

A Beginner's Guide to Properly Dissolving Parasocial Relationships

by Erin Ludwig

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Prologue – A Note from Erin

If you're reading this, chances are you've noticed that you have fallen in love with someone who is never going to reciprocate that affection. That, dear reader, while not an accurate definition of a parasocial relationship as outlined in *Chapter 1: What Parasocial Means*, is the essence of such a one-way bond.

And if you're still reading this, I'd like to believe that you are not satisfied with where you are. You wanted or still want the reciprocation. Or maybe you want the one-sided longingness to end. Or maybe you don't really want anything, and if that's the case, I'd really appreciate it if you could bear with me for just one extra minute – visit the checklist on Chapter 7. If you left all of the boxes unchecked on that list, congrats! You're safe. Send this book to someone else, as you will never find it useful again.

Now, to most readers who are still searching for a panacea that breaks or at least improves the parasocial relationship they find themselves embroiled in, I'd also like to extend my congratulations. You're in the right place – this book has everything you need to escape the hedge maze. That is, if you follow the instructions closely – any slight misconduct could lead to catastrophic results. And that's not an overstatement – much of what you need to carry out is the equivalent of holding a squid in your slippery hands.

Which is why I also do not encourage anyone, other than practitioners in the mental health industry, to recommend or even present this book to others. Under most circumstances, this book is the last resort. Prior to reading this, you have tried every type of medication, searched for every way of blocking out signs and schemas that you have attributed to your “celebrity crush,” closed your social media account, had nightmares about your “crush” that dressed like daydreams, and asked an advisor for help. You don't feel like feeling or talking or thinking anymore. You need practical, detailed assistance on the unspeakable imaginations that went out of control in your head.

Therefore, I'd like to humbly ask you to store this book in a place not readily visible to your loved ones or strangers, especially if they work for or are acquainted with people in the following industries:

- Television
- Motion Pictures
- Music
- Performance Arts
- Comic and Caricatures
- Content Creation on Mass Media
- Journalism
- Sports

- Games, especially those that have characters
- Religions
- Podcasting
- The Sphere at Las Vegas

Should you fail to hide this book from those working in fields outlined above, don't worry, dear reader. Send me an email notifying the situation. The email address can be found on the last page of this book. I won't be saddened or irritated or anything. I know what to do, and exposing this book is not your fault.

Without further ado, then, let's get to the therapeutic discussion. Or – if you feel I've already used some esoteric language throughout – let's get to the good stuff.

On the Unscientific Nature of this Book

Studies on parasocial relationships have evolved drastically since the term was originally coined in the 1950s. With emerging sources of distraction ubiquitously taking up people's lives and, as a result, the factors becoming harder and harder to control under an experimental setting, it is implausible for this book to consider every type of circumstance applicable to the situation the readers find themselves in.

The course empiricism takes has historically often coincided with the scientific one; here, however, that's not the case because that is simply not possible. Parasocial relationships, unlike their social counterparts, are very subtle yet vary greatly. A scientific explanation as to why the methods in this book work can only be provided after the methods have been implemented, which infringes on one of the many principles of scientific experiments.

Only one essay will be used as a reference in composing this book, and that essay is the academic article in which the term "parasocial relationship" first appeared: Horton, Donald & R. Richard Wohl's 'Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance.'

To close, the author would like the reader of this book to understand the risk of practicing the methods outlined in this book. Not all procedures of dissolving a parasocial relationship described in the following chapters apply to all individuals. The author would be grateful if the reader learns the mechanism and reasoning behind each instruction before proceeding.

Chapter 1

What Parasocial Means

The word “parasocial” first appeared in scholarly writings in 1956, when Professor Donald Horton and Professor Richard Wohl defined it as “a seeming face-to-face relationship between spectator and performer.”

To further establish the connection between a rather technical term and a tangible explanation, we should probably look at the prefix “para-” first, which means “beyond or distinct from, but analogous to.” Then we can deconstruct the latter part, which is the opposite of parasocial relationships: social relationships.

Social relations are much more prevalent and well-understood among us. Matter of fact, it’s likely that we have already experienced many forms of it: any voluntary or involuntary interpersonal relationship – friendship, kinship, membership, and more – between two or more individuals of the same species within or between groups is called a social relation. (Cash and Toney-Butler, 2022)

We can then derive a general definition.

Parasocial relationships are one-sided, illusory relationships typically developed by both a spectator and a performer, but only acknowledged by the former.

There are some aspects I’d like to highlight that were not originally underscored by Horton and Wohl in their definition, which are the words “illusory” and the phrase “only acknowledged by the spectator.” These minor generalizations are my addition to the definition that summarizes some of the most striking traits Horton and Wohl discovered that are not present in social relationships, as they analyzed interactions between what they called “personae” and viewers. A persona is “the typical and indigenous figure of the social scene presented by radio and television.” (Horton and Wohl, 1956) Times have changed, so we should note that today’s concept of “celebrities” and “personalities” are agreeably two forms of personae.

So from here on, terms like “celebrity crush,” “your celebrity,” “your persona,” and “the one you build your parasocial relationship with” are interchangeable. Similarly, “viewers,” “you,” “the audience,” and “spectators” are used to refer to the same individual or group of individuals. One other term, “performer,” will be used to refer to the individual who enacts the persona.

An Illusory Relationship

A relationship is, by definition, mutual. There is no way you'd suggest that a guy who keeps ignoring everything you say and do is a true friend of yours.

Yet that's also not exactly what happens in a parasocial relationship – the persona and the person enacting that persona would likely fail to establish intimacy between them and their audience if they constantly ignore any cues of expression and feedback from the audience. In reality TV, cast members on the screen regularly break the fourth wall; in talk shows, audience members are frequently invited onstage; even in movies, a medium that has been traditionally unalterable post-production, the introduction of 3D and other multi-dimensional experiences has erased the boundary between the audience and what's happening on the screen.

So it seems that the intimacy fostered between performers and us “fans” is primarily manipulated by the persona all the time. Horton and Wohl examined cases where this is not true, like when the parasociability of a persona is dramatically reduced as the persona fails to anticipate their audience's response, or when the virtues of the persona fail to meet the audience's expectations. In our case, however, the case where you have been advised to read this book because you have found yourself engulfed in a parasocial relationship, it's likely you didn't consciously downplay or embrace any traces of intimacy in the first place, because you didn't know an intimacy was about to emerge.

Or maybe you did during the first couple of sightings of your celebrity crush. After that, though, I'd like to think matters have slipped out of your own hands. You started seeing him or her everywhere. In the news. On the street. In your head. On your mind. In situations where you least want them to float around you.

