

Background for Chapter 42 Long Walks

By this point in my journey, I was living as the caretaker for an elite Scientologist, Astra, whose mind had fractured in ways I had not been prepared to witness. No one had warned me that she could become violent. When I arrived, I was shocked by the severity of her condition and by how completely unprepared I was to manage it.

My shift ran from three in the afternoon until eleven at night. After my shift ended, I would go for long walks. I walked to shake off the tension of the day, to loosen the fear from my body, and to remind myself that there was still air outside those rooms. On those long walks, I called friends and my daughter, Sara. Their voices steadied me. They reminded me of life in the real world.

Excerpt from Chapter 42

One conversation with Sara, my grown daughter, reached deeper than all the others. One evening, I admitted to her what I had barely allowed myself to say out loud: caring for Astra, seeing the truth of her condition up close, was making me question Scientology.

“Thank God,” Sara said. “I’m so glad.”

Then the feelings she had held back for years came pouring out.

“I hated that Scientology school at Flag,” she said. “I didn’t learn anything. It was filthy. Babies cried all day in the daycare, the place stank, and the food was disgusting.”

She went on to describe how upsetting and disorienting it had been to leave her Scientology school and enter public school.

“I was behind in everything,” she said. “At my Scientology school, they kept telling us we were advanced. However, when I got to public school I found out the truth. I wasn’t advanced. I was behind and lost.”

Her voice broke. Mine nearly did too.

“I’m so sorry,” I said. Anger rose in me—at them, and at myself. I had sacrificed so much for her tuition because I believed I was buying her the best education possible. Instead, she had been left unprepared, embarrassed, and alone in the outside world.

“That wasn’t the worst part,” Sara said. “I had to learn a new language. My friends didn’t speak Scientology. ARC, overts, Ethics Conditions, TRs—none of it meant anything to them.”

“They joked about Scientology. Called it a cult. That’s when I got scared for you. I wanted to tell you you were in a cult, but I couldn’t. I was afraid the Church would label me a bad person and make you disconnect from me. So I stayed quiet.”

Sara was referring to Hubbard’s *Disconnection Policy*. I had read it in the *Ethics Book*, but I had never imagined—not in my wildest dreams—that the Church would use that policy to break up families. But by then, I had seen it happen with my own eyes. So had Sara.