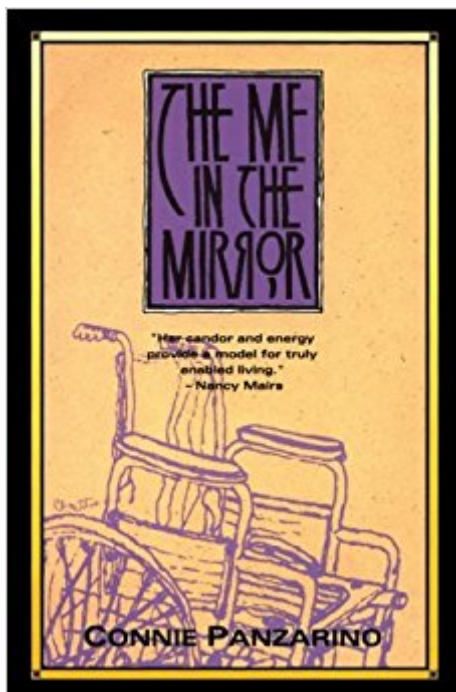


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The Me In The Mirror



Synopsis

Writer, activist and artist Connie Panzarino was born in 1947 with the rare disease Spinal Muscular Atrophy Type III, formerly called Amytonia Congenita. Throughout a childhood filled with both pain and joy, she strove to define herself: "I knew I was different. Now I had a name for the difference, like being Italian or Jewish. I was an Amytonia. I didn't understand if that meant that I would never walk, or if all it meant was lack of muscle tone. I didn't know that most children with this disease die before they're five years old." In this deeply moving and eloquent memoir, Connie Panzarino describes her decades of struggle and triumph, her relationships with family members and long-time lover Ron Kovic (author of *Born on the Fourth of July*), her eventual turn to lesbianism, and her years of pioneering work in the disability rights movement. Filled with spirit, passion and defiance, *The Me In The Mirror* tells the story of a remarkable life.

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Customer Reviews

Panzarino is a severely disabled lesbian activist and art therapist, and her story is scary in its forthright honesty. Born with a rare progressive muscular disease, she has lived a life in which virtually no achievement is small and nothing is taken for granted. She speaks uncompromisingly about the pain of ill-advised childhood braces, the guilt at disappointing her parents, waiting for assistance with toileting, and being barred from elementary school and the day-to-day companionship of other children. Dependent on a mother with two additional children, one of them born with the same malady, Panzarino well communicates the great frustration, anguish, and turmoil

she endured during her fight for education, employment, a usable wheelchair, reliable aides, transportation, accessibility, and, ultimately, a life of her own in which she could realize personal and political growth. A longtime friend and sometime lover of disability rights activist Ron Kovic, Panzarino eventually turned to lesbianism and political activism. She established Beechwood, a communal living environment for disabled women, where she continues her work as a therapist, writer, and activist. Whitney Scott

Writer, activist and artist Connie Panzarino was born in 1947 with the rare disease Spinal Muscular Atrophy Type III, formerly called Amytonia Congenita. Throughout a childhood filled with both pain and joy, she strove to define herself: "I knew I was different. Now I had a name for the difference, like being Italian or Jewish. I was an Amytonia. I didn't understand if that meant that I would never walk, or if all it meant was lack of muscle tone. I didn't know that most children with this disease die before they're five years old". In this deeply moving and eloquent memoir, Connie Panzarino describes her decades of struggle and triumph, her relationships with family members and long-time lover Ron Kovic (author of *Born on the Fourth of July*), her eventual turn to lesbianism, and her years of pioneering work in the disability rights movement. Filled with spirit, passion and defiance, *The Me In The Mirror* tells the story of a remarkable life.

