

# The Walls Breathe

Jacob Bernstein

## Chapter One

### The Will

A caw crawled into Mr. Keating's ear. The augur did little to still the tremble in his hands. Clutching a worn briefcase, nearly spilling its contents, the pair looked as if a gentle breeze could tear them asunder. While fishing in his pocket for the new key, he kept his eye on the tattered thing, making sure nothing slipped his faltering grasp. The corroded latch key turned and braced against the tumbling pins. The honorable Whipple Van Thornton Keating aspired for an office of such enviable prestige for as long as he had aspirations at all. In truth, he did fancy the idea of it all, it was only his sleeplessness as of late that encumbered him so. Every sound pierced his being with a primal hypersensitivity reserved for only the most repressed terror lurking within the human psyche, that millennia of the civilized world had done its best to relegate to a dead end of evolution. Piling weeks took their toll.

The office had been made tidy and to his specifications in the last few days. The desk had been recently polished, and its new owner liked to incessantly tap his oily fingers on the new finish. Only one expensive-looking chair adorned the barren office, guests had to stand in front of their transient counselor. In moving his practice from New Orleans to Baton Rouge, the aging lawyer had become accustomed to quick conversations and absolute certainties. Age had not graced him with renewed patience, it had only reinforced habitual pretensions and superficiality, least of which was his disdain for uncertainty. An early knocking at his door pushed his heartbeat into his gizzard. It was not his client, but just some buzzards he told to fly off. The exchange wore into the limited valor he had stored for the coming day. Mr. Keating pried the office window open, sinews complaining to their idle master, the hinges of the frame creaking less so. Humid air did him some good as he opened his favorite attaché. The unclasped locks were an uncertainty, one that Whipple always liked to close when his job was done. A single page was pulled and placed client-side of the desk; some loose papers fell from a torn divider within his open briefcase. Mr. Keating hurriedly stuffed them back inside, glancing to see if his client had arrived during his brief panic. He would remedy the issue in due time he told himself—but before he could tend to those more pressing matters, he had a small meeting to attend to. He left the unclasped case on the desk, turning the contents facing him to make sure he never lost sight of them. The door opened, Whipple looked up for only moment, reaching to grab something to distract him from the medial task at hand. After going through the document for some time, longer than he had anticipated, Mr. Keating hoped for the conversation to come to the natural conclusion he thought fitting. He chomped on a calabash pipe, unlit and flexing with every strained word:

“Now this is hardly the place—”

“I don't care.” Elanor muttered through the side of her mouth, cinching her tightly curled lips as she struck a match.

A deep drag, and deeper breath held the moment longer than Mr. Keating could tolerate. Elanor looked out the window and blew her smoke into the summer breeze, a small courtesy that she felt Mr. Keating was unworthy of. As Elanor took another puff, Whipple took his calabash out of his mouth and gestured with it:

"I say, this is rather inappropriate. A bad habit, especially for a young lady. What would your grandfather think, your father—"

"It clearly doesn't matter what they think." Elanor turned back into the room.

"Ellie, you know that—"

She blew smoke in Whipple's face. "Don't call me that."

Coughing, Mr. Keating put the pipe down. Elanor took another drag.

"Really, Ellie-uh-nor, *aughfumptuh, err eheemm*. Ahh. What was I on about again?" Elanor didn't respond. "Ah yes, thank you." There was a belabored pause, his breath strained in by an unseen tenebrism, it lilted between the sibilance before finding both the breath and the words to continue. Mr. Keating placed his hands on the briefcase and began to close, talking into the blanched leather, he continued to gesture into a nothing, "it is perfectly clear that I think your father intended—"

"To hell with what you think!" Elanor walked up to the desk. Mr. Keating's hands retreated from his briefcase.

For once, with Elanor's height, someone was looking down on Mr. Keating. There was the faintest of whimpers as he leaned deeper into the chair, almost if the inner recesses of the creaking leather could offer some protection. His eyes could not meet hers. A loose piece of parchment held his gaze. He pulled the case towards him and slammed it shut. The sound of the clasps masked the sigh of relief from Mr. Keating. Elanor scoffed. She put the bud out on the desk and turned toward the door.

