

*Alabaster,  
marble, gleaming stone  
'Perfect', distant, safe, unchanging  
A polished pedestal- a shining temple  
In time I saw the truth I was cold, alone  
I must tear down the temple, bring it down  
on our heads, to be human again*



## Departure

May 2003

Nick softly closes the door of the hired van.

'Right', he says, 'here we go into the wide blue Rhondda.'

The joke he makes at the start of every family trip doesn't draw the usual groans from the back seat. I look back at our daughters sitting on the vinyl seats of the van. Neither of them is smiling.

It's a short trip to Nick's place – a few miles from where we have spent much of our 19 year marriage. With every second of the journey, my heart grows heavier and I have a sense of moving irretrievably from one life into another – someone else's story, not mine, not ours.

How can this be happening?

When we arrive, he's still acting like it's a great adventure. Is this an attempt to normalise things for the girls? Ever the decent man I've loved for the past 25 years, he decided we'd all go with him when he left so that it wouldn't seem like he was walking out on them. This is, after all, my choice.

So here we are, with the last of his things in the van. I feel wretched as he takes us on the grand tour, showing the girls where they'll sleep when they visit at weekends. He's done a good job of redecorating and his new furniture looks great.

He seems really excited; I'm aware of a small, spiteful, whispering in my mind, shaping into thoughts I don't want to be thinking.

*'He was never this excited about the homes he had with you.'*

Bitterness stings and I try to push the thought away—ashamed of the impulse towards pettiness my inner narrative sometimes takes; it seems inappropriate in light of Nick's decency. He's losing his home and his family because I cannot do this anymore. How magnanimous would I be in those circumstances?

I cannot do this anymore.

Often I've felt like a single parent, raising our girls whilst he worked weekends and long evenings; feeling him absent from the room when he was next to me; feeling lonely in a crowd and trying to accept a sense of growing isolation permeating everything I do.

I admire the finish on the woodwork and try to smile. I feel like a parent being shown their child's latest masterpiece and hear myself say:

*'You've done really well, Love.'*

He's owned the house since February and spent agonising weeks renovating it. All this time, still living with me, still sleeping with me in our bed; each of us knowing he would be leaving; each of us knowing I have a relationship with someone else; each of us playing house like nothing unusual was happening.

I cannot do this anymore

Suddenly, I have two scripts running simultaneously: one spoken, one internal, unmediated and all the more powerful for that. The spoken script is careful; my tone is level, my words neutral, even bland. I know Nick will shrink from strongly expressed emotion. I've seen him squirm and panic in the face of it often – seeming unprotected and vulnerable, almost in physical pain. I've grown used to running my feelings through a filter to dilute them, making them more palatable for him.

I cannot do this anymore

The inner script speaks of a chaos of feelings, all seeking a voice. Pain, anger, fear, guilt, shame – and questions crowd in on me

How can he let us go so easily?

Did he ever love me at all?            How am I able to stand this?

How can I do this to us.....to them? How will I live without him?

Will he ever forgive me? Will they? Will I?

Am I doing the right thing?

I want to grab Nick and shake him. I want him to be asking these questions too. Instead I follow him passively from room to room in a daze before drinking tea in his comfortable new lounge like I'm visiting a relative.

I cannot do this anymore

On the doorstep, he hugs me and says we'll be alright but nothing feels right about this. I soften into the familiar warmth of his body then feel him tense and pull away

slightly before he stops himself and stays close. I release him, knowing there is no way back and no way forward for us.

I've tried for years to overcome the yearning I have for an emotional connection he won't give me. I can't tell him how to satisfy that longing. Despite his plea to ['just tell me what to do'](#); I can't tell him how to be different.

Now, I'm drained from living my life at arm's length from him and I cannot keep going back for more rejection, all the time hoping one day he'll finally show up.

He doesn't.

He won't

and I am desolate.

