



The mirror crack'd...

By Kay Hall

(inspired by Ronald Pope - Cubist Portrait)

He's tried hard to dismiss the demons his father created. Nightly he drowns in alcohol, but he cannot forget. Still his demons haunt him, taunt him with his failures, as a son, as a husband, as a father; as a human being. But he yearns to be free; for his own and his family's sake.

And so, finally, he returns. Steeling himself, he breathes deeply and prepares to enter his long deserted childhood home, and the demons' lair. Cobwebs and dust festoon the tattered wallpaper and he shudders as he imagines hordes of spiders and demons scuttling around.

He's been scared of spiders since his father locked him in that pitch darkness for some minor infant transgression. He stumbles down the hallway, edging carefully past the cellar door. The mirror still hangs there, in the hallway, although it's shattered now. His flawed reflection, a triple-eyed monster, stares back at him.

His 'portrait' glowers; cruel and angry. And it's also his father's face. They say he resembles his father, in looks and in deeds. It would be so easy to continue like this, he thinks, to go on as usual, embittered, unrepentant, evil.

But another side waits patiently in the shadows, and it now emerges. A man with hope in his eyes and a heart to match. The man he should have been.

The man he will become. He relaxes, and a kindly smile hovers around his mouth, despite the demons he can still see lurking behind him. They are powerless now; he releases their hold and orders them to trouble him no more. They tremble in fear at this newly-made, unfamiliar man and scuttle with their spider allies into the deepest darkest corners they can find.

He turns and strides out of the house; he will not return. His wife, clasping tightly onto their young son, waits anxiously outside. She glances up at his face; her eyes silently voicing her fear.

'It's over now,' he says, 'I have dismissed my demons.' He takes them gently into his arms and they huddle together, as the fear disappears. And love returns.