

THE QUARRY

Dress Me

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Part I Naomi

Covered in thick brown fur, the grey gelatinous goo drips down its lumpy mouth, smelling like rotten fish. Its inch-long teeth are sharp as daggers, glinting over its rubbery yellow gums. This is truly a picture of misery and horror.

‘Enough!’ I tell myself, quickly covering the mirror with an old scarf. Every day for the past twenty years, this big fat ugly monster is exactly how I look in the mirror, in photos and even in the reflections of sunglasses. It grows when I grow. But I’ve worked out ways to avoid seeing myself. Here, in my own little clothing shop, I know exactly how to eliminate the chances of seeing that monster of mine; I feel safest when I’m working.

Since there’s no one in the shop yet, I take out my copy of Vogue magazine and flip through the last pages. Those models—tall and slim with high cheekbones and bee-stung lips—are beautiful, too beautiful, maybe. This red maxi dress, I put my fingers to the page, I have to have it.

Suddenly, a smell catches me off guard; a woody blend of perfume with its own unique odour, that's refreshing, comforting and somehow seductive. It's coming from a young woman. I wonder how she came into the shop so quietly?

I immediately close the magazine. 'Oh hello, how are you?'

'What's up?' says the young woman with electric red lips.

I can never pull off that bright lip colour; with the body of a monster, it'll only look like I've been gorging on blood. But I understand why she's so confident. Look at her, five foot ten, slim, with blonde hair that has a hint of glowy bronze. Everything about her is perfect, delicious even.

I walk up to her, inhaling the sweet alluring air that surrounds her. Gee, I really can't stop staring at her, she's just like those models in the magazine. She points out a black jacket while looking at me with her blue sensuous eyes. She smiles, showing off her perfectly aligned white teeth. She wonders if she could try it on. Of course she can, but why would she want that baggy old jacket? With that killer body, she should wear something short and tight. I know I would if I looked like her.

'I'm afraid we don't have it in your size. But I can show you some other goodies instead.' I pout my lips without showing my slimy gums, knowing she won't be able to resist my collection.

This collection has been sitting here for years. Until now, I haven't found anyone gorgeous enough to wear them. If I didn't look like a monster they would be mine already. Will she be the first one to wear them? I get a little excited. But I have to be careful how I behave. She can never know about my monstrous teeth or catch my disgusting scent.

It seems she's quite happy with my choices as she grabs the clothes and heads to the fitting room. The sharp woody musk of her is laying down a heavy track wherever she goes. Waiting outside the fitting room, I can't stop thinking about how she'll look in my favourite clothes. I bite my ragged nails. Here she comes. Excitement rushes through my veins as my eyes settle on her.

How beautiful she is. Yet how fragile.

Emotionally, I walk up to her, giving her all the compliments I could ever give. I'm convinced that I've finally found the perfect replacement of myself. This is exactly how I'll look when I'm beautiful.

What makes today even better is that this innocent girl gives me her number. Chloe, what a sweet name. I hope she remembers me and comes back often.

It's been a week since I saw Chloe, the best seven days in my life since I checked in three years ago. No more electroshock, and an even prettier me? Life can be beautiful.

Even though I only saw her once, I'm already addicted. She must be thinking of me too. But I know she won't come by the shop every day, it would be weird if I call her and ask her to come by... Right? But I can't stop thinking about that body of hers, I wonder what it'll look like without anything on. Is it still perfect? And those long slender legs of hers, are they just as smooth as the models'? Will it scare her if she sees mine covered in thick brown fur? As my head is working hard to put together the pieces of her image, I'm starting to feel that exhilaration, the same when I first saw her. It's a different type of feeling to any I've experienced before; a frenzy that I wish could last forever. Having become so besotted with her, I know there must be something I can do to bring us closer. Then she could be my first friend, or even something more...

Look who it is! Chloe is back! Is she missing me too?

