

# The Magic Mirrors

*A Summer Night in Windsor Forest.*

By Ann Radcliffe

Edwy forsook the Fairie Court,  
And to forest-glades withdrew,  
Where never yet had elfin-sport  
Cheered the melancholy view.

Upon the hazel-wands he writes  
Eda's name, with "thrice and three,"  
Then buries them, with bidden rites,  
Underneath a forest-tree.

It was an oak, whose trunk within  
A foul and watching spirit lay,  
Whose night-shrieks in the tempest-din,  
Filled the traveller with dismay:

It was an oak, whose sinewy boughs  
Threw a dark horror o'er the ground;  
Whose high, gaunt top and warrior-brows  
With the storms of ages frowned.

Its trunk was never touched with light,  
So wide and deep the branching shade  
Of leaves, that, on a starry night,  
A gleam, like break of morning, shed.

But the brook, stealing from the brake,  
Showed a glimpse of brighter ray,  
When on it's dewy banks did take  
Will-o'-the Wisp his mystic way.

Round the high roots our Edwy drew,  
With muttered charm, a magic line;  
And in the circle heart's ease threw,  
And briony and eglantine;

Then sweets and poisons, three and three,  
Jess' mine blossoms, violet bud,  
The deadly nightshade's tresses grey,  
And the pale Monk's gloomy head.

Next, the buried wands he raised,  
And “Eda! Eda! Eda!” called;  
Thrice upon the West he gazed,  
When, hark! a shriek his breast appalled.

It was the spirit of the oak,  
Who, startled by the Love-Fay’s name,  
His dark and secret home forsook.  
He fled, in haste, whene’er she came.

A tongue from Windsor’s distant tower  
Tolled Twelve along the silent wood,  
When, lo! the planet of the hour  
Quivered upon the trembling flood.

Cheered by the monitory sight,  
Then Edwy forth his mirrors drew,  
And by that star’s informing light,  
Upheld them to his searching view.

Again he called on Eda’s name  
Mildly and meekly to appear.  
And round the crystals rolled a flame;  
While unknown murmurs met his ear.

See!—o’er the mirrors mists arise,  
And strange and fearful shadows throng;  
Frowning faces, glaring eyes  
Look and threat and glance along.

These gone, a tiny form there bounds,  
Flitting along the magic glass;  
Which, in an instant, her surrounds  
With leaves of Love in Idleness.

She seems reclining in a bower,  
As the green leaves around her spread,  
The motley-yellow, purple flower  
Bends in a top-knot o’er her head.

As round this cage of wreaths she lies,  
Forth from her wand a lustre pale  
Dawns o’er her blue and frolic eyes,  
And silvers all her dewy veil,

Touches the rose upon her cheek,  
The dimple, that her quaint lip owns,  
The smile, that now begins to break,  
Through clouds of wild, capricious frowns.

While Edwy gazed, a little strain  
Of sweet complaint did feebly swell,  
When, hovering round her leafy chain,  
Behold! her faithful Nightingale!

He perched upon the true-knot there,  
And tried to break, with slender bill,  
Her prison-wreath, so flowery fair;  
But the leaves mocked his puny skill.

Too late, she owns the forceful spell  
The little purple blossom throws.  
Fixed, as a painting, she must tell  
Mildly and meekly all she knows!

“Fairy Eda! show to me  
Aura, as she’s now employed.”—  
“On the other glass you’ll see;”  
With pretty lisp the Fay replied.

He looked; the colours faintly dawn.  
And living forms begin to glow  
Aura, full-dressed in lace and lawn,  
Blooms in a ball-room with a beau.

And, dancing with a Grace’s air,  
And with the eyes of Venus smiling,  
Edwy beheld her, with despair,  
His hated rival’s heart beguiling.

To atoms he had almost dashed  
The mirror, and so lost the spell,  
But warning lights around him flashed,  
Checked his hand, and all was well,

“Who is this Fop, so light and vain?”—  
Quickly, the magic scene is changed  
To rivers, woods, a wide domain,  
With falconers on the banks ranged.

All at their head his rival pranced  
In velvet cap, with feathers gay,  
And proudly o'er the sward advanced,  
While men and steeds their lord obey.

