

# THE QUARRY

1956

**Dannielle Parkes**

Elizabeth's Dior heel struck the pavement, igniting a frenzy of flashing lights in her direction. The press swarmed around the private jet, their beady eyes devouring every inch of the actress. Her fitted evening dress didn't shy away from her curves, and the low plunge lured their lustful eyes.

An orchestra of shutters clicking, and film winding played from the cameras, capturing Liz's pageant smile. She prowled along the edge of the crowd, teasing the press, daring them to take one step out of line. She grew bored with their evangelical eyes and began to strut towards the black Cadillac at the end of the tarmac.

Before the press could load another roll of film, a brown fur coat had engulfed the film star. The fine sable collar brushed against Liz's neck, sending a warm shiver down her spine. All the press could see was a knee-length mink coat, a pair of Ray-Ban sunglasses, and a mane of crimson waves.

The press circled around the film star, bombarding her with questions.

"Are you happy to be back in LA, Ms Loren?"

"Is it true you're starring in Brodeur's new film?"

Liz's sunglasses did their best to hide her tired eyes, but it didn't help the incessant noise of the press feeding her already excruciating headache. Liz slipped into the black Cadillac and took one last glance at the press. She fed them every day, but they kept coming back for more. She could see the way their eyes burned with desire that they wouldn't stop feeding until there was nothing left.

The sun faded behind the old mansion on Sunset Boulevard, its grounds littered with the memories of Hollywood's finest parties. On the marble walls hung film posters documenting Liz's rise to fame, and on top the grand mantelpiece, a statue of a golden man stood proudly.

Liz sat hunched over in the bath, her mind drifting back to the previous night, to the woman who had laid in her bed. She thought of the woman's dark curls, her soft smile, and the way her eyes danced in the light. A person's eyes never lied, Liz thought. Liz could see the pools of lust swirling in the depths of her eyes, and in there swam a desire not to be with her, but with the Hollywood starlet.

She looked down at the signet ring on her middle finger. Liz ran her thumb over the ring and her heart ached. Her eyes stayed fixed on the initials engraved on the ring: S.H. taking hold of her memories and transporting her back in time.

On Sunset Boulevard, in one of those great big houses in the ten thousand block, a younger Liz stared at her reflection in the mirror. The studio had put the finishing touches on her makeover. She didn't even have time to look at herself before Frank, her manager, had rushed her over to this party. He couldn't stress how important it was to make a lasting impression tonight. She was debuting as a new actress to the most important people in Hollywood.

"Liz! Liz you in there?" Sylvia yelled over the pandemonium of the party below.

Sylvia Hayes was the daughter of a famous director and the niece to Hollywood legend Katherine Hayes.

The only highlight of the night so far was being in Katherine Hayes's Mansion. Liz had only glimpsed the actress. All she had seen was Katherine wrapped in a thick fur coat,

prowling around the party, daring the men in suits to converse with her. She was the only person Liz had ever seen wear such a coat in the middle of summer.

The old bathroom door creaked open, and a young woman peaked inside the marble room. Brown curls fell like waves around Sylvia's face, and in that white dress, Liz thought she looked angelic.

Sylvia's eyes roamed over Liz's new look, making her heartbeat thunder throughout her body. Liz thought she now resembled a B grade Rite Hayworth with her face full of makeup, her low-cut dress, and her hair now an intense auburn colour. She stepped away from Sylvia and crossed her arms.

"You think I look stupid, don't you?"

"No, never," Sylvia said, stepping closer to Liz and pushing back a stray strand of hair behind her ear. Heat flushed to her cheeks, and Liz was positive her face now resembled the colour of her hair.

"So, they've dolled you up to feed you to the wolves tonight?" Sylvia stated, fiddling with the signet ring on her finger. Liz felt the weight of a thousand cameras pointing at her under Sylvia's gaze.

"Frank said if I impress them tonight, I could start getting leading roles," she said, glimpsing at herself in the mirror. "Maybe someday I'll be like your aunt."

"You don't want to be like her or anyone at this party."

But in fact, Liz wanted to be like Katherine Hayes. An award-winning actress who lives on Sunset Boulevard, who wears fur coats and has a million adoring fans. Was that not every young actresses dream?

