stand on.

No reply. A WAITRESS sets another drink down. Uh-oh...

GALE (CONT'D)

Her whole life, she's never had anybody to help her. Now she's got you - and that's it - *against all this*. Are you really gonna let her die in there from something you could've stopped?

On Haymitch's face, eyeing that drink... we CUT TO:

EXT. PINE - BRANCH #2 - RESUMING - NIGHT

Katniss rests against the tree trunk, her seared calf dangling off the branch. Below, the Careers sleep.

Then, a flicker. She squints, tracking it. Twenty feet away:

A pair of EYES - watching her. Is it an animal...? She grabs for that arrow, as if it might somehow defend her, then looks closer, in spotty moonlight... until she realizes:

The pair of eyes staring at her... they belong to RUE - *who has been hiding on a neighboring tree all along*. 80 feet up.

A silent moment, two girls, staring at one another... when Rue silently points a single finger, the universal gesture for "Look up, over your head." Katniss looks up...

And there it is, right above her, hanging from a tall branch:

A WASPS' NEST. Big, round, the size of a beach-ball...

INT. CAPITOL - CITY CIRCLE - BAR - RESUMING

Haymitch and Gale just saw that.

TEMPLESMITH (ON TV)

Oh, Dear. Looks like she's picked the wrong branch to hide out on. That's a Tracker-Jacker nest above her. Two or three stings can be fatal.

Gale fumes... as Haymitch closes his eyes with dread.

EXT. PINE - BRANCH #2 - RESUMING

Katniss looks up at the nest, then to Rue, then to the Careers sleeping below... And *an idea hits her*.

She puts that knife back in her teeth, and climbs even higher. Agonizing, but she does it. Rue watching...

EXT. PINE - BRANCH #3 - CONTINUING

She reaches the sky-high branch supporting the NEST, able now to hear the low, throaty BUZZ emanating from it.

The branch is thin. She takes the knife from her teeth and makes a quiet cut on it. Gingerly. Silently. Then another.

Now we get it; she wants to *saw this branch off*. Might take HOURS at this pace, but if she goes any faster or makes any noise she'll awaken the nest... and the Careers.

So she continues - slowly, methodically - with Rue watching from below. One patient cut after another. We CUT TO:

EXT. PINE - BASE - CONTINUING

Peeta is awake, but he can't hear or see her from here.

PEETA

Just want you to know - when we get her... She's mine.

Reveal Cato, also awake. He nods, happy to oblige...

EXT. PINE - BRANCH #3 - MORNING

Dawn. SUPER: "**Day Three.**" Katniss hasn't slept. The branch is nearly sawed off. She looks down to Rue, "Ready?" Rue nods. 95 feet down, the Careers sleep... until:

Movement: Cato, *beginning to awaken*. Katniss is out of time.

So she starts SAWING. Fast. Desperate. The branch starts to crack. The BUZZING in the nest grows louder. Cato looks up:

CATO

Hey!

Katniss saws, fast as she can. The knife slips from her sweaty hands. She grabs at it, just barely catches it.

...as the first TRACKER-JACKER angrily pops from the nest. It's BIG, with a golden-torso. Flying right at us. It lands on Katniss's knee. A STABBING PAIN as it stings her.

Another flies at her - stings her in the neck. More PAIN. She blocks it out, keeps sawing - arm pumping, getting woozy.

Rue hops to a distant branch like a lemur. Below, the other Careers are awakening - Cato yelling, "*Get up!*" Katniss saws, desperate to get through the last sinews of the wood...

Then it's done. We hear a SNAP. Cato runs away, as the whole branch plummets toward the ground...

INTERCUT WITH/EXT. BASE OF THE TREE - CONTINUING

The nest hits Earth and EXPLODES OPEN, TRACKER-JACKERS bursting out, enraged. That fast, they are a deadly swarm, stinging anything that moves. Peeta gets to his feet.

PEETA

To the lake! To the lake!

The sound is awful - buzzing mixed with screams. The Careers run blindly, chased by the swarm, each stung repeatedly as they flee. Peeta too, legs pumping...

But Glimmer and the Girl from 4 are caught in their sleeping bags, quickly enveloped in a CLOUD OF WASPS. Overwhelmed.

The Girl from 4, half-insane now, runs into a tree, staggers, disappears behind a rock. Glimmer shrieks, tries to swat the wasps with that bow, taking dozens of stings; then she falls.

Her body begins to spasm, twitching madly. Then, death. The Tracker-Jackers depart. And an odd SILENCE returns...

Katniss is alone, (Rue nowhere in sight). She pulls the stingers from her knee and neck, then descends the tree...

EXT. BASE OF THE TREE - MOMENTS LATER

She reaches the ground, bearing her backpack. Already, WELTS are growing from the stings. Her calf still searing...

She approaches the body of Glimmer, warily. It's barely human now - face distorted out of proportion. And still breathing.

The tip of that BOW peeks out from beneath her.

Katniss reaches under the faintly-breathing body to extract the bow. Glimmer's eyes flicker. Katniss avoids them, grabs the bow. Then the TEN ARROWS...

They're still clutched in Glimmer's fist. Katniss tries to pry the fingers away. Glimmer holds tight - fighting, even now. Her face a balloon, blood and GREEN OOZE everywhere.

Katniss hears a CANNON, sees a HOVERCRAFT descending not far from here to get the Girl from 4. Soon, the craft will be coming for Glimmer - so this has to be done:

She grabs a rock and SMASHES IT DOWN on Glimmer's hand. The fingers release their grip. Katniss grabs the arrows.

*

Then, a shock: Peeta racing toward us, through branches. He's carrying a SPEAR, his body covered in WELTS.

Katniss tries to stand. Can barely do it. Lifts her bow, but:

PEETA
Why're you still here?!

Huh? Katniss is at a loss. Maybe hallucinating...

PEETA (CONT'D)
Go! Now! They're right behind me!

Sure enough, we hear the SOUND OF THE CAREERS, coming this way. Katniss studies Peeta - *he came back here to save me???*

Glimmer tries to yell. Peeta puts that spear into her chest.

PEETA (CONT'D)
(at Katniss)
Run.

Urgency in his eyes. Katniss turns... and runs.

EXT. WOODS - MOVING - CONTINUING

Katniss, running blindly, fleeing. She hears another CANNON. Up ahead is a POOL. She gets there, drops her backpack, dives *
in - still clutching that bow and arrows...

A moment later, bow drawn, she surfaces - ready to fire.

But no one's coming. The woods are still, until *they start to move in a hallucinogenic way, swaying*. Suddenly, *ANTS appear out of thin air, floating toward her*. IMAGES, wobbling:

Her FATHER collapsing in a COAL MINE. Limbs falling off Katniss's body in the Town Square. Prim collecting them in a cart alongside berries she's gathered.

Then *those ANTS bore into our eyes*, and Katniss passes out.

EXT. WOODS - POOL - NIGHT

She awakens where she fell, beside the pool, surprised to find that she's been COVERED by her sleeping bag. She blinks.

A familiar face looks down at her from a branch above. Rue. *
She's smiling. Katniss smiles too. *

EXT. TREE - BRANCH #4 - NIGHT

Katniss and Rue share a branch twenty feet up. Rue pulls some LEAVES from a fanny-pack. Starts chewing them.

KATNISS

How many are still alive?

Rue answers, but *her mouth is full of leaves* so it's garbled.

KATNISS (CONT'D)

Huh?

Rue spits out the leaves, chewed now into a PASTE...

RUE

Ten. Including us. Let me see your neck.

Katniss turns. Rue applies the wet paste to the Tracker-Jacker welt on Katniss's neck. Instant relief.

RUE (CONT'D)

You were smart to pull the stingers out. If ya don't, you die.

Rue puts the paste on Katniss's knee. More relief.

KATNISS

Thank you.

RUE

There are Tracker-Jacker nests all over my District, so we always take these leaves with us when we work in the orchards.

Rue now notices the horrible burn on Katniss's leg.

RUE (CONT'D)

Oh. I don't have anything for that.

KATNISS

I'll be okay. Are you hungry?

Rue nods. Katniss reaches in her bag, pulls out the RABBIT she'd half-finished. Hands it to Rue - whose eyes go wide.

RUE

For me?

Katniss nods. Rue tentatively accepts the rabbit... Takes a bite. Katniss watches her affectionately.

RUE (CONT'D)
I never had a whole leg before.

KATNISS
I thought people from Eleven always
had plenty to eat, since you grow
everything there.

RUE
Oh, we're not allowed to eat the
crops. They're for the Capitol. If
you're caught you get whipped.
Sometimes worse.

That lands. Rue spots the SUNGLASSES in Katniss's backpack:

RUE (CONT'D)
Can I try?

KATNISS
Those? They're useless. Can't see
anything through 'em.

RUE
They're for night.
(that threw Katniss)
Night-vision. We use 'em in the
orchards after sundown.

Katniss pauses, chagrinned. Then pulls out the glasses, slips
them on. Sure enough: NIGHT-VISION. Green, but clear...

