

The walk from the station to the address on the letter is silent. There isn't a sidewalk, just a worn line of dead grass. The sounds of cars, music, and people are all absent. The gas street lights flicker silently, casting weak orange light. Not even footsteps seem to make much noise here. No lights on in any house. Nobody is awake.

The house is balanced precariously between "shithole" and "abandoned lot". The porch is sagging, the planks rotten and the nails pitted with rust. One of the windows is boarded shut and the other is too cloudy to be of any use. The foundation is unfinished cement, and the walls of the house don't consistently reach its edges, like the structure on top was an afterthought. Moldy, bowed steps lead up to the porch. A weather-stripped wooden chair faces away from the door. *Like it's pouting.*

The door is different. It's a brilliant emerald green, with a bright brass knob and backplate. The knocker is an enormous bronze stag's head with its antlers stretching up and back through the wood like the mouth of a river. In its mouth is a burnished and worn bit, from which hangs a simple chain of similar wear. The eyes glare down at the chain expectantly.

There is a creaking noise, and a wet snap. That weatherbeaten chair has moved slightly. "*Look at me,*" it pleads silently, but the door is too alluring to ignore for long. "*Please.*" The knocker's chain is pleasantly cool and heavy to the touch. "*Don't you love me?*" The chain swings neatly into the wood of the door with a pleasant *crunch*.