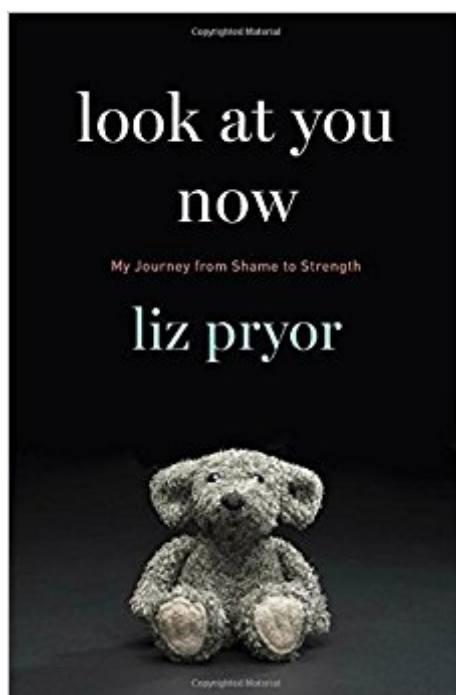


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Look At You Now: My Journey From Shame To Strength



Synopsis

For readers of *Orange Is the New Black* and *The Glass Castle*, a riveting memoir about a lifelong secret and a girl finding strength in the most unlikely place. In 1979, Liz Pryor is a seventeen-year-old girl from a good family in the wealthy Chicago suburbs. Halfway through her senior year of high school, she discovers that she is pregnant—a fact her parents are determined to keep a secret from her friends, siblings, and community forever. One snowy January day, after driving across three states, her mother drops her off at what Liz thinks is a Catholic home for unwed mothers—but which is, in truth, a locked government-run facility for delinquent and impoverished pregnant teenage girls. In the cement-block residence, Liz is alone and terrified, a fish out of water—a girl from a privileged, sheltered background living amid tough, street-savvy girls who come from the foster care system or juvenile detention. But over the next six months, isolated and in involuntary hiding from everyone she knows, Liz develops a surprising bond with the other girls and begins to question everything she once held true. Told with tenderness, humor, and an open heart, *Look at You Now* is a deeply moving story about the most vulnerable moments in our lives—and how a willingness to trust ourselves can permanently change who we are and how we see the world. Praise for *Look at You Now* • A funny, tender and brave coming-of-age tale. • “People • A poignant, often funny reminder that we learn who we are when we’re at our most challenged. • “Good Housekeeping • Engrossing . . . Readers will swiftly be drawn into the author’s compassionate retelling of her teen pregnancy—her fear, shame, regret, joy, and even her forgiveness of her parents for sending her away. This coming-of-age memoir is authentic and unforgettable. • “Publishers Weekly • [Liz] Pryor’s refusal to bury the truth of her experiences is the greatest strength of her book. Her honesty about a youthful error and desire to let that honesty define the rest of her life are both uplifting and inspiring. An unsentimental yet moving coming-of-age memoir. • “Kirkus Reviews • Pryor has vivid memories of her time in the facility, and her straightforward, unvarnished narrative, written as if by her seventeen-year-old self, rings true. Her story is well worth sharing. • “Booklist • I started reading this book thinking it was a compelling, honest, sometimes funny, sometimes poignant look at the world of teenage pregnancy, and knowing it would offer an inside look at the places where girls used to be hidden away until their babies came. I finished it damp-eyed and understanding that *Look at You Now* is much more than that. It is a story about how family dynamics work. It is about how wrenching it is to give away something born of your flesh, even if you know it’s the right decision. It’s about how much we can learn from people very much different from us. Most of all, it is a subtle, graceful story about how sometimes the worst things in our lives work best to shape our characters into something

shining and true, something that will serve us for the rest of our lives.” Elizabeth Berg, author of *The Dream Lover* Liz Pryor’s story is shocking, moving, riveting, and, ultimately, inspiring. She writes like a natural, can balance humor and sorrow perfectly, and in *Look at You Now*, has written a pitch-perfect memoir.” Darin Strauss, author of *Half a Life*

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Liz Pryor tells the story of being sent at age 17 to a government-run facility for pregnant unwed teens -- all of whom come from the criminal justice system or foster program, except Liz. Born into a privileged family in the tony Chicago suburb of Winnetka, Liz paints a picture of idyllic family life, with just a few hints that all is not well. When she becomes pregnant, her mother, a devout Catholic, does the 1970s version of googling and picks the Gwendolyn House from a search of the yellow pages. Piggybacking on the popularity of *Orange Is The New Black*, the book spends most of its time at the facility, which is populated by a group of brash, foul-mouthed, street-savvy teens, some as young as 13. Liz is granted privileges they don't have -- she can leave the building, have a hot plate and food in her room, access to a phone, and initially doesn't have a roommate. But the author devotes an almost equal amount of time to her home life leading up to the pregnancy -- she comes from a large and boisterous family of seven children. To me, the book read more like a story of her parents and of the girls at the home than of herself. Liz is the blank canvas on which everyone else comes to life. We read nothing about her life at school, except that she was in a chorus class and that her friends, the few she has, are in the class that has just graduated and gone off to college. She writes vaguely about her boyfriend and doesn't go into the incidences that led to the pregnancy.

As soon as I saw this book, "Look at You Now: My Journey from Shame to Strength" • available in Vine, I wanted to read it. The author, Liz Pryor, became pregnant when she was only 16 years old (and was 17 at the time of delivery). I became emotionally involved in the story, partly because of the similarities between Liz and myself. We were about the same age (she graduated from high school in 1979, me in the early 1980s), both grew up in the "Mid-West", and were both raised in large, strict Catholic households. One big difference, however, was that I was never an unwed (teen) mother. That definitely would not have gone over well with my parents either, but they never would have gone to the extreme that Liz's mother did. Perhaps because they were wealthy, their friends were more judgmental, but still! As I read the story, it boggled my mind to think somebody around my age would have been forced by her own parents to keep her teen pregnancy a secret from everyone, including close friends and family (even her siblings). Granted, teenage pregnancy is more widely accepted these days, but this story took place in 1979, not the 1940s or 1950s. There were pregnant girls at my high school. In fact, one girl I knew became pregnant in her junior year and married the father of the baby in a Catholic church, while she was obviously pregnant. So to have the author's parents feel the need to hide their daughter's pregnancy from everyone in 1979 seemed excessive to me. That being said, I found Liz's story an interesting one, albeit quite sad. For a child raised in a wealthy family to be shipped off to a locked, government-run facility for delinquent and impoverished pregnant teenage girls, is unfathomable to me.

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