RUE (CONT'D)
The Careers have 'em too. They have
all the stuff from the Cornucopia. In
a camp by the lake.

KATNISS
How many of them?

RUE
Cato, Clove, Marvel - and the Boy
from 3, he guards the supplies.

KATNISS
What about the Boy from my District?
Peeta? Was he with them?

Rue shakes her head. Katniss nods, pleased. Rue sags a bit.

KATNISS (CONT'D)
Don't be afraid, Rue. We can beat
these guys.

RUE

How? You can't run on that.

She looks to that seared calf. Katniss tightens, irritated.

KATNISS

It's fine.

(Rue's unconvinced)

They don't know how to be hungry like we do. They don't know how to forage.

RUE

They don't have to. They have everything.

KATNISS

We're gonna fix that tomorrow - and take all their stuff. After that, they're ours.

RUE

And then what?

That one hovers, unanswered. Katniss is silent.

INT. GAMES CENTER - SENECA'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Seneca is alone, looking down from his SPACIOUS SUITE at the Games Center below. Then, oddly:

SENECA

Hello, Haymitch. Are you lost?

Reveal Haymitch, on the other side of a glass door. Seneca crosses to the door - but doesn't open it, leaving Haymitch in the hall, a spotless ELEVATOR LOBBY behind him.

HAYMITCH

Let me help her, Seneca. That leg is getting worse.

(Seneca's silent)

People like her. She's good theatre.

SENECA

Thanks for the insight.

That fast, the elevator opens, and TWO PEACEKEEPERS emerge.

SENECA (CONT'D)

Great to see you, as always.

HAYMITCH

She deserves better, damn it! People
are starting to see that!

SENECA

Go, before the Capitol gets itself
another Avox.

Peacekeepers grab Haymitch, yanking him into the elevator as:

HAYMITCH

If you're gonna put on a circus, at
least make it a good one...

That lands. The doors close. Irritated, Seneca moves to a
desk, hits a button - messaging the Games Center below.

Betto looks up. No one else can hear them:

*

BETTO (THRU HEADSET)

*

Sir?

SENECA (INTO COMM-UNIT)

Where are we on the mutations?

BETTO

*

At last count, ten of them had been
successfully modified, Sir.

SENECA

I didn't ask where we are on ten of
them. I asked where we are on all of
them.

He pounds a button, ending the communication...

EXT. TREE - BRANCH #4 - RESUMING (NIGHT)

Katniss and Rue share the sleeping bag. Stillness.

RUE

I like your pin.

KATNISS

Oh. My father loved mockingjays.

RUE

Me too. Sometimes I sing, and they
spread it around the whole orchard.
They carry messages for me.

She sings four lovely notes, like a bird. Katniss smiles...

...until we hear a SOUND above them - FLUP! - followed by...

A tiny silver PARACHUTE, descending from on high - bearing a BOX. It lands right on Katniss's lap. She looks to Rue.

KATNISS
Could be for you.

RUE
I don't think so. Open it.

Katniss does. Inside, a JAR - of BURN BALM! Katniss yelps:

KATNISS
Thank you, Haymitch!

INT. GAMES CENTER - HAYMITCH'S QUARTERS - SAME

Haymitch almost allows himself a moment of pride...

EXT. RUE'S CLEARING - MORNING

SUPER: "**Day Four.**" Katniss's calf, remarkably, has almost fully healed overnight. She and Rue pack carefully.

RUE
The Boy from 3 will be standing guard. He's not very big, but he's always armed.
(Katniss nods, unafraid)
What'll you do with the food?

KATNISS
Burn it. Dump it in the lake. Eat it!
(Rue giggles)
Don't worry. I'll think of something. Destroying things is a lot easier than making them. You remember where the fires go?
(Rue nods)
We'll meet by our tree, where the nest was. Take the sleeping bag - in case I can't get back by night.

RUE
Okay. You know the whistle?
(Katniss nods)
If you hear the mockingjays sing it, it means I'm okay, only I can't get back yet.

KATNISS
I'll see you at dinner. Dress casual.

RUE
You be careful.

KATNISS
You too, little duck.

A surprising HUG. Then they take off in opposite directions.

EXT. THICKET - BY THE LAKE - DAY

Katniss emerges from behind brush - scouting, listening for unseen threats, her bow taut and ready. There's her target:

Four Careers, camped 100 yards from the Cornucopia...

Cato, Clove, Marvel - surly and covered in welts - and the BOY FROM 3. Their SUPPLIES are stacked in a PYRAMID: crates, plastic bins, a burlap sack, all covered by mesh netting.

Katniss takes it in, eyes darting... then:

CATO
Look!

He's pointing at something. The others turn...

SMOKE, rising in the distance. Katniss grins, as:

EXT. GLEN - SAME

Rue fans FLAMES in a fire, sending smoke. Then she runs off.

EXT. CAREERS' CAMP - RESUMING

The Careers arm themselves quickly. Cato in charge:

CATO
Everything rigged?

BOY FROM 3
We're rigged.

The Boy From 3 arms himself as well. Then the four of them set out in pursuit of that smoke...

Silence - a long beat - Katniss waiting to be absolutely certain they're out of range... Takes a first step.

Then she STOPS, abruptly. Just heard something: a rustling.

...as another Tribute emerges from nowhere, approaching the pyramid. It's *FoxFace*, the Girl from 5. Katniss watching now:

FoxFace nears the Pyramid, doing an odd little HOP from one spot to the next as if avoiding something. Then she's there.

She swipes some crackers from a crate at the Pyramid's base, and APPLES from the burlap sack, stuffed into her backpack.

Then she hops away like a sprite, just as daintily as before - avoiding certain spots... *as if they were mined...*

Then she's gone. Katniss watches her vanish again, impressed - then studies the Pyramid -- that BURLAP SACK, hanging by a rope. It has apples inside. She approaches quietly.

Fifty yards away now, her position slightly exposed. She grabs THREE ARROWS. Then, with blinding speed...

Three STRIKES, in mere seconds. The first rips a hole in the burlap sack. The second widens it. *The third severs the rope by which the bag was hanging.* Now, apples spill out...

And when they hit the ground... BOOM! LANDMINES - EXPLODING.

The blast blows Katniss backward, DISINTEGRATING the Pyramid of supplies. She's mid-air, as:

MORE EXPLOSIONS rock the forest. BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! Dizzying, thunderous. A shower of debris. Katniss lands hard on her back. The air splitting around her.

But suddenly, *she can't hear it*. Blood pours from her left ear, SOUNDS wobbling disorientingly. She tries to get to her feet, but her balance is off. She staggers. MORE EXPLOSIONS.

Shell-shock, feeding panic. She knows she has to run, but...

A FLASH, in the corner of her eye. She turns... The Careers are coming back! She drags herself away, hides...

...as the Careers return to see the damage. Cato's rage is instant: he grabs the Boy from 3, snaps his neck...

Dead, just like that. The boy slumps to the Earth. A CANNON goes off in the distance, but Katniss can hardly hear it.

The Careers are arguing, trying to calm Cato down... then they *set off in different directions, heavily armed, livid*.

Katniss can't move. The world is wobbling. But she rises...

EXT. FOREST - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

Katniss stumbles - battered, bleeding, nearly deaf...

EXT. WOODS - RUE'S CLEARING - DAY

Katniss taps the side of her head to make her ear function:

No luck. She pours some water over it, washing blood away - a WHOOSHING sound that distorts things even further.

Then, overhead, TWO MOCKINGJAYS land on a branch, eyeing her strangely. They emit a SONG - a few notes - with an *urgency* to it. A warning maybe. But Katniss can't hear it. Then:

She spots SMALL FOOTPRINTS in the ground - *Rue's* - just as a SOUND pierces her deafness, horribly:

A scream. From a child. Rue. God no. *Katniss calls out*:

KATNISS

Rue?

No reply. She starts running, while drawing her bow...

KATNISS (CONT'D)

RUE? CAN YOU HEAR ME?

RUE (O.S.)

Katniss!

KATNISS

I'm coming, Rue! Hang on!

Racing, through the leaves of a low-hanging branch, to see:

Rue, on the ground, entangled in a net. And Marvel, five feet away, spear in hand, about to let it fly.

He does so - just as *Katniss fires an arrow at him*.

The two weapons pass one another in mid-air...

Marvel is hit, in the throat. He drops instantly. But Katniss can't celebrate...

...because Rue's body is now curled around the spear. No...

KATNISS (CONT'D)

Oh no... Oh no... Rue...

(head on a swivel)

Are there more? Are there more?

*

Rue shakes her head. Katniss pushes Marvel's body aside, kneels down, takes Rue's hand. A CANNON BLASTS.

RUE
Did you blow up their food?

KATNISS
Every bit of it. Just stay still.

The spear is buried in Rue's belly. She can barely breathe. Katniss cuts the netting away.

RUE
You're gonna win. You have to.

KATNISS
Stay still.

*

Rue tightens, her hands spasming. Katniss holds on tighter.

