

The Manor House

One step at a time, Lara crept down the stairs. At the bottom, she paused but all that she could hear was blood thumping in her ears. She'd be back before they awoke.

Twenty minutes later, she entered Harrow Woods. Her torchlight found the path and occasionally flashed to show her the black, quivering leaves. Dark clouds had muted the moon. Before long, she came to the ruins of the manor house. In the front garden, the fountain was still and smothered in years of moss. Overgrown rose bushes blocked a path painted thick with fallen petals.

Warily, Lara perched on the edge of the fountain, took her camera from her bag and faced the trees. It was here that she had first seen it. This time she'd be ready.

After a few moments, she heard the wind awaken in the woods. The water rippled, the trees rustled and a damp petal landed on her cheek. Lara shivered. Behind her, a door slammed. What was that? She whipped round to face the house. A shadow moved through the downstairs room. A light flicked on.

Lara ran, shoving her camera back in her bag while she scrambled away from the fountain. She was sure she could hear something cracking the dried twigs behind her as she sped through the woods. She didn't stop until she reached Meadow Drive, where she paused by a lamppost to catch her breath.

Next time, she thought. Next time, I'll be ready.