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Lankelly Chase



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☺



AN UNTOLD STORY

EXPERIENCES
OF LIFE AND
STREET
PROSTITUTION
IN HULL



**THESE 12 WOMEN WARMLY, BRAVELY
AND EARNESTLY INVITE YOU TO HEAR THIS
UNTOLD STORY JUST AS THEY HAVE TOLD IT:
'LIKE IT IS'.**

Between these covers a group of women who have all been involved in street prostitution in Hull tell the stories of their lives through poetry, interviews, prose and artwork. Here you will read of abuse, pain and loss but also of exceptional courage and hope.

WOMEN INVOLVED IN STREET PROSTITUTION ARE AMONGST THE MOST DISADVANTAGED, ABUSED AND STIGMATISED WOMEN IN BRITAIN.

The 'problem of prostitution' - and more recently the issue of sexual exploitation - has been much discussed by journalists, academics, professionals, policy makers and, to some extent, by women who regard themselves as having made a free choice to engage in prostitution. Rarely have women who have experienced the vulnerability of street prostitution themselves defined and described their experiences.

AN UNTOLD STORY

EXPERIENCES OF LIFE AND
STREET PROSTITUTION IN
HULL IN THE WORDS OF:

ANGELA
BECKY
CRISSY
DAISY
DEBORAH
FREDDIE
JEMMA
MIA
MILLIE
NICOLA
PORSCHA
& RENATTA

DEDICATION

THIS IS THE BLANK PAGE POETRY,
THIS IS THE HIDDEN PEN.
THE SILENT VOICES, HUSHED UP SCREAMS,
UNHEARD WHISPERS; CALLED OUT NAMES.
UNANSWERED,
UNHEARTFELT,
AND UNCARED FOR.

THIS IS THE TRUTH AS IT STANDS.
THESE ARE THE VOICES OF OUR FRIENDS WHO GOT LOST ON THE WAY.
THESE ARE THE SHADOWS OF THE INNOCENT AND LONELY,
WHO NEVER MADE IT HOME.
THESE ARE THE TEARS AND THE ENDLESS ECHOES OF THE CRIES FOR HELP
THAT NO ONE EVER ANSWERED.

BLESS THEM ALL AND SEND THEM ON THEIR WAY.
THIS IS OUR DEDICATION TO THE WOMEN WHO HAVE DIED.

Written by Renatta

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FOREWORD

In these pages you'll find the untold story of the lives of twelve women who have experienced street prostitution in Hull. The authors speak with searing honesty about experiences that are not easily put into words. Doing so has sometimes come at a deep personal cost, the extent of which only they will ever really know.

Producing this book has been a courageous endeavour for the women involved, and as a reader you may also need to summon some courage in order to read their stories. You might want to do so slowly, and not necessarily in the sequence they are presented. Be assured that, though it may seem bleak in parts, honest darkness is met here with equally honest light.

It has been said that love happens when you are willing to be fundamentally changed. I was originally funded by the Lankelly Chase Foundation and employed by the Hull Lighthouse Project to undertake a piece of research into women's experiences of street prostitution. Over the four year period of the project, 'love' changed the research methodology as false divisions between us fell away. Questions about who really held the expertise, and what this meant, were gradually laid to rest until it became clear that the voices of the women themselves should be heard entirely without analysis or interpretation.

What is obvious in these stories is that neglect,

loss and violation, insidious exploitation or violent coercion almost always come before problems with alcohol, drugs, prison, mental health and parenting. And, most starkly to me: that there is probably no experience comparable to being deemed an inadequate mother and having your child removed from your care, instead of being given the support you needed in order to challenge, protect, cope or change.

The policies and practices of the criminal justice system, and mental health and children's services, which have perpetuated the disadvantages each of the authors have faced rather than alleviating them, continue today. In addition, cuts to public services make it even less likely that women involved in prostitution will receive the support they need to escape addiction, homelessness and violence.

'Love' has been the glue and grit of this collaboration and has certainly changed me: irrevocably and for the better. I will always be grateful to the women for allowing me the privilege, and to the funders whose ethos enabled the project to develop as it did. Shamefully, however, the stigma around those in prostitution is still so strong that I am the only woman able to use her real name here to identify her authorship, because I can do so without fear of personal attack, smearing or alienation.

Emma Crick

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BEGINNINGS



HISTORY

30 years ago my Mam was only getting £14 a week for us all to live on. She would always bring the 'coco cabana' home though, if you know what I mean — she wanted to treat us. She used to say, 'Life's a shit sandwich — the more bread you've got, the less shit you've got to eat' My father would be away at sea — he was on the rigs at first, the trawlers; he'd bring bits of fish home. She loved him to his bones. But we had no hot water, we had a cold bath on a Sunday, with a hosepipe. And he would go away and come home to a big gin bill, at the pub. So he said to my Mam, something along the lines — as she recalled it, 'Why don't you go out on the batter, get some money?' She'd have parties with bunches of fishermen. Because when the fishing industry was actually up and running, they'd get a month's wages on hand and spend it in one night, with one girl. None of that now.

But you know what they say — 'familiarity breeds contempt'. If your Mam's struggling because she hasn't got much money and you can make a few quid doing that, then you're exposed.

Jemma

I remember when I was about 6, and the dockers were on strike (my Dad was a docker). We were sharing a tin of soup at home, and I started asking for some bread. My Mam said, 'I ain't had nowt to eat and you're asking for bread!?'

I remember things being real tight when we were young. But my Dad's family were really, really poor because his Dad used to go to sea and then come back and piss all the money up. Dad got caught pinching pigeons to eat. His Dad had been evil to him.

Freddie

I'd seen it as a kid — my aunties and my cousins were all working. My Mam took me on ships and all sorts when I was a kid, just to show me off when I was a bairn, to get more money out of them. She'd got off with the captain business-wise, and just took me on the day time, to get more money I suppose. I was a little girl, I had really blonde curly hair. I had a fur coat as a bairn — I was the only kid on the road with a fucking fur coat. My Mam's got loads of trades; she's a really clever woman. But because my dad was away at sea all the time, and my Mum had 'enemies nightclothes,' I had to be seen and not heard.

Deborah

*Deborah's phrase, meaning a dark personality change in night time hours

I had all those behaviours of male flattery: 'sit on your uncle's knee', instilled in me really, really young.

My Dad used to get me to come downstairs and sing to his pissed up mates when they got home from the pub. I think that's where it starts to come in — I didn't feel like an actual 'own' person. I didn't really become aware of my own individuality until I left home I don't think. You should have that instilled in you as a child. You shouldn't just have that when you're 35 and you start to realise, 'Shit, I'm a real person here.'

Renatta

BROKEN HOME IS A BROKEN HEART, WELL WHERE DO I START?

My Mam and Dad went to jail just after I was born — I went to jail with my Mam, then we got out, and moved into a flat. My Nanna rang my Mam's social worker and I got put into care. When my Dad got out, he fought and got me back when I was 3. My Mam had got into drugs and wasn't a good role model for me but my dad stayed strong. He found it hard having a new home; we didn't have much but he started college to be a joiner, and things got better.

When I was about 14 I had just moved in with my Nan and my Mum, but my Mam used to send me to the drug dealer down the street so my Nanna didn't catch her going.

I just thought I was doing her a favour. I didn't understand much about drugs then. Then my Nanna kicked us both out and we moved into a flat together. My Mam used to let me and my mates drink and smoke dope, she didn't mind because it was better than being on the street and not knowing what we got up to. Then my mum asked me to drink some of her methadone so I could do her wee sample for her, but I didn't know what it did. I said yes, I'd have a little bit — it used to make me sick, then I'd feel drowsy. This became a regular thing.

She also used to send me down the lane, from being 14.

Written by Daisy

HOME LIFE

My Dad used to come and pick me and my brother up for contact. He'd either turn up late, or he'd promise us that he'd take us to McDonald's one week, but the next week say 'I can't take you 'cos McDonald's is shut on Sunday', (it isn't, but we didn't know that as kids). Or, 'I can't take you to the fair, my leg's hurting'. But he could play football in the park. It was a case of him not having the money to, but he felt he had to make something up for us kids. When we were still really young, he took me and my brother outside, and said 'I'll always love you both, but I think it's best for everyone if I don't see you anymore, for your Mam'. And with that he just turned around and walked away. I remember running down the street after him shouting, 'Daddy, Daddy, if I've been naughty I'm sorry, please, please don't leave me Daddy'. And until I was 15 or 16, I blamed myself for my Dad going.

Crissy

I didn't feel loved by my Dad when I was a kid. I was resented more than the others because he had to marry her, because they were pregnant. I felt resented. He's got a very low opinion of women.

He'd use money when we were younger, to say 'shut your gob', and that type of thing.

Freddie

My Mam had 6 children altogether. Things weren't easy; we lived in a very small house. As a teen I couldn't live by my Dad's rules because he was very strict. I wasn't allowed a key to the door and I had to be in at a certain time. So I ended up leaving at about 17. It was a silly thing to do because I ended up homeless, and then he wouldn't take me back. He said I'd made my bed so I had to lie in it.

Mia

My Mum left when I was 4, and then there were loads of problems about who would look after me. My Dad was always drunk, so sometimes I'd go and stay with my aunt. I was pushed really, from pillar to post. I felt sad when I realised that I wasn't really wanted. I know I was sad.

I spent a lot of time in a lot of beer gardens — I was really dragged up, by people who didn't really want me. Who were annoyed that I was around, who were angry with me, often. What would they want a little kid around for when they're trying to get pissed?

Renatta

When my Granddad died, it was snowing. I had an appointment with the mental health team, I wanted to tell them he had died, and I walked all the way there in the snow. Nobody ever helped me deal with my Granddad's death. All my family are the same, and then there's me. The others are 'normal'.

I don't remember anybody reading me a story, or helping me draw a picture or telling me they loved me. I don't remember anything like that.

Becky

I went from foster placement to foster placement, to kids homes, into rehab, until I was 16.

Altogether, I had 27 foster placements, and I was in 3 different kids' homes. No-one could cope with me, because I went off the rails. I was drinking and doing drugs and trying to block out my childhood; running away. Used to get a train to wherever — Sheffield, but wherever it was going I used to end up getting caught and having to go back in a cop car. Now and again I'd get into trouble with strangers, but I think that was my way of saying I was unhappy. My stepdad abused me from being 6 years old, until I left, so, as I say, I was drinking and doing drugs, trying to block that out.

Crissy

ABUSE

When my Mam and Dad divorced, I went to live with a family across the road who had a lot of kids. Before that I'd go over there to play with my friend — that was 'learn through play'. But after I moved in with them I was abused there, at age 6. The older teenage brothers used to put me and the younger brother in the front room, get us to get undressed and do things to each other. I knew it was rude, I knew it was wrong, in my head. But you know, when you're a kid you can't openly express what's happening.

I didn't tell my Mam. I had gone home and told my Mam I fell on some glass. I didn't tell her the truth until many years later. From that, came promiscuity as a teenager. I was exposed to sex at a very young age, and it goes from there.

Jemma

I was 11; my stepdad (who had abused me from the age of 6) had come into my room one night, and I just turned round to him and said 'You know what, why don't you just fuck off and leave me alone, I've had enough!' and he grabbed my head, and slammed it into the desk. And then he kicked me outside. It was snowing, and all I had on was a little pair of shorts and a pyjama top. He told me I could stay outside until he decided to let me back into his house. That's when I got to go and live with my Nanna.

Crissy

I was quite a sexualised kid, but I'm not sure why. There was one guy, a farmer who poked something in me, and I ran home, bleeding. My Grandma had said 'don't you say anything about this.' All around where I lived there had been a whole group of 'weirdo' people, who preyed on the school, and got people thinking they were a witches coven, when they weren't really. Horrible stuff. We had to eat all these cakes, got out of it, dancing round the fire and chanting and... we were manipulated. We were taken advantage of, really. At the time we thought it was great. I think the thing was that because no one was in when I was at home from school, nobody cared. Some might say I was lucky. You know how some people say, 'oh, my Mum and Dad were so strict with me, they locked me in the bedroom and shut the door' — but I think, 'fucking hell, I'd have loved that.'

Renatta

My brother used to punch me, and he used to say to me, 'If you don't fight back, you'll get this every night.' And so I started fighting back. In the end I started laughing at him. He hurt me when he used to bray me, more because I used to look up to him. He never protected me from what the man who abused me was doing to me. But he didn't know until he went to court and then he nearly fucking killed the guy.

I had been crying when my Mam came in — I was bleeding. He ripped me, ripped me up. Why don't our Mams believe us? That does your fucking head in. I blamed myself for what my abuser did; I thought it must have been my fault. And that's how I get sometimes in my head.

Shelley

Different people used to come round and give my friend drugs. I was drunk one night — I went there on my own, and then this girl was there who worked on the street. She asked to borrow my phone, so I let her, and then she said, 'Come out to this flat with me.' And so I went with her, but they wouldn't give her any more lay-ons, so I lent her some money. As she didn't have anywhere proper to stay, she had to use my address — to the men, because she owed them money. So they had an address and a phone number... and then I regret it, but I went back. There were three men there, who did what they wanted to me. When they were leaving, her and the boss were exchanging things, as if he was giving her something; money or drugs. So that went on for a few months. There was this other man that just drove, and used to tell me about different flats and houses. I just felt scared to say no... they used to get me drunk.

One night, they gave me a time and a place to go and meet someone. And I asked him why, they said "bigger and better things, there's better business there." They said "If you're not there at 9 o'clock we know where you live, we'll come and drag you out".

It's my fault. I chose to do the things I did in my life. I was a pain in the arse when I was a teenager, and... maybe if I'd got support to deal with my Granddad dying, then everything wouldn't have gone wrong. But it did. They just think when you're a teenager, you're meant to have stress, but it's not like that. I got bullied at school, and my Mum and Dad used to argue all the time, my Dad used to drink.

Becky



Here goes a little story: A little girl, the eldest child, so innocent and scared — got groomed by her best friend's Dad. He would ask for her to sleep at her friend's house. Her mother never thought anything about it. She had a bad relationship with her step-father, but he was strict in a good way. So the predator made her feel special, like she wanted. She didn't understand; aged 6 to 11, this little girl had no-one to tell her about bad men. It wasn't her mummy's fault.

He abused this little girl on numerous occasions. She was petrified. She was told that no-one would ever believe her over him, and if she told anyone, he would kill her and her Mama. When she found out they were moving out, she thought 'No-one in the world should I tell'. At primary school she suffered badly, didn't tell a single person. She made sure her family was never hurt. By the time there were five brothers and sisters, she had to protect them; and she did. This has ruined her life for years and years until this day.

Written by Porscha

I protected my siblings from my family, as a kid. One of my cousins, when he used to come round, he'd come upstairs. My sister would be asleep, then he'd go to me, 'go downstairs', and I wouldn't go because I knew he'd go for my sister. I also protected them from my own mother; I used to take all the beatings for them. I was abused by men and women. My Dad was my best friend but I couldn't tell him any of what had happened. While he was at sea, my Mam used to run a working joint. She used to leave me with my cousin. So I sort of rebelled. I left home at 15 ½.

I think work was so easy for me to start doing because I think I was in control of the abuse... if you understand what I mean. You know, the tables were turned, and you did what I said you fucking did, instead of it being the other way around. You know — I am laid there, and you did what you liked. Where when I was working, they're laid there and I did what I fucking liked. That's why I think that had a big part to play. I was in control for once.

You see, when you're a working girl, you're still getting abused.

Deborah

SCHOOL

As a kid I didn't really have any friends. I was bullied through school, when I was little. I was really quiet when I was younger, I suppose because of all the abuse and shit. I didn't like school, I didn't want to go to school, but there again I did want to go because it got me away from whoever was looking after me at the time. So it was like a 'catch-22'. My best friend from school used to take all the blame if I used to get in trouble though, because she knew my Mum was a bastard.

Deborah

I got snatched from primary school when I was 7. I hadn't seen my Mum for two years. I remember, I was rolling my socks down, and all of a sudden my Mum appeared in the playground. She went, 'Right, you're coming with me, get in the car!' I went, 'No, I have to tell the teacher!' and so I tried to run. I was trying to get away from her, saying, 'I want my Dad'. But she bundled me into a car and we drove, far away.

And then I was in Scotland and didn't go to school for ages. When I did go to school, I didn't get on with the other kids and I was really frightened. They tried to call me by the false name I'd been given, but I was going, 'that's not me, that's not me,' and that's how social services found out. So we had to leg it to a different city and I was at a school there, and that was even worse. They used to call me 'wee bag' — I used to wee myself all the time, and I used to wet the bed all the time, until I was about 11. I remember being in trouble for it and having to sleep on the wet bed as a punishment.

