

# *MIRROR-MIRROR*

## *CHAPTER 1*

### *THE MIRROR*

A few final words from the high-pitched auctioneer ended another sale. "I've got thirty-six-fifty going once, twice...and," he declared for the crowd with a brief hesitation, "this luxurious antique brass bed is SOLD to the prettiest little lady in town. Show 'em your number miss. Number one-forty-two...Number one-four-two. And...we're off to the next item up for bid today, an antique armoire adorned with intricate strands of golden pearls."

Vinni Cross shook his head at the ridiculous selling price, but credited the talented auctioneer who had successfully accomplished his goal of setting some very high standards for this particular

estate sale. Vinni leaned over and whispered to the little silver-haired lady who had won the war, "That's a nice bed miss, but for that kind of money I could have remolded your entire bedroom."

Vinni Cross was a master carpenter by trade and if there was one thing he knew it was genuine value or, at the very least, the lack of it. Any real bargains today would be few and far between. So he slipped from the crowd to browse through some of the less appealing items, fixtures that would require more work but that still had potential to sell for a reasonable price after refurbishing.

He casually leaned back against what he thought was a wall and struggled to retain his balance as he caught the item he had leaned against before it crashed to the ground. What most would consider a sorry excuse for a full-length mirror had been haphazardly propped against the wall of the freestanding garage.

It was unquestionably an antique, quite possibly a few hundred years old, but the now discolored face was extremely faded and had a strange series of metallic blue streaks tracing through the glass. It wasn't the mirror that caught Vinni's attention though. It was the exquisite design of the intricately crafted frame that encased it. In its day, the elegant hand-carved frame was undoubtedly a

sight to behold.

The unique mirror had obviously been buried in someone's musty cellar for a very long time. The original lacquer finish had almost completely vanished and the delicate wood was somewhat pitted and beginning to split. Only a true connoisseur of the trade could truly appreciate the skillful craftsmanship that went into its original fabrication and envision the potential for its restoration. That of course was Vinni's specialty.

The back panel was a meager afterthought and had clearly been installed by an amateur. A sheet of mismatched exterior grade plywood had been excessively tacked to the frame and had never even been stained. Vinni made a mental note of the item number and slid the mirror behind an old chest of drawers to prevent detection.

Though it was one of the less appealing pieces, Vinni suspected that it would still sell in the several hundred dollar range. To an artist like Vinni, the mirror was a diamond in the rough. But this particular diamond concealed an even more intriguing treasure, one more valuable than anyone could possibly have imagined. Little did he know that this unusual mirror was about to begin changing his life and the rest of the world forever.

Vinni unraveled a brown paper bag containing a ham sandwich he brought along and waited patiently for the auction to reach the vicinity of the mirror. He walked up just as a lot of tools sold for a surprising low price. "Damn...I could have used them," he said to a familiar face.

The auctioneer's assistant shuffled the mirror out from Vinni's hiding place. "We've got a vintage antique mirror here. I've seen items in better shape and it has a few minor blemishes, but don't let that scare you off. It's still a priceless antique." That of course was an understatement. "What am I bid for this relic? Who'll give five hundred?" The lack of response from the previously anxious crowd provided an indication.

The auctioneer elected to expedite the sale. "Alright, it needs a little work. Who'll give me three? I'm looking for three hundred. Two hundred then and she could be yours." Still, there was no response. "C'mon folks, don't let this rare beauty get away from ya. If nothing else, it'd make a nice sliding board for the kids. Who'll give me a bid? Open it up now. Give me a number."

Vinni raised his brow, stepped forward and spoke softly with an air of humorous sarcasm that swooned the crowd into muffled laughter. Vinni barked out his number, "I'll give ya a buck for it

Tom!"

The auctioneer knew Vinni all too well and leered at him with squinted eyes. "Alright, you heard the man. We've got our first bid," he exclaimed without repeating the number. "Now, let's get serious." But almost as if in support of Vinni's bold attempt to 'steal' the item, the crowd remained silent. Vinni glared at the auctioneer with a crooked grin. "C'mon now people, give me a bid...any bid...any number at all."

Vinni leaned forward, put his hand to his ear and, as he basked in the glory of his triumphant subterfuge, spoke out with a sassy smirk, "Let me hear those magic words, Tom?"

