

THE QUARRY

Grace Mitchell

Flowers and Tea

‘You useless woman.’

The voice resounded through the café and rang through her brain, opening up the doors to the memories she had long ago tried to forget.

The small ornate tables and the talking customers disappeared as the café was overtaken by grass, leaving Samantha standing confused and bewildered in a field. Hearing the voice, she turned around, only to see her father and mother on top of a nearby tall, grassy hill. They seemed to be both smiling and waving down at her. Dazed, she found herself smiling and waving back. The smiles on their faces seemed to glitch for a second into the look of anger on her father’s face and fear on her mother’s. They instantly turned back into smiles as though nothing had really

happened. Just as children would, her father pushed her mother down the hill and her mother joyfully rolled down the grassy knoll. With a large smile upon her face, she rolled down to where Samantha was standing. There she landed, though not as a bundle of joy like a child who was playing, but as a messy heap with her arm at an angle that an arm shouldn't naturally be in.

Looking into the fearful and weeping eyes of her mother, Samantha felt her gaze rising to see her father. There he stood menacingly above her, on the top of what was no longer a grassy hill but an old splintery wooden staircase. He stared at her for a moment before walking away, leaving her bruised and battered mother to find help by herself. Samantha wanted to pick up her mother and help her, but she looked at her hands only find they were too small to ever help move an adult. In fact, her whole body was too small to help her mother; she was just too young. So she did the only thing she could do and sought a way out of this horror. There to the right she saw a darkened door; it didn't seem to fit with the old house. So she ran to it and pushed it open with all the strength that her five year old self had. Stumbling on to the other side of the doorway, she found herself out of the memory and back to her twenty year old body. Not only that but when she looked around, she found herself in an ancient wooden corridor that was lined with dark wooden doors.

Tree roots showed through the floorboards and the more she looked, it felt like she could feel her mind tear and warp just like the wooden planks. The corridor before her looked like it went on forever, with all the tree roots and grass growing out of the wood, or maybe it really was because it did truly go on forever. Feeling drawn to one of the dark wooden doors down the corridor, she felt her feet start to move, like they had different ideas about the door than her mind did. Walking across the unsteady flooring, she saw the wooden ground under her feet start to crumble and break. Suddenly at the door, she didn't have a moment to think about the dangers of her surroundings. Instead her hand shot out, and she let herself into another world.

Another world being her old kitchen. There was the old dirty sink filled with plates, and the fridge displaying a pathetic drawing from her six year old self. Then, of course, there was dear old Dad sitting at the table, right next to the gathering pile of bottles. Except...this time, the pile wasn't as big. This time, half of the pile was smashed all over the floor, along with a smear of blood. It was now that Samantha

suddenly realised which memory she was in. It was the night he had thrown the glass bottles at her mother, the night when...

There was her mother in the kitchen doorway, with a shotgun in her hands. The same weapon that was her right to bear. The same gun she had to protect herself from intruders, but this time it was her husband who was the trespasser. A trickle of blood came down her forehead as she stood glaring at her husband, with fire in her eyes that even devils would be scared of.

‘Harold,’ she said, announcing herself to the poor excuse of a man before her.

Samantha’s father turned around and his face instantly turned into shock, and then anger. His hand grabbed a bottle, as if to punish her insolence. ‘What are you going to do, you useless woman?’

A loud sound echoed through the kitchen as if to answer his question.

A golden flower flew out of the shotgun’s barrel and slowly careened over to Harold’s chest, where it hit in a sudden shock and then, there were petals everywhere. The petals escaped from his chest as he slowly fell to the ground. Samantha turned from her father, who looked like he had just robbed a flower shop, and then to her mother. Samantha, in shock, looked down at herself to see a petal on her dress.

She quickly turned and ran for the door, without looking back at her parents. She didn’t want to see her mother give a giant sigh of relief before finally saying the words, ‘I’m not useless.’ She didn’t want to see her father’s body give its last heave. She didn’t want to see, she didn’t want to remember.

Instead she found herself back in the hallway, which now looked like the floor was crumbling beneath her feet. Nevertheless she kept running to the next door way, which was all she could see. Back in the hallway, the part of her dress that the petal had fallen onto was now stained with the dark red of her nightmares. She needed to keep running to get away; she needed to get away in case reality wanted to make its presence known.