When I got back from Scotland, no primary school would take me. My Mum's friend was going to adopt me, but they spent a bit of time with me (I was smoking by then you see) — they didn't like me, and they sent me back. I was never the same after going to Scotland. It fucked me.

Renatta

FIRST ENCOUNTERS WITH DRUGS

I started smoking when I was about 5. We used to steal cigarettes from a guy who used to work on the boats. And then at 8 I started smoking full time. It was really easy to nick money from people. All the negative behaviours that I learned — pinching, taking money and lying, started there. They were already ingrained in me when I was at least 9 years old, I was very seasoned. I used to eat sweets instead of a proper meal. When my Dad came home I'd tell him that I'd had a meal, but I'd just got 100 penny sweets, like 100 black jacks. I think that my addictive behaviours were well ingrained within me, in an addiction to sugar, at a very early age.

Renatta

I didn't meet my real Dad again until I was about nine or ten. So I was under the impression that my stepdad was my real Dad. It all came back to me when I found out that he wasn't, and it really did mess my head up — that's when I started smoking weed. I must have only been about ten. I was real upset one day, and my stepbrother just said 'Here y'are, just take a drag of that.' I felt I had finally found something that chilled me out. I used to give him my pocket money every week for it. Not long after that, I started drinking. I used to nick my Mam's vodka.

Crissy

My Mum didn't sleep properly, so the doctors were giving her medication — and that's where I started taking her Valium and sleeping tablets, just to block it out. When I returned home, it started getting worse and worse, and I eventually moved in with my boyfriend when I was 17. They did eventually get her meds sorted out. But by this time, I hated my family. My Dad did apologise, but it just didn't cut it! I was so mad at him, for letting it happen to me, and the knock-on effect on my sister.

All this time — I might have needed a proper tablet, not my Mum's prescription drugs. I started noticing my mental health issues after coming off heroin, and was given Quetiapine. It worked — it's been pretty damn good.

Millie

**AT SCHOOL, I DIDN'T GET BULLIED OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT,
I JUST DIDN'T LIKE GOING. I HAD TOO MANY
DIFFERENT SCHOOLS, 9 IN TOTAL.**

Jemma

WHISPERING

I pop a couple of Vali's from my newly acquired strip and climb into bed.
I pick my book up and find the folded over page from last night. I begin to read,
losing myself in the characters of the story.

I begin to relax.

I'd not been reading long when it started, so faint I couldn't make it out.

Whispering.

I concentrate, trying to make sense of the words. But still just whispering.

I continue to listen for a few more minutes, willing it to stop.

The whispering is getting louder; now I can make out a few words.

My eyes fill up with tears, my stomach lurches with dread.

The Vali's aren't working so well tonight.

Yes, the whispering is now loud enough to hear the words.

'You're the spawn of Satan, demon seed. Why are you so evil?

The Devil incarnate, that's what you are.'

Over and over and over.

Tears are rolling down my face as I put my hands over my ears
and try to pretend it's not happening.

But it is.

I feel so alone.

I wish I could tell somebody what was happening.

I couldn't even put it into words and who would I tell anyway,

they wouldn't believe me.

I wish I could talk to someone.

It's been going on for months now.

It's not just a whisper anymore. Just plain words.

'There's evil inside you, I can see it. You are a demon, spawned from demon seed.'

I'm crying now, great heaving sobs. I get up, walking to the bedroom door
as quietly as I can.

Reaching for the door handle I open it as quickly as possible.

'Please Mum, just leave me alone. I've got to get up for school in the morning.

And please stop saying those fucking things to me.'

Written by Millie



'I Wish' taken by Millie

When I was 17, I had my son. I never loved my son's father. I thought I did, but really I just wanted to get away from my mother. She was a raging alcoholic, and violent. My son's father was 29 and a heroin addict; he was using me. My life ruined, all because I wanted to get away from my Mum. I didn't know anything about money, didn't have a clue — 17 with a baby! Everything I got for my son was secondhand — my first baby, I felt embarrassed. So I went on the batter, and someone introduced me to heroin.

I'd seen my Mam work, as a ways and means. That just happened because it's something that I knew. I drank as a part and parcel of my life; my mother was an alcoholic too and I just thought, 'Oh well, I'm pretty much the same as her, may as well follow fucking suit!' But the drink gets you from inside out.

Jemma

I didn't take any drugs until I had my son. I'd just turned 17 when he was born. At first, I lived like just a normal housewife. The baby's Dad used to be out on the ships, on the ferries. He was on 2 weeks off, 2 weeks on. So when he came home, we used to go out at a weekend to all-nighters. This was when I'd started experimenting with drugs. I went to all-nighters and started doing E's and a bit of 'Phet.

I used to get the baby back at 6 o'clock from my Mam. One night I thought, 'Oh I'll never be able to cope with him,' 'I'll never be able to do it, I don't know what to do!' I knew that I couldn't turn to my Mam to keep him longer and I was a bit panicky. My boyfriend's brother said to me, 'here, have a line of this...' and that's where my heroin got introduced. I was only 17 when he introduced the heroin, and it brought me real level.

Angela

I started taking drugs aged 12! Smoking resin, then acid, Valium and weed. My stepdad had resin in the cupboard upstairs. I started pinching it and sharing it with my mates, we all liked to go drinking and smoked the resin in the cemetery.

Aged 21, heroin awoke in my life. A friend said 'Porscha, you want a boot?' I said yes. I didn't realise what I was getting myself into. My partner was in jail; it was me and my daughter.

So I ended up smoking it every day. I didn't realise what withdrawal was. Then I got with this man, he had a name for himself, and he was my addiction; I was his slave. I chose this.

My family needed me, but drugs always from then on especially started letting my body be used. Once it started, there was no stopping me. I'd live at Mum's and start getting ready at 6pm, out the door at 7pm every night. Wind and rain, thunder and snow. All weathers. I'd been brutally raped and attacked. Had a broken nose, fractured eye socket, broken cheek bone. All I cared about was heroin and crack, and it was nice if I could give my kids something when they woke up. As long as I had my crack and brown money, I was happy.

I put them all through hell and back. But my mother always looked after us all. My mother is the backbone of our family.

I was his person whom he knew needed him. Relied on him. He ruled me so bad I was frightened, I did everything for him. He was my master. He was the devil. I was his servant! And he knew he controlled me. He let me sell my body, sell drugs, robbed people and a lot worse.

Written by Porscha

FIRST EXCHANGES

He was a dealer, he tooted it himself but he was a real big dealer. So, I liked it, and the next night I had a bit more, and the next night after that I had a bit more, so then the baby's Dad started saying (this is how he used to make me ill): 'You can have a toot, if I can go for a pint.' That's how we used to compromise with each other. Because if he used to ask to go out every night I used to go mad. But when I started taking the heroin, I used to agree.

Angela

When I first went down the lane, I didn't really know what was going on — I'd seen this girl walking down, and I was sitting begging. It was Christmas and I'd been cut off 80ml of meth, and I had a dealer at my flat who I'd taken a huge amount of money's worth of crack and heroin off to sell, but I hadn't sold — I'd smoked it. He'd beaten me up, just before Christmas and we had no money. My boyfriend and his mate were both there, no one had any money and I just started walking.

I was thinking, 'I'm gunna beg.' I was sitting there, just outside the hospital going, 'have you got any spare change, please?' and this girl walked down the stairs, I asked her, she goes, 'What you on about, I'm fucking looking for a walker,' and then it clicked...

The first time I tried it I was a bit scared; with a taxi driver. He gave me £14 for a blow job. I felt like I had achieved something by doing that because I was penniless; it seemed like a lot... another time I had been busking, juggling, and I didn't make any money. And this guy made a pass at me, and I sort of agreed I'd do it for 20 quid. It was obvious that I was out collecting money and that I was desperate. It must have been so obvious that I probably would have done anything for that money — so he knew.

Renatta

I ended up getting a habit on gear, but at first I didn't know what it was I was addicted to. I just knew it was this brown stuff, and if I didn't have it, I was ill. Because I was in and out of kids' homes, I just used to go out and get hammered any way I could. This kid came up to me one day and said, 'You coming for a pipe?' So I ended up addicted to crack, and I couldn't find anything to help me come down, to help me sleep. So this lass had this brown stuff on the foil and she just went, 'ere y'are, put this tube in your mouth, and when I burn it, just breath the smoke in and just hold it in your lungs, the way you would a crack pipe.' So I did that, I was doing that with her for about three or four days in a row. And then on the fifth day, I decided I wasn't going to have any, and I was really poorly.

She knew what she was doing — so that I then needed money to pay for stuff. So she introduced me to working on the lane, so that I would buy her drugs for her. I will never forgive her to this day because I would not wish my worst enemy to have a heroin habit, I know what it's like withdrawing from it. If I could turn the clocks back — I wouldn't have taken any of it.

Crissy

I was 18 — just a few weeks after I lost my job, I had a massive row one night with my parents, and I went missing. I self-harmed and ended up in hospital. They said, 'that's it, we can't cope with you.' So I left; just packed my bag and went — nowhere. I went to the council, but there weren't any spaces in their hostels. I had to go back every day for about a week and a half, but there were still no spaces. So I slept on the street...

When I finally got a bed in a hostel, I had started filling out the paperwork but said, 'I can't stay here,' and walked out. It was awful. People that lived there could bring visitors in up until 9 or 10 o'clock, and there were more men than women. You could tell they were drunk, or took drugs, it was just horrible. We weren't allowed to go into our rooms until half past 8 or 9 o'clock or something like that, so I just walked out. I slept on the street again and found another hostel about a week later. Most people were older than me and whatever, but all the lads used to 'watch out' for me and stuff, sort of like took me under their wing, although that wasn't a good thing.

Becky

WORKING; AT FIRST

I think when you're in 'addict time', it goes so fast — one minute you've only been doing it a few days; the next it's a few weeks, and next time you look at it, it's a couple of months down the line. I suppose in the early days you still think you can control heroin, and that you're stronger than it; that you must be really weak to become an addict — and then before you know it, you're there yourself.

If somebody sat down with me and said, 'I've got onto the drugs, I'm thinking of working the streets,' I don't know what I'd say to them, because I wouldn't have listened. When you first start out it is easy money because you're new, so all the punters want a piece of you. And, you're not haggard, you know, you spend a year on the street, you start looking haggard. But when you first start you think, 'Fucking hell, this is really easy, I can get 50–100 quid a night, no problem.' And then down the line you're struggling to get a punter. I wouldn't know what to say to somebody. 'Don't do it' just isn't enough. And at the very beginning, working seems easy — it's not your first night you actually meet that punter that smacks you in the mouth.

Millie

The more you do something, the easier it gets after the first time. I think the hardest is probably the first, but you don't really think of it as the 'first time'. You think, 'Oh I'll just do it this once'; it's not like you'd go for a job interview. It's an insidious kind of slippery slope; the way prostitution slithers into your life. Like, a year away you wouldn't think of yourself doing it and then a year later you'd be out there every night. Your addiction deepens.

Renatta

I've always been a grafter. The last time I worked legitimately, I had four jobs — I was working in a chippy when I thought about prostitution. I thought, 'I need some money, I'm sick to death of borrowing, I'm sick to death of subbing my wages. It was cash in hand at the chip shop — £14 for 4 hours. Thursday night you got £17 if you worked the night. 90 quid a week: I thought, 'I just can't keep doing this, I'm sick to death of the kids eating chips.'

I don't want lots of money or loads of nice things, just to feed and clothe the kids. I don't want to work in prostitution anymore, I don't ever ever want to do it again. But at this moment in time, I'm not being left much option, I'm having to learn to manage.

Jemma

I'll always remember the first punter I ever took. It was horrible, I hated every minute of it. I stood on the corner and got into a car. I was scared, but it was over and done with within seconds. I remember doing the business with him, I just froze. I was just like a piece of wood really. I froze right the way through it. I looked out of the window and I found myself back in that bedroom again when I was a kid, looking up. I just found myself a little girl again. I felt like that little girl in that bedroom being abused. I was 4 or 5.

You think you forget, but you never forget. That's when the gear comes into it because it stops you feeling, and kills all the emotions.

Deborah

My mate was already working, and she said to me 'I don't know why you aren't doing it, you earn quick money, you won't be waking up rattling'. So, I got ready that night and I went and I stood on the street, I got in my first car, and I just did it, but turned off. And I was feeling a little bit shit, so I was just thinking, 'When I get this money I can feel a bit better'. That night when I got home, and I got in the bath I felt a bit disgusted but it was either that or jail. So after that I started to just go out every night and earn my money that way, to keep my habit going.

Angela

My first time working was strange. I kind of detached myself from what was happening. I had half a litre of vodka, and I just kind of shut my eyes and thought of something else. I tried not to think about what I was doing. Afterwards I went and scored my gear and fell asleep.

Crissy

Sometimes I used to like going on the street because I was on my own. I was on my own and I had to deal with this, doing something on my own — and I found that helpful in a way. You can switch yourself off.

I couldn't rely on anyone else. The only person I could rely on was me, and it was the only job I could do that would fund what I needed to be funded for.

Deborah

2 MEN



MEN WE KNEW WHEN WE COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN BETTER

When I was living at my Dad's, my uncle came home from sea one weekend. He was staying at my Dad's house.

I was only about 12/13.

He was looking after me because my Dad worked nights. It must have been about 11 o'clock. I said, 'I'm off to bed, night', gone upstairs, put my nightie on and got in bed. He didn't touch me but he came into my room, sat on the bottom of the bed, said, 'Right, all you've got to do is sleep with me one night and I'll buy you anything you want, anything money can buy I'll buy you it.'

Crissy

Monday

150-155 (UK) (except Scotland)
Bank Holiday (Scotland) Memorial Day Holiday (USA)

A shoulder carry

25th Wednesday
December

SHALL I
SLIT MY
WRIST'S

?

~

Renatta remembering a shoulder carry from her Dad: a diary entry from after her son was taken into care

He said, 'You'll be in big trouble; nobody will ever look at you the same; you won't be your mother's daughter if this all comes out.'

It came to light: there were loads of us. It went to court.

My mother took me aside and said, 'If the police come, please don't say anything, they know about your brother but please don't say anything.'

She said, 'It's not as bad if it's a man touching a girl as it is if it's a man touching a boy.' My family made me lie: 'It'll make us look bad.'

I was really fuming with my Dad, because if anybody had owed him money, he would have filled them in. But this bastard didn't get prison, he'd pass our house from his work every night to go home, and my Dad never did nowt to him.

I went on the game when I was 16, I know it sounds really stupid, but I thought, 'Well I've done it for fucking less...'

I remember the first time I did it, it was this really foul bloke. I did it with him and I thought, 'Ah that's nice getting the money,' and then when it hit home, I thought, 'I've done it now' and I thought, 'I might as well do it again, cos I've done it now — I am now, I am that.'

Freddie



A SMALL CHILD

A small child —
around 7 years old.
Jumping along a wall,
shadowed by her Dad.

They don't talk as they head to the bottom of the road.

At the edge of the wall it is
over-growing with nettles. The Dad gestures to the child
to jump into his arms.

As the child jumps, the Dad pulls his arms away —
And the kid lands
in stinging nettles.

'NEVER TRUST NO FUCKER.'

Written and illustrated by Renatta

SPONGERS

You're usually 'sorting somebody out' (buying their drugs). I was sorting out my boyfriend, and a couple of his mates. There's always 'spongers', who just soak up everything that they can get hold of, drug-wise.

A lot of fellas, they say, 'I'm looking after our lass' and, 'I'm looking after my girl.' No they're not! They don't want to miss out, so they need to be there when the punter drops her off. If not, they might not get anything.

Millie

Some girls have pimps who batter them and keep them locked up, whereas I had my ex who used to do the opposite: 'I've run your bath for you darling, I've ironed your dress.' I thought he was being kind to me because other people's boyfriends would just say 'get out!' I loved him, so it was easy for him to manipulate me.

I don't want to put the responsibility of my prostitution onto him, but I think he helped me in alleviating the guilt of it, and also by sharing the profit.

Renatta

It used to always annoy me that my boyfriend would get exactly half of what I'd earned. Yet it was me sucking somebody's cock, not him. That rankled in the back of my mind, but when you've got a bag of heroin, you don't want to ruin it by arguing. You don't want to ruin your buzz, you don't want to ruin the moment.

They're not really boyfriends but because you've got a little bit of backup, got support, you think that you've got love. You think it's a normal relationship. I suppose it is normal, in a 'drugs' sense.

And I put up with so much shit, he used to beat me. He head-butted me once. And he counted while he was doing it. He was head-butting me and counting at the same time.

