

Did she detect something tangible now? A faint trace of perfume? Now I'm imagining things, she told herself sternly. She hoped the light hadn't given her away and she still had time to wait undiscovered for the trickster to appear.

She leaned back against the wall and waited. Nothing creaked or shifted or fluttered in the darkness. But for the knowledge that she didn't have long to wait, the silence would have gotten on her nerves. As it was, the hair on the back of her neck prickled. She shivered a little. Like most old houses, Stonebridge was drafty.

The silence was oppressive and in some way alive. An inexplicable chill ran down her spine. She saw nothing, heard nothing. She didn't even have a definite sense of someone else in the room. She was simply unnerved for no reason. For a few seconds more she stayed in the shadows of the music room and then, with an almost physical sensation, her composure shattered.

Rynna fled. She ran for the stairs and clambered up them, slipping and stumbling in the dark, half-choked by terror and gasping for breath. At the top of the stairs, she ran full tilt into someone hurrying down the hall, and before she had time to register who it was, she screamed.