

"The Milk Run"

It was supposed to be a quick trip—just milk. The kids wanted cereal for the morning, and I didn't want to hear the complaints at sunrise. So I grabbed my keys and drove.

The road stretched out for miles, nothing but cornfields and the occasional crooked fence. My headlights caught dust and bugs, but no other cars. Not even a porch light. The kind of dark that swallows you whole.

About halfway there, I noticed a figure walking along the shoulder. Tall, thin, arms hanging a little too low. As I passed, I glanced in the rearview mirror.

But there was nothing.

I tightened my grip on the wheel, told myself I was just tired.

A few minutes later, there it was again. Same figure. Same walk. This time closer to the road, head turning just slightly toward me.

I pressed the gas. My heart was pounding now, counting down the miles to the store. Finally, I saw the glow of fluorescent lights ahead. Relief.

I pulled into the empty lot, parked under a flickering lamp, and hurried inside. The place was deserted—no clerk, no customers, just the hum of the coolers.

And there, in the back by the milk section... stood the figure.

Waiting.



"The Milk Run — Part II"

I froze. The figure didn't move, didn't breathe, just stood among the rows of milk cartons like it had always been there. Its head tilted slowly, almost curious.

I blinked—and it was gone. The aisle was empty. Only the faint hum of refrigeration.

Hands shaking, I grabbed a gallon, hurried to the counter. The register screen glowed, but there was no clerk. No sound but the storm outside. I left cash on the counter, practically ran back to my car, and slammed the door.

The milk was on the passenger seat. My keys were in the ignition. I started the engine.

Then I glanced in the rearview mirror.

Three porcelain dolls sat in the backseat. Their cracked faces stared forward, glassy eyes catching the flicker of the parking lot light.

I don't own any dolls.

As the engine idled, the figure appeared again—this time just beyond the car, half-lit by the buzzing lamp. And behind me, I swear I heard the dolls whisper:

"Drive."



"The Milk Run — Part III"

The dolls' whisper echoed in my ears long after the word faded. Against every sane thought in my head, I pressed the gas. The figure in the lot didn't move—it only watched as I pulled out onto the road again, milk sloshing quietly beside me.

The storm had eased, but the night felt heavier, pressing against the glass. The road I took wasn't the one I came in on. I don't remember turning. I don't even remember deciding. But the car knew where it was going.

Cornfields gave way to overgrown hedges, then to a wrought iron gate hanging open, rusted and bent. My headlights swept over a shape rising in the dark. An old mansion, three stories tall, its windows black and hollow. Shutters hung like broken teeth.

The dolls in the backseat were silent now, but when I glanced at the mirror, I swore their heads had tilted toward the house. Toward it.

I parked without meaning to, engine still running, rain dripping from the trees above. And then, just for a moment, the mansion lit up—every window blazing with warm, golden light.

Inside, figures moved. Dozens of them. Standing at the windows, pressed against the glass, watching me.

The lights flickered out.

Only one window remained glowing. Top floor, center.

And in the glass, I saw my own reflection.

But I hadn't gotten out of the car.



"The Milk Run" — Part IV

The mansion loomed above me, every shutter and broken tile groaning in the storm. I don't remember deciding to leave the car, but my feet were already moving, carrying me up the crumbling steps.

The front doors creaked, then swung open before I touched them. A breath of cold air slid out, smelling of damp wood and something sweet, almost rotten.

I stepped inside.

The entryway stretched into shadow, the wallpaper peeling in long curls. Both sides of the hall were lined with dolls—porcelain, ragged, some missing eyes, some cracked straight through. Dozens of them.

Their heads turned as I passed.

My breath caught when I heard it: faint, high-pitched laughter, the kind children make when they're hiding. It echoed from somewhere deep in the house. Then, above me, floorboards groaned beneath unseen footsteps. Slow. Heavy. Pacing.

The doors slammed shut behind me.

The laughter stopped.

The dolls kept staring.



"The Milk Run" — Part V

The staircase groaned under my weight, every step sending echoes spiraling into the dark above. I didn't want to go higher—every instinct screamed to leave—but something tugged me forward, the same invisible pull that led me off the road in the first place.

The second floor was lined with portraits, gilt frames caked in dust. Families posed stiffly, frozen in time—except every face had been violently scratched out, gouged deep into the canvas as if by fingernails. Some portraits were shredded entirely, leaving only hands and torsos, headless families staring at nothing.

A door at the end of the hall caught my eye. I tried the knob. Locked. The sound of shuffling came from the other side, slow and dragging, then silence.

I climbed higher.

The third floor was worse. The wallpaper had sloughed off in strips, revealing walls bricked up behind every door. I pushed one open and found nothing but cold, damp stone. Another door led to the same. A dozen doors, all leading nowhere. All sealed.

Except one.

This room was filled with mirrors, standing tall in warped wooden frames. But they didn't reflect me—not exactly. Each mirror showed fragments of places I'd never seen: a child's nursery with a mobile swaying, a dining room where rotten food still steamed, a hospital hallway flickering with failing lights. In one mirror, I saw the dolls from the car—sitting in the backseat, waiting patiently.

