

## FORGIVENESS

I needed to get out of my life. What was the path that I needed to take to get rid of all the bad energy?

*Josh was different. He went down like a fine bottle of wine. He was smooth, and a kick in nothing else. Once, I took a sip I wanted more. Once I had a little taste, I wanted the whole bottle. I didn't just want to Josh. I wanted all of him. And I wanted him to devour me. I welcome that invitation. It was everything to me. Once I started, I knew that I could never stop. This was a wonder. This was fantastic. This was my forever. I don't think that I was the only one who felt this way about Josh. That might've been my downfall. Sure, he gave me everything that I needed. But I always wondered about him. Why did he seem to be holding back? Why did he do one things for me that I could never give him? What was lacking in our relationship?*

*For the time being, I didn't care. I wanted him so much. And he obliged me physically. That was all that seemed to matter. I didn't get it. There was something so cool about it. I wanted to be with him. I want to be with him all the time. I think that he knew this, and this made him cocky. Inevitably, he knew how to push my buttons. And I was helpless. I tried to counteract his influences. I told myself that I was an independent woman.*

*I thought the temptation. It was solid and inevitable it was impossible for me to resist. I felt as if he was playing me like a violin. He knew everything that he had to do to convince me. I went along. Sometimes, when I really needed him, I couldn't find him in almost didn't make any sense. Why had he been so obliging. Why did he seem to give me everything out that I needed to survive, and when I truly needed that excitement, he was nowhere to be found? It was more than hurt. I would hate for him. I would text him, and I wouldn't hear a thing. He knew he had that power. He was still at home and do his own thing. But he would make me imagine that he was with someone else. And I can put myself in the room with him, and I would watch what he was doing. That only added to my sense of jealousy. There is no clear basis for my suspicions. And he was ignoring me. And I think that he enjoyed the feeling that I had. In his own way, he was me in front of me. I hated his marking. I didn't feel that was a fair trade off. In a sense, it was becoming addictive. In the beginning, he lived up to his promise. It was everything that I could hope for and more.*

*It was brilliant. It was a sun that shone onto eternity. I lived by it. It was my constant reference. I seem to be nothing else worthwhile. Other times, and it was almost hideous. I was counting on him. He knew that. He would even miss appointments. I prepared a dinner for him. We had plans to go out somewhere. I intended him to meet my friends. None of that was enough. He said that he didn't like to make plans. When I started to miss him too much, he would show up. That only added to the habit. I was caught. Perhaps it wasn't that satisfying anymore. That didn't diminish my younger. I wanted him all the time.*

*I battled the night for image could last me through my ache. After I had seen him, my appetite seemed to subside. But he knew how to push things. Again, I wouldn't see him for days. He was going through the same charade. I was hanging on. My breathing was halting. I felt on the verge of a panic attack. None of this seem to change his perspective. He was just as*

*ruthless. I hated to think that I was getting turned on by this. Some of these escapades should've been a pretext for breaking with him.*

*Instead they only made me want him more. I would look at him and think this is the guy guy for me. I knew that he wasn't that great in the commitment department. He had his own career. He wasn't asking me for money. Sometimes he would spend a lot on me. For him it was all a game. There is nothing long-term here. He didn't give me any indication that he wanted to break up. Sometimes, he would just assume that we were together. But there were those moments when I needed him. These times and I long for him. Those long lapses when I wondered if I would see him again, and all that made me afraid. What was happening here?*

*:Why have you become so distant? When will I see him again?"*

*All these thoughts ran through my head. I was running out of my ability hang on. How come I needed more resources. I realized who he was. He was giving me just enough to keep me interested. He was also letting my imagination play on. He knew how jealous I was getting. And he would drop a little hints as if something really was going on. That only irked me. It made me wonder what he was all about it. Try as I may, I couldn't get them to change. He seem to like it the way it was. He would hold steadfast to his lifestyle. He would imply that his creative juices resulting from his love of freedom. But I was only trying to restrict him. But I was trying to mess with his version of paradise. He made sure that I continue to trust him. And my trust would build overtime. Even though he was shaking my confidence, he was also giving me cues to stay on board. He might give me flowers spontaneously. Or he would pile on with the compliments.*

