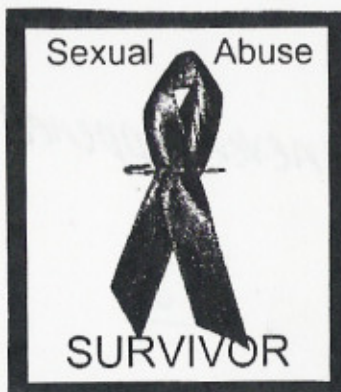


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Olympia



If I Could Live in Hope: Sexual Abuse and Survival

ZINE
IF-I-COULD
2009

July 2009

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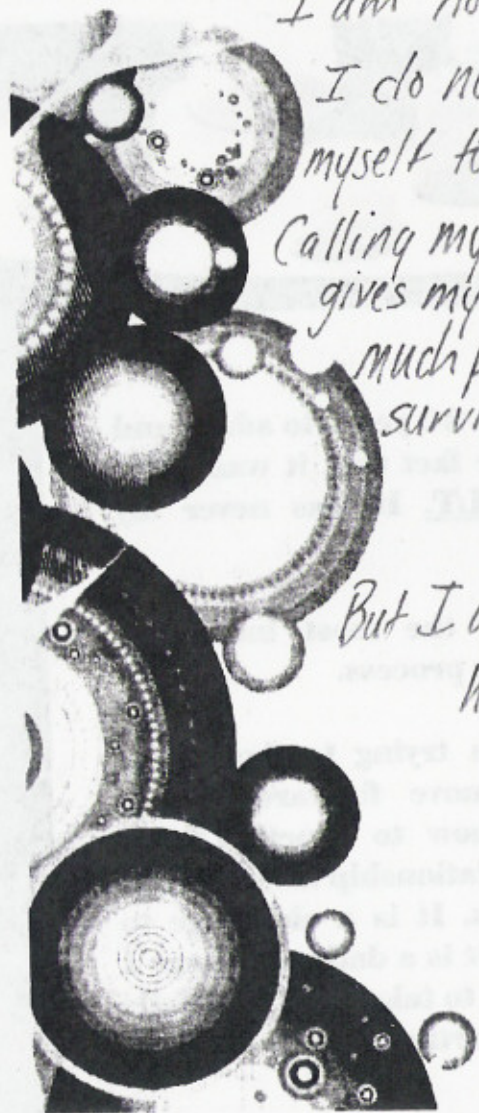
Please send comments or
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Kisha

