



*Sixmuth  
Manor*

# ~ Sixmuth Manor ~

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## ~Bio's~

### Marty Parsons Bio

Writer Name: Dan

Char. Name: Marty Parsons

Species: Mundane Human

Gender: Male

Race: White

Age: 23

Height: 5'8"

Weight: 140

Eye color: Grey

Hair stats: Dirty blond, unkept

Sexuality: Hetero

Relatives: An uncle and aunt, two cousins. An estranged mother and stepfather.

#### BRIEF PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Marty is a nice guy, good with his hands but not too well educated. Some women consider him attractive, but things usually don't 'click' for him. He's usually found in jeans and a tee shirt, with work boots. He speaks with a soft drawl, and somewhat slowly.

#### PERSONALITY:

Marty is a simple soul. He is a hard, conscientious worker. He's quick to laugh, even if he doesn't get the joke, and generous to a fault. In spite of this he doesn't have many friends. He also can't seem to hold down a job, and so he relies on his uncle Jim and aunt Annabel a lot. He tends to be shy until he gets to know somebody.

#### BRIEF HISTORY:

Marty is a high school dropout, occasional handyman, and construction worker. His father is deceased and his mother has remarried and moved away. His stepfather doesn't like him at all and it's mutual, and one of the reasons he never finished school. His father's brother took him in and is trying to 'get him straight', but Marty just can't seem to cope with life in general.

Marty's uncle Jim is a lawyer in Charleston, at the law firm of Ramsey, Parsons, and Carver, and is handling a rather large estate at the moment, the 'Sixmuth Estate'. Crazy old Beauregard Sixmuth was found floating in the Stono River, and his property was now in probate. In order to get Marty some

income, his uncle has hired him to 'fix the estate up' in the hope that if an heir is not found they can liquidate it quickly.

**STRENGTHS, POWERS, ABILITIES:**

Marty is strong for his size, being a laborer. He is also a competent handyman. He has never had a drug or alcohol problem.

**WEAKNESSES, PHOBIAS, FEARS:**

Marty is not very bright. He actually could be, but has never really needed to be, nor was it expected of him. To quote his uncle, "boy's about as sharp as a box of hammers." He's not afraid of much, other than being seen as stupid, so he's a bit shy around strangers until he gets to know them.

**OTHER:**

Nothing at the moment, but I'm sure some quirks will pop up as his tale is told.

## Bertram Aidensen's Bio

Writer Name: Dan  
Char. Name: Bertram Aidensen  
Species: Ghost  
Gender: Male  
Race: White  
Age: 37 at the time of death  
Height: 6'  
Weight: 180  
Eye color: Blue  
Hair stats: Reddish Brown  
Sexuality: Hetero  
Relatives: None

### BRIEF PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Bertram was a captain during the civil war, for the confederacy. He was quite handsome and dashing. His spirit, when it manifests, is dressed in the uniform he died in. There is a flounce of lace at his cuffs and collar, and he wears his cavalier hat at a rakish angle. There is a gaping hole in his chest. When fully manifested he reeks of the grave.

### PERSONALITY:

In life Bertram was a snob. He was egotistical, vain, and self centered, a typical entitled man who had everything handed to him and wanted for nothing. As a spirit he is consumed with the loss of his wife, Miranda (a woman who, if truth be known, was happy that he hadn't returned).

### BRIEF HISTORY:

Bertram was born on the Dragonwood plantation, his ancestral home, and inherited it shortly before the civil war broke out. Using his connections he landed a captain's commission in the confederacy and a cushy job away from real fighting. That is, until the tide turned and he was sent northward. He took a bullet to the chest at Antietam.

Returning to his estate, and a bit confused as to how exactly, he began looking for his wife Miranda. She, however, had moved into Charleston with her aunt for safety. Upon learning of his death she remarried and moved on. His plantation was sold at auction to a carpetbagger and renamed Sixmuth Manor.

### STRENGTHS, POWERS, ABILITIES:

Those of your average haunting ghost. The ability to materialize at will, and being non-corporeal at other times. He is aware that someone else is living in his home, and that they have 'threshold rights' and he no longer does.

**WEAKNESSES, PHOBIAS, FEARS:**

Bertram is very unaware of reality, and is still living in the time of his death. Modern situations confuse him, as does the passage of time. He believes the manor to be his and has been somehow usurped.

