

Something didn't seem quite right -- Leigh glanced down at the GPS one last time as she turned onto the gravel drive, obscured by once-manicured Magnolias and untamed Willows. As she inched through the overgrowth, it suddenly emerged. Perched on a hill above the unkempt grounds, like a forgotten sentinel from a time past, the house showed its elegance as well as its age. A sign reading Open House rocked gently in the breeze, dwarfed by the disheveled behemoth towering behind it. This couldn't be the house she had seen, she thought. Her brow raised as she held the pictures out in front of her, glancing back and forth between the elaborate mansion in the pictures and the presumably condemned mass in front of her.

Leigh stumbled out of her sapphire blue Carrera as her heels were given a welcome unbecoming of classic Southern charm on the unpaved walk. Too distracted by the house itself, it suddenly struck her. She was alone. "Someone else must be here -- right?", she thought, as the chill of the evening breeze added to her feeling of unease. As the red bottoms of her heels touched the cobblestone walk leading up to the front door, something urged her to turn around. An instinctive fear washed over her as she froze, engulfed in the aura radiating from the decrepit home. A silence of unmeasurable time was abruptly shattered as the solid-oak door slammed shut. A man appeared from the shadow of the porch, his boots crisply clicking the worn stones as he reached out a callous hand, "You must be here for the open house!", he exclaimed, "We've been expecting you, I'm Mayor James Musgrave."

Leigh showed a sheepish smile, caught off-guard by the unexpected introduction, though, quickly regained her frigid demeanor. "While it's a pleasure to meet you James-- may I call you James? -- This house isn't remotely close to what I expected, I..", "Miss", the Mayor interjected, "I do hope you'll forgive the minor deception long enough to take a look inside". He motioned towards the door with a crooked grin. Bemused, Leigh reluctantly marched forward, nearly comatose with the nerve of this boorish old man. "Minor deception", she scoffed to herself. Regardless, Leigh couldn't shake the allure of this maltreated manor.

As she cautiously navigated the loose stones leading up to the entrance, she couldn't help but admire the construction. Seven windows lined the top floor with crimson curtains drawn. The hue seemed all too familiar, but the origin of the memory was undiscernable. The twin pillars, standing guard, showed their beauty as the oak grain peeked through the flakes of ivory paint. Triplets of stained glass flanked the door, too sullied with age to show their allure. James, hobbling after her, muttered something but Leigh didn't hear a word. She stopped just before the doorway.

"This has to be at least 10 feet tall," she thought. Leigh braced for the impending disappointment and questioned why she had come all this way, to begin with. It was too late now, she thought, though her budget for self-soothing was at its end -- she had to go in. As she let the door swing open, she felt the burden of her anxiety lift.

Leigh stood in awe of the expanse of the ornate foyer. A cylindrical room, with beauty that pierced the veil of dust that engrossed every inch. Her first step into the house landed on an

elongated Egyptian rug as if it were rolled out for a special guest, cut perfectly to match the curvature of the space. Her brown eyes couldn't help but follow the depictions of reeds and hieroglyphs through an archway to a crested marble mantle as tall as she. From where she stood, Leigh could see what looked like carvings of roots surrounding the empty hearth, twisting hauntingly as each tip gently kissed the ruby-colored tile outlining the great room. Here gaze began to trace back to the ceiling when suddenly two walnut brown eyes met hers. "Excuse me miss, I'm Kateri, the Curator of the Francis Estate. I assume you're here for the open house?" The woman surmised politely. At average height, even Leigh towered over her. "Yes," Leigh replied shortly, too encumbered by the weight of what she had encountered. Even the air felt heavier just past the doorway as the evening chill crept through the walls. Comfort did not reside here.