*Quietly you came  
seeping, weeping into my consciousness  
With more than words, more than reason  
With a knowing I knew well  
The knowing of one who has raged and pleaded and  
sat  
Emptied out on the kitchen counter, on the bedroom  
floor  
All the longing and needing and yearning  
Narrowed into one simple wish  
See  
me  
and  
understand*

>> Fwd >>

92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11 12 13

## **Arrival**

July 2012

I notice the package as I dump my bag in the study. The slim cardboard parcel is barely thicker than an envelope; it contains another book to add to the growing number I have on Asperger's Syndrome and something I need for my research.

Carrying it through to the kitchen, I try to ignore the dining room table – piled high with books, papers, files and, somewhere, the 14<sup>th</sup> draft of my research proposal.

Waiting for the kettle to boil, I talk to Rhys, who is cooking supper. He's pleased to see me but busy so, after a brief chat, I take my tea and the package back into the living room.

The slim volume slides out of its cardboard envelope into my hand. Its pristine cover shows a carved stone head, split diagonally across the nose. One disembodied hand is raised, holding the left side of the head, attempting to

stop the two pieces from sliding apart. The sculpture has sustained a catastrophic blow.

It is a fitting image of Cassandra.

I've been aware of this book and read extracts of it online since first hearing of Cassandra Phenomenon in 2009. I was researching how to help Alice (the youngest of my two daughters who is on the autistic spectrum) to make the transition into adulthood. Almost by chance, I found the website of a UK therapist and researcher who has been a leading voice in the area of Neurotypical (NT)/Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) relationships. There I heard of 'autistic cousins' and 'Cassandra Phenomenon'. It was the first glimpse I had of what may have happened to us and why.

Now, as my research takes a more formal turn, I finally hold a copy of this volume in my hand. It's not in any of the library catalogues I've searched although it is referenced in books I have read on NT/ASC relationships and, for many, it has shone a beacon of light on lives that have seemed hopeless, helpless, unseen.

It is an important book.

'Asperger's Syndrome and Adults.... Is Anyone Listening?' is a collection of writing by family members of adults who have Asperger's Syndrome. I know from the extracts I've read online that, overwhelmingly, it contains an outpouring of emotion, a wave of feelings – frustration, pain, anger, sadness – valuable information about what it is like when AS is in your life.

One woman describes the difference between AS and NT partners as the difference between a cactus and a rose - one perfectly at home in an emotional desert, the other needing the softer, nourishing environment of a rose garden (Long 2000 in Rodman 2003, p. 91). Another contributor speaks of the differences in how AS and NT partners show affection and seek comfort. She describes an AS interpretation of an embrace as 'an uncomfortable squeeze' and relates that one AS man's lack of response to his wife's distress in the counselling room originated from an assumption that she would want to be left alone to get over it (solitude being a common AS restorative), and from a fear of doing the wrong thing (Rodman 2003, p. 177).

Our story is here too – in the fragments and pieces of others. Turning each page, I see pointed shards of my own experience littering these accounts. Not the exact same thing. It's almost impossible to think others felt what I did – the slow sensation of invisibly slipping away with each day; denying a small piece of myself in gradual degrees; feeling ashamed that I needed so much more than seemed to be offered. What I see here are the same words – the same story I've been singing to myself for over 20 years. It's just that the tune is different.

All this time, I thought I was singing solo. I continue to read.

*At this distance I can admire you  
Magician, mimic, raconteur  
I wait in the wings  
For the curtain  
to fall,  
little knowing  
- that really is all (folks)*

<< Rwd <<

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## Adjacent Spaces

Christmas 1992

Christmas evening at my parents' is always hectic. Four generations and two branches of the family gather in a 'sunshine' house built in the '60s with the nuclear family in mind. As I hand around the food, trying to watch the dance my eldest, Melissa and my niece, Kelly, are showing me, I glance at Nick. He's in the centre of the room looking relaxed, talking to my brother about something – sport I'm guessing. His knowledge is impressive; he always has statistics and anecdotes at the ready to embellish the conversation. Suddenly Dan throws his head back and laughs loudly, 'Yeah, yeah, that's spot on', he says.