todayneverhappened@gmail.com

or

Black Carrot
P.O. Box 830
Chicago, IL 60690

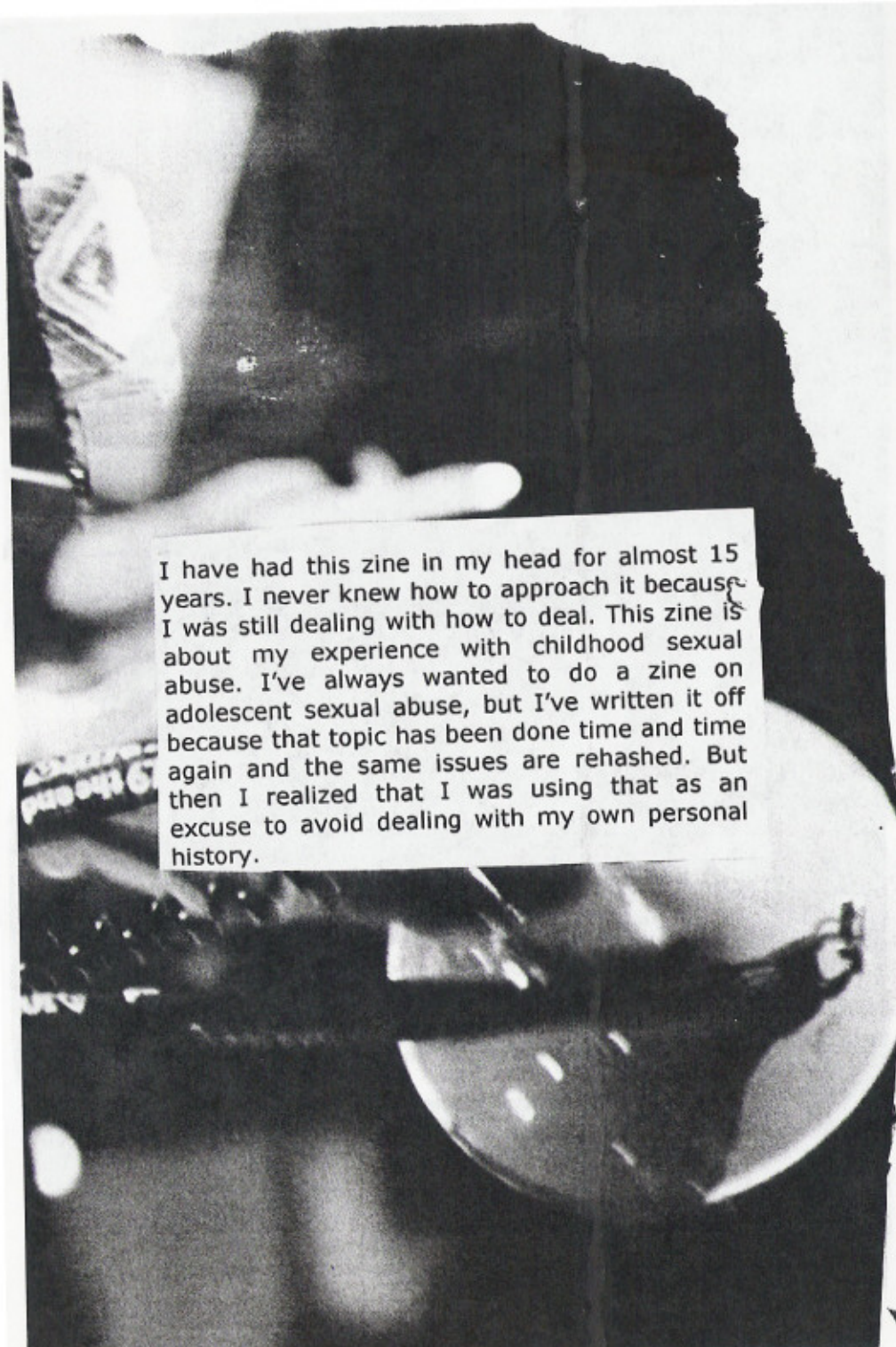


*I am not a victim.
I do not consider
myself to be a victim.
Calling myself a victim
gives my abuser too
much power. I am a
survivor, not a victim.*

