



Welcome to Issue 2 of 'Mine to Define'.

We had a great response to Issue 1 and a load of people wanting to submit, so we went ahead with another issue.

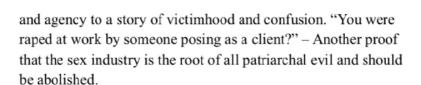
You hold in your hand a rare resource put together by a few people working in the sex industry and who identify as survivors.

We decided to create this small zine to give a little space for surviving sex workers like ourselves to share their stories, analysis, and testimonies... Our lives are complex and often hard to put in to words due to the stigma, shame and guilt associated to both sex work and (sexual) abuse. Abuse that is recent, historical, ongoing, within work, outside of work, or all of it at once. And what sometimes makes it even harder are these un-nuanced discourses and debates on sex work and prostitution: Happy hooker or victim. Empowered or abused. Always one or the other. Never both, never neither.

Nothing is that simple. We are the ones that abolitionists use as statistics to win debates for more criminalisation. We are the few from the unproven mantra that the "large majority of prostituted women suffered sexual abuse in their childhood".

Our experiences are transformed into arguments to manipulate and lie and push for criminalisation. And those flawed and tired arguments force us to keep silent, to keep quiet, to keep those stories in our heads and not look for answers.

- "You grew up in an abusive family and turned to prostitution?"
- You just become a useful cliché for abolitionists wanting to use your experience to further their agenda, reducing your life



"You want to speak out about abuse and work from a Introduction 4 sex workers' rights perspective?" "Shhh... be quiet, you don't want to give more arguments to abolitionists do you?"

But we will not keep quiet. Nothing should stay secret. We learned this truth the hard way.

Our lives and experiences are a journey between different states from victimhood to resistance, resilience to healing. Few words, few submissions in a zine from a sex worker collective will not be enough to explore the complexities and uniqueness of our lives. But maybe it will be a start to dismantle this oppressive narrative that survivors working in the sex industry need rescuing and are unable to speak for themselves.

Surviving sex workers speak out today.

Can you hear us?

Issue 2 has submissions from folks living in the U.K, Germany, U.S.A, Australia, Portugal, Canada and Spain. If you'd like to get involved in any future issues feel free to get in touch at swspeakout@gmail.com. if you're interested in a support group we'll starting you can get in touch at swspeakoutgroup@gmail.com

This zine contains peoples' personal experiences around abuse. Some of this is explicit in detail.

Sex Work and Surviving Abuse by Stella

We all know the stereotype: sex workers are broken, we're insecure, we don't respect ourselves, we were abused as children and that's why we choose work that degrades us.

I chose sex work for the usual reasons: it paid well, the hours were flexible, I didn't need to write a resume and pass a job interview, the work was interesting and challenging. I don't particularly feel the need to justify my choice of vocation to anyone.

When I was 18, long before the idea of sex work had even crossed my mind, I started a relationship with an older man. When we met, I was in high school and living with my parents. I'd never had sex before. He had been out of school and out of home for a few years, had lived in a few different cities around the country, and had lots of sexual partners.

Our relationship lasted almost 5 years. During that time lots of things happened that I'd later come to identify as emotional and sexual abuse. If I said no to sex, he'd nag and haggle until I gave in ("you don't have to do anything, just lay there"). If that didn't work he'd sulk and guilt-trip me ("it's because you don't find me attractive"). Other times he'd have sex with me while I was asleep. I'd wake up in the middle of confused and disorientated and let him finish because I didn't want to make him mad.

Everything I'd learned about relationships made me think he was the perfect boyfriend. After all, he didn't hit me, and he didn't cheat on me. I thought there was something wrong with me for not appreciating how great he was.

It took me a long time to finally break up with him. It took me even longer to realise how much trauma our relationship caused me.

A few years after we broke up I began working as a full-service sex worker for a local escort agency. I'd graduated university just in time for the global financial collapse, so sex work seemed like a good option.

There were lots of things I hated about that job: the elaborate grooming it required, the long commute on public transport, my boss's constant micromanaging, and most of all, having to keep it secret from everyone in my life. The one thing I didn't mind was the sex itself.

In some ways I felt like my past relationship had trained me to be a sex worker. I was experienced at having sex I didn't really want, and pretending to enjoy it.