I grew up while the ADA was the 'next big thing' and am a heterosexual with invisible disabilities. But I can totally relate to Connie Panzarino's autobiography. It is so well-written, moving, and intimate. Unlike a lot of temporarily able-bodied feminists, who yearn for the 'good old days' she intentionally tells her audience that there is no best moment, We are living in the present She thinks back to her time with one-time boyfriend Ron Kovic. But this is more a coming of age. And it's not a pity-party. She discovered herself and what she wanted as a woman with a disability vs being a disabled girl. It made me reflect on how being in college had also successfully changed me. Yes, we had ADA and 504, but honestly, it had still been a battle when administrators and officials did not know the rules. Or they ironically did know the rules and did not want to enforce them. Being told that you do not have civil rights because people do not feel like it is a radicalizing process. It does wake you up. it also fundamentally separates you from your family--who does not have to fight to be heard, to vote....etc. We are 'different'. It does not matter if this difference is physically seen or not. I found that I could not put this book down. It's so engrossing. There are obvious discrepancies in assistive technology (owing again to the time periods described). But it would be an excellent personal purchase for anybody interested in women and disabilities. It certainly needs to be on the

syllabus for a course on women and disabilities! Disappointing that this is not a movie. Here is hoping.

I finished this book last night, and I was frankly infuriated by some of the earlier reviews posted about this book. This is probably the most illuminating book about the day to day existence of an extremely disabled person; which holds back nothing, that has ever been written. Panzarino, who, despite her disability was a powerful force for change in the way the disabled are treated in society, passed away on the 4th of July of this year. Her passing only makes this book more poignant. Panzarino's style is eloquent and engaging; her story both heartbreaking and inspirational. This book is a MUST read for anyone interested in reading fascinating biographies of women who have truly helped to change the world, as well as a great tool for understanding what those with disabilities go through in a world that wasn't designed with them in mind. This book changed my view of the world profoundly. I am planning on buying it for all my friends as Xmas gifts--and hope that Connie's incredible courage will inspire them as much as it did me.

This is a beyond fabulous book. Illuminating, inspiring, galvanizing, educational, essential reading for both disabled and temporarily able-bodied people alike.

I read this book a few years ago and loved it. I think it was an honest book. I know it is because I have SMA like the author so I am a good judge of the subject. This book is not "Preachy" or filled with religious meaning like some disabled books. Nor does it make the disabled look needy or helpless. It's just about her life. It's not supposed to go in to great detail of specific disability issues...that's what essays and textbooks are for. Even so, I do think it does give the average "walkie-talkie" insight of disabled culture. Everything from care, school, career and romance. The writing is in everyday language and shows her humor in dealing with her struggles. The main flaw is the poor edit job. I didn't find it too distracting (if you can handle reading a personal journal you should be OK with this book) and the book is a quick read. There is a great need for books on adults with born with disabilities and disabled women. I'm glad this book made it!

Ms. Panzarino presents an accurate and passionate account of an absolutely remarkable life. She survived the disability that should have killed her as a child, the terrible pressures of her home, where she and her mother were trapped in a dance with no help for either. She fought her family and the "abled" world for her independence and THRIVED as a whole woman in a society which

assigns a half-life to the disabled adult. I am new to the disabled community, having suffered a major stroke at the age of 49 and two small ones since. They have left me nearly speechless but I cannot even imagine the world Ms. Panzrino has had to live in. I can only admire this brave woman's strength, fortitude, intelligence and candor. The reviewer who did not see the life story and daily life of a disabled person did NOT read the same book I read!! This is an excellent read by an enlightened individual! My only disappointment is that there has not been a follow-up book since this wonderful tome was written!

I just finished this wonderful book after only two days. I couldn't put it down. Panzarino writes her own life story in a novel-like, episodic narrative style. She tells her story with shocking honesty as well as humor. This book is both eye-opening and entertaining, and I highly recommend it.

Connie Panzarino tells the story of the horrors of disability and fight for the right to have a normal life. She is a true advocate and an inspiration for everyone, disabled and able-bodied alike.

As a disabled woman, I really loved this book, and could identify with many aspects of Connie's life. An educating book to those who are not disabled.

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