



From the MixCache.com library

SAMPLE COPY

Midnight at Hollow Manor

MixCache.com

SAMPLE COPY

Table of Contents

- Introduction
- Chapter 1: The Letter on a Rainy Morning
- Chapter 2: Welcome to Hollow Manor
- Chapter 3: Echoes in the Corridors
- Chapter 4: Whispers from the Village
- Chapter 5: The Groundskeeper's Warning
- Chapter 6: Dust and Old Diaries
- Chapter 7: The Locked Door
- Chapter 8: Ghosts in the Library
- Chapter 9: Reflections of the Past
- Chapter 10: Broken Promises
- Chapter 11: The Night Watcher
- Chapter 12: Haunted by Shadows
- Chapter 13: Fragments of Memory
- Chapter 14: The Portrait Gallery
- Chapter 15: Cracks in the Foundation
- Chapter 16: Beneath the Floorboards
- Chapter 17: Clues in Candlelight
- Chapter 18: Truths and Trapdoors
- Chapter 19: The Librarian's Secret
- Chapter 20: Letters Lost and Found
- Chapter 21: The Masked Presence
- Chapter 22: Midnight Revelations
- Chapter 23: Breaking the Curse
- Chapter 24: Choosing Light
- Chapter 25: The Last Dawn at Hollow Manor

Introduction

Ava Bellamy never imagined her life would lead her to the wind-battered edges of the English moors, nor that she would one day inherit a crumbling manor steeped in shadows and secrets. At thirty-four, Ava's world had become a delicate tapestry of disappointments—a publishing career perpetually on the brink, missed deadlines, and the slow fading of dreams she once chased with reckless conviction. London felt more like an exile than her chosen home; its crowds and noise offered little comfort as her ambitions unraveled.

When the letter arrived bearing the crest of an unknown solicitor, Ava almost threw it away, assuming it was junk mail or a cruel mistake. But beneath the embossed paper and formal language, she found a lifeline in the darkness: she was the sole heir to Hollow Manor—ancestral home of the Bellamys. There was, however, a peculiar condition. To claim her inheritance, Ava had to live in the manor for thirty consecutive days—and she had to do it alone.

Despite her doubts and the niggling ache of abandonment that followed her since childhood, something within her stirred. Perhaps it was hope, or perhaps desperation—a yearning to escape her present and forge a new beginning, however uncertain. Days later, suitcase in hand, Ava found herself standing at the iron gates of Hollow Manor, the faint outline of a vast, brooding house rising amidst endless fields and twisted brambles.

From the moment she crossed the threshold, the manor seemed to breathe around her—a silent, spectral presence steeped into its walls. Floorboards groaned beneath her feet, and cold drafts lingered in every blackened corner. Yet even as unease prickled at her skin, Ava couldn't shake a strange sense of belonging, as if the house itself had been waiting for her return. The villagers' wary glances and whispered warnings about the 'Hollow Curse' did little to dampen her resolve.

On her first night, with storm winds howling beyond shuttered windows, Ava realized her journey was not just about possession of a house, but reckoning with the history it contained. Family secrets slumbered in forgotten diaries, long-locked rooms, and the echoing footsteps that stalked her dreams. In Hollow Manor's chilling silence, Ava was confronted by what it meant to belong—not only to a place, but to a legacy darkened by betrayal, love, and death.

To remain at Hollow Manor, Ava would have to unravel its mysteries and face not only its restless ghosts, but her own. What began as an escape quickly became a reckoning with her family's shadowed past—and with the future she would choose, once the

clock struck midnight on her thirtieth night.

SAMPLE COPY

CHAPTER ONE: The Letter on a Rainy Morning

The email arrived not with a chime, but a dull thud, as if the digital delivery itself was exhausted by the grey London morning. Ava Bellamy, tangled in a duvet that smelled faintly of stale coffee and unfulfilled ambition, reached blindly for her phone. The clock on the bedside table glowed 7:03 AM, a time when most sensible people were already battling the morning commute. Ava, however, was a novelist—or rather, a struggling novelist who often mistook procrastination for creative incubation.

Her latest manuscript, a gothic romance stubbornly refusing to bloom, lay splayed across her desk, a silent accusation. Rent was due, again. Her agent, a perpetually harried woman named Sarah, had hinted (not subtly) that her advances were drying up faster than a forgotten cup of tea. Life, in short, was a masterclass in elegant decline.

The email was from “Messrs. Blackwood & Finch, Solicitors.” Her first thought was a polite brush-off from a literary magazine she’d submitted to months ago. Her second was that she might have inadvertently signed up for some bizarre legal newsletter. She almost deleted it, fingers hovering over the trash icon. But then, a flicker of something formal in the subject line caught her eye: “Regarding the Estate of Eleanor Bellamy.”

