

Mansion of Mirrors

Ivy jumped awake, her heart pounding. Alex slept on, unfazed. Hamish whimpered and hid beneath the bed.

“It’s just the wind,” Ivy whispered to herself, though every instinct told her otherwise.

She crept downstairs. The hallway lights flickered as she stepped forward.

The blackwood cupboard doors were opening and slamming shut, slowly, deliberately. The tall glass mirror was now completely fogged, and faint handprints pressed outward from the inside. At Arthur’s desk, papers scraped across the surface as a pen dragged itself along the page, writing in dark, wet ink.

Ivy froze.

The scratching grew louder. Ivy thought back to how she landed in this predicament.

Alex and Ivy arrived at their new home on a bright and sunny Tuesday. It was a fully furnished country estate hidden behind iron gates and stone walls. Hamish, their tiny brown labradoodle, whimpered softly from the back seat as the Uber rolled forward. They both knew the property was large, but nothing could have prepared them for this awe-inspiring mansion.

The car passed through a massive stone entrance and slowly rolled forward along a pebbled driveway that crunched beneath the tires like breaking bones. Ornamental pear trees lined the path, their branches bare, next to the almost perfect garden beds. The house rose at the end of the drive, vast, silent, and watching.

Alex stared in disbelief, his mouth hanging open until his phone buzzed with messages from a friend on his soccer team. Ivy didn’t look away at all. Tears filled her eyes. The place was beautiful, but there was something about it that made her chest feel tight, like she was standing somewhere she didn’t belong.

The Uber stopped. Ivy jumped out immediately, heart racing with excitement and feeling overwhelmed by the smell of the freshly chopped grass that looked wonderfully immaculate. Alex took his time retrieving the luggage. She stood still beside him, grinning, repeatedly asking for the house key.

When Alex finally handed it over, she rushed to the door and unlocked it with shaking hands like a nervous wreck and thinking this must be how newborn mothers feel.

Inside, the house smelled old and of ancient, polished wood, dust, and something faintly sweet and sour. Ivy darted through the rooms, her footsteps echoing. She passed a blackwood cupboard that carried the lingering scent of men’s perfume. As she brushed by a listening chair, it creaked softly, though she hadn’t touched it. She laughed it off, too excited to care.

Alex followed more slowly, dragging suitcases behind him. He stopped in front of a tall glass mirror in the hallway. Its surface was slightly foggy as if someone had breathed against it moments earlier. He shrugged, wiped it off, and kept walking.

That night, the house settled into silence.

At the exact moment the clock struck midnight, a huge bang that sounded like a powerful gunshot shook the walls.

She pinched herself until her skin burned a bright amber. When the pen suddenly slammed down, she screamed and ran for the stairs. Her footsteps thundered through the house, but Alex never woke. She dove beneath the blankets, shaking uncontrollably, and eventually cried herself to sleep.

The Morning came as well as fear of the house.

Everything was exactly the same.

Alex brushed off her story, blaming stress and imagination, and returned to studying for his exam. Ivy fed Hamish, her hands trembling, and began researching the house's history. She couldn't ignore what she had seen.

She called the most recent owners, Edgar and Louis Bell, calmly asking about the furniture. Louis mentioned that the cupboard had held men's perfume, towels, and clothes. Other owners spoke of a listening chair owned by Lucinda Gray, a mirror once fixed beside a bathroom, and an Arthur's desk where Eleanor Pike wrote letters to her husband during the war.

Finally, Ivy contacted the first owner. Mr. Vane's voice was low and uneasy. He spoke of a man named Fletcher Gray. A man who stole everything, even lives. For every person he killed, he took their habits, their routines. When Fletcher died, the house learned to do the same. His bones, Mr. Vane said, were still hidden deep within the walls.

That night, Ivy waited until Alex fell asleep determined to solve the mystery.

At midnight, the house awakened again.

Returning once more to the present, Ivy heard a nearby cupboard slam with anger. The chair creaked. The desk wrote with the same increasingly scratchy sound growing louder and louder by the second.

Ivy followed the sounds into the cellar. The air was damp and cold. Wooden crates filled with empty beer bottles covered the room. As she turned to leave, she noticed a small hole, barely visible in the brickwork.

She grabbed a sledgehammer from the old tool shed. The impact echoed through the house. Bricks shattered and shook the house. Dust filled the air.

When it settled, human bones lay scattered behind the wall.

Everything made sense.

The house didn't keep bodies. It kept habits.

The furniture remembered its owners. The desk wrote in Alex's handwriting. The chair creaked exactly like Ivy's footsteps. The mirror reflected them even after they left the room.

The house was fully furnished because no one ever stayed long enough to leave whole.

It wasn't about escaping the house.

It was about how much of yourself it had already taken.