



Case of Amy Porter

HISTRIONIC PERSONALITY DISORDER

Amy Porter is a 50-year-old divorced woman with two young children. She had been in treatment off and on over the past 20 years. She would typically enter treatment when distressed by difficult situations. She would end treatment when she began a new romantic relationship. At that point, she would feel excited about the person she was dating and would idealize the person and the future. Prior to her marriage, Ms. Porter would date one man after another. She was very attractive and dressed in a provocative manner. She even described herself as a “Barbie doll.” She enjoyed all the men looking at her at a party. She had a romance novel view of relationships. Her idea was that she would meet someone and that they would live happily ever after in a big house. She was often surprised that the men she met only wanted a short-term relationship. This pattern had repeated itself a large number of times. As she became older, she wanted to have a child with someone but tended to be dissatisfied with relationships with men her own age. As she moved into her forties,

she viewed men her age as inferior, referred to them in derogatory terms, and was intolerant of their physical imperfections. However, she did meet a man her age that she felt attracted to and quickly they married and had children. After that, he left her.

At some point, she found herself in the dating world again. Although she was still attractive as a 50-year-old, she was negative toward her appearance. She continued to be uninterested in men her age but felt desperate to find a suitable partner. In therapy, she wanted more from the therapist and showed a dependency. She had difficulty reflecting on her own internal experiences. She imagined the therapist to have a very different life than was the case and would become angry at what she imagined. After around 2 years of therapy, she was able to obtain a job more consistent with her education. She also was able to have a long-term relationship with a man her age.

Clinical vignette provided by Kenneth Levy, PhD