

Start

~~consider it uniquely exciting to be a part of something so fraught with psychic potential. There should be a great deal to report to the "outside world" when our investigations are concluded.~~

~~ELEANOR. (Vaguely.) Is there still a world out there? I'm sure Mrs. Dudley goes somewhere else at night, and it must be that our food comes from a place with stores, and lights, and people, but as far as I can clearly remember there is no other place than this.~~

LUKE. (To Eleanor, with a smile.) We are on a desert island.

ELEANOR. (Ignoring Luke.) I can't picture any world but Hill House.

THEODORA. Perhaps we should make notches on a stick, or pile pebbles in a heap so we'll know how long we've been marooned.

LUKE. (To the others.) Actually, I find it quite pleasant not having any word from outside . . . No letters, no newspapers. (With emphasis.) Think what might be happening out there.

DR. MONTAGUE. We'll soon know what's going on. As I mentioned to you, Mrs. Montague will be here this morning.

LUKE. (Gallant.) We'll be delighted to see her, of course.

THEODORA. I imagine she's holding high hopes of things going bump in the night. Maybe Hill House will outdo itself and greet her with a volley of psychic experiences.

DR. MONTAGUE. (With a twinkle.) Mrs. Montague will be more than ready to receive them, I assure you.

ELEANOR. (Seriously.) It's been so quiet. Perhaps Hill House is biding its time until she arrives.

LUKE. (To Eleanor, again.) Or waiting until we feel secure—so it can pounce on us.

ELEANOR. (To Dr. Montague.) I've been trying to remember more about the other night. I can recall knowing that I was frightened—but I can't imagine actually being frightened.

THEODORA. (Shivering.) I remember the cold.

ELEANOR. (Intently.) I think it's because it was so unreal by any pattern of thought I'm used to. I mean, it just didn't make sense. (Dr. Montague nods.)

LUKE. (Affably.) I agree. This morning I had to convince myself again that it all happened. Almost the reverse of a bad dream, where you keep telling yourself that it didn't really happen.

THEODORA. (Firmly.) Well, I thought it was exciting.

DR. MONTAGUE. (Lifting a finger in warning.) Remember—it

is still perfectly possible that it was all caused by subterranean waters, or some such phenomenon. Mrs. Montague will certainly have more thoughts along that line when she arrives.

THEODORA. Then hooray for secret springs, I say.

DR. MONTAGUE. (Concerned.) I wish you were not quite so positive about that. What you feel is exciting for sure, but might it not also be dangerous? Perhaps an effect of the atmosphere of Hill House? The first sign that we might have—as it were—fallen under a spell?

THEODORA. Why not? I shall be an enchanted princess.

LUKE. (Seriously.) And yet, if the other night is a true measure of Hill House, we aren't going to have any real trouble. We were frightened, of course, and the experience was unpleasant while it was going on. But I can't remember that I sensed any physical danger. (Archly.) Even when Theodora said that whatever was outside her door was coming to eat her.

ELEANOR. (Quickly.) But I know what she meant. It was exactly the right word. I had the strange feeling that it wanted to consume us, take us into itself, make us a part of the house . . . (She hesitates, as though unable to express herself completely.)

THEODORA. (To Eleanor.) I thought you were the girl who wasn't bothered by all this. (Eleanor looks flustered.)

~~DR. MONTAGUE. (Positively.) No physical danger exists, I can assure you of that. No ghost in all the long histories of ghosts has ever hurt anyone physically. The only damage is done by the victim to himself. One cannot even say that the ghost attacks the mind, because the mind, the conscious, thinking mind, is invulnerable. In all our conscious minds, as we sit here talking, there is not one iota of real belief in ghosts. (He looks at the others for a moment.) No, the menace of the supernatural is that it attacks where modern minds are weakest, where we have abandoned our protective armor of superstition, without developing a substitute defense. Not one of us thinks rationally that what ran through the garden was a ghost, or that what knocked on the door was a ghost, and yet there was certainly something going on in Hill House. But the mind's instinctive refuge—self doubt—is eliminated, and neither can we say that it was "imagination." After all, three others were there, too.~~

~~ELEANOR. (Rising, crossing R.) I could say that all three of you are in my imagination—that none of this is real.~~