The difference is that this time I was getting paid for it. Being a sex worker completely changed my attitude towards sex. It helped me understand that I never have to have sex unless I'm getting something out of it - and if that something is not intimacy and pleasure, then it should be money.

I don't like talking about this topic: drawing parallels between being in an abusive relationship and being a sex worker. Those who oppose sex work will inevitably interpret this as evidence that the industry is inherently degrading and exploitative and that workers are psychologically damaged. Those who support sex work will probably think that I'm harbouring some kind of internalised whore phobia and sex negativity, and that I'm upholding stigma by writing this.

The way I see it is that my abusive ex took so much from me, but I found a way to take the survival skills I had to develop in that relationship, and make them benefit me. Sex work helped me deal with the trauma of that abuse. It didn't just grant me financial independence, it also taught me that my sexual labour is mine, and I don't owe it to anybody.



Sex workers (as we all know) suffer violence of all kinds: social, institutional, and moral.

In my particular case, I have suffered clear patriarchal violence as well as the abuse of my children—the children of whores. The violence exercised against sex workers represents what "women" are seen as under the structure of patriarchy. Sex workers (whores) were constructed by Catholicism as the dregs of femininity, to be expelled from society. But why? Because whores are the subjects that can maneuver best as feminized subjects under the patriarchal oppression between men and women.

That is to say, the whore (as opposed to the wife and mother), does not exchange her work for housing, food and social status. The whore, whether single or partnered, does not enter into this patriarchal transaction of quasi-crumbs. With the services she charges to the sons of the patriarch, she manages her own housing and her own meals, without needing to live with her clients. She has an individual space and has her own money, and she pays the price through social repulsion and expulsion.

That is to say that the whore does not collaborate with the empowerment of men, since men develop through the almost-free services that mothers and wives perform. While he develops, she weakens, and a hierarchy of dependence between them is established. These are some of the reasons why patriarchy will always attack women who leave the domestic sphere and don't collaborate with servitude to the patriarchy. It is not a moral issue. Patriarchy does not care about moral issues. Patriarchy cares about money. Money is the most important thing for the patriarchy. And with whores, the patriarchy loses money.

One violence exercised by the Patriarchal State against sex workers is the violence against their children. These acts allow patriarchy to control sex workers, to violate them, punish them and expose them in the public sphere to be judged by society. It takes away from sex workers the higher status of femininity that is motherhood. Grisélidis Réal and Eva Marree Kullander are only two of thousands of examples of working mothers who suffered this patriarchal violence. The children of these whores were stolen, locked up, and then given to unknown families. This is one of the cruelest and most despicable acts of violence that the patriarchy can exercise: the violence against the children of whores.

The transmission of knowledge from sex workers to their children is feminist knowledge: the knowledge of self-management, freedom, dissidence, and love. This is quite the opposite knowledge of fatherhood transmission: obedience, order, discipline, punishment, competition and conditional love. This is the reason that they attack the children of whores, to interrupt this dissident matriarchal transmission. Patriarchy locks up these children and separates them from their mothers to perpetuate the creation of weak, obedient, servile, and insecure beings. This means that sex workers are denied both a life in freedom and the possibility of excluding men from raising their children. Mothers, whores, and the children of whores are being re-ordered and re-aligned with the patriarchy by means of violence—their children are made prisoners and given to unknown families while the mother whore is punished, left in the sewer, and silenced.



Every Survivor Deserves To Be Whole by Amber Dawn

The new girl and I stare through a two-way mirror into the massage parlor lobby.

Crybaby sits neatly on the leopard-print sofa waiting for the new girl—his pick for the session—to escort him into a private room. I suggest she bring him to the blue room. The lighting is darkest in the blue room.

"He's a regular," I tell her. "He tips well, and he always cries at the end of his session."

"He looks so normal."

This girl is really new, I think. The word "normal" irks me; that word has always irked me. Who the hell is normal? Not me, that's for sure. For a flash moment I feel resentful that I've been training her all day. But sex workers are responsible for creating our own standards and safety and strategies.

