

#1 *New York Times* Bestselling Author

# Nora Roberts



## The Mirror

The Lost Bride Trilogy

Book 2



# The Mirror

Nora Roberts



ST. MARTIN'S PRESS  
NEW YORK

[Begin Reading](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

**Thank you for buying this  
St. Martin's Publishing Group ebook.**

To receive special offers, bonus content,  
and info on new releases and other great reads,  
sign up for our newsletters.

[Sign Up](#)

Or visit us online at

[us.macmillan.com/newslettersignup](https://us.macmillan.com/newslettersignup)

For email updates on the author, click [here](#).

The author and publisher have provided this e-book to you for your personal use only. You may not make this e-book publicly available in any way. **Copyright infringement is against the law. If you believe the copy of this e-book you are reading infringes on the author's copyright, please notify the publisher at: [us.macmillanusa.com/piracy](http://us.macmillanusa.com/piracy).**

To family  
Those of the blood, and those chosen

PART ONE

Witness

Can I get a witness?

—Brian Holland, Lamont Dozier, Eddie Holland



## Prologue

The manor stood, as it had for generations, on the high, jagged cliffs above the thrash of the sea. Through the swelter of summers, against the bitter winds of winters, in blooming springs, and in dying autumns, it held its place on the rocky coast of Maine.

Within its stone and cladded walls, inside the gleam of its windows, it had seen births and deaths, it had known triumphs and tragedies. Both blood and tears had spilled on its polished floors; secrets and shadows lived in its many corners.

And it remembered them all.

From its turrets, its widow's walk, from the seawall beyond its grand entrance doors, many eyes had looked down toward the village of Poole's Bay.

Many eyes looked there still.

Since those grand doors opened in 1794, a Poole had walked those halls. A Poole had climbed the grand staircase, gazed from the many windows, dreamed their dreams. And some had lived their nightmares.

Some lived them still.

A murdered bride, the first of seven doomed, would—in all innocence—carry the curse that haunted the manor. Generation by generation, it passed its shadow to the next, and the next, through the rage of a jealous witch.

With those lost brides, others walked the labyrinth of rooms. Those who had lit the many fires, made the beds, cooked the meals continued their

duties.

Others who had lifted a glass in toast, danced in the ballroom, or rocked a fretful baby in the night toasted and danced and rocked still.

In the many rooms, time came and went. Music played, clocks ticked, floors creaked as the manor waited for another generation.

As it waited for one who might break the curse.

More than two hundred years after Astrid Grandville Poole died in her wedding finery, more than two hundred years after her murderer cursed the manor and leaped off the cliffs to her own death, another with Poole blood walked through those grand entrance doors.

Those who'd come before her watched and waited as she made the manor her own. As she dreamed her dreams—or theirs.

As she walked the labyrinth where music played and clocks ticked and floors creaked. And to the mirror where time came and went.

Carved predators frame this mirror's glass and seem to snap and snarl and slither. And its glass opens a door to what was for her, and another with Poole blood.

Hands clasped, they step through the door together.

And become the ghosts.



## Chapter One

Music that had been dim and distant poured around her now. Colors and shapes that had been blurred and indistinct on the other side of the mirror sharpened.

Sonya gripped Owen's hand—the hand of the cousin she hadn't known existed only months before. That hand was warm, that hand was real.

Instead of furniture stored, with white sheets draping it, people swirled around them. Women with hair piled high, long dresses flowing, and men in sharp, dark suits danced, laughed, drank. The room—the ballroom—smelled of flowers. There were so many of them. And of perfume. An orchestra played something lively and quick.

She heard a woman laugh, high and bright, over the music. She saw a line of sweat slide down the temple of a man with slicked-back hair as he led his partner in the dance.

And she heard her own heart pounding louder than the drumbeat.

When her hand trembled, Owen tightened his grip. And he said, almost casually, “This is fucking weird.”

The bubble of hysteria in her throat came out in a breathless laugh. “I'll say. I've done it before, gone through, but this is the first time I was awake when I did. I thought, before, I thought I'd dreamed it. But it's not a dream.”

“Nope.” He scanned the room. “We know where we are. It's the ballroom. Any idea when?”

“1916. I read Deuce’s Poole family history book and looked through the pictures enough times to know this is Lisbeth Poole’s wedding reception.”

A man, obviously enjoying his gin, stumbled right through her. “Oh my God.”

“That’s beyond weird.” Frowning, Owen turned to her, studied her with eyes a slightly lighter shade of Poole green than her own. “Okay?”

