Hidden Riches, Hidden Lies  
By: Amelia West

Setting:
a large, old-money style manor with an expensive, yet eerie feel.

Characters:
NIKKI SCHWARTZ- a suave young business man, socialite, and aspiring playboy

MAGGIE SCHWARTZ - an older woman with a tendency to forget and a flair for the eccentrics; also Lloyd’s sister

NELSON SCHWARTZ - an older middle aged, traditional and avaricious businessman; also Nikki’s unattending father

MS. (LAURIE) CARTER - Lloyd’s middle-aged, black-widow type, estate manager, who is precise, professional, and just a bit mysterious

LLOYD SCHWARTZ - An extremely rich, greedy, and free spirited old man; also Nelson’s uncle.
NIKKI, NELSON, and MAGGIE ENTER the manor

NIKKI: Well this place sure has gotten creepier since I was a kid...

MAGGIE: Shhh, watch your voice, he could still be listening
(looks around for presumably nothing)

NELSON: (gruffly) Oh please Aunt Maggie, remember what we are here for? Since Great Uncle Lloyd has passed, we need to go over his will.

NIKKI: (in a hushed voice, dry) The three hour drive in the rain with the both of you was enough to remind me, let's get this over with.

MS CARTER: (ENTERS) Everyone welcome and thank you for making the trip; I am, well was, your uncle's Estate manager. Laurie Carter. (reaches for handshake)

NELSON: Ofcourse, I am Nelson, Nelson Schwartz; Lloyd was my uncle. This is my son Nikki and my Aunt Maggie.

NIKKI: (flirts) Hey, it is nice to meet you Ms. Carter. Or can I call you Laurie?

MS CARTER: (uninterested) As you saw by the letters you three received, it was your magnificent Great Uncle Lloyd’s final testament that you three, as his only remaining family members, gathered in his estate to go over his will. Please have a seat. (pulls out will) Your Great Uncle, with his brilliant mind, decided that only the best and brightest of his heirs should have access to his fortune.

MAGGIE: Oh, I wonder how we can decide that.

MS. CARTER: (annoyed) As I was saying, Mr. Schwartz figured that the only way to decide would be to create clues himself to lead only the most worthy to his fortune.
NIKKI: *(attempt at flirting)* Oh come on Laurie, this can’t be the only way. Uncle Lloyd and I were very close, so there must be someway I ca-

NELSON: *(cuts him off)* Please Nikki, you just know you would have no chance at finding it; let me see that clue.

MAGGIE: I always knew my older brother had some tricks up his sleeve *(chuckles to self).*

NIKKI: Well, if this is the way Uncle Lloyd wanted it, I guess it’s our only choice.

MS. CARTER: Precisely the conclusion I was hoping you would come too! Now if you would give me the floor, the will reads as follows:* (opens the will and clears throat)* "Welcome my dear family to my celebration of a lifetime! Well for one of you at least. We have always been a very competition oriented family, so I decided the best way to give up my fortune, if I have to, would be to give it only to the best and the brightest of my few heirs. Now tread lightly and look cautiously, because here is your first of three clues: 'In pages of old tales, our family's history weaves, where whispers of our past secrets softly breathe. Seek me where memories are bound, and the next step to your destiny will be found’"

NIKKI: *(stands)* Memories of the past? I haven’t been here in a decade! This is useless.

    MAGGIE seemingly wanders off towards coffee table, as NELSON excitedly goes for the bookcase, and NIKKI paces/stands in confusion

NELSON: *(talking to himself)* Pages of old tales… where memories are bound… It must be in one of these old books, but which one?

    MAGGIE takes a seat on the sofa and starts looking through an old book on the coffee table
MAGGIE: (talking to an uninterested MS. CARTER) Oh, I just love these old photo albums; it just brings you back to the good old days. (flipping through pages) Lloyd’s graduation, the first summer with the new house, I think that’s Lloyd’s fifth wife. Mandy was great. (lifts up piece of paper wedged in between pages) I don’t seem to remember what this could be from.

NELSON: Family history, whispers of our past; I got it! (walks over to MAGGIE and snatches the clue from her) Here it is!

NIKKI: Maybe Laurie should do the honors, since she has such a nice voice.

MS. CARTER: ( sternly ) Thank you Mr. Schwartz, but I’m sure that is not necessary.

MAGGIE: No, no he has a point; you sound much sweeter than that bloke of a nephew of mine. Let’s hear it sweetie!