That brings us to the second key requirement of a parasocial relationship.

Your Celebrity Crush Shouldn't Know Who You Are

But if they do, congrats! You're zero degrees away from Kevin Bacon, or Liza Minnelli, or Taylor Swift. The point is, if the celebrity you are obsessed with is aware of your existence, the concept of parasocial relationship no longer applies to you and your celebrity. You're back to having a social relationship with them. Not an analogous, or a “para-” one.

Even if they rarely reply to your DMs (Direct Messages), and you haven't seen them since the last concert or the last premiere, or your last encounter with their drunken silhouette in apartment stores. That's still a social relationship.

Now, for the less lucky and the majority of us:

It's this very dilemma that symbolizes the magic of parasocial relationships: a persona is facing masses of audiences, all with different identities, ethnicities, backstories, and personalities, yet the persona successfully establishes an ethos that he or she is a friend to every single individual who

came to his or her show. A dear friend, a helping hand, a heartwarming spirit, a true listener. All while not even knowing or perhaps even caring to know the slightest about anyone in the audience.

The “know who you are” part of “your celebrity crush shouldn’t know who you are” should be interpreted in a very general sense. Your celebrity crush likely knows your name. Your Twitter handle. Your Instagram mentions. Your phone number. Your previous encounter with him or her. Maybe a frenzy rush to your head enabled them to know where you live.

But do they know how you react to emergencies that do not involve their surprise appearances in public? Know how you chart your path in life? The current biggest challenge you are facing? The fact that so much more is going on in your life other than your bond with them?

Not so fast, you might suggest. I don’t need them to know. I don’t want them to. I don’t want them to see me for who I am; in fact, that’s the part of me that I’m actively trying to hide from them. I actually don’t have much going on in my life other than their updates, their newest role in an exciting upcoming blockbuster, their newest music, their newest episode of a podcast, or their new selfie.

That’s what leads us to the next stage of analysis. However, if you feel that you firmly stand by the above statements regarding your relationship with your persona as healthy, and you believe changes are unnecessary, wonderful; you may close this book now, although I have a feeling that you might come back later.

If you allow me to go further down the analytical spiral, let’s discuss the direst question that you and I have been trying to answer:

What am I to do?

Chapter 2

Why Did It Happen

As I had covered in “On the Unscientific Nature of this Book,” the only source I will be citing in this book is Professor Horton and Wohl’s study. And that’s not just because I have no expertise whatsoever in social psychology other than the 5 I got in AP Psychology back in my second year at high school. It’s also due to the fact that, as much as I sincerely hope this is not the case, relatively few studies have been focusing on what the title of this book suggests and what you came here for: dissolving a parasocial relationship.

Before we get to the methodology, however, we must cast that purpose aside for just a minute. We need to take a closer look at whether it’s really necessary to dissolve a parasocial relationship. And to do that, we need to take another step back – revisit and deconstruct the cause of a parasocial relationship.

God, I feel tired typing out the whole thing. Let’s abbreviate “parasocial relationship” to PR from here on now, shall we? (Ironically, PR also stands for public relations – the crucial catalyst your celebrity crush relies on to build any parasocial relationship nowadays.)

What the Fuck?

So that might not be the best subtitle for this section. Anyways, the following simply tries to take you back to the moment when a PR started – likely without your consent.

According to Horton and Wohl’s standards, PRs don’t form without “the bond of intimacy.” This bond is created through methods you are already familiar with, like building up a character with recurring elements that make him or her identifiable. Common techniques include inserting a unique tone in the persona’s voice in their dialogues with others, adding a signature theme to the performer’s clothing and hand gestures, or fixating on the performer’s virtue, a special ability, or a backstory. You may have felt close to the persona viscerally, especially when the performer takes center stage in a frame and looks at you in the eye – well, not exactly at *you*, because that would be breaking the fourth wall, which, while a common practice to strengthen the bond of intimacy, is less desirable to the integrity of the show that needs to stick to the script.

The thing is, the “bond of intimacy” standard was made in 1956. There was no internet back then. No phones, no Twitter, no Instagram, no Letterboxd or IMDb. Today, people get swirled into endless unsolicited cycles of engagement with their personae. Algorithms and digital footprints hunt down where we have been and dictate where we should go next by constantly monitoring even the tiniest

indicators of what we like and what we don't, like how long we spent looking at a picture, how many times a keyword showed up in a DM with a friend, and how close we live to the nearest movie theater that are screening the movies that advertisers have paid to promote.

Which means the setting that cultivates a PR, as summarized by Horton and Wohl, while still correct by and large, has become less accurate today. It used to be that to maintain a parasocial bond between a performer and a spectator, the spectator should:

- be situated among an audience that “accepts the situation defined by the program format as credible”
- regard the rules and conventions governing the actions performed and the values realized as “natural”

And the performer should:

- subscribe to a value system that matches the demands of the spectators, like what an ideal personality under the backdrop specified by the script of the show would be
- duplicate signature gestures, an informal conversational style, and the spot where he or she meets the audience
- further engage with the audience by breaking the fourth wall, or communicating with the audience through Q&As

(Horton and Wohl, 1956)

Now, if you didn't understand a single word of those bullet points, that's completely okay. Me neither. What you should know is that, as far as I have experienced myself, in the 21st century, to build a tight PR, you need the audience to:

- do nothing except sit and watch and/or listen

And the performer to:

- portray a relatable, admirable, and/or charismatic character
- do a ton of press tours to promote the show

And – this is relatively new – the mass media to leave no stone unturned when it comes to

- digging up users' browsing history by all means
- connecting with their social media as ubiquitously as possible
- embellish the performer's appearance and actions for greater appeal
- creating content that bit by bit diminishes the distance, whether it's the difference in class, in wealth, in physique, in sexuality, in power, in the size of the house they live in, between the audience and the performer
- circulate or prolong the duration of any form of promotion that may have contributed, even

inadvertently, to the publicity of the show

There is no “target audience,” “accepted values,” or even “belief in the naturality of the format” anymore. The main factor at play is neither the spectator per se nor the performer per se – it’s the staff that works with the performer that you might never see. It’s the lighting designers, the social media managers, the writers, the makeup artists, the graphic designers, the soundtrack composers, the publicists, the software engineers, the algorithm debuggers, the people with jobs you likely never even heard of.

Which makes you reconsider a claim I made in Chapter 1: “So it seems that the intimacy fostered between performers and us ‘fans’ is primarily manipulated by the persona all the time.” Is this still valid now that we realize that the mass media, not the performer, is the primary manipulator?

