



Working with Lighthouse

For a brighter future, free from domestic abuse

All the works here have been created by a group of inspirational women currently being supported by Lighthouse Women's Aid. All the contributors are survivors of domestic abuse and the poetry and prose displayed are part of their life stories.

Lighthouse is a local charity, working with adults and children affected by domestic abuse across Suffolk.



First Meeting

Group Poem by
'The Lighthouse Family'

We first met on a sunny day
My heart's a flutter
I think I'm gonna melt like butter
You are my world
The days are so long
The sun beat down on us
Who was to know that sun was to be
Your fist beating down on me in time
Safety promised, the magic of love at last
I'll be your knight in Shining Armour
To rescue you from your castle
Ooh- aah, such delight
Daytime strangers, lovers by night
A mobile phone for you, my dear,
So I can keep you oh-so-near
He gives me purpose

You beautiful man!
My heart's still beating, as if this is the first
meeting.

Jealous

It was a Sunday afternoon, a sunny and warm day. At
3.15, I was born, there was no joy, no smiles for this
little new-born, just hate and jealousy.

This was the start of my very lonely and painful life. As a
small girl, at times when my family were very angry, they
used to lock us up in a room. They took the light bulb
out. So there we were, me, sis and bro, in the dark,
cold, frightened and hungry. No one ever cared.

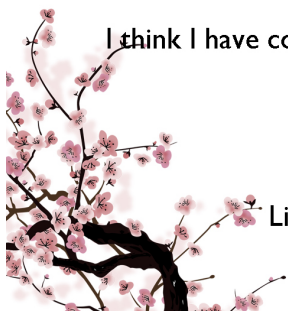
I have lost so much in this world.

Then I found Lighthouse. They helped me, where my
family failed. I have been there nearly three years. I am
now finding myself; I do still struggle every day.

I think I have come as far as I can go, I just have to fight,
every day.

It can be a lonely world.

Lighthouse is my home now.



Sorry – not sorry!

Sorry comes all too easy now it's too late –
for you ...

You promised me a fairytale
I'm sorry I fell for the dream,
but what day dreamer of a girl wouldn't?
Sorry can't fix broken happy ever afters.

Sorry doesn't comfort my night terrors
nor calm my anger
that it's me left with nothing.
that it was me, without choice fleeing
my home town.
that it's me who's lost friends and family.
Sorry doesn't replace over twenty years
of my life.

Sorry won't convince me,
no matter how many your pleas
that you're a changed man.
How can you change when
you haven't done wrong?
It was all my fault, remember?

I am sorry
that I allowed you to cage me,
I am sorry
that I had to become so broken.
I am sorry however
that you won't get to see me now,
to see the strong, happy woman
I am flourishing into.
(it's fine though, because you so hate strong
women!)

See your sorries wash over me now
but not before they empower me,
so, sorry – not sorry!

N.B.

*Not once did he ever say 'sorry'
during the twenty seven years of mental and physical
abuse Since the day I left, almost a year ago not
many days pass without getting a
message ending with one word ... sorry!*



Leave off your Evil Ways

Had I not been abused since I was a young child, I would have known that my body belonged to me and no one else had a right to use it for their evil, wicked ways.

I had finally had enough. I left one cold January evening with our eighteen-month old boy.

So scared of your evil ways and treatment, I snuck out in the night sky like a thief, whilst you were at work. Afraid that the neighbours would see me.

We had four good years together, or maybe I was blinkered. How was I to know that the birth of our wonderful son would be the start of your evil ways? Nothing I did for our wonderful baby would ever be enough or correct. The night my waters broke you verbally hammered down on me that I was stupid, hopeless and too lazy to give birth. It's only now through deep emotional counselling that I can see you are truly a narcissist. Why you were not christened 'Evil' at birth I will never know. You see no wrong in what you do, telling others I made you do it. But how can that be?
I had no control over your fist, mouth or abusive language.

My decision to leave your evil ways had been building up. Unbeknown to you I had already visited a refuge but so scared of what you would do, I refused. However after that final beating when I had to have major surgery on New Year's Eve, I decided I could not tolerate it anymore and that, if I remained, I would surely be found dead one day - due to the severe reign of beatings you bore down upon me. I lost count of the number of times you raped me, placing empty Budweiser bottles inside me. I know I always felt dirty, unclean, just like the scum you would find around the basin.

You made sure no one knew by refusing to allow me friends, or freedom to come and go as I needed. Not even to meet our son's needs was I allowed to leave our home without explanation or reporting to you my every movement.