And so I continue share any information I know about the massage parlor's regular clients with the new girl. Yes, Crybaby appears sober. He can make direct eye contact. And he always has tip money ready without being asked for it. Yes, these are reassuring signs, but otherwise there are no "normal" designations for men who pay for sex. I tell her Crybaby won't negotiate his kinks at the beginning of his session. He'll receive a routine hot oil massage and hand job, and wait until his testicles shrink up before whimpering, "Are you going to hurt me, Mommy? Are you going to hurt me, Mommy?" He doesn't want kind reassurance, nor does he want to be dominated. He

needs nothing but to vocalize the words "Are you going to hurt me, Mommy" at the precise moment of ejaculation.

"What a creep," the new girl says.

"He's my favorite client," I tell her.

It's not pity that gains my favor. I don't pity him just like I don't pity myself. I admire of his the wholeness of sexual expression. I admire that he holds trauma and pleasure together at the same time.

I extend this wholeness to myself. I respect that I'm sometimes still afraid of being in my body. I remember that I survived when I orgasm. I know I can grow sad after sex—and I will kindly attend to that sadness. Everything I feel deserves care. I deserve this wholeness.

Every survivor deserves to be whole.

This submission has come from a free write exercise with the prompt "what have you learned from clients". It was a challenging and illuminating prompt, but inspired this piece.

Amber Dawn is a writer and creative facilitator living on unceded Coast Salish Territories (Vancouver, Canada). She is the author of four books and the editor of two anthologies.

Mine To Define; A Thing of Sorts. by Disco Titts

They say that to be a sex worker is to be degraded, used, abused, and wasted. What if you already were degraded, used, abused, and wasted prior to engaging in transactional sex? What if you were all these things prior to adulthood? Prior to teenagehood? What then if when you were a small child and you didn't have the language to articulate the turbulence, the horror, the pain?

I'm a child survivor. I'm a child survivor who engages in transactional sex. Saying this out loud reminds me time and time again of the abolitionists who publicly seek to save us from an industry that operates under an algorithmic fantasy of desired oppression.

They scream.

You are in need of saving, my arms they are safe (let me just hide the hatred for you under my saving grace).

They scream and fail to hear our words of liberation.

I am my own savior.

Let me explain.

I am a child survivor and I engage in transactional sex with men as a form of survival. I am a child survivor and I have been raped a few times prior to engaging in transactional sex.

To say that I am a sex worker because I was abused is a pointless statement to make. Of course this is true. As it is true that I'm probably a lesbian because I was abused. But these statements are insignificant. The fact of the matter is that I am both of these things and regardless of my abuse I exist as both outside of sex work and within sex work. This statement is true not because of the act of abuse itself but by the long lasting aftermath of the acts. I am incapable of doing any other form of work successfully due to my life-long exhaustion from trauma. Let me explain again.

I am a child survivor who engages in transactional sex and who has been raped



and assaulted more than 50 times in the almost 10 years I have engaged in the sex industry.

They say that our clients are violent and degrade us, yet those men are their boyfriends, lovers, husbands, brothers, fathers, uncles, grandfathers, great grandfathers, friends, comrades, coworkers, etc...etc...

They say they are violent and degrade us, yet they fail to hold them accountable in their own lives and turn to us whores as the problem.

I joke with my co-workers who are also survivors of that time he tried to kill me or than time he locked me in the room and I feared for my life. And we laugh. We laugh because it is funny. It is funny because they didn't succeed and we are still here surviving, our existence is exhaustive.

Don't get me wrong, the work I do is hard. His dick is hard and it makes me cry inside at the thought of doing this over and over again yet I know that this is the life that was carved out for me and damn right I am owed reparations for every minute of it.

And they fail to see.

They fail to see the liberation that this work holds for those of us who have survived, who survive every day and who will furthermore survive.

They fail to see the freedom that it can provide.

Let me explain.

He pins me down and fucks me hard and deep and I think of the cash. I can eat this week. I pay my rent and finally pay off that bill I really need to pay. Yes I can buy that sweet cannabis that keeps me sane on my days off as I hold myself because I've got me and that me needs holding like a baby. And the w33d makes me feel at ease. Helps me hold my breath and exhale the stress that binds me. It's hard to tell you how much it pains me but at least I am in control of the pain. I control the pain, who causes the pain and how I take it on. And that for me is liberating. It reminds me of every moment where I had no control over the pain inflicted on me but now I get paid for that control.