"That was rosewood! Dalbergia, from India! How dare you—"

Elanor turned. "It's Ebony." Mr. Keating gulped. "And I recall that it was I who selected that piece for my late grandfather. What I do not recall is seeing *you* as one of his benefactors to receive such an ornate piece—or am I interpreting the *intent* wrongly again?" Mr. Keating's hand tipped the calabash off the desk. "Good day!" Elanor slammed the door behind her.

\* \* \*

The door shut without the two men entering—they protested, but a slender figure made it abundantly clear that this was strictly an immediate family matter only. He would see them off in due time. That time swelled into a tedium. The taller of the two tapped his thumb against the sodden wood of the bench. By all accounts the summer of 1918 was sure sweltering, but the unease of the gentlemen came from anything but the humidity that crawled up their finely hemmed pant legs. The shorter of the two men rose to his feet, took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, fixed his pants break on his shoes, and stared at his companion.

"Ain't you family?" There was a sigh from the taller man. "I said, ain't you family with these nice folks?"

"My grandfather was step-brother to the late Baron himself, so we're family." There was snap in the taller gentlemen's voice indicative of some perceived slight.

"So, what does that make you, some sort of cousin?"

"It makes me family."

"Does that mean you got a little of that Levanite blood in yah?"

“Step-brother, mind you” The snap here was more definite.

“How fortunate that a good ol’ boy like yourself may be entitled to suckle at the dry teat of a dead Shylock.”

“I’m surprised that you read, let alone the bard.”

“I have my moments of grandeur.” The smaller man wiped his brow.

Gadflies buzzed around as the two swatted their hats at the lot of them. Before either of the two couldn’t complain any further about their station, those wooden doors flung open, but this time, the figure of a woman slammed them back closed. She looked at neither of them, her curses under breath were enough to guarantee their distance. When they were confident she had marched out of earshot, they let out a breath.

“I presume that’s the Jewess,” the smaller man pointed.

“Hopefully not the heiress,” the taller man quipped.

“Considering her present demeanor,” the smaller man gazed down the courthouse hallway, looking deep into her departing figure, “I don’t think that’s likely.”

“It’s unlike them not to leave the spoils to themselves.”

“Then why’d you come, why’d you drag me?”

“You never know when a kike will drop his gelt.”

“Unless he’s dead.” A chuckle passed between them.

“Exactly.”

The men stared at the woman’s shadow lingering under the white marble columns. Whatever they thought about her, about what she might have or might not gained was never truly why they stared. In truth, even they didn’t even know why they stared.

“You’d think there’d be enough not only for her, but for even a bottom-feeder like yourself.”

“What do yah mean?”

“I mean that all of the coin that these German-Jewish bankers got from the war, some of it has to go back to us, we’re fighting the damn thing!” The short man raised his fist in some sort of symbolic gesture that was lost on his taller companion.

“You ever held a rifle?”

“Nope.” The shorter man lowered his arms.

“You ever killed a man?”

“I wouldn’t call him a man.” The smaller man sneered with a devious joy only matched by his friend’s own toothed grin. They gestured something to each other.

Their laughter was broken by the doors opening once again. A thin, well-aged man with tawny fingers wrapped his dry tendrils around the doorframe. He passed the taller man a document and turned towards him.

“I trust that you will find all that you need to know from this here copy. I expect that our paths will not cross again, but if you have any complaints with my interpretation, you know where to find me. Good day, sir.” There was a mechanical tip of the hat, with anything but courtesy.

The taller man looked at the paper for only a moment. He crumbled it up and tossed down the long hallway.

“You’re right. God damn selfish kikes!”

Mr. Keating had no time for charlatans. Point of fact, Mr. Keating had little time for anything other than leaving. He couldn’t vanquish the gnawing sensation behind his eyes, it was as if someone had walked over his grave. The pain in his head and the heaviness in his chest left

him oblivious to the unlocked door and abandoned key, both left open in his new office. In his haste, he only latched on to his attaché, the leather crumpling around the tightening grip. Whipple did not know what he had to do, but he was wise enough to know he had to do something, and soon. His mind had been occupied by the singular thought of escape, and the means that could ensure it. He couldn't burn the damned thing—that had yet to destroy it. He couldn't drown it—that had yet to yield a promising result. He couldn't forget it—no, that was impossible. Whipple wondered what sort of eldritch truth he has unknowingly loosed, but nothing held his fragmented mind more than the hope of salvation from his plight. His hastening steps were a silent prayer for some divine clemency, not forgiveness. His profession had taught him the former was more important than the latter. While Mr. Keating never acknowledged it, he knew only through intervention could justice escape him; his silence was the closest he could get to understanding that desperate truth.

