

The Woman in Purple

I saw her for the first time at Earl's Court Station on my way to the park. It was a cold day. I had my London Fog trench coat fully buttoned up, though the collar of my shirt, tight around my neck from the perfectly knotted purple tie, was still visible. My walk to the station was brief, but my hands were beginning to turn the same color as my tie. Before entering the large doorway, I stopped and stared down at my hands for a moment, marvelling at their rawness, marvelling at the shade of purple my body produced in such extreme conditions. *The son of blue and red*, I thought.

I took out a pad of paper and quickly scribbled down a few lines that came to mind:

aquamarine walks on land
invading the warm expanse of life
auburn lights up like a cigarette
reveling in the short-tempered fires of ambiguity

Thoughts of fire, warmth... I should have worn a scarf.

I rushed into the station, the vibration of bodies around me putting my senses on edge. An earthy smell filled my nostrils as a man walked past, the tapping of heels and the monotonous *click click click* of the turnstile pounded at my brain. There was so much to look at, so many faces to see, yet it was all a blur.

Life is war.

There was a huge crowd of people waiting outside the lift to go down to the Piccadilly Line, so I maneuvered my way over to the stairwell. I winked at one of the many CCTV cameras throughout the station, then found the stairs. Taking two at a time, I held my gaze steady on the toes of my loafers. The rush of the spiral descent was intoxicating, and, by the time I got to the bottom, I felt a bit lightheaded.

My body had finally heated up. Longing thoughts of fire and warmth were gone and all I wanted to do was rip off my jacket, or unbutton it at the very least. I could feel a bit of wetness forming above my upper lip, and my forehead was burning. I rubbed the back of my hand across my mouth, the prickle of fresh stubble scratching at my skin. I could see the shine on my hand from the sweat, and I wondered if everyone else could see it, too.

It was then that I finally looked up. It was then that I finally saw her.

There she was, sitting in one of the seats waiting for the train to arrive. She had one leg crossed over the other, pushing her skirt up to just above the knee. Her blouse, a darker shade of purple than my tie, was low cut, yet still conservative enough to be classy. Her hair was

pulled back in a tight ponytail, and she was twirling a fair lock around her finger, absentmindedly chewing on what must have been a piece of gum. She had headphones in, and her finger occasionally moved from twirling her hair to fixing the earbud in her ear, her red nail polish slightly chipped but still glossy. I noticed her mouth was moving, and at first I thought she must have been mouthing the words to the music she was listening to. I took a few steps closer, only to be cut off by a group of people rushing to the platform. I clenched my fist, growling. I resisted the urge to push someone aside. I stepped closer yet again, just close enough to get a light hint of her subtle perfume, and realized she was talking on the phone.

“...not sure when I’ll be back tonight, might be a long day.”

Her resonant pitch made me that much more drawn to her. It was so smooth that it was like listening to the drizzle of honey. I could listen to her talk until her voice gave out. I could listen to her talk until the day she died. In that moment, I knew that she had to be mine—she would be mine.

I moved a few steps closer, still trying to hazard some distance, when she stood up. I hadn’t noticed that the train had arrived until I watched her board. Just as the door was closing, she turned around and we made eye contact. It was only for a brief moment, but the striking blue color of her eyes caught me so off guard that I had to catch myself from stumbling. Her mouth kept moving, she must have been talking on the phone still, and she averted her eyes. Those eyes were now burned into the back of my mind. The train pulled away, and I was left with a sort of wanting, an unfulfilled need. I pulled my pen and pad out of my satchel, sitting in the spot she had previously inhabited. The seat was still a little warm. My heart sped up slightly at the thought of our connection. I couldn’t stop my knee from shaking. It was bouncing up and down and the pen in my hand wavered precariously between my fingers. I had to get it out of my system, so I wrote:

When I first heard you,
your voice smothered
me like tear gas
writhing beneath the skin,
toxicity pumping through
my veins on the frontline.

I could have gone on for days. I had to write and get my feelings down on paper to calm the urges, but the words I had to write were too jumbled, and words themselves were not enough to describe the way I felt right now.

I missed all of the trains that came because I wanted to inhabit the space she had. Absorb her energy. Wait for her to return... I kept to my pad and paper, pacing on the return platform, taking note of my surroundings. It was just me and her in that tunnel, though she was not physically here to share it with me. Not yet.

I checked my watch. It was getting close to midnight, meaning the tube would stop running. Where was she? There was essentially no one out now, so the trains that stopped were largely empty. I was beginning to lose faith when a loud rush of wind and squeaking filled the tunnel. *This had to be the one*, I thought. I looked into each car carefully, until finally I spotted her.

I walked quickly toward her car, wringing my hands. I had no idea what I was going to say, or if I could even speak. The door opened and she stepped out. My heart began to race and my palms grew sweaty with anticipation. It was time.

"Hello, my lovely," I said.

She didn't look up right away, so I spoke again, a bit louder this time, and she finally looked at me. Those piercing blue eyes stabbed right through my heart.

She looked at me questioningly at first, then her face softened. "You look familiar..." Her voice sounded even sweeter when spoken to *me*. I inhaled sharply, loosening up my tie.

"I saw you here earlier, and I've been thinking about you ever since..."

She furrowed her brow, laughing nervously. "Uhh, okay."

"My darling, I want you to be with me, and only me. I won't have it any other way." I closed the distance between us. She let out a high-pitched squeal and backed up, trying to move away from me, but I had her pinned against the wall. Playing hard to get, I see. I smiled at her, putting a finger over her lip and grabbing her chin ever so gently so she would look me in the eye.

"This could be the start of us," I said. She tried to turn her face away, so I gripped her chin tighter, and soft purple circles started forming beneath my fingertips. I could hear her breath quicken, short, hard breaths through the nose. I stared at the circles, thinking back to my hands earlier and how beautiful they were. I wanted all of her to be that color, the daughter of blue and red. I moved my hand from her chin to her neck, squeezing. Her bottom lip quivered and a single tear fell from her eye.

"I thought you wanted this to be the start of us. Please, stop," she said, coughing like she could barely get the words out. She tried to wriggle out of my grip.

I kept one hand on her throat and used the other to fully undo my tie. My purple tie. I quickly turned her around so I was positioned behind her, and I put the tie around her neck, pulling until her face turned the most magnificent shade of purple. I had never seen a more brilliant creature. I kept pulling until she couldn't fight any longer, then let her fall slack into my arms.

I looked at her, finally here with me, and I began to weep. I sunk to the ground, making sure her head was cradled in my arms.

"My beautiful woman, my love. Purple, just as I had wanted you... Oh, but what have I done?"

I took out my pen and pad, tears blocking my vision. I wrote, finally finding the words to finish:

When I first heard you,
your voice smothered
me like tear gas
writhing beneath the skin,
toxicity pumping through
my veins on the frontline.

*You wanted this to be
the start of us, you said,
but I have reached my end;*
guerrilla warfare left me
ambushed from all sides and
into the ground we descended,
a grave I didn't want to belong to.

Gone but
reborn in my mind,
you refuse to die.

The daughter of blue and red.