

SUNRISE ON THE REAPING



A HUNGER GAMES NOVEL BY

SUZANNE COLLINS

A large, stylized magnifying glass graphic in shades of gray, with the author's name centered in the lens.

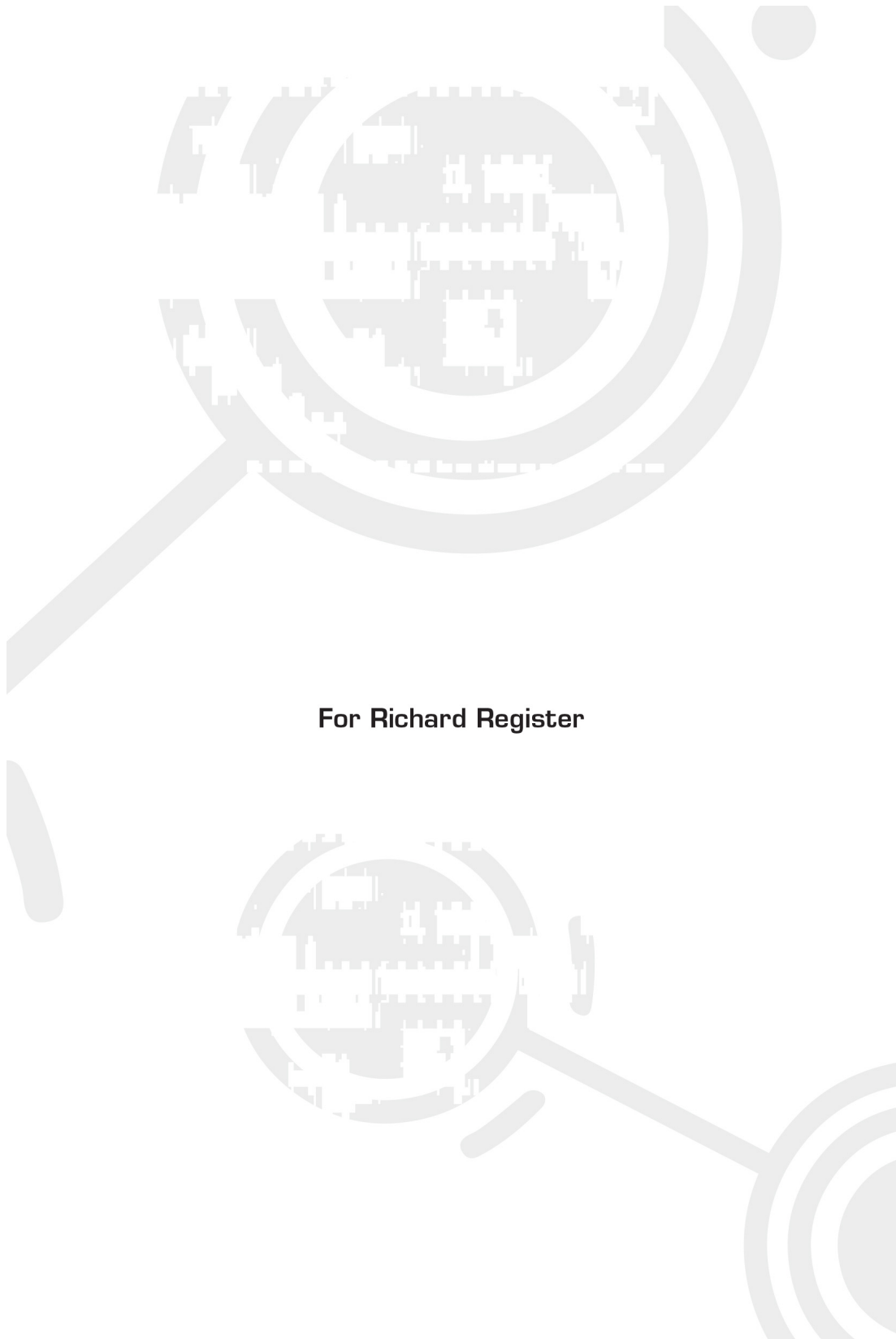
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A small logo of a quill pen, the symbol for Scholastic Press.

SCHOLASTIC PRESS / NEW YORK

A second, smaller stylized magnifying glass graphic in shades of gray, partially visible at the bottom of the cover.



