

CHERRY by Conchita Navarro Saez

My mother Cherry had a penchant for lying down beneath trees in our garden and in wild Wicklow.

When I was 9 she let me plant cherry stones along the gravel path which led to our door. We were never allowed to close that door. Howling gales and salty Dublin rain swept in. Leaves swirled around my feet.

My stones grew high. A dappled avenue emerged.

Later at 13, in hospital, I sat daily by a blonde-haired child who was dying. She was full of wit and cynicism for her five years. She did not believe in god, refused Holy Communion. Only on her last night did nurses refuse me permission to sit vigil. She called my name until dawn.

I needed to go home to my family.

Back home, Cherry had a new interest – we were off to see a psychometrist ! On a table, people laid out sentimental rings, watches, locketts - I brought a branch from my sapling. The medium 'read' each in turn, handing out comforting messages from the dead.

She took the cherry branch and began rocking it in her arms. The only teenager in the hall, all eyes were on me now. I understood the rocking, tears fell hard and fast.

*a young blonde haired child is here for you and wants you to know that she is not in pain any more.*

Mortified I ran for the exit.

I was in awe of the powerful cherry branch!

Cherry eventually sold the house to a man who promised not to cut our trees. But every sapling was cut without delay. Today Google suggests that the mature trees have gone.

Having re-settled in London, Cherry took to her bed, as was her habit if a tree was felled. But she was soon resting beneath trees again, in Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest. In her final years she took to sitting amongst lime trees in Ally Pally, dressed in her black cape, in all weathers. I often walk in her footsteps, though I've never tried it in a cape.