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It's a Long Road

I'm a naturally curious person, and after what seemed a very long time of dealing with emotions and pain that I couldn't understand, I started doing some research on what might be behind them. I found this board a while back, after already having read Forward's books on dealing with one's parents and Love's and Adams' books on covert and emotional incest itself. I didn't end up registering at that time because I very quickly came to a difficult turning point in my life involving what I came to admit was sexual addiction, which I've been trying to deal with (with modest success, thankfully) for nearly a year now.

My parents had a relationship that was characterized mostly by my father's aloofness and my mother's desperate clinging. It wasn't something that would have been obvious unless you were looking for it, but looking back, from my perspective, I can see how little my father was there; his job took him physically away from the house, sometimes for months at a time, and my mother turned to me for a purpose in life, I suppose. I was barely let out of the house, and I didn't have friends outside of school. I was everything to my mother when my father was gone, but when he was home, it was like I had a portrait of a mother and father: pleasing to look at, but inaccessible.

We moved across the country when I was seven years old, ostensibly to be closer to my mother's immediate family. I was still a loner, although I finally had a few friends once the family settled down from the move. I should note that I'm an only child, to be clear. Somehow, the move seemed to make things worse, overall, emotionally; my father was able to stay at home much more often, but it didn't seem to affect how detached he seemed, and my mother certainly didn't feel any better for it.

It was soon after this that I began gaining the "privilege" of staying up a bit later to watch TV in my parents' bedroom, provided I scratched my mother's back for some time. I'm still piecing together the feelings and memories from this time. I honestly believe that nothing overtly sexual took place, but over the next few years I would, nearly every night when my father wasn't present, go to my mother's bedroom to scratch her (sometimes completely bare, often nightgown-covered) back and perform back massages.

A few years after the move, after my mother's father died somewhat suddenly of congestive heart failure, my father "came out" to my mother, confessing his belief in his own homosexuality. After a period of their "trying to make [the relationship] work," which my mother later, and inappropriately, told me involved sexual concessions made by her, she discovered his infidelity with another man, and they eventually divorced. My emotional enmeshment with my mother intensified during this time. I essentially became her best friend and confidant, listening to her problems and continuing to "help her relax" in her bedroom until I finally decided I didn't feel comfortable with it anymore, around the age of 15 or 16 (I don't remember the timing clearly). Even then my ties to her didn't diminish, and despite the many friendships I developed in high school, she was heavily involved in my life; she was a "band booster" in my time with the school band, and she was my transportation to and from everything I did. I never had a serious girlfriend, and it

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was around this time that what would become my sexual addiction began to manifest itself.

I ended up going to college at a campus within an hour's commute of home, and for the better part of my first semester there my mother would actually pick me up from the residence hall and take me home. At this point, I can't think of anything I really did there other than keep her company. I continued to be completely lacking in close relationships with women until I essentially failed my first year of college and had to move home from lack of financial aid, when I started going out with, and eventually having a very active but not at all emotionally intimate sex life with, a girl I met through a group of mutual friends at the community college I ended up at. I realize now that I was in a pretty nasty emotional tug-of-war between my mother, who basically wanted nothing for me other than for me to take care of her and not abandon her the way my father had, and my own interests, which included getting an education, developing close relationships with other people, and having a career more fulfilling than foodservice could provide.

My "escape" and "flight" from my mother was facilitated by the relationship I had with the woman who would become my wife, the second "real" relationship I was involved in. From nearly the start of that relationship, my mother was antagonistic toward her; some of my clearest recollections of that time involve memories of my mother either insulting or denigrating her to my face, or my mother trying very hard to paint my relationships as an "either-or" choice: my fiancée was the "wrong" person, for various reasons, and I needed to stay and take care of my mother because, well, she was my mother. My wife comments now that she understands why she felt more like an interloping mistress rather than my committed girlfriend whenever she spoke with my mother.

Most of the difficulties that I've had since I've moved out of my mother's house are less directly related to my mother so much as collateral damage from the emotional baggage I carry from that time. Two major incidents between her and I stick out in my memory, both from visits she made to our home (we live across the country from her, and have since the first move). During her first visit she treated me almost like an old flame, and at that time I couldn't think any more of it than to know that something felt seriously wrong with the way she acted toward me. During her second visit, now two summers ago, she seemed profoundly disappointed that I'd matured and become nearly unrecognizable from the person she knew while I lived with her; we ended up having a major argument about her treatment of me during childhood and haven't really spoken since.

I'm 31 now, and just beginning to come to grips with what really went on in my childhood, and how I've been deeply affected by those events. My wife and I have come very, very close to parting ways due to my emotional issues and the ways I've continued to try to escape the pain of my relationship with my mother, and I am profoundly grateful to have found a woman as understanding and compassionate as her. I'm in therapy for my emotional problems and a recovery program for my addiction, and I'm extremely hopeful in my pursuit of a stable and sane state of mind.

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Groundless