

The Miracle Therapist

By Matthew Allen (2025)

I can feel them waiting inside me. Squashed in a queue, jumping up and down with childlike excitement. Traumatic memories, frightening prophecies, feelings of melancholy, fear, anger, craving, and self-hatred, all ready to enter the door to my voice box. Ready to escape. But nerves patrol the queue, ensuring not one cry for help steps through the door until the sign is flipped from 'Closed' to 'Open'. Until she asks me what's on my mind.

On the outside, I'm calm. Sat on a sofa, enjoying the rays of natural light bouncing off the conservatory's white walls to create an ethereal glow. And I'm hopeful. Hopeful about my first appointment with her.

My story is not unique. I hate being me. The past haunts me, the future taunts me, and trauma resides within me underneath all the other weights of negativity I have sewn into my skin over the years. My soul is locked in a desolate chamber, where all it can hear, muffled through the walls, is the jabbering thoughts of my mind like a rowdy neighbour. I delivered gifts to my soul, which seemed to cheer it up at first. Drugs. Alcohol. Eroticism. Then I realised these gifts had been laced with poison. When I stopped giving them altogether, my mind and body retaliated by torturing me, every day, and will continue to do so until they get what they want: the gifts. The steroids they need to carry my weights without collapsing.

I arrived earlier, believing her redemption to be a scam. I'm well-informed of her past, so it just didn't add up. This was a woman so consistently mad that the entire neighbourhood closed their windows at 18:00 every night to avoid hearing her unhinged screams. A woman so volatile that she would kiss a loved one at 19:23, then hurl a glass at them at 19:24. A woman so bitter that her children were hesitant to tell her about any smidgens of success for fear of being shattered with derision. A woman so depressed that she would lie on her sofa for much of the time as if it were an open casket, and so anxious that it was the sole emotion that could galvanise her from said casket. A woman so enslaved to drink that despite being conscious of the damage it was doing to her mind, body, soul, and relationships, all the apologies and the 'it-won't-happen-again's it was making her serve up each morning, only for alcohol to wink at her from across the breakfast bar and say 'let's do it again', resulting in those apologies being completely redundant every time and any future amends to be perceived as frivolous by her loved ones, all while the abusive things she said and did became incrementally worse, running parallel to an ever-increasing tolerance for alcohol, with this disastrous combination performing its self-destructive routine like a pair of dysfunctional figure skaters, all while her loved ones watched helplessly from the stands. A woman so

much without hope that despite knowing all this she didn't even try to stop, drinking and drinking, and raging and raging, but at last, ceasing to apologise.

I was told that this woman, against all odds, was now sober, and had overcome all of this personal turmoil at the age of sixty. Not only that, but she now helps other people. Before, no one would have dared bring their troubles to her for fear of being met with ridicule or exasperation. Absurd, right? But when the front door opened, and I looked into her serene eyes, my doubts cascaded from my mind like dirt being washed from a car by a hose pipe. It seemed to be true.

The therapist enters from the adjacent kitchen that connects the conservatory to the rest of the house. She glides over to hand me a coffee. Sits in the chair opposite. Smiles a miraculous smile.

"Oh. Sorry, I forgot to get myself a drink. Excuse me, one second."

She springs up, sauntering back through to the kitchen.

This therapist had studied the patterns of her family history. A history so similar to mine. One of generational alcoholism and abuse. And while she may not have prevented its repetition, she had found a way to free herself from its conditioning. That's why she is the perfect therapist for me. Because if she can overcome this, then maybe, so can I, and we can stop history from repeating itself. The past is there to be moved on from. Otherwise, why would the present and future exist? Why bother carrying on if you can't move on? You've made a mistake? GAME OVER. No. I can try again.

She returns. Takes her seat. This is it. The start of the end. Finally, I have someone to go to. Someone to talk to. A mother-figure.

Funny. She went out for a glass of water. But didn't return with one. I guess she forgot.

I rise from the sofa. "Sorry. Just need to use the toilet," I say, ambling out of the conservatory.

Stopping in the kitchen, I turn to a cupboard. I tentatively open the cupboard to reveal its contents of spices. There, hidden at the back, is a half-drunk glass of white wine. Where she's always hid it.

A woman so trapped in the cycle of history that yes, any hopes for recovery, and her finally being a reliable, stable, loving mother, were absurd.

I find my seat on the sofa. Head down. Hope lost.

"So, how's my boy?"

I look up into her glazed, drunken eyes. It's so obvious she's trying to act normal. Like a dog that's broken a vase, convincing itself that their owner will never find out.

I feign a reassuring smile. Like mother, like son.

"Yeah. Fine."