### Find your place - be a nice bloke

Growing tired of my inattention, Kelly bounds over to them. She's eight and precocious. Dan's youngest, Sophie, is just two months older than Alice; they're almost four.

'Uncle Nick, Uncle Nick', Kelly chirrups jumping up and down on the spot, (she has abandoned the dance routine for now), 'do the voices - pleeease!'



The other two join in whilst Alice stays close to me.

Nick bows to them formally and they squeal with delight.

‘What’s your pleasure, girls?’, he glances at me and we share a smile.

‘Would you prefer the ever impressive Geeenie of the Lamp? Or Victor

Meldrew – I don’t believe it, in the name of sanity, what is going on?

- or how about .....

With each character, his voice changes without missing a beat. He’s really good; the kids love it. Even Alice, who dislikes the noisy room, moves closer when he does the Genie from Disney’s Aladdin and dances around in a circle, flapping her little hands.

Later we collapse in our lounge – it’s been a long day. The girls are sleeping next door with my parents. They often have them to stay over on airbeds that fill their bedroom.

I pour us a drink before sitting next to Nick. The day’s busy schedule has not given us much time together – now I’m looking forward to connecting with him.

‘It went well today didn’t it?’

‘Yes,’ he smiles, ‘the kids had so much swag’ he gestures towards the pile of presents. I wonder where we’ll find the room for it all.

He turns back to the TV – drink in one hand, remote in the other.

‘I loved my presents,’ I say. As usual he’s been generous and thoughtful with his gifts.

He swivels his head towards me, keeping his eyes on the screen.

'You can return the underwear if it's too small.'

I try not to over react. This year I've managed to lose two stones, reaching the weight I was before I had the children. The delicate silk camisole set Nick gave me this morning is loose fitting and size 16. I'm size 12 now but that's clearly not how he sees me. I feel stung but I don't want to spoil the day with an argument.

I sit with conflicting feelings, unsure why I feel so upset. I know he doesn't mean to be hurtful but his casually insensitive comment and his apparent disinterest in the cues I'm sending him that I want to be close, all make the distance between us seem huge. Even through my upset, I can see my reaction is out of proportion to actual events. This upsets me even more.

'If anything, it'll be too big', I say curtly.

'I've kept the receipt', he says, pleasantly, flipping through channels.

The temperature has dropped several degrees between us but, it seems, I'm the only one to notice. I'm not sure what to do. Surely he must see I'm upset?

However, as seconds pass, it's clear he's unaware either of my need to connect or of the change in atmosphere. Where's the vivacious entertainer I've been seeing all night? Now we're alone, he's completely shut down.

I know there's no point telling him how I feel. I'll have to argue with him just to get him to accept I feel differently to him. I just can't face it again. Fighting to overcome feelings of sadness, I make another attempt to connect. Reaching

forward, I touch him on the arm. He flinches slightly beneath his shirt, tilts his head towards me again, shakes his arm, wrinkles his nose and says,

‘Don’t! It tickles!’

It’s not the reaction I was hoping for. Removing my hand, I sit beside him, feeling ridiculous and confused. He’s made me feel I’ve done something wrong, when I’ve only touched him. Moments pass before I get up and move towards the stairs.

‘I’m off to bed, are you coming?’

‘No, I’ll be up in a bit.’

I know that if I say the words, he’ll switch off the TV and follow me to bed. He’s a sensitive and attentive lover. I know I’m lucky, although I’m starting to see that this is the only time he lets me get really close. Perhaps that’s why I love this part of our life so much. I just don’t want always to have to ask him or wait until it is our usual time to connect this way. I want him to read my cues, to respond to my desire for him the way I respond to his. Maybe I’m asking too much. We’ve been together 14 years.

