

Mirror Image

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Mirror Image

by [Sixteenthdays](#)

Summary

(Rapid knocking)

[GRIAN]

Mumbo? Mumbo! I know you're in there!

[MUMBO]

(Distantly) No I'm not!

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

[Click]

(Rapid knocking)

[GRIAN]

Mumbo? Mumbo! I know you're in there!

[MUMBO]

(Distantly) No I'm not!

[GRIAN]

Yes you are! I *know* you are, and if you don't tell me what's going on right now I'm going to come in and see for myself!

(Long silence)

(Glass shattering)

(Shorter pause)

[GRIAN]

...Right, didn't exactly think this through.

(Clumsy movement, glass crunching underfoot)

(Footsteps)

[GRIAN]

Where is... *aha*.

(Looked doorknob rattling)

[GRIAN]

Oh, come on, really? *(Knocking again)* Mumbo!

[MUMBO]

(Muffled behind the door) Look! I just... I just need to get this sorted out, and then I'll be back to work, okay? Just- let me worry about this.

[GRIAN]

Get *what* sorted out? You're *not* just sick. Don't lie.

[MUMBO]

I... okay. You're right. I'm not sick.

If I explain it, will you go away and let me deal with it?

[GRIAN]

Maybe.

[MUMBO]

Okay.

(Pause, fabric rustling as Grian sits down)

[MUMBO]

I'm not sick. But I thought I was, at first.

I was a bit of a hypochondriac when I was younger, you know? I don't remember if I ever told you about this, but I'd start panicking every time I felt even a little bit off. Which, as it turns out, was just anxiety. I never actually had anything worse than the stomach flu, as a kid.

But I guess it stuck with me. And it came back to bite me eventually, because it meant when all this started I figured I was just... catastrophizing. Imagining things. Goodness knows this job has shot my nerves.

I guess it started a couple weeks ago? I kept trying to go back and remember if there was anything at work that could've prompted... um, *this*, but I can't remember any one thing that stands out. I mean- I turned into a *potato*, and there was that stupid evil plant, and the thing with the moonstone,

that one statement I took, probably a hundred other things besides, but...

I think it was just something in me that just got, um, a bit messed up. And maybe I should've noticed sooner, but I *didn't*, because- well.

Anyways. Um. I'm stalling. Sorry.

A couple weeks ago, I started having these weird... moments of numbness? Mostly in my face, but also in my hands. Just little points, never lasting longer than a few minutes- I would go to pick something up and my knuckles wouldn't move right, or I'd realize that I hadn't blinked in awhile because I couldn't feel my eyelids. My first thought was stroke, honestly, but when I looked the symptoms up they didn't match.

So I figured it was just... I don't know. Lack of sleep? Stress? Something that would *go away*, if I just ignored it. Stupid of me, really.

And then, um, about a week ago, one of my hands started hurting.

Not like it had *gotten hurt*, more like... um, I had a massive growth spurt when I was about sixteen, and all of my bones just sort of *ached* for a week. It was more like that, like there was just something *wrong* about the muscles, and when I ducked into the bathroom and looked at my hand, it looked all... crooked? Like a couple of the fingers looked all... stretched out, and the skin was sort of... caved in, in some places, and too tight in others- not all of it, but in patches.

And as I watched, it was still getting *worse*. Like it had, um, forgotten what it was supposed to look like? Like the bones were just *sliding away* from each other and pulling all the skin and muscle with them.

I pressed both my hands together to compare, and to try and... hold it together as best I could, because the other one still looked fine, and when I did, the first one started, just... going back to normal? Right in front of my eyes. It still *hurt*, and I could hear the bones, um, creaking, but after a few minutes my fingers were all the right size again and it was like nothing had happened at all.

I didn't... really know what else to do except hope that was the end of it. I felt... horribly tired, and achy, so much that I could barely walk. I ducked out and went home early. I really did think I might have just been weirdly sick, at that point, that I was... seeing things and a good night of sleep and maybe a couple days off would fix me up.

So I stumbled home, crawled into bed without even changing into my pajamas, and fell asleep. I thought I woke up a few times in the night to these... horrible noises, all... crunching and cracking, but I couldn't see anything that could've caused them, so I figured I'd dreamed them.

When I woke up, I felt like I was dying.

I felt horribly disoriented, like I couldn't keep track of where any of my body was, like I'd come all... disconnected. Except not really, because it all still *hurt*, in that terrible growth-spurt way.