**OTHER:**

Nothing at the moment, but I'm sure some quirks will pop up as his tale is told.

## Jules Sixmuth's Bio

Writer Name: Kitara Parsons

Char. Name: Julie,( Jules) Sixmuth

Species: Human

Gender: Female

Race: Caucasian

Age: 24

Height: 5'4"

Weight: 110 lbs.

Eye color: Blue

Hair stats: Ash Blond

Sexuality: Hetero

Relatives: Father: Gerald Sixmuth, Businessman in Florida=recently deceased

Mother: Mary Theresa, Socialite and Homemaker=recently deceased

**BRIEF PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** At 5'4" Jules would never be considered tall. She has shoulder length wavy ash blond hair, and dark blue eyes. Her complexion is clear, with what could be called a "cupid's bow" mouth. Slender but having all of the curves a woman should have. She is well read, soft and well spoken, and can be very businesslike. Graduated College with an MBA in business.

**PERSONALITY:** Polite, honest and warm. Down to Earth and cannot stand the phony, jet set, country club, self important, types she grew up around. Does not judge people by their looks or education.

**BRIEF HISTORY:** Julie, aka Jules, Sixmuth was born and raised in Palm Beach Florida. Her father was a wealthy and successful businessman, the CEO of "Sixes" a parent corporation that owned and operated several smaller corporations within it. Her mother Mary was a socialite, if her mother had a job it would have been as a party planner for the various charities that she supported. Both had been recently killed in an automobile accident, leaving the business to Julie.

Unbeknownst to her, her Grandfather Beau Sixmuth was a wealthy, but slightly crazy old man. Her Father and he had been estranged for years. Julie was the old man's only living relative, and had never met her grandfather.

**STRENGTHS, POWERS, ABILITIES:** Intelligent. Focused. Not afraid of a challenge.

**WEAKNESSES, PHOBIAS, FEARS:**

- Arachnophobia.

Slight fear of the dark

Fear of heights

OTHER: Can't think of anything, but something may pop up.

## ~Prologue~

The sun was setting. Beauregard Sixmuth fumbled with the engine of his aging Bentley. The old girl had been finicky the entire trip from town, but now at the least convenient time she had died. Bullfrogs along the river began to sing the sun to sleep as it slipped behind the Spanish moss covered trees. Insects began to twitter and chirp, and somewhere a whippoorwill called. A cool breeze came up off the sun warmed, stagnant water, ruffling leaves and moss and bringing with it the scent of mud and rotting plants, and perhaps something else. Beau had lived along this river for all of his eight plus decades, and he knew it's sounds and smells very well.

The old man began to panic, he was a dead man if 'HE' found him out here, away from the mansion, his home, and his protection spells. He cursed the Bentley again, trying in vain to get the engine started. There was enough gas, the starter was cranking the old engine just fine, but somewhere deep in the contraptions mysterious working something was awry. He had already been on the cell phone to triple A, and a tow truck should be on it's way soon. Still, Beau opened the hood again and peered at the engine as if to start it by sheer willpower. He had just closed the hood for the third time when he heard the deep, low growl and the soft squishing of riverbank muck. A scent of putrefaction assaulted his nostrils.

He didn't even have time to scream, not that it would have done him any good. When the tow truck finally arrived hours later the driver found the abandoned Bentley just where it should be. Unable to locate the owner, who also wasn't answering his cell phone, he dutifully towed it back to his garage in Charleston.

## ~Arrivals~

Marty Parsons jiggled the old skeleton key in the ancient lock, finally getting a satisfying click out of it. He'd read up on this place when his uncle had given him this contracting job and the instructions, fix it up for the new heir.

The Sixmuth mansion was a classic antebellum manor, complete with all the trimmings. It was built in the early nineteenth century, placed on a knoll overlooking the Stono River when slaves still worked the cotton fields of Dragonwood, the Aidensen's plantation. When Captain Aidensen didn't return from the civil war his wife moved to Charleston and the plantation fell into disrepair. It didn't suffer long though, because George Sixmuth (a carpetbagger) came down from Boston and bought it for a song during the restoration. He turned it into a sharecropper farm, moved into the manor house, and worked the plantation's former slaves just as hard as before, but with less physical abuse.