Who are they to determine what I do with my body.

It is mine to give and so what if I capitalise on my trauma, on my abused body?

This body is mine, this trauma is mine and it is is m i n e t o d e f i n e \bullet



You lose time in a brothel

I only started two weeks ago and already I am forgetting faces

Trying to recall anything about the man who settled himself between my
thighs just this morning

Nothing. A name, a voice, a touch - all lost to forgotten history. The more I think about it the more I am sure that I must have made him up, but there are twenties in the crease of my bra that are crumpled like relics.

I have stopped questioning the feeling of being unstuck in time. How the moment I met these girls I would kill for them, how they had seen my body, all of my body, in the twenty minutes after we met.

Relationships tempered like precious metals, like more bodies, like our fingers
- stretching in the gap between single beds.

In the darkness of day the hours stop being hours like we have known them before. It is leaden at lunchtime, in a windowless room, and stepping out into the cold sunlight feels ugly and invasive.

Sometimes our boss comes in, too loud, and watches us curled up in our undressed states. All night the phone rings, calling out to us with the voice of one hundred panting men, so much so that it doesn't wake us any more.

I wrote this poem two weeks into my first brothel job and was trying to articulate the weird feelings that come with moving into an exploitative situation that is still relative safety and security compared to the way I started in the sex industry; which was underage and in far more dangerous conditions. I had faced so much violence in and out of work and found my time in the industry so traumatising that even though I knew I was safe now I was still dissociating to be able to cope with seeing clients. At the same time, I was feeling so blessed to be working with other people. After being isolated and vulnerable, I suddenly had friends at work who knew exactly what I was going through. It is thanks to these strong women that I have been able to redefine my relationship with my job, reclaim my own power and autonomy and find empowerment in my newfound identity as a survivor. All we see in the press are these narratives of happy hookers and victims, and it was important to me to share the mixed emotions I felt when I wrote this poem. The binary of good and awful does nothing to help those of us in the industry, and does not reflect the reality of our lives.

Surviving Sex Worker by Emy Fem

I am a sex worker, whore, prostitute, escort, dominatrix, bizarre-lady, feminist porn actress, model, performer, and activist.

I am a mother, daughter, lover, femme, BDSM lesbian, and simply a "Lesbian*."1

And I am a survivor of violent experiences, I have PTS.² I live, love, work, laugh, and cry. Surviving shows me how it feels to be alive and how it feels to love my life after I realized what death could feel like. I was birthed into a life where PTS became my main job. I should be paid by the person who created my main trauma. But I'm not. I learn how to organize my life and navigate triggers and post-traumatic stress on a daily basis. I learn how my body feels, what my sexuality looks like, how the air I breathe feels, how nature feels when I go to dream and reflect on myself. Feelings and emotions can be intense when you learn how to realize them. Sometimes I feel like I'm a baby in an adult body: the body of a sex working activist and performer who takes her first steps in a new world. I can't change my past, but I can change how I look back on it and the way I feel about it. For sure, my PTS will never disappear, but I try to be comfortable with it. My jobs give me the chance to work when I feel like working. Sex work and activism are huge opportunities for me. I work with full energy for some well-paid hours and use the rest of my time to prepare for when my power gets eaten by post-traumatic stress.

It's the perfect life for me.

Yes, I love my life. I love my body, and I love my sexuality.

I am a survivor, but I resist the status of being a victim.

My life and my emotions go up and down like waves in a stormy sea. My laughing turns into crying and ends in laughing. Reminders of violenct experiences flash in my brain in great moments and stress jumps into my life for no reason at all like a flash when I am sitting around having a good time. This is my life. When I am able to believe that I am alive, a warm and cozy feeling floats in my body and lets me forget my tears and pain. Every tear gives me the chance to feel my soft skin and shows me the power and lust of my surviving.

Sex work is a consensual service which includes intimate services. Consent gives me power. The scars are healing in my body and my brain. My scars got created in a non-consensual way through my trauma. BDSM has the same effects as sex work does on me. I negotiate with my play partner how things are going to be during the BDSM-play and check in throughout, that way I have power over the situation. Sex work and BDSM help me a lot with the process of reclaiming my body and my sexuality. It is the hot connection to my body and sexuality which makes me feel alive and allows me to survive.



