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American Literature

Mr. Gagnier

B6

**They Can’t Hurt Me Anymore**: Johanna Mason’s Story

Johanna Mason, the darkhorse winner of the 70th annual Hunger Games, was destined to be somebody to reckon with. Since the inception of the Hunger Games, District 7 had always provided worthy tributes for the Capitol. Known for their strength and camaraderie, District 7 had won more Hunger Games than any other district besides the Career districts. Being the lumber district gave the citizens of District 7 a distinct advantage: they were physically stronger and mentally more capable of doing hard things than many of the other districts. Johanna Mason was no exception.

Born to Athens and Blaze Mason, the “first couple” of District 7, she was destined for greatness. Johanna was tall and athletic, a gifted climber, and a highly intelligent student in school. She consistently won the yearly Whistle Punk Games, the annual lumberjack competitions held in the forests surrounding her community. Her parents taught her to be independent at an early age; often, her father would take her into the woods outside of their home and they would practice tree jumping and log throwing. They would also tree race. Her father, an accomplished climber himself, usually won. But every once in awhile, young Johanna would best him. He always laughed encouragingly at her successes.

Johanna’s mother worked hard to help Johanna maximize her potential. She was an accomplished woodcutter and brilliant politician. When not discussing political ideologies, Athens, not Johanna’s father, taught Johanna how to use the axe. Johanna learned how to use the broad axe, tomahawk, ono axe, the lathe axe, ice pick, and the lathe hammer. Johanna’s aptitude grew as her mother showed her how to use each and as she sparred against her older brothers. Moreso, Johanna’s mother’s time mentoring her daughter led to them being inseparable friends.

As Johanna grew older, she developed an even closer relationship with her brothers. They had married off early out of necessity and lived on their own in District 7 with their families, but she would visit them often, spending time playing with her nieces and nephews. Her brothers, in turn, taught her

When Johanna’s name was reaped, her parents and older brothers blasted the Capitol. They openly demonstrated against the process of the reaping and the Capitol’s decision to hold the Hunger Games. Johanna took the challenge in stride. She shrewdly pretended that she was woefully unprepared for the 70th Games by faking illnesses during training and pretending to have little skill in front of the Gamesmakers during the Scoring Sessions. Once the 70th Annual Hunger Games began, she ferociously assailed the other tributes, decimating the Career Pack before it could even gain an advantage. Within 3 days, Johanna had won, leaving a swath of bodies and blood behind her.

Nevertheless, all did not end well for the Masons. The Capitol responded to their demonstrations with cruelty. President Snow executed Johanna’s family before the Hunger Games had even ended. He had her parents beheaded and her brothers and sisters-in-law hung from gallows he had built in District 7’s town square.

Johanna Mason didn’t learn of the murders until after she’d been celebrated like a hero in the Capitol. Returning home, she broke down with guilt and wouldn’t eat or sleep for days. After being on her deathbed for a time, she awoke with renewed energy to make Snow atone for what he’d done. At her coronation as the winner of the 70th Games, she attacked him, nearly choking him to death before the Peacekeepers tore her off of him. As an example, and not wanting to make a martyr of her, he threw her into the Capitol prisons, determined to teach her a lesson.

Instead, Johanna gained confidence and friends there, including becoming close with another Capitol insurgent, Finnick Odair. That friendship led to her joining the rebellion against the Capitol in District 13 and eventual volunteering for the 3rd Quarter Quell. On a side note, even though the Capitol thwarted Johanna’s attack on President Snow, she found a sordid satisfaction in his coughing up blood from time-to-time knowing that she’d damaged his lungs in the process.