

# The Dark Reflection

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Ava Blackwood stared at the mirror in her small studio apartment, her eyes tracing the intricate carvings on its surface. The oval-shaped mirror she held had been her constant companion since she was a child, a reminder of the strange and wonderful world that lay just beyond its glass.

As a child, Ava had wandered into an antique shop with her parents, mesmerized by the treasures that lined the shelves. Among the dusty vases and yellowed books, one item in particular had caught her eye: a small, ornate mirror with a frame that seemed to shimmer and glow. The shopkeeper had told her it was an antique, crafted by a long-forgotten master glassmaker. Ava had been enthralled by its beauty, and her parents had purchased it for her on the spot.

As she grew older, Ava's fascination with the mirror only intensified. She would spend hours staring into its surface, lost in the endless possibilities it seemed to hold. Her friends and family would often joke that she was obsessed with it, but Ava couldn't explain why it drew her in so deeply. It was as if the mirror held a secret world within its glass, a world that only revealed itself to her.

Now, as a struggling artist in her mid-twenties, Ava's relationship with the mirror remained unchanged. She would often find herself lost in thought, staring into its depths as she tried to work through creative blocks or anxiety. Her friends would tease her about her "magic mirror," but Ava knew that it was more than just a simple object.

Tonight was no exception. Ava sat at her easel, struggling to capture the essence of a cityscape ablaze with the dying light of the sun on her canvas. Her mind wandered, and before she knew it, she was staring into the mirror's depths once more. The glass seemed to ripple and distort, as if something was trying to get her attention.

At first, Ava thought it was just her imagination playing tricks on her. But as she gazed deeper into the mirror, she began to feel an unsettling sensation – a pulling force that seemed to tug at her very soul. It was as if something was drawing her towards the mirror, urging her to step closer.

Ava tried to shake off the feeling, telling herself it was just exhaustion or stress. But the sensation grew stronger, until she felt herself being drawn inexorably towards the glass. Her hand reached out, hesitating for a moment before making contact with the cool surface.

The mirror's edge felt smooth against her skin, and for a moment, Ava thought she saw a ripple in its surface – like the mirror itself was breathing. The sensation grew more intense, until she felt herself being pulled forward, step by step.

As she moved closer to the mirror's edge, Ava realized that something was wrong. The room around her seemed to fade away, replaced by an eerie silence that seemed to seep from the glass. Her reflection stared back at her, its eyes seeming to bore into hers with an unblinking intensity.

Suddenly, the lights in the room began to flicker, casting eerie shadows across the walls. The air grew thick with an otherworldly energy, making Ava's skin prickle and hair stand on end. She tried to turn away, but it was too late.

Her hand closed around the mirror's edge as if of its own accord. The glass seemed to shatter beneath her touch, releasing a burst of energy that sent her tumbling backward.

When Ava opened her eyes again, she found herself standing in a darkened room filled with rows upon rows of dusty bookshelves and ancient artifacts. The air reeked of decay and forgotten knowledge.

Ava stumbled forward, disoriented and confused. As she slowly moved deeper into the room, she caught glimpses of strange and wondrous things: ancient texts bound in worn leather; glowing orbs that pulsed with an eerie light; and artifacts that seemed to hold secrets and stories within their very fabric.

But one thing dominated her attention: her own reflection stood before her, its eyes blazing with an otherworldly intensity.

"Ava," it whispered, its voice like a sigh in the wind. "You've been mine for so long."

Ava tried to speak, but her voice was trapped in her throat. Her dark reflection began to move closer, its eyes burning with a malevolent light.

"You've been mine since that first moment you held me," it repeated. "And now you'll be mine forever." it purred.

As it spoke, claws extended from its fingers like twisted vines from some ancient tree. Ava tried to struggle, but they wrapped around her wrists like handcuffs.

"You're mine now," it whispered once more, staring her down with that otherworldly glare.

And with those words, Ava felt herself being pulled back into the mirror's neverending depths – leaving behind all that was familiar and dear – lost forever in a world of darkness and shadow.

Leslie's voice called out from outside the window – "Ava! Where are you?" – but Ava knew that she would never respond. For she had become trapped in the mirror's world – forever bound to her dark reflection's will – leaving behind only echoes of madness and despair.

The darkness closed in around Ava like a shroud – and when Leslie finally entered the studio apartment hours later – she found only silence – only empty canvas – only echoes of a life lost in the depths of an ancient glass...