A caw broke the silent desperation.

Whipple stopped in his tracks in the alley, but yet he still heard his own feet shuffle. He looked down, still as petrified wood, those heavy steps sounded closer. Yet the caw, it's sound, the sound drew further and further away. As the steps neared, he could feel the beating of the wings. They continued to caw and crow like buzzards circling a carcass. Feeling a beak press into the soft of shoulder, he shut his eyes. Birds of prey had starved weeks and he was their carrion.

*Look at me*—without words, it begged for an end to its pain, final release. To die with him. It sank deeper, tearing into his flesh, tempting oblivion.

Whipple ran blindly, running a hand down the walls of the narrow alley. When he had made distance, freeing himself from the cawing, he instinctively reached for his unlatched briefcase. The empty attaché, whose contents had spilled in the encounter, had left salvation behind him. Mr. Keating knew he had to go back for it, there must be an answer in what curses him with these visitations. Mr. Keating would take the long way around, he stuck to the main road, avoiding the alley, and made his way to the courthouse steps. Once he returned to the hallway, his relief exhaled into his office door. It did not budge. He shook it to no avail. Mr. Keating tried once again to fish his empty pocket for the key, but he thrashed about to no avail.

*Thud.* "Watch it!"

"I said on three for Christ's sake!"

Whipple heard those voices, and he thought of how to reach them. He clung steadfast to this hope, enough so he ran out through the court steps and back to the alley behind his office. As he panted, he thought of the window, he could climb in through the open window.

"Christ! It's boiling in here, close that damn windah!" The shorter man sat on the floor; he heaved as if searching for something.

"You mollycoddle." The taller man scoffed.

It was open, he could see from the end of the alley. Whipple began to climb the crumbling bricks, salvation.

The taller man walked to the open frame, "I've had it with these Cajun folk, and these Cajun sweats, lord if I have to spend another day down here cus—" the window shut on Whipple's hands. He let out a whimper on the brick path below.

"Shhh. Do you hear something?" Both men listened.

"That's the sound of gelt!" Dollar bills of every denomination flew from the shorter man's hands. The desk had a repository of emergency funds its prior owner had wanted to keep safe from unsavory types. Yet, in its use, it was mostly spent on such types. The desk had a

secret latch to open this treasury, one so complex that only through example could the sequence be replicated.

“What in the Sam Hill?” The taller man frantically picked the bills up and stuffed his billfold.

“Why do you think we’re here? I wasn’t betting on charity.” The shorter man demonstrated the secret technique of opening the desk.

“I knew you had some of that blood in yah after all!”

Whipple struggled to his feet. “Is somebody there? Hello!” He dusted himself off and braced for another summit of the ledge.

A caw crawled into his ear. And beak into his neck.

“Dear God! Please! Someone! Anyone!” Only laughter drowned his pleas.

Whipple pulled at the creature but in doing so turned around. He saw empty and torn sockets, clinging every fiber to eviscerating dread. A note dropped from his pocket as he slid down the wall into the escape he prayed for.



Last Will and Testament  
of  
AARON ARNOULT

I, AARON ARNOULT, sometimes called BARON ARNOULT, of New Orleans, State of Louisiana, being of sound mind, not acting under duress or undue influence, do hereby make, publish and declare this to be my last will and testament, and hereby revoke any and all other wills and codicils heretofore made by me.

I direct that all debts, and expenses of my last illness, funeral, and burial, be paid as soon after my death as may be reasonably convenient, and I hereby authorize my executor, hereinafter appointed to settle, and discharge, in his or her absolute discretion, any and all claims made against my estate.

I nominate and appoint Whipple Van Thornton Keating of New Orleans, Parish of Orleans, State of Louisiana as executor of my estate.

