Aria

by levett14

Summary

Aria Caddick, an innocent twelve-year-old girl from District 7 has just been reaped for the 73rd Hunger Games. What will happen to this young girl? Will fate be on her side? For now, it seems almost as if the odds are never in her favor...
Chapter 1: The Reaping

Faces. Empty faces. Everywhere. All so worried about their fate. We never wanted a part in this cruel world; we were just born into it. The escort for District 7, Elleny Brodge, walks over to the ball to choose the female tribute. The anxiety in the air, and especially in me, is only heightening as Elleny’s bright teal heels click on the concrete floor along with her silver dress jingling with every step she takes towards the bowl for the females. I begin to twist my shoulder-length brunette pigtails uneasily. Click clack click clack. She opens the paper a little too joyfully as the world seemingly stops and she reads the name on the slip. “Aria Caddick”, she says, “Where are you darling, come on up.” Air, I need air. Everyone turns to me, and I swallow the lump in my throat. How? Why? God, no, I can’t do this. Wake up Aria, wake up; it’s just a dream. “Aria? Aria?” Elleny asks again in her oh-so-annoying Capitol accent. I slowly edge my way out of the crowd and walk slowly up to the stage. I can hear my brother Adkin shouting my name, but I don’t respond, as I can barely breathe. I reach the stage and just look out at the mass of people. Everyone whispering to one another about how such a small, innocent, little twelve-year-old girl could have fate like this. I once again hear the click-clack of Elleny’s heels walking over to pick the male tribute from District 7. I don’t pay much attention to her as I’m still trying to wrap my head around the fact that I’ve just been reaped for the 73rd Hunger Games. “Deven Zulen”, she says excitedly. Who the hell is he? Never heard the name before in my life. I see a muscular boy with rich brown hair walk up. He looks to be about sixteen or seventeen. I turn to him, still not able to breathe sufficiently and we shake hands. He mouths to me “I’ll protect you.” and with those words it all becomes real to me. I, Aria Caddick, age twelve, have just been picked to essentially die in front of all of Panem. Great, this is just amazing. I’m not angry or sad, I’m just numb and in shock. Well, goodbye old friends and people I hate, have fun watching me get murdered.
“You’ve got an hour to say goodbye” a peacekeeper, or as I like to say: a white devil comes into my room in the Justice Building to tell me. I just nod and stay quiet. Suddenly, my parents and my three brothers enter and stand before me. My two oldest brothers, Adkin and Ginnin are both yelling at each other, while my mother tries to break them up. My father is pacing back and forth, oblivious to the chaos around him, trying to figure out how his sweet little Aria got reaped for the Hunger Games. My youngest brother, Camin, is holding my hand and trying to reassure me. His bright blue eyes almost convince me I’ll be okay. “Aria, you can do this, I know you can. You’re the strongest girl in all of Panem; I know that, I believe in you Ary, I really do.” With some other kind words from my brothers and my parents, our time is up. A kiss on the cheek and a warm hug from my mother, and then they are pulled away from me by a couple of Peacekeepers. After they leave; Elleny comes to my room to tell me I have to leave to get on a train to reach the Capitol. I walk with Deven to the train with Elleny leading the way. Click clack click clack. God, that’s getting annoying. When we get on the train, there is another woman already there. She looks to be in her mid-20s, with shoulder-length brown hair that has a pink streak in it. She definitely doesn’t look too ecstatic. She shakes Deven and I’s hands and introduces herself as Johanna Mason, Hunger Games victor, and our mentor for this year. Elleny suggests we get some sleep and regroup in the morning. Without another word or motion, I run off into my cabin for the journey, it’s quite marvelous. Very Capitol. I walk around the mahogany-covered room. There’s a stunning bathroom to my right, marble everywhere. I tour the room a bit more and I see a dresser. I open the drawers and find beautiful, luscious clothing, nothing like we had in 7. I strip off my clothes and put on a warm, blue nightdress. I then get into bed when realization hits me: I’m going to the Capitol for a fight to the death. It’s going to be a while before I get to sleep.
“Aria! C’mon darling wake up!” Elleny’s Capitol accent rings in my ears as I wake up the next morning. “I’ll meet you in the dining car”; she says and then hurries away probably to wake Deven. I get up out of bed and walk down the narrow hallway to the dining car. Deven has beaten me there; he and Johanna are talking strategies and enjoying the plethora of food that’s in front of us. Johanna looks up at me “Come, sit” she motions to a seat across from her. “We were just talking about you, Aria” she says calmly, “Deven is going to protect you but there’s not much else I can do for you. My only suggestion for you is to do what I did, act like you’re just an innocent little girl, which you are, and then kill everyone in the end. You have some decent skills, but you’re half the size of the other tributes. I wouldn’t bet on you, you’re not going to win, not in a million years. Here’s another piece of advice: make your last days memorable. Inflict pain on others, when you die, you want to die with a purpose.” And with that terrible speech, she leaves the room to do who knows what. I swallow the lump in my throat and keep my head down “I’m not really hungry, I’m going to go back to my room.” I try to get up by Deven grabs my arm “No, Aria stay.” I can feel another speech coming on “Don’t listen to whatever crap Johanna was saying, you can win this, you will win this, and I will help you achieve that. I’m not going to let you die, you’re only twelve, and you’ve got your whole life ahead of you. I’m going to protect you with every will I have, and I won’t stop until you win. You can do this; you have the skills to get through this. I know you do, just save it until the end, no one is going to bother a little girl until there’s only a few tributes left.” He grabs my hands and looks straight into my eyes “Aria Caddick, you will win the 73rd Hunger Games and become the youngest victor ever.” I smile weakly, blinking back tears “Thank you for the encouragement Deven, but I really can’t do it, I’m going to die.” He immediately pulls me into his arms, comforting me “That’s a lie Aria, you’re going to be alive a week, a month, a year from now. You’re not going to die on my watch.” I have now started crying and am wiping away my tears with my hands. Deven believes in me, he believes I can win. I can feel a glimmer of hope, even though it’s almost non-existent, it’s still there. Aria Caddick is not giving up, not quite yet.
Chapter 4: Arrival