The auctioneer glared out over the crowd one last time in hopes of getting some sort of reasonable offer before surrendering to the appeal in reluctant submission. "Alright, alright, alright...item number 382, a priceless antique mirror...is GIVEN AWAY to buyer number...What's your number Vinni?" Vinni held up his card. "Sixty-four...stolen from the estate for ONE solitary silver dollar."

"Thank you sir," Vinni said proudly to entice a humble round of applause from the gallery. He took a modest bow. "Thank you...thank you very much!"

He set his dollar on the registration table and signed off. The stout wide-framed mirror was heavy and rather awkward to carry, but he managed to wrestle it over to his '87 Chevy Pickup with its sun-faded apple green finish. A fellow bargain-hunter made his way over to help load it.

"That was a pretty slick move there, Vince. I sure wasn't going to bid against ya. But by the looks of it, you probably got what you paid for. This thing's in pretty bad shape."

"You're probably right, Harry. It'll take a little work, but give me a few weeks with her."

"That frame is damn near shot and it looks like you'll have to replace the glass."

"Actually, I like the frame and it's the faded glass that gives it character. That's what makes it special. You wait and see. I'll get more than my money's worth out of it."

"If anybody can pull it off, you can," the man declared as he closed the tailgate of the truck. "And for a buck, you can't go too far wrong. Have fun with it Vinni."

"I will. Thanks for the help Harry." They waved farewell and with a cloud of dust swirling behind him, Vinni drove off down the windy gravel road.

Vincent Lux was the simple soft-spoken shy type and, if six feet is considered tall, he was an inch shy with wavy brown slightly graying hair well hidden beneath a faded St. Louis Cardinals ball cap.

At the age of forty-eight, he had long given up on his childhood dreams of being a successful entrepreneur, but was also through working too damn hard for someone else just to earn a grossly underpaid check. He still had to work, but was focused on attaining a modest form of semi-retirement, which he thought he could pull off in the next five to ten years if he was relatively conservative. Although the Italian portion of his heritage seemed to dominate his appearance, the mild mannered Romanian side of him seemed to shine through most in his personality.

Vinni lived alone in an old three-bedroom colonial style home that sat on eight acres of sandy land on the inland outskirts of Daytona Beach, Florida. Although he wasn't what one would consider an antique collector, he did have a variety of unique items that he

had accumulated through the years...items he either already had or was in the process of restoring. The resale of renovated items was his primary source of income and he was a well-known for his work at a variety of local flea markets.

When he arrived home from the auction, he backed his truck up to the front porch of his house and parked temporarily to unload his only purchase. He took a slow stroll out to his workshop, an old barn he was perpetually remodeling, to retrieve some hand tools and a two wheel dolly. He loosened the bolts that anchored the pivoting stand to the center of each side of the frame and then carefully slid the mirror out of his truck. He maneuvered the mirror up three stairs and onto the porch. He temporarily leaned it against the wall near the door and headed back out to his truck to begin unloading the base.

Suddenly there was a loud crash. He cringed with shrugging shoulders and gritted his teeth as he slowly turned around to find the oversized mirror lying flat on the porch. He was sure it was broken and, after such an unproductive day, he didn't particularly relish the thought of cleaning up millions of tiny shattered glass fragments. More importantly, he was hoping that the frame would still be in one piece and hadn't sustained too much damage. Fortunately, it had landed face up.

He walked up and stared down into his oxidized reflection. Much to his amazement, the entire mirror was still in one piece. He blew a breath of astonished relief into the cool autumn air. "Either it's my lucky day or you're a lot stronger than you look." He began wrestling the mirror back up.

He turned leaned the reflective side of the mirror toward the wall, but this time used a large flower pot to brace it. It was then that he noticed the only visible damage. A loose bolt that must have been lying on the deck was now imbedded in the thin plywood backing. He grabbed the claw hammer from a loop in his overalls and yanked the bolt from the splintered wood. Aside from the 1/2" hole it left in the plywood, the mirror appeared to be intact.

It didn't take him long to reassemble the mirror in his bedroom, which would be better described as an extended workshop with a bed in it. He walked it into an open space in the corner then headed back down stairs. He tossed a frozen pizza into the oven and retrieved a beer from the fridge.