Now, of course, time had finally taken its toll. The once grand drive was overgrown and nearly impassable. Not that it was used, old Beau came in and out the back entrance that ran down to the river road. That was the way Marty had driven in as well. The mansion's paint was peeling, her roof leaked, and in the months between old Beau Sixmuth's disappearance and the discovery of his remains she had been locked up tight. Marty pushed the door open and the scent of stale cigar smoke, mildew, bourbon and general funk assaulted his nose. "Smells like an old man," he mumbled.

A grand stair wound around the left wall of the open entry hall. It ended at a mezzanine opposite the door, and split into two smaller stairways that went left and right into the second floors of the east and west wings of the manor. A large, dusty chandelier hung in the center of the room. Marty was looking up in awe at it when he tripped, falling hard onto the hardwood floor.

Looking down he saw that someone, probably crazy old Beau himself, had driven five nails into the wooden floor and strung wire between them forming a five pointed star in a pentagon. Seeing it as the dangerous hazard it was, he tried to pull one of the nails out with his hammer. The nail, of course, refused.

Hurrying back to his truck Marty returned with a crowbar and heavy bolt cutters. Placing the wire in the cutters he easily snapped the taut wire and was thrown backwards out the door by a massive shock. A loud whoosh burst forth, and the debris on the porch was blown onto the driveway. Marty stood up, slightly dazed, and brushed himself off. Assuming that old Beau had electrified his contraption Marty went back to his truck and returned with a meter.

He was confused when he couldn't locate the source of the discharge. Of course, once he was sure it was now safe he continued on and pulled the five nails from the floor, scrapping the entire mess. That much copper would bring a good price at the scrap yard.

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Jules sat at her table rereading the letter from the Law Firm of: Ramsey, Parsons, and Carver. It seemed as if she was the sole heir to her Uncles estate. It was a sizable parcel of land that contained a Manor house, Carriage house, and had once been a Plantation, and later on a Farm.

There was already a caretaker for the place, but she needed to come to Charleston, to hear the Will and decide what to do with the property. The phone number on the letter head was indeed in Charleston, picking up the phone she called her own Lawyer Josh Hewitt, to discuss it with him, he was an old family friend and the business attorney as well as the family's.

"I think you should go out Jules," Josh had said, "You have nothing to lose. Old Beau was a crazy old coot, from what little your Father said about him, he never talked about his brother too much. Look you've been thinking of scouting around for a new location for the corporate offices, Charleston is a thriving city, and growing. Businesses do very well there, even though Sixes is successful, real estate and taxes are reasonable. Go take a look see, if you don't want it, you can sell it." Her attorney always gave good advice and Jules had known him all of her life.

Jules emailed the law firm and also followed up with several phone calls to set things up. She was coming to Charleston for the reading of the Will, then would look at the property and decide if she wanted to move her company's headquarters from Florida to South Carolina.

She made hotel reservations, not knowing if the house was livable or not, and she was taking the company jet so flying in was not a problem.

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It was about a week since Marty had first come out to Sixmuth Manor. He had finally surveyed the work to be done, and scheduled roofers and painters to bring the exterior up to par. The landscapers had pretty much finished their work. The main drive in was now passable, the expansive lawn was mowed, and the shrubbery was less overgrown. He had gotten a call that morning from Uncle Jim saying that an heir was in town, the only surviving member of old Beau's family. Uncle had stated that she was eager to see the place, and would probably stop by after the will was read.

Marty had been staying in the carriage house, apparently old Beau took better care of his car's home than his own. The roof was sound, there was a small loft that was quite cozy, and the old Bentley didn't seem to mind the company one bit. He had been hoping that the county historical society would buy the manor and he could stay on as a caretaker. Marty didn't relish showing some aging Yankee around and then being thrown out on his ear when she didn't need him around after the work was done.

Old Beau, Marty noted, had only lived in the lower east wing. That's where kitchen was, and his bedroom and study. The second floor was mostly closed off, same with the third and the entire west wing. He hadn't had much cause to go into the cellar except to check the foundation. There was a century or more of junk down there that he didn't relish having to inventory for the estate.

A cold chill ran up the contractor's spine as he remembered his first visit. He still bore the bruises and scratches from his jolt, and had been avoiding the main hall ever since. As a matter of fact, when he did need to be in here he kept his head down and passed through quickly. Old Beau had burned a lot of candles, and Marty figured he had some trouble with the electricity which might explain the nasty jolt he had gotten on his first visit. Still, it figured that the room which bothered him the most would be the one he needed to pass through constantly. Even some of the ones on the second floor of the west wing, with their furniture covered in dusty white sheets, weren't too bad.