Surviving means I am alive.

Surviving saved my body, my sexuality and my dreams.

Surviving created a new world around me.

Surviving gave me the chance to explore every detail of the world around me like a baby does as it grows up.

My steps were bigger and more powerful than the steps of a child, but my brain had difficulty following them.

My emotions seem to be new and exciting. They are my personal love affair. This warm and amazing feeling you can get when you fall in love shows me that I am alive. I am having a love affair with my new life.

Because

I survived.

¹ I choose the term "Lesbian*" to describe my sexuality and my desire. A desire which excludes cis men, but includes people whose genders aren't femme. Some of these people use pronouns different to mine and some choose to have testosterone in their bodies. On the one hand it's not fair to name myself a lesbian because of it, on the other hand it's a word which feels correct when I describe my sexuality. That's why I use "" and * to widen up this term.

² I choose the term PTS for my situation. Post-traumatic stress. Normally it gets spoken about as "post-traumatic stress disorder" or PTSD. It's my reality 24/7. My life isn't a disorder, my life is special, and I have to deal with a situation which is no dis-order for me. It's my special order and my reality. PTS. Post-traumatic stress.

Hooker Mode by Miranda Recht



I.

July 26, 2015

I met up with J. at Townie's tonight and in an attempt to sabotage our growing closeness I told him I had spent the last nine months selling my body to affluent middle-aged men I'd met on craigslist so that I could buy this time to finish writing my book.

Far from the judgment I was expecting, it was as though I'd said I had vacuumed my apartment that afternoon, or eaten a sandwich.

August 3, 2015

Something rather disconcerting happened while J. was over: I found myself not wanting to be touched by him in any way and I asked him to leave.

I have no idea what's wrong with me. Is it because I'm too focused elsewhere? Or could it be the soul-rot from the sex work finally setting in?

September 15, 2015

While J. and I were having sex this past weekend, I found myself retreating into "hooker mode," fixing my attention on his low ceiling and its single, naked light bulb as I drifted far above the two bodies below in order to stay sane while the numbest part of me was being penetrated. It just felt all wrong.

This morning I awoke to him hovering over the bed like a harmless but unwanted presence. His lips on my skin stirred no sensation besides a purely tactile one, and I caught myself staring out into the hallway, as if in boredom, when he embraced me...

II.

March 19, 2016

I awoke before sunrise on my third morning in Patagandria to find a strange man in my bed. No, I didn't bring him back to the bungalow I was renting in the middle of nowhere after debauching myself in town. I fell asleep alone and sober; and when I woke up he was just there. And in that final hour before the encroaching dawn, he pinned me, naked but for a pair of panties, by the arms and told me to "Shhh Shhh!" All I could see of his face in the darkness was his Cheshire Cat smile. All I could smell was his stale tobacco body odor and the putrid slurry of his booze breath. My effort to free myself from underneath his weight ended as soon as I realized that a) it was futile b) it would be easier to navigate these feelings of violation from "hooker mode" and c) my Mag-lite was miraculously in the bed with us. (When I think about the night after I arrived on the island and how both of the overhead light bulbs in the bungalow blew, forcing me to seek out the flashlight in my unpacked suitcase and bring it into bed with me, I am more certain than ever that the powers protecting me are the stronger ones.) After my struggle had subsided, the man began humming what sounded like an American top-forty ballad and pulling my body against his every time I tried to put as much as a sliver of distance between us. The reek of his sweat was almost unbearable. Yet, as I ran my fingers through his damp hair in my professional pantomime of foreplay, all I could think was that I was going to have to aim as if to kill another human being. Of course there was also the persistent murmur bubbling up

clearly from some obscure depth: "my parents, my little brother, my book, my life..." And it was a voice from this same part of me that told me to wait while he kissed me, moan while he sucked my tits (but still wait, so as not to lose a nipple), open my legs when he wanted to go down on me...and then, once his head was in my lap, bring the flashlight out from under my pillow, where I'd been slowly maneuvering it this whole time, and start smashing his skull with the full force of my anger at everything and everyone that his violation of me represented. After three sharp clanks, he rose up and attempted to choke me, but I wouldn't stop hitting, and his grip, anyway, was too weak from the shock of it. So instead, much to my relief (what fucking relief), he jumped up and ran out the back door. I hurried to the front window and, in the beam of the flashlight, watched him disappear down a side road before scrambling into my clothes, my whole body shaking, and then running in the opposite direction, stopping only for a pack of stray dogs that were feeding in the street, until I reached the 711 almost two miles from the bungalow, where the female employee had me wait—still shaking, still clutching the flashlight—in a back room while she called the police.

