

## THE PORTRAIT'S EYES

The moment Elena steadily stepped through the towering, old, heavy oak door, she felt a shiver run down her spine from the creaking floors and the cold chill in the house when she entered. The place had high ceilings, with peeling rose-patterned wallpaper. The staircase curved up like a spine. Creaking softly, the stairs were made of a wood that was dark in colour and peeling from the sides.

Everywhere, the air carried that faint and familiar smell of rosy perfume, of an older resident that once must have lived here. That was when she saw it...

The more she looked at it, the more its gaze sharpened at her. The more she resisted, the more the eyes seemed to shift. She remembered a young woman she once saw. Now she was here, framed in an oil painting, her eyes locking onto Elena's.

As she was exploring the rooms, she found traces of her deceased aunt everywhere: her silk, fitted ballgown wedding dress that she gave to Elena's mother before she passed away, her makeup vanity and stool in the corner of the master bedroom, covered with cobwebs but with slight outlines of fingerprints, as though someone had touched just before her.

When she returned to the living room where the painting still hung, her body froze on the spot.

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The lady in the portrait had seemed to have turned the other way, and now she had a purse in her hand. Elena thought to herself, had the painting moved?

**Harleen Kaur (13)**

Ormiston SWB Academy, Bilston

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