*Every time, he recognized what he needed to do to keep my interest. And I wanted to scream out to the heavens that I was being betrayed. I wanted someone to intervene. He was so clever. He would flatter my friends. I would tell them that was what was going on. They always seem to take his side. That made me more uncomfortable. What was going on? Why was I saw week. He wouldn't bully me. He wouldn't threaten me. He also seems so tender when he was with me. And I want to believe that with everything. Why did he neglect me? Why did he put other things in his life before me. I could watch movies going on. I could feel that sensation. And he would always get the better of me.*

*I didn't have enough of a grasp on the situation to understand what was really going on. I didn't want to feel as if I was being played for a fool. I was a mature individual. But he could do it every time. Sometimes now and then, it became this elaborate performance. He would check in for a little while. We would make major plans together. In some emergency would come up in his life. He would lose touch. We have been so close. Now, he was resisting mean. I hated this resort. I felt devastated.*

*I would be at a restaurant, and he would tell me that he was about to meet a major client. He wouldn't be able to make it. Occasionally, I would hear voices in the background. Female voices. They would be laughing. He would even join in the laughter. All the while, he was talking to me as if nothing bad was going on. I didn't get it. How stupid did he think that I was? I'd confront him the next time that we were together. He would become indignant. He would ask me if I wanted to break up. He would blame me for the problem. And I wondered*

*what I could see in my defense. I feel as if he was tossing me back-and-forth.*

*I would catch my breath, then I'd be rolling around on the ground again. He loved the game of cat and mouse. He was triumphant. I was helpless. I need to create my own version of cleverness. What would it be? For a time, I tried distancing myself from him. I figure he wasn't giving me what I truly needed. Therefore, I needed to go off on my own. I would do just that. I hadn't seen him in a month. I really believe that he was out of my life. I had wave my hands, and he disappeared for good. That was all that I needed. That was all that I expected. That was perfect for me.*

*I took it other guys, and I'd create a life for myself. They would take me out to dinner. They would bring flowers. They would romance me. They would be none of this nonsense. Finally, I would be free that all seems so easy. I was still longing for him. I was still waiting for that moment when he would come back in my life. New. I accepted my new lifestyle you ran into me at Home Depot. He told me they would be finished in a while for dinner. At first, I told myself that it would be okay. I spent all this effort trying to get away. If I went along with him that wouldn't do me any good.*

*He was there to rob me of my integrity. More than ever, I recognized how many net manipulative he was. When I told him no, I was sure that I was going to stick to my guns. This time, he was more than clever. He let me talk on. That made me think that I had one. I relished my victory. He was right here before me, and I wasn't giving in. And the world crashed around me. I wondered what it happened. I was almost desperate. I felt as if I was begging to be included in his dinner plans. I also wondered if anyone else would be there.*

*What is he going to play a game with me. He would surround me with his friends, and he would make me feel as if I was less of a person. He might even have some other women there. They would all be dressed up. They would all be scantily clad. And they would feel so comfortable in the moment. I would watch them all, and I would wonder why I was even there.*

*All these thoughts confirmed my fears. They made me feel right about myself. There was no way that I could accept it for myself. It didn't work out that way. I was there when he wanted me. And I did everything that he expected me to do. I believed that I had my own plan for my life. Whatever it was, it couldn't last.*

*He had gotten mean. As I drank my wine, I try to slow things down. Sure, I was there. But I wasn't taken in by his bullshit. I had to sit down boundaries. I was not going across them. He started to touch me. I couldn't even remember what I was thinking. Everything seemed to go blank. And I just gave in to his kisses. Indeed, I lacked the ability to resist. I was immersed in the moment. I was excited for the passion. I longed for the pleasure.*

*There was nothing else for me. I hated that feeling. I had said no to myself a million times. But I was saying yes to him over and over and over again. But it happened to my strength. Why had I been so compliant. I hated this weakness. This hadn't been like me. It was nothing that I was able to do.*

*I thought that sure Josh was going to be everything that I hoped for. I was slowly realizing that I was in for a rude surprise and I barely understood how to prepare myself. I was facing enough challenges. And I thought that I could make it happen. In fact, sure. Or I would recognize when was going on. And I would finally have the world to tell Josh what I*

needed to say.