The answer lies within the context of your PR. Who is this celebrity you’re having a crush on? Is it a 1600s performer that have no means of publicizing their brilliant work except for screaming “come see my show!” down the streets all by himself? Or an unfortunate genius who never got the recognition they deserved during their lifetime? The truth is, rarely does a performer successfully appeal to their audience without the help of any form of media. The media, assisting the establishment of the performer’s reputation, shall most appropriately be categorized as a part of the performer as well.

And You Are Telling Me That This All Happened Without My Consent?

Precisely. You don’t have to identify with all the promo to go to see the show anymore. As I had listed under what a spectator needs to do in a PR in the 21st century, you only need to be present on the receiving end. And by present, I mean physically present, not even spiritually.

You may dispute, saying, that can’t be true. Why would I develop a PR with something I don’t even like?

And to that I say, dear reader, you just answered yourself. It’s a PR with something *you* don’t like, not something *everyone* doesn’t like. Universally hated figures and objects, while proliferating as history unfolds, still account for a small percentage of everything in this world. Even in the golden days for television in the 1950s, Horton and Wohl imply that if you are constantly placed among loyal followers of a persona, your dialectics, suspicion, and analytical stance slowly get rotted away as the lauding voices of the majority overwhelm your disgust. One can certainly try to resist; I’m not denying this possibility, but as Mr. Keating demonstrated to his students in *Dead Poets Society* (1989), through grouping them and asking them to walk together around the little square, and eventually watching the group stride in unison, holding on to your opinions and beliefs can be tough.

Especially when we are talking about something so deeply unessential to our lives. It’s a trending

celebrity, for crying out loud! Scroll past that unflattering photo, and move on. But if you dare to even scroll back to that photo just a little bit, I regret to inform you that you might get into big trouble.

I Swear I Didn't Do Anything. All I Did Was

Took a quick glimpse back at the photo to make sure you didn't like it? Then clicked his or her profile to make sure you're directing your dislike or nonchalance toward the correct person? And then, out of complete unconsciousness, loitered on his page for about a minute or two?

None of this aims to be interrogative, dear reader; if you did any of the above, completely understand. In fact, I have fallen down the rabbit hole multiple times. What I mean by describing the cascading scenarios is to point out a phenomenon that we will elaborate on later in the book: the delusion of detachment.

Clearly, the action of taking another peek at some persona you barely interact with does not count as lighting the fuse to a PR. But that's what we as humans believe. The algorithms, which are just matrix multiplications and other mathematical formulae under the hood, don't have this tolerance. If you never voluntarily clicked on the profile of a person again or stopped at his or her new post for too long, platforms like Instagram would likely interpret that as a click by mistake. Again, I am claiming this as someone who experimented with interacting with posts and profiles on my own Instagram account, not as someone who conducted a well-controlled experiment with carefully calibrated statistical significance.

If you did, however, engage with a person (or a persona, in that sense) more than once, the algorithm is definitely going to flag a new keyword as your interest.

If that's the case, still, don't fret. Let's discuss what we should do next.

Sidenote from the author

Including instances where a spectator interacts with a persona on social media for the first time as an identifiable source of a parasocial relationship definitely sounds like an exaggeration by Horton and Wohl's standards. But even by their standards, every ingredient for a PR is already there:

- A persona is portraying an ideal image aligned with the audience's interests
- A spectator is absorbing the portrayal by examining the posted image
- The persona, along with the algorithm controlled by the persona, is anticipating what the spectator likes

- The spectator is hallucinating the worthiness of his or her comments on the posted image, asserting they know the persona better than anyone else

As Ricky Gervais once said, we tend to live in a false impression that our voices matter on the internet simply because we are handed millions of microphones every day. His words weren't acerbic or overblown; they were just a recapitulation of what Horton and Wohl described sixty years ago.

Chapter 3

Where Am I Now

Here, we are almost ready to reveal the methodology for dissolving a PR, a methodology that I refer to as “unplugging.”

One more thing, though. Remember what I said at the beginning of Chapter 2? I said, before we get to the methodology, we “need to take a closer look at whether it’s really necessary to dissolve a parasocial relationship.”

I must apologize in advance for what I’m about to attempt to do: standardizing a measure that is unscientific in the first place with even more unscientific methods. But again, as I had stated, there is no point in being scientific when you’re already using this book as the last resort. Let’s skip the traditional psychological questionnaires and quotient calculations, and instead, simply go through some digestible terms and the traits of different states of PR.

Plugged vs Unplugged

Plugged and unplugged are basically just my ways of saying you’re in or not in a PR, respectively. I used them because:

The feeling of being involved in a PR is analogous to pushing a brand-new plug into a power socket. Unless the socket is old and deteriorated, chances are the plug won’t go in easily. You need to constantly exert force on the plug before it goes in. Unplugging is just as hard.

But after you’ve lived in your house for long enough and you’ve forgotten about the plug and the socket, components inside the socket start to oxidize, and the friction between the metal parts of the plug and the circuits of the socket becomes smaller. That’s when unplugging becomes light work. With a short and soft pull, the plug is disconnected from the socket.

If you think about it, falling into a deep obsession with a celebrity and getting out of it is largely the same. Didn’t get what I meant? Let’s rewrite the paragraphs above, this time without the metaphor.

The feeling of being involved in a celebrity crush is analogous to finding yourself a new source of obsession as you submerge into the celebrity’s world. Unless you have previously experienced this crush, chances are it takes time to truly become a fan and admire the celebrity. You need to constantly check on what’s been going on with their lives and learn more about their work. Leaving the obsession behind is just as time-consuming.

But after you’ve moved on with your life, you’ve forgotten the celebrity even existed, and you

couldn't even believe you used to have a huge crush on him or her, you realize that the celebrity wasn't that attractive or appealing after all. You also don't have the time or space for your obsession. That's when making a closure to this revelation of a fanatic becomes relatively easy. With a disposal of old paparazzi photos and secret messages addressed to the celebrity that you so desperately wanted him or her to see, you've finally said goodbye to that period of PR.

Plus vs Minus

This is something I added that Horton and Wohl, or perhaps the entire field researching parasociality, would dispute on. That's because in their original study, Horton and Wohl clearly stated that for a PR to form and solidify, the performer must create an intimate, positive, and personal image in the audience's minds. The audience should also regard the persona as favorable and flattering, and actively participate with encouraging feedback.

