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THE FALL OF THE HOUSE AT POE CORNER

(from the journal of Edgar Allan Pooh)

by Mark Kearney

"Oh fuss, oh bother, O blood stained avatar of Death," said Winnie the Poe. And thus began the hellish nightmare, the mirror-cracked face of Terror, that haunted -- in a devilish manner unforeseen -- the now elderly bear to the very marrow of his oft-chilled bones.

As he stood bathed in the grim light of Dawn, Winnie -- with his still very little brain intact -- ruminated on his horrific circumstances.

"No honey!" he cried. "I've run out of Honey."

And thus he journeyed to where he believed the supreme prize -- Honey -- was to be found -- the House at Poe Corner. O sweet elixir, O nectar of life, ran the thoughts in Winnie's mind. My old friend and mentor, Christopher Robin Usher, will possess it. The two had not laid eyes on each other's countenance for 54 years.

"And now we are 60," quoth Winnie as he shuffled toward the gray ruins that represented his last Hope for the enduring sweetness. Yet, Horror burned in his heart, the ugly sinking feeling that Christopher, a now-grizzled, mawkish fellow --

who had remained in the house, his only companion, Imagination -- would be unable to fulfill the Destiny that had drawn Winnie to the crumbling mansion.

Hunger and sweet-toothed desire it was that now pervaded Winnie's frame as Christopher Robin, a yellow pallor covering his wizened skin, flung open the door in dramatic greeting.

"Hallo, Poe," chirped Robin, his voice tarnished by Age to a mere whisper, a softness of sound that -- in all its manifestations -- could infuse the listener with a mournfulness until now unrealized.

The somewhat cadaverous Winnie followed Christopher Robin Usher into the front room, a dark chamber, covered in rich tapestries, thick dust, and filled with stuffed toys from years past.

"I am just a bear of still very little brain," said Winnie the Poe, "but it is my suspicion that here lies my best opportunity for Honey."

"Hmm," replied Christopher Robin. "Perhaps there is some in Piglet's old room."

"And how is it with Piglet?" the skeletal bear inquired of his old friend.

"Lost to the ages, I fear," answered the old man, flipping the gray page-boy hair from his eyes as he searched the room for the elusive jar.

The emaciated frame of the old bear shuddered in panic.

"This cannot be. Decades I have dreamed that he still walks within these Walls. Do I dream, then, of a phantasm, a spectre?" cried the bruin through quivering lips.

"Alas, he is dead," nodded Christopher Robin.

"And what of Eeyore?"

"Nevermore," replied the host, shaking his head, his eyes penetrating the shriveled countenance of his old cohort.

Winnie shivered at the news, as much from fear and consternation as from the dank, damp essence of the house. They strolled slowly through another hallway to the cellar door.

"And Kanga and Roo?"

"Morgue," answered Usher, now realizing that the situation was desperate.

Without the fruits of the bees' labor, his colleague would certainly go mad -- his very little brain torn asunder in a vortex of insanity -- engulfing him in a cloak of honeyless Despair.

"O tiddely pom, tiddely pom," cried Winnie, his tiny mind wracked with the songs of his yesteryear, his stomach all rumbly and grumbly. Ghastly it was for Winnie, the bleakness of his famine more monstrous than can be conceived.

"There is but one possibility," Christopher Robin whispered, an agitated edge to his voice. "I have a cask in the cellar. A bountiful cask of yellow liquid, Poe, that can yet save you, but through the years it has become one with the foundations. Any attempt to remove it could mean certain Ruin for this venerable structure."

Down, down, deep into the abyss they descended until the nourishing jar they sought was within grasp.

"Tigger wedged the pot in here once upon a midnight dreary to hold up this moldering castle," said Robin. And with that, he tore the urn from the foundations and pressed it to the bear's parched lips. Eagerly, Winnie drank from the pitcher, the liquid coursing through his slender torso.

But as the bear drank, Christopher Robin's Fear manifested itself. The house began to collapse under its own weight. Aghast, Usher turned to flee, his mind racing with the energy of Survival. Moments before the House perished, he reached for the still-withered hand of his companion, dragging him into the crisp night air and to Safety. Deeply drawn were breaths of Relief.

"Haroo, hurray, we're saved!" cried Christopher Robin.

"Smack, smack," smacked Winnie the Poe. "Now what do we have for Lunch?" He stared hard, Piercingly, at his companion.