

The Girls Who Died

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The Girls Who Died

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Summary

Eleven outfits Cinna never designed, and one he did.

One - The Girl Who Glitters

If there's one good thing about being assigned to District One, it's the supplies. Calpurnia Silver's old workshop - his now, which still feels impossible - is full of some of the finest fabrics from Eight, and tubs dotted along the tables hold jewels - *actual gems*, not the plastic ones Theo hoarded for a hypothetical future outfit that would need some flair - instead of spare pins or bobbins of ribbon. Cinna struggles not to work out how many student's stipends it would take to buy even one of the sapphires on display, how many tesserae he would have to trade to get even a yard of silk of this quality. Ideas he would never have the supplies to complete under normal circumstances are flashing through his head; if he wished, he could make all of them and still have fabric left over.

If there's one bad thing about being assigned to District One, it's the inability to make any of those ideas happen. Calpurnia had already gotten her designs approved before her untimely death, and the Office of Tributes' Affairs in One is refusing to go through the approval process again so close to the games. That means Cinna is allowed to make only small adjustments to Calpurnia's designs, which basically amount to scandalously short tunics covered in jewels and silver spray paint meant to "show the luxurious material wealth of One". (The explanation makes Cinna want to roll his eyes; "luxurious" isn't a word he'd use to describe either the dark mines where people died every day for wages of almost nothing or the dim workshops where Cori had cut rough gems into something someone would buy, and they don't even mine silver in One. A look at a map would show that the lodes are obviously too far south for that, but given that Theo's sense of geography put the Capitol in the middle of Nine's plains, Cinna figures that almost no one in the Capitol knows.)

Still, he's got plenty of materials, and Tributes' Affairs did technically imply he could change the details of Theo's design to something more in line with his brand. (He doubts they actually know what his brand *is* - everyone takes a look at him and forgets he was sponsored by and apprenticed under Theodora Lockwood, who never met a convention she didn't want to break - and he's pretty sure they didn't mean to imply he could change *anything*, but the point still stands.) Just as he worked with nothing but flowers for his first exhibition, Cinna can work with this.

Glimmer appears in the Capitol already prepped and beaming at the cameras, like all the tributes from One do, and she sits perfectly still as Flavius carefully arranges her hair and Octavia covers her body in a layer of iridescent dust. Her smile never drops, even when a few strands of her hair get caught in the glue Venia's using to attach dozens of tiny plastic gems to her face.

"Hello," Cinna says as he walks in, and Glimmer's smile falters for a split second. Cinna hopes it's just because another person has seen her naked and not because she's caught some hint of the accent he's carefully eradicated. "I'm Cinna, your stylist." Glimmer nods. The smile is back in full force, but her eyes have grown cold and calculating. "Your outfit is ready now."

Cinna has more or less stuck to Calpurnia's design. Sure, he's changed the fit of the tunics - Glimmer would be falling out of it otherwise - and switched out the silver spray paint for

something opalescent, but that he could put down to personal flair. The only major changes are the gems on Glimmer's face and in her hair and the shimmery gauze cape, also studded with gems, that hangs from her right shoulder and pools on the floor behind her. Glimmer moves it experimentally, testing to see how it will flow once she's in the chariot. Her eyes widen as the gems attached to it glow with the movement.

"All the ones in the cape do that," Cinna says. "The others just glow. Do you want to wear your token?" Cinna picks up the ring that had been sitting on one of the side tables. An emerald at least a carat and a half big has been carved into the shape of a rose, and the setting has been molded to look like leaves. It's a beautiful piece, really, as long as you don't notice the slight looseness of the emerald's setting and the hint of a mechanism underneath it. Cinna's only seen workmanship like it from one person. "It's really a lovely piece."

"Thank you," Glimmer says. "My aunt gave it to me for my sixteenth birthday." She slides the ring onto her finger as they walk towards the chariots. At her side, Marvel is glowering and still vaguely pink from the rushed depilation job.

