

## Excerpts from the Upcoming Book, the Asylum

Emilie Autumn

And when I looked out I saw that we were heading fast upon a series of iron gates set in stone, wickedly arched, and crowned with tall spikes. But what unnerved me completely was beyond the gates, a set of doors, heavy and wooden, pointed arched towering higher than any entrance to any building I had ever seen. Crossed with iron bars, and studded with heavy bolts, the doors were set in a great wall that appeared to be protecting whatever waited inside.

So paralysed was I by the sight before me, I did not notice that we had already driven past the first of the three spiked gates guarding access to the door, until I heard it crashing to a close behind us. Where am I? A short drive onward and we were at the second gate, I turned to look behind me and saw the gates closing, one after the other by power of unseen hands, or simply through years of habit more accustomed were they to being closed than opened. Were these gates erected for the protection of this great establishment? For the security of these admirable administrators of magical medicines? Were these prison bars meant to keep intruders out, or to keep it's inhabitants in?

With each turn of the wheels that brought me closer to the last gate, I tried harder to drown out the answer to my questions with whatever music I could conjour into my head. Approaching the third, I began to lose my grasp on reality. I imagined we were going in circles, driving through the same gates over and over again, endlessly circling. As though there were a certain number of rotations that must be completed before access to this unknown world was granted to us. I thought of the lock on the cabinet in my music master's study, the one with four lettered plates that had to be rotated a definite amount, and then alligned in a perfect secret order before it would open. I had once unlocked it.

I felt dizzy, and much too warm. The wind screamed around the carriage, the wheels rattled, and though the gate was close ahead, we seemed to be eternally racing towards it, making no progress. A bird, something like a Raven, but a great deal larger, soared overhead, and, emitting a strange, metallic growl into the blackening sky, circled above the ever-approaching gates. As it did so, I caught sight of the sharp spikes gleaming in the pummelling rain. Still galloping at full speed, I heard the muffled squeals of what sounded like a swarm of insects.

Looking out, I swore I saw, though I did not believe my eyes at the time, a great pack of rodents, perhaps a hundred, perhaps more, sleek furry bodies skimming the Earth leaping over each other, black eyes sparkling. A quivering mass, they swam over th

e cobblestones like one creature, Squid's ink, spilling into water, and infecting it with deep black in seconds. How they were able to keep up with the Horses mystified me, and when the swarm dispersed, and shot on ahead of us, they darted in and out beneath the wheels of the carriage and around the Horses hammering hooves, yet, were never trampled. I followed them with my eyes as they melded together again and slipped beneath the gate to the other side like a gush of dark water, the tide coming in.

It was all so ghastly, so intoxicating, my body convulsed in a quivering wave, somewhere between horror, and wild anticipation. And then, the final gate having slammed closed behind us, we were at the ultimate precipice at last. Three...Two...One...The doors began to open, there was an awful grinding of metal, a clashing of loosened chains. And with the skies seeming to come down around us, it appeared. The Asylum.