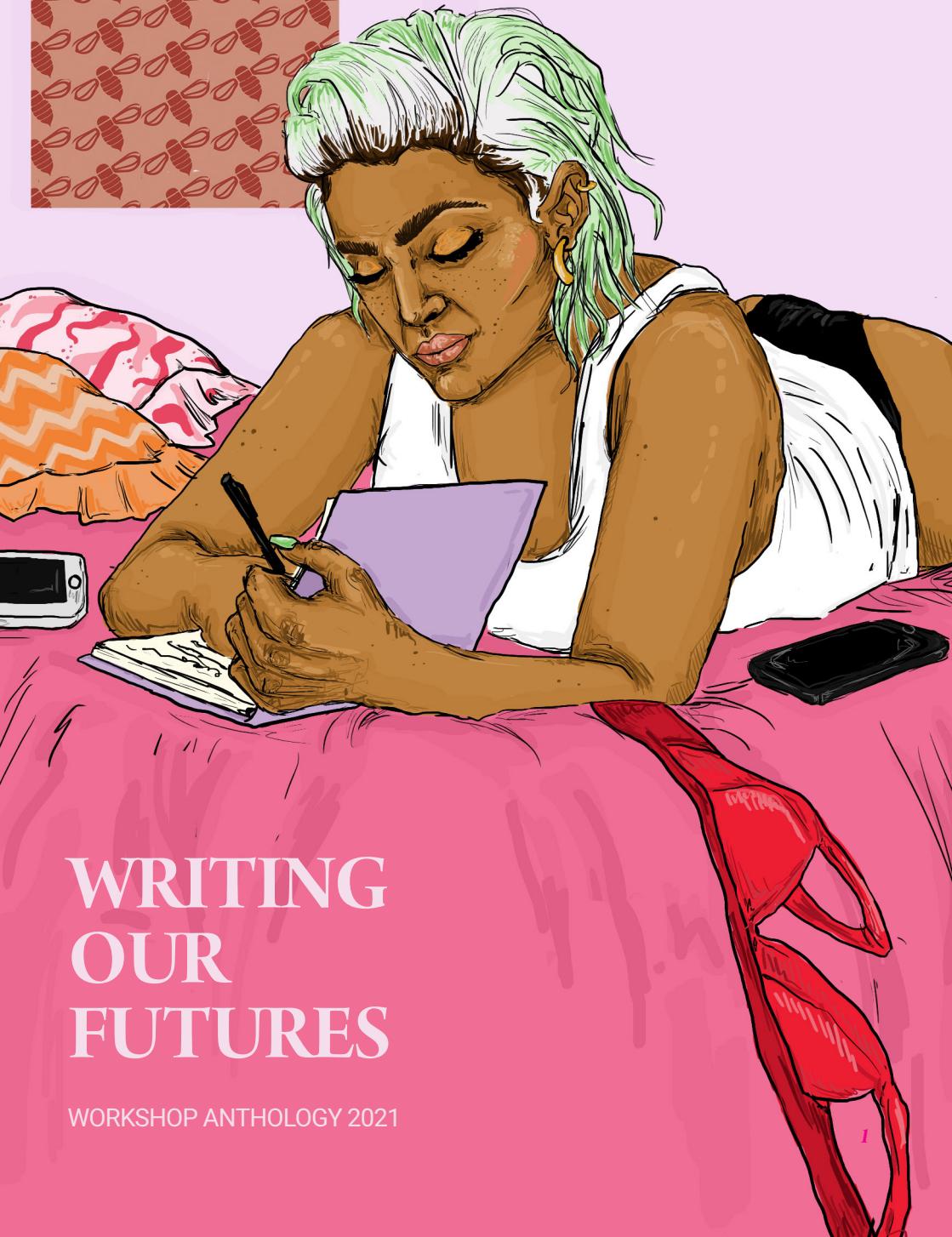


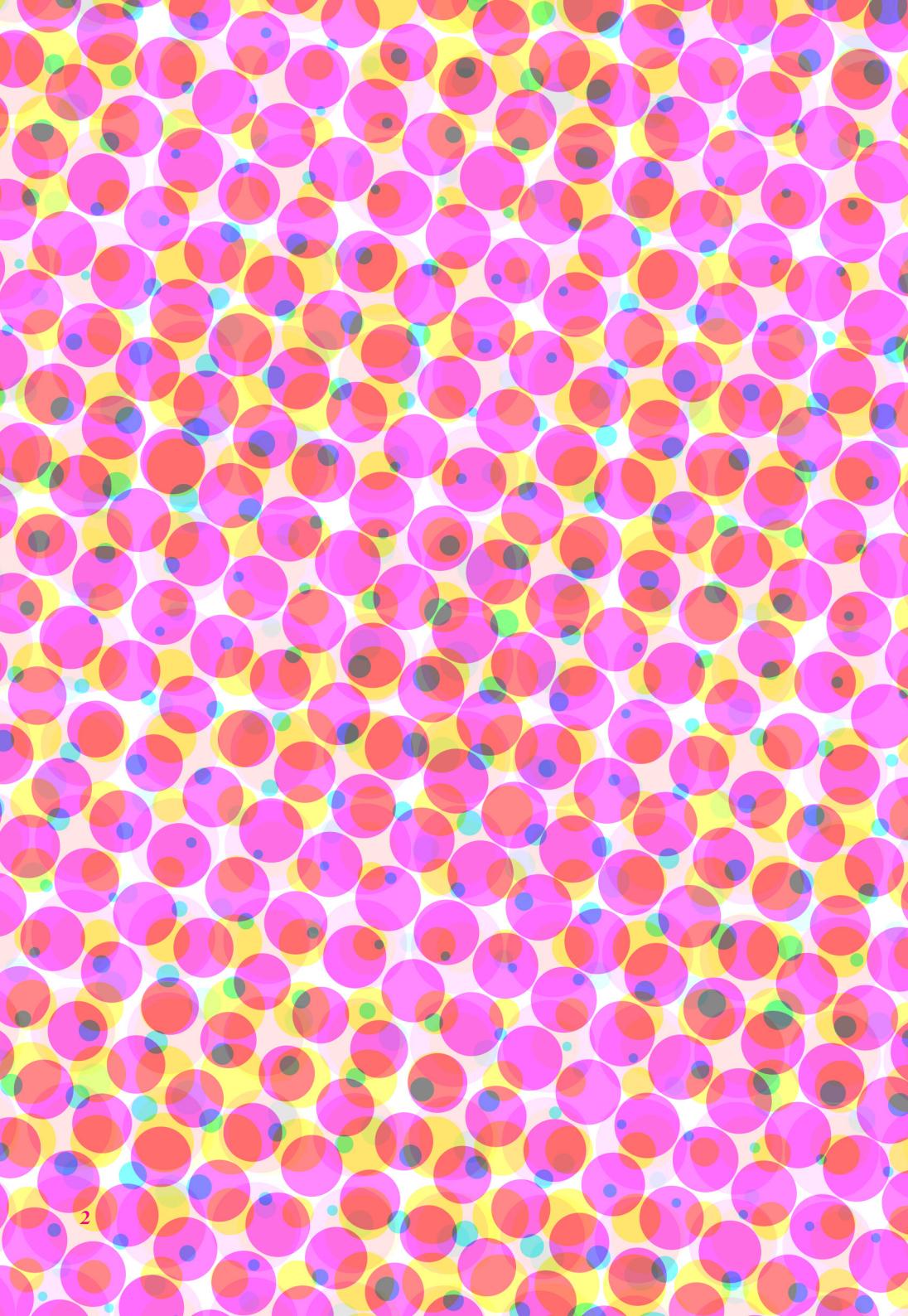
A DECRIMINALISED FUTURE:
SEX WORKERS' FESTIVAL OF RESISTANCE

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF SWARM



WRITING OUR FUTURES

WORKSHOP ANTHOLOGY 2021



Writing Our Futures

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2021

WRITING OUR FUTURES

In 2021, Decriminalised Futures ran the first of series of free workshops over five weeks for sex workers to explore their lives, experiences and political movements through creative storytelling. We wanted these workshops to support participants in telling the kinds of stories that are often untold, or that don't conform to conventions. During the workshops we explored writing techniques, representations of sex workers in television and film, the history of political sex worker movements, and created a space to make and celebrate our own work within a community of sex worker solidarity and love.

DECRIMINALISED FUTURES

Decriminalised Futures is a collaborative project using creative tools to explore a broad range of topics impacting on the lives of sex workers. Our goal is to celebrate creative expression of all kinds as a tool for deeper solidarity between global justice struggles. Through creative interventions and popular education, we aim to highlight the ways in which sex worker movements are inextricably linked to struggles for racial and economic justice and trans liberation.

Content note: This zine contains descriptions of violence, intimate partner abuse, whorophobia, family disownment, dissociation and consent violation. Take care <3



From idea to narrative dialogue

We started the Writing Our Futures workshops with a grounding exercise and discussion: why do we tell stories? Who gets to tell them? What can a story be, and what power do stories have? Participants brought all sorts of ideas to the workshops, and with these in mind, we ran through basic plots, and related them to our own experiences.

It was important to us to begin by thinking about how to tell stories based in our own lives, challenging the ways our experiences are usually fitted into existing narratives about who sex workers are or what we do. We watched films and videos made about and also by sex workers and talked about what those representations mean to us.

The first exercise of the workshops was to come up with a single sentence which would then be the seed for a developing story.

Next, those single sentence stories were developed into three sentences: a beginning, a middle, an end. Finally we fleshed the sentences out into paragraphs.

Over the weeks the workshops moved onto thinking about characters, motivations, dialogue, and conflict. What factors motivate characters to act in certain ways? What ideas can we express through different characters, through conflict? How are our desires and motivations influenced by our identities, or the social structures we are in - if someone is your boss, or your client the way you deal with conflict is different than if they are your friend - and how do we bring these insights to our characters?

We've shared some examples of our work in the following pages.

1 SENTENCE

- ♥ Having managers + all the girls run up to my room to check I was okay after they heard a loud bang. I was doing a handstand competition.
- ⌚ Grappling with internalised whorephobia after finally leaving a whorephobic partner.
- ⌚ Quids in, he's paying for three hours and will need coke by the second. He's asked if I know a guy, darling I've got your supply.
- ⌚ A charted history of who's touched this body
- ♣ I'm trying to divorce myself from my sw alter ego
- ♠ I'm an advanced AI, living and working in a 2060s future Berlin where we've failed to tackle climate change.
- ★ Reverse the saviour complex in Pretty Woman.
- ♪ I would tell the story of what I'd truthfully reply to the messages I receive from clients.
- ⌚ A queer sex worker love story. Based on my girlfriend and I both being sex workers.

3 SENTENCES

- In my home, I am a sinner. (The idea of not having a home, metaphorically. Due to feeling excluded from the core of "normality" for being a sex worker).
- I run around restless, lost and lonely.