Leigh continued to inspect the room as she took a few steps forward. She noticed the refracted geometric patterns tracing their way around the room. As she looked up she noticed one of the most beautiful chandeliers she had ever seen. Three layers of golden stems branched into elaborate leaves, each housing Edison bulbs encapsulated by intricate honeycomb-shaped crystals. "21", she counted -- each stem slightly askew from the next, entertaining both the mind and the eyes. "Beautiful isn't it?", Kateri proclaimed, her arms spread wide. "Beauty truly is in the eye of the beholder", Leigh thought to herself. Yes, the building was intricate, but there was something that didn't seem right to her. A consuming presence lounged in this haunt -- She couldn't walk away. Leigh smoothed her red locks of hair that had been blown by the wind and rearranged her blouse.

"Step into the great room with me, it only gets better from here", Kateri said with a subtle smile. Kateri seemed to float. Her steps were light and her movements graceful. Dressed in black from head to toe, it was hard to discern where her jet black hair ended and her blouse began. The only color visible was a turquoise bracelet laced with gold trim that dangled dangerously from her wrist that stood out against her dark complexion. Leigh would have sworn she looked native, but this was an area she tended to avoid. All too often, her curiosity was taken as contempt when it came to issues of origin.

As they walked through the archway, Leigh saw two grand staircases on either side of the great room, leading to a bridge that connected the East and West wings of the home. Another chandelier hung in the void, this one made entirely of antlers. It was an odd choice, but Leigh had given up her ability for a surprise this evening. Nothing seemed as it should here. The wooden floors groaned under the weight of her high heels as she walked into the kitchen. The colossal island standing solitary in the brightly lit room was curious Leigh thought, didn't at all match the time period.

"The kitchen has been remodeled," Kateri said from behind Leigh's shoulder. Leigh's manicured fingers grazed the top of the counter. "Quarts?" Leigh asked.

"Yes, and the cabinets are walnut," Kateri replied.

Leigh turned her attention to the back wall lined with windows. The evening sun was setting fast casting a shadow of 7 large trees in the backyard.

"What kind of trees are those?" Leigh said.

"I've been told they're orange trees, although in my 5 years giving tours here they have never bared fruit," Kateri said.

“Tours?”

“Yes, since this is a historical site I used to give tours here. But we haven’t had many tourists in the past few years, so the Mayor decided to sell it.”

In the far corner of the kitchen stood a small wooden door Leigh jiggled the brass doorknob to see what was concealed behind it.

“Oh, I have the key here somewhere.” Kateri pulled out a large ring with at least a dozen skeleton keys all clinging together. “Mmmm this one, no this one I think...” Kateri walked over and tested the brass skeleton key, the door broke free and opened easily. The room was engulfed in dust and the smell of damp earth. Leigh forced a cough and waved her polished fingernails in front of her face to clear the air.

“Sorry this door hasn’t been opened in a long time it leads down to the cellar,” Kateri said.

Leigh peaked through the dingy opening and glanced down at the unsteady wood stairs. Kateri stepped in front of her to lead the way down but Leigh turned to walk away. She was not going to take her Louboutins down those grotesque steps.

“I wish to see the rest of the house.” Leigh walked back through the great room and Kateri hustled after her trying to keep up with her short legs.

On the opposite side of the great room was a door that led into the library. Shelves were built all along the walls and the ceiling held exposed wood beams, it smelt like the inside of a book.

“This room is my favorite, I think Sir Francis was the paranoid type,” Kateri said walking over to one of the bookshelves. Her small fingers fidgeted under the shelf and Leigh heard a soft click and the shelf peeled away from the wall and hovered above the wooden floor. How charmingly cliché Leigh thought. Leigh walked into the small hidden room no bigger than a closet. The walls had wood panels from floor to ceiling. Leigh’s eyes adjusted to the dim light flooding in from the other room. There was no light switch or windows in this hidden treasure. Kateri saw a small smile of approval on Leigh’s lips.

“Would you like to see the upstairs?” Kateri said with confidence.