RUE
Don't go, okay? Until...

KATNISS
I'm right here.

Katniss moves in closer, trying NOT to look at the blood...

But Rue's going to die. They both know it. Their eyes meet.

RUE
Will you sing to me?

KATNISS
Sure. What do you--

Rue shrugs; *it doesn't matter*. Katniss nods, opens her mouth. But no sounds come out. Her throat's too tight with tears.

She gathers herself - just has to. Then she begins:

KATNISS (CONT'D)
*Deep in the Meadow/Under a willow/
A bed of grass/A soft green pillow/
Lay down your head/Close your sleepy
eyes/When they open again/The Sun
will rise...*

Rue lets her eyes close. Katniss keeps singing:

KATNISS (CONT'D)
*Here it's safe/Here it's warm/
Daisies guard you from every harm/
Dreams are sweet/They all come true/
Here is the place where I--*

...when she's interrupted, by a CANNON BLAST. God, no...

She looks down. Rue is dead. Katniss just stares...

KATNISS (CONT'D)
...love you.

Silence. Then those MOCKINGJAYS trill sadly. Katniss presses her lips to Rue's temple, releases Rue's tiny hand.

Then she looks up, wanting those unseen cameras above to see her rage. It's hard to miss. She rises...

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Katniss marches along, bereft but resolved, searching for something... Then she sees it: a bank of wildflowers.

EXT. RUE'S CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

Katniss decorates Rue's body with flowers, one stem at a time. Covering Rue's wound, wreathing her head, weaving petals through Rue's hair. A sad, loving farewell.

...until all we can see of Rue is her tiny face. Then Katniss tenderly affixes that mockingjay pin on to Rue's clothes.

EXT. DISTRICT 12 - TOWN SQUARE - DUSK

People from Katniss's District watch, weeping, as:

Katniss stands, almost at attention - and gives Rue that SILENT SALUTE we've seen twice now: three fingers to the lips. While a mockingjay softly trills Rue's melody... *

KATNISS (ON TV)
'Bye, Rue.
(through tears...)
You're safe now. Good and safe...

Then the people in this Square, unseen by Katniss, return the gesture. Fingers to lips, the silent salute, as:

EXT. DISTRICT 11 - TOWN SQUARE - DUSK

Rue's home-town. Rural. THOUSANDS of FARMERS watch, bereft. They too return the SILENT SALUTE to Katniss. *

But a few clusters of people are *smoldering*. TEENS. We can feel them drifting away from the Town Square... *

EXT. RUE'S CLEARING - LATER DAY

Katniss quietly collects the items from Rue's backpack: sleeping bag, water skin, extra socks, slingshot, some food. *

And, from Marvel's backpack: knives, spearheads, flashlight, leather pouch, med-kit, full water bottle, dried fruit.

EXT. ARENA - CREEK - DUSK

Katniss wanders, her guard down, too sad to be afraid. Then she stumbles onto something that makes her feel even worse:

Rue's signal fire, still smoking. Katniss sags, lost. She hears two GROOSLINGS on a branch above...

EXT. ARENA - CREEK - MINUTES LATER (EARLY EVENING)

The Grooslings cook. Smoke wafts up. Katniss doesn't care.

Then another SILVER PARACHUTE drifts down, landing at her feet. She opens the box... to find a LOAF OF BREAD inside.

...with a note: "From the People of District 11."

Katniss can barely react at first. Too touched. She breathes out a sad smile, then looks up to the sky:

KATNISS

My thanks to the people of District Eleven.

She leaves this clearing behind - as we RETURN TO:

EXT. DISTRICT 11 - TOWN SQUARE - RESUMING (NIGHT)

The people of Rue's District watch in silence... Until: *

CRASH! The window of a GOVERNMENT BUILDING just got shattered by a thrown TRASH CAN. Every head turns. *

CRASH! CRASH! Two more windows shatter on the other side of the Square. Three spontaneous acts of dissent, right on top of one another. Three different groups. Then a fourth. CRASH! *

PEACEKEEPERS start after them now. But the THOUSANDS of FARMERS gathered here suddenly fan out, "accidentally" getting in the way of the Peacekeepers. *

So the Window-Shatterers can disperse and scatter, protected, as the Square expands with humanity. It's a first blow... *

INT. GAMES CENTER - SAME

Seneca, monitoring the incident live, turns to Betto. *

SENECA
Assemble the Gamesmakers. My office
in five minutes...

EXT. TREE - BRANCH #4 - NIGHT

She's in her sleeping bag on a branch, alone. Up in the sky, the faces of the District 3 Boy, and Marvel... and Rue.

Then the ever-present Capitol Seal... and the Anthem. We STAY WITH KATNISS as it plays. Rage hardening her face... until:

TEMPLESMITH (O.S., OVERHEAD)
Attention all Tributes!

TempleSmith. His voice booming out of thin air. Katniss goes still. Even the river hushes...

TEMPLESMITH (O.S., CONT'D)
The Gamesmakers have instituted a rule change. From this point forward, *if two Tributes from the same District are the last to survive, both will be declared victors of The Hunger Games!* Good Luck! And may the odds be ever in your favor!

And just like that, the voice is gone. Katniss blurts out, without even meaning to:

KATNISS
Peeta!

INT. CAPITOL - AVOX BARRACKS - SAME (NIGHT)

Gale lies on a bunk - in the musty, stale air of the AVOX BARRACKS - 5,000 silenced souls around him. An everpresent TV just showed him Katniss, saying that name: *Peeta*...

Gale swallows a reaction... as TINY FEET rumble past: A TEN YEAR-OLD BOY, chasing a GIRL through these barracks.

The boy has fashioned a fake BOW-AND-ARROW from a stick and two knotted shoelaces, pretending to shoot at his quarry. Gale watches, touched. Saddened too. Then a HUGE NOISE, as:

The barrack doors burst open. FIVE PEACEKEEPERS, shouting:

PEACEKEEPERS

Head count! Everybody up and in line!

The Avoxes leap from their bunks, alarmed. Gale freezes...

LEAD PEACEKEEPER

Move! Move! Everybody up!

Lavinia looks to Gale, "It's okay." But she's scared too, clearly. The Avoxes scramble into lines before their bunks, standing at attention. Gale follows their example. *

... as that Lead Peacekeeper looks down a long row of them.

LEAD PEACEKEEPER (CONT'D)

We've had a report of an *unauthorized inmate* in these barracks. Anyone found harboring him will be punished!

Gale's eyes just went wide. Lavinia's too. Oh no... *

LEAD PEACEKEEPER (CONT'D)

Sergeant!

PEACEKEEPER SERGEANT

Sir!

LEAD PEACEKEEPER

Open every mouth in here until you find one with a tongue in it. *

That cues the PEACEKEEPERS to start down each row, swinging TASER STICKS at every single Avox. Each mouth shoots open, to be checked. It's brutal, dehumanizing. But effective. *

And Gale knows what'll happen when the Peacekeepers reach *him*. Lavinia knows too. Now what? Gale tightens, awaiting the inevitable test that is rapidly coming right at him... *

Then, *a hand on his arm*. He looks down. It's the Ten Year-Old Boy With the Bow, gesturing, "Follow me." Gale follows.

Hurrying - through rows of bunks, hidden by all the commotion, with the Peacekeepers not far behind, until:

The Boy points to the floor beneath a random bunk. *Huh?* The Boy points again... until Gale looks beneath the bunk:

There's a GRATE in the floor. Oh. Gale kneels down, lifts the grate. A HOLE beneath it. He climbs in, replaces the grate.

...just as Peacekeepers rumble past this bunk.

INT. SEWER DUCT - CONTINUING

Gale's now in a SEWER DUCT. No idea where it leads. But he starts crawling through it, hurrying away from here...

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

Morning. "**Day Five**." Katniss has lit a big FIRE. Lots of SMOKE. She leaves it behind, setting out in search of Peeta.

EXT. WOODS - STREAM - LATER DAY

She walks through a stream - crouched, like a hunter.

EXT. STREAM - SECOND LOCATION - DAY

Scouting, eating her bread... when she spots a canteen. Empty. She keeps going. Then stops.

At her feet, a barely visible FOOTPRINT...

EXT. STREAM - THIRD LOCATION - DAY

She kneels down, letting some SAND sift through her fingers.

The sand falls into ANOTHER FOOTPRINT. She gets on her belly, blows the sand away, revealing a cleaner look at the print.

It's pointing North. She follows...

Moving quietly, until she sees a RED smudge on a boulder:

Blood. She stops, draws her knife, eyes darting...

But she doesn't see anything. So she starts moving again - through leaves - cautiously, delicately - trying not to make a sound, wishing her hearing was working better...

...when a VOICE pokes through, completely disembodied.

VOICE (O.S.)
I'm not dead.

Katniss freezes. The voice seemed like it came from below her feet. Yet *there's nothing but leaves down there...*

Wrong. The leaves are *moving*. And they have a face. Peeta's.

PEETA ("VOICE", CONT'D)
Just buried.

