

## Mr. Linden's Library

At the end of the cul-de-sac on Brighton Street, sat an enormous Victorian mansion. However this wasn't just any mansion; stories and myths have swirled around it for decades, and for god reason. The windows were always shut with thick, black curtains, draped over them. Dense, viridian vines climbed up the walls of the house. Cobwebs and spiders entangled themselves in the small dark corners of the window sill. The two large French doors never opened and no one ever came out of the house. In fact, the house had been still for nearly 40 years.

Rumor has it, a man named Porter Linden lived in that house. Supposedly he moved there after he returned from deployment during World War II. Suffering from a severe case of PTSD, Mr. Linden moved far away from his friends and family, entered the Victorian mansion, shut the curtains, and was never seen or heard from again.

Only one person remembered seeing Porter Linden move in that fateful day in November; Mr. Nigel Lawrence, and he had a reputation as a good man. The entire town looked up to him, however he always seemed as if he was hiding something. He would sit in his big plush chair resting by the fireplace mantel in his quaint little cottage. Three doors down from the Linden mansion, was the home of Lawrence's granddaughter. Rebel was her name, and she lived up to her reputation.

On November 13<sup>th</sup>, the anniversary of Mr. Linden's departure from the neighborhood 40 years prior, little Rebel Lawrence sat on her granddad's lap, and fantasized about the mysteries and wonder that awaited the person who dared enter the house. She had been warned never to go there, but one day curiosity got the best of her and she slipped out of house after her grandfather went to sleep, and was careful not to let the gate creek on the way out of the yard. She ran down the sidewalk, her blond ringlets bobbing up and down on her shoulders, and her stubby little legs making stride across the pavement. After passing endless houses for what seemed like the greater part of an hour, Rebel stood silent at the precipice of the mansion that had tempted her curiosity so many times before.

## Mr. Linden's Library

Silence engulfed her as she opened the front door. Sound itself seemed to drown out upon her entrance into the foyer, and it felt as if she wouldn't be able to breath. Panicking Rebel thought about running back out into the street, when suddenly a violin wafted through the silence, and Rebel had air in lungs again.

Now that her fears were at bay, Rebel continued to explore the Mansion. There was a room with a giant marble dome, the walls of which were littered with brightly colored paintings, seemingly from many different ages. Intrigued by the beauty, Rebel moved forward, and the sound of the violin started playing just as she was about to touch one of the paintings. Drawn to its eerie sound, Rebel continued to walk through the corridor leading away from the domed room, her ballet flats making a faint tapping sound on the mahogany floor. Turning down a new hallway, she looked into every room she passed, each becoming more magnificent. At the end of the hallway stood two sturdy doors. Upon opening the doors, Rebel found herself surrounded by books of every shape and size, coating every shelf, table and empty space in the room. Rebel had never seen so many books. Suddenly the violin stopped. Butterflies in Rebel's stomach seemed to have taken flight to the back of her throat, and she let out a small cough of exasperation. A shadow slowly crept towards her! It was a small man with a long white beard, and he identified himself as the caretaker of the Linden's Library. Everything about him appeared to be ancient except the young quality of his light blue eyes. . Rebel peered into them though she could find no deeper understanding. His eyes were like the ocean during a storm, their mysteries hidden beneath a stormy façade. The man didn't smile, his face remained solemn and still, but his eyes seemed to smile out at her.

After what seemed like an eternity, he questioned

“And who might you be?”

“My name is Rebel”... she replied

Mr. Linden's Library

When he did not offer any new information, Rebel continued by saying

"I live down the street. I'm sorry for..."

Her pleas were interrupted.

"What do you want miss?"

"I'm sorry sir, I just wanted to know the truth about this house"

"Young lady, there is a reason why I haven't left this house for over 40 years. My life is dangerous to anyone who knows its secrets."

The man shut his eyes briefly, and took a deep breath that sounded more like a sigh. Rebel broke the silence.

"Sir, I need to know".

"If you must know so badly then... here" the man replied with a smile.

He threw her a tiny red diary and it landed in front of her feet with a thud.

"I must warn you, if you read that diary, bad things will happen to you. Your life may be threatened, and might come to an end as you know it!"

This intrigued Rebel, though she showed no sign on her face of how badly she wanted to read the diary. When the old man turned and walked away, she slowly bent down and picked up the diary. He spoke again...

"Little girl, I must warn you once more that this curiosity will be the end of you. I do not wish to see you get hurt, but if you do not heed my warning, I fear I shall find you a very grave person on the morrow."

Mr. Linden's Library

Rebel pretended not to hear him as she ran out of the mansion with the book. The mansion was creepy, but how could anything hurt her if she was safe at her grandfather's cottage?

