



Reflection in a mirror

By Paul-François Bourgault

Barbara locked the door to her dressing room. She didn't want to see anyone. Sitting in front of the mirror while brushing her long hair, she found it difficult to hide the sadness and anxiety reflected on her face. Soon, her work in the fashion industry would be reduced to memories.

Barbara relished the perks of her job. She had rubbed shoulders with celebrities in many major fashion capitals of the world and loved travelling. Famous at only 20 years old, she had already modelled in fashion shows in Paris, Milan and New York. On the runway, her presence captivated the audience.

Today, however, things were different. The ticking clock reminded Barbara that her appearance on the catwalk was just 20 minutes away. She wiped her tears away, and started to apply her make-up. Pretty soon, she thought, no one would be offering her work. Another red patch had appeared on Barbara's knee, and hiding the blemishes was becoming increasingly difficult.

Two weeks earlier, Barbara received

a call from her agent. The famous fashion designer PFG from Paris had offered her a contract. This was a golden opportunity to achieve international status and break into the Asian markets. Barbara had not yet told her agent that small patches were appearing all over her body. She had managed to hide them—so far. One thing was sure; PFG would not tolerate any imperfections. The fashion world dictated it.

Lost in the reflection of her large seductive eyes in the mirror, Barbara set down her make-up. Was she defeated? Metaphorically, Barbara saw herself as a Formula 1 racer bound for glory, only to crash on the final bend. Was she feeding impossible expectations to nourish an insatiable ego bound for fame and immortality? Time to reflect!

As she pondered what her life should be about, Barbara wondered if the patches were appearing for a reason. Was she really meant to live a life dedicated to outer beauty? Could it be that she was meant to be a role model as well as a fashion model?

A knock came at the door. There were only minutes remaining until Barbara had to walk out to meet the applause. However, this time when she faced the crowd, she knew she would be more reserved, less flamboyant. Barbara decided she would begin to show more of her true self: human and imperfect. As she walked onstage, she also decided that she would take charge, and make the time to consult a specialist about the red patches when she returned home and learn about available treatments. In addition, she promised herself an hour or two of make-up-free time each morning and a strawberry sundae once in a while. She wouldn't give up—she'd just work hard to make sure her dreams were met by showing her true beauty. **CS**

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**Although inspired in part by a true incident, the following story is fictional and does not depict any actual person or event.*