

Dearest Son of Mine,

Thank you for your letter, along with its kind and precious gifts. I can lay to rest all your concerns—yes, I am indeed your father, and you are indeed my heir.

I know you must have heard rumors of my illness. Allow me to speak to those concerns: my health wanes, but I remain capable. I hope my good humours last long enough that I might behold your face with my own eyes, but I fear the worst.

I hereby invite you to our manor, to inspect your inheritance and birthright. I fear that by the time you reach the estate I might no longer be among the living, but that changes little. You and I, we are connected, and you need to see this manor—and all that I have left for you—whether or not I still reside within it.

Your mother has certainly told you terrible stories of me, after all that nasty business so many years ago. She fled from the manor in the night, before we could truly speak; I believe something must have struck her ill and brought phantasms to her weakened mind, phantasms I was not given the chance to dispel with reason.

Since then, I understand that she holds me the greatest sort of monster, but not so horrible as to diminish her love for you, the blood of my blood. If even she must hold such a doubt in her heart, then you must acknowledge that her stories may be false. I implore you to believe me when I say they are naught but the slander of an ill mind.

Come to the manor. Claim your inheritance. Here you will find the deed to the property and enough money to provide for you and your life, although sadly, not enough for your sons. If you do not come to claim these funds, I fear that others with poor intent will attempt to take from us our family's right to the land and property.

I trust that you agree with me when I say that our family's domain should remain within our family. This house, and all its noble history, belongs to us. And only us.

I know that you will fall in love with the estate as soon as you spend some time in its halls, just as I did as a young boy. It will awaken in you a part of yourself you may only be dimly aware of, a part that is the truest part of you.

Please, come. Explore the estate, and find yourself.

I will be in my chambers, either lying in state or resting. The servants have orders to keep my body there, in the event that I do pass. Enclosed in this letter are the keys to the estate, but please do not enter into my chambers unless specifically invited. I do not wish for you to see my corpse the first time you behold my face.

The servants have been ordered to obey your commands in all regards. They will look for your mother's wedding band upon your finger as a symbol of authority—I believe you said you still have it in your last letter. Please wear it when you come here.

I hope to live long enough to hear your footsteps in our entrance hall. Come soon, my son.

Your loving father,

Bluebeard

P.S. I do miss your mother and her beauty. She haunts my heart, even now—the love that got away. Please, if you see her, tell her I never stopped loving her. And do be the good boy I know she has raised you to be. Stay out of my chambers.