But as we have discovered, that's no longer the case. You still need some form of participation, but the persona on your screen doesn't need to be to your liking. Therefore, I'd like to argue that *both* passionately loving and hating a performer should be regarded as signs of a PR.

You are in deep connection with the celebrity, except this time, you're channeling hatred, irritation, or despise toward the persona, and you wonder if they would take your advice, walk away, and go into hiding – also another form of hallucination you created in your head, because why would they? They likely turned off their comment sections, logged out of Instagram after sharing a story, unbothered by your condemnation. Interestingly, here the road parts ways: you may choose to realize the ineffectiveness of your output and cease the fiery bombast, or you can choose to be triggered by this nonchalance toward your opinion and escalate your irritation by upscaling the negative feedback.

Choosing the first one reduces the situation back to the "I Swear I Didn't Do Anything. All I Did Was" section in the previous chapter. Choosing the second one means you're now in what I call the minus (-) state of plugged.

The Minus (-) State of Plugged

You're in a **strong** minus state of plugged with a persona if you

- are noticing that the persona appears in an unusually high number of places
- detect a sense of discomfort whenever and wherever the persona shows up
- are actively and unrelentingly trying to find the weaknesses of the persona
- are questioning every motive behind the persona's behavior
- have previously crafted negative responses to a persona and/or their fandom

- speculated on unflattering aspects of the persona that you can defame on, with no credible evidence
- have had recurring dreams where your persona is present even when you don't wish them to be
- blocked, muted, or blacklisted their social media
- have financially contributed to your devotion to hating your persona
- yearn for your persona to notice you

Hold on, you said. If I blocked them on social media, wouldn't that mean I am no longer interested in interacting with any expression or performance of my persona? Wouldn't I be, in a sense, "unplugged" from the PR?

That's factually correct, but only under one very important condition: if you won't be triggered when you see their images in places where you can't realistically block them. On the radio. In the news. A gigantic billboard on Hollywood Boulevard. TikToks that have somehow made their way between scrolls and onto your For You page.

We will get to this condition later on, but there is also another state that's more typical of PRs around the world.

The Plus (+) State of Plugged

Attributes of the plus state of plugged have come up in our discussion multiple times now. Just for clarity, you're in a **strong** plus state of plugged with a persona if you:

- are noticing that the persona appears in an unusually high number of places
- feels a sense of company in the presence of the persona, a sense so strong that anyone else couldn't provide
- have at some point in the past or present searched for more content on your persona
- have suggested, perhaps not out loud, admirable and commendable qualities about the performer
- have considered the possibility of attending or have attended meet and greets with the persona
- have previously crafted positive responses to a persona and/or their fandom, wishing they would see your message
- fantasized about the coveted features your persona may have, with no credible evidence
- have had recurring dreams where your persona is present even when you don't wish them to be
- have financially contributed to your devotion to worshipping your persona
- yearn for your persona to notice you

Note that the lists couldn't possibly take everything into account – does any of the bullet points remind you of some action you may have taken in the past that felt similar? If so, the state applies to you as well.

How Strong Is It Plugged In?

You may have noticed for the first time ever, I used bold in the text and formatted the word “strong.” That’s because the seriousness of a PR is crucial to our analysis. And here I regret to say the only reliable indicator of how strong a PR is how long a PR has persisted.

How long have you been having a crush on this celebrity?

Stop reading, dear reader. Look at the question above. Stare at it blankly and rewind to the first time you saw the celebrity. Wait for the images to precipitate in the solutes of memory in your head and finally stop spinning around.

Now, find your scale below:

- A. Less than a week
- B. Less than a month
- C. Less than a year
- D. Over a year

And then, evaluate the following statement.

I acknowledge my engagement with the celebrity I’m having a crush on is, in fact, a parasocial relationship and would like for this relationship to end, as it has escalated to an unhealthy status.

- A. True
- B. False

What’s an unhealthy status, you ask?

Healthy vs Unhealthy PR

As Horton and Wohl had pointed out, “It is only when the para-social relationship becomes a substitute for autonomous social participation, when it proceeds in absolute defiance of objective reality, that it can be regarded as pathological.” In other words, as long as you haven’t become so attached to our personae that we refuse to make friends in real life, which counts as pathological by Horton and Wohl’s standards, you’re good to go.

Once again, dear reader, this standard was made in 1956. A 2019 study has summarized the past sixty years of para-sociality research, and the study’s generalization of the cause and impact of a PR was that a media user's bond with media personas can lead to

- higher self-confidence (Greenwood, 2008)
- higher self-efficacy expectation (Phua, 2016)

- stronger perception of problem-focused coping strategies (Hoffner & Cohen, 2012), and
- a stronger sense of belonging (Derrick, Gabriel, & Hugenberg, 2009).

As examples of potentially negative effects, which the results also indicate, an unrealistic body image can

- reduce self-esteem (Eyal & Te'eni-Harari, 2013) and
- increase media consumption and media addiction (Grant, Guthrie, & Ball-Rokeach, 1991).

(Liebers and Schramm, 2019)

Told you I only need one reference for the whole book. Well, two, to be exact.

Take a closer look at the “examples of potentially negative effects” listed in the study, and see if any of the terms apply to what you’ve been going through. Feel free to check your screen time statistics on apps like Instagram, TikTok, the number of fan-cams you saved to your collection folder, the frequency of your persona showing up in the search suggestions, and also refine the word choice you make when describing what you think of your persona. Is he or she irreplaceable? Or just talented? Does he or she occupy your mind all the time? Or from time to time? Would you make friends with someone who does not necessarily share the same passion with you about your persona?

Ready? Let us now cycle back to the most important questions I hope you answered in this book.

What Did You Choose?

First things first – if you selected “false” on the statement I suggested you evaluate, which, for your convenience, is reproduced below:

“I acknowledge my engagement with the celebrity I’m having a crush on is, in fact, a parasocial relationship and would like for this relationship to end, as it has escalated to an unhealthy status.”

Then I’d strongly encourage you to close this book for once and for all. The title of this book is “A Beginner’s Guide to Properly Dissolving Parasocial Relationships,” and you clearly won’t find dissolving a PR necessary.

If you have selected “true” on this statement, however, we shall then examine what you chose for the first question.

If it’s A. Less than a week, you will find the instructions outlined in the next chapter a walk in the park. You have just started your new obsession, yet you believe you have already devoted a lot of time, or effort, or money, or wondering, and you would like this obsession to at least slow down a bit or come to a complete stop. The remedies won’t be hard to swallow, the advice won’t be hard to hear. Move on to the next chapter, and I’ll meet you there.