He lies on this forest floor - camouflaged beneath mud, leaves, and twigs. We just caught a blink of his eye...

KATNISS

Peeta! What're you doing down there?

PEETA

Well, mornings I spend recovering from the Tracker-Jackers you dropped on my head. Afternoons and evenings I spend mostly bleeding to death.

She kneels down, lifts his head out of the mud, pulls a water-skin from her bag, puts it to his lips.

PEETA (CONT'D)

This mean you heard the announcement?

(Katniss nods absently)

I guess we're on the same team now.

KATNISS

Could that be real? Could we really make it out of here?

PEETA

I'll believe it if you do.

He sits up, wincing in pain.

KATNISS

Are you hurt?

No reply. Then she sees it, *something uneven about the contour of his mud-caked leg*. He shrugs, won't explain.

So she brushes away some of the gunk camouflaging him - until it's right there, gaping at us:

A GASH, in his leg. Hidden by mud but deep. Very. Damn it.

PEETA

Cato. When he found out I was trying to help you.

KATNISS

I can fix it, Peeta.

PEETA

Oh, you've got a hospital handy?

KATNISS

My mom was a healer once, remember? We saw all kinds of injuries from guys in the mines - just need to get you cleaned up so I can see how deep it goes. Can you walk?

She grabs his hands and yanks him to his feet. Literally.

He staggers, utterly unable to bear his own weight. She catches him, *their faces suddenly an inch apart...*

PEETA

And remember, we're madly in love. So any time you want to kiss me, feel free.

KATNISS

Thanks. Have you eaten?

PEETA

No.

One soldier carrying another off the battlefield, to:

EXT. WOODS - RIVER/RIVERBANK - CONTINUING

Katniss gets him to the RIVERBANK, props him up against a rock, spreads her PLASTIC SHEET on the ground beneath him.

PEETA

This isn't smart. You shouldn't be out in the open like this.

She fills her water-jug in the river, returns to his side, starts searching for his JACKET-ZIPPER. *Dried mud hides it.*

PEETA (CONT'D)

Frosting. The last defense of the dying.

KATNISS

Nobody's dying.

She unzips his jacket. Pulls it off him. Then his shirt - revealing TWO BURNS, and FOUR TRACKER-JACKER WELTS.

KATNISS (CONT'D)

You have underwear on, right?

PEETA

Yeah.

KATNISS

Good.

She undoes his belt. Awkward, for both of them - but oddly stimulating. Unbuttons his PANTS, pulls them down.

KATNISS (CONT'D)

Sit.

He sits on the plastic sheet. She slides his pants off, washes them in the river - delaying the inevitable. Leaves them to dry on a rock. Then returns.

His leg wound is still covered in mud. She takes the water-jug, stands over him, hands him a thin STICK.

PEETA

How about that kiss?

KATNISS

It helps to bite down on something.

He puts the stick in his mouth. She nods, then empties the jug onto his wound. He seizes with pain...

...because *the gash in his leg goes down to the bone*. We see PUS, lots of it. Katniss recoils, then feigns calm:

KATNISS (CONT'D)

Rue gave me some leaves that draw out infection. We just have to get you somewhere dry for a couple days.

(Peeta doubts it...)

And you have to eat something.

PEETA

I tried. It just comes back up again.

KATNISS

There are some dried pears in my bag. We'll try those. Up.

She pulls him to his feet...

INT. GAMES CENTER - HAYMITCH'S QUARTERS - SAME

A sober Haymitch watches. On his TV, he sees *PEOPLE IN THE CAPITOL STREETS, cheering for Katniss and Peeta*.

HAYMITCH

Good. Good! More coffee, Effie?

EFFIE

Please.

Effie's beside him. He pours her a cup...

EXT. WOODS - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

*

Katniss labors to bear Peeta's weight as they inch their way through the woods. He's trying to stomach some pear slices.

PEETA
(kidding)
Can't you go any faster?

KATNISS
Shut up and eat your pears.

He enjoyed that. But every step is sheer agony on that leg.

KATNISS (CONT'D)
There's a cave a little farther up
the river...

INT. CAVE - LATE DAY

A big CAVE, its mouth concealed. Katniss covers the floor with pine needles, then lays out her sleeping bag. Peeta looks through her backpack, assessing supplies.

KATNISS
You need rest...

*

*

She lowers him down - which puts her face mere inches from his open wound. She cringes without meaning to.

*

PEETA
Sorry. I know it's--

*

KATNISS
It's fine. I'm just, not a big fan of
pus.

PEETA
Ya know, for such a lethal person
you're kind of squeamish.

KATNISS
Your fever's still up. And we have to
get some more food in you.

*

PEETA
I'm not hungry.

KATNISS
It wasn't a request.

...which is when she notices the TINY CAMERA, mounted up high in a back corner of the cave. Peeta notices it too.

*

...so it's hard to tell if this is performance, or sincerity: *

PEETA (CONT'D)
Katniss, thanks for finding me.

KATNISS
Twelves have to stick together,
right?

She starts to rise. He grabs her hand - dead serious:

PEETA
Listen, if I don't make it--

KATNISS
Sssshhh.

PEETA
But if I don't...

Before he can finish, *she drops down and kisses him*.

Her first kiss - shocking the hell out of both of them - but it's just for the cameras; we're pretty sure. Then it ends.

KATNISS
You're not going to die. I forbid it.
Okay?

PEETA
Okay.

A brutal SHIVER shakes his body - that fever just racking him; it literally slams his mouth shut.

KATNISS
Get some sleep.

PEETA
What about you?

KATNISS
I will. In a bit.

INT. GAMES CENTER - HAYMITCH'S QUARTERS - SAME

Haymitch is up, and out the door, leaving Effie behind.

HAYMITCH
Finally! Something I can use!

Effie giggles, excited. Haymitch heads off.

INT. CAVE - LATER (EVENING)

Another SILVER PARACHUTE lies on the cave floor, having just delivered a pot of BROTH. Peeta eats from it, while Katniss conceals the mouth of this cave with vines and branches.

Peeta studies her - looking very much like a kid with a crush. She tears down the vines, dissatisfied.

KATNISS

Horrible.

PEETA

Looked okay to me.

KATNISS

Might've fooled a deer or something -
but not Cato.

She starts to rebuild it again...

INT. CAVE - LATER (NIGHT)

The cave-mouth has been concealed now. Katniss eyes Peeta, asleep in the sleeping bag - then climbs in beside him.

It's odd, being this close to him. Feeling him. She puts a hand to his forehead - it's burning hot.

His eyes open. And here we are, inches apart. He strokes a stray hair from her forehead. It seems genuine, comforting. She wants it to go on, which surprises her.

He smiles, nothing said. She lets her eyes close...

EXT. DISTRICT TWELVE - TOWN SQUARE - SAME

The people of The Seam watch, rapt... But:

EXT. CAPITOL - ALLEY - SAME (NIGHT)

FEET, racing in panicked flight...

It's Gale, running. Up ahead is a RAILYARD. A block behind him is a PEACEKEEPER TRANSPORT, bearing a SEARCHLIGHT. Gale bounds a fence, falls into the railyard, as:

EXT. RAILYARD - CONTINUING

An UNIDENTIFIED HAND *passes MONEY to a RAILYARD WORKER...* who throws open the DOOR of a RAILCAR.

...as Gale races across the railyard, jumping into that open car. The Railyard Worker shuts the door, runs away... mere seconds before the PEACEKEEPER SEARCHLIGHT lands on:

Haymitch, an empty bottle in hand, *pretending to be on a drunken stroll*. (He just paid off the fleeing Railyard Guy).

Behind him is another SCREEN beaming The Games. So even now, *Haymitch is able to watch Katniss sleeping...* as: *

HAYMITCH
("slurred speech")
Evenin', Officers!

TWO PEACEKEEPERS lean out of the transport, annoyed. *

ANNOYED PEACEKEEPER #1
Man, are you ever sober? *

They drive away. Haymitch pats the door of the car, twice.

INTERCUT WITH/INT. RAILCAR - SAME

Gale, as grateful as he is relieved, returns the signal. The train starts to pull away.

Haymitch watches it go as he drifts out of the railyard...

INT. CAVE - NOON

"**Day Six.**" Katniss awakens - to find Peeta sitting against a cave wall, holding her bow and arrow. On guard.

PEETA
It's nice, seeing you sleep. You
don't scowl as much.

KATNISS
How long was I out?

PEETA
I don't know. It's noon.

He looks even sicker this morning. Feverish, shaky. Damn it. She sits up - eyeing his leg. And her stomach drops.

His wound's gotten worse. Much worse. RED STREAKS spider across the skin. Blood Poisoning. No doubt in her mind.

PEETA (CONT'D)
No good, huh?

KATNISS
You'll be fine.

PEETA
I know what blood poisoning is,
Katniss.

That stopped her. She studies his leg, then tells a lie:

KATNISS
We just have to outlast the others,
that's all. The doctors in the
Capitol will fix you up after we win.