She managed a nod. “We’re the ones out of place or time or whatever the hell. They don’t see us, or feel us. Or most don’t. She’s not here.”

“Who?”

“Hester Dobbs. Murdering witch. She’s not here, not yet. This isn’t her time either.”

“Seeing as she’d be dead over a hundred years.”

“Maybe we can stop her. It’s not a damn dream, so maybe we’re here to stop her. Thirteen spider bites, inside the wedding dress—that’s how Lisbeth dies today. If we can just—”

“What, strip her clothes off?”

“I don’t know. We have to try something. Where is she? Where the hell is Lissy?”

Owen pointed. “Other side of the ballroom? I’m taller, can see over more heads. I’ve seen pictures, too, and that looks like a wedding-type dress to me.”

He shifted Sonya to the left.

“Yes! Yes, that’s her.”

As she started forward, people danced through her. Some gave her a jolt, like a mild electric shock, others a chill that shot straight through her bones.

“It’s like walking through mud,” Owen muttered, and shoved a frustrated hand through his unruly brown hair. “Or fricking quicksand.”

“I know. I know. It happened like this before. I can’t see her anymore. It’s so crowded. Can you see her?”

“Just keep going. She’s moving to our right. She’s dancing. She’s—Shit!”

“What? What happened? I—” Now she saw, through a break in the dancers as they glided. The look of shock and pain on the young, sweet face.

And then the shriek.

“We’re too late, too late.” But she kept pushing forward. “If we can’t save her, we need to stop Dobbs from getting her wedding ring. She needs all seven rings. We need to get it first.”

As Lisbeth collapsed in her husband’s arms, Sonya felt the change in the air, the sudden brittle bitterness of it.

Hester Dobbs, her hard beauty glowing, her dark eyes sparking with venom, all but floated across the ballroom. Her waving fall of black hair seemed to stir in an unseen wind as she approached the dying bride.

Enraged, Sonya cried out, “Stop! You bitch. Leave her alone.”

Dobbs snapped her head around. For an instant, just an instant, Sonya saw surprise, and maybe a hint of fear ripple over the hard beauty of her face.

Then that unseen wind struck her, slamming into her like an icy fist. It broke her hold on Owen’s hand, sent her flying back, flying through people who rushed forward.

She landed hard enough to leave her dazed and dizzy. As she fought to draw in a breath, to push herself up, she watched a spider, wider than her palm, skittering across the floor toward her.

Real, she thought, it was somehow real, somehow *now*.

The room filled with screams, with weeping, with rushing feet as she tried to scramble up and away.

She saw its red eyes gleaming, and prepared for the first vicious bite.

An inch from her bare foot, Owen stomped on it. Her stomach rolled as she heard the ugly crunch.

“Up.” He hauled her to her feet. “Move!”

“Did you get it? Did you get the ring?”

“It’s gone, and so’s the bride. We’re not.”

He dragged her through the chaos, shoved her through the mirror. And leaped after her.

She tipped straight into Trey’s arms. And he wrapped them tight as the three dogs swarmed them.

“I’ve got you. Jesus, you’re freezing.”

“It got so cold.” Now her teeth chattered with it.

“Are you hurt?” As he ran his hands over her, he looked at Owen. “Either of you hurt?”

“Sonya took a flight like you did outside the Gold Room.”

“I’m okay. It just rattled me.” Leaning into Trey, grateful for his warmth, she looked over at Cleo. “It was Lisbeth Poole. We couldn’t stop it.”

“Let’s get you downstairs.” Cleo stroked Sonya’s hair. “Let’s get you both downstairs.”

“I need a drink.” As he spoke, and his scrappy mutt, Jones, sniffed at it, Owen looked at the bottom of his shoe. “And a new pair of shoes.”

“What is that?” Cleo demanded.

“Evil spider guts.”

“Take them off! You can’t track evil spider guts through the house.”

“Yeah, that was my first thought.”

Cleopatra Fabares, Sonya’s best friend and housemate, took over.

“Trey, take Sonya downstairs. The kitchen. We all need a drink. You. Take those disgusting shoes off,” Cleo ordered Owen again. “Leave them right here until we get something to put them in.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah.”

“We’re right behind you. You can pour us both a whiskey. A double.”

As Owen bent to pull off his shoes, Cleo sucked in a breath that put him right back on alert.

“The mirror. It’s gone. It’s just gone.”

He turned. “Son of a bitch.”

“Get those damn shoes off,” she insisted. “And let’s get the hell downstairs. Then you and Sonya are going to start at the beginning, when the two of you just vanished inside that damn mirror.”

