

THE QUARRY

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Bad Blood

19th May 2007

This isn't what I thought I'd be doing for my 21st birthday. But then I guess there were no plans to fuck up anyway. I don't have friends. But that's okay, I'll wear that, I know that's my deal. Still though, a visit to the hospital. Fuck. I've never liked hospitals. It's a combination of things I suppose. It's the smell. It's the atmosphere – the lighting, the muted colours, the obnoxiously shiny floor.

Dad's driving. Mum's navigating. Vicki is sitting next to me – right next to me, because the other seat is taken up by Dad's skis, poking through the folded down seat from the boot. They've been in the car now for three months – he keeps meaning to

take them into Rebel Sport to have the bindings fixed. He never will. Vicki is pinching me. Continuously. Viciously.

It's because she's mad with me. I kissed her boyfriend last night. That's why I don't have any friends by the way. I've kissed a lot of other people's boyfriends over the years. It's not intentional. Kidding. Of course it's intentional. I do it for a laugh. I do it because it turns me on. I do it because I can. It's all in the eyes you know. If a man sees that you have fuck-me eyes, you can make him hard with just one look. And I have fuck-me eyes.

But does she have to pinch me so fucking hard? I'm going to have bruises all up and down my left arm. And a few on my thigh. And every time she does it, I want to slap her.

We're going to visit my other sister Nicki by the way. My name is Ricki. Short for Richelle. But no one ever calls me Richelle. I could have been Erica for all my parents cared. Just as long as I rhymed with my sisters. According to Urban Dictionary, Ricki is 'an overweight white girl who wears too much eye liner, puts too much product in her hair and sleeps with black men.'

I'm pretty curvy in case you were wondering. But I never used to wear too much eyeliner. Or use too much hair product. Not until I read about myself on Urban Dictionary. I guess you could call it a self-fulfilling prophecy. I looked myself up and there it was. My life laid out on the page. So then I started overusing eyeliner and hair spray. I had already slept with black men.

We're visiting Nicki because she just had a baby girl. Mum asked her if she would continue the rhyming names tradition. Nicki just giggled.

Here's what Nicki doesn't know. I slept with her husband two months ago. I'm wondering if I'll whisper the truth to her while I'm nursing her new baby girl. Just for a laugh.

19th May 2007

This isn't what I thought I'd be doing for my 21st birthday. But then I guess there were no plans to fuck up anyway. I have two best friends – but they're both

overseas just now. They did invite me, but they're an item. A holiday as the third wheel? How fucking depressing! I'm like Harry Potter to their Hermione fucking Granger and Ron fucking Weasley. One day I might screw Ron Weasley, just to see what it does to Hermione. I'm twisted like that.

Still though, a visit to the hospital. Fuck. I've never liked hospitals. It's a combination of things I suppose. It's the smell. It's the atmosphere – the lighting, the garish colours, the grating squeak of sandals on linoleum.

Dad's driving. Mum's crying. Vicki is sitting next to me – right next to me, because the other seat is taken up by Dad's skis. They've been in the car now for three months. He put them in there when they were supposed to take that trip to Canada in February. The tickets were booked. The bags were packed. They were supposed to drive to the airport at five in the morning. But then the call came through.

Nicki is sick. Nicki needs treatment. Nicki will be in and out of hospital. Nicki might not get better. Nicki is going to need her family.

They couldn't get a refund on their plane tickets. Dad keeps meaning to take the skis back into the house.

He never will.

Vicki is pinching me. Continuously. Viciously. I kissed her boyfriend last night. I did it because it turns me on. I did it because I hate myself.

I'm glad that she's pinching me hard though. The bruises will ease the pain. I sort of want to hug her. Bullshit. I don't.

We're going to visit Nicki. She's taken a turn for the worst. I know that I should care – but guess what I'm thinking about? I'm thinking about the fact that no one's even realised that today is my birthday. And it's an important one isn't it? My 21st – that's fucking special. My sister is dying but all I care about is that no one sang happy birthday to me or gave me some new eyeliner and hairspray. I seem awful to you, don't I? At least I own it. At least I know who I am.

I did have love once you know. For Harry, my pet rabbit. I used to sit for hours in the backyard with Harry on my lap, stroking his white fur. But then one day Harry

squeezed under the fence into the neighbour's backyard. The neighbour had a dog. I cried for two days straight.

