



Synopsis: Dark Souls is a deeply personal story of author Sarah Strudwick's relationships with psychopaths and how she overcame the odds to transform her life.

The book covers personality disorders including narcissism, sociopathy and psychopathy and the mental, emotional and spiritual injuries people with these conditions cause their victims.

It traces the story of the author's own dysfunctional upbringing and how it led to her attracting even more dysfunctional people in her adult life.

Using life-coach Sarah's unique Butterfly Effect technique, the book goes on to explain how victims of psychopaths can change their lives for the better, breaking free of the past through self-analysis and spiritual healing.

Often shocking, Dark Souls is the essential self-help guide to recognising and escaping the abuse of those who feed on fear, pain and strife.

Chapter 5

The Broken Bed

I begin my description of Oliver with an analogy, a man who, in his quest to destroy me, left me with no option but to put some humour into my tale. My sense of humour was one of the endearing things he found so appealing when he had first decided to prey on me. Since the only time these people have any sense of humour is when they are hurting us, I hope that by coming out strong and victorious with a little bit of humour thrown in along the way, it will go some way to restoring the balance.

When you first meet a Dark Soul you have no idea what their motives are and how very difficult they are to discern. When we had first met, Oliver, who came from an excellent family, was charming, well mannered, and sophisticated. He appeared to be the perfect “nice guy.” However, eventually, the cracks start to appear. It’s a bit like buying a new house that you think is your *perfect* home, only to find that it was built on a shoddy foundation, the structure is crumbling, and there is no insurance policy in place to cover it when it all starts to collapse.

Oliver worked for a company for over 10 months, going to work daily as the sales manager of an eco-friendly company where he was supposedly selling wind turbines. In fact, he had been fired from more than four jobs during the time that I’d known him. Being with a Dark Soul is like uncovering the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Five months after telling me he had cancer when a lump was removed from his head, and a second dose of cancer that miraculously appeared the following year, I would go on to spend nearly five years in a relationship with him. I once called up his firm to learn that he had been fired from his job six months earlier, and, moreover, the so-called wind turbine sales manager job had never even existed. It turned out that Oliver had, in fact, been working for an unethical, environmentally *unfriendly* company (that had been investigated by the press for their unscrupulous sales practices), selling products on a commission only basis at extortionate

prices to poor victims, especially to old and infirm customers. When I had contacted a former salesman from that same company, he had chosen to describe the business as being “at the top of the food chain,” which, by coincidence, is a fitting description for a Sociopath, too, since he feeds off victims for his own gain and pleasure. So much for his eco-friendly job!

When I finally kicked Oliver out in January 2010, I had sold my house the previous year and lost everything, but I had exposed him for who he really was after having played private detective. The last straw was his “impotency” story with which he had strung me along for about 3 months. I realised that *everything* he had told me about himself was a lie, not the least of which was an interesting double life which included bisexual swinging and being a sperm donor to lesbian women.

I had uncovered a whole can of worms and so I confronted Oliver. At least I was lucky enough to know his real name unlike other victims who don't even discover who their partner is. I remember a couple of times laughing at some of the stupid things I have allowed myself to put up with over the last couple of years, but it's when you can look back and laugh that you know you've really healed. With beds, sex, lies, and impotency on my mind, I dreamed up *an analogy* of a salesman for a company whereby the “product” was actually Oliver himself. Here is what I wrote:

The Crapmatic Salesman

It was about five years ago, when one day I decided to go shopping and buy myself a lovely new “bed.” The salesman was lovely, attractive, and well-mannered, and the product appeared to be fantastic. It was unique and “special,” unlike any other product I had ever known. It also had all kinds of gadgets and things I had never seen before. Oliver demonstrated the product with great skill and, before long, I was convinced that this was a bed I needed to have. He even suggested that it might benefit my health and well-being and would therefore be

a good long-term investment. In my head I knew I couldn't afford it but he played on my emotions so well with such skill and dexterity and made it sound lovely and appealing I could not resist the urge to buy it. Even the option to "buy now, pay later" didn't put me off. I was sure I could have it and pay the instalments as they came due. I had never thought about reading the fine print.

He was such a genuine salesman and I truly believed I was getting a product that was unique and exclusive. I bided my time for a while. Tested it out and it appeared to feel quite comfortable. I sat on it a number of times and although the mattress appeared to be firm, at times it felt a bit uncomfortable. When I questioned the good salesman, he always had a great answer: "No problem! Any problems with the manufacture are guaranteed. I promise this bed will never let you down." He seemed to use the word "promise" a lot, but it helped to convince me that it might be a good idea to invest in this bed after all. With all the claims he had made and all the guarantees I felt I had nothing to lose.

