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is now known that her nursing license was suspended at the time and that she was, in fact, a parolee convicted of multiple felonies. She infiltrated William's life, stealing his identity, opening up fraudulent credit accounts and stealing large sums of money. Her behavior, characterized as psychopathic, terrorized William and his family.

knowledge that Lynda was perpetrating an elaborate scam. An additional factor contributing to the veracity of the scam included a suspected cyber-conspiracy involving persons portraying professional athletes and law enforcement officers. Some references to such persons will be identified as Lynda's alter egos.

As an accomplished con artist, Lynda was very adept at predicting the behavior of her victims and found ways to get them to believe her. The subterfuge she created was so confusing that it was difficult for her unsuspecting victims to sort out fact from fiction. Without proof, there is a tendency for the victim to extend sympathy to the psychopath, and this is exactly what happened in William's case.

In order to take advantage of William, Lynda presented herself to him as a co-victim. To amplify his terror, Lynda would tell him that she had been beaten, burned or punched by the other characters involved in her scam. These claimed encounters were frequent and the harm inflicted increased with each incident. After one such confrontation, William insisted on seeing the bruises on her body. In turn, she showed him a huge black and blue mark on her thigh. On another occasion, Lynda claimed that two members of a well-known organized crime family forced her into the back of a limousine and proceeded to burn her with a cigarette around her vagina and on the insides of her thighs.

She pretended not to want to show him the physical evidence, crying and saying that he never believed her about anything. She eventually raised her dress, horrifying William with what appeared to him to be 10 to 15 fresh burn marks. Lynda said "they" did this to her.

Finally, in late 1998, a year and a half after William first reported his situation to the federal agency, Lynda confessed to certain aspects of her scam to a private detective hired by William after she was arrested for the sale of a computer stolen from William. According to a verbal report the private detective made to William, Lynda impassively claimed that she herself inflicted the cigarette burns William had seen, as well as other bruises and cuts on her arms. She said she did these things to enhance the believability of the scam and to “keep [William] under control and make [William] afraid.” The stunned detective asked her if inflicting the wounds had hurt. She said that because she was so

high on Demerol at the time, she didn't feel a thing. Lynda made other statements to the detective, claiming that the corrupt police officer was a co-conspirator. Lynda used evidence of physical abuse to serve as messages to cleverly support the superficial validity of her eventually uncovered fraudulent scheme. This pattern of behavior is typical of False Victimization Syndrome wherein an individual attempts to convince others of claims of harm, usually in order to re-establish a failing relationship and/or gain attention. In some cases, the stalker actually feels victimized by the person he or she is stalking. This is a defense mechanism referred to as *projective identification*.

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Lynda Kerr

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she was remanded back to jail pending a further order of the court. Lynda now faces extradition to another county in her state on charges that involve serious parole violations. However, Lynda employs tactics that enable her to take advantage of weaknesses in the legal system so as to delay prosecution and incarceration. Typical of psychopathic behavior, she is unremorseful and smug in her lengthy record of scamming innocent citizens.

Psychopathic personality disorder

The perpetrator in this case has a long and relentless history of psychopathic criminality. Early in the 20th century, the term *psychopathy* was used to refer to extreme variants of normal personality and included all personality disorders. Phillippe Pinel (1745-1826) first described this type of behavior in 1806. He used the term *mania sans delire*, which essentially means craziness without raging. Such a diagnosis carried with it a certain moral stigma similar to insanity. In an attempt to remove the moral stigma of the term psychopathy, the American Psychiatric Association adopted the term *antisocial personality disorder* in the DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

People who are given the diagnosis of psychopathic personality disorder exhibit the following characteristics: they are engaging, charming, and egocentric; they are incapable of love; they reveal no ability to express guilt, remorse, and shame; they have little insight; and they do not easily learn from certain types of experiences, such as causing pain in another person or being convicted of a crime (Hare, 1998).

Much is known about Lynda's behavior through various sources. These sources include criminal records, court transcriptions, printed e-mail records, correspondence, taped conversations, newspaper articles, personal interviews of the victim cohort by the author, and the reports of a private investigator. Using forensic methods, Lynda's behavior may be easily diagnosed as psychopathic based on a study of her behavior. The author has interviewed numerous members of the victim cohort, and their stories concerning Lynda's actions serve to highlight her anti-

social nature. One victim, Lynda's parish priest, referred to her in the following manner: "If ever there was evil incarnate walking on two legs, it is that woman." Lynda's [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] referred to her as "a black widow spider" or "the scorpion that goes after people," and said that "she is highly manipulative and multi-faceted, skilled in the art of deception." Lynda usually selects victims who are unable to defend themselves. William is the only member of the victim cohort so far to fight back. Several additional victims have been identified but are unwilling to provide information; they continue to live in fear that Lynda will hurt them again. Lynda physically assaulted one such victim. Her former probation officer stated that he thought she had it in her to be a killer.