“Actually-- I would.” Leigh was surprised by her own curiosity. With two staircases to choose from, they took the one closest to them. Leigh grasped the smooth wood railing that moved effortlessly under the palm of her hand. The view from up top was exquisite. The antler chandelier cast a tangled shadow of arms on the wooden floor. The marble fireplace stood robust surrounded by the root carvings. Leigh didn’t even mind the peeling wallpaper splattered with water spots from previous leaks. Kateri took lead across the bridge to the master bedroom on the east side. The setting sun blazed through the crimson drapes setting the room on fire. Kateri stood on tiptoe reaching up to tear the curtains back. The red glow faded away and golden light filled the room. Leigh walked through the dust particles and circled the room it smelled stale and stagnant like no one had stepped foot here in years. The ceiling was low but the room was large, two evergreen couches sat in the corners and an antique desk was placed in the center. The queen-sized bed was enclosed with a wooden post in all four corners. Carved from mahogany the illustration in the wood told a forgotten story.

“The bed was made special for Sir. Francis, it comes with the house along with the other furniture you’ve seen.” Kateri said.

Leigh held on the bedpost and thought of the man who once slept here. Her hand became glued to the post and a chill crept into her body, her grasp broke when Kateri spoke.

“Sorry, what did you say?” Leigh said.

“The master bath is through that door,” Kateri said pointing across the room. Leigh forced her hand to loosen its grip and walked into the bathroom. A garden clawed bathtub stood center and

Leigh pictured herself with her red hair piled on top of her head and bubbles around her chest with a wine glass in hand.

“There are two more bedrooms upstairs.” Kateri walked out of the bedroom across the bridge to the west side of the home. Both were smaller than the master but still a good size. Kateri peeled back the crimson drapes and the last of the evening sun rays disappeared. Leigh flicked on the light switch the warm glow from the bulbs quivered before remaining on. Leigh was bewitched, seduced by the allure of this house. It was a feeling she didn’t understand she felt-- at home.

“Would you like to know the history of the house?”

Leigh jumped at the sound of Kateri’s voice. “Sorry I didn’t mean to startle you.” Leigh laughed and shook her head “Sorry I thought you left the room, yes I would like to know everything about this home.” Leigh said straightening her posture under her high heels. They walked back down the staircase to the great room where James was tending to the crackling fire. The smokey pine filled the room, Leigh smelled the burning sap and felt her body relax from the aroma. The glare from the fire brought Leigh’s attention the massive portrait on the wall. How did she not notice it before? It was at least 6 feet tall above the marble fireplace. Framed by thick gold with decorative etching in the metal. The man’s eyes didn’t follow her as she walked down the stairs but stared straight through her. The warmth of the fire was dissolved by the coldness in the man’s eyes. His broad shoulders were dressed in a royal blue his posture displayed his self-importance. The Mayor noticed Leigh’s fixated eyes.

“That is a portrait of Sir. Francis.” The Mayor said shuffling his boots across the hardwood. “I have tried to take it down but it’s as if it’s glued to the wall.”

“Guess he comes with the house,” Leigh said dryly avoiding the stare from the portrait. She sat on the red velvet couch perched in front of the crackling fire. The smoke from the burning pine lingered in the room making Leigh’s vision hazy. She turned to see Kateri sitting down next to her with a pile of papers on her lap.

“I’ll just go shut off the rest of the lights and let Kateri go over everything with you. She knows this house better than anyone.” The Mayor clapped his rough calloused hands together and excused himself from the room.

As Kateri went over the history of the home and the man who built it her eyes would linger on the portrait of Sir. Francis almost as if he were alive in the room with them.

In the 17th century Sir. Francis sailed here from England in search of gold and spices after forcing the Natives off the land he built his home here and run a large slave plantation on the land. We believe he had sugar cane fields and tobacco. A small town developed with other settlers and after a few years, he refused to sail back to England and named himself governor over the town. Sometime in the following years the town was left abandoned without any trace of Sir. Francis or the townspeople. It was then settled by other English men who expanded the town to what it is today. Leigh cut her off before she could go into more detail.

“So to get to the point, Leigh looked at her Dolce & Gabbana gold-plated watch, what is the asking price?”

Kateri flipped through her stack of papers shuffling them around till she sighed in relief when she found the right one.

“The Mayor has it listed for 350,000\$, now that comes with the 20 acres of land and all the furniture you see inside.”

“20 acres? The land alone must be worth more than that.” Leigh raised her eyebrow snatching the paper from Kateri’s hand.

“Well, the problem with that is this is a historical site and can’t be built on.”

The Mayor walked back into the room waiting for someone to acknowledge his appearance. Leigh was busy reading through the documents when he cleared his throat. She glanced up from the papers and saw him rubbing his weathered hands together. "So miss Dawson are you interested in purchasing the house." He tried to cover up his nervousness with a crooked smile. Leigh assumed it was because he wasn't comfortable around her, she has had that effect on men before. She tucked a loose strand of her long auburn hair behind her ear and straightened her slender body on the couch. Her brown eyes intimidating with success met his stare and he quickly looked away. "I have recently sold my business and have been looking for somewhere quiet to settle down," Leigh said.

"Doesn't get quieter than this, the Mayor laughed looking back up, no neighbors around for miles."

"I've lived here all for life and have never thought about leaving, I think you would love it here." Kateri smiled showing her pearly whites against her dark complexion. Leigh had never made a rash decisions in her 27 years of life without knowing every detail. But the thought of leaving this home and never coming back disturbed her.

"I'd like to take the weekend to think about it, but yes, I think I can see myself living here." A rush of heat broke over her ivory skin whether it was from nerves or the fire she wasn't sure. The Mayor's shoulders relaxed and he let out a breath of air.

"You won't regret it, this house is very-- special," Kateri said standing up. Leigh walked over to the front door and turned to take in one last look at the house.

"We will meet you back here Monday morning, say 10:00?" The Mayor said opening the heavy oak door. "I'll see you then." Leigh shook both their hands and her heels hit the cobblestone steps. Her arms came out to keep her balance as she walked to her sapphire blue car.

This is my revision.

Blood Orange
Chapter 1

In her mind she had already begun devising a plan that would be intricate and almost impenetrable. To launch her complicated act of revenge and work out the details she needed a private place, one that was concealed and secluded. This estate might be the answer. She liked the long, serpentine gravel road that led to it.

Her instincts, ever on full alert, signaled a sense of foreboding. The once-manicured magnolias and untamed willows seemed alive with rough energy. Leigh was feeling comfortable here already.

As she slowly inched through the overgrowth, it suddenly emerged. Perched on a hill above the unkempt grounds, like a forgotten sentinel from a time past, the house showed its elegance as well as its age. An Open House sign rocked and creaked in the breeze, dwarfed by the disheveled behemoth towering behind it. It looked more like a condemned structure that should be red-tagged for demolition than the mansion pictures in her brochure.

Leigh eased out of her sapphire blue Carrera onto the unpaved walk. Her heels were given a welcome unbecoming of classic Southern charm. Too distracted by the house itself, she noticed she was alone, a familiar feeling. As the red bottoms of her heels touched the cobblestone walk leading up to the front door, something urged her to turn around. An instinctive fear washed over her as she froze, engulfed in the aura radiating from the decrepit home.

Silence. Then the solid-oak door slammed shut. A man appeared from the shadow of the porch, his boots crisply clicking the worn stones as he reached out a callous hand, “You must be here for the open house!” he exclaimed. “We’ve been expecting you. I’m Mayor James Musgrave.”

Leigh recoiled slightly, caught off-guard by the unexpected introduction. She quickly regained her frigid demeanor. “While it’s a pleasure to meet you James – may I call you James? – This house isn’t remotely close to what I expected, I...”. “Miss”, the Mayor interjected, “I do hope you’ll forgive the minor deception long enough to take a look inside”. He motioned towards the door with a crooked grin. Bemused, Leigh cautiously marched forward. “Minor deception”, she scoffed to herself. Regardless, Leigh couldn’t shake the allure of this maltreated manor.

As she carefully navigated the loose stones leading up to the entrance, she couldn’t help but admire the construction. Seven windows lined the top floor with crimson curtains drawn. The hue seemed all too familiar, but the origin of the memory was indiscernible. The twin pillars standing guard showed their beauty as the oak grain peeked through the flakes of ivory paint. Triplets of stained glass flanked the door, too sullied with age to show their allure. James, hobbling after her, muttered something but Leigh didn’t hear a word. She stopped just before the doorway.

