

# The Mirror that Knew

**I**n the high country where clouds touched the roofs, the village of Lir kept the art of mirrors. Their mirrors were not toys of vanity but instruments of devotion; each generation one was made for the Temple of Dawn, to reveal the soul as it truly was.

When the honor fell to Master Iren, no one questioned the choice. He was patient, precise, and — by his own account — humble. “A mirror must be pure as snow,” he told his apprentice Sela, a quiet girl whose curiosity he mistook for clumsiness. “If the maker leaves a trace of himself, it will cloud the image.”

Weeks passed in silence broken only by the hiss of molten silver and glass. At last, the mirror was lifted into its frame, shining like captured sunlight. The abbot came, the bells rang, and the villagers lined up to see what they would see.

The first pilgrim stepped forward — an old woman, trembling. Her reflection bloomed crisp and clear. Then a merchant, strutting in his best cloak: the surface misted over at once. One after another, they gazed at themselves in the mirror. The modest saw themselves luminously; the self-important saw only fog.

Few grasped what the mirror was doing. Grumbling spread. Iren laughed lightly to still them. “The metal is fresh — it needs to season.” He turned toward the glass, certain his own face would steady the crowd.

Nothing. Only a foggy light.

He felt heat rise behind his ears. “You’ve spoiled the mixture,” he hissed at Sela.

She blinked, frightened, then stepped up beside him. The mirror caught her instantly — her image bright and alive, the whole hall luminous.

“What did you do?” he demanded.

“Nothing,” she said. “I only looked.”

That night, he worked alone, polishing until his hands shook. The harder he tried, the duller the surface grew. Exhausted, he leaned close, whispering a prayer he could barely remember. For an instant, a face flickered there — worn, uncertain, human — and then was gone.

At dawn, he hung the mirror in the temple as it was. The wise came to understand it:

*Those who approach to admire themselves see only mist.*

*Those who forget to look for themselves see light.*

— William Zeitler

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