

## WHAT ELSE WAS THERE HAD WE FORSAKEN THE PLEASURE OF THIS SHARED LIFE?

“Neehehehehe,” Jeremy giggled, finishing making a continuous scissors cut all the way across the cushions of the couch in the center of the living room. Crawling around on the couch the-floor-is-lava style, Jeremy continued the cut (*snippy-snippy-snip!*) over the armrest of the couch, and leaned over the back of the couch to start cutting around the back of it too.

Virgil, Jeremy’s boyfriend, stood nearby, watching with his chin in his hand, wondering how it had come to this.

### **five minutes earlier**

“Virgil wake up the neighbors just put a couch out on the curb help me carry it inside so I can cut the entire couch apart with scissors and maybe break and smash the rest with a crowbar later!”

### **anyways**

Presently, Jeremy had gotten halfway around the back of the couch, and then stopped the continuous cut and went back to the front of the couch, and started snippy-snippy-snipping all around one of the cushions at the front. Jeremy then tossed the scissors aside, stuck his face into the big jagged tear in the cushion, and started grabbing the white fluffy stuffing with his

teeth and pulling it out, mouthful by mouthful, pbbbbbbth'ing it out of his mouth each time onto the floor.

Once he had done that a dozen times or so, he flopped onto his back on the couch, head happening to come to a rest on the discarded scissors that lay flat there. He draped his arms and legs wide across the couch to either side, one leg thrown over the back of the couch, one foot resting over on the floor, and he grinned up at Virgil, showing off the wiry white stuffing that was stuck in his teeth.

He asked Virgil, "Wanna get in on this?"

Virgil continued to look down at this with his chin in his hand. He shook his head. "No, by all means, I don't want to interfere with... whatever this is."

"There was a free couch to destroy so obviously who wouldn't?"

"I see."

"Thank you for helping me carry it inside you are so strong and I appreciate you?"

Virgil tried to stifle the smile that came to him at that, but wasn't fully able to. "Thank you. I am happy to help, even if I am admittedly baffled by... all of this."

Jeremy, still making full eye contact with Virgil, began open-throat wheezing and pbbbbth'ing, trying to get some of the stuffing out of his mouth that had started to get in his throat. Then after taking some of the stuffing out of his mouth with his hand, he laid there looking at the glistening bits he had taken out, and said, "Hey Verge, do you ever wonder what would happen if—"

"Uggggghhh, nooooo," Virgil groaned, and took his hand away from his chin and turned and faced away, and began making like he was going to walk off out of the living room.

"What!" Jeremy called after him. Jeremy crawled up onto his hands and knees and scampered to one of the arms of the couch, and leaned over it and shouted to Virgil, "Hey! I didn't even ask the whole question yet!"

Virgil paused to stand at the big arched doorway between the living room and the entry hall of their home, and asked, still facing away, "What do you want to ask the magic mirror Jeremy?"

“Do you ever think about the people you almost dated and wonder what would happen if you had dated them?”

Virgil shrugged. “No? Barely?”

“Let’s looooooooook!”

Virgil shrugged again. “Fine.”

Jeremy gave a hissing victory laugh as he threw himself back onto the couch, throwing his arms and legs all around in a victory squirm.

He then got up, and jogged up to Virgil’s side. Together, the two of them walked up the stairs, and set off onto the enclosed bridge that went over the house’s courtyard, towards the black glass tower that was at the courtyard’s center. Grey-feathered birds chirped and swooped all around, many of their mud nests built into the enclosed bridge’s ceiling. A baseline droning of bees filled the air below them, as though the bridge were over a sea and there was a distant sounding of crashing waves. Looking down at the courtyard, all of Virgil’s flowers were coming in beautifully.

As they walked, Jeremy commented, “This feels like an inadequate comparison, but you know that game where you can draw on a computer?”

“Paint?” Virgil asked.

“Yeah!” Jeremy said, and gave a gesture that was a snap and also a tossing fist pump kind of gesture. “Paint! Looking out at all your square patches of awesome flowers reminds me of looking at the squares of colors you can choose from, but especially when you’ve made a bunch of your own colors so there’s not just the first two rows, there are special colors too.”