Liz grabbed her hand, feeling the emptiness in her voice. Sylvia's hazel eyes danced under the light, and emotion swam in the depths of her iris. Liz leaned in closing the distance between them. Their lips brush one another, when the sound of someone clearing their throat forced the two girls back to reality.

A large man stood at the opening of the bathroom.

"Sylvia, your aunt is looking for you," Frank said, his eyes fixed on Liz.

She knew once Sylvia had left the room Frank would scorn her, again. This was the third time he had caught them. His hands shook with rage, and his beady little eyes narrowed in on Liz.

"Liz, come with me."

She followed him down the long corridor, passing various film posters of Katherine Hayes from her early career. He stopped at the big door at the end, pushed it open, and gestured for Liz to follow.

The room was full of the finest clothes and jewellery she had ever seen. There were shelves for pearls and diamonds, and even a tray full of vintage broaches. Liz turned her attention to the other side of the room, where a rack of fur coats caught her eye.

She ran her hand along the coats. The fine furs of the dead animals were soft against her skin. Liz stopped at the end of the rack and inspected the mink pelt. The lifeless animal hung there. Its glossy eyes stared back at Liz. She picked the pelt up and moved over to the mirror.

“Stop this, Liz. People have been talking – they’ve noticed you two. Sylvia has her daddy’s name and aunt’s fame to fall back on. You have nothing.” Frank watched Liz grab a coat to go with the pelt and pranced around the mirror.

Liz thought about what Frank said, and he was right. If Sylvia grew bored with her or found someone famous like her, then she’d be over. But she couldn’t imagine her life without Sylvia.

“If the studio caught wind of you two, you’ll be blacklisted. Your career will be over before it starts and all the work we’ve done will be for nothing.”

Liz patted the arm of the fur coat and looked up at Frank in the mirror's reflection.

“Kid, if you want all this one day, listen to me.”

She shifted her attention to the two golden statues on the shelf behind Frank. Liz wanted fame, her name in big print on the posters, and her face on the big screen. Sylvia knew this. Liz was sure if she listened to Frank, they would only be apart for a few months. Just enough time for Liz to get her first gig.

Liz pulled the collar of the coat up, and the smell of Chanel No. 5 clung to the fine fur. “What do I need to do?”

“You need to stay away from her for now. I’ll fix things up.”

She turned to Frank looking him in the eye. “Promise me we won’t be apart for long?”

“I Promise,” Frank said, taking the coat from Liz.

After a long night of networking and dancing, Liz’s feet throbbed, and her cheeks hurt from smiling. She walked into the garden searching for Frank, so she could grab a cab home, when

she found Sylvia. Sylvia sat on the lawn, picking at the blades of grass. Her eyes were red and her cheeks puffy.

“I thought I would say goodbye,” said Liz.

Sylvia pushed herself up off the grass and walked over to her. She tried to muster up a smile, but tears fell down her cheeks instead.

“Dad has offered me his place in Paris while he’s filming. I leave tomorrow.”

Liz’s hands shook, watching tears stream down Sylvia’s face. She could feel her heart shrivel up.

“It’s only for the summer, right? Then you’ll come back to me?” Liz questioned, her voice cracking.

“I hope you get everything you wanted,” Sylvia said, taking off her ring and handing it to Liz. She looked into Liz’s eyes one last time, searching for something, then brushed past her and into the Mansion.

The sound of heavy footsteps brought Liz back to the present. She got out of the bath and put on her silk robe. Liz followed the sound of footsteps to the back room where the golden statue stood upon the mantelpiece. The fire flickered in the dark room, illuminating the large man on the sofa.

“By all means Frank, make yourself at home,” Liz said to her agent.

“Someone has to,” Frank said, dropping a newspaper down on the table. He cleared his throat, then began to read out the headline. “Wild Liz out on the town, can she be tamed?”

“What were you doing in New York?” he said, holding the article up for Liz to see. The picture that accompanied the article was of Liz bar hopping on Christopher St with the woman from last night.

“I was there for business.” Liz leaned against the door frame.