It's good to know Cori's doing well for herself. He's never going to see her again - he hasn't been allowed to talk to her in well over a decade - but it's good to know that on some level, his sister's still alright.

Two - The Berserker

Clove Carter is tall and strong and sixteen, able to beat out both the girls in her year and the girls in the year above her for the coveted spot of volunteer. If the carefully-worded psychiatric profile in her file from Two's Athletic Achievement Academy are anything to go by, she's also more than a little crazy, prone to bouts of all-consuming sadism, but Cinna thinks that goes with the territory; he can remember a dozen different students at One's Program for the Promotion of Decorum and Grace, and at least four of them had similar tendencies towards cool cruelty and a complete lack of empathy. (That label meant nothing to the Program's trainers, of course, but it certainly meant something to the people who had to share their academic classes.)

Still, Clove is remarkably calm and polite as they prepare for the parade (even though the prep team finds four knives on her person), and she even lets Flavius fuss over the fur of the wolf pelt draped over her head without complaint. Cato, her district partner, is also taking to his role as a Norse warrior (including the slightly too small helmet and long extensions they'll probably have to rip out as soon as the parade's done) more affably than Cinna and Mercuria were expecting. They manage to get down to the chariot forty minutes earlier than planned and with no members of the prep teams in tears or need of medical assistance.

Just as their chariot goes out into the night, Clove bares her perfectly straight, perfectly white teeth. They look remarkably like the ones of the wolf pelt that covers her hair and most of her back.

Three - The Robot

As he surveys the wreckage that used to be Theo's workshop, Cinna groans. The water main above it had burst, and now most of the electronic components, carefully collected over years of scrimping and saving and scavenging off old costumes, both Theo's and not, are inundated with water. Some of them will dry out in time and still be usable, but they don't have time for that; the reaping is the day after tomorrow. At his side, Theo sighs.

"Three months of soldering, all for nothing," she says. "What are we going to do?" It's probably a rhetorical question, but an answer is forming in Cinna's mind.

"We fake it," Cinna says, and Theo turns to look at him, neatly pencilled eyebrows raised. "I've still got some rudimentary components in my shop, and we've still got all the plastic gems, right?" Theo nods. "I know a few ways of modifying them that will come in handy. If we use the components we have carefully, then people will assume they're all components. It won't look quite the same, but..."

"Something finished is better than nothing," Theo says. It's an old maxim from the stress of his apprenticeship days, an attempt to break the cycles of perfectionism he and the others tended towards in times of stress. "What kinds of modifications?"

"I can make them glow," Cinna says. "Since they'll be in contact with the tributes' skin or costume, I can't make them phase on or off repeatedly unless you know glow-in-the-dark pigments with a time component, but a slow phase on is probably manageable with skin contact. I can also make them change colors with some difficulty."

"That's all we really need," Theo says. She's already pulling her silver hair back, preparing for another monster soldering session. She gestures to their latest concept drawing, which features the already fabricated robot costumes complete with their planned light placement. "I think we should stick to the pain light-up ones, with a ones that slowly turn on here, here, and here." Cinna nods. "Do you still have the hyper-reflective silver paint?"

"Yes, and it's safe for skin contact," Cinna says.

"Good. If we use that as eyeliner, maybe put a few of the white gems on top, it'll look like lights flashing on and off when they blink." Cinna nods. "We can do this."

"We can do this," Cinna repeats before they both go to work. They have three days - with mandatory viewing of the reapings, really two and a half - to do this.

It takes an all-nighter and seemingly endless fiddling with pigments, but they manage to get everything done just in time. As they wait for the parade to start, Lux fiddles with the wiring in her costume, her fingers searching for the connections despite the fact she can barely see where the lights are thanks to severe nearsightedness and the Gamemakers' belief that glasses could be used to start a fire. It's a nervous habit Cinna's seen tributes display half a dozen times, mostly with things other than wiring and a 9-volt battery, but it still reminds him of Cori fussing with her hair or incessantly running her fingers along pieces of finished jewelry, finding the settings and seams and weak links. It doesn't cause the pangs of homesickness it

did when Portia did it in their first year at the Academy of Fashion, but Cinna wonders if that association will ever shift to someone else now that she's never going to remind him of it.

