**Character Profiles**

Main Character

Name: Cynthia Chen

Age: 28 (b: 1958)

Nationality: Asian American

Appearance: Medium length hair with side fringe in a messy bun, wears glasses, black singlet, undone relaxed plaid shirt, pants (jeans or basic activewear), basic shoes. Black hair, brown eyes.

Personality: Fear of leaving her apartment (agoraphobia), dislikes leaving to go the apartment lobby but is getting better with common spaces in the apartment building, refuses to go outside. Has a blunt attitude and a tendency to speak before thinking. They are very resistant to change and has stayed in her apartment for 8 years now, though doesn’t have any meaningful connections with the tenants, Kim being the only exception. Prefers to keep to herself and is a workaholic, operating under the mentality that no one can disturb her when she is working.

Job: Novelist

Relations: Friends with Kim (crush)

Backstory: Born in America, her parents are Taiwanese immigrants who moved to America two years before she was born, her older brother Phillip was born a year before her. Growing up she was close with her brother and enjoyed playing game of make believe with him, from a young age she was always writing stories and putting on plays she wrote and performed with her brother to her parents. Her parents were always working at their milk bar that they lived above with little time to spend with their children, but they loved them dearly. Cynthia was always a shy child and had very little friends growing up, however this didn’t bother her as she would rather spend time by herself, due to her lack of social interaction she came off as blunt often and standoffish to others around her age, often resulting in her being bullied due to her speaking before thinking at times. Though the treatment upset her greatly, she never told her family of her struggles and slowly become even more withdrawn from her own family.

When she was 16 she finally came to the realisation that she preferred women, horrified by what others would think she made sure no signs of such preferences were ever evident, she even tried dating a Taiwanese boy from her neighbourhood and one of her brother’s friends, Mark Lin, he was a year older than her and both their families adored them as a couple. She tried loving him but could never see their relationship as anything beyond platonic. She found solace in his company, being the only other person she wasn’t anxious around, she enjoyed his company but whenever he kissed her she felt nothing, she adopted the habit of imagining it was a girl instead in order to not alert him of her discomfort. After dating for a year, he wanted to go further, she refused, when he said he loved her, she just smiled with no response back.

One day when they were hanging out in her room during the weekend, Mark started looking through her collections of stories when she left the room to prepare lunch, he found several stories depicting women in relationships with each other. He angrily confronted Cynthia about the stories stating that they were sickening and that no one would ever want to read such content, headstrong, she defended her work and Mark connected the dots. Mark threatened that he would tell people about her “illness” as he called it, saying that she would have to prove to him he was wrong if she didn’t want the rumours to be spread. Heartbroken by his words, hurt that the one she considered a friend would do this to her and be disgusted with her acts, she considered his words, understanding what he wanted her to do. The disgust she felt for herself flipped, becoming disgust towards him. She said that she didn’t have anything to prove to him, he stormed off, she yelled that it was over between them before he left the house, wanting to be the one who ended the relationship.

Rumours began circulating, people looked at her differently and the bullying at school got worse, she would be locked in rooms, her lunch stolen, her items damaged. Even though she was able to quell some of the suspicion by explaining that it was most likely just a nasty rumour spread by her disgruntled ex because she broke up with him, the torment wouldn’t stop. No one knew if she was innocent or not, but they continued their acts, revolted by the possibility. Slowly the anxiety got to her, she’d sleep in more, skip classes, and avoided going to school all together. Though she managed to graduate it was with poor grades, a shocking contrast to her previous marks. At home her parents were worried, not wanting to believe what the other parents in the neighbourhood had said, believing their daughter’s side of the story. Her brother however became distant from her, never doing anything to harm her, but abandoning her none the less. Cynthia developed an anxiety for the outside world, not even feeling safe in her own home at times due to her brother.

For the next two years Cynthia kept herself closed off in her room, writing manuscripts and sending them to publishers, she was eventually signed by a publisher and wrote under a pseudonym Dawn Bishop, solely writing erotic fiction, after saving up money for two years she gladly took the chance to move away from where the rumours dwelled. She moved into Saffron Apartments at the age of 20 and has resided in her 5th floor room since, paranoid that somehow the rumours followed her, worried that people could somehow see what she was. Through her 8 years of stay, she can leave her apartment and journey to the lobby in to pick up her mail and any packages, though that is the sole extent of her comfort zone.

