

## Grandma's Warning

by Richard Lewis

When she was five, Beth's grandmother told her, "if a loved one dies in the house, all mirrors must be covered to prevent their soul being trapped inside."

This was the start of it.

She suffered from an eating disorder in her teens and on seeing her distorted reflection in a mirror, would cruelly mumble to herself 'fattopotamus.' In spite of this Beth bought the mirror in Grimwades, a monstrous rabbit warren of a place that occupied five floors with numerous rooms that seemed to go on forever.

Grimwades was run by a great wardrobe of a man with a rugged face resembling splintered oak, and hair like a shower of autumn leaves. He was affectionately known as Grimboles. To Beth it was a magical place, she loved the smell of oiled wood and musty, discarded effects. She could almost taste the layers of decay from dusty furniture and quirky bric a brac.

They say darkness is cheap, well Grimwades' dimly lit rooms were just the place to find a bargain. Wandering through the Aladdin's cave of paraphernalia, something caught her eye. Waiting expectantly on the opposite wall was a huge Victorian mirror. Instinctively she began to turn away but the mirror held her like a magnet and she thought, 'that's strange, I look normal, not fat at all.'

Taking a closer look, it glistened like a silvery pool, inviting her into its depths, as if saying, "take me home."

Noticing Beth's interest, Grimboles barked, "such a fine mirror."

"How much do you want for it?" she asked.

“Only £20 including delivery,” Grimboles replied, excitedly.

Beth wondered about the sudden enthusiasm and small price tag for such a handsome piece but she'd become entranced and later that very day, there it was hanging proudly on her bedroom wall. Delighted with her purchase, looking into the glass she thought, 'I actually look quite attractive.'

That night the mirror appeared in her dreams. As Beth gazed into its haunting depths, ghostly figures appeared, muttering and laughing, as if they knew something she didn't. Terrified, Beth tried to run but her legs refused to move, paralysed by fear. Then, materialising before her, stood her grandmother who had died suddenly when she was ten. Her grandmother pleaded, “it's not safe, it'll blight your life, you must send it back.”

Shocked, the words fell into Beth like a stone.

She woke with a start, the workings of the dream maintaining an immobilising effect. As if, pinned down by the weight of grandma's warning.

Eventually, hauling herself from the bed, she plucked up courage to look at the mirror but like the dream, the reflection she saw was not her own but once again that of her grandmother, only now as she had been the last time Beth had seen her. Lying in her coffin at the funeral home.

Beth screamed and ran down stairs, grabbing her phone, she begged Grimboles to take the mirror back. The mysterious thing is, from that day on, when looking into a mirror what she now saw was a true reflection of herself. Never again would she see that distorted image.

Somehow the spell had been broken, her fear of mirrors a thing of the past.