

Beautiful. Gorgeous. Mysterious.

Those were the descriptors that came to mind as I stood outside the gate. The wind of cars rushing back home blew my hair up to the side; they completely ignored the forgotten property that I stood in front of.

There were no trees around, but there was plenty of land. The estate stood at attention a few hundred feet from the road. It was silent. No lights and no sound came from it. I could tell the exterior paint was chipping away. The yard around it was an ocean of weeds. This was clearly a place that someone didn't care about. Who knows what secrets lie inside.

And it was the perfect place for my and my fiance's next adventure.

We both returned later. A dark blanket had fallen over the entire area and small chirping from crickets filled the space with a quiet noise. There were fewer cars on the road, too, and I knew my black car would be effectively hidden when someone passed by. It was the ideal time for some exploration.

The front gate leading to the property had two signs reading "No Trespassing. Private Property." Both of the signs went unheeded. When there was a break in cars passing, we climbed over the fence and quietly moved far enough away from the road that we were invisible in the night. The air, which in reality was crisp and clear, tasted like rebellion with a mild aftertaste of worry.

The large house slowly grew in size as we waded through the weeds. Up close, there was more damage than I thought. The once-white paint was browned and breaking away on all the corners and around the windows and door. Where it wasn't chipped, there were cracks streaking through it like tree branches. Three of the nine windows on the front were broken, with one completely missing its pane. And the front door was waiting for the perfect gust of wind to knock it off its hinges.

Still, I was mesmerized.

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My fiance and I reached the porch after what seemed like a 20-minute walk from the gate. I knew it was much shorter, but time slowed in this place. The area remained quiet, save for the crickets in the background. So, we tried the front door.

One side of the double-doors didn't budge, but the other swung open slowly. No creaking or groaning; that's better reserved for setting the mood in movies. The interior was a blank, black canvas. That is until my eyes adjusted and the moonlight shining in through the windows highlighted some basic structures.

I could see that the foyer did not have the stairs. Rather, it ran like a narrow hall to the back of the house. There were four doors, two on each side. In the front two, there was a living room on the left and a dining room on the right. Both rooms were only identifiable to me thanks to a couple pieces of furniture left inside. The dining room, of course, had a table and a chandelier over it. In the living room sat two chairs to the left of a small, understated staircase.

As we entered, the air grew thick with musk. Rooms and furniture had been locked away for too long. There was another smell, but I couldn't identify it.

Tip-toeing across the hardwood floors, we moved toward the back of the house. While passing, I noticed that the dining room had a beautiful stained glass window that had somehow remained unbroken. The living room wasn't so lucky with its windows, though. Two of them had been hit with a rock. There was glass lying on the floor nearby and moth-eaten curtains hung limply at either side of the window frames.

I could tell the living room used to have a rug on the floor by the discoloration, too. It had likely been gone for several years by now.

The other two doors leading off the foyer were a mystery. I had assumed the second door on the right was the kitchen, seeing as how the dining room was right in front of it. And as we got closer, I spotted the unmistakable outlines of cabinets and a stove. There was no fridge left in there, though a microwave sat alone tucked in the far corner of the countertop.

Looking to the left, I realized that the final downstairs room was a library. Bookshelves lined the walls, though the books they once held had been removed. As I explored more into the room, I saw that a few books were abandoned in the back right wall. Covered in dust, I needed the light from my phone to make out a few of the titles: "Perfection: Mastering the Art of Motherhood and Wifehood," "Most Popular Recipes of the 1940s," and "Decorating The Ideal Home". The others were unreadable. Regardless, all of them stood upright as if the rest of their brethren had never been taken away.

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With the downstairs sufficiently explored, we continued upstairs. Getting there was surprisingly simple. I wasn't sure how the old stairs would hold our combined weight, but there wasn't even a creak as we stepped.

From the top of the stairs, a hallway ran to the left and right. There were three rooms of similar size there: one at the end of the hallway to the left, and two more on either side of a branch-off to the right. I figured they were all bedrooms.

At the end of the hallway leading to the right of the stairs was a single door tucked into the corner. This room was the largest of the four; clearly the master bedroom. Despite having the only fully broken window in the house, no wind moved through the room. The attached master

bath rested in the back right, while a walk-in closet filled the space at the front right side of the room.

The back wall, or front wall since it was at the front of the house, had rotting wallpaper clinging to some disappearing wall glue. It was the only wallpapered area in the entire building. In all four rooms, there was stained and pitted carpet. Insects had clearly been eating at it and I was positive I had seen squirming on the floor in several of the rooms.

Throughout our time exploring the house, my fiancé and I hadn't spoken. That didn't mean my mind was blank, though. I couldn't stop wondering about what this house had seen.

Who had lived here before?

Why did they leave?

What resulted in the property being abandoned?

How old was the house?

What happened here?

There was no shortage of questions. I was in love with the estate and I craved knowledge about its past.

"What do you think happened here?" I shakily whispered.

"No idea." Was his terse response. "The structure is perfectly fine. No damage or weakness or anything. People just...left."

"I think something must have happened, then. Nothing else really makes sense. It's a desirable area, the property is worth plenty of money, yet the owner is hoarding it without living in it."

"They're just selfish." He quickly explained away my questioning thoughts.

"In reality, yeah. But that explanation is too boring. I like the notion that something happened." I was determined to create a more unique story.

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At that, a door downstairs slammed shut. I jumped at the unexpected noise and immediately became uneasy. My fiancé looked toward the stairs while remaining composed. The sound echoed through the home for a while before settling back to silence. Outside, the air was still. Wind couldn't have pushed the door shut that hard, anyway.

My breathing rate increased and my heart rate spiked. Goosebumps rose up on my arms and legs. Seeing my reaction, my fiance urged us back downstairs.

We both walked down, me curling my arm through his and tightly gripping his hand. We walked through to the foyer and turned around to see the kitchen door shut. I was certain someone else was here and I pulled my fiance to the front door.

As we approached, we saw some lights through the front windows. Someone was walking toward the house with a flashlight scanning the yard for trespassers. I was uncertain what to do, but my fiance purposefully pulled me toward the back of the house. We had seen a door leading to the back yard in the library and quickly moved toward it.

It swung open easily, revealing our escape passage just as we heard the new visitor stepping onto the porch. Slowly creeping around the side of the house, we checked that the visitor was inside. Their flashlight shone through the windows in the living room. Seeing it, we knew we had our chance.

Fleeing back into the familiar ocean of weeds, we worked our way to the front gate. We moved quickly, yet made very minimal noise.

The gate was slightly ajar when we got there and we slipped through without an issue. There was a warm security car parked just in front of it. On the way back to our car, I glanced longingly back at the house. A bright white figure stood out among all the blackness at one of the upstairs windows.

My heart skipped a beat, yet I quickly forgot about the image by the time we reached the car. I was ready to go home and sleep; excited for the next adventure.