After getting used to living in seclusion the fought of leaving the safe space that she built herself is panic inducing in of itself. Though the other tenants interact with her on her walks to and from the lobby, she doesn’t pay them much mind, still being blunt and sceptical of people’s true intentions. Her only friend and main point of contact is Kim, a schoolteacher who lives on the 9th floor. Cynthia admired Kim’s ability to face the world head on and her cheerful demeanour was a welcome respite from her monotonous days of just typing, she soon found herself developing feelings for the woman, instead of being disgusted she decided to treasure the feeling, as she never felt that way before and wanted to be by Kim’s side, even if only as a friend, for as long as she could.

Image Reference:



Girl on 9th floor

Name: Kimberly “Kim” Moris

Age: 26 (b: 1960)

Nationality: Lithuanian American

Appearance: Shoulder length brown hair that she dyes to a natural red colour, it is always styled to mimic 1950’s hair. Wears higher rise jeans and a white shirt with sneakers whilst outside of work hours, and a dark purple pencil skirt and blazer with a white wide collared shirt with pumps at work.

Personality: Fear of small spaces (claustrophobia), avoids closets mostly due to her childhood where she would be locked in one as a punishment. Warm and welcoming, she is always eager to explore new places and has a tendency to move every few years to avoid feeling stuck in one location for too long. Has stayed at Saffron Apartments for 3 years now and is reluctant to leave, though she feels herself growing more anxious in some corners of her apartment.

Job: Secondary School Teacher

Relations: Friends with Cynthia (crush), is friendly with the rest of the tenants

Backstory: When she was only three, Kim’s mother left the family home, leaving her with her father who soon grew to become an alcoholic. From a young age Kim learnt how to tread carefully around the house when her father was home, knowing that he’d lash out if she disturbed him in any way. There were some days where he forgot to feed her, resulting in her having to sneak into the kitchen to get food. One night however she was caught and locked in a coat closet for the rest of the night as punishment for “trying to take more food that she didn’t need”, she wasn’t let out no matter how much she begged and couldn’t fall asleep the whole night, worried that he would somehow forget that she was locked in there.

Over her the course of her childhood and teenage years she was placed in there a total of 14 times, each night feeling longer than the last. The last time this occurred was when she was 15, when her father came home early and found her kissing a girl, he berated her and threatened to send her away to get “fixed”, she begged him not to and he instead locked her in the closet for the whole weekend, occasional talking to her through the door and telling her that it was the only chance to cleanse her of her sin and that she need to leave that part of her to rot somewhere hidden where no one can see. She didn’t talk to the girl she kissed anymore, and they naturally avoided each other after the event.

She never was close to her father, and naturally developed claustrophobia due to these events. No one at school ever knew what she was going through, never wanting to burden those around her and always showcasing a happy persona. She dove headfirst into her studies, as not only did she enjoy her subjects but also discovered that her father wouldn’t bother her when she was studying in her room quietly. During high school she also worked part-time, never spending her money frivolously, only buying school supplies, food to store in her room, and the occasional new piece of clothing for school. When she was 18, she moved out the first chance she got and went to university to become a teacher, dying her hair from this point onward regularly in order to feel more confident in a new environment. During her time at university she had multiple part time jobs, one being a delivery driver, she delivered to Saffron Apartments frequently and met Cynthia for the first time when she was 19. She never returned to her home and got a teaching position a few months after her graduation, she never dated anyone during those years, but knew she didn’t fully leave that part of herself in that closet.

She moves from her apartment after every couple of years, growing paranoid that the tenants somehow know about her secret and feeling unsafe in her apartments due to a sense of dread overwhelming her and suffocating the space. She has worked at the same high school for 5 years now and has moved 3 times. When she first moved into Saffron Apartments, she went to introduce herself to her neighbours, she then decided to introduce herself to Cynthia also, even though they were several floors apart. Cynthia instantly recognised her as the delivery driver, stating that she remembered her because of her hair and commented on how it was cute.

Image Reference: