

Grades 7-12

First Place Prose Winner

Rumors

The door flew open as Jack's foot thrust open the ancient mahogany doors, and stale air nearly suffocated him. The mansion appeared to be anything but void, the fifteenth century furniture was strewn throughout the place. The eerie silence, however, was deafening. He made his way through the threshold recalling the novel he had come across at the village library.

The age old cover depicted a fair young woman with the most alluring blue eyes imaginable. Jack was thoroughly intrigued, and tore through the novel. The century old author told of a maiden who murdered her husband shortly after their arranged marriage. The town locked the girl in the mansion for eternity knowing the demented woman would eventually perish. Jack had heard rumors that the mansion the story described was the old Landol Mansion in the rural part of Salem. He felt that it was his duty to – though it seemed unattainable because of the two hundred year lapse- save the maniac damsel.

He walked across the debilitated floor making his way to the magnificent, breathtaking stairway. He began his ascent up the marble the second floor. He looked around. A monstrous chandelier dangled from the linoleum ceiling, dainty specks of crystal shimmering in the moonlight. Cobwebs veiled the atmosphere and a grandiose window allowed moonlight to reveal the dust particles sailing through the air.

The *creak* of each step taken was practically earsplitting until a melodic hum reached Jack's ears. He saw a beautiful portrait of the woman and her husband in the hall, ignoring the harmonious murmur. The women had the same beautiful piercing eyes and raven hair. The man's face was unrecognizable seeing that it was clawed to shreds. Moving on, Jack found an immense mahogany door practically identical to the entrance.

He figured that this would lead him to the west tower that he had been searching for. He nearly tripped over a decrepit divan leading to the climb. Jack reached the peak of the stairs and the subtle hum turned into a dull roar. The door was mysteriously unlocked, and Jack invited himself in.

Moonlight exposed a multitude of tick marks that had been etched into the stone wall. Jack's candlelight was extinguished when the wind from the storm blew open the shutters. The lightning's luster brought a large bed to his attention. A petite figure left a silhouette; only visible because of the moonlight. Jack crept over to the maiden. At the edge of the bedpost was a plaque.

"This maiden, possessed by mortal malignance, cannot receive true love's penance. For thy poor soul who hath been misled, one small kiss shall leave thou dead. For this is a sadistic murderess, and thou cannot put her punishment to rest."

Unshaken by the passage, Jack was made utterly deaf under the hum, and practically lost consciousness. He stooped over the damsel, and was petrified by the blood red lips. Temptation engulfed him, and Jack gave into one small kiss. Instantaneously, Jack withered. The last thing he was aware of was the fluttering open of the fatal blue eyes and venomous laughter.

Evidently, some rumors are true.