- It seemed like a punishment but it was a gift.



- I look at my phone at 8am and have 6 messages and 22 missed calls.
- The messages are from spambots and 3am 'u up's. I am angry and begin to reply to them truthfully.
- I delete what I've written and answer with the usual message, then return to the kettle.



- I used to be one person, then I was two, now I'm not sure if I exist any more.
- Who am I? Am I my pain? Am I real? Who am I without sw?
- Setting boundaries + embracing my anger - learning to be selfish.



Client arrives. He's creepy from the start. Pervasive atmosphere of menace.

Client is saying terrible things, but not obviously terrible. I smother him with a pillow and kill him.

The body is splayed in the middle of my bed. I need to clean up and destroy his phone. I do laundry and repetitive mundane cleaning tasks. When it's over I sit in the empty room.



I find out that
He has been cheating
I find out that he's
Never not been doing
Revenge porn

I blame myself
I see it as an inevitability

I love myself
I'm whole

3 PARAGRAPHS

Panic in room 6

It was a quiet Tuesday afternoon, the girls were watching films + ordering takeaway, it was rainy + we didn't have any clients in the waiting room

All of a sudden we heard a scream + a large bang come from room 6 where E had been with someone all morning. The maid, reception + two of the girls ran upstairs and burst into the room...
Panicked, they asked - are you ok? What happened?

Just doing a handstand competition with my 58 year old regular,
NAKED!
Why, what's wrong?



"In my home, I was a sinner", is a warm affirmation that love is possible and that dignity is only possible if we have a home. In my home I am a sinner. What do I remember? My room was a confessional, very cold, very quiet. None wanted to get in. They'd just wait at the door step, preparing their questions to confess me. (Till a rather large press conference announced my sacrament of penance). I did not repent and so, godless I departed.

"The woman departed clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stone and pearls, holding a golden cup in her hand, being full of abominations and the impurity of her sexual immorality".
Apocalypse (Revelation 17: 4).

I run around restless, lost and lonely. To sustain the weight of the "I" – name, read gender, social class, lingerie. It's not vanity what's heavy, it's the homeless "I". Intrinsic to the whore that negotiates alone. The unnamed woman, with the repetitive obsession for being "the me" and also the "not me". The me, then the abominations – or so they said. And the hours falling through the evening, just like bars of autumnal light fell through the openings of my former room.

It seemed like a punishment but it was a gift. Intrinsic to the whore, it seemed a punishment but it was a gift. To use the abominations as verses to create first barricades. Then, to use the barricades to create a home. The me and the whore – also me, in sisterhood with other whores – the gift. The demolition of home turning into a home. A warm affirmation that love is possible.



'Party guy looking for a good time'

Condoms, check. 8ball, check. Lube, check. Excuses, check. Sex appeal, check.

Knock x2, twice to make sure he hears, a third would be too keen.

Nice aftershave, annoying face.

He's nervous I can tell, sweaty palms.

Asks a new question before he finishes the last.

I can milk this one.

Lots of chat, lots of fumbling.

We're wasting his time not mine.

Fuck do I care?

Classic misogynist I can tell. So if he wants another line I'll help him rack it as well.

None for me though. I am nobody's drugged up vulnerable little girl, this is my game and we play it my way, so if you want me to stay the night you've got to pay.

If you want to fuck you've got to get it up.

So far not much luck



Ruin is an advanced AI in a femme artificial body. They get by on sex work, activism and avoiding curfews and military-police surveillance. The temperature in the city is unbearable, socially and literally. Group division is extreme. Autonomous groups have begun to reclaim certain city districts, squatting and house-sharing are on the rise as workers take back buildings that were taken from them. It's a hotbed of sleeplessness.

