

# THE MIRROR HOUSE

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A SHORT STORY

BY

NORMAN KING LLOYD

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I opened the door to a black shiny suit and the prissy voice of religious conviction: 'How about this for a lovely morning, Sir! There is *only* good news: We are about to change your life!'

'You don't say?' I muttered, not properly awake.

The young woman with him, smiled: 'The gentleman is just woken, Pierre.'

The young man droned on: 'Every breakfast time, there is good news. All you have to do is change your thoughts.'

'Right! I've changed my thoughts. I'm shutting the door on you!'

I day-dreamed over a poached egg... What if that stunning young woman had called on her own, without that dreadful shiny suit in tow... Her face was perfect; delicate and pretty with the most amazingly pointy ears. And that sweet accent...'

I washed, did a little work on the computer and out of the blue, sighed.

Then the door bell rang.

It was Sandy, a music student who cleaned for me once a week. 'Hey! I'm early because two idiots tried to sell me God at eight this morning! Still, the young woman was interesting... I could do with a cup of tea!'

As I made the tea, I relayed my own God experience and told Sandy that I too was really taken with the woman.

'I bet your eyes were glued on those sexy little pixie ears?'

I laughed. 'Tell me your experience.'

'Well, she got rid of the stupid young man.' Sandy sipped her tea and then moved closer to me. In a shaking voice she asked: 'You don't mind me touching you?'

‘You’ve never...’

‘Done this before? She told me to touch you in a nice way.’

‘Who?’

‘The foreign woman!’

‘How did she know you were...’

‘Your cleaning lady? I told her.’

Something about this answer did not quite add up or satisfy me. ‘Fancy a cake, Sandy?’

‘Why not! I’ll give the cleaning a miss, today, Arthur.’

I laughed. ‘Why are you calling me, Arthur?’

‘She told me to call you that. Anyhow, I invited her in and when she looked in the long mirror in the hallway, she said in ever so calm a voice: ‘You’re going to meet your future husband this morning. He’s *Numero Three* on our list.’

I shouted from the kitchen: ‘You haven’t got a husband! Blueberry muffins? Calorie high but you can work it off.’

When I brought in the cakes, Sandy was leaning back on the sofa, her hand clasped against her forehead, saying quietly: ‘I think she meant *you*.’

I was dumfounded. Sandy was great looking and I’d heard her play Chopin once and it took my breath away but I had never fancied her. Sandy was tall and thin, model material really and I liked...

‘I’m on fire.’ She took her hands away from her face and she did look flushed. ‘When this woman looked in my mirror, she saw you.’ Sandy gave me some close scrutiny. ‘I know... I’m not your type.’

‘Well...’

Sandy was getting worked up. ‘Remember, *you* gave me that mirror! Anyhow, this woman, Velna, she called herself, told me to change my thoughts... and if I was deserving and without too much sin... Arthur, *you!* would be mine. What a laugh! So I told her that you didn’t find me the slightest bit attractive... My God, I’m burning now! She did warn me. To find your dream, you must suffer first!’

‘But I’m not your dream, Sandy.’

‘No, definitely not! What would I do with a lolling-about, ivory-tower husband?’ Sandy rushed into the kitchen and put her head under the cold tap. I handed her a tea towel to dry herself. Then I told her that she looked a bit worn out.

‘O.K. News received loud and clear! “Miss Worn-Out” will just scarper and get out of your hair! But I’m probably worn out because at least I do a proper job of work!’

I was surprised how quickly she had just upped and left. I did some cleaning; it helped calm me; then rested on the sofa and listened to a Massenet opera. I must have fallen asleep when the doorbell rang. I went upstairs and peered into the street. The foreign woman was standing in the middle of the road smoking a cigarette. She waved.

For the first time that day, I felt uneasy.

When I opened the door, she had her back towards me, examining the house opposite.

‘Velna?’

She did not turn around.