



**The DISTORTED LENS of
Chevy's Control A Lone Ranger"**

DISTORTION: *"I have to take care of it, no one else will."*

*From old Luxottica
calendar-Trademarks and
copyrights held
exclusively by Luxottica
Italy 1989. Artist is Paola
Casagrande. Private
calendar collection
Crystal*

Chevy's childhood was riddled with conflict. Her parents fought constantly. Chevy slept with her mother for as long as she can remember; her dad taking up residence in the "back bedroom." Her father's only daughter, Chevy was youngest of her mother's children but grew up as an only child given her half-siblings lived with other family members. She found herself wishing she could live with her siblings rather than in her home environment. Often she woke up in the middle of the night to find her mother gone - out drinking - her father gone - looking for her. She knew her mother was seeing other men, and witnessed her mother's drinking and dancing when they visited her aunt's home in another city. Chevy's father remained in the marriage for Chevy's sake; they both suffered emotional abuse as a result of her mother's escapades and mood swings. Chevy enabled

her mother by keeping silent when she accompanied her mom on trips to her aunt's. When Chevy was in the fourth grade, her mother was in a horrible car accident which changed the family dynamic. Father and daughter were tasked with taking care of an invalid. Chevy became an adult overnight and began caregiving, housekeeping, being a dutiful "nurse-daughter," while her dad worked the swing shift. Even though she could no longer indulge in her previous lifestyle, her mother's mood swings continued, and she told Chevy that she was a bad girl nearly every day. Chevy incurred her mother's wrath. When things were good, life was great; but when it was bad, Chevy was emotionally, and sometimes physically, abused. Her mother would extend regret and apologize for berating her as a bad girl; the cycle was perpetual. In healing from the car accident, Chevy's mother incurred one sickness after another, surgery after surgery. All the while it was Chevy's on-going responsibility to take care of her mother. "Why do you think I had a little girl?! It is your responsibility to take care of me," her mother would scream. Chevy believed it was her duty to care for her mother until she died. Now 39 years old, she realizes she has not lived her own life. She experiences mixed feelings, including resentment, but no regret as she knew she was a respectful daughter. However, she knows in her heart that her former husband bailed because he was frustrated with being married to a woman that was "married to her mother."

Exhausted and frustrated, Chevy looks back on her life, recognizing she has not progressed emotionally from her childhood-like state of mind and had not pursued a professional life. A "child in a woman's body," her attempts to make sure that she was a good girl by caring for her mother had not allowed her to grow into a life of her own. Chevy feels she was "born 40." Now that she can finally start living her life, she feels behind her peers. She spent her childhood playing alone, caring for her mother alone, it only makes sense that Chevy feels like she is a Lone Ranger.

INSIGHT FOR REFLECTION

Children are naturally innocent, unwise to the ways of the world and believe that their parents can do no wrong. "When caregivers ignore or attack children's natural characteristics, children develop dysfunctional survival traits to keep from feeling crazy and yet still maintain the belief that the caregivers are always right. They adapt and reshape their mental world to keep from being devastated by the feelings of worthlessness and shame generated in them by the abuse" (Melody, 2003, p. 80).

Chevy believed it was her daughter-duty to take care of her mother for as long as she lived, as that is how she was "groomed from birth." In spite of the caretaking, Chevy was attacked verbally as a bad girl by her mother for just exhibiting traits of a normal child. As a result, Chevy lost her own sense of self, and sense of value since she could not see that the faults of being accused of by her mother might actually have been her mother's own issues, rather than having been a bad little girl at all.

"The process of abuse depletes energy children must have to do the work of growing up. When a child is not allowed to be his or her authentic self, the healthy ability to adapt and change is misdirected, and the child is forced to begin the enormous adaptation process into codependence" (2003, p. 78).

*CoDevelopers of O for the Soul
Joni LeRette Flores
Crystal Anzalone*