

— The Psychopath Code

Pieter Hintjens

The background of the book cover is a dark purple and black abstract illustration. It features a white, cat-like creature with blue eyes and blue markings on its chest and ears, standing on a black, root-like structure. Below it is a large, dark, spider-like creature with red eyes and red markings on its body. The background is filled with vertical purple stripes and black, web-like lines.

The Psychopath Code

Cracking the Predators that Stalk Us

by

Pieter Hintjens

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The Psychopath Code - Cracking The Predators That Stalk Us

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Pieter Hintjens has spent years building on-line communities and helping others to work better together. He is an expert in the dynamics of group psychology. He has researched cults and abusive manipulation since 2000, and psychopaths since 2010. He is also a software programmer, musician, and father.

Other books by the same author: "[ZeroMQ - Messaging for Many Applications](#)" (O'Reilly), "[Culture and Empire: Digital Revolution](#)" (Amazon.com), "[Social Architecture: Building On-line Communities](#)".

Decoding the Psychopath

There are some scary people around. People who take what they want, using their charm and wits. Con artists. Professional liars. They take from friends, colleagues, family and strangers alike. They never apologize or feel remorse towards the people they hurt. They often have criminal careers. We call them by many names. Narcissist. Anti-social. Sociopath. CEO. And more and more, we call them Psychopath.

Psychopaths raise so many questions. What is wrong with these people? Maybe they had cold and distant parents. Maybe they suffered abuse as children? Maybe they have something broken in them, a chemical imbalance, or evil demons. Or the next stage in humanity's evolution. A new race of superhumans, perhaps? Can we identify them? Can we learn to spot them in our homes and streets? What is going on in their minds? Are they aware of the damage they do? Do they sleep well at night? How do we survive them? How can such *horrible* people exist? Am I one of them?

Luckily, there are good answers, which lift the dread mystery from psychopathy. This was my goal with this book: to decode the psychopathic mind and write a manual for the rest of us. The material is based on my experiences and those of many others. It has been tested in real life, and it seems to work. Having said that, please note the following section.

Disclaimer

The author is not a psychiatric or medical professional. The author does not dispense medical advice or prescribe the use of any techniques as a form of treatment for physical or medical problems without the advice of a physician, either directly or indirectly. The intention of the author is to offer information of a general nature to help you in your quest for emotional or spiritual well-being. In the event that you use any of the information in this book for yourself, which is your right, the author and publisher assume no responsibility for your actions. None of the suggestions included in this book are intended to replace the care of a physician or to interfere with a diagnosis, prescribed medicines or therapies.

Break the Glass

If you're reading this book to get help with a difficult situation in your life, start here. I'm going to explain the key lessons in a short summary.

You will need to realize several things. The first is, are you the victim of psychological abuse? It is rarely overt. The bruises tend to be mental, not physical. An abusive relationship is disguised in lies, the ones your abuser tells you, and the ones you tell yourself. That makes it hard to see clearly.

Let's start with your feelings. Are you often sad, depressed, even suicidal? Do you feel empty and worthless? Have you bent your life to the other person's needs? Do you take blame for the failures, and do you keep trying to fix things? Do you feel you might be crazy? Do you feel burnt-out? Are you lonely, and have you lost old friends and relations? Do you drink a little too much?

If you're nodding to this list, you are probably in an abusive relationship. It is far more common than you realize. I'd estimate 10% to 20% of people are in abusive relationships at any point in time. It can be hard to recognize, admit, deal with, both for victims and for their friends and family.

Next, let's examine the relationship that is stressing you. Did it start "perfect" and then turn into a nightmare over time? Is it marked by sudden, unexpected crises? Is it characterized by extreme emotions? Is there verbal or physical violence? Have you invested everything in the relationship, with little in return? Has it become the only relationship that matters, overshadowing friends and family? Are you unable to imagine any alternatives?

These are the signs of the abusive bond. If this describes your situation, then you are under attack. Assume the person doing this is a psychopath, with or without formal diagnosis. We'll come to a detailed diagnosis later. What matters now is to recognize your situation, and how you are being attacked. It may seem random, yet it is systematic. The goal is to confuse and isolate you, strip you of your assets, then destroy and discard you. The violence is just part of that.

If this does not describe your situation, then you can skip the rest of this section.

Now, take a fresh look at the other person. If you are facing a psychopath, it can be impossible to see their real nature. You must look sideways, and by reflection off other people. Do you see someone who cares for others, or someone who cares for themselves? Do they make quiet, careful plans, or are they chaotic? Do they save and invest, or are their finances in a mess? Are they surrounded by happy people, or by a cloud of stressed, obsessed followers? Do they have a solid professional and social history, or is their past a blank mystery?

When you come to the decision, "I am the victim of an abusive psychopath," then you are halfway to the door. You will be tempted to flee, and when you talk about your realization with others, they will tell you to get away. In common culture, "psychopath" means "serial killer."

In reality "psychopath" means the slow draining of your life force, like a vampire sucking you dry over weeks, even years. There can be physical violence, yet it's mostly insignificant compared to the psychological damage. This means if you leave, you take your damage with you.

Here is my overall strategy: patience, observation, and the slow turning of the relationship around. From victim and enabler, you become an immovable force that recognizes and blocks the psychopath's many attacks. You slowly disable your abuser, and in doing this you regain your power. Finally you end the relationship on your own terms, a whole person.

Sometimes you can just tell an abusive person, "it is over, do not contact me again." Yet often it requires force and time to break the relationship.

The law tends to ignore psychological abuse between adults. Most psychopaths are careful to leave no evidence. The police and courts tend to be cynical about "he said, she said" accusations. And no matter what you say, a psychopath will always have a better lie. This is how cults can operate in broad daylight.

So you cannot make verbal accusations. Indeed, it will tend to work against you. When it comes to wars of words, psychopaths are powerful. Instead, be patient and collect material evidence. There are ways to provoke a psychopath into doing and saying self-destructive things.

When you confront a psychopath, or even change your behavior slightly, the response is usually more abuse. You will be terrified, and hurt. You will want things to be "normal," and parts of you will be screaming, "don't provoke him, it'll only make things worse!"

This is the point when many people give up and return to their abusers. It is easier to accept than to fight back in pain. Yet to accept abuse is to die a slow death.

From experience we see that most threats are bluff and bluster. Predators are fragile. They cannot survive exposure. They will snarl and bully, yet confronted with real resistance and the risk of wider sanctions, they mostly back off.

Learn the laws that cover abuse and harassment. Make friends with your local police. Learn the types of reports you can file. Does violent language count as abuse? Or do you need bruises and a medical certificate? Are you legally allowed to record phone calls and conversations? Do your research.

If you share property, a business, or children, do contact a lawyer. The police will give you the address of your local victim support groups. If you are in a difficult domestic situation, a psychologist who specializes in abuse victims will help as you fight your way out of the relationship. Whether you're a man or a woman, asking for help to fight an abuser is no shame.

And here is your superpower: other people. When you talk to others you'll find that many have similar experiences. When you get evidence of abusive behavior you can publish it and file police complaints. Your abuser can only hide when others excuse and forget his or her behavior.

Above all, patience and calm. You need to learn a lot and change some deep assumptions about your life. You are not to blame. Abusers choose their victims, not the other way around. Read the book slowly, and take your current situation as a chance to become a stronger, wiser person.

How this Book Works

The Psychopath Code has eight chapters, each telling part of the story. You can read these in any order. I'd suggest you skim the text rapidly, then read it carefully a few times. Then discuss with people you trust, and let your new knowledge sink in slowly. Do your research, read psychopath forums and other books. There is a lot to learn, and it will take you time, maybe years, to digest it all.

In Chapter 1, we get the core hypothesis of the book, which is that psychopaths are social predators of other humans. It is not a new idea, indeed it is becoming mainstream. I've just taken the idea further than others.

In Chapter 2, we see how psychopaths hunt. It is strongly driven by gender and age. In each case the psychopath uses stealth and deception to get close and make their prey trust them. Learn these patterns, and you become immune to them.

In Chapter 3, we see how psychopaths capture their victims, and build the abusive bond. The psychopath isolates and manipulates their target into giving them anything. Again, knowing these patterns, we become immune to them.

In Chapter 4, we see the most brutal phase of the psychopathic relationship. In this stage, the psychopath drains their target, while abusing them into silence and acceptance.

In Chapter 5, we begin to turn the tables by tracking and identifying psychopaths. We see over a hundred traits and behaviors you can identify, including how you feel in the embrace of a psychopath.

In Chapter 6, we examine the human emotions. This is the key to understanding psychopathy and our response to it. We work through about fifty universal human emotions, of which psychopaths have nine.

In Chapter 7, we see how to break free from the embrace of a psychopath. The material explains step-by-step how to regain your power, and disable your abuser. It is not an overnight process, so patience and calm are essential.

In Chapter 8, I answer frequently-asked questions that follow from the material.

The book is available for sale on Amazon.com and Kindle, and for free from psychopathcode.com. Please do share the free PDFs and ebooks with your friends and family.

How this Book Came to Be

I'm a geek who writes software, articles, and books. My degree was in computer science. I studied psychology only a little at university. It's not the usual starting point for a book about psychopaths. So let me explain how it came to this.

Over my career I've worked with thousands of people. I've built hundreds of teams, and many small businesses, not-for-profits, and on-line communities. I've had to learn human nature. Some lessons are obvious. Some are well hidden. We are such a complex species. And yet it is possible to decode, understand, and predict human nature.

It was in *Culture & Empire* that I began writing on psychology. My expertise, and what fascinates me, is social psychology. That is, how groups work, and how people work within groups. It is the core of my work in open source community building. Software is all about people, it turns out.

In *Culture & Empire* I also looked at conflict as a force for change.

We dream of peace and stability. Yet throughout history the most ambitious leaps forward have arisen from conflict and chaos. We build a world of human rights. We work to protect the environment. We build legal systems and courts and police forces to protect prosperity and peace. You may not realize this from the daily news, yet globally, *violence falls every year, and always has*. Humans are not good, or evil. We are survivors. We do whatever it takes to reproduce and make sure our children flourish. Most of us succeed by hard work. A few of us live as parasites, taking from others, like vampires. I call these the "good actors" and the "bad actors."

As I finished *Culture & Empire*, I was facing some bad actors in my personal life. Being a writer, I didn't run away, and I didn't deny what was going on. Instead I started taking notes and conducting small experiments. It is not every day you get psychopaths to play with.

I found that my work in social psychology was incomplete. I'd focused on the good actors, and only skimmed the surface of bad actors. Yet these two strategies are not alternatives. They intertwine and work together in a long and mysterious arms race. This arms race lies at the core of what it means to "be human."

There is a lot of material about psychopaths on the web. It is a topic that [is trending year on year](#). There are thousands of stories from those affected. There is research from psychologists and psychiatrists. There are papers from criminologists, and from on-line dating experts. There are even blogs and forums written by diagnosed psychopaths.

There are some huge questions that have no agreed answer. To start with, what causes psychopathy? Can we cure it, and do we even want to try? Can we identify psychopaths "in the wild," that is, without a psychiatric examination? Are they always violent and dangerous, and if not, what factors affect that? Is it a spectrum of behavior, like intelligence? Or is psychopathy more binary, like gender? How do psychopaths think and operate? Can we protect ourselves from them?

The authority on psychopaths is Dr. Robert Hare, and I use the term as he defines it, though more broadly. [His checklist](#) focuses on males and misses many female psychopaths. Classic psychopath research has focused on convicted criminals: habitual law breakers, and violent offenders. In the mid 1990s researchers started looking at psychopaths who hide in the general population. These are the "subclinical" or "successful" psychopaths who stay away from violent crime. They are rarely arrested.

What we see is a figure of around 10%, in both genders. *'A handful of empirical studies suggest that ... subclinical psychopathy is much more common than its clinical counterpart, with base rates ranging from 5 percent to 15 percent.'* -- Jay C. Thomas, Daniel L. Segal, speaking of work by Gustafson and Ritzer in 1995 and Pethman and Earlandson in 2002, in the *Comprehensive Handbook of Personality and Psychopathology: Personality and Everyday Functioning* (Google books).

Clearly some psychopaths are more harmful than others. I'm going to use a figure of 4% as the cut-off point. This is somewhat arbitrary. Too low, and we miss the majority of psychopaths and the damage they do. Too high and we trivialize it.

While many psychopaths look entirely "normal", I've also come to think, and [research backs this up](#), that psychopaths also hide behind other personality disorders. Those are: narcissistic, borderline, and histrionic PD. This especially applies to female psychopaths. When you include these, the picture becomes clearer and more detailed. As a plus we get usable models for managing the damage caused by these disorders.

In theory, personality disorders like borderline are treatable with medication and therapy. In practice, that does not work well, or at all. It is the same for diagnosed psychopaths (those with "anti-social personality disorder"). Therapy just seems to make them more skilled at

manipulating people.

What can work is to limit and work to repair the damage that psychopaths do. Like bullies at school, psychopaths do not suffer from depression. It is family, friends, and colleagues who pay the cost. Once you see the process behind the psychopaths' impact craters, you can intervene.

Intervention is not simple. To deal with people who have spent their lives charming, manipulating, and bullying others is by default impossible. If you try to warn a group, you will find yourself blamed. If you try to warn individuals, you will find them turning against you. You must move slowly, carefully, and with the right knowledge.

So this book focuses on that process, how to recognize it, how it works, and how to disable it.

I'm not a qualified psychologist or psychiatrist. I cannot argue from authority. What I can do is develop models and test them on the psychopaths I have access to. I can test them against unusual situations from the past. And I can test them through other people who find themselves entangled with psychopaths.

I've spent years reading the literature, forums, books, articles. Anything that can shine a light on this mystery of these strange fellow humans, and how they work. I've talked to hundreds of people about the topic. That includes psychologists who specialize in abuse, and developmental disorders. It includes people who have survived abusive partners. People who have tried to kill themselves to escape. People whose parents were abusive and fit the profile of psychopaths.

I've used these models to build gardens of sanity in my personal and professional lives. Those who work with me know that our on-line communities are above all *happy* places. This is no accident. It comes from long, careful work to keep bad actors at bay.

As far as possible I've worked from repeated observations, verifiable research, and consensus. I've stayed away from speculation and opinion for its own sake. Having said that, I do tell a lot of stories and some are more fantastic than others. This is necessary. My experience has told me there are deep, important problems to solve here. For myself, my friends and my family, I wanted to solve these problems.

In "All Life is Problem Solving," Karl Popper wrote:

Science begins with problems. It *attempts* to solve them through bold, inventive theories. The great majority of theories are false and/or untestable. Valuable, testable theories will search for errors. We try to find errors and eliminate them. This is science: it consists of wild, often irresponsible ideas that it places under the strict control of error correction.

Please look for errors in my wild, irresponsible ideas, and work with me to replace or correct them. I've avoided jargon and innuendo. A clearly expressed idea is easier to critique. We can never reach truth, only discover better approximations to it. Sometimes that takes large leaps and informed guesses. Sometimes we must be willing to think in unorthodox directions. I make many hypotheses, and state them as if they are facts. I apologize in advance for that style. I apologize also for the speculation that I've gotten wrong. I hope the parts which turn out to be right make it worthwhile.

Embracing the Past

If your ex-partner might have been a psychopath, this book will bring back memories. It will cause you to feel strong emotions. You may want to avoid reading it, to avoid reliving your experiences. This is a common and understandable reaction. The dominant opinion about trauma is that re-thinking our experiences stops the healing process.

Yet to avoid is to be helpless. And helplessness leads us to depression. I have talked for hundreds of hours with other survivors of psychopathic relationships. I've listened to their stories of endless emotional bullying, deceit, manipulation, theft. I've shared my own stories. And I've told the stories that I tell in this book. What psychopaths are. How they think. Where they get their power. What they look like. And most of all, how to fight back.

Our experiences are all so similar. It is as if every psychopath on Earth read the same handbook. When I talk about psychopaths with a new group, at least a quarter of them light up. "You're speaking of my ex," they say. I explain how I learned to deal with such people, past and present. "You should write a book," they tell me. "I'm doing that," I reply.

My advice is to embrace your past. Don't avoid it. Confront it and understand it. Then use that new knowledge to become a stronger, happier person. This is why I wrote this book. I wanted to explain psychopathy in a positive way. Not that psychopaths are nice people. They are as nice as a nail through the hand. Yet if you can get to the end of this book, I promise you a picture of psychopathy that changes everything.

Chapter 1. Predator

"Human predators populate our society" -- Stefan Verstappen.

The Plundered Pilot

Keith is talking to a man in the corner of the room. I've known Keith for ages, so I go to say hi. He's agitated, stressed. It's not like him. He's always been a calm man, confident and quiet. He owns a plane, a little Cessna. He does small commercial gigs, takes tourists over the Grand Canyon. When he gets something extra, he puts it aside. "One day I'm going to buy our ranch," he tells me. Keith and Alexis, and their retirement dream.

"Hey Keith, how's it going?" I ask. The other man sits there, says nothing. Dark curls, Shaded glasses. Good suit, heavy gold watch. Keith shakes his head and shoulders in anger. "Fine! It's going fine!" he tells me. "Now can you please leave us alone? Please?"

I'm shocked. I've never seen him like this. "Sure, catch you later," I tell him, and go back to my place at the bar. I watch them. They're arguing about something. The man shrugs, talks. He's quiet and intense. Keith calms down, stop shaking his head. He's nodding now. The small drama ends with them shaking hands. Keith signs a piece of paper. The man folds it, puts it in his jacket pocket, stands, leaves. I wait a minute, then take my drink and sit across from Keith.

"Mind if I sit?" I ask him, already sitting. It's our running joke. He looks at me, not laughing, and sighs. "What was that?" I ask, still somewhat annoyed at him for sending me away before. "Nothing," he says, "Business." He changes the subject, asks about my kids. We chat for a while. He's distant, skinnier, hasn't shaved. I want to ask more about the guy in the suit. Then I don't. No need to stir the pot, right?

That's the last time I see Keith. Two weeks later I get a funeral card from Alexis. His *widow*. I call her immediately. Keith is dead. He crashed his plane. No passengers, just him. I'm lost for words. "So sorry." It's all I can say. Keith?

The investigator finds the plane had no technical problems. It didn't hit anything. The skies were clear. So he rules it a suicide. Keith crashed on purpose. No insurance for Alexis. The worst part is Keith cleared out their joint savings account. And just a few days before I saw him. Over \$180,000 gone, no explanation.

Psychopathy as Adaptation

Some researchers have suggested that [psychopathy is an adaptation](#), rather than a disorder. I had the same idea many years ago when involved with a difficult young woman. She was in treatment for borderline personality disorder. She moved from job to job, always blaming others. Her life was a long story of abusive parents, ex-partners, and friends.

She lived in a cloud of chaos and emotional pain. Yet it was others who always showed the real hurt. No matter how bad the situation got, she was able to find a way out, and attract new friends. Behind her, she left a trail of damage and trauma. She was on medication, which she rarely took. She had a therapist, whom she later seduced. The "sufferer" always got what she wanted.

Above all, she was *predatory* in a confident and innocent way. It took me a long time to realize I'd been sleeping with a psychopath. She wore the mask of "borderline" to be a more successful victim. At the time I also took notes. They documented my descent into an alternate universe. In a relationship with a psychopath, our core laws of social conduct are gone. In their place grows something alien and hungry.

There are already plenty of people studying psychopathy-as-a-disorder. I wanted to explore psychopathy-as-an-adaptation because it fit my data better. Further, it seemed to lead to more positive, and useful conclusions.

To model psychopathy as an adaptation rather than a disorder opens a door to a new world. Our questions change. We ask what struggle pushed this evolution. We ask what specific adaptations they actually own. Do psychopaths have longer teeth? Sharper claws? Or are their talents more discrete?

We also ask what counter-adaptations might exist in social humans (the non-psychopath majority). We ask, "Could the psychopath-social relationship in fact be a predator-prey story?" And the answer turns out to be an emphatic "Yes, of course!" We ask, "How old is this story?" and the answer is, "Millions of years."

The Predator Model

The author of "Dracula," Bram Stoker, drew the psychopath as predator. Perhaps he had personal experience. The story is not meant as literal truth. It is a metaphor, and a good one. Dracula comes in the night, dressed to kill. He drains the life blood out of you, even as he seduces you with his charm and sexuality.

Dracula does not kill outright. Rather, he turns you into a weak copy of himself. He is powerful and animalistic. He can read your thoughts, even as you scramble to escape. And the best tension is human versus vampire, with vampire-on-vampire conflict as cherry topping.

Dr Robert Hare started describing psychopaths as social predators in [his landmark 1994 article in Psychology Today](#). The subtitle is: "This Charming Psychopath -- How to spot social predators before they attack." In this article and his work he focuses on identifying psychopaths. Many of us are familiar with his "Psychopath Checklist."

Predators deceive their prey as a core strategy. Human predators cheat their victims as a core strategy. It is the same thing. Animal models are essential to understanding and predicting human behavior. We find it hard to look at ourselves without lying. Our self-analysis crashes into notions of "free will" and "consciousness." We cannot improve nor discard these notions, so they obsess us. Yet we have no trouble dissecting animal behavior without such distractions.

What I've done in this book is use the predator model as a backbone onto which all the rest can hang. We start with predators that cheat their way through the human social universe. All the rest derives from that, and makes sense in that context.

My first exposure to the predator model was in Stefan Verstappen's excellent work, [Defense Against the Psychopath](#). This was the first text I read that suggested strategies for confronting and defeating a psychopath, which is the path I've taken in this book.

Not the Ants You Are Looking For

"There are spiders in Australia that smell and behave like ants: some are so convincing that the ants will allow a spider to live permanently as one of them. This spider will then feast upon its new friends, but it won't eat all the ants, or even a significant number; instead, it extracts resources slowly, sustainably, and over time." -- [Daniel N. Jones, "Snake in the grass"](#)

It's not just a few spiders. Thousands of different insects have hacked into the ant colony in one way or another. One caterpillar [mimics the queen ant's voice](#) to trick workers. The *Paussus* beetle is born, lives, and dies inside the ant colony. Not only does it smell right (ants use smells to detect friends from foes), it also mimics the sounds the ants make. Literally, it mimics the queen ant, saying "it's OK" to ants and larvae, even as it gobbles up.

Ants evolved to work together to collect food and protect it from thieves. They divide the work, care for their young together, and live in large colonies. They communicate, and they think collectively. An ant colony shows intelligent behavior.

Ants thrive, despite the parasites and predators after them, their protection, and their food. Indeed, ants are one of the most successful species. Ants have languages, tribal identity, social organization, the ability to work together. These are adaptations. One must ask, *to solve what problems?* and the answer seems to be: exactly that horde of cheats.

Ants started by spreading the risk of a seasonal food supply. Many ants can harvest a wider area than a single ant. A lucky ant can share with unlucky ones. An unlucky ant will survive a bad spell. So ants evolved altruism, which is a good answer to a risky food supply. Other answers are migration, hibernation, and synchronized breeding cycles.

Yet altruism has a weakness, which is cheating behavior. The ants' food supply is open to anyone who needs it. If you get into the colony, you can eat ants, larvae and food without work. Thus altruists had to evolve defenses against cheats, or go extinct. For an ant colony, this means to detect intruders, and then kill them. Genes for altruism can only survive if they also enforce reciprocity.

As Daniel Jones [writes](#):

Some predators are fast, mobile and wide-ranging, executing their deceptions on as many others as they can; they resemble human psychopaths. Others are slow, stalking their prey in a specific, strategic (almost Machiavellian) way... There is a never-ending arms race between the deceiver and the deceived among most living things.

So the ants evolved languages of smell, touch, and sound to identify each other. The cheats evolved to imitate these languages. The ant languages got more sophisticated. The cheats got better. And so on, over hundreds of millions of years, to give us the modern ant. One family of ants from Argentina now covers much of the world in a "[intercontinental super colony](#)". This super colony is invasive, dominant, and drives out local ant species. An ant from Portugal can enter a nest in New Zealand, and be accepted.

This should be familiar to you. Cooperative altruism appears in other species. Termites, bees, and species of wasp have evolved along the same path. So have vampire bats, killer whales, and humans. We also form an intercontinental super colony, that is invasive, dominant, and often acts like one family.

In his 2012 book "The Social Conquest of the Earth," Edward Wilson described humans as [eusocial apes](#). Our divisions of labor, overlapping generations, and cooperative care of young give us a "superpower" that few other species can achieve.

Humanity did not evolve in a garden of Eden. Severe climate shifts hammered us, over and over. We survived through many near-extinction bottlenecks, down to a few thousand individuals, over and over. These events didn't kill us off. Like the Argentine ants, we are descended from a single small population of genetically similar people. This lets us recognize each other as members of the same tribe.

We survived disaster after disaster by working together. We developed the ability to pass knowledge down the generations. We evolved altruism, the spreading of risk through tribes and generations.

Early altruistic humans had many cheats: scavengers, parasites, and above all, other humans. For every social instinct we evolved, we evolved talents for cheating others. And as cheats got smarter, social humans got better at identifying and punishing them.

Humans form networks of relationships. Sometimes these are hierarchical. More often we form ties to other individuals and groups. Those relationships aren't arbitrary. They build on meticulous accounting. We calculate trade in genes, food, shelter, sex, affection, information, time. It is mostly subconscious, yet it is constant and dominant.

We have sophisticated mental tools to track these relationships. We can remember faces for a lifetime. We remember the good and the bad, in detail. We can guess the relative value of any favor or item, in a given place or time. That roast chicken you shared with me for lunch is worth three beers tomorrow, or one in two weeks' time. We remember cheats forever, and we do not forgive them.

We have imagination, so we can plan how to work together. We have language, to exchange knowledge. We express our emotions on our faces, voices, body language, and the blush of blood on our face, ears, and body.

All of these are adaptations to defend against cheats. Just as the ant colony is the product of an arms race, so is human society. Who we are stems from this endless war between working together, and that promise: "the check is in the mail!"

The Forever War

You and me, we've been at war since before either of us even existed. -- John Conner, in *Terminator Salvation*

Since we're talking about evolution and a long arms' race, one question pops up. That is, when did human psychopathy start to evolve? What time period are we looking at here? It is a question no-one else has ever asked, according to Google. I'm going to try to answer it.

First, we can rule out a recent origin. Psychopathy is a consistent feature of humanity across the world. It is a human universal. It thus predates our expansion out of Africa, some 150,000 years ago.

The origins of humanity keep getting pushed back in time. The ritual burial cave of *homo naledi* in South Africa dates from around 3 million years ago. The oldest stone tools [go back 3.3 million years](#).

Ritual burials speak of empathy for the dead, and social emotions that go beyond tribe and family. Stone tools point to a structured society, a division of labor, some level of trade, and forward planning.

Let me explain. To turn stone into usable tools takes incremental skill and learning, adapting techniques that follow a slow evolution. This means knowledge passing down the generations, which means specialized individuals, a caste of tool makers.

As Scientific American [writes](#),

The Lomekwi knappers were able to deliver sufficient intentional force to detach repeatedly series of adjacent and superposed flakes and then to continue knapping by rotating the cores. [They] intentionally selected big, heavy blocks of very hard raw material from nearby sources even though smaller blocks were available. They used various knapping techniques to remove the sharp-edged flakes from the cores.

The raw materials are not widespread. The toolmakers had to travel to locations with the right rocks. They had to make their tools. They had to carry those tools back to people who needed them. This meant taking food and water, sacks or ropes, and so on.

It also means the ability to plan in advance and organize with others. This means language, rich enough to express futures and maybes. This sounds advanced for hominids with small brains, until you realize that ants do much the same. This behavior does not need to be conscious. It can be instinctive.

A stone tool production chain has cores, flakes, and anvils. It goes far beyond the mental capacity of a single individual. It tells us there was a social structure. Some specialized in making tools. Others in using the tools for hunting, cleaning meat, breaking bones, cutting wood. Such a social structure means altruism, that is, the ability to share with others. And whenever there is altruism, there are cheats.

The counter-notion is that early humans were generalists, and that they made their own tools as they needed them. Specialization and trade comes much later, in this view. Yet it's an easy model to discredit. Hunting demands its own sets of specialized skills. There would be extreme competition on men to be the best hunter, or the best tool maker. Women need tools as well as men, yet are unlikely to be toolmakers. Two specialists able to trade can *always* do better than two generalists. So the generalist model does not survive sexual selection, nor economics, nor the male-female division of labor.

So I think we can date human psychopathy to at least 3 million years ago.

The Puzzle of the Big Brain

Our most distinctive human feature is our over-sized brain. The fossil record shows it suddenly growing larger and larger, starting around two million years ago. What drove this expansion? The answer turns out to be: other people. As [David Geary says](#):

There was very little change in brain size across our sample of fossil skulls until we hit a certain population size. Once that population density was hit, there was a very quick increase in brain size.

Why would more people mean bigger brains? Geary credits "social competition", with more people competing for the same food supply. The smartest win, have more kids, and the genes for smaller, stupider brains die out, he argues.

Yet human food supply is not a static resource. Rather, it is a direct result of human activity. More people means more food, not less. Fish do not line up in shallow water, waiting for someone to collect them. Deer do not come in packets of twelve. Food fights back. It is a deep and complex puzzle, solved by technology, knowledge sharing, altruism, and trading. Our social model gets more, not less, effective with more people. So, the more people, the more food.

This only stops being true when we hit the limits of our environment. That is, during a population collapse, not a boom. Only in catastrophic situations do people compete for food.

We could also ask why intelligence should win food? It does not happen in other animals. Big brains are expensive and dangerous, for mother and baby. Why not evolve larger teeth, or stronger muscles, or longer legs? It seems arbitrary to claim intelligence as the key to getting more food, without further explanation.

We can make Geary's model work, if we replace "social competition" with "arms race between altruists and cheats." When populations consist of small, isolated families, cheating is a poor strategy. It is easy to detect and punish cheats. Predators need a certain population density. They must be able to move on after exhausting a given territory.

So the economic incentives for cheating increased as ancient human populations grew. At a certain point, the arms race turned hot. Co-operative humans evolved social emotions to detect and punish cheats. Cheats evolved manipulation and emotional mimicry to hack the emotional languages. Social emotions became more complex, as cheating mimicry got better. As co-operative humans developed better social memories, cheats became better liars.

And so on and on. Our brains are chock full of psychopathic talents and psychopath detectors. It's not that the more intelligent humans had more babies. The arms race did a pincer movement on small brains. We are either superb altruists, or we are superb cheats. Both take a lot of brain power: the more, the better. There is no safe middle ground.

Someone Stole My Lamp. I'm Delighted.

Let me explore some of those psychopath detectors. One is our sense of humor. Humor is a human universal, visible in children from a young age. Babies giggle with joy when they play with their parents. We instinctively trust people who can make us laugh. We distrust those who don't like our jokes, or seem to lack a sense of humor.

We use humor more in stressful situations. We value original humor and reward the "telling" more than the joke itself. In our horror films, the monsters don't laugh except in a creepy way that scares young children. Monsters have no sense of humor.

A joke is a construction, a story with a specific and consistent shape. Every joke, even puns, depends on a mystery. We don't tell the mystery. That would be "explaining the joke."

Rather, we tell the joke and then we wait for the other person to "get it." When they get it, they laugh, and we laugh, and the event is complete. Or, depending on the joke, we may expect a groan.

It's not enough to just laugh, either. Both parties must laugh at the right moment, not too soon, not too late. The laugh must last long enough. It must not be too loud, nor too soft. A good joke makes both the teller and the listener happy. A failed joke disturbs and irritates us. Humor is so connected to our emotions.

Such a precise thing, the humor protocol. This is not random or accidental.

What we have evolved with humor is an empathy detector. A joke is a card with two sides. We show one side, and keep the other hidden. If the listener has empathy for the character in the story, they get to see the hidden side. This triggers the laugh response. If the listener has no empathy, they are baffled.

A psychopath cannot laugh "right." He does not laugh, or he laughs too much, or too long. We are more wary of people who laugh too much, than of those who don't laugh at all. What is he hiding, we wonder?

How Does it Make You Feel?

Another of those "uniquely human" talents is art. Why did our ancestors enjoy painting on rocks and cave walls? The traditional explanations are they made art for art's sake, out of boredom, while high on drugs, or as part of hunting ceremonies.

Yet like the 40,000 year old ivory Venus, art serves no functional purpose except to stir emotions in the viewer. The talent to create is so widespread that it plays on every street corner for pennies. Yet we respect it and, it seems, our species has done so for a long time.

Above all, we expect art to make us "feel" something. And we ask this of others: "how does it make you feel?" And we scan their faces as they answer.

Psychopaths have many curious traits, which I will come to in the book. One is their lack of interest in creative acts. They do not draw, paint, sculpt, or carve. They do not take photographs, except of themselves and their possessions. They do not cook for pleasure, invent recipes, nor make their own bread as a hobby. They do not create music, though they can be an excellent performers of others' work.

This lack of creative drive is a curious thing, when you first see it. It matches their generally empty sense of humor. Their hobbies are travel, shopping, eating out, meeting new people. This is consumption, not creation.

Art is a precious thing. It is a universal human language. As with comedy, we reward originality more than technical brilliance. As with comedy, we enjoy art more in company than alone. And as with comedians, we praise and respect artists, though the talent has no survival value. Finally, we measure artists by their track record: one success isn't enough. One success can be fake, stolen, or accidental. Whereas for scientists or athletes, one victory can last a lifetime.

I'm certain creativity is another secret language of empathy. It asks the world, "friend or foe? Look at this and tell me you feel something!" and the viewer responds, or fails the test. It is much like telling a joke. Like a great joke, a great creative work must speak from and to the emotions. It must tell half a story that only a social brain can complete and "get."

A young child learns to draw at school, and takes their works back for their parents. These gifts are not useful in any concrete sense. Yet they are important and special in the moment. The child watches their parent's reaction. When they see joy at the squished faces and strange colors, the child also feels joy. They share the moment, confirming each others' social humanity. The child thinks, "See Mommy, isn't this great!" The subtext is, "See, Mommy, I'm normal. Please don't reject me!"

We create for ourselves and others. We create to make other people feel something. Usually, it's happiness, though sometimes it's loss, sadness, or other emotions. A creative act is a message of empathy. And we measure the quality of our art as we do our humor: by its originality, and thus its authenticity.

This is why imitative art is "fake." It is why engineering isn't art, and why fast food feels "cheap." It is why we don't explain jokes, and why an artist cannot explain the "point" of his or her work. It is a test, and if you don't know the answer, that itself is significant. It's why a pile of bricks in the Tate Gallery is worth a million pounds. That's the joke.

Conclusions

We've started to unlock the mystery of psychopaths by treating them as predators, rather than broken people. The predator model does more than explain psychopaths. It also explains the evolution of the human mind, as the result of an ancient arms race between cheaters and altruists. For 3 million years, altruists have gotten better at working together, and cheats have gotten better at faking it. In the next chapter I'll explain how psychopaths hunt.

Chapter 2. The Hunt

The Party Maker

He wanders into his favorite place, a large bar and restaurant. The spot is popular with noisy young people looking for good times. It's early on this Saturday summer evening. He chats with the bouncer, Mike. The large man enjoys the distraction, and tells him little fragments of his life. His ex-girlfriend and the unexpected baby. His boss. He high-fives the bouncer and cuts the conversation. "Catch you later, Mike, I'm gonna get myself a beer". He crosses over to the bar.

Outside on the terrace he finds a large round table and sits with his cold bottle. People are trickling in. He watches them. A good mix, typical of this part of Texas. Migrants come here from all over the US, and beyond. Men check out women. The women pretend to ignore the men. Some couples. Some loners, backs to the wall, body language shouting, "I wish I was taller."

The place is getting full now. A small group of young men sit on the steps beside his table. White, black, Hispanic. They look uncomfortable. He turns to them, asks "where y'all from?" Soldiers from a nearby army base, on a night out. He sweeps his arm to show his table. "Come join me," he says, "it's more fun at a table," he smiles. The men accept, and get up and join him. They're glad for the chairs, and the welcome.

These young men are smart, and curious. Not yet deployed, they're optimistic and trusting. He tells them sweeping stories of his own foreign adventures. They laugh with excitement. He stops, puts his hand on the table, and states the obvious. "We need women!" One soldier points with his chin. "How about those two?" He turns to see two pretty dark-haired women. They look bored and uncertain. "OK, don't move!" he tells the men, and gets up.

"Hi ladies, how you doing?" he asks them, not listening to the answer, which is always "fine" or "great." He watches for any signs of irritation. They seem happy to talk to him. "You waiting for someone else?" he asks, and they say no, it's just the two of them. He frowns, studying their features.

"Where are you from?" he asks. "Guess," says one, laughing. He tries to place them. Dark eyebrows, dark green eyes, pale skin, high cheekbones. Lebanon? Georgia (the country, not the state)? They laugh and shake their heads, "no."

"Won't you join us? We've space," he invites the women with a broad sweep of his arm. They look at the handsome, crew-cut male faces, shrug, and accept. "Sure, why not."

The two women sit beside him, and he chats with them, making more wrong guesses. Russia? Armenia? They laugh. The soldiers buy them drinks. Everyone is happy, it's a great party. Finally, he admits defeat, and they tell him, "India." He's shocked, impressed, and fascinated.

"The most beautiful woman I ever met," he says, "was from Georgia. We talked for five minutes, and I wanted to marry her right on the spot. You both have the same features. I was *sure* you were Georgian! But India, wow... India!"

"Yes, India!" they laugh, flattered and enjoying themselves. They chat through the evening. The bar closes, and the public empties into the car park. His group is last to leave. The soldiers say goodbye and go their way, and the two women stay with him. "Do you want to go somewhere else?" he asks. "My car's there." He pushes his remote and the lights on his new Mustang convertible flash on and off.

Later, one of the women asks him, "so how long have you known those guys?" He answers, "Oh, I only met them this evening." "What?!" she exclaims, shocked. "We thought you'd known them for years! You were like best friends!"

The Social Predator

Psychopaths can exert a fascinating level of power over others. It is like a cult of two. When we meet such people and start to snarl our lives with them, we feel carried by destiny. It is a strange mix of certainty and loss of control. It is like falling in a strong wind. It is the hot fire of religious fanaticism. And it always seems to end in tears.

The question others often ask is "why?" The relationships between psychopaths and other people are so destructive and bitter. "Why" is a good place to start. When we can answer that, then we can start to look at "how" and "who" and other deeper questions.

My stories at the start of each chapter are all about predators of one shape or another. Every psychopath works this way. Psychopaths hunt other humans. They attack and capture them. They feed on their time, resources, power, and energy. They dispose of the remains. And they move on.

The violence is covert. It sometimes ends in self-harm or suicide of victim. More often it ends in depression. Every relationship between a social human and a psychopath follows the same pattern. There seem to be no exceptions, no "nice" psychopaths. To be a psychopath is to be a predator.

This is no metaphor. This is the key to decoding psychopathy. *They are predators or parasites who feed off other humans.* Without this key, psychopathy is mysterious and baffling. It is like an ancient manuscript filled with symbols and glyphs. A text that affects so many of us, yet is indecipherable. With the key, we can read the stories and we can understand.

While my descriptions are often of individual relationships, the patterns apply in many situations. We see them in cults, abusive businesses, and other predatory organizations.

Mallory, Alice, and Bob

In the information security business, we sometimes call a hostile attacker "Mallory." Likewise, we call the innocent targets "Alice" and "Bob." I'll use these names in this book, to make it easier to read and digest.

Mallory can be a man or a woman. I'll switch between "he" and "she" as it suits. Mallory is an adult, at least 14-16 years old, and under 70. Mallory is a psychopath.

Alice and Bob are altruistic, social people. They are targets of Mallory's attention.

Walk This Way

The first time you meet Mallory, it is an intense, personal, and deep experience. That is, to Alice or Bob. For Mallory it is insignificant, casual, a reflex. When she says "Hello" to a hundred people, 96% will feel affected. It is the smile, the eyes, the *depth* of that simple greeting. For Mallory, there is no effort, no emotional cost at all.

This is the "charisma" we speak of. It is the projection of joy at meeting someone we care a lot about. Alice and Bob cannot fake this. They show it only for those they cherish. To cherish *everyone* you meet is an extreme perspective that takes decades to find. Mallory fakes this by reflex, from youth. It does not take learning. It is her first rule of survival: *others must adore you.*

It's such a strong effect you can use it to spot psychopaths in the wild. I'll come back to this in "Hunting Mallory". Most who cross paths with Mallory tend to feel little kicks of pleasure. If they are even a little lonely, this lures them back for more conversation. Meanwhile she is scanning for interesting targets. It doesn't take conversation. She can see vulnerability in people from their body language.

Social humans can learn this skill, with years of practice. Mallory needs no training for this. It is one of her many inborn talents. [Forbes Magazine writes](#), "it appears that psychopaths don't need that meditative practice to be inordinately observant... of weaknesses in others."

Two signs above all show us as vulnerable. One, is to be alone or show solitary body language. Two, is to show fear and insecurity, and especially the signs of past abuse.

Many people believe abuse victims often go on to become abusers. Yet the [rate is around 10%](#), unless abused and abuser are in the same family. Then it rises significantly. And one third of these adult abusers were cruel to animals, as children.

I don't doubt that psychopaths abuse, neglect, and mentally torture their children, and that many of these go on to become psychopaths. It's a mechanism I've observed, and will explain later. Yet the "abuse causes abuse" model misses the 90% of children who are sexually abused and grow up to harm no others. I think it comes from social workers fooled by young psychopaths. "My father abused me, that is why I'm hurting others." Psychopaths never take responsibility for their acts.

In reality, abuse victims tend to be silent witnesses to their own life of traumas. Or, as Joanna Moore writes in [The Faces of Narcissism](#), "It's easy to blame the angry victim and support the calm abuser."

Past abuse is a prime predictor of future abuse. Coming from an abusive family stamp us with fear and insecurity. Having an abusive employer, or an abusive partner does the same. Our fear and insecurity flash a neon "Eat Me!" to passing psychopaths.

Fear of others shows in our [body language](#). Abuse victims lift their feet higher while walking. They take longer or shorter strides than average. They twitch their hands and feet. They avoid eye contact. They use submissive and defensive body postures.

All these cues are easy to read, if you have the right mind. Studies of criminal psychopaths [show how psychopaths pick-up on such cues](#).

I've no figures for how fast this happens, only anecdotal reports. I'd guess Mallory can work a hundred people in ten minutes or so.

Big Blue Eggs

Mallory, looking for plausible targets, strolls through the crowd. She projects her sexuality just a little louder than the other women. She is looking for solitary, prosperous males. She watches how men look at her, and sees one nervous reaction that intrigues her. She goes up and shakes her hair, breathes in, smiles to him. She watches the man's face. He stares a little too long. She smiles to herself.

After choosing Bob out of all the potential targets, Mallory moves in. There is no visible chase, no running and screaming. The movies don't tell the truth. Mallory slides in like a long lost friend. She seem so nice, harmless, and sincere.

She opens with a range of tactics that depends on the context. These attacks work at the instinctive level, both in the attacker and the target. She begins with broad, unfocused probing. As Bob responds instinctively, Mallory shifts, tunes, and cranks up her game.

The triggers for instinctive responses are usually simple caricatures. Evolution is lazy like that. For example, in many people a spider triggers screaming fear. That trigger sits in our genes as a dark dot with many legs. And we fear the [specific way those legs move](#). A cartoon spider which walks the right way is as scary as a real spider. Make it walk like a daddy long legs, and it looks harmless. Exaggerate the spider walk, and the cartoon spider is scarier than a real spider.

Isolate and amplify the trigger, and you can amplify the response. There is no ceiling to this. Take our species' sweet tooth. We respond instinctively to fructose, which wild plants stuff into fruit in low doses. The sweetness hits the same areas of the brain as a drug like cocaine. In nature, this drove our primate ancestors to eat as much fruit as they could find. Then we bred ever-sweeter fruit. Then we refined sugar and began to load it into our diet. We eat hundreds of pounds of sugar a year, to the point of self-destruction.

At no point in this story did we hit a limit in our instinctive response to fructose. Instead, the more we consume, the happier it seems to make us.

This escalating response to concentrated triggering is a known phenomenon, called "supernormal stimuli."

Predators and parasites are specialists at using supernormal stimuli on their prey. They force behavior that is self-penalizing and illogical until you understand the trigger mechanism. So, a parasitic bird species may hijack the triggers young chicks use to beg for food. For example, an open red mouth. The parasite imitates and exaggerates the trigger. This makes the parent bird feed the parasitic chick before its own offspring.

In the deepest ocean waters, the angler fish dangles a bright bait that shines in the dark. This triggers prey fish to swim towards its toothy trap of a mouth.

Or, take the eggs of a tree-nesting songbird. These are often pale blue with dark-gray or brown spots. This particular color scheme triggers the female or male to sit on the eggs. Perhaps instead of sitting on random stones, or eggs of a different species. The parasitic cuckoo lays eggs that are larger, and bluer, with darker dots. This causes the songbird to prefer the cuckoo's eggs over its own.

The arms race between parasite and host creates a natural balance. Overusing the trigger turns it against the parasite. If the cuckoo makes its eggs too attractive, vulnerable songbirds won't reproduce at all. Songbirds that don't react to the trigger will get an advantage, and dominate. For a parasite, killing the host is a losing strategy. It means only resistant hosts will reproduce.

Niko Tinbergen, the biologist who discovered and named supernormal stimuli, built plaster eggs. He found that birds preferred larger eggs than their own normal eggs. They preferred more saturated colors than normal. And they preferred more exaggerated markings than normal.

So instead of a small light blue gray-dappled egg, he'd offer a songbird a fake. His egg was huge and bright blue, with large black dots. The bird would try to sit on this egg, over and over, and keep falling off.

It may make you laugh, yet for the bird this is insane behavior. We see that supernormal stimuli can produce insane behavior from well-evolved instincts. It is a evolutionary loophole many predators and parasites exploit. It is one human psychopaths often use to manipulate their targets into position.

Opening Moves

In 1989, Clark and Hatfield of Florida State University ran an infamous [study](#). Their attractive research assistants walked around campus, making hookup offers.

The results are well-known. More than half of men accepted a date, even more were willing to go home with a strange woman. Three-quarters accepted an outright offer of sex. In contrast, women generally said "no." Students are perhaps not typical of the general population. Yet others have reproduced similar results.

I'll come to the gender difference in a second. The original study suggested women don't have casual sex. We know that is false, at least in some contexts. My first question is, "how can so many men be so easily hooked?" You might say, the risks that casual sex exposes men to are low, and yet that is not true. There's the obvious risk of disease and surprise parenthood. And there is the much higher risk the whole thing is a set-up for one, or other, form of mugging.

And yet most men will say "sure!" How can a woman's charm be such an effective bait? Are men desperate, horny and foolish? Are women smarter? Well, perhaps, yet the answer is more subtle than that. It also turns out women are no more resistant than men. It is a matter of using the appropriate bait.

As we answer these questions, we see how significant gender is. It plays a key role in the psychopath's opening moves. There are four distinct patterns: female-to-male, male-to-female, male-to-male, and female-to-female. Many of our social instincts tend towards masculine and feminine poles, like our bodies.

Our bodies and minds default to female. As a male develops, timed bursts of testosterone shift body and mind to male. Men and women differ in mind and body, driven by evolution.

So when I say "male," this includes women with male-typical instincts. And when I say "female," it includes men with female-typical instincts. These opening moves do not assume heterosexual normality. Psychopaths often have [a fluid sexual identity](#). They will be as confident and predatory as homosexuals as they are as heterosexuals.

Women Hunting Men

The "anti-social" part of psychopathy does not mean "not wanting the company of others." It means "not respecting social norms and customs." Psychopaths tend to be hyper-social, and obsessed with making new friends. It goes with the territory.

They can appear private and discreet, yet that usually hides intense background activity. The Web has made this much easier, offering so many ways to speak to others in private.

I'd enjoy mining Facebook data for private chats, public posts, and selfies. My guess is we'd see a distinct group with many more private chats than average. Further, talking to many more people than average. I predict you'd see two overlapping bell curves, one for the social majority, one for the predators.

Mallory likes to hunt in places and events where he has advantage. It must be a situation with a fresh supply of targets. The targets must want something that she can exploit. The targets must offer her potential benefit. There must be cover before, during, and after any attack. It should be hard for victims to talk about it afterwards.

The dating scene is the obvious opportunity. Bars, night clubs, and dating websites are ideal for psychopaths of both genders. The pop culture of dating has dealt with psychopaths for a while. They use the euphemism "narcissist."

On one website [Susan Walsh discusses female narcissism](#) and lists the traits of such a person.

First, physical appearance:

Dresses provocatively, flaunting sexually suggestive body parts; focuses attention on make-up and hair, even for the most mundane tasks or events; overly confident about her looks; places high value on brand names, and feels entitled to wear "the best"; frequently purchases new clothing, and does not distinguish between wants and needs; is more likely to have plastic surgery, most commonly breast augmentation; enjoys being photographed, and often asks others to snap her picture; enthusiastically shares the best pics of herself on social media sites.