"Well," he drawled to himself, "'cept maybe for the one bedroom with 'Miranda' scrawled on the wall in blood. That's real creepy."

The sun was setting. Somewhere down by the river a whippoorwill called and a cold chill ran through him. Marty hurried back to where he was staying in the carriage house, and his evening meal of spaghetti-o's.

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The spirit of Captain Bertram Aidensen moved through the shadows, more of a shadow himself than the gathering gloom beneath the junipers and magnolia. He still wore the confederate captain's uniform that he had died in, his cavalier hat at a rakish angle on his head. There was a flash on laced flounce at his neck and cuff, his boots were spit polished. As a mortal, women had found him quite dashing, but he only had eyes for one, his Miranda. The only things amiss were the gaping, bloody hole in his chest left by a union miniball and the rot and muck of the grave that clung to him like an overcoat and dripped onto the soft loam under the trees. The house was up above, on the knoll, but now the ward was down. The usurper was no more, and the enchanted pentagram that had held him at bay was gone. He was finally free to return home.

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The plane landed smoothly and taxied to a halt on the tarmac, Julie put her papers back into her briefcase and waited until the plane stopped before getting off. A rental SUV was waiting for her, and

once her luggage was placed in the back, she climbed behind the wheel and entered the address into the GPS.

The weather was its usual thick humidity, but Jules was used to it having been born and raised in Florida. The AC in the SUV worked perfectly, keeping her cool and comfortable as she drove to the Attorney's office for the reading of the will. The Law offices of, Ramsey, Parsons, and Carver, were in a lovely older building in the heart of Charleston. There was parking in the rear of the building and Jules pulled the rental in the shade of a stately Oak tree.

Briefcase in hand Jules walked in and gave her name to the receptionist, "I'm here to see Mr. Parson's, I have an appointment. It concerns Beauregard Sixmuth's estate," she explained calmly.

The receptionist, who was not much older than Jules herself, asked her to have a seat as she called Mr. Parson's secretary.

Another woman, dark skinned, professionally attractive, and slightly older than the receptionist, entered the lobby and looked around. She then looked to the receptionist, who nodded in Jules direction. She walked over and, with a questioning, almost confused, look said, "Miss Sixmuth?" Offering her hand she added, "I'm Mr. Parson's secretary, Macy. If you'll follow me?"

After standing and shaking her hand with a nice to meet you, she followed Macy down the hall. This firm apparently did well, because the inside was comfortable, state of the art and very well appointed.

"I'm sorry," Macy said as they walked down the short hallway, "we were expecting someone older. We were told you were Beau's niece. He was eighty four, so naturally we assumed, well, we were expecting someone in her fifties at least." After an awkward pause she added, "anyway, we're in here." Indicating the open door she said, "we'll be using the small conference room, I trust you've gone over the papers with your attorney?"

As Jules sat down a middle aged man in a light tan suit entered. Offering his hand he drawled, "I'm Jim Parsons, Miss Sixmuth. Pleasure to meet you, do you mind if Macy stays? She's studying to be one of our paralegals."

Julie shook Jim Parson's hand, "Nice to meet you Mr. Parsons. I have no objection to Macy remaining," she said giving the woman a warm smile.

Retaking her seat at the conference table, and taking out her papers, where she'd made notes in the margins, she sat and smiled. "Before we begin, Macy mentioned that you were expecting someone a bit older. I think that I can explain that, my father was much younger than his brother. Apparently my grandparents had thought that they were only blessed with one child, then when they were near middle age, they were surprised with another one. There's a good twenty five to thirty years between them, and they had a falling out many years ago, or so I've been told. I doubt old Beau even knew about me," she explained.

"Oh," Mr. Parsons said, "he very much did." He donned a pair of wire rimmed reading glasses and opened the will. "Beauregard specified that his estate was to pass over his brother and go directly to his niece. That stipulation predates your father's passing, Beauregard hasn't changed the will in many years. I'm not sure what passed between them, but it must have been bad."

Handling the will Jim said, "Anyway, since you're the only heir I don't see much reason for a formal reading, suffice to say you get everything. The land consists of about forty acres, mostly mud flats, between Highway Seventeen and the Stono River. It used to be much more, but Mr. Sixmuth sold off a big stretch on the other side of seventeen to developers about fifteen years ago. What's left is the main parcel, twelve acres including the grounds and structures, and another parcel of bottom land along the river unsuitable for development. In the will Mr. Sixmuth specified that this should be set aside as a bird sanctuary, if an heir wasn't found."