I think, as an addict, all you're doing is trying to suppress your emotions. Your whole day is spent trying to stop your emotions, and anything like a breakup, or potentially becoming homeless because of it, you just can't be bothered to deal with. You've spent all your time and energy and money on forgetting, and suppressing, so why make that trouble for yourself? It's 'better the devil you know' a lot of the time.

Millie

PUNTERS

You learn how to read people real quick when you're out on the street — some of them you can't and they're the scary ones. But a lot of it is old men and they're married. For some, 'you're not rough enough.' You remind them of their wives and they don't want to feel guilty.' They want the 'lowest of the low,' they want you to be really rough. Because they're the most easy to victimise aren't they? They're the most vulnerable.

But they don't want the same ones time and time again. When I first did it, I got loads and loads and loads, because you're new. After that I used to go to Bradford and Huddersfield, and Leeds, you know and do it there, so that I was new.

He thinks that you want him, and you're doing it because you want to! A lot of the customers that I used to have were married, and it was like they wanted to believe you were having an affair... They think that you like them, but you never do, it's horrible. You want to get it over as quickly as possible. You might think you're laughing at them in your head but truthfully you're not because you're actually giving yourself away to them. When that dawns on you, that's one of the things that makes you sick... when you realise that you're not the one using them — they're using you.

Freddie

With a lot of the clients I see, it's loneliness — they like to have somebody to talk to.

One of my clients, he's got a wife but she's very badly poorly, so he can't have a normal conversation with her. So, he comes and sees me, he picks me up, takes me for something to eat, he'd take me to score, and we'll just have a natter while we drive around.

Crissy

I hate it when people say it's an easy way to make money. There's nothing easy about it at all. Your life's in danger all the time. From as soon as you get with that guy you don't know; he could turn just like that; and you don't know who's waiting around that corner. It's the most vulnerable position to put yourself in. Horrible. You've got to have eyes in the back of your head.

All the time there's men out there, there'll always be a woman working. And I don't think it's the women that need changing, it's the men.

Deborah

VIOLENCE, ABUSE & BETRAYAL OF TRUST

'YOU DON'T LOOK THE TYPE'

I came out of the train station one evening; it could only have been about 7ish.
The sky was dark, but there seemed to be people milling about.
I began my journey, quite unawares...
An immediate assault: a man rips down the top of my dungarees and starts
trying to finger me.
He tears through my underwear.
'I'm gunna fuck you!'
He was pushing his body against mine, into a wall of box bush. I of course, was
responding in fear:
'Help! Get off! Whatcha doing???!'
He was almost there, he nearly had his cock in me.
The event only lasted three seconds, maybe more. He was stopped.
A couple were crossing the road, and saw me struggling.
'Are you alright?!'
'No!!!'
He was swift; he got himself together real quick.
Within seconds he was off.
A patrol car arrived, quick as you like.
Two big blokes in uniform came to attend me.
'You don't look the type!', one of them said as I tried to push my breast into
my bra and straighten myself out.
His colleague laughed.
'Listen love, we can take two courses of action here. We can go into the
station and put you into the rape suite. It could take a while cos I don't think
there are any female officers on tonight. Or you could jump into the back and
we will drive round and see if we can find him.'
We never saw him. I didn't go back the next day.
I went home to my syringe.

Written by Renatta

I was attacked by a punter. We got into the flat,
and he whacked me, knocked me clean out.
When I'd come around, claret pouring out of my
face, and him going, 'Who's the Daddy? Take your
gold off!' It was on the second floor, the window
was open. When he went to lock the front door I
went straight out of the window, to save myself. I
rolled down the roof, and landed on my arm, my
shoulder and my wrist broken.

I said to the doctor who stitched my lip, 'Look, I'm
in so much pain! I need some pain killers.' He went
off, came back with a syringe and he's saying
'Where are you hurting?' And then he comes over to
me and he touches my fanny and asked me if I was
hurting there. Serious. How fucking disgraceful is
that. A woman who has just been attacked, fallen off
a fucking roof and he touches my fanny. No wonder
I'm riled about men.

Jemma

Punched
slapped
beaten
strangled
choked
humiliated
dragged around by my hair
raped
abused
robbed.

So many men, so many times: not once did I say
anything. I didn't report it. The shame of what I
had become weighed too heavily. I didn't want
to see the judgment in other people's eyes.

Just push it down. Have another hit.
Try to forget.

Written by Millie

Intimidated



Got in a car and drove off.
All I thought about was a hit.
He said to me 'I'm a police
officer. Giz a blow job or
you're coming to the cells.'

The door locks, so
I couldn't get out.

Did he lie to me?
Use me like a fool?
Written by Porscha



Is One





I was working. I was 20 years old and on my own. I asked him if he wanted business. We went down the tenfoot behind the shops. He trapped me in the corner, and wouldn't let me go. He had hold of my hair and punched me a few times.

I got away but never reported it.

Another guy took me to his flat and wouldn't let me out. He forced me to have sex with him all night. He only let me out because I said that I had to pick up my son in the morning.

Later he moved to near where I lived, and once tried to strangle me in the stairway.

I've been quite lucky when I think of it.
It could have been a lot worse.

It just seemed like an everyday thing; it became a norm.

I never reported any of it.
It's part and parcel of working. But it's not is it?

Co-written with Daisy

COMPLICATED LOVE

21 years old — my life changed.
Lo, and behold!
I fell for you.

You stole my life,
treat me like gold.

Passion;
Love;
My everything.
2 sons he gave me, had me under control.
Then prison.
Drugs.
My life in bits —

All for the love I had for
The kiss of his soft lips!

We chose each other;
soul mates in every way.
The heroin and speed, took every day.
Me praying:
'I wish it would all go away.'

Left me and the kids,
Time after time.
I was young,
so pretty.

He messed my head up,
I went to jail.
My kids always had me,
until that final day.

Written by Porscha

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

I was young, pregnant with my second child,
happy family life
'til I fell for this 38 year old.

I was only 20, I was young and daft,
but I fell for this carefree man.
Money,
— sold drugs,
He had what you call the good life,
And I wanted it as well.

So out for him I went to get him
Thought he was amazing.
Everyone tried to tell me different, but
Listening wasn't on my agenda.

He took me on pregnant, and my 3 year old son.
His lifestyle destroyed me.
I got all the drugs I wanted,
but I also got a lot of fists.

He would mentally play with my emotions by
sitting by the next girl,
'partying' as he called it.
I had to just
Shut up.

Written by Angela



MEN AND ME

It's atomic when you fall in love
You feel like you can blow the world apart.

The euphoria carries you through

To the first punch.

Straight in the face,

In your beautiful eye, that is now
blackened and swollen.

I didn't know what I had done wrong.
"You were looking at that guy's cock."

Bang into the cheek

Seeing stars —

Flying down,

Boot in the rib.

The total ridiculousness of it.

I cried, and took a while to get
up and set myself right.

There was the constant anxiety
of the next beating.

You're terrified of him

But you can't

Leave him.

Written by Renatta

He was 28, but he didn't know I was 14. At 14 I could pass for 17 — I told him I was 17. I met him when I was sat in the park, having a drink one day when I had run away from one of my kids' homes. He came across and asked me for a 'cig, and I ended up getting with him.

I didn't know he was on heroin: he hid it from me.

It must have been a year before he died. He literally took his last breath while I had my arms around him. I was alone at his place. I didn't know what to do. So I did the only thing I could think of, I rang the police. And I rang an ambulance. And then, I got out of there as quickly as I could. Because I knew if I didn't, there was a chance that they could arrest me on attempted murder charges. It broke my heart to leave him though, it really did. But I had to.

Crissy

Iwant men to be fairly treated in this chapter. I was a perpetrator of domestic abuse. I inflicted so much pain on my ex. We went into roles and it was like I couldn't stop myself from doing it. But I didn't mean any of it. The more anxious he became, the worse my fire for aggression would be inflamed.

I think that maybe people fall into roles but aren't necessarily aware they've gone into them, especially if there's alcohol or drugs involved; because you're not really in your right mind.

Renatta

Illustration from a diary entry of Renatta with her boyfriend at the time



3 LOSS

Puppet by Shelley,
dedicated to her partner
who had worked on
Hessle Rd, and died of
alcohol poisoning



THOSE GONE TOO EARLY

MY BEST FRIEND WAS ONLY 23 WHEN SHE DIED. THAT WAS HEART BREAKING FOR ME; I USED TO SLEEP IN THE SAME BED AS HER EVERY NIGHT. THE PARAMEDICS TOLD ME THAT IF I HADN'T RUNG THEM WHEN I DID, SHE'D HAVE BEEN DEAD NEXT TO ME IN THE MORNING. SHE LEFT A LOVELY 3 YEAR OLD BAIRN BEHIND. SHE DIED THROUGH CRACK AND HEROIN, AND GOING OUT IN SHORT SKIRTS AND PISSING RAIN; CONTRACTED DOUBLE PNEUMONIA. IT RIPPED ME OUT – IF SHE COULD CONTRACT DOUBLE PNEUMONIA AND WAS DRESSED IN PRETTY MUCH THE SAME AS ME... I WAS AMAZED THAT I HADN'T GOT IT MYSELF. SHE HAD A BIT MORE WEIGHT ON HER TO KEEP HER WARM, TOO. I STARTED HITTING DRUGS A LOT HARDER AFTER THAT, JUST TRYING TO BLOCK IT OUT, I DIDN'T WANT TO THINK ABOUT IT.

Crissy

THE WOMEN WHO HAVE DIED

38 women directly known to the Hull Lighthouse Project have died in the last 20 years.

14 women, including two contributors to this book, died during the three and a half years it took to prepare it.

The causes of their deaths range from pneumonia and street work-related illnesses to drug overdoses and drug-and-alcohol-related health conditions. At least five were murdered – while some causes of death remain undetermined.

All died too young.

The names below are not their real names. Prostitution still stigmatises women and we did not want to cause their families any more pain, so we have chosen for each woman a name we believe they would have liked.

Helen Myan	Billie Wilson
Sarah Cooper	Susan Walker
Christine Dawson	Jayne Brown
Glenda Powers	Laura Nichols
Linda Barnes	Donna White
Heather Martin	Diana Chambers
Jackie Murphy	Mary Harris
Jessica Randall	Lyndsey Underwood
Nadine Connor	Mollie Baker
Sheila Harris	Terrie Roebuck
Angela Kingston	Sharon Hills
Dawn Atkinson	Nina Hills
Josie Pickering	Sally Evans
Carole Abbott	Rosie Alison
Joan Miller	Nelly Sainsbury
Jemma Gordon	Charley Simpson
Tanya English	Debra Evans
Candy Spencer	Keira Gosthorpe
Eileen Seaton	Marle Eastfield

CHILDREN

A broken home
Is broken hearts
that's been torn apart.

The day you weren't by my side
was the day I died inside.

I spiralled out of control
and went down the wrong road
I cried,
I screamed,
I prayed.

I hope you can forgive me for my mistakes.

Now I am doing okay,
I get to see you again
my heart beats again

I love you no matter what they say
that I can say.

Written by Daisy

They said to me that if I stopped working, stopped using drugs, left my partner and moved out of my home, then I could have my daughter back. I did all of that and then some. But my social worker decided from the first time she met me, she was going to get my bairn adopted no matter what. I think when they took her off the case, they should have basically declared the adoption as not legal and they should have gone through that process again, with a different social worker. But, no. I've got a post-adoption worker now, but they don't listen, they're not bothered.

The last thing I want to do is upset my partner, so I end up using more drugs rather than talk about it. But I worry that if I don't talk about her I'll forget what she looks like, and I don't want to forget a single thing about her. She was so tiny and perfect. They took her away, cleaned her up a tiny bit, wrapped a blanket around her, and just put her there on my chest. As I was holding her, she just opened her eyes, and just curled her hand around my finger, and my heart melted.

Because of my mental health problems, when bad things happen it doesn't happen to me, it happens to this other person — it's the only way I can cope with it. She's somebody that's tough; it doesn't bother her when bad things happen to her, she's used to it. So I can think, 'Oh well, it didn't actually happen, it was just a dream.' But it hits me really hard when I see my caesarean scar.

Crissy



Sculpture which prompted Renatta's poem 'My Boy, My Heart'.

My kids went to live with my Mam, my partner got caught selling drugs, went to prison, and that's how I ended up having to go on the streets. I couldn't keep shoplifting because I couldn't go to prison and I knew I would get over 6 months next time I got caught. And that would be my house gone, so I would be homeless. At the time I was still seeing the kids, but I wasn't reliable, because I was too involved in drugs. So at times I wasn't there for the kids, I really wasn't. But I didn't see that when I was taking drugs, so I started to work on the streets.

You can start off in a crowd and take the drugs; you can have been abused and take the drugs, but this is the pattern, how it goes: if you end up pregnant, you can guarantee that child's getting taken away from you, even though at that time you'll say, 'My child's going nowhere.' It doesn't work like that — this is the reality; look at our situations: take a different path.

Angela

MY BOY, MY HEART

A mother holds her child aloft
Visual bond —
Powerful,
Soft.

The image in the sculpted clay
The statue has so much to say
Their peeling laugh of silent joy
Female parent, baby boy.

I think of mine
And memorise
The saddened look of hard goodbyes.

I sometimes think I hear his voice
My absence was the hardest choice
Because I miss him,
And have such regret —

Of the cruel past,
let him forget.

Now he is safe,
And it is sure;
With his pa he is secure.

Written by Renatta

These thoughts I do not share
GUILT, Resentment, Failure.
Im climbing a snakes ladder
+ my head keeps falling
The voices are alive, Like a
song, going on + on + on.
I slice myself it feels so
good. Relief, Memories
of rape child abuse Neglect!
Rip my hair out, Why Why He?
Layed in bed thoughts
racing through my mind.
Then the breathing starts,
I see dead people laughing,
playing hide + seek, terrifying.
I lay there this is only
the start. The blackness
seeps me in wanting to
terrify me. God where are u?



'My Heart Is Broken With Three
Pieces Missing' by Millie

ONE WORD CONTAINING FIVE LETTERS

Sorry, It's only one word containing five letters. It's not enough, it will never be enough.

I miss being a Mum. It's down to me that I'm not anymore. I hold my hands up to all the mistakes and bad decisions I've made, but it's not enough. It will never be enough.

It's not just birthdays, but the silly little things, like making up daft songs about what we were having for tea and singing them all the way home from the shops. Or writing teeny tiny letters from the tooth fairy in miniscule writing, thanking them for an incredible tooth and to keep up the good work. That their tooth would be used to help build the fairy kingdom.

I miss being a Mum. My memories of my three children are tainted by guilt, filled with shame, saddened by regret.

I remember one rainy afternoon playing hide and seek in the house with my son. I started counting 1, 2, 3, 4 with him, giggling, trying to find somewhere to hide. When I got to ten, I turned around, there was a boy shaped lump under the living room rug. He couldn't stop sniggering. I went around the room — 'are you behind the chair?... No. Are you behind the the settee...?' He was giggling so bad it took all my will power not to laugh out loud. 'Are you behind the curtains? Oh no! I can't find him.' I carried on looking, going back to the places I'd already looked. 'I'm going to have to phone the police and tell them I've lost my son somewhere in the living room.' By this time he's just outright laughing. He jumps up from under the rug shouting 'Here I am Mum!'

I miss being a Mum and my heart is hurting, I'm sorry. Only two words containing seven letters. It's not enough. It will never be enough.

I remember my youngest daughter's first fancy dress Halloween disco at school. She wanted to go as a witch, so we sorted out an old black skirt of mine that we could cinch at the waist with a belt and a black shirt. Her older sister already had a pointy witch's hat she could borrow. She asked about a broomstick which we didn't have. I could see the disappointment in her face, so I told her to get ready to go out and off we went.

She was so confused as we made our way across the playing field, towards the graveyard. When we got there, I told her to pick up as many long thin twigs as she could find.

When we got home we put them in the garden. I grabbed some tape and string and together we

taped up thin twigs into bundles and put them all onto the bottom of the four feet long strong stick, taping them up tightly, then we covered the tape with the string.

When we had finished, my daughter's face filled with pride and delight, because we had made the perfect broomstick, the best broomstick ever created.

I miss being a Mum.

I'm so sorry.

Three words containing nine letters.

It's not enough. It will never be enough to describe how sorry I am.

I remember all the Christmases when I still had my children and one of those Christmases my eldest was sat with her little sister and brother engrossed in a Christmas movie. I could hear a spattering sound and couldn't place it so I got up and went to find the noise. It was definitely coming from the kitchen. The kitchen was totally flooded, with water pouring through the kitchen ceiling; 'shit, shit, shit.'

