

Mirror Mirror - Intro Sequence

The quiet ticking of the grandfather clock in the hall was the only sound as Taylor Caldwell sat on the sofa, frowning ferociously at her math textbook. She tapped her pencil on the paper in front of her and then used the eraser end to scratch an itch on her nose. She hated math. English was so much cooler. Taylor stared forlornly out the window at the softly falling snow, sighing a little. Wasn't it the weekend yet?

Bethany turned to the kitchen counter to add a few more ingredients to the simmering pot of pasta sauce. The simple activity turned into an impromptu jig as a marmalade-striped cat wound its way between her bare feet, yowling.

"Not yet, Bella. You'll eat with the rest of us. Scram."

The cat paid her absolutely no mind and made another melodramatic turn around Bethany's ankles. Unable to catch her balance this time, Bethany sacrificed the olive oil in her hand to catch herself on the counter. The bottle shattered on the tile floor, spilling its contents with a heavy splash as Bella streaked out of the room.

"BELLA!!"

Completely frustrated, Bethany blew a stray brown ringlet out of her eyes, cursing under her breath. Reaching quickly for the paper towels, she pulled the last two off the roll. She let out an exasperated sigh. Obviously not her night. Needing reinforcements, she called out to her daughter.

"Taylor, honey? Can you grab some more paper towels? I'm stuck until I get this glass cleaned up."

Taylor quit building mental snow forts and looked away from the window at the sound of her mother's voice. Not exactly the reprieve she was hoping for, but better than nothing.

"Sure, Mom!"

She uncurled her legs and hopped down off the sofa. Any excuse was a good excuse, after all. Stretching cramped muscles, Taylor came out of the living room and rounded the bottom of the stairs,

aiming for the storage closet set into the paneled wall beneath them.

Taylor flipped on the overhead bulb as she slipped into the closet. The musty smell of an old house filled her nose, which she wrinkled to keep from sneezing. Somehow, this closet always seemed dusty, even though her mom cleaned it religiously.

The naked light exposed the shadowy, unfinished corners of the long, narrow space. Support beams stood out from the walls like starved ribs, and an ambitious spider had set up shop again in the corner over the jumbled pile of toilet paper and paper towels that Mom always bought in bulk.

Walking down the length of the closet, Taylor picked up a roll of towels adorned with a cheerfully smiling lumberjack. She turned back towards the door, where her eyes fell on something new. Hidden back in the shadowy corner behind the door was what looked like a large, rectangular mirror, partially covered in a white sheet gone soft with age.

Looks like Mom went shopping again. She was always going to Augusta or wherever, bringing home funky antiques, weird artifacts, and stuff. Taylor moved in for a closer look, seeing her own reflection shining out of the depths of the exposed corner of the mirror. The frame was gold gilt and ornately carved. Kinda pretty. She pulled the sheet aside to see the overall effect.

The fabric whispered as it slid down the frame's shiny edge and puddled on the floor. Suddenly, the door to the storage area slammed shut behind her, the single light flickering precariously. Taylor jumped and spun around, dropping the paper towels.

"What the ..."

Bethany looked up from her crouched position on the kitchen floor at the sound of a slamming door.

"Taylor? Everything okay?"

Unnerved and feeling sheepish about it, Taylor turned back towards the mirror to pick up her load and leave. Something caught her eye in the reflection almost immediately.

The door was still open.

Turning over her shoulder, Taylor glanced quickly at the door behind her. Closed. She looked in the mirror again. Beyond her own pale reflection in the glass, the doorway stood wide, a warm and

inviting light falling over the worn floorboards of the mirror-image room that wasn't. No way. Taylor took the pink embroidered kerchief off her head and balled it up in her hand, reaching for the mirror.

As her fist touched the cool glass, there was only a moment of resistance before it seemed to ripple like water beneath her hand, which sank in easily. She drew a sharp breath and pulled her fist back, dropping her scarf in haste. She felt the silvery pool object to her withdrawal at first, but it released her. The surface stilled sullenly.

And there was her headscarf, lying inside the mirror.

Taylor strained to see where the welcoming light in the reflection was coming from. Could she really ...? *I just want to see what's behind the door. It will only take a minute.*

Taylor braced a hand on either side of the mirror frame and put a foot through the silvery glass. Her sneaker landed on solid ground on the other side. She hesitated for a moment, looking back over her shoulder. Nah, it would be fine. Just a second - Mom had probably broken out the dishtowels by now anyway. Taylor took a deep breath, holding it in as she slipped the rest of her slight frame into the mirror.

The air smelled cleaner here, with a faint hint of cinnamon. There was a ticking clock somewhere. And the light coming through the door was welcoming sunlight - a far cry from the gray snowdrifts outside her living room window. Her decision made, Taylor scampered towards the open door, stepping out into the sunshine. Only a minute. The door closed softly behind her.

Having dodged the worst of the glass, Bethany rounded the staircase and tried the door to the closet. It was stuck firmly. She rattled the handle a bit, worried now. Her voice was sharper than usual.

"Taylor?"

Unseen by anyone, a small man with an enormous nose and a hat to match it peeked out from behind an oversized storage box in the mirror. He approached the mirror, dancing a little jig in anticipation. The ticking of his watch became more pronounced as he approached the mirror, seeming to echo off the walls on either side of the thin glass.

Bethany rattled the handle again.

"Taylor, are you in there? Get back out here. Now. I mean it, young lady."

No response.

The little man peered at the glass, reaching out a gloved hand towards it. A low rumbling shook the mirror room as the silver liquid danced under his touch. He smiled a feral smile, insanity dancing behind his dark eyes. He spoke just above a whisper, a gleeful, discordant singsong to his speech.

“... Though the shadow of a sigh may tremble through our story, for happy summer days gone by and vanish'd summer glory ... it shall not touch with breath of bale, the pleasance of our fairy-tale.”

With another maniacal grin and a quick pirouette, the man held his enormous hat to his head and ran quickly towards the door Taylor had closed behind her. He opened it, stepped out into the light, and closed it again. The mirror sighed. A brief gust of wind tore at the cobweb in the corner before the air lay still and dusty again.

Suddenly, the knob beneath Bethany's hand gave with a start. She almost fell into the room, seeing her own surprised and none-too-graceful reflection in the exposed mirror. Next to the frame lay an abandoned roll of towels.

And on the floor, just ... inside ... the mirror, a scarf. Taylor's scarf.

"Taylor?!?"

#dnd/chosen