



Mirror Bound
Lisa Mantchev

“Some of the best stories start with a mirror. Alice had one. The Evil Queen did too. As an adolescent, I spent a lot of time looking into mine with an odd mixture of hope and despair.

Our reflections are mighty and mysterious things... and the idea that mine might have a life of its own sparked ‘Mirror Bound.’”

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IT’S MORNING AGAIN. Ava is getting ready. I’m on call while the shower runs, even though the steam makes it hard to judge my cue. But when she wipes the silver surface, I’m there to mimic every movement.

She bends in closer to study the tiny pimple that surfaced in the night. I have a pimple too now. That’s just great. She thinks the same thing.

“Shit,” we say. “That’s just great.”

This wouldn’t happen if she washed her face before falling into bed, but

there's no telling her anything. We flounce out of the bathroom, naked and dripping water.

I flicker across the surface of her college diploma and beat her to the bedroom. The mirror only reaches up to our neck, so I stick my tongue out at her. We study our naked curves, suck in our stomachs, heave up our boobs and let them fall again. She slides the closet door out of the way and we switch into high gear, trying on everything she owns and some pieces twice.

It's like this every morning.

It's getting really old.

God, we need coffee. The sun isn't even up yet.

Maybe after we blow our hair dry and slap on some make-up, I can crawl back into her bed and sleep.



So much for my nap. I get pulled into the restroom at work six times before lunch. She must have picked up a double latté on the way into the city.

The lights here are too bright. What's more, they turn our skin green and bring out the circles under our eyes. The pimple looks worse than ever.

Michelle glides in. Her job is to sit behind the front desk and look pretty. She checks herself out. We check her out. We don't like her and she definitely doesn't like us. She's the office man-eater, complete with sneaky eyes and big tits. That's how she got her diamond stud earrings and top-of-the-line Lexus.

"Honey, you look tired," she says with mock concern. "Watching late night TV again?"

We arch a brow.

"I'm too young to need beauty sleep."

Unlike you.

Insincere smile.

We breeze past her; I scowl over my shoulder at her reflection. It gives us the perfectly French-manicured middle finger when Michelle disappears in to a stall to pee.

Long afternoon. We get invited to the new club downtown. I groan, thinking of all the costume changes we'll have to make later.

I want to take the paint off Ava's toenails; it makes me claustrophobic.

I pick at it with glee and wait for her to notice the chips.



She's late getting home and slams the door. The dog barks and runs to greet her. I wait in the wings with the second dog, holding onto his collar. He's a little stupid and would jump out early if I didn't stop him.

She races through the bedroom. The dogs play, nose to nose with tails wagging. No time, no time, no time. We shed clothes like snakeskin. On goes a skirt, the one with the slit. She must be horny. No one would wear a skirt that short unless she was trolling for a piece.

"Damn it all to hell."

She noticed the toenails. No time to redo and I indulge in a smirk. We quick-fix with dark pantyhose and high heels. We grab earrings and spray perfume. The dogs sneeze and smack their heads against the floor. She leans in and pouts, so I do the same. Crimson lipstick. She winks, and I wink back.

Let's go get 'em.



She checks herself out in the rearview mirror twenty times on the way downtown.

Lipstick on the teeth, stupid!

No, she saw it. Tongues remove the whore-red smears.

Valet parking. The girls from the office are waiting behind the velvet rope for us. Including Michelle. Purring, perfect Michelle. Damn.

Ava agrees.

"Damn."

One last look. We smooth the hair. Dig the black liner out of the corner of our eyes. I almost have butterflies as I chase her inside, dashing through car windows and rainbow-slicked puddles on the sidewalk.

I watch her from behind the bar, fragmented in the bottles. We do tequila shots and laugh with the girls from the office.

The music is loud, but our voice is louder. I cross my legs too and talk with all her friends. We shoot glances at the guys playing pool and smile that coy smile.

There's a shy blond watching us. He's nursing a Corona with a lime wedged in the neck, but she's going after the consumptive poet with a deliberately messy hair-do. Her tragic taste in men drives me wild, but I can't really say anything when I'm downing another mouthful of Cuervo. It goes straight to her head and mine.

There's going to be trouble. Michelle is eyeing the same guy and we go to

stake a claim before she can get her pretty paws down his pants.

It's hard to keep up with her when the room tilts and my head floats miles above it all. I stumble after her, toss my hair and break into a thousand pieces against the disco ball on the ceiling. We dance, rock back and forth. I'm a shadow across the room, a flicker in a glass, twin reflections in his eyes. Oh yeah. The poet is there, all hands and heavy breathing.

Just when I start to enjoy it, she forgets herself. Closes her damn eyes and lets him hold her close. I go back to waiting in the wings, frustrated and impatient.

He stands next to me. We do not touch.



This guy is some kind of freaky. I watch them from the ceiling, trying to time pelvic thrusts and unexpected writhing. He's on top of me then we're on top of them. It's trickier than I expected, but the novelty breaks the monotony. Music thumps in the background—

Twenty-three positions in a one-night stand...

—And I want to snicker but I can't.

The bedsprings squeak in a furious rhythm. She must have closed her eyes again or maybe they decide to only look at each other. But there was a moment when his reflection paused, shook the hair out of his eyes and gave me a look like:

Whatcha gonna do?



Waiting again. I can't believe she's fallen asleep in a complete stranger's bedroom. Probably the booze. I'm on call, in case she gets up to puke all over his bathroom floor tiles. My stomach twists but I'm still on duty.

This could get awkward.

He sits next to me, naked and smoking a cigarette. He offers me one. I shake my head, then reconsider. Why the hell not?

"I don't think we ever got your name." I inhale, and manage not to choke.

