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I Still Remember the Girl

As I reconcile her with the woman I've become.

By [Melissa T. Shultz](#)



Brian Rea

Hi, mirror, it's me.

The two of us ... we go way back, don't we?

Those really were the days.

Not that I don't appreciate the present, and what I've learned along the way. I do.

It's just the more you know, the more you stop to think. And now, I think, I think too much.

Speaking of which, just when I was certain I'd memorized the shape of my curves, the twist of

my hair, the stretch of my skin, it all changed. Again.

It turns out you're not a magic mirror after all. And I am not, though I thought I would be, immune to the physical changes of getting older.

I've noticed other changes, too. Mostly my reflection in the eyes of others. Once a woman achieves the age of 45 or more, it seems you're expected to fade into the woodwork — stop doing whatever you did that made you you. And that you'll never be as attractive or productive as you once were.

Have you seen all the tips out there, from beauty to business, on how not to "give away" your age?

- When writing, make sure you don't use two spaces after a period.
- When corresponding, don't have a Yahoo email address.
- When cutting your hair, never go shorter in front if it's longer in back, and ...
- Never, ever wear miniskirts or clothes that are at the height of fashion, or too many accessories.

These are not truths. They're arbitrary rules made up by people who want power.

So, when we meet in the bathroom, I expect you to tell me the truth.

But the truth is, every time we meet, I see her — the girl.

The one who danced on the hood of her parents' car when she was 3;

the one who never left home without a roller-skate key tied around a ribbon that hung from her neck;

the one who baked cakes by the light of a bulb in an Easy-Bake Oven, hoping to win her father's love.

I'm more tranquil now. I have a spot on the couch — a couch I own. It took me decades to let myself be. It's just that I can't stay there for long.

Because I still remember the girl.

The one who had a little sister that was her heart;

the one who had to teach herself to be her own cheerleader, and protector;

the one who dreamed of growing up and telling stories.

I still remember the girl, even now as I trace the scars of my breast cancer,

as I reconcile her with the woman I've become.

There's still so much I have to learn, but these things I know to be true:

I'm flawed, but I'm kind.

I'm the sum of my years, my tears, my triumphs, and my failures.

I protect the people I love at all costs. You know who you are.

I am not a wallflower. So, if I don't speak up, it's because I've deemed it not worthy of my energy and have moved on. If I do speak up, listen. I have something to say.

I can still bust a move,

and bake a damn good cake. And eat it, too.

And if someone else can't see me for who I am, see past the number of my years, well — that says much more about them than it does about me.

Because I am not old. I am bold.

I still remember the girl.

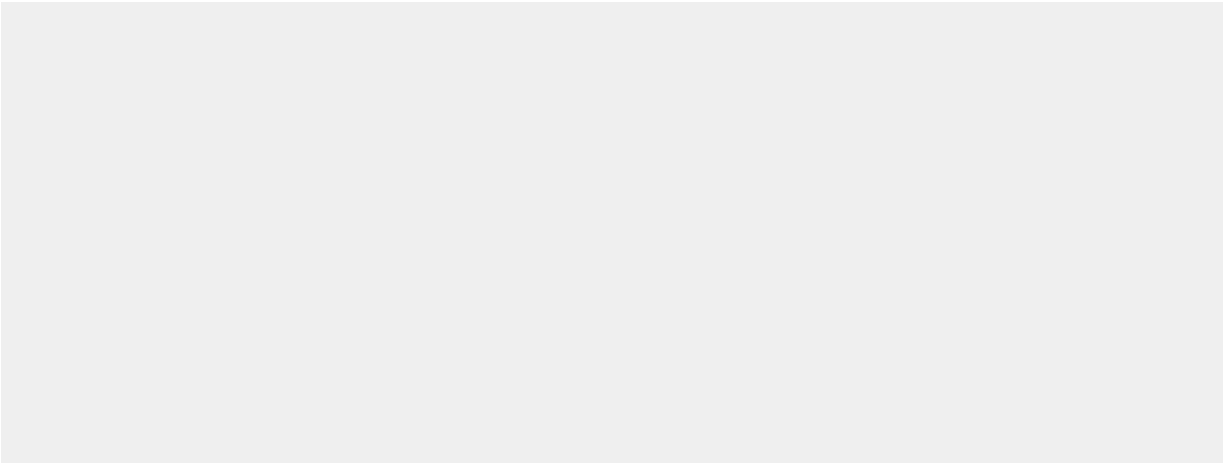
And I'm never letting her go.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Melissa T. Shultz is a writer, and the acquisitions editor for Jim Donovan Literary, an agency that represents book authors.

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