

MIRROR MIRROR

A SHORT STORY



Holli Fry

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“I’ll take the stamps with the blue flowers on them,” Miranda said as she removed a credit card from her wallet. A part-time teacher and dedicated wife and mother, she usually rushed from her morning classes to get the laundry and house-cleaning done or buy groceries or get started cooking supper before returning to school to pick up the kids. Today, she had only one errand—buying stamps at the post office. Having completed this small task, she stepped out into the bright sunshine of a South Texas spring day and realized she didn’t have to rush anywhere. She actually had a couple of hours to spare before going back to get the children from school.

Glancing across the street, Miranda spied the perfect diversion—the new Hospice Thrift Shop. She had patronized the old store because she wanted to support the cause of hospice care. However, this small business, operating out of an old home on a residential street, smelled of old shoes and musty furniture. The shopping experience there resembled that of a poorly-run garage sale. Friends had told her the new one was larger, cleaner, and beautifully organized, and this lovely afternoon provided an excellent opportunity to check it out.

Tripping joyfully across the street, she entered the new store and gasped, unable to contain her astonishment. Neatly laid-out clothing racks displayed carefully-sized items. Signs on the wall explained the simple and friendly pricing system. Jewelry sparkled inside a glass case upon which rested a real cash register manned by a smiling attendant who appeared ready to answer any question about the merchandise.

After perusing the racks for a few minutes, Miranda addressed the cashier. “I’ve heard you have a boutique room. Is this it, or is it somewhere else?”

“These are the regular-priced clothes and accessories,” explained the attendant. Pointing to a wide doorway, she said, “Go through that passageway into the next room, which is the

housewares, furniture, and books. At the back of that room is a door to your left. That's the boutique. The items in there are priced higher than the ones in here, but they're all either unused or like-new. You'll love it. The clothes are still quite inexpensive, but you don't have to go through the regular stuff to find the really nice things. It's worth the difference in price. You'll definitely want to check it out."

"Thank you so much," said Miranda as she turned toward the wide passageway, pausing to feel the soft, stretchy texture of a neon-green exercise top. *I might come back for that*, she thought, *but not now*.

She stopped again, briefly, in the middle room and surveyed its contents. Neatly-organized books stood like soldiers in formation along one wall while unique and colorful dishes called out to her from the other. Furniture and home décor invited investigation through the middle. *I could easily spend quite a bit of time in this room as well*, she thought, *but I want to give myself plenty of time in the boutique, so I'll start there*.

As she stepped into the boutique, she noticed a second attendant stationed at a glass display full of glistening jewelry, as in the first room. Taking a quick overview, she observed a straight clothing rack running the length of the long, narrow room with four circular racks—one on either side near each end of the long rack.

Wow! This room is so long. I had no idea this building was this big, she thought.

As she greeted the attendant and headed toward the nearest circular rack, she sensed movement at the far end of the room and saw another customer disappear behind the round rack at the other end just as she reached the one on her end. She picked through the pants and shorts, focusing on the section marked "small" and selected two pairs of shorts, draping them over her arm.

“We have a dressing room now,” said the attendant, who noticed Miranda had selected some things. “It’s the door over there on the side wall. So whenever you’re ready, you can try those on.”

“Thank you so much,” Miranda responded, impressed that a thrift store would have a fitting room.

This will be great, she thought. I’ll check out the other circular rack at this end and then travel down the long rack to finish up with the round ones at the other end. Then I’ll go to the dressing room.

As she approached the second round rack, Miranda again sensed movement at the far end of the store and realized the other customer had just moved to the second round rack at the other end and also had a couple of items hanging over her arm. Like Miranda, the other customer was petite, and she disappeared from sight as soon as she passed behind the hanging clothes.

Hardly noticing their similarity in shopping styles, Miranda merely thought how nice it was she only had to share this wonderful moment with one other customer, not having to make room for others to pass and so forth. After all, she rarely had time away from the children, and she intended to make the most of this welcome opportunity.

The skirts were nice but not exactly her style, so after a few minutes, she moved from the circular rack to the long, straight one. Interestingly enough, the other customer did the same, moving to the far end of the long rack and working her way toward Miranda.

Keeping her focus on the merchandise, Miranda didn’t look up to see who the other customer was. She assumed she didn’t know her and planned to give her a polite greeting when they got closer. No need to look her in the eye yet. After all, Miranda was busy with her shopping and had now arrived at her favorite section... the tops. One never has enough of those.

Both the dressy and the more casual ones captivated her. She added several to the items hanging over her arm as she made her way down the aisle.

The other customer proceeded toward Miranda from the far end in similar fashion, scrutinizing each item carefully and placing those with promise over her arm. As they drew nearer to one another, Miranda became irritated with the other woman. *Surely she's going to back away and go around me*, she thought, as she was determined to see every blouse on this rack, not thinking the other woman might have the same goal.

As they continued to work their way toward one another, both focusing on the task at hand, Miranda felt herself becoming exasperated.

My goodness, she thought. *She isn't going to go around me! We're ridiculously close already, and she just keeps coming this way. I don't see her making one single move to back away from the rack and let me through. What is her problem?*

Eventually, they were so close that if they continued in this pattern, they would soon bump elbows. Miranda thought for a moment she might even have heard the other woman's breathing!

Ok, enough of this, thought Miranda. *I'm going to strike up a conversation with her and show her how to be nice. Then surely she'll get out of the way and allow me to continue.*

Breaking the silence, she spoke before lifting her gaze. "They've really fixed up this store nicely, don't you th...?"

As she turned to face the other woman, Miranda startled and jumped, then looked around in total embarrassment to see if anyone had heard her, for she had just spoken to herself! The entire end wall of the boutique room was a mirror!

Take a moment to reflect: How many times have I criticized others for doing the very things I do myself? Human nature is opinionated, selfish, and intolerant. Only by allowing Jesus to live inside us can we break this mold of self-centeredness, get outside ourselves, and see things through the eyes of others.

The world we live in today boils over with anger and hatred. Communities and churches, opposing political parties and people of different races, friends and family members with different views—all stand on either side of the fence shouting angry epithets at one another while holding destructive grudges.

When we find ourselves at odds with others, perhaps we should look more closely at ourselves. Maybe the people we're so angry with are doing the very things we do. Or perhaps we've simply caught a glimpse of ourselves in the mirror.

Just in case you're wondering, Miranda's story is true, but her name has been changed to protect the not-so-innocent. Miranda is, in fact, yours truly. I pray God will help me to be more tolerant, understanding, and kind toward others.

*Mirror, Mirror on the wall!
Who's most selfish of them all?
When life gives us clear reflection,
Perhaps it's time for self-inspection.*

Dear Reader,

Thank you for reading my silly little true story. I hope you enjoyed it and had a bit of a chuckle at the end. Even more, I hope you recognized yourself in it and will think twice before criticizing others in the future.

Remember Jesus' words in Luke 6:37: "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."

I hope to live by these words. How about you? Perhaps we can covenant together to be less condemning of others and more aware of our own faults.

Until then...

Grace and peace to you,

Holli Fry

PS. I've published several books for children and will soon publish one written for an adult audience as well. I'd love to have you visit my website and take a look at all my books, both published and "in process." Within the website, you can submit your name and email address to become a member of my email newsletter group and receive word of each of my books as they become available. Just in case you're interested in checking it out, here's the link and the QR code:

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