“This has to be at least 10 feet tall,” she thought. Leigh was curious what lay beyond. As she let the door swing open, she was not prepared for what greeted her.

Leigh stood in awe of the expanse of the ornate foyer. A cylindrical room, with beauty that pierced the veil of dust that engrossed every inch. Her first step into the house landed on an elongated Egyptian rug as if it were rolled out for a special guest, cut perfectly to match the curvature of the space. Her brown eyes couldn't help but follow the depictions of reeds and hieroglyphs through an archway to a crested marble mantle as tall as she. From where she stood, Leigh could see what looked like carvings of roots surrounding the empty hearth, twisting hauntingly as each tip gently kissed the ruby-colored tile outlining the great room. Here gaze began to trace back to the ceiling when suddenly two walnut brown eyes met hers.

“Excuse me miss, I'm Kateri, the Curator of the Francis Estate. I assume you're here for the open house?” The woman surmised politely. At average height, even Leigh towered over her. “Yes,” Leigh replied shortly. While most visitors felt encumbered by the dark weight that permeated the mansion, Leigh felt elated. The heavy air felt just past the doorway and the evening chill that crept through the walls relaxed her.

Leigh continued to inspect the room as she took a few steps forward. She noticed the refracted geometric patterns tracing their way around the room. As she looked up she noticed the ornate chandelier. Three layers of golden stems branched into elaborate leaves, each housing Edison bulbs encapsulated by intricate honeycomb-shaped crystals. “21”, she counted – each stem slightly askew from the next, entertaining both the mind and the eyes. “Details”, she thought to herself. “It's all about the details.” Her inattention later to one detail would jeopardize her carefully crafted plan.

“Beautiful isn't it?” Kateri proclaimed, her arms spread wide. “Beauty truly is in the eye of the beholder”, Leigh thought to herself. Yes, the building was intricate, but what consumed her was a haunting presence that seemed to lounge here. She couldn't walk away. Leigh smoothed her red locks of hair that had been blown by the wind and rearranged her blouse.

“Step into the great room with me, it only gets better from here”, Kateri said with a subtle smile. Kateri seemed to float. Her steps were light and her movements graceful. Dressed in black from head to toe, it was hard to discern where her jet black hair ended and her blouse began. The only color visible was a turquoise bracelet laced with gold trim that dangled dangerously from her wrist that stood out against her dark complexion. Leigh would have sworn she looked native, but this was an area she tended to avoid. All too often, her curiosity was taken as contempt when it came to issues of origin.

As they walked through the archway, Leigh saw two grand staircases on either side of the great room, leading to a bridge that connected the East and West wings of the home. Another chandelier hung in the void, this one made entirely of antlers. It was an odd choice, but Leigh had given up her ability for a surprise this evening. Nothing here was what she expected. The wooden floors groaned under the weight of her high heels as she walked into the kitchen. The colossal island standing solitary in the brightly lit room was curious Leigh thought. It didn't at all match the time period.

Leigh was all about consistency and balance. She looked for it in everything and needed it to anchor a psyche that was too easily disturbed by anything that was askew. Her soon-to-be lover would drive her mad with his unexpected impulsiveness.

“The kitchen has been remodeled,” Kateri said from behind Leigh’s shoulder. Leigh’s manicured fingers grazed the top of the counter. “Quarts?” Leigh asked.

“Yes, and the cabinets are walnut,” Kateri replied.

Leigh turned her attention to the back wall lined with windows. The evening sun was setting fast casting a shadow of 7 large trees in the backyard.

“What kind of trees are those?” Leigh said.

“I’ve been told they’re orange trees, although in my 5 years giving tours here they have never bared fruit,” Kateri said. “That is about to change,” she thought to herself. “They will soon bleed oranges, blood oranges.”

“Tours?”