*I was eating dinner at his house. It seemed like the perfect moment I wanted to thank him once and for all contacting me. Josh never threatened me. He never done anything to make me afraid. I was angry at him. But I don't think that he ever understood why. That gave me the creeps. It made me think that was all in my head. I know that he wasn't trying to gaslight me. It was nothing like that. He just was too casual but life. Maybe, I was wrong to expect that he would be any different. There's no reason to expect him to change. And I couldn't force him to act differently. What could I do? What hold did I have over him? This reminded me of something important about other people. If I about to put credibility in my relationship. I needed to feel that the other person was willing to adjust for my emotions. If I felt upset, the other person would be interested in finding out the source of my feeling. And that understanding would cause a real change in his behavior. I wasn't just thinking about Josh. I was thinking of anyone else that I had been with in the past. And it's also applied to my future. This was the thin line between me and the other person. If I love someone. I needed to establish this connection. It was so obvious. I couldn't force him to feel this way. But he didn't show sympathy, and the relationship was dead. It was dead on arrival. I couldn't do anything about it to save it. I reviewed what that meant. Clear lesson.*

*I needed to do what was necessary when it was necessary. This was more than obvious. If I felt hurt, I wanted the other person to feel my heart. I didn't want the other person to feel that he could cause pain to me, and he wouldn't have any responsibility to respond at all. I couldn't use my aggression to make Josh feel another way. But if he didn't show his concern, what good was the relationship? And if he didn't care about my emotions, why did I want to be with him?*

*Why did I want to be with him? I like the way he made me feel. But it wasn't that. He just helped me feel relieved. And after that relief is over, I start to feel bad again. Even when I was with him, that feeling would quickly we are off. And I would be back to feeling bad again. The worst part of all was that I continued to want him when he wasn't around. I should've learned from what happened. I didn't. It was so automatic. He would act a certain way, and I would feel all messed up. I'd get away from him. I put all that behind me. Then I start to ache for him. And that aching became more intense. This wasn't right at all. But it was our relationship. And it continued again and again.. At first I feel fortunate that we were together. And he didn't try to play me. He didn't take me for granted. In fact, he knew that I could ditch him at any moment. That kept him on his toes. More than that, he felt lucky to be with me. Overtime, that all changed. He found a way to soften me up. As he was doing this, he was changing his own outlook.*

*From this point on, only felt good when he was able to make me feel bad. I didn't even realize that this was happening. He was involved in this power trip, and it continued again and again. It freaked me out. This wasn't what I had signed up for. I felt as if I could no longer trust him. What he done to me. My lack of trust still wasn't enough to motivate me to leave. I felt afraid. I was afraid that I would lose some thing that I truly cherished. And I still thought about those early moments with Josh. And he filled me with that intense sensation. I loved it. I loved all of it. Now, I was seeing the other side. That was all that I was saying. Nevertheless I*

*still didn't have enough courage to break from him.*

*I sat with him at dinner and I stared into his eyes. He melted me again. And he got exactly what he wanted. I didn't spend the night. I needed to get out of there. When I left, everything felt clear. I told myself that I wasn't gonna do this again. I held my resolve for a couple of months. He kept inviting me over. And I kept on telling him no. I finally agreed to meet him at a bar. I felt that this was a neutral site. I decided to avoid drinking. I needed my mind to be clear. On the other hand, he got smashed. After he was in that state, he started to say all kinds of things. He told me that he was sorry. He explained things that happened in his childhood. He asked me for forgiveness. He started crying. It was all crazy shit. I never saw him like this. In some ways, I didn't respect him like this. At the same time, I wanted to mother him. I wanted to make things right once and for all. Worst, I thought that I could fix him. I believed that I finally seen the source of all his mischief. And it wouldn't take much to break it down.*

