



Published in *More Or Less Democracy & New Media* in 2012 by Future Leaders (www.futureleaders.com.au)

Hall of Mirrors

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Darkness descended upon the land. The trees on the outskirts were now dark silhouettes, with only the moonlight making out their large forms. There were no flowers left anywhere due to the cold winter, the bushes by the trees were mere skeletons of their former selves. All was silent, with no sign of construction save for one small, abandoned building that matched its surroundings. Its former glow stripped from long-term abandonment.

It was on the far side of the oval-shaped patch of land, right in the middle, with only the grass leading to a small set of stairs. The path had long been overgrown by the growing speed of the weeds, once controlled by the blades of a lawnmower. There were no windows to allow in the light, the walls were a faded brown, and the posters that once proclaimed the magnificent attraction were now torn and as faded as the walls they covered. The plaque that held its name was now missing letters and covered in dirt. The moon a silent witness to the building's existence as it shed its light upon the oddly pitched roof that looked like a circus tent.

Abandoned by its owner, it was about to be rediscovered by a lone figure. Wrapped in a thick coat and clutching her arms closely to her sides to shield herself from both the cold and the darkness, she made her way across the long stretch with only the light of her phone to guide her. There was no-one else around and she understood why. The old, rundown building

was as uninviting as Dracula's haunted mansion in a dark forest. She was only here because of one urgent text.

'Hey, Exodus. Meet me at the old mirror house ASAP.' The person who sent the text was a dear friend of hers. Exodus reflected on how exactly she had gotten herself to the point where she was outside in the dark heading for an abandoned mirror house when she could be in her warm apartment. She dared not look at the clock, hurrying out of her apartment into her small car. She tried to remember where exactly the abandoned mirror house was located. After an hour of searching, trying to locate the old car park by the woods, she finally found it. Mentally cursing her absurd friend she made her way towards it, and she was reminded about the past.

Returning to the present she finally reached the steps of the building and looked around to see if she was alone. With no sign of her friend she turned her attention back to the door and apprehensively turned the handle. The door slowly opened with a moaning creak. Frozen, she looked into the dark atmosphere, with fear gripping her heart in a vicelike grip that rivalled an anaconda's squeeze. Taking in breath after deep breath she slowly walked into the opening of the building, trying desperately to slow down her heart rate. That didn't help one bit as the door suddenly closed shut and she was swamped in darkness.

Letting out a small scream she quickly clamped her hand over her mouth. Shakily fumbling with her phone, she tried again to focus on breathing. Scolding herself for being such a scaredy cat she turned on its light and was greeted by her own reflection. Sure enough, the once empty hallway had changed and now a solitary mirror showed her reflection and something else that made her breath stop. The door that was once behind her was gone.

Turning sharply to where the door had been to gain proof, to her dread it was confirmed. The door was indeed

gone and a wall was in its place. Quickly turning back to the mirror before it too disappeared she noticed a new wall. Her breath rasping, her eyes quickly glanced around to take in her new surroundings. Except now she saw that there was a hall of mirrors that bent sharply to her left and was her only means of escape from this haunted building.

Running wildly through the halls she followed every twist and turn, trying to desperately exit the building and leave it to its previous abandonment. Identical mirrors were reflecting her every move. At one point she had to stop, her blue eyes flashing to note any changes to the path and to pull her now messy, black hair from her face. Soon she was running again, and in the mirrors she caught sight of her reflection; it chilled her to the bone. The house seemed to reflect her innermost demons and bring them to life.

Panting for breath and gripping frantically at the smooth surfaces, she tripped into what was another changed room. Dropping to her hands and knees she looked around this now circular room, with mirrors once more reflecting her panicked self. So freaked was she that she didn't even notice that the entrance to the maze of mirrors, as she had come to realise, was replaced by another mirror just as the door at the beginning was replaced by a wall. Her breathing settled down and she slowly made her way to her feet. Exodus looked towards a mirror that stood in the centre of the circle directly in front of her.

It wasn't like the others; it was covered in a faded, dusty, red velvet blanket fringed with gold embroidery. Slowly walking towards the mirror she was drawn in, as it seemed to replay her youthful memories. Softly reaching out she gently touched the fabric, gazing at it and trying to piece together why it was so familiar to her younger self. Finally gaining the courage, she gripped handfuls of the worn fabric and ripped it sharply from the mirror, looking up at the cracked surface. It

was as if that look had lit a flame in a dark room as she saw the familiar fractured surface and was reminded of a tortured childhood memory.

It was a summer's day with people lined up in front of the new attraction with its neat walls, oddly pitched roof and a sign that read 'Hall of Mirrors'. She remembered how she bounced on her feet, clutching her mother's hand, and waited excitedly to enter the building. How the line took so long before she finally got to go in, and how it slightly frightened her when she did. Everywhere they walked the mirrors took odd twists and turns, and things that were there once seemed to vanish. She remembered how she had somehow let go of her mother's hand and couldn't find her despite frantically racing ahead looking. Finally she came to a circular room made up of mirrors and walked towards one that stood right in the middle. Touching its smooth surface and seeing her childlike face she realised with wide eyes and a scream that her nightmarish self with glowing red eyes and a devilish smile was looking right back at her, and the mirror itself cracked.

People rushed through the halls then. Seemingly coming out of nowhere to see what had been the cause of the scream, only to whisper to each other about what they saw. Her mother pushed through the crowd and grabbed her, pulling her away from the mirror and stroking her hair. The owner of the attraction rushed in with a red, velvet blanket fringed with gold embroidery, and quickly covered the broken mirror with it. Once he had covered up the mirror he turned back to the crowd, waving his hands reassuringly and murmuring that it was only an unfortunate accident.

Coming back to the present she continued to gaze at the dull and fractured mirror that seemed to depict her darkest self, haunting her nightmares ever since that day. However, she didn't see what she expected, only her broken reflection. Tracing her hands wistfully across the cracks that stretched

across its surface she simply stared at it and with a warm smile banished the fearful memory. She erased it from her memory and her heart filled with the comforting notion that she would finally get some decent sleep and that the nightmare was in the past. She was safe.

Blinking rapidly from her relieved daze she looked down to her phone; it was blinking at her through her clutched hand. Looking at its surface she opened the message. It was her dear friend.

‘Scary, huh? I told you you’d be able to face your fear with a little encouragement from dearest little me.’



Taylor Saxon wrote this in 2011 when she was in Year 11 at Kildare College in South Australia.