She's about to rise, but she stops herself - following some impulse she can't identify... and *kisses his forehead*.

Gently, affectionately. It surprises them both. Then it ends.

KATNISS (CONT'D)
Sleep. I'll go get us some lunch.

INT. CAVE - LATER DAY

Peeta awakens, to find a SPREAD before him: roots, berries. And Katniss standing guard at the mouth of the cave.

PEETA
How do you do that? How'd you set all
that up without me hearing you?

KATNISS
I'm light-footed.

She just felt a twinge of guilt. Shakes it off.

PEETA
Sleeping helped. My leg feels better.
Definitely on the mend.

A lie. She knows that. The leg looks even worse. He shrugs.

KATNISS
You want me to stop worrying about
you. I won't.

PEETA
I want you to save yourself.

KATNISS
Can't do that, Peeta. I owe you.

*

PEETA
No you don't.

*

KATNISS
Yeah I do. The first gift is *always*
the toughest to repay. Ya know?

*

*

That touched him. She takes his hand, as:

Templesmith again. Overhead. The Voice of God:

TEMPLESMITH (O.S., OVERHEAD)
Attention all Tributes!
(Katniss waits...)
You've all been invited to a feast!
Come to the Cornucopia at sundown;
waiting there will be items each of
you needs desperately, in backpacks
with your District numbers on them.
Good Luck, and may the odds be ever
in your favor.

End of transmission. Katniss and Peeta eye one another.

PEETA
A feast. Of course. Whenever there's
been a day or two without any deaths.

KATNISS
There'll be medicine there.

PEETA
Doesn't matter. You're not risking
your life for me.

KATNISS
Who said I was?

PEETA
I know you want to.

KATNISS
Right. I'm gonna run into the middle
of some free-for-all against Cato and
Clove and Thresh. Give me some
credit, okay?

PEETA
You're such a bad liar, Katniss. I
don't know how you survived this
long.

Anger flushes her face. She looks right through him.

KATNISS

You can't stop me, Peeta.

PEETA

No. But I can crawl out of this cave and call your name at the top of my lungs until they trip over each other on their way to kill me. And I will.

(a beat)

I want you to survive all this, Katniss.

KATNISS

We can both survive. He said it. I'm not gonna sit here and watch you di--

She stops just short of saying it. *Die*. He eyes her. She tightens, frustrated... And marches out of the cave.

...just as ANOTHER SILVER PARACHUTE, bearing a BOX, gently wafts down from the sky, landing at her feet. Her eyes light up; *there must be medicine in there! Hope!*

EXT. ARENA - OUTSIDE THE CAVE - CONTINUING

She opens the box... There is indeed a VIAL inside. Blue LIQUID. But she twists it open, sniffs it...

And grimaces, furiously, eyeing the unseen camera above:

KATNISS

Dammit, Haymitch!

INT. GAMES CENTER - HAYMITCH'S QUARTERS - SAME

Haymitch sighs heavily. Effie is beside him.

EFFIE

Ignore it, Haymitch. She's lucky to have you.

HAYMITCH

No she's not...

Effie pats his hand. Haymitch appreciates it.

INT. CAVE - LATER DAY

The VIAL is empty now. Katniss pockets it.

...then starts feeding Peeta with a spoon - strawberries, mashed into a paste. He's too delirious with fever to notice.

PEETA

It's good. What is it?

KATNISS

Strawberries. The Mayor's favorite.

PEETA

Oh. They taste sweeter than--

Just then... a flash of recognition. And a semi-guilty look in her eyes. Peeta pauses, catching on... Livid:

He tries to spit out the paste. Katniss covers his mouth.

And she waits... until his eyes start to hang droopily.

Then he's OUT. She lays him down gently, even mumbles "Sorry" *
without meaning to. Then she covers him... and: *

EXT. FOREST PLAIN - NIGHTFALL

Katniss peeks out from behind a tree. Nine ARROWS in her quiver. NIGHT-VISION GOGGLES on. Through them we see HER POV: *
The CORNUCOPIA, fifty yards away. Nothing moving...

...until she hears TWO METALLIC CLICKS. Then a patch of ground OPENS UP in front of the Cornucopia - something emerging from below on a PLATFORM... a TABLE.

Four items on it: Two LARGE BACKPACKS marked "2" and "11". A smaller backpack marked "5". And a POUCH marked "12."

There's medicine in there. Katniss knows it... But she can't be the first to risk bursting from the woods to run for it. She looks around. Where are the other Tributes?

Then, a STARTER'S PISTOL FIRES. And before Katniss can blink, *FoxFace emerges from inside the Cornucopia itself*, swipes the "#5" bag, and vanishes into the woods again. In mere seconds.

Katniss shakes her head, impressed. Stillness returns. No movement in the trees. She steels herself.

KATNISS

Okay, Peeta. Here we go...

And she BOLTS, head up. Seen through the GREEN GLOW of her glasses, it's a scary trek - racing for:

EXT. WOODS - AT THE CORNUCOPIA - MOVING - NIGHT

Running. Table's ten yards away - when an awful PFFFFT sound slices the air. Katniss turns, gets a green-glow glimpse of:

A KNIFE, hurled by CLOVE. Katniss gets a hand up, deflects the knife with her bow, turns, fires an ARROW. It hits Clove in the arm - as Katniss gets to the table.

She slips that tiny #12-POUCH on to her wrist. Turns...

This KNIFE comes too quickly to evade - whizzing through the air, gashing her forehead. Katniss staggers, drops to a knee.

Clove is running right at us now - arm bleeding, eyes lethal. A KNIFE IN EACH HAND. Katniss tries to draw back an arrow, but there's no time. She's a goner. Clove, barrelling in--

Then, shockingly, Clove is knocked sideways, on to her back.

...by a rock the size of a volleyball, hurled from the darkness. Clove quivers on the ground - disoriented, bloody.

Katniss is almost as confused as Clove is. *Who threw that?*

Then Thresh emerges... to re-claim the rock he just threw.

He stands over Clove, lifts it into the air, and brings it down on Clove's skull. Katniss watches, awed. CANNON BLAST.

Now Thresh comes at *Katniss*, stands over her. He seems huge from down here, his eyes dull. And she's dazed, helpless...

KATNISS

Do it fast. Okay, Thresh?

...which is when Thresh shocks Katniss - and us - by calmly placing something into her palm:

The mockingjay pin she'd buried with Rue. Katniss gasps.

THRESH

This makes us even. Understand?

She nods, speechless. Thresh grabs the #11-backpack, turns.

...and gets a DAGGER right in the chest.

...from Cato, who is suddenly just a foot away. The look on Thresh's face is pure shock. Cato digs in deeper.

And here's Katniss, a witness to it all. Thresh wheezes:

THRESH (CONT'D)

Go.

(Katniss staggers)

Go!

Katniss rises, runs, horrified - doesn't look back.

...as Thresh gamely pulls Cato to the ground, trying to get his hands around Cato's neck. It's a struggle between two athletes in the prime of their youth.

But Thresh is bleeding out, and he knows it. Cato plunges the dagger in deeper, the life draining from Thresh's eyes...

EXT. FOREST - BEYOND THE CORNUCOPIA - CONTINUING

Katniss runs for her life - crying, forehead bleeding badly. Another CANNON BLAST. Dear God. She just keeps running...

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Katniss staggers in. Peeta's in a fever dream, mumbling. She gets to his side, and opens the kit she just bled for. Inside: a hypodermic needle, syringe, gauze...

She sticks the needle into his arm, pushes hard on the plunger, then sags down to the cave-floor, unconscious.

INT. CAVE - MORNING

"**Day Seven.**" She awakens - to a new world: Rain, thunder. Her forehead bandaged. And Peeta, healthy again - by her side.

...but *his eyes are red*. As if he'd been crying recently. *

Katniss blinks, studying him in profile. (He doesn't know she's awake.) She can see that his leg looks healthier now, and bandaged. So why's he so upset? *

KATNISS

Peeta? Are you...?

He buttons it up quickly. Turns, faces her. *

PEETA

You can't do that, Katniss. You can't do that to me.

KATNISS

Your leg looks better. Is it okay?

PEETA

I don't *give* a damn about my leg! You could've died out there!

(she's at a loss)

Do you understand? I would never let you die for me! Why did you do that?

KATNISS

For me.

That just blurted out - and it surprised him. Her too.

PEETA

What?

KATNISS

I did it for me. Just didn't want to
be without you.

Again, she's realizing it just as she's saying it...

PEETA

You didn't?
(she shakes her head)
Why?

KATNISS

I don't know! 'Cause you're Peeta
Mellark, the Boy With the Bread.
(fumbling...)
You're the Boy With the Bread. And--

Then she's silenced... by a whopper of a kiss. A real one.

It's soft, but urgent. And it *lands*, wobbling both of them.

When it ends, he pulls her close - *whispering*, so no one else
in the world can hear:

PEETA

I didn't do that because they're
watching. I did it because I wanted
to.

Another kiss. Then he studies her. So do we... Something just
shifted. We can see it in her eyes.