For Richard Register

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*“All propaganda is lies, even when one is telling
the truth. I don’t think this matters so long as
one knows what one is doing, and why.”*

— George Orwell

*“A truth that’s told with bad intent,
Beats all the lies you can invent.”*

— William Blake

*“Nothing appears more surprising to those, who consider human affairs
with a philosophical eye, than the easiness with which the many are
governed by the few; and the implicit submission, with which men resign
their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers. When we enquire
by what means this wonder is effected, we shall find, that, as Force is
always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support
them but opinion. It is therefore, on opinion only that government is
founded; and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military
governments, as well as to the most free and most popular.”*

— David Hume

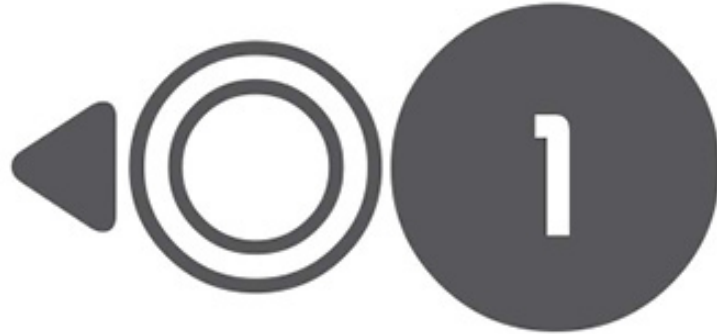
*“That the sun will not rise tomorrow is no less intelligible a proposition,
and implies no more contradiction, than the affirmation, that it will rise.”*

— David Hume



PART I

“THE BIRTHDAY”



“Happy birthday, Haymitch!”

The upside of being born on reaping day is that you can sleep late on your birthday. It’s pretty much downhill from there. A day off school hardly compensates for the terror of the name drawing. Even if you survive that, nobody feels like having cake after watching two kids being hauled off to the Capitol for slaughter. I roll over and pull the sheet over my head.

“Happy birthday!” My ten-year-old brother, Sid, gives my shoulder a shake. “You said be your rooster. You said you wanted to get to the woods at daylight.”

It’s true. I’m hoping to finish my work before the ceremony so I can devote the afternoon to the two things I love best — wasting time and being with my girl, Lenore Dove. My ma makes indulging in either of these a

challenge, since she regularly announces that no job is too hard or dirty or tricky for me, and even the poorest people can scrape up a few pennies to dump their misery on somebody else. But given the dual occasions of the day, I think she'll allow for a bit of freedom as long as my work is done. It's the Gamemakers who might ruin my plans.

“Haymitch!” wails Sid. “The sun's coming up!”

“All right, all right. I'm up, too.” I roll straight off the mattress onto the floor and pull on a pair of shorts made from a government- issued flour sack. The words COURTESY OF THE CAPITOL end up stamped across my butt. My ma wastes nothing. Widowed young when my pa died in a coal mine fire, she's raised Sid and me by taking in laundry and making every bit of anything count. The hardwood ashes in the fire pit are saved for lye soap. Eggshells get ground up to fertilize the garden. Someday these shorts will be torn into strips and woven into a rug.

I finish dressing and toss Sid back in his bed, where he burrows right down in the patchwork quilt. In the kitchen, I grab a piece of corn bread, an upgrade for my birthday instead of the gritty, dark stuff made from the Capitol flour. Out back, my ma's already stirring a steaming kettle of clothes with a stick, her muscles straining as she flips a pair of miner's overalls. She's only thirty-five, but life's sorrows have already cut lines into her face, like they do.

Ma catches sight of me in the doorway and wipes her brow. “Happy sixteenth. Sauce on the stove.”

“Thanks, Ma.” I find a saucepan of stewed plums and scoop some on my bread before I head out. I found these in the woods the other day, but it’s a nice surprise to have them all hot and sugared.

“Need you to fill the cistern today,” Ma says as I pass.

We’ve got cold running water, only it comes out in a thin stream that would take an age to fill a bucket. There’s a special barrel of pure rainwater she charges extra for because the clothes come out softer, but she uses our well water for most of the laundry. What with pumping and hauling, filling the cistern’s a two-hour job even with Sid’s help.

“Can’t it wait until tomorrow?” I ask.

“I’m running low and I’ve got a mountain of wash to do,” she answers.

“This afternoon, then,” I say, trying to hide my frustration. If the reaping’s done by one, and assuming we’re not part of this year’s sacrifice, I can finish the water by three and still see Lenore Dove.