When I looked closer, I realized their tiny heads were turning toward me.

Behind me.

The sound of small feet pattered across the floorboards, quick and light, followed by a low groan from the staircase below. Something else was climbing.

I backed into the hall, my pulse hammering, the mirrors whispering as though my reflection wasn't mine anymore.

And above me, the attic door creaked open.



"The Milk Run" — Part VI

The attic door above yawned open, but before I could take a step, the house seemed to shift beneath me. The floor pitched forward, pulling me toward a wide staircase I hadn't seen before. My legs moved without my consent, carrying me down into the dark.

When I reached the landing, the smell hit first. Rot. Sweet, cloying, and thick enough to taste. A set of double doors stood at the end of the hall, light leaking from the cracks. They opened as I approached.

A banquet hall stretched before me.

A long table sagged beneath the weight of food, or what might have once been food. Platters of meat slumped in their own decay, crawling with worms. Bowls of fruit collapsed into black mush. Wineglasses brimmed with something dark and congealed, clinging to the crystal like blood turned to syrup.

Every chair along the table was filled. Not by people, but dolls. Hundreds of them. Some porcelain, some ragged cloth, some twisted from wire and bone. Their little bodies sat upright, heads tilted at unnatural angles, glass eyes glittering in the chandelier's sickly glow.

At the head of the table sat the figure. Tall, thin, draped in shadows that seemed stitched to its skin. Its arms were too long, resting on the table like lengths of rope. Where its face should have been was only a blur, a smear of features shifting too quickly to recognize.

As I stood frozen in the doorway, one of the dolls turned its head toward me with a sharp crack. Then another. Then another. Until every one of them faced me.

The figure raised a hand.

The dolls began to move. Tiny hands lifted forks and knives, scraping against porcelain plates. Their mouths—painted, stitched, or broken—began to open and close, chewing though no food touched them. The sound of cutlery clattered louder and louder, a deafening feast for the dead.

Then the figure stood. The dolls froze mid-motion, utensils poised in the air. The blur of its face tilted toward me, and though it had no eyes, I felt its gaze settle deep into my bones.

A single chair slid back from the table. The only empty seat.

Waiting for me.



"The Milk Run" — Part VII

The chair waited at the head of the banquet table, angled toward me as if someone had just risen from it. The dolls sat frozen in their grotesque feast, little hands clutching rusted forks and chipped knives, their glass eyes unblinking. Some still held food—chunks of gray meat sagging from forks, fruit pulp dripping like blood from their porcelain mouths.

I couldn't move. My body wanted to turn, to run, but the house itself seemed to hold me still. The air was thick, pressing against my chest like wet fabric, heavy with the scent of rot and candle wax.

The tall figure loomed at the far end, motionless. Its face was a blur, a smear of shifting features, like an image smudged on glass. I caught fragments—an eye, a mouth, a nose—but never all at once. The more I stared, the more it seemed like it was trying on faces, cycling through them. Testing them.

A sound rose in the silence—soft at first, then swelling. Laughter. High-pitched, echoing. Children's laughter, spilling from the dolls in waves. Their tiny jaws clattered open and shut, the sound breaking from them in shrill, broken tones. Their laughter didn't belong in this room; it belonged on playgrounds, in sunlit kitchens. That's what made it wrong.

One doll toppled from its chair, landing on the floor with a crack. Porcelain shattered, spilling not stuffing, but wet red tissue across the boards. The dolls beside it leaned forward, dipping their utensils into the mess, stabbing and scooping, feasting on what spilled.

The tall figure's head twitched. It raised one long arm and pointed.

The empty chair scraped back another inch.

My legs trembled, then buckled. Something was dragging me forward. The dolls beat their tiny utensils against their plates in a slow rhythm, metallic clinks echoing like a heartbeat. Closer. Louder. I fought against it, digging my nails into the doorframe, but the pull only grew stronger.

My reflection caught in a goblet near the table's edge. I froze.

The face staring back wasn't mine.

It was older. Hollow-eyed. Skin pulled thin and gray, stretched tight across the bone. Mouth sewn shut with black thread.

The tall figure shifted, and for the first time, its face steadied.

The reflection in the goblet was my own.



The Milk Run — Part VIII

I tore my gaze from the goblet, from the smiling version of myself staring back, and stumbled into the hall. My footsteps thundered against warped wood, echoing far too loud—as if the house wanted to announce my panic.

The hall stretched forward, endless. Doors lined each side, identical, repeating. I passed one with peeling green wallpaper, then another, and another—until I realized I was passing the same one again and again. The air grew thicker, hot and stale, filling my lungs with something that wasn't quite air.

I forced open a door. Behind it was another hallway. Identical. I tried again—another hallway. The next—another. Each door was only a copy, feeding me deeper into the house's stomach.