Before I know it, we arrive at the Capitol. It’s extravagant and larger than life. Tall, silver buildings everywhere and bright colored tiles at your feet. Along with the, let’s say eccentric, people, it’s like I’ve entered a fantasy world. Before I have time to process the vibrant world that is the Capitol, I’m whisked away into an open room that’s divided into two sides. I’m told that one side is for the girls and one for the boys. This is the preparation room. Elleny tells me that we’ll be cleaned and readied for the Games here. “Cleaned and readied”. Okay, that phrase freaks me out just a bit. I lie down on a cold, hard bed as three aberrant people surround me. "Hi Aria, my name is Kaya," a woman with bright purple hair and freakishly long green eyelashes says to me “And this is Julius and Eden, we’re your prep team. We’re just going to wax you down and make sure you’re perfect for when your stylist, Tammin comes to see you.” I nod apprehensively, and with that gesture, off go my clothes. When Kaya said she was waxing me down, she meant it. I’m biting my lip and holding back tears as they wax every part of me from head to toe, including my nether regions. After what seems like forever, I’m told that the waxing is finished. Impetuously, I breathe a loud sigh of relief. Eden giggles at my reaction; her kind must really enjoy the pain of children. Next, they wash me down, ridding any unwanted residue. Kaya, Julius, and Eden then leave, leaving me alone and naked, and feeling quite vulnerable. I get up and look at myself in the mirror. I look like a doll, not even close to a real girl. I’m shining from the wax; I look like a goddess, if you consider a twelve-year-old girl who has yet to develop real breasts a goddess. Suddenly, the door opens and a tall man with glimmering golden hair and a vivid blue suit walks in. “Hello Aria, I’m Tammin, your stylist for the Games.” He shakes my hand and then takes a step back, admiring every inch of my body. I am very uncomfortable considering I’m standing here naked with a man I just met staring at me. He must have noticed my uneasiness, as he laughs and hands me my dressing gown. "You don’t have to be in the nude, darling. Put this on.”

Without hesitation, I throw on the thin dress and wait for further instruction. “District 7, Lumber. I have the perfect idea. You and Deven in white outfits to represent paper with the ends of your hair painted green for trees.” He claps, “Oh! It’s going to be perfect!” He is really proud of himself right now. “I must go tell Deven! He’s going to be overjoyed!” And with that, the shimmering man leaves my room. I’m now alone again, just left with my thoughts. I sigh again, how in the world am I going to survive this?
Wow. I’m standing next to Deven, looking at us in our outfits for the Tribute Parade. I’m wearing a strapless, knee-length white dress with embroidery to resemble lace around my waist. Deven is wearing a similar ensemble; a white suit with embroidery around the collar and around the cuffs of his jacket. My thick brown hair has been put into pigtails with the ends dyed forest green. I also have on some kind of space makeup: a dark brown smoky eye with bright green eyeliner. Deven’s hair has been styled into a quiff, with the top dyed green to match mine.

He smiles weakly, “Wow, we look pretty good.” I nod in agreement.

“Aria, come on. You and I both know that we’re most likely not going to make it out of there alive. So just try to enjoy all this luxury while we have it.” I roll my eyes at him.

“Fine. Whatever.”