Then, personality and character:

Insists on being the center of attention, often the most charming person in the room; often seeks favorable treatment, and automatic compliance; believes she is special; is highly materialistic; is prone to envy, though she presents as supremely confident; seeks opportunities to undermine others; is convinced that others are envious and jealous of her; lacks empathy, and even common courtesy at times; puts others down, including you; does not hesitate to exploit others; is competitive; believes that she is intellectually superior; blames others for problems; displays a haughty attitude when she lets her guard down or is confronted; is dishonest and often lies to get what she wants; is "psycho," engages in risky behaviors, has an addictive personality, and is prone to aggressive behavior when rejected; is unpredictable in her moods and actions.

This is a 95% match of the various female psychopaths I know or have known. The author also says, "Based on the women of all ages I have known in my life, I think 10% is an accurate estimate of the number of narcissists in the female population." That is a high figure yet it matches the estimates of 10% of sub-clinical psychopaths. I'm convinced that this predatory and destructive "narcissism" Walsh describes is one of the masks of psychopathy.

The physical appearance aims like a large weapon at the male biology. It can be devastating in effect. That Florida State University study measured up to 75% of men responding to such bait. Maybe it's lower in general populations, than on college campuses. Yet in a dating setting, most men are looking for casual sex. The figure will approach 100%.

When Mallory is out hunting men, she does not just ask every man for a drink. That would be simple-minded. She knows what she's looking for. So she can select the best targets, even before they see she is there.

Humans respond like any lifeforms to triggers and supernormal stimuli. Women looking to attract men invest in amplifying the relevant triggers. Here is the list of triggers I've been able to identify and collect:

- **The waist-to-hip ratio, or WHR.** This is a primary signal of human female sexuality. The ideal WHR sashays between 0.6 and 0.8 depending on culture. Narrow waist indicates youth, and wide hips announce fertility. The simplest WHR cheat is to pad the hips. One can then wear a corset, and then one can resort to surgery. The honest counter-move is to wear tighter clothes, and then to show more skin.
- **The shape and size of breasts.** There is much debate about the evolution of human female breasts. Their size and shape do not mean more, or better, milk. Some people think they evolved as cushions for baby heads. Some argue they imitate the buttocks. To me it seems they signal female youth and availability, both triggers for men. Before modern times, most mothers suckled their babies for two to three years. Breast feeding changes the fat deposits and connective tissue (the Cooper's Ligaments). So the

breasts show, immediately, whether a woman has already had (and suckled) babies or not. Babies means the woman is less available, and it hints at a protective partner. As with the WHR, a cheat can use padding, or surgery. And the honest response is, again, to show more skin.

- **Other reliable indicators of youthfulness.** First, smooth skin on the hands and face. The smoother the face, the stronger the eyes, eyebrows, and lips shine through. Women can hide blemishes with make-up. They can exaggerate the shape of their eyes, lips, and eyebrows. Striking features on a smooth, unblemished skin are a trigger. Then, full lips, and small nose and ears. Our lips thin as we age, and our nose and ears grow. Cosmetics and hair can cover these signs. The honest response is hair pulled tight back to show the ears, and wearing less makeup.
- **Other reliable indicators of fertility**, expressed by the hormone estrogen. The main ones are high cheekbones and voice. A high, melodious voice signals fertility and youth. Observe how some women will shift their voice higher when asking for a favor. It is close to impossible to do this without sounding fake.
- **The leg-to-body ratio, or LBR.** Anything that interrupts growth up to young adulthood [affects the LBR](#). This is a good indicator of genes, diet, and medical history. The LBR is a predictor for resistance to many diseases, from diabetes to various cancers. Long legs means healthy and healthy is sexy. This is one of the rare triggers which works in both genders. Women can cheat the LBR by wearing high heels and short skirts.
- **Other signals of good genetic resistance and a history of good health.** These are symmetrical face, long clean hair, clear sparkling eyes, and healthy nails. Hair and nails have become easy to cheat and there is no real defense except a ceasefire. Hence, maybe, the cultural evolution of head-scarves and such. Mascara can make the eyes look whiter and shinier.
- **Signs of vulnerability and submissiveness.** The damsel-in-distress triggers a [predatory-protective response in men](#). The subtext is, "Save me and I will reward you with sex." A darker version is, "I'm alone and couldn't stop you even if I wanted to." There are various body language triggers. Feet together, wrists exposed or limp. Head down, avoiding eye contact. Or, head down and eyes looking up, to act young. And finally, to be or act drunk. I'll come back to psychopaths and alcohol later.
- **Signs of sexual availability and desire.** That is, telling a man: "I desire you, and am willing to have sex with you right now." There are at least two sets of triggers here. One is cosmetic, coloring the lips and cheeks red. This mimics the signs of female arousal (flushed lips and glowing face). The other set of triggers is body language. The woman will sustain eye contact. She will move closer to the man. She will wear revealing clothing. She will shift her posture and clothing to show more skin. She will touch his

arm, play with her hair, and open her lips. She will raise her eyebrows and half close her eyes. In general, she will act as if they are in bed and she is enjoying it. This is impossible for social women to do, except as a game, in safe circumstances. The fear of rejection is too high. Psychopaths have no such fear, so can and do take this act to extremes.

- **The appearance of novelty**, also known as the Coolidge effect. While monogamous pairs are the norm, many people are opportunistic cheats. Most men prefer new receptive sexual partners than existing ones. This effect is one reason the porn industry is so hungry for new young starlets. How does a woman with no fear of ridicule look *different* every few weeks? It is simple: she changes her hair and clothes. New hair means a new face. New clothes means a new body. Both create stronger responses in men who already know the woman.

This set of triggers and the unbounded male responses to them explains pornography. Heterosexual women do not find pornography enjoyable. Yet for many men it is close to addictive. Indeed, it is like sugar: a source of refined triggers. Porn displays a stream of young, available females, hitting the full list above. Porn site statistics [show the most popular category](#) globally is "teen."

Why the obsession with youth? OKCupid, the dating site, found women of all ages prefer partners around their own age. Men of all ages, when no-one is watching, favor women of 22 or under. Dating site profiles and searches may seem like a weak basis for science. A study of 12,000 Finns at Åbo Akademi University in Turku [found much the same](#): women prefer somewhat older partners, while men prefer women in their mid-20s.

The answer lies in our species' model of long-term monogamous relationships. Women's fertility peaks young, so men have evolved to see 16-22 (18-25 when others are watching) as the peak of "sexy." Chimpanzee, our close relatives, have a different family model. They live in extended families, without monogamous pairs. Thus, chimpanzee males are not triggered by female youthfulness. And, chimpanzee females do not make such displays.

If you ever wondered why men are so fascinated by female beauty, you now have the answer. As I'll explain later, women are just as fascinated by male triggers.

By default, adult males respond to these supernormal stimuli. They are like the songbird teetering on a football-sized super-blue egg. They try over and over to launch sexual relations with the woman. No matter how she mistreats them or others, they climb back on that egg and try again. It looks like insanity. It can be self-destructive.

Most women who dress to seduce are not psychopaths. Most of the time, it is sincere and healthy. The difference lies in the level of deception. There are those who distort the truth, and then there are professional liars. Female psychopaths broadcast their sexuality as a lure, more broadly and intensely than a social woman can. They use it to control the

narrative. They provoke an off-the-charts response, and then they hold back. It goes far beyond a game. The promise is, "I am the ultimate woman and I am yours." The reality is, "you will suffer and pay and never get that first thrill, ever again."

I'd love to provide references for this effect, yet it's undocumented as far as I can tell. I've experienced it and observed it often enough to conclude it is real and deliberate. And the mechanism seems familiar. The male response to female sexual signals lives next door to addiction.

We're hardwired to feel pleasure from these triggers. It is how our biology works. Dopamine hits the brain's emotional centers. They feel joy. This reinforces whatever behavior got us the trigger. When someone amplifies the trigger, it creates a larger dopamine rush. The mind compensates by becoming less sensitive. So we need more triggering to get the same feeling of joy.

Addiction is no metaphor here. It is the core of a sexual relationship with a psychopath. And such a relationship is as awesome and healthy as life on cocaine or hard liquor.

Psychopaths prefer those triggers they can fake or amplify with focused effort. So, Mallory can be quite plain, and yet spellbinding when she wants to be. I explained ways to cheat the various triggers. For every cheat, say a woman who lies about her age, there is an honest player. Say, a younger woman competing for the same men. This is a slow and ancient arms race between different strategies.

Female psychopaths spend more effort on appearance, less on friends and family. They fake triggers that social-minded women cannot, or will not. Social women instead compete on the basis of their true assets. We have this arms race to thank for authentic female-to-male triggers. That is, full breasts, wide hips, long hair and smooth skin. They are the fruit of sexual selection and competition between cheats and honest players.

Men Hunting Women

Women are of course different, and immune to cheap flattery and fake bulges. The female response to offers of sex from strange men is low to zero. A woman will generally treat such an offer as a hostile act. She is liable to call the police, or male friends, to help.

Yet it is only a question of context. Given the right triggers, most women will respond. They'll walk towards weak triggers. They'll jog towards strong triggers. And they will leap with self-destructive drama towards supernormal triggers. Just like men.

So what are these triggers? What makes men attractive to women? It is somewhat of an age-old mystery. Yet the answer is obvious once you see it.

Biology and empirical research rule out many obvious possibilities. Availability and willingness to have sex are not triggers. Youthfulness is not a trigger. Men do signal their genes, health record, and fertility, as women do. So there is some overlap. Long legs, well-defined buttocks, symmetrical face, nice hair, strong chin, high cheekbones. These work the same way in both genders.

Yet appearance only works together with other triggers such as confidence and charm. Alone, male appearance is not a trigger to females. Social women do not find pretty yet insecure men to be attractive. Psychopaths of both genders do seem to love playing with such men.

What traits do women prefer in men?

Most women compete to be the most beautiful, the youngest looking. The competition may be veiled and subconscious. Yet it is omnipresent, because that is what men respond to.

So what do men compete for? What do men spend their lives fighting to accumulate and hold on to? It is not youthful looks, except for a few quirky men. It is not long hair. Nor straighter features, nor longer legs.

Men compete for power and its proxy, money. Just like women competing in looks, the competition may be covert, even subconscious. Yet it is everywhere. In work, sport, social activity. Male power takes many forms. It can be physical, intellectual, economic. Even men who explicitly do not compete are making a statement.

There appear to be two main themes to male attractiveness. One is dominance: height, deep voice, confidence, visible facial hair, and competitiveness. At [least one study suggests](#) the lure of dominance rises and falls according to the woman's fertility cycle. That is, when women are at peak fertility, they are more likely to seek opportunistic sex. Then, they prefer men who are "manly", and socially dominant, rather than good partners or fathers.

The other theme is personality, which expresses itself as "is intelligent," "has a good sense of humor," and "is kind". When women look for long term partners, they tend to focus on this theme. In other words, potentially good partners and fathers. If you rephrase this theme as "has empathy and sensitivity" then it reads as code for "not Mallory."

Male power is a trigger to women, at least some of the time, just as female fertility and youth are triggers to men.

The evolutionary rationale is simple. The partners of powerful men have more grandchildren than the wives of weaker men. Good genes are a good starting point. To push those down the generations against never-ending competition takes force. In human terms, that means power.

Let's fix Clark and Hatfield's study. The actors were young, attractive men and women. That already introduces a huge bias. A better study would provide a range of actors, both male and female. The actors would show different levels of age, attractiveness, and power. We'd then measure their relative success on a mix of subjects.

Here's my guess of what would happen. We'd find men responding most to youth, then looks, then availability, and then character. Availability is critical though. Male-on-male violence over women is significant enough that "is not available" should be a turn-off for most men. We'd find women responding to power, then character, then availability, and then looks. During peak fertility, women would respond mainly to power and looks.

The question is, how does a man project the "I am powerful" trigger? How can women tell when a man is lying about their own importance? How do psychopaths exaggerate these triggers?

Again, the answer lies there in plain sight. If you ask a solitary man about his status, most will lie outright. Men will exaggerate their earnings. They will lie about achievements. They will hide their failures. And so on. We assume this, and treat whatever a man says about himself as harmless fantasy.

Males display power in their body language, and behavior towards others. That could be to the observing female, to one or more other men, or to another woman.

Instinctively, when we meet strangers, even crossing in the street, we assess them. Watch how one person gives way to another. A roomful of strangers will self-sort. The men move into most-to-least dominant clusters, each with one man in charge. The women move into various patterns around the men, or apart from them. Men may cluster around individual women. The men check out the women. The women check out the men. The group forms an opinion. It all takes only minutes.

Male power means ability to dominate other men (and women, yet mainly men). This can be subtle and indirect, going far beyond physical dominance. As a writer I can dominate simply by typing. Yet body language and face-to-face dominance is a good place to start looking.

We understand dominant body language well. It is partly about appearing larger. This comes from our ape ancestry, where dominance meant being strongest. The largest, strongest male ruled the group. It is also partly about acting superior to others.

To appear larger, a man stands straight and lifts his chin. He stands with his feet further apart. He takes more space than necessary. He uses hand gestures and pushes his elbows out.

To act superior, a man controls the conversation. He maintains eye contact without blinking. He ignores those he is not interested in. He smiles less and moves his head less. He speaks less, at a lower pitch, and a lower volume. In general he ignores social cues. He will be late, will interrupt, and be severe to others without being rude.

We have a paradox here. These traits both attract women, and repel them. They show a man as capable of dominating other men, and yet as insensitive and potentially brutal. There is a way out of the paradox. Women just assume men are liars, until proven honest. Dominance displays need a secondary trigger to work. Without that secondary trigger, the woman sees a bully's act.

The secondary triggers come from other males. Like all the triggers we've examined, these are minimalistic and elegant. I see two specific triggers. The first is other men who accept the dominance, and act in the right way. That is, they show submissive body language. They are quiet when he talks. They accept his pushy attitude as if they agree he has earned the right.

The second trigger is more dramatic. It takes a male challenger, from outside the group. The dominant male either asserts himself, or loses the game. Women find such winner-takes-all dramas compelling, in real life, in sports, and in entertainment. It gives the same dopamine kick men get from watching a pretty woman undress.

Appeal is all relative, for sure. Yet while female attractiveness is an individual thing, male power flows from other males. No matter how large or rich or confident, a man alone is nothing. Male dominance is all about other men.

There is a similar effect with female-to-male triggering. A woman's display both attracts and repels men. A woman who wears too much perfume and makeup, who flirts too aggressively, and who shows too much skin turns off most men. Yet if she is with other women, and they appear to like her, this acts as a secondary trigger. And then most men will be comfortable again.

These secondary triggers seem to boil down to "is not a psychopath." Empathy and sensitivity are relatively easy to fake, so superficial displays of empathy are not triggers. I'll come to empathy tests later.

Now we've pinned down the signals, let's see how to fake them. A wandering male psychopath is solitary. He has no real friends. He cannot just show his "I am important" narcissist mask to women. Rather, he must convince other men he is important. He must find or build a group to dominate, he must display the results.

The underlying mechanisms are subtle. I do not know any research in this area except my own. So this is speculation and hypothesis based on long observation and analysis.

I said men and women differ in key ways. One of those differences is how we communicate. It goes deeper than what we talk about. It goes to the heart of why we evolved the language instinct in the first place.

Men and women both trade power and knowledge, and build structures. Yet there is a distinct gender split. Men talk to exchange technical knowledge and organize with other men into power structures. Women talk to trade social knowledge and organize with other women into rather different structures. Our language reflects these two models.

I've called these ways of talking [the "human protocols"](#). There are two main protocols, the male and the female. There are other smaller protocols such as adult-to-child. Most men can at least imitate the female protocol, and vice-versa. Yet it is hard work.

Mallory is an expert in the male protocol. He can dominate groups of men with a mix of lies, promises, and confidence. A large predatory business is indistinguishable from a cult. While Alice tends to distrust solitary males, Bob and his friends do not. This is especially true when a lone male approaches a group. So Mallory likes to work his magic first on Bob and his friends. This gives him status and power he can project towards women.

This can happen in minutes. The male protocol allows for instant relationships based only on future possibilities. "Follow me! I promise you gold!" Yet the female protocol is cynical and careful. Relationships between women often take years to develop. Women must invest in their relationships. Men need to just keep the future open.

This is a huge difference. Both genders project their own values and measurements on the other. Alice assumes relationships take time to build. She assumes relationships express the cynical accounting of past facts. So she over-values the relationship she sees between Bob and Mallory. And in the same vein, Bob discounts Alice's relationships.

This gives us a classic hunting pattern for Mallory. First, he conquers Bob and some other men with a smile and utter confidence. He implies some promises of future benefit. This can take only a few minutes. Then he presents this temporary ersatz structure to Alice as she passes. He shows dominance over the assembled men. Alice finds this charming man desirable. She begins to respond to him. When he suggests they take their discussion somewhere private, she agrees. It is just how the men would respond to inflated bosoms and welcoming smiles.

Power Pyramids vs. Living Systems

Male psychopaths can and do work at the personal level. Yet it is dust compared to the industrial-scale male psychopathy of many organizations. Before we look at how Mallory hunts Bob, we must take a small detour. I will explore how humans organize at scale.

Humans seem to organize in two specific, and contrasting ways. These are the "living system" and the "power pyramid."

A living system is a loose economic network of inter-independent actors or pieces. These pieces trade resources such as knowledge, work, or money. These resources flow through the system in different directions and at their own rhythm. Living systems have no obvious power structure. They have no identifiable owners and no central authority. They have no central decision making or planning.

A power pyramid is an explicit structure, with a name, purpose, and leadership hierarchy. Decisions and planning move down, and profits move up. The entire pyramid is the property of those at the top. It is a clear hierarchy where position defines status, and status defines position.

Living systems are unobtrusive, almost invisible. They have no marketing departments, no boards, no CEOs. They consist of thousands, even millions, of independent actors. These actors self-organize around the most interesting areas. Living systems are far more profitable than power pyramids. Yet those profits spread wide, and are hard to measure.

Living systems are powerful and core to our way of life. They feed our cities and keep our shops filled with goods. They supply us with clothes, information, Internet. Every city is a living system, or it is a prison. Every economy is a living system, or it is a planned failure.

The exchanges in a living system depend on contracts agreed upfront. Living systems detect and punish cheats, using the simple mechanism of free choice. They need some form of regulator. That is, laws and enforcement. Natural living systems use the laws of physics, chemistry, and biology. Artificial living systems produce their own authorities, usually by evolution and competition.

Successful living systems are fair to all participants (that is, ethical) by virtue of the need to be efficient. They tend to treat discrimination and cheating as inefficiencies, problems to solve. Living systems experiment all the time with small answers to new problems. They bury the failures and promote the successes. This makes them good at adapting to change. They are resilient and survive until broken by a catastrophic external event. Cities survive empires, unless razed to the ground.

Power pyramids specialize in getting clients, suppliers, and workers to give more for less. They act like parasites. If you turn a power pyramid upside down, it looks like a feeding funnel. An extreme example are the large surface retailers who pay their suppliers and staff the minimum, while generating billions in profits.

It takes some effort to keep masses of people sitting still while you feed off them. Power pyramids do this using a mix of force, bribes, and threats. They demand physical presence. They promise monthly salaries and bonuses. Failure to conform means dismissal. This is a

form of constant, low-level internal violence. Power pyramids also project violence against external threats. They use force to remove competitors and achieve their goals. They are pragmatic, and remorseless.

Not all large businesses are pure power pyramids, and indeed most are a mix, with some aspects of living systems. Yet I've never seen a business apologize for beating a competitor. Nor have I ever heard of a country apologize for winning a war. Survival defines morality, in the short term. In the long term, morality defines survival. That is, living systems tend to beat power pyramids.

We see power pyramids most often in business, in government, and in organized religion. When the three mix together we get fascism and genocides. This happens when society is too fragmented and weak to resist. More often power pyramids are negligent, rather than outright destructive.

When power pyramids produce goods, they aim for lowest viable quality and highest price. In some cases they will poison and addict their customers, for profit. An example would be the food and drinks industry, with its emphasis on sugar. Power pyramids do not listen to the market. Instead they try to force people to accept their goods, with heavy advertising. You could say power pyramids lack the capacity for empathy.

Power pyramids are masters of deceit and hide their true nature. They market themselves, as "ethical," "positive," "good," and "fun." They spend billions on branding and image, developing narratives to sell their products. People believe these narratives and invest heavily in them.

The worse the product, the heavier the marketing. Coke. Microsoft. Kraft. Heinz, USA! Power pyramids communicate in lies wrapped around elements of truth. Their core values are profits and survival, no more or less.

Despite their focus on survival, power pyramids are bad at adapting to change. Over time they depend more and more on lies and force, as the world changes around them. They become fragile, and prone to rapid, catastrophic collapse. Nokia, Blackberry, the USSR.

Lacking empathy, callous and predatory, abusive... Many large businesses, religions, and certain flavors of government are psychopathic power pyramids.

A friend with good work experience interviewed with a large technology firm. The process left her feeling puzzled and humiliated. "Why do I have to prove myself to a young interviewer?" she asked me. "Can't they just look at my work. It is all on-line." We thought about it. I said, maybe humiliation is a goal of such interviews. If you accept that, you'll accept much worse, in return for that juicy pay check. Conformity is a test.

Do these two models represent the male vs. female ways of working? It is a tempting notion. The male protocol deals with male power, the female protocol with social knowledge. Yet it would be foolish to caricature "maleness" as evil. Our species did not evolve gender specialization to divide us. It did so to let us work better together. Both men and women are happier and more effective in living systems. And power pyramids exploit both men and women.

The truth is more subtle, I think. Living systems need flows of both knowledge and action. The male and female protocols work together, solving different parts of a larger puzzle. Power pyramids are a distortion, constructed by the psychopathic ego. They are a temporary fruit of mass industrialization and urbanization. They are so dominant we take them for granted. Yet they are I believe malignant and anti-social, and destined to slowly fade away.

What male psychopaths want above all is power over others. It is rarely about money. As Frank Underwood says in the Netflix series "House of Cards,"

Such a waste of time, he chose money over power. In this town, a mistake nearly everyone makes. Money is the McMansion in Sarasota that starts falling apart after ten years. Power is the old stone building that stands for centuries. I cannot respect someone that doesn't see the difference.

Men Hunting Men

A power pyramid recruits young men with ease. As with all our instincts we can find the reasons in our evolutionary history. Human men formed groups to hunt large wild animals. This is a high-risk high-benefit team activity. Older men share their knowledge, and younger men share their physical abilities and time. Young men who respond to "follow me" from older men are more likely to come back with meat. And that maps to reproductive success.

A "follow me" promise of future rewards from an older man is a trigger. The bigger the promise, the bigger the response. It does not have to be logical or sane. Indeed, insane propositions are often *more* attractive than sane ones. A sane proposition requires hard work and patience. An insane one just needs suspension of disbelief. "I know some VCs and they'll invest millions in your idea!" is hard to refuse.

There are a set of "follow me" triggers that let one man take control over others, even a group. The triggers work best on younger men, under 40, and without children. These are the ones I know:

- *Making a solitary approach.* This shows confidence, and defuses the group's natural defense reactions. A single man cannot be a physical threat to a group.
- *Showing dominant body language,* particularly towards the existing dominant male. If the dominant male does not fight back, they have stepped down, at least for a while.

- *Appearing to be older and wiser.* This triggers the "wise old man" response in younger males. Wisdom is precious, as long as it is relevant.
- *Controlling the conversation.* Dominant males sustain eye contact, focus on higher status males, and smile less. They speak less, at lower pitch, and lower volume. This forces others to pay close attention to them. This triggers the "is dominant" response.
- *Making promises of potential wins.* These can be as large and difficult as possible. The crazier, the better. Young men's biology makes them natural gamblers. A huge potential payoff triggers the gambling response, no matter how slim the chances.
- *Invoking a common enemy.* This triggers the defensive reaction. It gives the group focus and energy the outsider can own and steer.
- *Demanding action and proposing a plan.* This triggers the "follower" response. If a majority of the group responds, the outsider is now in charge.
- *Attacking internal enemies,* especially the old leadership. This triggers the paranoia and revenge responses. With luck the new leader can purge the hierarchy of all potential threats.

Not every pretty, flirtatious woman is a psychopath. Not every man who uses these techniques is a psychopath. The difference lies in outcomes. Do we see deception and exploitation or honesty and mutual gain? Are people getting burned-out and depressed, or happier and more independent? Psychopathy hides well, yet when it is organizing people for its own ends, the damage will eventually show.

These triggers evolved for valid reasons. The ability to organize around charismatic leaders saved our ancestors many times. And we leap to respond. If the triggers affect us at all, the biological imperative is to be first.

Once the response kicks in, it grows to match the trigger. A natural leader can push the stimuli to a certain level, no more. Mallory keeps pushing, far beyond what is normal and necessary. The effect calms down after a while. Yet that supernormal stimulus shock leaves an imprint that lasts for years.

Mallory takes a group towards self-destruction, while emptying the coffers. When he says, "follow me!" it hooks Bob into a situation he has no control over. Bob feels he cannot abandon without betraying his ideals, his friends, his own investments.

I've seen this used hundreds of times, often with catastrophic effects. It causes burnout: utter exhaustion, disgust and depression. Today we can recognize this as the classic outcome of a psychopathic relationship.

What is the clearest sign an organization is one or the other type? From my own experience, I believe it is the size of an independent team. By "independent" I mean free to organize and work as they choose. A dozen or less indicates a piece in a living system. Above twelve is likely a power pyramid or part of it.

A good theory lets us make further deductions and inferences. Let's try a few:

- Why are there so few women in power pyramids? Is this due to sexism and discrimination? Although sexism and discrimination are rampant, I don't think this explains it. Men enjoy working with women, for the most part. It is partly because power pyramids are incompatible with being a full-time parent, especially a mother. It is partly because women tend to ignore the "follow me" triggers that push men to sacrifice time with their family.
- Can psychopathic women rise in power pyramids? This seems unlikely. Most female psychopaths disdain the male concept of mass power, and do not seem to speak the male protocol. Both male and female psychopaths lack the talents for building power pyramids, and succeeding in them, except by upward conquest. Female psychopaths will tend to target powerful men. Most men who succeed in power pyramids are not psychopaths, and thus vulnerable.
- Most of us fear and distrust power pyramids for good reasons. These organizations make billions of people miserable, even if these effects are hidden in the much larger success stories of our living systems. It does not mean all businesses are toxic. Far from it. It does not mean free market economics are to blame. True free markets underlie living systems, and are the enemy of power pyramids.
- We now have a evolutionary explanation for premature graying and male-pattern baldness. Graying and baldness signal male maturity and age. They trigger the "wise old man" response in younger men, and defuse the competitive instincts. When a man goes gray or bald earlier than others, he is mimicking the signals of old age. This can give him an advantage, if he is smart enough to pull it off.

Women Hunting Women

Female psychopaths hunt other women. That is a given. The question is "how," not "whether." Like the male-to-male pattern, it can be hard to see, almost cryptic. Our blindness to gender-biased behavior can make this research harder than it should be. Every time I write "women do X" or "men do Y," without qualifiers, it hurts. And yet these generalizations are a vital tool for approaching the truth.

Male relationships tend to be cheap, loud, and public. Power pyramids appear to project male power over entire industries, economies, and countries.

Female relationships are by contrast secretive and deep. They carry vital knowledge about people and events. Above all, they are an important defense against Mallory no matter her gender. To learn how the female Mallory hunts Alice, we must decode the female protocol. Then we must see how to cheat it.

The female protocol shows as a conversation between two women who have met before. The two women talk about people and events. The talk is not random. It is an exchange, a trade. The dialog continues until both women have what they want, and then it ends.

It is quite easy to see. Two women who know each other and have been apart for some time will sit apart, and chat. They will talk and listen in turns, neither woman dominant nor submissive. After a period of talking, they will defocus from each other. They switch attention back to the rest of the world. It is tempting to call this a "gossip protocol." Yet it is more accurate to call it a "grooming protocol." It is intimate, yet non-sexual. As far as I can see, it is the human version of the grooming behavior other primates engage in.

Men also use a grooming protocol to deepen their relationships. Yet it is thin compared to the female version. The producers of day time soaps know this. It is the female mind that obsesses over stories of social intrigue. The male grooming protocol is little more than, "hi, everything good?" followed by drinks in a neutral setting. Males trade favors yet it is marginal.

The female grooming protocol is central to a woman's identity and power. A powerful woman has many relationships with other women and gets valuable knowledge early. Valuable knowledge is timely, accurate, secret, and detailed. A weak woman has few relationships, and her knowledge of the social world is poor. That means it is inaccurate, out of date, well-known, and incomplete.

The grooming protocol has three main functions, which work at the same time. First, as in any species, grooming establishes trust between two individuals. Second, the protocol spreads accurate knowledge about people and events through human society. Last, it detects and punishes long-term cheats.

Of all the topics women love to talk about, sexual infidelity seems to top the list. It's not as simple as "bad news travels fast." Sexual fidelity isn't data. Cheating is, because repeated sexual misconduct is a prime trait of psychopaths.

Mallory lies and exaggerates when grooming. This lets her stay dominant in that relationship. Her need to control the narrative is a red flag, if you can spot it. It's more visible than the low quality of the data she is providing. Mallory is the victim, hurt and needing

affection. She reports the latest horrendous acts of her male partner. She begs for help and support. She flatters and charms.

In return, Mallory gets valuable information about other people. Alice is quite lost. She gets what feels at first like a valuable and deep friendship. And yet it is empty, and over time, more and more abusive.

These appear to be the key triggers:

- **Dramatic story-telling.** It is the drama of a daytime Brazilian soap opera. The characters are beautiful or evil or both. They are violent and emotional, proud, and loud. The stories are false and they are endless. Alice feels as if she is five and getting a fabulous bedtime story.
- **Playing the helpless victim.** The offender is a partner, employer, or the authorities. The crimes are infidelity, violence, and theft. "He beat me and the kids, took the family money, and spent it on whores." Alice feels like an older sister, compelled to offer advice and help.
- **Flattering the listener.** This means compliments, attention to birthdays and personal events, and excessive amounts of attention. This is a form of "love bombing" I'll explore more in the next chapter. Alice feels important, valued, and loved.
- **Revealing others' secrets.** These are negative, intimate, detailed, and often invented. The listener feels as if they are getting rare and valuable knowledge. They feel powerful. Mallory uses this to divide Alice from her friends and colleagues.
- **Utter, palpable sincerity.** Mallory lies often and about anything. Yet she shows no stress response or hesitation when lying. She shows deep sincerity in voice, expression, and body language. Alice's responses is to over-value everything Mallory says. It's not just true, it's hyper-true. The stranger Mallory's lie, the truer it feels to Alice.

How does Alice respond to such triggers, if she does not wake up and walk away in disgust? Usually she opens up, and provides all her secrets. She treats Mallory like a reliable BFF. Alice introduces Mallory to other friends, and engages her in social activities. The reality only hits many years later. It takes many counter-voices to undo those piercing lies. By the time Alice questions the relationship, the damage can be deep. If she can, she will walk away in shame, and never speak of Mallory again.

Look, I'm Your Father

I've covered how Mallory hunts other adults. In general adults are fair game, and expected to be capable of defending themselves. The authorities and general public have little sympathy for adult-on-adult abuse, though this is [slowly changing](#). When laws get broken, then the police and courts may step in. There are two other common scenarios that create more anger and revulsion. That is, when Mallory preys on young people, or on the aged.

Let's look at the case of young people first. We can see clear, recurring patterns of vulnerability. I believe these both attract, and breed psychopaths.

It starts with children cut off from their family by distance, isolation, or abandonment. In stable societies, orphans and young offenders are housed in homes. In societies hit by economic collapse, young people run away and become street children. In war, families can get separated, and young people end in refugee camps.

Then we see Mallory moving in, and building abuse networks. He may pose as a relief worker, religious organization, or youth worker. Or she may wait at transit points for new arrivals, picking out candidates. "Hey, you look hungry, would you like a meal?"

The trigger is attachment to family. Young people away from their relatives will feel alone and insecure. They will respond to adults who act like parents. As with other triggers, Mallory can exaggerate his behavior, and get stronger responses. The adult shows confidence and gives more fake affection. The young person responds with more trust. Mallory can push this further and faster than social humans.

There is a huge global trade in young people. Sometimes it calls itself "cultural" or "sporting" exchanges. Young girls from Guatemala who think they're going to become dancers. Young men from West Africa, dreaming of a future in European football.

Sometimes it's desperate parents who send their children off to a "better future." They pay brokers to take their children to Europe or America. The figures are unknown. This is not a documented trade. One million a year? Ten million? No-one knows. The children often just disappear.

Sometimes it's [blatant slave trading](#). Brokers travel to poor villages, buying or kidnapping young boys and girls. They move these children far away. They set them to work in homes, cramped factories, or brothels.

Whatever the cause, the distance from a loving and protective relative means vulnerability. Vulnerable children always attract Mallory. He sees raw material to own, shape, use, and trade. Bob should not die, may not run away, and must make a profit for Mallory. That is the limit of his concern.

Then Mallory builds a trafficking network, with others like him. He starts moving young people up and down this network. He specializes in buying. Or perhaps in selecting and training children for different roles. Or in moving them across borders, into Europe or the USA, where they are worth more.

It remains easy and cheap to smuggle children across borders. It is a matter of knowing how. A falsified passport costs from 500 to 2,000 Euro depending on the country. It's a real child's passport, with the photo of the victim. Dark kids all look alike, don't they? *Update: at least in Belgium, this loophole was closed in 2015, with better checks of under-aged passport holders' identities.*

And then Mallory filters out young potential psychopaths. He coaches them, using other children as practice material. He promotes them and turns them into his proxies.

This problem of child abuse is old, guarded in shame, and has been hard to solve. One scorns the sweatshop, then wears the t-shirt. So often it hides in families, under layers of tradition and racism.

How to solve this? We can hope to reduce war, stabilize economies, and strengthen families. We can raise awareness of the mechanics of abuse. We can try to keep predators away from vulnerable children. Yet we cannot remove psychopaths, nor switch-off their predatory nature, nor guard every child. Who guards the guardians?

There seems to be another answer, which I believe is emerging little by little. Mallory's strategy has one weakness. That is, young Alice or Bob must be alone and far from help. The core of the problem is isolation. This means there are no alternatives to the fake parental masks Mallory wears. When you have no-one to talk to, Mallory looks like a friend.

We must give children tools to create their own social networks, face-to-face or on line. Teach children to ask for help, from their peers, and others.

Access to other people over the Internet, using a personal device, is vital. It is as important as clean water, education, and access to health care. One day the technology will be close to free and available to every child on the planet.

Good Listeners

At the other end of life, let's consider elderly people with some assets. You might think as we get older, we develop more resistance to con artists. Yet it's not so. The asset-stripping of the elderly is almost an industry. It's not because the aged have dementia. Nor are they stupider than average. It is because psychopaths are good at this. To be alone is to be vulnerable.

The extended family is no more, in most Western countries. This **leaves many aged alone** in their houses, or retirement homes. Their children are adults with their own families, living far away. Decades of economic growth means many aged have assets. This generation presents a lucrative target to psychopaths. And Mallory targets them with care and precision.

There are several types of attack I've observed, and will explain:

- The *Helpful Advisor*. Mallory induces an elderly Alice to gamble. He takes the form of a financial advisor working through the family. He uses the children's greed against their mother. Perhaps he proposes Alice take on extra debt, using her home as collateral. Mallory gets a good commission. The children get cash. Alice later finds herself unable to repay the debt. The family goes bankrupt. The triggers are family pressure, and greed.
- The *Helpless Stranger*. Mallory asks an elderly Bob for money. Any excuse gets her into the living room. A little chat to establish trust. Then, something like, "the problem with society today is how selfish people are. No-one cares any more. Like, my mother is dying from cancer, and our bank is kicking us out of our home!" Bob may ask if he can help. Mallory refuses point-blank, with tears in her eyes. Bob insists! Mallory again refuses, saying she'll find a way. Bob's suggestion offends her. Yet Bob is adamant, and Mallory leaves with an envelope of money. Guilt is the trigger here.
- The *Parental Authority*. Mallory gains full control over the elderly Alice. The control is emotional, physical, and then financial. I'm not saying all private nursing homes are like this. Only a certain fraction of them. Push Alice to act and feel like a child. She responds to your authority when you then say "please, sign this document."
- The *Surrogate Child*. Mallory acts as the elderly Bob's child. She finds a way to spend time with him. She listens, and asks innocent questions. Just by being attentive and submissive, she triggers the parental response in Bob. She can then come with her problems and worries. Bob will try to solve them. The bigger the problem, the more he responds.
- The *Phony Policeman*. Mallory pretends to be an authority figure, such as a policeman. He warns the elderly Alice that her bank details may have been compromised. She trusts the kind smile and patient explanations. He says, if she gives him her card and PIN, he can check for her. No bother, love. She hands them over. A week later, her account is empty and Mallory has vanished.

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

There is one more arena where Mallory hunts. That is, within the family itself. Family life does not bring frequent strangers. Yet it makes up for that with good cover. Families tolerate significant imbalances of power. Mallory can do extraordinary damage to a family from the inside. And this can be invisible to outsiders, even active observers.

We can break this into two main cases. In some cases, Mallory is already in control of the family. He works to keep and extend his power. In most cases, the family is not... *infected*... and Mallory is trying to enter and gain control. The first case is about stealing any newcomer's resources. The second is about stealing the resources of a whole group.

The damage Mallory can cause to a family can be extreme. There is the personal damage, the trauma and loss of power. There is the collective damage, the loss of property and savings. Look at a family fractured by dispute. Look closer, and you may see Mallory at work.

How does Mallory enter a host family? The most obvious way is to marry into it. The reaction of parents to a new partner is often so extreme it is a popular caricature. Yet given the risk of a psychopath, suspicion and hostility are normal. Anything else would be negligent.

It is hard for men to understand women's real motivations and character. There are too many signals and triggers getting in the way. Thus, it's the mother's job to vet new girlfriends. Likewise, women are often poor at judging men. So, new boyfriends must win the father's approval.

The classic pattern starts with an interrogation and checking of credentials. There follows either conditional approval or rejection. Then, a period of probation. Then, celebration and maybe babies, at least in the parents' minds.

This drama plays out over and over, in real life and in popular culture. We have the parents and their desire to see their daughters and sons making babies. We have their distrust of the newcomer. We have youth and its demands for independence and self-definition. These allow for a wide range of characters and plot points.

Take for example the much-maligned mother-in-law, the butt of jokes in every human society. Few married men like their mothers-in-law. It is hard to forgive someone who kicks off on the assumption you're a psychopath. The irony is rich. A mother-in-law who does not question her daughters' choices often conceals trouble ahead.

Divorce divides a family and exposes it to predators. If the father is absent, it is easier for male psychopaths. If the mother is absent, it is easier for female psychopaths. Divorce usually spreads the assets. So while post-divorce families make easier targets, they tend to be less profitable.

When a family is wealthy, in a country with a weak state, it presents a lucrative target. Strong families in developing countries develop a culture of arranged marriages. They vet candidates with paranoia. One bad choice can destroy generations of accumulated family wealth.

This model lets us make a prediction about any given society: *the rate of arranged marriages will correlate with social status of the pair*. The higher their status, the less free choice in marriage. This seems true in all societies. Between societies, the weaker the state, the higher will be the rate of arranged marriages. This is because weak states cannot protect a family's wealth from predators.

After union, the next way into a family's coffers is by seduction. These relationships tend to become common knowledge. When a young man dines with a widow, or a woman dates a man twice her age, we ask the same question. "How much money is on the table?" If the answer is "a lot," we conclude the worst. Only if there is no money at risk, do we consider it might be love.

Mallory can seduce a married man for gifts and money. She will use her sexual triggers to create an all-consuming dependency in the man. It's all the more potent when the man is in a marriage where the romance is long gone. This is banal. Sometimes, Mallory will make friends with the wife. She will convince her there is no cause for worry. She will become her best friend, without a twinge of fear or regret.

It's harder for Mallory-the-male to hack into families like this. He may pull Bob into money-making schemes that end in disaster and loss. This is how the Mallorys of Wall Street empty many savings accounts. Or, he may seduce Bob's wife Alice, and convince her to steal for him.

Conclusions

Mallory is insatiable, always hungry and thinking about her next meal. When she finds plausible opportunities, she approaches and shifts her manners and behavior. Here, she appears timid and modest. There, she looks dominant and arrogant. She shows astonishing range. She shifts voice and body language, posture and accent. She becomes whomever she must to move in closer to her prey.

Beneath her shape-shifting masks, Mallory does have a real and consistent personality and character. You will almost never see it, and even if you do, it is hardly recognizable as human. Psychologist [Kathleen Vohs](#) has shown how priming people to think about money makes them anti-social, unempathic, and more likely to cheat. In other words, more like Mallory.

This is how Mallory sees the world the whole time. She is not like other people, in her own mind. And other people are not like her. Others are paper-thin shapes with a simple set of properties. Some are tasty, some are boring, some are useful, some are dangerous. She see a world of prey, and herself as a natural-born predator.

Chapter 3. Attack and Capture

The Careful Nurse

She likes old people, she says, because they talk so much. The old men and women in the home seem to like her too. "She's always in a good mood," they tell each other. "Such a good listener!"

She's worked hard for her nursing degree. Endless books, studying, writing, exams. The other students get better marks, and she guesses they all cheat. They've got people helping them, and they bribe the teachers. Well, that's easy. She can do that too. She can't use the computer, it's so difficult! Oh, could you check my work for me? Pretty please?

Finally, the torture is over and she gets that magical piece of paper. "Qualified nurse," she repeats to herself. "Qualified nurse!" That afternoon she's already sending emails around, looking for work. Soon she has a gig lined up. She'll join a team looking after a wealthy man who has cancer.

She dresses for work. Hair tied back, and the neat outfits she learned from the nursing home. Black and blue, white cap, long skirt, dark shoes. Expensive dark shoes. She has three colleagues, and they take shifts. Their patient is in his seventies and spends most of his time in bed. Before lunch they get him up, dress him, and take him for a walk in his gardens. He returns tired, and sleeps. Her colleagues prefer the evening and night shifts, as they have less to do. Despite the extra work, she prefers the morning shift, when he's awake and talkative.

He's an interesting man, who's built several large businesses. They get close, always talking. She asks him once, laughing, "so how much are you worth?" He laughs back, "that's one thing I regret. I never quite made a billion." She raises one eyebrow and tuts. "Silly man, I'm sure you have more regrets than that!"

He does. Hard work is good for you, he tells her. Yet it's no replacement for family. He married, his wife died in a car crash twenty years before. He has a son, forty-five now. The son hates his father and visits once a week, like it's a chore. They talk about nothing. He leaves as soon as he can, in his black Mercedes. She finds out he divorced his wife, and refused to help his father in his businesses.

It takes her almost six months to reconcile them. In the end, they hug, and she smiles to herself. The old man is getting stronger. He's promoted her to head of the nursing team. She replaces the other team members with her own people. Now she's the only woman. One evening, as the son is leaving, she goes with him. They have a meal in a restaurant close by, and she stays overnight at his house.

When they marry, soon after, they both know it's the right time. Why wait longer? Destiny makes its own plans. They buy a ranch, high in the hills, and plan their dream home. The father dies in his sleep a few months later. They name their baby after him. It is a boy.

Slow Violence

We've seen a little of how Mallory operates, when she is out on the prowl. She preys on the most ruthless of apex predators: other humans. "The Most Dangerous Game", a short story by Richard Connell has entered [part of popular culture](#). And yet by selecting the weakest, most vulnerable people, Mallory tends to escape unscathed. Most of the damage falls on her victims. Just now and then, Mallory chooses a target that fights back, and she gets hurt.

This is how it is in a classic predator-prey relationship. The predators cull the most vulnerable individuals. This drives the evolution of the prey species towards ever greater resistance. It is not the sole evolutionary driver yet it can be a significant one for both sets of genes.

After identifying Bob, Mallory attacks and tries to capture him. We might imagine a lion chasing, and then bringing down a zebra. The zebra dodges left and right. The lion leaps, and strikes. What we actually see is a lot of talk, and then sudden and unusual decisions. The violence is rarely overt, yet it is always present in one shape or another. For as Mallory attacks, Bob fights back with all his strength.

The core of the psychopathic relationship is an "idealize-devalue-discard" (IDD) cycle. Many authors [describe this cycle](#). Anyone who has tangled with a psychopath will recognize it. The IDD cycle starts with Mallory putting Bob on a pedestal. She rains down praise and affection. A while later, she does an about-face and turns indifferent and cold. And then she breaks it off, and walks away.

The IDD cycle can run in a few hours, or over decades. Most authors see the cycle as a sign of failure. Mallory cannot create real relationships, they explain. She needs admiration to feed her narcissism, then she gets bored, goes the story. This explanation seems bogus for several reasons. It assumes there is a normative model for relationships, which Mallory fails to achieve. It draws narcissism as a kind of mental demon, with wants and needs. And above all it ignores the many psychopaths who build relationships spanning years.

It is more useful to see the IDD cycle as one of Mallory's many tools. She is not a broken person. She is as successful on average as anyone else. Her relationships are as "normal" as anyone's. It is just a different normality, based on the dynamics of predator and prey.

The Wikipedia [article on predation](#) says:

The act of predation can be broken down into four stages: Detection of prey, attack, capture and finally consumption.

There is a stage before detection, which is *hiding*. Mallory must remain invisible to her prey as long as possible. If Bob sees her true colors, he walks or runs away. Exposure is crippling. Only by packing up and moving elsewhere can Mallory hunt again.

The hiding stage is critical. Yet the IDD cycle misses it, and treats "idealize" as the start of entanglement. And it misses the goal, for Mallory at least, which is "consumption." She does not eat her victims' flesh. She just empties them of money, power, and energy until death can feel welcome.

Finally, the IDD cycle misses the detailed way Mallory builds her control over time. It is not one cycle at all. Rather, there are larger and smaller cycles that overlap and repeat. This is why the timescales seem so variable. Mallory may IDD someone on their first meeting. And, then go on to a decade-long relationship with that same person. As I'll show later, this is not contradictory. It is part of the mechanism.

So, the IDD cycle is accurate, consistent, and predictable. Yet it is also incomplete and shallow. It does not model the relationship between Mallory and her children. It does not model the one between Mallory and her willing helpers (secondary psychopaths). It does not explain why Mallory works to break people before she discards them.

As I see it, the IDD cycle tells the victim's story. The story is valid, yet biased and incomplete. We must look wider and deeper to understand the whole picture. The "discards" are lies aimed to dig the hook deeper. Only the last one is true. And when Mallory does walk away, there is no relationship any longer. It is not just over. In Mallory's mind, it *never existed*.

Let's rewind. Mallory has detected a target. Before the first IDD cycle bites, she is preparing her attack. This preparation is so consistent you can tell where you are in Mallory's eyes by the mask she shows you. By the time she is idealizing you, you are already entangled. I'll explain how the entangling starts.

Hiding

Mallory cannot survive exposure. From an early age he must learn to act "normal." This is a hard challenge, as "normal" is a moving target and a devious one at that. It's almost as if social humans move the goal posts every day to mess with psychopaths. Mallory often avoids the problem by hiding in plain sight. One way is to act so loud and lurid that people don't look twice. We call this histrionic and narcissistic behavior.

I'm not claiming that every loud, flashy, extravagant person is a psychopath. There is no accurate visible test for a psychopath, and cannot ever be. This is the balance of evolution. Yet, if you think of Mallory as a cold, gray person, you're wrong. He is often dramatic, unpredictable, mysterious, ineffable. He is passionate and emotional. It is nonetheless an act, and it fools most except other psychopaths.

Let me draw you a scene to make this clear. You're in a party, with some friends. There is a woman who doesn't laugh, makes no expression at all. She looks at you like a butcher deciding which pig to slaughter. Now and then she looks at others, and then looks back at you. She smiles, and it's not a gentle smile. This would be Mallory wearing no mask. It is a frightening sight, and a rare one.

And there's a guy, wearing a stupid orange hat, dressed in lurid colors. He's laughing out loud, a huge stupid grin on his face. Everyone loves him. He's the life and soul of the party, roaring loud and happy, his face and hands animated. He looks like a harmless fool. If you meet his gaze, you feel warmth and affection. You could fall into that gaze, it's so deep. That's Mallory wearing his colors.

Mallory learns his masks from friends and family. He mimics accent and tone, speech patterns, facial expressions, body language. He is a professional actor immersing himself in his roles. He keeps these masks all his life, fine-tunes them, and wears them as needed. These masks are caricatures, yet more convincing than the real thing.

The point of this is to distract and control. It's the technique of the stage magician. Drama, music, and smooth words get the audience looking one way. And so they miss Mallory's real moves. It works with a single person, and it works with a roomful.

The Interview

Once as a young student in York I strolled, with my band of friends, into a small house. The friendly people inside were offering a "free personality test." They let us play with science-fiction machines that measured our stress levels. They sat us down for one-on-one talks. A young woman chatted with me a little about why I was there and what I was looking for in life. She jotted down my name and address, and then started taking notes. "What's the worst thing you ever did in your life?" she asked me. It was the same casual tone as you'd use to ask someone, "what did you eat for breakfast?"