*Since we have been through so much together, this would be the basis for a strong relationship. I can depend on him, but I wouldn't be dependent. I achieved a sense of certainty. It seemed wash away all the bad. For the time being, we agreed that we would only meet at restaurants or bars. We wouldn't attempt to go back to his house. I would invite him over to mine. The rules required that. He seemed on his best behavior. I took him for that. This was a probationary period. He was making up for all his bad behavior. I did my best to be sympathetic. I realize that this crystalized problems. But I was doing my best to accommodate. Nevertheless, I could still see the things.*

*I was going to have to make a decision. But I agreed to go back to his place? Was I going to end this once and for all? I could see that he was playing me. He had offered his confession. It showed how discouraged as he was. For the moment, we seemed to share the same emotional spectrum. Made it easier my trust. Nevertheless, this all seem to suck. I needed to back off for the time being. I've given him some thing, but that was sufficient.*

*I told him that I needed more space. He almost begged me; however this was not going to be the time to give him I promised myself that I was going to be strong. I need to show my strength at this moment. I need to say no to me. When I got home, I felt none of the desire. And since I felt that his confession had enabled me to separate myself from the madness once and for all indeed, could I be that confident? I had not just diluted myself through all this. He done a masterful job. He knew how to move forward and the retreat. He could make it all happen. It was shared genius. I felt frightened.? I times he seemed almost sociopathic. I felt no fear whatsoever. But he learned how to manipulate it.*

*Already, I wanted to see those days in the past. Nevertheless. there was a side of me that longed for him. The more that I thought about this experience, the more I was drawn in by him. And that connection kept getting stronger and stronger. I should've let all of this go. That wasn't happening. Even though I felt this way, I told myself that I was not going to call him. And I remained with my resolution. That made me proud of myself.*

*He also needed he also knew what to do to shore up his position. He was ready to work hard. He would text me at the appropriate moments. I would even talk to him on the phone. I*

*no longer heard women in the background. He was no longer humoring someone else. He devoted his complete attention to me. That itself. I felt this emotional overload coming from him. It scared in a sense; he thought nothing of it. He's showing me his tears, he had apologized for his past mistakes, and he offered up himself and sacrifice. This was freaky.*

*I couldn't see through what was going on. It was so obvious. He was good at this. Now that I was looking for it, it all made sense. I sought abstractly. Before I had gotten taken in by his seduction. No longer had that skill. He seemed weak. He didn't have the same insurance. He realized that he wasn't getting what he wanted, so the only added to his frustration.*

*The more frustrated that he felt, the weaker that he seen. I was trying to respond. I was trying to resist him. But there was too much in my way. There were too many interferences with what I needed to do. I took a good long hard look at myself. I didn't look like a victim. I didn't look like someone who could get pushed around. What it made me feel that way? He was a pro. I started wondering if he had done this with other women. I didn't want to forgive him anymore. I didn't wanna add to his game. It would only make him seem that he could do this to other people. It was really difficult. He hadn't really hurt me that much. It just bothered me. And it seem to prevent me from getting the maturity that I need it. So I became lost in this rigmarole.*

*I felt it as if I was only accompanying his performance. That really wasn't me. I needed to fight against these effects. It wasn't as if he was that brilliant. Sometimes I would be out by myself, and I would like another guys. At first I would tell myself that they were different. And the more that I looked, the more that they seem to be worse. I could see them trying these games on unsuspecting women. They would brighten up to the moment. They would listen to all the bullshit, they would believe it. I wanted to wave a red flag to tell them the danger was ahead. They would've only welcomed the seduction. I would've only have helped it to transpire. That bothered me.*

*I told myself that I was better than this I needed to make sure. I had a new understanding. It seemed so hard to put into affect I didn't have all that confidence that I thought I did. I was a little bird. He was doing his work on me. It bugged me. Who did yhe think he was? He wasn't some kind of genius. We had never sat down on an equal basis I found him wanting. His conversation shallow. All emotional or pathetic. A total lack of anything critical. That didn't stop me from going along. He knew how to get to know women. From his skills, he could play the master game. And it went on again and again. There was nothing there. There was never anything there. I'd work so hard to get to this point. It made me think that I was impervious to any assault. I was becoming overconfident. I knew pride went before a precipitous fall. I needed to catch myself. I needed to find a stronger support. I'm just getting lost in the moment.*

