

Memories Long Forgotten  
(Based on Mockingjay by Suzanne Collins)

By: Lia Castro

I light a small candle and watch the little flame flicker to life. Shouts and cheers from the street outside echo softly in the room.

*I should be celebrating. He doesn't deserve my grief.*

The windows are shuttered, and the light is dim. This will be a day of mourning for me. My chance to say goodbye.

*He doesn't deserve my goodbye.*

I might be the only person in all of Panem who isn't celebrating. There is chaos everywhere, of course, but the people are *free*. I'm free.

I should be out in the streets, in the daylight. I should be shouting joyously to welcome the new era. I should not be sitting in darkness in my quiet little shop, mourning the boy who was like a brother to me.

*He hasn't been a boy in a long time. And he has never been my brother.*

I reach into a desk drawer littered with old memories and dust, fingers groping for the simple frame. I pull it out, sending dust particles clouding into the air.

I pull out the photograph. It was so long ago— we were both so young.

*There he is, that twisted, corrupted man. The monster who is responsible for the continuation of the Hunger Games.*

He's just a boy in the picture, grinning with childlike joy. A smile that is now only a memory.

*He doesn't deserve to be remembered.*

I set the picture next to the candle on the table and sink into my chair. The flame of the candle dances softly, bathing the photo in a warm orange glow.

Memories echo in my head. I close my eyes, trying to drown out the storm.

*"We'll take care of each other always, won't we, Tigris?"*

*"Of course."*

*"Promise?"*

*"I promise."*

We were only children then. My heart aches as I think of those innocent souls from so long ago.

*"Coryo! I did it! I did it!"*

*"You're brilliant, and the best cousin ever."*

I suck in a breath. My Coryo. My cousin.

*"Snow lands on top."*

A melancholy laugh slips from my lips. We said it so much during the Dark Days, in the war. *Snow lands on top*. We clung to those words so desperately, whispered them in the night like sparks to a flame.

I remember things were spiraling out of control. Coryo was desperate for a way to get into the University, and we were slipping into poverty. Even then, when he was so young, he was so ambitious. He had so much to prove.

And when he returned from his Peacekeeper service, he was different. Colder. Harder. He was not the same boy I knew. And soon enough, he became someone new. President Snow.

He helped the Hunger Games grow into something even more evil and twisted. He ruled with terror and cruelty. He *deserved* what he got. President Snow is dead, and the people of Panem are celebrating, as they should be. As *I* should be. They are finally free. *I'm* free.

So why am I here, mourning a corrupt man, a murderer, a monster?

*My Coryo died long ago.*

*He doesn't deserve my grief.*

*He doesn't deserve my goodbye.*

*He doesn't deserve to be remembered.*

And yet, here I am, grieving him, saying goodbye, remembering him all the same. Perhaps it's cowardly. Perhaps it's weak. Perhaps it's naive. Perhaps it's cruel to everyone he has hurt.

Perhaps it's wrong to try to forgive him.

Or perhaps if we all held a little more room for forgiveness in our hearts, there would be no need for a Hunger Games. Perhaps there would be a little less suffering, and a little more peace.

Maybe forgiveness is the bravest thing one can do.