

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER: THE MIRROR'S TALE

By Edith Weiss

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Note: the Actor playing the Mirror should feel free to use his body as a human would.

Every day, for years and years, she has come in here. She looks me right in the face, she smoothes down her hair, she pinches her cheeks to give them a little blush, and then she asks me: "Mirror Mirror On the Wall : Who's the Fairest of Them All?" And I open my eyes wide with admiration, and I smile hugely, and I say: "You are. You are the fairest in the land."

But lately, things have been different. Lately, my eyes still wide, my huge smile now faked, my voice goes up an octave when I say: "You are. You are the fairest in the land."

She thinks it's because I am in awe of her beauty. No. It's not awe. The truth is, I'm scared. She is the Queen of the Land, and if I say something she doesn't want to hear, she will throw me to the ground until I shatter into a thousand shards. Sure, she'll get seven years bad luck, but when you're the Queen of all the Land, you have the means to deal with a bit of bad luck. I, on the other hand, will be nothing but little glittering pieces of glass waiting to be swept into the dustbin. And I, like the famed and foolish Humpty Dumpty of yore, cannot be put back together again.

For years, I was almost glad to see her, it was a bit of company, and it wasn't a chore, because it was true. She was the most beautiful. More beautiful than Bertha the baker, who has an unfortunate clumping of facial warts and a unibrow. No contest with the girls who harvest the crops, who have faces red and swollen from the sun and hands the size of hams. Or toothless Tess, whose teeth rotted and fell out from all the sweets she's stolen from the kitchen.

But one morning, a while ago, Snow White happened by and looked me right in the face. And then, she saw a bird out of the window, and she smiled. And I was breathless. What a smile! What a kind, joyous, smile. Her whole face lit up. And for the first time in my life, I saw true beauty.

You see, the Queen never really smiles. No, no. She is afraid it will give her wrinkles. With a real smile, the whole face smiles. The eyes crinkle, the cheeks bunch up. Well the Queen can't have that. Crows feet and deep nasal labial folds – that won't do for our regal Queen. Oh, the hours she practiced the lower face smile in front of me. Smile with the teeth together, lips apart: (*demonstrates*) Hideous. Smile with the teeth apart: (*demonstrates*). Ludicrous. Lips together, teeth together: (*demonstrates*) not good. Lips together, teeth apart: (*demonstrates*) idiotic. So she left off smiling forever. Not that she ever frowns either. The point is to never use her facial muscles, so where other people have a face in the front of their head, she has this unmoving Queen mask-smooth, perfect- nothing at all like a human face.

Of late, she's been having procedures. A lot of them. Liposuction, cellulite reduction, and then lasered, toned, tightened, her skin stretched and stitched.....(*whispered*) I fear she suspects. Oh horrifying and my blood runs cold at the thought- I think she knows that she sometime soon, a year or two, maybe, she will no longer be the fairest in the land, and I think it's making her cuckoo.

Yesterday, after the usual "Mirror Mirror" bit, she asked me, all casual as she was straightening her gown: "Mirror. Look hin, look yon – am I more beautiful than the dawn?"

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