If it's B. Less than a month, you're in luck – but you need to act fast. You have strolled around the obsession for an amount of time that has started to become alarming, and now you've stumbled upon the best way to step on the brake. Many of the instructions listed in the following chapter could cause some upset or even distress, but you need tenacity to overcome the pain of withdrawal effects from your PR.

If it's C. Less than a year, or D. Over a year, I would probably guess that you spent some extra time with that statement evaluation afterwards. Your obsession has become an integral part of your life. It brings joy, even if it means staying up late for a surprise album to drop, or loitering on your phone for way too long, searching for validation about the glamorous aspects of your persona. The mere presence of your persona is so powerful and omnipotent, it might even make you sigh at the immense difference between you and your persona. Why am I so much less gifted or utterly mediocre compared to him or her?

But if you're still reading, you must have selected "false" to that statement. You want to change.

And here's how.

Chapter 4

How Do I Unplug

Well, we're finally here: the most practical part of the book.

As I have emphasized in the analogy from the last chapter, unplugging can be very hard. You might have tried conventional methods regularly suggested by loved ones and advisors before, like taking deep breaths, walking away from distractions, picking up a new hobby, blocking the persona on your social media – well, if any of those truly worked, we wouldn't be having a discussion here.

Cutting off someone from your head is far from easy. Especially when that someone is likely still existing somewhere in the world and is so influential that *they* get to choose if *they* want *you* to see *them*, not the other way around. How, then, should we regain the freedom to choose when it comes to consuming the media's display of our persona?

We have been analytical from the beginning. It's best if we keep analyzing to find the root cause of our PR.

Where Do You See Them the Most?

Disparity in the sensitivity of algorithms across different social media platforms creates an interesting phenomenon: a celebrity I searched for once almost always splashes over my entire Instagram and TikTok, but that rarely happens with Twitter. That's because Twitter, as a primarily text-based interaction platform, relies heavily on explicit feedback on tweets to adjust the algorithm.

Instagram and TikTok, on the other hand, are much smarter because all their content is image-based, and an image-detection system scans through every uploaded image for key figures and objects. It then attempts to label the images with the name of a person that matches the features in the photo, and broadcasts the photo to groups of users who are likely interested in that person. You might suggest that TikTok would find this process extremely challenging, considering every single video would have to be cut down to hundreds of frames for later stages of image processing. But they have other algorithms that help the system to only focus on the pixels in motion.

You're probably wondering what the hell any of this has to do with dissolving a PR. But exploiting this disparity provides us with the key to escape.

If They're Always on Instagram, TikTok, or Other Image-Based Content Platforms

I wouldn't believe you if you told me that you can completely stop using Instagram to avoid seeing

your celebrity crush. That's what anyone would likely suggest, but that's also highly unrealistic – Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) doesn't end in the blink of an eye. So what I'm proposing is:

If you found your Instagram filled with pictures of your persona, instead of continuously scrolling to avoid eye contact, which I've tried, and it looks very desperate and is exhausting, simply leave the home page. Want to catch up with your friends? Go to your own profile page. Tap on "Following" or "Followers," the two numbers right next to your profile photo. Scroll down the list and you won't have to go too far to see your friends, especially with the default order Instagram set to help your close ones show up first on the list, *not* the one you interacted with the most. If they post a story or have a new post, you will be able to see because a ring of pink will show up next to their profile photo.

That is to say, you must never be on the home page (or in TikTok terminology, the "For You" page) and the search page at all times. Always, always, always use your own profile page. You wouldn't be missing out on anything.

Or, if you can, move to Twitter. Your friends are probably not that active on Twitter, though, but there's a solution for that, too: Threads. If your friend has an Instagram, they probably already have a Threads account, thanks to Mark Zuckerberg and the Meta team's relentless effort to integrate between platforms and encourage the so-called "Twitter competitor" to thrive.

The other way, however, requires much more care.

If They're Always on Twitter, Threads, or Other Text-Based Content Platforms

Good news: you're receiving images of your persona from the platforms with the least sensitive algorithms. Bad news: you're receiving images of your persona from the platforms with the *least* sensitive algorithms.

It's easy to switch – unlike Instagram, you likely won't be missing out on any important updates from your friends or other celebrities that you don't currently have a crush on if you just temporarily close Twitter or Threads for a week. The problem, however, lies in the fact that algorithms on text-based content platforms have excellent memory. Even if you haven't opened the app and engaged with any content of your persona for days, or if you decisively uninstalled the app from your phone completely, you won't notice any changes to the posts you see on the home page.

Two methods may help solve this, but both must be implemented cautiously. Either you choose to stick with Twitter or Threads and patiently click "I'm not interested" on every post you see about the persona, or you move to Instagram or TikTok and *never ever* search for the persona again on those platforms. I'd like to argue the second measure is more important, and that these two methods aren't mutually exclusive – you can choose to move to Instagram or TikTok and abstain from searching the

persona while simultaneously clicking on those “I’m not interested” buttons occasionally.

But then, as we would logically expect, there’s always a worst-case scenario.

If They’re Literally Everywhere

I’d say while this is truly the most nightmarish situation, it’s sadly also the most common one. After all, what lunatic would categorize social media apps before searching for some random photos of a goddamn celebrity? Just give me the photos, for god’s sake. I don’t care where I searched for them.

As much as I completely understand and sympathize with this sentiment, dear reader, I’d humbly suggest that if you want to prevent PR from becoming unhealthy in the future, you should probably choose to become that lunatic. Think twice before letting the algorithm get you.

Now, of course, we have lost the chance to think twice. Our persona has become omnipresent.

You would probably suggest combining all the measures I’ve mentioned above. That, dear reader, while a brilliant idea, is insanely hard to practice in reality. For most of us, it’s not that different from getting rid of all the social media apps. And, to make it worse, you have to make sure you keep in mind the “right thing to do” when that charming and sexy persona takes up your screen. Oops, you didn’t say you’re not interested. Oops, you clicked like. One slip, and now you’re back in the hedge maze.

So there has got to be another way. There is. In fact, there are multiple ways. But you should know that these are sinuated, narrow ways. Some are counterintuitive. Some may not work. Take them at your own risk.

Transferring Your Obsession

You fell in love with a celebrity, you said. He looked so dashing. She looked immaculate. They looked fabulous. You can literally smell their on-screen chemistry, you said. But that’s not the complete picture, is it? Did they look good all on their own? Or did they look good because someone uplifted or supplemented their character?

