

# THE QUARRY

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A Literary Homicide

Cherry. It is only a six-letter word. One vowel, consonants five, two coupled syllables. If you were to flip open a dictionary and glide over its pages for the term ‘cherry’, you may find something resembling this:

Cherry /'tʃeri/

noun, *plural* cherries

1. ---the fruit.
2. ---the state of virginity.

3. ---something new and unused.

*adjective*

**4. ---bright red; the colour of love.**

You, Reader, enjoy the idea that in a single room there exist thousands of tiny universes, bound in leather and sitting tranquilly on shelves. Or perhaps the libraries themselves are actually the universes, housing galaxies and worlds and dying stars and black holes, largely undiscovered and untouched. Lying just beyond the surface, so you would not quite know it is all there... A universe in a universe. Perhaps the world is a library. Maybe you are just another book on the shelf. We know *she* is. It is sort of a comforting thought. You love books, love other people's words. It is now time for you to experience my words; images and sweeping swells of emotion that carry those poetic nuances with them.

You enter the shadowy room with too few windows and too many dust particles. You creep further to the back, feet whispering over the wooden floor, the shadows of the room getting a little deeper, the dust swirling a little heavier. Where the books sit quieter from years of being untouched. You feel an odd twist of sympathy at that, and you swipe your fingers across their spines, titles barely visible under the stress of time. Just for a little attention, a little something. So that they know they have not been completely forgotten.

It has now been a month since you met Her in that library. Since you memorised the tattoo of Her lipstick on the rim of the biodegradable coffee cup. The shade? 'Lost Cherry' by Charlotte Tilbury. How ironic when the non-fictional you have become the subject of a missing person's case; you have not paid your bills, attended work or even stopped by your parents' for the fortnightly bonding session over your mother's infamous cherry pie. Are you not going to introduce Her to them? But you do not care. Like a mosquito, you are drunk on Her. Your lips dance. Tango. Cha-cha. Waltz. They bend to the rhythm as cherry blossoms would the breeze. No. No care at all. I will take back control of my narrative.

And so, the Author attempts to wrap you both back around his smallest

finger. It is the blackest night and almost cold, the wind ruffling the moth-eaten curtains as it glides into the room through the open window, unyielding and curious. The moon sort of glows and there are a few stars that he can spot, just above orange blankets of pollution. He finds himself resenting the moon and wishing it were the sun, gripping a cigarette between long, pale fingers, his nails bitten down. He does not smoke. He does not bite his nails. But he brings the damp paper to his lips and sucks in the toxicity, breathes in the lilac fumes and watches the ember alight as the curtains tickle his dry, bare knees.

The patched-up blue velvet chair speckled with cigarette burns has moulded to his figure around the third hour. He focuses all of his energy into accessing those parts of his mind not spattered with ink. Ink that forms the words of tens of thousands of voices, echoes of which he hears even in moments of slumber: ‘Author’s debut novel *Her* a disaster’, ‘things you didn’t know Author meant in *Her*’, ‘Protagonist in *Her* would actually react this way.’ His notebook sits empty in front of him, the blunt tips of his nicotine-stained fingers tapping discordantly atop the surface of the cherry wood desk. The varnish is chipping away. Each hour after the fifth, the shadowy ink transforms more distinctly into the fine lines of *Her* plump, cherry-stained lips. Those born to be under his command. The soft padding of his pining fingers strokes against the page.

Left.

Left.

Left.

Right.

Left.

His hand darts swiftly across the battlefield. He scans his paint selection, mentally plucking up tube after tube and squeezing them purposefully on the palette.

They stand amongst chrysanthemums and daisies on a cobblestone path. Gazing up at a chaotic sky tinged with citrus hues, he pinches a few of the crisping petals between his fingers, paint dug into the creases of his nails. A distinct cherry

wood aroma travels on the breeze. The undertones are what really draws him in; cedar, vanilla and musk flowing from her wrists, her neck, her most vulnerable parts.

Her cheeks are splashed with fuchsia as she catches his gaze, though the majority of the cherry tint is concealed beneath a porcelain coating. His grin widens, revealing a fine set of teeth that are almost predatory.