After the payment of all of my just debts and expenses, I give, devise, and bequeath my property, both real and personal and wherever situated, as follows:-

First: I give, devise, and bequeath to my only son EZEKIEL ARNOULT, my many properties and for him to do with them how he pleases—this discretion excludes my manor in Vacherie, St. James Parish. Under no circumstances is the White Manor in Vacherie ever to be deconstructed. And under no circumstance is the White Manor ever to be uninhabited, there must always be a soul in that manor. However, my benefactors see to this end is entirely at their discretion, but never it be left vacant. If my beloved son EZEKIEL ARNOULT is unwilling or unable to take up my estate, I give the same entitlement to EZEKIEL’s eldest heir.

I also give all the coin in my purse to EZEKIEL ARNOULT or to his selected heir.

Second: I give, devise, and bequeath to my eldest grandchild ELANOR ARNOULT my entire private library.

Third: I give, devise, and bequeath all my other earthly possessions to Trinity Lutheran Church in New Orleans.

Previously Yours,  
/S/ Aaron Arnoult

## Chapter Two

### The Cortège

The corpse had bloated by noon. The first to lay eyes on the eyeless thing could not make heads or tails of what they were looking at. It lay with parts that naturally should stay elsewhere; joints, tendons, and whole limbs dislodged from any recognizable or discernable human anatomy found themselves all contorted into an expanding mass of rot. All the Pinkertons of Baton Rouge could do was to dispose of the stinking heap without causing a scene. Their late employer had hired them as muscle to ensure that the Baron's state funeral went off without a hitch. Some of the brawny boys had been stirred from their stupor to fetch whatever hacksaw or hatchet they could happen upon. The flesh was cut free from the torn clothing, a bulging billfold being the target for obvious identification purposes. The lead investigator took this as necessary severance pay in lieu of the recent complication in his employment. Some of those boys came back with a buck saw they stole from some old Jimmy or another, whopping down the alley like they'd won themselves the lottery. Their enthusiasm was drowned by the sight of their prize. The Pinkertons had little experience with any sort of coronary or post-mortem dissection, but it didn't take a doctor to note how strange the body was. It had puffed up so unnaturally, like it was waterlogged despite the hours of desiccation in the summer heat. By the time of the procession, what remained of Whipple, made it into the Mississippi in small burlaps.

Elanor hit the garçon's hand, she had said no sugar in her coffee. She couldn't drink coffee like she used to, not with the cream and sugar anymore. The boy flinched and took the spilled saucer with him, scurrying back into the kitchen. It was truly an unconscious motion, one that made Elanor wince as the boy was slapped by the café's owner. She didn't hate sugar, but just couldn't stomach the sight of it anymore. As she thought of what to say, how to apologize, some stiff began to sniff around, throwing her name into their questions. She needed the coffee to be awake today, they were waiting. "Fuckin' Pinkertons" Elanor thought to herself. The suits turned toward her booth—Elanor often thought out loud. They told her how soon the procession would start, and how she needed to be there, and how she should show she cared, and how she like to kick their crooked teeth in. Elanor's apology satisfied all of these lines of inquiry, but she still sat unmoved. They made demands, Elanor made a cough that suspiciously sound like the word "ignoramus" or something along those lines. She hadn't had her coffee after all, and they agreed to wait outside until she had finished—but they warned they'd come back if she tarried to long, and that they'd be more than happy to spill coffee all over her pretty sundress if they had to. Elanor winked and the cavalcade of bald men went out the door, "Fuckin' smooth brains"—Elanor was capable of not letting things like this slip, unless she felt it had to be known. The boy gently left a new saucer of black coffee. She took a sip, and without a word, Elanor left without paying. It wasn't about a disliking to sweetness, but from bitterness that only sweets long since passed could make sour.

Elanor's disappearance from the public mourning was the least of the concerns for the spread all too thin Pinkertons. One of their strengths was in finding people who didn't want to be found, but their best feature was in convicting people who didn't want to be convicted. While the Pinkertons weren't much for finding cause of death, they had a strong history of finding a cause in a killer. Earlier that morning, two men were found loitering on the steps of the courthouse, smoking expensive cigars, and it just so happened that the shorter of the two had Mr. Keating's

office key in his pocket. The Pinkertons had a way of pinning their men, angling and skewing things into a pandemonium that would often lead to swift, frontier justice—and more importantly, their payment. But these city authorities were less prone to fits of herd behavior and took the would-be robbers into custody, although the Pinkertons were not keen on the lack of payment for their efforts. The Pinkerton's knew that without a body, no one could confirm any count of murder, so they didn't try to press this claim. They had to keep both Whipple's death and the money they had pocketed from it and their quarries a secret. Robbery, with premeditated and lethal intent had to do to make a payday. The police said they needed more time to ensure they can get a conviction before they could cough up the finder's fee.