Global warming has caused food shortages, mass homelessness and movement of people and a breakdown in social welfare. The rich escape the worst of it by hiding in shared enclaves and by monopolising international travel for themselves. Everyone else is stuck, journeys to other countries take weeks and months. Revolution is in the air, extreme social structural change must emerge if the masses are to survive. But the struggle to move forward is blocked by division, lack of resources and tribalism.

They sit on the edge of collective revolution, the result unknown, but the flames are fanned.



I fell in love with somebody I thought was the one. For a year he was cruel and controlling about my job. We were in therapy to work on it. I thought it was forever, but then I discovered a year's worth of cheating, abuse, and revenge porn entirely by accident, all somehow coloured by my identifying as a whore.

There is an aftermath of my own whorephobia - I get back with him. I see his treatment of sex workers as an inevitability. It takes years of empathy.

I'm ok. I don't blame myself. I'm whole and a whore. My dog, my friends, my home.

I tell my story.



Reverse the saviour complex in Pretty Woman

I feel so sorry for him. I don't think he's experienced enough culture, seen enough things. For example, he hasn't even heard of the clit, let alone found it! But he has potential. Latent kinky energy. What a vision he'd look in fine latex instead of that starchy work shirt. He's so brainwashed, poor exploited soul. He keeps telling me that just because he's a banker it doesn't mean he does cocaine – that he hasn't done cocaine in years. Yet he is trapped within a never-ending cycle of mindless office drama. Even more disturbing: he has a favourite brand of stapler. Poor creature. He needs rescuing. I'm going to tell him to say my name at the entrance of the Blue Door Dungeon in Angel. They won't expect him to know what he's doing there, but with my help, they'll be wrong to underestimate him. There's a person in there, buried deep underneath the scam society sold him - spoken over by the script it gave him to read. We can set him free.

– Bella Quinn



Sex worker 1: Why are you helping him... he's going to have an existential crisis, quit his job and then ruin our source of income.

Sex worker 2: don't you think we have an ethical responsibility to help people find themselves and then lead more authentic lives?

Sex worker 1: No!!! That's above my pay grade. I blow dicks not minds. Jesus.

Sex worker 2: But he'd be so much happier if he could unlock-

Sex worker 1: It's not your responsibility. Have you ever considered that you're a serial empath, it's kind of a trauma response from a childhood spent hypervigilant of other people's needs in order to protect your own safety. You're a people pleaser. You need to set boundaries. You wanna be working around his cock, not working around the clock. You're not Jesus.

Sex worker 2: Well... I guess he took the sins of the world on his shoulders, we take them down our throats. And... I got this dude to donate monthly to charity... am I not feeding the world with my body? Sounds pretty messiah-like to me. It's radical to offer love to those who need it.

– Bella Quinn

Final pieces

The final weeks of the workshop explored social change and what effect big social changes might have on the stories we are telling. We watched work made by artists who had produced videos for the Decriminalised Futures exhibition and talked about how telling stories about sex workers is political because of the landscape of how people think about talk about sex workers.

We spoke about how social change can be represented in our work, how the contexts we exist in as sex workers will shape the writing we produce. Reflecting on our own activism and struggles while being witnessed and supported by other sex workers was such a powerful experience.

These conversations and the exercises in previous sessions gave space for us to build on the ideas we had brought to the workshops. In the last session we worked on final pieces, which we've reprinted in the following pages.



THE BOOKING

The last one is the most work. He's new but I recognise him immediately when he walks in: the trembling nerd, as good-natured and eager to please as he is selfish and unimaginative, keen to fulfill a role for himself that he has already written, one in which my presence is entirely irrelevant. In these scenarios, they buy wholly into the lie; that I am smooth, coiffed and buttered, a giggling mirror to their own inertia. Never nervous, or ill at ease, or bad tempered; never anything less than utterly delighted by an hour spent in their company.

He's so anxious his hands shake when he hands me the money and he cuts off every sentence I start with agreement and anticipation of what he thinks I will say. His round face is eager and so vulnerable I almost can't bear to meet his eye. He brings me a bag of lime tortilla chips and some onion dip, which I like. Too often I am gifted awful, ill-fitting lingerie; not only a waste but humiliating to perform enjoyment and gratitude for such things when all I want is money. The lingerie has nothing to do with me; a demand for performance couched as generosity. Tortilla chips are something I can actually use.

"I'm harmless", he says delightedly. "You'll not have any trouble from me."

I beam and squeeze his arm. "Of course I won't", I reply, and I feel the sad predictability of dread settle in around us.

In bed, he is blundering and unconcerned with me, his hands rough against my skin. He hasn't yet learnt to support his own bodyweight and he smothers me in missionary position, his hot breath panting

and wet against my neck and in my ear as I squeeze my face into a pillow and try, with increasing futility, to hold him up above me. When I go on top he winces when I lean against him.

"I have a very sensitive chest" he says.

We change again and he is behind me; he wants me to lie face down on the bed and I have a final glimpse of his dick and the bubble of the condom through the triangle of my crooked arm and think, oh no. He spreads himself out on top of me and crushes me from my core outwards. Twice I croak from beneath him to hold himself up, twice he blusters his apologies and braces himself on his arms before slumping back down entirely moments later. I am anxiously waiting for him to come and when he's close he says "Oh yes that's it", before stiffening and quickening his pace. When he's finished I snake my hand behind me through the claustrophobic cavern of flesh between my back and his stomach and down, searching blindly for the ring of the condom which I already know I won't find. When he finally pulls out his dick is bare and sticky.

I leap out of the bed and into the bathroom, dimly aware of his apologies behind me. I shut the door, remove the condom and shower. When I come back, I try to say that such things can be avoided by checking the base of the condom, and he interrupts me constantly with agreements and apologies and wild attempts to finish my sentences.

"Yes, shout at me" he says.

"I haven't raised my voice to you at all."

"You should I mean," he laughs awkwardly, "you should shout at me."

"How would that help me?"

I can't stop myself, the frustration and anger is all over my face; I work so hard to be peppy and bright, never hard or sharp, anything that I've heard so many men call "bitter". His foolish grin collapses and his eyes cloud over dully with disappointment and shame. Sitting on the edge of the bed, still nude except for his boxers, he looks away quickly.

"I'm sorry, I'll get my things and be out of your hair," he says in a rush, grabbing for his wadded up clothes on the floor and going into the bathroom. He takes a long time in there, the shower blaring on full.

I feel like I might cry. There's half an hour left; I know that I have to smooth everything over. If he leaves like this he won't think of me as professional, he'll have seen my anger, my cover will be blown. Later when I get home I'll be torn in a tedious, exhausting pendulum swing between guilt and resentment. I have been through this enough times to know that directing an immediate resolution is always the best option. The crucial thing is that I don't apologize. I psyche myself up while he finishes in the shower and by the time the bathroom door clicks open with a puff of steam I'm almost back, there's only a trace in my bearing of the horror and powerlessness that I know he glimpsed before. I draw him out as he sits to tie his shoes; at first he hardly meets my eye, he obviously just wants to run, but there's still time left and I need this to end amicably. He feels like a failure with women, so he paid a prostitute and he even failed with her; but if this is the story he leaves with then I will feel like a failure. The resolution has nothing to do with him, or with any of them. Probably I make it worse, dragging it out, reassuring him and aggravating his guilt, when all he wants is to flee to the comfort of familiar surroundings, distance himself from this woman who has recast all his steamy boudoir fantasies

as laughable, causing him to cringe with shame when he recalls them later. I compliment his trainers and talk to him about Star Trek, the ocean on fire, our mutual dislike of Elon Musk, ruthlessly shoehorning in connection and shared experience wherever I can.

