



# The Unblinking Smile

George Constantinou



The old house creaked, a familiar symphony of settling wood and distant wind. Lately, though, a new note had joined the chorus – a profound, unsettling silence that seemed to swallow all other sounds. It felt as if the air itself was holding its breath, waiting.



A flicker in the periphery, a shadow too deep against the sunlit windowpane. It was gone before a proper look, leaving behind only the lingering sensation of something having been there, something watching from the edge of sight.



Down the quiet street, past the old oak tree, stood a figure. Tall and impossibly still, dressed in a dark, simple suit. Even from this distance, the unnaturally wide, unwavering smile was clear, a stark white slash against their muted face. This was Mr. Finch.



Days later, Mr. Finch was closer, positioned near the overgrown hedge bordering the property. The smile was identical, unblinking, eyes like deep hollows fixed directly on the house. He made no movement, offered no greeting, only watched.



A door, previously latched, now stood slightly ajar, revealing a sliver of darkened hallway. No breeze, no tremor had opened it. A faint, almost imperceptible hum filled the air, a sound that wasn't a sound, but a feeling of profound wrongness.



At the end of the long, narrow hallway, framed by the deepening shadows, stood Mr. Finch. His posture was slightly hunched, his head tilted just so, the smile unchanging. He was inside.



Panic surged. A frantic dash to the nearest door, a desperate twist of the handle. But as the door swung open, Mr. Finch was already there, standing silently on the other side, his smile a cold, knowing curve.



He began to move, a slow, deliberate glide rather than a walk. Each step was silent, each movement fluid and unnatural, closing the distance between them with an eerie grace that defied physics.



Cornered, breath hitched in the throat, there was nowhere left to go. Mr. Finch simply stood, inches away, his hollow eyes reflecting the terrified face of the protagonist, the smile utterly serene.



The light seemed to dim, fading not from the room but from perception itself. Only the unwavering, unnervingly cheerful smile of Mr. Finch remained, a silent promise in the encroaching darkness.