Eleanor Bellamy? Ava frowned. The name didn’t ring any bells. Her family tree was less a sprawling oak and more a spindly sapling, pruned back by generations of unspoken disagreements and geographical distance. Her parents had been only children; her grandparents, equally solitary figures who had passed before Ava was old enough to ask meaningful questions. There were no mysterious, forgotten relatives lurking in the annals of her limited family history.

Curiosity, a rare but potent spark in her current state of ennui, won out. She tapped open the email. The letterhead was crisp, even digitally. The language was precise, almost chillingly so. It began: “Dear Ms. Ava Bellamy, We regret to inform you of the passing of Ms. Eleanor Bellamy, of Hollow Manor, Devon, on October 26th. As per the terms of her last will and testament, we have been instructed to inform you that you are named as the sole heir to her entire estate, including Hollow Manor itself.”

Ava read the sentence twice. Then a third time. Eleanor Bellamy. Hollow Manor. Sole heir. It sounded like something ripped from the pages of one of her own half-written novels. Her mind, usually so adept at conjuring fantastical scenarios, struggled to process this sudden intrusion of the extraordinary into her distinctly ordinary life.

Devon. She'd never been to Devon. She knew it was somewhere in the southwest, known for its rugged coastline and rolling moors. The idea of inheriting anything, let alone an entire manor house, was so utterly alien to her experience that she wondered if it was an elaborate scam. Perhaps a phishing attempt with a particularly convoluted narrative.

She scrolled down, searching for the catch, the inevitable request for bank details or a Nigerian prince's rescue fund. And there it was, buried towards the end of the second paragraph, written in the same dry, legalistic tone: "Please be advised that this inheritance is conditional upon your continuous residence at Hollow Manor for a period of no less than thirty (30) consecutive days, beginning from the date of your arrival. During this period, you must reside alone on the premises. Failure to meet this stipulation will result in the forfeiture of the entire estate to a charitable trust, as outlined in Ms. Bellamy's will."

Thirty days. Alone. The conditions were so peculiar, so deliberately anachronistic, that they lent an air of authenticity to the whole bizarre affair. No scammer would bother with such elaborate rules. This was real.

A thrill, cold and sharp, cut through her lethargy. It wasn't the thrill of wealth, not exactly. It was the thrill of possibility. The publishing industry had grown stale, her friends were settling into domesticity, and London was suffocating her with its relentless pace and even more relentless cost of living. This was a crack in the monotonous façade of her life, a gaping maw beckoning her towards the unknown.

For the first time in months, Ava felt a genuine surge of something akin to excitement. Or perhaps it was desperation, masquerading as courage. What did she have to lose? Her cramped flat, a mountain of overdue bills, and the crushing weight of artistic stagnation? The thought of escaping, even to a possibly haunted manor on the edge of the moors, felt like a breath of fresh, albeit damp, air.

She pulled out her laptop, the old machine whirring to life with a familiar groan. A quick search for "Hollow Manor, Devon" yielded surprisingly little. A few vague mentions in historical records, a blink-and-you-miss-it entry on a local tourism site describing it as "privately owned and rarely seen." No pictures, no grand descriptions. Just an insistent, almost secretive silence surrounding its digital footprint. This only deepened the mystery.

She brewed a fresh pot of coffee, the aroma momentarily chasing away the scent of dust and old paper that seemed to cling to her flat. As the caffeine began to hum in her veins, she started to formulate a plan. She would call the solicitors, of course, verify everything. She would inform Sarah, who would likely oscillate between bewildered concern and a predatory gleam at the prospect of a potentially marketable

story. Then, she would pack.

Her belongings were few: books, clothes that had seen better days, and the scattered detritus of a creative life that hadn't quite taken off. It wouldn't take long to box them up and arrange for storage. The thought of leaving London, even temporarily, filled her with a surprising lightness. No more listening to the rhythmic thud of her upstairs neighbour's bass. No more navigating overcrowded Tube lines. Just the open expanse of the moors, and a manor. A manor that was now, impossibly, hers.

A shiver ran down her spine, despite the sudden warmth in the flat. It wasn't entirely a shiver of excitement. There was a prickle of apprehension too. Thirty days, alone, in an unknown, ancient house. What kind of person leaves such a will? What secrets lay buried within the walls of Hollow Manor that required such an eccentric, isolating condition?

The rain outside intensified, drumming a steady rhythm against her windowpane, a mournful prelude to the journey ahead. Ava stared at the email, the words "Hollow Manor" seeming to pulse on the screen. It was a leap into the void, a gamble with stakes she couldn't yet comprehend. But after years of treading water, the idea of finally taking a plunge, no matter how cold or dark the depths, was suddenly irresistible. Her novel could wait. Life, it seemed, had just written her an unexpected opening chapter.

This is a sample preview. Purchase the book to read the full content.

Visit MixCache.com to purchase the complete book.

SAMPLE COPY