It probably will if Lux makes it a while and then dies after someone stomps on her fingers. That's how most of his associations with home break these days.

"This is going to feel cold," Cinna warns when the five-minute warning goes off; applying the gems cold lengthens the transition time. "Hold still." He quickly applies the last three gems to her face just before the horses begin to move. As they move out onto the course, Lux raises her hand to wave and does so in jerky, almost robotic motions.

Four - The Mermaid

Lori rolls her eyes when she sees the golden mermaid costume with blue strips of fabric, representing ocean waves, artistically draped across the skirt. She rolls her eyes at the top meant to mimic a pair of gold-flecked sand dollars. She rolls her eyes even harder when she sees the wristbands she's supposed to wear and the long streamers in varying shades of blue tied to them.

However, she looks vaguely surprised and impressed when she sees the stripes on the skirt move and notices that the streamers on her wrists subtly shift color along their length, which Cinna counts as a success.

Five - The Electric Girl

Everyone knows Tesla Finch won't win. It's not that she's from Five, where victors are few and far between. It's not that she's short and slight; too-young, too-small girls have put up fights before, and Johanna Mason was less than an inch taller than Tesla when she took the crown. It's not even that she's nearsighted and not allowed to bring her glasses into the arena. No, the reason everyone knows Tesla will not make it out alive is so obvious to those in the know that to point it out borders on treason: her last name.

Not counting Tesla, there have been five tributes from Five with red hair and the surname Finch that Cinna can remember: Annie, a fourteen-year-old who died quickly in the bloodbath when he was nineteen; Michael, the eighteen-year-old who placed fifth in the Coliseum year, where there was no food or water or shelter but lots of weapons; Davy, the twelve-year-old who, blinded by poison gas, walked into the careers' camp; Newton, the thirteen-year old who fell off a cliff; and Jule, the fifteen-year-old who Cinna had dressed and reassured and watched die. All in all, it's not a particularly subtle message, and Cinna wonders how this family, which must be running out of children by now, annoyed the Capitol quite this much.

If Tesla is aware of her certain doom - and she has to be with a track record like that - she doesn't show it as she and Faraday walk down to the chariot. They've been dressed to look like power generators, which is a common motif to Five the way coal dust is to Twelve. What

isn't so common is for arcs of electricity to bounce at random between (carefully grounded) points on both their costumes. It might not be the spotlight of the parade, but it has to impress someone, and that's currently all Tesla has going for her.

Six - The Train Girl

Rose's eyes are clear, and her callused hands are steady as she shakes Cinna's hand. She also looks incredibly dubious about Cinna's entire concept as he explains it to her, and it's not hard to imagine why. Six's costumes alternate between skimpy train attendants' outfits and tacky (and often also skimpy) train outfits. Cinna can also imagine that having a train of white smoke billowing behind you is not the kind of look most girls go for.

"It's better than last year's," Rose mutters to herself. Cinna, remembering the... *unfortunate* headlight placement of last year's costumes, agrees.

Seven - The Girl on Fire

As they wait for the parade to start, Hollis looks vaguely alarmed. Ashley does, too, but she's hiding it better, probably because her back is already covered in burn scars. Cinna can't really fault them for being afraid, either; after all, he is about to set them on fire.

In a break from Tertia Blackwood's decades-long tradition of trees, Seven's tributes are wearing white outfits that reflect this season's clean, geometric designs and with long, flowing white capes. Paper products are a slightly less obvious route for Seven, so they're less overdone, but the real surprise comes from the torch Cinna is holding.