I heard my eldest daughter racing up the stairs shouting 'I forgot! I forgot!' When she came back down from the bathroom she was crying. 'I was gunna have a bath' she sobbed.

I was stood in the kitchen, feet bare, jeans rolled up, ankle deep in warm water, trying to mop up gallons of water. Well at least it had stopped pouring through the ceiling.

'It's ok, give me a hand and stop crying' I said to her. I told her to get some towels.

We were both stood on towels on the soaking wet kitchen floor in our bare feet and ringing the sodden towels out in the kitchen sink. In the end we were stood twisting on towels singing 'Let's twist again.' Neither of us knew any of the lyrics, but that didn't stop us trying. I miss being a Mum.

I'm so desperately sorry. Four words containing twenty letters. It's not enough. It will never be enough.

Written by Millie



THE RIGHT NOT TO BE JUDGED

One of the things that gives you a sense of loss, if you spend a lot of time in that world, is that people never trust you, from drug life. You might prove yourself and you might make amends, and do the 12 steps and all that, but there will still be always that underlying thing, 'oh they used to be a junkie, watch out for them.' You get that, you do.

There are hierarchies, especially on the street — like if you hear one girl's doing it for a fiver, then everyone turns against her; there is sort of an unspoken code. But I mean that person who's doing it for a fiver, she's probably in a much worse state but she still gets kicked out of the organism, she's really frowned upon.

Renatta

Someone I know stopped me the other night when I had gone out for a couple of drinks, she said, 'My heart goes out to you, it doesn't matter that people look and stare, because you know what, your kids are amazing. You've done an amazing job, Jemma, no matter what else you've done in your life... Be thankful, be proud; listen to them. That's where you find the truth.'

There's this girl talking to me on the one hand and this guy on the other — is laughing, I said 'I'm glad you're laughing, you're having a good time!' Everybody thinks I'm fucking crazy when I go out. And I want them to think that. I want them to stay away from me.

Jemma

For seven years I never had a drink, I was in a stable relationship and job with two children, running a house; nobody looked down on us then, but because I had to go into escorting to get some quids and had a drink... I've asked for several jobs, but people look down their nose at me! What right have they got? I'm in the same boat with a lot of other people now... in not having any money... There's nothing left of this country, there's no industry, I'm not surprised that girls are working on the streets, there's nothing for nobody.

Jemma

Some
days
I don't get
changed

LOVING TOUCH

Really, you want the sexual act to be about when people love each other, and you might have a fairytale idea in your head about getting married. But when you're doing this work, it goes against that. I was going out with this guy and he used to make me feel like a prostitute because he used to want to talk all dirty and do all that sort of shit. I never really enjoyed sex with anybody; it's taken years for me to start relaxing after doing that; it really ruins it. I couldn't get my head into it at all. It just seems so sad to twist your own head up so much that you think your sexual activity is financial. It's a really difficult one to overcome.

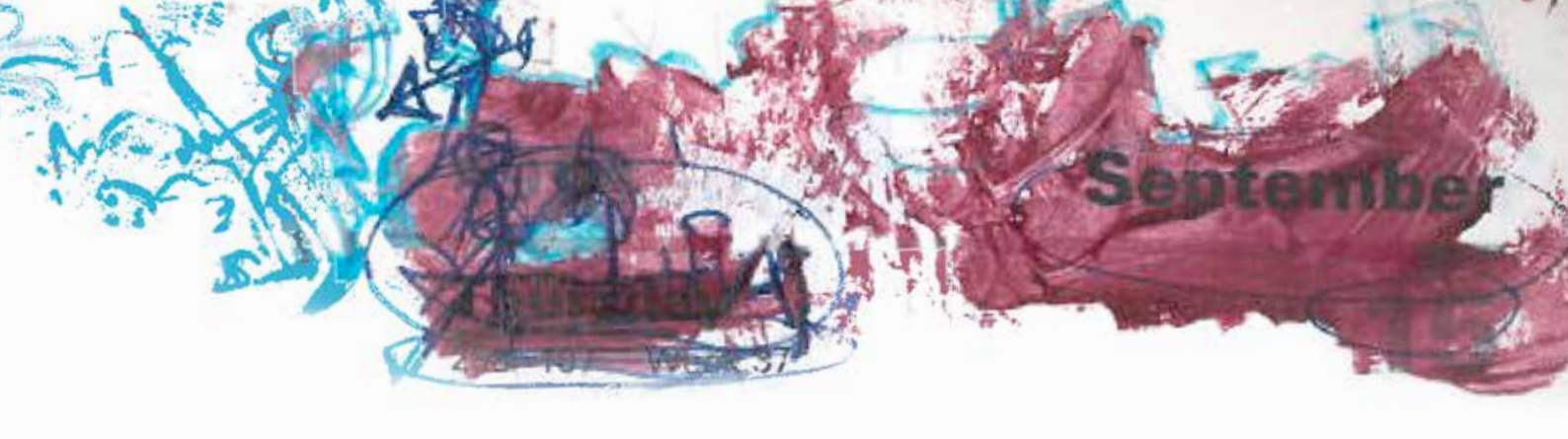
Renatta

Your partner thinks that because you do it with a punter, that you can just sort of like roll over in bed and just do it for them. You know, not 'I don't feel like it tonight love' — no, we're just going to do it anyway. But you don't go with punters because you enjoy it, it's because you have to do it. I think you get to the stage where you don't like it.

Mia

If I could tell a young girl, or a boy anything, it would be, 'Are you willing to sacrifice all that?' because it will: it will fuck it completely. It takes a lot away from it — it's hard to 'switch off with a punter, switch on with a partner'. It's like they think you've got a switch at the back of you like a fucking machine.

Freddie



September



MENTAL HEALTH

I hate it when I just get to know a worker and I just get to feel like I can actually trust them enough to open up to them, and then they're gone. I have to start all over again with somebody else, which for me is really difficult because I've been hurt so many times, I put, like, a barrier up, because I think, if I don't let people get close, I can't get hurt.

Especially when I got given a new male drugs worker, I thought, 'No — I can't talk about what happened to me when I was a bairn — I can't talk about things like that with a bloke.' Cos it was a bloke that did it to me.

Crissy

Right after Christmas, my daughter started self-harming. I self-harmed too. It's a history thing. My Mum self-harmed, she was abused as a child. Everyone loved my mother. I wish I could see her, I wish I could hold her. I wish I could tell her just how bright she was.

She didn't have no love for herself. She gashed her arm from arsehole to breakfast, my Mum and Dad had been trying to make a go of it, but she'd slit her arteries, the blood was going all over, my Dad was knelt on her arm he was saying, 'Call an ambulance!' then he left us after that.

Jemma

WITH MY MUM IT ALWAYS FELT FALSE; I DIDN'T FEEL THE LOVE WHEN SHE KISSED ME, I DIDN'T FEEL THE LOVE WHEN SHE HUGGED ME, AND I WANTED TO HUG HER ALL THE TIME.

Jemma



THE GHOST OF ME

I silently watch as people rush by me, weighed down with bulging bags and their own problems. Nobody notices me.

I live in the shadows, at the outer edges of your world.

I'm stuck in this existence between life and death.

There is no light.

A smartly dressed man looks in my direction, his eyes looking straight through me. He quickly turns his head and continues on his way.

I am invisible.

I see a sea of faces pass me by. Most are making their way home and I try to imagine what their lives are like.

I mourn for the life I once had.

I grieve for the person I once was.

Rush hour is finally coming to an end. Shop shutters shut. The city centre empties.

I am alone.

I see you walking slowly, talking animatedly on your phone, smiling and laughing. You finish your conversation, you're still smiling.

I envy you your life.

I envy you your soul.

There is no light.

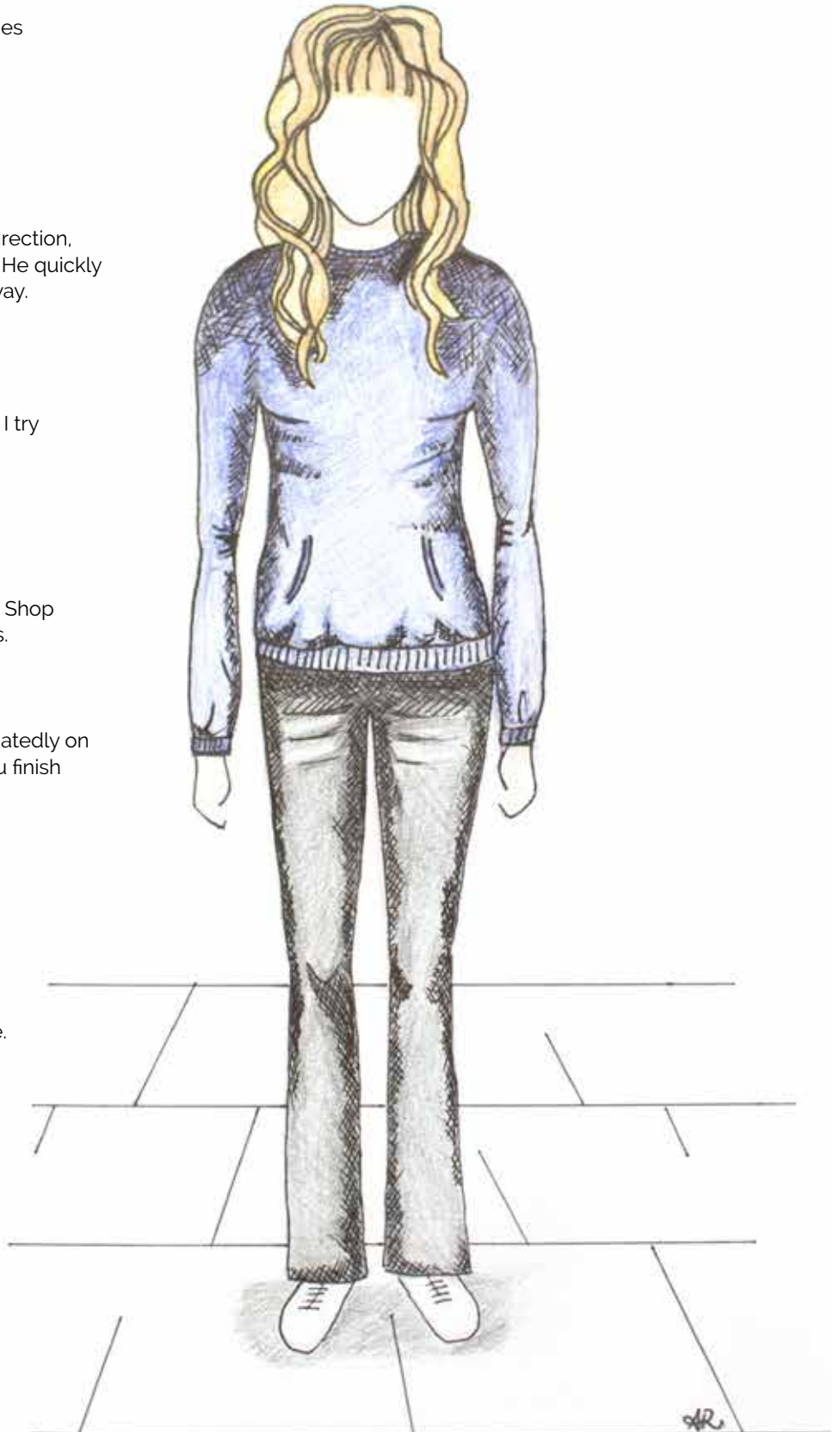
You walk past, looking directly at me and I can see distaste cross your face. I don't blame you, I can't stand the sight of me either.

I am homeless.

Of No Fixed Abode.
There is no light.

No light at the end of the tunnel

Written by Millie





November 13th ~~Thursday~~

~~the~~ Wednesday

April

those vertical drops Abseling
phoenix house 3rd day

~~Thursday~~
10~~2~~ 2008 week 15



House Rules Total abstinence

NIGHT LIGHTS
The Dream engine

Helius Balloon Show
Static Trapeeze Candle Mofn.

GOOD
FUN

Back gammon. 3 Won Haka-ha.

TRIGGERS.

Holding a spoon
With my fingers
standing by the microwave
cigarette Ash.
Foil - LIGHTER.

20 To 11 - LAST ORDERS (DICKINSON)

cigarette filters
Standing a fag up while burning
MACDONALDS
Telephone box's + mobiles
Seeing filter-addicts
Walking through dicey areas.



LOST SOUL

Stood alone, all skin and bone,
Eyes wide, looking at the headlights,
Needing to be picked up.

No heart,
No respect,
And lost all who loved her.
No, she didn't care for no-one.

Only praying a car would stop
and pick her up
Pound signs in her dull, vacant eyes,
No expression.

The punter, like a hunter with his prey.
He stinks of filth — that doesn't put her off.
He pulls £40 out of his wallet,
Her eyes light up.

'Get it over and done within ten minutes, it will
get me a fix of a snowball'; she gets her shit.
Follows her every move, that devil.
'Put me in your veins': she was his slave.

Everything was down to him.
Life of chasing drugs; my God.
It don't matter what life you came from.
You please him, you tease him, he takes
you and wants more.

This girl had no-one in her relationship,
She was chasing the devil and dragon.
She sits alone one morning, having
fucking body spasms —
She tried two days to get clean.

She knew she had a life, in the past,
and wanted it back.
She was hurting, self-inflicted, yes.
You can take a horse to water but you
can't make it drink.
She couldn't handle the pain no more;

Nothing.

Written by Porscha

Self portrait
by Mia



SELF-WORTH

My Mam always used to say 'Am I ugly?' because she couldn't handle the fact that my father didn't love her or want her. I thought I was an ugly child, because I look like my Mam. It just makes me question myself a lot. When I'm getting dressed, I have to get dressed at least seven or eight times in order to feel comfortable in something.

Jemma

A really relevant piece of the puzzle in becoming a prostitute was because I felt worthless; that's why I said, 'I'll take £20' — for my own self, I mean that's very, very cheap, whereas now I wouldn't accept anything for that. My true wealth and my true game and my true self esteem is so much higher now; but it's just so unfair that I didn't know that then, so that I wished I'd never even done it. The bargaining process is more like a discussion of yourself and your relationship with your addiction. You pretend in your head that you feel great, but you feel worthless.

I'd feel really down if I hadn't got any business straight away — as soon as I got out I'd want business straight away. If I'd been out for a couple of hours or whatever, and got nothing for whatever reason, I'd always take it personally. I was really hard on myself. Really, really hard on myself. I'd just try and stay out much later, go out earlier, wear less clothes, you'd just try and make yourself more attractive... you go to a worse position.

I'm sure that working is different for everybody depending on how they perceive themselves, or how they perceive the events to be happening around them. I think it's the case when women are working — sometimes against their will, and under the control of a man, but even for the ones out there that are doing it for a grand at a time, that's still symbolically unfair that they would put a price on their own body.

Renatta

I punished myself for a lot of years. When I first came off the methadone, the guilt was so overwhelming that I made sure I didn't laugh at things. I'd become a hermit, because I didn't trust my judgement to make friends, I didn't trust my judgement with a relationship or even just a passing acquaintance. For 2 years, I'd catch myself laughing and then I'd think, 'No, you don't deserve to be happy.' When you come off the drugs, you've got to grieve for the person you were, because that person is never coming back again.

Millie

4 CIRCLES

**IT'S A VICIOUS CIRCLE; I REALLY DO BELIEVE
IT'S ONE BIG, VICIOUS CIRCLE**

Nicola



KICKOFF

When I lost the kids, is when it started sliding away. I withdrew from it, it was so painful that I'd end up using loads, after seeing them, just to numb it out a bit.

Later on, a relationship I was in became quite violent, so I ended up in a women's hostel. And as it happened, the woman who ran it, her son used to sell me heroin and crack. So I got chucked out of there. I was totally on my own, I felt so isolated. And I started working (again).

And to set off with, it was really good money because I was the 'new girl', and my heroin and crack use just absolutely spiralled, it was the worst it's ever been.

Millie

I'd stopped using drugs completely, until my eldest was 8. I'd been clean for 8 years!

Afterwards I thought, 'Why did I start again after all that time?' And the only thing I can really — if there is an excuse — put it down to, is that when she got to 8, I think it did my head in: that's the age that I first got abused.

Freddie

I was sexually abused by my Granddad from a young age. I then got raped, and the guy got off on a police caution. That was before the age of about 15. I moved away from those people but it did no good. Within a couple of years I'm an alcoholic; have depression, taken overdoses. I became a prostitute. My first time — I hated it. I had just been taking registrations for my friend who was working, and this same punter kept asking me over and over again. And in the end — I just saw my friend having all the money. It was like, 'Just close your eyes and pretend it's not happening; you've got all this money.' And then it just all got on top of me and it was like, 'I need the drink.' I was always getting arrested. Things just went in a downward spiral.

