

Labyrinth of Reflections

The red and white tents glowed before me as I watched in curiosity all the things that they held. Everywhere I looked something new would appear. People all around me look up with amazement as trapeze artists fly above our heads. Others standing in line waiting for their turn to get their fortune read. Children screaming with glee as puppies and kittens have a competition of who can do the best tricks. Men crowd around a *Test Your Strength* booth as their partners watch from a distance laughing when they can't get over 200.

The dirt ground below me is soft under my shoes and easy to walk on. An assortment of flowers grow along the sides surrounding the tents, as if to lure me towards one or the other. I walk through the main portion of the circus. My eyes moving quicker than my brain can comprehend, trying not to miss anything that may be happening. A sudden aroma hits my nose and leads me to a sign that says "COTTON CANDY" in large bold letters. The cotton candy is shaped into different animals and objects, making it look too pretty to eat.

As I continue walking, a small sign on a little tent intrigues me. My whole body gravitates towards it. The letters on the sign are swirly and written in cursive, each letter blending into the next like running water in a stream. The polite letters spell out "Mirror Maze."

The tent flaps are cold in my hands as I move them aside and walk in. A reflection stares back at me, but it's not my own. It's a small boy around the age of six, his hair is brown and curly and strangely long for his age. He stands with his hands behind his back observing me in a slow methodical motion. After he meets my eyes once more he suddenly runs off, disappearing in the labyrinth of reflections. I wonder if he is lost and if I will ever see him again.

With my hands out in front of me, they guide me through the maze, touching each mirror trying to remember which way I came. It's only been a few times that I have gotten confused and had to turn back, but other than that I feel like I'm doing pretty well.

After what seems to be half an hour in this maze I check to see what time it is. When I reach for my phone it's gone. Panic rising in my chest as I check all my other pockets, but find nothing.

Thoughts race through my head.

Maybe I dropped it while walking around? Maybe I left it at home?

But I'm sure that I brought it with me.

After searching all my pockets for the fourth time I decided to start heading back out of the maze. Before I turn around though, I look up at my reflection in front of me, behind me stands a familiar little boy. His hands clasped behind his back, his eyes looking directly at me.

He doesn't look sweet this time though, his skin is a lightly pigmented gray and his face has deep shadows of purple. Death lingers in his eyes as they reach into my soul. His hair has lost some of its curliness and turned more into a tangled nest matted with oil. His appearance is frightening, it resembles that of a ghost and presses the same fear into my stomach.

I watch him in the mirror as he turns around, his hands are tied with frayed rope and entwined between his fingers is my phone. His feet start moving away from me, not making a single sound or print on the dirt floor. As he slowly walks off his head faces me, he is smiling, and through that horrid grin, he laughs.

His laugh echoes through the mirror maze bouncing off each reflection. I am petrified, standing still awaiting for the right moment to run. But that moment does not exist.

My breath is cold and shivering as I turn to face the boy that is laughing at me. When I turn around though, he is gone. My fear holds tight but loosens just slightly when I feel that my phone has returned to my pocket.

I go to check the time, but my stomach drops as I see a small piece of rope tangled in between the edge of my phone and its case. My breath hitches as a silent scream binds inside my lungs. I throw my phone on the ground as I force myself to get out of the mirror maze.

My hands slamming into each mirror trying to find the right path to take. As I round the last corner I see the exit sign. I'm so close, I make a run for it, placing my hands in the position to throw open the curtains and finally be free. As I close in on the red and white flaps, a light flashes out of the corner of my eye, but it's too late.

The glass of the mirror shatters around me as my head plummets into it. I fall to the ground. Blood pooling around me and shards of glass embedding in my bare skin. The mirrors surrounding me start to fade into my imagination, a hollow laugh fills my ears. And the six year old boy stands over me with a strand of rope, reflecting off the broken glass that piles around me. The world goes dark.

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The dirt ground below me is soft under my shoes and easy to walk on. My hands are bound behind my back, it's uncomfortable. I try loosening the rope but it doesn't work, so I walk around what seems to be a hall filled with mirrors. Reflections of more mirrors surround me, though I never see my own.

I can taste salt on my lips as if I have been crying, though I don't know why. It's peaceful in this hall, though it is lonely. I walk along the passage ways searching for some else to share this peace with, though I find no one. So I continue walking.

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I have been walking for a long time, the rope has formed divots in my wrists and hands. My tears have been dry for quite a while now. I do not sleep, I only focus on trying to find a companion, someone to share this peace with.

The silence lingers around me. I stop. A small, joyous sound escaped my lips. I like it, it's sweet and comforting in this world of tranquility. I continue walking and repeating my new sound, listening dearly to the echo that follows it.

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My head is heavy and my eyes long to close but I continue walking. My eyes jolt open when I hear the sound of a curtain swishing open. I follow the sound that echoes and eventually

see a woman standing in front of me through the mirror. She is tall and has long brown hair, her skin is warm and bright like a sunset in summer. Her eyes are focused on mine.

My brain fills with lovely ideas,

She will be my friend, she will love the peace within the mirrors.

Before she can notice that I'm gone I slip away to retrieve the rope that will connect her to my mirrors.