PEETA (CONT'D)

Since I was five. You always knew
that, right?

KATNISS

I guess maybe I did wonder now and
then how all those loaves kept
getting burned by accident.

PEETA

Sssshh. My mother's probably watching.

Katniss breathes out a smile, touches his face.

PEETA (CONT'D)
I've drawn you a million times.

KATNISS
I know. I've see--

She stops short. He's not sure why.

Then, suddenly, the rain stops - as if a faucet had been turned off. The skies clear in an instant, the forest floor filling with sunshine. It feels jarring, ominous.

And Katniss knows what it means - hence her dread.

KATNISS (CONT'D)
Oh no...
(a beat)
He's gonna drive us back to the lake now. Once it gets down to the Final Four, he always does something to get everyone together. Can you walk?

PEETA
Kinda. Is that where we're going?

KATNISS
Not until we're stronger. Not until we've eaten.

He nods. They rise, both wounded, helping each other...

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

"**Day Eight.**" They stand in what was a CREEK yesterday. DRAINED NOW, bone dry, despite the recent rain. Amazing.

EXT. GLADE - MORNING

Katniss, bow in hand, walks a gentle incline of forest floor. Peeta's hobbling, but trying to keep up.

Trouble is, he's making noise. TWIGS SNAP beneath his feet with each step. She's trying to ignore it... but she can't:

KATNISS
You've got to move more quietly.

PEETA
Sorry. Am I scaring the game away?

KATNISS
And telling Cato where we are, yeah.

He tries to walk lighter. No good. Katniss tightens, irked.

KATNISS (CONT'D)
Can you take your boots off?

PEETA
Here?

She nods. He takes another step. More crackling. Damn.

KATNISS
Are you trying to get us killed?

PEETA
Maybe we should split up for a while.
(she stops, turns)
You hunt. I'll stay here and find us
some greens or something. Maybe set
the table.

Truth is, she loves that idea. But doesn't want to offend.

KATNISS
It's only because your leg's hurt.

PEETA
Give me a signal, so we can contact
each other.

Katniss does a TWO-NOTE WHISTLE.

KATNISS
'kay?
(he nods)
Stay in the neighborhood - in case I
get into trouble.

He takes that pretty well. She hurries into the forest...

EXT. GLEN - LATER MORNING

She's looking for prey, bow at the ready.

...but *there's nothing out here*. No game at all. The forest
is completely still. Hmmm... She gives the whistle-signal.

Peeta's reply echoes back. She plunges on...

EXT. ROCKS - LATER MORNING

Hunting, quietly. But once again, there's nothing out here.

No animals. No movement at all...

KATNISS
Damn it, Seneca...

She whistles for Peeta, checking in.

This time, *nothing comes back*. She whistles again.

Again, nothing. She tries a third time. No reply.

Something's wrong. She starts to run...

EXT. GLADE - MOMENTS LATER

Katniss arrives... to find her PLASTIC SHEET splayed out like a tablecloth. A pile of roots on it. And some BERRIES. Oh no. *

KATNISS
(instant panic)
Peeta? Peeta?!

*
*
*

There's a RUSTLING in the leaves behind her. She reflexively grabs her bow, turns, about to fire, when...

Peeta emerges from behind a bush. Katniss jerks her bow up at the last second, the fired arrow narrowly missing his head. He jumps back, flinging a handful of berries into the air.

PEETA
What the hell!?

KATNISS
I whistled! You didn't whistle back!

PEETA
I was gathering lunch!

KATNISS
If two people agree on a signal, they stay in range. Because if one of them doesn't answer, it means *they're in trouble*, all right?

PEETA
Okay! Sorry! Put that thing in a holster! I was just trying to help.

KATNISS
(re: berries)
By picking these?

PEETA
It's all I could find. What's--

KATNISS
They're poison, Dummy.

Oh. Peeta tightens, humbled. Forest silence around them.

KATNISS (CONT'D)
Nightlock. Instantly fatal. Where'd
you find them?

PEETA
Behind a tree, up-river.

She nods. He examines the berries on the plastic... thrown.

PEETA (CONT'D)
Wait. Did you take any of them?

KATNISS
No. Why?

PEETA
'Cause... I picked a lot more than--

Just then, a CANNON BLAST shakes the sky.

And a HOVERCRAFT DESCENDS - fifty yards from here, its arms
quickly *gathering a dead body from behind a tree...*

FoxFace - her fingers DARK BLUE from the juice of those
deadly berries. The hovercraft ascends...

PEETA
I'll throw them away.

KATNISS
Don't. Cato'll be coming for us now.

*

That caught Peeta. She puts them in the pouch on her belt.

INT. GAMES CENTER - SAME

Seneca, the Gamesmakers, the staff... watching, as:

TEMPLESMITH (ON TV)
Three left now: Katniss and Peeta
playing a waiting game, and Cato
lurking. With so little food left in
The Arena, who'll weaken first?

*

*

SENECA
Prepare the platform, Betto.
(just decided:)
And sound the cannon again.

*

*

What? Betto pauses, thinking he must've heard wrong. *

BETTO *

Sir?

SENECA

The cannon. Sound it.

BETTO *

But... nobody else died.

SENECA

Do we want them back at the lake or don't we?

(no reply from Betto) *

Sound the cannon! And cut the audio feeds on Four and Eight.

Betto is silent. They all are. *

SENECA (CONT'D)

Have you no sense of drama at all? We are *climaxing*. *

(again, no reply...)

These Games end now. *

EXT. FOREST - DRY CREEKBED - SAME

Katniss and Peeta, moving slowly. The forest is still.

PEETA

We're gonna win, Katniss.

KATNISS

If you say so.

PEETA

(half-kidding)

We have to. The whole *world* wants to see us together!

KATNISS

Oh, your parents'd probably love that. You and a girl from The Seam.

PEETA

But if we win, you wouldn't be a girl from The Seam. You'd be a girl from Victor's Village - with all your needs met for the rest of your life.

KATNISS

And Haymitch for my only neighbor.

PEETA
What about me?

A laugh, then BOOM! A cannon-blast bounces off the trees.
They freeze in their tracks. *Did we just imagine that?* But:

EXT. WOODS - HILLSIDE - SAME

A mile away, Cato freezes as well. Just heard the same thing.
And he sees a HOVERCRAFT descending in the distance...

EXT. FOREST - DRY CREEKBED - RESUMING

Katniss and Peeta see the Hovercraft too - also in the distance. It's almost too much to believe.

KATNISS
Does that mean Cato--

She can't finish the sentence...

PEETA
Last night, did you see Thresh die?

KATNISS
I just saw the start of it. Then--

PEETA
Thresh must've wounded him.

KATNISS
But...

PEETA
It's over. Cato's dead. We won.

Impossible. Neither can believe it. Both silent.

KATNISS
We won...?

Peeta nods - and they both start RUNNING toward the lake...

EXT. WOODS - HILLSIDE - SAME

Cato starts running too. MATCH CUT TO:

INT. GAMES CENTER - CORRIDOR - SAME

Footsteps. Haymitch's. Also running - right at:

INT. GAMES CENTER - MISSION CONTROL - SAME

Haymitch bursts in. Seneca turns. They all do. Betto cockily inserts himself in Haymitch's path, until:

A forearm shiver and a sweep kick, lightning fast... and Haymitch, reclaiming some long-lost skills, has put Betto on the floor. Silence. Seneca smiles, amused and impressed.

HAYMITCH
You son of a bitch.

SENECA
You are lost, aren't you.
(at two PEACEKEEPERS)
Show him to the nearest bar.

Haymitch lunges at him. The Peacekeepers step in, as:

EXT. ARENA - NEARING THE LAKE - MOMENTS LATER

Katniss and Peeta, giddy as Hell, rumble through tall grass. *We did it!* And there it is, the LAKE.

EXT. AT THE LAKE - CONTINUING

Then that fast, they come to a HALT, confused. No one's here.

There's the Cornucopia. There's the blown-up Pyramid. But *where's the celebration?* Katniss just stares, thrown.

KATNISS
Peeta?

Something's off. Way off. He's silent.

KATNISS (CONT'D)
Where's Claudius Templesmith? And the Trumpets? Where're the cameras and all the Gamesmakers?

PEETA
I don't know.

A tentative step. The stillness feels deadly. Like a trap...

Then, suddenly, some MOCKINGJAYS START SHRIEKING. Katniss whips around to locate them. The shriek repeats: a high-pitched, frightened WARNING, aimed right at her.

And she knows what it means. Oh, no...

KATNISS

He's not dead, Peeta. He's not dead!

The shrieking builds - deafening. Then a horrifying BLUR:

...as Cato bursts out of the trees. Running right at us.

Sheer TERROR in his eyes, as if *something were chasing him*, something impossibly lethal. Katniss turns...

And there they are -- *racing at top speed* -- A PACK OF THEM:

The WILD DOGS. "MUTTATIONS." Murderous and huge. Cato blows right by us, unslowed by the Kevlar BODY ARMOR he's wearing.