“O tell me, Eda—loves she him?  
Can she her promise old forget?”—  
A flame curled round the mirror's rim;  
The crystal darkened into jet.

And in long moonlight prospect rose  
Windsor-Terrace, flanked with towers;  
How soft the lights and shades repose  
Among the low Park's lawns and bowers!

Oh! what an arch the heavens throw  
Upon the vast horizon round!  
The stars! how numberless they glow  
Down to the landscape's dim-seen bound!

Some battlements are left in night;  
Others almost appear to shine  
Of yonder tower, whose stately height  
Draws on the sky a tall black line,

That measures, on the azure void,  
Billions of miles, while worlds unknown,  
Distant howe'er, glow, side by side,  
Upon it's shadowy profile shown.

Down on the terrace, men appear,  
Gliding along the stately wall,  
With arms enfolding the tall spear—  
How still their measured footsteps fall!

Voices are heard round that vast shade,  
Although no talkers meet the sight;  
But, beyond, where moonbeams spread,  
Figures steal upon the light.

'Twas Aura, with a lady-friend—  
'Twas Aura, with this lover new!  
Ah! does she to his suit attend?  
The distance baffled Edwy's view.

“Eda! Eda! why torment me  
With obscure ambiguous truth?  
Thou to show my fate wast sent me.  
Say, will she wed this fopling-youth?”

Behold! the terrace fades away!  
And a tap’stried room succeeds;  
Her sire, with age and wisdom grey,  
’Mid lawyer, settlements and deed

Again, time charmed picture changed:  
A gothic porch, with silk all hung;  
There beaux and ladies fair are ranged,  
While humbler gazers round them throng.

There a happy rival waited  
With his friends, in trim array:  
“ Aura! what makes thee belated?  
Aura! why this long delay?”

Again, the mirrors were in danger,  
From our thoughtless Edwy’s rage;  
But a fairie checked his anger—  
Would she might his grief assuage!

Next, dimly on the crystal steals  
A chamber in her father’s home;  
There, Aura, weeping, pleads and kneels!  
The father, frowning, quits the room.

Again the changeful glass receives  
The porch—and Edwy, doth lie tremble.  
As smiling Aura there he sees?  
And whom doth the bridegroom resemble?

It is—*himself!*—He’s joyous, frantic,  
As the glass showed his happy shape;  
But as he sprung, with gesture antic,  
It fell, and let the fairie ’scape!

Without due homage let her fly!  
Straight, unknown voices from the ground  
Wildly exclaimed, “O fie! fle! fie!”  
And “Fie! fie! fie!” the echoes sound

Unhomed he had let her fly!  
From the old oak an owl hooted;  
And thence a louder "Fie! fie! fie!"  
To the spot poor Edwy rooted.

But, soon recovered, through the woods,  
Hopeful and light, away he sprung:  
The moon peeped through their leafy hoods,  
And o'er the path her chequers flung.

To the forest's-edge he hied,  
Where the Beech's giant-form  
Had, for age on age, defied,  
With his lion-fangs the storm:

Where the Lime, with spotted bark—  
Spots, that old moss on silver weaves,  
Hung her spray on branches dark  
Among the light transparent leaves,

And fragrant blossoms, forming bowers,  
That cast, at noon, a twilight green,  
Where 'twas most sweet to watch time hours  
Change the highly-tinctured scene.

The silvery Aspin quivered nigh,  
The spiry Pine in darkness rose,  
The Ash, all airy grace, on high  
Waved her lightly-feathered boughs.

And there the mighty Chesnut reared  
His massy verdure, deepening night;  
Whose pale flowers through the dark appeared  
Like gleams of April's coldest light.

Under the low boughs Edwy went.  
Shade, after shade, in close array,  
A sadder tint to midnight lent;  
And thoughtless Edwy lost his way.

Now, far beyond the long-drawn gloom,  
Where a faint, misty moonlight fell,  
He watched a lonely figure roam,  
And loud he made the echoes swell.

His call was heard, the stranger turned,  
And paused a moment; but, in vain.  
Our Edwy would his way have learned,  
For, not a word in answer came.

The vision fled—but soon a cry,  
Loud, though far-off, alarmed his ear;  
And a footstep passed him by;  
Which he followed fast and near.