"Those bastards are the damn robbers! Not us! Check their damn pockets!" The taller man shook the bars.

"Let me tell you hwat, we're victims of circumstance. That's all. No crime in smokin' a cigar is there?" The shorter man tried to reason.

The taller man pointed, "It was him! He was the one who came to see Lawyer!"

"Shut your trap! I outta—

"What lawyer?" A policeman asked. The two stopped yelling. "*What lawyer?*" He leaned into the taller man's face. A Pinkerton struck the prisoner unconscious.

"He's all kinds of crazy, you have to believe me!" The shorter man flinched at a raised baton.

"Sounds like they knew whose office it was." The Pinkerton though he'd made his bag.

"Sounds like they're a couple of assheads. No chance in Hell these jokers were able to rob Mr. Keating." The constable turned to his deputy, "John, find a beat on Mr. Keating, maybe he can make something make sense."

The Pinkertons would have to settle for only their ill-gotten gains.

Elanor found herself idly roaming on the rue, ruminating. Every calle crept into a new corner, and every avenue was the all the same to Elanor; it didn't matter where she wandered, the whole of the city was moving as one with her grandfather's procession. The streets flooded with more and more acolytes all singing the same philistine song of circumstance and want. The chorus soaring over the sweltering city was a singular sibillance of pure performance, of affected mourning. Condolences and sadness were shared by all who grieved for the man they never truly knew. From above, Elanor thought they'd all look like ants. But the mere thought was not enough to satisfy her imagination, she thought it best to get a better view of the crowd, and to see them religiously grovel at the steps of the capital. *Only Catholics would kill for this land*—Elanor thought to herself as she felt an elbow in her side. Despite her outward disparaging of the city, Elanor knew it like the back of her grandfather's hand. Baton Rouge's City Court would offer the perfect vantage point and respite for Elanor.

Those long columns and pale bricks screamed the Greek Revival style in sickening way to Elanor. She detested the southern flair for the grandiose almost as much as the people who lived in those stuffy buildings. But this didn't bother her as much while on the roof. Elanor had spent much of her childhood dragged around this building and knew how to slip away into it. She knew where she should and shouldn't stand. More importantly, she knew where she could get away with it. Memory had a way making it all seem so distant, but her first cigarette on the roof felt just as it did when she was fourteen.

She remembered his favorite cigarettes: Fatima. Elanor remembered feeling his fingers touch hers as he leaned with a freshly struck match. She watched his tanned hands pull and drag so intensely, so passionately on the smoke that she couldn't help but try to emulate that swagger.



Her coughing fit was covered by the boy, his hands tasted like her cigarette all these years later. Her drags were more reserved now, pulling deep and reaching a part of her where that over-eager child still was happy and in love. But as she brought the burning filter up for a final drag, the scars on her right hand pushed that child back into deep and unhealing lesion within.

The Louisiana State Capital building was closer to Elanor's architectural predilections. Countless hours she had spent trying to name every color hiding in those stained-glass windows. She would dream of being taken away to a castle just like it, a place where she was the queen and nobody could tell her all things that come with who, what, where, and when. The crowd silenced as speaker took to the stand, periodically serving as a megaphone for their emotional resonance. The first speaker unveiled a "new" commemorative portrait to hang in the city courthouse. There the Baron was, as he always hoped to be, immortalized in everlasting eminence. It was a copy, Elanor saw it for the same portrait the Baron had been copying for the last twenty years, before too much gray set in. The roseate hue that radiated from its gentle and relaxed palms looks as though they had deeply caressed love burning within, needing only a gentle touch to swindle and swoon. The rancor in those hands would mark her with faded scars no eternity could mend. Around his dark figure, he was draped with a blood-tinged cloak that was just as bright. Elanor could only think of the smoking jacket and rags he wore in private. The clapping from the cheering crowd rang like the Baron's jewelry in her ear. Every slap was burned into the brushstrokes. Even now she swore she could discern pooling blood under the collar, but her father always said it was just the tie—that granted little succor, it always smelled metallic, like dried blood. The speaker mourned the loss of a deeply empathetic, charitable, and virtuous man as there ever was—but those eyes, they still gazed and burned all these years later. The crowd's dirge reached even behind the concrete embankment she braced against. The smothering grief spoke only one name to her. She tried to silence it, but that profound little girl lacerated any abscess keeping her at bay. Elanor looked over the edge. That boy, he was here again, right where he left Elanor two year ago.