As they continued to walk, Virgil took hold of Jeremy’s hand, lifted it up, and gave the back of the hand a kiss, then he let the hand go, and clasped his own hands behind his back, walking with an upright posture. He responded to Jeremy’s compliment, “Thank you. I like that more than you might think I do. I totally agree that is such a pleasant aesthetic.”

Nearing the glass tower, Jeremy checked himself and his boyfriend out in the reflection of the sliding glass doors that stood closed before them. Himself, skinny, messy curly blonde hair, black gym shorts and a t-shirt with an awesome green t-rex on the front: he stuck out his tongue super far like KISS and

gave himself sideways finger guns, and fired several rounds at himself. Virgil continued to walk upright beside him with his hands behind his back: blonde hair buzzcutted, with the very beginnings of the day's stubble, grey sweatpants and a black sweater that he had thrown on on his way to the front door when his boyfriend had woken him up to go get a couch from the curb in front of the neighbor's house.

Arriving at the glass tower, the sliding doors gave a *woosh* as they parted open before the boyfriends.

Inside, the two of them took the spiral staircase up to the magic mirror's room. Virgil held the door open, and Jeremy walked in first.

On the way in, Jeremy intoned a flamboyant greeting, "Heyyyyyy!"

The long room held no furnishings save for the mirror itself, which was mounted onto the far wall, some 20ft from the door through which the boyfriends entered. The walls, ceiling, and carpet were all colored in the same dark, reddish grey paint. Dark-reddish-and-grey tinted bulbs overhead kept the room in an even, monotone light. If one's mind wandered, and they were to stare blankly at some unoccupied space in the room for a moment, it would often suddenly give the sensation that one was falling through a vast and featureless dark-reddish-and-grey void.

The mirror, upon Jeremy's entrance, sighed, and said in his deep and full voice, "What do you want to look up this time, Jeremy?"

Jeremy did a cartwheel as he approached. Then he idly rubbed his wrists, which were very suddenly sore from doing a cartwheel for the first time that year probably.

Virgil closed the door behind them, and walked on his feet across the room to join Jeremy.

The two humans stood before the mirror.

Jeremy began, "Mirror, mirror, on the wall..."

The mirror bemoaned, "Please don't do it like this, you can just ask."

"Tell the prettiest boy of all..."

"What do you want, Jeremy?"

“What would... um... how...” Jeremy began, and faltered. He thought in silence for a moment. Then he leaned over to Virgil, and whisper-asked, “Who’s someone you almost dated?”

The mirror muttered, “Oh my god you don’t even know your question.”

Virgil briefly bowed his head in thought, and then looked up into the mirror and spoke, “In seventh grade, I asked a girl named Kim to the Spring dance. I had hoped that she would fall in love with me, and we would get married someday. She declined to go to the dance with me. If she had gone to the dance with me, and she and I had begun dating, where would I be now?”

“I see it,” the mirror said. “And I show it to you now, though there is no difference to detect: were you and Kim to have dated, you would now be exactly as you are today, standing before me with Jeremy.”

Virgil clapped Jeremy on the shoulder, and said, “See? Some things have a way of just working out the same one way or another. I’m sure that even in this other timeline where me and someone else had dated for a little while, I still went to college, met you, and here we are.”

“Yeah I guess,” Jeremy said.

“Do you want to ask about someone you almost—”

“Nnnnnnope!”

“Why?” Virgil asked. “Why are these always about me? Can’t we ask *one* about you?”

“No that is so transphobic oh my god.”

“What?”

Jeremy grabbed Virgil on the bicep tightly, and said, “What if I’m a girl in other timelines.”

“Then... you are in that timeline, but that’s not this one?” Virgil put forth.

“Yeah but what if... all of them, I stayed a girl.”

“We would be living in the special one where you didn’t.”

“Do you think we would be able to tell in all of them or would it not even be visually obvious usually?” Jeremy wondered.

The mirror chimed in, “I will literally tell you if you ask.”

“Like, women don’t wear dresses anyways very often,” Jeremy continued.

“I hate my job.”

“Like, women’s fashion is so close to men’s fashion ninety percent of the time, we probably wouldn’t even know, there’s probably nothing to be afraid of because it would still be unknown.”

“I don’t think there would be anything to be afraid of either way.”

“Like, we wouldn’t have to worry about the idea you’re actually dating a woman.”

