

One Banana? Now I know!

It's been said that eventually, as we grow old, we become our parents. I remember thinking that would never happen to me - but I was wrong - it has.

I was there, at their besides, when both my parents passed away. I watched as they deteriorated year after year, month after month, week after week. I could see the changes in them. I could see the loss of independence and old habits becoming engrained while new ones also got added to the list.

I recall seeing my mom's living situation and thinking, "How does she do it?" **Now I know.** Here are a few examples that come to mind: I remember seeing the basket of medications on the coffee table and thinking, wow, what a job it must be to manage all of that. **Now I know.** I remember seeing her physical abilities deteriorate almost overnight (she was fighting lung cancer) and seeing her wobbling around in her apartment or at the grocery store. **This is me now, not as sure-footed as I once was.**

I remember doing a grocery run for her, and on her list, she had "**1 banana**". I thought to myself, "Who buys just one banana?" I now purchase just **one or two bananas** because they last me several days. Like, mum, I can't eat a whole banana in one sitting. **So, now I know what it's like to buy food for ONE.** I remember her taking on small projects just to keep herself occupied. Things you would never think to do, like organize a drawer of Tupperware, label bags with family heirlooms, etc. Because of my health, I am not working, so the days are very long. I find myself doing the same thing as my mom did - looking for something to fill my time with. My mom was an excellent writer, and now writing seems to be my distraction or passion of choice. **So now I know what that's like too.** But most of all, it's the "living alone" phenomenon, something I have never experienced before, that I **really now understand.** I often wonder how my mom managed it. She lived alone up four flights of stairs in a small and humble apartment until the last few weeks of her life when she went into palliative care. How incredible.

After the Christmas gathering at my son's mother's house last year, I remember coming home alone, just like my mom used to do when she left our home after the party. Before leaving, I was asked to text my son when I got home, so they knew I was home safe - something we used to do with my

mom as well. As I got into my car, I remember thinking, "I've become my mother!" I am the person that needs to be watched over with a little extra special care and has to check in when they get home, and I'm only 52. **When did that happen?**



My parents were divorced, so I would obviously visit them separately. In the last few years, I ran back and forth from St-Lazare to Mirabel, to St-Eustache to visit with them, pick them up to take them to hospital appointments, or

meet up with them after they had been hospitalized. They were crazy years. I can remember my dad; his health had declined severely. Gone was the strongest man I'd ever known. **He was weakened and compromised - like I am now.** He depended on opioid medication to control pain - **like I am now.** He also had quite the basket of pills, something I, too, have now. My father and I had gone eight years without speaking and reconciled in 2010. He passed away in 2014. In those four years, he went from being able to mow the lawn, trim hedges, and install hardwood floors, to being almost unable to walk 100 feet to get from the car to the hospital door. I can still walk a hundred feet, but I certainly have lost a lot of physical capacity in the last few years. **Now I know.**

I look in the mirror, and I see my father. Not just my face, but my body is now shaped just like he was! It's freaky how powerful genetics are. I never imagined that would happen to me. But it has, and **now I know.**

I see expressions in me that he used to make. When I laugh or cry, I sound and look like him. I don't know if this "**seeing your parents in you**" thing is the same for everyone or if some of us experience this phenomenon more than others, but for me, it's really hard sometimes to wrap my head around it.

It's especially hard when there are things about your parents that you resent or even regret. Seeing them in yourself means seeing the good and the bad in them in you. I used to only see myself in the mirror and whatever baggage I carried, but now it feels like I have inherited theirs. I watch my 23-year-old son in his prime, and I see myself at his age, so wide-eyed, green, and naive; **it's a beautiful stage of life.** As we age, life loses its luster and gets harder and harder. I struggle with getting old every day, so I hope my son will one day see me in him and embrace becoming an older man as he gazes at his reflection.



Written by Patrick Franc

SONG OF THE MONTH "Banana Boat (Day-O!)"

by Harry Belafonté - bit.ly/banana_boat_day_o

You can reach me at: bionicman@beinginvisible.ca.

