

The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes, review by Reika JAN 2025

"The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes" by Suzanne Collins is the highly anticipated prequel to the Hunger Games Trilogy. It takes us back to the 10th Hunger Games a dark time of violence, rebellion, and betrayal, 64 years before Katniss Everdeen. Following the early life of Coriolanus Snow, the future president of Panem, this book reveals Snow's true intentions from the start and how his personality evolved from teenagehood to adulthood. Following the story's beginning, Snow is chosen to mentor a tribute for the upcoming Hunger Games and takes it as an opportunity for him to gain power in the future.

The tribute who was assigned to him was Lucy Gray Baird from District 12, a charismatic and alluring young girl who knows how to captivate the people around her. She knew how to perform well in front of an audience, with her huge stage presence and impressive singing. On the day of the reaping, when Lucy Gray was called as the female tribute, she shocked the capitol citizens by singing a song and wearing a flamboyant, ruffly, rainbow dress that contrasts against the gloomy atmosphere of District 12. Snow sees her tough and magnetic personality as the potential of winning the games and starts working on strategies with her. It is important for Snow that Lucy Gray wins not particularly for her survival but because her victory would build his reputation and ensure him a career in the Capitol which would eventually lead him to rise in power. He creates Lucy Gray's persona, with her talent for singing and unique style and personality that can be shown through the live interview process. For Lucy Gray to get the best chances possible, Snow knew that she had to have her own, individual tragic story that would earn sympathy and support from the Capitol and sponsors. He starts getting emotionally attached to Lucy Gray and they form a special connection, but he only sees her as someone who will come to his advantage. The Hunger Games always unleash a brutal, savage side of the

tributes since they have to put their survival above their dignity. The hunger to survive is rarely enough for the tributes to survive. The games require physical and mental strength, carefully planned-out strategies, and the ability to adapt to things quickly. Once the games begin, there is a limited amount of things Snow can do to help Lucy Gray so he must prepare her to the best of his abilities and hope that her charming but resilient personality combined with her talent in music will be enough to set her aside from the other tributes and gain the audience's favor.

After the games were over, Snow was caught being involved in some illegal actions involving the games and he was sent to be a Peacekeeper as well as Sejanus (a fellow classmate of Coriolanus in the Academy) as a punishment. Sejanus was originally from District 2 so he felt that the Capitol's actions were unjust. He tried to rebel against the Capitol and faced grave consequences. During Snow's time as a Peacekeeper, he came to understand what it truly takes to gain power and control. This is the turning point of the story and his future is shaped by the choices offered to him and the decisions made.

Overall, this novel shows how far people can and will go to either survive or gain power. Morality can be influenced easily by others, greed, and desires. Snow doesn't have the same morals as he had as a teenager and as the president of Panem. The reason it changes is due to his circumstances and the decisions he made. What I particularly liked about this book is that it zoomed in on Snow's way of thinking and how it has evolved but yet stayed the same over time. If you are easily affected by the idea of violence, I would recommend reading this book when you are a bit older. But if you want a good read full of complex ideas and plot twists, this book is just for you!