Katniss turns, runs for her life. Peeta too - hobbling. Both of them following Cato as he gets to:

EXT. CORNUCOPIA - CONTINUING

It's brass, with a sheer face ten feet tall. There are seams on it to give Cato some purchase as he climbs.

Katniss follows at full speed, LEAPING UP, grabbing a seam, climbing the wall - desperately. Adrenaline rocketing...

She gets there... onto its FLAT SURFACE - and she and Cato square off instantly - Cato drawing a sword, Katniss her bow.

But, incredibly, the LEAD MUTTATION bounds that ten-foot high wall in a single bound, barrelling into Cato.

As they battle, Katniss turns - to see *Peeta, hobbling this way*. The PACK gaining on him fast. Her eyes go wide.

Peeta gets to the base of the Cornucopia, starts to climb. MUTTATION #2 swipes at his legs with FOUR-INCH RAZOR CLAWS. Instant blood. Instant agony. Peeta howls.

Katniss fires an arrow right into the throat of the beast. It falls back, dead.

KATNISS

Climb, Peeta!

He's trying. But the other Muttations get to his heels, as:

Cato stabs the Lead Muttation. A death-blow. He shoves the Muttation away. It lands at Katniss's feet.

She recoils, instantly. Just saw something horrifying:

This Muttation has human eyes. *Glimmer's eyes*. Good God...

KATNISS (CONT'D)
(can barely say it)
Glimmer...

Then she's shaken out of her daze - by a very flat voice:

CATO
What's it gonna be, Girl on Fire?

She turns... and gasps:

Cato has yanked Peeta to safety, sort of. He's got the guy in a vicious HEADLOCK, Peeta's legs hovering off the edge of the Cornucopia - with TWENTY HOWLING MUTTATIONS BELOW.

They ALL have human eyes. *Tribute eyes*. Eery as hell.

Katniss draws her bow. Aims right at Cato's head. The noise from the Muttations is a disorienting din...

KATNISS
Let him go, Cato.

Muttations baying. Peeta turning blue... Katniss can't fire that arrow or he'll fall.

CATO
Somebody's gotta lose. You know that.

But just then, Peeta uses his fingers to make an X on the back of Cato's hand. Cato notices, but too late. The smile fades from his face just as Katniss takes dead aim, and:

KATNISS
You're right.

She lets it fly - an arrow aimed right at Cato's hand. Bullseye. Cato cries out, reflexively releasing Peeta, who slams back against him. They might both go over, as:

EXT. DISTRICT 12 - TOWN SQUARE - DAY

8,000 people. No one breathing. Prim crying from the tension. Mrs. Everdeen grabs her hand. Peeta's Parents are rigid.

INT. GAMES CENTER - SAME

Every eye in Mission Control, transfixed.

EXT. CAPITOL - CITY CIRCLE - SAME

TRAFFIC stands still. PEDESTRIANS stop in the middle of an INTERSECTION, watching on a huge SCREEN. Cinna among them.

INT. GAMES CENTER - HAYMITCH'S QUARTERS - SAME

Haymitch, eyes shut, just can't watch.

*

EXT. ARENA - CORNUCOPIA - RESUMING

Cato loses his footing on the slick surface. Katniss lunges forward, grabs Peeta - as *Cato falls into the beasts*.

Instant carnage - a human being, torn apart. Cato shrieks, Katniss watching in horror as the Mutts simply maul him. His eyes find Katniss - a desperate, dying request: *Please*.

Out of mercy, and sportsmanship, She draws back an arrow, and sends it right into his forehead. Death. A CANNON BLASTS...

Safety. At last. The remaining Muttations try to scale the sheer wall - but none of them can do it. Peeta and Katniss embrace... It's over. We've won.

EXT. CAPITOL - CITY CIRCLE DRIVE

JUBILATION. Citizens cheering. Cinna beaming.

EXT. DISTRICT 12 - TOWN SQUARE - RESUMING

Mrs. Everdeen gasps with relief. Peeta's Parents too.

But Prim can't quite celebrate yet. Sensing something off...

INT. GAMES CENTER - MISSION CONTROL - RESUMING

Seneca bears no expression at all. Just nods, coldly:

SENECA

Have Claudius make the announcement.

BETTO

(sick about it)

Yes sir...

*

EXT. ARENA - CORNUCOPIA - RESUMING

The Mutts howl harmlessly beneath Katniss and Peeta.

KATNISS

I want ice cream. Every day.

PEETA

Huh?

KATNISS

In Victors' Village. I want ice cream
delivered to my house. Every day.
Until Prim can't eat it anymore.

Peeta laughs. They both do. He takes her hand. Then:

...an announcement from above:

TEMPLESMITH (O.S.)

Greetings to the final contestants of
the 74th Hunger Games. The earlier
revision has been revoked. Closer
examination of the rule book has
revealed that only one winner may be
allowed. Good luck, and may the odds
be ever in your favor.

And that's it. End of announcement.

Katniss just stares. Peeta too. Neither can speak - all hope
suddenly vacuumed out of their bodies.

The Mockingjays are silent. No sound in the world except the
howling of the Muttations below, which seems deadly again.

PEETA

If you think about it, it's not that
surprising.

KATNISS

No. I guess I always knew it somehow.

PEETA

Doesn't matter. I did what I came
here to do.

KATNISS

What the hell does that mean?

PEETA

I wanted to see you survive. Now
you're going to.

KATNISS

How ya figure?

PEETA

It's just math, Katniss.

He stands, shakily, grabs his knife. In mild disbelief she
draws her bow back.

...only to watch him toss his knife into the lake. Splash.

PEETA (CONT'D)
I told you I wouldn't let these Games
change me. And they won't.

She's standing, bow drawn, deeply ashamed. She lowers it.

PEETA (CONT'D)
No. Do it. I want you to.

KATNISS
I can't. I won't.

PEETA
Do it - before the mutts get me. I
don't wanna die like that.

KATNISS
Then you shoot me!

PEETA
Katniss, you know that's impossible.
And they have to have a winner. So...

That sparked something in her, *an idea*. But he goes on:

PEETA (CONT'D)
Do it. So I won't have to.

KATNISS
...What if they don't?

PEETA
Huh?

KATNISS
What if they don't have a winner?
People would go crazy, wouldn't they?
(Peeta's silent)
I don't wanna die, Peeta. But I know
I can't kill you. Can you kill me?

PEETA
No.

KATNISS
So...

Peeta doesn't get it - until she unzips that pouch around her waist and extracts a couple of those berries. NIGHTLOCK. Oh.

KATNISS (CONT'D)
 They only hurt for a second. Then
 it'll be over. All of this...

She drops a few into his palm, keeps a few for herself.

KATNISS (CONT'D)
 Trust me.

Mutual suicide, on live tv. But Peeta still hasn't agreed.

KATNISS (CONT'D)
 On the count of three?

PEETA
 Hold them out. I want everyone to
 see.

Two hands, extended. The berries twinkle.

PEETA (CONT'D)
 Count of three.

He kisses her goodbye, gently. They stand back to back...

INT. GAMES CENTER - RESUMING

Seneca, blood now draining from his face. Betto gasping... *

EXT. DISTRICT 12 - TOWN SQUARE - DAY

8,000 stunned viewers. Prim, Mrs. Everdeen. Peeta's Parents.

INT. JUVENAL HOTEL CASINO - SPORTS BOOK - SAME

Thousands of GAMBLERS, eyes wide. Numbers flying across the
 electronic wager-boards...

EXT. CAPITOL - CITY CIRCLE - SAME

Cinna, and half the Capitol, breathless...

INT. AVOXES QUARTERS - SAME

Lavinia, and the Ten Year-Old Boy, and every Avox down here -
 watching without words. Despair on every face... *

INT. GAMES CENTER - HAYMITCH'S QUARTERS - SAME

A sound. Haymitch turns: *

Effie just burst in. Their eyes lock, pure dread... *

EXT. ARENA - CORNUCOPIA - RESUMING

The kiss ends. Katniss looks up...

KATNISS

'Bye, Prim. 'Bye, Mom...

PEETA

I'm not afraid. I love you, Katniss.

KATNISS

'Bye, Peeta. One...
(steeling herself)

Two...

(Peeta nods...)

Three!

They shove the berries into their mouths... but --

TRUMPETS BLARE. And a FRANTIC VOICE booms from above:

TEMPLESMITH (V.O.)

Stop! Stop! Ladies and Gentlemen, I
give you the winners of the 74th
Hunger Games! From District Twelve,
Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark!

FIREWORKS ERUPT, that fast, lighting the lake. CANNONS
thunder. CAMERAS SUDDENLY DESCEND on Katniss and Peeta.

The ground beneath the Cornucopia opens up, swallowing those
Muttations. The Mockingjays sing. Now it's over.

Katniss and Peeta spit out the berries, shocked and thrilled.

PEETA

You're not dead?!

KATNISS

I'm not dead!

PEETA

I'm not either!

She throws her head back, laughing. They hug. *We did it!* He
grabs her hand, pulls her into the lake.