“Whiskey first.”

Though a MacTavish—emotionally if not by blood—Sonya wasn’t one for whiskey. Tonight, she’d make an exception. Still shaken, she let Trey lead her

down from the ballroom, down hallways, through the house as he snapped on lights.

“I don’t remember anything before I was standing up there in front of that mirror.”

She pushed at her hair, wished for a tie to hold it back, then just let the weight of it fall again.

“I don’t remember getting out of bed, walking up there. And you were there.”

“Cleo called.”

“Cleo called,” she murmured.

Cleo, her closest friend for a decade. Cleo, who’d moved into the manor with her without hesitation even knowing it held a curse, ghosts, and a crazed dead witch.

Being Cleo, Sonya decided, those elements had served as some extra motivation rather than any sort of deterrent. But then Cleo’s Creole grandmother was a self-proclaimed witch—the good kind.

With the dogs, his Mookie and her Yoda, flanking them, Trey led her down to the main floor.

At the base of the stairs, she paused to look at the portrait of Astrid Grandville Poole. The first bride, so lovely, so tragic in her white dress.

“It started with her. Everything that’s happening now started with her, and on her wedding day in 1806. When Hester Dobbs murdered her and pulled the ring from her finger.

“It has to end with me. It has to.” She looked up at him, into those deep blue eyes she’d come to trust.

“You came. Cleo called, and you came. After three in the morning.”

“Of course I came.”

“But ... you were with a client. The hospital.” It flooded back. “Oh, that poor woman. Her husband—ex-husband—attacked her. Her kids—”

“They’re okay.” He kept his voice soothing. She was still so pale. “They’re all going to be okay. Don’t worry.”

“You were worried. And so angry. I could hear it when you called to tell me.”

“Her mom and sister are with her now.” Trey turned her, steered her back toward the kitchen. “The police have him, and she’s with her family. The kids are with them.”

“And you’ll take care of the rest, because that’s what you do. Not just the lawyer business. Taking care’s what you do.” She tipped her head toward his shoulder as they walked. “I feel a little off.”

“Really? I can’t imagine why.”

He turned on the kitchen lights, noted the fire crackling in the kitchen hearth, another roaring in the huge dining room.

Bringing the light, bringing the warmth. He wasn’t the only one taking care.

Then he led Sonya to the table. “Sit. Do you want wine? Tea? Water?”

“Whiskey.” She blew out a breath.

He thought of Owen getting a bottle only a few hours before when he’d needed to vent out that worry and anger, and all the frustration that came with it, to a friend.

“It seems to be the night for it.”

With the worst of the cold fading as the fires snapped, she watched Trey get out biscuits for the hovering dogs, set out one for Owen’s dog, Jones, before he walked into the butler’s pantry, easy and confident in jeans and flannel shirt.

Like the first time she’d met him when he’d shown her through the manor, she mused with her head still swimming. The third-generation, long-limbed, lanky lawyer with his black hair, his deep blue eyes.

His seemingly infinite patience.

He knew the house as well as she did—better, she corrected. He’d roamed its rooms and hallways, welcomed from childhood on by the uncle she’d never known she’d had. Her father’s twin—the classic separated at birth.

But they’d met through that same mirror, hadn’t they? Those twins. As children, as men. Both artists, both so much alike in so many ways. Twin

memory, Cleo called it.

One to become Andrew MacTavish of Boston, son of loving parents, husband of a loving wife, father of a loved and loving daughter. All of whom mourned and remembered him.

And one to grow up a Poole of Poole's Bay, to inherit the thriving family business, to inherit and live in the manor, as the son of a woman who was really his aunt, and all at the cold-blooded whim of the matriarch, Patricia Poole.

Just thinking about all of it hurt her mind, her heart. She covered her face with her hands, breathing slow as she tried to steady herself.

As Trey came back with a bottle and glasses, the phone in his pocket played Grand Funk Railroad's "Please Don't Worry."

On a half laugh, Sonya dropped her hands. "Clover never misses. Just a little musical pick-me-up from my nineteen-year-old ghost of a grandmother."

Trey set down the bottle. "Did it work?"

"I guess it did." When Yoda put his paws on her lap, she scratched his head. "And here's more," she said when the eye-patched Jones pranced into the room on his sturdy legs ahead of Cleo and Owen.

"We stopped by your room to get you a sweater in case you're still cold."

"Better now, but thanks." She took the sweater, then Cleo's hand. "Big thanks for looking out for me. For calling Trey and Owen."

From Cleo's phone, Dionne Warwick announced "That's What Friends Are For."