"I feel stupid," he says.

"These things happen. I've done things that've made me feel stupid sometimes too."

He looks genuinely incredulous.

"Have you?" he scoffs.

"Well yes," I reply. "Because I'm human."

He takes this in quickly, this fact of my life, and shakes his head in an embarrassed gesture that says "of course, of course", but I know why this man smothered me and why he is so afraid now. When he goes to leave the next time I follow him to the door and do the vulcan salute, which makes him laugh. It's important to make them laugh or feel special as they leave; it's the last memory they'll have of you.

– Anonymous

EXCERPTS FROM THE NOVEL CITY LAND

Some days I finish work and I feel like I can't get the smell of shit off me. I can't clean it off no matter how many times I wash my hands. It's soaked in. I've also noticed that sometimes, when I'm working, I leave the room. Just mentally checkout. And when I come back into the room and I see what we're doing I'm terrified for a moment and then I'm fine again. At least with this job I leave work at work though. Apart from the smell of shit.

I don't really know what I want. Maybe I don't want this but it's good right now so I'll stay with it. Maybe I'll change maybe I'll grow maybe I'll do other things. I will do all of that. I will change, I will grow, I will do other things. It's inevitable. But the work seems endless right now. One thing ends and another thing begins. And in between all of that I have no time. I don't have enough time for myself. How do you get more time? How do you buy more time? Money, I guess.

...

I came home and I put my money in my wallet. I now had 220 euros. I had made 100 euros that night. I'd had one appointment which had been good. I lay on my back and put a song on that I liked. There was no one home. I put my legs up in the foetal position and engaged the re-gen function by closing my eyes and rolling them backwards into my control panel.

This function makes my pussy regenerate. It takes about 60 minutes to restore everything that I take out in a day. I just lie there like this for an hour. And then I'm fixed and I carry on. Today someone asked me why do my job, when I could do lots of other jobs. She said it's because she thinks I fundamentally

disagree with the system that made me and that me putting myself through this (yes, "putting myself through this" as a use of words) is a form of protest against a system that I hate. She said I could have a better life if I wanted to. And she said that I choose not to because I am angry.

I'll hand it to her, some of it was accurate. I am angry. I am protesting. But lots of people are angry and protesting. I'm not doing God's work by choosing not to live a way of life that I find stifling and impossible.

I'm lucky because I can carve out a space for myself in this industry that is pretty sweet by most standards thanks to my model number and things like that. Everyone's just surviving in this city and I feel like at least with this, with the way I work, that I get more chance to live than if I did a 50-hour commerce job and so I do it. I don't know. I'm just living. What do any of our choices mean. What do our choices say about us. We all make choices. This is mine. I respect everyone's choices as long as they're not harming anybody.

If we really could choose, I don't know what I'd do. The sad fact is that I really don't believe we can choose and don't ever expect the chance to, under the current circumstances that we're in. Unless you're rich of course. I really don't believe that I can choose to live a decent life in the system that made me. I don't believe that if I got a "clean" job that I would be any better off than I am now.

the thing is I'm happy to work. I'm so happy to work you know. But I work for my friends. I break my back for my friends. I break my back for my family. I break my back for my community. I'd grow things I'd give away things for free in return for things that mattered. I'm not afraid of work.

I'm clearly not afraid of work.

I just feel that this way of working gives me more opportunity to not work. It's 12 hours a week instead of 50. I work so I don't have to work. What's wrong with that? Isn't that the goal of everybody's work? Isn't everybody working so that they can not work? Whether they get a job that doesn't feel like work because they love it so much or they get a job that's going to get them loads of money so that they can quit their job when they're 30 and travel the world. Or they work their whole life so that they can get a decent pension and not have to work. Isn't everybody working so they don't have to work? That's what work is. You work to live. I also live to work. But work means taking care of my family and my friends and my community and the planet that's work to me. Not this service for coin. That's not work. That's just necessity. That's an annoying necessity. That's just a job. And so I put myself to work in other ways, and then I do job. My job and the work are completely different.

I don't know what I'm doing. Why am I doing this? Why is anyone doing anything? I laughed. My re-gen cycle finished and I noticed that the needle was jumping on the record in the same place over and over again.

THE POOL

Sunday is the hardest day. I wake to an empty flat and if it's raining, I know I'm really in trouble. I make the bed, which is quick and easy and sad because the warmth I feel when arranging the duvet comes from just my body and the material smells only of me. I want to bury my face in your pillow and inhale you, like they do in films. Like I did in our early shapeless days, whenever you'd leave the room to shower, stretching out like a cat where you had lain. But I washed you away and you've now been replaced with heady, chemical flowers. Since we broke-up, my days are barely without sound. I start with audiobooks before moving onto podcasts and, if in the gym or out running, it's music every single time. I wonder how long I will fear silence. I wonder if there are tracks that send a jolt through your body, like an elevator breaking down. I try to guess which ones they are. Walking into town, the air is thick with dust and pollen. Cars trundle past, windows open, arms hanging out. Somewhere out of sight a baby is crackling and, by the little Sainsburys, a toddler reaches for flowers tied to a bench, wailing as they're pulled away. I see couples sharing all around me – headphones, pots of tea and tiny squares of cake. I can see them leaning-in for kisses, or rubbing noses in the street. 'Be careful' I want to tell them, it all starts this way, but don't be careful at all. It's just that when I pushed my nose against your beautiful snout, my world changed colour. That wonky smile, those chickenpox scars. Your hands. I've got a booking at four so need to clean the flat and shave. I wonder if I can get away with not hoovering if I pick the white bits up by hand. It's the bathroom that's a pain, as the grouting makes the whole place look dirty, even when it's not. Even though I pride myself on being very hygienic these days. I try to think. Where did he go on holiday?

I used to keep a spreadsheet so I could remember this sort of thing. It makes them feel special. I ask myself when did I stop trying in this job? The client I'm seeing later is nice and usually pretty clean. Some medical guy from what I've gathered, though he's careful not to say too much, which I find funny, as if I have the energy to ruin his life. As if I wouldn't ruin mine in the process. Being touched by people who aren't you is getting easier, which, in itself, is painful. The week after our breakup I felt like I was betraying you each time I worked, even though I was seeing clients when we were still together, which you knew, and which you were so devastatingly cool about. Your friends were shocked you didn't care about me working, and I felt bad about their judgement, like I wanted to protect you. Or maybe that's not quite true. I didn't want them to think you didn't care about me. I didn't want to think you didn't care about me. When I used to look at you, scared, and say 'I think so and so thinks this', or 'so and so said that', you'd pull me close, laugh into my neck and ask 'And what do they know?' And you were right because they weren't with us when we camped out in your kitchen (because you like tents and I hate fields), or sitting beside us when we cooked our food on a little gas stove in the yard, blankets wrapped around, my feet in your lap. Your friends knew nothing either, of the day you cracked open, the first time your mother forgot who you were. It was me who held you tight and rocked you, resisting the lie that it would all turn out fine.