Now, not forty-eight hours later, I am on an airplane, about to touch down in America, and so very, very tired.

III.

November 22, 2016

At times I question whether I am so traumatized by the event that returned me to my hometown eight months ago that I only imagine being over it? Or does my "being over it" only reveal how sexually traumatized I'd already been before?

What I am trying to emphasize in this piece is the very ambiguity that I explore by juxtaposing the vignette about my failed intimacy with the story of the thwarted sexual assault in Patagandria. That is to say, I do not feel that sex work is either inherently bad or good, but rather a fraught occupation entailing both gain (in terms of money, bodily empowerment, a nuanced knowledge set) as well as fallout (e.g. trauma, increased difficulty navigating intimacy).



A Safe Distance by Riley

I have been cradled tenderly

in the arms of strangers

who shower me with money, gifts, compliments, attention, and affection

In the same day

I have been hurt, judged, and criticised

by the partner to whom I entrust my deepest truths

My mind spins, confused with this dichotomy

This extreme dissonance

Of love and affection from strangers, and pain and abuse from a partner

Who do I believe?

The man who knows me better, and tells me I'm worthless

Or the men who don't even know my real name, but who tell me I'm worth the world

Who do I trust?

The man who shares my life, but who heaps shame at my door and leaves bruises on my body

Or the men who pay me to be the best version of myself, and reward me accordingly

And it feels like the only way I can be loved unreservedly, is to retain my status as a stranger, mysterious and perfect

And I know no-one is perfect, that conflict in relationships is normal, and that forgiveness and empathy are strengths, not weaknesses

But if letting someone love me

Means allowing them to judge me

hurt me

and make me feel as if my way of existing is unacceptable

I would rather stay a stranger.

Because being hurt by the one you trust

is far more painful

than being single

Untitled by Annonymous

I didn't want to submit anything because I have so much to get on with trying to forget this ever

happened. This kind of work, and also the activism and advocacy and campaigning that I did to

make it just about bearable - surely if I was helping other people cope with it, then that made it

somehow worthwhile?

There's a lot said about no-rescue but we were all trying to rescue each other.

My rescue-impulse, which I did understand was about rescuing parts of myself mirrored back at

me in others, got so out of hand that I found myself stood at a sink turning on taps faster, louder,

boiling kettles, clanking plates to drown out the sound of the stories I couldn't bear to hear

anymore, and the laughter that went with it. Always the laughter, always the joking around about

things that I stopped finding funny. I understood that laughing usually comes from grief. I

understood that laughter was bonding, but we can call this a trauma bond. I had stopped trauma

bonding with anyone who came for a cup of tea and to tell their stories and I found $\ensuremath{\mathsf{myself}}$

drowning out the sound and I was finished.

I got into this work because I correctly assessed that the person stalking me and frightening the

living daylights out of me, and who I was too afraid of to report to the police, would be disgusted

by me if I did this kind of work, possibly so disgusted that they left me alone. They had taught me

to be anti-police, and had taught me that the police were racist, so I was obedient and did not

report them or take action. I also remembered what the stalker had told me about the shame $\ensuremath{\mathrm{I}}$

would bring on their family if their family found out I had considered this type of work, so after



in the middle of the night, and of course slandering me in ways that I could not comprehend, \boldsymbol{I}

chose this method of coping. Working in this industry. It might be unorthodox, but in hindsight it

worked. I also became a very vocal advocate and campaigner because I took this gamble: how

could they slander me any further if I slandered myself, if I outed myself in ways that nobody else

was outing themselves at that time? And they weren't. Nobody was giving their real name and

also being a parent and speaking up at events, for the unions, wherever..it's all a blur. I spoke and

I spoke and I spoke. I forgot about everything else I wanted to do with my life because I wanted

to hold onto my life, and to make my kids proud that I was doing something to help anyone else

who got in this sort of situation. I have such chronic PTSD from it all. The stalker tried to get $\ensuremath{\mathsf{my}}$

kids taken off me but I was an exemplary mother. You'd better know this, all of you. I really was, I

still am. One of my daughters blew up with rage about the fact that it all happened, years later,

and for the next five years after that we worked through it, and the other seemed to consider me a

holy figure for it, which is perhaps the reaction that concerned me more. One made it an insult:

"you think you're fucking Jesus, feeding the sex workers", and the other went and found Jesus.

