

A conversation with the Lady of Shalott

Who was she? I'd heard rumours of an angel, a fairy, an evil curse. I knocked on the heavy oaken door. It opened.

'Please, come in!' she called.

I entered. She was smiling, though her face held traces of tears. She hugged me, then clasped my hand and led me further into her chamber.

'My dear, I'm so pleased to see you!'

'Lady, is this yours?' I showed her the tapestry. 'This web? It's so beautiful, such fine weaving.'

She smiled, 'Yes; it's my work.' We gazed at the vibrant scene, life and nature in one glorious whole. It was unfinished.

'It became my labour of love. My love for the world... Where did you find it?'

'I was on my way to Camelot. I heard a crack... your mirror I presume?' I glanced across the room, where it stood shattered, glassy shards littering the floor.

'I broke my curse, the mirror cracked and my web flew away...'

'And landed at my feet! I had to find out who crafted it.'

'And you found her...'

'But the curse... why did you break it? Why doom yourself? You could have stayed here, safe, untroubled. You can create such beauty, was that not enough?'

My words angered her. 'You think I was content? Untroubled? I have spent my days here, my nights here, nothing to do but to work on this... pale imitation of life!'

'But...'

'No! I was half sick of shadows. And I was alone, craving friends, craving the joys of nature. And I realised when I saw him, Lancelot, I was not living, merely existing, if you can even call it that!'

'But to risk all, for a man? Like him? Your knight in shining armour?'

'No. I've no illusions there! I'd given in, I was weak, I was... secure. Lancelot was merely the straw that broke my back.'

She shrugged her shoulders and fell silent.

'And...?'

'He was... so vibrant, so alive. Even through the mirror he shone like the sun. And finally I acknowledged the truth; my life was like my web, a sham, a pale imitation. So I looked out through my window. I was free, I could breathe once more.'

'But when the curse came upon you...?' I was curious.

She nodded, biting her lips. 'I felt empty, bereft. I'd burnt my bridges, there was no going back.'

Her eyes began to tear up, but she pulled back her shoulders, stood proud and tall.

'No,' she shook her head, 'I'll not regret my decision. I will rejoice in nature, in living, in freedom.

And I will go to Camelot. My future lies there, whether I live or die.'

I had discovered her truth.

'I admire you, my lady. You are inspiring; you chose life, you chose freedom. Your tale shall be remembered for ever.'

And I took my leave of her as she readied herself for her fate.