He and Portia have made this fiery debut as safe as possible; they've gone through a dozen fabric treatments to figure which one would have the capes burn the most cleanly and which offered the most heat and flame resistance. Last week, they made a half-size mockup with leftover fabric and put it through simulated parade conditions, and it performed admirably. If this goes as intended - and he and Portia are 95% sure it will - Seven could have more sponsors than it did the year after Johanna Mason won. (If it makes a splash, Cinna already has an orange and red dress drawing on the same geometric trends in Ashley's size ready for the interviews.)

As the music starts, Cinna lights his torch. It's showtime.

Eight - The Rainbow Girl

"Hello," Cinna says, and Calico looks up from examining her newly painted nails. "I'm Cinna, your stylist."

"Hello Cinna Yourstylist," she, wheezing slightly, says. "What odd names they have in the Capitol." She begins to laugh like it's some kind of inside joke, but her laughter is quickly

replaced by violent coughing. Cinna can feel the panic building up in his chest even as the coughing fit dies down; that sounded nasty, and he's not sure what happens if a tribute dies before they get to the arena. "Sorry."

"It's fine." It's obviously *not* fine, but Cinna can't do anything to fix it. "This is your outfit for tonight." Cinna gestures to the mannequin that has just risen from the storage space on the floor below. Calico stares at the iridescent gown and the fine velvet cape with a diamond pattern in jewel tones most of its length. She's careful not to cough in the direction of the dress as if her cough could stain the delicate satin. She might be able to; it sounds like she's hacking up a piece of her lung. (Cinna wonders briefly if she would have reached her 25th birthday even if she hadn't been reaped; he decides it doesn't matter, because she'll be dead or have access to the marvels of Capitol medicine in the next month or so.) "Do you like it?"

"I think it's the most expensive thing I've ever seen," she says. "The cost of the fabric alone... and the beadwork... where did you find beads that do that?" Cinna shrugs.

"It's all part of the trade." In truth, it's a trick Cori showed him to make glass beads look like gems, but faking a much bigger budget than non-Career stylists generally had *was* a part of the trade Theo had taught him to excel in.

"It must have cost at least a year's rent..." Calico takes a deep breath and coughs. "Probably more like rent for a decade for everyone in our tenement... I'm going to be wearing that?"

"Yes," Cinna says. "Presuming it fits." It fits perfectly, just as Cinna knew it would; the stylists are sent the tributes' measurements, after all. Calico turns in the mirror and watches the light catch on the beads that form patterns on the dress' bodice.

"It's beautiful," Calico says.

"A beautiful dress for a beautiful girl," Cinna says, and she laughs. He sets the tiara Venia, who enjoys jewelrymaking in her spare time, made on top of Calico's short brown hair, which is rising up around her ears in rebellious curls. "They're going to love you."

They do; Claudius Templesmith calls her "The Rainbow Girl from District Eight", and she gets more sponsors overnight than most girls from Eight get in the entire Games. It's not just the outfit, either, after her interview with Caesar Flickerman; when she can breathe enough to speak, she has an innate wit that the audience finds incredibly charming. Cinna thinks she'd make a great victor.

She's dead within a week.

Nine - The Girl with the Grain

"We do have actual clothes, you know," Ceres says. There's a sharp edge to her voice that reminds Cinna of Cori. Ceres looks a bit like his sister, too, though the resemblance is mostly her bright blue eyes and the way Flavius has done her hair, and it's more than a little unsettling.

"I know," Cinna says.

"Well, after the wheat thing and now this..." Ceres gestures at her interview gown, which is covered in flowers that coordinate with the white lilac and red cypress flowers braided into her hair. It's a fashion just old enough to become trendy again, especially since it vaguely evokes the soft lines that look like they're about to overtake last season's geometric trend.

