

ALEX MORGAN

Paranormal Investigator



STRANGE
REFLECTIONS

JAY MASON

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The Series

Alexandra Morgan, known as Alex, is a 19-year-old college student and the daughter of two prize-winning scientists. What no one knows is that in her free time Alex is a paranormal investigator who takes on a variety of mysterious cases. Together with her best friend Rusty and an online associate known only as c0nundrum, she unravels a conspiracy that will put her own life and that of her family in danger ...

About the Book

Alex notices that people start behaving oddly when they look into mirrors. They become paranoid and convinced that their mirror counterparts are trying to kill them. Soon students wreak havoc at the college and run amok through the town smashing windows. They attack anyone they believe may be working with their mirror selves. Even Alex's mother gets infected, confirming Alex's suspicion that the Centre is involved. With Conundrum's help, Alex and her friends break into the Centre and discover the terrible secret at its heart ...

The Author

Jay Mason is a pen name of Caroline Dunford, who lives in Scotland in a cottage by the sea with her partner and her two young sons. As all authors are required to have as much life experience as possible she has been, at various times, a drama coach, an archery instructor, a counsellor, a qualified psychotherapist, a charity worker, a journalist, a voice actor, a hypnotherapist, and a playwright. Today she writes mainly novels, the odd (often very odd) short story, theatre plays, the occasional article, teaches and mentors. She can't remember a time when she didn't write or tell stories and seriously doubts that she could remain sane if she stopped doing so.

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Episode 3



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1. Things Aren't How They Used To Be

The room is white and she is not alone. The glaring intensity of the walls and the faint but sharp aroma of disinfectant make her think she is in a hospital. Her eyes are refusing to focus properly. They feel dry and gritty. Has she been in an accident? She can't remember. As she scrambles for memories, she realises she can't remember her name.

But she can remember his. A man is leaning over her bed. A middle-aged man with a charming smile that doesn't reach his eyes. He is wearing a doctor's coat. In his hand he has a syringe.

"Last time, Alex," he says. She screams.

Alex wakes up sitting bolt upright in bed, her arms outstretched to ward off her attacker. Sweat pours down her back. Her heart is racing as if she has been running for miles and her throat is raw from the scream.

Alex automatically pressed her hand to her chest as if some part of her feared her heart was about to break out from her ribs. The intercostal muscles down both her sides ached. She felt as if she had been in a bad fight. She peered down inside her nightdress, but there was no sign of bruising. Gradually she became more awake and more rooted in reality. The dream remained in the edges of her mind, but it was the emotions that lingered. Even as she

put her feet on the floor, the dream was dissolving like cobwebs in morning dew.

The dial on her bedside clock stood alarmingly ahead of where she wanted it to be. Throwing aside the covers, Alex raced into the shower. Her parents were giving her a lift into college today and she didn't want to start the week off with another row.

As she stood under the hot stream of the shower she wondered exactly what more she could do to appease her parents. Or was it *would* do? Shampoo ran into her eyes, making them water. She brushed the foam away only to discover her hand was also covered in foam and she'd only made things worse. This seemed an apt metaphor for how her life was going.

Ten minutes later, with her hair still wet and her eyes slightly red, she presented herself in the hall. Irene and Lewis, her mother and father, were waiting. Her father jingled the car keys in his hand.

"Am I late?" asked Alex, glancing at the hall clock.

"No," said Lewis. "We're a little early."

"It's generally accepted that one should arrive slightly earlier than agreed for an arranged meeting," said Irene. Alex bit her lip. *Rise above*, she thought to herself. When she didn't respond to her mother muttered something about 'a wet mess' under her breath and turned to check her flawless make-up in the mirror.

Irene reached for the door, but Lewis didn't move. He stood there, a big sappy grin spreading over his face.

"What are you waiting for?" said Irene.

Lewis held out the keys at arms length. "Surprise!" Irene went to reach for them and Lewis plucked them out of her reach. "Uh-uh," he said. "These aren't for you." He smiled at his daughter. "Alex?"

"You're giving her keys to our car?" said Irene, her voice rising.

"No," said Lewis. "I'm giving her keys to *her* car."

For a moment real happiness suffused Alex. "Really?" she asked, tentatively taking the key.

"Really," said Lewis. Their eyes met and instantly Alex's joy faded. This was a bribe. Her father nodded slightly, as if he knew what she was thinking. This was his way of thanking her for not telling her mother of the military style project he was running at the centre. For years he had presented the amiable, bumbling image of a mildly eccentric biologist, but now Alex knew very differently and her mother did not. Her father's gaze held her. If she took the keys then she was agreeing to continue to keep her mother out of the picture.

She hesitated. Then she heard her mother begin to object. Alex tried to block her voice out, but the words 'irresponsible', 'childish' and 'undeserving' came through all too clearly. She took the keys. Her father's grin widened, so much that she thought for a moment his entire head might flip back like a pedal bin.

"It's in the drive," he said. "You'll need to move before we can get out. It's an automatic," he added referring to the British custom of not driving stick-shifts. "Easier to drive than a dodgem car."

Alex nodded back at him. She didn't smile. She hoped he understood that she wasn't happy about the situation.

"Not even a bloody thank you," said her mother.

Alex swept past her and opened the door. Before it closed behind her she heard her mother scream at her father "What were you thinking?" Irene screamed so loudly her voice cracked. Alex pulled the door shut and fled down the path.

The car smelt of fresh leather with an overlaid sharp scent of cleaning fluid. Alex barely registered that it had four doors and was coloured red. Inside it seemed enormous, and despite her long legs, she had to draw the seat forward to reach the pedals. With the echoes of her

parents' argument in her ears, she pressed the start button and drove away.

"Wow, a first generation Prius," said Rusty as he stood next to her, admiring the car. "Old now, but I hear they just keep going and going." He opened the door and climbed into the driver's seat. "So how does it feel? Is it as smooth a ride as they say? Can you see when it shifts to electric and goes all ninja silent?"

"The panel there." Alex pointed. "It lights up."

Rusty cocked his head to one side. "You don't seem very excited. I'd be over the moon if someone bought me a car — and a car like this." He stroked his hands lovingly down the sides of the steering wheel.

"You can drive it if you want," said Alex.

Rusty's mouth hung open. "Really? You'd let me drive her?"

"It's a him," said Alex. "I'm not that good with females."

"Did your mother do something to take the shine off the occasion?" asked Rusty.

"More than the usual. She actually screamed at my father. I mean they've argued before, but she yelled so hard her voice cracked. It was nuts."

"Does she have a birthday coming up?" asked Rusty.

"Only Mum and Cat always get a bit angsty if they see me spending money on myself when I should be saving to buy a present for them."

Alex looked pointedly around the inside of the car. "I don't think my parents have any money worries," she said, blushing.

"Yeah, suppose not. Lucky them," said Rusty. He got out of the car. "Thanks for the offer of a drive, but I doubt your