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If the Shoe Don't Fit, It Ain't for Wearing
Adrian Enwright

Prologue

The Royal Ball Massacre was an unexpected tragedy that abruptly ended a prestigious royal lineage and revealed the need for change in how children are disciplined and reared. Millions are shocked to discover how Cinderella was unknowingly exploited by her step-mother and step-sisters for years without her father's knowledge. How did nobody see the signs of mistreatment? How did an entire French village, albeit quite small, unanimously agree to socially outcast Cinderella? Cinderella suppressed and others oppressed a beautiful young lady's need to be understood and accepted, such that an explosive manifestation of emotions was simply inevitable. Now, a month after the massacre, I have been tasked with diagnosing and restoring Cinderella. The world is watching as Cinderella becomes a representative for the state of all French youth. If I am unable to help Cinderella form her true functioning self, parents in the community may become anxious and hopeless.

On the day of the event, an announcement from the local king was spreading around Cinderella's village. The king requested all young maidens to appear at the royal palace for a special royal ball. The Prince was extending a life-changing opportunity of joining the royal family as his wife, and future queen. Cinderella jumped at this opportunity for reasons we explore during the diagnostic interview. The "Godmother", an elderly acquaintance of Cinderella, provided Cinderella a dress for the ball. At the ball, the Prince reportedly danced with an unknown maiden and immediately chose her to be his wife. At midnight, the chosen lady unexplainably fled the celebration and left only her glass slipper behind. Determined to find the owner of the shoe, the prince later visited every woman that attended the royal ball. Two days after the night of the ball, the prince visited Cinderella's household. The prince and Cinderella's family watched as Cinderella confidently announced the slipper belonged to her and, with a smug smile on her face, Cinderella slipped her feet into the glass slippers. They didn't fit; not even close. There was no way the slippers belonged to Cinderella. In anger, Cinderella broke the tip of the slipper on a nearby table, creating a sharp edge. Cinderella then proceeded to slash the necks of the prince, her stepmother, and both her stepsisters. She then ran to her backyard garden and stabbed the Godmother's leg twenty-six times. Cinderella then placed her hands firmly on her throat and broke her own neck.

Interview

Twenty-five days after her psychotic meltdown, Cinderella rolled into my office in a wheelchair and had her first therapy session. Our first session was a diagnostic interview that lasted three hours and fourteen minutes. I focused on open-ended questions to receive individualized answers. My goal was simply to understand the mental status of Cinderella, without disputing her beliefs or cognitive patterns, in order to efficiently choose a DSM diagnosis. There were several noteworthy moments in this interview.

First, Cinderella denied ever attempting suicide in the garden. There are many eyewitness accounts of Cinderella breaking her own neck, so it surprised me that Cinderella thought she could convince me otherwise. Not to mention, she's a paraplegic for a reason. Cinderella claims the Godmother simply put up a good fight, but nobody can attest to said fight and its impossible the Godmother had enough strength to break a neck, especially after being stabbed.

Family life was the most discussed topic during the interview. When I asked Cinderella if she ever harmed her family in the past, she responded with a clear no. After some silence, Cinderella frowned. I asked, "Are you doing alright, Cindy?" and she began to share her dreams. Cinderella had reoccurring dreams of harming men and harming herself. However, in all the dreams involving self-harm, Cinderella inflicted harm on a male version of herself. I asked her if

she ever wanted to hurt her family and she responded, “Only when they deserve it, yes. Naturally, I feel like hitting people every now and then, but it’s just a feeling! I never did anything. It’s not worth the effort, if you ask me.”

Shortly after Cinderella said she never physically harmed her family, I asked her what had changed. She responded, “My only chance to leave my family’s abuse was being taken from me. I’d prefer any other life over the one I was living. It’s a shame. I lose no matter what I do.”

Cinderella experiences guilt, but still justifies her actions.

Although, Cinderella’s rationale for the murder spree was to avoid a future with her family; the prince’s rejection was ultimately the emotional spark that allowed her to accept such irrational thought. Therefore, it seemed pleasing and appropriate to bring up the prince at this point in the interview. During this discussion, Cinderella remarked “He (the prince) clearly wanted to keep me a slave. He despised me.” Cinderella evidently wanted to marry the prince as she was trying on the slipper or else, she would not have attempted to fit in the slipper. But immediately after the slipper did not fit, her entire perspective of him changed. In a moment, the perfect husband became a ruthless oppressor. Here, a critical moment in the interview occurred.

I asked Cinderella, “Do you think the prince purposely had the slippers not fit your feet specifically?”

“No. Probably not. That’s doing the most.” She responds.

“Then the prince didn’t set you up, right?”

Her disposition quickly changed, and she raised her voice, “You must not be a very good therapist if you’re asking questions like that. You simply cannot be serious. I belong in the Godmother’s dress, not these rags, and definitely not this wheelchair! If you think I should slave away for the rest of my life, just tell me now, and I’ll request a more qualified therapist.”

