

[REDACTED]

A few weeks later I started dating someone who told me he had a multitude of connections. This person was an activist, leader, and St. Louis native. This person was the president of several local non-profit organizations. This person was a feminist, a musician, a dancer, and a coder. This person ate locally sourced food and knew all about urban farming.

Full disclosure: this is not a happy story, so that's your trigger warning.

[REDACTED]

I shared this with this person. I had found a partner who was earnest and open-minded. I liked how outspoken this person was and how this person told it like it was. This person made me feel special. This person was polyamorous and sexually liberated. It was important to this person that I understand monogamy was unnatural and that they had never been in love. It was important to me that they knew I had no interest in trying to change them. So long as this person was honest with me, I could give this a try.

After three months of an open relationship I determined this was not the right arrangement for me. Monogamy was what would ultimately make me happy and so I told my partner this. They cried and told me they loved me. They would change for me. We could be monogamous. I didn't know what to do. I knew that changing your romantic partner never ended well. People change because they want to change, they don't change for other people, at least not successfully. We stayed together.

I was in a committed relationship and happy. I had a career, a partner, and a new city. They spoke often and fondly of their exes. How all of their relationships had ended on good terms. They went to dance retreats with ex-girlfriends and asked permission to share rooms with them. I told them I trusted them and that was fine. I merely asked that they consider how they would feel if I asked permission for the same arrangement. They didn't care for that question.

It didn't take long before my partner started asking me if I still liked them. They asked nearly every day. They asked if I had found someone else. They asked why I was disinterested. I assumed I was doing something wrong by not being affectionate enough or reassuring enough. When I told my partner of course I loved them and still wanted to be with them they would get upset with me and tell me that this was why they were polyamorous. Monogamy made them this way. I offered to end our relationship, and they said that wasn't what they wanted.

Lindy Hop was incredibly important to my partner and I wanted to become more involved with the scene. I was painfully shy and valued modesty deeply, but I wanted to participate. The one event we attended they told me that either I danced with everyone who asked me to dance or I danced with no one. So I danced with no one.

There were moments in this relationship that were profoundly sweet and tender. Times when I cried and they held me. They sent me flowers. One time I accidentally threw my car keys in a dumpster and they immediately jumped into the dumpster to fish them out for me. I would organize their closet and make them baked goods. My partner was not a monster to me. I think they cared about me as much as they were capable of caring about me in their own way.

They were always open about their sex drive. They needed to have sex and often or they would be unhappy. I was simply too traumatized by my childhood experience to be the partner in the bedroom that they needed. They frequently said the relationship would have to end if I didn't start performing in the bedroom. They were kind about it, patient, understanding—but the deadline loomed. They offered me a bottle of birthday cake flavored vodka once to make it easier. I hated all of it. I was unhappy and uncomfortable. I didn't know how to express it, but I cried often. They suggested I was asexual and that was why I wasn't enjoying sex with them.

While we were together they confided in me that they had enormous wealth and capabilities. I think they meant to impress me with what they could accomplish if they wanted to. They wanted me to know they could ruin people, they could deliver justice that police were not capable of delivering. They told me they had secret and extreme knowledge that made them dangerous. I would ask probing questions and they would become agitated. They told me I was in danger simply by being in a relationship with them, that was how great their secret knowledge was. I became afraid of them and for them. I thought they needed medical help and I told them this. They vehemently denied having any problems and cried when I told them I couldn't continue our relationship if they wouldn't get help. They said they would work on themselves. They would exercise more. They would get better sleep. They would have a healthier work/life balance.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] My partner graduated from Washington University.

Throughout the relationship my partner would make comments about my faith. I am a devout Jew. They once told me that Israelis were genocidal (knowing I have close relatives who are Israeli) and when I became emotionally distraught they told me I was being unfair. They told me if we ever lived together we could not have a Kosher home because they would be ashamed. Their friends would judge them for letting me control them that way. There would have to be bacon at breakfast. They told me their mother had expressed concern about us having children together because Jewish women were controlling. When I said that was a classic anti-semitic statement they became enraged with me for speaking about their mother that way. We prepared a dinner to have with their boss and close friend and over the meal my partner said they would never get married because the woman would only be after their money. I was mortified.

