

Mirror Mirror

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The Deity of Darkness did not recall a time before her imprisonment. She hadn't for many years. When she closed her eyes, she no longer imagined the realm she had once called home. She only saw the shapeless, grey expanse of her world, and blurred visions of the sunrise beyond the mirror.

Yet still, she never felt lonely. Never felt resentment for the gods that had trapped her here all those years ago.

Because even in those dark days when she had first been taken from the world, a child, lost and frightened, the gods had been merciful enough to bless her with company.

The Deity of Darkness had gone by many names over the millennia, and her brother had, too. They were Shadow and Light, Moon and Sun, Yin and Yang. But when the sun had set, and the pair were left to the solitude of their prison, he called her Nyx and she called him Sol.

Centuries had passed since the last time they had seen anyone but each other. Once upon a time, they had been the great sages of the realm beyond. A human would come seeking counsel, and each of them would impart their holy wisdom. But in the end, humans feared that which they could not understand, and the sacred glass that the Deities spoke through, that the humans called a mirror, was hidden away.

Now, Nyx would stand by the looking glass for days at a time, watching for any sign of movement in the realm beyond. She did not believe their mirror would ever be found again—it was her divine purpose to think that way, after all—but it was not such a bad life. At least she had never thought so. She wondered sometimes if she had just forgotten what life was supposed to be.

Her brother never wondered about what their life could have been. Sol believed with all his heart that the gods would protect them. That they would never abandon them.

Not that it mattered. Even if the pair of them were forgotten by the world, they had each other, and they had the faded views of the sky through the mirror. Nyx had long since learned she didn't need anything else. Neither of them did.

Until the day of the fracture.

Nyx would never know what led to that moment, or how the fracture formed. All she knew was that one day, after rising from her meditation, she went to view the sunrise and found an empty slice at the bottom of the mirror where glass used to be.

She knelt, running a finger along the jagged edge of the cut. What did this mean for the other side of the mirror? she wondered. What did it mean for them?

She was so enraptured by the development, the first peculiar thing to happen to her in centuries, that she believed herself alone until a thin, sharp presence arrived at her throat.

The missing shard. And above it, the tearstained face of her brother, her companion, the other half of her soul, holding it against her.

"I'm sorry," Sol croaked, his voice broken as the glass he held, "but I can't let you hurt them anymore."

Even at a whisper, when Sol spoke, it shook their world. After all these years of silence, for they had never needed words between them until now, the sound of anything but her thoughts felt raucous.

So why speak now? Nyx searched her brother's golden eyes for the longest time, and still she found no understanding in them.

"I have..." She adjusted herself to prevent the makeshift dagger from digging into her. Neither of them knew what would happen if their bodies were pierced in this place, and Nyx had no desire to learn. "I have hurt no one."

Sol let out a shuddering breath. "Do not lie to me, Nyx," he growled. "I know you remember what they called us all those years ago." His hand shook with his words, the shard of glass brushing against her. "I was named Light because I brought them hope. You only dragged them down."

Gently, Nyx reached for his wrist and pulled the blade down. "We bring balance, Sol." She inched away from him. "That has always been our duty."

"And for what!" He brought the glass up again but fell to his knees before he could chase her down. Tears streamed down his cheeks, and he slammed his fist into the ground. "The humans feared our power. Feared your wisdom, never mine. This is the only way I can bring them back to me. This is how I fulfil my purpose." He rose to his feet, a weak smile forming on his lips. "This is what the gods wanted."

At that, something inside of Nyx broke. The shattered remains brought her as much clarity as they did pain. "You've lost your mind," she muttered, rising to her feet.

His smile crumbled, overshadowed by a burning betrayal that ripped her soul apart. "I...I never blamed you," he insisted, as if she were the foolish one. "This is our destiny, Nyx. You are meant to sacrifice yourself. And save that realm." He pointed to the mirror, and somehow, he let out a laugh; cackled, as if purpose and merriment had eluded him until now. "I love you, Nyx, but this is the only way." His final words seemed less like a proclamation, and more like an attempt to convince himself. Like words meant for someone who was not there. "This is the only way."

In that moment, Nyx's heart fell silent. She did not feel, she only knew. Knew that her company had not been enough for Sol. That all this time without the presence of mortals had left him twisted, devoid of all logic.

That there was no light between them any longer. Only darkness. Only imbalance.

She could not let the world she had made here be destroyed by his corruption.

Sol stepped forward, his blade raised. "I'm sorry," he cried out again, and with his whole body trembling, he brought the glass shard down.

Nyx never felt its touch.

With a swiftness she had not known herself capable of, she grabbed his arm, twisting it around until the blade no longer faced her.

In these final moments, emotion returned to her and she let a tear fall, tracing the lines of her face as she looked up at him for the last time.

"I'm sorry, too."

She plunged the glass into his chest, feeling nothing but air as it passed through him. No flesh, no muscle, just emptiness.

A thousand reactions crossed his features. Shock, hurt, but worst of all, fear. It had been many years since either of them had been faced with the unknown, and now it charged at Sol without remorse.

Sol's form was fading, his limbs turning translucent as he stared wide-eyed at both the shard and its wielder. "You..." Though he still stood before her, his voice was an echo. "You've doomed them all."

And with those final, shaking words, her eternal companion vanished, leaving nothing to remember him by. No clothes, no blood, not even a pile of ashes.

Just the spotless blade she had killed him with.

Nyx did not know how long she cried for him, clutching the glass fragment to her chest. Days, weeks, even years, as every feeling she knew came crashing down at once. She mourned him, she damned him. She damned herself, for delivering the kill, for knowing she would do it all again.

What did that make her? Selfish, murderous, monstrous. It made her everything Sol had feared. Maybe he had been right to want her dead.

Then, as she drowned in her despair, a thought occurred to her. Her breath hitched, and for the first time since that day, she found herself rising to her feet.

He was still the one to fashion a blade, to scheme and plot before her eyes. He was the one willing to kill her, and she never would have considered it were it not for him, regardless of their sacred duties.

He was the corrupted one.

She was just the monster he created.

She chose, then, to no longer be Nyx. To no longer be the darkness to another's light. To the world beyond, she was simply the mirror. If the mirror was corrupt, selfish, cruel, then so be it.

She approached the looking glass, refusing to spare a glance for the jagged edge. She stared and stared, letting the years pass, until at last she sensed movement.

A woman appeared at her window. No, not just a woman, a queen. She stroked the frame, admiring herself. What vanity. What a perfect victim she would make.

When at last she spoke, she spoke with grandeur. "Mirror, Mirror, on the wall," she announced with a flourish. "Who is the fairest of them all?"

And with a smirk, the Mirror said, "You are, my queen."