We are then ordered to get into our chariots for the parade. The large, metal doors open and out go the chariots. Districts 1 through 5 go out and I can hear the roaring cheers from the crowd outside. Next is District 6, they leave in their ridiculous silver costumes that are meant to represent trains, I’m suddenly awoken from my thoughts, as our chariot is pulled outward by two horses. I almost faint from what is before me. A very animated crowd is on either side of me. They’re not just animated; they’re a fucking rainbow of anticipation. Their brightly colored lips part making way for screams of adoration. I do as I’m told; just wave and smile. Johanna told me earlier that we, especially me, need sponsors, so I go the extra mile and I try to seem pleasant. I wave individually to as many people as I can and smile particularly big. After about ten minutes of Wave. Smile. Wave. Smile. We arrive at the end to see President Snow is on a balcony, preparing to speak. “Welcome Tributes, to the 73rd Annual Hunger Games! We’re all very excited here, as I’m sure you are too.” Blah blah blah, it’s all just bullshit. He gives the same speech every year; he’s like a robot, a sick, cruel robot.

His speech is over quickly, per usual, and we are now taken inside to where we will be staying for the last few days before the Games. Deven and I are waiting for Johanna and Elleny to come and show us our rooms. I must have been more tired than I realized, because before I know it I’m leaning against Deven, mostly asleep as he carries me into the elevator.
Chapter 6: Breakfast with Johanna

“Aria, come on, we have to talk with Johanna.” It’s Deven, trying to wake me up. I groan and get up out of my cozy bed reluctantly. We walk into the dining room where Johanna is waiting for us, once again with a plethora of food before them. I sit next to Deven, across from Johanna, and begin to eat.

“So kids, the next few days are the most crucial to your survival, only second to the Games themselves.” Johanna says admittedly, “It’s time for Training. Deven, weaknesses and strengths?”

“Um…” He ponders this for a moment, “I’m good with axes, of course, I’m pretty strong and I have some decent survival skills. I would say my main weakness is I’m not too keen on killing people. I’m not very assertive either.” Johanna shoots back immediately, “We can work with that. Trust me, when you get into that arena, the bloodlust will overpower any other feelings and you will kill anyone who’s not an ally.” She then looks at me “What about you, Smalls?”

I respond confidently, much to her surprise, “I can throw a knife or an axe pretty far. I can fight too; you know hand-to-hand combat. My brothers taught me. I think my weaknesses are pretty obvious: I’m small and twelve.”

She smirks, “You just need to use your weaknesses to your advantage, just like I did. Now, after this meal you two head of to training, it will be your first encounter with the other tributes. Deven, this isn’t what I normally say, but show your ass off. Be assertive. If you play your cards right, you can get in with the Careers. After them, tributes from District 7 probably have the best chance. If you can get in with them, Aria can too. They’ll want her as a spy or something of the sort. Now Aria, my advice for you is the polar opposite. You have to do what I did, and the tributes, along with the Capitol will treat you as a little Johanna Mason. Don’t do anything in Training, just wander around or paint your arm or something. Just be little and invisible. If you show your skills, the other tributes will think of you equally, and they’ll fear you. If you try to do something and fail, the other tributes will ridicule you and you’ll be their first target. But, if you do nothing and just blend in, they won’t bother you and the Careers will let you in along with Deven. Do what I say for the next three days, and it should be smooth sailing after that. I’ll talk with you two later about interviews and the actual Games, but now, you have to go to Training. Remember Deven: be bold, and Aria: be undetectable. I’ll see you later, good luck, and may the odds be ever in your favor.” She says the last bit in a Capitol accent as she walks away cackling, this must be fun to her. I shake the thought out of my head before I look to Deven; he is equally, if not more petrified than I am.
“Deven, I’m scared.” I whisper to him as we walk down a dull, gray hallway towards the Training Room. He rubs my back soothingly, “Shhhhh. don’t be scared, just listen to what Johanna said and we’ll be fine.”

We then enter the Training Room; it’s massive. The rest of the tributes surround us, all dressed identically in silver and navy outfits with our respective district numbers sewed on our shoulders in different colors. Atala, the Head Trainer, approaches us and begins to give her lecture about training. I’m only half-listening, as I’m so eager to get to “being invisible”. She talks about survival skills and weaponry, blah blah blah don’t fight with the other tributes, blah blah blah pay attention.

She finishes her talk and then dismisses us to train. Deven hugs me tightly before he runs off to show his talent, as the other tributes are scrambling to show off as well. I am now standing in the middle of the room, alone. Just wander around or paint your arm or something. Just be little and invisible. With Johanna’s words haunting me, I walk over to the camouflage station. I start to paint something that resembles tree bark on my arm. It reminds me of home, the only place I want to be now. I look over at Deven, who has clearly impressed the Careers. He notices my glance and smiles at me. He’s achieved his mission within twenty minutes; I’ve still got three more days to meet mine. A boy awakes me from my thoughts.