NELSON: Well I-

NIKKI: Hold on Dad, let the woman read.

MS. CARTER: (NELSON and MS. CARTER awkwardly pass off the clue) Well, Mr. Schwartz’s clue says: "In corners forgotten, I stand tall yet unseen, Once cherished by Lloyd, now where I've been. But a piece once shattered, by a careless hand, Search where his secrets lie, in the shadows it stands"

MAGGIE: Maybe we have to find his sixth wife!

NIKKI: You and I both know Melissa is long gone. Great Uncle Lloyd never did learn how to sign prenuptials...

NELSON: Yes, well I’m sure the guy cared about more than his short-term wives and ill fitting suits, I got tired of going to his weddings after number seven. What do you think Ms. Carter? You were with Lloyd around the time he was writing these, what could this all mean?
MS. CARTER: (suspiciously taken aback) I wouldn’t have a clue! Lloyd, I mean Mr. Schwartz and I never discussed it, I was only told to read the first letter.

NIKKI: Of course Laurie, I knew you wouldn’t be keeping anything from us.

MAGGIE: You know, I never knew my brother had such a way with words.

NELSON: Sure Aunt Maggie.

MAGGIE: (sing-songy voice and to a tune) “A piece once shattered, by a careless hand, Search where his secrets lie, in the shadows it stands.”

NELSON: Wait, say that again.

MAGGIE: (more dramatically singing) “A piece once shattered, by a careless hand, Search where his secrets lie, in the shadows it stands.”

NELSON: Maggie, you got it!

NIKKI: Got what? (MAGGIE gets ready to sing) And please don’t make her sing again.

NELSON: Remember that story I told you as a kid; how Uncle Lloyd taught me the Schwartz ways of money?

MAGGIE: Oh that was one ugly Easter.

NELSON: Well I was just a boy and I was playing in the foyer, when I fell into Uncle Lloyd’s grandfather’s grandfather clock and broke the handle off. Of course he found out, and I had to work the mail room for a month, to pay it off. He did end up getting it fixed but old Lloyd was my start in the family business.
NIKKI: So we are supposed to be looking for an old clock in this room of junk, at this rate, we won’t find the treasure until sunrise.

MAGGIE: Oh, just get to lookin’!

EVERYONE, except MS. CARTER, starts frantically looking around

NELSON: Well don’t just stand there Ms. Carter.

NIKKI follows as MS. CARTER moves to look in a separate corner of the room, while NELSON and MAGGIE are searching on the other side

NIKKI: Sorry about that, I know he can be a bit of a hardass sometimes.

MS. CARTER: I’m sure I don’t know what you mean.

NIKKI: I wanted to do a year abroad in college, but no, he decided we needed to sponsor some village in Africa instead. I bet you get it Laurie, so free-spirited, beautiful, gorgeous.

NIKKI moves awkwardly closer to MS. CARTER, getting more flirtatious with every line

MS. CARTER: (inches away) Please, Mr. Schwartz, call me Ms. Carter; I am still technically employed by your uncle, so maybe it’s best that we stay professional.

NIKKI: Come on Laurie, it’s not like Great Uncle Lloyd is still around to hear us; (continues to get closer to MS. CARTER)

MS. CARTER: I assure you, as long as my contracts are still living, I intend on doing my job.

NELSON: (from the other side of the room) Hey guys!

MAGGIE: Yoo-hoo
NELSON: We got it! *(MS. CARTER rushes over as NIKKI ashamedly follows)* wedged right in the spot I broke it.

NIKKI: Open it up; what does it say?

    **MS. CARTER holds out hand to take clue**

MS. CARTER: Well I just assumed...

    **EVERYONE shrugs in agreement**

MS. CARTER: "Within these walls, a story untold, Where mysteries lie, yet to unfold."

MAGGIE: What? That’s it?

MS. CARTER: That does seem short, but I’m sure Mr. Schwartz made it that way for good reason.

NIKKI: But what could that mean?

MAGGIE: Did he hide all of his money in the walls?? *(looks around cautiously)*

NELSON: I knew he was crafty, but how would the old man manage that?

NIKKI: Maybe we are thinking too deeply about this; maybe there is just a hole in the wall somewhere where he stored it.

MAGGIE: Hey good idea; I’m pretty sure that’s how he met his third wife!

NELSON: How could I forget about that family story; Lloyd told at the end of every Christmas party I can remember.