"You missed the height of the plant fashion craze," Cinna says. "At least that dress actually has fabric." So, so many unfond memories of his first exhibition. Ophelia Cardrew wouldn't acknowledge him for a week after Tarquinius sprayed her with a mild pesticide. (He'd gotten pulled over for his choice of flowers, too - apparently literary allusion is never in vogue in the Capitol - but he'd gotten away with a warning after pointing out that it was on the List of Approved Texts. He's just grateful the Department for Proper Behavior didn't look any deeper into the literary canon they wish to not exist; otherwise, he wouldn't be trying to explain Capitol fashion whims to a suspicious thirteen-year-old.)

"There were some that didn't?" Ceres asks. "But how..."

"Creative use of stems and florist wire," Cinna says.

"But why?" Cinna shrugs.

"Your guess is as good as mine."

Ten - The Sacrifice

When Cinna walks in, Cheyenne is standing in front of the prep table, her (reddened - the prep team's depilation job was both thorough and aggressive) arms crossed over her chest. He would tell her that she's not actually covering anything, that the robe is sheer almost to the point of transparency, but he thinks she already knows. The glare she's sending him certainly implies that.

"Hello, Cheyenne," Cinna says. "I'm Cinna, your stylist." He extends his hand; she glares at him and doesn't shake it.

"You're new." It's said as a statement of fact, not a question. She's confident in her ability to recognize the stylists, which isn't unusual in and of itself. "No, not new. You used to be on Five's prep team." That, on the other hand, indicates she was watching the games rather obsessively; Cinna had five, maybe ten minutes of screentime at roughly four o'clock in the morning, long before prime time (let alone mandatory viewing) started. He tries to remember what year Jule had been a tribute - the Sixty-Seventh Hunger Games? Sixty-Eighth? Sixty-Ninth? Sixty-Sixth? - but it's all a hazy, horrifying blur.

He can remember that the end of Jule's cape got caught in one of the chariot's wheels and that it and most of her top were pulled off halfway through the ride. He can remember her interview dress - a silver satin thing decked in ruffles that he'd altered the night before because Tarquinius had messed up the drafting. He can remember how she made an alliance

with the boy from Ten over the body of the boy from Two, whose suit had fit so badly Cinna was sure he had somehow managed to anger his stylist or tailor.

He can remember how Jule died, and he really wishes he couldn't. The boy from Ten's revenge catapulted him into the final eight, but he was speared in the chest by the girl from One while Cressida Crane was trying to get the attention of one of his young relatives, a young girl with dark hair tightly braided into pigtails and eyes focused completely on the screen, big dark eyes almost like-

Well, that explains it. She's that girl, older now, but now that he knows what to look for, Cinna can see clearly that she's the same girl who watched her - brother? uncle? cousin? something along those lines - die on camera and screamed her lungs out when Cressida tried to comfort her.

"I'm sorry for your loss," Cinna says as if it has the power to save the boy whose name he doesn't remember, as if it has the power to give this girl back her relatives, as if it has the power to make any difference at all. It doesn't, but Cheyenne's glare softens.

"We knew he probably wasn't coming home," Cheyenne says. "When he killed that boy from Two and destroyed the Careers' supplies, I almost thought he could. But he didn't." The words hang between them. "So, is it a skimpy rancher year or a cow year?"

The chestnut brown twill suit is similar to a ranching outfit (at least, similar to the ranching outfits shown on Capitol television) and, unlike most variants on career themes in the tribute parade, looks like it could be worn on the job without immediate safety concerns. As Cheyenne looks at herself in the mirror, her eyes catch on lines that seem to shimmer in and out of existence. Cinna can see the moment when she figures out that the lines mark out cuts of meat; she turns to him, her eyes wide with the implications of what he's done.

He's dressed her as what she is - a cow on its way to the slaughterhouse.

Eleven - The Girl Who Could Fly

Cinna knows that his tribute is a recently-turned-twelve-year-old. He knows that his tribute is from District 11, where hunger and malnutrition are (somewhat ironically) major problems. He knows that there's going to be a lot of altering for even the smallest garments he made to fit her; like a good Capitol citizen, he watches the reappings dutifully.