Vicki, Nicki and Ricki. Hilarious. Ricki is short for Erica by the way. Boring. Last night Mum asked us if we would continue the rhyming names tradition when we had kids. She was all teary, so Vicki told her yes, of course we would. I laughed in her face and said she's got to be fucking kidding. Then I went out to meet up with Vicki's boyfriend.

Vicki knew because her boyfriend confessed straight after. Here's what Nicki doesn't know though. I slept with her fiancé two months ago. I'm wondering if I'll whisper the truth to her while she sleeps. Just for a laugh.

19th May 2007

This isn't what I thought I'd be doing for my 21st birthday. But then I guess there were no plans to fuck up anyway. I have a great group of friends. And I know they would have wanted to organise something. Maybe a big party. Maybe dinner at the Italian place on Carrington Road. Maybe drinks at the pub. I've never really been sure why I have so many friends. Deep down, I'm not the nicest person. But I guess they don't know that. They don't know that I often fantasise about sleeping with their boyfriends or their dads. They don't know how close I've come to acting on those fantasies.

Once, when I was fifteen, I almost screwed my best friend's dad at a sleepover. I crept into his bedroom while he slept. I stood by the bed and I stared at him until he opened his eyes and stared back at me. He knew what I wanted. And he wanted it too. I started to touch myself in front of him and I saw him get hard under the sheets.

Something made me stop though. And I turned around and crept back down the hallway and climbed into my sleeping bag. Sometimes I feel like there is a different person inside of me. A different person that's screaming to get out.

I've always hated hospitals. It's a combination of things I suppose. It's the smell. It's the atmosphere. Bullshit. It's none of that. It's what happens to me when I go there. It's where we're going now.

Dad's driving. Mum's dead. Vicki is sitting in the front. She's in charge of navigating. Today it's a new hospital. A new treatment. A new hope. Isn't that the name of some fucked up movie as part of some fucked up movie franchise? Star Wars? Or Twilight?

Next to me are Dad's skis. They've been in the car now for three months. You would think he would want to get rid of them. Who would want that? A constant reminder every time you hop in the car to drive somewhere. A constant reminder of how your wife died.

They went to Canada in the summer. Our summer. Canada's winter. Mum died in a skiing accident. How glamorous of her. The holiday was supposed to be a break. A break from me. Nicki called one of those commercial radio stations and fed them our sob story. My sister's sick. My sister's dying. My parents have been carting her to and from appointments for years and it's only delaying the inevitable. We can't afford a holiday because of the medical bills. The radio announcers gushed over my family. Nicki was a hero for calling. Mum and Dad were heroes because they'd taken care of me for so long.

Fuck off. What about me? I'm the one who's sick. They're my parents; they're supposed to look after me, that's their job. I would never say that out loud.

Anyway, it backfired. Mum skied into a tree. Came home in a box. The radio station distanced themselves from us after that. Took down the smiling photographs of Mum and Dad standing at the airport with their skis. Big cheesy smiles. Holding a sign that said 'Thank you Chance FM!'

Dad keeps meaning to take the skis back into the house.

He never will.

Vicki is ignoring me. I told her I didn't like her boyfriend last night. I did it because I can't handle having him round the house anymore. I did it because if he keeps coming round I'll end up kissing him and I know he'll kiss me back.

Sometimes I hate myself. I hate the person I think I could be. I hate the person I think I would be, if it weren't for this disease. This disease that holds me back.

Nicki's going to meet us at the hospital. She's bringing cake. I know that I should appreciate that – but do you know what I'm thinking about? I'm thinking about the fact that I'm spending my birthday in hospital. And it's an important one isn't it? My 21st – that's fucking special. I'm dying but all I care about is that they'll be singing happy birthday to me in a hospital room. That I'll unwrap my new eyeliner and hairspray while I'm sitting cross-legged on a trundle bed.

Do you want to know what I want to be when I grow up? I want to be a vet. I like the idea of wearing the white coat. Of looking into an animal's eyes as I care for it. I don't care that it meant sticking my fingers up an animal's bum or getting scratched to pieces by a cat. But I guess I'm never going to grow up, am I?