Surrounded by a bunch of average looking girls, Chloe steps into the shop, smelling like cigarettes and alcohol. Where is that her sweet scent? These bitches are no good for my Chloe. I take a closer look at them—fishnet stockings with lacy chokers—can they even afford a candle at my shop? No wonder Chloe smells cheap.

Chloe comes up to me, wearing a thick smile. 'Hey Naomi, show them your private collection.'

I know for sure that she must've been forced to come here by these so-called friends, who are nothing but chubby and typical. I've already found the perfect replacement of myself. No one else needs to see my collection.

'Don't worry, I'm saving them for you,' I whisper.

'Wha-what do you mean?' Chloe looks a little red. Her friends start noticing our conversation. 'This way, let's go,' Chloe points at the fitting room.

Knowing this is a cue, I yell, ‘Get out! Get out before I kill you bitches!’

Stunned, Chloe and her friends quickly scamper out of my shop. Poor Chloe, she comes here just to visit me and those whores have ruined it for her. But I’ll do anything to make Chloe look amazing, I’m sure she knows it too.

The next day, my boutique clothing has arrived. They only come in size 4, perfect for a model's figure, just like my Clo. Oh my god, I quickly realise we’re already calling each other by nicknames. What’s next?

Walking with a bounce in my step, I reach the landline and call Chloe.

Beep. Beep.

‘Hello, this is Chloe speaking, who’s this?’

What a soothing voice.

‘Hey Clo, I’m wondering if you want to pop in my shop later for some new—’

‘Naomi?’

She can tell it’s my voice. Thrilled, I quickly correct her, ‘Nomes, you can call me Nomes.’

‘Listen you nutter, I’m not going anywhere near you after what happened yesterday.’ Suddenly Clo doesn’t sound so sweet.

Why? Was it something I did? I panic, biting my nails. Thinking out loud, ‘Please don’t do that, I’ll do anything you want. Just don’t say things like this please.’

Clo hangs up.

I feel my teeth gnawing on the inside of my cheek. I can taste the blood from an old wound, as it slowly starts to fill my mouth. My fingers are glued to the telephone, waiting for Clo to call me back.

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A black Porsche screeches to a halt right in front of my shop. A skinny woman in black hops out of the car. As she walks through the door, I realise it's Clo. Suddenly, I can feel every fibre of my being vibrating with excitement. Adrenaline is coursing through my body.

'I'll only move on from this if you promise you'll never treat my friends like that ever again.'

I quickly nod, 'Sure, sure, I promise. I just thought the clothes wouldn't look nice on them.'

'What do you mean?'

'Well, they're not as skinny and pretty as you,' I quickly respond.

Chloe freezes, looking surprised. 'Well, thanks for the compliment. But you need to know not everyone can be as skinny and pretty as us two.'

I look her in the eye, stuttering, 'P-pretty? Me?'

'Mhmm, you're pretty... And skinny, a little too skinny, maybe.'

I feel over the moon, giddy even. This is the first time anyone has ever complimented the way I look. How could she see me like that? Does this mean my eyes—no, Clo's eyes, are special? Overwhelmed with her comment, all sorts of thoughts start running through my mind. Am I still going to keep her? Just to appreciate her body? Or will I let her be the friend I've never had? Wait, do I really consider her a friend? I almost laugh out loud. Who am I kidding? I don't even know what a friend is for. But if we do become friends, that means she'll give me her eyes, right? That's what friends do for each other.

Gosh, imagine if I had her eyes. How would I look? Just as pretty as her? Like the models? There are so many things I need to find out. I need to see through her eyes. I need them right now.

Finally, this moment has come.

‘Thank you Clo,’ I whisper in her ear, but I guess she doesn’t hear me as she’s still out cold. I must have hit her head too hard, but at least she didn’t feel the pain when I took her eyes out.

Those beautiful eyes are mine now.

I push Clo’s eyes securely into my own sockets, and hold my breath, as I slowly walk towards the mirror.

Part II Chloe

‘What is your name?’