I really didn't want to move, but then I sneezed and I felt something *crack* in my face, and *that* motivated me to get *right* out of bed and go find a mirror to, um, assess the damage.

The thing is, once I was looking in the mirror, it didn't...

It didn't seem *that* wrong. Like... I could still tell it was my face, and everything. It was just sort of... uneven. Like pieces of it had *slipped* a little, under the skin. I brought my hands up to try and... I don't know, fix it? But that just made it *worse*. I could tell my hands were... *wrong* again,

also, and this time it was both of them, so I couldn't fix them like I had the first time.

I guess I got it in my head that if I could just get a good reference image, I would be able to get everything, um, back in order again. But the thing is, I don't really... take pictures of myself? At all? I went back through my phone and I could only find a couple. Not enough to actually, um. Remodel my face based on.

I did try. I mean, obviously. It seemed like every time I poked at it, I just knocked things *more* out of place until I couldn't even tell if I looked anything like I had in the first place. Even when I thought I was on the right track, it didn't come out looking like me at all.

So, um, that's when I called in sick. Ever since then I've just been... turning my house upside down looking for better pictures of myself, the way I'm supposed to look. Haven't found anything good enough yet. I'm a bit worried I... to tell you the truth, part of the reason I haven't come out of here yet is, um. I'm a bit worried if I see anybody I'll just start looking like *them* instead of *me*.

...How many days has it been now? Three?

[GRIAN]

Four.

[MUMBO]

Just as well you turned up, then. Because if I'm being honest here, I've sort of hit a wall, mate. Like, it's mostly not getting any worse anymore, but it's certainly not gotten any better either. It's just all sort of... stabilized, I guess? I hope? There's been less... slippage, at least, in the last day or so. Still look positively frightful, though.

So, um, I appreciate you dropping by, but I think I'm just going to stay inside for the rest of my life, if that's alright.

[GRIAN]

Come off it. Are you going to let me in or not?

(Pause)

(Lock clicking open)

[MUMBO]

I suppose.

Don't look frightened, though, or I may cry.

[GRIAN]

Oh, please. You're the least frightening man I know.

(Door opens)

[MUMBO]

(Quickly) Actually I've changed my m-

[GRIAN]

Nope, none of that. Let me see.

(Pause)

Oh, that's not so bad. You'd look worse if Cleo got her hands on you. Hold on, let me just-

(Crackling and squishing sounds)

[MUMBO]

Ow ow ow ow *ow ow ow ow-*

[GRIAN]

Shush, I'm *fixing* it. Well- sort of. Um. Okay. Hm.

Well, that's *better*, at least. Here, have a look.

[MUMBO]

(Somewhat offended) You squished my eyes!

[GRIAN]

I did not! They were already like that, I just- evened them out a bit.

Look, it's *fine*. I can look at you and go, yup, that's a Mumbo Jumbo. Basically good as new! More or less.

[MUMBO]

I don't know if I'm entirely comfortable with taking *your* word for that.

[GRIAN]

What's that supposed to mean?

(Feathers and fabric rustling)

Ow, okay, I get it, let *go-*

Fine, point taken. *(Pause)* I guess you'll just have to come back with me and see everybody else, if you're not willing to trust me that you're recognizable.

[MUMBO]

Nooo, I look all stretched out and horrible!

[GRIAN]

Look, Pearl keeps forgetting to come to work fully *opaque*. Compared to that you mostly just look like you got steamed in a slow-cooker too long. You *basically* can't tell the difference.

(Pause)

Wait, no, that sounds bad. I mean-

[MUMBO]

(Laughing) Goodness, Grian, tell me what you really think, why don't you?

[GRIAN]

I didn't mean it like that!

[Click]

End Notes

i've been wanting to do something with shapeshifter mumbo for a very long time but i didn't want it to be too similar to anything else already going on in the series, so he gets, uh, hypermobility but Worse. sorry buddy. institute has a maximum one (1) normal guy and impulse already took that job. frankly amazing he's been around grian this long without getting permanently cursed in some way it was really only a matter of time.

BUT HEY. GUESS WHAT. THERE'S NOW A FULLY-VOICED PODFIC OF THIS SERIES THAT'S GOING UP ON YOUTUBE. GO LISTEN TO IT [HERE](#). SUBSCRIBE TO THE CHANNEL. ITS SO GOOD YOU GUYS THE VAS AND EDITORS ARE ALL AMAZING THERE'S SO MUCH GOOD STUFF COMING.

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