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Looking in the Mirror

by

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What does this woman see when she looks in the mirror?

Well, she sees a 60-something-year-old woman who has encountered myriad emotional, mental, and physical difficulties. At first glance she doesn't look her age—maybe because once a month she covers up the glistening gray hairs scattered on her hairline. When people look into her eyes, they see a woman who has lived many lives, who has experienced much joy. As the daughter of a narcissistic woman and having survived two bouts with cancer, she has successfully worked through many challenges.

If you're perceptive, you'll notice many secrets behind her deep-green eyes. She says that these secrets formed in the womb, where she felt the weight of being an unwanted child. She was planned . . . but not wanted. The negative vibrations and sense of despair permeated the amniotic fluid that nourished her for nine months. Her father, a Holocaust survivor, wanted a large family to make up for all those he'd lost during the war. Her mother, the narcissist, almost

denied him of those pleasures, but eventually agreed to have just one child, saying that they'd need someone to take care of them during their golden years—definitely the sentiment of a classic narcissist.

From the day she was born, her father worshiped her, blessing her with the gifts of love and compassion. For years when looking in the mirror, she held on to the secret of her ten-year-old self finding her grandmother dead following an overdose of sleeping pills. It was the 1960s, when suicide was not openly addressed. Her grandma's death certificate said something about an excessive amount of barbiturates. Now, six decades later, she can still see that image of her grandmother being strapped to a stretcher, and being carried down the creaky wooden stairs of their family home to the ambulance parked outside.

When she looks in the mirror, this woman sees the deep pain of that loss. She can't shake it, and perhaps that's why she's obsessed with death and dying. Since her grandmother died, more than six of her loved ones have taken their lives. When she looks in the mirror, she wonders if these losses were spirit's way of teaching her to appreciate life and all its wonders, or as a reminder to enjoy each day—"Carpe diem," as they say.

She's come to appreciate life's silver linings—such as a renewed gratitude for living after having survived two cancer journeys. She's read that some researchers correlate childhood trauma with the incidence of cancer later in life. One particular study done back in the 1980s said that those who were exposed to adverse childhood experiences are three times more likely to

develop cancer, and additional studies have corroborated those findings. One of those adverse childhood experiences revolved around being silenced as a child and living with a mother who always put her own needs first.

When others look into this woman's eyes, they might or might not see her pain. Chances are, they see a blissful, sensual woman who has decided to transcend pain and disappointment; she focuses on the light rather than the darkness, another trait inherited from her beloved father, who died of heart failure too early at the age of 71.

When she glances into the mirror long enough, she drifts back to one of her many past lives, where she was a psychic, and another time the wife of a German baker. After her grandmother died, her mother gave her a journal to document the grief she felt over her grandma's death, and ever since, journal writing has become her way of coping with difficult times. As an only child, she came to realize that this journal was her best friend and confidant; and even all these years, it continues to play a vital role in her life.

When this woman looks in the mirror, she sees someone who is compassionate and caring, someone who puts others' needs before her own, sometimes to the detriment of her own health, especially when it comes to her children who've had their own challenges with drug addiction and dealing with the loss of their own children.

She also sees someone who has made many contributions to help others achieve their full potential by helping them record the narratives of their lives. As a wounded healer, she knows and understands the emotional and physical pain we all encounter at some point. She knows how to recognize it and navigate through it. She believes that writing helps bring about a sense of self, and also that when we share our stories, it helps others who are navigating their own journeys.

And finally, when she looks in the mirror, she realizes that without the darkness, there is no light . . . as she forges ahead with strength and courage—one day at a time.

So what do you see when you look in the mirror? By delving deeply into this question, you will most likely discover profound truths and insights that will help you grow as a human being and also allow you to be a source of love and compassion for all those in your world.