It was an unexpected cold finger poking into my private mind. I slapped it away and thanked her for the cup of tea, and took my friends and left. One of our group, a girl, stayed a little longer. Six months later we had almost lost her. With a lot of convincing, she stopped going to the group. She stopped spending her money on their weird literature and courses. She resumed her studies.

The friendly people stalked her, and us. They went to her dorm, and followed us on the streets. "Why are you not coming to sessions?" they would ask her, not so friendly any more. "Why are you hurting your friend?" they would ask us, "she needs her courses," sometimes yelling at us as we ignored them. They persisted for more than a year before they gave up.

I'm not mentioning names, as Scientology might take offense. Some years later that psychopathic organization took my cousin. It was years before he returned, a different person, his joy and laughter gone.

People ask me sometimes where my interest in Mallory comes from. My friends and family, and myself... we've bled and wept over and over. How could I not notice the parade of predators that stalk us? I don't make it personal. I don't get angry about it. Instead, I decode, understand, and dismantle the frameworks of lies that Mallory depends on.

The Interview is one of those lies. It starts as, "I care about you, and we are sharing an intimate moment." It ends with blackmail and extortion. It is rarely so overt as a person writing on a clipboard. More often it happens in a bar or club, or social setting. These are contexts where we expect small talk and are happy to chat. Often there is alcohol involved, so we drop our guard.

Mallory wants to know how good a target Bob is, and what direction to work in. It's the car salesman asking, "what is your job," then, "are you married?" The probing may be gentle yet is insistent. She slices to Bob's weaknesses, and the opportunities and risks he presents.

Mallory wants to exclude false positives. That is, people who look like opportunities yet are not. So the questions focus on Bob. There may be theater and drama. Yet the conversation zooms in, and Mallory reads every microscopic reaction and twitch.

The interview is part of a growing promise of some kind: sex, money, or salvation. The threat emerges side-by-side with the promise. If you don't answer, I'll walk away, and the promise will vanish with me.

You can tell when Mallory is interviewing you, if she is in a hurry. If she is careful, you cannot tell, as it will happen over days or weeks, or even longer. And the interview can happen behind your back, through people you know.

Often though, you can see it. She is nicer than she needs to be. She smiles a lot at you, and acts dominant in a casual way. She approaches you, not vice-versa. She asks questions about your background, your family, your work, your relationships. It seems rather intimate for casual discussion. Your intuition is uncomfortable. Yet the interactions hit your triggers, and you get dopamine kicks of pleasure. So you keep talking.

If you listen to your intuition, you may feel uneasy with this smiling person. You can of course walk away. Yet it's *plausible* she is sincere and interested in you. Walking away from everyone who's interested in you is a poor strategy. So there's another defense we often use. That is to keep talking, and switch to neutral topics, or back to the other person.

A person who enjoys talking to you will go with the flow, no matter what you talk about. The ability to play with conversation in random directions is a white flag. Mallory will ease the discussion back in line. She will deflect questions about her own background, or she will lie and exaggerate. She may talk about herself and share "intimate" details yet it is always to position you into revealing more. It is near impossible to spot her lying, unless you catch a specific falsehood.

Cold Reading and Shotgunning

During the Interview, Mallory will be cold reading his target. This means guessing significant details about Alice in a short time. It is a basic tool of mentalists, con artists, car salesmen, and assorted mystics. Mallory does it without effort or practice.

Most of us are expert in reading people, though we may not realize it. Yet our brains interpret what we see as emotional signals and empathic reactions. We don't see stress, we feel stress. Mallory sees what is there, with no emotional lens.

Classic cold reading is a party trick, used by mystics to impress people. "You recently lost your father... he is sending me a message for you." In the field, it is more intrusive.

Most people are readable most of the time. One engages them in conversation, and asks the right questions. One can then make good guesses about:

- Where they grew up, from their accent.
- Whether they are the first child or not, from the amount of stress they show at disorder. Are they comfortable with delay, and some mess, or not?
- Whether they have younger siblings, or come from larger extended families, from the way they treat young children.
- Whether their parents argued violently, and divorced or not, from their general confidence.

- What field they studied, from the way they talk and act.
- How much they earn, from the context, their behavior.
- Why they are there and what they expect to happen.
- How they feel, about the situation and about you.
- What they want most, at that time and place.

And so on. Most people can learn to cold read, to some extent. You must learn to ground your emotions, and then you practice. Much of this is just being open to what people express, in words or in behavior. The unreadable people are those who hide, for one reason or the other.

Mallory cold reads at genius level. He combines perfect reading with shotgunning. He makes rapid, broad guesses at various scenarios. The guesses either fall flat, or trigger a small response. He blasts out five possibilities, sees a response to number four, and knows he's hit home. The result looks like a shocking ability to read minds.

You can tell when Mallory is shotgunning you. It's like the Interview except worse. He makes sharp guesses about details he should not know, nor be asking about. He makes these guesses with pure conviction, as if he is stating absolute facts. No questions, he blasts out assertion after assertion, until he scores.

Shotgunning can range from subtle scanning to overt aggression. Mallory may blast allegations aimed to cause the greatest pain. It is a curious form of discussion. It seems to have three goals. First, to hurt and destabilize an opponent or resister. Second, to get reactions and thus to discover vulnerabilities and hidden truths. Third, to convince observers of Mallory's innocence and virtue.

Internet trolls show many psychopath traits. They show no empathy nor emotion. They tend to be solitary and predatory. They also shotgun their perceived opponents. They are often as violent as one could be [over a keyboard](#).

It is remarkable to see Mallory announce outright lies, to discredit others. He may be calm and sad, or burn with righteous indignation. It is theater, aimed at an audience. The best lies are plausible and colorful. They tend to be easy to disprove, yet few people do. Our minds evolved to agree with those in authority. We will accept obvious lies when they come from someone who acts superior to us. It's called the [Asch effect](#).

The Imitation Game

Primates and birds have social instincts for copying the behavior of others. There seem to be three main mechanisms in humans: convergence, mirroring, and mimicking. Each mechanism has its evolutionary reasons. Each is a tool in the hands of a psychopath.

As a social species, our identity lives in the groups we are part of. Our concept of "group" scales from two people to millions. Many of the same mechanisms work at all these levels. Convergence is one of these.

Part of the group identity is a more-or-less consistent culture. Above all, this means appearance, behavior, and language. Groups don't just aim for consistency, though. They also aim to be unique, and different from other groups, especially close competitors.

There are several reasons why groups strive for consistency and originality. Individuals already in the group have an interest in expanding the group. Size is power. The group culture is its branding. "This is who we are!" is a recruiting statement. And "We're not like them!" is how groups stop their members defecting to other groups in the same area.

For those who join a group, or are born into it, there is strong advantage in conforming. Being "different" exposes an individual to rejection from others, and to violence from outsiders. When there is conflict between groups, the first targets are the outliers.

The evolutionary benefits of hiding within a group are an old cultural engine. The diversity of human language and behavior is not random chaos. It stems from every group's need to find its own niche. It expresses in accent, dialect, and memes.

It expresses as food taboos, which are often complex to the point of absurdity. Arbitrary, complex rules are a tool of control, as I'll explain in "The Feeding". Food taboos most likely evolved from our hunting-gathering past. "This is toxic," is easier to explain as "forbidden." We learn disgust once, and it saves our life a hundred times. The same instinct then lets tribes ban foods eaten by neighboring tribes. It stops people slipping away.

Convergence happens by negotiation and imitation. Dominant individuals establish a pattern which the less dominant follow. When people share power, they negotiate a weighted average. Hence the term "slavish conformity." Even a child will try to negotiate with its parents. The result is group consistency in the short term, and evolution over time.

Convergence takes time and effort and is a negotiation between individuals. This means you can tell how close and equal people are by how they appear, act, and talk.

Both men and women converge, in differing ways. Men tend to converge towards group language, behavior, and appearance. Women tend to converge towards other individual women. You rarely see two men dressing alike, unless they are part of a larger group. Yet

you will often see two women converge on each other. Observe two women together, and you can often tell how well they know each other. It shows in hair, clothing, shoes, accessories, and body language.

Not everyone converges. There are at least three distinct types of people who appear to act "different." There are those with some degree of autism. There are the natural leaders. And there are the psychopaths. I'll explain each so that you can tell the difference.

People with autism cannot read social cues. This means they never converge no matter the context. They look lonely, asocial, and "strange" in various ways. While popular culture has demonized "loners" as unstable and dangerous, this is a myth. Such individuals run a higher-than-average risk of discrimination.

Natural leaders will converge when joining others of higher status. They will not converge when meeting potential followers. This forces others to make more effort to converge. We value our relationships according to how much we invest in them. So working harder to converge makes a deeper attachment to the leader. And that builds the group, as participants converge on a single person.

Mallory acts much like a natural leader at this stage. Yet he starts to abuse and mistreat members of the group almost at once. A natural leader treats and protects the group like family. Mallory treats the group as his possession or toy. This is narcissism, one of his masks.

In extreme cases, he forces others to make extreme efforts to converge. To force a consistent dress, language, and behavior is a form of abuse. It breaks the individual's identity and self-image. This is a pure psychopathic trait, in individuals and organizations.

The Cloak of Invisibility

Convergence establishes the nature and depth of a relationship. It generally takes time and effort to become a corporate drone. There is a way to cheat, namely "mirroring." In this, one person (the "actor") copies another person, in real time. The most obvious sign is the actor switching language and accent. We're less likely to notice the shifts in body language and appearance.

What the actor is saying is, "we are close and you can trust me." When someone adopts your accent, it sounds like they are from your home region. It's an invisible sound. The sure way to know if someone is mirroring you is when they show no accent (to your ears). Unless, of course, they did in fact grow up where you did.

Mirroring is a cloak of invisibility, a mask that triggers trust and relaxation. It is a core talent of psychopaths. When Mallory uses mirroring, he becomes a dangerous presence. He does it to get close to his targets.

It's not malicious by definition. It evolved, presumably, as a defense mechanism. When you move to foreign places, the ability to mirror is a life-saver. We tend to see other people as fuzzy bundles of triggers. Mirroring lies about the actor's past and makes it seem they have been there for years.

Shape Shifters

Mallory does not feel social emotions. This is not a bug. It is a feature. If she had social emotions, she would be unable to work. And yet, the lack of emotional responses is a fatal give-away. Her answer, evolved and carried in her genes, is to borrow from others, using mimicry.

Mallory is a superb observer. She is always hunting, untroubled by emotional filters. One thing she watches for are new types of emotional scenes. Something happens, one person responds with emotions, and then others respond in turn. She watches these dramas. Somewhere in her mind, specialized neurons capture the caricature of behavior. Facial expressions, body language, voice inflection, and way of speaking.

And she replays this on demand.

This ability makes Mallory an excellent and convincing actor. Her projection is rich and has all the right triggers. This makes it more convincing than the original.

For example, when Bob or Alice get angry, they show a loss of control. It is still tinged with some fear. Mallory records this and replays it, without the fear. The result is a perfect "anger" mask that is terrifying at a visceral level. The same for displays of love, jealousy, self-pity, fear, loneliness, guilt, affection, sincerity.

People talk of the psychopaths' "masks of normality." In fact these are masks of super-normality. Much of Mallory's power comes from this talent, and our hard-wired responses to it.

Mallory can switch masks in a heartbeat. One second, calm. The next, intense fear. The next, brooding violence. The next, dramatic self-pity. Then, calm again.

Mimicking is a powerful tool that works on most people, most of the time. It has some inherent weaknesses and telltales. Remember, Mallory is showing prerecorded emotions. A social person starts with a mix of emotions and then expresses these.

These are some ways to tell that you are seeing Mallory's mask:

- The emotional display is too pure, too intense. This is hard to see, as we're so vulnerable to the triggers. Yet if you can step away from your own responses, you can tell the difference. Bob is wine at 12% alcohol and Mallory is spirits at 40%.
- The masks have no gradient. Social emotions can flash on and off, yet they have ripples and echoes. It's part of being social. Fear leads to anger, then to guilt, and regret and remorse. Mallory's anger mask has no gradient, no social climbdown.
- The mask may be of someone you know, or even yourself. It is an interesting question to ask, when you see Mallory acting out. Who are they doing now?
- In rare cases you may confront Mallory with a situation she has no response for. Perhaps a plan failed. You may see the "slip and recover" where the mask falls. You see no personality, just quiet, deep calculation. I've seen this last a split second, or hours. Then there is decision, and she puts on another mask.
- Sometimes Mallory will lose control temporarily, when provoked. Mallory is not emotionless. She has some authentic emotions, like hunger, fury, and glee. You can provoke her through these emotions, and then she shows her real nature. It can be a terrifying experience.
- When Mallory is tired, and at home, and can't keep up the act, the mask may slip.
- When Mallory is over-confident, then her true emotions can show through. She may show flashes of glee for instance, when she believes a plan is working well.

The masks will fool anyone who is not aware of how this trick works. Her extreme emotional displays are not just for camouflage. They are also a whip and a hook. Strong emotional displays create strong responses. Those responses are addictive.

Mallory's true emotions are worth understanding, and I explain more in "The Dance of Emotions". She feels hunger when bored, then obsession when she finds a new target. As she starts the chase, she feels euphoria, and as she closes in she feels glee. When she moves in for the kill, she feels fury, and as she inflicts damage, she feels bloodlust. As she feeds she feels gluttony, then satiation when she's had enough. And when she fails in a hunt, she feels blocked.

All other emotions she shows are fake.

When Mallory apologizes and shows remorse, it is an act. When Mallory stares into your eyes and says, "I promise," it is an act. When Mallory shows bad temper and burning anger it is an act. When Mallory tells you, "if you do that, I will kill you," it is an act. This can be hard to remember, so convincing is the mask. All psychopaths have the capacity for violence and yet, if they do strike, they will never warn you.

With mimicking, Mallory pushes people around like pieces on a game board. Only other psychopaths are immune, not responding to these emotional triggers.

Constructing the Narrative

Every psychopathic relationship has the same structure. At the heart, Mallory places a core of lies and promises. I call this the "Narrative". Around that, Alice wraps layers of efforts and investments, string around stone. Over time the ball becomes huge. To untangle it, and find the lies at its heart, can be difficult.

The first of those lies is a promise that Mallory makes right after the interview. It is a cheap, simple, and unbelievable promise. Yet it aims straight at the heart and guts. "I will make you wealthy," he whispers. "I will be yours," he promises. "I will take care of you forever," he sighs, as Alice falls asleep in his arms.

Mallory speaks with confidence and authority. His lies become prospects and then facts. As soon as Alice accepts a lie even as a remote possibility, the dance has started. Mallory mirrors, flatters, dominates. He weaves more promises around the core. This can happen in hours, or a few weeks. Alice starts to feel the burn of attention. We now enter the idealization stage.

Mallory focuses everything on Alice. Before that, she only felt short flashes of attention. Those were already strong enough to knock her out of her comfort zone. What comes next is shocking, disruptive, and addictive.

Mallory knows exactly what Alice wants. He's asked her, he's read her, and he's seen her type before many times. He spins a story of lies and magic. He gives Alice this theory and he watches as she swallows it, like a grateful child.

If Alice sees herself as strong, Mallory becomes the lost boy. Oh Alice, maybe you can save me? He plays the victim well. Later, he will turn to Alice's friends and family, with tears in his eyes. He will explain how Alice abuses and betrays him. Lost, helpless, he will show them a world of suffering in his eyes. They will curse Alice and reject her.

Whatever Alice's fantasy, Mallory brings it within reach. He promises, tells tales, flatters, hints at things to come. The only resistance to such an attack is to want nothing, and believe nothing. Above all, to distrust one's own voices. Mallory's magic only works on Alice because she lies to herself.

Not that Alice is unique, or to blame. We almost all lie to ourselves, even the most honest and upright of us. Even Mallory lies to himself. It takes conscious and deliberate effort to see our own lies and step aside from them.

What Alice should notice most of all is the sheer volume of chatter from Mallory. It would be overwhelming were she not so eager for it. When they are together, it consumes their nights and their days. Alice feels like the center of Mallory's universe. When they are apart, Mallory will text and call Alice non-stop. The phone companies love Mallory. He usually finds someone else to pay the bills, though.

Cult jargon and support forums call this "love bombing." It is a well known tactic to break resistance. Love bombing is a super-normal stimulus. It triggers a rush of dopamine in Alice's brain that overwhelms. It is the same response as if she was ingesting fructose, or cocaine. We get a kick when someone we like talks to us. We get ten times that kick if they talk to us ten times. We get a hundred times the kick when they call us a hundred times.

This trigger and response is natural and necessary. It is how we bond. A social person can only give so much. It is exhausting to express deep emotions. Mallory pays little or no cost. His deep ululations of love and desire come from memory. They cost him no more effort than wagging a finger. He does what social humans cannot. He amplifies the trigger, and he drives the addiction deeper into Alice's mind.

Alice starts to commit time and resources. Mallory watches her and chooses his moment. He has done this so often before. It is almost too easy.

Perhaps he will start slowly, when Alice is feeling most confident and intimate. A subtle comment after sex. A show of jealousy or insecurity. "Who were you thinking of, your ex?" A glum mood and argument that leaves Mallory a victim, and Alice searching anxiously for her fault.

Or, he may simply switch his attention to someone else, seen or unseen. Alice freezes, waiting for Mallory to return. It can be for minutes, or weeks. When he does return, it is without explanation or apology. He continues as if nothing had happened. If Alice makes a comment, he accuses her of being insecure, jealous, possessive.

Or he may strike more brutally, when she is feeling vulnerable. She twitches, does or says something that betrays uncertainty. Mallory lashes at her. How dare she? She stumbles, retreats, apologizes. It is what Mallory was waiting for. Fury fills him. Eyes wide, mouth in a snarl, he explodes in verbal abuse.

Alice has no words. It has all gone wrong somehow. Bewildered and in shock, she cannot react or process. She watches as Mallory takes his things and leaves. Come back, she pleads. And then he is gone. Mallory walks to a corner and makes some phone calls. He has business to take care of. Alice will be calling him, and hitting his voicemail. He'll give her an hour or two. Whatever. It's much the same. Alice is going nowhere.

There are many points in the relationship where Alice could break free. This is the most visible one. Mallory has left. It is over. Time to move on, yes?

Yet Mallory is a professional. This is what he does. Alice has as much free will as his phone. She will wait, and she will weep, and she will beg forgiveness. Alice always does.

When Mallory does answer her call, and returns, Alice is compliant. She is shivering from hurt, withdrawal, self-pity, and guilt. She does whatever Mallory asks. She takes all the blame, even though she does not understand what for.

This is the devalue stage of IDD, the withdrawal of affection. It is not a one-time event. It can start just a few days into a relationship. It can be subtle and creeping, or it can be dramatic and violent. Mallory does this over, and over. Break, and remake. Break, and remake. Alice goes fuzzy on the details, after a while. She tells no-one of it, and they would not believe her if she did. Mallory will remind her, often, of her crimes and his patient, forgiving nature.

It is the hallmark of an abusive relationship that Mallory acts highly sensitive, jealous, and volatile. At the slightest excuse, just as things seem OK again, he flips to violent argument, then to crisis. Sometimes he threatens to leave. Sometimes he packs his bags. Sometimes he just vanishes. Sometimes he kicks Alice out. It doesn't matter. The goal is to push Alice to the edge, to destabilize her, break her, and train her.

After every crisis, Mallory withdraws, goes cold and distant. If Alice was smart, she'd watch Mallory go and wipe his number from her phone. Of course, she is desperate to get him back. She is an addict. She tries harder, and he relents and returns.

The burn comes back. Mallory knows how to make her cry from pleasure, as well as pain. She forgets the arguments. Whatever he wants, she will give.

Mallory does not forgive, nor forget, though. He tracks Alice's crimes like an accountant. It forms part of the narrative. She will now and then try to resist Mallory's demands. She will complain when he throws chaos into her schedule and life. Mallory responds with cold abuse. "You dare?" he asks, and he reads the ledger back to her.

Mallory never apologizes if he can help it. He never makes steps to repair the fractures, unless Alice is on the verge of walking out. His brutality is not personal. It is a negotiation strategy, part of doing business.

While my description above has Mallory the man, and Alice the woman, it works the same way when Mallory is a woman, breaking Bob. For every broken woman explaining why she loves her abuser, there is a broken man doing the same.

The Spanish Prisoner

People often stay in abusive relationships far longer than you'd expect. Abusive attachment is a counter-intuitive mechanism for everyone except psychopaths. These individuals understand it from youth, and practice it to perfection. For the rest of us, decoding the abusive bond is hard work. Yet it is a valuable exercise that teaches us much.

Let's start with normal social relationships. Alice and Bob meet. They need each other in some way. Love, business, or friendship. They each invest time, money, resources, or affection in the relationship. It starts with small steps. They ease into larger commitments over time. They work to keep the relationship balanced. This is "normality," when both Alice and Bob are happy with each other. If either feels they're not doing enough, they work harder until it is solid again.

Human social instincts are not perfect. There are at least three vulnerabilities in the bonding mechanism. These are triggers that Mallory can amplify to trap Bob or Alice. They are: sunk costs, future promises, and parental abuse. I'll take these one by one.

The sunk costs fallacy is well known in economics. No-one has explained it well, so I will try now. The symptom is, "I've spent so much money on this house, it *must* be good by now!" We know the house has problems, yet the more we spend on it, the more we believe in it. Even the smartest of us falls into this trap, over and over. Houses, businesses, cars, hobbies, all kinds of projects.

How do we value a project? We could put it up for sale and see what offers people make. Yet we tend to form emotional relationships with our projects. That is why we care for them. To offer them for sale violates the relationship. One cannot put a money figure on a relationship. Instead, we count our investments in the project. And we guess how much we feel it has given us back. We add these up. If we do come to a figure, it will be high.

The origin of what I'll call "social accounting" is clear. We're a predator species that survives risk by mutual sharing. When we succeed in a hunt we have more than we can consume or carry, so we share with others. When we fail, we beg. On average this exchange works out and keeps us alive. Yet it is vulnerable to freeloaders who cheat by always begging, never hunting. To beat them, we evolved identity to track other individuals, and social accounting to track their behavior over time.

Bob and Alice each hold a ledger in their minds. They keep a balance of gifts received and given. The more work it takes to calculate this balance, the more solid the bond feels. This is why the best gifts have no price tag. This is why money dissolves relationships like acid. This is why we can bond with a [limited number](#) of people. Our mental capacity is 150 ledgers, more or less.

The bookkeeping is delicate. We don't know the value of our gift to others. There are many intangibles like genetic closeness. We don't know the cost of their gifts to us. So we track the value of the gifts we received and the gifts we give. "He saved my life!" and "I gave her my

last chicken." It is a one-sided ledger.

Further, we cannot read the other's ledger. We have to guess it. If we see the other person happy to see us, we assume our credit is good. Then we take our own valuation. If the other person is unhappy, we invest more until they are happy again. Then we again take our own valuation. If we feel we're getting too little from the other person, we become unhappy with them, and we dislike them.

You can see how the social emotions of like and dislike evolved. They are the language of social accounting. You can see why we read and interpret these emotions using empathy. You can see why empathy for these emotions is an adult mental tool. Juveniles do not take part in the risk sharing. We do not keep ledgers for juveniles, nor do we expect them to do that for us.

Social accounting achieves two things. First, it lets us detect and punish cheats. That takes no conscious thought. The ledger is out of balance. We dislike the cheats and then become angry with them. If they make enough effort, we become happy, and we like them again. If not, we stop sharing with them. Second, it lets us rank others from most to least important. Meaning, most to least likely to look after us when we are unlucky.

As such, social accounting is a good defense against cheats. I'd guess this mechanism evolved many millions of years ago. It is essential for high-risk hunting by larger groups (and I'd predict the same mechanisms in other social top predators).

Somewhat later, we evolved the ability to plan the future, and make promises. We often make and accept promises of future rewards, or just "futures". Futures are a large part of social accounting. It is how we stretch our risk balancing strategy forwards in time.

Like all gifts, we measure futures in the silence and privacy of our own minds. It is a bad tactic to tell others how you measure them, unless you dominate them. In the same way it is bad practice to tell others the futures you expect of them. Every relationship is a slow game, a negotiation. One does not show one's cards.

So when someone promises or reveals a future, that is a trigger. As the future gets larger, our response grows. When the reveal is modest, and thus looks sincere, our response grows. These futures tend to be basic: sexual gratification, protection, affection, time, resources, opportunities, contacts.

The further a future, the higher the risk of default and effort of enforcement. So we discount futures, using a [hyperbolic curve](#). We discount a lot at first, then less over time. The closer the future, the higher we value it.

Somewhere close to the evolution of futures, we evolved the ability to lie. As I've said, Mallory is a professional liar. She is not just a good liar. She is a better-than-perfect liar. It is the key to her long-term success. Whereas Bob feels stress at lying, Mallory feels none. She fears no consequences. When Bob lies, he places his relationships at risk. Mallory has a different accounting model.

So to hack Bob's social accounting, Mallory lies about futures. Bob adds those futures to his ledger, and values the relationship higher. It sounds simple, yet that evolution must have taken hundreds of thousands of years. Presumably the necessary genes evolved in parallel with the genes for language.

Mallory meets Bob and reveals some future. She then asks for help, playing the victim. Bob starts to share. Mallory shows larger futures. Bob invests more. Mallory contrives a crisis, and makes it Bob's fault. He responds by investing more. He now values the relationship higher. Mallory gives a little, then repeats the cycle. She breaks the relationship again, and Bob repairs it, again. She can make Bob see this as the primary relationship in his life. He will sacrifice everything to make it work. It only ends when Bob is empty.

Futures tend to be massive compared to sincere investments. This means the bond works much faster than a normal social bond. In a typical case it takes only a few days for Mallory to hook Bob. It will take her only a few months to become the most important person in his life.

Over time, Mallory replaces the futures with Bob's debts. The advantage for her is that he can never pay them off. She controls that ledger, and no matter what he does, she adds new debts to it. The sooner she can do this, the sooner she can focus on other targets.

Sunk costs and future promises are the basis for many confidence tricks. The archetype is the [Spanish Prisoner](#) aka Nigerian advance-fee fraud. This is the backbone of the abusive bond. Even when Bob is bleeding empty, he will deny that Mallory is dishonest.

Mallory's Books

What do Mallory's ledgers look like? How does a psychopath do social accounting? In broad terms, they do not. They use different mechanisms to track their relationships. To start with, Mallory can hold many more ledgers than Alice. His Dunbar number is in the many hundreds. He does not track gifts. He does value his relationships relative to each other. He definitely knows who is most likely to feed him.

Mallory's ledger for Alice tracks the flow of resources from her to him. It tracks issues she appears to be sensitive to. Alleged crimes she has committed, that he can use as leverage. Often when he talks to Alice it is to try new accusations, and revisit old ones to see if they

still work.

You can see that this ledger is not negotiated. Alice cannot get Mallory to change by being happy, nor angry. Her social instincts work against her.

This bond can last years, even a lifetime. Seen from the outside, it is incomprehensible and immoral. Yet it seems an inevitable consequence of the social accounting instincts. Evolution doesn't try to make everyone happy. It plays the averages. If 10% suffer so 90% can thrive, so be it.

Yet there are clear ways to escape this bond, no matter what stage it is in. I will come to this later. The suffering is only inevitable as long as Alice believes Mallory to be sincere.

Stockholm Syndrome

"If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous he will not bite you. This is the principal difference between a dog and man." -- Mark Twain

The third trigger is parental abuse.

As Mark Twain observed, the more someone invests in us, the *less* we value them. A visible effort by the other person diminishes them in our eyes. If a dominant man is generous to a submissive man, he creates a challenger. The submissive male sees the dominant male as weak and needy. Instead of affection, he feels antagonism and rebellion. This is our ancient primate mind at work, fighting its way up the group hierarchy.

Parental abuse triggers the opposite effect. It is the bond that children have with abusive parents. Mistreatment comes in many forms. It can come as verbal, emotional, or physical violence. It can come as physical confinement. It can be negligence of basic needs. It can be disregard for social cues and needs. We would expect children of abuse to hate and detest their parents. Instead, they tend to bond hard. They identify with their parents, defend them, excuse them, and follow them. The bond only breaks, if ever, when the children are adults.

The evolutionary benefits of responding like this are clear. To survive in an abusive family, a child must accept the abuse. To rebel is to starve. More, the child must push the worst of it onto his or her siblings. That means being the most enthusiastic defender, the first to comply.

To provoke the parental abuse response, Mallory pushes Bob towards childishness. When we think like juveniles, we respond like juveniles. We abandon our ledgers and social accounting. We do not negotiate. We submit, or we flee. Mallory has diverse tools to push Bob into this state. I'll cover them in "Attack and Capture".

The parental abuse trigger is the basis for Stockholm Syndrome. That is the affection hostages feel for their kidnappers.

The mechanism at work is one of dominance and submission. When an individual tells us to do favors for them, we have several choices. We can comply or refuse. These are both submissive responses. We can also assert dominance by ignoring or mocking them. We can avoid the question by walking away. We can comply while mocking, which is a mixed response.

If we do comply, we accept dominance and we then feel attachment. It is not just favors. If an individual mistreats us, we again have the same possible responses. Ignore them, mock them, walk away, or accept. If we accept mistreatment, we accept dominance.

The worse the mistreatment, the stronger the dominance trigger, and the stronger the attachment.

Mallory is demanding with everyone she feels is under her spell. She puts on her anger mask at the slightest excuse. The verbal and emotional abuse she heaps on Bob can be astonishing.

Isolation Attacks

Our oldest defense against predators of any species is other people. When we have trouble with someone, our first instinct is often, "discuss with others." When we keep our problems private, from isolation, or fear, it usually gets worse.

It is only through other people that we can understand the world. We may think of ourselves as clever individuals, yet that is self-flattery. We are only clever in groups. It is so easy for Mallory to lure people in. He spins them a fantasy, and sells it with promises, lies, threats, and half-truths. No-one is immune from such attacks, except other psychopaths.

As Mallory blasts Alice with exaggerated triggers, she loses her sense of normality. When she explains her life to others, they will tell her "this is not normal." She may be stubborn, so such advice can wash off. Yet it can be the voice of reason that saves her. It just takes one person who recognizes Mallory's true character.

So Mallory must separate Alice from the people she trusts and depends on. He does this through a series of "isolation attacks." He creates a bubble environment that he controls. He levers Alice into this environment. He keeps her isolated within it, so she cannot get help.

We see this pattern over and over. It can be one person controlling another. It can be a company asset-stripping its staff. A cult swindling its members. Mallory has many faces.

- First, Mallory creates a bubble environment. In a couple, this will be "our new apartment." In a start-up, this will be "the new offices." In a cult, this will be "our new education center." The bubble looks and feels like home. It lacks the critical part of any home: real family.
- Next, Mallory convinces Alice to move into the bubble. The further she moves from friends and family, the better for Mallory. The move is Alice's investment. It makes it harder for her to talk to others.
- Now, Mallory starts to cut Alice's links to other people, one by one. He'll sow distrust by telling Alice stories of what people said about her. He'll create conflicts, and make Alice believe everyone hates her. While he is doing this, he will charm her family and friends. No-one will imagine Alice is in trouble.

When Mallory moves to isolate Alice, the stakes have risen high. This is the point where the young person leaves home, into the arms of a child abuser. This is where your brother packs a bag and moves into the cult compound. This is when the young couple announce they are moving in together. This is how the wealthy husband leaves his wife for a younger, prettier woman.

It is always a shock to friends and family. Alice abandons them for an unknown adventure. She uses passionate language. "Destiny!" she says, when people ask "why?" Mallory is discrete, charming, plausible.

If Alice was sober and able to listen, I'd try to warn her. Keep your assets out of the relationship at all costs, I'd say. Define boundaries and protect them with force if you must. Keep your friends and family close. Avoid physical vulnerability. Please don't trust Mallory, he is not what he seems to be.

Yet when Alice is moving in, it is already too late by months. You cannot treat addicts with logic. If there is a clear example of temporary insanity, this phase is it. Perhaps a dose of Clozapine or some other [dopamine blocker](#) would help.

Exploring in Safety

Reading this, you may ask how to avoid Mallory, and escape if she does decide you look interesting.

Locking yourself in a room is a poor option. People do try this. I do not recommend it. At the same time, if you walk among strangers, you will meet Mallory, over and over. It is as inevitable as day and night.

Another strategy is to become a "grey rock." This means, showing little or no response to anything people do or say. This is a decent strategy for surviving a psychopath in the room. Yet Bob and Alice don't like this and will avoid you. Grey rocks tend to be lonely, which is not a good thing.

You may ask, would it help to act more like a psychopath? It is a common question. There is this notion that psychopaths are successful, with their charm and social fluency. They do not suffer the bruises of emotions. They seem strong, even invincible. Does acting like Mallory give us immunity? The answer is "yes, except it's not that simple."

So then we ask: can we just identify the psychopaths, and avoid them? After all, we have checklists and personality tests. In theory, yes. I'll explore this in "Hunting Mallory". In practice, the answer is "most often, no". Mallory has been fooling people since she was a toddler. She fools professionals: psychologists, law enforcement, judges. She fools people who see her every day for years: partners, children, close friends. What makes you special?

Where does this leave us? We cannot distrust everyone, or we become isolated and more vulnerable. We cannot extend blind trust to everyone, or we suffer wound after wound. We cannot tell who we can trust, and who we cannot. It seems like a paradox.

Yet what looks like a paradox is actually a set of false assumptions. First, that we can trust Alice and Bob, and we must distrust Mallory. Second, that we must decide alone, in our own minds. Third is that we must judge each case afresh, on its own merits. When we break down these assumptions, we solve the paradox.

The Theory of Trust

The psychopath manipulates trust. From the first seconds of a meeting to years later, Mallory insists: "trust me!"

So it's worth looking at trust. Trust is a hypothesis about a person's future acts towards us. "I trust her" is shorthand for, "my hypothesis is that she will not harm me." Like any hypothesis we cannot prove it is true. We can only try to falsify it, and fail.

To establish any depth of trust, we need opportunity and time. We need chances for the other person to break their trust. We need safe spaces where failures are not harmful. We need time for many such experiments. You need an unbiased observer to collect the data.

Mallory specializes in distorting this process. He expands experimental space far beyond what is safe. He forces conclusions based on too little data. He influences others to accept lies as truth. Mallory's logic is: you trust me, thus you must invest in our relationship, now.

As I explained, Mallory distorts our social accounting to make us trust him. Despite ourselves, we evolved to want to trust people. The more we work to establish trust with a psychopath, the worse our conclusions. This means that trust is a poor tool for predicting others' actions. It becomes a form of gambling. Most of the time we are lucky. We come to believe we are born lucky. Now and then we have horrid accidents. Then, we believe fate wants us to lose.

Consider this: you can create deep and loving relationships without depending on trust. Not that trust is absent. Rather, that it is not the basis for the relationship. Correlation is not causation. Trust is like happiness. It is a social emotion that you feel to show the other person how much you like them. Like happiness, it can come from real reasons, or fake ones, and we cannot tell.

Motivational Awareness

If we cannot use our feelings of trust to predict another's actions, what do we use?

The answer is motivational awareness. That is, to develop an awareness of others' motivations and intentions. As part of that, we must also be honest about our own motivations. It is our own lies that trap us.

Why are we in this place at all? What are we looking for? Most often we disguise our own motivations. We do this for ourselves first, and for others thereafter. There is a social process. To put our needs on the table shortcuts this process, and invites rejection. One does not ask an unknown person, "are you single?" or "how much do you earn?"

Thus we often hide our desires and needs. Yet this does not hide them from Mallory. When we push our motivations out of sight, we create denial. When someone sees that denial and pushes the trigger, our response is higher.

So instead, we look for our motivations, with honesty. We accept them, and we then resolve them. There are not a huge number of possible motivations. Indeed the set is small and depends on our age, gender, and circumstances:

- We look for people to trade our knowledge and skills with, to learn from, and work with.
- We look for people to play with, be it mutual fun, or more sinister bullying.
- We look for partners for casual affection, exploratory sex, and possible long term relationships.
- We look for people to look after us, with advice, resources, affection, shelter.
- We look for people to invest in, with our knowledge, resources, and affection.

- We look for people to share experiences with, to make us feel safe and meaningful.
- We look for people to like us, follow us, and listen to us, so we feel more important.

That is about it. It comes down to sharing knowledge, power, money, sex, security, attention, love, and care. We can not stop ourselves needing these at times in our lives. Yet how we respond to a trigger undergoes a dramatic change, when we accept our needs. Accept and embrace them, and they are no longer a vulnerability.

Let me illustrate. Imagine a homosexual man dealing with his sexual attraction to other men:

- He may deny it, to conform to social expectations. This makes him vulnerable to predators, as he will ignore weak cues. He will respond only to the exaggerated cues that psychopaths are good at projecting.
- He may accept and embrace it. This lets him recognize weak cues, and project them in turn. When someone projects exaggerated cues, he can now see these as a red flag.

Mallory picks up on the first case, to flip into a super-stimulus response. When you have hidden dreams and desires, you are vulnerable. Anyone with the talent can guess those dreams. And if they then promise to make them come true, they carve a hole into your mind. Yet if you embrace your desires and carry them in the open, it changes. You will find small, real comforts in most of the people you meet every day. It adds up to much more than any dream.

Normally, hiding our deepest desires, we see a crowd and feel, "most of these people are uninteresting." We narrow our vision and become passive, waiting for others to provoke a response in us. We appear bland, uninterested, perhaps shy and quiet. Every encounter feels risky, and if someone does break through our shields, we treat this as a special event.

When we understand, and accept our motivations, we can shift our perspective to "everyone here is interesting in some way." We broaden our vision and become active, trying to provoke a response in everyone we meet. We become playful, and outgoing. We have no shields to break. We're like a song bird sitting happily on every round object it sees, blue or not.

It is also healthy to understand the motivations of others around us. You can of course ask out loud, and get an answer. The answer will often be wrong in all the most important places. You have to go past spoken words and borrow one of Mallory's tricks.

When you are among strangers, practice cold reading them. Every person you see or meet is a story. Something happened to bring them to that exact place and time. What is their story? What are they hoping for, afraid of, dreaming of? Sometimes it is explicit, or obvious. Even then you will see layers. There is the story we show to others. There is the story we tell to ourselves. And there is the hidden truth.

It doesn't matter how well you guess. It is the perspective that matters. You can see strangers as words, bodies, and faces to respond to. Or you can see them as stories waiting to speak. That viewpoint lets you pick up on details that otherwise slip past you. Things people say, or don't say. The way they control, or respond to others. Their body language. How their friends act. Whether they appear alone, or part of a group. Whether they keep trying to get your attention, or not.

When you see strangeness, and you will, try to document it. Make a mental note and if you can, keep a journal. Anything that seems unusual. Over time you'll start to see patterns emerging. Many will be familiar from this book. You will start to see pain and hurt. You'll see through the many acts people play. You may now and then see Mallory, when she's not paying attention to you.

Emotional Awareness

One of the core techniques to learn is emotional control. This is essential to escaping a relationship with a psychopath. It is also a useful skill in a broader social and professional context.

Like motivations, our emotions form an identifiable core set. These are universal across cultures, and live in our genes. The psychologist Paul Ekman proposed six original universal emotions. These were: happiness, sadness, fear, anger, disgust, and surprise. He seems to have missed jealousy, loneliness, despair, and self-pity and a few others. Later he added others including guilt and shame. The full list I explain in "The Dance of Emotions" runs to about fifty emotions.

The emotions evolved to coordinate our bodies for actions like fighting, or running away. They also evolved as a language that expresses on our faces and bodies. This is a universal language that babies can speak before they can form words. They live in the areas of our brain also responsible for empathy. These are the anterior insula and the amygdala. These areas also process our sense of smell. In humans this sense has strong ties to emotions.

Psychopaths do not have the same wiring in these areas of the brain. It's not clear yet what their anterior insula and amygdala do. Perhaps emotional mimicry that drives facial expressions. In any case, they do not experience the same range of emotions as non-psychopaths. Their emotional range is limited, as I'll explain in "The Dance of Emotions". They have limited empathy. They have no disgust at mutilation, visible or imagined. They have a different sense of smell.

As a social human, we cannot control how our emotions display. If we feel an emotion, it shows. This is their value as social signals: they are honest. To fake or suppress an emotion takes training, or psychopathic talent.

While emotions are powerful social signals, they also affect our senses and behavior. If we feel a strong emotion, that affects how we see others. If we are happy, we see others in a positive light. If we are sad or anxious, we see others in a worse light.

Since they affect our awareness, emotions also make us vulnerable. If Mallory makes us happy, we like him more. If Mallory makes us jealous of someone, we start to hate that person. If Mallory makes us afraid, we will do what he demands.

To see clearly, and to resist Mallory's attacks, we must control our own emotions. Controlling your emotions is as hard as faking them. I'm sure there are many techniques. I call my technique "grounding." It works by identifying and resolving emotions one by one. I'll explain grounding in detail in "The Dance of Emotions". For now, here is a summary.

The basis for grounding is that emotions are distinct, yet trigger in chains. Fear of being alone may trigger jealousy of others. That may trigger anger, which in turn triggers shame. The result is a soup of emotions, dominated by anger and shame. We can learn to identify the strongest emotion, shame, and sense what triggered it.

We can then work backwards until we come to the root emotion. The root emotion rests on a belief that we can negate. That fear of being alone is baseless. Doing that, the fear disappears. And then the whole chain of emotions is gone.

One of my sons is angry with his brother. I can see the small jealousies that provoke it. Those come from insecurity. Rather than ask them to stop bickering, I cuddle them both. The insecurity and jealousy and anger disappear.

To fake an emotion you do the same in reverse. Start with a belief or hypothesis that generates a strong emotion. Let this trigger other emotions. Express these emotions. It can be a useful skill if you need it. For one thing, Mallory does not expect it from others.

Grounding works in real-time, when you are in a difficult situation. You do not need peace and quiet. It does take practice, for most people.

It can help you deal with people who antagonize you, in real life and on line. A common root belief is, "feeling and expressing this emotion will get them to behave better." That is false with trolls and psychopaths.

Situational Awareness

The focus on others is a form of active meditation. Mallory likes you to listen to her and think of yourself, so she can push your buttons. That only works if you are unaware and lost in your own thoughts. It is good to search for others' motivations. It is also good to understand the situations you find yourself in.

This means active listening and watching. Even among strangers, the most valuable data about a person comes from other people. It is a good question to ask: "how long have you known each other, and how did you meet?" When you observe how one person affects a group, you can tell a lot about them. This is much harder when it's just the two of you.

So situational awareness is social awareness. Each person tells you their stories, and you build small theories of each person. Other people add weight to these theories, or falsify them. You throw away the theories that break, keep the ones that work. This sounds like a lot of effort. Yet it's just a set of small habits you can teach yourself, over months and years.

Once you are good at this, you can understand the dynamics of dozens of people, in a short time. You can respond in ways that deflect conflict, and absorb shotgunning without effect. You can start to see psychopaths by reflection off others.

It is wise to stay alert, sober, and with friends when possible. Alcohol and fatigue make it harder to stay aware of the people around you.

Contextual Awareness

Finally, situations are not context-free. The question is, how much of the context do you know? You will always be safer in a place that you are familiar with. You will know the kinds of people who come there, and why. You will know the economics of the place. In an unfamiliar place, you have to guess these, and you will often be wrong.

This doesn't mean avoiding the unknown. It is only by exploring the unknown that we can learn. This applies to people and places alike. The point of context is to know that we're out of our depth. If you are in an unfamiliar place your first goal should be to understand it.

You can look at a place in several ways. One perspective that you can try is that of the hunter. What are they looking for? Are you being that person? If so, what can you change to regain control of the situation.

For example, I've traveled and worked a lot in Africa. A non-African always attracts interest, for various reasons. Much of this interest is constructive and benign. Some is life-changing in the best way. And a lot is predatory, pure and simple. The best way to escape the stream of predators is to stay away from other non-Africans. This either means staying locked up in a hotel room, or making local friends. The second strategy is by far the more pleasant.

Conclusions

In this chapter I've described the first half of the psychopathic relationship. I've explained how Mallory can trick otherwise sane people into insane commitments. Her goal is to isolate her target. Alone, they will give her what she wants.

Maybe I've made it seem easy for Mallory. And often it seems to be. Yet the stakes are high on both sides. If her trap fails, Mallory has lost an opportunity. Worse, she may have revealed herself. So she must select her targets with care.

The best defenses against a psychopath are proactive. It is easier to keep Mallory away, than to fight her off once she is part of your life. I've explained how to be aware of oneself and others, of the situation and context. When you need nothing, and accept everything, you are immune to Mallory's charms.

This strategy is not only an effective tool against Mallory. It also lets you build deeper, more solid relationships with Bobs and Alices. To find every person interesting is a humanistic and optimistic perspective.

Yet there are no guarantees. You, or someone you care about, will sooner or later get caught. Mallory will switch from charm and promises to different shades of violence. In the next chapter I'll explain how this works and what it looks like.

Chapter 4. The Feeding

The Doctor's Daughter

"You're looking chubby," he tells her, concerned, over dinner. She touches her face. She leaves her dessert. No appetite. They've been arguing a lot recently. She can't get it. The first year they were together, he was fine. It is as if he became a different person.

Their fifth anniversary is coming up. He promises to take her out. She buys a new dress, she wants to be beautiful for him. On the day itself, he has to meet people. He will be home late. She spends the evening alone at home, hurt and angry. He comes home after midnight. He slides into bed beside her. She smells the alcohol, and pretends to be asleep.

He's studying again. Business school, this time. Before that, marketing. Before that, Eastern philosophy. He studies evenings and weekends. She works office hours. They live together like uncomfortable strangers in an elevator. She wishes he'd get a proper job. When she says this, they fight. "They're racist!" he tells her. "You don't know how hard it is for a black man. You whites," he says, and she winces. "Go study," she says, "I want you to be happy."

Her mother never liked him. "He's not a nice man," she says, shaking her head, after meeting him. "He doesn't make you happy." She cuts her mother off, refuses to talk to her again. He is handsome. He is full of love. He makes her passionate and come alive. When she is with him, she feels energized, euphoric. It is magical. How can her mother be so petty and jealous?

"You have to forgive her," he tells her. "Her generation aren't used to foreigners. Jealousy and hate, I know it so well. She'll get over it in time." His eyes are moist and she sees five hundred years of pain. She hugs him and wonders how her mother can be so small-minded. She tries to kiss him, and he turns away. "I'm tired," he says, "Tomorrow."

They are always in debt. She doesn't understand it. Before she met him, she'd never owed anyone money. She saved every month. Now, it seems she is scrabbling at every turn. They spend so much, on wasteful luxuries. Trips they can't afford. Eating out, several times each week. A new car. New furniture. The worst part: he neglects everything.

He takes the car and brings it back with scratches. Then, dents and broken lights. What happened? she asks, furious and shocked. "Some idiot backed into me," he says. It is always someone else's fault. "Did you fill in the insurance form?" she asks. "He drove off! I called the police of course."

She gets the post. Credit card statement. She opens it, glances at the total. What?! She reads again. No mistake. It's more than her monthly salary. Her hands tremble, as she looks through the details. Some mistake! This isn't her. She tries to make sense of the text. Her mind is slipping on ice. She grapples for balance.

The bank! The number is there on her statement. She calls them. Give me a real person... give me a person... ah.. "There's been a mistake on my credit card" she blurts. They calm her down. Client number. Name. OK. They check. Madam, was your credit card stolen? "No," she says, "no, it wasn't. I have it right here." Sorry madam, these are legitimate purchases. All confirmed with PIN code." She frowns. Who else knows her PIN code apart from her husband...?

When he comes back from his studies, she confronts him. He denies it flat out. "It's one of those websites you shop on. I told you not to trust the Internet," he says. "Cancel the card, and if the bank won't refund you, change banks. Damn thieves." It does not end well. She argues with her bank manager, and closes her accounts there. After years of the same bank! She sits shivering in anger, fear, insecurity. Her world is collapsing.

One day, she is too sick with flu to go to work. In the post she gets a letter with a court summons in her name. Unpaid traffic fines, more than a year of them. Her mind finds itself on slippery ice again. This is impossible! She parks with such attention! There's a number for the bailiff. She calls to ask for details. The female voice is happy to explain. Eleven different parking violations. Unpaid despite many reminders for each one. Fines and costs are now over three thousand dollars. She sits in shock, unable to process.

I'm going mad, she thinks. I can't take this. She weeps slow hot tears as she takes the bottle of sleeping pills, and puts a handful in her mouth. The black void pulls at her. Come, it says, why fight?

And then her phone rings. It's him. "Where are you?" he asks, without pause. "At home," she tries to say. It comes out as a nasal mumble. "Don't expect me home this evening," he continues, as if she'd not spoken. "I've got stuff to do, put the garbage out, OK?" He cuts the conversation. She holds the phone, stares out of window at the wordless city.

In her mind, an ancient door slides open. Something steps out. "No," it says, "not that way. We fight." The bottle of pills drops from her hand. Cold anger wipes out her self-pity. She spits the pills out onto the carpet.