Lynda has manipulated and scammed many individuals in the past 30 years. She has even victimized her former husband, both her daughters, and other relatives. She has also made false statements in the past that one of her daughters and an infant son died. For example, in one attempt to gain sympathy, Lynda fabricated a story that she tragically lost a daughter in a car crash. Psychopathic individuals typically lie and distort facts in their often-unsuccessful attempts to fool their therapists or interviewers (Hare, 1998; Meloy, 2002).

Lynda portrayed false scenarios of her victimization designed to elicit sympathy. In one incident, Lynda said that the people who had been threatening them both had abducted her and burned her vagina with a lit cigarette. William insisted on seeing the injury and

was shown a series of fresh burn marks. This left William and his family in a state of absolute terror. Many months later, Lynda admitted to William's private detective that she had inflicted these burns herself while on Demerol in order to manipulate William.

Lynda's latest scam

Despite the numerous ordeals William has been through, his original goal of stopping the person who was terrorizing him (namely Lynda) has not yet been achieved. In fact, Lynda continues to locate and exploit new victims. Recently, it has been learned that Lynda has victimized an elderly man, Thomas Butler who is mentally incompetent due in part to Alzheimer's disease. Lynda did this through manipulation of her relationship with Thomas as a co-participant in regular substance-abuse peer-meetings. With the help of a male accomplice, Lynda created a ruse to gain access to Thomas's apartment. While pretending to dote over him, Lynda was stealing and using

Thomas's credit cards for personal gain. Thomas's attorney and legal guardian believe that these criminal activities may require Thomas to file a voluntary petition for bankruptcy. Lynda also took advantage of Thomas's illness by stealing money from him and taking his car. Thomas also suffered a debilitating stroke while Lynda was with him, raising additional suspicions.

Lynda used Thomas's credit accounts and his credit profile to open charge accounts with more than 30 online merchants. Over the course of 6 months she purchased, on an almost daily basis, jewelry, clothing, gifts, and household items amounting to tens of thousands of dollars. Lynda also charged numerous telephone calls to Thomas's home phone. Many of the online orders indicated that Lynda used her first name with Thomas's last name and requested that the items be shipped to her address and billed to Thomas's credit accounts. In one case, Lynda mistakenly entered Thomas's address for shipping; she then frantically e-mailed the merchant to request that the order be mailed to her address.

At present, Lynda is under police investigation by a computer crimes expert for felonious use of Thomas's credit cards. However, she seems to be planning a defense based on verbal reports that Thomas gave her permission to use his credit. This police investigation has been proceeding very slowly. Police, pursuant to a search warrant, raided Lynda's apartment. During the search Lynda was questioned and her computer taken into evidence. More than a year has passed since the search. The computer crime expert handling the case has said they are monitoring the health of the elderly man and that they would arrest Lynda at some point. Presumably, this suggests that if the elderly man dies they may choose to drop the case. It seems that this delay is allowing Lynda to continue to dodge prosecution for crimes that could be easily proven.

Thomas's attorney spoke directly with Lynda, and she told him that if he brought felony charges against her and

she was sent to prison, she might kill herself. Archival data reveals that Lynda threatened suicide many times as a way to manipulate people. Lynda also uses a false story about being chained up and raped by a male guard while in a detention center to elicit sympathy. Such false victimization is yet another psychopathic trait. Psychopaths often attempt to gain sympathy for problems unrelated to their criminality in order to avoid detention.

Lynda's other crimes

While on probation for her crimes against William, Lynda was arrested for visiting a hospital 85 miles from her hometown to obtain Demerol under a false name, reportedly for severe migraine headaches. She had to travel such a distance because the local emergency room attendants were familiar with her many previous attempts to obtain narcotics. In one attempt she impersonated a police officer; in another she said she was the twin sister of the person who previously asked for the same drug. Lynda identified herself using combinations of the names of several of her victims but at no time revealed her true identity. According to the arrest report, the attending emergency room physician became suspicious, reviewed the hospital computer records, and noticed that Lynda met the description of a person with a different name who had recently requested Demerol for severe headaches. The doctor confronted Lynda about his concern. She immediately fled the hospital. The police were summoned and Lynda was arrested on felony charges for attempted theft of a controlled substance and use of false identification.