Nicola

I was about 17 when my first daughter was adopted. I'd stopped taking drugs after I had her, but then I started again, because I lost her.

And then I was working to support my habit.

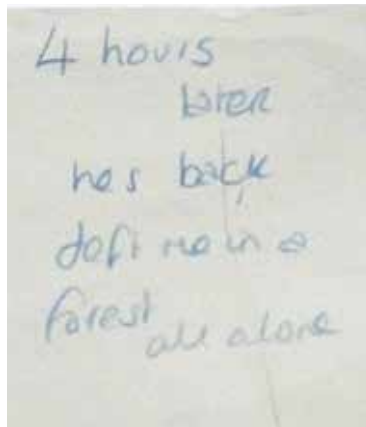
Daisy

When the world turns up side down
when people turn away.
when the head won't stop screaming.
when times are hard.
when all hopes gone.

Deborah



Porscha memory illustration



REINFORCEMENT

Because I was staying at this girl's house, I had to provide her with drugs. Later, by the time the heroin addiction had got to such a state, I needed total privacy to be able to get a hit. So, whoever's house I happened to be in, I had to sort them out. You don't want to be thrown out of where you're staying, so you feel the need to keep giving them drugs for a bed for the night. Or, if somebody scores for you, you have to sort them out too. And if you don't sort your boyfriend out, he's going to kick off.

But it was getting really hard to provide for so many people. How is one person expected to support 3, or 4? Me and my boyfriend were functioning — we used to deal as well. But if it didn't go well, I'd work. When that relationship split up, I didn't really have a means of income. I got with someone else; we'd shoplift during the day, and I'd work all night. That became a bad relationship for me. You don't want to get beaten up because it's harder to make money, and you can't shoplift if your face is all mangled, so you don't cause trouble. And by this time I'd lost the kids. So I didn't give a shit, I really didn't. Any amount of drugs didn't matter.

Millie

He used to come out with me, and whenever I'd get in a car he'd write the car registration number down. As soon as I come back off a job, he'd take the money off me and he'd be like, 'Right, I'll go score, you wait here and do another job.' He'd go score the drugs, come back, we'd go round back of taxi office, have a pipe, and then I'd be straight back out to work. It was like that all night, every night.

There would be times when I'd get money off a client, and I'd want to go spend it on a new pair of boots or a pair of jeans or whatever, but he would be having none of it. It was basically getting spent on crack, whether I liked it or not. But he was on methadone, and I wasn't at the time. So he was alright the next day, he had something to fall back on, but I didn't. I'd been kicked off my methadone through missing 3 days, because of him. If I didn't have money for the next day, that was it, I was going to rattle until I went to work.

Crissy

A photograph of a silver metal shopping trolley with blue handles and red wheels, lying on its side on a dark asphalt surface. The trolley is positioned near a concrete curb that separates the pavement from a patch of dry grass and moss. The background shows a paved area with white and yellow markings, and a building with a blue door is visible in the distance.

THE SHOPPING TROLLEY EFFECT

Imagine you're in a shopping trolley at the top of a steep hill.
You know you need to get out ASAP, as you start to feel gravity pulling on you.
You know it will be much easier/less painful to get out now, but you just can't.
You're paralysed
You're feeling the motion
You're out of control, the force is just too powerful.
Now it's too late to get out,
The only other way this is going to stop is because you've hit the bottom.
If you survive the fall.
Some do, and many don't.
A collective idea

Cherish
 memories
 of your beloved
 forever

Family
 Funeralcare
 www.familyfuneralcare.co.uk

MCKIE
 Pauline
 Passed away on
 25th August 2016
 aged 73 years.
 A loving partner to Mark,
 a much-loved mum to
 her three children and in-laws
 Alex, Stuart, a loving
 grandchild Hemione,
 Jennifer and Molly.
 Will be sadly missed
 by all the family.
 Services to take place
 on Thursday 8th
 September 10.30am at the
 Hampshire Crematorium.
 Family flowers only please
 donations in aid of Hesse
 Community Centre.

NELSON
 Irene
 August 27th 2016,
 peacefully at St. Mary's
 Nursing Home after a long
 illness aged 74 years,
 of North Hull Estate.
 Beloved daughter of the
 late Ella and Alf. Sister
 of Stan. A much loved
 cousin who will be sadly
 missed by all the family.
 Service at the small chapel
 Charterlands Crematorium
 on Wednesday 14th
 September at 2:00pm.
 Family flowers only please
 but donations for St.
 Mary's Nursing Home may
 be left at the service.

Family
 Funeralcare
 www.familyfuneralcare.co.uk

All enquiries to:
 Co-operative Funeralcare,
 63B Goodhart Road,
 Tel. 01482 370220
 www.mgarton.co.uk

GRABY
 Joan
 Passed peacefully
 on 28th August 2016
 aged 89 years.
 Now reunited
 with her husband
 Andrew.
 A Peace at home
 service will be held
 on Monday 29th August 2016
 at 11.00am at the
 Dove House
 Crematorium, Hull
 (Large Chapel).

HIGGINS
 Audrey Marjorie
 Passed away on
 25th August 2016
 aged 73 years.
 A loving partner to Mark,
 a much-loved mum to
 her three children and in-laws
 Alex, Stuart, a loving
 grandchild Hemione,
 Jennifer and Molly.
 Will be sadly missed
 by all the family.
 Services to take place
 on Thursday 8th
 September 10.30am at the
 Hampshire Crematorium.
 Family flowers only please
 donations in aid of Hesse
 Community Centre.

HOE
 Wendy Anne
 nee Styles
 Passed away peacefully
 on 18th August 2016
 aged 89 years.
 Service at Charterlands
 Crematorium on
 Monday 5th September at
 11.00am (7.00am for
 family flowers only please,
 but donations for the
 Alzheimer's Society.
 Resting at
 H. Samp & Son Ltd,
 Tel. 844695

Family
 Funeralcare
 www.familyfuneralcare.co.uk

GRABY
 Joan
 Passed peacefully
 on 28th August 2016
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 Now reunited
 with her husband
 Andrew.
 A Peace at home
 service will be held
 on Monday 29th August 2016
 at 11.00am at the
 Dove House
 Crematorium, Hull
 (Large Chapel).

FREE
 Kimberley Juliet Ann
 22nd August 2016
 After a very long battle
 our baby passed away.
 We are proud of how
 long we fought for her.
 She made a lasting
 impression on everyone
 who knew her and even
 those who did not get
 to know her.
 She left a little
 cowboy monkey,
 which we will treasure
 until we meet again.
 Mum, Dad, Grandpa,
 Muriel and Daddy.
 Burial in the
 Dove House
 Crematorium, Hull
 (Large Chapel).

HIGGINS
 Audrey Marjorie
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 25th August 2016
 aged 73 years.
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Family
 Funeralcare
 www.familyfuneralcare.co.uk

Loving mum of Kayleigh,
 proud nanna of Wyatt,
 and Leo and dear
 sister of David.
 Service at the small
 Chapel Charterlands
 Crematorium on Thursday
 8th September at 10.00am.
 Donations in lieu of
 flowers please to Dove
 House Hospice and may
 be left at the service.

EAST
 Brenda Ann
 On 28th August 2016
 in the Dove House
 Hospice aged 81 years.
 Loving wife of Stanley,
 much loved mum of Jez,
 Jacky, Jill and Chris,
 in-laws and a dearly loved
 gran and great-grandma
 and a dear sister of Pat.
 Now at peace.

EAST
 Brenda Ann
 Service 3.30pm on
 Tuesday 6th September
 at the Charterlands
 Crematorium, Hull
 (Large Chapel).
 Family flowers only please,
 but donations to the
 Dove House Hospice would
 be appreciated. A collection
 will be made at the service.

EAST
 Brenda Ann
 Forever in my heart mum,
 miss you always.
 Love Jill XX
 Love you always gran, your
 at peace now.
 Love Mark, Nikki, Chns
 and Logan xx

Family
 Funeralcare
 www.familyfuneralcare.co.uk

Resting at Robert A Drew
 & Son's chapel of rest,
 7B Main Street, Willerby.
 in the churchyard.

EAST
 Brenda Ann
 On 28th August 2016
 in the Dove House
 Hospice aged 81 years.
 Loving wife of Stanley,
 much loved mum of Jez,
 Jacky, Jill and Chris,
 in-laws and a dearly loved
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 Now at peace.

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 Love Jill XX
 Love you always gran, your
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 Love Mark, Nikki, Chns
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 8th September at 10.00am.
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 flowers please to Dove
 House Hospice and may
 be left at the service.

30th August aged 89 years.
 Will be missed and missed
 so much by his family.
 Special thanks to
 the staff at St. Mary's
 Hospital and St. Mary's
 Hospice for the care and
 support given during his
 illness. Funeral will be held
 at the large Chapel,
 Charterlands Crematorium
 on Monday 5th September
 at 11.30am.
 No flowers please but
 donations welcome
 to Doostep of Hull,
 Homeless Charity.

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 No flowers please but
 donations welcome
 to Doostep of Hull,
 Homeless Charity.

From Uncle Ray
 and the Websters
 Deepest sympathy to
 Stan and family.
EAST
 Brenda Ann
 Forever in my heart mum,
 miss you always.
 Love Jill XX
 Love you always gran, your
 at peace now.
 Love Mark, Nikki, Chns
 and Logan xx

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 Brenda Ann
 Forever in my heart mum,
 miss you always.
 Love Jill XX
 Love you always gran, your
 at peace now.
 Love Mark, Nikki, Chns
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 and Logan xx

EAST
 Brenda Ann
 Forever in my heart mum,
 miss you always.
 Love Jill XX
 Love you always gran, your
 at peace now.
 Love Mark, Nikki, Chns
 and Logan xx

For an early addict to see a working girl, and her money, or that she's using constantly or there are dealers round at her house and whatever, you're not inspired, but you are given false hope — when you first start out, you get told all these tales of how much people earn, and it's not true.

Millie

One punter pulled me up, and asked me how much. I told him, and I put the price right down because I was really desperate. He said, 'I'll give you a fiver for a blow job' and I said no, but the next lass got in. They all go, 'Oh I charge loads, I charge loads,' but the prices haven't even gone up, hardly.

Freddie

I can remember walking up to car windows and saying, 'You looking for business mate?' It was this whole persona that is no longer in my person — a whole person: the woman that I created specifically to work. I acted like I thought I was great but was absolutely terrified inside. Prostitution isn't just about sex, it's about people pleasing and stroking ego — you'd do anything for that money. You are selling your soul, until they've paid you, you'd do anything, you'd be nice to the most horrible person.

Renatta

Sleeping rough in winter is never easy for anyone. Well, when I say sleeping — you don't sleep because it's too cold, and the night drags on. Morning never seems to come, it's far too cold, and you're afraid to close your eyes in case anyone attacks you.

Written by Mia

**SQUATTING IN A FLAT
WITH A BABY SON, TOO.
NO ELECTRIC.
WINTER.
FREEZING.
WISHING YOU WERE ALL
WARM AND SAFE.
SMASHED WINDOWS,
A BIG HOUSE, ONE ROOM.
IN THIS ONE WAS A COOKER
— THE GAS WAS ON.
GOT MY TRAINERS PINCHED
OFF MY FEET.
WANTING TO JUST FEEL
SAFE, WARM.
BODY FULL WITH DRUGS.
ANOTHER MAN DID DIE
IN THAT SQUAT HOUSE.**

Written by Porscha

Why are you always around.
IN the back ground waiting,
to cure my pain. : '

Above: Deborah
Left: Renatta diary entry

TRAUMA

THERE WERE QUITE A FEW MURDERS WHEN I WAS WORKING. THAT DIDN'T STOP ME. YOU GET IN THE CAR WITH A TOTAL STRANGER, AND YOU KNOW HE COULD KILL YOU. BUT THE HEROIN'S MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU. AND I'VE BEEN SEXUALLY ASSAULTED. BUT I DIDN'T GO TO THE POLICE. I'D SAY MOST WORKING GIRLS HAVE BEEN ASSAULTED MORE THAN ONCE. I WAS PUNCHED AND SEXUALLY ASSAULTED BY THIS FELLA, AND I DIDN'T CRY. I DAREN'T START CRYING. IT WAS AWFUL ENOUGH AS IT WAS, WITHOUT ME PUTTING EMOTION, ALL MY EMOTIONS INTO IT AS WELL SO I JUST SORT OF KEPT IT OFF AND HOPED THAT I COULD GET THROUGH THE REST OF THE NIGHT.

Millie

I WILL DEVOUR YOUR SOUL

I will offer you peace for your turbulent mind
The inner tranquility you can't seem to find
I will soften the edges, lines not so defined
Your everyday turmoil left so far behind

I will take from you all those you adore
Broken relationships you can never restore
Warning bells ringing that you chose to ignore
Anything to score just a little bit more

You'll practice my ritual again and again
Hollowed out, darkness, all that remains is your pain
No longer your life, this is my domain
Kneel before me as I roar my disdain

I'll scar your heart til there's barely a beat
Your life stops, judders; then is stuck on repeat
Total surrender, my deceit now complete
Dead inside — now will you admit defeat?

Your future's not written, but I hold the pen
Your slow suicide, but I'll decide when
Your body a commodity — for sale to all men
Your misery resplendent, you're alone, what then?

I will destroy your life and devour your soul
Spinning kaleidoscope, out of control
Ripping you apart so you'll never feel whole
worshipping me is your only goal.

Written by Millie



The Devourer of Souls
by Millie



HELLO. Dawn is curling her way into the grey concrete industrial town of Hull. Its almost christmas day

I am in a roller coaster of emotional instability. My ears are burning. I can almost feel voices discussing the body behind this name, behind this face, with eyes of ^{green} grey fireworks spark.

Alive I am. The living dead, (shrug) and take a look for a cigarette. A roll up of dog ends will suffice.

Do you have any idea, what poverty is really like. The reality of being poor? I AM HUNGRY. There is nothing to eat!! My feet stink, but we've got no gas - so I can't have a bath. My boots left in water! And to top it all off we never ^{got} one single christmas card. NOT ONE!!



KING'S CROSS

Standing in amusement arcades,
A scar down your face, in your dark black shades.
They're hiding your eyes that are shot out,
An expressionless face is searching,
'Cos easy money's about.

Another dodgy deal, a rip off to a punter's loss.
You see them all standing there, waiting at King's Cross.
You've nearly had your throat cut for a score bag or two?!
Life ain't worth much compared to smack for you.
And it ain't just dirty junkie types!
But those in suits and ties; pin-striped.

Waiting on the station corner,
Tell your daughter to behave, or
Someone else will warn her.
Women turning tricks
To pay their habit they have day to day,
— For that brown sugar that tastes so sweet,
That they'll risk their liberty scoring on the street.

And it's blatant beneath the Kozzer's noses,
A body in the doorway — OD, decomposes.
— But nothing can touch you when you've had your hit,
But it won't be long before you start feeling shit,
And where's your next bag gunna come from?
A midnight meeting, shadowy slum,
Yet you get a kind of thrill when your man is here at last,
You have to wait no longer to have another blast.
Violated veins, as the plunger fills your arm,
Spiked and mutilated, self-inflicted harm.

Share the needle with your mates, whose disease
you can't 'pronounce',
And now you've passed it to your girlfriend.
Death's on the cards —
You can't pretend,
When you reach
the end.

Written by Renatta

THE LETHAL INJECTION

Stab, jab
Pin-prick
As the blood flows into the barrel.
As you push
The never-ending
In to the blood stream.

Then you come face to face
With the real fact;
It's the drug you can't face.
So you push
More and more,
Into your veins.
But really it's you, just being vain
As you push
The never ending
In to the blood stream.

As you float away,
Into the never ending space.
The lethal injection takes its place

Daisy



Illustration by Daisy

Illustration by
Renatta



BIG CIRCLES

You've got to stop them both together, the working and the drugs. If you work, the drugs are always going to be there, you're always going to need to buy them. It's a vicious circle. If you're saying you've got to do one, that one's never just one. Because you're going to go out and bump into somebody, and that feeling's going to be there, 'Well I've got the money, let's go get a "hit".'

