

# Reflection



# REFLECTION

A Novel by

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by Luke Scott Webber

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### **Dedication**

*For those who confront their reflections, even when the mirror smiles back with lies.*

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### **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank the countless voices that whispered ideas in the dark, loved ones who offered support when the story grew heavy, and the readers who embrace fear, grief, and resilience as part of the journey. To those who watch the shadows and notice the little things others do not—this story is for you.

## Introduction:

The world has a way of hiding its cracks in plain sight. You can walk past them a thousand times, never noticing the tiny fractures that run beneath the surface, the faint distortions that whisper just beyond your awareness. Until one day, the reflection in the mirror isn't yours anymore.

Evelyn Harper had learned this the hard way. She had grown up believing in safety, in family, in the small certainties of a quiet life. But the death of her parents had left her wary, and the shadow of responsibility now stretched long over her shoulders. She had her brother, Ryan, and her life felt tethered, fragile but steady. Until the cracks appeared.

It began in the quiet moments—her own reflection moving a fraction too late, a whisper of a voice that shouldn't have been there, a smile that wasn't hers. At first, she dismissed it. Shadows play tricks. Fatigue blurs reality. But the world doesn't warn you when it starts to unravel.

When the Doppelganger came, it didn't roar. It didn't strike with fury. It smiled. Wide, wrong, impossible—a reflection of what should have been, twisted by malice. And in its gaze, Evelyn saw the truth she never wanted to face that grief could be a weapon, fear a prison, and love a lure.

Now, everything she thought she knew would be tested. Every bond, every memory, every choice—measured against a force that could mimic, manipulate, and destroy from the glassy depths of a reflection.

This is the story of survival, sacrifice, and the shadows that linger long after the fire is gone. The story of Evelyn Harper, her brother Ryan, her allies Mara and Renner, and a being that could wear the faces of the living to hunt them down.

Because when the reflection smiles... it isn't yours.

And sometimes, the one you love most becomes the reason you cannot survive.

## Prologue: The Smile in the Glass

I watch them. Always.

They do not see me—not yet. They walk, talk, laugh, weep... and I follow, patient as the shadow that lingers behind the light. Their faces are mine to borrow, their voices mine to mimic. I know their grief, their love, their fear, their past. I know how to feed.

The little one is sweet—fragile, warm, ripe with trust. I almost taste it. Almost. But patience is a virtue. The stronger the bond, the deeper the despair when it breaks.

I move through mirrors, puddles, the tiniest reflections in glass, following, waiting, smiling. My smile is wide, too wide, teeth glinting, eyes that do not blink in the right time. They will look, one day, and see me. But by then... it will be too late.

I wear faces as others wear clothes. I take what they love and twist it, fragment by fragment. And when they call for me, thinking they call for each other... I answer.

I have learned their weaknesses. I have learned their hope. I will wait until it fractures. And when it does, when grief becomes the weapon I wield, I will be there.

Always.

Always smiling.

## Chapter 1: Smiles in the Dark

The morning sun filtered weakly through the blinds, slanting across the kitchen floor in pale stripes. Evelyn Harper moved quietly, careful not to wake Ryan. The apartment was still, except for the faint hum of the refrigerator and the occasional creak of the old building settling.

She poured a cup of coffee, the bitter steam curling upward, returning to her laptop to read through strange reports of dead smiling bodies, she paused. Something caught her eye in the small mirror hanging above the counter. A flicker, a momentary distortion. She frowned and leaned closer.

For a heartbeat, she thought she saw her own face... smiling. But her lips hadn't moved.

Evelyn shook her head. *Just tired*, she told herself. Ryan was probably still asleep, dreaming some ordinary, mundane dream, unaware of the unease creeping in around her. She had always noticed details like this—a slight shift in a shadow, a glimmer that didn't belong—but this morning it felt sharper, more insistent.

She shook it off, reaching for her phone to check the time. 7:03 a.m. Ryan would be up soon. He was always punctual, a creature of routine in a world that could so easily slip into chaos.

The sound of footsteps on the stairs made her tense. But it was only him. Ryan's tall frame filled the doorway, hair mussed, eyes still sleepy but warm.

"Morning," he said, voice low. "Coffee already?"

"Yeah," she replied, forcing a smile, though the image in the mirror lingered in her mind. "I was just... thinking."

Ryan poured himself a cup and leaned against the counter. "About?"

"Nothing," she said. But she couldn't stop glancing at the mirror. That impossible grin. *It wasn't mine*.

She shook her head and turned away, hiding the unease she felt in the soft folds of routine. But the moment stayed with her, like a faint echo in the back of her mind. Something had changed, even if she didn't yet know what.

Outside, the city was waking slowly, the streets slick with morning dew. Everything seemed normal. But Evelyn had learned early that normal was a fragile thing. And some reflections... weren't.

In the evening the rain fell in relentless sheets, turning the alley into a reflective river of shattered light. Puddles gleamed like molten silver under the dim glow of a flickering streetlamp. Evelyn Harper's boots slapped against the wet cobblestones, a staccato rhythm that echoed off the graffiti-streaked brick walls. She had followed the reports, the rumours,

the fleeting glimpses, until she found herself here—at the heart of a city that had become a labyrinth of fear.

The body lay crumpled beneath a rusted fire escape, limbs twisted unnaturally, soaked in rain and blood. Evelyn knelt beside it, flashlight trembling in her hands, as the stench of iron and decay filled her nostrils. The man's face... her stomach turned at the sight. His mouth had been carved into a grotesque, permanent smile. The eyes, wide and unseeing, stared into some unknowable void. It was a smile that mocked life itself—a grin that shouldn't exist on a human face.