I turn off the high street towards the leisure centre, a pale red brick construct from the 80s with an ugly blue logo. I always feel like I'm stepping back in time as I walk through the sliding doors, past the receptionist and through the metal turnstiles. A cleaner is mopping the floor in the corridor and I say sorry for stepping where he's mopped, though there is no way for me not to. I can smell the chlorine, and I hear the sound of water as I strip off to just my costume, watching the colour darken as I shower, getting clean in preparation. Though she is hours away, I can sense my

mother's approval. Feet slippy, I pad my way to the pool and nod at the lifeguard, waiting for a gap in the slow lane before easing myself into the water, between the orange ropes threaded with large plastic chunky beads. There are two people in this one already, a man I recognise who is, once again, in the wrong lane and a serious looking woman with whom I exchange hellos. I use my feet to launch off and it takes me a minute to adjust my breathing. On the wall behind the lifeguard there's a jungle scene made-up of brightly coloured tiles, showing crocodiles, lions and toucans hanging out, side-by-side as monkeys swing in the palm trees overhead. It's a mosaic for kids, though I have never seen a child here, time my visits so I don't have to deal with their screams and splashes of delight. Neither of us wanted children, though you went soft around them in a way I never understood. When your brother visited from New Zealand with your niece, I watched you with a mix of awe and envy, charging towards and away from Ella, scary then scared, slithering, squawking, roaring and hissing. I hope you know I thought about it hard. Not just thought, but turned it over in my mouth, saying it aloud to see just how it tasted. Though, in the end, I couldn't leave my sister, so had to spit it out. I still miss you - clothed and naked, laughing, our bodies sliding, burning hot. I thought I'd given up on sex entirely when I first met you (especially with civilians), having received exorcism via fucking quite enough. I told a worker friend that we were over. She said, 'Sorry babes, but love's just not for us, or at least, not with one of them.' But she's wrong, because I've felt it, stretched round and out so far ahead it could've wrapped around the world at least a dozen times before it ended and left me swimming here, exactly as I am.

The End.

- Amy K

THE PURGE

The bar brawls aren't because we hate you

it's not, Not All Men

or us and them

it's US

and THEN

What?

So pop t'kettle on

Love

This time I'll take a cocktail,

one lady hump or three?

Let's have a fuckin' pa'arrty!

Or shall I make the tea?

Don't worry we won't get t'arty

We know how you like it,

it's your turn to blow the candles out again.

You're such a Good Boy.

Well done!

Are you done?

Cus we're all burnt out

The kitchen timer ended 2000 years ago

and you only paid for half an hour.

You should really get your trousers on.

But it is your party, so

I'll cry if you want metoo.

Here's a knife to cut the chords. A human platter for your words.

Would you prefer sushi served on an Asian Submissive Fantasy?

Tastefully appropriated.

Or would a Gobby Northern Bird slathered in gravy be ok?

I can put on the posh voice

Deconstructed to be not Too Much

a bit of extra saucy

a touch of bitterness

Oouuumami! Your body! Oh Christ! Keep me from my infernal wife!

Breast or thigh

An eye for an eye

Biscuit? Soggy or dry

a sticky finger in another pie

How's about a fistful?

Cram it in til you're up to your elbow, that'll stop the songbirds flying out.

We can settle down for sloppy seconds and last-ons on a spit roast.

Make a wish! It's time to choose

your next dishy dish! No that's not what fish smells like.

It could have been so delicious if you've let us compose a balanced meal

You don't need to steal, there's enough loaves and fishes for everyone.

But if a big Macci D's is what you want...

We will bleed for that, and more.

feed you til we're raw

Sleeping beautiful whore

Aww my cute little parasitic child.

All that I am, I give for you

All that I do, I give for you

All that I speak, I give for you

All that. You take for you.

We say love, you hear war

Tis a Pity She's a Whore.

You shout LOVE ME! You scream MORE!

Yeh you like that don't you?

Take it you Dirty Whore, this is the money shot.

I thought you feminists liked to pay the bills?

It's wrong to pay a Real Woman or Girl

for sex.

If only you'd take that cock tale out of our mouths

we could show you how to have

multiple whorgasm.

Pass the joystick, we know where the secret levels are.

It's in yer mum!

Can you handle it?

Or are you too busy with your toy dick?

Don't worry, it's just a stealthy tip

Just pretend I'm not there

So shall I pop t'kettle on again, then love?

For another round of wank carousel?

We know how you think you like it

and how you need it.

Let us need you, we will all rise.

Sorry, I forgot, it's your turn to win the prize.

Oooh you're so soft and strong and very very wrong.

for being the smartest and the wisest and the strongest and the
wrongest and the loudest and the GOODEST BOY!

You hear a lot tied up to the kitchen

Getting fucked, on the floor

Anyway you like, Sir.

There's a Reason She's a Whore.

Would you like some more?

We are not fit to suck off the crumbs from under your table. Oh
Lordy.

Or take a turn at the polite conversation.

No hesitation, repetition or interruption.

We all know women aren't funny.

It's not cos I miss you, unless you want to play.

Mummy?

Mummy look at me! I'm the lead!

All the world's a stage and all the men are merely players.

They have their exits and entrances

and woman, in her time, knows her place.

You're better off under the table.

And while you're down there love,

This'll stop you interrupting, it's time for my monologue, you might
learn something.

Cos you can lead a whore to culture

But you can't get her to think.

It's better that way, you'll not want to either,
When you're is six clients in and

you've got a landlord to feed.

We had to build this whore tea culture,
cos you can't handle the drink
You'd sup it too fast and cook up a stink
Better to leave you playing at the Big Boys table,
So we can get on with it.

Yes Chef!
This puttanesca you made is a tasty dishy.
If a little heavy on the cream
So sorry, not sorry
We couldn't eat another fight
Even if this is a reputable rest-rant.
we're full up from all the stewing in the kitchen
Besides you're under seasoned
And I'm dieting again

Pass the pepper spray.

We played blind so you could see
Would you like some tea and empathy?
We know how sweet you take it
But it could be so much sweeter

Mothers are obliged to bleed and feed
If you bite the tit that feeds you
We will still let you suck

And suck you off
You hear a lot when the kettle's boiling

One thump or two?
How's about a soggy biscuit?

We need a space to create if you want us all to be free.
I'm not your mummy
There is an us and them
It's not like that
It's US and THEN

Do what you love to shout about
Open the door for us
We won't need to break the windows then.
Poor Good Boy. Do you have to tidy up the glass?
Think this method's lacking class?

All we want is for you to take your share of the hoovering.
It hurts. but so does your sex life.
Please let us rip that plaster off.

We were blind but now we see
Asleep for this whole century
Or more.
Sleeping, beautiful whore's.

We've heard your trials and make the tea.
There's a lot to hear when you always make the tea.
We know how you like it, did you

hear?
Steeping beauty.

Or was the telly up too loud?
Will you choose the red pill or be force-fed the pink one?
You'd be pleasing to me all frilly in pink.

Can you remember how I take my favourite drink?
We're waking up, and babe,
It's your turn to get fucked.
Mine's a molotov, easy on the emotional labour.

