

Up the Stairs and Beyond the Door

“That’s enough!”

“No fair! You always have the last word! Why do you think--”

“Exactly! I think. Something you never do! That’s why everything’s a mess--”

“Excuse you! I know what I’m doing!”

The children’s screams carried throughout the large room and further about the front half of the manor. None of the servants bothered to even mind the endless fighting, choosing to either completely ignore it or silently keep score in their head as they continue along with their daily work. Anyone who’s been working in the house for more than ten years knew the twins have been ferociously arguing since they were first able to speak.

A tug at a pigtail brought forth a yelp.

“You jerk! Come back here!”

“Only if you run faster!”

The boy barked as he pushed onward, skipping stairs to move faster up to the second floor, whipping around corner after corner to reach another, narrower staircase. He only turned back to look at his sister periodically during this race to make sure she was still following along.

“Thomas, slow down already!”

“No way!”

They kept on, the rumbling of their footsteps nothing more than an ambient thunder all around the house until the petite boy reached a large wooden door. They both knew most of the house like the back of their small hands. They had only been exploring it every day of their life, yet this door stood before them towering and taunting. The only untouched part of the house lay behind it.

Thomas’s thoughts were cut short by his sister’s loud panting in his ear.

“What was that for?”

“Shut it, Alice.”

He finally tricked her to come all the way up here. There’s no way he’s going to let her run off and tell one of the house staff what he’s planning to do. A whine erupted from Alice as she tugged at her brother’s arm, finally realizing where they were.

“Thomas, don’t you dare! You know we’re not allowed to go in there.” A harder tug was made, pulling the boy off balance and making him move back a step. “C’mon. Let’s go.”

“Why should I?”

“Because I’m older and I said so.”

“We’re twins.”

Pulling his arm free, he turns the doorknob. It gives way surprisingly easily, not even letting out a creak as it opens.

Looking back towards his sister, Thomas grins. “If you really are the older one, you shouldn’t be so scared.”

At this, Alice is stubbornly silent. Now was the time to be weighing options. Without a word, she moved into the dark room, pulling her brother along by his wrist. He has to stick to his word on this, too.

“We walked through the door. Can we go now?”

“No way.”

He uses Alice’s hold on his shirt sleeve to his advantage, moving them both further into the room. It’s pitch black and he can’t hear any noise from the workers who keep themselves busy around the house during the day. The thought of being accidentally locked up in a place like this sent chills down his spine. Still, he moved forward, Alice clinging to his arm.

“It’s creepy in here. This was a stupid idea.”

“*You’re* stupid.”

Thomas maneuvered as best he could in the darkness of the room, trying to find his way to the curtained windows to let some light in when he finally heard some noise.

First, a gentle creaking.

Then a groan.

And then the snap of wood.

That’s when they fell.