From behind, I heard the patter of small feet. Not one set—hundreds. Tiny porcelain steps clattering in unison, chasing me. I spun around. The dolls were there, pouring from the banquet hall, spilling like ants from a nest. Their glass eyes shone in the dark, their tiny mouths still opening and closing with those hollow, broken laughs.

I ran.

The staircases betrayed me. Each one I climbed led back to the same landing. I counted thirteen steps, then twenty, then forty, but the hall at the top was always the same, wallpaper curling like dead skin, portraits gouged into faceless ruin. My legs burned, but the stairs gave me no escape.

A mirror at the end of one hall caught my eye. Relief surged—I thought maybe it was a window. I ran toward it, only to find myself staring into another version of me. This one had no eyes, only black, weeping sockets. Its mouth moved, mouthing words I couldn't hear.

Behind the reflection, I saw movement. A child's shadow darting across the wall. Then another. Then dozens. Laughter filled the hall again, high and sharp, overlapping in a sick chorus.

The dolls were closer now. I felt them, dozens—no, hundreds—skittering across the floor, climbing the walls, their little fingers scraping against wood. Some had grown taller, their porcelain limbs stretched thin like twigs, heads bobbing on broken necks. They crawled toward me, their laughter echoing, a thousand voices in unison.

Every door I tried slammed shut. The wallpaper pulsed, breathing. The chandeliers overhead swung wildly though no wind stirred. The house groaned around me, bones

shifting, halls bending and folding until it was no longer a mansion at all but a labyrinth of itself, chewing me deeper into its body.

And then I heard it.

The slow drag of footsteps. Heavy, deliberate. The tall figure, moving somewhere ahead. Every hallway led to it. Every path bent toward it.

No matter how far I ran, I wasn't escaping.

I was only being delivered.



"The Milk Run" — Part IX

Every hallway bent upward. No matter which door I pushed through, no matter which stairs I climbed, I ended at the same place: the narrow stairwell to the attic.

The dolls lined the steps, hundreds of them, knees drawn tight, hands folded neatly in their laps. Their cracked faces tilted upward, unblinking, as if they'd been waiting for me all along. I tried not to touch them as I passed, but their porcelain heads turned, one by one, tracking my climb.

At the top, the attic door stood open. A sickly glow spilled from within.

I stepped inside.

The room was bare except for a circle of dolls surrounding a single window. The glass shimmered with golden light, cutting through the storm outside. In the center of the circle stood the tall figure.

It was still a blur, a smear of borrowed faces. But as I entered, its head lifted. The blur steadied.

And I saw myself.

Not the me I knew, but the version from the goblet—older, hollow-eyed, lips sewn tight with black thread. My double stepped forward, its long arms dragging across the floorboards, thread snapping free from its mouth with each stride.

The dolls began to chant. Their tiny voices rose in whispers that built into words:

“Sit. Sit. Sit.”

One empty space waited in the circle, sized perfectly for me. My reflection smiled, lips split and bleeding from the broken stitches. It raised a hand, gesturing toward the spot.

I backed away, but the house closed in. The walls pulsed like a heartbeat. The dolls shuffled closer, their glass eyes burning in the dim light.

And then the window flared bright.

In its glass, I didn't see the attic. I saw my car. The milk still sweating on the passenger seat. My keys in the ignition.

And me—sitting in the driver's seat.

Only this me wasn't moving. Wasn't breathing.

The reflection smiled again.



"The Milk Run" — Part X

The attic glared with golden light, the window burning brighter until I had to shield my eyes. When I looked again, the scene beyond the glass sharpened. My car. Rain slicking the windshield. Headlights glowing weakly in the storm.

And me.

Sitting in the driver's seat, still as stone, milk sweating on the passenger seat.

But something was wrong. My clothes were different—older, worn, as though I had been sitting there for years. My skin was pale, slack, lips cracked and colorless. My hands gripped the wheel in a death-clench, but my eyes... my eyes were open. Watching.

I stumbled back, heart racing, but the dolls closed in, their whispers rising:

"Always. Always. Always."

The figure at the window—the blurred, hollow-eyed version of me—stepped aside. And for one heartbeat, I saw clearly.

It wasn't another me.

It was the same me.

The first me. The one who had taken the road for milk, years ago, decades ago—maybe longer. The one who never came back.

The truth hit like a blade to the spine. I hadn't stumbled into this nightmare by chance. I'd been here before. I'd walked this road. Climbed these stairs. Sat in this circle. Again and again.

I was only following the path I'd already taken.

The attic walls groaned. The dolls' laughter screeched like breaking glass. My double in the car lifted its head, lips stretching into that awful, familiar smile.

The mansion pulsed once, like a living thing, and the window's light consumed me.

When it cleared, I was back in the car.

The milk on the passenger seat. The storm outside. The keys in the ignition.

And in the rearview mirror, the dolls sat quietly in the backseat. Waiting.

There is no morning. No escape. Only the road, the house, the loop.

The milk run never ends.

The End ... or is it?

Thank you, I hope you have enjoyed this tale and got some measure of entertainment out of it. Please let me know your thoughts and if you like it, let me know 😊 Please also, look for my other tales on my page.