Evelyn snapped photographs mechanically, forcing herself to breathe. Her pulse thundered in her ears. Somewhere beyond the alley, a faint sound made her stop—a laugh, soft, echoing, almost familiar. She froze. Her flashlight quivered as she scanned the darkness. Nothing moved. Only the drizzle pattered against the corrugated metal and broken glass.

Then she saw it. A puddle at her feet reflected her face, distorted by ripples in the water. But it wasn't her own expression. Her lips curved into a smile too wide, eyes glinting with something unrecognizable, sinister. She recoiled, heart hammering, but the reflection lingered, as if breathing, as if alive.

*"I see you..."* whispered a voice, her voice, but not hers, twisting through the darkness and into her mind.

Evelyn staggered back, hitting the brick wall. Cold ran down her spine. She could feel the rain soaking her hair, mixing with sweat, her hands shaking. The streetlamp flickered again. In that brief darkness, she thought she saw movement behind her—but when the light returned, the alley was empty.

She swallowed hard and forced herself to speak, voice cracking. "It's just my mind... just exhaustion."

Her phone buzzed violently in her coat pocket. She fumbled it out with trembling fingers. A message from Ryan Harper: *"Call me. Something's wrong. I need you to stay safe."*

Evelyn's pulse quickened. Ryan never sent messages like this without urgency. But what could she say? That someone—or something—was watching her, reflecting her every movement with a smile that was all wrong?

She tried to convince herself it was exhaustion, stress, paranoia. The city had that effect—dark corners, echoes of footsteps that weren't there, shadows that lingered too long. But deep down, she knew it wasn't her imagination. Not entirely.

She turned back to the body. The carved smile gnawed at her, a vision she couldn't unsee. She had seen mutilation before, horrific scenes in her line of work, but this... this was intimate. Someone had taken the time, the effort, to make this person's face a mask of joy in the most grotesque way possible.

A cold wind gusted down the alley, rattling the dumpster lids. Evelyn shivered. Her flashlight flickered, and she caught movement in the corner of her eye. Something shifted, a shadow, a

figure—tall, impossibly still, standing just beyond the range of light. She spun, but it was gone.

Only the puddle remained. And the reflection.

The smile.

Wider than ever.

Evelyn's breath caught. She stepped back instinctively, and the reflection mimicked her movements—not quite synchronized, lagging, distorting, until the head tilted just slightly, too far, a grotesque parody of her own.

Her mind screamed. She couldn't explain it. Rational thought struggled to assert itself against the raw terror coiling through her veins. And then, in the black corners of the alley, she heard it again—the whispering, soft but precise:

*"I'm here. Always."*

Evelyn bolted, heart hammering, leaving the body behind. Her boots splashed through puddles, adrenaline surging as she ran toward the relative safety of the street, the neon signs, the occasional car headlights cutting through the rain. She didn't look back. She couldn't.

But even as she turned a corner, the unmistakable feeling remained: eyes on her. Watching. Waiting. Smiling.

And she knew, deep down, that this was only the beginning.

She tried to focus on Ryan. He would know what to do. He always did. But as she dialled his number, the twin appeared again in the puddle at her feet, fingers stretching impossibly long, reaching toward her. She screamed into the phone, but the words caught in her throat as it mirrored her fear perfectly.

*"I am here. Always."* The whisper slithered through the night, sinking into her mind.

Evelyn fumbled into a derelict building, doors hanging on broken hinges. The lobby smelled of mold and decay, dust and wet wood. Her flashlight illuminated the peeling wallpaper, broken tiles, and a puddle that reflected more than just light—it reflected the impossible grin. She backed into a corner, shaking.

Footsteps echoed faintly from above. The building's stairwell groaned as if protesting her intrusion. She climbed cautiously, each step a calculated risk. Halfway up, a puddle reflected a hallway she had never seen, walls stretching farther than possible. And there it was again: crouched, head tilted, lips stretched impossibly wide, watching.

Memories crashed into her—childhood fears, past traumas, moments of isolation where mirrors had seemed to mock her. She had learned fear early. Now, that fear was weaponized, turned against her by a being that copied her every move, every reaction.

At the third floor, the twin appeared fully in a cracked mirror. Not a reflection, not an image—something real. Fingers brushing glass that wasn't there. It leaned closer, and for the first time, Evelyn saw intelligence in its eyes: calculating, malevolent, patient. It was learning, evolving, adapting.

She bolted again, crashing through a door into a narrow hallway lined with mirrors and windows. Every reflective surface taunted her, duplicating her panic, stretching her screams into grotesque echoes. She tripped over debris, hitting a hand against a broken railing. Pain seared through her wrist, but adrenaline drove her onward and to an eventual exit.

The city outside was rain-soaked and deserted, but every puddle and pane of glass was a threat. Her twin appeared in each one: crouching, smiling, tilting its head. Evelyn's stomach churned. The city itself had become a hunting ground.

A flash of insight struck her: it wasn't just following; it was preparing, planning, learning. Her every instinct, every moment of hesitation, only sharpened it.

She ducked into an alley, pressed against a wall, trying to catch her breath. Her own reflection in the puddle mocked her. And then it winked.

*"Soon... we will be the same."*

Evelyn's scream echoed into the night, carried by the rain, swallowed by the dark, and reflected back at her in every surface. The hunt had begun.