

You looked at me but you didn't see me

Here I am, in front of the mansion. It's been some time since I was last here, in front of the house which holds most of my childhood memories. The place looks creepier than last time. Well, the house always looked creepy but now it feels way different, maybe because she died in there. "Ah, Auntie, I'm gonna miss you."

3 days before

Her funeral was great. However, I felt chills down my spine when I looked at her dead body and when I turned my back to her, it felt like... like she was looking at me. I am wondering if I was the only one who felt it. Even the fake tears of the persons who called themselves family were less scary. They are really bad actors. The only thing they are interested in is her money. Nobody deserved her, nobody besides me and the gardener. At the end of the ceremony, he and I talked about her, the good memories of my holidays at the mansion and her obsession for flowers. I was going to my car when a well-dressed man came to me, calling me by my name, I didn't know him but he sure knew me.

"Oh there you are, I searched for you all around."

"Mmh... Do I know you?"

I was a bit scared because of his appearance, he looked more like a cadaver than my aunt in her coffin. He was paler than a corpse and thinner than canvas and he was really tall maybe 6'3 or 6'4. He was standing straight and spoke with a plummy accent.

"I am Charles Winstern, the notary of your aunt. Lady Margaret left a lot behind her and you are the first one in her list of inheritors. Well, it turns out you are the only one in your family."

I was shocked, the only one... When I thought that she was too kind for her own good, you sly little fox! All the people of my family were kind and friendly with her because she was rich, but behind her fragile figure there was a powerful woman that everyone feared, she never had a husband nor a child but she had tons of nieces and nephews, rapacious nieces and nephews, only waiting for her to die, hoping that her fortune would be theirs. But rumor had it, she apparently had a favorite, nobody knew who it was until now, I am her favorite: the niece who spends her vacation in the house of this Lady because her parents are incompetent. Well, that was fine with me I never really liked my parents, they gave me life, but they never cared about me. My mother, if I can call her that, was just with my father for his family name and everything that comes with it, and he was with her just because she was beautiful – but she was still the stupidest woman I've ever met. My

parents left me with my aunt every time they could, so they wouldn't have to take care of me - even when I was a baby- now that I think of it, mostly when I was a baby; but my aunt didn't care, she took me with her, fatally glaring at her brother for having a child and not taking care of it.

Lady Margaret was a beautiful woman with piercing green eyes, beautiful long white hair always in a French Twist hairstyle, tall and thin, wearing fine and expensive dresses, but as she became older and older she started to look more like a skeleton. Sometimes when I saw her after a while I was scared.

My childhood was filled with so many memories of my time in the mansion: learning how to cook, sew, play chess, playing the piano or violin, our cards game moments, the times we would go for a walk in the woods near the manor. Everything was joyful, except on the day when I fell down the stairs. I could have died but a guy, who looked around my age, came out of nowhere and saved me. After the event I recovered from the shock of my fall and I asked him who he was. I was interested in him he was my savior and he looked like a prince. That day is printed forever on my mind not only because I nearly died falling down the stairs but because I had met this boy I spent the rest of my childhood with.

I went to the notary office and I learned that not only 97% of her fortune was for me but that we were only three on the testament: me, the gardener and the son of the gardener. My savior was in her testament, I really was surprised. But after some thinking, it was normal; he was always there to help anyone who needed it, he was such a sweetheart. Honestly, I didn't mind sharing the manor with him, after all he had saved my life.

Here I am, another vacation in the manor of my aunt. Well now: my manor. I don't know if the other inheritor of the manor is already here or if he is going to come or even if he knows about this. I would like to see him but if he is not here it will not change anything.

As I am walking in the front yard, I notice that everything is in place. The gardener is still doing his job. That is all great but the closer I get to the mansion, the weirder I feel. Something is not right in here, not right at all. I feel like someone is watching from the inside but everything is closed. How? How is that possible? There is nobody here. Right? Just before I take the keys from my bag, the door opens but I don't see anyone, I don't know if I want to get in anymore. What if it's someone I don't know or worse, a ghost!