Parsons looked up from the papers over his glasses. "I've got to tell you, Miss Sixmuth, the place is in disrepair. I've got a contractor out there now assessing the work to be done, and I've already had an offer from the local West Ashley Historical Society." He smiled, "but you really should at least see it before you sell it. Even in its current state it is truly beautiful. Besides, there's a lot of family possessions contained in the estate, not the least of which was Beau's Bentley. He really loved that car, perhaps more than the plantation."

He folded the will and passed the papers to Jules. "Anyway, Miss Sixmuth," he said, "this is your copy. I'll retain a copy, and of course there's one registered with the county." He smiled. "Your uncle was an odd old bird, but harmless. It's a shame you never got to meet him, and a damn shame he went the way he did. Do you have any questions?"

Julie had been reading the will as she'd listened to the basics that Mr. Parsons had given her. He was right, everything was left to her, the entire kit and caboodle.

Lifting her head and giving the attorney's a smile, "I'm not selling. As you may know I run my family's business, Sixes is a major corporation that owns several companies. I've been looking to expand, and maybe even relocating the main office Charleston seems like a good spot. You have ports, rail-lines, major highways and plenty of land. My offices would be in town, but I see no reason to not live at the Manor, once it is livable," she explained.

"You are right though, the mud flats and bottom land is not fit for developing, so I will take a look at that and then simply leave it as a bird and wildlife sanctuary. I will have it as a private entity though, since I really don't trust the government to leave it alone. As for the main home, I'll be having it restored, and I'll talk with contractor, so long as he is knowledgeable and fair in his pricing and assessment I'll most likely hire him on. Please reach out to the West Ashley Historical Society for me and explain that while I don't intend to sell, I will possibly be calling on them for advice on antiques and period pieces. I'd like to restore her as authentically as possible, along with all of the most up to date codes of course."

If she lived to be a hundred Jules would never forget the looks on their faces as she explained her plans. Placing her copy of the will, in her briefcase she began to sign all of the necessary papers to take ownership of Sixmuth Plantation and all it entailed.

Once finished she thanked them all, shook hands and took up the keys to her inheritance.

Once back in her rental SUV, she reset the GPS to get her to the Plantation.

Pulling into the long drive, the house looked imposing from the distance, sitting on high ground, surrounded by trees and shrubs. It looked as if some headway had been made in clearing the area

around the home, and as she pulled closer she saw a pickup truck, parked near what looked to be an old carriage house.

Glad that she had worn boots, jeans and a tee shirt, Jules got out. Not seeing anyone around she leaned in and honked the horn a few times. As she waited she looked around, sunlight poured down onto the house, but the thick foliage of the surrounding forests cast deep shadows and gave off an eerie vibe that caused a chill down her back.

"Come on Jules, it's just an old house with thick dense, overgrown woods around it." She muttered to herself.

Bertram stared out of his bedroom window on the second floor of the west wing, his and Miranda's room. A cloud of dust came up off of the grand drive, out by the Savanna Highway. "Looks like I've got company," he thought, peering into the distance, "I should wonder who it would be, for it is not the young caretaker who bustles about, nor any of his hired hands." The dust cloud parted to show a fancy red carriage approaching too fast, bouncing along the dirt and gravel lane between the young, stately oak trees.

The carriage deposited the oddly dressed young woman on his doorstep. At first he thought her a boy because of her attire, until he saw her face. It was his Miranda returned to him, and the soldier's heart soared. Then she reached into the carriage and made an ungodly great racket!

At the sound of the horn Marty stepped out of the oppressive heat of the entry hall into the oppressive humidity of the Carolina summer day. For a moment, in the haze of the day, he couldn't see highway seventeen in the distance, nor the buildings and houses along it. The constant drone of traffic was gone, in its place the calls of birds and buzzing of insects could be heard. The air was scented with magnolia blossoms, horses, and warm damp loam. Black men, dressed in worn clothing, worked in the sweltering afternoon where the landscapers had finished up that morning. Somewhere a cicada chirped loudly. His pickup was missing, and he envisioned a plow horse and wagon sitting parked along the tree lined grand drive.

