

Powerhouse

A dazed Michelle wakes up on a rocky beach. She looks up to see thick, dark clouds looming overhead, firing raindrops like millions of tiny arrows at her face. Water with a faint smell of seaweed dashes at her striped dress. It's freezing. Looking around in the mist, Michelle barely makes out the faint outline of trees surrounding an impressive building with tall windows. A little hopeful, she drags her body up the ragged slope to the entrance.

What happened? Michelle wonders as she leans on the metal door. She was boating with her parents when the sunny weather suddenly rebelled, and the storm must have swept her here afterwards. Thunder rumbles. Michelle flinches and desperately pushes the door, only to find it unlocked and ends up slamming onto the floor inside. The door swings back with a rasping screech, leaving the echo of a lock's click.

The building's interior only adds more eeriness to the direful atmosphere. This is apparently an abandoned hydroelectric powerhouse. Rusty machines and railings quietly watch Michelle shuffling in the semi-darkness, searching for another exit. Where are her parents? Tears cloud her eyes. What if she cannot go home? What if –

The sound of clothing draping on the floor interrupts Michelle, who slowly turns around, clutching her dress. A tenebrous figure approaches from the shadows. Strange – instead of walking, it smoothly glides towards her with only its cloak skimming the floor.

Lightning blinks. Under the hood emerges a woman's spine-chilling face with whitewashed skin, a high forehead, rotted teeth, and obsidian eyes that reflect Michelle's horrified face. She screams. The woman shrieks back before the room dims again. Michelle scrambles for the opposite direction, but the woman starts to glide faster and faster towards her, smashing into machines on the way. Abruptly, she reaches for Michelle's shoulder, grasps it so tight that her bones are about to be crushed, and then brutally shoves her against rusted railings. Lightning flashes repeatedly, and the woman, now shrieking even louder, seizes Michelle's teary face, her claw-like fingers plowing deep streaks of blood. Engulfed in pain and fear, Michelle screams for her parents until her voice breaks.

At that moment, she stops struggling. Memories of her parents flood her mind as Michelle wonders where they are right now. Are they looking for her? Are they devastated? Maybe they're sleeping at the bottom of the sea already. Her heart aches at the thought of them. The railings finally give way, and Michelle powerlessly falls into the water below. As lightning flashes one last time, she sees the woman's face twist to form a crooked, sinister smile. She then hears the machines start to operate. The noisome smell of seaweed and dead crabs hugs Michelle before she is swallowed by the humming turbine.

The storm dies the next morning. As the sun spreads its golden fan over the abandoned powerhouse, two fishermen sailing nearby spot something – pushed into cliffs by gentle waves, there floats a piece of striped cloth dyed scarlet.