*I seemed to enjoy my instability. Nevertheless I didn't contact you. I would reply to his text intermittently. I needed to make it seem as if I was busy. I wouldn't let him throw me off. It's been a struggle to reach this point. I need to stick with this commitment. That was that. If he was someone wanted I really wanted I don't think that it would've been going through this struggle. Things would've seemed evident. He was playing up on me I need to prepare for*

*what was happening. That was my only defense. I was coming closer to facing the future. I couldn't be part of my life I didn't need to forgive him. I need to forgive myself.*

*I felt as if I was going through the whole process again. Josh hadn't lasted that long, but I was going to have to make an effort to get rid of him. Would that take forever? He wasn't part of my system, and it had been easy to dispel his influence. I had overcome his negative effects. I wanted to talk to someone.*

*I contacted a woman that I knew, and we met for drinks. Cheryl went on about what a cool guy Josh was .*

*"Did you sleep with him?"*

*"Shira, what are you asking me."*

*"Did you ever have sex with Josh?"*

*"He told me that you weren't in a committed relationship."*

*"And you fucked him?"*

*"Just the opposite. He knew that I thought that he was attractive. But he also knew that I was your friend. And I wasn't going to do anything with him, while you were going out with him. But he just lied."*

*"Are you making this up?"*

*Was I making this up? Did I want Cheryl to tell me something so that I would hate Josh.*

*"Cheryl is lying."*

*I had none of these conversations. I didn't want to talk to Josh, and I did not want to listen to another one of her stories.*

*"Josh always seemed like a cool guy. But the more that I got to know him, the more that I wondered. He knew that we were great friends. And he would say things to me. All of this was wrong, but it didn't stop him from acting this way. That was part of his power trip."*

*What evidence did I need? None of my friends would have acted this way. And Josh would never have played around in my circle. It made me think that the story was all made up.*

*"Why should I believe you?"*

*"Why should I believe her?"*

*"No one believes her. She is not a good friend. She would make up stuff to make me look bad."*

*All this made me wonder. It made me feel worse. What did I need to hear? I wanted to know everything. No Cheryl was going to tell me. I needed to dig deeper.*

*I realized that this had nothing to do with any of my friends. If she wanted to tell me something, I would listen. But she said nothing. He said nothing. I said nothing. And I had no recollection of anything that would upset me in any way.*

*I was thinking too much about this. And there were so many things distracting me from what I needed to do. I was making excuses for Josh. I was making excuses for myself.*

*The slate was clean. This was never about jealousy. This was about my real life. Where had I gone wrong? Did I say the wrong thing?*

*"Josh, I never realized how much of a loser you were."*

*"What do you want me to say back to that?"*

*I spent so much time trying to get with Josh. It seemed like it was going to take longer to get them out of my system. I was so wound up. It wasn't clear what steps I could take*

*process nevertheless I told myself that I couldn't keep on this way. Damn, he was messing with my life. I hated it. It was destroying me. I knew that this wouldn't go on forever. There would be a point when I could finally walk away from this experience. I could only hope that it was sooner than later. That only added to my uncertainty. How soon would it be?*

*I knew that Josh was counting down the days. And he was convinced that it would only be time before I would be back in his arms. It worked himself up. I talked to another friend, and she indicated to me that he was still carrying a torch for me. I knew this was nonsense. But she had planted a seed he had planted a seed in her, and that was all that was needed he knew that she would report back to me. She hoped it would make a difference. I only found it or ridiculous. He thought that he was appealing to some general principle.*

*Overtime I would finally cave in. I wasn't like this. I wasn't that weak. And Josh was looking at me and remembering all the times in the past when he was able to bring me back into the fold. This seemed to be no different. If Josh failed, this would be his defeat. He couldn't let that happen. Josh was pretending that he was waiting for me. But he knew he was entertaining other women. Maybe, if I hadn't followed through yet. But if the torch was supposedly burning for me, it was nearly extinguished. There was nothing in my favor. This helplessness became greater and greater. I remained with it. I enjoyed it. It lifted up my spirits. I was looking forward. I was not looking back. Josh is stealth only got greater. He wasn't going to let up. He knew that he had time on his side. And he was going to use it for his benefit. He thought that he knew me.*