Then the moment was gone and Marty shook his head violently to clear it. There was a shiny red SUV parked in front of the house and a young woman was standing beside it. The ancient oak trees marched off behind her like twin rows of newly groomed sentinels. The dust of her passage was drifting off across the recently mowed lawn. Just what he needed, another trespasser. "Can I help you, ma'am?" Marty asked, "this is private property."

Jules took the man in from head to toe, tall, broad shouldered, very handsome and maybe a year or two older than she was. Walking to the porch and climbing the few steps she stopped in front of him and looked up.

"Yes I know, I'm the new owner," she said and extended her hand, "Julie Sixmuth, but please call me Jules. And you must be the handyman that Mr. Parson's mentioned. I'm sorry but he didn't give me your name,..." she left the statement open.

It was warmer and more humid than she'd expected, and yet there was a small chill, as if from out of nowhere, snaking its way down her back.

Marty looked at his feet. "Sorry, ma'am, I've had to chase off a few scavengers," he offered, "and people just wantin' to look around." Looking back up he held out his hand, "I'm Marty, ma'am, Marty Parsons." He smiled, showing even white teeth, "not a coincidence, Jim's my uncle. Pleasure to meet you."

Jules' hand was cool and dry in his warm sweaty one, and she had the most incredible blue eyes. Marty held both a bit too long. Finally he said, "oh, I guess you'll want to look around." He looked up at the mansion behind him. "They don't make 'em like this anymore." Chuckling he added, "they didn't make 'em with air conditioning either."

Jules gave a soft laugh, "Yeah well that will be one of the few things we'll need to put in," She walked by when he stepped aside for her to proceed him. "I love these old houses, you're right they don't make them like this anymore. The older ones have withstood hurricanes and tropical storms, while newer structures collapse like a house of cards."

Walking into the foyer she got that eerie chill again, but it was just her imagination playing with her, in spite of it being daytime, there were shadows everywhere. "I want to restore this as authentically as possible, with a few upgrades of course," she gave him a smile, "like air conditioning. The trick is to have things brought up to code and yet look older. Antiques will help. I asked your Uncle to reach out to the Historical Society on my behalf. Please don't go chasing them off if they show up?" She liked Marty, he seemed like a nice guy.

"Of course it's going to cost, but once it's done it'll be gorgeous. In addition to what Uncle Beau left behind, I also run my family's business, maybe you've heard of it, 'The Sixes Corporation', a play on the Sixmuth name I suppose. Anyway I've been looking to expand, and I figured that this is the perfect chance. The Corporate headquarters will be in town, and this will make a lovely home, and be perfect for entertaining when I need to," she explained.

Linking her arm through his she said, "Now since I'm new and you've probably been all over this place, how about you showing me around?"

## ~Sum of a Life~

When Jules linked her arm in his a big grin crossed Marty's face. "Why ma'am, I mean Jules," he replied, "it would be my pleasure."

"This here is the main entry hall," he explained. That stairway, to your left, is called a grand stair. The mezzanine right ahead of us branches off to the east and west wings, mostly bedrooms, sitting rooms, and such." He pointed up. "That chandelier is originally gas, but it's been half electrified. They did that a lot when electricity was new and usually intermittent, 'specially out here in the stix." Leading her across the hall he said, "those doors to the right go to the library and smoking parlor, your great great grandpappy's man cave, among other places. To the left," he continued, "past the stairs is the area that ol' Beau lived in. The bathroom is under the stairway and the kitchen and dining room are both over there too. Your uncle's bedroom used to be lady of the house's sewing parlor. He didn't use the rest of the place as far as I can tell."

He opened the doors under the mezzanine with a flourish. "This is my favorite room, the main dining hall." The room was huge and empty save the dust, but even in it's state of disrepair it was impressive. Aged hardwood floors stretched between yellowed walls with peeling wallpaper. Hand carved cove molding framed the water stained ceiling, a good eleven feet over their heads. The opposite wall was lined with carved panels and French doors that overlooked a balustraded porch and the expansive backyard that rolled down to the Stono River.

"I think it's the view that gets me," he offered quietly as Jules took it all in.

Jules nodded, "I can see why, it's amazing!"

Turning to him she smiled, "As I said, I intend to keep this place a restore it. Of course I'll need the place completely wired and rewired for electricity, including ductwork for air conditioning. The plumbing will need checking and maybe some work, and I'll need you or someone check for leaks, those water stains on the ceiling concern me, might need a new roof altogether. But as long as the foundation is sound, and the floors seem to be in decent shape, so that's a start." She said making a mental checklist.