“Yes, since this is a historical site I used to give tours here. But we haven’t had many tourists in the past few years, so the Mayor decided to sell it.”

In the far corner of the kitchen stood a small wooden door Leigh jiggled the brass doorknob to see what was concealed behind it.

“Oh, I have the key here somewhere.” Kateri pulled out a large ring with at least a dozen skeleton keys all clinging together. “Mmmm this one, no this one I think...” Kateri walked over and tested the brass skeleton key, the door broke free and opened easily. The room was engulfed in dust and the smell of damp earth. Leigh forced a cough and waved her polished fingernails in front of her face to clear the air.

“Sorry this door hasn’t been opened in a long time. It leads down to the cellar,” Kateri said.

Leigh peeked through the dingy opening and glanced down at the unsteady wood stairs. Kateri stepped in front of her to lead the way down but Leigh turned to walk away. She would have ample time later to explore this macabre dungeon.

“I wish to see the rest of the house”, Leigh said. She walked back through the great room and Kateri hustled after her, her short legs barely able to keep up.

On the opposite side of the great room was a door that led into the library. Shelves were built all along the walls and the ceiling held exposed wood beams. It smelled like the inside of a book.

“This room is my favorite, I think Sir Francis was the paranoid type,” Kateri said, walking over to one of the bookshelves. Her small fingers fidgeted under the shelf and Leigh heard a soft click and the shelf peeled away from the wall and hovered above the wooden floor. “It keeps getting better,” Leigh thought. She walked into the small hidden room no bigger than a closet. The walls had wood panels from floor to ceiling. Leigh’s eyes adjusted to the dim light flooding in from the other room. There was no light switch or windows in this hidden treasure. Kateri saw a small smile of approval on Leigh’s lips.

“Would you like to see the upstairs?” Kateri asked with confidence.

“Actually – I would.” Leigh could not conceal her curiosity. With two staircases to choose from, they took the one closest to them. Leigh grasped the smooth wood railing that moved effortlessly under the palm of her hand. The view from up top was exquisite. The antler chandelier cast a tangled shadow of arms on the wooden floor. The marble fireplace stood robustly and was surrounded by the root carvings. Leigh didn’t even mind the peeling wallpaper splattered with water spots from previous leaks. She was surprised at her indifference to this flaw. Kateri took lead across the bridge to the master bedroom on the east side. The setting sun blazed through the

crimson drapes setting the room on fire. Fire would soon become the theme, the leitmotif that would almost consume her grand plan of revenge.

Kateri stood on tiptoe reaching up to tear the curtains back. The red glow faded away and golden light filled the room. Leigh walked through the dust particles and circled the room. The sweet, stale smell of stagnant air electrified her. No one had stepped foot in here in years. The ceiling was low but the room was large, two evergreen couches sat in the corners and an antique desk was placed in the center. The queen-sized bed was enclosed with a wooden post in all four corners. Carved from mahogany the illustration in the wood told a forgotten story.

“The bed was made special for Sir. Francis, it comes with the house along with the other furniture you’ve seen.” Kateri said.

Leigh held onto the bedpost and thought of the man who once slept here. Her hand became glued to the post and the chill that crept into her body startled her. Her grasp broke when Kateri spoke.

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“The master bath is through that door,” Kateri said, pointing across the room. Leigh forced her hand to loosen its grip and walked into the bathroom. A garden clawed bathtub stood center and Leigh pictured herself with her red hair piled on top of her head and bubbles around her chest with a wine glass in hand.

“There are two more bedrooms upstairs.” Kateri said as she walked out of the bedroom and across the bridge to the west side of the home. Both were smaller than the master but still a good size. Kateri peeled back the crimson drapes and the last of the evening sun rays disappeared. Leigh flicked on the light switch and the warm glow from the bulbs quivered before remaining on. Leigh was bewitched, seduced by the allure of this house. It was a feeling she hadn’t felt in a long time – at home.

“Would you like to know the history of the house?” Kateri asked.