“I am bisexual.”

“Like, even if some of these timelines would suggest I would have been a woman sometimes, this also isn’t all the timelines, we might have gotten a weird specific sample based on the questions we asked, so you wouldn’t have to worry about all that because we can’t know how all timelines would have worked out.”

“I am bisexual Jeremy.”

“You can literally ask me what percentage of all timelines you are he/him in.”

“Like, whatever we find out from asking these questions, it’s all for fun at the end of the day, it’s not like we can learn anything anyways.”

“I have no nerve endings and yet I suffer.”

“Like, okay, so...”

Jeremy scratched his hair, and sighed.

“Okay, yeah, um, mirror mirror on the wall, tell the prettiest boy of all, one time in school, Tanner had a crush on me, and I heard about it from rumors and basically avoided him and he got kicked out of school like a couple weeks after that anyways and he had to go to a different school and I basically barely ever saw him again. If I actually had started dating him, where would I be now?”

“I see it,” the mirror answered, “and I will show you.”

The image of the boyfriends in the reddish room faded away. In that image’s place, an image faded in of Jeremy in the woods on his hands and knees with his pants around his ankles, getting humped by a German Shepherd. Virgil and the Jeremy in real life dropped their jaws open. The Jeremy in the mirror made a different kind of open-mouthed expression. The German

Shepherd's penis pistoned inside of mirror Jeremy for a solid minute as Virgil and real Jeremy watched. Then, when the German Shepherd was done humping, he laid limp on top of Jeremy's back for a moment. Jeremy said some words to the German Shepherd that looked like praising words. The German Shepherd then slid off of Jeremy, but the dog's penis bent back along with the turnaround, and stayed stuck inside of Jeremy even as the two faced in opposite directions.

Virgil, lifting a hand and gesturing towards the mirror, said, "So, when dogs mate—"

"I KNOW WHAT KNOTTING IS," Jeremy interrupted.

"Okay, okay, just saying."

"MIRROR, WHAT THE FUCK."

"I have shown what you have asked," the mirror said, as its face continued to show the knotting scene. "All else being the same, except for the change that you described, this would be the world now. You and Tanner would begin dating, he would still get kicked out of school, the relationship would end at that point, and now you would be knotted by Clyde."

"WHY."

"Though I can answer many questions, the matter of 'why' on any topic is—"

"LOT OF HELP YOU ARE."

The mirror harrumphed, and stopped showing the knotting scene, fading quickly back to showing the two boyfriends in the reddish room.

"WELL THAT WAS FUN," Jeremy said, sarcastically.

"Want to try another?" Virgil suggested.

Jeremy ran his fingers back through his hair, and then calmly said, "Yeah alright. Mirror mirror on the wall, tell the prettiest boy of all: That night me and Verge went out bar hopping, our fourth date, both of us with fake IDs, and there was that woman who started hitting on me. What would I be doing now if I had ditched Verge and started dating her instead?"

"I see it," the mirror answered, "and I will show you."

The image of the boyfriends in the reddish room faded away, and in their place was the scene in the woods of Jeremy already knotted by Clyde, the German Shepherd.

"Huh," Virgil said.

“Shut up!”

“What, I’m just—”

“SHUT UP!”

Virgil shrugged, and then said to the mirror, “Thank you, I think we get the idea.”

The mirror faded the image away, back to the reddish room.

Virgil asked, “So, do you like dogs, or?”

“I LIKE them, I don’t LIKE-LIKE them.”

“Are you sure, because—”

“MIRROR MIRROR ON THE WALL, TELL THE PRETTIEST BOY OF ALL, ME AND JEFF, FRESHMAN YEAR, WHAT NOW.”

The mirror faded to the same scene in the woods, but this time Jeremy was knotted by a Black Lab.

“OH COME ON.”

“This one’s name is Strider.”

“GOOD FOR HIM.”

“That’s not the only thing good for him.”

“SHUT UP VERGE—wait you’re happy for him?”

“Yeah, why not?”

“Do you wanna go pretend to be dogs right now and?”

“Eh, I’m down.”

“YES. Okay bye mirror we’re busy now!”

“Have fun you... two...”

The door was slammed shut as the boyfriends departed, leaving the magic mirror all alone again.