She goes to the cupboard where her husband keeps his papers and books. It's locked as always. She has a second key that he never knew about. She opens it. Inside there are piles of papers. She takes the piles one by one and goes through them. Finally she sees it: a plastic bag with letters. They are all addressed to her. Dozens and dozens of them.

The tickets. Then reminders. And second reminders, then final warnings, and penalties, and letters from lawyers...

She confronts him when he gets home. Waves the papers in his face, shouting, what is this? What IS this?

He looks at the letters, and then at her, and then explodes in rage. "You looked through my papers? How DARE you?" He slaps her, once, and then again, harder. She falls to the floor, in shock. He kicks her in the ribs, in the face, in the back. He shouts. "Never." Kick. "Touch." Kick. "My stuff!" Kick!

In the hospital, they recognize her name, and call her mother. The doctor checks her daughter. Nothing broken. She asks, "Did he do this?" and her daughter nods. She calls the police, who send a unit. They write up a statement, and then go to arrest him. He does not deny hitting her. It was her fault, he explains. She told me I'm too poor for her, and she kept taunting me with racist slurs. In the end I couldn't help it, I got angry. It's terrible, and I feel so bad about it. He is crying, miserable, a broken man.

He is not charged, instead they both get warnings, he for assault, and she for hate crimes. Much later, at home, he tells her he's sorry, and that he loves her. She looks at him, and sees the man she fell in love with. For a brief moment she feels the connection again. She wants this so much, and she's so afraid of what comes next. And then she remembers his violence, his lies, his stealing. The other voice speaks. "*Get out,*" it says, and she takes a step towards him. "Make me!" he says, but takes a step back.

Just Leave?

When we meet others suffering from abusive relationships, our first response is often disbelief. "Leave!" we say. "Change jobs! Divorce! Move out!" Yet that is like saying to a sick person, "Get better!" The victims find themselves tied down by a web of lies, promises, and threats. Escape can seem impossible. Captivity and suffering seem inevitable.

In this chapter I'll describe the second half of the psychopathic relationship: the Feeding. The word sounds like there's a deadly blow. A bite to the throat, then the ripping of bloody flesh. Yet, that's not how it generally works.

What we see is the victim accepting, even embracing their situation. If others criticize them, they become defensive, and hostile. They protect their abuser, praise him or her. They produce tortured rationalizations that make you ask, "are you *crazy*?" to which the unspoken answer is, "yes, at least for now."

How does this happen? How does a psychopath force adult humans to accept such pain, neglect, and violence?

I've been researching mind control techniques since the late 1990's. I stumbled onto the [Cult Information Centre](#), a website describing how cults work. The loss of self within a consuming group... it was familiar. It reminded me of working in large businesses. Or military service.

What I found interesting was how many of these techniques seem to work both ways. One theme that we'll see in this chapter is pushing people into a juvenile state of mind. The adult mind needs real (even small) problems to chew on, and freedom to solve them. It's like a muscle that needs real work and freedom to move. Take away real problems, or remove freedom, and the adult mind weakens and shrivels. This leaves the juvenile mind unprotected. And that is far easier to push around.

If you give people full freedom and responsibility, then their adult minds get stronger. This can make them rebellious, if you are a tyrant. What it also does is unleash a self-controlled creativity.

My business is making software. To be more precise, I build on-line communities, and help them to make software. One tactic I used was to take the cult techniques and reverse them. Cults use arbitrary, inconsistent rules. Healthy communities need consistent, pragmatic rules. Cults form a pyramid of power. Healthy communities form a network of peers. And so on. Cults tell their members what to do, and when. Healthy communities self-organize around real problems.

So we can learn a lot of positive lessons, from the worst things people do to each other. Bear this in mind as you read this chapter, else it may be quite unhappy reading.

Motivations

Let's recap. Mallory has persuaded Alice to invest a relationship where she's losing control. She's stopped building up her own future and is handing over resources to Mallory. In a normal healthy relationship the two parties complement and strengthen each other. The psychopathic relationship is one-sided. Mallory takes everything he can, and gives as little back as necessary.

Keep in mind, it is about economics: money or time or sex. Sometimes access to property or assets. Sometimes power of different kinds, when it benefits Mallory in some tangible way.

In pop culture, the psychopath is the caricature of an unpredictable and deadly killer. It is how the mouse describes the cat. "The monster was upon us! All teeth and claws... it got my family, luckily I escaped! Crazy!!" The cat does not share mouse emotions and psychopaths do not feel social emotions. No hate, fear of rejection, jealousy or self-pity. And no revenge, nor even enjoyment in the pain of others.

Psychopaths are scary because they can inflict extraordinary damage onto others without restraint. Their emotional states are those of a predator. That's it. How do you talk to animal hunger? Yet I suspect the worst monsters in history are social humans. People who are aware of the pain they cause, driven by beliefs that can seem insane. At least Mallory follows the logic of the predator.

So the "why?" is easy to understand and predict with psychopaths. As long as Alice has something of value to offer, Mallory keeps the web strong and tight. As Mallory drains Alice he shifts gears and prepares to exit in safety.

Until that point, Mallory must ensure that Alice stays put. This is no simple task. We're all the descendants of an unbroken chain of survivors. There has been a long arms race between human predator and human prey. This gives even the nicest of us strengths to call on when we need them.

Alice is an adult, and capable of walking out of the door at any point. Mallory cannot stop her by physical force. He doesn't need to. Instead, He explains to Alice, in different ways, that she has no choice but to stay. There are many ways to do this. These are Mallory's main tactics:

- Cut Alice off from the outside world and sources of help.
- Strip Alice's assets so she becomes too poor to leave.
- Keep Alice confused so she accepts Mallory's arguments.
- Break Alice's empathy and ability to care for others, and herself.
- Break Alice's ability to think and make plans.
- Regress Alice to a juvenile state so she accepts her situation.

Mallory could be an organization rather than a person. Organizations tend to take on the characters of their founders. When psychopaths bring people together, we see the same patterns as between individuals. We see this in organizations like investment banks, cults, and VC-funded startups. They tend to abuse their members more than they abuse the rest of the world.

That Big, Bad World

Every cult and police state does the same cheap trick: "they hate us for our freedoms!" This refers to the devastated wastelands of the outside world, filled with roaming zombies. The message is clear: "stay here and follow The Rules, and you will be safe. Leave, and your death will be slow and nasty."

It is already hard for a single mind to make sense of an infinite and chaotic universe. We depend on others for our sense of reality, even our memories. It is the power of a social species, and also its weakness. An isolated individual is much easier to manipulate.

An antagonistic "them and us" mentality is a red flag. If your company defines itself by hate for its competitors, watch out. With individuals it's harder to see. The first thing you may see (and often, accept as truth) is a "trail of tears." Here, Mallory plays the victim. She tells convincing stories of abuse from her parents, teachers, and ex-partners.

After you have accepted Mallory's vulnerability, she learns your most important relationships. Then she breaks them, one by one.

Our relationships are rarely strong enough to survive deliberate attack. I once knew a man whose job it was to recruit experts. He didn't wait for people to answer ads. Instead, he just called a business. He chatted to the receptionist and asked, "can I speak to your best ?" He would get through. Then he would ask the expert the key question. "Would you change jobs for a promotion and a raise in salary?"

Once upon a time a small software firm called Borland made the best software in the world. They made compilers, spreadsheets and databases. They threatened Microsoft's business. Microsoft responded not by making their own software better and cheaper. Instead they hired away Borland's key staff, one by one. The dying firm sued, then settled and was then swallowed up piece-meal, for peanuts.

People asked, at the time, how Borland's staff could be so disloyal. Yet it was easy, and cheap. Send limousines, offer million-dollar signing bonuses. Make it clear that the number of seats is limited. If you don't join us, your junior colleague will, and one day you will beg to work for him or her.

There are so many ways to create conflict between people, no matter how close. Psychopaths excel in doing this, if they can see both parties and get a sense of each.

Here are some ways Mallory discourages Bob from an independent social life:

- Showing violent jealousy when he speaks to someone of the opposite gender. It's love, right?
- Reporting others plotting against him, with convincing detail. Of course they deny it. That just goes to prove.

- Forcing Bob to spend so much time on other tasks that he neglects his social life. It is all about priorities.
- Accusing Bob's family of prejudice and a hateful attitude. They never understood him, never accepted his choices.
- Hinting that Bob's colleagues are getting unfair promotions or earning more than him. She's obviously sleeping with the boss.
- Showing flashes of "crazy" to Bob's acquaintances so they learn to stay away.
- Encouraging Bob to change his behavior and act weird, so others start to avoid him. Here's a new shirt I bought you. Bright colors suit you!
- Forcing a move to a new city or country where Bob knows no-one. We have to move, it's best for my studies. We'll be together :)
- Criticizing Bob so he loses the confidence needed to make new friends. Your friends say you're overweight, so you might want to wear baggy clothes.

If Mallory is an organization, most of these tactics still work:

- Did you go for a job interview with another firm? That's treachery... You're fired!
- Every quarter we expect you to rank your colleagues. Oh, and they will rank you.
- Yes, we expect you to work evenings and weekends. Other people want your position.
- You need to explain to your wife how important your work is. Make her understand.
- Employee grade levels and salary data are secret. You negotiate alone.
- Next Saturday is team building day. Your voluntary presence is mandatory.
- You're going on a two week intolerance awareness program.
- Good news, you're promoted. How do you feel about moving across country?
- Your peer ranking for the last quarter was 20% lower than average.

If Bob insists on an independent social life, Mallory creates a crisis. In a couple, she packs her bags and walks out. A group threatens its non-compliant member with expulsion.

"Imagine if you lose this job, and your health benefits. Do you want to risk that?" This is usually enough to break Bob's resistance. Bob is so lost, so in love, so *addicted* to Mallory that he will do anything to get her back. If swallowing her persecution complex is what it takes, so be it.

The Uphill Struggle

There is the ancient Greek myth of Sisyphus, whom Zeus sentenced to forever pushing a rock up a mountain. Every time he got near the top, the rock would slip out of his grip and roll back to the bottom.

At the heart of every psychopathic relationship is a Sisyphean Mountain. The victim or victims push their heavy rocks up this mountain. The rocks always slip and roll back to the bottom.

This is part of the Narrative: work harder and your life may improve. If you aren't in a great place today, it's because you're not trying hard enough. Yet no matter how hard Bob tries, that rock keeps slipping out of his grasp.

Go into almost any large business and you will see a Sisyphean Mountain, rising up. Cathedrals where the elites sit high and the masses toil in the lower levels. Work hard, says the Narrative, and you may rise and rise. In reality, no. That is not how it works. You will fall off, and it will be your fault.

We also see a great deal of Sisyphean Mountain propaganda in our media. It shows beautiful people, expensive lifestyles, desirable sexual partners, large homes, frequent luxury travel. This represents the top of the mountain. We are then encouraged to climb this mountain, at all costs. The 2015 movie *Entourage* is a prime example.

We take such organizations and cultural models as the norm, and yet they are predatory, and psychopathic.

Follow the Money

Here is some advice for those seeking a partner, a new job, a new client or supplier. If you don't enjoy a meeting with someone, wait before calling them back. Either you feel happy and content and snug with them, or you don't. After a date, interview, or business meeting, we often ask the wrong questions. We ask, "are they the right person for me?" Or, "will she sleep with me on our next date?" Or, "will they pay me enough?" Or "does he like me?"

The correct question is: "did that moment make me happier or not?" Keep asking this question over time. Your first dates with Mallory will almost always be fun. It takes time for the pain to emerge.

Back to Alice, who is pushing her rock up that mountain. Mallory goads her on with comments about her lack of style, and weight. She is so focused on her rock that she does not see what is happening to her world.

Psychopaths are often mysterious until you look at the economics of the relationship. Then it usually becomes as clear as a deer halfway down a boa's mouth. The predator feeds. This means taking resources from Alice until she is empty. This is the core of the relationship, as far as Mallory cares.

It is often about money, time, or sex. Yet the range of resources Mallory may in fact be taking from Alice is quite broad:

- Mallory will use people as cover. An organization will recruit people to boost its numbers. This projects a more solid and trustworthy image to potential targets. The recruits may believe they are getting a good job or a path to paradise. Yet they are fodder for whatever insane projects the organization comes up with. Many psychopaths will marry and have children. This screen of normality makes their hunting easier.
- Mallory will use people for sexual gratification. This gives a sense of power. I believe this is more common for male psychopaths (using women and/or men). It is rarely rape, since half the kick for Mallory is to get his target to say "yes". [Yet it often skirts close to rape](#). Robert Hare has estimated that 50% of serial rapists are psychopaths.
- Mallory will ask for money, slowly yet obsessively. Mallory might target his wife's life savings. It comes as hints, pleas, manipulations against her family, requests for help to start a small business, then losses, and the need for more. If he makes modest demands then he follows with immodest ones. In business, a corrupt startup may ask its investors for more funds to avoid bankruptcy. The total over time will be huge and crippling.
- Mallory will offer his targets a lucrative business opportunity. There will be some show of early profits, and the promise of huge annual returns. If Alice invests, she will not see his money back. Pyramid schemes are a classic psychopath construction. If Alice challenges Mallory, he will insist on his innocence. He will then ask for more money to make things work again. Alice often falls for that. The psychology of sunk costs I explained in "Attack and Capture" is powerful.
- Mallory will use people as slaved labor. He has no remorse doing this. He will justify it in creative ways. "I saved them from a worse fate," or "They are paying back their debt to me." In an organization, this means volunteers and interns, cheap foreign labor, and extreme overtime. In a family, you will see Mallory avoiding work and delegating to others. In cults and prisons, you get outright slave labor.
- Mallory will convert others' assets by claiming "yours is ours is mine". In marriage, Mallory insists on sharing all property and savings. This makes them easy to plunder. Yet he will keep his own assets hidden. In business, a startup may tell its new hires,

"You are part of this!" and even give them a nominal shareholding. In return the employee must contribute all their time. If the firm ever makes profits, or sells for a large amount, the employee gets little back.

- Mallory will create debt and push that onto others. He uses the reverse "mine is ours is yours" principle. This is common in business deals and marriages with psychopaths. Mallory borrows money in the name of the joint venture, and hides or spends that money. He then defaults, leaving Alice to pay the bill.
- Mallory will encourage Alice to invest in new assets. This could be a new company, or property. Mallory always gets enough of a stake to be able to steal. He often insists he is the only trustworthy party. "You are too old and senile to recognize crooks!" he tells Alice, who must sign over full control of the new assets.
- Mallory will steal and defraud whenever he believes he can get away with it. This is consistent, whether the amounts are a few dollars or millions. The price to the victim is irrelevant. All that matters is the benefit/risk ratio for Mallory. Fraud works better when he knows and profiles his victims in advance. So for example, if Mallory shoplifts his groceries, he sticks to shops he knows. If he steals old peoples' identities, he targets people she knows and can control.

If Mallory gets caught, he always denies the facts, and blames someone else. It may be the victim. It may be other bystanders. He denies responsibility even when confronted with material evidence. There will be no remorse, no attempts to make it right, no apologies.

The Ukrainian serial murderer [Andrei Chikatilo said](#), about his 50-60 victims: "I did not need to look for them. Every step I took, they were there."

For every wallet and every heart, there is a story that will open it. Sometimes it's being the tragic victim of a cruel world. Sometimes the wallet opens for false promises. "Let's invest in tulip bulbs! I've a cousin who's importing them." "We should build an extension to the house. My friend will come and help." Sometimes it is simple blackmail. Give me a new car, or I'm leaving. Sometimes objects of value disappear.

Wherever there are flows of money, Mallory tries to get control over them. In an organization he will try to be treasurer or get spending authority. In a family, he will "hold the purse."

Mallory is as negligent in paying bills as he is quick to steal. This combination is a recipe for ruin.

Many business do go bankrupt like this. Yet many more do not. It is interesting to look at the design of a modern business. The concept of a limited-liability entity may seem sinister. How can a business be a "legal person?" How is it ethical to allow a business to take risks that do not carry onto their owners? Is this a conspiracy by capitalism to defraud the general public?

In fact a business entity is a one-way trapdoor. It stops debt moving back onto investors. Most often the investors are not the ones running the business. Without such a trapdoor, Mallory can borrow heavily, steal the cash, and run off.

Modern States demand annual accounts from businesses. They give owners the right to inspect these accounts. They let owners question their business managers to justify them. They often separate the roles of treasurer and chief executive. All this reduces the scope for fraud.

So the core of modern business law is an anti-psychopath defense.

The French proverb *Les bons comptes font les bons amis* applies here. Some misinterpret this as "debts must be repaid as fast as possible." It just means that any relationship must balance.

If you look at the accounting, an abusive relationship shows up right away. "We're in an open relationship," Mallory says. He knows Alice will try harder and harder to get him to commit. Meanwhile he is "free" to sleep with other women.

We've evolved many defenses against predators looking to empty our real or social wallets. Another of those defenses is the ritual of gift giving. This is a fascinating part of human culture. We get so much pleasure from our rituals of exchanging gifts. And particularly when they are heavy with emotional value. We get such pleasure from *making* a successful gift. That shows how important the ritual is.

Gift giving can take different forms. I believe that it's fine to work for free. It is also fine to charge a full price for your services. The first is a gift. The second is a transaction, not an investment. What I will not do is work at less than my worth, on the basis of future rewards. This is something I've learned to avoid, unless I'm working for myself.

You should be free to walk away from any relationship, at any time. This includes personal, business, and social relationships. It does not mean lack of commitment. It means clarity and freedom. When a relationship is healthy and makes you happy, you have no reason to end it. And when it is unhealthy and makes you unhappy, you should not have to continue it.

Techniques of Confusion

Mallory must keep Bob captive and docile while she feeds. She most often uses words rather than chains. She is a convincing speaker, quick to find the right thing to say. She is always confident and dominant. To hold Bob captive without chains, she keeps him in a state of confusion. There are many techniques, and I'll try to cover the main ones.

It's not Me, it's You

There is a certain kind of lie that Mallory uses, called "gaslighting." He does this to confuse Alice, by messing with her memory and sense of reality. The term comes from a play and 1944 movie, "Gaslight." As [Wikipedia notes](#), "Sociopaths frequently use gaslighting tactics. Sociopaths consistently transgress social mores, break laws, and exploit others, but typically, are also charming and convincing liars who consistently deny wrongdoing."

Some classic forms of gaslighting are:

- To lie about important past conversations. "You told me I could borrow the car! You even gave me your credit card so I could fill the gas tank!"
- To lie about past agreements. "We agreed you would invest in my firm if I tried to get you a meeting with the vice-president. Well I tried, and now you owe me that investment!"
- To lie about irrelevant details. "No, we didn't have Italian yesterday, it was sushi. You had the maki, remember."
- To lie about others' perception of her. "Everyone tells me how paranoid you have become."

Mallory prefers to lie in private. When Alice is alone and cut off from other people, she wants to believe Mallory. Faced with a constant flow of untruths, she starts to doubt her memories and even her sanity. This is a pragmatic tool for mind control. [Unscrupulous interrogators can use it](#) to extract false confessions.

The Gods of Lies

Mallory lies to confuse her victims. She also lies to conceal. She conceals who she talks to, where she goes, and what she does. She is so secretive about her real life that even her own family are unaware. And Mallory lies for profit, to escape criminal prosecution, and to frame other people. She mixes lies into banal truth, to confuse and distract.

Mallory is Loki, the shape-shifting Norse god of trickery and untruths. Her love and talent for lying are central to her predatory nature. To be a predator is to deceive your prey. When she lies, no matter the occasion, she feels the thrill of the chase.

I've seen Mallory lie, and it is a remarkable thing. I'm sure she can stroll through lie detector tests without leaving a trace. It goes further than not showing a stress response. When she tells you that black is a shade of white, it feels *better* than the truth.

How does Mallory do this? How does Mallory project untruth to feel more solid than mere statements of fact? I think it is another blue egg story. Mallory mimics the signals for sincerity, and speaks with authority and confidence. This triggers our belief response. The

more the psychopath amplifies those signals, the more we believe. It is like Puss in Boots' [wide eyes in the movie Shrek 2](#).

To understand how Mallory can lie like Loki, first accept that we all lie. We start lying as young children and we socialize ourselves out of it. We become honest liars. We accept and repeat stories we know are only partly true yet are better than empty space. All stories are lies to some degree. "It is sunny outside" is a lie. What does "sunny" mean? Half-true stories make the world simpler and more digestible. This book is full of such stories. Only a dysfunctional mind cannot deal with gentle lies.

So we all lie, and we know this about each other. It is a human universal. Truth is a negotiated average of semi-lies. We have evolved ways to get more accurate stories by talking to each other. "It's sunny outside," says one person. "I just saw dark clouds on the horizon," says another. Together they get a better story: "it's sunny and may rain later." The stories become solid, reproducible. We build them into theories, share them and pass them on.

So as we talk, we exchange fluffy lies and distill them into hard truths. For this to work, we must try to believe people even when we guess they are inaccurate. We measure the speaker for sincerity, and when we see that, we accept. The more sincere the speaker, the more we accept. We can always correct mistakes later.

Social humans cannot fake sincerity, by definition. When we tell an "honest" lie, we are sincere about it. When we tell a deliberate lie, we show tiny twitches. Our imaginations take over from our memories, and the shift in gears shows in our eyes. So, we are honest liars.

Mallory is different. She fakes sincerity like she fakes anger, affection, jealousy, sadness. From an early age she studies others' faces and body language. She becomes a perfect mimic. She is born with this talent, visible in some children just a few years old. She can amplify the triggers at no cost, so she is better than the original.

The second thing about Mallory's lies is how rich and detailed they are. You can of course catch her out, if you know what is going on. If you don't then you just get a convincing flood of detail. It is as if Mallory creates an imaginary situation, then describes this to you.

Mallory does not seem to try to remember these imaginary situations. Maybe there are too many, for too many different people. So the reliable way to catch her lies is to record them, and compare them over time.

It is how some psychologists get the truth out of people. Ask the same question in five different ways, and compare the answers. A sincere person will tell the same story five times. A psychopath may change the story each time. This is how honest police work, when questioning a suspect. For this to work, I think the questions must come from different people, and over time.

If Mallory has children, they grow up with her lies as a daily diet. The children of narcissists often report having above-average memories for events and conversations. This is anecdotal data. It could be correlation as well as causation. Mallory, after all, has genetic talents for conversation and mimicry. Her children inherit these, to some extent.

Machines of Chaos

Many children of psychopaths describe their parents as "chaos machines." Mallory spreads chaos in different ways. He tends to disrupt the lives of everyone around him. Sometimes it looks like incompetence, sometimes like neglect, and sometimes like simple carelessness. I've come to believe it's deliberate, even if it's often subconscious. Organizations often use the same techniques:

- Chaotic planning, in which Mallory's time is precious and Alice's time is worthless. Mallory will make short-term demands of Alice. This interrupts her schedule and makes a mess of her planning. If Alice dares to act like this, Mallory attacks her irresponsibility and punishes her.
- Alice may lose all control over her schedule, leaving Mallory to plan her every move. This is typical of cults, and also happens in some relationships and some organizations. Mallory can combine this with sleep deprivation. Then Alice has no private time in which to analyse her situation.
- Removing Alice's personal spaces. Organizations often do this by creating communal areas for working, eating, and meeting. Some psychopathic businesses ban all personalization. They enforce "order" and sterility of spaces, the so-called "clean desk" principle. Since humans are territorial, the lack of any private space damages our self-confidence.
- Mistreating or neglecting items that Alice cares about. Organizations may ban personal choices when it comes to items people identify with. Here, you will use a corporate laptop. In personal relationships, Mallory will mistreat Alice's property: cars, apartments, photographs, clothes. It is violence by proxy. It depresses her, and she then detaches. She realizes she cannot stop such mistreatment. So she stops trying, and stops caring. And the less she cares about her possessions, the less she cares about herself.

So chaos can take various forms. An employer may demand that Bob give up his free time. The firm may send him on business trips without notice. They may put him on irregular and disruptive shifts. At the same time, Bob will have to plan his vacation six months in advance. He may not know until the last minute whether he will actually be able to leave.

In the home, Mallory will go out, and return, without warning. He will bring home spectacular and flashy dramas involving real or imaginary protagonists. He will crash the car and it will never be his fault. He will start disruptive projects like renovations and insist everyone get involved. And he will leave these projects half-finished for months or years. He plans tasks for others, yet rarely shares his own calendar.

If talking to others is hard, maybe Alice can find a quiet moment to herself. Just to process the day's events. Mallory makes sure this is impossible. Early in their relationship, he will cling to Alice day and night. He smothers her with chatter, intense sexual activity, and passionate arguments. Later, he disrupt Alice's schedule with endless trivial-yet-urgent tasks, so she cannot relax. And later, he builds up the ever-present threat of emotional and physical violence. Alice retreats into depression and starts to shut down.

Rigid sterile order has the same effect as chaos. Imagine that someone goes into your email every night and messes with your emails. They delete some, move others to the wrong folders, and so on. It is all "clean" and yet nothing is where it should be. At first you get irritated and angry. Then you try to take steps to stop it. When all this fails, you give up and abandon your email. Or, you accept that someone else is now in charge of your life.

In a world of chaos, we regress to juvenile acceptance of authority. This reaction is well known to propagandists, who depend on it. Keep your public on a steady diet of shock and horror chaos. They won't question the corruption and repression.

Magic and Illogic

Karl Popper wrote: "We are social creatures to the inmost center of our being."

Our superpower, as a species, is to think together about large problems. We do this by building theories of the world. We refine these over time, and we teach them to younger generations. Our minds collect observations and use them to test our theories. We do this from our first to our last breath.

We seem to construct theories out of nothing. We take observations and gut feelings. We chatter with others, and with ourselves. We take the endless theories delivered to us by past generations. We design new, or improved theories. We encode them in language and words. And we argue, remember, and share them.

Popper argued that there are two kinds of theory. There are scientific theories, which we can falsify with data or observations. And there are magical theories, which we cannot. To put this another way: you cannot ever prove that a theory is true. Absolute truth is unreachable, like an irrational number. What is the absolute value of pi? You can try, and fail to prove a theory wrong. When you remove all that is wrong, what remains is a closer approximation to the truth.

We can disprove or improve scientific theories like "Tiny invisible creatures spread diseases." We can neither disprove nor improve magical ones like "Evil spirits spread diseases." Magical theories are not only not true. They are -- to quote the theoretical physicist Wolfgang Pauli -- "not even wrong."

When a social mind shapes a theory, it remixes existing theories with new observations. It adds in guesses, assumptions, and beliefs. It mixes in myths, legends, hypotheses, memes, and lies. It tries to connect those into a consistent story. The process takes time. In such minds, lies are temporary scaffolding that we correct over time.

Mallory lies to confuse, manipulate, and hide. She does not seek truth, only control. Her mind constructs magical theories in a heartbeat. She describes with complete sincerity. This is an assault, a weapon, a form of violence. In Mallory's theories, truth is temporary scaffolding to replace over time with lies.

A magical theory has no solution, and can absorb infinite amounts of thought. That disrupts logical thinking. In the software security business we call this a "denial of service attack." Every cult and religion grows around magical theories. So do many business ventures, and many relationships. How can you disprove or improve "Fate means us to be together" as a theory?

Magical theories tend to develop their own secret languages, jargons, and idioms. Invented words often carry magical meanings that the listener cannot negotiate. Psychopathic organizations tend to invent private languages that are confusing and hard to learn. And then they change these languages often and without cause. They force their members to listen to and learn complex doctrines. More denial of service.

Unable to process the flood of illogic, Alice gives up making sense of her world. She accepts Mallory's statements. She accepts his justifications. She treats him with respect and love, even as he is consuming her.

Crime and Punishment

After enough pain and theft, Bob may wake up and think of rebellion. So Mallory carries another weapon, which is fear. Before Bob gets to the point of revolt, Mallory has already been working hard. She redefines the relationship around fear. She creates an atmosphere of terror. It is so deep and tangible that Bob thinks of killing himself rather than challenge her.

As I explained in "The Hunt", you can spot abuse victims by the nervous way they walk. It's the deep-seated fear of tripping up and unleashing their tormentor's anger. Mallory builds the fear by rewarding and punishing Bob in the most confusing way.

Mallory likes to change the rules arbitrarily, and make rules that are inconsistent, intrusive, and impossible to not break. The rules never apply to her. Bob has no appeal, and no voice. He must accept the rules, or leave. So, Mallory can punish Bob arbitrarily, and keep him always on the defense.

Complex and arbitrary rules are a staple of religious cults and other psychopathic organizations. These rules regulate what to eat, and when. They define dress codes for every occasion. They regulate language. They limit who may talk to whom, where, when, and about what topics.

Good rules are in fact important. They block that tactic of making up new rules to suit the purpose, so Bob is always a criminal. Bad rules become a prison. What we see often in psychopathic relationships is an asymmetry. The rules apply to Bob yet not to Mallory. This power imbalance is a sign of something rotten. When the justification for a rule is "Because I said so," it's a sign of abuse.

When Bob breaks a rule, and often when he does not, Mallory will explode in sudden anger. When Mallory projects sudden anger, it can be dramatic and terrifying. She shifts her body language to look larger, smiles with her teeth bared. She opens her eyes wide. She advances and raises her arms as if to strike. She picks up objects to use as weapons, or to smash on the floor. She raises her voice, shouts a barrage of insults and provocations.

Our emotions are social communication tools. They are a way to negotiate others into behaving with us. They are our original, primeval language, displayed in face and body. Sudden anger defuses and moderates conflicts between individuals. We still have conflicts, yet anger reduces the risk of violence and injury. It lets us make mistakes that could end in conflict, and then step back before we go too far.

This is easy to see. If someone walks in your way on the sidewalk, you sidestep, smile, or nod. The little irritation (a raised eyebrow) turns into a tiny pleasant interaction. You both smile and nod. Take the same two people in two cars, trying to cross each other in a busy intersection. Instead of a polite nod, it can lead to intense sudden anger in both drivers.

What makes the difference is the cage the car forms around the driver. This cuts off verbal and non-verbal communication. It is easier for a car driver and a pedestrian to understand each other than two car drivers. When the brain gets annoyed it starts to show anger. If it gets a response, it calms down. If it gets no response, it moves into "fight or flight" mode. It is the same response you might have if someone walks in your way on the sidewalk, on purpose. Road rage is a basic survival instinct caught in the wrong context.

So the authentic anger display is a social cue. It evolved to tell another person: stop now, I am losing control of myself. It says, violence will happen if you do not step back now. It is a usually-reliable signal that most people cannot fake. The loss of cerebral control is central to

the signal's weight. We can learn to control anger, to calm it or to encourage it. It remains the same authentic mechanism in most people.

Mallory's anger display is loud and explosive yet not authentic. She does not feel sudden anger, and does not lose control. Instead she puts on an anger mask taken from people she's watched in the past. She may have several anger masks, taken from parents, siblings, or close relatives. When Mallory believes she faces a real threat, she does not display anger. She strikes, at once and without hesitation, or she turns and leaves.

Mallory's volcanic anger display provokes the [fight or flight response](#) in Bob. No matter how he responds, he is in trouble. If he responds with anger, Mallory mocks and insults him and provokes him further. She does not back down, nor apologize. If Bob walks away or does not respond, she mocks him and insults him. She chases after him and threatens him with violence if he returns. If Bob gets violent, he will be accused of criminal assault.

It is how Internet trolls behave, getting people to argue, to humiliate them. If Bob accepts the violent language and anger, he takes a large burden of stress with him. It will consume him for hours, even days. If Bob fights back, he may feel better, yet he is losing control, and Mallory will use that.

So Bob learns to absorb the insults and anger in silence. This is how abusive relationships run. The outsider sees, if anything, violent arguments. One person tends to start the fights, and the other tends to take the blows.

There are, [according to Wikipedia](#), three types of anger. There is sudden anger, which Mallory mimics to build that atmosphere of fear. There is passive anger, which she doesn't seem to experience at all. And then there is [aggressive anger](#).

The symptoms for aggressive anger are a checklist for the late phases of a relationship with a psychopath. The accuracy of the list shocked me when I first read it. I'm going to quote it completely, in case someone edits it out of Wikipedia:

"The symptoms of aggressive anger are:

- **Bullying**, such as threatening people directly, persecuting, pushing or shoving, using power to oppress, shouting, driving someone off the road, playing on people's weaknesses.
- **Destructiveness**, such as destroying objects as in vandalism, harming animals, destroying a relationship, reckless driving, substance abuse.
- **Grandiosity**, such as showing off, expressing mistrust, not delegating, being a sore loser, wanting center stage all the time, not listening, talking over people's heads, expecting kiss and make-up sessions to solve problems.

- **Hurtfulness**, such as violence, including sexual abuse and rape, verbal abuse, biased or vulgar jokes, breaking confidence, using foul language, ignoring people's feelings, willfully discriminating, blaming, punishing people for unwarranted deeds, labeling others.
- **Manic behavior**, such as speaking too fast, walking too fast, working too much and expecting others to fit in, driving too fast, reckless spending.
- **Selfishness**, such as ignoring others' needs, not responding to requests for help, queue jumping.
- **Threats**, such as frightening people by saying how one could harm them, their property or their prospects, finger pointing, fist shaking, wearing clothes or symbols associated with violent behavior, tailgating, excessively blowing a car horn, slamming doors.
- **Unjust blaming**, such as accusing other people for one's own mistakes, blaming people for your own feelings, making general accusations.
- **Unpredictability**, such as explosive rages over minor frustrations, attacking indiscriminately, dispensing unjust punishment, inflicting harm on others for the sake of it, using alcohol and drugs, illogical arguments.
- **Vengeance**, such as being over-punitive. This differs from retributive justice, as vengeance is personal, and possibly unlimited in scale."

I've no clue how the author captured the psychopathic relationship so well. It would be a big coincidence. Perhaps the author lived with a psychopath.

Mallory slams Alice with sudden anger displays, and long term aggressive anger. The effect on Alice is corrosive. Her mental state suffers. She becomes sick with unusual stress-related diseases. She lives on the verge of depression and suicide for months, even years. She may start to use drugs and alcohol to self-medicate.

The one thing she won't do is ask, "is this normal?" She is too busy fighting for her sanity.

You Can't Beat Me

When you read about psychopaths on line you hit a lot of theories about what makes a Mallory. Evolutionary psychologists like Steven Pinker have dismantled the old nature-versus-nurture argument. Yet it still confuses many.

Pinker explained this well in his 2002 book "The Blank Slate." Human nature is the product of genes, expressing through our environment. Everything we are is the result of genetic potential, shaped by environment and use. There is no choice between nature and nurture.

You need 100% of both.

The theory of our genes as static blueprints is also falling to a better model. That is, our genes express over our lifetimes. In other words, they switch on and off all the time, to produce different proteins. They work in cascades, so that one gene may control dozens or hundreds of others. And this happens in every cell of our body.

Look again at Mallory. We see a set of talents that switch on and develop depending on the environment. At least some adults can become temporary psychopaths, if conditions are right.

I'll use the term "secondary psychopath" to mean a social human who has turned to psychopathy. Some people still [explain this phenomenon using the nature-versus-nurture model](#). Remember that gene expression is itself an evolved mechanism. No-one becomes a psychopath just through trauma. It is always about survival.

I don't think you can be a little bit psychopathic. Whether you play the social game, or the cheater game, you must play to win. Mallory is competing with other psychopaths, and Bob with other Bobs.

So we can model psychopathy using game theory. People are bundles of talent that are either expressing, or latent. It depends on the playing field. Depending on our age, that expression influences our mental and physical development. Many can learn to play music, yet the best musicians start young and focus on just that.

Mallory controls the playing field. If she sees the potential in Bob, she can try to turn him. If this works she gets a long-term helper, much like a master vampire. To create the necessary playing field, Mallory must:

- Break Bob's empathy. She makes him witness violence towards others, and forces him to take part. For the greatest effect, the violence happens to Alice, who Bob cares about.
- Maintain the climate of fear, so that Bob lives in constant fear of punishment. Mallory will punish Bob enough to teach him who is in charge.
- Offer Bob an escape from the constant threat of pain and violence. He just has to help Mallory by being violent to Alice.
- Maintain the threat of expulsion. At any point, Mallory may kick Bob back into the cell with Alice, or expel him into the unknown.

Mallory creates a "them or us" dichotomy. She forces Bob to choose sides. She makes it more and more expensive and painful to stay with Alice. If Mallory judged Bob well, he takes the path of least pain. He rationalizes it by accepting Mallory's doctrines.

This sounds awful, and it is. It's the recipe that gangsters use to make child soldiers. It's how many businesses operate. Accept and survive, or resist and die. The violence and threats may be subtle, and economic rather than physical. Yet this basic recipe is the core philosophy of many organizations.

Look deeper, and the distinction between primary and secondary psychopath is vaguer. There are no "born" psychopaths, it is always genes expressing according to their environment. I'm not sure that psychopathy can always switch off. It seems impossible after a certain point.

This recipe for secondary psychopaths is how Mallory raises his children, if any. He divides them into helpers and victims. The helpers practice on their brothers and sisters. They emerge at young adulthood as unflinching predators with a decade of training. The victims spend a life as hosts, stumbling from one parent figure to another. Genes have no pity, in their endless race to stay relevant.

Let's Go Back

We can model the human mind as interlinked yet distinct tools. This includes [the tools for decision-making](#). These tools tend to pull in different directions, and balance each other. Our emotions pull us according to what other people are doing around us. Our empathy pulls us according to how we think other people are feeling. Our intuition pulls us according to slower and more careful background analysis. Our executive pulls us according to conscious analysis and forward planning. When someone yells at us in the street, our emotions say, "Yell back, louder!" Our empathy says, "Smile!" Our intuition says, "Laugh!" Our executive says, "First see who it is, then respond."

Our emotions develop early. A young child already experiences happiness, anger, jealousy, self-pity, fear, hate, joy. Our empathy develops later, when we are teenagers. A young child can already plan and solve problems. Our intuition and executive only mature when we reach adulthood.

If our executive, intuition, and empathy are not working, then our emotions decide everything. It is far easier to manipulate someone's emotions than the other parts of the mind. Psychopaths often attack these three instruments of adult thinking. This pushes their target back into juvenile acceptance of their situation.

I've already explained a set of techniques that do this. Each mental tool needs a certain consistency in its dealings with the world. The more Mallory controls the world, the more she can create inconsistency. And in an inconsistent world, emotions rule the stage.

A young woman goes to her manager to ask for a raise. He does not talk about her excellent work and successful projects. Instead he chastises her for her clothing. "There have been complaints," he says, "suggestions that perhaps you dress a little too,..." he looks up and down at her, "... flamboyantly. Now what did you want to talk about?" he asks. She shakes her head and leaves.

A company is giving its executives bonuses. Meanwhile it is also sacking staff. The CEO announces a new ranking system. Employees will score each other. Each year the company will fire the lowest ranking 10%. The emotional chaos ensures that no employee questions the bonuses. Conform or die.

One can also talk straight to the child mind, to reinforce it and encourage it to dominate. One tactic is to ask for small favors. [Ben Franklin wrote](#), "He that has once done you a kindness will be more ready to do you another, than he whom you yourself have obliged."

Asking someone for favors makes them like you. It is simple, effective, and Mallory uses this often. This is the "Ben Franklin effect". I think it is a mild form of Stockholm Syndrome, something I've already explained. Either you rebel and say "no," or you accept. Then you feel attachment to the parental figure asking you the favor.

Doing random favors for Mallory disrupts Alice's schedule, and keeps her afraid and uncertain. Mallory never asks "please." She demands "or else!"

The Wrecking

It gets worse.

The Feeding doesn't last forever. After a while -- it could be a few days, or many years -- Mallory decides to move on. To be more accurate, she starts to act on plans she's been making from the start. Bob is close to empty. Or, a fantastic opportunity has opened up. Or, Bob is threatening to explode and expose the whole scheme.

So her next phase is a demolition job I call the Wrecking. It is a classic part of Mallory's relationships, and yet puzzling. She doesn't work from revenge, nor vindictiveness. She is too lazy to take time and effort to hurt people unless there is a pragmatic reason. It has to be profitable.

The Wrecking can be hard to see. It happens in private for the most part. It is often subtle and insidious. The obvious symptom is long term depression and trauma in Bob and Alice. Years after Mallory is gone, they still hate to talk about their experiences. They feel long-lasting shame, guilt, and self-pity. Anything that reminds them of their experience triggers flashes of fear, anger, and pain.

Brenda Myers-Powell, in her article "[My 25 years as a prostitute](#)", wrote: "I can tell as soon as I meet a girl if she is in danger, but there is no fixed pattern. You might have one girl who's quiet and introverted and doesn't make eye contact. Then there might be another who's loud and obnoxious and always getting in trouble. They're both suffering abuse at home but they're dealing with it in different ways - the only thing they have in common is that they are not going to talk about it."

During the Wrecking, Mallory only has two masks for Bob. One is neglect and absence. The other is aggressive anger. There are no rewards, only silence or punishments. And during this, she tells him over and over, "this is your fault, you are worthless." And she reminds him how he has ruined her life, how she will make him pay. "No matter where you go," she says, "I will find you and hurt you."

Bob becomes dysfunctional, gaunt, violent, and defensive. If anyone sees the couple, Bob looks hostile and unstable. Mallory looks comfortable, easy, delicate. It is clear to observers who the victim is, if any.

This wrecking brings no direct profit to Mallory. A dysfunctional Bob is worth nothing to her. This is the mysterious part. Mallory needs to feed, and yet she spends effort making Bob useless. We can see the answer in Bob's long-term PTSD.

Mallory has strong incentives to keep Bob from telling people about his experiences. Mallory needs to keep her cover, or she cannot hunt. An ex-victim who talks is dangerous. This is how cults like Scientology fall. Ex-members tell stories of the insanity and criminality, and public support turns to hate. Likewise, firms have collapsed due to ex-employees exposing corruption and criminality. Governments have fallen the same way. As for serial abusers, it is the silence of their victims that lets them continue.

Serial Killer vs. Psychopath

The man sits next to him, unwraps a package, and offers him a piece of bread with sausage. "Here, take some, you're hungry," says the man. He takes a piece then nibbles at it. It's the first food he's had in days, since he left. He can hardly swallow, his mouth is so dry. The man offers him a canteen. "Drink" he says. It's water. He drinks and hands back the metal bottle, then finishes the rest of the bread.

"Where you from?" says the man. "Gukovo," he mumbles. "Runaway, eh? What are you, thirteen, fourteen?" says the man, and gives him another chunk of bread and sausage. He nods, says nothing, and eats. The man reaches into his pocket and takes out his wallet. He opens it, pulls out some notes. "Take this, you'll need it," says the man. He hesitates. Why is this stranger helping him?

"My uncle was from Zverevo." says the man, nodding, as if he can read his mind. "Horrid little town, nothing but the mines. Just like Gukovo. You're going to a better place. Here, take this." The man hands him the money again. So he takes it, folds it, puts it into his shoe. "Come," says the man, "I will show you something important." The man gets up, stands in front of him. He's dressed like a factory worker, heavy trousers, heavy shoes, shirt, jacket. He is carrying a black bag. His face shows nothing except an easy smile. It's a face you can trust.

The young boy shrugs and gets up. He follows the man out of the waiting room, deserted for hours. They walk out of the station yard and cross the single track into the autumn woods. He wonders where the man is taking him. They get deeper into the woods, well out of sight of the station. The man opens the bag he is carrying and takes out a length of rope.

"I will tie your hands behind your back now," he tells the boy.

The boy complies. It seems inevitable.

With all this talk of violence, let's talk about serial killers. Popular culture has often portrayed psychopaths as serial killers. Serial killers are of course real, yet rare. The FBI estimates 35-50 active in the USA at any time. There are roughly 8 million psychopaths running around. That is 4% of Americans above 18 and under 65.

So the chance that any given adult American is a psychopath is 1 in 25. Whereas the chance that any given psychopath is a serial killer is 1 in 200,000. The statement "all Americans are psychopaths" has a 96% error margin. The statement "all psychopaths are serial killers" has a 99.9995% error margin, by contrast.

Can we agree at least that all serial killers are psychopaths? If you ask forensic psychologists and psychiatrists, [there is no general consensus](#).

Some argue that most serial killers act like psychopaths. They are aware of the law yet they disregard it. They have no empathy for their victims. They are predatory, to an extreme degree. They tend to be charming, manipulative, and narcissistic. They often hide in plain sight, fooling friends and family for years. They invent rich cover stories. They lie so well that even coming home covered in blood, [their wives suspect nothing](#).

The list of psychopath traits that serial killers exhibit goes on. They show no remorse, and blame their victims. They are rarely alcoholics or drug users. Above all, they treat others like disposables, to use and destroy for personal gain.

Nonetheless, when psychiatrists diagnose serial killers, they often come up with other personality disorders. The typical diagnoses for serial killers are borderline, narcissistic, and schizoid personality disorders.

And others argue that serial killers do not act like psychopaths. Most psychopaths murder no-one. And when they do, it is for pragmatic reasons: for money, for power, or to escape capture. Most serial killers are men. 50% of psychopaths are female.

They look like different animals, and I struggle to find a model that works. Mallory, for all the pain he causes, plays a role. Predators shape their prey species. Psychopaths have been key to social human development, as I explained in "Predator". Yet serial killers?

The 2015 movie *Jurassic World* turns around this question. In the movie the genetic engineers grow an *Indomitus Rex* out of mystery genes. The angry hybrid animal escapes and goes on the rampage. It slaughters people and other dinosaurs. Owen (played by Chris Pratt) says the animal knows nothing of the outside world. "Now it's killing for sport," he tells us.

In the end (spoiler alert!) it is the other predator dinosaurs that defeat the monster. The velociraptors and T-Rex that bring down the Indomitus Rex are just as dangerous. Yet they are part of a system, and in the end they defend that system against the threat.

We see the clear difference between killing for survival, and killing for pleasure. The I-Rex has the talents of a predator, yet exists outside the natural balance. It never had an environment in which to learn its place. When the velociraptors and T-Rex bring down the dragon, we cheer.

This is the theme of the popular US TV series *Dexter*. The protagonist is a predator who hunts serial killers. Whether Dexter is a serial killer or even a psychopath is debatable. He is charming, stealthy, and lacks all empathy. Yet he protects innocents from men who have put themselves outside society. He does not manipulate people. He has a job that involves real work, not conning people.

We see what appear to be serial killers in nature. The British built their first East African railways late in the nineteenth century. A [pair of male lions in Tsavo](#) learned to eat humans. They started attacking railway workers. By the time Lt. Col. John Henry Patterson shot the two lions, they had eaten 35 people.

Lions evolved to eat large African wild animals. Attacking humans is a losing strategy. In normal times, male lions live with a pride of females. The pride hunts zebras, wildebeest, gnu, buffalo, gazelle, and so on. It is the sister lionesses in the pride that organize the hunts. Most male lion cubs do not survive to reproduce. So these two lions were outside the system, so to speak. It is possible they had learned to scavenge corpses. When railway workers moved into their territory, the humans became irresistible targets.

In 2005, the FBI published [a readable and detailed report called "Serial Murder"](#). It is worth reading from start to end. Some key points: serial killers span all ethnic groups. They are territorial. They kill for a variety of motives: sexual, thrill, financial gain, anger, and attention. They may pause or stop killing when they have other priorities. They improve their skills and range over time. When they get caught, it is not on purpose. "It is not that serial killers want to get caught. They feel that they can't get caught," says the report.

The report looks at the origins of serial killers. It argues for a mix of biology and environment. Serial killers often come from abusive homes. Young, they are often lonely or isolated in violent environments. In 70% of cases they suffer injuries or traumas to the head when young. The report says:

There are documented cases of people who suffered severe head injuries and ultimately become violent, even when there was no prior history of violence.

The FBI report is pretty clear:

As a group, serial killers suffer from a variety of personality disorders, including psychopathy, anti-social personality, and others. Most, however, are not adjudicated as insane under the law.

What about the different diagnoses given to serial killers? I've argued that borderline, histrionic, and narcissistic personality disorders are masks of psychopathy. The forensic psychologist may well see these masks and take them as real.

Psychopaths kill rarely, and only when necessary. Serial killers butcher people for sexual gratification or sport. That seems irrational and self-destructive. Yet the serial killer feels all the benefits, and none of the costs. They do not recognize their victims as living beings. They are confident they will not get caught. That is pure, selfish pragmatism.

Serial killers appear to be psychopaths who have broken something. Not their empathy. Rather, their restraint and calculation of consequences.

The case of [Charles Whitman](#) gives us a strong hint. Whitman's father appears to have been a psychopath. Whitman himself showed some of the traits. Charm and small-scale criminality. On 1 August 1966, he shot 16 people, after complaining about "tremendous" headaches. A later autopsy showed a tumor pressing on his amygdala.

Like the I-Rex and the Tsavo lions, psychopathic killers live outside the system. I'd guess most are caught rapidly. That is, if a hundred psychopaths suffer the specific damage to their amygdala that turns them into killers, then ninety-nine get caught and imprisoned after one or two murders. As such they never count as "serial killers." The careers of those we know about is likely to be [survivorship bias](#).