Nicola

If people used to start handing numbers round, and, 'Oh, do you want this?' at the recovery group I used to say to them, 'I've told you already, I'm not doing it anymore, can you stop asking me?' You're supposed to report people handing out phone numbers and stuff, but you don't want to do that, because that's classed as grassing; there's a certain code. I used to say, 'Get that number out of my fucking face, I don't want it'. In the end they do listen, but it takes quite a while. But you did get the jealous ones — you know, you're doing alright — they're not. And they just want to drag you down. It took me a couple of weeks you know, to click on that actually these people are actually trying to fuck me up again — because I could actually make money, they'd latch on to me. And it's such a cruel thing.

Millie

As an addict, you feel side-lined from society, you know you don't act or look like the rest of society; the heroin makes you something that you never wanted to become. You're so outcast by the time you start working the streets, you become 'sub-class'. It's a horrible phrase but that's what you become — it's totally different, to a 'normal life'. And you dream about a 'normal life'. It does become 'them and us'. That's a saying — 'Once an addict, always an addict'. And you believe it, in your heart you believe it. And it's not true.

Millie

I think the Section 222 is wrong. I think it's going to take one of the girls to get either murdered or seriously injured before they realize what a fuck up they've done. How the hell can Lighthouse support the girls — they don't know where the fuck they are, because the coppers have scattered them all over Hull. And this is the only city in the entire country that's doing it.

I can't get a normal job. I've got quite an extensive criminal record, nobody would employ me, so it is one of the only jobs I know where it doesn't matter what you've got on your criminal record, it doesn't matter what you've done in your past.

Crissy

I've had knife offences and everything. No, you don't think then. I didn't think all those years ago, that I'd want to do something like I want to do now. Yeah; your past just jumps up and bites you. 'You can't do this, you can't do that.' Now I've got to wait until my criminal record has been spent.

Nicola

What was difficult was the fact that the agencies didn't keep in touch with each other. So you have to tell your life story, time and again. You've stood up and said, 'I'm trying to get help; I can't do this on my own'. Which is a massive step; in effect you're admitting to total failure, as a person, and in life. And then when they can't even get the basics right, it's quite annoying — but that's how you think as an addict. If all you're thinking about is numbing your emotions, it's going to take you a lot to basically rake over your life history every time.

Also, it's like they wanted to treat each bit separately. But it isn't, it's a whole. You'll go to the doctors for your prescription — you just talk about your drug addiction, not the domestic violence that you've suffered, or if you go to a domestic violence unit that's what they want to hear, not about the drug addiction, the mental health problems. But counselling allowed me to do all that. It dealt with lots of little issues that impacted on each other. But it isn't easy — you've got a criminal record: your life isn't going to be perfect. I've got violence, neglect and shoplifting on mine. You know, my chances of employment are quite slim.

Millie



Only god can judge me

SQUARE ONE

The psychiatrist I had as a kid said it's kind of similar to split personality; but right through my life, whenever bad things have happened, it's been as if they weren't happening to me. It's happening to another person that just happens to be part of me. I won't go out until I've had either a hit of 'phet or a hit of gear first. I need that hit before I go out just to relax me a bit. And it helps you, because obviously when you're smashed, you don't think about what's going on, and it helps you block out what you're doing.

A lot of people think my job's easy. The physical side of it is, but the mental and emotional side of it isn't. I mean if I didn't take drugs, I'd have probably cracked up a long time ago.

Crissy

Alcohol helped for everything with me. I could work and still hold down a relationship, it's two different things: you just shut off, completely. Girls that get into working without substances, who just need the money — it won't be long before they need something to block it out. It'll start off as drinking, and before they know it they've got a raving habit.

Nicola



I know what did the damage was the fact that I had to go and lay on my back. There was nowhere else to get it from, unless I went shoplifting and I didn't want locking up! I had to do something in order to maintain household income. And the drugs and the drink often go part and parcel with prostitution, you can't help it! You get some big fucking heffing ugly bloke who wants to do you up the backside, for a mere £50, and you do it because you need the money, so you want something to block it out, don't you?

You have people phoning up for rape scenarios, or you have guys ringing up, saying 'we're father and son', and he's only 15. What the fuck?! It plays with your head. It's a case of getting off your head — amphetamines to keep you up on a night time so you can see the clients who are out on the piss, cannabis so you can wind down a little bit from amphetamine, it's just a vicious circle.

Jemma

You get that good at pushing it all down, that even when you're supposed to react, you don't. If you get beaten up by your boyfriend or you get into trouble somehow — you've learned to suppress it that well, you don't want anything to come to the surface. You spend your life pushing it all down. I think that's why when you first come off drugs it's so difficult — all your emotions are coming back, and it becomes overwhelming. And the only thing that you know to push it back down again is heroin. You've had shit coping mechanisms all your life, so how's it going to be easier, you know, just because you're off the drugs? You can't mature emotionally through addiction, it's just impossible. It doesn't change your life, coming off drugs — you change your life by coming off drugs.

Millie

I have successfully managed
to drink my first whole bottle of

Jack Daniel's
Traditional Tennessee Sipping
Whisky matured in new oak barrels

Yesterday.
I went up to the
ship point for me

and
him
ed head
120.
when And
Contact
ed of
ank.
Mon
r at
Bar
med me
120
With

My so called
companion
HAS BEEN
CAUGHT

When he got in six
I couldn't hold it
But he denied it
even swearing on
life - !!

He didn't
confess till
late
evening

born to
BE MY KING!
RED
THANKS!
DEAD

Red Hand - dead by Renatta

5 CHANGE

**YOU HIT ROCK BOTTOM. AND THEN
YOU STAY THERE FOR AGES.**

Daisy

ONE MORE TIME

I arrived here a couple of months ago in the clothes I was stood up in. My only baggage is the guilt, shame and despair I carry inside me.

I look out of my second floor window at the small green park below. I've got my own room here at William Booth Hostel, it's the most secure I've felt in these last few years, not having to scabble about, trying to find somewhere to stay, somewhere to sleep, somewhere that's safe.

All the staff seem really nice, especially my keyworker. I've started to open up to her and I've explained how much I despise my life.

I draw the curtains to block out the daylight's glare and take a couple of pain killers in an effort to stop the pounding inside my head. I can feel it thudding with every heart beat.

I look at my reflection in the mirror above the sink, my skin sallow and sunken. I don't even recognise my own eyes, I'm so used to seeing my pin-prick pupils, now they look massive.

I go and sit on the bed, my eyes are watering and my nose keeps running. My muscles keep going into spasms, aching to the bone. All my joints feel so tight, like they need to pop.

I stretch in an attempt to ease the pain, but it makes no difference.

I've got a tickle at the back of my throat, the mucus feels thick. My stomach lurches and rolls, feeling empty and greasy.

I sit on the edge of my bed, trying to deep breathe the sickness away.

In, out, in, out.

I'm really feeling it now.

I start sneezing. Not the typical 'a-choo' of a normal sneeze, but short, sharp, internal implosions. Painful, rib-breaking, numerous.

Sweat breaks out on my skin, turning to ice. My skin crawling with goose bumps, wave after wave.

The sensation horrendous.

I can't seem to lay still, the pain unbearable. Everything is hurting so bloody much.

My stomach tightens, stabbing pains like a sharpened kitchen knife, ripping through my insides, making me breathless. Saliva fills my mouth and I

rush across the room to the wash basin. Hot bitter bile rises up my throat as I vomit in the sink, watery and acid yellow. I wash it away and wipe the sweat, tears and snot from my face.

I lay down on the bed, self-pity morphing into desperation, as my warring inner demons taunt me with their vicious, cruel wickedness 'Why are you doing this again? You failed every other time you tried. It's not going to work this time either. You couldn't do it before, for your children, your family, your self. What makes you think that this time is going to be different?'

Voices screaming with their intensity, ricocheting inside my mind, raging inside my head. I curl into a ball, feeling wretched and look at my pound shop alarm clock for the umpteenth time. It seems to have stopped. I pick it up and give it a shake, putting it to my ear. It's still working.

I close my eyes and try to sleep, listening to the busy traffic outside on the main road, listening to the clock ticking inside my silent, empty room.

Tick, tick, tick.

My body explodes from another round of sneezes. I'm sweating, shivering, spasms contracting my muscles, my skin crawling.

Will this never end?

Hours pass, like cold molasses, time ticking away oh so slowly.

I lay here, my arms and legs moving back and forth. Like I'm cross-country skiing, they just won't stay still.

I've thrown up so many times now, I'm heaving on nothing.

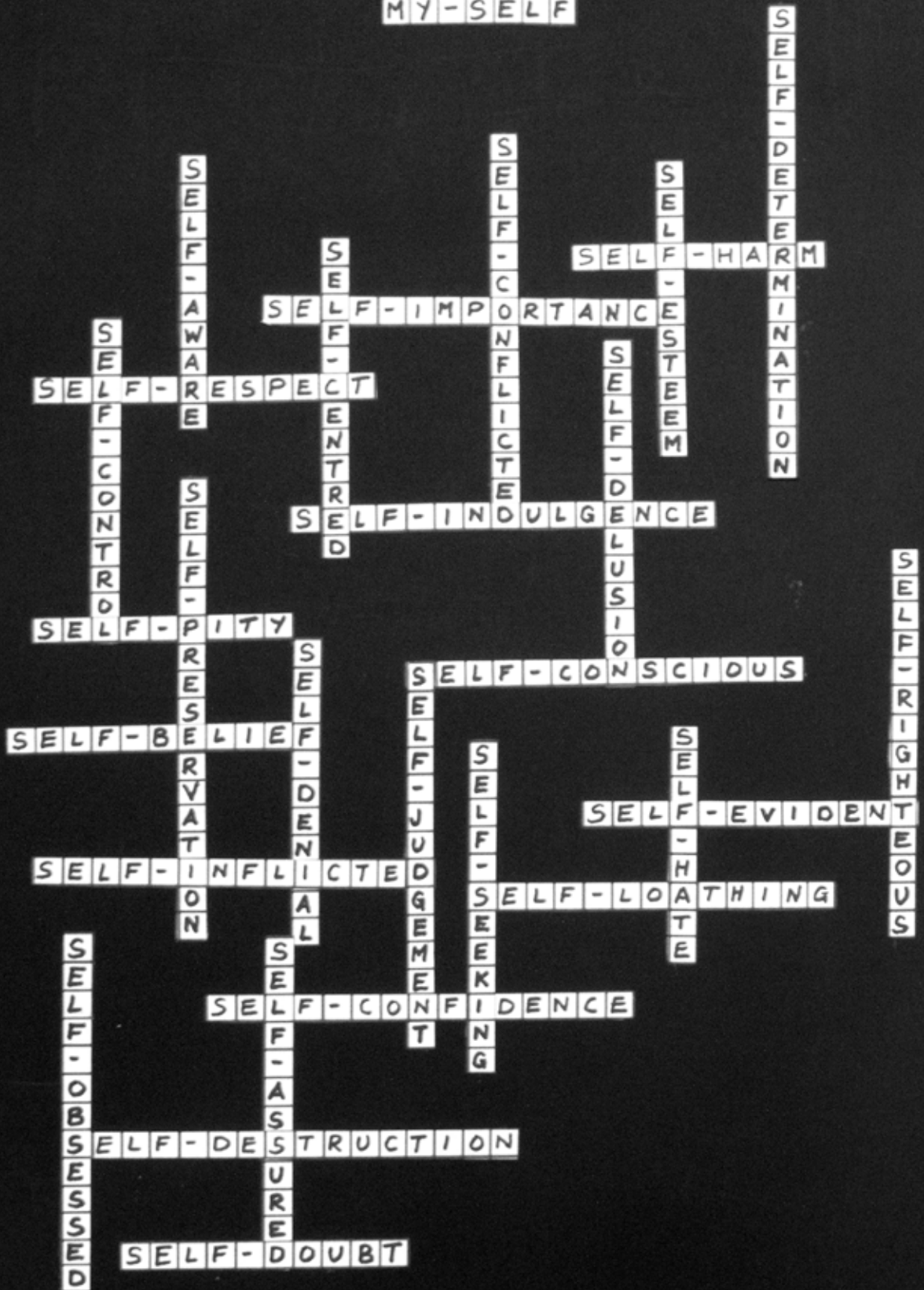
I watch the second hand tick slowly, seconds to minutes, minutes to hours. Tick, tick, tick.

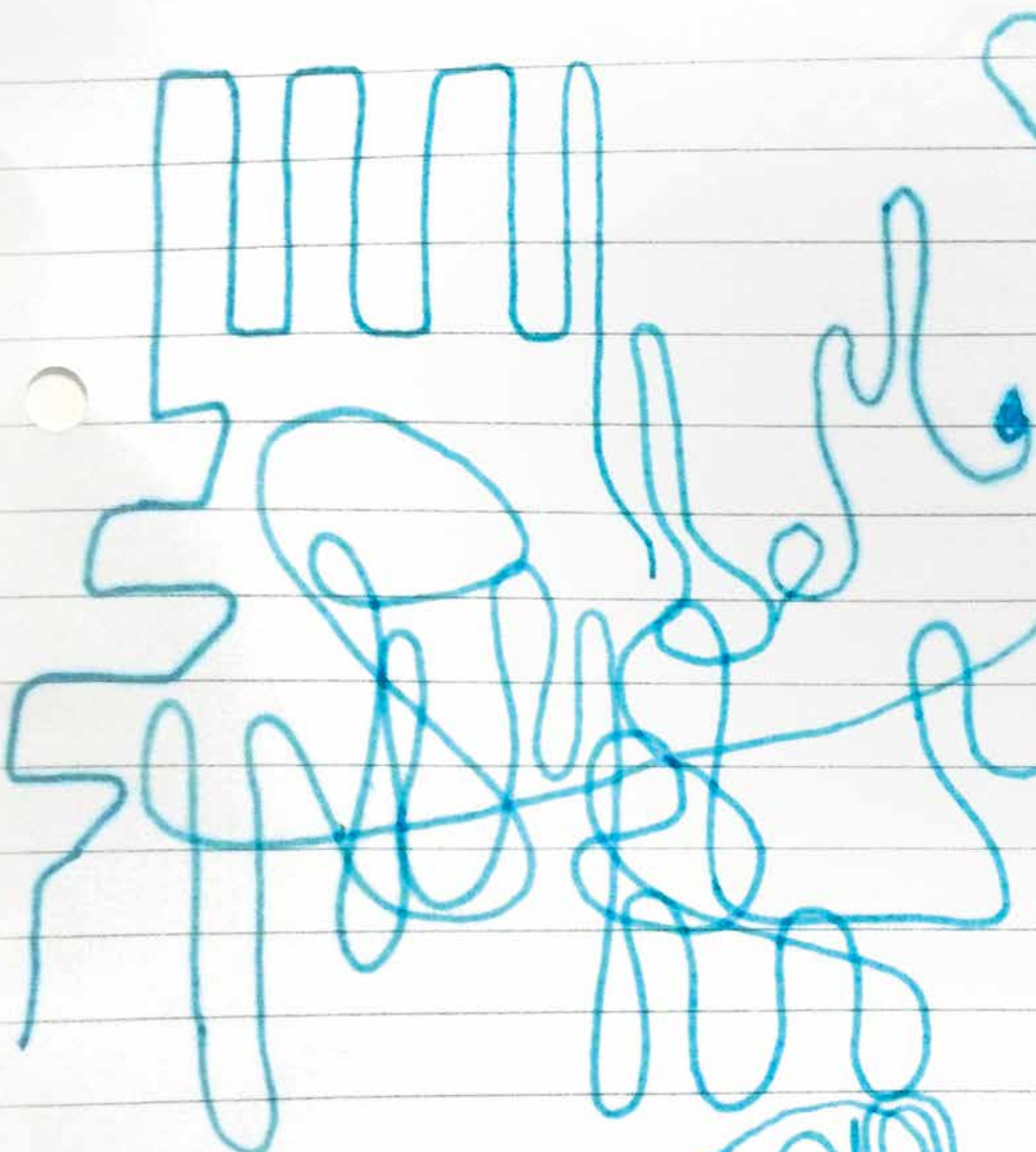
For years I believed someone was going to come and save me.

It took all those years to realise the only person who could save me was me, and the only thing I needed saving from was myself.