If it’s the latter case, how about we change our perspective just a little? Your persona, at some point during the show, must have had a moment with another performer. If you’re so deeply in love with your persona, why not stand in the shoes of someone who literally stood next to that persona on the set of a movie or TV show? Learn more about that someone. How did they contain their obsession so well and didn’t screw up lines looking into your persona’s enchanting eyes? Watch that someone’s previous works. If you’re reluctant to do that, just know that if you get to meet the person who were in the same film as your persona, you’re more likely to meet your persona, too! Isn’t that something

you wanted? Kevin Bacon would probably say you just increased your Bacon number.

(If your celebrity crush is Kevin Bacon, I sincerely apologize for bringing him up again.)

The reason behind my suggestion can be traced back to what Horton and Wohl found all successful personae have in common – a great team behind that persona working collectively. If you liked your persona's performance, chances are you're going to love his or her counterpart's, too.

The risk behind this method is self-explanatory: what if I start a PR with the new persona? The chances of that happening, however, are now dramatically reduced because you are consciously deciding to become obsessed with a performer. As Horton and Wohl have discovered, one-time viewers typically take the analytical stance and view the proceedings with detached curiosity and hostility. If you're watching from a distance and haven't yet decided to step closer, the gravitational pull of the performer is very limited.

Dig Up Some Dirt

You are hopelessly in love with your persona. They're not giving the love back. You wonder if it's something you haven't done enough. (If you don't, problem solved! If you need further assistance, like if you feel it's not enough to know "it's not my problem that my celebrity crush doesn't know me," and you also want to stop loving that celebrity, keep reading.)

But it takes two to tango. Some fundamental differences between your celebrity crush and you likely won't be eliminated, no matter how you change yourself. What's his or her nationality? Sexuality? Preferences on cuisines and dishes? Do they like the artist you like? Listen to the same music you love? Share the same opinions on the biggest issues of society as you do?

Maybe you dismissed these differences early on, deeming them as unrelated to the charisma and integrity of your persona. Maybe your persona has taken so many media training courses that they know how to be a friend to all by politely declining to take an obvious stance on any of the questions that might make them lose some of their fans. But don't call it a day yet. Let's say you finally are in the same room with your celebrity crush. If your celebrity has never really been passionate about what you love, would they love you for who you are?

Furthermore, under the prism of the internet, your celebrity crush may have forgotten to delete some rather inappropriate comments they made about your identity, music taste, or sexuality before going through media training. What makes you think they would change their mind after all these years of being in show business, an insular paradise disconnected from the struggles of the general public?

The risk behind this method is a bit lower, but a fascinating phenomenon unfolds when it's taken too far. We'll get to that phenomenon in *Chapter 6: Dichotomy State of Plugged*.

Let It Happen

Almost all of the measures we've discussed so far involve systematic logical reasoning. Even I don't like doing that. But you can't fight fire with fire – we've been victimized because we weren't consuming the media logically in the first place. Now is not the time to let the illogical side of us further unravel.

Then again, we don't want the deduction and plotting to exhaust us. Our PRs already did. So there is one last practice to dissolve PRs that I would like to suggest as the last resort in this book, and it's the least intuitive one:

Let it happen.

You probably cheered. Great! I don't need to engrain those twisted and meticulous methodologies into my mind anymore. You might even blame me for not telling you that this is a way of unplugging earlier.

Don't get your hopes too high too soon, though. There's a reason I call this the last resort, and *letting* it happen is different from *making* it happen.

Why would I make it happen? You questioned. I'm not going to actively engage with my persona anymore.

Are you, though? Because as we have seen in Chapter 2, a lot of what you thought was innocuous could be considered as forms of engagement: your prolonged stay on a photo, your unintentional clicks on it, or even opening up the comment section could lead to the algorithm believing you need more of this. That's what I meant by "making it happen." A complete disregard of what swirled you in the PR will simply pull you deeper into the mess.

Letting it happen requires you to fully commit to the following:

- Scrolling past the contents of your persona at a casual speed.
- Not clicking on any button or any part of the post. You don't need to click "I'm not interested", and you certainly shouldn't click Like or open the comment section.
- Not scrolling back to the content.
- Not searching for the persona. Not even on Google.

The reason I call "letting it happen" the last resort is because of the time it takes to achieve the unplugging effect. If you selected C. Less than a year or D. Over a year back in Chapter 3, this one might be your elixir because of its simplicity. Make sure you stick to the only four rules above, and you'll gradually say goodbye to your celebrity crush.

What's Next?

Not much. It seems that we have discussed everything in detail, dear reader. We covered what parasocial means, why it came into your life like an intruder, and how you can leave it behind.

In fact, I might suggest the book has come to an end.

But there are just a few more things I'd like to bring to your attention. The things that I never thought were worth mentioning, but eventually threw all my plans into flames.

And they all have names. They are the mirage, the pendulum, and the leprechaun.

Chapter 5

The Mirage: Delusions of Detachment

A mirage is typically observed in deserts. The observer, with the help of light deflection, sees a faded, floating image of buildings or lakes, and becomes exhilarated at the delightful discovery that he is not far from walking out of the desert, or at least there's something to drink. The truth, however, is that the closer the observer walks to the mirage, the faster it decomposes.

It's crucial to keep in mind that the same thing happens when unplugging. You might notice the persona making their way out of your social media or your whole life, and you wonder if it's time to stop fighting the instinct and revert to the "let it happen" mode.

Most of the time, you're on the right track – if the amount of content recommended to you about your celebrity crush has decreased, the algorithm would know that you've moved on. But things become more complicated when your celebrity crush posts on social media frequently, or if they love appearing in public. Some even hire paparazzi.

That's when mirages come in.

What Type of Mirages?

The performer is able to produce mirages if they

- post on social media frequently, as we've discussed
- has managed to connect with your other parasocial connections, like your favorite film star posing with your favorite baseball team
- collaborated with your social connections in real life, like if they meet a friend of yours, and your friend posts their picture with your persona, because why not

What Happens When I See Mirages?

The first two cases are easier to contain. They are like a dam shutting a metal gate to a flood that has only begun to recede lately. The majority of the flood is blocked, but traces of water managed to seep through. All you need to do is let the traces run dry, which won't take long.

The third one, however, feels more like a Twilight Zone episode where dreams and reality have started blending into each other. Your persona used to be some reclusive figure in Beverly Hills, but now they have arrived in your town and are standing next to your friend, someone who, until your recent lectures about how great your celebrity crush is, likely didn't even know they existed.

Of course you're going to be jealous as hell. Why does your friend get to meet your persona before you do? You have anxiously waited, beseeched, and drooled about such a chance, yet the chance was given to someone who stole your obsession.

