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Author of story #2 in Story Collection

For a while after everything came to light in early December, I admittedly held on to some hope that Clifford could change. However, after replaying everything that happened between us, observing his response, recognizing that his behaviors were textbook abuse tactics, and working with a therapist, I know with all my heart that Clifford is only getting more skilled at his ability to deceive others. He is a heartless, classic narcissistic abuser who shows no authentic signs of remorse. I'm providing this update to ensure that anyone who he tries to reach out to has the information they need to stay safe and protect themselves.

Clifford has not called me once since the day that I left our almost 3-year "relationship." When he realized that my possessions were removed from his room in early December, he sent me a text asking if we could talk. When I asked what for, Clifford said that he had lied about being in a previous relationship with Des, and mentioned nothing else. After pressing him, Clifford admitted half-truths and small confessions as a continued form of manipulation to make me feel as though maybe he did have a conscience. For example, he admitted that he had created a fake Instagram in our early days to stalk me, that he didn't lose his journal that he promised to write in as he claimed, and that he actually didn't delete sensitive content of me when I asked him to. However, Clifford would not admit to major items like having relationships with two other people while we were together or his pattern of sexual assault. After exchanging a round of texts, I blocked him on everything, reported him for sexual assault related to non-consensual sex that we had the morning I left (along with sexual coercion for most of our relationship), and got a restraining order.

Despite blocking him on everything, his blocked emails would still show up in my junk mail. And despite feeling so violated and being thoroughly disturbed by all I learned, I had a hard time not reading and responding. He was my closest "friend" and partner for so long, and a part of me still held on to the idea that maybe there was an ounce of something real between us. While his other two recent victims had already gotten to a place of being able to see clearly, I thought that maybe his apologies were sincere and that he was finally hitting rock bottom. As I pulled more information out of him, Clifford told me that his behavior was "despicable," admitted that he "was emotionally and sexually abusive," to me and said that "the lasting damage that [he] has caused is unquantifiable" and that he "poisoned [my] ability to trust anyone that [I] am ever close to again." While these words may sound earnest and repentant to an outsider, I know that they were just hollow platitudes.

Clifford continued to lie throughout our email exchanges while simultaneously claiming that he was "coming clean" and that he "hated the person he was." (These lines were recycled almost verbatim from two years ago, when he was called out by Des for similar abusive behavior). When I would confront his continued lies, Clifford would say that he "forgot" to mention certain things, or had a hard time remembering. For example, Des was eventually given a list of 28 people that he cheated on them with (although the real number is likely higher). For each of the

28 people he listed, Clifford had either lied about having sex with them, or lied about using protection. Many of these people overlapped with my monogamous relationship with Clifford as well. Yet, when emailing me, he only admitted to cheating 3 times and couldn't remember any more. After a number of emails like this, I got sick of wasting my time on him, realizing that we would never know the whole truth about anything, and that it didn't really matter. When I told him that I would no longer be responding since he continued to lie, he wrote, "Why are you torturing me like this? Why would I hold out? I know in my heart I'm being honest. If whatever story you believe to be true helps you hate me more to make this all easier somehow, then good on you."

Another apology later and Clifford started to send me performative information about his "recovery" that I never asked for. He must have realized that I wasn't going to fall for more gaslighting, and thought that he could once again elicit undue sympathy from me. He forwarded two appointment reminders for an acupuncturist, and told me he was starting therapy, attending sex addict meetings, and entering into a men's program. He also sent me a picture of his B-12 vitamins. (Note, this does not cure being a rapist). During this time, I lost ten pounds, couldn't sleep, couldn't work, spent a night in the ER, and had to be on oxygen after passing out while getting blood drawn for STI testing. Yet, Clifford told me that he would always love me and asked me to forgive him someday since he was again "putting in the work," a phrase he repeated many times over the years. I realized that he was creating a new persona— the broken guy that got tangled in his own web of lies. He was telling people that he was going through a really hard time but was finally seeking professional help. He wanted people to feel like he was bearing his soul and plant the idea that maybe he wasn't so dangerous after all.

