**As I peered into the ancient mirror, a face stared back at me – one that was hauntingly familiar, yet utterly foreign.**

The glass was clouded with age, its frame a tangled mess of blackened ivy and tarnished silver. It stood in the attic of the old estate I had inherited, shrouded in a dust-laden tarp that had clearly not been disturbed in decades. Yet somehow, the mirror’s surface shimmered like water, alive and beckoning.

The face that looked back bore my eyes wide, amber-flecked, and unmistakably mine, but the skin was paler, almost translucent. The hair, while the same deep chestnut as my own, fell in waves with a refinement that didn’t belong to this century. And there was something in the expression, an air of sorrow laced with defiance, that had hold of my chest. An expression which only the heart can tell. I felt that it wanted to rip my life out of my cold body. The concentration of the stare was unbearable. I wanted to look away but something stopped me, something deep inside of me, like a longing for the past. Then, the stare took me back 15 years to when I was just born.

I was sitting in my mum’s lap waiting for food when a stranger crept in my house.

He wore a long, dark coat, soaked from the rain. His boots were muddy, and water dripped from the brim of his hat. My mother gasped and pulled me close. I didn’t understand much then, I was just a baby but I remember the way her body tensed, the fear in her heartbeat.

The man looked at us, his face hidden in shadow. Then he said something I didn’t understand at the time, but now, as I stared into the mirror, the words came back to me clearly:

**"The child is marked. She’ll return to her place in time."**

And then he was gone.

My mum never spoke about that day. As I grew older, I sometimes thought I had dreamed it. But now, standing in the attic, staring into the mirror, I knew it had really happened. That man had known something. Something about me. About *this*.

Suddenly, the mirror rippled again. The face inside was no longer still. He was moving. Her lips slowly opened, and she whispered:

**“It’s time.”**

The attic around me darkened. The air became thick, like fog. I felt something tug at my chest, like invisible hands pulling me forward. My feet slid across the floor, and I couldn’t stop them.

“No,” I said, trying to pull away. But the mirror’s pull was too strong.

The last thing I saw before the darkness swallowed me was the other me, the mirror me, stepping out into the attic, into my life.

Then everything went black.

When I opened my eyes, I was no longer in the attic.

I was inside the mirror, and the world was out of reach.