“Hey.” He says casually as he pushes his dirty blonde hair away from his face, “I’m Avan, 15 years old, District 5.” I just look at him, unable to speak; partly from his beauty, partly from the fact that a real person is talking to me. He laughs slightly, “And may I ask, who are you?”

I put my brush down and stand up straight, “I’m Aria, 12 years old, District 7.” He then grabs my hand and kisses it softly.

“Lovely to meet you, Aria. Now darling, what are your skills? I’d guess you’re pretty good with an axe considering you’re from 7, is that right?”

“Yes, I’m not too bad with a knife either.” I respond gingerly. He nods approvingly, “Not too bad. Now you know, Aria, that we’re the two youngest tributes, right?” I nod knowingly, “Having said that, I think you and me should form an alliance. Better to die with the one you love than alone, am I correct in saying that?” I can’t help but smile at his remark.

“Yes, you are. I’ll let you know, I’ll have to see how my cards play out.” While I do appreciate his kindness, I don’t appreciate the condescending vibe he’s giving off.

“Alright then. Thank you Aria. I must get back to my partner, perhaps I’ll talk to you later?” He asks with a warm smile.

I return the smile back to him as I say “Maybe. We’ll have to see.” He then leaves and I notice Deven is looking at me with a perplexed look on his face. “I’ll tell you later!” I mouth to him, and he nods in agreement.

The rest of the day goes by fairly quickly, playing with sticks for five hours can really entertain. We are excused around 5 o’clock to head back to our rooms. Oh how I can’t wait to see Deven and Johanna’s reaction to my possible new lover boy.
Chapter 8: For the Love of a Tribute

“What the hell were you thinking?” It’s the next morning and Johanna is yelling at me from across the breakfast table about my previous encounter with Avan. “Aria! You can’t just go around casually telling people these things! Were you not listening to me?”

Johanna’s yelling brings back painful memories to me and I start to cry. “I-I’m sorry Johanna. I didn’t mean to. I didn’t realize I was doing any harm.”

“Whatever. Listen to me. Don’t speak to that boy again, okay? If he comes up to you and tries to talk to you, ignore him and act like he’s not there. Got it?” I nod weakly. Johanna then looks to Deven. “So how did your training go?”

He smiles proudly, “The Careers were very impressed with my strength and skills with an axe. They said that I could join them, as long as I don’t piss them off.”

Johanna smirks, obviously impressed with him “Of course, and you will not, correct?” He nods in agreement.

“Johanna?” Deven asks,

“Yes?”

“What did you say to get any sponsors?”

“I’ll try my best to get you some, and you should get some. The girl isn’t terrible looking, and if she continues with her act of innocence, then you’ll get some. The Capitol citizens will love and pity her, and, in turn, you.”

She now turns to face me, “Aria, you have to listen to what I say and never speak to anyone. Your life and Deven’s life depend on it. Understood?” I nod. I’m afraid that if I don’t listen to her, never mind the other tributes, Johanna Mason will kill me.

The next few days went by quickly. We have two more days of training, individual assessment and then our interview with Caesar. Avan came up to me on the second day, and I did as I was told and ignored him. He seemed to be offended, and I felt quite bad for him. Other than me, there was no one else his size. The next youngest tribute was 16 and he was a Career, and a good foot taller than me. Deven continued what he was doing, and he only impressed the Careers more with each day. I know he is going to place high, if not win the Games. I’m not so sure about myself, I can only hope what Johanna is telling me to do is helpful when we get to the Arena.

Johanna, Elleny, Deven and I are sitting on the couch in our room watching Caesar read off training scores for the tributes. I haven’t been listening much, but what I have heard is: Bliss from District 1 got an 8, Frill from District 1 got a 9, Liam from District 2 got a 10, Macey from District 2 got a 9, Meredith from District 4 got a 9, and Avan got an 8. I am so scared, for Deven and me. These scores determine sponsors, and sponsors determine fate.

“District 7,” Caesar’s voice echoes through the newfound silence in the room “Deven Zulen, 9.”

Johanna and Elleny start clapping and cheering, “Perfect Deven, just perfect.” Elleny says in her Capitol accent.

“Nice one.” Johanna says with a nod of approval.

Now me. Johanna said to show some skill, but not all I have, unlike Deven. She said between a 5 and a 7 would be ideal.

“District 7, Aria Caddick,” I feel like I’m going to combust. “6.”

More applause from Johanna and Elleny follow. Yes, I did it. Johanna high fives me, maybe I have redeemed myself to her.

Deven hugs me, “Good job Aria.”

“Thanks.” I smile at him; he really is a good person. My confidence level has raised a little, just enough to not make me crazily fearful as I was before. I still don’t think I can win, not in a million years, but now I don’t think I’ll be the first one to die.

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