So spread em, we want to baste you.
I've strapped on a big-un
It'll fit, I promise
you just need to grow around it.
It's muscles, they stretch and it can be fun to retch
I like the fact you're crying
when you're trying

So suck it and weep bitch.

Yeh you like that don't you? Finally scratched that itch.
I know what you like.
Shhhh I'm talking, there's no space for you here
Just like another one of those pesky meninists,
Burning their bridges, so inconvenient.

We'll have to take the long route
and we know men
can't ask for direction.
It's not the scenic route, It's the dogging carpark. Surely you don't
need to stop for services again?

I can't listen. You don't speak. Let's play the game another week.

But we don't have to be trolls like you
Goats legs look frail but scale mountains

You'll learn to listen too when your nail to the kitchen sink,

Head full of their favourite drinks
Sticky from ironing out the kinks
Exactly how we like it, and while you're down there love, suck my
clit. You can bear the cross now.

What would Jesus do?
Kick out the tax collectors
Forgive the murderers
And love the hookers.
Reckon he had a thing for feet too.

What happens when the kettle boils. Tea needs to boil. Never let the
coffee boil or it will turn bitter.

But are you open to this new idea?
Or hardened like your inner ear.

Tuned into yer Mum's tongue,
Dessus or dessous?
Des sous? Des suss?

translated into every written language. Lost in translation in every
taken nation.

And what a story, you might have heard of it, it's only been the
worldwide bestseller for 2000 years.

What do we say in this house?

Perviness is next to Godliness.
God in Le Gode.

We play goose, you play dandy.
Though you'd better keep that funnel handy..

another dinner swerved.

Don't worry we won't get t'arty.

What would Jesus do?
Kick out the tax collectors
Forgive a murderer, as they died together. Comrades.
And loved the hookers.

– Handle

BI NOW, PLAY LATER

As I perch on a worn red velvet stool in a questionable establishment, on the corner of Black Jack street, I exhale impatiently awaiting the bartender's attention. Alice is late, despite the time being 2.15am and her finishing work at 2am. As usual my battery is dead, I have no means of contacting her, but this is my fault of course, why don't I charge my phone? I ask myself this question most days, Alice asks me this question most days. Anyway I assume she's being held back by a generous client, and she's probably making the most of the financial opportunity, who'd blame her, she won't be much longer, I have nowhere to be anyway. I lean over the bar "Double gin and tonic please, and any chance you have an iPhone charger I can borrow? My phones dead" he's around 6'2, admirably built, heavily tattooed and probably around my age. "I have Samsung," his response was blunt and emotionless, I just nodded in way of thanks. Scanning the room, my attention met a hanging clock behind him, 2.25am, still no Alice.

I looked again at the towering macho figure on the other side of the quiet, dim lit bar. He's attractive, it goes without saying. I was intrigued, and bored, and what's the harm in an innocent flirt. "So what's your name then?" ...eventually he glanced up from the drink he was preparing... almost looking annoyed at my question, as if disinterested or reluctant in making conversation, there was a long pause, "James". "Nice to meet you James, I'm Amber" he manoeuvred the edge of his pursed lips and raised an eyebrow ever so slightly in way of acknowledgement. "I assume you don't like talking?"

In all fairness I would say I'm pleasing to the eye. I work hard at the gym and my petite slender frame is admirable to most, people

frequently compliment my waist-length brunette hair, it's by far my best asset. I always smell good, and take pride in my appearance, so what's his issue? Why doesn't he want to talk to me? Arrogance doesn't get people far these days, doesn't he know that?

Anyway, I don't have the patience.

I look again in my bag in hope that I have missed my charger and now it's miraculously appeared. "So, Amber, what are you doing here?"... he caught me off guard, I quickly looked back in James' direction, shocked at his question and surprised he was speaking to me. His tone was soft, quiet, he spoke in low volume, and his mannerisms were calm. He had an apparent accent which I didn't pick up on when I ordered my drink. "Are you Irish?" an unpolished outburst of word sick left me feeling almost silly and embarrassed, of course he is, of course he's Irish, why did I need confirmation, what a stupid question to ask someone with an obvious accent. I sat vulnerably in silence anticipating his response, feeling absolutely stupid, "I am, and I assume you're English" this time his approach was more direct, he made strong eye contact, I almost felt patronised, but in an excitable childlike way. I paused for a while and thought about his response, I decided to disregard the sarcasm and revert to his initial question of my being there, and played for a second with the offering of truth or lie.

Adapting a more structured and composed approach, I ran over my response before verbal communication. This could go one of two ways, and I am all too familiar with the consequences, "I have been working". He reaches over and places the highball glass carefully down in front of me, taking a sip I return to meet his gaze. I hadn't noticed just how crystal blue his eyes were, he really was a beautiful specimen of a man, his face had a muscular frame, with a prominent jaw line, and his nose was in perfect proportion with his eyes and lips. "what is it you do Amber, when you are, working?" This was a conversation I had polished, knew back to

front. I was expecting the same set of questions, and would give the same set of answers, as if almost rehearsed... A few moments past and I eventually responded "I'm an escort". His demeanor didn't change, nor did he react, he remained distracted peeling fruit garnishes. I sat in silence, puzzled at his reaction, or lack of, and waited. Eventually he spoke "and how is escorting on a Thursday evening in South East London?" I exhaled, I felt I wasn't allowed to breathe until I was spoken to, I was waiting, but I didn't know what I was waiting for. He made me nervous, on edge, it was as if his underlying dominance controlled me. "Works work I guess, same old, how's your night been?" As I spoke my eyes lowered to meet my hands, placed on my lap, my voice was sheepish. Self-consciousness flooded my body. My normal characteristics were pushed aside. He looks at me and for a second, the birth of a smile appears on his lips, as if he's amused somewhat. Is this intentional, can he sense my weakness, does he feel my tension? How or when did I become susceptible to such unseeable powers? I don't have answers. From that moment I wanted to be controlled. I wanted and needed more of this man, I knew I wanted to belong to him, and I so desperately wanted him to want me back.

Known to employees as Slut Club, Seven is best described as a very illegal strip bar, with private rooms out back where off-the-record arrangements can be negotiated. A busy high street filled with bars and restaurants, just a few minutes' walk from Dalston Junction overground was home to such an unsavoury enterprise. Accessible to clients by only word of mouth, the unnoticeable entrance looked tired and in need of some paint. This was no concern as the club was almost invisible within the thriving community.

Profits from the night's work will contribute towards the surprise birthday weekend planned to Berlin, for Alice's partner's 27th birthday. Flights are booked for 2pm, departing from Heathrow, the time now is 2.20am. "Her phones never charged, she worries

me sick" Alice mutters under her breath, actively shaking her head in disapproval. Collecting the last of her belongings and fastening the top button of her jeans Alice shouts goodnight to the girls remaining in the dressing room, as she makes her way out onto the street to meet an impatient Uber driver. In a world of escorting and stripping (and all in between) safety should always come first and having a phone charged should go without saying. Amber is yet to grasp this concept.