Leigh jumped at the sound of Kateri’s voice. “Sorry I didn’t mean to startle you.” Kateri said. Leigh laughed and shook her head. “Sorry I thought you left the room. Yes, I would like to know everything about this home.” Leigh said, straightening her posture under her high heels. They walked back down the staircase to the great room where James was tending to the crackling fire. The Smokey pine filled the room. Leigh smelled the burning sap and felt her body relax from the aroma. The glare from the fire brought Leigh’s attention the massive portrait on the wall. How did she not notice it before?

Leigh was all about presence and hyper-awareness. Yet this place had muted her instincts and was beginning to hypnotize her.

It was at least 6 feet tall above the marble fireplace. Framed by thick gold with decorative etching in the metal. The man’s eyes didn’t follow her as she walked down the stairs but stared straight through her. Accustomed to being stared at and always expecting it, Leigh was miffed that the man’s eyes didn’t follow her. She was irritated by the picture. “How dumb is that?” she thought to herself.

The warmth of the fire was dissolved by the coldness in the man’s eyes. His broad shoulders were dressed in a royal blue. His posture displayed his self-importance. The mayor noticed Leigh’s fixated eyes.

“That is a portrait of Sir. Francis.” the mayor said as he shuffled his boots across the hardwood. “I have tried to take it down but it’s as if it’s glued to the wall.” he remarked.

Her lover, too, would soon become glued to her mind and become an impossible challenge.

“Guess he comes with the house,” Leigh said dryly, once again irritated at the non-stare from the portrait. She sat on the red velvet couch perched in front of the crackling fire. The smoke from the burning pine lingered in the room making Leigh’s vision hazy. She turned to see Kateri sitting down next to her with a pile of papers on her lap.

“I’ll just go shut off the rest of the lights and let Kateri go over everything with you. She knows this house better than anyone.” the mayor said. The mayor clapped his rough calloused hands together and excused himself from the room.

As Kateri went over the history of the home and the man who built it, her eyes would linger on the portrait of Sir. Francis almost as if he were alive in the room with them.

“In the 17th century Sir. Francis sailed here from England in search of gold and spices. After forcing the Natives off the land he built his home here and ran a large slave plantation on the land. We believe he had sugar cane fields and tobacco. A small town developed with other settlers and after a few years, he refused to sail back to England and named himself governor of the town. Sometime in the following years the town was left abandoned without any trace of Sir. Francis or the townspeople. It was then settled by other Englishmen who expanded the town to what it is today.” Kateri explained.

Leigh cut her off before she could go into more detail.

“No one leaves a trace behind them. All our grand plans and serpentine machinations disappear in the consuming march of time. So be it,” Leigh thought to herself. She didn’t have the inclination to entertain such sentiment.

“So to get to the point,” Leigh looked at her Dolce & Gabbana gold-plated watch, “what is the asking price?” Ever the bold aggressor, Leigh had yet to master the art of subtlety. Her impulse to strike too soon would often get the better of her. She winced at her own frankness.

Kateri flipped through her stack of papers, shuffling them around until she sighed in relief when she found the right one.

“The Mayor has it listed for \$350,000. Now that comes with the 20 acres of land and all the furniture you see inside.” Kateri said.

“20 acres? The land alone must be worth more than that.” Leigh raised her eyebrow snatching the paper from Kateri’s hand. “Why did I say that?” Leigh thought. She was negotiating against herself.

“Well, the problem with that is this is a historical site and can’t be built on.” Kateri explained.

“I see,” Leigh replied. This gave her an edge in the bargaining.

The mayor walked back into the room waiting for someone to acknowledge his appearance.

Leigh was busy reading through the documents when he cleared his throat. She glanced up from the papers and saw him rubbing his weathered hands together. “So Miss Dawson are you interested in purchasing the house.” He tried to cover up his nervousness with a crooked smile.

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“We will meet you back here Monday morning, say 10:00?” The mayor said opening the heavy oak door. “I’ll see you then.”

Leigh shook both their hands and her heels hit the cobblestone steps. The steps succumbed to her as she marched to her sapphire blue car.