Scheduled hearings for this case were delayed several times due to Lynda's clever tactics. On the day of one hearing, Lynda checked herself into a nearby drug rehabilitation clinic. Police inquiry revealed that the clinic doctor was of the opinion that Lynda was there simply to avoid the court hearing and not to deal with her drug addiction. This evasive tactic reveals the ease with which some

psychopathic criminals delay prosecution. It also shows how they seek to garner sympathy and manipulate prosecutors and judges.

Lynda was ultimately convicted of these felony charges and her probation was revoked. She was sentenced to 6 months in jail, but after serving 3 months she was released and placed on house arrest. Reportedly, Lynda became an informant while in jail, advising authorities about criminal activities by her fellow inmates. At the time of her hearing, Lynda accused her former parole officer of having been sexually inappropriate with her. An internal investigation refuted this claim, but the parole officer was so shaken by this allegation that he was removed from her case. In a discussion between this parole officer and William, the officer admitted that he was afraid of Lynda.

At present, Lynda faces charges for probation violations in a different county; her arrest and prosecution for her fraudulent behavior using Thomas's identity and his credit are pending. The current concern is that there is no effort to review Lynda's statewide criminality. Thus, a trial or sentencing judge who is unaware of the facts of the other cases may give her a lighter sentence. This potential situation points to a serious problem within the criminal justice system in its dealings with psychopathic criminals.

Weaknesses of the criminal justice system

This story reveals how criminals can easily manipulate the criminal justice system itself. When criminals commit crimes in multiple jurisdictions, these crimes are rarely connected, allowing the criminals to get away with lighter punishments. In a way, each jurisdiction prefers to let other jurisdictions handle the criminal and will ignore certain probation violations if the criminal resides in a different jurisdiction or county. Savvy criminals take maximum advantage of this weakness in the criminal justice system.

Further complicating matters, as in the case of Lynda, is that when criminals have been arrested in multiple counties, they may have been assigned many different parole and probation officers who are spread out over hundreds of miles and several jurisdictions. Additionally, there is a certain turnover rate among probation officers. Research into Lynda's criminal past reveals that her new probation officers rarely contacted previous parole officers from different counties to obtain information about persons for whom they are responsible.

An additional weakness of the system is exploited by psychopaths who often manipulate their public defenders and judges. They do this by the continuation of scams in different jurisdictions, and by taking advantage of loopholes in the criminal justice system. When caught, they attempt to sway the legal system to pity them rather than isolate them from society. These psychopaths understand that the legal system will eventually hold them accountable for their crimes, and they will do anything to delay imprisonment. Such criminals want the legal system to view them not as dangers to society, but as drug users or habitual shoppers who simply need treatment for their addictions.

Historically, prisons were designed to first punish those found guilty of crime. Secondly, they were intended to protect society from criminals. Thirdly, and dependent upon the political and philosophical climate of the era, imprisonment provides an opportunity for inmates to receive treatment geared towards rehabilitation. If done well, this third purpose will lead to a reduced rate of recidivism. However, it is this author's opinion that the prison system is not achieving adequate results with respect to rehabilitation for psychopaths. This case example provides evidence of the flaws in the system concerning its handling of such criminals. In Lynda's case, while the system did provide opportunities for her to rehabilitate, it did not succeed in its efforts. The conditions in a few of her probation orders required her

to get drug treatment, but Lynda has never completed a treatment program. Furthermore, her only use of these programs has been to manipulate participants and target vulnerable ones for more criminal attacks.

Conclusion

This case study highlights the problems that can be encountered in bringing psychopathic criminal offenders to justice. It also emphasizes the frustration often felt by victims who place their lives on hold in the hope that their true story will become known and believed. It is common for victims to become investigators of their own cases. Often, they embark on an exhaustive study of the lives and activities of their victimizers.

There is some basis for optimism in the present case. At least there is a possibility that the various criminal matters will ultimately be brought before the courts and that the judges will understand the seriousness of the cases because of the psychopathic element involved. Studies in the area of psychopathy suggest that incarceration is the optimal remedy for repeat offenders with this disorder. Meanwhile, readers are encouraged to be mindful of their personal information and to be aware of the presence of psychopathic individuals in our midst.