Serial killers are so scary and fascinating because they epitomize the psychopath's predator traits. Every time we read about a serial killer we think of all our near escapes. You almost never see the psychopath's predatory nature naked, in the daylight. Mallory hides so well. Serial killers show us Mallory naked and exposed, in broad daylight. It is a scary and yet compelling sight.

Paying the Bill

Psychopathic households live in violence, emotional and physical. Few of the victims [report even physical violence](#) to the police. Let alone neglect and emotional violence, which can be hard to explain and prove. About one third of women and men alike pass through an abusive relationship. About 40% of murders of women are [at the hands of their partners](#), compared to 6% for men.

I'm not claiming that violence is Mallory's monopoly. Most violent male deaths are at the hands of other men. And most often in disputes over women, territory, or status. Male-on-male violence does not shock us. We have institutionalized it as war. We glorify it in our culture.

What I am claiming is that the abusive relationship is a psychopath's digestive system. How it starts, how it flows, and how it ends are a evolved mechanism. It is how Mallory consumes Alice and Bob. It can be that in some cultures, abusive relationships are the norm. I'd consider these cultures to be psychopathic, like a national cult.

If you know someone who is in an abusive relationship, it is likely one of the two is a psychopath. You must take real care before making a conclusion. Psychopaths lie. They will often claim to be the victim. They will often look exactly as you'd expect a victim to look. Most often there is no visible violence. As I explained, the real victims do not like to talk about their experiences.

So the violence tends to resurface in a different form: self-harm.

[A million people a year take their own lives](#), reported the WHO in 2012. For every death, there are 20 attempts. The WHO says 5% of people will try at least once to take their own lives. I think they under-counted. 20 million x 70 (global life expectancy) makes 1.4 billion, or 1/5th of the world population in 2012.

Attempted suicide is a cry for help from someone who has no other voice. For every suicidal person, how many live in long term depression? Five, ten, fifty? The WHO estimates 350 million people live in depression globally. It says, "depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide." As [men tend to not ask for help](#), the real figure may be much higher.

Conclusions

I've explained how Mallory feeds. It is usually a slow business, yet it is violent. It often drives Alice and Bob to long term depression, PTSD, or suicide. While Mallory is not a serial killer, he is a serial abuser. His selfish use of others can result in death.

Mallory deserves his dark caricature. It's not just that he causes such massive amounts of suffering and death. It's that he does this pragmatically, to control his victims, and to stop them talking.

Despite this, Mallory evolved in a predator-prey relationship. Later I'll explain how this relationship has been good, even essential, for our species. First, I will provide a set of tools for breaking yourself or another person free. If you are in a relationship with a psychopath, you must have this goal. It can seem impossible. Yet there are ways out.

We start by asking the essential question, "am I confronting a psychopath?" and I will answer this in the next chapter.

Chapter 5. Hunting Mallory

"We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals." -- Immanuel Kant

The Happy Couple

Mark is in love. It's not like him. Yet he is full of romantic energy. It washes over him and washes him away, like sea waves. He's been seeing Florence for a few months, and they are perfect together. They clicked at once, love at first sight. Eyes meeting across the room, she strides towards him. She pokes him with a finger. "So you're that Mark guy they tell me about." "What do they say?" he asks, flustered. "Nothing good," she says, turns, and walks away. That night, she's in his hotel room and the next days he cannot stop thinking about her.

Apart from their age difference, and the fact he's married, it's perfect. Well, she's also married, with a young child. Details, nothing can stop destiny. He's a stubborn and confident man, works on intuition, afraid of no-one's opinion. That's how he made his money. That's why Florence loves him, for his power and strength.

He tells his wife, who stares at him in shock. "How old?" she asks. She cannot believe this conversation is real. "How long have you been seeing her?" All the obvious questions. "I don't want a divorce," he says, "just my freedom." He'd discussed this with Florence. He's a responsible man. Abandoning his wife and kids would be shameful. The correct choice is separation.

His wife doesn't argue, and doesn't get angry. She has no tools to deal with this. The younger woman stealing her husband, it is such a caricature, so fatal. She wants to disappear. Money, she panics, how will she live? It's all his money, she has nothing, except part of the house. If he cuts her off, she'll have to beg. A life spent at home, raising the kids and cleaning. She feels powerless, mute.

Florence and Mark travel, and make their plans. They will live together, she has already chosen a house. "I don't want your money," she tells him, and he insists. They fight over it, their first real argument, and finally she accepts. "Don't think you can buy me," she warns. "I know men like you." He assures her, he's different, and she relaxes again.

His friends tell him he's looking happy, for the first time in so many years. He feels he is bouncing with energy, euphoric, and confident. Florence's power flows through him. Only his sister scrutinizes him. She says, "you've lost weight, brother." He admits he isn't sleeping enough. Problems at work, he explains.

And yes, there are problems at work. The endless corporate politics have turned against him. Florence is his rock. She helps him understand what's going on. She warns him against trusting people who hate him and want to destroy him.

His accountant emails him, warning him he's been spending too much money. Well, of course, the houses and the travel, it's adding up. Everything in double now. He gets a personal loan from the bank. He buys Florence a new car. She's angry with him for wasting their money, and they fight. Later she forgives him. The car's OK, she says, and she takes it away for a drive.

It has been a year, and he's changed. His ex-wife sued for divorce and won a good settlement. The house went back on the market. It sold with a loss. He didn't care. Just money. They are fighting every day. She flips all the time. One minute, exuberant joy. The next, dark brooding anger. He can't control her and he can't predict her. He's drinking too much, and not taking care of himself.

One day his boss calls him in. "Mark," he says, "I'm letting you go. Your department is not working. You're in charge and I'm holding you responsible. We're shutting it down. Your people will go to Bill. Please take your personal belongings. You'll get a month of severance." Two men from security escort him out, to his office, and then out of the building.

He picks up the phone and calls his ex-wife. He needs someone to tell him it will be OK. Anyone. The calm voice says "the number you have dialed is no longer in service." He stares at the dirty wall of the small room. He reaches for the bottle of vodka. The bedroom door opens, and it's Florence, suitcases in hands. "I'm leaving you, it's over," she says, "don't call me and don't text me. You've done enough damage already."

On the Track of Unknown Animals

I've explained how Mallory hides, hunts, attacks, feeds, and buries her corpses. Your next question is likely to be: "how can I tell if someone is a psychopath?" Once you realize psychopaths walk among us, things change. You start to wonder how many shape-shifting predators you know, or knew. You start to look at the people you meet, and ask, "you too?" The question may become an obsession. Yet it is the wrong question.

Or rather, it is only half the question. It is almost impossible to tell if a given person is a psychopath or not, without time to see how they interact with others. You need more than good observational skills. You need more than the awareness I described in "The Feeding". You must actually get entangled, then analyze them as they attack you. If they attack you. And if you even realize that is what is happening. This is not an experiment I would recommend.

So a better question is, "how can I tell if a psychopath is active in my circles?" This is a valid question, and a necessary one. It is a question with solid answers. Psychopathy is like a disease that causes long-term mental damage in the entangled. This damage is Mallory's impact crater. You can see that impact crater if you search for it. Look at yourself, other individuals, families, businesses, and other organizations.

It takes time and study. You look for pain, damage, trauma, and burnout. You look for depression and anxiety. You look for problems at school and work. For alcohol and drug abuse. Self-harm, and suicide attempts. If you see these, without other causes, chances are you're seeing Mallory's work.

Once you see an impact crater, *then* you can ask the question "who is Mallory?" Now you can pull out your checklists and narrow down the list of suspects. Start with the crime, then follow the trail. Someone is making a profit from that pain. When you have eliminated all other suspects, the last person left is Mallory.

So this chapter is about hunting Mallory. Yes, we are going on a safari. We will track, and maybe trap, the most dangerous animal of them all.

A hunter must know the terrain. I've already explained *how* Mallory hunts. Apart from meetings between strangers, there are three main contexts *where* Mallory hunts. Each has their dynamics defined by the depth and duration of relationships. These are: the project group, the workplace, and the family.

The Project Group

The project group is an informal social group with some goal. Project groups exist in culture, non-profit, arts, technology. A classic project group has a small set of organizers, and a larger set of members. The organizers set the rules and manage the group. Members join and leave at will, driven by their own schedule. Members may pay a fee, and their work is not compensated. Members who stay longer may become organizers. The group has clear goals, and regular meetings.

Project groups are vulnerable to bad actors by default. Their founders must take explicit steps to protect the group. Otherwise, Mallory can waltz in on a cloud of charisma and chaos.

Mallory loves project groups because they give him good cover. Project groups are rarely wealthy, yet individual members may well be. Members come and go often, and most groups do not vet new members. This gives Mallory the means, motive and opportunity.

What Mallory is looking for depends on gender, as I explained in “The Hunt”. There will be sexual seduction and deception. There will be fuzzy business deals, loans, and gifts. If the group has funds that Mallory can get control over, they will become chaotic. Money will disappear.

You can measure how resistant a project group is to attack by bad actors. A resistant group has formal defenses that survive people coming and going. A vulnerable group has none. It depends on the goodwill of its members and organizers. You can just ask the organizers, “how do you stop bad actors joining your group?” If they have no answer, that means they are relying on trust.

Classic defenses against walk-in psychopaths are:

- Careful vetting of new members. There may be a formal process to filter out bad actors before they can do damage.
- Rules and structure that discourage bad actors from taking part. Mallory prefers vague, unwritten, or chaotic rules.
- Isolation of assets. Money on the table is psychopath bait. Mallory finds an empty table to be discouraging.

If a group has assets and no defenses, it is inevitable that Mallory will invade the group. There is no “if” here. Indeed, you may see several psychopaths striving for advantage.

The symptoms of infection are clear and easy to see, once you know what you are looking for:

- A healthy group makes its members happy, secure, and strong. An infected group makes its members miserable, anxious, and weak.
- A healthy group is successful with its projects, and grows over time. An infected group tends to avoid risk, and shrink over time.
- A healthy group spends little time on decision making. Its members have high independence. They tend to do first, talk second. There is little or no argument. An infected group struggles to get consensus. Its members argue over irrelevant details. Even the smallest project takes huge planning, and stresses everyone.

You cannot fix such groups. I have tried many times. Groups grow around founders and rules. You cannot change the rules after the fact unless you are the founder. And to keep out bad actors, you must have the right rules. It doesn't help to identify Mallory and chase him out. That just makes space for a new Mallory to come in.

You could start a new group with a healthier structure, and offer it as an alternative. You may then find yourself at the sharp end of a campaign to discredit you. If you become a plausible threat to a group, they will rally around even the worst leaders.

So an idealistic approach can make things worse. You cannot save a dysfunctional project group from its founders. You cannot recreate it without risking a lot of conflict. What you can do, though, is:

- Use it to study Mallory in a real environment. In the science of human behavior, you are your own best instrument. You can join the group, talk to people, try to be a good member. See where it hurts. Ask others what hurts them. This is useful data which can be hard to get any other way.
- Offer specific individuals a way out, if you want to work with them. When Mallory attacks a project group he will often force out the nicer people first. Only those who can withstand the arguments and conflict remain.

Where is Mallory in a project group? We know his strategies for hiding and hunting. So we can predict where he will be in a project group, and how he will act:

- Mallory may be a founder, yet that is rare. If he is a founder, someone else did the hard work. Look for burned-out skeletons in the closet.
- Mallory is most often a new member. He may be surprising best friends with the founder and some of the organizers. He is quiet on public forums and in meetings. He prefers to do the heavy talking in private.
- Mallory has no verifiable track record. He may come with grand stories, yet only by his own word. He claims authority from his connections to important people. He does not bring his own knowledge and abilities.
- Mallory does little visible work in the group. He spends his time in the group manipulating people against each other. Or, he is absent on "important business."
- Mallory is always a VIP by some unspecified law that everyone accepts. His dominance is not earned, yet it is tangible. I've explained how he does this, with language and behavior.
- Mallory breaks the social conventions of the group. This is a dominance mask. Social humans feel fear and anxiety when they do this. Mallory gets a kick from how others respond to him when he does this.
- Mallory is immune to the general stress and anxiety infecting the group. He doesn't see chaos as a bad thing. The worse it gets, the happier he seems to be.

- Mallory is a poor organizer, and depends on others to do that for him. He lacks the ability to plan events. He cannot orchestrate people, without empathy. He does not ask openly: he demands, bullies, and intimidates.
- Mallory cannot execute long term plans within the group. Everything is short term, and last-minute drama. As good as he is at one-on-one manipulation, he is incompetent at collective works.

It can be tempting to stick the label "psychopath" on anyone we don't like. Be careful of that. It is not science to leap to conclusions. Remember that Mallory is a life-long expert in hiding from people like you and me. The right way to identify a possible psychopath in a group is to start with damage and pain. Then, rule out suspects until one person remains. In some rare cases you may see a coalition of psychopaths.

The prognosis for a project group infected by a psychopath is always bad. The real problem isn't Mallory, it's that unfixable culture. There are no cures, only various ways of dying.

So it is worth asking, "can we write rules that keep psychopaths away?" The answer is an emphatic "yes." I've spent the last decade developing, testing, and using such rules.

The rules must remove all scope for manipulation, secret agreements, and power structures. The details depend on the kind of work the group is doing. These are the essential pieces:

- Stay away from legal entities, and the power structures that form around them. Beware of board elections, general assemblies, votes, and such. Legal entities operate accounts, so clear the table. Find a way to work without funding.
- Aim for many small groups rather than one larger one. Encourage people to start their own groups, around projects. Groups can then live and die with their projects. This isolates any infection.
- Give people the right to create competing projects in any area. Give them the right to take over a troubled project's work. This lets good actors in an infected project leave and continue their work.
- Put all discussions on the public record. This makes it harder for Mallory to troll, disrupt, and lie.
- Lower the barriers to entry. While this makes it easier for bad actors to join, it also makes it easier for good actors to join.
- Document the rules well and make them a charter for every small group. Allow the rules to evolve over time. Clear rules make Mallory pause and go elsewhere.
- Develop a process for identifying and expelling bad actors. Ensure this process exists in your rule book.

If the group produces music, photos, software, or designs, then licensing matters. Standard copyright rules make it easy for psychopaths to capture people. Capture a work, and you capture the authors and users. So use a license that lets people move, with their work. For photos and music, use a Creative Commons "share-alike" license. For software, the Mozilla Public License (v2) is a good choice.

In my software communities the rule book I use ([called C4](#)) has this section on psychopaths:

Administrators SHOULD block or ban "bad actors" who cause stress and pain to others in the project. This should be done after public discussion, with a chance for all parties to speak. A bad actor is someone who repeatedly ignores the rules and culture of the project, who is needlessly argumentative or hostile, or who is offensive, and who is unable to self-correct their behavior when asked to do so by others.

The Workplace

In the workplace, people are there because it is their job. This makes a different dynamic than project groups. Flows of money always attract Mallory. Middle management in larger business can look like a parasitic class. Still, it's hardly a walk-up-and-join situation. If Mallory wants to get her hands into the stream of profits, she must charm and deceive her way in.

Most businesses have units that mirror the family, and create some kind of stability. Mallory does not last long in stable structures. She prefers chaos, confusion, and a flow of fresh faces. Apart from getting bored with routine, she is unreliable. Her boss will get tired of her, unless she is sleeping with him. She moves up and sideways through the company structure.

The workplace often wraps a blanket of anxiety and stress around its staff. Few people expect their work to make them happy. Many businesses use mind-control techniques on their staff. These are the same techniques psychopaths use. All this disguises Mallory's impact crater.

When Mallory enters a workplace, she is already thinking how to leave it. She has minimal interest in the people or the work. She'll go through them and take what she can, as a matter of principle and practice. Yet her focus is on the person in charge, and the money and power above that.

If you suspect an impact crater, the best way to be sure is by getting other data. If the business has existed for some time, what was it like in previous years? Allow for a lot of distortion. We have selective memories. Economics go up and down and affect many firms.

If the business is larger, what are other teams like? You may find that the data points to a specific problem in the workplace.

The symptoms are much like those in an infected project group. People seem too anxious about taking risks. It takes too long to come to consensus. There is too much argument over insignificant details. Staff spend more time justifying themselves than doing valuable work. The team feels stuck and lethargic, though individuals seem bright. People are leaving for unspecified reasons.

If you are stuck with Mallory in the same workplace then your feelings will evolve. You'll have a long period of frustration and some anger. Then you will feel burnout. This is a sudden shift in mood from trying to make things work to disgust. You will want to avoid talking to anyone in the team. You often have to resign, or take extended leave. If you ever feel this, stop and think: where is Mallory?

Indeed, where? It is often a puzzle. You can look for the same signs as in a project group. Look for the self-importance, the secret discussions, the poor organizational skills. Look for the solitary, over-confident, empty person. She is good at getting others to do things for her. She may be narcissistic and over-dressed. She always has an answer. If challenged, she attacks.

Mallory leaves more specific tell-tales, in the workplace:

- Mallory makes nothing of use to others. She makes no helpful documents, presentations, websites, manuals. If she does show off such materials, it is others' work.
- Mallory does not build projects. If she does get involved in a project, that tends to be a death sentence. She manipulates projects for her own benefit. She may sabotage a successful project to make someone look bad. Or, she may join a successful project, and then take credit for it.
- Mallory has no solid track record. Anyone who has worked with her before is loath to speak of their experience. They seem afraid of her in some silent traumatized way.
- Mallory may collect credentials, awards, and certificates. Her resume may be impressive. She will display these credentials like feathers. In reality they may be fake. People do not generally check.
- Mallory does not stay in one place for long. She cannot form good relationships with internal clients and suppliers. She comes in, creates havoc, and makes her dramatic exit.
- Mallory has nothing good to say of ex-colleagues. She does not converge in dress, language, or behavior with her colleagues. She only shows admiration and affection for more powerful people in the organization.

We all meet psychopaths at work. If you know how Mallory works, you can see this happen almost in real-time. If not, it can take years to realize "it was not normal."

You may want to try to fix things. It is unwise to accuse co-workers of being psychopaths. Only a trained professional can make a formal diagnosis. And even then, only with cooperation from the subject. Mallory is not going to walk with you into Human Resources and agree that she's a problem.

If you confront a psychopath in the workplace, have your exit ready. You will not be staying long. Mallory knows exactly how to make people hate and fear you. She will with tears in her eyes accuse you of sex crimes, financial fraud, and worse. She will explain in clear detail why all the trouble is your doing.

What you can do instead is to collect violations of company policy or the law. You need documentation and proof. You need more than one case. You can then report these to your management, or HR. Since HR's first job is to protect the firm from bad actors, they should be able to help. You should still be looking for other work.

Good companies have rules that catch bad actors. Such as, banning sexual relationships between managers and staff. Or, making it unethical to accept gifts from suppliers. Other companies are havens for bad actors. Learn the difference, and you can be more selective the next time you search for a new job.

The Family

Perhaps it is surprising, yet psychopaths have families and children, like anyone else. Mallory's family has its own, unique structure and way of working. Details may change. Yet Mallory always has the same goals. His obvious goals are:

- To use the family as cover for his predatory secret lives. A married man with children looks more reliable and trustworthy than a single man. It reassures potential targets that he is not a threat.
- To have as many healthy children as he can. This is not unique to psychopaths. Yet it's worth remembering: psychopathy is an evolved trait. That means it is part of a reproductive strategy.
- To push the costs of raising these children onto his spouse and other people. This leaves him as free as possible to pursue his own private goals.
- To keep his spouse captive and responsible for childcare at least. If possible, he will use his spouse and her family for income as well.

He has less obvious goals too. He needs to ensure his children grow up successful psychopaths. Or, grow up to seek psychopaths as partners. Either way, his psychopath genes stand more chance of being passed down the generations.

What this translates to are a set of behaviors. These appear to be fairly consistent across psychopath's families. We know that Mallory is abusive and dominating. This is how he keeps his spouse in a long-term bond. Here are some less well-known traits of Mallory, the parent:

- Mallory neglects his children's emotional needs. They exist to him as extensions of his identity, not separate individuals with needs. Yet he can focus such power on them they feel intense love.
- Mallory looks after himself, and no-one else. His spouse and children get random, fragmented attention. He spares no expense on his own clothes, and expects his family to wear cast downs.
- Mallory keeps his finances opaque. His spouse has no view into these, which would tell a lot about his secret lives. If he must pay bills, he is neglectful.
- Mallory often disappears on trips. It may be one night, or a month. If he announces his departure or return in advance, it is for his own reasons.
- Mallory will plan family vacations, yet always with a personal motive. Often such travel is cover for one or other hunting trip. On a true getaway, Mallory is aggressive and irritable.
- Mallory is the star of the family. He enjoys taking photos of himself, his travels, and his possessions. He always looks great in these photos, and he shares them with others whenever he can.
- Mallory has no creative hobbies. He does not tend a garden, nor cook, paint, sculpt, compose music, or write for pleasure. He prefers to travel, meet new people, and shop.
- Mallory may buy or steal art, and collect others' work. He may learn the language of art appreciation. He may display his "love of art" with monumental extravagance.
- Mallory disdains pets. If he does have a pet, he treats it as an accessory, and a way to meet new people. He then takes bad care of his pet, who is often sick.
- Mallory cannot create comfortable order. He cannot tell the emotional value of an object. So he treats old, new, broken, used, and loved objects the same. He is often a hoarder.
- Mallory is expert at getting his spouse and extended family to take over house work. He does this using a mix of incompetence, neglect, and feigned invalidity. This lasts well into old age.

- Mallory divides his children into the "golden child" and the "scapegoat." He rewards and trains the golden child to be like him. Crime pays, he says. He bullies the scapegoat.
- Mallory's spouse becomes an "enabler" who justifies Mallory's behavior to the children. She shields him from criticism. She takes part in the winner/loser division of the children.
- Mallory's spouse goes into a slow downwards spiral. She becomes poor. Her physical and mental health suffers. She becomes cut off from family and friends. She has professional problems.
- Mallory's spouse becomes depressed and hurts herself in various ways. She may abuse alcohol or drugs. She may become suicidal. Mallory will blame her for being "crazy" and play the long-suffering victim.

Mallory may have a job, or may not. It is harder for male psychopaths to avoid work. That looks strange to outsiders. Few people ask questions about a mother who does not work. If he can, though, he will spend years in higher education, never quite working. If he works, he will always aim for easy money and opportunities to hunt.

The relationship between Mallory and his spouse is the abusive bond I already explained. If you speak to someone in a relationship with a psychopath, they may admit it. Yet they will often not accept it, and not act on it. It is like telling a smoker that they are damaging their lungs. They will nod, and continue to puff.

This is the strangest part of the psychopathic bond. Part of the mind knows the situation is abusive and wrong, and must end. Yet the rest of the mind continues to invest in it. It is a psychological addiction.

As with all addicts, there may come a point where the abused mind wakes up. It may decide, "I want out." It is at this point that others can help. The first step is diagnosis, to identify the source of their pain and misery. "It's not you, it's him" can be a shocking revelation.

In the family, Mallory has years to build a cage for his spouse and children. This slow timescale makes it almost impossible to see the process. You can see it when you compare "before" and "after." You can see it when you compare two families. For friends and relatives though, it tends to be too subtle to see.

Let me now come to the children. Mallory inflicts long slow mental torture on his children. He neglects them, and forces them to serve him. He dresses them like dolls, to parade in public. He never asks them how they feel or what they want, except to better disappoint them. Every promise he makes, he breaks without explanation. He is angry, and violent with them. Every chance he gets, he leaves them with someone else. He competes with his spouse to make them love him, and then he turns his back.

And then he divides them into winners and losers. This is perhaps the worst violence. It sets the children against each other for life. He treats the winners as if they can do no wrong. He encourages them to steal and lie. He shows them how to hunt. He lets them practice on their siblings. And the losers, they are to blame for everything. They ruined his life. He never wanted them as babies. Everything they do is wrong, and stupid.

It is hard to fit this behavior into the pragmatic selfishness that defines Mallory. Yet that golden child - scapegoat pattern seems universal in psychopaths' families. That means it helps psychopathic genes survive and spread. It is an evolved strategy.

Here is the goal of that strategy, I think. The golden children are those with the most psychopathic traits. Mallory grooms these to become psychopaths. The scapegoats are those with fewer psychopathic traits. Mallory grooms these to seek psychopaths as future partners. In both cases, his psychopathic genes maximize their chance of getting into his grandchildren.

It is a miserable story, yet with a positive aspect. Psychopathy is genetic, yet needs the right culture to develop in. It is like our language instinct. We can all learn foreign languages, at any age. Our first languages are special.

My hypothesis is that Mallory's presence provides this culture of neglect and violence. His behavior is what pushes young talent to develop towards psychopathy. Once set on that path, they work hard to become the "best" psychopath they can. I call this process "differentiation." It starts young, before the age of ten.

I assume there are several groups of genes responsible for psychopathic traits. These genes work together, perhaps live on the same chromosome. They may express according to gender. Some of these genes delay the growth of empathy and social emotions. Others improve the talents for observation and mimicry. And so on.

If the environment is right, the young person starts to differentiate. It takes older psychopaths who encourage the anti-social behavior. It takes other young people to practice on. It takes opportunity, on the streets. Above all, it takes an anti-social environment devoid of affection and love.

Differentiation is not inevitable. Some people raised by psychopaths show many of the traits and yet are social. Some flutter between extremes, as if trying to be two different people at once.

This hypothesis is falsifiable. Look at the twin children of psychopaths, adopted by other families. In some cases those foster families will also be abusive. Observe the incidence of psychopathy in the orphans, when they are adults.

For Mallory to run this strategy on his children, he must stay around for years. I think this is one reason psychopaths stay in long marriages. Yet it is a precarious place to be. His own incentive is to abandon his family. He is leaving a hot trail of criminality and lies. His spouse may, and often does, rebel and take the children.

And if the children do grow up safe from him, there is much less chance they will be psychopaths. This is significant for those dealing with troubled families. Sometimes divorce is the best thing for the children. And sometimes they need protection from one parent. Mallory is as likely to be the mother, as the father. Social workers and judges should get training to see the difference.

The Empathy Test

Most authors who write about psychopaths start with the topic of "testing" people. It is one of our obsessions, for good reasons.

Popular culture draws psychopaths as criminals and killers, dangerous and insane. In fiction, we project them as zombies, vampires, and monsters. They are the undead, the emotionless eaters of souls and brains.

Yet a successful psychopath looks just as you expect a "normal" person to look. Most psychopaths are successful and hide in general society. The number one talent of a psychopath is to look "normal," as I keep repeating. The number two talent is to trick the observer into forgetting what "normal" means.

Psychopath brains are different in small yet key ways. We almost know how, and I've tried to explain why. A brain scan can show what look like significant differences. In [a typical description](#), "psychopathy is a personality disorder associated with a profound lack of empathy." Put a willing psychopath into an MRI, and you may see them [turn their empathy on and off](#) like a switch.

I am skeptical of such experiments. Not only do they show contradictory results, they seem malformed. Mallory cannot both lack the machinery for empathy, and switch it on and off. How do we know that person in the chair actually is a psychopath? Who decided, and on what basis? What kind of psychopath accepts to sit still and open their minds to inspection? Have we established that Alice and Bob cannot switch their empathy on and off?

Let me dissect empathy. Most people can turn this on and off like a switch. Empathy is not supernatural soul-stuff implanted by alien visitors to test our humanity. It is an evolved tool with a social function. And as such, it is flexible and opportunistic.

This is trivial to show with a quick experiment. Think of a close family member falling on the street, and dying. Now think of a stranger begging you for money. There, you just felt your empathy switch on, and off. In Belgium we spend 10% of GDP on health care, and 0.5% on foreign aid.

The same goes for all social tools. We feel almost nothing for other people. That is, until and unless there is some kind of relationship. That does not make us all psychopaths. It means to understand psychopaths, we must observe how they operate. That means in society, over time, and in a variety of situations. Not alone in a lab.

Here is a better psychopath test, for a researcher with no ethics. Take your test subject and observe them in secret. Now take their close relatives and pretend to torture them. Ensure your subject sees this happening. Ensure they do not realize you are watching and cannot intervene. Observe the reaction. Bob or Alice will squirm in empathic pain. Mallory will watch and wait.

Mallory is a spider, living among ants. He extracts resources little by little, over time. Only the unlucky or dysfunctional psychopath gets caught. Most psychopaths are invisible, hidden among friends and family. They never end on the psychologist's couch. They do not let others experiment on them. These are the mass of successful psychopaths. To track and identify them means going out into the woods, and hunting them.

First Impressions

Let's look at the traits for psychopaths. These are indicators that are more or less visible. In some cases you have to get close to see them. Often when you do see them, Mallory is already chewing on you.

The traits may seem inconsistent, and shift over time. Remember you are watching an actor who manipulates everyone he talks to. Even if he doesn't see you watching him, he's careful and paranoid. He always assumes eyes are on him.

Mallory's first impression comes from his need to hide in plain sight. He has to attract potential targets, and discourage critical analysis:

- Mallory is charming and eloquent. He can make anyone like him. He smiles a lot and maintains eye contact. He uses dominant body language. He is well-groomed and stays in good physical shape.
- He's narcissistic and colorful. He dresses well in any public situation. He always stands out, better dressed and more distinctive than others. He's hungry for money and power, and important people. He takes many photos of himself and enjoys showing these to others.

- He has no startle response and no fear of authority. He is happy to interrupt people, take control of conversations and meetings. He shows no fear in talking to strangers. He ignores social mores without anxiety.
- He is great with languages. He talks without an accent, and can blend in with any crowd. He is an excellent mimic. He can do dramatic facial expressions and body language.
- He likes telling stories, and making people laugh. He laughs a lot. Yet he has a juvenile sense of humor and does not get others' jokes. He always wants to dominate the group. If someone challenges him in this, he asserts dominance with force.
- He makes friends without stress or difficulty. His behavior and body language with new acquaintances says "we are old friends." People who meet him seem to adore him and often ask after him. This effect lasts for years.
- He enjoys the nightlife and you may well meet him over a drink. He can drink a lot, yet does not lose control. If he uses drugs, they do not affect him much. He likes to encourage those around him to drink and use drugs.

Second Impressions

If Mallory decides you are an interesting prospect, you may see a new set of traits. I explained many of these in "The Hunt" and "Attack and Capture". It's worth listing them again:

- Mallory shows a quiet yet dramatic vulnerability. She may have injuries, or difficulties with her family. She talks about this without shame or fear. You find these vulnerabilities attractive, even compelling. She may even tell you, "only you can save me."
- She likes using dominant body language on you. She touches your arm and shoulder all the time. She gives you long gazes. She interrupts you, while laughing. It seems friendly, yet it is insistent and one-sided.
- She texts and chats with you often. That can be hundreds of times in a day. She initiates conversations, and controls their direction. She often uses sexual and provocative language. She flatters you and makes you feel wanted.
- She introduces you to few or no old friends. She may be new to the place. If she has friends they are all recent. She does not talk of her past in a positive way. She has a lot of time for you, for someone so charming and sociable.

- She has few long term accomplishments. She may lie about her credentials and achievements. If you search Google you won't find a solid body of work. She may be using a false name.
- She brings sex into the relationship early, if it's an option. She offers this without pause, and is even aggressive about it. If you refuse, she turns angry and accusatory.
- She does not respect your existing relationships. If you're talking to her, she assumes you are willing to take it further. She is not concerned with others who may suffer in the process. She does not apologize for crossing social boundaries.
- She shows fits of explosive anger, with you and with others. She provokes arguments and fights. She seems to enjoy these episodes. It often happens after you are most intimate. They leave you shaken and shocked.
- She acts with casual rudeness and disdain towards people who she considers unimportant. This will include anyone serving her in a restaurant. She likes it when people serve her.

Third Impressions

If you start a close relationship with Mallory, you may see better-hidden traits. Though they may emerge only late in your relationship. I already explained some of these in “The Feeding”:

- Mallory likes to hear stories about other people. Yet he seems oblivious to their emotional needs. He never asks how you are doing, meaning it. If you ask him how someone else is doing, he gives a bland, generic answer. He does not know, or he does not care.
- He texts and chats with a lot of people. Most are unknown to you. You do not see this behavior unless he slips up. He changes his phones often, and hides his browsing activity. If you do spy on him you find a lot of disturbing discussion about sex.
- He cheats, a lot, and with a long line of different people. It varies from one-night stands to year-long affairs. He may be bisexual, yet denies this outright if you ask him. He uses his trips away from home as his main cover. Few of the people he sleeps with know he is married. Often they know little about his true life.
- He has a family history of strangeness and criminality. This is a well-hidden family secret and emerges only over time. He has a parent who is a lot like him. The other was quiet and unhappy. He has a brother or sister who is in psychiatric care. He has uncles or cousins with personality disorders. There may be suicide in the family.

- His relationships with you and others revolve around argument and conflict. He may not speak to family members for a year at a time. He argues with you at the slightest excuse. Every argument becomes a crisis. It is never his fault. He never says sorry.
- He is a compulsive and eloquent liar. You struggle to see this. His lies are rich and omnipresent. You think him the most sincere and honest person, for years. When you catch him lying it is like decoding an optical illusion. The shattering of this particular illusion leaves you stunned for weeks.
- He is paranoid and often accuses you of plotting what he in fact would do. He accuses you of cheating. Of planning to abandon him. Of giving him STDs. Of lying to you, taking his money, sleeping with your ex. If you make a note of all his accusations, it adds up to an accurate confession.
- He fakes his emotions. You can only see this when he switches off a mask. His sudden anger feels real and explosive to you, and is terrifying. When he flips from anger to calm, you may see the fraud. Honest anger does not disappear so fast. The same for affection, jealousy, self-pity. His real emotions are predatory, and alien to you. You do not get to see this personality though.
- He is a compulsive rule breaker. He collects traffic violations. He is slow to pay his debts. He accumulates a police record. He appears in court, before judges. Yet he always seems to escape serious consequences. His record is clean. You see nothing of this, unless he slips up.
- He prefers nights to mornings. He sleeps less than most people, and can go for weeks with poor sleep. When he sleeps, noise does not wake him. If he dreams of a chase sequence, he is the hunter, not the hider. He does not dream of monsters.
- He asks you to invest in projects. These are often difficult, and expensive. He promises to share the burden. That is not how it turns out. These projects leave you financially and emotionally exhausted. Yet you are too busy to see that until much later.
- He is chaotic and forces that chaos on you. It is like living with a tropical storm. He comes and goes as he likes, without warning. He assumes you will handle affairs when he is gone. It damages your schedule and your personal life. He disregards your need for a structured life.
- He is a hypocrite. He is 100% selfish, and does what he wants. If you assert yourself, he answers with violence. Your needs do not count, yet his are untouchable. If you question this, you are assaulting him. He recites your crimes against him like an epic poem.

- He does not ascribe emotions to inanimate objects. Alice and Bob feel their phone is "unhappy" when it is less than half charged, and "happy" when it is 100% charged. Mallory does not do this.
- He does not keep his possessions in order. He has no emotional bond to physical objects, neither to people. He is reckless with items. He keeps precious family heirlooms together with trash. If he does clean, it is to sterilize, not create order.
- He prefers dramas to horror movies. Dramas show him emotional scenes that he can watch and learn from. Horror movies play on a fear of monsters that he does not share. He does not enjoy jump scares. If you leap out at him, he is liable to punch you.
- He does not cook for his own, or others' pleasure. If he cooks, it is a performance for guests. He prefers to eat alone, while watching dramas on television or the web. He does not keep an organized kitchen. His fridge is empty. He prefers eating out.
- He gets no pleasure from making others happy. He does not play with babies unless someone is watching. He plays with his own children only enough to make them like him. When he plays with children, he imitates others whom he has watched before.
- He does not enjoy card or board games. He does not gamble. If he plays video games they are the kind where he can kill people. He does not enjoy any game with rules that are not his to control. Games of chance where others might win offend him as unfair.
- He does not understand gifts with intangible emotional value. He likes getting explicitly valuable things like new clothes, accessories, jewelry, cars, money. Still, he cannot look after his effects, and neglects and wastes them. He may give tangible gifts, when he is seducing you. If you give him intangibles, he discards them right away.
- He is afraid of disease, and often appears as a hypochondriac. He collects medicines, and enjoys visits to the hospital. He may [feign disease or trauma to get sympathy](#). If he has children, he may do this to them, even making them ill deliberately.
- He is quick to use force and violence against you to get what he wants. His techniques will range from diplomatic persuasion to outright violence. Often he will use extreme verbal insults. He will take your possessions without comment. He acts like a child in an adult's body. Any consequences are always your fault for forcing him into a corner.
- He does not apologize when he should, nor does he show remorse. This is often the strongest red flag you may see. No matter how bad he acts, it is always someone else's fault.
- He answers your anger, jealousy, insecurity, and loneliness with cold distaste. His reaction puzzles you. If you ask him why he cannot respond like a "normal" person, he gets angry with you.

The strongest indicator, and the hardest to see, is his plunder of your assets. When you are the frog in the boiling water, it is hard to see the fire. You may see it when Mallory takes from someone else and you spot it. You may just wake up, after a long fight between fantasy and reality. You may go bust and have to seek the causes.

Final Impressions

Often you will recall other traits about Mallory, years later. These tend to be invisible to you except with the distance of time:

- Mallory is a shape shifter, a face dancer. She wears the mask to suit the company. Her mask is often the caricature of someone Mallory knows or knew. You may see her change masks. Once in a blue moon you may see her without a mask, if she is off-guard.
- She often plays the victim, yet the details are vague and flexible. Often her struggles are the fault of her spouse, employer, or children. Her portrayal is perfect, award-winning. It convinces everyone except those who have been through her claws.
- She is a social climber. She may come from poverty, yet she can end in the highest circles of society. She does this by working your friends, and theirs, over and over.
- She is an expert in reading others' emotional states. She knows when someone is lying. She knows what people want to hear. She cannot smell warm bread or clean sheets, yet she can smell fear.
- She collects a cloud of followers and admirers. These come and go. People who stay with her for the long term tend to be burnt-out, depressed or suicidal. Her opinion of her admirers is black and white. She does not get in touch with old friends unless they come into money.
- She has impeccable taste, yet over time it tends to grotesque. She chases eternal youth with breast implants and stomach reduction. She has her face done. She dresses like a teenager, at forty. She does not ask others for advice, only applause.
- She loves to dress others up, particularly her children if she has any. This fits with her main hobbies: shopping, travel, and meeting new people. Her children are accessories. They are quiet and subdued in public, polite and careful.
- She may fit the diagnostic criteria for various personality disorders. In particular: borderline, histrionic, schizoid, and narcissistic personality disorders. And, redundantly, anti-social personality disorder. Yet her "disorder" masks the predatory nature of her relationships with family, friends, and therapists.

- She cannot laugh at new jokes in the right way. When you tell a joke she either does not get it, or she laughs too soon, too loud, and too long. She is liable to treat humor as literal truth, or a deliberate provocation. It is so annoying that you stop trying to joke with her.
- She does not self-regulate her behavior to keep others happy. That means, when others are unhappy she does not consider that she may be to blame. Others' happiness is not her problem. Only if she is up against a wall does she make some gesture of sympathy.
- She tends to think on her feet and never move backwards. You rarely see her ponder. This makes her seem clever and resourceful. She rarely ask others for advice. If she appears to do this, it is in fact to recruit allies in some conflict.
- She does not learn, over her life. While she appears to be successful, she repeats the same errors of judgment over and over. Depending on context, this may land her in serious trouble.
- She promotes herself as supremely moral, and may use religious or social crusades as cover. She is stridently, even violently against "social deviants," whatever that means in a culture.
- She is confident in almost all situations. When she does trip up, it can be dramatic. She never expects to get caught. Yet she is solitary and prone to fits of fury. She can make large misjudgments if she is in unfamiliar territory.

Neurophysical Traits

Psychopaths do have measurable neurophysical traits. These are not accurate psychopath tests, though. Many people have these traits for other reasons than psychopathy. It is bad science to make a conclusion and then search for data to prove it. Be careful about diagnosing someone you dislike as "psychopath" and then searching for data to prove your point. It is wiser to search for data to disprove a theory.

Keeping this in mind, I'll explore these traits. They do help us to model and understand psychopathy:

- Mallory has a poor sense of smell. Mahmut and Stevenson [found that](#) "higher degrees of psychopathy were significantly associated with poorer olfactory discriminative ability." In humans, the sense of smell is handled by the machinery for social emotions. Mallory does not process social emotions and so his poor sense of smell fits the puzzle well.

- He has [high testosterone levels](#). This helps him act dominant. It makes him more attractive to potential sexual partners. It hints that psychopath genes correlate with genes for physical strength and good health.
- He is better looking than average. [Shackelford and Larsen have shown](#) that "psychopathic individuals have greater [facial] symmetry." Facial symmetry is a key indicator of good health during embryonic development. That shouts "great genes!" It may be real, or psychopath genes may be regulating facial development. In other words, doing what psychopath genes do, which is to cheat.
- His pupils do not shrink when he watches someone who is sad. This effect is called [pupil empathy](#). It correlates with emotional empathy. When we are sad our pupils shrink. When we watch someone who is sad, we also feel sad.

Do genes cluster together? Indeed they do. At the least they can sit on the same chromosome. They may express in chains, so that genes depend on each other. So one gene can act as the key to unlock a series of other genes.

Perhaps genes for psychopathy cluster with other desirable genes. This would explain some curious data. Such as how we find charming liars of both genders to be sexy. Everyone loves an outlaw and biology is pragmatic. If we meet a potential partner with a package of genes that could give us more successful children and grandchildren, we feel attracted. That happens even if the personal cost of becoming co-parent with Mallory is huge.

Since we're talking about sex, let's discuss that slippery slope of sleeping with crazy.

Sleeping with Mallory

How does Mallory make you *feel*? This is an interesting way to look at her. We are often our own best instruments. Mallory effects deep change in us and how we see the world. Those changes are invisible to us at the time. Yet our feelings as we go through the grinder are real, and strong.

A sexual relationship with a psychopath changes you most in the shortest time. So it is easier to see the effect. Here is how it feels to be in a sexual relationship with Mallory:

- The first times you meet Mallory, your feelings are of longing and desire. With Alice or Bob, these feelings take time to develop. I've spoken of the way Mallory starts to give you signals and triggers. What you feel is the rush as dopamine hits your brain, and the shock as it stops.

- After a few dates, you feel euphoric whenever Mallory is around, and nervous and edgy when she is absent. You start to do whatever she asks, to get that euphoria back. There is not even a small part of you that fights this.
- Your relationship gets sexual before you know each other. The sex is intense and makes you feel great. Mallory knows what she is doing. Yet it is antagonistic, not affectionate. Mallory uses intimacy as a way to open you up for her next attack. She is selfish in bed. It is about her pleasure.
- Mallory is sensitive, jealous, and insecure. She seems to leap on the slightest excuse to start a violent quarrel. These fights always take your relationship to the brink of crisis, and over it. It is always your fault. She makes a dramatic exit. You apologize and grovel. In the end she comes back.
- You start to define your world and life goals around getting more Mallory. You are now an addict and this is how the addict sees their drug. Observers cannot believe how fast this happens. You are a careful person. Yet now you are making major commitments, without taking the time to reflect.
- You start to invest in Mallory's projects. You will do anything to make her happy. Yet she rarely is. She flips from intense adoration to sullen silence to loud anger. You never see her just busy and content. You form a miserable and argumentative pair. People tell you to treat her better. You feel guilty, ashamed, and confused.
- Mallory hits you with crises that deepen your addiction, as she consumes you. The idealize-devalue-discard cycles can repeat every few weeks or months, for years. You feel empty, depressed, sick, angry, lonely. Yet when Mallory pays attention to you, the euphoria kicks in again for a little while.
- Mallory starts to terrify you. You see madness in her eyes. She threatens to harm you, to kill you. She smashes glasses, reaches for a knife, slaps you, punches you, bites. You flee. The idea of calling for help doesn't cross your mind. You haven't asked anyone for help so far. This is love, right?
- The violence disappears as fast as it came, without discussion or resolution. If you bring up the subject, Mallory starts her list of accusations against you. The list is long and grows each time she tells it. You learn that to forget is to forgive.
- When Mallory is not there, you think about her all the time. It feels like love, except you are miserable. You lose sleep and friends. You try to make yourself happy by spending money. Mallory likes that, and joins in with enthusiasm.

- You start to have random thoughts of suicide. Most likely, after one of Mallory's rage explosions. You feel trapped and alone. You feel worthless and unwanted. Death would be a relief. What would be the least painful method to die? What is stopping you? Fear and shame, perhaps.

If this is familiar to you, I'm half-sorry for taking you back to your memories. Then again, that was the point. Realize that this same story plays out over, and over, and over. It always feels so personal, so special. That is another lie. It is impersonal, and mundane.

The Dark Side of the Moon

Sleeping with Mallory is one of those "well, I thought it was a good idea at the time" things. Susan Walsh, the narcissist watcher I already quoted, writes, *"Please don't date one. I beg you not to fall in love with one. And never, ever marry one."* It is good advice, yet assumes a level of control that often just isn't there, any more.

It is more likely that you tangle with Mallory at work. I'd say it's inevitable unless you are lucky enough to be in a small business that has escaped infection.

Larger organizations are rarely fun places to work. Forbes [reports](#) that 80% of US workers "feel stressed" at the office and only 30% feel "engaged." Almost 20% are "actively disengaged." That means they go to work, take the pay check, yet hate every minute of it.

Forbes cites a list of reasons. There is lack of trust from and in management. There is the insecurity, boredom, and lack of progress. There are the poor communications and unpleasant co-workers. All except boredom are classic symptoms of a relationship with Mallory.

So here's an idea. Big business is the dark side of the Moon. It is an unseen surface disfigured by psychopath impact craters. Hundreds of millions of them, impact after impact. And they cover everything.

Here is how it feels to work in a healthy workplace:

- You wake up every morning with joy at the idea of going to work and seeing your colleagues. After all, you share the same dreams and passions. You like these people, and they like you.
- Your workplace is creative, and effective. Everyone brings problems and ideas to the table, and solves them without delay or fuss. There is a lot of chatter, and few meetings.
- You find yourself teaching others, and often the work is playful. Your bosses tell you if there are major problems to focus on. They provide coffee, and Internet. They don't tell you how to do your work, nor when.

- You set your own priorities, because you know what the customers want and need. And the customers seem happy, except when there's a serious problem. Even then, they know you're doing your best.
- The bosses treat you like equals, and share in the work. They know what they're doing, and they trust their staff. After all, they hired you one by one.
- The team grows little by little. New hires usually start as interns or apprentices. If an intern doesn't fit the culture, they don't stay for long.
- The pay and benefits are OK, yet that's not the reason you work there. You work there because it makes you happy. You work there because you can't imagine any reason to leave.
- When you think of who your friends are, your workmates are high on the list. You enjoy their company and you often hang out together, after work.
- You and your colleagues often stay late. Not because someone is watching, just because you love what you're doing. The work makes you feel satisfied, and fulfilled.
- When you go home and spend time with your family, you never feel stressed about work. Your evenings and weekends are yours. Of course if there's a problem, work can call. They almost never do.

Here is how it feels to work on the dark side of the Moon:

- Your alarm clock forces you out of bed, and you hate it. Mondays are worst because it's another five whole days until you can drink yourself sane.
- The commute is like riding the slow bus to Hell. A dark pit of despair fills you as you get to your stop. It's raining. You left your umbrella on the bus. Of course.
- The notion of seeing your colleagues fills you with dread. You hope they don't notice how hungover you are. You hope you don't meet the boss on the way to your desk.
- The office is sterile, and impersonal. You can't think. You'd take a music player and headset, except that's forbidden. In the toilet, a new note from HR. It says, "Collarless t-shirts forbidden except on last Friday of each month. Enjoy mandatory casual Friday!"
- The coffee wakes you, and you find the energy to start on the report. Except, it's meeting time. Everyone crowds into the meeting room. Planning time. Always the same. Your mind goes back to sleep.
- You start on that report, then you get a bunch of emails from the boss. She wants to know your planning for the next week. What was the meeting for then? She sends you PDFs with a presentation she wants to tidy up. It is large. And it is all wrong. You will

need to redo everything. There goes your day. You feel sorry for yourself and angry with your boss.

- You don't talk much to your colleagues. Above all not to ask for help. Everyone knows annual sales have been terrible. There will be layoffs. Your wife is sick again. You need the benefits. The thought makes you so anxious that you have to take a pill.
- You see a report from customer service. Satisfaction is down 5%, retention is still good. Someone in legal has been adding clauses that make it harder for customers to switch. Whatever. You don't feel anything. The pill is working well.
- The boss is meeting with unknown people. Well dressed. Not from the company. Consultants? What's going on? Afterwards, lots of handshakes and the suits leave, all smiles. The whole office is alert now.
- A few days later, there are new faces. "We're bringing in help," the boss says at the morning meeting. The new faces all have expensive laptops. They take over the meeting room. Their new office. You wonder about tomorrow's meeting.
- HR sends round a reminder for the Saturday company picnic. "Attendance is optional," as usual. Your daughter is doing her ballet school show on Saturday. You wonder what you can buy her to make up for it this time.
- You notice Larry isn't there. Is he sick? You ask Nancy, over coffee. Fired, she tells you, with a strange smile. He didn't pass review. That's it. Didn't pass review. No more detail. Larry was one of the few people you liked talking to. You start to feel the stress build up in the pit of your stomach. Must cut back on the coffee.
- You work late, as usual. Maybe you can finish that report. First, the presentation for the boss. You hope she doesn't trash it like last time. Quiet despair fills your mind. You wonder what slide transition to use. Too many options.
- When you get home, it's late and the kids are already asleep. Your wife is silent in the living room. You sit on the other couch, and open your laptop. One more day and it's Friday.