A blanket of mist wraps protectively around the worn, gray houses of the Seam. It would be soothing if it wasn’t for the scattered cries of children being chased in their dreams. In the last few weeks, as the Fiftieth Hunger Games has drawn closer, these sounds have become more frequent, much

like the anxious thoughts I work hard to keep at bay. *The second Quarter Quell. Twice as many kids.* No point in worrying, I tell myself, there's nothing you can do about it. *Like two Hunger Games in one.* No way to control the outcome of the reaping or what follows it. So don't feed the nightmares. Don't let yourself panic. Don't give the Capitol that. They've taken enough already.

I follow the empty cinder street to the hill with the miners' graveyard. A jumble of rough markers spikes the slope. Everything from headstones with carved names and dates to wooden boards with peeling paint. My pa's buried in the family plot. A patch of Abernathys, with one limestone marker doing for us all.

After a quick check for witnesses — no one's here much, and certainly not at dawn — I crawl under the fence into the woods outside District 12 and begin the trek to the still. Brewing white liquor with Hattie Meeney is dicey business, but it's a picnic compared to killing rats or cleaning outhouses. She expects me to work hard, but she works hard herself, and even though she'll never see sixty again, she can do more than a person half her age. There's a lot of grunt work involved. Collecting firewood, hauling grain, taking in the full bottles and toting back the empties to be refilled. That's where I come in. I'm Hattie's mule.

I stop at what we call the depot, a bare patch of ground concealed by the drooping boughs of a willow tree, where Hattie drops off supplies. Two twenty-five-pound sacks of cracked corn await, and I swing one over each shoulder.

It takes about half an hour to reach the still, where I find Hattie tending a pot of mash next to the remains of a small fire.

She offers me her long-handled wooden spoon. “Why don’t you give this a stir?”

I drop the bags of corn under a lean-to where we keep supplies and raise the spoon in victory. “Whoa, a promotion!”

Me being allowed to handle the mash is something new. Maybe Hattie’s starting to train me to be a partner one day. Two of us brewing full-time would increase output, and there’s always more demand than she can meet, even for the eye-watering stuff she makes with the Capitol grain. Particularly for that, since it’s cheap enough for the miners to afford. The good stuff gets bought up by disorderly soldiers — Peacekeepers, that is — and the richer folk in town. But bootlegging’s illegal ten different ways, and all it would take is a new Head Peacekeeper — one who didn’t like a stiff drink himself — to land us in the stocks or worse. Mining’s tough work, but they don’t hang you for it.

While Hattie packs pint bottles of white liquor into a basket lined with moss, I squat down and stir the mash on and off. When it's cooled some, I pour it into a deep bucket and she adds the yeast. I set the mash in the lean-to so it can ferment. She's not distilling today since she doesn't want to risk the smoke attracting attention if the mist burns off. Our local Peacekeepers may turn a blind eye to Hattie's still and her stall in the Hob, an old warehouse that serves as our black market, but she's worried their Capitol counterparts in their low-flying, cloaked hovercraft will spot us from the air. No hauling in the bottles today either, so I'm tasked with chopping wood for the week. When the pile's replenished, I ask what else needs doing, and she just shakes her head.

Hattie's endeared herself to me by throwing in a tip sometimes. Not with my wages, which she pays directly to my mother, but by slipping me a little something on the sly. A handful of cracked corn I can take to Lenore Dove for her geese, a packet of yeast I can barter with at the Hob, and today a pint of white liquor for my own use. She gives me her broken-toothed grin and says, "Happy birthday, Haymitch. I figure if you're old enough to make it, you're old enough to drink it."

I have to agree and, though I'm not a drinker myself, I'm glad to get the bottle. I can easily sell it or trade it or possibly pass it on to Lenore Dove's uncle, Clerk Carmine, so that he might have a kinder opinion of me.

You'd think the son of a washerwoman would be harmless enough, but we Abernathys were known rebels back in the day, and apparently we still carry the scent of sedition, scary and seductive in equal parts. Rumors spread after my father's death, rumors that the fire had not been an accident. Some say he died sabotaging the mine, others that his crew was targeted by the Capitol bosses for being a pack of troublemakers. So it could be my kin's the problem. Not that Clerk Carmine has any love for the Peacekeepers, but he's not one for yanking their chain either. Or maybe he just doesn't like his niece running around with a bootlegger, even if the work's steady. Well, whatever the reason, he rarely gives me more than a terse nod, and he once told Lenore Dove that I was the kind that died young, which I don't think he meant as a recommendation.

Hattie yelps as I impulsively give her a hug. "Oh, enough of that. You still sparking that Covey girl?"

"I'm sure trying," I say, laughing.