As I climb the stairs, he turns up the volume on the TV. There’s something in that action that makes me feel excluded, banished, stupid for wanting more of him than he’s willing to give. It’s like he can’t wait for me to leave him alone.

[It isn't that I don't want you; it isn't that I don't care.](#)

I know he’s unhappy living next door to my parents. He moved here for me when Alice was a baby and I was struggling with depression. Now things are

better, I've offered to move somewhere else, although I fear those feelings will return if we do.

That would be a great idea but the girls would be upset, you might hanker to go back again— all for my own selfishness. So what do you do?

He just sighs and says 'It's not so bad' when I try to talk to him about it.

### Default - Quiet Life – Withdraw

Occasionally things erupt – usually when my mother comes in uninvited. He says he feels invaded when she does this and I have tried to tell her not to. It doesn't make much difference; she makes me feel weak for letting a man dictate to me. She doesn't seem to understand that this is his home too. Privacy, and peace, is very important to Nick.

'Put your foot down,' she scolds, 'don't let *anyone* tell you what to do.'

'Does that include you?'

I can see things from both points of view; there doesn't seem to be room for mine. I'm not sure what I think any more. I tell her I wouldn't want his mother turning up at the back door unannounced, although she often turns up unannounced at the front door. They live just up the road. I'm always glad to see her though, I love her very much. His dad is another story; he makes me feel uneasy when he visits and he often says inappropriate things.

I know that living here has affected our marriage and I feel guilty that my needs have resulted in Nick being unhappy.

I thought you were happy!

Given his reluctance to change things though, I feel we should enjoy the benefits of having babysitters readily on hand. We could go out more often or take off for Paris at short notice and they would be fine. We've only done this a few times though.

Why can he give so much of himself to others but keep me at arm's length?

Climbing into bed, I feel familiar feelings of isolation take hold.

'I must try to be less needy', I say into the darkness as I remind myself of the good things about today.

Somehow, though, I can only feel the aloneness of it all.

*I got me a Chrysler, it seats about 20  
So come on and bring your jukebox money*

*Love Shack, The B52s*



## **Bang Bang on the Door Baby**

Dec 1995

The music's so loud it seems to be right inside me; I feel the deep bass tones resonate in my body as I flop onto the seat beside Jen. I'm suddenly feeling ill and wish I was home.

'Too much of a good thing?' she asks and I nod. I've had way too much to drink.

'I'm wasted *and* I've missed my last train', she giggles.

I look at my watch.

'God - it's 2 o'clock! I'd better go home!'

'It's OK', she says, 'we can crash at Steph's again; she won't mind.'

'Nooo - Nick is expecting me home and it's too late to call and say I'm staying out now.'

I picture him lying in the dark, waiting for the sound of a taxi in our quiet street.

'Well you may as well stay out longer. He'll be pissed off anyway and IT'S CHRIIIISTMAAAS!' Her Noddy Holder impression is excellent.

Through the blur of too many vodkas this makes sense.

'OK but I *am* going home.'

She rolls her eyes and then says, 'ooo I love this one' as 'Love Shack' starts playing; it usually gets us dancing. 'C'mon' she says but I stay seated as she and the others move towards the dance floor.

Watching them dancing and laughing together, my eyes are drawn to Andy. He's in his element, surrounded by women and exuding the sort of cool that makes him the focus of most attention - male and female - in our largely heterosexual group. As if he can feel my gaze, he looks over and gestures me to join them. Smiling, I shake my head but he disentangles himself from the huddle and makes his way across the room.

'Oh no', he says, taking my hands and pulling me to my feet, 'you haven't danced with me all night.'

'You're not exactly short of partners', I laugh.