Rebel didn't speak to her grandfather when she arrived home, but ran straight up stairs to read the book in her room. She opened the cover of the book and inscribed in tiny calligraphy was the phrase "it's already too late."

She pretended not to be creped out, though she closed the book rapidly and decided she would revisit it later. Afraid to close her eyes, Rebel walked downstairs to the kitchen to make herself feel better with a midnight snack. She looked out the kitchen window and had the feeling that she was not alone. And right she was! Outside the window sat three men, all dressed in black, their faces covered. The only visible body parts were their young, blue eyes that gazed into the kitchen, watching rebel's every move.

Rebel's night eventually ended and the sun rose over the hill in the distance. The sense of daytime brought peace to rebel, and gave her the confidence to return to the house of Mr. Linden and ask him all of the questions she had been asking herself in the late hours of the night. However, when she got there, there was no violin playing. In fact there wasn't a sound at all. The house was as quiet as ever. Rebel walked up to the door and pushed, but the heavy, glass doors did not budge. Giving up on her inquiries, Rebel reversed to return to her house when she noticed three men walking toward her. Completely covered in black, they marched with military stature, completely uniform to each other. Rebel's heart began to beat rapidly in her chest, as the men seemed to lunge at her. One yanked her hands behind her back, and the other pulled a bag over her head while one tied her feet. After being forced into a box of some sort Rebel stopped fighting against them, and completely succumbed to their power, completely vulnerable and alone

She watched her capturers every move, as one of the men reached down into a tiny knapsack holding a small vile of liquid. The fluid inside the capsule was red like freshly drawn blood. The man

Mr. Linden's Library

pressed a needle into the capsule and knelt down my Rebel's head. As he punctured the needle into the side of her neck, he began to whisper. As he spoke, Rebel thought his voice was peculiarly familiar.

"You were warned, and you did not obey. Now your soul belongs to me. Life as you know it has changed forever"

As he spoke, the man squeezed the deep red liquid into her body. The other two men watched eagerly as blood began to seep down her neck and pool onto the sidewalk. Rebel's eyelids were all of a sudden heavy, as if cinderblocks had been placed on top of them, forcing them shut. The old man's peculiar voice sent chills through her body as he breathed a final statement.

"Good Bye Rebel"

As he spoke those words, Rebel's body had completely reacted to the drugs and she became nonresponsive and motionless, draped across the sidewalk on quiet Brighton Street.

Time ticked on and Rebel would never again be a part of the world she has been accustomed to. After she had dozed off, the men scooped her up and dragged her inside the infamous mansion. The drugs eventually wore off and Rebel awoke, once again lying on the chilling marble floor of Mr. Linden's library. However, the library was not the same as she had once left it. Instead of millions of books surrounding her, rebel was being watched by millions of pairs of young, blue eyes staring at her from the shelves.

The sound of the eerie violin hummed in the background as the library doors were suddenly whisked open and the three masked men marched toward her. The third man turned and was immediately absorbed by the book shelves and became another pair of eyes staring at her. The other two men continued to walk towards her until they came to an abrupt halt inches from where her body laid. One man began to speak.

Mr. Linden's Library

"You are no longer apart of the real world. This is the price you pay for disobedience."

Rebel immediately recognized the voice as Mr. Linden's.

"Every book in this library was once blank. Today, every last one is inscribed with a story, each ending the same way. Your little red diary was the last empty book."

With that, Mr. Linden turned and walked away. The red diary sat in her lap and invited Rebel to read its contents. The sole remaining man stood before her, silently watching as she picked up the book and started to read. Page after page, rebel read the story of her life inscribed onto the pages. A rush of memories flooded her mind and she had become a giant mess of emotions by the time she reached the last page. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she read,

"Rebel opened the book and saw the words 'it is already too late' "

This time, it really was too late. Following the last phrase were the words,

"THE END"

A sudden realization overcame Rebel as she recognized that his life ended the second she opened that book. She shuts the book and looks up at the lone man watching her. Her eyes begged him for some sort of reconciliation, but there would be none. The man looked down at Rebel and spoke with such an evil tone that her blood curled.

"Silly, naïve, little girl. You were just like your mother. You succumbed to my power. You sat on my knee and let me fill your head with fascinating stories about a haunted mansion. You fell right into my trap. Now I hold your soul forever, trapped inside this house, engraved onto the pages of that book."

With a chuckle, the man removed his mask. Nigel Lawrence stood before his granddaughter and delighted in her shock and disappointment. He chuckle grew into a cackle as he pivoted on his heels and

## Mr. Linden's Library

pranced out the door. Rebel's body started to vanish as she was absorbed by the library. Forever, Rebel would rest there, on the marble floor, where she had first found that little diary. Forever, Rebel would lie in Mr. Linden's library, trapped in the mansion that sits at the end of Brighton Street.