He finished watching a series of Archie Bunker reruns around 10 PM, shut off the television and climbed the squeaky stairs to retire for the evening. He briefly studied his distorted image in the newly

acquired mirror as he undressed, then switched off the bedside light.

He folded his arms behind his head on the huge pillow and, as he stared up at the ceiling waiting to doze off, his peripheral vision caught sight of an unusual spot of light shining on his bedroom wall. He watched it for a long while trying to determine its source. The puzzling mystery and his own curiosity finally got the best of him. He climbed out of bed and walked over to the bedroom window.

Aside from the overhead light attached to his workshop in the distance, it was pitch black outside. Even the moon was hidden by an overcast sky. He opened the window and peered out as a chorus of cricket music filled the air. He grinned to himself at the thought as a group of fireflies randomly illuminated themselves in the surrounding trees, but when he turned back, the mysterious spot of light was still shining on the wall. To add more confusion to the mystery, the spot suddenly disappeared. He was stupefied. Though there was no logical explanation for it, he surrendered to the inability to solve the bizarre anomaly and climbed back into bed.

Every few seconds an eyelid would pop open and he would peer over in hopes of catching another glimpse of it. Suddenly, out of

nowhere, there it was again. He tossed the blanket to the side, leaped out of bed and rushed over to investigate. Based on the apparent direction of its source, the mirror itself should have been blocking it.

He waved his hand in front of the mirror, which did nothing to interrupt the flow. So, as illogical as the conclusion seemed, he was forced to consider the only other alternative. As his hand passed between the backside of the mirror and the wall, the light transferred onto the palm of his hand. He fearfully jerked his hand away and clasped it into a fist as if he'd just been burned. He looked back up at the harmless ray of light that was still shining on his wall. The intriguing quandary had quickly transformed into a challenging quest.

To observe the phenomenon more closely, he gripped the frame and slid the mirror away from the wall. As he did, the beam of light rapidly traveled across the room. He was now wearing a discerning look of shock as he realized that the light, in at least some way, shape or form, was clearly projecting from the back of the mirror. He jockeyed the mirror back and forth and watched the ray of light dance across the wall in perfect unison.

He finally turned the mirror completely around to inspect the

back. As his face moved closer to zero-in, he quickly focused on the tiny bolt-hole created when the mirror fell earlier that evening. As he moved closer, the spot of light traveled across his face until it was shining directly into his eye. There was absolutely no doubt as to where the light was coming from, but the many questions one would ask their self were rapidly filling his head.

He stepped to the side and repositioned his right hand behind the mirror with the peculiar light shining on it. He stretched out his left hand on the front side, but the light was unobstructed. He cautiously began to press his eye toward the perforation. Much to his awestruck amazement, he came to realize that he was somehow peering into another distinctly different room...and the only thing he knew for certain was that it certainly wasn't in any part of his house.

As he was observing the strange surroundings within, the shadow of a woman crossed the path of his limited line of vision from the right and disappeared to his left. Vinni's eyes flew open wide and he snapped himself away for fear of being seen. Once he was convinced that he hadn't been noticed, he slowly brought his eye back to the slit just in time to see the woman cross again. He watched nervously as she appeared again and calmly walked away from

him toward a closet on the far side of what appeared to be a bedroom. Clearly, she was unaware that she was being watched. She retrieved a light blue robe hanging on a hook on the back side of a door and laid it out on her bed.

Vinni didn't particularly care for the thought of spying on anyone and felt a bit like a perverted moron in a peep show booth, but it was his intrigue that was presently prompting his actions. Since he still wasn't even sure just what he was observing, he simply couldn't bring himself to resist the urge. He had no clue as to what was transpiring and where or how, but there was virtually nothing within the realm of normal about it.

It wasn't long before the woman within was standing before him on the opposite side of some sort of strange multi-dimensional two-way mirror. A menagerie of curious thoughts was momentarily put to aside as this lovely lady began shedding her clothes.

There in front of him, apparently for his eyes only, was a young vivacious woman with all of the right curves. She was rather attractive, somewhere in her late twenties with long chestnut hair pulled up into a bun standing before him in a matching set of black lace panties and a rather sheer brazier. She appeared to be studying her own feminine features in the opposite side of this unique full-

length mirror and exotically posing as if for a photo layout in a risqué magazine. Vinni's first thoughts were that the vision was some sort of peculiar show that 'someone' had 'somehow' generated exclusively for his entertainment. As demoralizing as it was, he remained glued to his new silver screen.