To the right I hear footsteps on the descending metal frame work of the stairs, Alice appears in the doorway. She's a beautiful leggy blonde, with a thin waist and perked, perfect breasts. Her hourglass figure is draped in a short grey satin wrap dress which compliments her well trained behind. She walks towards me, sits on the empty stool next to mine, and places her tan leather hold-all on the floor between us. Resting the palm of her hand on my thigh, she winks in my direction. A different bartender approaches. I order Alice brandy with diet coke and my G and T. We chat a while, catching up on the evening's events. Eventually our drinks are finished, as we stand Alice alters the positioning of my hair which falls diagonally over my eyes and cheek, she caresses my face, and gently kisses my soft, plump lips, "Happy Birthday sweetheart, it's about time we go home". Our hands meet and we exit the bar together.

– Charlotte

SMILE

In my home I was a sinner. What do I remember? My room was a confessional, very cold, very quiet. None wanted to enter. They would close the door, shut the window shutters, leave me in the darkness. They waited at the door step, preparing their questions for my confession. (Till a rather large press conference announced my sacrament of penance). I did not repent and so, godless, I departed.

"The woman departed clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stone and pearls, holding a golden cup in her hand, being full of abominations and the impurity of her sexual immorality". (Apocalypse, Revelation 17: 4).

///

I: Do you remember when we used to drink champagne in cardboard cups? I remember how you were smiling. Every time I returned your smile, you scratched the cardboard with your nails in excitement.

She: Of course I remember! I also remember how, once I got to know you better, I got lost in the idea of it possibly being just one more of your characters with that people-pleasing smile of yours.

I: How do you dare to say this? If anything, meeting you was a treatise on how to fall head over heels. Baby, you are my heart.

She: You and your sweet talk, is this how you are going to talk to Mr. S too tonight?

I: Can't you tell the difference between my loving self and me being in work mood? Can't you just trust me when I want to be sweet with you, to remind you of how much I love you? That with you I am who I really am? Stripped of artifice and pretence?

She: Anyway, the client is here.

///

The repetitive obsession for being “the me” and also the “not me”. Sustaining the weight of the “I” – name, read gender, social class, work appropriate lingerie. It’s not vanity that’s heavy, it’s the homeless “I”, intrinsic to the whore that survives alone.

///

She: I love your smile, babe. Mr. S, don’t you think her smile brightens up the room?

I: Thank you baby, you always have the sweetest words for me.

She: But it is true, look at you! You have the loveliest smile, stripped of artifice and pretence. Don’t you think Mr. S?

///

I hold the golden cup in my hand, full of abominations. The hours fall through the evening, just like bars of autumnal light fell through the window shutters of my former room, whipping something out, leaving the shadow.

– Letizia Miro

DAWN

Eyes open.

Dawn is breaking

That touch-fuelled haze.

A sliver of orange dances,
The heady remnants of wine
Pouring and twisting glasswards,
through a slotted window,
fortified with bars.

I realise I've overstayed.

Breezing from bed to door,
Shaking before he stirs,
I take my leave

With the garbage.

A more youthful me would spin
Depravity into tea and toast,
Breaking down shame, fun and fast.
I keep my powder dry. My lips smacked.

GRIEF

In the dockyard, or
In the promised land.
Gulls wail a hymn for
Centuries of work.

A spread of fruit, discarded,
Welcomes all basket cases.
Sanctuary long vacated, even
The weeds deconsecrated.

Lost souls drift. Pilgrims
Paying for the pleasure.
Some swear they see God.
Some only come close.

PORCELAIN DOLL

Tinsel on the cliffside.
Wry smiles and deft hands,
Embouchure and bad breath.
Priceless doesn't preclude cheap.

Or course he loves this piece.
Eyes roll a full 360
at the mention of rose inlays.
Strap in and assume the position

HOMETOWN

Manicured privet.
Walls of stone.
Apple blossom tucked
behind one ear.

Rosy grandeur washed in
imposing peace and quiet.
Raucous play muffled still.
Clean, placid streets.

Pinpoint lawns bedding
Immaculate wild gardens.
Pot pourri rockeries
Unspeakably comfortable.

Twin sets and tweed
raconteurs deluge:
A pleonasm in red wine.
Welcomes overstayed.

Neighborhood watchers.
Twitching curtains lined
Brows furrowed gazing.
Pointedly quiescent.

A Patrician, solemn
Newsletter suggests:
Consummate professionals,
Appropriate boundaries.

– Nick Bagshaw

SITTING ALONE IN THE VIP

"What do you do for work?"

I glance at the man sitting across the table from me, the one attempting to make pleasantries over a shared plate of burrata and bread - a friend of a friend, whose face I only recognise from Instagram and a photo pinned to my friend's kitchen wall. I make chewing motions with my mouth, gesturing apologetically, buying myself a few extra seconds to run through my lines, tongue shaping out the letters against my teeth so I speak with a practised sincerity.

"I'm freelance. In marketing."

I stitch together fragments of phrases and keywords I used to find familiar, weigh my replies with enough specificity that I seem authoritative, but not interesting enough to warrant any follow up. That's the key to a good lie - to root it in truth, but bury it in too many layers of dirt and sediment to sift through.

He knows someone in marketing - doesn't everyone? I ask about them, about him. I smile and laugh when I'm supposed to, look interested when he tells me about the flat his Dad bought him in Clapham Common, until I can excuse myself to go outside and chain smoke.

I fucked four men to be able to come here today. Bought this pack of straights with a twenty that was still wet with lube in the middle. The remnants of a half empty Passante packet I'd forgotten to throw away had regurgitated in my bag on the train up, sticking to

the wad of twenties I'd shoved in my make up bag for safe keeping.

I rolled the cigarette between my thumb and forefinger, half expecting lube to have pooled in the whorls of my skin and transferred my prints to the tip - a smoke signal that there's a hooker hiding in the crowd of city boys and finance wankers.

Several of them looked like clients. Top buttons undone, ties loosened, eyes still glassed over from pints "with the boys" at lunch and asking me if I'd ever fucked my boss before.

I'd only ever been to restaurants like this with a man three times my age. Folded myself inwards into the corner of the booth, legs crossed, elbows bent against my waist so he couldn't ooze under my hemline and pool himself between my thighs. Felt my smile stiffen as he shook a viagra out of a ziplock bag between courses, before pouring me another glass of wine from a vintage more mature than I was.

Do the waiters know I'm a whore? I tell myself we could maybe pass as family, but the way his eyes eat up each inch of bare skin, linger at the curve of my chest, makes it painfully obvious we are anything but.

I wanted to quit smoking this year, but the lingering invite to exit an awkward conversation is one I can't bring myself to decline. Sometimes it feels like I wear sex work on me - that if someone asks the right question, pulls on one loose thread, my carefully constructed lies will unspool on the floor. But there are a finite amount of death sticks in a pack and my lungs can only bear so much, so I stub out the embers of my third fag on the wall and head back inside to pretend some more.

By the time I get back to my seat, my friend's fiancé has stood,

clearing his throat to make a speech. It's their engagement party. My uni friends and I chipped in to get them a present for the house they'd just bought, and a bottle of champagne at the next bar. I give a silent shout out to my regular for booking every week of the last month - my friends have expensive tastes.

The sky was growing dark, black blooming over the blue like ink in water, and a soft breeze tangled my hair as I tilted my head back to feel the warmth of the outdoor heater on my face. The silk of my dress dragged against my skin as I re-crossed my legs, the split opening and falling either side of my knee. Sweat cooled on my chest, the back of my neck, my thighs.