It was right at the bottom of those steps that she saw him for the last time, her Benoit. *Only a minute, mi dulce*—Elanor could still feel his lips on her hand, burning under the scar tissue. That evening, Elanor spent smoking on the court steps, unmoved by the dark. Even Charles couldn't convince her to leave, and she knew he'd never leave her. His body was found later that night by Pinkertons. When those suits came to ask her to identify the body she refused. The neck had been broken with no signs of struggle, thrown from a horse they said, a freak accident. The Baron personally came to the scene with his men. Daniel Benoit had no living family and Elanor was the only person close to him. He made her look. The Baron put a match in her hand, Elanor let it burn. The flame singed her skin as she couldn't look away. Doctors had it wrapped well, but Elanor would take off the bandages and burn herself more whenever she was alone. It wasn't until the infection became dangerous that she stopped, not for a newfound sanctity of life or for the flesh, but for her Benoit's memory.

Looking over the court steps, Elanor felt her hand. Clenching her fist, she tossed a cigarette over into the crowd. Daydreams of hats, mustaches, and fine dresses going up in smoke plumed over her pyre. She felt tempted to throw herself over, but the voice of Benoit cut through the smoke. She felt the copy of the will in her pocket, Benoit's cold face resting in her hands. Elanor stared at the far-off painting.

"I can prove it." Elanor said to herself. "And burn it all down when I'm done."

By morning, Elanor would make her way to the White Manor.

## Chapter Three

### The Manor

With the blood dripped into the fresh soil, the White Manor broke ground to bring in the new year. Coincidentally, that same evening, Elanor Arnoult would herald the turn of the century. The number 1900 brought its share trepidation, but for the aging Baron, nothing could eclipse the achievement of starting the construction of his magnum opus, nothing except the birth of his first grandchild. When the ceremony commenced on the outskirts of Vacherie, the Baron held the umbilical cord and let the gold tassels fall by themselves.

The White Manor was a towering marvel of Greek revival, looking more like a courthouse than a plantation. Based upon the famous altar steps of Pergamon, the façade was closer to the temples of long dead gods. Imported white marble columns carved with ornate Corinthian caps looped over the many steps leading into the grand entry way. A stained-glass decagram, the Baron's personal crest, gleamed above a golden door, marked by reddened frame. Once inside, a three-story atrium, with inner balconies adorned in the most lavish of engravings and the rarest of flowers were enough to make the greatest of atheists into a believer of the divine on earth. The Baron spared no expense, even down to the splendid mosaics whose titles scoured every inch of the atrium's floors. The crowning achievement of which was a depiction of a sword hanging above a golden throne, reminiscent of the ancient legend of Damocles. But with all these finer details, the Baron never paved a proper promenade to the manor. There was no cleared carriage path whose hanging trees would usher his guests to the magnificence that awaited beyond the thicket. The thick woodlands formed a near impenetrable ring around the White Manor. These trees swayed and breathed around the structure like a scythe being pulled, at any moment wholly swallowing the manor. The saplings and shrubberies slowly inched inwards, as did the stretching vine leaves that began to wrap around the imposing columns. When Elanor was but a small child she would tug at the roots of these vines, trying to halt their advance. Now in her return, those same vines have begun to strangle even the Corinthian caps.

