

At first glance, Mia Garcia has it all: Fame, fortune, and the perfect boyfriend. Well, at least that's what the tabloids want you to think. At the age of 18, Mia finds herself skyrocketing to fame when her TV show, *Against the Odds*, has become the most watched series of all time. It stars her and her offscreen boyfriend, Chad Powers, following their journey of young love and the apocalypse. While the whole world is engrossed, Mia finds it to be a worn and played out story.

Today is just like any other day in Mia's life: She and Chad arrive on set promptly at 5am, hand in hand. Mia listens to Chad ramble.

"Look, I don't care if it's her birthday. This week is really important for us. You don't have time to see your friends." Chad exclaims.

It's true, this week *is* big: The Upfronts are happening, which will determine whether or not *Against the Odds* gets another season. Getting another season for Chad means that he gets to ride out the fame of being a household name for another year, while for Mia, it means being stuck in the same old routine.

"How do you want it today, love?" Mia's hair dresser asks. Mia sits down.

"Oh, I don't know.. Maybe —"

"I loved the way you did it last week!" Chad's voice bellows from the other side of the trailer.

"... yeah I guess let's do that." Mia slumps down.

The heat of the blow dryer straightening her long curly hair radiates to the nape of her neck and gets intensely hot as time goes on. Beauty is pain, she reminds herself. She turns to her phone to deter her attention, opens up her Instagram to see her childhood friends posting "First day of college" posts. Mia smiles. Only for a moment.

"Mia and Chad, we're ready for you!" The Assistant Director yells from outside the trailer.

On set, we are transported to a post-apocalyptic world. Skyscrapers that once stood tall have tumbled to the ground and the sky is rust orange. In this scene, Chad's character, Troy reunites with Mia's character, Penelope, after a near death experience. It's romantic, it's sexy, it's bittersweet, and —

"CUT!" Chad breaks out of character.

"Mia, what the hell is wrong with you?!"

"Wh— what did I do?" Mia asks timidly.

"You're fucking overshadowing me. Here, stand behind me a little." Chad directs Mia.

It's important to note that Chad the person and Chad the actor are two very different people. Mia loves Chad the person with her whole heart. Mia wants to punch Chad the actor's face with both her fists. The problem is they are trapped in the hell that is production for as long as this series goes on, and the line between actor and person have merged so much that Mia is frequently walking on eggshells with him.

"Action!" The director yells.

The sequence of actions repeats again. Troy survives, Penelope is elated and they kiss and –

“UGH. CUT!! MIA WHAT THE FUCK? CAN’T YOU DO ONE SIMPLE THING RIGHT? STAY BEHIND ME AND DON’T FUCKING STUMBLE ON YOUR LINES. THAT’S SO FUCKING UNPROFESSIONAL–”

Mia stares at Chad as he explodes on her. Although this isn’t new behavior to her, she is near tears.

“ THERE YOU GO AGAIN WITH THE CRYING. IT’S NOT GONNA WORK ON ME THIS TIME.” With every sentence, Chad gets louder.

She looks around and sees the bystanders that are crewmembers staring at Chad, unsure of what to do. She sees the post-apocalyptic set design, so real you would not even have guessed it was made of cardboard. Finally, she sees the exit sign, with a door that is wide open. A gentle breeze opens the door even wider. Mia does not know where she is going, but she starts to run. She runs past the door, past the hair and makeup trailer, past her trailer she has spent hours upon hours in, past the commissary she had stolen wifi from all these years to do her school work, through the back gates she would always go through to get in and out of the lot, into the real world. She takes a moment to wipe her eyes and catch her shaky breath. The sky is not rust orange. It is a periwinkle shade not so different from her favorite bed sheets as a child. The sun goes down slowly into the night as cars whirl past.