Still, he didn't expect her to be so small. He'd assumed Thresh was one of those hulking behemoth types that One and Two and occasionally Four spit out. While Thresh is larger than most tributes from the outer districts, he's done-hard-labor-since-the-age-of-five large, not trained-and-taken-HGH-since-he-could-toddle large; Rue is simply slight enough to make that illusion possible.

"Hello," Cinna says once he remembers why he's here. "I'm Cinna, your stylist."

"I'm Rue." Rue holds out her hand for him to shake. If she weren't a tribute, Cinna would have guessed that she was either nine or a very small ten. This is going to be a hard game; Cinna can feel it.

He needs to redo the interview dress. The chariot outfit looks good enough on her - it was designed to look good enough on anyone with a few simple alterations - but the interview dress needs to be more than just enough. It needs to be memorable. If he can make her memorable, she might attract a few sponsors even though she has little else going for her.

One problem: he has no idea how to do that.

He's watching a recap of the tribute parade when Claudius Templesmith says that Rue looks like she's about to fly off the chariot. The comment in itself is nothing special; Claudius likes mocking the non-Career tributes, and he's doing a particularly nasty job this year. However, something clicks in Cinna's mind. Rue looks like she's about to fly off the chariot. Rue looks like she's about to fly. Flying, flying...small and delicate... a songbird.

The dress itself is simple - a high-low skirt to imitate tail feathers, cape sleeves to imitate wings, careful embroidery to imitate feathers. While he's still sketching, he briefly considers making the dress imitate a mockingjay before he remembers who this dress needs to be approved by and what exactly they could do to her (or, for that matter, him). He's still got a bolt of the most beautiful sky blue he ever found, and white satin is easy to get as a games stylist. Rue will make a fine bluejay, and she'll still have a slim chance of living when the interviews are over.

Twelve - The Mockingjay

It's a good thing the Twelve stylist before him had bought and then never used so much black fabric; Cinna doubts he would be able to buy enough without the Gamemakers getting suspicious, especially since Katniss' interview dress was selected by President Snow himself. With that at the treatments he needs for the dress' inner and outer layers accounted for, all he needs to find is the wiring to set the outer layer off at exactly the right time. He'll ask Theo how she does it when he sees her tomorrow; the use of electronics in fashion has been her wheelhouse for almost 20 years.

When he asks Theo about motion-activated triggers, her eyes widen for a split second, stretching the intricate patterns she's had tattooed on her face in violet metallic ink to complement her artificially purple eyes. She sets her cup of tea down delicately.

"I have a set already completed in my studio, if you want to look," Theo says in a strained but perfectly level voice. "I always thought you preferred the more chemical theatrics."

"I like to expand my horizons," Cinna says.

Theo gives him the wiring with a hushed "I hope you know what you're doing" (and he doesn't, he really doesn't, he'd forgotten that he was risking Theo's life because she was his sponsor, but at the same time he does because he keeps thinking about how he can place the

blame for this solely on his shoulders instead of Katniss') and a folded scrap of paper with a crude drawing of a mockingjay on it.

He knows he isn't going to survive this war. He knows this dress is undeniable treason in Snow's eyes, and since he's already got a bit of a track record (actually, quite a lot of a track record), the only possible punishment is death. He also knows that many things are treason in Snow's eyes. Talking to his sister is treason. Hating the games is treason. Making burial shrouds for a tribute before their inevitable death is treason. Altering Jule's dress last minute so that it was vaguely comfortable is treason. Holding a tribute's hand as they accept they'll be dead in ten minutes is treason. His adopted name is probably treason if anyone else knew where he found it.

He doesn't want to live in a world where these things are treason, and he doesn't want Katniss to, either. This is his one shot at something else, and he doesn't care if he doesn't get to see it so long as *someone* does.

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