She turned and at an angle stretched one very long leg backwards toward the mirror, then glanced back over her shoulder to view her posterior. Suddenly and with a look of visible concern, she began moving closer and was suddenly peering deeply into the mirror. Vinni was sure that she had spotted his eyeball leering at her from the other side and quickly pulled away into the shadows.

At this point, it was only logical to assume that, if she looked closely enough, she could surely see him as well. Another observation he made; he couldn't hear any sounds coming from the other side, which sparked another spectrum of irrational thoughts. The incredible possibilities seemed endless.

It took what seemed like a long time to work up the nerve, but soon enough his hazel-colored eye was again fixed on the strange aperture. Regardless of what it was he was seeing, he wasn't quite ready to discontinue. Much to his surprise, the woman had pressed her face to within inches of the glass with her fingers pinching at

a tiny pimple on her forehead. He was relieved, convinced that she still wasn't aware of his presence. As far as Vinni knew, this was all part of the 'show'.

After a few seconds of overlooking the only flaw Vinni could find on her body, she slowly backed away and gracefully twirled 360 degrees as she pulled the strap of a satin robe tightly around her waist. She crossed the room again, disappeared from view and the light from within was extinguished.

Vinni stared into the darkness until his eyes grew weary of the strain. After concluding that his private peep show was apparently over, he turned his attention to a vigilant inspection of the extraordinary mirror. Starting with the back, his fingers glided down the edge of the entire frame, carefully tracing every square inch of its surface. He made a feeble attempt to pull the plywood apart with his fingers, but an odd overabundance of rusty nails held it firmly in place. He quickly hustled down the stairs to retrieve the hammer he had left sitting on the kitchen counter.

Convinced that it was now clear on the other side, he began prying at the plywood backing with the claw of his hammer. Not only had it been excessively nailed, but it had also been bonded by some sort of strong adhesive, which made the task of removing the plywood

even more difficult. Why anyone would go to such extremes to install the backing so securely was abundantly clear. Whoever installed it probably knew what they were protecting and didn't want it removed.

With his hammer and a sharp chisel, he began working the plywood free along the perimeter. As the nails and glue began to loosen, he worked his way across the top and then alternated from side to side working his way to the bottom until the plywood loosened enough to pull the material free by hand. With one forceful yank, he ripped the plywood backing away.

He stepped back to observe a full-length crystal clear view that now filled the entire six-foot by three-foot frame. He again walked all the way around the mirror, still inspecting every inch of its majestic allure. In one respect, it appeared to be as normal in appearance as any other. On the front side, it was just an ordinary mirror, but whoever designed its frame went to an awful lot of trouble and intended to conceal this mysterious 'window'. It was a lot like an imaginary episode from the Twilight Zone.

Vinni's eyes wandered back and forth throughout the woman's room in an attempt to see all that he could in the faint moonlight being cast inside. It provided just enough luminosity to make out most of the items in the room. Although his thoughts were coupled

with intense trepidation, he knew that he was now in possession of something extremely rare and very special. The most incredible fear known to man is the fear of the unknown. In contrast though, there is an equally compelling and overwhelming urge to explore those mysteries. Vinni prepared himself to face that challenge.

With sweaty open palm, he slowly reached out and ever so lightly pressed his fingers toward the apparent surface without breaking the plane. Then he took a deep breath and lightly touched it. A surge of numinous energy raced through his fingertips. It wasn't at all painful, but the tingling sensation prompted the automatic recoil of his arm in response. He rubbed nervously at his affected fingers. "My God," he said aloud and on the chance He might be listening, "What the hell is this thing?"

It took a few minutes to muster the nerve, but he prepared himself for another attempt. This time his fingertips seemed to dissipate through the surface causing another sensation to surge through them. He pulled them away again, but almost as quickly put them back. The eerie feeling had a somewhat pleasant effect that only seemed to affect on the portion of his body that was in contact with the plane. He was soon enthralled with the experience.

He took another deep breath and gradually shoved his arm elbow-

deep through the surface. The penetrating portion literally disappeared, which frightened him into another full retreat. He flexed his hand into a fist several times to assure himself that his extremities were still fully functional and intact, then shook his arm to thwart the unique sensation.

