

# THE QUARRY

**Slay Park**

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It's dark ten o'clock, down near the roses as I watch Trix uncover Tony's face. Maz had tripped on his head, buried as it was among cheery autumn leaves. He was sooo dead, but his amber-eyes were still glaring up at me. 'SLAY' had been written across his forehead. I stifled a scream, then hiccupped and swayed.

'It's written in Ruby Woo,' I hissed, unnecessarily. It was our squad's signature lipstick colour after all, worn when on a mission to... Slay. 'We need to get out of here.'

‘Is this even real life?’ Maz said. ‘What the fuck? Trix, don’t take a photo.’ Trix shrugged.

‘Oh Dee Dee, Dee,’ Trix said, shaking her head and making tut-tut noises as if we’d just discovered a child’s hand in a lolly jar.

‘She wouldn’t, would she? We can’t report her!’ Maz was breathing so heavily I thought she might hyperventilate. I eyed the paper bag surrounding the bottle dropped at her feet.

‘She *would*. And no way,’ I said, silently weighing up our options.

We’d all been besties since kindergarten. Dee had always been bossy but in recent years she’d become a nasty bully. Her loaded parents gave her all the latest clothes, threw killer parties *and* for her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday she got a shiny new Merc. To be in the ray of her sunshine, and her car if I’m honest, levelled us all up. So, we looked the other way as she took control of our group. Now here we were, in a scramble to figure out just how loyal a friend we were to Dee in her new status of murderess.

The body lying dead-as-a-doornail in front of me was quite a convincing argument for keeping our mouths shut. That and the passing memory of watching the candlelight dancing around Dee’s face one sleep over, as she told us that if anyone ever crossed her, they would end up face down in Wahroonga Park. We’d been in our matching pyjamas that night, ruby red of course, to match our lips.

‘Tony was a dick anyway,’ said Trix. Maz nodded.

Dee had been dating Tony, but Tony had been having it off with one of his mum’s friends. As we walked away from his body, I wondered who would take the fall.

Six months later a blast of winter air swept through the doors of the Supreme Court House. I shook to learn that I would be swapping my red pyjamas for a green ensemble and juvie. Dee’s expensive lawyer had got her out of being a suspect and somehow framed me. Trix and Maz sat wide-eyed as I was led away.

That night I lay in my bunk with a broken heart. As the guard’s footsteps clunked along the hall, I could feel bitterness spread like black cancer across my body. Meanness and anger took over my thoughts and grew to monster proportions in

my nightmares. The only positive was that I found a new friend in my unhinged cellmate.

‘Girl, one day I’ll help you take both your Judas and her disciples down. I’ve got contacts in the poison business, you just let me know when you’re ready.’

I thought of this as I was released not long after, thanks to new DNA tech.

I could see them all as I spied like a total creep through Dee’s window. At least Trix and Maz didn’t look like they were having that great of a time. I was ashamed of the pain churning through my insides, the pull of wanting to belong to my squad still there, minus Dee. I tried to shake the feeling by tossing up if I should slip poison in the coke or sprinkle it on the cake. Then I stopped. I knew better than this.

As I sat slumped underneath the window, I closed my eyes and prayed for guidance. I prayed to forgive for my own sake. My mum’s voice came into my head and said ‘Honey, when you’re feeling bad about a situation, the only way you’ll feel better is to take control and make a plan!’ She was right of course. I wondered what I could do to more gently remove Dee from our lives.

Dee’s place was a serious contender for the front page of *Better Homes than Yours* magazine. As I walked across the lawn towards Dee and her tennis court, my feet sank into her impossibly soft carpet of grass. She was hitting balls in a super-cute tennis outfit, all white but for the red soles of her sneakers that flashed up as warning when she moved. She reminded me of red-back spiders that sport red as the colour of danger.

‘Dee. You’ve got to go.’

She turned to me with a look of disinterest. I handed her an envelope of photos. Photos that would make a Kardashian blush, as well as our PE teacher. She only glanced in the envelope and then looked up at me with amusement.

‘Fine,’ Dee said and laughed, ‘I was bored of this shit hole anyway. They don’t call it the north-snore for nothing.’

Dee waved her tennis racquet loosely around, gesturing at her family's mansion and uber-green gardens. A ball shot out of the auto-serve machine towards us, which Dee hit with ease. She held out the racquet to me.

'Fancy a hit before I go? Those arms of yours look super toned now, was that from all the toilet scrubbing in the clink?'

She flew out the next day to go live with her grandma in Alaska.

'It's now called Slay Park, by the kids anyways,' Trix informed me.

Trix and Maz had sheepishly agreed to meet me. It was a year since the murder and it seemed fitting to be having a drink among the roses again, breathing in the fresh autumn night.

'You know what I learned from all of this? I now understand that it's the most unhappy people that bully, and knowing this, I can find empathy for Dee.' Trix and Maz stared blankly at me, doubt cast across their faces. '*But* you've got to stand up for yourself.'

'I learned to not be such a weak excuse of a friend.' Trix looked to Maz.

'We're really sorry we didn't say anything,' Maz said.

'All is forgiven my loves.' It was warm hugs all around.

'What did happen to Dee?' Trix said as she extracted herself from the huddle.

'Remember those photos you took of Dee and Mr Gee in the back of the sports cupboard?' I smirked.

'Ohhhh, you didn't!'

'I did.'

'Wow. Here's to you my clever friend,' Trix said, raising her bottle in the air.

'And here's to Dee, may she find happiness and repent, but twelve thousand and fifty-seven kilometres the hell away from us!'

'Cheers to that!'

To lighten the mood Maz began to recount her date from the night before.

‘OMG guys, he was so nervous to kiss me that he closed his eyes and missed!’

Trix snorted so hard that the beer she’d just taken a gulp of fizzed out her nose. Maz ran off holding her crotch, desperate in her search to find an emergency pee bush. I threw my head back and roared with the most satisfying, deep, hysterical laughter. The kind of laugh that only happens among friends.