And jealousy, as vicious as it can be, is rather useless when it comes to decision-making because the only thing jealousy is capable of producing is hatred or insanity. Hatred means you gaping at their photo and your persona's hand around your friend, then quickly closing the photo and unfollowing your friend. You couldn't believe your friend didn't tell you the love of your life is in town.

Insanity works out similarly, only instead of unfollowing your friend, you start to search for places your persona might show up. You want their itinerary. Their email. Their phone number, even. All three of the hardest things to find on the internet. If you succeeded, you might buy a ticket to the next city they are performing in. Or, not even performing, but simply staying in. You might come close to fulfilling your dream, or you might not. You might get the wrong information or get to their spot too late. You then repeat the cycle of searching, traveling, and running around a city you've never been to before.

Which is why the third case – parasocial relationships putting roots in your social relationships – is the most dangerous one. Hatred jeopardizes your friendship. Insanity jeopardizes your career and/or studies.

What do we do now?

Walking Away from the Mirage

The first case is the easiest to deal with. So you see another post from your persona, big deal. That used to happen all the time. Tell yourself you don't love them anymore, and scroll away. If you can't seem to, refer back to the "Dig Up Some Dirt" section in the last chapter.

The second one, however, would depend on your luck. There's no way of knowing if Instagram gave you that photo because the algorithm thought you loved the baseball team or because it thought you loved the film star. But you can tell the algorithm which one it was by consuming more content from the baseball team. This helps you bypass the pitfall of getting more updates from your persona.

The third one is the one in desperate need of a solution. Unfortunately, restraining jealousy is normally an art only mastered by people over sixty. If you can find ways to tune down your jealousy, though, like by reminding yourself of the time when you met some other persona your friend was dying to meet, or by reexamining the achievements you've made and how little your friend's rendezvous with your persona was compared to them, that would be best.

If you couldn't contain the envy quickly, then we would have to choose between hatred and insanity. For the purposes of dissolving a PR, regretfully, I suggest you go with hatred.

But in a precocious way.

Hate with A Purpose

A friend of yours met your persona. Is that a close friend? Do they play an important role in your life? Are they understanding? Do you share secrets with them?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, don't hate them yet. Talk to them. Tell them you're trying to get over the celebrity crush because the obsession has left you drained. Tell them you're happy for how lucky they must have been, but you would like to step away from discussing the persona for just a while.

If the answer is no, on the other hand, I don't see why keeping them as friends is necessary. They probably didn't even think of you when your persona appeared in front of them. They just wanted a picture with someone famous. They and their flamboyant fame-chasing should burn in hell. If they ever walk up to you and go, "I saw that celebrity you were crazy about the other day," simply reply with, "Oh. Good for you!" and walk away.

Or, blame the rotten luck on the celebrity. How ungrateful is it for someone to leave all your endeavors and devotions unappreciated, specifically come to the place your friend was at, and take selfies with everyone, everyone but you? You should see this as their way of telling you to stop being obsessed with them.

Who do they think they are? You deserve so much better than them.

These, dear reader, are afterthoughts I'm trying to insert in your brain. You're likely still panicking after seeing that photo, walking in circles in your room. I completely understand, but think about those afterthoughts once you calm down. I hope they make sense.

Danger in the Blind Spot

I have repeatedly suggested using "Dig Up Some Dirt" as a way of unplugging, because it's a known fact that becoming critical of something you love prevents you from continuing the frenzy about that thing.

But what if you take the hating too far?

Chapter 6

The Pendulum: Dichotomy State of Plugged

No, dear reader, I never said there were only two states of parasocial relationships. In fact, we will be covering two additional states that are more important than plus and minus in this and the next chapter.

Dialing Dialectics

“Dig Up Some Dirt,” or other methods similar to finding something unpalatable about your persona, is more formally described as critical thinking, or dialectics. The interesting thing is, critical thinking of a subject is only activated when you’re not feverishly in love with or passionately hate it.

So if you’re willing to stick to the instructions of this book, you will naturally discover that there are stages of developing dialectics. At the beginning, every imperfect facet of your persona can be dismissed as trivial. You might even consider some imperfections as reasons to love them more. But you mustn’t stop. Think about how much your identity matters when you are making friends in real life. Would you be willing to make friends with someone who, upon hearing your obsession with Taylor Swift, replies with “Eww. She’s been singing the same thing for 18 years now.”?

Then came the equilibrium, where you can, without additional thinking, view your persona as nothing more than just a person who happens to be famous. You know he’s out there seducing millions of people, but you should be glad you’re not one of them.

But something weird happens when your critical thinking gets a little too loud, when you are stepping out of the equilibrium.

Yep, you guessed it – you have now descended from the plus state of plugged to the minus state of plugged.

Out of the Frying Pan & Into the Fire

While transferring from the plus to the minus state is not common, it can occur if your persona:

- said something unforgivable regarding your ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or your other personae
- induced severe financial, mental, or physical damage to you and/or your family
- gave you the realization that the time spent on fanatically craving was so insanely embarrassing and wasteful
- or more.

Seek professional legal advice on the second case. We examine cases one and three below in detail.

Defense is A Two-Way Street

For case one, let's say it's something less serious: your persona has terrible taste and said something egregious on a TV show you love. Or a comedian you just bought a ticket to see. Or some other celebrity who may or may not have cared about catching strays online.

If that's the case, I suggest you act based on how much you love the show. We certainly don't need to evaluate that because I'm convinced that if you have binge-watched the show multiple times, your brain would automatically call you to craft a well-developed response within minutes of furiously typing on your keyboard. But just bear with me for an extra second before you hit "Post."

Add a shout-out to the others who love the show as much as you do toward the end of your "essay." You can @ the fandom, or the performers on that show, or someone you know who shares your obsession. Tell them that you are on their side. Which sounds corny, but add it anyway. This helps because it gives you the thing you subconsciously wanted: exposure of your post. But more importantly, it brings forth new connections that are much more meaningful. You get to follow and DM someone who, just like you, can recite every line in every episode of the show or anticipate when the comedian's punchline typically lands. You get to talk about how your *common* interest, not the one you or they personally have, brightens up your lives.

One post might not open up such a possibility, but keep doing it. In your future posts, when your persona shows up again with tasteless takes, increase the amount of shout-outs to fellow fans of the show your persona attacked.