Now that he was even more inquisitive, he gripped the frame tightly to brace his body and then very cautiously pressed his nose toward the plane. With his eyes closed, he leaned his head into this very strange realm of the unknown. The sensation filled his head to the depth of its penetration was almost orgasmic, but once through and on the other side, it rapidly diminished. He slowly opened his eyes and with his head now literally on the other side, began peering around the room. The woman's bedroom door was closed and he appeared to be alone. That enticed him to continue his tentative journey.

As the fear subsided and his confidence increased, so too did the extent of his experimentation. He thrust his entire left arm through beyond the shoulder, but, when he looked down at it, he couldn't see it and could no longer 'feel' it. On the other side, his body had somehow become invisible.

He backed out through the plane to reassure himself and

carefully contemplate his next move. He was now convinced that his new 'window' wasn't harmful, at least not from a physical perspective, but he still wasn't sure what could or would happen if he ventured too far and stepped all of the way through. He had virtually no assurance that once he did, he could actually get back.

To provide himself with some sense of security, he yanked loose the thin rope used to open the blinds. The thin line was less than twelve feet in length, which wouldn't provide him with much distance, and it certainly lacked any real strength, but he presumed that it would permit just enough lead to enter and would serve as a lifeline to guide him back.

As futile as it seemed, he tied one end of the short cord around his waist and the other to the handle of an anchored heating unit in his room. With much the same consternation of an adventurous astronaut on his first spacewalk, he grasped the edges of the outer frame and at a snail's pace stepped through with his left foot. He kept his right foot firmly planted on the floor in his room as he leaned through with his upper torso and was soon straddling the base of the mirror with half of his body on each side. He reached through the plane with his right hand to yank on his security cord, but like the rest of his body, it was no longer there. With one very awkward motion, his entire body gradually disappeared through the portal.

There was still a tremendous amount of uncertainty, a fact that kept him cautiously on his toes, but in some way, shape or form, he was now well inside the woman's room. He turned back sharply toward the mirror expecting to see his reflection. Instead, he espied an analogous window that provided a peculiar view of his own bedroom. Although fear wasn't so much a factor, he leaped back through the portal in one quick motion to allay a few concerns. He was rather relieved to find himself safely back in his room and his body fully intact again.

He was now wearing a self-assuring smile and was actually beginning to enjoy the prospect of this unique experience. He jumped in and back out a few times to remove all doubt. The, as he was about to leap back in for the fourth time, he loosened the safety cord from around his waist and let it drop to the floor. He instinctively glanced down at his wristwatch before stepping through, then again afterwards only to find that, like everything else, it was no longer there. The digital clock on the woman's nightstand indicated that it was 11:25 PM and precisely matched the time on his clock, which was visible through the window into his own room.

Although he couldn't actually feel anything, it was as though

his entire body was shaking in nervous anticipation. At this point, the only thing that he knew for certain was that at least one woman existed in this new dimension and she wasn't invisible. Soon enough, he was wandering aimlessly, but cautiously around the room. Not that it would have mattered, but he was careful not to touch anything.

He strolled over to the bedroom window and peered through at what appeared to be an ordinary neighborhood in a typical American subdivision. Although he failed to notice, there were no late model vehicles parked on the street. Even if he had noticed, the significance of the fact probably wouldn't have been too obvious at this juncture, but it would later prove to be a significant detail.

As Vinni was casually making his way across the room, the bedroom door flew open. The young lady reentered rather hastily and flipped on the light. Vinni froze in place with startling fear engulfing his invisible heart. He hadn't even considered the possibility of being exposed and he knew that this unsuspecting lady sure wasn't expecting to find a stranger mingling in her room. She rushed toward him, almost as if she were nonchalantly walking up to greet him. Vinni couldn't bring himself to move fast enough and, just as he was about to step aside, she briskly whisked right through him as if he were some sort of poltergeist or wasn't there at all.

Perhaps he wasn't there, which added another very interesting aspect to his numinous adventure. Though he had no way of knowing at the time, he was as invisible to her as he was to himself, but something unusual transpired as their bodies connected. She clearly felt an odd surge of energy from his presence as she passed through. For her, it may have seemed more like an eerie chill, but the sensation prompted her to hesitate.