He's not conventionally good looking, he's not very tall and his eyes are too close together but he's compelling. For some reason I'm yet to fathom, he pays me lots of attention when we're out. He has this way of leaning in close when I speak as if he can't hear me. This brings his mouth pretty close to my neck; I feel his breath on my skin whenever he does this. It's very seductive but I've seen him work this move on others - it looks pretty sleazy from that place.

'Relax, it's just a dance.'

'OK but I'm going home in a minute' I tell him.

On the dance floor the long chorus is still going on and we settle into the rhythm with the others.

*Bang Bang on the door Baby... I can't hear you....*

I'm feeling better now and having fun. I met this crowd through Jen and we always have a good time when we're out. The track finally finishes and we drift back to our seats just as the opening riff of REM's 'Strange Currencies' starts up.

Andy stands in front of me, blocking my path.

'Let's dance to this; it's one of my favourites.'

'No, I'm going home', I say but we're already moving to the music. I feel the eyes of the others on us.

We move to the centre of the floor where we stand, hardly moving at all now as other couples shift around us. Michael Stipe seems to be singing directly to us

*And I don't know what you mean to me*

*But I want to turn you on, turn you up, figure you out*

*I want to take you on*



'Mmm - you smell of sunshine' he says; I feel his breath on my neck again and picture the coconut body butter on my dressing-table. It smells like suntan oil on warm skin.

'What are you doing for Christmas?' I ask, attempting to change the mood.

*These Words..... 'You Will Be Mine'..*

'I really fancy you Catherine', he continues as if I haven't said a thing. I lean back and give him a scornful look.

'No really, I do!'

'I'm too old for you Andy!'

He's seven years younger than me and still in his 20s.

*The Fool might be my middle name...*

'I know I have a rep with women,' he says, 'but this is different, I remember the things you say and I think of you when you aren't there.'

*I'm gonna make whatever it takes...*

I must be drunk, I'm starting to believe him. It *does* feel good to be close to him. His arms are around my waist and he seems to move towards my touch as I rest my hands on his upper arms. Sensing this shift, he pulls me fractionally closer. For a while, neither of us speaks as we stand, swaying slightly, suspended in the moment.

*What I want to feel,*

*I want to feel it now...*

A world of possibility is opening up; I don't want to walk away, despite feeling I'm on the edge of a precipice. I can't breathe.

*You know with love comes strange currencies..*

'Let's go,' he says after a long minute has passed, 'I've got the keys to my office....'

*A word, a signal, a nod, a little breath..*

*Just to fool myself, to catch myself, to make it real, real..*

We've been circling this question in a destructive cycle of excitement and denial for months.

'I can't, Andy; I'm married.'

*These Words..... 'You Will Be Mine', all the time..*

Speaking this aloud, I realise I'm the only one who must remember this. I turn to go back to the group and gather my stuff. People are talking to me but I just want to get out of here. I'm almost at the door when Andy catches up.

*These words...*

'Don't go Catherine; I'll drop it, I promise.'

*they haunt me, hunt me down, catch in my throat, make me pray...*

I round on him.

'Why me, when you could have anyone here?'

I've puzzled over this since that weekend away last spring when he knocked on my door in the night. I refused him then and I've been trying to stand by my decision ever since, with varying degrees of conviction but, somehow, we always end up back here.

'Well', he looks under his lashes and leans in close, 'they aren't much of a challenge are they?'

There it is.

He's a player and I'm being played.... I'm furious with him and myself for allowing this. Although I'm older, I'm inexperienced here. I've been with Nick since I was 16; he never says things just to see the effect they have. Suddenly I desperately want to be with him.

'It's all a game to you isn't it?'

'No, but you take it too seriously – I just want to be with you for a while; it's just a bit of fun- a nice memory for us. No one will know.'

'It *is* serious and *I* will know!' I turn away. 'Just leave me alone!' I hurl over my shoulder as I make for the exit.

'Don't worry about *that*, I will. Happy Bloody Christmas!' he hurls back.

Outside, the cold air hits me hard and I realise how drunk I am.