Ricki is short for Frederique by the way. Fancy. Last night Nicki called to ask if we would continue the rhyming names tradition when we had kids. A way to honour Mum. Vicki told her yes, of course we would. I was shitty though. It's not like I'll ever get the chance to have children, will I?

Here's what Nicki doesn't know though. I've been toying with the idea of sleeping with her boyfriend for two months now. I'm wondering if I'll tell her this while the medication is being pumped into my veins. Just for a laugh. Just because I can. Just because I need *to do something*.

19th May 2007

This isn't what I thought I'd be doing for my 21st birthday. But then I guess there were no plans to fuck up anyway. My friends are all dead. No. Not really. They may as well be though – they all hate me. But that's okay, I'll wear that, I know that's my deal. I slept with half the people in our group. Broke up couples. Made girls cry. Made things messy.

Still though, a visit to the hospital. Fuck. I've never liked hospitals. It's a combination of things I suppose. It's the smell. It makes bile creep up my throat. It's the atmosphere – the soft colours, the sticky floor. It's the fact that we've been in and out of hospitals since I was little. Since Mum was diagnosed.

Dad's driving. Mum's sleeping. At least I think she's asleep. Could be she's dead and no one's noticed. I lean forward and pinch her arm, just to check. Her shoulders jump and Vicki slaps me. 'What? I was just checking.' Vicki is sitting next to me – right next to me, because the other seat is taken up by Dad's skis. They've been in the car now for three years. He put them in there when they were supposed to take that trip to Canada. Mum was supposedly 'in remission.' The tickets were booked. The bags were packed. And then the doctor called.

Dad refuses to take the skis back into the house. He says they'll still take that trip one day. One day when mum is better again.

They never will.

If Vicki knew what I'd done last night with her boyfriend, she would have slapped me harder. I'll probably tell her later. That I sucked him off. Why would I tell her? Because that's what I do. I always tell. I always kiss and tell. Or suck and tell.

I do it because I hate myself. I've always hated myself. Always. But I've never been able to change. And I doubt I ever will.

We're taking Mum into the hospital for a long-term stay. Nicki switched wards so that she can be one of the nurses looking after Mum. Such a sweet, perfect daughter. It's not likely that Mum will ever come back home. And I know that I should care – but do you know what I'm thinking about? I'm thinking about the fact that today is my birthday. And it's an important one isn't it? My 21st – that's fucking special. My Mum is dying but all I care about is the fact that when they sang happy birthday to me this morning, Mum was so out of breath that she had to sit down half way through and then Vicki's voice faltered and Dad rushed to Mum's side. Not very upbeat. At least Vicki gave me some new eyeliner and hairspray.

Lately I've been thinking about something. It's this memory I have, from when I was really little. I think I'd forgotten about it, and to be honest I don't know what it is that's brought it back... but I guess something triggered it and now I keep getting flashes. Flashes of my uncle and me, in a bedroom together. Pictures of him... doing things. But there's another memory there too. It's the memory of me telling Mum about it. Of her not believing me. Of her face reflected in the mirror behind me, her

mouth twisted as she chewed on her bottom lip, her hands moving quickly as she wound the scrunchie around my pony-tail.

My mother never did trust me.

Ricki is short for America by the way. Ridiculous. Last night Mum asked us if we would continue the rhyming names tradition when we had kids. She was all gaunt and weepy, so Vicki told her yes, of course we would. I laughed in her face and said she's got to be fucking kidding. It's not that I don't love her. It's just who I am. I'm rotten inside.

And then I went out to meet up with Vicki's boyfriend.

Here's what Nicki doesn't know though. I slept with her ex-boyfriend two months ago. She doesn't know that's why they split. I'm wondering if I'll tell her the truth while she tucks Mum into her new bed. Just for a laugh.

Sometimes I think about what could have been. This disease is passed down through the women in our family. Passed on through our bloodlines. Grandma had it before Mum. And our Great-Grandmother before her. But it's completely hit and miss. You never know who's going to get it. It could have leap-frogged over Mum and hit one of us. It could have hit all three of us. Vicki, Nicki and Ricki, all lined up in hospital beds. Three headstones in a row. And if any of us have daughters, they'd be at risk too. Or we could have all been okay. Mum, me, my sisters. We could have all been fine. Healthy.

And I wonder if things had been different, would it have changed me?