She took a moment to explore the feeling, but quickly dismissed it and headed for the bedside nightstand. She opened a drawer, pulled out a revolver and placed it on the nightstand. The prospect of a gun made Vinni very nervous. He trained an eye on the nearby window and then back to the mirror searching for a quick means of escape should these unforeseen circumstances warrant it. He remained motionless. There was one other fact that Vinni suddenly realized; he could now hear every sound in the room. That peculiar bit of information prompted another consideration. He didn't yet know, but there was a possibility that he could be heard as well, so he remained cautiously silent.

The woman then retrieved a white diary and placed the handgun back in the drawer. She opened her journal and began reading silently to herself with an occasional chuckle. Vinni soon concluded

that he was for the moment relatively safe and slowly moved toward her. He was now glancing over her shoulder and just about to indulge when some sort of noble dynamic kicked in. No matter how anyone else might have perceived it, he acknowledged the fact that he was in essence an intruder.

Based on his actions thus far, one might not have surmised accordingly, but Vinni was a man of principals and maintained some rather high moral ethics. His conduct with regard to the current situation wasn't something he was very proud of. The thought of invading this woman's privacy began to trouble him and prompted him to leave certain aspects alone. He respectfully refrained and continued exploring his bizarre new surroundings.

He approached the bedroom door and instinctively reached for the handle, but his phantom hand simply passed through it. The woman soon got up and moved toward him. She grabbed the handle and pulled the door open. As it swung it in his direction, the door itself passed through his body. He was surprised, but no longer alarmed and even somewhat amused by the fact. Vinni was only beginning to realize and understand the extent of his newfound capabilities. After she switched off the light and closed the door behind her, Vinni began pondering his next move.

He closed his eyes, put his head down and pressed forward through the wall. As he did, the presence of his energy passed through an electrical conduit, which caused an unexpected reaction, a slight momentary glitch that made several of the lights on that circuit flicker throughout the house. Contact with the electrical charge also caused a very mild sensation within his spiritual makeup as well. He looked back over his shoulder to confirm what he had just accomplished. "Holly shit," he said aloud without considering the unforeseeable ramifications.

"Did you say something, honey?" the woman's voice rang out from somewhere down the hall.

"I didn't say anything," a male voice echoed in reply from another room. "I thought you did."

"It was probably just the TV."

"I guess."

Vinni had discovered another very interesting fact; even with the lack of vocal cords, his voice could definitely be heard. From this point on, he would have to be very quiet and considerably more cautious. It certainly wasn't Vinni's intent to 'haunt' these kind

people, but in some strange sort of way, he was in the process of doing just that. He certainly wasn't a ghost, but he still didn't know what he was, where he was or how it all came to pass.

Vinni quietly made his way down the hall toward the family room of the small ranch style home where he found a man tilted back in a recliner with his face buried in a newspaper and one hand clinging to a frosty mug of cold beer. The lady of the house was in the kitchen dipping out two bowls of chocolate ice cream. Vinni walked slowly to the center of the living room and stood completely unnoticed directly in front of the man's chair.

He couldn't help but react in startled amazement to the familiar headlines on the cover of the man's newspaper; "AMERICA UNDER ATTACK - TERRORISM ON U.S. SOIL". The date on the cover was Wednesday, September 12, 2001. He stood in stunned silence for a moment, lost in flabbergasting confusion. When Vinni left the confines of his bedroom, it was September 12 alright, but it was Friday, not Wednesday, and the year was 2008.

If what he was seeing was real, logic began dictating that he had somehow managed to travel exactly seven years back in time. He knew that according to Einstein the prospect was supposed to be theoretically possible, but from the viewpoint of reality, it was

still a farfetched notion. He tried to rise above his racing thoughts and began to wonder if he may have been experiencing a peculiar dream. 'Considering the fact that I'm obviously here, which is hard enough to believe, I certainly can't dismiss the fact and have got to assume that, in such a vast universe, virtually anything is possible.'

As he was considering the proposition, a news bulletin bellowed from the TV. The man, his wife and Vinni all turned their attention to the screen as the journalist began reading follow up segments from the prior day's disaster.

