

# RORRIM'S MIRROR

DAVID MORICE  
CoraIville, Iowa

Recently, I met Dr. Bob Rorrin, a professor doing research on mirror travel in a private laboratory at his home. He told me he'd discovered a way, known by medieval alchemists, that one could open the barrier and step into the Looking-Glass World, which he called it in honor of Lewis Carroll. He invited me over to take the trip. His laboratory, located in his slightly miledwed basement near the Iowa River, held his invention--a full-length mirror with a beam of light radiating on it.

"It's powered by nuclear energy," he informed me.

"Nuclear energy, you mean?" I asked.

"No, nuclear energy. It's nuclear how it works, but it gets the job done. All you have to do is walk through the mirror. It's a lot like going through a door. You may feel a little dizzy at the moment you pass the barrier, but it will go away."

"Have you tried it?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact, I have."

"And everything went okay?"

"Certainly," he said. "Would you mind delivering a message to my colleague on the other side? It's private, or I'd hold it up to the mirror."

"Sure," I said, and he gave me an envelope.

With some apprehension, I stepped before the mirror. I didn't see my reflection in it, and that startled me.

"I know what you're wondering," said the professor. "Don't worry, you'll pass through to that side, and your mirror-self will pass through to this side. You'll see each other later. Now, go!"

I took a big step. For a moment, I felt dizzy, and then I was on the other side. Everything was the same, but backwards. The professor was there with his hair parted the other way, his pens in his other pocket. His desk phone had the numbers backwards. His books had their titles backwards.

"That was easy, now, wasn't it?" he said.

"Yeah, really," I said. "Now what?"

"Now you'll have to learn how to read and write Reverse English."

"Oh, I don't plan on staying here that long."

"By the way," he said. "Do you have a message for me?"

"Yeah, right here in this envelope."

"You can read it if you wish."

I was curious, so I took out the paper and unfolded it. It was printed in reverse, as I guessed it might be. I held it up to a smaller mirror on his desk and read:

"Dear Bob: The experiment was both a success and a failure. You and I crossed the gap, but we can't get back. It seems that un-clear energy permits only one-way trips for living creatures."

I looked up at Dr. Rortim. "Does this mean--?"

"Yes," he said. "We're both from the other side of the mirror. I sent the same message to my mirror-image."

"No, it's impossible. I don't want to be here. Everything is going the wrong way. I can't read backwards. Let me out!"

"Calm down and send a message through the mirror. It's not my fault you're here. Blame my mirror-image."

"But it's your fault that my mirror-image is over there! How do I send a message?"

"Write it out, and hold it up. Your mirror-image will do the same."

"And what if I decide I don't want to write it?"

"Your mirror-image will decide not to, too."

"So who is making the decision?"

"You."

"And not my mirror-image?"

"Not here. There."

"But whatever I decide, my mirror-image will decide, too. Maybe my mirror-image is making the decision, and I'm not. Or vice versa? This is crazy."

"Not at all. Think of it as the highest form of cooperation--perfect coincidence."

"Why should I even bother writing it? I know what I'll write, and my mirror-image knows it, too. Why did you send a message to your mirror-image?"

"That was my decision. And his."

"Why did you want me to make the trip?"

"I need an assistant to help me find a way back."

I wrote the message to my mirror-self. It didn't really matter what it said. When I held it up to the mirror, my mirror-image held his up, but neither of us could read what the other wrote. So, I'm stuck here, a mirror-illiterate, helping Dr. Rortim. The only

way I can read books is by holding them up to a mirror. I'm trapped among the right-to-left people. I've requested that this article be printed in my native language, which is far superior to the Reverse English in the rest of this magazine. I feel sorry for all of you—and for myself and Dr. Rorrin. Life is much simpler on the other side.

..and, Janus, I also require  
you to be the god of  
palindromes