In that time Elanor had also pulled at her own roots, grafting herself as far as possible from Vacherie. She had spent much of her adolescence buried in books with visions of academia, or as close as she could get. Where she went to study was of no concern, as long as it was as far away from the bayou as humanly possible. That all had to be put on hold when her father Ezekiel died suddenly in service at Fort Riley earlier that summer. The flu took him. The military doctors found the rate at which his illness progressed and the final state of his body to be perplexing; when he was found in the sick bay, his face stricken with terror—the body appeared to be bloated and blued, like a drowning victim. While this perplexed some, nothing was ordinary about this Flu which took even the healthy Baron a few weeks later. The Baron's physician came to the same conclusion about the odd postmortem deformities as the military doctors who treated his son in Kansas. Without these unfortunate events, there would have been nothing left to tie her down, but her late father's and grandfather's inheritance suddenly became her responsibility. The late Baron's lawyer Mr. Keating interpreted the Baron's words to mean that her brother Charles was to be the heir to the family fortune. Her new responsibility was to be the caretaker for the White Manor while her brother was off on his way to the Western Front in America's contribution to the war to end all wars.

Elanor had few fond memories of her family, even less of the White Manor. When she wasn't reading for leisure, she spent all her waking hours caring for her younger brother as her

mother had died during her labor with Charles. Elanor thought of none of these things when she rode through the narrow thicket path towards the manor. Each turn was hidden by growing greenery, many who tried to make their way to the overly exorbitant hermitage tread the same bushes till nightfall, making them reconsider their visitation. The white woodland stylite marked the only home for miles, missing it left only darkness for the weary, unfortunate traveler. But this wasn't Elanor's first journey. As a child her father sent her and Charles on their own to visit the Baron. When night fell, the children were nowhere near the secluded home. Her brother screamed until his voice was nothing but dry rasping. Pleading, Charles would rasp, "Please... don't leave me..." In that darkness Elanor felt the trees for a sign, anything that would bring her closer to the path. Dragging her near cationic brother, Elanor felt the tree bark until she found one with moss, and then another. For reasons Elanor nor the Baron could explain, the moss formed a spiraling ring around the manor's grounds until eventually leading to the steps. Even now in the false promise of daylight, Elanor still felt the trees for moss as if she still wandered in the darkest of nights.

When the moss led her back like it always did, she saw those white columns for the first time in ten years. The vines made her skin singe with the burning that only the pain of childhood could spark. While climbing the steps and seeing the glittering window and red bumper frame above the white door, that engraved word, "K I N G" on the frame, Elanor could only look at her feet as she resisted the urge to claw at those vines. The atrium offered little more comfort in its vast emptiness. Her only welcome was an assortment of blackened petals sheered from dead flowers and a bouquet of books lining the stairs. The sum of her vast inheritance. Before dark could fall, she gathered it all and placed each book into a pile at the bottom of Pergamon's cousin stairs. She then went back inside to look for the parlor, den, kitchen, or wherever her late benefactor had left his most expensive booze, the cheaper shelves wouldn't do for tonight. After some time, Elanor had found what she had been looking for, an unopened Glenavon Special Liqueur Whisky, dated 1857. She took this trinket out back into the dying twilight.

Elanor sat on those cold steps with a cigarette in hand as she waited for the orange hue to die behind the blackness of the woods. With a pocketknife, Elanor slashed into the bottle's neck, leaving drops of scotch and broken glass on the hued dirt standing on the steps. Elanor wondered if those lost drops were worth more than the sum of her inheritance when she poured the entirety of the bottle on to the books. On her final drag, Elanor tossed the cigarette bud on to the pyre. The embers brought her some small peace as they danced into the purple eventide.

ገደ ዕጠጭ ሃጻ ዘጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸ ሃዘጠጸጸ



ጸጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸ ሃ ገደገደገደገደ  
 ገደገደገደ ጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸ  
 ዘጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸ  
 ጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸ

ጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸ  
 ጸጸጸ ጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸ  
 ጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸጸ  
 ጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸ

ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸ  
 ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸጸ  
 ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸጸ  
 ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸጸጸ

ጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸ  
 ጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸጸ  
 ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸጸ  
 ጸጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸጸጸጸጸጸጸ

ጸጸጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸ ጸጸጸጸጸጸጸጸ

Key:

A = ጸ

J = ጸ

S = ጸ

B = ጸ

K = ጸ

T = ጸ

C = ጸ

L = ጸ

U = ጸ

D = ጸ

M = ጸ

V = ጸ

E = ጸ

N = ጸ

W = ጸ

F = ጸ

O = ጸ

X = ጸ

G = ጸ

P = ጸ

Y = ጸ

H = ጸ

Q = ጸ

Z = ጸ

I = ጸ

R = ጸ