‘We need to work together if we are going to make it out alive. If you want to make it out alive. I invented you, you cannot be without me,’ the Author challenges.

‘I need someone who’s going to believe in me and plead for my happiness and success with each turn of the page. Not someone who forces me to behave and act the way they see fit.’

Her rejection and disagreeableness come with a gentle rise and fall of her half-naked shoulders. Her hands rest before her, dainty fingers laced and lax. All she does after delivering that final blow is shake her head, slow as poured honey, fringe falling upon her eyes. No apology in the green, the grey, the blue.

The words scrape his throat, his scalp, his brain, as they work their way into his body. They are so quiet, yet the loudest he has ever heard. Th-thump. Th-thump. Th-thump. He was one of the three little pigs and she the wolf; the antithesis of what he had anticipated. He would be damned if that stick house could ever be repaired. Now the jagged fragments are lodged deep in his heart, much like the stalk of a cherry; hidden beneath the glossy skin and sojourned into the fleshy inner core. His hand clenches tighter around her arm, nails creating crescent moons. But she never explains herself further. Never offers him sympathy. Like the heroine of any nineteenth-century romance novel, she flees. And so, he turns on his heel to leave. Almost. In reality, the only part of him that remains is still standing on that path. In that blue velvet armchair. All that is really left of him are the clothes on his back. So, a ghost walks home in his clothing.

The cherry pops and the Author is drenched in the aftermath. The crimson juice coats the entirety of his wounded expression which spreads from the outer corners of his downturned lips to the highest arch of his creased forehead; he knows this will stain. He has lost the battle. He is the Author. They were his words, his words to be read and interpreted as he intended. She was his story, his character to

act and feel as he articulated. She was his. And now she will become nothing but his swan song. Shakespeare's cursed pen may hast writ this very moment. He may be est dotting its i's currently, in whatever gloomy pearlescent vision of heaven sticks in thy head. The Author's blood runs cold. It runs. Until it doesn't. And so the tragic musk of white roses settles on the air.

Under the comforting blanket of heavy darkness, just moments before the breaking sun shatters the sky with blinding light, Her lethargic limbs travel toward the bathroom. The monotonous tone of the news presenter travels through your flat, anchoring her attention, but only because of the words that tumble into the stuffy air.

'A man in his late 40s was found dead in his townhouse yesterday, with six stab wounds to the left side of the chest. At this point in time, the injuries are suspected to be self-inflicted.'

The bottomless glass above the basin swallows her whole, not even bothering to spit out the stone or pull out the stalk. Her lathered hands intimately read the curves of one another. This happens six times. Not five. Not seven. Six. Re-enacting Lady Macbeth's obsessively compulsive post-murder hand washing. However, a little water does not clear you of this deed.

As she returns, you notice the resemblance between Her and the cherry blossom trees outside; both wilted and void of colour and life. You, the Reader, don't know the first thing about the arts, but you know that you want to paint her with colours and textures that haven't even been invented. And so, you do.

We spend our first night alone together walking aimlessly. Fingers laced with fingers and the clicks of our heels syncing as we laugh. I almost swear I can hear our voices mingled in the sky, twirling and prancing amongst the stars. There's a delicate moon-laden moment, lost in each other's gazes. Time might have actually stopped. Hands having stopped their rhythmic march across the clock face. I'm only ever going to write about this. About right now. About the fragility of openness and the feel of Her fingers carving their places into my skull, about the way the soft light of the moon emblazons Her skin cells and flickers in Her presence. I'm going to write about the soft look in Her eyes – the soft look that's

reserved for me, the Reader, only me, and is still there after all this time, after everything. I'm going to write about the dust and the creaky floorboards and warm skin against warm skin and I'm going to write from my soul because she is my soul and I'm not afraid and I'm not ashamed and I know it isn't wrong. She is part of him, but she is connected with me. Interwoven and beautiful.

The moon seems to sigh above them, and if you look close enough, puff out a smoky breath of cigarettes. Almost in a poetic way. It knows they're in love.