"True enough." Cleo sat, looked at Owen. "Buy me a drink, sailor."

He poured three generous fingers in each glass. "To being here," Owen decided. "Right here, right now. That's a damn good deal right now."

"It is." Sonya lifted her glass, took a gulp. Shuddered.

"All right. Okay. I know you want to know what happened, but can we start at the start? I don't know how I ended up in the ballroom, but you were with me, Cleo. Did I wake you up?"



“No. But somebody did.” She took a long, slow sip, let it slide, let it settle. “I heard the clock at three, the piano, and someone crying, and someone who sounded like they were in pain. You know.”

She looked at the others, shoved at her curling cloud of hair. “The usual middle-of-the-night manor entertainment. I’m just going to roll over and go back to sleep, but ... Somebody touched me. My shoulder,” she said, laying her own hand on it now. “And they said your name. ‘Sonya,’ just ‘Sonya,’ but there was an urgency in it.”

“My name?”

“That’s right. I turned on the light, and thought I’d probably dreamed it, but that urgency? It stuck, and I got up. I was going to check on you, but there you were, just coming out of your room. Sleepwalking, trance-walking, or whatever the hell it is. I ran back for my phone, and I called Trey as I followed you.”

She turned to Trey. “Owen told me you were at his place. He filled me in on your client, your friend who was hurt by her drunk bastard of an ex. I’m glad she’s going to be okay, her and her children.”

“I was pissed off. You were right about that,” Trey said to Sonya. “I went to get Mookie from Owen’s, and dumped on him. Crashed in his spare room.”

“A good thing you did,” Cleo continued. “You went up to the third floor, Sonya, and I could hear that weeping woman, so clear. You stopped outside that room—a nursery once, right? You opened the door, and I swear, Son, I could see and hear the chair rocking along with the sobbing, and you said ... Something like how night after night, year after year, Carlotta grieves for her boy.”

“Hugh Poole’s second wife, about six years after Marianne died in childbirth—having twins, Owen and Jane. They had three more kids, Carlotta and Hugh. One died as an infant.” Sonya drank again, shuddered again. “It’s in the book.”

“I remember, too. I texted Trey so he’d know where we—you—were going, and I kept telling you I was there. I was afraid, I’m not ashamed to say, that

you'd go down to the Gold Room, that bitch's room. I could see a red light glowing around it, and smoke curling out. You looked right at the door, and I thought, well, Jesus, just don't. You said she exists to feed, on fear and on grief. I should've turned the recorder on my phone to get it exact, but I didn't think of it."

"I wonder why?"

At Owen's comment, Cleo managed a snicker. "You said more, about her drinking tears, night after night, year after year. Then, thank the goddess, you turned in the other direction."

She held out her glass to Owen. "Hit me again."

And she drank some more.

"Someone cried out in pain, in what had been the servants' quarters. You went to a door, and I swear to you I could smell the sick, and the bed creaking like someone was in it, tossing and turning. You said, sad, so sad, you couldn't help poor Molly O'Brian."

"Molly," Sonya murmured. The spirit who made the beds, lit the fires, tidied up.

"You said she came from Cobh and found a home here, how she loved to polish the wood, and you cried for her. You said you could only bear witness.

"When you turned, I thought: Shit, Gold Room. But you started toward the ballroom, so I let Trey know that. I turned lights on because it was so damn dark. Then you opened the ballroom doors, and I turned the lights on in there.

"And there was the mirror. It hadn't been there. We'd all been up there not long ago, and it wasn't there. But it was. It was so goddamn cold, and I could hear the pulsing from the Gold Room. Like the damn 'Tell-Tale Heart.'"

Now Cleo shuddered, just a little, before she continued.

"The way you looked at the mirror, Son, I knew, I *knew* you saw something I didn't. I couldn't. Then, oh, such relief, I heard Yoda barking, then the other dogs. I heard them running, and I told you to wait. 'Please, just wait.' Trey and Owen rushed in, the dogs, too. And you woke up."

“I don’t remember any of that. Or ... some, like a dream that’s blurry and faded when you wake up. I heard you tell me to wait. I think. And the dogs barking. I felt half-in, half-out, I guess. Then I was awake and standing in front of the mirror.”

She shifted to Owen. “You saw what I saw in it.”

“Light, movement, color.”

“Trey and I didn’t. We’re not Pooles. It’s a portal,” Cleo said with absolute certainty. “But not for everyone. You said it was pulling you.”

“It was. There was music. I heard music.”

“Yeah,” Owen confirmed. “I didn’t feel that pull, but I saw something, heard something.”