You can estimate how many psychopaths (M) are active in any given organization. Start with an estimate of 4% of total workforce (W). Multiply by three for finance-related businesses (F = 1 or 3). Now imagine you are a client, and give the organization a "ripoff factor" of one to five (R = 1 to 5). One is your local baker. Five is Comcast. Multiply your estimate by the ripoff factor. Round down to the nearest whole number. You now have your estimate.

The Ages of Mallory

Given the model of psychopath as profession, at what ages does psychopathy start and stop? Can we see the traits of psychopathy in juveniles and senior citizens?

These questions are valid because the traits run in families. To know someone, look at the family members of all ages. If you are in a relationship with someone, you are in one with his parents, siblings, and cousins.

They are also important because Mallory often has children. If psychopaths make up 4% of the population, then 8% of families have a psychopathic parent. Half of Mallory's children become like him, on average. I've explained my hypothesis that adult psychopathy needs an incubating environment to differentiate.

This means that if we can recognize the traits in the parent, and in the children, we can intervene. I'll explore the ifs and hows of this in more detail in "Escape from Jonestown". Let's say you are in a position to do something. Your main question is, "is this child growing up to be Mallory?"

The traits of psychopathy in children are well studied. Yet the focus is on aggression. For instance, Dr. David Rettew in his talk "[Sociopathic Behavior in Children](#)", refers to "aggression" 36 times. In effect he equates aggression with psychopathy. For sure, some psychopaths are aggressive and violent. Yet it is not a defining trait.

The bulk of successful psychopaths are rarely violent. Their aggression lives under the surface. They rarely punch or kick. They smile, and they whisper. Only when they feel violence is more effective, when they have no other options, will they use it. And even then, they will use verbal and emotional violence first. Above all, a psychopath's violence is pragmatic and targeted.

I'd expect young Mallory to show a sharp learning curve in hiding his predatory nature. I'd expect to see him learn to make others admire him. I'd expect him to practice on smaller, weaker children, when no adult was watching. I'd expect his teachers to adore him and praise him.

The model of young psychopaths as out-of-control future delinquents seems so wrong. It describes young Mallory acting on primitive impulse, unsocialized and dysfunctional. It is a model without hope. I think we make it worse when we frame child psychopathy as a "medical problem." If drugs and therapy do not work on adult psychopaths, why consider them for children?

Mallory the adult started young and sharpened his talents on his schoolmates. He learned to not get caught. So here is my list of traits for young Mallory, before and during differentiation:

- He is charming and can be angelic. His teachers tend to adore him.
- He is popular with other children, dominant, and independent.

- He teases and bullies smaller and younger children for fun.
- He is not afraid of larger children, nor of disapproval. He does what he likes.
- He despises the school rules, though he avoids getting into trouble.
- He leads a small gang of other children. They experiment with breaking the rules.
- He asks other children to give him their toys, and other possessions, and they do.
- He steals from other children, and takes small items in shops.
- If you ask other children what he is like, no-one has a solid answer.
- He never asks others how they are doing or what they are feeling.
- He is as likely to show violence and aggression as other children. It is how he aims it that is different.
- His empathy does not develop. He laughs when others fall and hurt themselves.
- He is chaotic with his and others' possessions. He does not enjoy organized order.
- On line, he stalks and bullies those he feels are weaker and vulnerable.
- His family shows chaos and narcissism in one parent.

So the adult Mallory emerges over time. I suspect that by the age of 12 or so, it is too late to change the trajectory he has taken. The full adult Mallory emerges at 15 or so, as he builds a career in taking from others and getting away with it.

What about old Mallory? At what age does a psychopath retire? The answer is "never." Mallory's genes make her more resistant to cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and other illness. She manages, to her last breath, to draw her family in to support and look after her. I wrote that psychopaths divide and torture their children. One of the benefits for Mallory is that she keeps her scapegoats around for decades, serving her.

The seductress side of Mallory disappears when she hits 45 or so. She tries to keep the interest going with plastic surgery, tight clothes, wigs, and cosmetics. She looks more and more grotesque. Yet she pays no attention to others' advice. She is never wrong.

If you look at older Mallory you may see these traits:

- Her children surround her and look after her. They ignore or despise their other parent. It is Mallory who is the center of attention.
- People exist to serve her. This goes beyond her children. She collects a circle of admirers who look after her. Her social life is about recruiting and keeping this circle alive.

- She does nothing sincere for other people. If she does charity work or community work, it is always a display, in public view. She despises her neighbors and ignores them as far as she can.
- Her main hobby is watching television soap operas. She does not keep house plants or cats. If her family give her a companion dog, it becomes sick or disturbed.
- She hoards relics: photographs, clothes, old possessions. Her home is not tidy and functional. It is chaotic and full of arbitrary things left for years in the same spots.
- She may be frail and on the verge of hospitalization for years, decades. Her retirement revolves around phases of ill health. Yet she lives to a surprising age.
- She leaves no inheritance to her children. Maybe she never worked. Or, if she had wealth, she leaves it to a charity, to teach her children a lesson.
- She feels no reason to talk to her family unless she needs something. Yet she has no compunction about interfering in their lives at any time, and without notice.

Conclusions

In this chapter I've explained where and how to spot Mallory. Is there a *single* reliable way to tell if a given person is a psychopath? The answer is "no." It depends so much on the state of your relationship with the person, and the context. All your data are lies. Every accusation and observation is wrong or biased. The truth only emerges after time, as the average of many errors.

Can we spot psychopaths in the wild? Yes, we can. It is even quite simple. Watch groups and couples in public settings. Observe without opinion. You will see the narcissists, the rule breakers, the charmers and the mimics. You will see some people always triggering others, yet rarely responding. This is how psychopaths spot and avoid others "playing their game."

Except it's not that simple. Prey and predator are in a constant arms race. We can predict that some ants will evolve to imitate their spider parasites. We can predict that some social humans can and must play the psychopath game. Predator mimicry is an interesting idea, and I'll come back to it later.

Chapter 6. The Dance of Emotions

The Best Friend

Sure, I'll tell you what happened.

We had a rocky relationship from the start. I'm a large guy and usually pretty chill. Yet we fought all the time. And I mean, *all the time!* There was no real reason. Sure, I look at other women sometimes. I'm human. She'd freak out. "Hey you," she'd shout at a waitress who I'd said hi to. "Do you want to go out with my boyfriend? Do you?"

We stopped going out after she got into a fight. Some woman had called her a whore, when her boyfriend stared at my wife's legs. Short shorts, right? I told her she'd been showing a lot of skin, men were going to stare. "So you think I'm a whore, do you?" she said. "No," I sighed. "He called me a whore in public, in front of everyone!" she said, to anyone who would listen. For years.

I thought she was insecure and jealous. She's so good looking though. I was so in love. So in love. My family loved her too, told me I'd found the right woman, told me to look after her. So that's what I tried to do.

She started going to college, evening classes. I paid her tuition. "It's *our* money," she said. To be honest I don't know why I wanted to marry her. But I did, more than anything, and she said "yes" right away.

About a year after we married, my unit deployed to Iraq. We spent our last night together, and she cried, and told she would wait for me. Only two months later, our Humvee hit an IED. It was like I flew overseas to get blown up. I was in hospital for a month and then they sent me home on disability.

The decision happened so fast I didn't have a chance to call her. OK, I thought, I'll surprise her. I'm back from work, honey!

I got back to our place and the house was empty and quiet. The plants were dry and going brown. There was mail, a lot of mail. I walked through our home, and sat on our bed. The side cupboard was a little open. I pulled it open and saw this little beaten-up black notebook. I'd never seen it before. Strange.

I opened the book and read it. It crammed with letters and dates. "A.H.B, 3-12-05." The same letters showed up over and over. They were peoples' initials. Beside some of the names there were figures. Money, could be. There was an entry every few days, and

the first ones dated back to years before we met. There, I found our first few dates. I looked through twenty pages, to the end. The dates continued until a few days ago. I recognized the last initials. J.A.K. One of my best friends, across the street. Wife and two kids. Not possible. No harm taking a look, right?

So I got up and walked outside and crossed the street and rang the doorbell. He opened it, then went pale when he saw me. "Have you seen her?" I asked him. He pointed over his shoulder, into the house. I walked inside, and there she was, in a towel, on the sofa.

She didn't even blink. She stood up, and shouted at me, "What do you think you're doing here?" She was screaming at me, "You bastard, almost getting killed! I thought you were dead! It was terrible! How *could* you?"

What, I said, what the f? Why are you naked here with Jon?

Jon kept saying, "sorry man, I'm so sorry, I didn't realize what I was doing, sorry man." It was obvious he meant they'd been sleeping together. Where's Judy and the kids, I asked him. "She left, about a month ago, when she found out," he said, starting to tremble.

A month ago.

All the time she's shouting at me, threatening me. She's accusing me of sleeping with whores in Iraq. She's saying I betrayed her from the start.

"Hey," I say to her, "look what I found!" I hold out the book. She lunges for it, shouting, "Mine! That's mine, give it to me! I swear I'll rip your eyes out! You piece of shit!" She's saying the most horrid things.

I tell her, "I've read it and taken pictures of every page. I'm going to find every one of those guys you slept with." That's not the word I used. I tell her, "I'm going to find these guys and tell each of them what kind of trash you are."

She stared at me, completely blank, for about a quarter of a second. I'd never seen her make that expression before. Like her face froze while her brain was doing some kind of calculation. And then she shrugged. "Fuck you, you piece of shit" she said, went to dress, then left the house.

I had a few beers with Jon, months later when I'd pulled myself together. Poor guy never knew what hit him and I wasn't mad at him. He'd just saved my life. I was so lost. Two years we were together. I loved her so much. When I got back to our place, her clothes and papers were gone, and so was she. I never saw her again, though I spent a while looking for her.

Learning to Read

When we ask why someone acts in a certain way, the answer is a mix of pragmatic logic, learned habit, and emotion. This is as true for psychopaths as it is for the rest of us. Despite appearances, logic and emotion are not opposed. They work together in a complex dance that I'll explain in this chapter. The dance has many steps, and each step plays out in specific ways.

To learn the dance of the emotions is like learning to read. Emotions are a language. It is an ancient language that we share with many other species. The language flows through us, and between us. We speak it with our bodies and faces. We feel it in our blood as music. We move to the music without conscious decision. We must answer the call of emotion, even when it hurts and damages us to do so.

Mallory can make others dance. This is a talent he does not need to learn. Yet he is as lost as any of us, when it comes to his own music. He does not decide to hurt others. He obeys an ancient logic. He is a rock rolling downhill, obeying the logic of gravity. In this sense, Mallory is an innocent.

In this chapter I'll explain each step of the dance, and its music. Each emotion is distinct and consistent. Every emotion has a cause, and consequences. These connect in chain reactions. These chain reactions keep us alive. The dance may seem primitive or wasteful. Sometimes it is. Most often it is not.

When we know the dance, we can tell the difference. We evolved for a different world, one with fewer people and more dangers. Much of our mind responds like a idiot savant. It often cannot tell the difference between reality and accurate caricature. Time and again, if you confront Mallory, you will realize this. You *know* his masks are fake, and yet they hit you in places you cannot defend. Yet other parts of our mind can learn the difference. We can learn which music causes us pain and harm, and we can stop the dance when we choose to.

Learning to read the emotions gives you a new power. This is the ability to recognize and then control the music, both in yourself and in others.

When we can control the music, we become immune to Mallory and to many other causes of stress. There is no magic moment of awakening. It is a gradual process that takes years. Like any skill it takes practice and patience to master.

The Evolution of Emotions

Evolutionary psychology aims to explain our mind and behavior as adaptations. It is a solid theory: we are the products of natural and sexual selection, no more or less. I've used this approach to explain psychopathy as an adaptation rather than a disorder. I'm going to use the same approach to explain our emotions.

Our emotions evolved over time to help our ancestors survive and reproduce. This is not an original notion. The first champion of evolution, Charles Darwin, used it when he wrote "The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals" in 1872. Some human emotions date from hundreds of millions of years ago. We see these in many other animals. Some date from more recent times, and seem to be specific to humanity.

It is likely that different species have invented the same emotions over and over. Many birds and mammals share emotions like *happiness* and *sadness*. Yet that does not mean their common ancestors already had them. Evolution often rediscovers the same solutions to what look like universal problems.

What follows are my personal theories, developed from observations and research. There are several theories of emotions. My goal is to model emotions as functional tools. I want to understand how they work and why we evolved them, rather than simply describe them. That lets us both understand what the psychopath is doing with their mind games, and how we respond. And that lets us extricate ourselves.

The meaning of an "emotion" can be hard to pin down. Is dread an emotion? Are joy, happiness, satisfaction, complacency, delight all distinct emotions? It's somewhat like trying to identify colors or smells. The closer you look, the more there are.

I'm going to look only at primary emotions. By that, I mean emotions that do not overlap, and are not flavors or mixtures of other emotions. Much like primary colors.

Further, I'm going to define an emotion in a strict sense. This makes it easy to decide whether a particular state of mind counts, or does not. My hypothesis is that each emotion has its own distinct mental machinery. Each emotion evolved over time, and is coded in our DNA. Emotions are more or less active, according to age, character, and gender. In some people, some emotions are absent or invisible.

Emotions have two general goals. First, they prepare our mind and body for some action. They speed up certain systems and slow down others. I call this "orchestration." Imagine the emotion as the conductor waving a baton to get a hundred musicians to play the same tune.

Second, emotions display our mental and physical state to others. They do this using facial and body language. The language of an emotion is often based in real physiological activity. It may also be synthetic. Emotional languages are universal across humanity.

Some emotions are only about orchestration. Others are only about display. Most are a mix of the two.

For every display emotion, there is matching machinery to read facial and body language. This machinery works without conscious thought. It produces its results as emotions in the observer. When a dog threatens to bite you, you feel fear. When a person shows sadness, you feel sad. When a person laughs, you also want to laugh. We call this "empathy."

I'm going to take the human emotions, and collect them into groups. This grouping turns out to be a helpful approach. Each group works together like a puzzle, with the emotions as single consistent pieces. We can see when a group is complete. We can fit the emotions we recognize into their correct group. We can also see how each group works, as a whole.

The emotional groups evolved over time as our species climbed up the social ladder. I'll work from oldest group to most recent:

- The *predator emotions* help us hunt and capture prey.
- The *defense emotions* prepare us to detect and deal with predators and competitors.
- The *sexual emotions* drive us to find sexual partners.
- The *family emotions* let us talk to our parents and care for our offspring.
- The *tribal emotions* let us form small social groups.
- The *social emotions* let us form looser and larger social groups.

My breakdown comes to about fifty universal human emotions. All humans, with specific exceptions, feel these emotions and feel them in the same way. That is my hypothesis, in any case. I expected to find a much smaller set of universal human emotions. Yet as you will see these are distinct and precise. Often I've had to name emotions that we know, yet rarely verbalize.

Like all our mental tools our emotions have continued to evolve and shift over time. So while human rage and dog rage share a common ancestor, they have evolved in their own directions. I'll explain the human experience.

The Predator Emotions

The predator emotions are what we feel when we stalk and prey on food animals. These are ancient and violent emotions. Some are taboo, even alien to most of us. We have to search for words to describe them. We rerouted these millions of years ago, as we started to develop our social instincts. You will recognize some from our daily rituals of eating.

Others are familiar from play. Watch children play hide-and-seek and you'll see tame forms of *obsession*, *euphoria*, and *glee*. Play monster with a young child and you make caricatures of *fury* and *bloodlust*. Watch young men playing team sports or violent video games and you see the full range acted out in full. This is one reason people enjoy group sports. It lets players -- and the crowd -- express these emotions in a safe and accepted arena.

The predator emotions are:

- *Hunger* - the emotion of looking for prey. *Hunger* drives you out of your comfort zone. Your digestion slows. Your vision and hearing gets sharper and you focus on distinguishing prey from threats. You feel the need to move, yet you are careful to stay invisible. You walk without haste, and keep your posture relaxed. Your breathing is regular, slow.
- *Obsession* - the emotion of stalking a prey. Your digestion speeds up. Your hearing and vision fixate on your target, and exclude everything else. You crouch and stay hidden. You move towards your target, trying to appear as innocent as possible until the last minute. Your adrenalin starts to rise. Your memory starts recording in high resolution.
- *Euphoria* - the emotion of chasing a fleeing prey. Your hearing switches off and your vision tunnels in on your target. Your breathing and heartbeat accelerate. Blood flows to your muscles, and glucose feeds into your blood. Your eyes widen, your mouth opens, and you bare your teeth.
- *Glee* - the emotion of seeing your prey stumble. You feel a kick of pleasure and adrenalin. You exhale hard. Your body prepares to move in for the capture. Blood flows to your arms and face. You bare your teeth and open your mouth. The muscles around your eyes compress, to protect them. Glee looks like the ancestor of happiness.
- *Fury* - the emotion of attacking your prey. Your sense of pain switches off. Your vision narrows to a tunnel, and your eyes narrow to reduce the risk of damage. If you could move your ears, they would fold back. You exhale hard, to tighten your chest muscles and reduce the risk of a broken rib. You focus on capturing and immobilizing your prey. As you catch it, you feel intense bursts of pleasure that push you on.
- *Bloodlust* - the emotion of killing your prey. You feel an orgasmic climax of pleasure as you taste blood. Your lungs and heart are still working hard to purge your system of waste products from the chase. Your arms and hands and jaws clench. You still make no sound except a low groan. You're focused on keeping your prey captive while you kill it. Your digestive system starts to prepare for food.
- *Gluttony* - the emotion of eating your prey. You feel more paranoid than usual. You are vulnerable to competitors looking for a free meal. If it is possible, you move your meal to a safe location. You lick your lips, glance left and right. Your eyes are wide. Your saliva

glands are working full speed. Your digestive system is in full swing, expecting a full belly. When it is safe to eat, you focus on your food.

- *Satiation* - the emotion of having eaten enough or too much. Your saliva glands switch off, and you reject the remains of your meal, if any. You look around for others to share with. You adopt open body language, and relax. Blood flows to your digestive system. Your arms and legs are limp.
- *Blocked* - the emotion of a failed hunt or chase. Your body relaxes and all systems go to neutral. You withdraw to a safe place and replay your memory over and over. You look for what went wrong. You imagine different "what if" scenarios, and rehearse them mentally.

Maths Murders

In most people the predator emotions do not, even under threat of death, focus on fellow humans. In hand-to-hand warfare, **most soldiers will not kill**. They aim to miss. They run away when they can. They provide cover and mass, to intimidate the other side. Much of the military machine works just to train this majority to aim their guns in the right direction.

This majority does shift gears when their families and homes are under threat. To save our relatives or children from an armed and violent stranger, most of us will aim to kill. Yet we do this without the predator emotions. Instead, we feel the defensive emotions I'll explain in the next section.

Some of us, a small minority, feel only these emotions and no others. So the emotions work at their original full power. More, they focus on fellow humans rather than on food. This minority are the psychopaths. It is the predator emotions that drive psychopaths in their hide-hunt-attack-capture-consume behavior.

We all feel the predator emotions at some level. The key differences are degree and direction. Do you live for the pleasure of the kill? And do you hunger for breakfast, or for power over others?

Yet this does not mean all psychopaths engage in physical violence. Violence and murder is risky business. In normal circumstances the risks of exposure and retribution far outweigh the emotional rewards. A healthy psychopath amygdala shudders at the thought. It keeps the predator emotions focused on business, politics, and private life. Sane psychopaths aim to die from old age, surrounded by grandchildren. In this respect, Mallory is just like anyone else.

In specific circumstances, the equation tilts Mallory towards serial murder:

- *If the amygdala suffers damage from injury or tumors.* This may shut down its inhibition, so it feels infallible and superior.
- *If the social status of the victim is so low that retribution is unlikely.* Serial murderers tend to target individuals who are least valued by general society. That is: prostitutes, beggars, orphans, minorities, homosexuals, and the lonely elderly.
- *If the murder is in the name of the State.* This means open hostilities between two groups, in other words, war. Only losers stand trial for crimes against humanity. The winners get to butcher at will, in the name of God and Country.
- *When there is nothing to lose, and much to gain.* A large proportion of young men are evolutionary dead-ends. In some cultures, as many as two-thirds of men have no children. That includes many psychopaths. Lack of local prospects makes Mallory long for foreign adventure.

The maths of murder are consistent across human culture. Successful generals understand it. They use it to recruit young male psychopaths as the killer core of their professional armies. It is a timeless recipe. Invoke martial law, to remove the risk of punishment. Dehumanize the enemy so that Mallory faces no anger from the home front. Aim at poor psychopaths with few other prospects. Deliver propaganda and marketing that lures them in.

The military has practiced this for a long time. It selects, enables, and promotes psychopaths. It offers the chance for unlimited rape and murder. The main rule is: just don't get caught. It has institutionalized the process of creating secondary psychopaths, via "bootcamps." The military always takes the moral high ground, and always makes it someone else's fault.

Secondary psychopaths learn to apply the predator emotions to others. If they do kill, they later feel deep guilt and shame, as their empathy starts working again. We see the damage that the military does to its recruits, [in the suicide statistics of veterans](#).

The psychopaths who enter conflict zones pursue the chance to rape, hunt, and butcher. They kill without pause, once they learn the basics. They enjoy it more than sex. They build power pyramids. They sabotage peace efforts and remove internal competitors. They can rise to positions of great power, leading armies and empires.

You might ask how society accepts and collaborates in the promotion of murder. We show snuff videos on the evening news. We criminalize Mallory when he travels abroad to fight. We draw bold "do not cross" lines so that every young candidate knows where to aim. The generals don't need to do the hard work of recruiting. Society does it for them.

The answer lies in a second group of emotions, those we use against badder animals than ourselves. It is easy to convince a population to support a war of aggression. You just invoke the defense emotions.

The Defense Emotions

The defense emotions are ancient and widespread. These emotions keep us safe from predators, and let us deal with competitors:

- *Surprise* - the emotion of reacting to a sudden threat. It is what you feel when a cat leaps at you out of a closet. It's what the cat feels if you creep up on it and say "boo!". We also call this a "startle response." You flinch away from the threat, and raise your arms in self-defense. You lift your eyebrows and open your eyes wide to see better. Your hearing gets sharp. You exhale hard to clear your lungs of carbon dioxide. Your heart accelerates and you breathe in deep to oxygenate your body for action.
- *Suspense* - the emotion of detecting a potential threat. It is what you feel when you hear an unexpected noise in the middle of the night. Or, when you turn a corner and see a large, dangerous looking animal blocking your way. Your body freezes, for ten to thirty seconds. Adrenalin starts to flow into your blood stream. You breathe out to clear your lungs without making noise. Your vision and hearing heighten as you try to identify the threat. You get goosebumps. Your memory goes into high-definition recording mode. Later this feels like time had slowed down.
- *Terror* - the emotion of wanting to flee from a threat. Blood flows to your lungs and legs. Your blood vessels constrict to reduce bleeding in case of damage. You go pale. Your digestive system slows down and stops. Your mouth goes dry. Your eyes open wide, and your hearing gets sharper. Your focus is on listening, hiding, and freezing when you are out of sight.
- *Flight* - the emotion of fleeing from a pursuing threat. Adrenalin pours into your bloodstream. Blood flows to your leg muscles, lungs and arms. You focus on paths and exits. You start to sweat. Your eyes open as wide as possible. You breathe hard and fast and your heart pumps at full speed. Your hearing switches off. Endorphins flood into your bloodstream to switch off the pain response.
- *Anger* - the emotion of defiance against a threat. Blood flows to your face and neck. Your posture makes you seem larger: arms wide, feet apart, head up. You bare your teeth and you stare with wide eyes. Your saliva gets thick and foamy. Your voice gets heavy and loud, and you shout. *Anger* says, "I am not backing down. Retreat now, or you will be hurt!" *Anger* is a caricature of *glee* and *fury* that exaggerates the most terrifying traits.

- *Rage* - the emotion of attacking a threat. Your body prepares to inflict and receive physical damage. Blood flows to your upper body and arms. Your face goes pale. Your nervous system switches off pain. Your heart beats faster, and you breathe hard, pumping oxygen into the blood. Your body releases glycol and your muscles tense for action. Your vision narrows to focus on the threat. You lower your head and fixate on your target. Your hearing dulls, as noise is now only a distraction. You are shouting or screaming without pause. *Rage* says, "Leave, stop, go away!"
- *Shock* - the emotion of preparing for sudden death. Your body switches off its response to pain. You feel cold and limp. Your sense of touch, hearing, and vision all dim. Your face pales and shows a characteristic flushing pattern on the cheeks. Your mind may put itself in the third person, and give you an "out of body" experience. The effects of shock change over time, assuming one survives.
- *Triumph* - the emotion of asserting dominance. You breathe in and fill your lungs. Blood flows to your upper body and arms. Your heartbeat is faster than normal. Your body remains ready for physical confrontation. You stand with your head high, arms out. You stand with feet apart. You walk with larger strides. You look straight at bystanders, yet not at submissive people, whom you ignore. You raise your voice and gesticulate more than usual.
- *Defeat* - the emotion of submitting to dominance. *Defeat* displays that you will not fight. You adopt weak body language to look smaller and harmless. You bow your head, squash your shoulders in and hunch your back. You bring your knees together. Your steps get smaller. Your eyes look at the ground. You expose your neck. You make the characteristic high-pitched *mmh* sounds of *defeat*. Your voice, if any, is quiet. Your metabolism slows. You make no facial expression.

A successful predator must avoid its prey feeling *suspense* until it is too late. There is thus an old arms race between predator and prey. The predator disguises itself, to move in closer. The prey becomes better at identifying its predator. The two strategies balance each other. If a predator is too successful it destroys its own host species. If the prey is too nervous, it dies from exhaustion.

Anger and *rage* are the first display emotions. All others so far are for orchestration only. These two emotions cross species boundaries. They need no explanation: when an animal looks ready to attack us, we read that as "anger."

Mallory does not, as far as I can tell, feel the defense emotions. She perhaps has no natural predators. She shows no startle response. Unexpected events may cause her to pause and calculate. If you leap out of a dark corner at her, she is likely to just punch you. When she gets angry, she is showing *fury*, not *anger* or *rage*.

Mallory enjoys violent confrontation. It gives her real pleasure. This brings us to our next group: the sexual emotions.

The Sexual Emotions

The sexual emotions are, like the predator emotions, old and deep. They predate language. There is debate about whether these are even emotions. Yet the orchestration and display functions are undeniable:

- *Ennui* - the emotion of looking for sexual opportunities. *Ennui* drives you out of our comfort zone. Your sexual responses slow down. Your vision and hearing gets sharper and you focus on potential sexual partners. You feel the need to move, yet you are careful to stay discreet. Your walk with quiet calm, and keep your posture relaxed. Your breathing is regular, slow.
- *Interest* - the emotion of focusing on a specific person. Your sexual responses speed up. Your hearing and vision focus on your target, and exclude everything else. You may move towards your target, trying to appear as innocent as possible until the last minute. Your pupils widen. Blood flows to your cheeks. Your adrenalin starts to rise. Your memory starts recording in high resolution.
- *Desire* - the emotion of chasing a sexual target. Your hearing switches off and your vision tunnels in on your target. Your breathing and heartbeat speed up. Blood flows to your lower body and skin, and glucose feeds into your blood. Your eyes widen, your mouth opens, and you smile a lot. *Desire* says, "I want you."
- *Lust* - the emotion of getting consent for sex. You feel the kick of pleasure and adrenalin. Your breathing accelerates. Your body prepares for sex. Your blood pressure rises, and blood flows to your genitals, breasts, skin, and face. You laugh and smile a lot more than usual. *Lust* says, "I want you more than ever."
- *Arousal* - the emotion of engaging in sex. Your sense of pain shifts. Your vision narrows to a tunnel, and your eyes narrow or close. You may be silent, or make groans of effort. You focus on your partner, and the physical act. As you engage, you feel intense bursts of pleasure that push you on.
- *Climax* - the emotion of concluding sex. You feel an orgasmic climax of pleasure, your DNA rewarding you for the effort and risk of sex. Your lungs and heart are still working hard to purge your system of carbon dioxide. Your arms and hands and jaws clench. Your skin flushes in specific and recognizable patterns. You may make a low groan, or louder shouts.

- *Replete* - the emotion of having finished sex. Your sexual responses switch off, and you reject any further physical stimulation. You may want to talk, or sleep. You adopt open body language, and relax. Your blood pressure goes back to normal. Your arms and legs are limp.
- *Rejected* - the emotion of a failed seduction. Your body relaxes and all systems go to neutral. You withdraw to a safe place and replay your memory. You look for what went wrong. You imagine different "what if" scenarios, and rehearse them mentally.

I had to search for names for many of these. You will notice that this group is almost an exact copy of the predator emotions. The one missing emotion is *gluttony*, which is now part of *arousal*. If there is any symbolic consumption, it happens before, not after *climax*.

The similarity of these two groups of emotions is striking. They have evolved in parallel. I assume they share much of the same DNA, and in some people the boundaries are blurred.

Do men and women experience these same emotions? It is a difficult area for research. Sexual experiences are never neutral. Culture distorts and warps them. We tolerate sexual activity, approve of it, expect it, or forbid it. The cultural regulation of sexual activity is constant and global and corrupts our responses. No two experiments will show the same results.

I'll claim that both men and women tend to experience the same cycle of emotions during sex. At least in the case of consensual sex between adults. If male sexuality is predatory, then so is female sexuality. There is no "passive" gender, though individuals can be more passive or active.

Both men and women have sexual empathy. When your partner shows lust, this tends to provoke lust in return. Both seek an "emotional connection" with their sexual partners.

How does Mallory feel the sexual emotions? It is sure that he has the physical responses needed for successful intercourse. He shows sexual empathy. Yet there are some striking differences that demand explanation:

- Mallory is casually bisexual. To be more precise, he will adopt whatever gender identity [fits the situation best](#). He can be gay, dominant, submissive, heterosexual, confused.
- Mallory does consume his sexual partners, in a manner. You may see him as a sexual predator, yet that is to misread his behavior. For him, sex is not the goal, it is the means. His goal is to consume his target's power and resources.
- Mallory is dominant and insensitive to his sexual partners. To quote one woman of her psychopathic partner: "During sex he was harsh and rough. His eyes cold and distant, focused... like an animal eating his prey."

I believe Mallory mixes the two groups of emotions into a single one. Psychologists describe psychopaths as "thrill seeking," yet a more accurate description might be "over-sexed and uninhibited." Apart from the physical responses during *arousal* and *climax*, Mallory experiences exactly the same emotions inside, and outside the bedroom.

This points us towards a new metaphor for psychopathy. *Predator* is a good functional model. It has many useful properties, as a model. Yet it dehumanizes. To describe him as an animal is accurate in many ways, yet it suggests he is worth less than Alice or Bob.

Mallory is not subhuman. Neither is Mallory superhuman. Psychopaths are no more or less successful, on average, than social humans. In the long arms race between the two strategies, *neither can ever win*. It is a race to equilibrium. For every trait that makes Mallory more successful, he has a weakness. For every weakness that Alice or Bob show, they have balancing strengths.

Psychopaths are neither demons nor demigods. They are just *different* in perplexing and difficult ways.

So here is that new metaphor: *psychopathy is a third sexual identity*, a distinct gender. Social humans differentiate to either male or female gender identities. Psychopaths differentiate to their own sexual identity. While male and female do their particular dances, psychopathy romps around them both. For all his sexual intensity, Mallory is asexual in a profound way.

The Family Emotions

It was our eukaryote ancestors, common to plants, animals, and fungi, that invented sex. Much later, our ancestors invented parental investment. It's a trick that animals have rediscovered many times. Plants and fungi less so. 80% of birds form stable couples where both parents invest in the young, and about 6% of mammals do this. All mammals care for their young if you disregard the father. In many species of fish, reptiles, and invertebrates also, both parents look after their young. Such species tend to form monogamous couples, at least per breeding season.

As any parent knows, childcare is hard work with few obvious short-term rewards. Kids tend to grow up oblivious to the efforts of their parents. If they think about it at all, it tends to be "I could have done better." Yet the genetic payoff for investing in children and grandchildren is huge.

The genes' solution is to blackmail and bribe us with mood-altering chemicals. These are serotonin, dopamine, oxytocin, and endorphins. When we do the "right" thing we get a soup of chemicals that makes us feel good. When we do the "wrong" thing, we get a different

soup that makes us feel terrible. These affect our whole body, not just our brain. 80% of our serotonin is in our intestines. That "gut feeling" is real.

This carrot-and-stick machinery sits out of sight of the conscious mind. With knowledge and practice, you *can* hack into it and steer it. It is like learning to control your heart rate. The moment you stop trying, your subconscious takes over again.

The machinery is, of course, the emotions. The predator, defense, and sexual emotions focus on orchestration. Family needs more abstract emotions. This group covers three kinds of bonds that evolved together. These are the bond between a couple, between parents and children, and between siblings. In general the emotions drive the family to stick together.

These emotions are confusing to most people. So I'll use the same approach as for previous groups. This is: take each piece of the puzzle, identify it, and then name it:

- *Love* - the emotion of being close to a family member. We establish "closeness" by mutual physical contact. The kinds of contact depend on the relationship. The closer you are to another person the more you feel the emotion. Your eyebrows rise, your pupils widen, you smile and laugh and feel happy. You use open and dominant body language. You are more childlike: playful and uninhibited. You seek more contact. You need less sleep.
- *Longing* - the emotion of being far from a family member. You're feeling the symptoms of oxytocin withdrawal. You obsess on to get back to your loved one. You may feel alone. Your pupils shrink. You use closed and submissive body language. You are serious, less childlike. You sleep more than usual.
- *Loss* - the emotion of losing a loved family member. Your metabolism slows down. Your sight and hearing work slower than usual. You may feel "nothing," an empty or dead feeling. Your pain response lowers, thanks to the endorphins suppressing your oxytocin withdrawal. You seek other family members. You may feel *longing* or *sadness* later. Your face shows no expression except inattention.
- *Happiness* - the emotion of being in a good situation. Psychologist [Martin Seligman](#) lists five aspects of such a situation: pleasure, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments. My experience says you also need good health, security from threats, structure, and freedom. You also feel happiness by empathy from other people. When you are happy, you smile, laugh, and use open body language. Your pupils widen, and blood flows to your skin, making you glow.
- *Sadness* - the emotion of being in a bad situation. I'd argue it's what we feel when you lack one or more aspects of happiness. If you fall ill, or are constantly threatened, or have few accomplishments, or see no meaning in our lives, you feel sad. You also feel

sadness by empathy from others. When you are sad, you show closed body language. Your pupils shrink. Blood circulation slows in your skin, making you look pale and cold. You may pout, or weep.

- *Fear* - the emotion of asking for help from a threat. *Fear* is how you signal danger to your parents or siblings. Alone, you feel *suspense* or *terror*. Your heart and breathing speed up. Adrenalin pumps into your blood, and your muscles get ready for action. Your eyes open wide, as your vision and hearing focuses on the threat. If you can, you make the characteristic shout or shriek of *fear*. If you must remain silent, you mime *fear*. You open your mouth and eyes wide and stare at the threat, hands raised like claws.
- *Distress* - the emotion of being lost or threatened. This has a juvenile and a parental form. Juvenile *distress* is a call for help from a parent or older sibling. Parental *distress* is a call to a missing child. *Distress* is a display emotion. A child will shriek, wail, cry, or call to its parents. Every parent knows their child's distress calls. *Distress* triggers similar physiological shifts as *anger* and *rage*: red face, loud voice. *Distress* leads to *anger* and *rage*. Its universal body language is: shoulders and head slump down, eyes peer up.
- *Jealousy* - the emotion of competing for attention. *Jealousy* is how you signal that a parent, partner, or friend is neglecting you. You feel someone else is receiving attention that should be yours. You frown, and imitate other emotions: *sadness*, *anger*, *despair*, or *disgust*. The imitation is a warning to the person giving the attention. Watch out, it says, or this is how I will feel towards you, for real.

I've not listed *hate* here. While this emotion does exist in families, I believe it's a more recent evolution. There is no function for *hate* in a family without the tribe. It is a luxury that depends on other people. We cannot reject a family member, no matter their crimes, unless they have somewhere else to go. I place it in the group of tribal emotions that I cover next.

With parental investment, we also get the deeper evolution of empathy. The mechanism is clear: one person feels some emotion, perhaps being sick or lost. The emotion causes the person to make distress calls and show visible signs of *distress*. This triggers the matching emotion in a parent or sibling, pushing them to help.

In the same way, a child eats well and is healthy and shows this by expressing *happiness*. The parents respond by feeling great about themselves. It doesn't take a training manual to have kids. Children from birth tell their parents what to do next. "Feed me! Enough, stop, I'm going to vomit! Cuddle me! More, this is great! OK, put me somewhere safe, I want to sleep!"

Juveniles do not have the same range of empathy as adults. Yet they often have basic empathy from a few years old. A young child is playing and sees another crying. He or she offers their toy to the crying child, who accepts it and starts smiling.

Social humans project their family emotions onto people outside the family. They also project them onto pets and inanimate objects as they bring these into their personal lives. We feel happy when our possessions are safe and in a good state. When our possessions are vulnerable to damage, or in a poor state, we feel sad. We have empathy with inanimate objects. Our home is happier when it is safe against the rain, and warm, and filled with people. An cold, leaking, abandoned house feels lonely, and when we see it, we feel sad.

Empathy triggers older emotions too, particularly the defense emotions. Close traumatic injury or death in others close to us triggers shock. Threat to others provokes terror, flight, anger, or rage.

Mallory does not feel the family emotions. She feels no *love* for her relatives, neither parents nor siblings nor children. She does not experience *distress*, nor *happiness*, nor *sadness*. She has no empathy for belongings and living spaces. She treats her home the same as a random field. This makes her careless with things, and incapable of organizing by emotional value. Her living room looks sterile, or chaotic, to social eyes.

Mallory can project the visible signs well, at least in face and voice and body language. She acts *love*, *happiness*, *sadness*, and so on. This presents a real problem for honest relatives. As Mallory fakes her emotions, parents, siblings, and other relatives over-invest in her. So we've evolved counter-measures. Those are physical signals that Mallory cannot (yet) fake. Pupil size and skin flushing are the main ones.

Mallory can fake crying to some extent. She cannot fake the full display, above all the skin flushing. She can produce the tears, and runny nose, as the tears leak into the nasal cavities. This looks like "silent weeping." We generally feel it's insincere when someone does that. I suspect there's an arms race here. Honest crying gets more complex over time, to stay ahead of Mallory's acting skills.

When we see Mallory expressing an emotion, we do a subconscious check of her eyes. I assume our mind corrects for light conditions, perhaps using our own pupil size as control. If her pupils match her expression, we feel "she is sincere." If not, we will still respond, yet with unspoken reservations.

Various emotions display through skin flushing, each with different and recognizable patterns. *Terror*, *anger*, *interest*, *climax*, *happiness*, *sadness*. The emotions control these flushes and use them as authentic indicators.

When we have an authentic indicator, it is always fun to ask, "are there ways to cheat?"

There are ways to hide the pupil response. For instance, dark sunglasses, veils, or other coverings of the face and eyes. By wearing these, we can mask our responses. Mallory likes her sunglasses, and often wears them when she's out hunting.

How about the skin flushing? This shows on all skin tones, as different and yet recognizable patterns. The exception is dark black skin. People with dark skin flush like anyone, yet it is invisible. This tells us skin tones evolved after emotional flushing. And yet emotional flushing evolved after we lost our body hair.

There is an advantage in dark skin beyond protection from the sun and skin cancer. How far this has affected the evolution of skin tones, is an open question. We can ask same question about the evolution of dark irises. Does this interfere with empathy? If so, has that driven its evolution in any way?

There are other empathetic responses that Mallory also lacks. I've not counted yawning as an emotion. Yet it follows a familiar pattern of family emotions. Yawning prepares our body for sleep, and signals to others that we are tired. You breath in, close your eyes, stretch your jaw wide, and tilt your head back. Arguably this pumps blood into your brain. More interestingly, it provokes an empathetic yawn response and drowsiness in younger family members who observe you.

Mallory does not have the contagious yawn response. [Some researchers have suggested](#) that this is a potential psychopath test.

The Tribal Emotions

Humans take the parental investment strategy to an extreme. We invest in our extended family, to almost any degree of distance. We are able to form tribes of many families, keeping track of every other person in our tribe. To make this leap we evolved tribal instincts, including a set of emotions:

- *Loneliness* - the emotion of being disconnected. You feel physical pain in your intestines and chest when you see others enjoying themselves. You sleep lightly and wake often. Your immune system starts to slow and you start to get sick. Your metabolism slows down, yet you eat more often than usual. Your circulation slows, and you feel cold. You hunger for company and conversation. You adopt submissive body language. Your voice goes quieter and lower. You sigh a lot. You cannot smile with sincerity.
- *Belonging* - the emotion of being safe within your tribe. You feel pleasure in your gut and chest. You sleep well, and wake up refreshed. You are healthy and rarely get colds. You lose weight and don't feel the cold, as your metabolism speeds up. You spend more time with people than alone. You rarely question your situation. You use confident body language. Your voice gets louder and you laugh and smile with ease.

- *Disgust* - the emotion of tasting bad food. *Disgust* is how you warn others to stop eating. Blood flows to your digestive tract. Your stomach prepares to vomit. You make noises and a specific grimace to warn others. You narrow your eyebrows, curl your upper lip, wrinkle your nose, and stick your tongue out. You look at others to make sure they got the message. You make a characteristic groan.
- *Hate* - the emotion of rejecting a tribal member. *Hate* is a call to others to support you in a fight. Your eyes narrow and stare at the offender, or an imaginary spot. Your nostrils flare. You frown and your pupils contract. Your mouth closes hard in an anti-smile. Your body prepares for a physical confrontation. Blood flows away from your face and to your arms and shoulders. Your fists clench and you clench your jaw. You use aggressive and closed body language. You make the characteristic sounds of *hate*: low growls. You lose your sense of humor.
- *Self-pity* - the emotion of asking for adult help. *Self-pity* is the "I give up!" emotion. This lets us display defeat, and respond to it by helping one another. You show *self-pity* by slumping your shoulders, pouting, and crying. You look down, sniff, and use closed body language. The empathic response is to put an arm around the shoulders and ask, "how can I help?"
- *Submission* - the emotion of offering yourself. You feel weak and insecure. Your heart beats faster than normal. Your temperature is higher than normal. You are anxious at the threat of rejection. If the other party accepts and confirms, you switch to feeling powerful and secure.

Mallory belongs to no tribe, and does not feel the tribal emotions. He can do a perfect imitation, within the limits we've already discussed. His act has several weaknesses that you can learn to see:

- For those emotions triggered by others' behavior, Mallory is blind and often does not react at all. For example, he feels no *fear* when confronted with a physical threat. If he does display such an emotion, the timing and strength will be wrong.
- For those emotions triggered by one's own behavior, Mallory reacts the wrong way. So, we get the classic "anti-social" behavior. In a situation where Bob or Alice would feel *jealousy*, he shows nothing. Or, he shows a different emotion, such as *anger* or *self-pity*.
- For those cases where he has an innate response from his emotional palette, it is extreme. It goes from zero to 100% with no build-up. Then it switches off again, with no drop-off. You will see this most often with displays of *fury*. You also see it with his masks.

- For those emotions triggered by empathy, Mallory does not respond in the "right" way. He does not show *disgust* when eating something bad. He just spits it out and throws it away. He does not respond to *disgust* with his own *disgust* face. He just stops eating. Again, if he learns to mimic, timing and volume will be "wrong."

This dynamic can be confusing for anyone trying to establish normality with Mallory. In situations where he should be acting jealous, he shows nothing. Then, in minor and unremarkable situations, he will explode in a violent fit of *fury*. Seen from Alice or Bob's side, this is incomprehensible. For Mallory it's logical. He does not seek attention from his prey, any more than you seek attention from your lunch. Yet if he sees his lunch trying to sneak away, he attacks it with teeth and claws.

The Social Emotions

Somewhere around three million years, we began to evolve the emotions for relating to arbitrary people. This happened before the development of spoken language. These emotions let us work with an unlimited number of people, building social networks that stretch over time and space:

- *Like* - the emotion of a positive relationship. In "Attack and Capture" I explained how social accounting works. When you like someone, you feel happy in their presence, or when you think of them. This shows in the usual ways: wide eyes and open pupils, smiles, open body language, shining face. This emotion is all about display, to the person involved, and to third parties. There is some empathic response. Thus we tend to like people who are happy, as they seem to like us. Yet most of the time we base our response off our internal accounting.
- *Dislike* - the emotion of a negative relationship. When you are with someone you dislike, or you think of them, you feel sad and often angry. You show this with a frown, closed pupils, closed body language, pale face, tight lips, and so on. Like *like*, this is a display emotion with some empathic response. If someone frowns when they see us, we're concerned. Yet we don't respond with *dislike*.
- *Anxiety* - the emotion of preparing for a future threat. You may feel dread, in the pit of your stomach. You may feel worry in your mind. You frown, and furrow your brow as you work through possibilities and plans. Your facial language is a signal to others that you believe something bad will happen. Depending on your age and track record, others may respond with *anxiety* of their own.
- *Guilt* - the emotion of breaking a social code. You want to confess, and for others to forgive you. You may want to also run away. Your body displays the former, and prepares for the latter. You feel dread in your intestines, blood flows to your legs and

back. Your pupils narrow and your eyes close as if preparing for violence. Your focus flits from face to face, avoiding eye contact, to see if people are looking at you. You lose your sense of humor and become more paranoid. You interpret others' *dislike* as a personal statement.

- *Shame* - the emotion of humiliation. You feel sick in your stomach. You believe everyone is looking at you, and talking about you. Blood flows to your ears in a visible sign to others. You look at the ground. You avoid eye contact and do not engage in conversation. You want to hide. The social response to *shame* depends on the level of misconduct.
- *Remorse* - the emotion of apology. *Remorse* is close to *defeat*. Yet you feel it in the specific context of having broken a social code and someone has caught you. You feel *remorse* when faced with *hate*, *anger*, or *disgust* at some crime. You feel *remorse* as a strong desire to recreate balance. You want people to accept you again. The empathic response to *remorse* may be *like*, or it may be more *anger*.
- *Impatience* - the emotion of losing time. You feel irritated. You make repeated movements of the feet or hands. Your adrenalin is high, as you are eager to move. You gesticulate and make offended noises. The empathic response to impatience is to apologize and feel *shame*.
- *Amusement* - the emotion of a sudden understanding. You showing *surprise* and *happiness*. You exhale, laugh, smile, clap your hands, nod or shake your head. *Amusement* is an empathy display evolved from *glee*. To feel amusement at the right moment and in the right degree requires empathy for the scene. When two people share the same amusement, it creates a double reaction, provoking laughter.
- *Revenge* - the emotion of punishing a rule breaker. You feel *anger* at first. Then you feel determined and justified in action, even if that means violence. You show neither happiness nor sadness. You tense the muscles around your eyes, your mouth, and your jaw to make it clear you are serious. *Revenge* can lead to the predator emotions, if the emotion spreads to a group.

The social emotions seem to exist to trip up Mallory. That suggests they evolved as a defense against psychopaths. That dates human psychopathy to at least the point in our history when we grew beyond the small tribe, between 3 and 2 million years ago. Psychopaths need a crowd. They do of course prey on family, yet their life-cycle depends on a fresh supply of naive faces.

Each is an adaptation to defend against various of Mallory's talents:

- *Like* and *dislike* - they seem simple, yet these emotions are the output of long and complex calculations. The calculations take into account years of observations, transactions, and received knowledge. This translates into a simple "yes/no/maybe" value. We feel this value and show it as pleasure or distrust. It drives us to avoid bad actors, and invest more in honest players. Mallory cheats this by beaming love or dislike at his targets.
- *Anxiety* - the emotion which says something bad is happening, and asks others for help. Again, it can be a simple result of a complex calculation. Some anxiety is obvious: tomorrow I must meet important people, and that stresses me. Most anxiety is a vague "something is not right" gut feeling, that will not go away. I believe it's often caused by our subconscious psychopath detectors shrieking at us.
- *Guilt* - the emotion which says, "I am not a psychopath, promise!" when someone catches us cheating. Everyone breaks rules at some point. Social groups need a way to distinguish casual criminals from professionals. Some people will reform, and others will not. This is the indicator: casual criminals can feel and display guilt. Mallory has evolved a good imitation of guilt. Yet it is not perfect, and it often leaves us unsatisfied.
- *Shame* - the emotion which says, "I'm aware that I broke the rules." Again, this is about detecting professional rule breakers. Shame has a specific skin flushing pattern: face and ears. Mallory can mimic the body language, yet he cannot blush nor show red ears. Shame is such a powerful psychopath filter that social humans also mimic it, by blushing.
- *Remorse* - the emotion which says "sorry" and asks others to forgive us. Remorse has a body language, yet the key to an authentic display is timing and duration. You must say "sorry" at the right time, and for the right amount. To do this requires empathy for *dislike* and *revenge*. Mallory cannot show remorse in a way that satisfies other people.
- *Impatience* - the emotion of someone else delaying you. The social response to impatience is remorse, with an apology. Like remorse, this takes empathy to get right. The human obsession with time keeping and schedules seems bizarre. When you see it as a psychopath detector, it makes sense.
- *Revenge* - the emotion of punishing a rule breaker. This is the emotion that pushes us to actually confront and expel psychopaths. Catching Mallory's infidelity, theft, deception, or other violations, we fill with indignation and revenge. This propels us out of Mallory's hands.

