

Cinnamon tossed and turned in his bed, opening his eyes frequently, keeping them locked on the polished cedar box that kept the mirror. The shades in the room had been closed, but the cloudy night sky made it nearly impossible to see out, much less let any ambient light in anyways, yet the box seemed to shine. With his eyes still fixated on the box, he sat up and slowly crawled out of bed, making his way to the table where the box sat.

The cedar had a light, very pleasant smell to it and was smooth to the touch. Slowly and hesitantly, he opened the box and removed the mirror. It had a very humble appearance, any antiques appraiser would have said it was worthless by its make alone. The frame and handle were made of brass, hardly a valuable metal. There weren't even any patterns or designs on it to catch one's attention. The only reason he had found it was because he had been told to look for a mirror that looked "unremarkable".

As his eyes locked on the reflection, he didn't see himself. He saw what made the mirror "priceless" instead of "worthless". A beautiful young Red Wolf woman, with long reddish brown hair a little longer than shoulder length. Her hazel brown eyes were warm and loving and gazed back into his own as he lips curled up into a motherly smile. The woman in the mirror was named Cerise, but he would always know her as "Mother".

Desperately, he pressed his fingertips against the mirror's surface in another futile attempts to touch her, hug her, something. It was an act he had tried in vain several times over the past two days. He tilted his head curiously when his mother's face turned to an expression of shock and she covered her mouth with her paw. It didn't take him long to realize what prompted the reaction, and he quickly grabbed his scarf and wrapped it around his neck to conceal the disfigurement across his neck, left by the same attackers who murdered her.

She moved her paw but looked worried, her expression desperately seeking an explanation. He didn't think to get his writing board and instead, spoke "It's okay. I'm alright now."

But the words didn't come. He couldn't speak anymore. His vocal cords no longer vibrated to emit any sound at all. He couldn't hum, sing, speak, or howl when he made love. There was nothing but a scar that was a bitter reminder of what all was stolen from him. But

maybe he finally had something back. Maybe if his mother really was there in that mirror, he could get her out. Would the fur who hired him to retrieve it know? Would he help him?

Though he tried, Cinnamon hardly slept the entire night. He constantly climbed out of bed to look at the mirror, afraid the image of his mother would be gone. For the same fear that the image or the mirror entirely would disappear, he refused to even fix something to eat or shower. He just sat and waited for his contact to knock at the door. After that, he would ask what he needed to.

His eyes moved from the mirror to the clock over several hours into the late morning. When the time that his contact had specified neared, he got dressed and gazed into the mirror again. His attention was so focused on the mirror that he didn't even hear the knock. After a minute, the visitor was just about banging on the door before he began yelling.

"Hey! You in there?!" he yelled in aggravation.

That snapped Cinnamon out of his trance and he carefully put the mirror back in the cedar box. When he finally opened the door, the pit bull demanded "What the hell kept you? Get the item, and come with me, now!"

Cinnamon did as the pit bull said and on the way to his car, the dog sniffed and snorted "When was the last time you bathed?"

The comment did little to bother Cinnamon, who kept the cedar box clutched close, right against his chest. His eyes were sharp despite his fatigue, watching every fur with deep suspicion. The behavior wasn't unnoticed by the pit bull, either. This "cub" made him nervous and he didn't like that Cinnamon was armed.

The pit bull held in a relieved sigh when they arrived at his boss's shop. As long as that wolf was armed and clutching that mirror like he was, he expected the absolute worst from him. When they entered the main office, a fairly pudgy badger sat behind a desk. Despite his thickness, he was not somebody to fuck with. The badger's name was Jeremiah and Cinnamon had done business with him a few times. They had a mutual respect for each other, so when Cinnamon didn't seem quite right, Jeremiah maintained his temper.

He had very nearly been sent to prison at one point when he was in high school, before he dropped out. Being "kind of fat" gave others something to make fun of him and bully

him for. One bully in particular was vicious, a hairless egyptian cat named Anthony. Jeremiah's father had told him that he would have to make the bullying stop on his own, most likely violently, but it was a thought he handled well. Then Anthony and his friends jumped him. As his two friends held him down, Anthony brandished a pocket knife, vowing to trim the extra fat off of him.

How he got free had been a blur, but after he got a hold of Anthony, he pushed his thumb into his eyes and got him to the ground and picked up a rock. By the time the teachers had pulled him off of the cat, he was unresponsive and out cold. Anthony survived but suffered brain damage and had been very slow ever since. Every now and then, Jeremiah saw him shuffling around wearing an eyepatch over the one eye that he had ruined. He stared down at the ground constantly, almost like he was trying to remember all the things that eluded his dysfunctional mind since that day. Fortunately for Jeremiah, enough of his classmates had seen what Anthony had done that the police said it was a clear-cut case of self defense.

By that point, Jeremiah's reputation had been sealed and other furs didn't bother him. Violence had continued to be something that he disliked, but Jeremiah also understood it had to be an option in many situations. He hoped getting the mirror from Cinnamon would not result in such a violent confrontation.

"So what's going on here, Cinnamon?" he asked calmly.

Cinnamon took a seat, carefully setting the cedar box in his lap as he began to write on his board.

"I think the mirror is trying to show me something. I might need to use it, but I understand you need to make money so I'll pay you for its use and return it immediately after I'm done."

"God dammit...I told you to leave it in the box..." Jeremiah sighed and watched him for a moment, thinking on what he could do. His brow lifted however and he asked "And when was the last time you ate?"