In mid-January, Clifford's mother (who is an incredibly sweet, generous, albeit naive person) reached out to me. She warned me not to trust the other people Clifford had abused, saying that they tricked him into "taking the bait" and that he's "getting help for his inability to read people and his inability to say no to people." Weeks prior, Clifford told me that he had come clean to his family about everything, saying "this was the only time I've ever seen my step father cry." While deeply saddened to see his mother be manipulated like the rest of us, I do understand how she would want to believe her son and can't blame her for that, but it yet again reveals his trail of continued dishonesty.

After his two other victims and I filed restraining orders against him in January, Clifford also filed an order against one of *us*— clearly an ill-attempt to continue vilifying us and create a distorted papertrail to confuse people into thinking the situation was more complicated than it actually was. It's not complicated at all— Clifford Ludena/Meyer is an abusive narcissist who will say and do whatever he can to escape any consequence for his actions. It has now been over five months and the *ONLY* restraining order that has been served is the one that HE filed. I've called and left messages many times to check in on the status of my order, but have not received any response from the police other than an automated email saying my restraining order is pending.

Meanwhile, the detectives who were investigating my case (who apparently aren't connected in any way to those that serve the restraining orders) interviewed Clifford approximately two months after I filed a report in December. Clifford told them that he cheated and felt awful, but

he wouldn't admit to any of the multiple allegations brought against him by myself and others. Though I had low expectations for getting the police involved, I bawled when they called me to tell me that despite having interviewed three people with similar accounts of his abuse, and despite DNA evidence collected, they weren't able to make an arrest or take any steps to ensure the safety of our community. They also weren't able to give me an update on my pending restraining order.

The last thing I'll touch on is one of the "recovery" pieces that Clifford touted to myself and others. He told me that he enrolled in Emerge's Men's Education Program, a 6-month course which seeks to engage men in meaningful conversations and hold them accountable for their abuse. Clifford gave me the phone number for the manager and said I could be informed of his progress, so I contacted the program manager who filled me in on his involvement. They relayed to me that Clifford did do an intake interview and told them that he wanted to join due to infidelity during our relationship. He didn't mention the intense emotional abuse he put multiple people through, the pregnancy, the gaslighting, the sexual abuse, his unsafe sexual habits, etc., despite this being the chance to be honest and receive actual help. The program later found out about the website, realized that he was lying about everything, and asked him to come in for a true interview, making it clear that he wouldn't be able to participate without committing to honesty and honoring the program's goals. The program manager told me that they were concerned that he was using the program to manipulate people into thinking he wanted to change, and to provide a false sense of security. They said that they believed he was trying to use his attendance to further his image and make people believe he was actually turning over a new leaf. Hearing this person perceive him so well was incredibly refreshing for me, as I finally felt like someone removed from the situation understood just how dangerous and manipulative he is. Clifford has not responded to their repeated calls for him to re-do his intake interview and continue with the program. Also, it's important to note that this is not the first time he's rejected resources and tools that were made available to him. While undergoing the sexual harassment investigation at BICAS a few years ago, Clifford declined to participate in the same Emerge program, along with a men's group called Bruvluv, expressing his criticism with the organizations.

I know how appealing it is to trust someone's words that you really want to believe, especially if they are telling you that they want to make transformative changes in their life. I listened to these words, gave my trust, and provided forgiveness to Clifford for years. Before me, the long list of people that he has traumatized also gave him their trust and forgiveness, many pushing him to seek professional help as well. Yet, Clifford continues to blaze through our lives, extract whatever resources he can, and jump to the next victim. I had hoped that sharing our stories publicly would finally push him into seeking real help, but it is very clear that he only wants to preserve a false image of himself. Unfortunately, I have no doubt that he's already working on a new victim while trying to recover any friendships with compassionate people who truly want to see the best in others.