*He was sure that my loneliness overtake me. Moreover, he believed that if he could get close to me, my defenses would immediately crumble. I wanted I wanted to tell myself that was all ridiculous. I knew who he who I was. And he wasn't going to tell me any differently. However he was doing everything to work me. Even if we weren't together, I could feel the energy. It was worse than a ghost. It was so dominant. It pervaded my psyche. He was getting a kick out of this.*

*There was no way that I could ever let them back in my life. The temptation remained. There were so many factors that were preventing me from doing what I needed to do. I didn't realize how weak I was. In a sense, that was also the source of my strength. I could use my knowledge to advance my interests. And I can make sure that he wouldn't warm his way back. It was tricky. In someways, he was room lights. He wasn't going to stock me listen going to get creepy. He did just enough to keep himself around. In a sense, he was haunting me. And he knew this. That was why he's always been so good. He knew the tricks to the trade. When he needed to, and just turn them on. I was I supposed to do. I didn't want to sing and I was hopeless. I heard already create enough distance between him and me. There was no way that he was ever going to make it back in my life. My intentions were clear. I didn't really care what he thought. This was no longer a possibility. Even when I thought about our shared memories, it didn't feel all that good. Everything was forced. He was exchanging a little bit of goodwill for a commitment on my part. I was not going to say that he broke that commitment. But he did everything for his own advantage. And it was obvious that every situation continued the same. That hurt me. I felt that I was starting to understand everything.*

*I found a place for myself. It still wasn't sufficient. There were so many Temptations to*



*go back to the way that I was. And it would've been so much easier just to slip back into those always I wasn't sure what would be the turning point. I tried, and I tried to work in my favor. I kept having these conversations in my head and something would get in my way why couldn't I make the break. It all seems so obvious to me.*

*In a sense, I tried to skate through my life as if he was never a threat. But he did affect my integrity. I wasn't able to get along get on with what I needed for myself. I think that he understood this as well. That was why he was so good at doing what he did. If he had his own method, I need to have one of my own. And documenting all these aspects would have a roadmap to realize my dreams. That was what really hurt. I've given all that time to him. I had given him my dreams. Now I need to put all that behind it. I wasn't sure if I had the power. I had come to this point. Something was still absent. That created the ambiguity in my life. This was all mine. But he got in my head I did everything to reach out. You could've led me in a totally different direction.*

*I knew what was necessary, but I wanted to talk myself out of it. That was not indicative of real strength on my part. I was sure that I had finally escaped. But Josh was everywhere part of my life. How could I finally liberate myself?*

*I was becoming too caught up in the events in my life. I needed to create more distance for myself. I wanted to grow. I need to immerse myself in my dreams. This had nothing to do with Josh or my friends. How did my childhood contribute to this way of seeing?*

***"Why would anyone pose for one of your works?"***

***"They are not posing. What is in there?"***

I thought about Josh. I believed that I had finally done enough to dispel him from my imagination. But he was not going to go quietly. Josh decided to show up at my door unannounced.

***"You are not allowed to do this."***

***"Baby, I want to get back with you."***

***"Back. You want me to waste all my time hoping that you'll be with me."***

***"I'm here now. I don't want to leave."***

***"You know what this is about. You are becoming a disease. I hate to put it in such stark terms. There is really no other way to see it. Look at yourself. You are doing your best to distinguish yourself. You are pretending that you are different. There is no difference. I am over you!"***

***"You could be a little kinder. After all, there is so much love between us."***

***He tried to touch me."***

***"Josh, you need to leave."***

***He sat there as if he was waiting for someone to take him away.***

***"This is my place."***

***"You invited me in."***

***"Now, you need to go. You have no respect."***

***"I have more than that."***

***Did any of us understand the forces that were affecting our decision-making. I told myself that I was going to do the right thing. Honestly, he no longer had any appeal for me. He could try to touch me. He could try to soft talk me. That was all over. He was no longer part of the show. What was this pathetic guy doing in my house.***

