

A PROSTITUTE'S SCRIPT

Frank Morris

I only saw her eight to ten times in my chaplain's office a half century ago. She was near death with cancer and wanted, rather desperately, to be heard by a caring man before the end. I was the appointed nurturing man and listened to her story.

First, however, we must go back prior to her story to a therapeutic conviction of mine, namely, that a client unwittingly reveals her (or his) unconscious life Script in the first interview. To my query "Tell me about yourself", a given individual begins with an established pattern from childhood where some traumatic something was almost a daily occurrence. It could be an older sibling's constant emotional drubbing, a mother's alcoholism, a sister's retardation, a father's cruelty, or, say, an accident that changed the entire family. The options are many; the tale the same - in the sense that a life course is set by a repeated problematic situation. Stuckness occurs. This means that the client unwittingly plays and sets up the same scene over and over in real life as an adult - sometimes only with a spouse, sometimes with her or his own children and sometimes at work. The great challenge of therapy is to break that pattern and set the person on a free course to live and do as is chosen: not determined.'

Now, back to the dying prostitute. It seems that she was precocious in school and beautiful in looks. Nothing, however, earned her notice or praise from her father. "Each grading period I'd bring my report card to him as he sat stolidly in his chair. He'd glance at it and return it to me without even a grunt. All A's made no impression on him. My winning a beauty contest brought forth no sign of recognition. To him, I was invisible. I'd dress like I thought he might like, eat proper so he would not be ashamed of me, went to church obediently, and never caused him any trouble. Nothing worked. He was like a stone Buddha. I went to college, did well, and graduated with honors. Nothing from him. Absolutely nothing. He died when I was 22 years of age"

In each succeeding appointment she revealed how she got into her line of work and how, with man after man, she sought to please him in order to get attention and appreciation. "One time it worked while I was working a convention in St. Louis. A man, a rich man, fell for me. Weeks later we got married. He took me to his home out East where no one would know me. Things went along so well for awhile. I'd do anything for him: anything. I tried so hard to make everything perfect. I'd iron his shirts, press his pants,

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set out his clothes in the morning, and, when we went out, look like a million dollars so he'd be proud of me. I don't know what happened. Before a year was out, he divorced me. I returned to my business, this time in Chicago."

You, my kind reader, well know that this woman of pleasure was in the Script Loop leftover from childhood where each john was her father, her husband was her father, and she never matured. As the last man in her life - pastoral counselor at that - what was I to do? I could not say "Madam, you never grew up." That would be unbearably cruel because it was just weeks before her death. My job was clear. I had to listen, make sure she knew I listened and heard her, affirm her as a solidly good misunderstood soul, and embrace her at the close of each session as if I were a loving understanding father.

"Will you visit me in the hospital when I am dying? I will pay you."

Ahh, the Script again. I could not just visit her because I cared; according to her, I'd have to be paid because I'd only cared for her because she paid me my hourly wage during counseling hours.

"Yes. I'll be there and hold your hand. It will not be necessary to pay me." She looked at me disbelievingly, but gratefully.

And so her story ended so many decades ago. This good little girl who sought to please her father and each succeeding father substitute died without knowing soul freedom.

I hurt as I recount this story from long ago and faraway.

Maybe someone out yonder will hear how Scripts can be so deadly and awaken.

I hope so. Mary would like that.