"No, you never did."

"You screw a lot of strangers?"

"Yeah. You?"

"It's been a while. This wasn't bad though."

"Thanks." He rubbed a hand through the messy hairdo. "We need to get a haircut. You know how long he spends to look this scruffy?"

“When you have to spend twenty minutes waxing your bikini line, you’ll have my sympathy.”

He gave a short bark of laughter and then a singularly sweet smile. Right about then, I remembered I didn’t have any clothes on either. I studied the half moons in the winetinted polish on my toes.

“You’re cute when you blush.” He blows twin streams of smoke out his nose and stubs out his cigarette.

My cheeks are on fire, and it spreads down my chest. “Whatever.”

“No, really.” He pulls me to my feet and tows me into a little deeper darkness. His kisses are different. Soft and slow. Like he wants to take all the time in the world. Like they might not wake up any minute.



I go to sleep in his arms and get a wakeup call in the back of a taxi. She swipes at her face, and her wild eyes stare at me inside the compact. We sport raccoon circles and rampant bed head.

Did we get his number?

Did we get his fricking name?

I fume while Ava throws up on the side of the freeway.



We’re late, but it’s worth getting bawled out by the boss to see the look on Michelle’s face when we pass reception in the same outfit from yesterday. The black marble surface of the counter really needs to be cleaned....

“Up late?”

I hiss and spit at her reflection.

Ava steps away with a condescending grin and I have to follow. “Ladies never tell.”

“No, *ladies* don’t.”

“How would you know?” she calls over her shoulder. I laugh in the water cooler as she struts to her desk.

She dreams away the morning and doodles all over the desktop calendar. I hover between the computer monitor and her tiny window. I crane my neck until I get a cramp.

I’m not interfering. I’m just concerned.

Move your damn hand, woman!

Jarett.

We have a name. We have a number. And apparently we have another date tonight.

No wonder we glow.



We dress with more care tonight. Ava touches up the polish on her toes and I make no move to sabotage them. This date calls for killer strappy sandals and the perfect little black dress. We spend over an hour on our makeup; I steady her hand. She twists her hair up, but I convince her to let it tumble in loose curls over her shoulder.

The girls pick us up and there's nothing but laughter and dirty jokes and elbows in the gut for Ava.

“He was really hot—”

“And you were really late this morning!”

“So how much sleep did you get last night?”

“A minute or three—” we say, and the girls shriek some more. We laugh and toss our curls.

There are no puddles tonight, no wait outside. We flash past the bar, circle the dance floor. Laser lights cast our shadow in twenty different directions and I get dizzy.

He's there. Waiting for us in the corner. His smile is for us both. Ava waves to the girls and runs across the room to join him. I take the long way, past the bar, around the dance floor. A thousand little bits and pieces of me dance in the disco ball with him.

He holds me close and touches me in inappropriate places, but really it's Jarett and Ava bumping and grinding. We're just along for the roller coaster ride, and this time we don't mind.

“Baby, you are so hot,” Jarett tells Ava.

I missed you he whispers to me.

“Shut up and dance,” she demands with a laugh.

You hardly know me.

When Ava and Jarett disappear into a secluded booth, they leave us alone in the wings.

He brushes a stray, sticky curl from my forehead. Shy, as if he hadn't had his

crotch pressed to mine for the last half an hour.



Screwing on the ceiling is way more fun the second time around. And the third.



While they snore and kick each other in their sleep, we sit together in the wings. His hand is large and warm.

Falling for him is definitely against the rules, but I do it anyway.



Jarett goes out of town for a meeting and doesn't call Ava that week. Another week passes without a phone call and we both fret. She stomps around the house, glaring at me as though it was my fault.

I scowl right back at her.

"He's going to call," we tell each other, but neither of us believes it.

She throws herself on the bed and spends hours watching television infomercials.

I sit in the wings and pout. I pick at her toenails just to make her insane.

If you ruined this, so help me...!



And I won't say we kicked the dog by the time another Friday night rolled around again. But we nudged him a good one.



We're going out. Her hands shake and she jabs us in the eye with the mascara wand.



We're back at the club. She must have concentrated on the road the entire drive here because I missed all of it. I have two seconds to get my bearings before—

Ava freezes.

My gaze is hers, and it's on Jarett. And Jarett is plastered against Michelle. He catches sight of us and the eyes on Ava widen. The eyes on me are full of misery but their lips are on someone else and my hand is clenching.

Ava flees to the bar, but I stay quite still.

She orders a drink, but I circle the room.

Behind the bar, along the dance floor, over the disco ball.

This is against the rules.

To hell with the rules.

My fist plows into Michelle's reflection and both of them double over. She vomits tequila and her double goes for my eyes. He tries to get between us even as Jarett backs away from the mess. The strobe lights and throbbing bass line cover the chaos.

He holds me around the waist and I'm a little conflicted. I want to kiss him, kick him in the nuts and run away all at the same time.

Michelle drags herself away, gagging and screaming. Her reflection hesitates. All around us, other mirror images notice the commotion and then join the fray. They howl and dance on tables, tear off their clothes and screw in corners. It's a little scary, because someone is going to look in the mirrors and see us misbehaving.

Ava is at the bar, sobbing into her drink. I should go to her, but—

"There's going to be hell to pay," he says to me. Then his lips are on mine and I couldn't care less if the world implodes and takes Ava with it.

The mirrors begin to splinter. Cracks run along every surface and break us into pieces.

"Hold on to me!" he yells as the lights flare and explode. Everyone in the bar is plunged into darkness. We're all lost.

But he's got me around the waist and I hold on to him. I think I can hear Ava calling, but she's on her own.