NIKKI: Maybe Great Uncle Lloyd knew he would make us think of it. Wasn’t she the Australian?
NELSON: Yes! I remember her, Judith, right? Uncle Lloyd got with her when I was a teenager. They spent the whole summer in Sydney. He was always really secretive about that trip, but I always supposed the accents wore him out.

MAGGIE: Oh yes, the redhead! She was a firecracker. Lloyd was a little strange about her though. He kept a secret little picture of her behind the portrait of Sir Leonardo III. Oh he was a weird one alright.

NIKKI: Great Aunt Maggie, you cute sack of genius, behind the portrait!

EVERYONE walks over to the portrait and NELSON takes it off the wall to reveal a plain wall with a simple skeleton key taped to it.

NELSON: (ALL looking with confusion) What? What’s with the key? Where is the money?

MAGGIE: (laughing to self) Lloyd got us good!

NIKKI: This key looks as old as the house, I have no idea what this could be for.

NELSON: Have you seen anything like this Ms. Carter?

MS. CARTER: Well, you know your Uncle was quite the collector (she leads them to a cabinet), he kept an exclusive collection of specialty lock boxes.

NIKKI: I knew Great Uncle Lloyd was a little out of it, but this is just outright strange. (starts trying locks) Could it really be any of these? How will we figure out which one goes with our key?

NELSON: We just keep trying them.

NELSON and NIKKI search between the locks, while MAGGIE wanders off.
MAGGIE: *(talking to an uninterested MS. CARTER)* You know, ever since we were kids, Lloyd always needed his own space. He said he had projects and plans.

NELSON: *(not paying attention)* Yes Aunt Maggie, life when you were a kid was very different.

NIKKI: I always hated coming here as when I was little, I could barely look at something before Uncle Lloyd would remind me how expensive it was.

NELSON: Yes, you're right, and no one was even allowed in the basement.

MAGGIE: Hm I wonder what’s down there...

NIKKI: Could this key be for that door?

NELSON: Well, there’s only one way to find out *(nervously excited)*

    cautiously, EVERYONE walks over to the closed door

NIKKI: Right.

NELSON: Well, who’s going to do the honors?

MAGGIE: *(pushes to the front)* Ladies first!

    NELSON and NIKKI hide behind MAGGIE as the door slowly opens revealing LLOYD as he enters in a tuxedo

NIKKI: What?

MAGGIE: Lloyd!

NELSON: I can’t believe it; you’re alive!? And is that a church? *(peers into offstage room)*
LLOYD: The killer couldn’t take old Lloyd out even if they tried! But since I wasn’t sure if even my death could get my far and few family to come out here again, I had to do what I had to do. Thank you for getting them here safely Laurie-poo.

MS. CARTER: Oh, of course my Lloyd-y-bear.

NIKKI: Great Uncle Lloyd and Ms. Carter?

MS. CARTER: Please Nikki, call me Laurie, or better yet, Great Aunt Laurie

   *MS. CARTER and LLOYD now lovingly embracing*

NIKKI: I think I’m going to be sick.

LLOYD: Oh, man up son; you know what they say: ninth times the charm!

MAGGIE: How nice to see you Lloyd, we thought you were dead!

NELSON: So, if you’re not dead, why did you bring us all here to collect a pretend treasure?

LLOYD: I knew none of you would want to come to another one of my weddings, most people stopped showing up after the sixth one. So I figured there was only one way to get my family together for what could be one last time.

NIKKI: So you had to trick us? Just to bring us here for another one of your weddings. *(glares at MS. CARTER)*

MS. CARTER: Don’t go around blaming Lloyd, there was nothing else he could do. You are the only family he has left and when he can’t even count on you to show up to his wedding, what other choice does Lloyd-y have other than to trick you a little? Just think about today, you three were reliving the past, and reminiscing on good memories all because of the sacrifices Lloyd made to get you here. You should all be grateful!
EVERYONE stares at MS. CARTER for a second, shocked

NELSON: (looks around) Ya know what. She’s right, even if she is just another gold digger. (EVERYONE nods in agreement) Today, I have had the best time I’ve had in a long time, all thanks to Lloyd.

NIKKI: (uneasy) I hope you and Laurie are happy, maybe the ninth time is the charm.

MAGGIE: Then what are we waiting for? Let’s get to that wedding and party!

EVERYONE begins to exit, with MS. CARTER last

MS. CARTER: And I hope you brought wedding gifts!