"I'd like you to stay on and oversee the project, and afterwards stay on as a handyman and caretaker," she told him. "Oh and just to prove that I'm not some spoiled little princess, I'll help as much as my schedule allows, I'm not too good to get my hands dirty and put in some sweat equity, and elbow grease."

There it was that odd little chill again, like a goose walking over her grave. If she thought she saw something out of the corner of her eyes, well it was probably just a shadow.

Bertram Aidensen walked around the young woman as she spoke, but totally ignored the caretaker beside her. "Miranda," he said softly, "it is you. After all of these years I've returned from the war to you, my wife, and yet you do not see me." His hand reached out and caressed her cheek lightly without feeling it, "I can not feel you, nor you me." He wailed her name again, softly and in anguish, as his being disincorporated and drifted upwards. He rematerialized back in the bedchamber that he and Miranda had shared, and began pacing.

"Old houses make weird noises like that," Marty said as the building groaned, "the woodwork heats and cools unevenly." He smiled uneasily, "anyway, the roof does need replaced, but the foundation is sound. The electric and plumbing were both done almost a hundred years ago, so they'll both need to be reworked." He grimaced, remembering his first visit. "Took a nasty jolt the first time I stepped inside myself."

"I'll line up some contractors, people I know and trust to do the job right. Already had some landscapers working," he chuckled, "had to so I could walk around the place. It was really overgrown."

"Oh," he added, "I wouldn't go buying a lot of antiques until you've inventoried the basement. I don't think your family has thrown anything out for generations so you're gonna have your hands full." Turning back to the entry hall said, "c'mon, I'll show you upstairs and then we'll take a look in the basement."

Jules nodded and followed him up the grand staircase, "Even under the grime I can see that this banister was beautiful, we'll have to bring it back," she said looking around. "You're right though, they just don't build them like this anymore. Too many have been torn down, and destroyed, new owners not realizing what gems they actually had."

Of course too, many new owners didn't have the funds for restoration that she had at her disposal.

On the second floor the hardwood floors were sturdy, surprisingly there were no soft spots to worry about. Of course water stains on the ceilings told of the sorry state of the roof. "Marty do me a favor? When the workmen begin up here, try to have them keep as much of the old details as they can. I mean I know they have a job to do, and their first priority is to make everything right and safe, and it should be; I'd just hate to lose the wainscoting and the plaster medallions. That type of workmanship has become a lost art, and if I lose it we can't replace it," she said as they walked down the halls and began to look into the many rooms.

"We can't replace it, but I know a shop with a sweet three-dee setup. They can scan in an undamaged section and either print a plastic copy or carve one out of almost anything, including plaster." He pointed into the cove molding. "Now replacing the paperwork inside of the cove will be tricky, especially since we can't get the paper."

They came to a door near the end of the hall. "I think these used to be the master bed chambers," he said. "I don't like going in there, it kinda feels like I'm interrupting, you know?" He gave a little smile, "crazy, right? There hasn't been anyone living in this part of the house for almost half a century." He opened the door and stepped inside.

The room was unusually cool, considering the temperature in the rest of the building. The furniture, like the other rooms, was all covered in sheets of dirty white cotton. The walls were the same dingy yellow as the other rooms and hallways. A thick coating of dust covered the hardwood floor.

Across the near wall, opposite from the filthy windows, the name 'Miranda' was scrawled in what appeared to be brown paint, or perhaps stained with mud. There were two rooms off of the main one, and a small door in one corner. Marty pointed to it, "servant's door. It leads upstairs to the third floor, where the house slaves were kept before the civil war. That's why I pretty sure this was the master bedrooms." He shrugged. "Now there's just a dusty old attic up there. There's another way up to the attic from the kitchen."

Bertram turned when the couple entered the sitting room. He remained pinned to his spot near the bedroom window, staring through the doorway at them, at her. He watched Miranda's every move, every nuance. Her voice danced in his mind. Finally, unable to contain his elation, his ability to manifest failed and his form faded leaving only the scent of the grave behind.

Jules grimaced a bit at the sudden smell of rot and mildew that assaulted her nose, it was a damp, dank smell. "Oh God what is that odor?" she asked, waving a hand on front of her face. "I guess I'll have to burn some candles, or sage, or incense or something, and maybe once the roof and the leaks are all repaired it'll disappear," she said hoping that it was true.