I made my decision. But after a few weeks the bed began to develop a number of faults. I was paying big instalments every single month and the interest was exorbitant. I realised I couldn't afford this bed and finally read the fine print and realised I had made a huge error in the calculations and I would be paying for this bed for the rest of my life. Not only did this bed *not* offer what it claimed but health benefits were nil, contrary to what the salesman had promised. I started to feel very unwell, the bed worsened my health, and I could not sleep. First, it was a few little things like a small tear in the mattress which the manufacturers promised to fix. They did but they came with a staple gun and did a botched up job and then it tore again, even worse than before. Then one of the springs went. I couldn't sleep on the mattress anymore, and demanded a new one. Oliver said, "It's not a problem! It's quite normal for a mattress to be "bumpy." It takes time for it to settle. Just be patient and it will all be fine!" I waited and waited and still I got the same answer every single time.

It was one promise after another and all the time I was paying interest. My

debt was accumulating and still I was not sleeping comfortably. Often, I would be awake all night. The bed had all kinds of “interesting” gadgets that Oliver had said were unique to my particular model and could not be found anywhere else on the planet. It had a remote control that allowed the bed to go up and down. However one day the remote control broke completely. He promised to fix it but I realised it was irreparable. I had to console myself with the fact that I was sleeping in a bed that could no longer go up and down any more! I was mortified. How could they sell me such a shoddy bed that didn't work properly and, more importantly, at an overinflated price?

When I finally did some investigation I realised that this bed was not “unique” and “special,” and that the same “model” had been sold to number of different women over the years. They had all had the same problems. They had bought the bed in good faith only to find it faulty and useless. Moreover, they had invested a huge amount of cash trying to get the bed fixed, only to find that their investment was, in fact, worthless! I was left feeling I had been well and truly conned...

We all invest in “beds” at some point and some are more expensive than others in terms of health, financial, and emotional costs. We trust the salesman to be telling us the truth.

I realised that the bed I had been sold was really Oliver himself, in an analogy for how he sold himself to people. And that is exactly how these conmen sell their products to their customers. What you see is definitely *not* what you get. I am not one to go down without a fight and my own story is quite shocking. It includes some of the most despicable lies and deceit you could possibly imagine. I guess one of the most painful things is coming out of a relationship with a person you think is your “soul mate” or “twin soul” who had, on the previous day, declared their undying love to you. A man who had said they were “waking up spiritually” and wanted to create a website with me about Twin Flame, after he left his wife. Then, when you confront them with more lies, the following day they are nowhere to be found and you are concerned about their safety; you are literally dumped

as if you never existed because they were found out. Then the tables are turned back on you and they are threatening you if you try and expose them.

The irony is that Oliver had worked for one of the biggest companies that were known for conning people out of their hard earned money selling faulty products to vulnerable people like the sick and elderly. Their sales tactics were ruthless: a perfect job for a sociopath. The company had claimed that they crafted their beds with skill and quality, yet they had come under investigation by international trading standards for years for unethical practices. They had become insolvent more than a couple of times as a result, and then suddenly reinvented themselves, just as the sociopath does, under a lovely new name.

You will discover when you have relationships with Dark Souls that they lie consistently, and Oliver, always full of grandiose ideas about himself, lied through his teeth. I remember him telling me one day that MI5 had called him up for an interview and he was so convinced of his own lies he even believed it to be true. He told me he had been head-hunted through an agency. When I had quizzed him about why he wouldn't go for the job after all, he said he didn't want to take it because it would mean him being away from his children too much. Most of their life is a fantasy story that they make up as they go along. On discovering the fact he had been fired from his "eco- friendly" job and remembering the MI5 story, I tried to keep my sense of humour. When he had come home that evening, I had left him a note on his bed saying "I see you have been working 'under cover.'

Being the eternal optimist, I had decided to turn the dodgy bed story around and see it through the Dark Soul's eyes. Although I cannot - and will not - diagnose Oliver, he showed many of these traits. The most common denominators are a lack of Empathy, a feeling of entitlement, and no feelings of guilt or conscience.

If a Dark Soul were to buy themselves a new luxury top-of-the-range bed with a hundred and one gadgets that did the most amazing things, they would probably show it off to all of their friends. Chances are, they would probably find a way of getting it for free. Probably they'd try stealing it or lying on the purchase agreement forms, but, either

way, they would do their best to get it for nothing. What do you think would happen if a normal person brought this type of product home? If you were to purchase a wonderful new “toy” like a bed or a TV, and then find out that it no longer works and the warranty is null and void: the only option, if it were a large item, would be to repair it, give it to someone else, or take it to the local skip and dump it.

This is how a Dark Soul sees the object of their desire, i.e. you.

About Sarah Strudwick:



Sarah Strudwick is a respected spiritual life coach and NLP practitioner specialising in personal growth, self-esteem and relationship issues.

Drawing upon her own life experiences - including an abusive childhood and relationship with a psychopathic partner - Sarah has developed a unique style of spiritual coaching practice - the

“Butterfly Effect”.

Sarah regularly runs negative core belief workshops and shares the techniques she successfully used to transform her life for the better. She is also a qualified Chinese acupuncturist.

Sarah, a divorced mother-of-two who lives in Kettering, has recently been shortlisted for Britain’s Next Top Coach. She has appeared in the Daily Mail and on BBC Radio 5 Live discussing dysfunctional parents.