After a moment of silence I responded, “You were harmed and ignored for so long. If I were you, I would be terrified of going back. I wouldn’t do anything to you, that I wouldn’t do to myself so trust me, I do not want you to go back. Other people’s choices have constantly had negative impacts on your life and your family degraded you for years. Nobody denies that. The thing is, you have complete control of yourself. You choose what the circumstances of your life evolve into. Good or bad. Nobody can ruin your life unless you let them.”

The interview ended shortly after this.

Explanation

I suspect Cinderella has comorbid borderline personality disorder and narcissistic personality disorder. The way she quickly switches from adoring to despising the prince demonstrates extreme reactivity to interpersonal stresses, a classic symptom of borderline personality disorder. Cinderella’s belief that she belongs in royal attire and not rags could be a symptom of a narcissist. When she refuses to admit she attempted suicide, it could be an example of the intersection between coexisting yet contradictory narcissistic and borderline tendencies. The borderline in Cinderella is expected to display self-damaging impulses. Borderlines gamble spend money irresponsibly, binge eat, abuse substances, engage in unsafe sex, or drive recklessly. Completed suicide occurs in 8%-10% of such individuals, and self-mutilative acts (e.g., cutting or burning) and suicide attempts are very common. Finally, these self-destructive acts are usually precipitated by threats of separation or rejection; a condition undoubtedly satisfied when the shoe did not fit. However, the narcissist in her must retain a grandiose sense of self-worth. By inflating her self-worth, Cinderella becomes entitled to success and happiness, and can then justify her request for a better therapist but more importantly, she can envision the murders as her attempt of finally seizing the life she always deserved. But then, how can

Cinderella commit suicide and immediately throw away the life she just seized? The answer is unclear, but it's possible Cinderella lies about her suicide attempt to preserve her image of unlimited confidence, power, and control.

Cinderella is ripe with cognitive distortions and faulty thinking. The way she construes the events of her life causes her to react emotionally. During the interview, Cinderella made the statement "I lose no matter what I do." This is an example of catastrophizing cognitive distortion, consistently expecting horrible events that are unrealistic. In several instances she unconsciously filters out positive events and excessively focusing on negative events. Cinderella's step-mother psychologically and physically abused her, but also provided her with free housing and food for years, even as an adult. Cinderella ignores the positive and dwells on the negative. Near the end of the interview, she said the prince despised her. The prince knew Cinderella for three whole days, so it is not reasonable to believe he despised her. This is a manifestation of the mind reading cognitive distortion where she presumes to know exactly what others are thinking, when in reality, she is a pitiful crippled wench that can barely read a book, let alone a mind.

Treatment

Compared to psychodynamic therapy, I believe cognitive therapy will better treat Cinderella. With psychodynamic theory, we can gradually lessen the influence of her unconscious on her behavior and thoughts. However, the king ordered me to produce results hastily and psychodynamic therapy requires more sessions than cognitive therapy (I suspect the king is attempting to appease the media or comfort the kingdom with reports of a speedy recovery). Either way, cognitive therapy is a time-efficient route. During the diagnostic interview, there were more manifestations of cognitive dysfunctions than unconscious conflicts. There is the possibility she will unconsciously transfer the personality of her dead step-mother onto myself. Cinderella's worry that I will abuse her reflects the beginning stages of this step-mother transference. If she continues to socially behave according to the world she once inhabited instead of the world she currently inhabits, then the condition will worsen and I will have to address the unconscious transference directly. This transference is the only symptom I observed that requires psychanalytic theory. Therefore, I will apply cognitive therapy techniques and treat the obvious distorted patterns of thought.

I suspect Cinderella has borderline personality disorder and narcissistic personality disorder. To confirm, she will be here next week to Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory and the following week she will take the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. These tests emphasize pathology and feature a wide variety of useful clinical scales. If Cinderella does indeed have BPD and NPD we must recognize the existence of habitual dispositions toward the interpersonal world that limit her strategies to relax in stressful situations. From this perspective, violence, intimidation, unlawful imprisonment and the like represent the best choices from a limited menu of possible solutions to her daily problems. Regardless of the test results, I will employ genuine unconditional positive regard, empathy and teach a more internal locus of control. These conditions of client-centered therapy elicit a feeling of self-acceptance in Cinderella that can be further explored. Her surprise at my acceptance will demonstrate she, ironically, does not expect her narcissistic behavior to be accepted or condoned. Then, the client will likely recognize her immoral behavior and soon discover the repressed guilt she carries. I will facilitate this process of guilt discovery by caring for Cinderella as person with divine permission to not only have negative feelings, but to experience and share them. Through this, I hope Cinderella conceptualizes and aligns with her ideal self.