But if it's something serious, like your persona has donated to an organization that was famously homophobic, or shared a photo with someone with questionable ethics, you will find defending much easier; in fact, someone was probably defending for you already. So don't just leave after hating your persona. Go to some news syndication accounts, like Pop Base or Pop Crave, and scroll to the comment section. Support those who commented, "we stand with [an identity attacked by the persona]." Go to their profile and see if they also share some other interests or identities with you.

You might wonder, am I being too idealistic here? Not really. With billions of people around the globe and nearly 6 percent of them on social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, finding new connections isn't nearly as hard as you'd imagine.

Now, before we derive a solution for case three, I'd like to delve into a state of PRs typically associated with the case.

The Dichotomy State of Plugged

The dichotomy state is not as severe as its brethren, the plus and minus ones, but every bit as torturous. You're in a **strong** dichotomy state of plugged with a persona if you:

- are noticing that the persona appears in an unusually high number of places
- detect a sense of discomfort whenever and wherever the persona shows up
- are actively and unrelentingly trying to find the weaknesses of the persona
- are questioning every motive behind the persona's behavior
- have previously crafted negative responses to a persona and/or their fandom
- speculated on unflattering aspects of the persona that you can defame on, with no credible evidence
- have had recurring dreams where your persona is present even when you don't wish them to be
- blocked, muted, or blacklisted their social media
- have financially contributed to your devotion to hating your persona
- yearn for your persona to notice you
- feels a sense of company in the presence of the persona, a sense so strong that anyone else couldn't provide
- have at some point in the past or present searched for more content on your persona
- have suggested, perhaps not out loud, admirable and commendable qualities about the performer
- have considered the possibility of attending or have attended meet and greets with the persona
- have previously crafted positive responses to a persona and/or their fandom, wishing they would see your message
- fantasized about the coveted features your persona may have, with no credible evidence
- have financially contributed to your devotion to worshipping your persona

Your shrewd observation may have led you to notice that I merely combined the traits of both positive and negative states in this list. But that's what happens when you're in a dichotomy – one moment you feel the need to consume more content of the persona, then the next you restore your sobriety and question why your obsession took over when the persona clearly displays unflattering aspects after all, and you started loathing either the persona or yourself.

The speed at which the mind switches between these two beliefs varies from one person to another. It also depends on how long the dichotomy has formed and how much free time one has in their life. Typically, a sentimental person would find switching from plus to minus and back much easier. It's also more common with people who have plenty of free time, or when they don't normally do but a long summer break provided them with the possibility to. The most essential factor, however, is the time one has spent in the dichotomy.

Oscillating Between the Plus and Minus States

At the beginning of the dichotomy state, you misconstrue the on-and-off conflicting viewpoints in your head as critical thinking, as a sign of maturity, or as an indication that a PR has come to an end. In fact, you wouldn't agree that it's a misconception, because critical thinking does mean taking all the different voices into account.

But there's an important step we haven't yet covered with the dialectics, and that's the distinction between critical thinking and rumination: critical thinking ends with a conclusion. Rumination does not.

After the comparison and contrast of different facets of the persona, a logical mind should give you the "thesis" of the analysis. That "thesis" isn't necessarily that you have to continue loving or begin hating the persona, but it should definitely revolve around something similar to "because the celebrity crush is now regressed to a person in your head, the consuming of their content, the relentless wishful thinking, and the wasting of time, should all slowly but surely come to an end."

If, by any chance, your mind didn't take you to this conclusion, or didn't even prepare a conclusion at the end of the critical thinking process, you're, unfortunately, in big trouble.

In computer systems, any threads that start taking up a huge amount of memory, do not have an ending statement, but instead, have a self-replicating segment of code, will be flagged as a virus, and the system will do whatever it can to terminate that process immediately. The same thing happens with our brain as well, except there's no one to stop your dichotomy. You would likely slip into an endless cycle of digging up some dirt, closing your phone, unlocking it again to search for the thirst traps or the glamorous side of the persona, liking some posts about it, remembering the infamous contrarian stuff again, rinse, and repeat.

This is abysmal because one, your feed will be so overthrown with content of your persona, none of the methods we covered in Chapter 4 would work; two, you will be experiencing severe mental and physical exhaustion within days; and three, your PR may have become pathological even by Horton and Wohl's standards.

You're on a pendulum. You need to get off, fast. The first thing to do is to shake the rope connecting the swinging ball to the ceiling to take some momentum off the oscillating system. How do you shake the rope? By making a conclusion. Again, this conclusion does not have to be definitive, but it has to be constructive. What should you do next? You should confidently tell the pendulum to stop.

Shaking it once won't stop the swinging completely. You need to keep making the conclusion and following that conclusion, preferably by using the "Let It Happen" considering it's the only method used to treat chronic PRs, and get off the pendulum when it finally comes to a stop.

Tying It Back to Case 3

You're now off the pendulum, panting with relief. As tempting as it is, do *not* look back. You will easily regret the time you spent swindling by the pendulum, so don't reignite the frustration. You are no longer on the pendulum, and you're better off now. That's the only thing that matters.

If you're not sure if you've gotten rid of the dizzy feeling of swinging back and forth completely, there's a simple way to fix that.

Let's unveil the last and best state of PR together: the state of unplugged.

Chapter 7

The Leprechaun: State of Unplugged

Can't believe we're here, right? Finally at the mountain peak and looking back at what we've conquered with a satisfying grin.

Without further digression, we define the only trait for the state of unplugged.

The Zero (0) State of Unplugged

You're in an authentic state of unplugged with a persona if you read this sentence and thought:

- A persona? What are you talking about? That's just some random celebrity I used to know. and nothing more.

Cherish It

I consider the state of unplugged a leprechaun because it is so elusive and mischievous. The hardest treasure to keep in the world.

You don't keep it by thinking about keeping it. You earn it by acknowledging its existence and company. So don't let it go. You wouldn't want to type your persona's name into that search box again.

But chances are that even if you did, you wouldn't fall down the rabbit hole. To quote Rachel Green on a phone call with Ross Geller in Season 2 of *Friends*, you are over them, "and that, my friend, is what they call closure." Their photos don't put thoughts in your head anymore.

So yeah, go ahead and laugh about the ridiculousness of it all. The ridiculousness of the endeavors, the wild quotes you may have recorded in your diary, and even this book.

I think few would really be so alarmed about a PR that they'd read this voluntarily. Yet, I had the time and the experience. If they need help, this book and I are here for them.

It's been nice having you on board for this chaotic dive into the strangest corners of our minds. Thank you for your patience and efforts. I'm sure you'll find the struggles culminating in a mark of your growth.

Have a great day and an unbothered life!

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