

The Treasure of Hawthorne House

A sense of foreboding settled over Samir as he looked up the desolate hill. At the lonely summit sat Hawthorne House, the subject of scary stories told during sleepovers at Samir's friends' houses. The vacant house was more than a story to Samir, though. It had once belonged to his great-great-grandmother, Henrietta Swain, and recently, in his parents' attic, Samir had found a stained and fragile letter that described a treasure that lay inside the house. The treasure was his ancestor's legacy to the family.

Life at Samir's house had been turbulent since his father was laid off three months ago. Samir had listened to the late-night whisperings of his parents as they discussed how to stretch his mother's salary so they could keep up with their bills. Samir had noticed his father's haggard face at night, weary from stress, and he knew that if there was a treasure at Hawthorne House, his family could certainly use it.



Samir gathered the courage to enter the atrocity of a house. He reached the weathered door, and it inched open, protesting at the hinges. A pungent odor of age and something like sadness curled through his nose. His great-great-grandmother had been an eccentric lady who had bought the house from a descendant of the original owner. The house was rumored to be haunted, and that reputation protected Mrs. Swain from unwanted visitors, which included everyone.

The letter said that the treasure lay in the attic, so Samir climbed the creaky stairs. After three floors, the stairs narrowed to a sliver of space barely wide enough for Samir to squeeze through. Luckily, he was agile enough to slither through the tight spot. As Samir opened the door at the top of the confined space, an onslaught of musty odors and dank, stale air took his breath away.



Samir carefully crept through aisles formed by piles of dusty furniture and found the long, flat box exactly where the letter said it would be. The tiny key he had discovered in the envelope with the old letter fit perfectly, and with a slight protest, the lock opened.

The thump of the wooden box lid sent up a new riot of dust, but Samir did not notice. He was dealing with the excruciating pain of defeat. The box did not contain gold, jewelry, or even stock certificates. Instead, it contained piles and piles of old stamps. There must have been four hundred in the box, but they seemed very old, so Samir doubted they would be useful to anyone now. He slowly closed the box, and put it under his arm for the dreadful walk ahead.

Every light was on at his house when he crested the hill near his driveway. Before he could reach the door, his mother opened it and came out onto the porch.

"Your father and I were starting to get worried," she stated.

"I'm fine, Mom. I was just at Hawthorne House," replied Samir.

They went inside to the kitchen where Samir's father was staring down at another pile of bills. Samir told them about the letter and his trip to Hawthorne House, and he laid the dusty wooden box on the table to show them his disappointing find. He flipped open the lid, and his father gasped.



"Samir! Do you realize what you have here?" Samir's father exclaimed. He took a sheet of stamps gingerly from the box, and held it up to the light.

"These are extremely rare stamps, and they are worth a fortune! I knew my great-grandmother was a stamp collector, but no one ever found her collection! These stamps are worth thousands of dollars!"

Samir's mother put her arm around Samir and pulled him close to her side.

"Samir, you have accomplished a wonderful thing tonight. You have also taught us that we were wrong to pretend that everything was all right. From now on, we will go through everything as a family." She kissed him on the cheek and then joined his father, still exclaiming over each vintage stamp.

Samir watched briefly from the doorway, then went to his room to get ready for bed. Henrietta Swain must have known, he thought, that a later generation would need her treasures. The letter had been addressed to "A Worthy Descendent."