Till a groan of sad affright  
Almost killed him, with dismay;  
And to his undoubting sight  
There a man expiring lay.

As, horror-fixed, awhile he stood,  
A cloud o'erspread it's darkening veil;  
It suited well his fearful mood;  
It hid that dreadful visage pale.

Now, mark, where yonder high elms crowd,  
What red lights gleam and pass along!  
What funeral torches, dirges loud!  
A bier and mourners round it throng.

Down th' avenue of pines they go  
All sad and chaunting their despair,  
Then wind they on in pomp of woe  
Then fade and vanish into air

For, yonder, o'er the eastern hill,  
Morning's crystal tint is seen,  
Edging the darkness, solemn still,  
And glimmering o'er the sleeping scene.

O best of light! O light of soul!  
O blessed Dawn, to thee we owe  
The humbled thought—our mind's best dole,  
The bliss of praise—Devotion's glow.

O blessed Dawn! more sweet to me  
Thy gradual lines, thy influence fine  
O'er flying darkness, than the ray  
And glorious pomp, that doth enshrine

The cope of heaven, when the Sun  
Comes laughing from the joyous East,  
And bids th' expressive shadows run  
To tell his coming to the West.

At thy first tint the happy lark  
Awakes, and trills his note of joy  
And feebler, warbling murmurs, hark!  
Break from the woodlands—rise, and die,

At thy first tint, O blessed light!  
Th' observant Elves and spectres fled,  
And that misguiding, watching sprite  
Home to her oaken dungeon sped;

Elfena then, the niischief-fay,  
Who with an urchin had combined  
To 'wilder Edwy thus astray;  
Now in a Monk's-hood is confined.

No dying man was there—no moan,  
There were no red-lights, near the elms,  
No funeral torches, dirge's moan,  
No sable band, whom grief o'erwhelms.

Still, doubtful of his homeward way,  
Our hero watched the rise of dawn,  
Over a beech-tree's airy spray,  
That trembles on the Park's high lawn.

And soon the glorious Sun was spied,  
And Windsor, in her pomp of groves,  
Rose up in battlemented pride,  
Queen of the vale, that Old Thames loves—

From where the far-seen western hill  
In smiling slumber seems to lie,  
Upon the azure vault so still  
As listening heaven's harmony,

To where, beneath the eastern ray,  
With swelling dome and spires aloft,  
Vast London's lengthened city lay,  
All miniatur'd, distinct and soft—

To where, upon the northern edge,  
Learned Harrow points her vane,  
And Stanmore lifts its heathy ridge.  
Sloping to the cultured plain,

Which, purpled with the morning's glow,  
To boundless tints of azure fades,  
While humbler spires and hamlets show  
Their sun-lights o'er the woody shades

And gleaming Thames along the vale,  
'Midst willowy meads, his waters led,  
While, here and there, a feeble sail  
Was to the scarce-felt breeze outspread.

The willowy meads and lawns rejoice;  
And every heath, and warbling wood;  
The fragrant air, with whispering voice,  
The golden clouds, the brightened flood,

All laugh and sing beneath the morn,  
The dancing lamb, the springing deer  
The wild bee with his humming horn,  
And, loud and long, Sir Chanticleer.

Soon as his joyous clarion calls,  
Answering notes strike up and swell  
From rafter dark and loop-holed walls,  
Where sleep and silence seemed to dwell,

Surprising with their clamour clear  
The passing herdsman and his hound;  
Thus, far and near, Sir Chanticleer  
Rouses up all the country round.

Edwy so roused, who long had stood  
Over this scene of morning beauty,  
Forgetting every other good,  
And lost to each forgotten duty,

Now, bounding lightly down the hills  
And through the high o'erarching groves,  
Hied to his home, where Eda wills  
He soon shall wed the nymph he loves;

And grateful for the boon she grants,  
He now resolves, that, never more,  
His spell shall shock her quiet haunts;  
And quite abjures the magic lore.

But,—never let impatient wight,  
When he presumes to woo a fairie,  
Destroy his glass,—or rouse her spite,  
But civil be—and very wary.

Thus all was well,  
As watchmen tell,  
Of fairie sports in Windsor glades,  
Save that too long  
A summer-song  
Once lingered in those witching shades.