Swinging open the door before her, Samantha ran into a room that was dimly lit. The first thing that really that hit her though was the noise. The noise of screeches and roars. She cringed at the noise of fists pumping and hands slamming. Slowly and unsurely she walked into the dim lit room. As her eyes adjusted, she was shocked to

see that the room was filled with metal cages. Cage after cage, they seemed to go on forever or at least as far as she could see. The screeches of birds and howling of monkeys were louder now she was inside, and she found her hands scrunching up the edges of her shirt. In the cage nearest to her was a big gorilla thumping his chest, making sure all that saw him knew that he was the boss here. There next to him, in her own separate cage, was the meek form of her mother.

Hands clenched tightly around the edges of her brightly coloured shirt. She seemed so pale against the bright orange that hung off her small and thin body. A small taut smile came to her face as she saw her daughter come closer to her.

‘How is school, honey?’

Samantha didn’t know how to answer. Not only was the question too ordinary for a situation that was so bizarre, she was pretty sure the last time she checked, she had graduated from high school.

‘Mum...’

‘Yes, what is it Samantha?’ Her mother said with the same kind eyes she had always had. They looked like total strangers to the rest of her body now.

‘I...I miss yo-’

A sudden barking from the next cage over made Samantha jump. Her mother’s neighbour wanted to be heard and feared, especially by little girlies like her. Samantha looked at the terrifying muscular black dog, and then back to her mum, whose eyes looked at the floor. Slowly fading into the background, only the orange suit stood out. Not wanting to see her mother disappear, Samantha felt herself running down the lines of overbearing cages. It was there at the end of the cages, she found the same familiar door waiting for her.

Grabbing the door’s handle, she pulled it open and rushed through, only to find herself in midst of a puzzle of the few pieces of mossy timbered floor left. Looking around wildly, she knew she had to get out of here. She had to get out before the whole place around her broke apart and she fell to the abyss below.

Then she saw the golden wooden door. The door that had a cute etching of a teapot on the front. Her safe place, her haven. Without a second thought, she jumped from piece to piece of the ancient wooden floor, without ever looking down or

thinking about what would happen if she missed, until she was at the door that smelt of roses and tea, the smell of home.

Looking back, she found the once full of life hallway and the many doors had all disappeared around, leaving only her and this final gateway left. She didn't care though; she only wanted to go forward anyway. Grabbing the handle, she pushed and welcomed the world before her.

The first thing she saw, of course, was the alligator. It wasn't acting like most alligators would, as it was not only sitting cross legged on a garden chair but it also was holding a cup of tea (luckily it was an alligator, because if it was a crocodile, it would surely have not liked tea since it is made with fresh water and not salt water). It had its pinkie extended; after all, he did have manners. He did look remarkably like the soft toy she had once owned, which had stolen her heart as a child with its big toothy grin.

'Hello Samantha, my dear,' the alligator said politely, as he looked at his new company. 'Please do come and take a seat.'

Samantha walked over to the garden table and chairs and sat down with a large smile upon her face. 'It is so good to see you again Sir Reginald.'

She calmly took the spare tea cup and poured herself a cup of tea. Then she leaned back, letting the tea cool down as she took in the little garden she had walked into. There were rose bushes everywhere that scented the place so wonderfully, and the white garden seating that consisted of two seats and a small table, just seemed to come out of a Home and Gardens magazine. Then there was, of course, Sir Reginald sipping his tea slowly, looking dashing in his top hat. Samantha gave a large sigh as she relaxed in her chair. She needn't run here.

'So how has work been?' Sir Reginald politely inquired.

'Quite terrible, the other day this couple came in and-'

The teapot crashed, shattering into pieces of ceramic as the tea escaped on to the café's floor. Samantha's gaze had been slowly following it as it had fallen out of her hands, and then suddenly, with that loud sound, she was back to her job at the small café by the train station. Back to her reality, back to here and now. Quickly kneeling to the floor, she started to pick up the pieces of the teapot.

'I'm so sorry.' She said as the customers peered in to see what the large crashing sound was.

'Why do you always make a mess of things?!' A man's voice broadcasted himself from halfway across the room.

Samantha looked up to see a large man harshly pulling a woman by her arm out of the café. For a second she swore she saw her father's face but with another look, she could see it wasn't. So she stopped, with the ceramic pieces limp in her hand for a moment, as she watched the couple walk out. It was only when they were out of sight that she went back to cleaning up the mess she had made.

After all, she had learnt a broken teapot can easily be cleaned up.