The concept of a "social code" is foreign to Mallory. She can learn it, yet it is never a native concept. She disregards others' needs by definition. This means she cannot deduce rules like "keep quiet when others are sleeping." If you explain a rule to her, her mind immediately

breaks down the opportunity and risk. She obeys rules not because others would suffer. Rather, because they are not worth breaking.

A good social code is such a valuable defense against psychopaths that most are willing to pay to enforce it. You can see the development of modern society in this light. History shows an ever-decreasing rate of violence. Much of the apparatus of the State is about social regulation, and punishment of cheats.

Alice and Bob don't need to learn to defend social codes. When they learn a code, and see someone break it, they feel dramatic *anger* and then the emotion I call *revenge*. The two together tell other people "Someone has done something bad and made me angry!" and then "Please join me in punishing this person!"

Mallory can mimic both these emotions, and can do this two-step display well. Yet our empathic response to *revenge* is distrust. The more dramatic the display, the less we trust it. There are two ways to get support from the group. Mallory does it by building up *hate* and *fear* towards her target before she launches her *anger* and *revenge* act. This works, in specific cases. Then we get crusades, lynch mobs, and witch hunts, with Mallory at their head.

Alice and Bob get support for *revenge* by proving sincerity. In other words, that they have no personal stake. The best proof is to sacrifice assets, time, or personal security. A martyr inspires by proving the honesty of their cause.

To escape the accumulation of consequences, Mallory moves around more than average. She is good at learning local culture and manners. She can mimic accent and body language well. People often find her polite, obsessed with etiquette and manners. Only when you get close do you realize that this is superficial. Her manners serve to impress important people. Her behavior towards those she considers unimportant is cold and dismissive.

She manipulates others' social accounting, with a series of tactics that I explained in "Attack and Capture". If she's caught cheating, her response is denial, and blame-shifting. Mallory can imitate *shame*, yet without the tell-tale ear flushing. *Shame* is such a good psychopath test that Mallory doesn't even try to fake it. And *remorse* without *shame* is an empty gesture we disregard.

If you push Mallory, she will try a range of dramatic evasions. She may break down with dramatic weeping, doing good imitations of *self-pity* and *distress*. She may turn furious on her accuser, or other parties, heaping invented crimes on their heads. This "defend by attacking" behavior is classic, though not unique to psychopaths. Or, she may just leave. Only a psychopath can turn the emotional investment dial from all to nothing in a heartbeat.

Negative Triggering

Emotions are adaptations that helped our ancestors to survive. So there are no "negative" emotions as such. Yet our emotions can turn from helpful to harmful. Many people find their emotions are out of balance. They are anxious for no identifiable reason. They feel distressed, afraid, hateful. They cannot find happiness.

Some emotions, like fear and hate, can lead to terrible suffering, in the wrong hands. I explained how Mallory can use these emotions to push a group towards the worst kinds of violence.

So many emotions trigger in ways that we can call "negative." We can recognize these negative triggers, and we can become resistant against them.

There are two main reasons for negative triggering. The first is history. We evolved for a different world with fewer people and far more real dangers. Modern life is safe, easy, and yet complex and filled with other people. We compete with each other for toy points. Exposure to the elements, ignorance, or non-human predators is the exception, not the rule. We are a species on holiday. Our emotions are often the idle hands waiting for the Devil's commands.

The second reason is Mallory's ability to turn our emotions against us. By faking the right triggers, he throws us left and right like puppets. He is immune to most manipulation. His own emotional range shrinks back to the tiny ancestral set of predator emotions. You *can* manipulate him through these emotions, with practice. It's not just Mallory who pulls our strings. Entire industries have learned how to use our emotional responses against us.

I'm going to take each emotion and explain common negative triggering for it. This isn't a full breakdown. It's a basis for your own thinking and personal research. Everyone is unique and has their own sensitivities. The goal is to understand how emotions trigger in your own mind.

Let's look at negative triggers for the predatory emotions:

- *Hunger* - the emotion of looking for prey. Trigger: images of plumped-up food and other consumables: cars, clothes, shoes, and drinks. Such images form the bulk of advertising. They speak to hunger, and can exert a powerful effect until you realize what the trick is.
- *Obsession* - the emotion of stalking a prey. Trigger: repeated images of the same consumable. This is a goal of saturation advertisement, to move you from hunger to obsession. Once you want a specific consumable, you ignore alternatives. As long as the object of your obsession is within reach, you fixate on it.
- *Euphoria* - the emotion of chasing a fleeing prey. Trigger: consumables that are just out of reach. A budget model does not trigger euphoria. A luxury model does. Smart marketers know this, and offer every wallet an option that hurts.

- *Glee* - the emotion of seeing your prey stumble. Trigger: luxuries at a discount. We feel glee when we get a good deal on a prized item. This effect is so strong that people will camp outside shops for hours. They're waiting for that extraordinary prize and the feeling that comes with it.
- *Fury* - the emotion of attacking your prey. Trigger: plastic packaging that is impossible to open. I'm only half-joking. How often have you resorted to using your teeth to open a stubborn pack of food? And what was the emotion you felt when it finally opened?
- *Bloodlust* - the emotion of killing your prey. Trigger: signing on the dotted line, swiping your card, or handing over a roll of hundreds. It is understandable why so many people love shopping, are even addicted to it.
- *Gluttony* - the emotion of eating your prey. Trigger: taking your new luxury consumable home, unwrapping it, and admiring it. A smart business makes this "unboxing" experience tangible and tactile. The packaging is half of the prize.
- *Satiation* - the emotion of having eaten enough or too much. Trigger: a newer model comes out. Your luxury has gone stale. Rotten, almost. You stop showing it off. You start to obsess for the newer model.
- *Blocked* - the emotion of a failed hunt or chase. Trigger: the shop is out of stock. You feel like life itself has stopped for a few hours. You ponder on alternatives. You feel diminished and yet saved from a possible error.

Let's look at negative triggers for the defense emotions:

- *Surprise* - the emotion of reacting to a sudden threat. Trigger: the bank declines your card. You try to imagine how this is possible. You have not used it for weeks. You pay in cash and look for the number for your bank.
- *Suspense* - the emotion of detecting a potential threat. Trigger: the bank tells you there have been various large payments with your card. Your blood runs cold. Time seems to slow down. You realize... Mallory! You text him, "did you use my card??"
- *Terror* - the emotion of wanting to flee from a threat. Trigger: Mallory is on his way home. He's not replying to your texts. You know there's going to be a fight. You huddle in the couch, looking for a safe space in the house.
- *Flight* - the emotion of fleeing from a pursuing threat. Trigger: Mallory comes home and slams the door. You run to the bathroom and close the door. He is shouting. You make out the words. He's using horrid language. He accuses you of stealing the family's money, sleeping around, trying to kick him out.

- *Anger* - the emotion of defiance against a threat. Trigger: Mallory opens the bathroom door and yells insults at you. His face contorts into a mask of anger: eyes wide open, teeth bared, arms outreached. You feel he might murder you right there.
- *Rage* - the emotion of physically attacking a threat. Trigger: Mallory strikes you on the face, so fast you cannot defend yourself. You jump at him and wrap both hands around his throat, yelling incoherent noises. You squeeze as hard as you can. You feel nothing except surprising strength. You keep squeezing.
- *Shock* - the emotion of preparing for sudden death. Trigger: Mallory's face goes blank. You think you've killed him. You let go. He punches you in the face, so hard that your head hits the wall. Blood starts pouring down your face. He's broken your nose. You're thinking: this has gone way too far, and you collapse to the floor.
- *Triumph* - the emotion of asserting dominance. Trigger: you get up and smile at Mallory. "Thanks," you tell him. "I'm going to the hospital. If you're still here when I get back, I'm going to the cops and have you charged for assault." You walk out past him.
- *Defeat* - the emotion of submitting to dominance. Trigger: in an alternate time-line, you stay on the floor, and you wait for Mallory to leave. When he's gone you clean yourself up. Not so bad, you think, looking in the mirror. The next day Mallory acts like nothing happened. You wonder who you can borrow money from to pay off your credit card.

Let's look at negative triggers for the sexual emotions.

We know the emotional triggers are different between the two genders. Men respond to simple visual cues. These are hip-to-waist ratio, breast shape, leg-to-body ratio, nose shape, hair length. A plastic doll with the right features is erotic to most men. It's the basis for the porn industry. Women respond to a different and more subtle set of cues like male power.

Men and women also look for sexual partners in different ways. In 2015, hackers leaked the client database of the Ashley Madison website. This site claimed to offer cheating spouses a way to hook up. Analysis of the data showed that for about 3 million men there were less than 1,450 actual women. The bulk of "female" accounts were Ashley Madison employees or scripted "bots". The business model was to show interest in men, then get them to pay to send chat messages.

Ashley Madison was able to trigger interest, desire, and lust in men, and then convert that into profits. It is a common pattern in product marketing, aimed at men. Step one: show beautiful women who display interest. This triggers desire. Step two: cut to desirable products. This flips the sexual emotions into predatory ones.

Marketing aimed at women rarely takes this route. I suspect it does not work on women. Rather, it uses another route. Step one is to show thin young female shapes. This triggers subconscious jealousy and anxiety. Then, cut to desirable products, flipping these emotions into predatory ones.

Let's look at negative triggers for the family emotions:

- *Love* - the emotion of being close to a family member. Trigger: Mallory tells you how much she loves you. She gazes deep into your eyes, texts you a hundred times a day, spends hours in bed with you. You respond by falling in love with her.
- *Longing* - the emotion of being far from a family member. Trigger: Mallory disappears without warning and does not respond to her phone. You feel intense longing. When she turns up, you accept her explanation without question.
- *Loss* - the emotion of losing a loved family member. Trigger: Mallory breaks up with you after a violent argument. She packs her bags and walks out. You beg her to stay, it makes no difference.
- *Happiness* - the emotion of being in a good situation. Trigger: Mallory is so happy, and shows it in her face and body language. Everything is fantastic! You've never felt happier in your life.
- *Sadness* - the emotion of being in a bad situation. Trigger: Mallory is not talking to you. When she looks at you, she has no expression. It makes you feel hurt and sad. She does not seem to care. So cold.
- *Fear* - the emotion of asking for help from a threat. Trigger: Mallory says she'll tell everyone you raped her if you don't give her the money she says she needs. You feel cold horror and dread. You call your dad for advice and help.
- *Distress* - the emotion of being lost or threatened. Trigger: Mallory makes more threats. She starts to smash kitchenware. You lock yourself in the bathroom and call your sister. She says you're crazy to stay there.
- *Jealousy* - the emotion of competing for attention. Trigger: it's New Years' Eve and you're at a company dinner with Mallory. She is so radiant, like she is an actress. She radiates strength and confidence. Everyone stares at her. She spends most of the evening talking to your boss. You feel sad and then when Mallory comes to ask, "is everything OK?" you act angry and petulant. She laughs at you, not in a nice way. As you drive home, Mallory in the passenger seat complains about how controlling you are.

Let's look at negative triggers for the tribal emotions:

- *Loneliness* - the emotion of being disconnected. Trigger: your sister isn't talking to you any more. You mention this to Mallory, who immediately says, "Such a bitch. She's jealous because I told her about the money your dad gave us." You're angry with your sister, and then you start to feel sick.
- *Belonging* - the emotion of being safe within your tribe. Trigger: Mallory organizes a party for your birthday. Lots of strangers turn up. Your own friends seem to be few. Still the company makes you feel secure and happy.
- *Disgust* - the emotion of tasting bad food. Trigger: Mallory decides she'll cook. She prepares pasta, from a tin. You taste the slimy concoction and try adding more pepper. It doesn't help. You force yourself to eat some, then you feel sick and you leave the rest. Mallory is offended. She never cooks again. She tells everyone how you hate his food, and prefer to eat in restaurants, wasting money.
- *Hate* - the emotion of rejecting a tribal member. Trigger: you call your sister. She answers, and before you can chat, she's yelling at you. You start to realize she believes you spent the money on your new car. You try to explain it's a company car, the money went to Mallory. "Liar, I hate you!" she shouts, and cuts you off. You shiver with adrenalin. You start to hate your sister. It'll be years before you talk to her again, and you both realize what happened.
- *Self-pity* - the emotion of asking for adult help. Trigger: as Mallory attacks you, it feels so unfair. You start to weep. It surprises you, yet you can't stop it. You stop the car because your eyes are blurring. Mallory responds by getting out, slamming the door, smoking a cigarette. "When you stop your baby act, can we go home?" she says, no emotion. "I'm getting cold out here!"
- *Submission* - the emotion of offering yourself. Trigger: home, Mallory takes off her coat, and then undresses down to her underwear. She is so beautiful it takes your breath away. She commands, "come here" and leads you to the bedroom. Your heart pounds. You have already forgotten and forgiven.

These emotional whirlwinds are exhausting and traumatizing. For Mallory they are easy, cheap gestures that leave no wake in her mind. Last of all, let's look at negative triggers for the social emotions:

- *Like* - the emotion of a positive relationship. Trigger: Mallory says he's going to repay the money. His business deal went well, he made good profits. He needs a little more for the custom fees. Do you have a thousand? You nod. Life is good.
- *Dislike* - the emotion of a negative relationship. Trigger: Mallory says the customs agent is a crook. He shows a letter insisting on payment. You see the figures. Then you see the letter is to you. "Why is my name there?" you ask. "Well, it was your money," Mallory

answers. You don't argue, you're just trying to understand.

- *Anxiety* - the emotion of preparing for a future threat. Trigger: a letter arrives from the police. They want you to come in to make a statement. Did Mallory make a complaint? Your nose was just bloodied, not broken. You never went to the police. To forgive is to survive. You call and you get an appointment for the next day.
- *Guilt* - the emotion of breaking a social code. Trigger: the police detective explains that your partner made serious claims against you. There was evidence of bruising on his neck, and a medical report. You explain that Mallory punched you. "Was that before or after you tried to strangle him?" asks the interviewing officer. You ask if you can speak to a lawyer before giving a statement. The woman nods. You leave.
- *Shame* - the emotion of humiliation. Trigger: your lawyer talks to the police and they agree to not file charges, only issue a warning. The lawyer seems surprised how easy it was. You return to the police station and the same detective gives you a formal warning. "Any more violence between the two of you, and it'll be jail time. Understood?" You nod, ears flushing. You want to melt and disappear into the floor.
- *Remorse* - the emotion of apology. Trigger: Mallory is weeping, crying. He says you're violent and unstable, and he has to leave you. His whole family have been phoning you all day, leaving threatening messages. "If you hurt him again, we'll be there to deal with you!" they say. You try to make it good. You feel so, so sorry. It was all your fault.
- *Impatience* - the emotion of losing your time. Trigger: you're going out to see a movie, with Mallory. He is still choosing his clothes. It's been half an hour. You pace the living room, restless and anxious. Mallory comes out of the bedroom, impeccably dressed. You shake your head and hands. "What took you so long?" you say, "we're going to be late!" He sighs and walks past you, and gets into the car, without a word.
- *Amusement* - the emotion of a sudden understanding. Trigger: as you leave the movie, you see a couple arguing on the street. The woman is shouting at the man, who's defending himself. She slaps him, without warning. You see the shock on his face, and you laugh out loud. You know how he feels. He sees you, frowns, and you try to show sympathy, "crazy, right?!"
- *Revenge* - the emotion of punishing a rule breaker. Trigger: on the drive home, a pedestrian crosses in front of you. So dangerous! You honk the car horn and frown at them. Idiots, they could cause an accident like that.

Grounding Your Emotions

"We start out feeling afraid of something, then that fear makes us feel weak, then that weakness makes us angry, and then we start to hate." -- Cracked.com, "[4 Terrifying Psychology Lessons Behind Famous Movie Monsters](#)"

We've looked at how individual emotions work. In practice, it is rarely as clean as I describe. Emotions cause chain reactions, where one emotion triggers another, and so on. This covers the root emotion. Here are examples of some such chains. You might like to extend this with self-observation:

- We dislike someone, and feel somewhat threatened. That makes us angry, and then we feel rage. We then feel guilt, and then shame at our reaction.
- We love someone, and we feel eagerness, and then belonging, and then happiness.
- We love someone, yet they are not paying attention to us, so we feel jealous, and then sad.
- A good friend dies. We feel loss, and then we feel guilty that we did not feel it harder.
- We feel loss, and then we feel lonely, which makes us feel sad. People respond to that by avoiding us, so we feel more lonely, and sadder.

Some of these chains are positive and some less so. Some chains turn into cycles that can be hard to break. The usual way to try to break an emotional chain reaction is to provoke a different emotion. For example, to break a sad-lonely cycle, we look for ways to feel happy. The problem is that the original emotions often come back.

There's a good reason for this. A root emotion triggers off some core belief or assumption. As long as you don't challenge and discredit this belief, it remains active. It will sooner or later trigger the root emotion again, and restart the chain reaction.

To break an emotional chain, we cannot just add more emotions on top. Rather, we must find and understand that root belief, and we then discredit it. When we do that, the triggering stops, and the emotional chain reaction ends. Then we can feel other emotions like happiness and belonging and love.

Take the example from Cracked. The fear comes from the assumption that the monster is dangerous. Look again, and you see an image, poor computer graphics, and a shaky camera. The fear disappears. Then the weakness, the anger, and the hate vanish too.

How do we find the root belief? It is always hidden under layers of emotions. To see it, you must work back through the emotional chain. This sounds mystical, yet it's quite banal. Emotions fade away when you analyze them. We feel the last emotion the strongest. So, just ask yourself the question, "what am I feeling, and where does that come from?"

It is hard to stop, when you are feeling strong emotions, and ask yourself such a question. It can be easier with a second person, a therapist. Yet most of the time when you are dealing with Mallory, you are on your own. Get used to asking this question when it does not matter. You can then learn to ask it when it does.

Your goal is to work backwards, emotion by emotion. At each step you use the knowledge you've learned of how emotions work. You want to identify the most probable trigger. As you identify the trigger, the emotion calms and disappears. You repeat and finally, you come to a root assumption.

The root assumption is often simple, yet powerful:

- By displaying this emotion, I will get a response from others.
- By displaying this emotion, I will get my parents or family to save me.
- By feeling this emotion, I am reacting to a real situation.

And then you can ask yourself the question, "will feeling and displaying this emotion make things better?" The answer is often, "no." As you accept that answer, the root emotion goes away. If you're experiencing several emotions, each may have its own chain, and root assumption. Many triggers fighting for attention at the same time makes us feel as if we're in emotional turmoil.

Let's say someone breaks into your apartment and steals your laptop and camera. You feel intense emotions that become obsessive and consume you for weeks. You can't sleep because you dream of another break-in. You search online for your stolen possessions. You ask yourself over and over, *why me?* Your emotions seem to flip around, out of control.

When you focus, you realize you feel hate, fear, and intense loneliness. Three dominant emotions. You analyze each of these:

- The hate comes from anger at the thieves. The anger is a normal defense emotion. Except, of course, it's too late. The event has come and gone, and no amount of anger will stop it. As you realize this, the anger and the hate go away.
- The fear comes from anxiety at another robbery. The anxiety comes from self-pity, as you cry for help from friends and family. Except of course, you can fix this yourself. You install a better lock. The self-pity goes away, and so does the anxiety and fear.
- The loneliness comes from the loss of your treasured possessions. You loved them so much. If they were people, then displaying pain might bring them back to you. Stolen goods don't care. They are gone forever. As you realize that, and stop hoping they'll turn up, the loss goes away, and you stop feeling so alone.

This self-analysis is hard. I make it sound easy, only because I've practiced for years. Use a notepad and write down what you think you feel. Learn to name your emotions, using my list, and analyze them whenever you can. Everyone has different patterns. Yet each of us tends to repeat a small set that we're comfortable with. You'll find no more than a dozen emotional chains dominate your life. As you get good at this, you can learn to regulate these emotions almost as fast as they happen.

There are other techniques to control emotions. For example [the Wikihow guide](#) provides five different techniques. Method 4, "Reflecting On Your Feelings" is closest to grounding.

When you are well grounded, several interesting things happen:

- First, you become more self-aware. You notice your emotions are flaring up. You analyze why, and you see something that you never noticed before: the triggers. Your own responses become your instrument. Rather than denying your emotions, for the trouble they cause, you now embrace them. They just don't go far.
- Second, this emotional awareness lets you change how you relate to others. Social discourse runs on emotional games, more or less overt. As you learn to observe, you see these games when others play them, and when you play them yourself. You lose your insecurities, anxiety, and need to belong.
- Third, it protects you against manipulation. Mallory needs an emotional surface to attack. When you do not respond to his triggers, you can withstand even brutal personal attacks. Your normal response to Mallory's fury is terror, flight, and anger. To his desire, you feel intense love. These feelings will incapacitate you. Grounded, you see Mallory's expression and you think, "nice mask."

Conclusions

I've explained how our emotions work to orchestrate our body for action or display our mental state to others. I've defined six groups of emotion: predator, defense, sexual, family, group, and social. In each group the emotions fulfill a certain role. This functional breakdown gives us about fifty built-in emotions. Each has a universal behavior and physical expression.

We've seen how Mallory's emotional range covers only the oldest group. She is a predator, and sees the world in these terms. Even her sexual behavior is indistinguishable from hunting. Or, vice-versa. When you seek to understand how Mallory feels as she stalks a new target, think of how you feel sexual desire.

Mallory's attitude to sex is striking for two reasons. It seems neither masculine nor feminine. Mallory is bisexual by opportunity and need, not self-identity. And this seems consistent across psychopaths of both genders. Most of us accept human minds and bodies differentiate towards male and female poles. Psychopathy seems to be a separate pole. It looks like a distinct gender identity, with its specific physical and mental differentiation.

We've seen how empathy works from first principles. We usually define empathy as an emotional response to a family, group, or social emotion. Mallory lacks these emotions, and the empathy that goes with them. Yet she does have empathy for the predator, defense, and sexual emotions.

Mallory's pruned emotional range is no handicap. It's an evolved feature that lets her use others' emotions without paying the same cost. When Bob or Alice feel anger, they pay a real price in physical effort and stress. The after effects can take hours or days to wear off.

Mallory is often described as a manipulator, yet she is as vulnerable to triggering as anyone. Show her vulnerability, and she responds with aggression. Show her anger, and she responds with fury. Show her fear, and she responds with bloodlust.

Understanding our emotions lets us control them. I've explained one way to do this, which I call "grounding." This is not to suppress our emotions. Rather it is to be free to sense the emotion, while removing its power over us. Grounded, we are more sensitive yet calmer. This state of mind lets us confront situations that are otherwise terrifying.

In the next chapter I'll explain how to do the impossible. That is, to escape a relationship with a psychopath, without trauma.

Chapter 7. Escape from Jonestown

The Pretty Woman

My mommy and daddy divorced when I was eight. Mommy got to keep me and Daddy told he could not stand to see her ever again. So he went away. I don't see him much.

Granny is a lot like Mommy. They act nice to everyone and people just LOVE them. She is always so polite when people are watching. She has a honey voice. "I love you," she says to me like she means it.

Everything is Daddy's fault, she says all the time. Poor Mommy, everyone is against her. She tells me I have to stay with her, all my life. One minute, she's praising me, telling me I'm her smart baby. Next minute she's yelling at me. She tells me I'm an impossible child, I won't listen, how I don't know what I'm doing is wrong. Then she starts crying, and I feel bad.

She is never wrong. Everything bad is someone else's fault.

She always has bills that she doesn't pay. She tells me: cheating, lying, and stealing are OK as long as you get something out of it. She steals from me, says she'll give me the money back. She never does. She cries or gets mad when I ask her for it.

She stopped talking to her old friends because they don't have money to give her. Money, money, money. It is all she thinks about. She used to hit me, and threaten me with horrible diseases. "If you use the phone you'll get cancer in your brain." Or, "if you don't eat this food you'll get stomach disease and have to go to hospital." Everything I like doing is shit, for her. When I dress myself she tells me I am stupid, and she changes my clothes.

She never says "please" or "thank you" at home. She says, "do this or else!" Always "or else!" I have to go to the shops for her, do the dishes, and the laundry. Daddy once taught me to cook and she threw a rage fit. She said he was making her poor baby into his slave.

She treats me like a baby, asking "did you go poo-poo? How was it? Soft or hard?" She does this in front of my friends, in public. She tells me I don't wash, that I smell, that I'm fat. When we're with family she's always complaining about me. She keeps saying how she sacrificed her life for her poor baby.

At school they bully me a lot, and don't know how to stop it. The teachers know and do nothing. Mommy says it's my fault for not making friends. I once got sick with appendicitis. She complained the whole time I was in hospital. Daddy should have been there to look after me, she said. Then she said how lucky I was that she was there, that if Daddy had looked after me, I would be dead.

I'm sixteen now and want to leave and live with Daddy. Mommy doesn't want that. I made a friend at school. Mommy spoke to her and told her I am depressed and hysterical. My friend stopped talking to me. I don't know who I could ask for help.

The worst part is how people tell me, all the time, how amazing she is and how lucky I am. Sometimes I think I'm the crazy one, and Mommy is just trying to save me. Sometimes I want to kill myself, so I don't hurt other people like she hurt me.

I miss Daddy.

Lifting the Fog

So far I've explained the predator model of psychopathy. I've used it to draw a picture of Mallory in many different situations. If you have read and practiced the previous chapters, you are now equipped. You understand how Mallory stalks, attacks, captures, and consumes his prey. You understand how Mallory thinks. You can start to predict how Mallory will respond in any given situation.

What if you believe you are that prey? You have poured your life into a relationship based on lies. You are asking yourself, what next? When you live in a permanent fog, even small steps are terrifying.

This chapter is for you then. I'm going to explain how to lift that fog, and rebuild your life. It is not going to be an easy project. If you spent years in a relationship with Mallory, it will take you years to become whole again. My goal with this chapter is to teach you several things:

- How to stop Mallory from doing more damage.
- How to repair the damage that Mallory has done.
- How to become a stronger person than you were before.
- How to help others who find themselves in the same place.

It is not enough to remove Mallory from your life. As a victim of abuse, you are vulnerable to future abusers. You must break the cycle and use your experience to become immune to the next psychopath who stalks you.

This advice is above all meant for those entangled with Mallory. If you are reading this and thinking of a friend or relative, please give them this book. Then buy a new copy for yourself.

In the text, Mallory switches from male to female in each section. I've no agenda here except to remind you that Mallory works outside gender. She or he will use sex as a casual tool of control. Yet his or her mind operates on its own plane. You can mentally switch Mallory's gender, if that helps.

The Paper Cup

Consider a relationship as a paper cup. Most people ask, "is the cup half full, or half empty?" Mallory sees the paper cup as something to knock over. He waits for Alice to place the cup back upright, and fill it a little. Then he knocks it over again, and curses Alice for her clumsiness. She apologizes and starts again to refill it.

Again Mallory knocks the cup over, tearing a hole into it. Alice repairs the hole with tape. Mallory takes a knife and rips more holes into the cup. Alice repairs those too.

It continues like this until the cup is one huge ugly mess of tape. Alice has run out of tape several times. She has put her life savings into repairing that damn cup. And yet every time it seems OK again, Mallory smashes it to the floor.

The worst part is that Alice can't see Mallory doing this. He seems so innocent, and insistent that it was her fault. It makes her feel terrible and useless. Still as long as the cup holds water, that is what matters.

The cup is by far the most important thing in Alice's life and she does *everything* possible to repair it. Her friends and family keep telling her, "leave the cup!" yet she cannot. All that work! The cup is her life, she tells herself as she refills it.

Mallory's power comes from that cup and the resources Alice pours into it. He always leaves Alice a way to repair things. If she does walk out, he will do and say what he must to get her back. It ends on his terms, never hers.

If Alice does cut Mallory off, reject his apologies, and walk away, she leaves as a victim. She leaves a large part of her identity in that cup. It obsesses her, and she tries to block it from her mind. Any mention of the past brings her to tears. Her friends and family become tired of her moods and depression. She will heal, most often, yet it will take far longer than it should.

The helplessness is itself a prison. Alice never stopped feeling that the cup was important. She had to make the choice between it, and her own sanity. Her failure to make it work becomes her burden. She thinks she is a failure, doomed to be alone.

So now, consider another ending. One day Alice spots Mallory smashing the cup. Or, someone tells her what he is doing. She watches as he creates chaos, and she watches herself trying to fix it. Something clicks in her mind and she decides to change the game.

Mallory throws the cup to the floor and mocks her. She examines him and sees no love, no affection. She leaves the cup on the floor and gets back to her life. Mallory shouts at her to pick it up, and she ignores him. Or maybe, for once, she lets the anger and rage flow through her, and shouts back at him.

His power comes from her obedience. He ramps up, and tries to crush her rebellion. At first she is afraid. He does terrify her. Yet she holds her ground and keeps watching him. It takes months of confrontations, and then she realizes that he is backing down. His threats are violent and rich, yet he does not carry them out.

Little by little he loses his power over her. And she feels her power returning. She looks better. Her hair and skin are healthier. Her friends tell her how she is looking great. She meets a man at work who seems nice. It's a bit soon, she tells him, and he backs off, and they become friends.

One day, Mallory has gone. Disappeared, without a note or a trace. She isn't surprised. He's become silent, and impatient. Lots of phone calls. Other things going on. She tidies up, and whistles a small tune to herself. It's a nice sunny day outside.

The Survivor's Burden

Let's conduct a virtual experiment. Bob is in a relationship with Mallory. It has lasted some time. He worships her, and cannot see the harm she is doing to him. So one night we send in a commando team. The masked men take Bob by force, bundle him into an unmarked van, and race off. They drive to a new city, open the van door, and set Bob onto the pavement. "You're free now!" they tell him, and vanish.

What happens to Bob next? Does he thank the stars with gratitude, and find a new place to live? Does he pick up where he was before Mallory came into his life? What if Bob was in a cult compound? What if he was working for a nasty, exploitative business?

We know the answer. Bob immediately returns to where he was. Whatever was keeping him there in the first place pulls him right back.

So, we can fine-tune the experiment. We kidnap Bob again, and this time we "deprogram" him. We give him the time to kick his dependency on Mallory. We have done this experiment in real life many times, with other kinds of addicts. We cut them off from their drug supply, force them to go sober.

The result is just the same. Bob goes back to the source of his pain as fast as he can. If he learns anything, it is to avoid those midnight commandos.

This is the first problem with telling Bob to leave Mallory. He won't listen. And if you use force to make him leave, you must continue to use force to keep him away.

Let's now imagine Bob accepts your advice and leaves. Or, more likely, Mallory has used up Bob and kicks him out or walks away. Or some other crisis forces the situation to end. Bob does not walk away a healed person. Instead, he takes with him a massive burden.

The survivors' burden often translates into long-term depression, suicide, and relapse. It is not well understood, and often trivialized. I'll break it down into smaller pieces so you can see its size and shape:

- *Unresolved mental damage.* Mallory has broken down Bob's sense of self. It took thousands of small transactions, each negative in a different way. Often the individual transactions look harmless. Yet the balance is real, structural damage to Bob social mind. I explained in "The Feeding" how and why Mallory does this.
- *Loss of power.* Mallory has isolated Bob. Alone, Bob is and feels weak and vulnerable. He fears social contact. He stays indoors. He has nightmares, and dreads confronting Mallory on every street corner. His fear may last for years, or even the rest of his life.
- *Economic damage.* Mallory has stripped Bob of his assets. Without savings, it is much harder for Bob to take risks. He avoids new opportunities. He must repay debts created by Mallory. He may end up in real poverty, and suffer the consequences of that.
- *Failure to externalize.* Mallory has taught Bob that he is the guilty party, and she the victim. Bob takes this reality with him. He never understood how Mallory manipulated him. He accepts that he is a bad person, and then projects that onto any new relationship he tries to form.
- *Blaming the victim.* Others explain Bob's trauma though his own mind or upbringing. They insist on putting the blame on him. You sought it, he hears. You stayed when you could leave, they repeat. He accepts the majority verdict that he chose to suffer.
- *Survivor's guilt.* Bob knows that Mallory is still hurting others, while he "escaped." He feels responsible for their suffering. He gets stuck in cycles of guilt and shame and self-hate. He has difficulty in making new relationships, so remains alone. He remains vulnerable to drug abuse and suicide.
- *Shame and social stigma.* Bob's behavior during and after his relationship with Mallory disturbs others. He is anxious and depressed, needy and insecure. She has blamed him in public, with lurid detail of his crimes. People consider him tainted. At least, he has bad judgment. At worst, he is the true offender.

- *Lack of alternative relationships.* Mallory has cut Bob off from other people, by demanding exclusivity and attacking alternatives. A sudden rupture is like losing a bad job. The shock of being alone makes Bob vulnerable to looking for a replacement for what he knows. That is, another Mallory.
- *Lifetime risk of relapse.* Drug addicts and abuse victims are at high risk of relapse, all their lives. Bob spends years looking for another Mallory. He still sees himself as worthless and her as the only person who accepted him. He dreams of the euphoria she gave him.

All these add up to one thing. Bob is in real long-term danger, and few people are capable of helping him. If he is lucky he will find a psychologist who understands the trauma psychopaths create. No-one blames children for their abusive parents. People used to blame women for their abusive partners. "She likes it," was the unvoiced verdict. Thankfully that's changing in global culture. It is still harder for men to find that sympathy.

Russia Syndrome

Some damage is forever. Lost years, money, and opportunities are gone.

Yet some damage is fixable. Of the above outcomes, the one that drives all the others is the failure to externalize. It is Alice's own view of what happened that keeps her in such trouble. All the other aspects stem from that, and reinforce themselves in vicious cycles.

So let's break this down. What key things does Alice believe about her relationship with Mallory, that are mistaken?

- *That she desired it and made it happen.* Thus, she has some inescapable need to be with abusive people.
- *That she failed to help Mallory, and make the relationship work.* Thus, she failed in the main goal of her relationship.
- *That people dislike her with good reason, and only Mallory accepted and loved her.* Thus, she prefers her past over her present.
- *That she is weak, afraid, needy, and stupid.* Thus, she will fail in any new relationship or project.
- *That she can succeed by being more like Mallory.* That is, more aggressive, manipulative, and dishonest.

You can see this kind of thinking on many scales. It affects individuals, and it affects whole cultures. Look at a country like Russia and you see a nation believing all these things. It is not part of the "Russian character," if such a thing could exist. It is the result of a long history of psychopaths like Lenin.

Ask almost anyone why Russians get such bad leaders. The answer is always "because they want or deserve them." Even Russians say this, in all seriousness. I call this Russia Syndrome. For Alice to heal, she must cure her Russia Syndrome. To do this she must externalize her story, and see what actually happened. A predator attacked her, and hurt her.

I'm sure there are many ways to externalize, and cure Russia Syndrome. The fastest and most effective way I know is to confront Mallory, and defeat him. I'll explain in detail what this involves. First let's deal with the inevitable choruses of "are you insane?" When I speak of confronting abuse instead of fleeing it, I often get that reaction. The reaction comes from several arguments that appear to be wrong.

The first argument is appeal to free choice. We assume Alice can, and so must, escape. I've explained why this is a fallacy. Even if Alice realizes, "Mallory may be a psychopath," often she cannot just leave. The bonds are deep, and they override conscious decision-making. Alice may be a child, living with a psychopathic parent. Alice may share children with Mallory. Then she may face the agonizing choice of saving herself, or staying with them. Alice may live behind a wall.

The second argument is appeal to authority. "If Mallory is a psychopath like you say, then just tell the police. They will arrest him and save you." This assumes Mallory is silent and cannot tell lies that outshine Alice's truths. Which he can, and will. It assumes authority is honest and fair. It assumes Mallory cannot charm authority to get all the sympathy he needs. Authority is often more likely to punish Alice than save her.

The third argument is the illusion of safety. "It could be worse, don't provoke him." This is what Alice tells herself, over and over. Others will often repeat that. Even if Alice explains how bad things are, people may still tell her, "try and make it work." The assumption is that fighting back makes things worse.

The final argument is the assumption of immediate danger. "He could kill you, you must leave NOW!" Once the illusion of safety breaks, a panic sets in. We assume that Alice risks injury and death if she stays with Mallory. Thus, Alice must get away from Mallory as fast as she can. I'll explain why this also a fallacy, at least in most cases.

Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones

We make a major assumption about psychopaths in popular fiction, and in clinical research. The assumption repeats over and over. It defines how the police and courts deal with Mallory. It defines how we try to help Bob in his struggle to free himself from Mallory.

The assumption is: *the main danger from psychopaths is physical.*

Yes, psychopaths can inflict physical damage to others. Between 1-2% of men and women experience domestic violence in a year. 20-25% of both genders experience it during their lifetimes. Yet this is neither exclusive to psychopaths, nor is it the worst damage they do. The assumption is almost valid, yet is not. Mallory does do real damage. Yet for every physical assault, she delivers hundreds of non-physical blows. These are emotional, social, and economic. She is much more likely to drive her victims to suicide, than to murder them. When you look at psychopathy as a disease that damages Alice and Bob, it becomes obvious. A parasite or predator must find a balance. Mallory must work in stealth. Overt activity leads to detection.

Only failed, incompetent, or damaged psychopaths resort to physical violence, let alone murder. We saw that serial killers appear to be a tiny subset of psychopaths with a specific form of brain injury. We know that the bulk of psychopaths hide all their lives in the general population. These are the successful ones.

Mallory's mask of physical threat is a convincing yet thin lie. For sure, there are violent people, and there are violent psychopaths. Mallory will be violent when it works. Yet Mallory is above all pragmatic about hiding and surviving.

The predator lifestyle is risky. A predator cannot afford even minor injuries. Non-human predators attack the weak, the immature, the old. Never a full-strength adult, capable of fighting back. A cow with a broken leg can still eat grass. A lion with a broken leg will starve. This defines the level of violence a predator will exercise. It will choose the easier prey. It will not fight another predator except to survive or reproduce. It will use bluff and noise to intimidate, yet will flee from a real fight.

And so it is with Mallory. Of course she can deal violence, if it is a matter of survival. Yet the risks are almost never worth the potential benefits. If Bob is in a cult compound or cellar, or if he is young, or old, he is vulnerable, and "confront" is bad advice. If Bob is an adult, then Mallory sees any number of ways that he could fight back and hurt her.

We have this stubborn association of psychopathy with aggression and violence. It looks like silent collective hysteria over our ancient predators. "OMG psychopaths!" I believe this is fear, not data, talking.

Why am I arguing against this assumption? Because it takes us in many wrong directions. Above all it misleads us about how to deal with Mallory and the damage she causes.

Here are some of the mistaken paths we've taken when dealing with psychopathy in the past:

- We used violent criminals as our main source for data about Mallory. This is changing, yet it remains the classic source of data. We under-counted psychopaths, and believed most of them to be male. We did not study how Mallory hides and operates in general society. We did not look at her silent victims.
- We used aggression as a tell-tale when looking at juveniles and families. This leads to "treatments" like medication and anti-aggression therapy for at-risk youngsters. We do not consider that Mallory learns to hide from an early age.
- We disregard many forms violence in the home. We punish a parent for slapping a child. Yet we tolerate Mallory's long-term emotional abuse and neglect of those around her.
- We often ignore the victims of abuse unless there is provable physical violence. Law enforcement and courts tend to dismiss other forms of abuse, if home life looks "normal."
- We do not intervene in obvious cases, such as cults and other abusive organizations. Again, we assume that adults are capable of defending themselves. The State only intervenes when there is serious injury or death, or there are young children.
- We hesitate to apply the "psychopath" label, since it brings such negative connotations. That means we strive to treat Mallory the same as we treat Bob. This doctrine of equivalence leads us to assign blame to both parties.
- If we do conclude, "Mallory is a psychopath," our reaction is hysteria. We in effect scream "run away!" at Bob, as if he was not already doing his utter best. We have no tools for understanding how Bob got to where he is and why he stays there.
- We assume the risk from a psychopath is physical. That is, if Mallory has not yet hurt Bob, so far so good. We tell him to leave, and we hope she does not murder him in his sleep.
- We assume that leaving removes the risk. If Bob does leave, we expect him to resume normal life. If he remains depressed, we blame him. If he does not recover, we abandon him. If Bob does not leave Mallory, we assume he's staying by choice. Again, we blame him and in the end we abandon him.
- We may provide support to Bob, yet only if Mallory used physical violence. Alice may find help if she turns it into an issue of women's rights. If Bob asks for help for emotional abuse, he will find a stone wall, even mockery.

I've explained how Mallory hides and operates. I've explained why Alice and Bob are normal people who get caught in a trap. Why they stay put. Why they seem to accept their situation. I've explained in detail, every single step of the process, from both sides. It is clear that Alice and Bob lose control over their lives quite early on in the process. If they stay with Mallory, it is not from free will.

I've also explained the damage that Mallory does to Bob and Alice, and how deep it goes. I've explained how and why this can end in depression, self-harm and suicide.

Let's assume you are Alice or Bob. I've shown Mallory to be a slow predator who uses mind-control techniques. She uses these techniques to isolate, restrain, and silence you. The next step is to explain how to undo these techniques and fix your Russia Syndrome.

Four Steps to Freedom

Undoing Mallory's damage is a slow and delicate process. I'll break it into four steps to make it easier to understand. These steps are: *Diagnose*, *Observe*, *Inhibit*, and *Terminate*. You can remember these steps with the acronym **DOIT**:

- *Diagnose*: where you ask the question, "am I dealing with a psychopath?" and come to a "yes" answer if that is the case.
- *Observe*: where you learn to observe Mallory and keep notes. The goal is to decode his behavior and understand how he has been controlling the situation. You move away from cooperation, and towards passive resistance.
- *Inhibit*: where you learn to recognize and block Mallory's patterns of control. Mallory depends on you to keep repairing the cup. You stop enabling him, and then move towards active resistance.
- *Terminate*: where you take back control of the relationship, and then end it on your own terms. You understand that there is no cup, and never was.

Before we start, please realize: this takes time. You need to make time to repair your life. It takes time to learn and understand new ideas. It takes time to apply these to your relationship with Mallory. It could take six months, a year, two years, or longer. It depends on how deep the damage is.

Let me explain what you have to abandon, as possible outcomes:

- You will not get sincere remorse, ever. If you need this to move on, learn to stop needing it.
- You will not get the love, money, power, or whatever else Mallory promised you.

- You will not get your money or time back. Accept the losses, and look ahead, not back.
- You will not get a deal, or compromise, or negotiated settlement. Every deal is a lie.
- You will not change Mallory, nor help him, nor cure him, nor punish him.

And what you can expect to achieve:

- You can change Mallory's behavior towards you or a group, by changing how you or a group treat Mallory.
- You can force Mallory to leave you or a group alone, by making it expensive and risky for him to stay.
- You can staunch your losses of money, time, and resources, by refusing to give in to Mallory.
- You can take full control of your relationship with Mallory, by seeing it for what it is.
- You can block and disable Mallory, even to the point where he cannot hurt others.
- You may be able to salvage pieces of whatever projects you were investing in.
- You can learn deep and useful lessons about your own and others' psychology.
- You can externalize your story and understand what happened.
- You can help others move through the same process as you.

Be explicit in defining your goals, both to yourself, and to others. Once you write down your goals, you can measure your progress over time. This will help you during the many moments when you doubt yourself.

We covered Diagnose in "Hunting Mallory". Now I will explain the other steps.

Observe and Record

A main goal of every abuser is to teach the victim that there is no abuse. "This is normal," goes the refrain. "And if anyone is crazy or abusive, it is you." From the outside, to accept this seems insane. For the victim, trying at all costs to make things work, it is rational. Take the blame, apologize, and keep trying to fix that cup.

So asking the question, "Am I dealing with a psychopath?" is a major step in itself. Yet what comes next is delicate. If you recognize yourself as the victim, then you have the right, even an obligation, to free yourself. You cannot wait or hope for a formal diagnosis of "psychopath" from a psychologist.

Yet outsiders will not leap to your understanding. They will see you as unstable. First you insist the relationship means everything to you. Then you accuse the other person of being mentally ill, or worse. "Psychopath" is only one step away from "serial killer" in most peoples' minds.

Mallory always deflects blame onto his victims. He does this well. He ensures that they look guilty, angry, and unreliable. In any situation of conflict, people are likely to trust his explanations. They will absorb his stories and reject those of his victims. *The facts don't matter unless there is video or paper proof.* I cannot stress this enough. It catches even professionals who deal with psychopaths every day.

If you are Mallory's victim, telling people "he's a psychopath" will tend to work against you. It is like pulling out a knife in a gun fight. If you are trying to help someone else, the same applies. It is far better to document events as they unfold, and let others draw their own conclusions. Sooner or later, careful documentation always beats charismatic story telling.

You're looking for:

- *Evidence to disprove your insight.* If the hypothesis is wrong you want to know as soon as you can. You want to find the real culprit, if any. You want to find other ways of dealing with the situation. For example, if someone is mentally ill, they need help. If they are a psychopath, their victims need help.
- *Material evidence that you can use in a conflict.* Such evidence must hold up in court. What that means depends on where you live. Video is good, audio recordings often less so. Phone calls and emails are usually good. Police reports and witness statements are good. You can talk to a private detective. They deal with a lot of psychopaths, and know the laws for evidence gathering.
- *Insights into what Mallory is doing, and how.* I'm not suggesting you bug his email and mobile phone to track his location and chats. That is most often illegal unless the phone is yours, and you install an "anti-theft" app. Yet if you do, it can be enlightening.
- *Observations about Mallory's behavior, for your own benefit.* To confront and beat him you must know his game. You must understand every one of his moves, and know how to respond in each case. "Confront and beat" sounds dramatic. Yet Mallory never takes a holiday. Every time you interact with him he is pushing you.

I'll discuss evidence collection later. Let's focus on the last aspect first, which is to learn Mallory's moves. This takes time yet is easier than you might think. Psychopaths all seem to work the same way. If you watch one, you are watching them all. If you can understand one, you can understand them all.

This is why hunting Mallory is so valuable. Every time you cross paths with a psychopath, if you are alert, you learn something useful.

Observing Mallory is like [watching wildlife](#). You choose your place and time, and do your research. Dress right, and blend in to your surroundings. Be calm and still and wait. Approach your subject with care, or view from a safe distance if you can. Identify behaviors as you observe them, and note behaviors that are new to you. Above all, use a journal:

Note the types of creatures you see and their characteristics, and jot down what they are doing and where. Make sketches or take pictures and paste them into your journal. Once you return from the field, review your journal and do some more research to answer any questions that came up during your observations.

You can observe Mallory from different angles:

- How she interacts with groups. This is easiest to see, yet incomplete. It is a good place to start. You can see Mallory's narcissist mask, how she charms and bullies the others. You should always watch the others' responses. Mallory is the one controlling things. She may be active in the group. Or, passive, ignoring the group to break their mood. She triggers, they respond.
- How she interacts with individuals in public. Again, easy to see yet incomplete. You will see Mallory's narcissist mask again. More, you can see the other person's mood and body language. Do they look lost in love? Desperate yet frustrated? Silent and broody? Quiet and subdued?
- How she interacts with individuals in private. This is the best data, and also the hardest to get. It takes time and luck. Mallory is paranoid and secretive. Technology can help, if you have the skills or can find someone to help you. Or, you may talk to Bob and Alice and get their stories. These will be selective and distorted, yet useful.
- How she interacts with you. If you are in a relationship with Mallory, the data is all there. Your view is selective, rationalized, and distorted. It is still worth taking notes. Your journal becomes a long term memory. It lets you capture conversations or events that are so unreal you soon forget them.

The Resistance

The goal of *Inhibit* is to block Mallory's patterns of behavior. The abusive bond is a curious thing. Even though one party seems in control, the other must cooperate. This is the "enabling" we see in psychopathic families. When Mallory is in a marriage with children, her spouse often acts as enabler. He excuses Mallory, hides conflict from outsiders, and tells the children "it is normal."

Individuals enable their abuser when they normalize the situation. In my Paper Cup story, every time Alice resets and repairs the cup, she is trying to make things "normal" again. This is how she enables Mallory.

To inhibit is to disable, making it more and more costly for Mallory to rule. Inhibiting works both in solitary relationships, and in group settings.