*I clapped my hand, and he was gone. This was not a trial run. This was the real thing. And it had been easy to send him on his way.*

*I once thought that there so many facets to his personality. I developed as I learned about him. This helped me to grow. Now, he only seemed like someone's project. And it would always be turned in incomplete. He was set in his ways. Down deep, he was exploitative. I thought that I was influencing him. But he was only running interference on me. That was ridiculous. He had become a burden. Everything else in my life was so in control. How could I let this clown come aboard?*

*I knew that it wasn't just about Josh. I could finally cast him adrift, and there would be a million other Joshes waiting to take his place. I almost felt as if they were sharing notes. Worse, they could have had insider information about my life.*

*I think that I was lucky that Josh was not that complex. He could only play me for a while. Then he started to slip up. His games seemed evident. Try as he might, they would never work on me again. He could drag the lug of himself over here. But it wouldn't amount to a hell in beans.*

*I wouldn't say that he was a shithead. But he did exhibit shithead qualities. And the weight of his character was too much to bear. He had punched his ticket, and he needed to clear out.*

*There were none of the obvious signs with him. He never asked me for money. He never threatened me. He was not a raging alcoholic. He was just this pusher. And he knew how to get the results from me. He would turn me on. I would get going, and that would be the end.*

*I had experience. I had my wits about me. I was not going to surrender for this kind of song and dance. Josh needed to get out of my mind once and for all.*

*I kept running the tape back. I was going to make all the right moves this time. I was not going to be the shrinking violet. I was going to show my assertiveness. His mastery was not going to play on me.*

*I reviewed my strategy. It was easy to see what Josh was doing. Would I be able to bring the same foresight in dealing with someone knew. I didn't want to cut the world off. I needed to trust my instincts.*

*I imagined different versions of Josh, and I created new strategies to limit the influence of everyone. I felt as if I was programming my life. But I could only work things in a negative.*

*I thought that it was only a matter of casting off the emotional baggage. But he had dug in deep. And there was all this scar tissue. I wasn't moving it aside. I was only getting numb. I needed to admit to my true hurt. And it had nothing to do with Josh.*

*I felt badly. My life seemed to have a purpose. Now, it only had a Josh. It was not supposed to be like that.*

*"This is all that you will ever know."*

*"What does that mean?"*

*"You are seeking consolation. Then you will go back to who you were."*

*"I have theory."*

*"You have a game. You have become the abridged version of your own life. You are looking for a quick resolution."*

*"There is no satisfaction in the long game."*

*“This keeps on going on longer than it should.”*

*“What do you need to tell me?”*

*“I am ready for a new beginning.”*

*“I am ready for a new beginning.”*

*“You need to go to the root.”*

*“You need to move beyond conventional gestures.”*

*“You have been thinking too much.”*

*“I need a new Josh!”*

*I realized Josh was nothing more than a party guy. He had a job. He was a painter. He did metal work. He was stable. But there’s nothing much to his character. His only dream was to control people like me. I never saw this at all. He was good. He knew how to make the party seemed endless. And I love the distraction. He was a total distraction. That only inspired me more. I committed myself to his influence. I lived for it. It was a little embarrassing to admit what had been happening. I had my own dreams. I wanted to pursue my writing. Josh made me feel that we were creative together. I was building on that feeling in my mind. We both existed in the same place. And it seem magical. But it was a total concoction on his part. There was really nothing to it at all. He was stringing me along. And I fell for it time and time again.*

*I wasn’t giving him my money. I was giving him my affection. And he wasn’t giving me much back in return. That was how it works it wasn’t about love. It never was. Never would be. It was something else. If I had challenged him he still would never of admitted admitted it. That was how he worked. He made me believe that he was caught up in the experience just as much as I was. It seem to add to his chart. Everything seems so casual. And it all fell into place. It should’ve alerted me what’s going on. This wasn’t coincidence. More planned than I realized. For him it was all second nature. He could get away with the same thing again and again. I was only along for the ride. I was building on his ego trip. And there seem to be no end to this experience.*