'Stupid, stupid, stupid!' I chant as I wobble my way to the taxi rank.

In the warmth of the cab, I try to make sense of my feelings as I ride waves of nausea and dizziness.

Why am I so drawn to Andy? Whenever it gets to this point, I feel like I'm standing too close to the fire; I pull back and vow to never come here again but, soon, Andy apologises and we move closer again. That's what must change; there shouldn't be room for this in my life. Somehow, though, he offers an emotional engagement of an intensity I've never felt before. Even though it's largely a toxic experience for me, I'm fast becoming an addict. Is this a mid-life crisis? In the past decade I've had four jobs, three houses and two babies; at 33, I have a husband I love, beautiful children, a well-paid job, good friends, nice home, holidays abroad – I'm the poster child for having it all. So what's *this*?

Our crowd is large so it's often someone's birthday or there's some excuse to go out but do I always have to go? Nick doesn't complain but I dread the tight lipped response I get whenever I say I'm going out again. I don't always come home either – I've accepted Steph's invitation to stay at hers on several occasions. Truthfully, I want to be away from home as much as possible these days; there's a dull sense of oppression, a heavy hand on my head and heart, whenever my steps turn homewards.

As the taxi pulls up outside the house, I see the Christmas lights through the glass door and remember we're taking the girls to Tredegar House tomorrow (not Nick, he's working). I'll be hung-over and my family will know. I battle with my keys and rising feelings of guilt and shame. Sliding into bed, I hope Nick isn't awake. He's stock still, apart from the rise and fall of his breath. I want to curl into him, bury my nose in the nape of his neck and ground myself in his familiar scent; to feel the solidity and calm of his presence; to find that glorious place where he and I meet but I resist the impulse, knowing he won't

welcome unexpected contact, especially when he's sleeping. Instead, I stay on my side of the bed and replay scenes from the night just passed, too-close-for-comfort snap-shots that thrill and terrify me.

*they haunt me, hunt me down, catch in my throat, make me pray,*

'Please make it stop!' My silent prayer goes unanswered.

No one is listening, least of all me.

*'Looking back, my needs felt like an enormous burden for me, and anyone who loved me; too big and ugly for one person to ever cope with. I now feel a lot differently about them. They are part of who I am and I have learned that it's OK to need people, love and comfort. It does not make you weak or needy - it makes you human.....*

Extract of a letter to Nick, 2009

>> Fwd >>

92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11 12 13

## Breakdown

June 2009

Red eyed, I pull into the car park beside the lake. Saturday mornings often see me here. I've just taken Alice to Nick's and I can't go home yet. Rhys understands that, at last, I'm grieving for the end of my marriage but I can't keep showing him this. It's not fair. Getting out of the car, I pull my coat around me. Although it's summer, the wind is vicious today; the brutal weather matches my mood.

Why do I feel so bad, after so much time has passed? Perhaps it's because soon I'll be starting the counselling course I've wanted to do for the past five years. I know it'll mean facing this pain full on. Maybe it's because I'm learning more about Asperger's Syndrome in adults. Now Alice is 20, I'm beginning to see how like her father she is. She needs space away when she feels overwhelmed; she needs an escape route and will negotiate solitary time after doing something with the rest of us; she's abrupt when she needs to understand something – just that one thing and not all the other details; she cannot tolerate another's point of view when she's upset; she doesn't like

sudden change but can mostly cope if she knows what to expect and has time to get used to the idea.

I'm finding out about 'autistic cousins', relatives commonly found in families of those with ASC. These may have a few autistic traits and function adequately well in society, perhaps seeming a little odd, out of step or anti-social, maybe a little eccentric. Nick's father fitted this profile perfectly..... to a lesser degree, so does Nick.

I'm hearing of Cassandra Phenomenon - a condition where partners of those on the spectrum can experience emotional isolation and deprivation as their need for emotional connection and reciprocity are met by unseeing eyes and minds.