The chill in the room had disappeared as well, and the sweltering humidity began to swell up, making the room sticky and uncomfortable.

"Let's go check the basement, it might be cooler, and I can get an idea of what might be down there," she suggested. "Lead on, please," she told Marty.

"Yup. Like most old buildings the cellar door is outside, it's one of the reasons I had the landscapers working already." Marty led Jules back down the grand staircase and out through the French doors in the main dining hall, the 'ballroom'. Turning right he led her along the promenade to several steps leading down to the lawn. About halfway along the building was a set of double cellar doors at an angle to the manor.

As Marty opened the doors a century of cool, dank, musty air assaulted their noses. "It's cooler down there, but it sure don't smell better," he said as he flipped on a round switch that hailed from the twenties. Wan light flickered to life below them. "Watch out for spiders," he advised as he began his descent, "they're harmless, but they give me the creeps."

Jules nodded, "Yeah I'm not fond of them either, even though they are necessary," she said with a shudder. The lights in the basement were adequate though and Jules could see what Marty had meant.

"Wow this place is a treasure trove. We'll need to get everything out, cleaned up and appraised. Even if I don't use all of it, I'll want it cataloged and insured," she said as she looked at one lovely old piece after another. "I might even have to put in a dehumidifier afterwards just to protect everything."

Of course she may end up using everything, the house was huge, and all but empty right now.

"I have some boxes with me, I'll need to go through Beau's personal belongings, and clothes and what not, I'll donate any usable clothing, and decide what to use of the furnishings and household items once I clean everything out. I've got the feeling that 1-800 Got Junk is gonna love me before this is over." The sheer volume had surprised her, but as they left the basement, Jules found herself glad that she had so much, it would save her from running after antiques.

"The Historical Society may have some photos of how it looked, I'll have to ask when I talk to them. But for now I guess we're done looking around." The place wasn't truly habitable the way it was, so Jules would continue staying in town. Once she got an idea of how long things would take, then she could play it by ear as to when it would be wise to move in.

"There is still some daylight left. Like I said I have some boxes in the car, and some packing tape and markers, "I'd like to start going through my Uncle's things. The sooner I can get his stuff packed up, the sooner the renovation and repair crews can get started." She said.

"Easier if we just go in through the kitchen," Marty commented, "that's the section of the house ol' Beau actually lived in." He led Jules further along the manor to a small door on the end. This section was better cared for, with a small vegetable garden just outside of the doorway. It was overgrown, but not years worth like the rest of the property. This little garden had only been left for a few months, and there were tomatoes and squash now ripening on the plants.

The side door opened onto a large kitchen with a small round table in the corner next to a window. Two chairs were there, but only one was ever used much. The room was brightly lit from the windows and relatively clean although it smelled of bourbon and stale cigars. It was relatively cool, having both shade and good cross ventilation. The appliances hailed from a previous era. The stove was a massive, six burner gas affair in front of a bricked over hearth, the refrigerator was small, loaf shaped, and had the compressor sitting on top like a hat. Sitting on the stove was an electric toaster oven that probably got a lot more use. A rack of washed and now dusty dishes sat next to the double sink, as if still awaiting someone to put them away.

Two doors led into the house. One wide archway lead into what had probably, originally, been a dining room. The other was small and in the corner of the room. Pointing into the wide archway Marty said, "Your uncle used that as a living room, further on is his bedroom, a small office, and his bathroom. The closed door at the end of that hall leads into the library. Through the library is the entry hall where we came in." He pointed at the small door. "That goes straight to the third floor, the attic. That's how the house slaves entered the kitchen back in the day."

Marty looked around the room. "The sum of a life," he said with a soft sigh. "It's almost like this room is holding it's breath, expecting your uncle to come walking back in at any moment. I haven't touched much, 'cept to throw out the moldy bread and clean out the 'fridge. I keep some water 'an sweet tea in there, along with ice, if you want to pour a glass while you work." He smiled. "It get's hot around here and the kitchen is usually closer that the carriage house where I'm staying," he explained.

"Well, if you don't need me I'll leave you to your work," Marty said, thinking, perhaps, that Jules would like a little time alone to get to know her uncle better. "If you unlock your car I'll go fetch those boxes in."