“I told you to stay put, and next thing I know, you’re partying on the other side of the country.”

“Frank, I don’t need a keeper.” She glanced at the ring on her middle finger. “We’ve been over this.”

“I should talk with the studio again about getting you a husband. That’ll fix this problem.”

Liz narrowed her eyes. “I definitely don’t need a husband either.”

“I think it’s best for your career.”

“Cut the crap, Frank. Why are you really here?”

“I heard about the film with Brodeur.”

His mousey eyes studied her for a moment, before Liz moved over to the oak bookcase and picked up the script that laid on the dusty books.

Liz sat down on the sofa across from Frank with the script in hand. Frank shifted in his seat as a bead of sweat trickled down his face. Liz slid the script over to him. The orange hue of the fire next to them caressed Liz’s face as she studied him intently, waiting for his reaction.

“I’ve already signed the contract, and the script is decent. Well, better than the shit you make me do.”

He ran his hands through his non-existent hair and over his sweaty face. After he wouldn’t let her do *The Children’s Hour* on Broadway, she met with Brodeur. She knew it’d piss him off.

“Did he say who’s playing alongside you?” Frank questioned.

She hardly thought it mattered. Brodeur had mentioned getting a French actress, but that didn’t really concern her.

Frank sighed. “I don’t want those rumours to start again.” He picked up the newspaper and turned the page. “Liz, I’m trying to protect you,” he said, placing the paper back down on the table.

She knew of the rumours the first time, but they were dead and buried now, unless—  
*She’s back.*

Liz looked down at the picture of an actress getting out of a plane. Her heart stopped.

The article read, ‘America’s sweetheart Sylvia Hayes returns from France to star in MGM’s new film.’

“I’ve already told them you can’t do the film.”

Liz closed her eyes, trying to compose herself. Rage pumped through her veins as she continued to listen to her agent go on about the new film that he booked her.

“You’re not doing this to me again.” Liz said, throwing the paper in the fire. “You promised me we wouldn’t be apart for long. But you’ve kept me from her for five years now.”

Frank began to speak when Liz cut him off.

“I don’t care what people say anymore, I’m done, Frank. I want out.”

He sat there for a moment dumbfounded. “It’s not that easy kid, you signed the contract.”

Frank got up, made his way out the door without saying another word.

When Liz heard the front door echo throughout the mansion, she broke down in tears. She rubbed her thumb of the ring on her finger. Years of frustration and anger flowed down her cheeks. She had to wait so long to see Sylvia, and she’d be damned if she listened to Frank again.

Liz ran down the corridor, passed the marble bathroom, to the small room full of her clothes. She picked one of her vintage coats; but the fur felt coarse against her skin. She picked up the raccoon fur next to it. The coat no longer smelled of luxury perfume, but of rotting animal flesh. Her stomach churned at the smell of it.

Liz grabbed all the fine coats and took them back down to the fireplace. She threw every one of them into the fire. The fire grew larger with each coat she threw in. She was setting the animals free. She had sacrificed love for those dead animals, for the big mansion, and for the adoring fans. Yet none of those things could fill the hollow void in her chest.

The flames began to grow beyond the fireplace, engulfing the golden statue above it. Liz moved out of the mansion and onto the lawn. The orange hue of the flames behind her illuminated the sky. She watched the flames burn the old mansion. This was never her home, Liz thought, it would never be.

“It was about time someone burnt it to the ground,” said a voice behind her.

Liz turned around, knowing the sound of that voice anywhere. Sylvia stood before her, her hair now cut just below her ears, and she wore a soft smile across her lips. Liz was positive she’d died in the fire and this was just an apparition to take her into her next life.

“Why are you here?” Liz questioned.

“I read a story in the newspaper about a wild actress who couldn’t be tamed, so I thought I would come and see her in her enclosure and ask her if she wanted to escape with me.”

Sylvia offered her hand to Liz. The orange light of the fire behind them danced in her hazel eyes. Liz took her hand, and warmth radiated through her body when they touched. The two actresses fled into the night, and the old mansion on Sunset Boulevard continued to burn into the early morning, creating a thick black smog that descended over LA.