As I write about my experiences of your evil life dictated upon me, I feel sad and angry. But I am happy to say I now have complete freedom. I have survived your evilness. Which makes me a survivor, and I will go on and use my strengths to help others who encounter the evilness of narcissism.

Whilst I have my freedom, happiness and a child to be so proud of, what do you have today?

But now when I look back with the knowledge I have, I know how blind I was to not realise from day one what you were really about. I now know that no one else will ever use me or disrespect my body.



Survivor

So what is a survivor? What makes someone find enough meaning to simply survive? Who knows?

I ask myself this time and time again still struggling to find the answer, as I sit here staring at a blank screen, sipping on a red-hot coffee.

As I sit here hurting wondering what it is like to LIVE and not survive I stop and think... Hold on, all I do is survive; does this make me a survivor? Somehow I think not? A Survivor is someone who has lived through something that they have been through and lives in the present day rather than the past. It is someone who has come out the other side.

Then again I look back on all the battles I have faced in my short 22 years on this planet and remember I AM Here, I AM still breathing. Yes, my battle isn't over yet and I have a lot of demons to still face but that doesn't mean I haven't survived. My whole life has been about surviving. Scars scattered from head to toe and they're just the scars that show. To you I may look like an ordinary 22-year-old girl but my pain is still raw and skin deep. The world isn't as simple as one seemed for a little five year old girl who once dreamed.

Yet to this day, I soldier on hoping that one-day that it won't feel like everything is wrong. So I guess I have found the answer to my question, what is a Survivor you may ask? Well everyone in some way shape or form because everyone will have to survive at some point. It may seem simple to the naked eye but I know as surviving a majority of my life it isn't an easy hill to climb. There will be times where you live day by day, at some points maybe hour by hour.

Cliché but you have to go through the bad... so you can appreciate life, even if it is the little things like making someone smile, or sipping on a hot coffee... And that reminds me I'm out of coffee.