*All of this seems so evident to me. How had I missed it at the time? He was good. It wasn’t just that I wanted to believe. We were both creating the evidence to support the solution. We would go to a gallery open opening, and I would be looking at a work of art. I had a real insight into what was going on. Then made me think that I could engage the same level of creative endeavor.*

*Josh counted on that belief. It gave another level of significance to his work. He was never going to get famous as an artist. He would show women his paintings. They would believe that he had something more and went further than that. He had strong basic skills. He was good with a sketchbook. He really made people believe that he was on the verge of something greater. And I was always his best fan. Even when he mistreated me, I wouldn’t let go of that dream. In fact, that was what kept it all going. We both thought of ourselves as a living an artistic life. I loved him.*

*I didn’t want to say that. Down deep I knew it wasn’t true. But he had me going. And that was all that I could do. I ceded to all his tricks. Now I need to be honest. I needed to see how deeply I had fallen under his spell. It was all a little crazy. I kept trying to describe his mastery. It was evident. It was part of our experience. I wasn’t completely helpless. I saw it was going on. And I’d let it fester.*

*I was helping him create his own illusion. I really believed that he was not as confident around women before he was with me. I had created this monster. He was using our association to branch out on his own creepy that was creepy. There was no way he was inviting these other women into our private life. I hated that about him. It made me feel as if he was taking a vantage of me. He would always try to be crafty. He would hide what was going on. In a sense, he was hiding it from himself. This was all part of his show.*

*Everything seemed so easy. And I tried to overcome these influences. I had created a trap for myself. This wasn't pleasant. This was the monster who he was. Why couldn't I find more strength? Why not recognize my true independence? Just as he was creating me, I felt that I was making him in a way that could fulfill my inner desires. It only added to my sense of helplessness. I admired my creation. I wasn't gonna let it go. If I sent him on his way, that would be the end of the show. I would I have left. I didn't have any other demonstrate my own personal abilities. He had his art, and he wasn't a professional. But at least he was doing it. I had all these dreams in mind. And I was so busy with other things that I couldn't focus on them and added to his power. At times, I thought that he was looking down on me. It made me feel that I was never going to get anything done. And in its own the way, this was scary. I believe that I had this power that I didn't have. Anything that I could do seem limited. What was I missing? What did I need to say to give me more confidence.*

*I believed that there was another approach. I could use it to help me grow. But I needed to recognize its foundations. That would be my true inspiration. It was so apparent that I need to keep him out of my life there was nothing that he could do to advance my growth. He is my enemy. And I wasn't willing to admit it. That only added to this power. This realization convinced me couldn't go on with us any longer. I needed to discover the momentum I need to find the motivation to break for him once and for all. I need to find a balance. I needed to cast out all the ghosts.*

*What were the real causes of my dilemma. I needed to create my own way this was more apparent and ever. I had almost achieved what I needed. I still questioned myself. Was there any way that he could sneak back into my life.? I needed to make my boundaries clear. But he also saw a danger. I was going to end up I was going to end up shutting out any prospects for improvement. I was going to destroy the whole game. It had not been my intention. All along, it only made me feel more isolated. That added to my difficulty. It only made me feel that I need to get back together with him. He was taking advantage of my weakness I hated that aspect of his personality,*

*This needed to be the end once and for all. I could revisit the same situation. I only need to move one with certainly. It was time to make this work once and for all. I could declare my greatness and there's so much more to figure out. Where was I supposed to start?*

*What did your truly mean to have a life of my own? Was it even prepared to make the steps? I kept the process going. So much so that I needed to get free to do anything, even to cross the street on my own? That seems silly to Josh I couldn't let anything else affect me in the same way as it affected his other women. I needed growth. There was part of me that felt degraded by Josh. All in all, he only saw me one way and he counted on everything staying the*

*same. Even now, he was convinced that I had the same beliefs of the same belief. He was sure that I would eventually come running back to him. Boy, did he have another thing coming. And things were just getting out of control. And that was that.*