'No way! That just can't be,' he continued to rationalize silently to himself. 'Can it?' Just as he turned around, the lady was crossing toward him. Still not used to the new form of existence, he was startled again and leaped out of her way. It was at that moment that he discovered another fascinating capability that his new nonphysical state permitted. Like a streak of light, in a fraction of a second, he found himself on the opposite side of the room. He hadn't just moved, he had moved at light speed, which prompted another one of his 'Woe' thoughts.

Vinni was only beginning to grasp the gamut of his newfound potential. He studied the headlines of the Boston Globe Democrat and

did his best to remember as many details as he could. Then he tested those new capabilities by 'sliding' down the hall and through a wall in split-second increments. He made one last visual inspection of the mirror, which was the exact same mirror in every respect right down to the wood finish. He took one final look at the new surroundings before stepping back through the portal into his own bedroom and his own time.

Once back, he wasted no time. He immediately rushed down stairs to boot up his obsolete office computer and began entering search engine commands. Soon enough, there it was...the front page of the September 12th, 2001 edition of Boston Globe Democrat was on the screen. The headlines read exactly as those he had just seen. He leaped back up the stairs two at a time, grabbed the plywood back and loosely reapplied it with a few taps of his hammer. He grabbed the sleeve of his t-shirt, ripped a segment from it and stuffed it into the tiny hole. Before he made another move, he had some extensive research to do.

His initial thought was to share his amazing discovery, but wasn't at all sure who he could trust enough to share something this spectacular with. He sifted through piles of files on his desk to retrieve his address book and began browsing through potential contact. He went down the list on each page then paused with his

finger marking a number and began dialing. The process came to a gradual halt as he began reconsidering the prospect.

He stared through his reflection in the hallway mirror with a puzzling glare and slowly lowered the receiver. Disclosure of such a discovery, even to his most trusted confidant, might not be such a good idea. If divulging his secret was indeed a foreseeable consideration, that decision would require a great deal of deliberation. For the time being, at least until he knew more about what he had in his possession, this fantastic discovery of his would remain a deep dark secret.

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If he were actually capable of traveling back in time, he began to consider the possibility that somehow, someday he may be able to alter and enhance his own future. He wasn't the least bit sure how to go about it just yet, but the thoughts of such potential were invigorating.

He sat at his computer for hours researching bits and pieces of what he initially perceived as pertinent information. He printed out page after page of long-shot sports scores for the upcoming weekend then headed for the financial section to study the highest

performing stocks. He even generated a list of winning lottery numbers for the largest jackpots nationwide and surveyed investment opportunities pertaining to large scale Real Estate development projects. As he conducted his research, he began to consider what he perceived to be the two most significant problems that he would be forced to contend with.

Because any notes would be invisible on the other side, he wouldn't be able to carry the information with him when he stepped through. So the potential would be drastically limited exclusively to what he could commit to memory, a trait he wasn't well known for. And, since he couldn't bring anything back from the past, he'd have to find a way to negotiate these factors. It seemed that light itself was the only substance capable of leaking through the portal.

In spite of the risk, he would have no choice but to find a means of making contact with someone in that time period and somehow persuade them to participate in his little plan. Since confidentiality would be of the utmost importance, selecting a person he could trust implicitly would be the key. The woman certainly seemed nice enough, but she was married, which would mean the inclusion of her husband as well. The more links there were in the chain, the more possibilities that it could be broken.

Vinni pondered that question for several hours. The most logical and practical candidate became rather obvious to him. 'Who could possibly be any more trustworthy than me?' The thought was most compelling and he couldn't come up with any reasons why that person couldn't or shouldn't be his former self. In his mind, a younger version of himself was the most logical choice.

Vinni did a lot of traveling through the years and rarely stayed in one place for very long, but he was able to pinpoint the approximate location where he was living seven years before. At that time, he was living a relatively simple life as a carpenter in Edwardsville, Illinois just across the river from St. Louis, MO. So the next time he passed through the portal, that's where he'd be heading.

Also, since Vinni had never been to Boston and knew nothing about the area, he studied street maps of the region and main thoroughfares of the city. Once he narrowed down the location of the mirror, he prepared to take another 'trip'. It was late, almost 3 AM when he finished his preliminary research. He popped a mild valium to help settle his nerves and slid into bed. September 13<sup>th</sup> in 2008 and in 2001 was destined to be the biggest day of his lives.

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