"Go bother her, then. You're of no more use to me today." She dumps a scoop of cracked corn into my hand and shoos me away. I pocket the corn and take off before she can change her mind about her best gift: unexpected time with my girl. I know I should probably head home and get a jump on filling the cistern, but I can't resist the thought of a few stolen kisses. It's my birthday and, for once, that cistern can wait.

The mist begins to thin as I run through the woods to the Meadow. Most people comment on its beauty, but Lenore Dove calls it the friend of the condemned, because it can hide you from the Peacekeepers. She tends to take a dark view of things, but maybe that's to be expected from someone named for a dead girl. Well, half for the dead girl called Lenore in this old poem and half for a shade of gray, which I found out the day I met her.

It was the fall after I'd turned ten and the first time I'd ever snuck under the fence that surrounds our district. I'd been deterred by both the law and the threat of wild predators, which are rare but real. My friend Burdock had finally worn me down, saying he did it all the time and there was nothing to it and there were still apples if you could climb. And I could climb and I loved apples. Plus, him being younger than me made me feel like a big scaredy-cat if I didn't.

"Want to hear something?" Burdock asked as we ventured deep into the woods. He tilted back his head and sang out in that remarkable voice of his. High and sweet like a grown-up woman's but cleaner, nothing warbly about it. Everything seemed to go still, and then the mockingjays began to pick it up. I knew they'd sing for other birds, but I'd never heard them sing for a person before. Pretty impressive stuff. Until an apple dropped smack on Burdock's head, cutting him off.

“Who’s squawking at my birds?” a girl’s voice demanded. And there she was, about twenty feet up, sprawled out on the branch like she lived there. Crooked pigtails, dirty bare feet, munching on an apple, a small clothbound book in her hand.

Burdock cocked his head and laughed. “Hey, cuz. You allowed out here alone? ’Cause I’m sure not.”

“Well, I didn’t see you,” she said.

“Me you either. Toss us down some, would you?”

In answer she stood up on her branch and began to bounce up and down, showering us with apples.

“Hang on, I’ve got a sack with my bow.” Burdock ran off. She scooted down the branches and swung to the ground. She wasn’t one of Burdock’s Everdeen cousins, but I knew he had some distant ones on his ma’s side. I’d seen her around at school — kind of shy, I thought, but I didn’t know her to speak to. She didn’t seem in a rush to change that, just stood there looking me over until I broke the silence.

“I’m Haymitch.”

“I’m Lenore Dove.”

“Dove like the bird?”

“No. Dove like the color.”

“What color’s that?”

“Same as the bird.”

That started my head spinning and I guess it's never quite stopped. Soon after at school, she waved me over to a dog-eared dictionary and pointed. *Dove color: Warm gray with a slight purplish or pinkish tint.* Her color. Her bird. Her name.

After that, I started to notice things about her. How her faded overalls and shirts concealed snips of color, a bright blue handkerchief peeking from her pocket, a raspberry ribbon stitched inside her cuff. How she finished up her lessons quick, but didn't make a fuss about it, just stared out the window. Then I spotted her fingers moving, pressing down imaginary keys. Playing songs. Her foot slipped from her shoe, her stockinged heel keeping time, silent against the wood floor. Like all the Covey, music in her blood. But not like them, too. Less interested in pretty melodies, more in dangerous words. The kind that lead to rebel acts. The kind that got her arrested twice. She was only twelve then, and they let her go. Now it would be different.

As I reach the Meadow, I slip under the fence and pause to catch my breath and drink in the sight of Lenore Dove perched on her favorite rock. The sunlight picks up the hint of red in her hair as she bends over an ancient piano accordion. She coaxes a melody out of the wheezy old thing,

serenading a dozen geese grazing on the grass, her voice as soft and haunting as moonlight.

*They hang the man and flog the woman
Who steals the goose from off the common,
Yet let the greater villain loose
That steals the common from the goose.*

It's a treat to hear her sing, since she never does it in public. None of the Covey do. Her uncles are really more musicians than singers, so they just play tunes and leave the singing to the audience if they're so inclined. Lenore Dove likes this better anyway. Says it makes her too nervous to sing in front of people. Her throat closes up.

Clerk Carmine and her other uncle, Tam Amber, have raised her since her ma died in childbirth, seeing her pa's always been something of a mystery. They're not blood kin, her being a Baird, but the Covey look out for their own. They worked out a deal with the mayor, whose house boasts the only real piano in District 12. Lenore Dove can practice on it if she plays during an occasional dinner or gathering. Her in a faded green dress, an ivory ribbon tying back her hair, lips tinted orange. When her family performs around District 12 for money, she makes do with the instrument she is playing now, which she calls her tune box.