EXT. DISTRICT 12 - TOWN SQUARE - SAME

Katniss's NEIGHBORS - 8,000 of them - cheering, crying. Even
Corrina, who lost her son to The Games last year, is able to
smile now, through tears.

*

Mrs. Everdeen and Peeta's parents cry with relief and joy. This time, *Prim gives into it as well, so happy...*

EXT. FOREST - LAKE - RESUMING

Katniss and Peeta rinse out their mouths; then they're splashing each other, hugging.

KATNISS
I'm coming home, Prim! I'm coming home!

Laughing, splashing - utter joy and disbelief - until:

WHOOSH. TWO HOVERCRAFTS suddenly appear overhead. A SPLASH TEAM dives out of one, landing in front of us.

PEETA
What're they--

In seconds they've got him secured to a floating gurney.

KATNISS
Peeta?

Before Peeta can reply, SPLASH TEAM LEADER signals the Hovercraft, and Peeta is whisked into the sky - gone - as a SECOND SPLASH TEAM now zeroes in on Katniss. It's a blur.

Then she's on a GURNEY too. What is all this???

KATNISS (CONT'D)
Peeta?!

Just like that, she's whisked up. We CUT TO:

...train wheels, flying down a track. We are:

INT. TRIBUTE TRAIN - DINING CAR - MOVING - DAY

Days later. Katniss sits in a DINING CAR. Decompressing.

She looks like a girl again - but sobered, changed forever. Staring out a window at the bleakness outside. We MOVE IN on her, as a MEMORY hits...

*
*

INT. CAPITOL - BROADCAST CENTER - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

YESTERDAY: we watch from BACKSTAGE as Peeta is interviewed by Caesar Flickerman before a packed house. Big APPLAUSE.

REVERSE TO: Katniss, in a simple dress, watching from behind a curtain. In moments, she'll be called out to join him.

But first, *Haymitch approaches her*, and leans in:

HAYMITCH
(quiet, out of nowhere)
Listen to me. You're in danger...

INT. TRIBUTE TRAIN - MOVING - RESUMING (PRESENT)

Katniss, reliving the moment. Then BACK TO:

INT. CAPITOL - BACKSTAGE - RESUMING - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Haymitch goes on, a quiet warning:

HAYMITCH
The Capitol's furious about what you
did in the Arena. The berries. It
smacked of "rebellion."

More O.S. APPLAUSE from that crowd - Peeta charming them...

HAYMITCH (CONT'D)
Here's what you say: you were so
madly in love you couldn't think
straight. Understand?
(Katniss is a blank)
Understand?

KATNISS
Did you tell Peeta this?

HAYMITCH
I didn't have to. He's already there.

Huh? But just then, Flickerman calls out from the stage:

FLICKERMAN
How 'bout if we hear from Katniss
herself? Would you like that, Folks?

HUGE CHEER from the crowd. Katniss steps on stage as:

INT. TRIBUTE TRAIN - MOVING - RESUMING (PRESENT)

Katniss, remembering... Then:

INT. CAPITOL - BROADCAST CENTER - STAGE - (FLASHBACK)

Katniss shares a red love-seat with Peeta, her head on his
shoulder, her feet tucked under her - opposite Flickerman.

...as she and the audience watch HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GAMES:

The opening Bloodbath, the fire, the Tracker-Jackers, the landmines, Rue's death, finding Peeta, those kisses... It ends with a shot of Katniss and Peeta, in triumph. Then:

FLICKERMAN

Katniss, we know when love first hit
Peeta - at the tender age of five!
But during The Games we all felt we
were watching you fall in love with
him! Is that what was happening?

*

*

KATNISS

I think so.

The audience LAUGHS. Katniss reddens. Peeta holds her.

KATNISS (CONT'D)

I mean, at first I tried not to think
about my feelings, honestly - because
it only made things worse. But at a
certain point, everything changed.

FLICKERMAN

When was that?

KATNISS

When I realized there was a chance I
could keep him.

Applause. Katniss sees Haymitch off-stage, looking pleased.

And there's Cinna, in the front row, thrilled. With Effie
beside him, her eyes full and wet.

...as Flickerman goes for the drama:

FLICKERMAN

But that moment where you pulled out
those *berries*. What was going through
your mind then?

Katniss flinches a bit. The CAMERAS MOVE IN CLOSER...

...as Flickerman waits... Peeta too... and Haymitch watches
from the wings... until:

KATNISS

I don't know. I guess I just...
couldn't bear the thought of being
without him.

Perfect. Peeta takes her face tenderly, kisses her. The Crowd
sighs. Flickerman beams. Haymitch can breathe.

INT. TRIBUTE TRAIN - MOVING - RESUMING (PRESENT)

Katniss, going over every step of it again. Then:

INT. CAPITOL - BROADCAST CENTER - BACKSTAGE (FLASHBACK)

Show's over. Katniss and Peeta leave the stage to great applause. Haymitch here to greet them.

HAYMITCH

Great job you two. Just keep it up
until we're back home and the cameras
are off; we should be okay.

Then he's gone, shaking hands with Flickerman... leaving Katniss alone with Peeta - who suddenly looks lost.

PEETA

What'd he mean, "Keep it up?"
(Katniss hesitates...)
Katniss?

She looks away. And Peeta sags, *heartbroken*. END FLASHBACK.

INT. TRIBUTE TRAIN - MOVING - RESUMING (PRESENT)

Katniss sits, her face a mask again - as we REVEAL:

Peeta, sitting directly across from her. A frost between them now. He leans forward, adjusting something:

His brand-new *artificial leg*. He slides a pant-leg over it... as this train slows noiselessly. One row up, Effie rises.

EFFIE

We're here.

Katniss nods. The train stops. An odd silence hovers... as:

INT. HOVERCRAFT - MOVING - DAY

Seneca sits, Peacekeepers on either side of him. *Opposite* him sits PANEM PRESIDENT EVANDER SNOW. Not happy.

SENECA

Mister President, it was the largest
viewership we ever had.

PRESIDENT SNOW

Yes. And look what they saw.

SENECA

It was good theatre, Sir.

PRESIDENT SNOW

It was dissent. And you allowed it.

No reply. Snow nods at a PEACEKEEPER, who throws open a door.

Wait. We're *5,000 feet in the air* - nothing below us but that forest, the Cornucopia a dot in its center. Seneca gasps.

...and looks to President Snow, desperate. *No, you wouldn't*. But Snow is expressionless, which tells Seneca everything...

SENECA

One little loaf of bread...

PRESIDENT SNOW

You aren't without options, Seneca.

Seneca brightens... until Snow opens a small box... revealing *several of those same dark berries*. Their purpose is clear.

Seneca eyes them, and sinks. The prospect sounds awful...

PRESIDENT SNOW (CONT'D)

So?

Seneca just shakes his head. Snow nods, understanding. Then:

PRESIDENT SNOW (CONT'D)

Good luck, Seneca. And may the odds be ever in your favor.

With that, Seneca is hurled out the side of the hovercraft. We hear his screams, the SOUND MATCHING TO:

INT. TRIBUTE TRAIN - RESUMING

A CROWD CHEERS, O.S., audible through the rear door of the train. Effie eyes her two Tributes.

EFFIE

I want to thank you both. It's been an honor serving with you.

Katniss is silent. Peeta too. Haymitch approaches.

HAYMITCH

Ready?

Katniss nods, overloaded. Peeta misreading it entirely.

PEETA

Sure. Just another performance, right? Then we're done.

KATNISS

No. Peeta, you don't understand...

PEETA

Don't I?

Katniss tightens - as Haymitch throws open the door...

...and CHEERS flood in, from a waiting crowd of THOUSANDS:

EXT. DISTRICT 12 - TRAIN STATION - CONTINUING

This station is PACKED with the CHEERING CITIZENS of District 12 - roaring, as CAMERA CREWS capture it all.

Peeta and Katniss step on to the back platform of the train like candidates doing a whistle-stop, waving.

Peeta's Parents are here. And Corrina - everyone crying. Mrs. *
Everdeen and Prim too, their eyes wet, cheering. *

Prim jumps onto the platform, tackling Katniss, crying.
Katniss holds on tight, desperately grateful.

Until she sees something familiar in the corner of her eye...

Gale, anonymous amidst the crowd. Their eyes lock.

And there it is on her face: affection, relief, guilt, dread -
all at once...

Peeta grabs her, kisses her. The CROWD CHEERS again - despite
the confusion in her eyes. The CAMERAS PUSH IN on her...

Gale just smiles a thin smile; Katniss has survived, that's
all that matters. We RETURN TO:

INT. HOVERCRAFT - MOVING - RESUMING - DAY

President Snow looks down at the Arena, sullied now.

LEAD PEACEKEEPER

Back to the Capitol, Sir?

PRESIDENT SNOW

No.

(flatly)

There's a threat out there that wants
to be strangled in its crib.

(resolved...)

Take me to District Twelve.

The hovercraft banks hard, disappearing from our view...