

Mirror Land â€¦ so it goes

by Jason_Love

In the not-so-good old days, I lived in the mirror. Couldnâ€™t go ten minutes without a peek. Youâ€™d think I was afraid of disappearing. It wasnâ€™t vanity so much as the impulse to fix myself. Some people call it retarded.

Sunup to sundown, I probed myself for flaws. Weeks were lost to the idea that one eye was bigger than the other. My shrink, Dr. Dan, called it â€œbody dysmorphic disorderâ€•â€”seeing a monster in the mirror. Michael Jackson is what happens when you mix BDD with millions of dollars.

One morning I stared into the looking glass so long that I had a bad trip. My reflection wouldnâ€™t let go. I looked into his eyes, he looked back at mine, and so it went toward some strange expression of pi.

That day I decided to never look in the mirror again.

Dr. Dan said that "always and never are risky endeavors." I asked him why he couldn't be happy for me. Then I took back my brain and went home.

Two years lapsed, and would you believe I was true to my word? I contact-papered the mirrors and made my poor wife fend for herself in a compact. To shave and comb, I used The Force. I avoided windows, rearview mirrors, and the shiny side of compact discs. I boxed up all of my photographs, and, as fate would have it, I did disappear.

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Then came the anxiety attacks triggered by pictures, songs, anything that smelled meaningful. Julia Roberts died in a movie, and boom—I couldn't breathe. The attacks came mostly when I imagined my wife dying. Why did I do that? Retarded.

Dr. Dan suggested that my issues had relocated: mirror issues had become panic issues. I told him that the real problem is how ambivalent I was toward his mother.

Then came the titan of attacks. I was sifting through our Memories Box, when that void descended like a blanket. Whatâ€™s it all about?...Why do we strive as we do?... I called my wife, but she was at lunch being detained by a rapist, no doubt.

It felt like I was missing a part. I ran outside to grab a neighbor, the mailman, a stray catâ€”anything but the void. No one was around, not even the sun. Just when my thoughts turned to the noose, a voice said, â€œLook at yourself.â€•

So I did.

I rushed inside and unpapered a mirror. There in the glass stood my old friend Jason. He hadnâ€™t gone anywhere. He even looked the sameâ€”aside from the bags beneath his eyes. He was the missing part. We had, after all, known each other since spermhood.

Accept. Approve. Surrender.

That's what popped into my head. I'm not sure what the words meant, but they steered me to the middle way. Lao Tzu would be proud. I don't spend hours in the mirror, nor do I shun it altogether. I look when I look.

I can't say that I regret my experiment. We could all spend less time in front of the mirror and more time looking at ourselves. It's just a hard way to find out that we can't outrun ourselves. My issues are probably relocating as we speak. I just hope they land on Dr. Dan.

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