The ruined Castle

Looming in front of her, the broken castle lay like a decaying carcass that had been picked clean. Its derelict, frowning buttresses, though barely there, were still imposing. Long-forgotten turrets choked by ivy added the only colour to the grey scene. Entering through its cavernous mouth, Kitty passed through the west gate and scanned the ruins of the castle. She was faced with a labyrinth of crumbling walls and pillars, courtyards and tunnels that spread out in all directions. Archways poked every crumbling wall, like rat-holes, leading into dark alleys.

She knew it was here. She could feel it. She had the strangest feeling of being summoned by a presence, lurking in the background, but which she could never see.

A huge flight of steps rose in front of her, but this was not the time to climb. She hesitated at every sinister pillar, every arched gateway, cautiously peering around her, not knowing what she was going to find on the other side. Every moment became an exercise in paranoia: watching over her shoulder, jumping at every sound, sliding her hand to her sword, checking that it was still there. Many stone columns had been broken off and had toppled to their sides. It was like she was walking along a path of enormous, chipped, stone teeth. A succession of grotesque, broken gargoyles, jutted out from towers, casting jagged shadows as the sun began to set. Careful not to trip, she picked her way between weeds and ivy that had eaten their way into the cracks of the ruins and spread their tentacles into every crevice.

All along she had had a nagging suspicion that she was delivering herself into a trap, but nothing could have prepared her for what she met around the next corner.