At the lakeside I watch ducks tipping into dark water. It's a fitting metaphor; I feel I've been head down in silt for too long. Now, a different perspective raising me higher, I glimpse a changed horizon – one where my understanding is blazing with new light. I'm almost blinded but I can't look away. There's little comfort here – just cold, stark clarity as pieces of the puzzle clang into place, catching me in the shockwave of the shift.

Melissa has often said her father and Alice seem similar, describing how Nick cannot tolerate arrangements changing at short notice or people being late. On this subject, at least, I'm woefully late. It's difficult to bear when I sit in Nick's lounge and he cheerfully tells me about his week. Sometimes he talks about his girlfriend.

I don't want to hear of the woman who's been in his life for the past three years. I've never met her but how can she be happy with their arrangement

when I couldn't be happy with ours? Although Nick says he never wants to live with anyone again (*ever!*), I feel she has my life.

*She doesn't have your life! I don't see her for weeks on end.*

It seems his patterns of relating haven't changed and this relationship fits him well; rather like these ducks, he can dip into and out of the relationship at need.

*It's a full relationship at a very great distance.*

Although he says he never wanted our relationship to end, he says he's never been happier. Despite knowing he doesn't intend this to hurt me, it still stings like a blade.

Sitting here now, wrapped in despair, I feel shame at the memory of my behaviour as the marriage entered its slow decline. The out-all-night, drinking-too-much, weekends-away. How I must have hurt him; oh God – how I must have changed as I acted out my grief, confusion and loneliness!

*I felt betrayed.*

*If you could have just told me what to do  
to stop you feeling that way but you didn't!*

I made him go – not once but twice.

He went when I asked.

He came back when I asked.

It was more than I deserved.



Now (head in hands), I'm here again – this time with new knowledge and a roadmap that might help. I'm stranded between my new life and my old, belonging in neither. There is much about my relationship with Nick I miss. Nights out, nights in, the fun we had in bite sized pieces...

You threw it away. How can you say this? You **gave** it away.

*I had no choice*

There's *always* choice

*If I'd known....*

If you'd had faith... been faithful....

*I didn't know!*

*I didn't know that when I brushed against him by accident in bed and he'd jump and shout like I'd scalded him, that's probably just how he felt.*

*It wasn't that he didn't want me to touch him.*

That's what you thought?

*How could I have known?*

Did you ask?

*He used to say I don't like surprises.*

*How could I know what that really meant? To me a surprise is a good thing; to him it may be a physical and sensory shock.*

*I didn't know that when he shut himself off, it didn't mean he couldn't stand to be with me.*

What else could it mean?

*Maybe he was just exhausted from his coping routines. Tired from all the sensory input.*

Stop wallowing! What are you going to do about it?

*Rewind....Rewind!!!!*

?? Rwd ??

It's too late.

It's too late.

***Oh God, it's too late!***

*'Where do we go? What should we do, the spouses, the parents, the siblings? We are the bearers of this emotional pain, in this unrelenting abnormality. Where do we, the 'walking wounded', go for help?'*

Rodman, 2003, p43

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92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11 12 13

## Arrival (Cont.)

July 2012

I should put this book down and continue with the proposal; there's a lot to do. Even when Rhys brings me the pasta he's been cooking, though, I am reluctant to disengage. I'm drinking up the words with the thirst of someone emerging from the wilderness into an oasis.

One story is written by a woman whose relationship with her AS mother caused problems with her own emotional development and resulted in a failed suicide attempt. It recounts her efforts to find an explanation for her experiences; it seems the search for Cassandra has been undertaken by others before me. She writes of:

'A story that is age old, and yet has never been told, or not in the last century or so.' (Singer 2002 in Rodman 2003 p. 84).

Why didn't I find this book sooner? It would've helped a lot. Flipping to the front pages, I experience a stab to the heart as I see the publication date – the year of our divorce.

It was already too late for us.