

The Fall of the House of Usher

On a dark, silent day in fall I was riding alone through flat, gray countryside. As evening came, I first saw the melancholy House of Usher.

Immediately, I felt a terrible sadness. The house was dark, with windows like empty eyes. Almost nothing grew in the grounds around it. My heart felt cold, like ice; I was afraid.

I stopped to think. Why did the house make me so uncomfortable? It was a mystery. We cannot always understand why some things scare us. But I had to continue toward the dark house, because I was planning to stay there for a few weeks.

The owner of the house, Roderick Usher, was a close friend when I was a boy. I heard nothing from him for many years, until he wrote me a letter.

The letter was very strange. In it, he asked me to come and see him. He was very sick, he said, in body and in mind. Only a visit from me, his best and only friend, could help to make him well and happy again. His request seemed to come from his heart, and I could not say no.

Usher and I were very good friends as children, but I did not know much about him. He always disliked being around people. The Ushers were not like other people. They loved art and music. They were very rich, and gave money away to poorer people, but they were also very private. Because the same house was always passed down from father to son, people called the family, too, the "House of Usher."

I looked again at the house, and at the grounds around it. Again I felt afraid. The air seemed to hang over the house and grounds, and it smelled of death.

"I am dreaming," I thought. "I am making myself afraid."



The house was very old, and in a terrible state.