

The deserted roads, mostly forgotten, lead the way to the besmirched wooden gates. With ancient emblems carved onto these twenty-feet, deteriorating ligneous cedar entrance, one can only assume that the chronicles might be greater than the semblance. On the contrary, one can also trap themselves in the thought of why none of the countryside citizens crossed their paths with this enigmatic place. Inside the gates of the unknown truth, the dusty, alabaster-coated leonine statues stood sentinel to whatever they were bound to guard. Lacebark elm trees, which stared like silent sentries, were spread across the patio, radiating ominous energy into the atmosphere. Amidst this shielding, the senescent house sat in peace. Its griseous rooftop and its dilapidated stairs and rails, whose paint had become salt-and-pepper, made it known—it was aging. As I placed my foot on the first step to the porch, the creaking sound alerted my consciousness. The zephyr around me, which was undisturbed until now, blew towards the vicinity of the swing, causing its rusted chains to make a squeaky sound. Though these eldritch incidents, which caused the resinous palpitation of my heart, made me skeptical about discovering what lay further, they didn't blind me with fear.

The sun shone its soft, aureate light onto the farthest horizon, but it almost diffused when it converged with the stygian house. Through the cracks of the floorboard, the creepers grew out, and their claws gripped onto the grooves of the faded beige wall. The sun-bleached, brick-red door still had specks of varnish. The engraved metal knob, rounded at its edges, stung my skin with coldness and let out a small screech as I twisted it. When the door swung open, the remains of a gargantuan, antique, rusted chandelier lay shattered in the centre of the hall. The white rays, which peeked through the oval windows, reflected against the broken crystals, scattering the light and emitting a warm glow. The embroidered couches, which now looked like they were worn to shreds; the polygonal, richly carved wooden chairs, which resembled that of a throne but now had mosses growing on them; and the Victorian rugs, covered with heraldic devices, which were now tattered and could no longer be deciphered, were placed in the corners of the room.

Ahead of the chandelier was the majestic Thassos marble staircase. Its black veins appeared as if they snaked their way through each step towards the top. The emergence of the banister was smooth, polished, and vase-like, bearing the curved, antique, bronze candelabrum. As I ran my hand against the handrails and approached the next floor, my feet clapped against the marble steps, causing an echo in the vast emptiness of the hallways.

In the serenity of silence, I made my way past all the multiple directions and arrived at a room. A peculiar sense of familiarity possessed me. I was drawn into the room by a strange calling. I glanced around, unaware of this unusual feeling. The room had a rose window, glazed with sapphire-tinted glass, and as the light passed through it, the sapphire beams had a surreal outlook. The feculent beds, the pink-ivory wardrobes, the diary on the second shelf—it was all the same. I involuntarily knew where I had to head next. This time, I ran. When I saw the painting, I came to a halt. It was a maiden. Her golden locks glided down her shoulders. A locket with a ruby pendant rested on her neck. Although her face was veiled with a piece of off-white silk fabric, when I held the delicate fabric to unwrap the portrait, I saw her. I saw myself.