“You didn’t feel it, but you went with me.”

This time Owen’s phone sang out with “We Are Family.”

“One weird trip,” Owen said, and poured himself another shot of whiskey. “Five minutes, ten tops, but memorable.”

“Closer to an hour,” Trey corrected. “Fifty-six minutes.”

“It couldn’t have been.” Shaking her head, Sonya looked at Owen for confirmation. “Just a few minutes.”

“That just says time’s different here than wherever you were. Where the hell were you?” Cleo demanded.

“Lisbeth Poole’s wedding reception. In the ballroom, in 1916,” Sonya said, and told them.

“She didn’t expect us.” Nudging her glass away, Sonya sat back. “When I called out, it threw her off. I ... I don’t think she saw us, but she heard me. And I think it scared her, for a minute. Half a minute. But it didn’t stop her.”

“It was already too late.” Owen frowned into his glass. “No way to stop it, stop her.”

“I thought if I could get to the ring first. Take Lisbeth’s ring so Dobbs couldn’t. But—”

“You flew,” Owen said. “She didn’t aim at me, but dead on at you. Shot you back, ten, twelve feet, and right through people who were running forward.”

He picked up his glass a last time, drained the whiskey. “That’s something you don’t see every day. The spider was different.”

“The one whose guts are on your shoe?” Trey asked.

“That’s the one. Bigger than a wolf spider, but with black widow markings. People went right through it, as it went straight for Sonya. Fast fucker, too. I stomped its ugly ass, and we got the hell out of there.

“Lisbeth Poole was dead,” he said to Sonya, “as she’s always going to be dead on that night in 1916.”

“Then what’s the point of all this?” Sonya demanded, shoving impatiently at her long brown hair. “If it’s always going to be too late, if there’s no stopping her from killing them, what’s the point?”

Cleo’s phone played Ariana Grande’s “7 Rings.”

“It’s never been about saving those brides, those women, Son.” Cleo spoke gently. “It’s about finding their rings, the seven rings, and breaking the curse. Expelling Hester Dobbs from this house, and breaking her curse.”

“Dobbs has the damn rings.”

“We’ll figure it out.” Trey laid a hand over hers. “We’ll figure it out,” he repeated, “but we won’t figure it out tonight.”

“This morning,” Owen corrected. “I’ve got to be at work in...” He tapped his phone for the time. “Shit, about an hour and a half. And I need some damn shoes. I’m scrambling some eggs.” He pushed up. “Got bacon?”

“You’re scrambling eggs?”

“Cousin, if I’m awake to see the sunrise, I want breakfast. I’ll take care of the bacon.”

Trey gave Sonya’s hand another pat. “I’m going to let the dogs out for a bit.”

When he rose, Sonya shifted to look outside. Yes, morning was coming, and the night was dying away.

She had work of her own, and a life of her own. If the manor had given her a purpose beyond that, she’d do her best to fulfill it.

But morning was coming, and the day would follow.

She pushed away from the table to get started.

“I’ll make coffee.”

While the day bloomed, they sat and ate breakfast as they’d sat and shared whiskey and ghost stories.

After the dogs gobbled their own, Trey let them out again.

“I need you to drop me off,” Owen told him. “I’ve gotta clean up, get to work. Have you got a bag or box I can dump those shoes in?”

“I’ll take care of them,” Cleo said.

“By take care of, you mean—”

“Burn them.”

“Oh man.”

“Outside,” she added, “with a heavy dosing of salt.”

“Jesus.”

“That’s how it’s done,” Cleo countered. “It’s not like they were new. I could see that for myself.”

“They were really well broken in.”

She turned, patted his cheek, gave a couple days’ worth of stubble a rub. “I’m sure you have others. A successful businessman and craftsman such as yourself.”

“Is that a dig?”

She just smiled, sweetly. “You sacrificed your really well broken in shoes for my closest friend. No dig—this time. In fact, if I knew how to bake a pie, I’d bake you one.”

“You could learn. I like pie. Come on, Jones. Gotta move, Trey.”

“I’m with you. You’re okay, cutie.” Trey made it a statement as he took Sonya by the shoulders and kissed her.

His certainty served to boost her own.

“I’m okay. It’s my house. As long as that mirror’s in it, that’s mine, too.”

“Good. I owe you both dinner. I can pick you up at seven.”

“Come for dinner. You, too, Owen. I’m making pot roast.”

Trey blinked at her. “Really?”

“I did it once, I can do it again. I think.”

“I’m in.” Owen shoved his phone in his pocket.