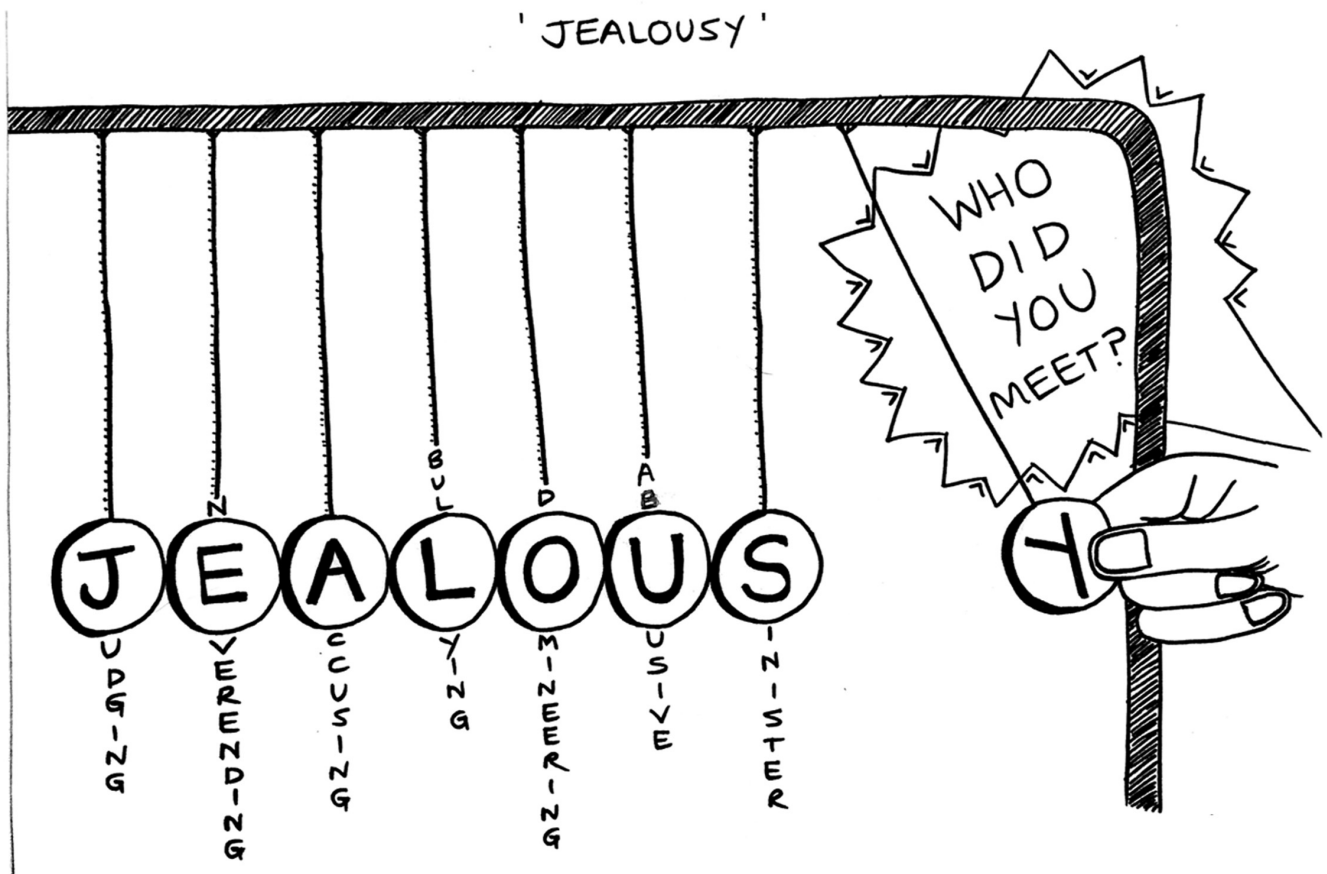


Jealousy

I return from a lone walk,
To that face and those eyes.
"Who did you meet?"
My answer; "No-one"
The interrogation begins,
I feel the accused.
"You must have met someone"
My answer; "No-one"

No matter what I say
A battery of jibes is directed at me,
Edging me into a corner,
Forever goading.
Why am I made to feel guilty
Simply for telling the truth?

He makes me feel like I am no-one.



Be Warned

When all of youth and beauty is lost
The frown on my forehead
The lines around my eyes
What a waste
What a cost

How much did I give up?
Friends, family, a career
And that girl who used to be me,
Just to appease this man
Was never ever part of the plan.

Because he said he loved me
It was easier to comply
To avoid the rage and the
Destruction,
The easy lie,
The desperate plea,
Just to keep the peace,
Counting the days,
Until one of the children,
My oldest darling boy
Just stated
We need to get away
We need release.

And yet this marvellous interesting man
He did it time and time again
Convinced me to stay
He dazzled me, you see
When it started he was
The most beautiful man on the planet.
Not just an addiction and habit
He had charisma, drive,
It wasn't the shoes, the suit, the car
It was the winning smile,
The sparkling eyes,
The humour, the fact that he needed me.
There was always an expression of regret,
a plea.
He swept me away
Married me too soon,
Be warned,
It lasts a short while

You realise too late
Should have run a mile.
All the signs were there
You just didn't see
I need you, I love you, I adore you
I want you, and then –

When all of youth and beauty are lost,
Two children have grown
Damaged and broken
You reflect and grow, courage,
Support, friendship, family
There is a moment with hindsight and age
When enough is enough
Forty, feisty and filled with rage

Fuck you
You rapist
You bully
You charmer
You philanderer
You ordinary man

I will not let you break me
I will not let you continue
To do what I know that you can
I will not lose another child
I will not let you make me
Feel that I cannot provide
That I am enough
That I will be wanted again.

Although outside I may be unrecognisable
from the girl that I am.



The effect a Mother can leave on a Daughter

– low self-esteem –
unworthy of respectful relationships later in life

“DON’T TELL ME HOW TO LIVE MY LIFE!” She
hissed pure venom at me and the pupils in her green
eyes grew to match her mood. I was stunned into a
silence, which she filled with an afterthought.
“How dare you.”

Transported back twenty years I realised nothing had
changed, from the time Mother had driven especially to
locate my 17 year-old self from a date with a boyfriend
she did not approve of – merely because his presence
in my life took my attention away from her. It had
nothing to do with his working with less able children,
or his taste in rock music, his tattoos or his kind
nature. He was competition in her eyes,
and he needed to be gone.

I was threatened with homelessness if I didn’t follow
her instruction to get in the car. I got in the car.

Mother did not want me. I disturbed her; her plans,
thoughts, her day. In school, negativity was my
soulmate - I would become at one and in-tune with
him. Friends I chose to allow into my life were never
good enough – too ‘risqué,’ too ‘tarty,’ too back-chatty.

As a teenager my clothes and my make-up, while of-
the-time, were disregarded and belittled. Soulmate and
I would leave the house for an evening out, pausing in a
shop window using the reflection to apply the lipstick
mother had an hour before told me to take off.

I soon learnt not to ask her for advice and picked up
life tips and skills from talking in whispers at school,
reading magazines and outsiders – some less than
savoury characters who appeared to value me.
So I let them. Abuse me.