It was pretty clear the young wolf had not been taking care of himself the past couple of days or so. Cinnamon honestly couldn't remember when his last meal was, not that it

was so long ago, but his focus had been so much on the mirror that everything else was barely even a priority.

“Linda, get Cinnamon some food will you?!” he called out to his personal assistant. “And make your best stuff, it doesn’t look like our guest has eaten for a while!”

“You really don’t need to, Jeremiah,” Cinnamon wrote in protest.

“Ahh nah, it’s no problem man.”

Linda was a brown-furred skunk with white stripes, a cute one at that. She was about Cinnamon’s age. What her exact relationship to Jeremiah was was never subject to discussion. Linda wasn’t saying and neither was Jeremiah, though unlike most, Cinnamon had a feeling that it was not sexual or romantic at all. Hell, there might not even have been any sort of affection between them at all, just a business arrangement.

Of course, Jeremiah’s reason for keeping her around could have simply been because she was an excellent cook. As soon as he smelled the food cooking, Cinnamon’s stomach began snarling at him. His ears laid back and Jeremiah smirked a bit.

“We’ll get you fed, don’t worry,” he said.

His demeanor became more serious as he then said “Listen, kid, whatever that mirror showed you will lead you to a dead end. Probably literally. It’s cursed.”

Cinnamon frowned at the warning, but was clearly skeptical about it. His deluded mind couldn’t see at that moment that something that appeared too good to be true probably was, and he still kept the cedar box close to him. He was starting to feel dizzy from hunger as the smell from the cooking food brought just how famished he was to the surface.

Linda prepared something that was quick but hardy and brought out a plate of “eggs in a basket”, bacon, and sausage, setting it on a tray for him. She went back into the kitchen and returned with silverware and some fresh-squeezed orange juice for him as well.

“Eat, we’ll finish our business after,” Jeremiah assured him.

He didn’t need any more convincing and started eating. Despite his intense hunger, he ate slowly and drank the orange juice when he needed. When he was done, there wasn’t a crumb left on the plate and the juice had been finished too. Linda took the tray back into the kitchen and set the dishes aside to be washed later.

“Alright, so what were you saying before about using the mirror?” Jeremiah resumed the conversation.

As Cinnamon picked up his board to write on it, his vision slowly hazed. He blinked a bit and started to write, saying “I just need to borrow it, I’ll pay you. I need to find out what the reflection means.”

As he wrote, however, his eyelids became heavier. He realized what was happening just before he passed out. The mother fuckers dosed him! His board dropped to the floor and he fell out of his chair. They actually hadn’t given him too much tranquilizer; exhaustion did most of the work.

When he woke up, he was in a bed in a cabin somewhere outside of town. The grogginess was still present but was fading and he found he didn’t really feel as angry as he thought he should feel. Instead he felt refreshed and well-rested. His board had been placed carefully on a table with a message written on it. Next to it however was a helmet, a pair of goggles, gloves and a set of keys.

*Cinnamon, for your own safety we had to do this. By the time you wake up, we will be out of town with the mirror. Your payment is in the satchel on the sofa. Do not try to find us or the mirror, it’ll only cause trouble. Against my better judgment, but at Linda’s insistence, I’ve given you a bonus for the trouble you’ve already gone through. The items on this table are yours as well as the motorcycle in the garage. Use it in good health. Oh and make sure you’re not too groggy from the tranquilizer, it would be a shame for you to get smeared on the road.*

Before he investigated his extra payment, he checked over his writing board and was pleasantly surprised that phallic imagery had not been drawn on it. He erased and cleaned his board then took the other items on the table and made his way outside. Strangely, while he still felt a longing for the mirror, he found a weight and burden had been lifted from him. However thinking on what the mirror had shown him, what it had teased him with, still caused him a great deal of pain. "A cursed item," Jeremiah had called it.

After getting his Mauser, Cinnamon collected his money and the other items and walked out to the garage. Inside it was a motorcycle; a Harley Davidson WLA. He looked it over and found that the bike was in great condition, no issues what so ever and ready to ride. His payment plus this. Cinnamon would have to thank Jeremiah...or Linda, actually. Before getting on the road, however, Cinnamon felt a great need for a shower.

It had been...how many days? He couldn't honestly remember and realizing that made him feel even worse. He went into the bathroom and stripped off all of his clothing, except for his scarf, before he turned on the faucet in the shower. He only removed the scarf and carefully folded it when the shower was ready, then he climbed it. The water was nice and hot and he took his time, thoroughly scrubbing through his brown and red fur.

As he washed up, the effects of the mirror slowly waned. Still he felt pain from the false prospect of seeing his mother again. He pushed it from his mind and instead rinsed out all of his fur, got out of the shower, dried off and got dressed.

There were no calls, no furs coming to check in on him, nothing. The only other thing Cinnamon could do there was just sit. Instead, he took the money and the bonus and went back out to the garage. He carefully pushed the key inside the ignition cylinder of the motorcycle and started it up. The helmet and goggles were fastened securely and finally he pulled his scarf up over his muzzle before revving the throttle and riding off.

The sound of the engine was loud but not deafening.

The motorcycle was probably the best thing he could have gotten after the ordeal. The constant barrage of sensation, sight, sound, and even smell, kept his mind off of the mirror. He would send a letter to Jeremiah and Linda thanking them, though he was sure he wouldn't be hired by them for anything ever again.