Written by Millie

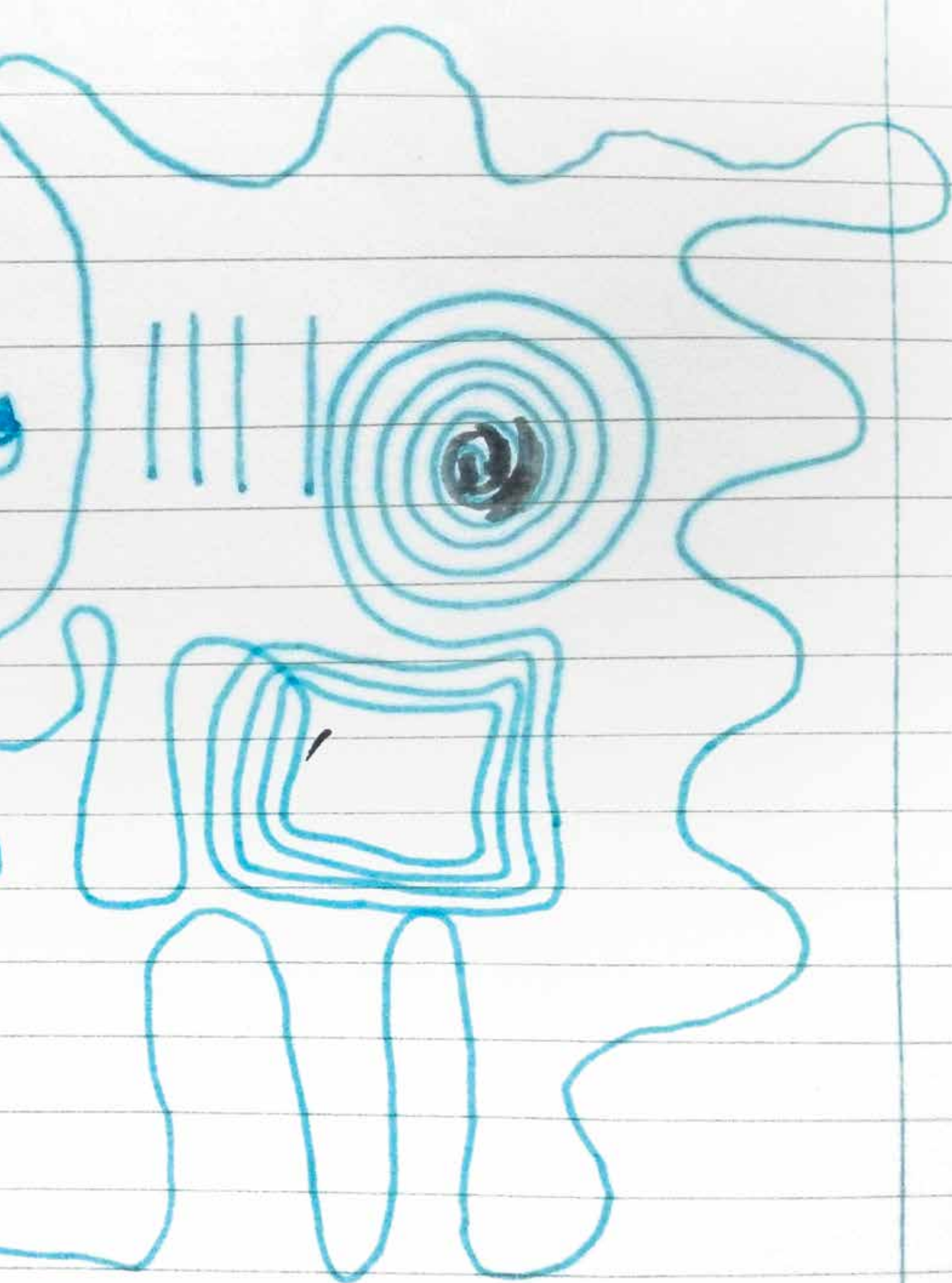
MY-SELF





**YOU'VE GOT TO
WANT TO DO IT**





'CHOICES'

Choose life, choose greatness.
Choose to be free, and choose to be yourself.

After recent time spent in recovery
I've found that I can learn things.
Not from a book, but from myself,
And put these findings to my day to day life choices.

Remember, nobody likes to be skint, in any walk of life.

Choose to be vigilant about life's options,
And when and where you put your priority in your life.
Because whoever you are, wherever you're from, how did
you get to here?
And now remember every day to choose to tell yourself just
how important you are.

Choices:
There's always something to do for good, for free,
and for a better style of living.

Choices:
To have a sanctuary, a place to reflect: look back, then look
forward to where you're going; where you've been and
exactly where you think you should be, or want to be.

Written by Jemma

I nearly lost my kids. My Mum was going to take the kids from me permanently. One night I'd gone in and she said, 'Right, you've got to be gone in the morning.' I went, 'Why?' She said, 'Go, come back clean or don't come back at all.'

I got up in the morning, said to her, 'Right, let's do it.' I stayed in Hull a week, went to Scotland for 6 weeks, came back, walked into an agency. I said, 'Look, I've got no references, never had a job before but will you give me a job?' They sent me to a factory

and I've always worked since; never gone back. Never gone back to the street, never gone back to the drugs. It's got to be a clean break.

You can't have the same friends — talk to them maybe, if you bump into them, talk to them but you can't be friends anymore. You can't, you've got to make that clean, complete and utter break.

I knew I was going to Scotland for my detox, and I knew when I came back that would be it, no more. And I did it! How many years now, and look at me.

Nicola



Porscha memory illustration

BEING BRAVE ENOUGH

Are you going to take the miserable path you've trodden and the only path you know? You're safe — you know that path, but then there is this lovely clear, beautiful green path. And the new path is like a new blueprint. It's scary because you've never been down there, it could be fraught with dangers, but it's got to be better than fucking sinking into the mud. It's gotta be, it's gotta be better, that's why you've gotta try and look at stuff in a more positive, new blueprint way — it gives you a chance to have a happy childhood, even if you're a grown up, that gives you a chance to be able to change yourself. You were worth it. You were worth it even if the adults around you weren't functioning and they couldn't show you that love, you deserved it. So the only way you could deal with that is later, as an adult yourself. But it is hard, because why would you want to? You might feel that you're not worth it; why would you want to go through all that? But you're are worth it, it's important.

We all deserve a second chance, but you have to give it to yourself.

You have to be brave enough and you have to have the right opportunities to be able to do that.

Renatta

My life changed for the better when I left my husband. He was abusive and controlling. I wasn't allowed to go anywhere unless it was with him or his family, so when I finally plucked up the courage to leave him after 10 miserable years was like walking out of a prison after serving 10 years, was such a relief to not have someone dictating to you all the time. Making that move and moving in with my partner changed my life forever. I spent 21 happy years with him. If I had not met him I don't think anything would have changed, but I am so glad it changed for the better.

Written by Mia

The bad side, being homeless, helped me to stop. I wouldn't go back to that because I wouldn't want to become homeless. You're cold and have nowhere to go, just walking around. I was sleeping rough, but didn't sleep — I'd walk around all night, or be working. I'd find myself staying at punters' houses. At least it was a warm place to stay. Being cold and tired with nowhere to go was the worst. I used to get fed by a punter who would sometimes let me stay in his house.

Daisy

THE MOMENT COUNSELLING CLICKED

My life kept falling apart. Every time I got back on my feet something knocked me down again. I was so fed up with getting back up again and again.

I decided to go to counselling. I didn't enjoy it at first, dragging every emotion into the light, examining it.

Working through it.

My counsellor Grace, was patient. I told her how fed up I was, getting knocked down, getting back up only to be knocked down again. This is what she said to me.

'You keep trying to rebuild your life. Putting every stone back in its place but no matter what, it keeps falling apart.

You need to start at the foundations, rebuild from the very beginning, from the bottom up. You need strong foundations, until you rebuild these foundations, make them strong, you can't rebuild your life.'

Then it clicked. I understood. The light had finally been clicked on and I could see.

Written by Millie

HAVING THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITIES

I had been living in a hostel and Lighthouse helped me so much! They got me a flat. They gave me a chance.

I had a blip because my neighbours were drug dealers. I got a grant for my flat and spent £400 of the £650 on crack! I had nothing in my flat.

But I stopped taking the drugs. My daughter had never got on with me because, at my Mum's, my kids and sisters would come home from school and I'd be in the bathroom; they knew what I was doing, I hated who I was, I had to change.

My daughter didn't like me but moved in with me and helped me overcome my drug problem. She understood my mental state.

My mind changed so much. I was alive and all my family loved me, and I backed off and was so happy. My daughter would be proud of me; but I wanted to prove I could be the Mum she wanted me to be.

In 2013 and 2014 two close friends died suddenly. I couldn't cope. I had 2 lapses but got sorted by Lighthouse and the drugs service.

Written by Porscha

When I got a prison sentence, my son went into a hostel, I called it a day with my partner, and got offered a home when I came out. So I was clean, and started to stay clean which was because of the methadone: they kept me on methadone while I was on this sentence, so they could do a detox for me. So I came out and decided to stay clean, got involved with Lighthouse, and started going to all my appointments.

Angela

After a couple of years I just got fed up of it, just the same thing day in, day out; it gets boring. But I had a drug habit, needed the money.

It got to the point where I'd been kicked off my methadone script through missing three days, because of him. And because it was the first time I'd been on methadone, I didn't really know how to go about getting myself back on it. It wasn't until I actually saw a Lighthouse volunteer, that they said, 'Well listen, we can do the referral for you,' and they got me on the methadone programme.

Crissy

Lighthouse is not a service, it's a fucking Godsend; it's something completely different. It's not like the ambulance, or the police, it's nothing like that, you can't verbalise what it is. It's really important. It's not like I would say that my keyworker was my friend, like how I imagine other friends are. But I would consider that she cares about me. And I believe that all of them, they're not doing it for the money. They're not doing it for the wages; they're doing it because it's vocational. It's their vocation, and it helps people.

Renatta



I had been homeless, then living in hostels, then in hospital for three months with septicaemia — I was really ill. I was still using, but not nearly as much; the crack cut right down. After discharge I got put into the women's hostel, and that was when my worth started to change. I only then started to realise what I was actually doing, when they started to help me in the hostel, things started to clear my mind.

I put on loads of weight — it's almost like I put myself in a cocoon, I made myself unattractive, so that I wouldn't be able to work. I didn't know how to get away from it at all.

The hostel was like communal living, all women together, so it's different. I went from being on my own after my partner had died, to a crack house, to being in a group of women and the staff who really cared about me. My worker was amazing, she was like, 'You can draw!' She got me to go to the art college. So my self-worth began to take shape, I became much more of a 'worthy' person, you know. And I was safe as well, I was in a much safer environment — no men come into the hostel.

With other women, who have been through similar things — I feel totally on par, I don't feel I'm being judged, it feels real, like it's all true. It takes you to another level, it makes it important — we're lucky to still have each other.

Renatta

When you say no to a punter. That was such a fantastic feeling for me, I felt really empowered.

You start feeling better about yourself, the more empowered you are. You're worth millions, you know.

I've thrown away all my sexy underwear. Thrown away most of the toys but I was embarrassed if anyone of the straights saw them in my dustbin.

The bin is getting pretty full as it is. It's not about your clothes, and it's not about your punter's fantasy you play in. It's actually a very private decision.

Walking out to the shop at about 7ish I bumped into an old punter. He was like, '20 quid for a blow job?' I said, 'Nah.'

He became the desperate one:

'30 quid then.'

'No, not a fucking chance!'

'50 quid then?!'

Of course, I turned him down. I could have punched the air, I was that impressed with myself!

Well fucking done. That's when things began to get better!!

Written by Renatta

PIVOTAL MOMENT.



AFTER MAKING CHANGE

I could never imagine going on the street and working again. I don't have the perfect life, but I have what most people don't. I have a roof over my head, I have a good family, and I have peace of mind, knowing that I don't have to step on a street to earn money again. Yes, money is tight but I manage because I would never stand on a street corner again to earn money.

Written by Mia

I always talk to the girls on the street. I was like that once. Last night I lent my phone to one of them as I felt sorry for her.

I also had a phone call off someone 2 weeks ago asking if I wanted a toot! I said thank you but no thank you. And that was that.

Right now I'm doing better than I ever dreamed of. I would love a man or woman for my future. I'm 41 years old, and I am so alone.

I have a lot of mental health and other problems.

But I'd rather live a lonely life than wake up to worrying about scoring. I see people and think I'm very lucky to be alive. People say 'God Porscha, you've changed, you look so good to how you used to look'.

My life is okay.

I worry about everything and anything.

Written by Porscha

I get severe anxiety if I think about my lifestyle as it was. If I thought that I would go out now, at night, and get in a stranger's car, at 2 o'clock in the morning, and then go and smoke crack in an archway in a block of flats and maybe pull my pants down and have an injection in my groin, after getting in maybe another dozen strangers' cars, I nearly feel sick with the fear of it.

If I knew then what I know now, I swear to God the world would be such a better place. I'd have been in a much better position, I would have been able to make a real difference, I would have gone into politics and tried to change things.

You've got to carry on learning. It doesn't have to be maths and English, it doesn't have to be drawing and art — but there have to be tools where you can learn how to emotionally develop. How you can learn to grow emotionally as a woman and step into your age; develop with your own, right age. That's part of the cure. I want to carry on growing, I don't want to be an old woman that's like a child.

Renatta

The social worker told me I was getting my son back, and that I would get a place in supported housing so that I could have him; they said it would be a month. Three months went by and nothing happened, eventually they told me I wasn't getting him back, because I'd taken drugs. I asked to be put into rehab but I was told I didn't need it. I was struggling so I contacted the mental health service, but they told me I needed to go through my GP. It was after that I tried to jump off the bridge. The police brought me down and took me to A&E, but I was left on my own there and hearing voices and I wandered off, went to the next bridge and jumped off it. After my 'accident' I thought things would get better, but they didn't. I ended up with a heroin habit. I was in an upstairs flat on my own for months. I couldn't go out because I was in a wheelchair. There was nothing else to do but take drugs. I was seeing my son, but not very often.

I had been kicked out of a hostel because my head went a bit funny and I started hearing voices. I didn't go back after that. My Nanna let me move in until I can get my own place. When I moved in I started taking my mental health medication, which helped me a lot. Having an operation on my leg also helped as I was able to walk by myself afterwards.

My worker at Lighthouse helped me by taking me to my appointments and things like that — I wasn't with it enough to manage that by myself. I was hearing voices and not even talking to people, not going out either.

My Nanna tells me what to do and I like that. Not all the time! But most of the time. Because she's right most of the time!

You get bored. You get bored of being normal and you get bored of being on drugs. I get bored of both. I have a drink and it takes me straight back to the drugs, which is why I don't really drink now. Alcohol affects me really badly since I hit my head after my accident. Having my son back would help me not be bored of being normal. I imagine taking him out and doing things together — taking him swimming. Having a family life.

Daisy



We need a specialist rehab for women, to actually meet them where they are, young. I believe the older ones can get set in their ways. Because a lot of the young girls I knew are dead now. The ones that started at a young age, most of them are dead. And that hurts.

If I had that chance to help people, I'd pick up younger ones, girls who are just coming out on the street. I'd say, 'Right, c'mon, I've got you a rehab, help you get everything back together when you're

straight off the drugs; we've got an aftercare service, if you've got nowhere' — you know, no family life. And like a house afterwards — all the help after that to get them into a property.

Many of the young girls, they've got into the wrong crowd or started hanging about with somebody because they've got nobody else; they get mixed up, and before you know it they've got a habit. I think a lot of the girls, they've been in care

and they've not got a family, and I do believe a lot of people now, especially the ones who've just come off the street, need that. Need that stability, need somebody there, all the time.

I always had my Mum. My children went to my Mum, and there's people out there that haven't got children; that have messed up younger years, had their children taken off them, and if they're young they get adopted out. And to be honest if your children get taken — I believe if that's happened, what life have you got? You don't want to live any more. You don't.

There's got to be trust. It's like if they've got children, they've gone to see the children and something bad's happened — it's always going to be a relapse situation. Like for girls who've gone to court and it's not gone well; they relapse. Straight off. And I think that's where a lot of the people need the support.

Nicola

6 HOPE

I THINK THAT THE REASON I HAVE
COME OUT OKAY IS THAT NO MATTER WHAT
HAPPENED OR WHAT ANYBODY DID, THEY
COULDN'T TAKE HOPE - OR WHATEVER
YOU WANT TO CALL IT - AWAY FROM ME,
NO ONE COULD DESTROY THAT...

Deborah

If the things I've been through hadn't happened, I wouldn't be the person I am today. I wouldn't be as strong as I am now.

There were about four or five occasions on the anniversary of my Nanna's death when I'd try to kill myself: every year, my head would go. It's only been the past few years that I've not tried to kill myself. Because I've realised that my Nanna wouldn't want me to put myself through that pain. And it would break her heart to know that I was going through that. The way I felt was if my Nanna wasn't on this earth, I didn't want to be on this earth. But I've now realised that I must have a purpose on this earth. Because I survived it.

And now I've got my daughter, so I've got something to live for. When she's 18 and she goes looking for her Mam (of course she's going to, she's going to be curious — she's going to ask questions) I want her to be able to find me. And that's the other reason I really want to get clean, because I don't want my answer to all her questions to be 'I can't remember, I was smashed.' I want to be able to give her answers to the questions.