"Breathe in, breathe out" As I am getting closer to the open door, a shadow appears, then a pair of intense gray eyes is looking at me and I am paralyzed, I can't move but I can't say if it is because of the fear that shadow is provoking in me or because those eyes are attracting me in some way it feels weird because they remind me of something or maybe someone. The shadow takes a step closer to me and I stand there, completely shocked, it's him! My savior, my prince, the son of

the gardener, my childhood friend: James Ryan. He is way more handsome than in my memories: his peculiar gray eyes, his shaped jawline, his thin lips, a well-built body. He is just perfect, so perfect that it's weird. I have a feeling in my stomach telling me he is hiding something.

"Hey"

"H-Hi"

"It's been a long time"

"Yeah..."

Even when he talked it was too perfect to be true, and I was right. I walked in the house and noticed how sad the atmosphere was without her, something here was different... but the maze-like corridors, the strange and eccentric paintings, all of the weird shaped vases, the furniture (older than my deceased aunt), the freaky stairs, everything was in place but something was definitely different... Maybe it's the stairs, she died because she fell down the stairs.

The atmosphere is getting creepier and weirder day after day. I still don't trust him. This feeling building up in my stomach is getting stronger and stronger every time I see him, but I can't help the fact that I'm falling for him, every day he is here for me when I need him, I feel like I am going crazy, what is happening to me? What is wrong with me? Am I paranoid? Am I in love with him? Is he manipulating me? I DON'T KNOW. I need something to calm down, my heart beats too fast. I am going to the bathroom of my aunt, she had anxiety problems so she had a treatment for it. I close the door behind me, locking it because I didn't want him to see me like that. I open the medicine cabinet and look at the different names before finding the right ones, but something is strange. Anxiety was her biggest problem, but her pills against it are at the back of the cabinet. After I calm down, I take a look at every other thing she had in the cabinet and I notice two boxes of pills that shouldn't be here. The first one is a dietary supplement. She shouldn't have taken those pills because she needed to gain weight, not lose any. And the second are some energizing pills. My aunt was a woman who needed to recover from her lack of energy with sleep, not medication. Then it clicks, everything makes sense, the only one who was here, with her, when I was absent, was James. His father told me at the funeral that he was really kind helping in the garden and also with my aunt. He was playing mister perfect boy so nobody would think he could be a murderer. Aunt Margaret did die from an accident but she wouldn't have had an accident if she had not been that weak, if she had eaten properly and calmed her hunger with food. If she had recovered her energy with sleep and not with energizing pills, she wouldn't be dead. My aunt knew well how dangerous the stairs of her house were. As I hear the storm outside, I try to think about the event. Then a knock on the door takes me out of my thoughts,

"Hey, are you in there?"

It's him, what am I going to do? Does he know that I know? Why is he here? Is he going to kill me? I can't get out of here,

"Are you okay?"

I took a deep breath

"Yeah..."

After my answer he doesn't respond, at that instant I don't feel good, if he is the man he pretends to be, why doesn't he ask something like "are you sure" or "do you need help"? He knows, he knows, he knows, he KNOWS.

"So, you found out?"

His voice has completely changed, his usual sweet but manly voice is now deep and filled with an emotion I can't describe, an emotion I don't want to describe, I am paralyzed, I can't get out of here.

"Your aunt fell for my trick of the perfect man but you didn't, I like women like you but sadly you're going to end here."

I could see his creepy smile even if he was behind the door.

"Rich people, like your aunt, look at people like me but don't see me. I am going to give you... five seconds to get out of the bathroom and run, after the five seconds; I am going to hunt you until I get you."

My body reacts as he says this, I get up and unlock the door and rush out of the bathroom. The plan: get into my car and get out of here. As I run into the corridor leading to the stairs, he is already behind me. I get to the last stairs when I feel a hand grab my hair, I stop moving letting a groan out of my mouth because of the pain. He gets closer to me and takes my wrists with his other hand, to block them in my back. I feel his breath on my ear.

"You saw me but you didn't look at me."

He pushes my body so I am leaning towards the stairs.

"I thought the hunt would be more interesting with you but no. Well, you went further than your aunt and that leaves you with the same death, how funny!"

The last thing I hear is his hysterical laugh as I fall, head first, on the twenty stairs leading to the hall of the mansion.