Both of those reactions are problematic, funny, worrying and valid. It was my life's work to be a

good parent, even if the construction of 'motherhood' doesn't fit me or the gender I have, which ${\bf I}$

still don't understand and no longer feel the need to.

But my parenting was so exemplary, even when I couldn't eat properly because there was no

money, and even when the police (it turned out to be correct, what the very dangerous person

told me, about the police) were sweetly telling me on a regular basis that they were watching me

and keeping an eye on the drop-in project I created. That drop-in project existed in a very grey

area of illegality, it could be considered incitement, at various points clanking plates I considered it

incitement myself. Sometimes it saved lives and sometimes it seemed to encourage the most

vulnerable to do things that made me so afraid for them. I didn't know what ${\rm I}$ thought about

anything after many years had gone by, except that with full decriminalisation most of this sort of

mess would never exist. Like most of us, I came into that kind of world with CPTSD to start with

(complex PTSD - either inter-generational, or such a cascade of unpleasant events that they

merge, and it's near enough impossible to unpick, CPTSD doesn't usually get 'fixed', it can only

be managed). Like many of us, sure we'd been molested as kids or teenagers, and sure we'd

been in a destructive relationship or two. Doing this kind of work wasn't a great solution, but it

turned out it was a solution for me. It was basically the only one I could think of to make a very $\,$

dangerous person go away, and it worked. Eventually they went away, or gave up, or shut up,

even though the police advice I'd been given on this matter was to move away.

The police themselves kept on reminding me regularly about the drop in project that I created, hey

there just calling to say (jovial hearty voice used by WPC Vice Tower Hamlets) they were watching

me and keeping an eye on it, they didn't mean it in a good way, even though they said they told

"some workers" about it, and "even" recommended they attend. But they certainly did not go

away, and I realised I had become addicted. I became addicted to my own salacious story.

There was a certain sort of drama going on throughout all of this, and just a few years before it all

kicked off I'd been living the most drama-free life imaginable, I didn't even watch TV or have the

internet, we used to ride horses over the mountains and watch DVDs and I was writing a fairytale

out of the house, it seemed like a salacious story had emerged, but perhaps I partly threw us out

of it? Perhaps, subconsciously, I raked up a bit of a story out of my life. I can take responsibility

we'd been living with because for one reason and another I thought I deserved catastrophe. Sure

enough, it followed. I picked the wrong characters for rebound relationships, I did not know

people could stalk you or conduct water torture sessions or take your phone and keys away and

pull a knife out, and when you find the courage to take it from them, gently, they pick up another

one and then you run. Everything followed from there. I'm not proud of the compulsive need $\boldsymbol{\mathrm{I}}$

had to seek catastrophe, or to rescue other people who did this kind of work, and to hear stories

about landlords, families, boyfriends, girlfriends, genderdiversefriends, clients, colleagues,



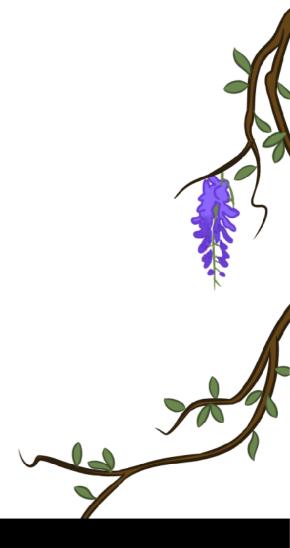
comrades, all behaving in ways that were the same or worse. Eventually, I let go of my story and

everyone else's and that's what this is, a setting aside of a story, like a doll's house that you clean

out and dust, it was mine and now it's not. I am grateful to everyone I met, and most of all to

myself. Every word of this is written in service of the demand for full decriminalisation.





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