The tension increased. We would make date plans and they would be hours late and angry when I would cancel. They told me I didn't laugh at their jokes enough, that they was certain they were funny and they wanted to know why I wouldn't laugh. On a particularly lovely spring day we went to the zoo and they asked me why I wasn't smiling more. I didn't smile enough. I told them I was never going to be a girlfriend who worshipped them, but I would be a girlfriend who always supported them. We fought.

Finally, I broke up with them and it took. They wanted to work it out and I said no. They told me no one would ever be as patient with me as they had been. They told me they feared for me going out into the world. They told me I would get raped. "I'll take my chances," was what I said.

We texted a bit after the break up but I realized I didn't want to speak to them any more. I was already so much happier without them in my life. I had time to process the experience away from them for several weeks. I tried to ignore their text messages and emails and finally I told them directly: "You said some

pretty hurtful things to me that I've since had time to reflect on. I need some time. I'll let you know when I'm ready to talk. I trust you'll respect that."

For six months they intermittently contacted me. I never responded. I made friends. I dated new people. Finally, my ex sent me an email that disturbed me. It opened: "I don't want to make the mistake of not telling you how I feel. I understand that you might not want to hear it. I do value your feelings and I promise you that I have tried to be respectful of your stated wish to not hear from me, but I weighed it out and decided this was still the best thing for me to do. If you really, genuinely don't ever want to speak to me again, that is your right, but understand that I will always think about you and love you regardless. It is just how I'm wired. I don't ever stop loving people." It was a long email that suggested I was doing this to be hurtful. I told my ex if they ever contacted me again I would call the police. They said they would never contact me again and they didn't.

That November I moved into a new apartment with a roommate. I started dating someone new. I settled into Tower Grove East. In the spring I was alerted that my ex had purchased a house one block from my apartment. I lived at Magnolia and Virginia. They lived at Holliday and Louisiana. I was beside myself and terrified. I couldn't move, I was in the middle of a lease, but as soon as the lease was up I got out of the neighborhood. They had started a social justice collective in the house, Radix. My friends attended events there. I was invited to them regularly.

Social justice circles became inaccessible to me. I walked into a Food Spark event with a close friend, saw my ex, and promptly had a panic attack. I left immediately. My ex approached my close friend and tried to engage her in a conversation about me. They told my friend perhaps an arrangement could be reached where she would tell them my schedule and they could avoid me. My friend declined the suggestion.

I continued to run into my ex. I would be out with friends or on dates and they would walk into where I was, put themselves in my eye line, and watch me. I had to end a date early because my ex sat directly behind the man I was with, it was as if I was forced to sit across from my ex instead of across from the man I was dating.

I found out earlier this year that my ex had been accused of raping and abusing another partner. I called an abuse hotline and described my relationship. I simply did not have the vocabulary or perspective to put a word to what my year-long relationship with my ex had been.

What if I had been more vocal about my experience with my abuser's friends and community? What if someone who came before me and had their bad gut feelings and reservations about my abuser had said something publicly before they acquired positions of power? What if someone had pulled me aside and warned me? What if I had said something the minute I suspected they were stalking me instead of rationalizing it?

It's hard to live with the knowledge that a woman was groomed, trapped, and raped after me. I have struggled with overwhelming anxiety, depression, and guilt. I wish I had spoken up. I truly did not think anyone would believe me or care. I thought my ex was too celebrated and too powerful to have anything touch them. The last woman who spoke up about my ex was harassed, threatened, and had the police called on her. I have been terrified to say anything. I don't know what my ex will do to me. I don't know what they are capable of. They have heavily hinted time and time again that they are capable of murder. I

don't want another woman to be raped, abused, or terrorized and I believe that my ex will continue to collect women and mistreat them if they are not stopped and held accountable.



I am begging you to come forward if they have abused you and ask for accountability so that they cannot do this to another woman.