I could hear my friend's voices carry over the patio, retelling the stories we'd built up into our own mythology. We'd played one of our old drinking games and I'd downed enough drinks to feel that warmth spread from my stomach to my limbs, my gums swimming in gin.

"Hey, did you want a drink?"

It was the boy from earlier, backlit by the pink glow of the bar lights and holding out a cocktail as if it were the entry fee for the seat next to me.

The sweet sugar syrup coated my lips as saccharine words dripped from his. Has anyone ever told me I have beautiful eyes?

He wants to know more about me. His hand touches the bare skin of my knee tentatively, at first with the tips of his fingers, but then with his palm. I can feel his eyes on me, assessing my reaction. It was good to feel the weight and the warmth of a body that hadn't paid for the privilege - to be wanted without conditions. He shifted his chair

closer to mine until our arms grazed every time I lifted my glass.

In the elevator of my hotel, I pulled on his shirt until he stood close to me, so close I could smell the aftershave on his collar, the ghost of the cigarette we'd shared outside the doors on his breath. We kissed. My lipstick stained the corner of his mouth. I wiped at it with my thumb, cupping his jaw with my hand.

People say that sex is one of the most intimate things you can do with another person, but I disagree. Sex is the repetition of intimacy, a simulation. The lipstick prints I leave mapping the topography of his body, each smear of red marking the spot I lingered the longest, will be gone by tomorrow morning - and so will he. But right now, we can pretend that the look in his eye telling me I'm the only thing right now that matters, is the truth; that the urgency in his touch is driven by a hunger only I can satiate. I can hide from myself in the way he rolls me around his cheeks, and holds me like I'm the only thing he ever wanted.

I didn't cum.

After, we lie facing each other and he grabs my hand to knot my fingers through his, thumb stroking mine.

"You know, I feel pretty embarrassed, but I don't think I can remember your name?"

"Sophia"

He repeats it, sounding out the syllables with care, letting them hang on his tongue.

I realised I'd given him my hooker name.



Feedback

We asked participants about their experiences of their workshops and what they got out of it - we've made some of their feedback available below.



The workshops have made me feel very nourished. The energy was kind and encouraging, there was a huge amount of love and respect in the room. It felt safe to be open about the complex nature of our work, and how our week had been, without judgement.



It was really useful to do the grounding exercises before the session, and this really contributed to me being able to claim this time as my own, especially as in this profession that is very rarely the case.



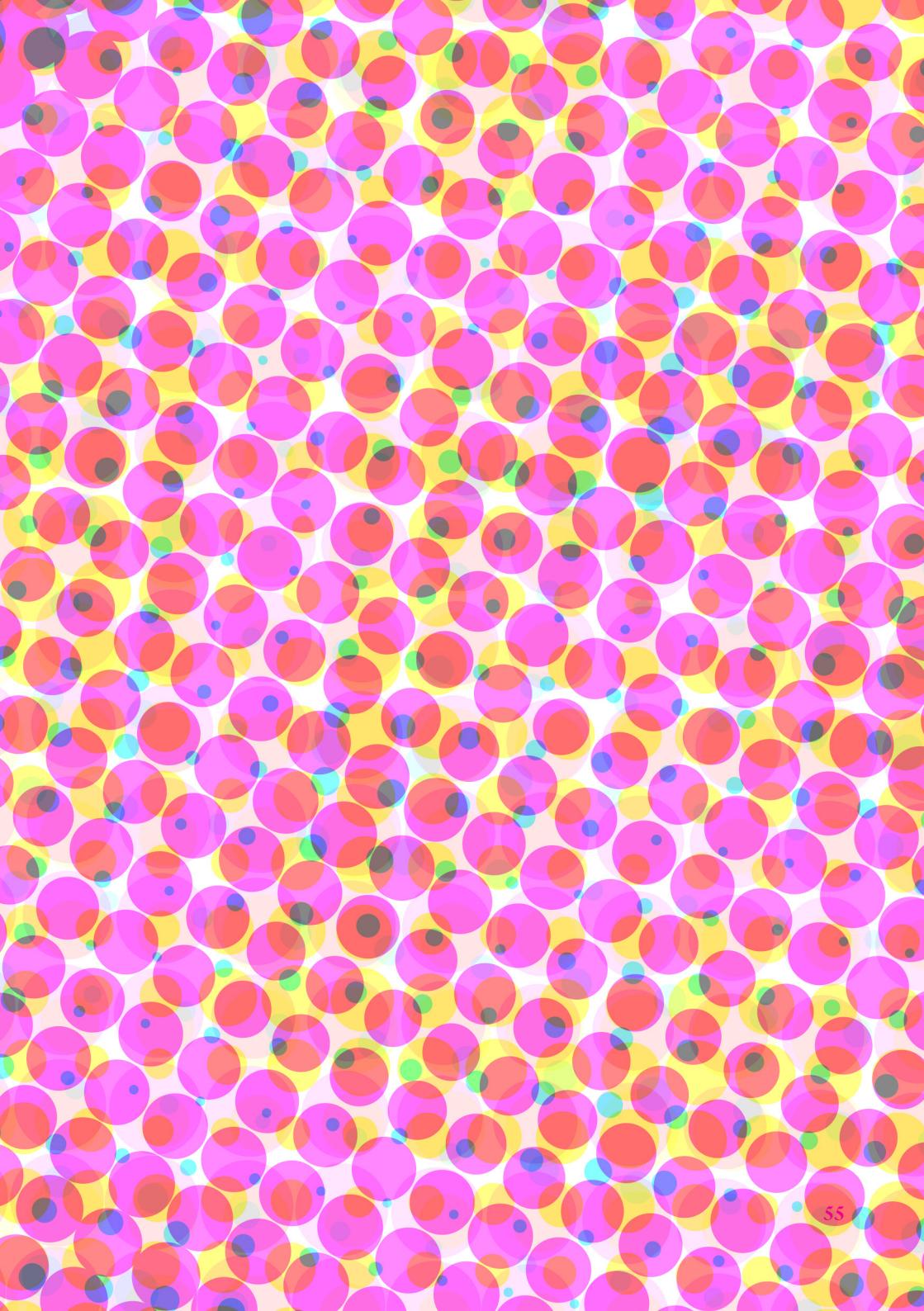
I felt that the workshops were really considered, they were mainly delivered in a way that gave space to those who felt able to contribute on the day, the space to contribute. They were fluid enough to move with the feelings of the group on the day and for that I was very grateful. Very rarely are sessions facilitated in a way in which this is possible, so I think this really was the main take away for me.

really really enjoyed the push it gave me to get my creative writing project off the table. I loved the group dynamics and the way it was lead. I do think however that unfortunately I was not able to participate as much as I wanted to due to the re-opening of in-person sex work around the same time as the workshops. I think that was completely an effect of COVID though and nothing to do with the group itself or its organisation. I think that a second set of workshops should take place in winter to reconnect.



Lovely friendly facilitators, put everyone at ease straight away. I've really enjoyed the workshops, made me feel welcome and connected. Learnt new things. Hopefully new friends and networking. Takeaway would be there's always support out there from other sw and we are stronger together as one. Also got a lot of new info and ideas to use in the future.





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