The nurture a mother should show her child was
missing - and the day she asked me to wash her in the
bath I was perhaps five years old. One did not disobey.
I knew something felt wrong at that time – not least
the coarse hairs mixed with soap suds beneath my
small innocent fingers, but the routine
went on for months.

Beaten

You beat me down,
Time and time again.

Even though you are no longer near,
I still see it as if you are still here.

Your name gives me chills,
It makes me want to run for the hills.

I have never faced the pain you made me feel,
And it makes me wonder if I ever will?

You beat me down,
Time and time again.

Responsible

When he seduced me with his charm,
I was responsible.

When he had a bad mood,
I had caused it.

When things didn’t go his way,
I was the one who had to give in.

When he made me cry,
it was because I was weak.

When he was unhappy,
the world stopped until I made him feel better.

When I didn’t understand,
it was my fault for being stupid.

When I couldn’t remember,
it was because I was a liar.

When another man looked at me,
I had encouraged him.

When I looked at another man,
I was a whore.

When he shouted at me,
I deserved it.

When he broke my things,
it was because I had argued back.

When he was violent,
it was because he had to make me understand.
I was responsible.

Chain Male

He is my knight in shining armour
Who will rescue me from my castle
So that I can stroll down lovers' lane
Full of life, and that fluttery feeling
That I may have found 'the one'.

We exchange letters and poetry,
And I allow myself to get closer and closer to my suitor;
Confiding my innermost secrets and opening myself up to
him,
Vulnerable and utterly attentive to his needs.

But all the time, waiting in the wings like a dark demon,
Is the saboteur, poised to destroy everything,
Shredding the scenes of my life, one act at a time,
Snatching my props of confidence and independence,
Freedom and dignity.

Swept off my feet by an early proposal,
I commit to a union, culminating in a family
But Mr Hyde remains upon stage
Edging Doctor Jekyll out of his way,
Stealing the show, demanding the limelight
And relishing the attention that his poison brings.

Anecdote unknown, I play his game, follow his rules,
And slot into my well rehearsed position.
I endure yet another round of insults and put downs,
Guilt trips and headworking.
How many more laps are there of this treadmill
With me in the role of servient robot?

I am stripped of all emotion,
So I attempt to add another link to my breastplate
As the neverending chain continues ...

Responsible?

He seems remorseful for his pointed words,
Unrealistic accusations, hurtful jibes,
Unbelievable lies.

He cowers there, pitying himself,
looking as low as can be,
Pleading for forgiveness,
Asking for sympathy and understanding.
Am I responsible? ...



Just one ...

With just one look,
you would shrink me.

With just one word,
my plans would change.

With just a change of vocal tone
I would shake.

With just one more punch or shove
I could have been no more.

With just one right move
from me,
I am free.



Kind and Good-Natured Young Man

I lived in a totalitarian state.
It was a small country.
The bed, the sofa, the kitchen,
Were the places that the torture took place.
No confession ended my pain.
No apology, or admission of guilt set me free.
Outside was a democracy,
Where people were free to dissent and disobey.
They weren't tortured or raped,
By my kind and good-natured young man.

Lighthouse

For a brighter future, free from domestic abuse

Lighthouse Women's Aid is a charitable organisation based in Suffolk providing emotional support to women and their children experiencing domestic abuse in their personal or family relationships. Lighthouse have been providing safe and supportive refuge in Ipswich since 1976. They also offer an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor Service, a range of community services and courses to support women and children to rebuild their lives after domestic abuse.

For more information on Lighthouse visit: lighthousewa.org.uk

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Beth Flintoff

"Over a series of workshops I met with an incredible group of women who have all survived domestic abuse. The workshops were full of laughter with occasional tears. Their work here was written mostly in response to selected phrases from reports of Maria Marten's murder. There is a visceral response to the word 'jealousy' for instance, because both Maria and her stepmother Ann were accused by the press of being jealous. 'A Kind and Good-Natured Young Man' was how William Corder was repeatedly described during the trial. We talked about chivalry, and childhood, and being lied to, and how we wished society was different. The time I spent at The Lighthouse completely transformed the writing of the play, and as a result I decided not to include the character of William Corder at all, nor to show any violence onstage after the opening sequence. I wanted to focus on what Maria was, rather than what had been done to her. My heartfelt thanks goes to these women and the wonderful staff at the Lighthouse; this play is dedicated to them and to all survivors of abuse."

Beth Flintoff - Writer of ***The Ballad of Maria Marten***



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