



from worthlessness to worthy

When your family is not a safe place, when you are terrified of your dad coming back drunk again and verbally abusing you; when you are terrified to go to sleep in case he staggers into your bedroom, lost, drunk, trying to find the toilet; when you are told you are dirty, a slut, boy mad, ruining the family, stupid, a disappointment; and then told you are mad; when you are told he can read your mind; when you are forced to take him a cup of tea in bed and he bounces up and down every time he sees you; when he teaches you how to lie in bed with a boy and your mother is screaming remember she is your daughter; when you are not allowed out; when you go out he follows you and spies on you; when you are not allowed to have boyfriends; when your mother does not support you but criticises and blames you; when all of these things happen they build foundations that last a lifetime.

The feelings of worthlessness and never being good enough pervade every aspect of your life. The feelings that it must be your fault, as the whole family blames you for its dysfunction, never leave you.

I didn't know how to say no when I was a child, and I didn't know how to say no as an adult. I was both terrified and attracted to men in equal measure. I opened my legs for many, as this is what I thought was expected of me, but it also fed into my belief that I was bad, dirty, a slut. I didn't know I had a right to pleasure. I didn't know how to have a healthy relationship and always managed to sabotage a relationship. I never remained faithful. I moved from man to man, always worried they would find me out and realise what a horrible person I was really. I wasn't aware that me saying no meant no. Every time I was forced to have sex, it had to be my fault.

I got pregnant and had a child by a man who was even more damaged than myself. He fed into my every fear of not being good enough. He became my father- he spied on me; he would not allow me to have any friends; I had to dress in a certain way; I was not allowed out. He would ignore me for weeks to punish me; he would orally rape me; and I loved him.

Oh, how I loved him. If only I tried a little harder everything would be OK. I finally realised my love was not going to change him.

I don't know where I got the strength to leave him, but I did. And I started psychotherapy. I would like to say I was better after that- it was a beginning.

There are good years, there are bad years. I continue to take teeny weeny steps towards recovery, towards recognising that I was a victim, towards forgiveness, towards being my own best friend.

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