



As I embark on a life that has thankfully resulted in reunification with my child, I am reminded that the person who got into this situation is still here and reunification is in many ways the first step. A first MAJOR step to be sure, and yet still the beginning of a long road to shifting the metaphorical shape I hold in the world, to become able to fit with more people and even (hopefully) a mate.

I am reawakened to the pull of wanting to share my life with someone, to have my child get a different experience of what a relationship can look like, and experience stability and support in an intimate relationship.

The fear, of course, is getting pulled into what got me to where I was before I clawed my way out of the dark back into the sunlight.

But when I met this amazing, beautiful, intelligent woman a little while ago, I started experiencing a feeling of being alive I hadn't thought I'd ever experience again. It was wonderful—trying to figure out what was going on, not sure but enjoying the back and forth and the attention.

And thinking "I have done so much work on myself, surely this is a reward, a chance at possibly having something special, something amazing." No matter where it might go, it was a sign that I was experiencing a new side of life.

And then, the mask slipped.

After behaviors that felt oddly familiar, like—things said in sharp tones that were then brushed off or denied, putting out boundaries and being subtly ridiculed for them,

comments and actions that made me feel like who I am isn't worth anything—and knowing something wasn't right. But this time saying something, asking about what those behaviors were all about and watching her eyes go black as it all became my fault, my doing, my problem. And in an instant, I lost myself again. I found myself agreeing it was all me, begging for forgiveness when what I had really done was the unforgivable act of no longer blindly admiring, adoring, and complimenting, instead pointing out behaviors that for most could be seen as simply human but for others intolerable to experience.

Within hours I went from being interesting and engaging to horrible and reprehensible—the going out of her way to tell me she didn't want to talk to me, the astonishing yet familiar distortions and mischaracterizations, the gathering of the allies, the smear campaign, and the nastiness, in an instant suddenly being viewed as a horrible, worthless piece of trash.

The worst fear, meeting another narcissistic personality type.

SH*T.

What Next?

Well, first and foremost I get that it took 4 weeks this time instead of 12 years. Next, I get that I have internalized enough sense of self that when the attempts at destabilizing behaviors came, something in me not accepting them and then knowing myself well enough to know when I am off and realizing it quickly. And shutting it all down immediately. The hooks were strong but I saw them for what they were.

This was my worst fear, and I survived. And among the many gifts she actually gave me, one of the most important is that I know I can trust myself. It's upsetting, heartbreaking, and uplifting.

This brings to mind “**An Autobiography in five Chapters**”...

1. **Chapter I** I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in. I am lost ... I am helpless. It isn't my fault. It takes me forever to find a way out.
2. **Chapter II** I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I pretend I don't see it. I fall in again. I can't believe I am in the same place. But it isn't my fault. It still takes a long time to get out.
3. **Chapter III** I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it is there. I still fall in ... it's a habit. My eyes are open. I know where I am. It is my fault. I get out immediately.

4. **Chapter IV** I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I walk around it.
5. **Chapter V** I walk down another street.

The question is, What chapter are we living right now? I know as long as I'm alive there's the chance to live another one.

UP NEXT—Chapter 2: How to Protect Ourselves From Doing This... Narcissistic Innoculation