We can break down *Inhibit* into separate actions. Each of these addresses a different aspect of Mallory's behavior. I'll summarize these:

- *Redefine the Narrative*. Mallory depends on her false Narrative. You replace her broken promises with a more accurate model of your relationship.
- *Fix the economics*. Mallory depends on you refilling the cup every time she demands it. You stop doing that, and staunch the loss of money, time, and other resources.
- *Collect evidence*. Mallory depends on privacy, your poor memory, and your forgiving nature to distort history. You repair that by keeping a journal and collecting material evidence against her.
- *Provide subtitles*. Mallory depends on her charm and fluid lying to confuse others. You prevent that by explaining to others what Mallory is doing, and why, as it happens.
- *Create consequences*. Mallory depends on your fear to escape serious consequences. You train her to understand you are willing and able to create real problems for her.

Redefining the Narrative

I explained in "Attack and Capture" how "every psychopathic relationship has the same structure. At the heart, Mallory places a core of lies and promises... The Narrative." To untangle your relationship with Mallory you must decode and redefine the Narrative.

It can be difficult for so many reasons. The Narrative usually has elements of truth. These are small, yet real, and Mallory uses them to push through larger packages of lies. They're hard to discredit because we so *want to believe*.

Let me give some examples of Narratives, to draw you a clearer picture:

- Mallory has caught Alice in a relationship. He tells her over and over, "you are naive and over-sensitive, and you overthink." He shakes his head with concern: "You need professional help." The first part may be true. She accepts that and finds it hard to challenge the rest. He succeeds in undermining her and keeping her dependent on him.
- Mallory is taking money from Bob, using sex and emotional violence to keep him hooked. The Narrative is, "you want me because I'm a difficult woman. Surviving me makes you a powerful man. Keep giving me expensive gifts and I will be yours." The

first statement is true. What follows is false. Mallory is cheating on Bob, wasting his money, and will leave him as soon as she can move to a wealthier contact of his. She is not the trophy. He is.

- Mallory has convinced Alice to become her house slave. Alice works for free and Mallory bullies her into thinking this is normal. The Narrative is, "I paid to bring you to this country. I am now your family and you must do what I tell you to. Obey and I will protect you." Again, the first statement is true and the rest are lies. Mallory will abandon Alice on the street without papers or money as soon as she becomes too large to lock up.
- Mallory has convinced Bob to join his project. Bob is working unpaid and Mallory demands more and more from Bob. The Narrative is, "this is an important project. You are serving humanity. I am your glorious and infallible leader. If you suffer, that is normal." The first statement might be true. Mallory is good at finding causes. The rest are lies. Mallory will steal Bob's work, drain him, and blame him for any failures.
- Mallory has convinced Alice to move in together. She invests her savings, and they plan expensive renovations together. The Narrative is, "this is our house. You are investing in our future. I will be a loving and caring husband. If I'm sometimes moody, it is your fault." Again, a truth followed by lies. Alice will go bankrupt before she wakes up. Mallory invests little if anything, and has cheated on her nonstop.

To untangle the Narrative, there is a small yet powerful mantra that you use. You repeat this to yourself whenever you look at past, present, or planned events. The mantra is: "*Mallory is lying.*"

Not now and then. Not maybe. Almost always. You must assume that every statement Mallory utters is false. He may sometimes tell the truth. That is accidental and irrelevant. When it mattered, and often when it did not, he lied and lies and will lie.

This takes practice. We tend to assume innocent till proven guilty. You need the opportunity to watch Mallory as he talks to you, or others. You feel his sincerity like a warm glow. You hear his words. You watch his face. Now you repeat your mantra: "Mallory is lying."

You may ask *why* he is lying, or how he can lie so well. There are answers, which I've already provided. He lies to bullies people into accepting his authority and to deflect blame. He isn't inventing, when he lies. Instead, he is the sincere teller of a story that happens to be false.

The power of this mantra is that it forces Mallory to work harder. It works especially well in a group. Mallory's aura of sincerity is like a diamond: hard yet fragile. If you can prove a single lie, then you can teach others the same mantra. From then on, the Narrative starts to fall apart.

If you are alone with Mallory, you must put yourself outside the Narrative to see the lies. This is difficult. You must want nothing, and believe nothing. That means switching off all the responses that brought you to this place. It means accepting that you have lost your investments. It means there will be no more sex, no money, no power.

Once you can see the lies, the next step is to see the truth. What are Mallory's real intentions? The sad thing is you already know them. They are your deepest fears, the ones you've pushed aside since the first day. Mallory wants to use you then throw you away. He means to use your network to climb up the social ladder. He intends to empty your savings, and those of your family.

Mallory cares about one person, himself. He will do whatever benefits himself, without limit and without remorse. If he is not worse it is because that would be counter-productive. Your relationship is a sham. It is window dressing to hide the crimes.

Can it be so simple and so calculated? Yes, it can be, and it is.

So now you have a new Narrative. You could never have made the relationship work. Every time you invested in it, you made it worse. Good intentions pave the road to hell. You fed him and reinforced his bad behavior. So now you have your next action. You stop feeding Mallory.

Fixing the Economics

Even if you do not base your life decisions on economics, Mallory definitely does. She does play with people for practice. Yet when she creates an extended relationship, it is for her profit. Unlike a win-win social relationship, Mallory always builds win-lose relationships.

You should be able to measure how much it is costing you to give Mallory her profit. You can count your time, money, goodwill, and the cost of lost opportunities. It is worth putting a dollar figure on the damage, if you can bear to do this. Mallory has worked hard to make you undervalue yourself, so don't be shy about adding zeros. It is not for a court, just for your own sanity.

Your next step is to close the taps. I call this "disabling." There is passive disabling, and active disabling. Use both, as you gain confidence and courage.

Passive disabling has a mantra. This is: "Every request is a test, and the answer is always No."

Mallory has a classic pattern of extracting resources from you. First she asks for a small favor, something small and innocent. This aligns you towards liking her, the Ben Franklin effect. Then she creates a problem that she cannot solve, and leaves it on the table for a

while. Then she comes with a solution, in the form of a larger favor you must provide. If you do not agree to the larger favor she gets angry and brings the relationship to crisis.

By refusing the small favor, you break the pattern. Mallory has no backup. If she creates a crisis over a marginal issue she looks unstable. If she asks again you just refuse again. If she asks for something different, you refuse again.

You can refuse in different ways. An outright "no" is fine, if you can find the confidence. Or you can say "I'll try" and then fail to deliver for random, complex reasons. Pretending to be incompetent is less healthy than rejecting Mallory's request outright. Yet it can be more fun, as Mallory has no tools to deal with such trickery.

When Mallory threatens you, observe and take notes. Compare her threats to her actual actions. You will see that she rarely if ever does what she promises. If she does use violence, she gives no warning. When she uses violence, document it and use that against her. Emotional and psychological abuse are notoriously hard to prove. Bruises, bites, and broken bones can end in criminal charges.

Active disabling also has a mantra. This is: "If it is not locked down, expect to lose it."

Once you recognize Mallory, you must assume she will take whatever she wants. This means money and assets, for sure. It also means contacts, employees, documents, secrets. She may explain this using "yours, ours, mine" logic. Or she may deny it and blame someone else.

You must consider what assets you have that Mallory could divert. If you are business partners, and you are not in full control of money and decisions, abandon it. If you own property together, consult a lawyer. If you have joint accounts, close them. If she has access to your credit cards, get new ones. If she knows your passwords, change them. If you are a co-parent, keep the passports for your children locked up.

If you live with Mallory you must be careful and somewhat paranoid. Since she is opportunistic, this means locking things up. Do not be shy about using large locks, and hide the keys well. Do your research on identity theft. She may fake your signature and take out loans in your name. Assume she steals your post.

If she knows her way around computers, assume she tries to hack your computer and web accounts. Lock your PC screen when you are away. Use extra "two-factor" security on your web accounts. Do not let her borrow your phone. It takes only a few minutes to install spyware on a phone.

If Mallory is in your social circle, leave no money on the table. Expect her to use your friends and contacts for her own benefit. Warn them, and keep your most important contacts away from her. It is far better to warn your contacts about Mallory than to expose them to her.

When you start disabling Mallory, she will get hungry. This makes her more aggressive, and scarier. Yet it also makes it much easier to expose her. As you secure your boundaries, you can see when she violates them. This brings us to the next action, which is to collect evidence of her violations of norms and laws.

Collecting Evidence

Mallory is a genius at using rules the wrong way. "Here are these complex rules which apply to you, yet not to me because I'm special," he says. It is strange how few of us question such unfairness. Perhaps we've learned the habit of lopsided obedience from school and work.

Good rules are simple, and apply to everyone in the same way. Luckily, no matter what Mallory claims or argues, most of society works this way. So if you document his rule violations over a period of time, that gives you real power. Again, this does take time, and patience.

What "material evidence" means depends on your case, and whether you expect one day to show it to a judge. For criminal or civil cases, learn the rules of evidence for your jurisdiction. In general, evidence must be verifiable, and you must collect it using legal means.

If you are in a serious conflict, speak to a private investigator as well as a lawyer. Collecting evidence is an investigator's main job. They will explain the rules and perhaps help.

Here are some hints for collecting evidence:

- Email is excellent as evidence. It is hard or impossible to fake and a service like Gmail does the backup for you. Again, care for your passwords. Print out any critical emails and store in a safe place.
- Use email to confirm agreements with Mallory. "Just to confirm, we agreed that..." Ask Mallory to correct you if you misunderstood. This gives you a written trail.
- Video recordings are good evidence in most courts, as they are hard to fake. If you need to prove a history of verbal or physical abuse, video is one of the best tools. You can use your smartphone, or small hidden video recorders.
- Audio recordings are poor evidence in most courts. They can be good material in non-legal situations. They are easy to make, and share. Just use your smartphone's voice recorder. You can buy small, cheap USB pen recorders online.
- Phone calls are better evidence than audio clips, if you use a call recorder on your smartphone. Tracking caller ID and date and time provides a good record.

- Before you record Mallory at all, learn the law. You could be committing a crime if he did not consent. It depends on the jurisdiction.
- If there are neutral witnesses to an event, try to get a signed and dated statement from them. Make a digital copy and back that up.
- Label your digital copies, and keep them safe and backed-up. You can use a cloud service like Dropbox though be paranoid about your passwords.
- Assume that Mallory is more paranoid than you, and will guess when you are recording him. You can turn this to your favor. He tends to behave much better when he thinks others are watching.

Going to court is an extreme and rare outcome. The main value in collecting evidence is more banal. As you build a file on Mallory, two things happen. First, you feel your power returning, and Mallory's power weakening. Mallory also feels it. Second, you begin to understand Mallory's deceptions as they are happening. You begin to learn his patterns. You can predict his next moves.

Providing Subtitles

Over time you have learned Mallory's patterns. You will start to predict her behavior. By explaining what is going on, and predicting what will happen next, you can stay grounded, and help others. You reduce the risk of getting caught in old narratives. I call this "providing subtitles."

Mallory acts like a chaos machine. She seems to show mad mood swings. She will be calm and relaxed one day, vicious and paranoid the next. It can look like a disorder. Anyone who sees this and isn't familiar with it will ask, "what drugs is she on?"

The simplest explanation isn't drug abuse nor a mental disorder. What seems like instability comes from two main factors. First, she gets into schemes and plots that she keeps hidden from you. If she appears calm it's because her focus is somewhere else. When these schemes turn sour, as they often do, she attacks anyone who gets in her way. That will be you.

Second, she responds to displays of weakness with aggression. And what social humans consider "being nice," Mallory considers "being weak." She also responds to anger with fury. Mallory responds to any display of emotion with her predator emotions.

This creates chaotic feedback cycles so that there is no stability. This sounds terrible, and it can be. Yet we can now predict the weather, from day to day. By warning others in your group, you help them take distance when the inevitable happens.

As you see Mallory manipulate others, you can explain:

- She's making promises she has no intention of keeping. She wants you to be off your guard. Get ready for the inevitable excuses.
- She's said something tangible. It is a lie. She's hiding something or trying to confuse you. Make a note, and we'll see the lie exposed later.
- She's making accusations. She's afraid of something and is attacking as cover. Note her accusations, she's talking about herself without realizing it.
- She's asked for something small. She's nudging you to face the right way. If you give it to her, she'll attack you and demand a larger service.
- She's making threats of retribution. She's pushing you to do what she wants. She's bluffing. Note it, and you'll see. She won't dare. Her threats are things *she* is afraid of.
- She's intimidating you with verbal abuse and lies about your behavior. She's trying to make you afraid and insecure. Don't let your fear control you.
- She's playing nice, offering attention and gifts. She is trying to make someone else jealous. She wants something from you. Refuse the gifts. Tomorrow she'll be abusive again.
- She thinks you are against her. She will try to intimidate you with a violent monologue. Then she will make peace and offer you a token present. Then she will demand that you do things for her. Then she will ignore you again.

A good subtitle explains Mallory's motivations and makes predictions about the outcome. The listener can then use this to build their own model of Mallory's behavior. You cannot assume everyone has read this book.

Create Consequences

As you begin to inhibit and disable him, Mallory becomes more hostile. He realizes what you are doing, and guesses the worst. He is paranoid. He decides you are a real threat, and so he attacks you.

He starts to slander you with detailed stories of your crimes. When he tells these stories to an unaware audience, they believe him. You find people upset with you for mysterious reasons.

In extreme and rare cases Mallory accuses you of criminal acts. He gives the police detailed statements to try to incriminate you. You find yourself questioned. Such accusations and situations are frightening. Yet most police forces do not give unsubstantiated accusations much weight. There are troubling exceptions in some regions. A woman's claim of abuse against a man may be taken as "true by definition" in some places. Be aware of this risk.

You must expect such attacks and remain calm if they happen. Take it as a sign of progress. The stakes are rising, and Mallory is taking more risks.

Material evidence is your insurance. You have proof that Mallory is a consistent liar. You have proof that he is a persistent rule breaker.

Your next action is to teach Mallory one simple lesson. It is: if he misbehaves, you will create consequences for him.

Keep in mind that Mallory has no fear of punishment or authority. He has always charmed and lied his way out of trouble. "You will get into trouble" is not a significant threat. He bluffs when he makes threats, and if you make a threat he assumes you are bluffing too.

So you must act, not threaten. You must create a cost for Mallory, and prove that you can and will repeat this as long as needed. The cost must always be a consequence of his behavior. That leaves him the choice of actions.

The consequence that hurts Mallory the most is exposure. Yet recall what I said about shouting "psychopath." *Do not diagnose*. Provide others with concrete evidence, and let them reach their own conclusions. Let them think of others they've known in the past. Let them paint Mallory with their own dark memories.

When you respond, do so with care and provide the minimal material evidence needed. It is tempting to make a dramatic exposure that will discredit Mallory for once and for all. This is a bad idea. It will not be over in one go. Play only the cards that you must, to win each round. Keep Mallory guessing and paranoid.

If you have evidence of criminal acts, do speak with a lawyer. You may be assisting a crime if you do not report what you know. As always, do your research and try to talk with other people in your situation.

Liberation Day

The next stage is to take back control of your life from Mallory. Then you must end the relationship. If you see Mallory as an occupying power, this is the invasion and liberation. It can get messy. It will take time and patience. Yet this is how you regain your power, and heal.

Let me break down *Terminate* into separate actions. Each of these gives you more power and independence:

- *Control your emotions*. Mallory uses terror tactics to keep you silent and compliant. You learn to recognize your emotions and not let them control you. I covered this in detail in "The Dance of Emotions".

- *Regain control.* Mallory likes to steer conversations and interactions, getting you to react. You turn this around so that you decide when to talk, about what, and for how long.
- *Build alliances.* Mallory works by dividing people and conquering them one by one. You create a united front among all those affected, to take power back from Mallory.
- *Invest in self.* Mallory attacks your self-image and sense of worth. This means you see no alternative to the relationship. To counter this, you create alternatives and build up your inner strengths.
- *Move to exit.* You now end the relationship, on your terms. There will be no negotiated settlement. Mallory must become history, one way or another.

None of these are one-day exercises. It all takes time. During that time, as Mallory realizes what you are doing, she will attack you. Few threats are as real to Mallory as a person determined to unmask him. And when she sees danger, she reacts with dramatic force. You need to learn to keep your nerve and not buckle. Remember what I said about predators being more bluff than bite.

Regain Control

By now we are moving to active resistance, and towards taking control of the situation. Psychopaths have specific weaknesses -- like their paranoia -- that you can learn, and then use.

They are arrogant and their superiority complex makes them careless. They are not used to any form of attack or active resistance. They often respond in dramatic and stupid ways. They tend to repeat the same responses over and over. Psychopaths are like actors: creative in a dramatic way and yet unable to see beyond their stage.

You have stopped reacting to Mallory's provocations and promises. You've started to decode his motivations and techniques. You've felt your power returning. The next step is to take the lead, in your relationship with Mallory.

Start with conversation. This is Mallory's main tool for manipulating you. Learn to control the start and end of every conversation. Choose when to talk and choose when to stop talking. If Mallory tries to start a conversation, you "have things to do." If Mallory forces his way into your space and begins making noise, you ignore him. If he insists, you leave.

Next, set the tone of any exchange. You can be friendly and generous, or cold, or outright hostile. At all times, be deliberate and conscious of your words and emotions. Learn how to control the direction of discussion through your own emotions. You will see that generosity or

hostility both tend to provoke aggression. Try to see humor in the situation. How does Mallory respond when you mock him?

In face-to-face discussions, use a hidden audio recorder if you can. When you catch something valuable, save the recording. In written discussions, realize that every word you say is open to scrutiny.

If you cannot end a conversation, you can still control it. Let's look at two techniques: chaffing and provocation. Chaffing is to overload Mallory with irrelevant detail about random topics. Provocation is to goad Mallory into idiocy or violence, and then record him.

Chaffing disrupts Mallory's ability to manipulate you. He works with averages. He knows how you, and others, respond in conversation. He thinks several moves ahead, like a chess grandmaster.

Is he trying to get you to talk about your work? Spend half an hour telling him about the traffic, and the road works, and the weather. Then switch to cheese. Then discuss politics. Try to feel sincere about the topics.

When you leap around in unpredictable directions, he loses his focus. He starts to feel blocked, and will withdraw. He doesn't enjoy playful banter.

Provocation sounds dangerous, yet as I explained, Mallory is a creature of bluff. Your goal is to kick off his visceral response, and to record it. One easy way to provoke him is to say "no" to a request, without explanation. Just refuse, turn and walk away, and switch on your audio recorder. Five minutes later you'll have a violent outburst.

You can also accuse Mallory of violation of whatever social contracts they are breaking. Threaten him with exposure. Again, walk away, start recording, and wait for Mallory to come back. You will often get only one chance, as the next time, Mallory will have a story to answer that accusation.

In such a confrontation, you must control your emotions. Mallory will shotgun accusations and slander against you. He'll pick up on any reaction, even the smallest one. Expect hurtful accusations, and when they come, just count them.

You can, in extreme need, provoke Mallory to criminal physical violence against your person. You can trigger his fury easily, until he realizes what you are doing. Your goal here is simple. You need him to hurt you and leave traces. Then you get a medical certificate of bruises or wounds. And then you make a formal complaint to the police. This should lead to Mallory's arrest and prosecution.

Do learn the law, and understand what counts as assault. *I can't recommend this except as a last resort.* The risks are high. You can be badly hurt, and it is hard to restrain yourself from fighting back. Yet "convicted of domestic violence" is difficult to shake off. Ask Chris

Brown.

Build Alliances

Alone, you're vulnerable against a professional manipulator. When you have the support of a group, confronting Mallory is easier. If a group rallies against a bad actor in their midst, the game is over.

Mallory knows this. She sees a united group as a bad thing. She works hard to divide the group and keep individuals fighting each other. If or when she sees you are a risk to her, she will aim to turn the group against you.

You have to expect this, and prepare for it. Your advantage is in moving before Mallory realizes what you are doing. By providing subtitles, you inoculate the group. When she does act, it then plays against her.

Ask yourself what is the worst possible thing she could say (true, or false) about you to others. Assume her goal is to have you discredited, ejected, arrested, or hurt. Mallory may often be shy of using physical violence herself. Assume she is not shy of using others.

She prefers to talk in secret, so she can weave her spells of promises and lies. It is harder for her to control a room of people not already charmed or intimidated.

These are the opportunities you have:

- Mallory prefers to work on one person at a time. She switches between people so fast it looks like she is covering them all at once. Yet whenever she's busy with one individual, she ignores all the others. You can work on groups: you don't need one-on-one diplomacy. If you have solid evidence of a crime or lie, you can spread that to many people at little cost.
- Most people, in most cases, will be receptive to such a message. We usually have a skeptical voice in our heads warning us that the situation is not "right." It is a matter of finding and talking to this voice.
- Anyone affected by the psychopath is already searching for a way out. It is often subconscious and unexpressed. You must try to understand their stresses and questions. Then, show them the right answers. They will usually accept what you are saying.

This takes time, and solid evidence, immune to forgery. There are risks. Mallory will try exactly the same strategy, painting you as the common enemy. You must be beyond reproach. You must be transparent with the people you need to work with.

The other danger is that a psychopath may not always be a lone hunter. There are psychopaths who work together, to control large groups. You are unlikely to confront such organized criminality in your personal life. If you do find yourself facing it, avoid direct confrontation.

Invest in Self

If you're trapped in a relationship with Mallory, you will be in a bad state which shows as depression. The slave, feed, and wreck phases of the relationship corrode your sense of identity. When someone asks you "how's it going?" your answers revolve around Mallory. "She's in a good mood today," or "crazy day today." You seem little more than a puppet, reacting to Mallory's every whim. And when Mallory isn't there, you feel empty and passive.

You can reverse this process of destruction of self. You can become more resistant to manipulation, better able to fight back. You can imagine and construct better futures than "when will this pain end?"

The tools of mind control come in many shapes. Likewise, there are many ways to invest in self:

- Rebuild relationships that broke as you went deep into the rabbit hole with Mallory.
- Build private space and time where Mallory cannot create chaos or try to take control.
- Start new projects to replace the failed projects you invested in with Mallory.
- Find positives in your situation. Every day can be a valuable lesson, if you are able to learn.
- Turn your pain and emotion into creative art, music, dance, photography, or writing.
- Use this creative process to create positive energy, and happy moments. It's both good for you, and confusing and distasteful to Mallory.

When I said psychopaths are lazy, that isn't true in all senses. They work hard at their core skills. They will bring people together, so they can get control over them. One irony of psychopathy is that this energy can produce positive and creative outcomes. We often have a better person hiding inside us. You can use your encounters with Mallory to find and develop that person.

Move to Exit

The last move in solving this complex puzzle is to create exits, and move towards them. You are only as trapped as you believe you are, unless Mallory has restrained you by force. When you can imagine a future beyond your current situation, then you can create it. Even if

it takes years, you define the path to freedom by your own imagination and determination.

Your goal must be to rebuild a healthy, complete, professional or personal life. One where Mallory does not exist, and where he cannot interfere. It may be a matter of cutting contact with Mallory.

As you get a grip over things, Mallory will decide whether he intends to stay, or leave. If he decides to leave, it will be sudden and total.

More often, Mallory wants to stay. He will either force you out, make you accept his control, or do something worse. If there is a moment of real physical danger, it is this. There is an old pattern of suspicious deaths of those divorcing their abusive partners.

In most countries with modern policing, Mallory cannot get away with physical violence. He knows it. In a corrupt country, if Mallory has powerful friends who can protect him, the risks of violence go up.

The most likely outcome is quite banal. Mallory will just become "normal." He will turn into the perfect parent, partner, or colleague. Anyone looking at him for the first time will see a lovely, hard-working person.

If you are not careful, Mallory can convince judges and peers that he is the sane one in a relationship. They will believe you are the one with issues. So, you must collect your evidence and witnesses long before he realizes your intentions.

Think of the Children

The most delicate and difficult cases are those involving shared projects. This means: homes, businesses, and above all, children. You can walk away from these, and people do. If you have children with Mallory, then it's not enough to save yourself. You have to also think how to save your children, and give them the tools to deal with their abusive parent.

I explained in "Hunting Mallory" how Mallory divides his children into winners and losers. Even with occasional access to his children, Mallory can shape them.

One strategy is to fight for exclusive custody, to remove Mallory's influence for good. This is a worthy goal in any eventual divorce or separation. Mallory will often be the one to walk away. After all, he is not interested in raising children.

Yet, there will be times when Mallory refuses to let go. It tends to be hard to separate children from a parent without evidence of physical abuse. You may see Mallory as toxic and abusive. A judge may see two parents who argue a lot.

You can try to catch Mallory breaking the rules, and get a judgment on that basis. This works only if you can afford it, and if Mallory's delinquency is dramatic and undeniable. Do not assume a judge will see things your way. No matter how well you explain, Mallory always tells a better story.

A more pragmatic backup strategy is to use Mallory to inoculate your children. This gives them tools to defend against his tactics. It also helps them in later life as they cross other psychopaths. I explained about providing subtitles. You can reinforce this by showing what parenting can look like. Shower your children with affection, love, and structure.

Over years you can teach your children self-reliance and inner strength. Mallory will keep trying to undermine that. It's just his nature. You use each case as an exercise, until your children have learned to read what lies below the words and smiles.

This is hard to do without asking your children to hate their other parent. Hate is not a useful emotion, when dealing with a psychopath. Neither are fear, anger, jealousy, self-pity and so on. Mallory merits careful observation, analysis, and explanation. If you can maintain this mental state, you can teach it to your children. Mallory has no emotions for his children beyond, "these are mine." It is fair that his children feel dispassionate about him in return.

This sounds cruel, yet it's making the best of a bad situation. In most families with a psychopath parent, the opposite happens. The other parent becomes the enabler. That is, they defend and justify Mallory, over and over. Minors cannot defend themselves, not alone against a single adult, and not against two.

Being the "disabler" parent has many positives. It teaches you to move forwards, not dwell in the past. To work from the desire to help yourself and others, not to punish from anger. To seek peace, not revenge. To understand and explain, not to blame.

Conclusions

In this chapter I've explained how to end a psychopathic relationship from the inside. The key lesson is that if you flee an abusive relationship, you leave as a damaged person. You take with you self-hate and a form of addiction to abuse which can last a lifetime.

As an alternative, I propose a process: *Diagnose, Observe, Inhibit, and Terminate* (DOIT). Through this process you will untangle the lies and distortions, and rebuild your self-image. By facing and beating your fears, you recover your inner strengths.

It is the deliberate act of freeing yourself from Mallory that heals you. It can take months or years. It will often be a painful and terrifying process. The pain and terror become routine, and then they pass. It is the shifting of power back to you that matters. When you end your relationship with Mallory, do it on your own terms, and as a whole person.

When you can look at Mallory and feel gratitude for making you a stronger, happier person, then you know you are free.

Chapter 8. Questions to the Author

What makes you the expert in dealing with psychopaths?

We're all experts, I think, after millions of years of evolved defenses against psychopaths. Some of us are better at expressing it. The book is based on my own life experience, and practice. When I realized there was a pattern to the damagingly eccentric people I'd come across, I could decode it, and explain it. I needed this book for myself.

Was this a hard book to write?

All my books take years to write. This one took less than some, and was easy to put together. The material wrote itself, often. A solid theoretical model provides answers to questions. Once I had the "predator" model, questions like "how does Mallory hunt?" or "what emotions does Mallory feel?" were just a matter of working through the equations, so to speak.

Why the name "Mallory?"

I apologize to everyone called "Mallory." It's a name used in computer security for an attacker. If someone breaks into your PC, that's Mallory. If someone steals your on-line identity, that's Mallory. The name works for male and female psychopaths.

The term is difficult... are there better terms?

All medical and criminal labels are loaded with the biases of their origins. "Psychopath" is the cleanest term yet it's so strong that I can imagine being taken to court for calling someone this. I've used that term in the book title and text. Yet it often leads to rabbit hole discussions like "why not 'sociopath'" or "such a diagnosis must come from a medical professional."

The French-Canadian author [Isabelle Nazare-Aga](#) coined the term "manipulator," and writes in her 1997 book *Les manipulateurs sont parmi nous*:

Sympathetic, seductive, reserved, and yet tyrannic, manipulators use various means to get what they want. Moving softly, our closest -- parents, partners, acquaintances, colleagues -- manage to make us feel guilty, inadequate, and full of doubt. Who are these manipulators? How do they keep us in their grip? Are they aware of what they are doing? Are their victims responsible, in some measure? How do we protect ourselves from these emotional terrorists?

The French also use the term *pervers narcissiques* (narcissistic perversion), invented by Paul-Claude Racamier in 1986 or so. I'm not sure the "perversion" works as a model, it seems rooted in a moralistic notion of normality, where there are "good decent" people, and then there are "perverts" of different flavors.

I've used "bad actor" as a euphemism. That's my way of identifying someone as a psychopath without invoking the arguments over terminology and qualifications. There are other terms we can plausibly use depending on context: "predator," "tyrant," "narcissist," "parasite," "cheat," "abuser," "bully," "professional liar," "con artist," and so on. However, my advice is to use "psychopath" consistently, unless you want to lighten the mood a little.

A lot of the material feels personal. Was this therapy?

It's a story of therapy. I'd discovered a way to deal constructively with the specific psychopaths in my life, and wanted to teach this to others. The tools and advice I'd found online were a good start, yet not enough. I felt we were mostly blind to the real story. OK, so there is clinical data, lots of it. Yet the only answer I'd get for my question of "how do I deal with Mallory?" was "leave, now!" It is a frustrating and patronizing answer.

Why is the advice to leave not helpful?

Anyone in an abusive relationship is already trying to leave. It's not through lack of will. The abusive bond has deep hooks into your psyche, and you can't just rip them out. If you try, it causes real damage. I explain this in detail in "Escape from Jonestown". You must extract those hooks one by one. That takes time and insight.

So can you summarize your approach in a few words?

Don't run away. Stop reacting. Learn your enemy, and stand and fight. Remove those hooks, get your power back, and end the relationship on your own terms. It can be terrifying yet the alternative is to take long term damage with you.

It is like escaping a rip current, which is when the sea tries to drag you out and drown you. Rip currents aren't large. Obviously the entire ocean isn't moving, only little threads and swirls. However if you try to swim back to shore, you will die from exhaustion. Catch your breath, swim sideways, and in five minutes you're safe on land.

It is the same when a psychopath attacks you, whether it's early in the game, or late and the mask is long gone. Psychopaths start young, and work hard to improve their hunting technique. We social humans, we're like mice, scurrying through the tiny corridors of our lives. We barely have time to react when the fangs and claws hit us. We get dragged out into the wild ocean. No-one can jump in to save us, even if they're paying attention, which most people aren't.

The hardest part is to not panic, and to not react instinctively. Instead, to take a moment to tread water and think it through, and then move sideways. Over time this becomes easier. The fight-or-flight adrenaline response does not go away, so you try to learn to ignore it.

Can you fight a psychopath head-on? Or do you drown?

When a psychopath is trying to drag you down, the usual instinct is to not fight. We try to *normalize* the situation, to make it good again, and that is what makes it worse. That is the "swimming back to shore" behavior, and that's how we drown. Fighting back is the "swimming sideways" behavior. It takes deliberate and conscious effort, yet it seems to be the safest way out.

This is hard. The predator behaviors evolved specifically to push our mental buttons. So it takes conscious effort, practice, and above all, working with other people. That's our superpower: other people. Do not forget that, and do not make your life a personal struggle. Share your problems and answers, you'll be surprised how much support you get, and how much you can learn.

When you fight back, doesn't it make the psychopath act worse?

Sometimes, yet not always. Psychopaths operate outside the law, if not in deed then in spirit. They respect no higher authorities, only force. Remember the Ben Franklin effect, where you ask people for small favors and then they like you more. The flip side is that when we (including psychopaths) mistreat people, and they don't fight back, we treat them even worse afterwards.

There is the risk of escalation and violence. This can be terrifying. I'm sure in some cases it can be fatally dangerous. Mostly though, the psychopath risks more than you do through escalation. A public fight attracts other people. It attracts authorities and investigations. All predators are vulnerable in similar ways: injury or exposure means they can't hunt. In human terms, this means psychopaths have to stay hidden.

So psychopaths are afraid of being exposed?

Yes. All vampires have their fears. I'd say this the number one background worry of any psychopath: "*what proof do they have?*" A solid file showing a history of breaking the rules and bullying people: this is sunlight and garlic. Psychopaths need secrecy and privacy to misbehave and get away with it, decade after decade.

When you realize you're facing one or more psychopaths, collect evidence, slowly and carefully. This applies to all cases where psychopaths operate, from death squads and genocide to domestic abuse. Collect incontestable proof. Use such material cautiously, only when you need to and when you know it will have an effect. Exposure is a card you can play only once.

Do you have tips for collecting evidence?

Emails are good evidence in most courts, which not everyone realizes. So are photos and videos. Audio recordings can be helpful in some cases. Impartial eye-witness statements are good. You have to be careful in a he-said-she-said situation. A psychopath will have the more dramatic accusations, and be ludicrously convincing. I've seen cops spin on their heels and start threatening the victims of violence, based on thirty seconds talking to the perpetrator.

You can get cheap audio recorders that look like USB sticks. Video recorders hidden in watches, pens, and pendants. Or, keep your smartphone handy, and use its audio or video recorder. If you ever get into a physical confrontation, then recording a psychopath can have a dramatic effect, as they may react violently and without warning to what they see as a threat.

Sometimes that's what you want. Provoking a psychopath to anger (real or acted) can be a good way to get them to reveal themselves. They will make threats and accusations. The threats are often extraordinary, and meaningless, until you realize they tend to make threats they see as real *to themselves*. And the accusations can be laughable, until you realize they have accidentally said something they are trying to keep secret.

What else are psychopaths afraid of?

Like any predator, they fear injury, exposure, starvation, and a bigger predator. That's the list, I think.

Can you teach me how to act like a "bigger psychopath"?

You're not the first person to think of this. Many people do this instinctively when we're in unfamiliar situations. We become more dominant, charming, focused on others. We dress up when we go out. We laugh more. This is partly about seduction, yet it seems more about feeling safe. Often these talents are suppressed until we have a drink or two. You can learn to do this consciously. It is easier for some of us than others.

Can you be more specific?

Dress slightly too well, interrupt people gently yet forcefully. Touch people on the arms and shoulders, a lot. Smile a little too much, and hold eye contact. Ignore people as they talk to you. Then, if you think you're talking to a predator, speak of money and future possibilities. Shine that laser pointer and they will dance like an entranced cat. Only use this for self-defense, please.

Are there any other tools I can use against psychopaths?

Psychopaths tend to be paranoid. It's normal when 96% of your fellow species hate you *ex animo*, from the heart. This makes psychopaths vulnerable to certain kinds of suggestion, such as they're being spied on, followed, or framed by unspecified people.

Are you saying, it's OK to deceive and manipulate psychopaths?

If someone tries to sink their soul-draining fangs into you or yours, I think you're justified in using whatever force you need, to make them stop and/or go away. This includes lying, threats and false promises, indeed the whole psychopath play-book up to violence of different forms. As necessary. Don't break the law. If you must, make sure you can show self-defense. Also, insert standard disclaimer here. My advice is an opinion based on experience. You have the right to use it or ignore it.

So you mean, we should all become secondary psychopaths...

Please no! Psychopaths are *horrid* to be around. They hurt everyone they touch. What I'm saying is, if a predator comes into your life and attacks you or your friends or family, strike back with force and drive it away. That's different from becoming a predator yourself. I've made this quite clear in "The Dance of Emotions", we have a set of emotions for attack, and a set for defense.

How does one lie to a psychopath?

Psychopaths are hard to lie to. They seem to read minds, and they know every possible lie like a musician knows chords. Lying to a psychopath is a bit like passing a lie-detector test. Start by assuming that every conversation is an interrogation. You're not a psychopath, so you will sweat and tremble and stutter. You can't avoid that.

Rule number one is control the conversation. Try to start conversations instead of waiting. Drag it out as long as you want it to last. Fill the conversation with tedious, boring detail. Mallory does not care about your life. If she's talking, she has a plan in her mind, an agenda. Every time you hijack the thread, you're making it harder for her. End the conversation when you're ready, and then go "no contact" until you decide you want to talk again.

Rule number two, *truths are lies that are accidentally true*. Every sentence you say is a potential time bomb, so telling the truth should scare you far more than making up lies. It doesn't matter how minor. What you ate for breakfast, the city where you were born... such details are bullets in the hands of someone determined to hurt you. So as a matter of habit, learn to give nothing of value in conversations. Do not discuss your real friends, money, or significant events. Tremble and sweat all the time, lie more than half the time, about grand and yet irrelevant topics, and you'll overload your psychopath's senses.

Don't do this in writing, or in front of neutral witnesses. If you're accused of lying, deny it, shrug and change the subject. Smile and hold eye contact. After many months, you will find yourself less stressed. Eventually you may learn to lie without showing any detectable signs.

This all seems like a lot of work, even dangerous... is it worth it?

It can be hard work, yes. I believe it's worse to let psychopaths roam free in our professional and social lives. That creates a lot more pain, even if it's often hidden. It's the child-in-the-cellar syndrome. Many of us are locked in cellars, so to speak. We don't want to open that door for fear of what we might see or have to do. And the world doesn't see us, and our pain remains private.

What I've learned is that climbing those stairs, pushing at that door, and confronting the brutes on the other side is the right thing to do. And "confronting" means fighting, even hurting and damaging them. It is hard work, and it can be dangerous, yet the alternative is worse. There is no peace with a tyrant. To live or work with a psychopath is to live in occupied lands. It is dismal, gray, with the constant threat of violence, and the total loss of freedom.

I've found, over the last years as I wrote this book and internalized its lessons, that confronting bad actors also made me generally happier in life. I'm pretty sure that psychopathy is an all-or-nothing strategy. We are all bad actors at times in our lives. Yet most of us work hard to self-correct. We're obsessive about it. It's enough to tell most people: "not cool!," show them an alternative, and they will stop. Psychopaths don't self-correct. Instead they get better at not getting caught.

So understanding these two paths of human nature, one can speak to people according to what path they are on. To the good actors, one gives order and structure, power, freedom, and protection from the bad actors. To bad actors, one gives the stick.

You're not a psychologist. How do you know this is safe?

I don't. I've tried it, with abusive psychopaths, and it works. That's my best data. I've discussed this approach with many people including psychologists who specialize in abuse victims. The main risk is that Mallory tends to get violent when challenged. How serious is this risk, and is it worth taking? How much violence can you absorb, and how far can you turn Mallory's violence against him? Are there higher authorities who will act on documented evidence of violence, for instance? These are questions you can answer and then act on.

Do psychopaths suffer from a disorder?

Technically, yes, it's anti-social personality disorder. In practice, there are two ways to study psychopathy. One is to look at Mallory and try to understand him by observing and dissecting him. The other is to look at Mallory's victims, and his relationships with them. The

first approach leads to "Mallory is dysfunctional and needs help." The second leads to "Mallory damages people, who then need help." Not the same at all.

I just want to avoid dating psychopaths

Don't look for dates on line, and don't trust total strangers with things that are precious to you. This is how you invite dangerous people into your life. Start by making friends of your own gender. Sooner or later they will set you up. The good friend of a good friend is less likely to be a predator.

How do you get that 4% figure?

Clinical research is often biased in huge ways. Let me give you two examples from the USA. You are **four times more likely** to get a diagnosis of schizophrenia if you are black, than if you are white. Yet, when it comes to personality disorders, you're **less likely to be diagnosed if you're black**. The judicial system pushes for diagnoses that lets them lock up poorer, black men, while sending wealthier men to therapy.

So when you read figures from clinical studies, you must question the sources of data. Hare's classic estimate is 1%. He focuses on criminal male psychopaths. Others have estimated figures for malignant narcissism as high as 10%. I double Hare's estimate to account for female psychopaths. I double it again for the many hidden psychopaths.

Is this figure the same in all cultures?

Predator-prey ratios are not constant, they cycle over time. There is no reason to suspect cheater-altruist ratios are a special case. So the figure could be from less than 1% to above 10% depending on context. Up-down cycles will take several generations. Matching the ratio of psychopaths you'll see altruistic behavior swing between trusting and cynical.

Do you have historical examples of this?

I'd say the period 1950-1999 in the West was one of increasing trust, causing an upswing in psychopath ratios towards the end of the century. This led to numerous financial swindles peaking in the 2009 financial crisis. This is leading to an increase in cynicism and political pressure against institutional cheats.

Can we eliminate psychopathy?

I'm not even sure that's a sane goal. This predator-prey battle has been the main force of human evolution for millions of years. Without it, we'd be a historical footnote. We can treat the effects of psychopathy like a disease to be eliminated. Yet without constant pressure from cheats, there is no game. And without a game, humanity has no future.

What do you mean with that?

I think we're still evolving, as we must, to overcome the limitations of our planet. We will go to the stars, or we will go extinct. Not tomorrow. Maybe in a thousand years. And while the altruists will build the spaceships and design the hibernation tanks, it will be psychopaths that provide the hunger. Every dramatic voyage of discovery is driven by false promises and lies. Most end in disaster. Some succeed, and take us forwards.

So altruists aren't hungry enough?

They aren't, not in that untiring predatory sense. We aim to be safe and happy. Without Mallory challenging us, we'd be a species on holiday. Yet every time we build up some capital, savings, and wealth, along comes Mallory and steals it. It forces us to work harder, be more creative, and let go of the past.

You sound almost grateful to psychopaths...

In some specific ways, yes. Yet only when I step outside my own experience, and look at the big picture. If I speak from the heart, then Mallory's casual abuse and the sheer harm he does to others enrages me. We can hold two contradictory ideas in our minds at once, right?

What if psychopaths get too much power?

I'm optimistic that the worse it gets, the better we become. The war between altruism and cheating has been going on for millions of years. Neither side can ever win.

Are psychopaths evil?

Good and evil are terms based on a self-centered view of the universe that religion has encouraged. That view is false, and the terms are meaningless. Do psychopaths cause hurt and harm to others? Yes. Is that a question of morality and religion? No. It's biology. It's inevitable and has been central to our evolution as a species.

If it's inevitable, why write the book?

Maybe the book was inevitable. It was the right book at the right time, for me. Maybe I'm just a pen in the hand of destiny.

Do believe in God?

Only if you define "God" as "the universal laws of infinite maths and physics" and "believe" as "accept only models that make accurate predictions and cannot be any simpler." Or, to put it another way, "no."

How do I tell if someone is a psychopath?

It depends on how you know the person, and what your goals are. Also on your own experience, and how aware you are of yourself, and others.

You can pick out some, not all, psychopaths in a crowd by their appearance and behavior. You can see the combination of dominance, narcissism, and social distance. They are like car drivers who casually break the rules, knowing they'll rarely be caught. This stops working if they think you're watching them.

You can actively look for psychopaths when you see impact craters in organizations or families. Mallory will be well hidden. It takes a different process: elimination of all suspects until one is left. You look for rule breaking and conflict. You eliminate those who show honest guilt, shame, and remorse. It takes time and observation.

You can ask the question about a partner, relation, or colleague. In this case you work off your own responses and behavior. If the relationship is new, are you swept off your feet, and making big plans? Does it feel too good to be true? If the relationship is old, does it make you sad and depressed? Is there abuse, anger, drama?

Another, more general approach is "grey listing." You start by assuming *everyone* you meet is a psychopath. Don't panic. It's not a decision, just a possibility. Then you look for signs to disprove this possibility. Old friends who speak well of them. A clear public history. Zones of happiness around them. Modesty and shyness. Blushing, a sense of humor, creative zest. And so on. As long as you cannot disprove the theory "X is a psychopath," leave them in that category and treat them with care. If you get clear indicators, you can move them to your black list.

Are there different types of psychopath?

Some authors like to distinguish narcissists from sociopaths and so on. I don't see the point of that. Mallory has many faces, and is opportunistic. It is always the same Mallory, however. He works the same way, has the same attacks and tactics, and has the same weaknesses.

Are you a psychopath, and this book just a twisted way of hiding it?

It is a possibility. Certainly when I read my own descriptions of psychopaths, there are moments when I feel, "that's me!" I think we all experience that. We all walk on the dark side, at times in our lives. And we can distort the meanings of words. I've been firm in defining psychopathy in terms of the harm it does to others. Those "impact craters" we've all seen in our work and social lives. In my defense, I think my decades of public work speaks for itself. People who work with me know how protective I am of others. Yet it could all be an elaborate ruse. I don't know.

What traits did you recognize in yourself?

Charm, reality distortion, language fluency, dominant body language, and almost no fear. To be honest though, authority terrifies me. I've been arrested twice in my life (for growing a few marijuana plants, both times) and it was like being gutted. Whereas I've seen psychopaths

confront police, and get away with it, without blinking. The question, "am I a psychopath?" has bounced around my mind during the whole writing of this book. In the end I decided "no" mainly because I get too much pleasure from seeing my kids and my family and friends safe and happy.

Now I wonder if I am a psychopath...

This is a common experience. We all have some of the traits. Yet it's practically the definition of "altruist" that you look for blame in yourself, when things don't work. If you worry that you may be a psychopath, then the chances are low. A psychopath knows they're *different*, yet never sees this as their problem.

Is it normal that I'm looking for psychopaths everywhere now?

This is also a common experience. I call it Van Helsing Syndrome. The awareness that the world is full of people who see you as food is disturbing. My advice is to decide slowly, and act rapidly. That is, allow people to show their real natures and intentions. This can take weeks or months. Do take simple precautions with new friends and contacts. If you decide a person is a psychopath, and you cannot explain their behavior otherwise, cut them off. Simply ask them to never contact you again, and delete their details.

So we are all a bit psychopath?

We share 50% of our DNA with a banana. Yet we're not "a bit banana." We certainly all carry a lot of psychopath genes. Most of these genes, in most people, are not expressed. Or if they are, it is in harmless or positive ways. We all tend towards being better altruists, or better cheaters.

Do psychopaths feel love?

Do you feel love for your breakfast? Or would you describe it as "hunger?" It does seem psychopaths feel something for their parents. It's not love though, it is more like another form of hunger.

What emotions do psychopaths feel?

Psychopaths feel those emotions needed to be a successful predator. These are: hunger, obsession, euphoria, glee, fury, bloodlust, gluttony, satiation, and blocked. I explain this in "The Dance of Emotions". All other emotions appear to be absent. A psychopath can imitate some from birth, and some by learning. Others like remorse they just don't show, maybe because they can't fake the physical signs.

Do psychopaths have ethics?

Ethics is one of those slippery terms. Easy to use, hard to define. I assume you mean, do psychopaths set themselves limits on who they hurt? Some psychopaths declare, "children are off limits." Yet others exploit children without remorse. The best analogy I have is that psychopaths have food taboos. They learn what is good to eat, and what is harmful or forbidden, at an early age. It tends to be about costs versus benefits. Preying on children or the aged is taboo when there is real risk of punishment. Hunting other psychopaths can be toxic, and usually a bad idea. Otherwise, food is food.

What jobs attract psychopaths?

Psychopaths are flexible and creative when it comes to hunting. What they seek are people and their assets. This means any organization will attract psychopaths. It's rarely about the salary, nor bonuses, which are fodder. Rather, psychopaths seek the chance to take what isn't theirs. They like jobs that let them travel. Certainly, positions of power and influence. Anything in finance. Jobs with access to vulnerable people. Jobs that rotate around image and charisma.

Should my firm hire some psychopaths?

Only if you are in the business of stealing and lying. There is a persistent myth that psychopaths are powerful and effective. It's a lie. I've worked with several psychopaths, and hired more than one. They certainly live the place up. They will always act in their own interests, even when it hurts their colleagues, or their firm. They are the ones who accept bribes, plot against their bosses, steal clients, falsify accounts, and so on.

How can I be sure I don't hire psychopaths?

It's much like dating. If you hire total strangers, based on how well they perform in an interview, you're asking for trouble. You want to hire people who have a trail of successful team work. Or, hire on a trial basis and be prepared to fire people easily.

Are all politicians psychopaths?

Not all, just many. The most successful politicians get elected on promises that they fail to deliver. They are charismatic actors who fit the role the public expects. They divide their opposition and blame their own failures on others. They lack empathy, and never show remorse for hurting others. Often they steal large amounts of money, and abuse their positions in every way possible. I'd estimate 10-20% of politicians are psychopaths. It can't be more, or they wipe each other out.

Postface

Dear Mallory,

I'd like to thank F, S, H, J, M, F, B, K, and M for teaching me more than I ever wanted to learn about psychopathy. I don't think you ever realized the damage you did to others. They were never real after all, the people you used and discarded like broken toys. It may shock you, if you read this book and realize you are on the wrong side of it. At some level we are all innocent inside, even the worst of us. Rest easy. I'm not going to speak your name.

For what its worth, the lessons you taught me were not wasted. I've used every interaction we ever had to understand how your mind works. I've run complex, long experiments on you. Often I wasn't even intending this. It's just how *my* mind works. I like to solve mysteries and you were a deep mystery. You gave me good, solid data, so thanks for that. You are nothing if not consistent. The results are in my work, and this book. I would dedicate it to you except, no.

Pieter Hintjens

Brussels October 2015