



Mirror

Tim Campbell

You have to help me. Please. But first, I have to tell you what happened, so you can appreciate my situation.

My name is Noah Riley Sissus. I'm a forty-three year old CEO of a major Fortune 500 company. I can't tell you the name of the company because of secret negotiations we're having with another big name corporation, but I work for a name you would recognize.

I am married to Jane, who used to work for me. But when she fell for me, I told her she had to quit because I couldn't let her feelings jeopardize my position. What I was making would support both of us, anyway. She complained a little, but she finally saw that my point was clear.

We live in a quiet upscale neighborhood, not rich enough to be tacky, but exclusive enough to, well, exclude people who aren't contributing to society, like I am. I don't really know my neighbors, but I can tell you they don't drive a car as nice as mine. Few people do.

Today started out like any other day. I woke up at 6 am and ran five miles on the treadmill (I still have my six-pack, thank you very much). I showered in the marble stall instead of the glass one, because Hestia never does clean that one well enough. When I came downstairs, I saw that Jane had left the lights on again when she went out. I've told her and told her that electricity isn't free, but, hey, women, you know? Also, she has a habit of repeating the last thing I've said to her, like she's hard of hearing, but other than that, she's okay.

Anyway, the lights were on downstairs. I went over to the panel by the door to turn off the juice, but before I could, the bell rang. Since Hestia was off for some medical thing, I answered it myself. When I opened the door, I didn't see anyone, but I heard the slam of the gate at the end of the walk. The sound of it lingered oddly in the quiet morning. I was about to go back inside, when I saw the box. It was white, about the size of a case of champagne, wrapped in red ribbon with a big bow on top. Well, the first thing I thought was the board was sending me a thank-you gift for helping out with the merger. I had been going

above the call of duty for them, so it was only fair that they showed their appreciation. It was strange that I didn't have to sign for it, but I wasn't going to let some incompetent delivery guy stop me from enjoying myself.

I picked up the box and almost fell over from the surprise of it weighing almost nothing at all. "What the hell is this?" I brought it inside, closing the stained glass door with my foot.

Since all the lights were still on, I walked to my study, where there was a glass-top desk big enough to sleep on if I wanted to. I placed the box on the desk, backed up, and just looked at how it fit in with the room itself. The image of having an impressive gift in such an impressive room was hard not to appreciate. I spend a lot of time in here, and I wanted the room to reflect the man who lived in it. I've got lots of framed magazine covers from when I used to be a model, and the dark wood paneling really makes the pictures stand out.

I couldn't resist my curiosity any more, so I lifted the lid off the box. The sides fell out away from the center, exposing a nest of white tissue paper. I still wondered why the box had been so big, if the gift was going to be something so small and light. After I peeled away the paper, I saw a paperweight. A clear, round, glass paperweight, about the size of the palm of my hand. There was a faint red light coming from the center of it.

This was stupid. What idiot would give me a useless, unoriginal gift like this? Someone who had no sense of taste, of style. Other than the light, which gave the thing a sense of depth, it was the kind of cheap junk you could pick up at some office clearance sale.

I picked it up, and noticed it had a flaw in its surface. There was a depression on the bottom of it, smooth, like it was meant to be there. Naturally, my thumb went right to it, as if the thing was designed to be held. The red spark in the middle flared intensely, filling the thing with a dark red glow. The room got brighter, but it seemed as if the light was coming from behind me. I turned, and there was a silver rectangle, floating in the air in front of me. About eight feet on the long side, and six high. This was crazy, how could something just appear out of nowhere like that? The paperweight started getting warm in my hand, and I wanted to look down at it, but the screen suddenly filled with images, and I couldn't look away.

* * *

That was a week ago. I've been sitting here that long. The screen has been showing me my life, over and over again, but not from my point of view. It's been showing it to me through the eyes of everyone

I've ever come in contact with. The overweight kid in prep school I humiliated to make myself look better. The grandmother I walked past after seeing her grocery bags break apart on the rainswept sidewalk. Everyone who's ever been laid off as a result of one of my business deals. I've been seeing myself through their eyes, the way I appeared to them. The way I appeared to my wife. I can't bear this anymore, but it won't stop. It just starts up again, from the age of ten, until I opened the box. I've tried letting go of the paperweight, but my hand won't open. I can't move, except to blink and breathe. All I can do is watch, and regret. You have to help me. You have to take this thing out of my hand for me, so it will let me go. I need it to stop, so I can fix things. So I can say I'm sorry. So I can try to make up for how I've used people to make my life look better. But I can't. Not while this thing keeps me here. Please, take it out of my hand. Please, Jane.