‘Chloe Ann White.’ I shiver.

The officer presses the record button, ‘Miss White, can you describe for us how you and Naomi Evans met?’

‘We met in her clothing store, it was a posh joint that I’ve never been to before. I went there looking for a black bomber jacket.’

‘And what was Miss Evans like?’

‘She was petite and skinny, like a girl-next door. Very passionate about her job, I’d say.’ I continue, ‘And her nails were overly bitten and swollen.’

The officer doesn’t seem too bothered, continuing, ‘What was she doing that day?’

‘She was reading at the desk, looking very serious, almost mad, like there was something she hated on that magazine. She tore pages from it.’

He writes this down in the notebook. ‘Then what happened?’

‘I tried to sneak into the shop without getting her attention, but that didn’t work so I went to the fitting room to try on clothes.’

He pauses his writing, looking up at me.

‘I can still remember those tiles. Bright colours arranged in jagged patterns on the floor. The curved walls were ornately carved with mosaics. So many rooms. It made that place an

absolute labyrinth. There was also a massive collection of trendy designer clothing, even bigger and better than my own closet.

‘What was Miss Evans doing at that time?’

‘Waiting for me outside, I guess. But it seemed like she didn’t really know what she was doing.’

‘How so?’

‘She just stood there, staring at me, smiling. But what I really needed was a mirror. Then she led me to this little corner where the mirror was covered by a dusty scarf. I mean, surely they had to have more than one mirror.’

The officer frowns, ‘Could you explain why we found your number in Miss Evan’s mobile?’

‘I gave it to her so I could be notified when there were new arrivals.’ It then reminds me of the joke I made on Naomi that day, right after she gave me her name... The name was so silly to spell backwards. But that joke doesn’t seem funny anymore, not after what happened. I need to forget about it.

‘Would you say that Miss Evans’ demeanour was a little strange?’

‘Yeah, always. That special relationship between her and her clothes—that was just weird. She was obsessed... No wonder she looked so gaunt.’

He flips a page, ‘On July 14th, you had a two-minute phone call with Miss Evans, could you explain it?’

‘She was begging me to buy some clothes from her. I guess her business was struggling.’

‘On the exact same day, did you visit Miss Evan’s shop?’

‘That’s correct... I couldn’t resist the boutiques.’

‘Did you notice anything different with her that day?’

‘She was just even creepier than I remembered. Rubbing her eyes, licking her chapped lips and wearing a shady smile.’

‘Then what happened?’

As I'm breathing louder and louder, the officer puts down his pen. 'You can take a break if you need to.'

'No, I want to get this over with. This will be my last time recalling it.'

I remember the ropes cutting into my wrists as I struggled, the pain was so bad it made me want to stop breathing. Lying on the cold ground, I didn't know what had happened. Tap, tap. I could hear a set of heels tapping on the wooden floor and the sound of heavy breathing. But I couldn't see anything, not even black. Just... Nothing.

The walking stopped, I could hear a cloth being pulled from something. There was something about it that smelled so familiar, dusty and mouldy. I panicked, realising it must have been Naomi's scarf on the mirror. Before I had time to process this, a scream tore through me like a knife. It made my blood run cold, piercing my brain as it echoed through the room.

I could see again.

But I was still lying in the corner and my eyes... they weren't on my body. They were somehow staring into a mirror, nowhere near my own body. Looking without my control.

My eyes could only see this thing... A demonic creature staring back at me from the mirror. It looked angry.

Covered in thick brown fur, the grey gelatinous goo dripped down its lumpy mouth, smelling like rotten fish. Its inch-long teeth were as sharp as dagger as they glinted over its rubbery yellow gums. It was truly a picture of misery and horror.'

I pause again, 'It reached up to touch my eyes... Then everything went dark. I felt a splash on my face, wet, cold and putrid. Followed by a scream, much quieter than before. Then a whimper. Then a thud. The heavy breathing stopped. That was the last thing I remembered.'