I don't want to forget a single thing about her. There was this tiny, perfect, beautiful thing, and she was depending on me to survive. And I thought, I can't let her down. Every single feed I was up in that unit, feeding her, every nappy change, every bath, every time she cried, I'd be straight upstairs to her, you know what I mean, I'd just had a caesarean I had a broken pelvis and an abscess, but I still made sure I was there every single time.

Seeing how my Dad has been with my little brother made me realise that how he was with me was not my fault. He came to see me a week after I had my daughter, we still speak on the phone every week, or on Facebook. But I think having my daughter was the first time my dad opened up to me. The first time and only time I've ever seen my Dad cry was when he held her.

Crissy's words

Being an addict has opened my eyes to a lot of things, so I can support people. Caring for others has made me look at other things I want to do with my life. I never thought I'd be able to do something like that, and now I can, but the whole point is the only thing that's stopping me doing things like that is my past life. My criminal record. I went on a downward spiral. Now it's time to climb up that spiral and stay on top, and I'm going to do everything in my power to do it. And if it takes me a year, two years, I'm going to do it — I'm going to keep fighting 'til I do.

Nicola

Human contact, to be able to have a good relationship with someone, to me, is a massive level of success. I never really cared about myself or anyone else. So that shines out, that makes me proud! There's a universe in each of us and to understand another universe, to understand another person and to feel empathy towards them; to actually really care about them.

Renatta

When you finally call it a day on the street, it's the silly things that hit home. When you know you don't have to get yourself ready and drag yourself on the street.

Things like doing the washing/doing the ironing.

Any other time you would hate doing your ironing, but it's a pleasure to do when you know you can stay in and not stand on a street corner.

Or just daft things like being able to put your feet up and watch television without having to get ready halfway through a programme.

It may sound stupid to some people but I have stood on a street corner in thick snow and pouring rain, fog so bad you cannot see anything. So it really was a novelty for me to stay at home every night, and do other things.

Even now, especially in winter when it's really cold, I look out of my window and think, 'Yes I am truly blessed because I know I will never be standing in the freezing cold like the girls do now,' and like I said, it's the silly things you take for granted.

Written by Mia

My life is so different now. I love to be alone! I also love my dog, cat and grandson. I'm so proud of my three kids, and helping my daughter when she was pregnant. I was with her all the time. She got a house next to me and has everything I had when I had a family home. My daughter's well loved, my grandson's so happy. My dog is my backbone, my world.

Porscha

I think love's the best — the biggest power of all. It's only my current partner I've been like it with; the real me. And it took me years. He loves me in all of him, that's what it is I suppose. I was pretty open with him about my past, straight away, because I think you get to that age in life where you think, 'Ah, I've got nothing more to lose'

Deborah



HOPE - I GUESS IT'S PEACE.
LIKE I HOPE I CAN PIECE
MY LIFE BACK TOGETHER
AND KEEP STRONG.
NO MORE DRUGS
CREEPING ALONG.

Written by Daisy

BBQ was sizzling the delicious grub. The people who were there were such gentle, welcoming warm + caring people that it made me feel at ease, the desperation + the intense compul. to use CRACK faded - slowly - but I began to enjoy myself.

It brought a lemon + blueberry muffin chaos pudding from Asda, which I intended to share - But after I'd had some, I put it out the way in the cooler - so no one else could get any - (I know) -

Got talking to a few new faces.

Sometimes I can't help myself. If this youngish black chap started up a conversation. "Wot brought me 2 Hull? Oh the university" says I. "Wot did I study?" "English literature - my dissertation on William Blake; Ye I got a 2.2 - So what AM I doing na

A BEACON IN THE DARKNESS

The nights are drawing in early now. Heavy charcoal skies erase the moonlight. A spiteful wind whipping off the distant water.

When darkness falls, the atmosphere changes on these busy streets, becoming edgier, sharper with a distinct element of desperation and danger.

Kate and I walk slowly along the main road of the red-light district in Hull.

I hunch my shoulders against the frigid night air and dig my fists deeper into my jacket pockets.

We continue walking, past the cream coloured phone box I used to phone my dealer, past the side street I lived for a few weeks when I came out of prison, towards the street corner which was my pitch.

A working girl stands alone on the same street corner watching the passing cars. Her name is Jane.

'God it's freezing, been out long?' I say to her

'No, just come out, what about you?' she asks.

'No, just come out ourselves,' I reply. The car pulls up, just past us, the driver turning on the interior lights.

'Do you want a hot drink?' asks Kate 'Warm yourself up a bit.'

We open the side door of the car and get in. The driver saying 'Hi' to Jane. She's the third member of our team. We are doing voluntary outreach for the Lighthouse Project.

For the next ten minutes, Jane talks about the problems she faces, while she drinks her hot chocolate.

It's the same issues I faced all those years ago, nothing's changed, nothing has got any better.

It's not just drug addiction working girls have to battle each and every single day but homelessness, exploitation, domestic violence, mental health issues, health issues in general, risks of violence and rape, even death.

It's also feeling the world has abandoned you, knowing society just doesn't care and that most people are blind to what's going on around them.

That's why I volunteer for Lighthouse. I want to make a difference, however small. To show I care

and I know what it feels like facing all these insurmountable problems.

I come out each shift knowing that all the volunteers at Lighthouse care and they too want to make a difference.

Jane, Kate and I get out of the car, Jane returns to her corner I worked all those years ago.

Different players, but 'The Game' remains the same.

Kate's been my ever-patient mentor for all the years I've volunteered for Lighthouse. She's made me confident to express my views and be part of a team.

We continue our walk up the main road of the red light district in Hull, towards the next working girl, stood on the next street corner. The Lighthouse car pulls up in front of us again, playing a crazy game of leap frog with us, keeping Kate and I within sight.

Another working girl opens the side door as we arrive at the car. She's in a hurry so she just needs a hot drink and a goody bag, then she's on her way.

For the next two hours we stop and talk to every working girl we see. Most we know. Some are new.

When the night shift is over and I'm snuggled up under the duvet with my dog curled up behind my knees, my husband breathing rhythmically sleeping beside me, a man who's never once thrown my past in my face. I once again realise how fortunate I am.

The sky finally unburdens its load as I listen to the rain tapping incessantly against my bedroom window, a miasma of memories cascades through my mind.

I welcome these memories and emotions because it reminds me never to become complacent, never to forget what I had become, and to remember the battle I fought so hard to overcome.

As I fall asleep, I think of all the women working the streets, not just in Hull, but in towns and cities throughout the country.

Written by Millie



by Millie



WE'VE ALL GOT A PLACE

I think as relevant as hope, is purpose. If you've got no purpose, that's a hard one. I'm lucky I can always fall back on the art thing; it gives me a purpose. Art lends itself to vulnerability, which makes it good. It's okay to be vulnerable when you're making art.

Art was like a religion for me, it was spiritual. It touched something in me that was innocent. It was like those individual brushstrokes, even if they were instinctive and I never thought about any of the colours or what I was doing, it felt much holier, – righteous. It felt pure, and untouched. I didn't start looking at art until after many years of prostitution as a way to express myself, and it gave me so much confidence.

When I had my near death experience after taking an eighth of each heroin and crack and falling and hitting my head, I never saw a light, angels; nothing, it was just blackness. But afterwards what I experienced was a memory, like a mist of souls... people were doing things like gardening, sewing, knitting, spinning wheels, climbing trees, tending nature. There was a conscious level of activity, I had a sense of them like a soup of people that were all together – all helping and striving, making and doing with one creative energy, one creative drive – all working to the good of their community. I described it like a soul memory.

They didn't need food, it was like their spirits needed to achieve these goals; like they were hardwired to prune these trees and tend these crops. It's a memory that's always stayed with me. I wondered if that's the way forward – that we've all got this little role, we've all got this place, and we all benefit so much from taking part in that one thing.

Renatta



Lover of the light

Every day I awake I'm thankful for what I have
in front of me.
Take a moment now and recall a good time in your
life when the heart's not heavy,
but full of joy and karma,
and put that into your day to day life now,
And I guarantee you will feel a little ray of hope
for the day,
hope for tomorrow,
and less alone.

It's an overwhelming feeling of despair that sends
these girls out to work,
in a cruel world of pure mental torture.
I've been there, I've come through – with many
others,
Holding up that light as a way to guide –
to hope, help, and relief from such a bad place.

Written by Jemma

There is hope. If somebody like me, who was
at the lowest of the low – if I can change my
life, and have a lovely flat, great relationship,
a degree, eating healthily – don't even smoke;
if someone like me can transform my life then
there's definitely masses, loads of hope, in buckets.
I could tip it out and pour it all over them.

Renatta

**US GIRLS, WE HAVEN'T BEEN
THROUGH WHAT WE'VE BEEN
THROUGH FOR NOTHING. WE'RE
OUT TO HELP OTHER PEOPLE AT
THE END OF THE DAY.**

Deborah's words



THE WOMEN WHO HAVE DIED

14 women, including two contributors to this book, died during the three and a half years it took to prepare it.

The names listed below refer to 38 women, all well-known to Hull Lighthouse who have died in the last 20 years. The causes of their deaths ranged from pneumonia and street work-related illnesses to drug overdoses and drug and alcohol related health conditions. At least five were murdered — while some causes of death remain undetermined.

All died too young.

These are not their real names. Prostitution still stigmatises women and we did not want to cause their families any more pain, so we have chosen for each woman a name we believe they would have liked.

**Helen Myan
Sarah Cooper
Christine Dawson
Glenda Powers
Linda Barnes
Heather Martin
Jackie Murphy
Jessica Randall
Nadine Connor
Sheila Harris
Angela Kingston
Dawn Atkinson
Josie Pickering**

**Carole Abbott
Joan Miller
Jemma Gordon
Tanya English
Candy Spencer
Eileen Seaton
Billie Wilson
Susan Walker
Jayne Brown
Laura Nichols
Donna White
Diana Chambers
Mary Harris**

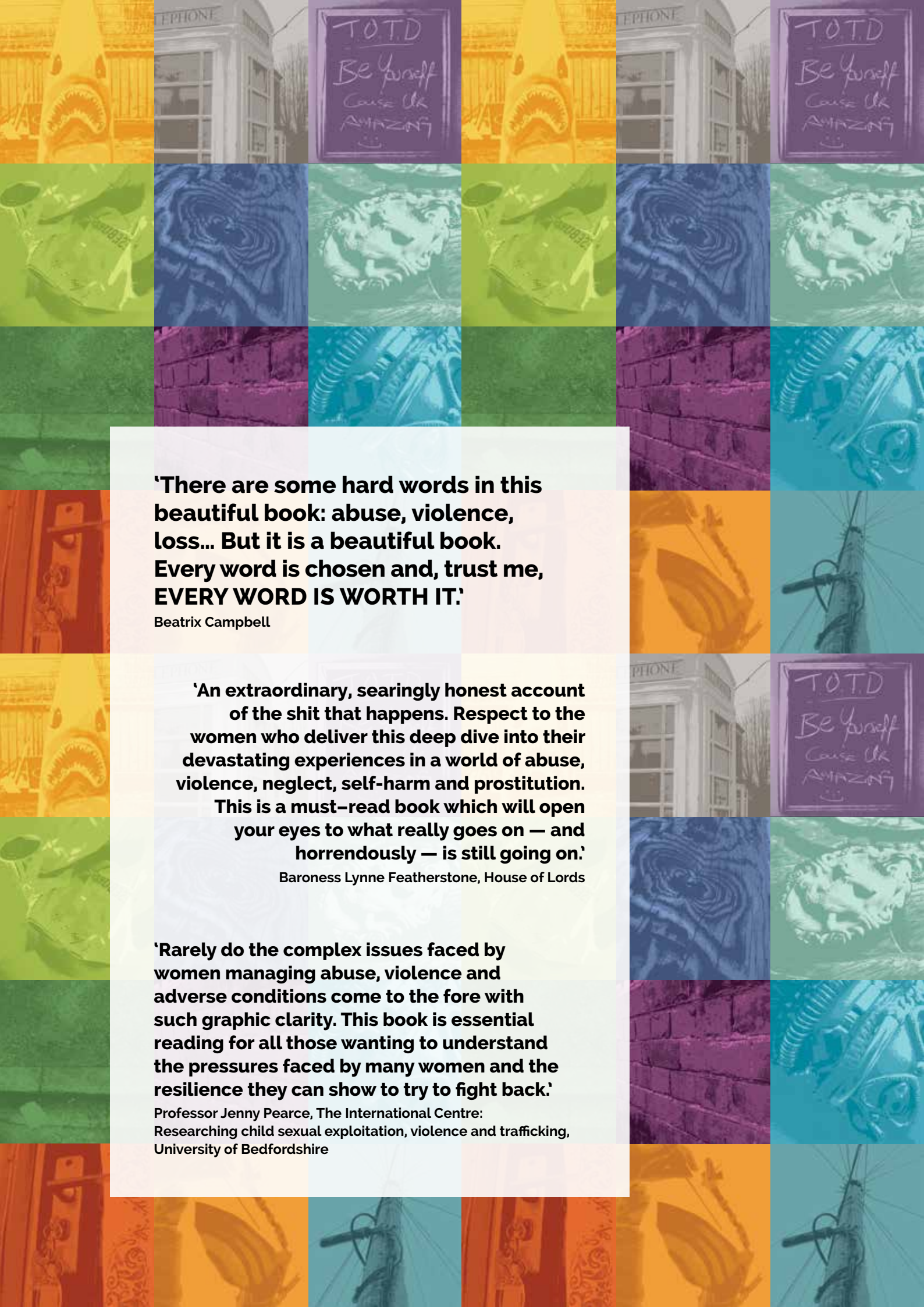
**Lyndsey Underwood
Mollie Baker
Terrie Roebuck
Sharon Hills
Nina Hills
Sally Evans
Rosie Alison
Nelly Sainsbury
Charley Simpson
Debra Evans
Keira Gosthorpe
Marle Eastfield**

These are all pseudonyms



GLOSSARY

Bag	bag of heroin (usually £10's worth)
Bairn	child
Bray/brayed	beat/beaten
Cig	cigarette
Dodgy punter	customer who causes violence, rape, robbery, etc. to a working girl
Doss	to find a place to sleep temporarily (usually someone's home)
Doss house/hall	temporary communal-living environment
Down the lane	the red light area
E's	ecstasy
Eighth	measurement of cannabis (1/8th of an ounce)
Gear	drugs, usually heroin
Go over	overdose to the point where you 'go over' to the 'other side'/have a near death experience.
Going 'on the batter'	working in street prostitution
Goody bag	bag containing information about Hull Lighthouse Project, condoms, wet wipes, sweets/chocolate, and details of recent dodgy punters
Hit	a high, usually an injection of heroin
Kick off	become aggressive or violent
Lay-on	loan in the form of drugs
Meds	medication
Meth	methadone
Owt/nowt	anything/nothing
'Phet	amphetamines
Pipe	device for smoking crack
Rattle	experience withdrawal symptoms from a drug
Resin	Cannabis resin
Section 222	Government legislation used by Hull City Council and enforced by local police, which criminalises women deemed to be soliciting within Hull's red light area
Score	buy drugs
Sorting someone out	supplying them with drugs
Script	prescription (usually for methadone)
Single skinner	joint made with a single cig paper skin
Snowball	injecting heroin and crack in the same syringe to counterbalance the upper/downer effect of each
Tenfoot	dead-ended back alley
Toot	to smoke an illicit substance (usually heroin)
Twag	truant
Walker	potential client on foot
Work/working	selling sexual services
Working girl	The term 'working girl' does not relate to the age of the woman. It's just the nicest phrase. Most of us call ourselves working girls. We don't want to refer to ourselves or have others refer to us as whores or prostitutes



'There are some hard words in this beautiful book: abuse, violence, loss... But it is a beautiful book. Every word is chosen and, trust me, EVERY WORD IS WORTH IT:'

Beatrix Campbell

'An extraordinary, searingly honest account of the shit that happens. Respect to the women who deliver this deep dive into their devastating experiences in a world of abuse, violence, neglect, self-harm and prostitution. This is a must-read book which will open your eyes to what really goes on — and horrendously — is still going on.'

Baroness Lynne Featherstone, House of Lords

'Rarely do the complex issues faced by women managing abuse, violence and adverse conditions come to the fore with such graphic clarity. This book is essential reading for all those wanting to understand the pressures faced by many women and the resilience they can show to try to fight back.'

Professor Jenny Pearce, The International Centre:
Researching child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking,
University of Bedfordshire