

Questions for The Broken Compass

After the Story:

Take time to reread this story. I found that I was able to take hold of more images and metaphors each time I read it. Notice right off what stood out for you in the story: What images, and metaphors captured your imagination? What feelings did the story conjure in you? What most moved you? What confused, angered, upset, or frustrated you?

Retell the story to a good listener in your own words and talk together about what moved you both.

Backstory: The author does not tell us exactly what the situation was that Neblina was fleeing but we know that it was not safe and that it scared and harmed her. If it does not cause you distress, imagine what that trauma was for her. See if you can open your heart more to her plight.

Visualize the story: Close your eyes and replay this story in your imagination using all your senses. Imagine that you are there in the boat with Neblina. Listen to the sounds of the ocean wind, water, and sea birds. Smell the smells of the sea. Taste the salt spray. Look at her as she tries to manage her boat, feeds the birds. Hold that compass in your hands and watch as it spins. Notice how these sensory details make you feel and if they remind you of experiences in your life.

Step into the shoes of the main character: Go through the story again imagining that you are Neblina. Are you reminded at any point about situations that you have been in?

Think about the story cycle. Like all stories, this follows the heroine's journey cycle. She left the comfort of home because something had been lost, something needed healing. She was launched on a journey of healing as each of us will be many times in our lives. For a time, she was lost, and utilizing her old tools she struggled and kept going in circles. But as in all good tales there came a helper (Felipe) who provided just enough support and perspective shift for her to begin to move in a new direction. As so often happens, she needed to spend time alone, in the inner sanctum of her being feeling her pain and learning to listen to the healing voice from within. Only then could she find a home and a still place inside and outside. Only then could she join with others in a deep and safe way.

More questions to contemplate:

Neblina's compass and her boat were spinning wildly, not allowing her to find her ground or move forward. She wants to keep relying on her old compass, but it is broken. Is there a part of you that keeps you stuck and spinning? Are you relying on any old, outdated ideas of what or who will help you?

Check-in with that part of you to see why it feels the need to keep spinning. What would happen if it stopped? Would you have to face some feelings? We often have protective parts inside that keep us from feeling painful feelings. It is a noble cause, but it keeps us stuck like Neblina.

Neblina spent all of her time feedings and caring for the sea birds. They even began to demand this of her. Where in your life do you feel trapped in a caretaking role that does not nurture you?

Check-in with that part of you to see why it feels the need to keep putting so much energy into helping others? Ask that part of you what would happen if you stopped doing that? What do they worry would happen or not happen? Usually, these parts of ourselves have outdated belief systems. Can you update them with the facts that you do not have to do this anymore to be loved, appreciated, cared for, or respected? Her new friend Felipe tried to play this role for her reminding her that she didn't need to be a "floating veterinarian." You play that role for yourself. Find your wise center and speak to your parts from there.

Neblina finally found land. Felipe wanted her to go off with him, but she knew that she needed to find herself first. Are there situations or relationships that are pulling you from the self-healing work that you need to do?

Is there a metaphorical cave that you can create for yourself in which to face your pain from the perspective of unconditional love? Taking the time to stop and focus on your wounded parts from a perspective of curiosity and self-compassion will help you to create a true safe home within yourself.

Tell Your Own Story: Now begin to construct your own healing journey story. Perhaps you have one that feels complete in which you went through the cycles of the heroine's journey and came out stronger. Retell that experience to emphasize what it was that helped and how you changed as a result. Perhaps there is a situation in your life that is still causing you pain, or limiting your ability to interact with others, or to forgive yourself? As the author did, begin to construct your story.

Questions provided by Elisa Pearmain

My psychotherapy practice has been inspired and influenced by my ongoing career as a Professional Storyteller which I have been engaged in for over 35 years. I have put together two collections of folk tales with a third on the way, about how stories and story work can illuminate and guide the healing and forgiveness processes. As a **psychotherapist**, I utilize mindfulness techniques and Internal Family Systems work. From those vantage points, I would like to offer some suggestions for learning the most about yourself and your journey as you read and contemplate this story.

Further resources:

- For more information on Internal Family Systems work check out [The Internal Family Systems Institute](#).
- Find out more about Elisa Pearmain's [storytelling](#) and healing resources and her [therapy practice](#).