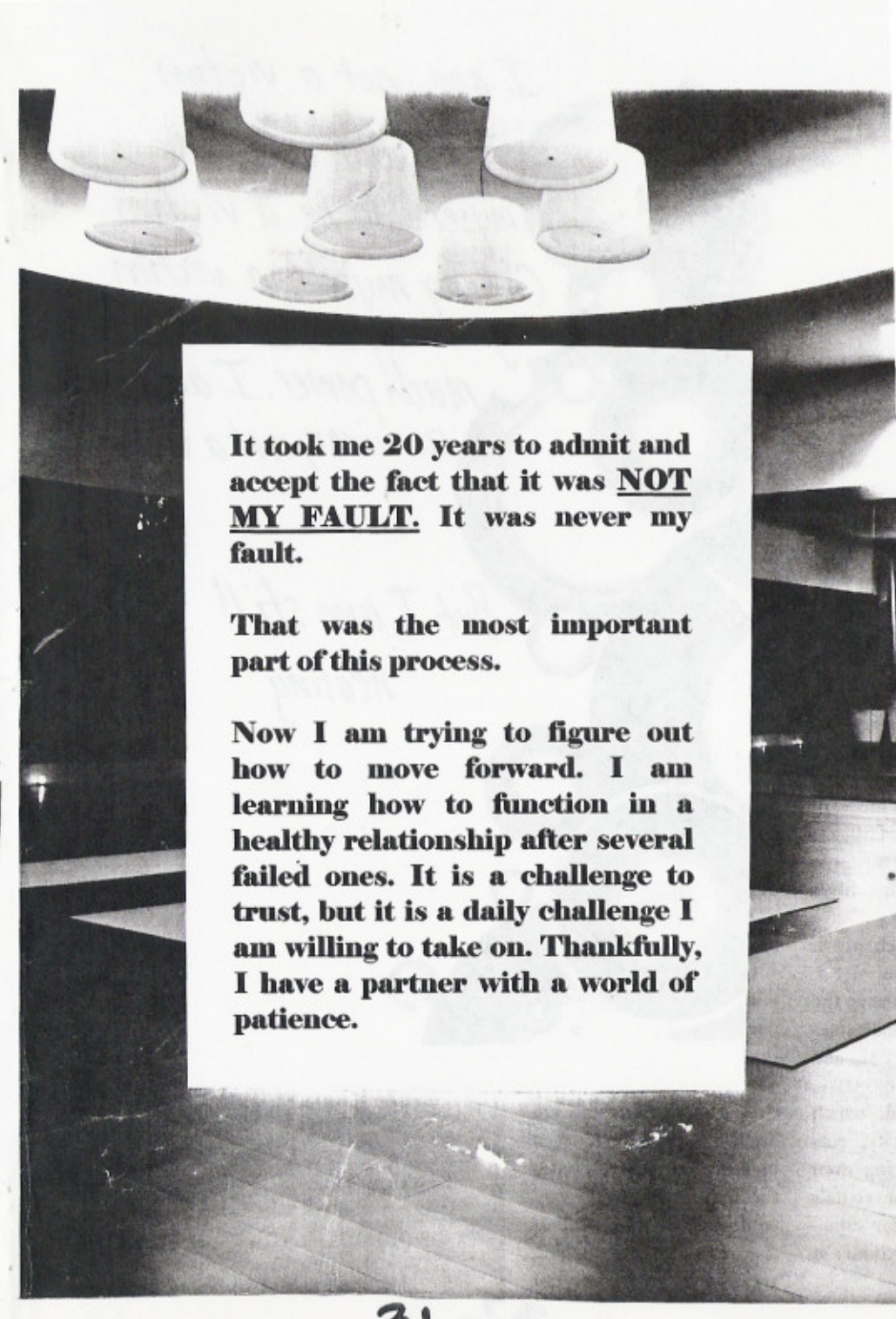
*But I am still
healing*



I am a child molestation survivor. Thank you for taking the time to read this. This is a warning to readers that some things in this zine may be triggering. I apologize in advance. Proceed with caution.



I have had this zine in my head for almost 15 years. I never knew how to approach it because I was still dealing with how to deal. This zine is about my experience with childhood sexual abuse. I've always wanted to do a zine on adolescent sexual abuse, but I've written it off because that topic has been done time and time again and the same issues are rehashed. But then I realized that I was using that as an excuse to avoid dealing with my own personal history.



It took me 20 years to admit and accept the fact that it was NOT MY FAULT. It was never my fault.

That was the most important part of this process.

Now I am trying to figure out how to move forward. I am learning how to function in a healthy relationship after several failed ones. It is a challenge to trust, but it is a daily challenge I am willing to take on. Thankfully, I have a partner with a world of patience.

This is where I am now. I took me almost a year to complete this zine. I have yet to forgive or forget, and I do not feel that I have to. Especially when my neither my abuser, nor my family acknowledge the abuse. I have given myself permission to be angry, cry, and forgive myself. I have given myself permission to grieve the loss of my childhood and the years I have spent blaming myself for what happened.

Abuse

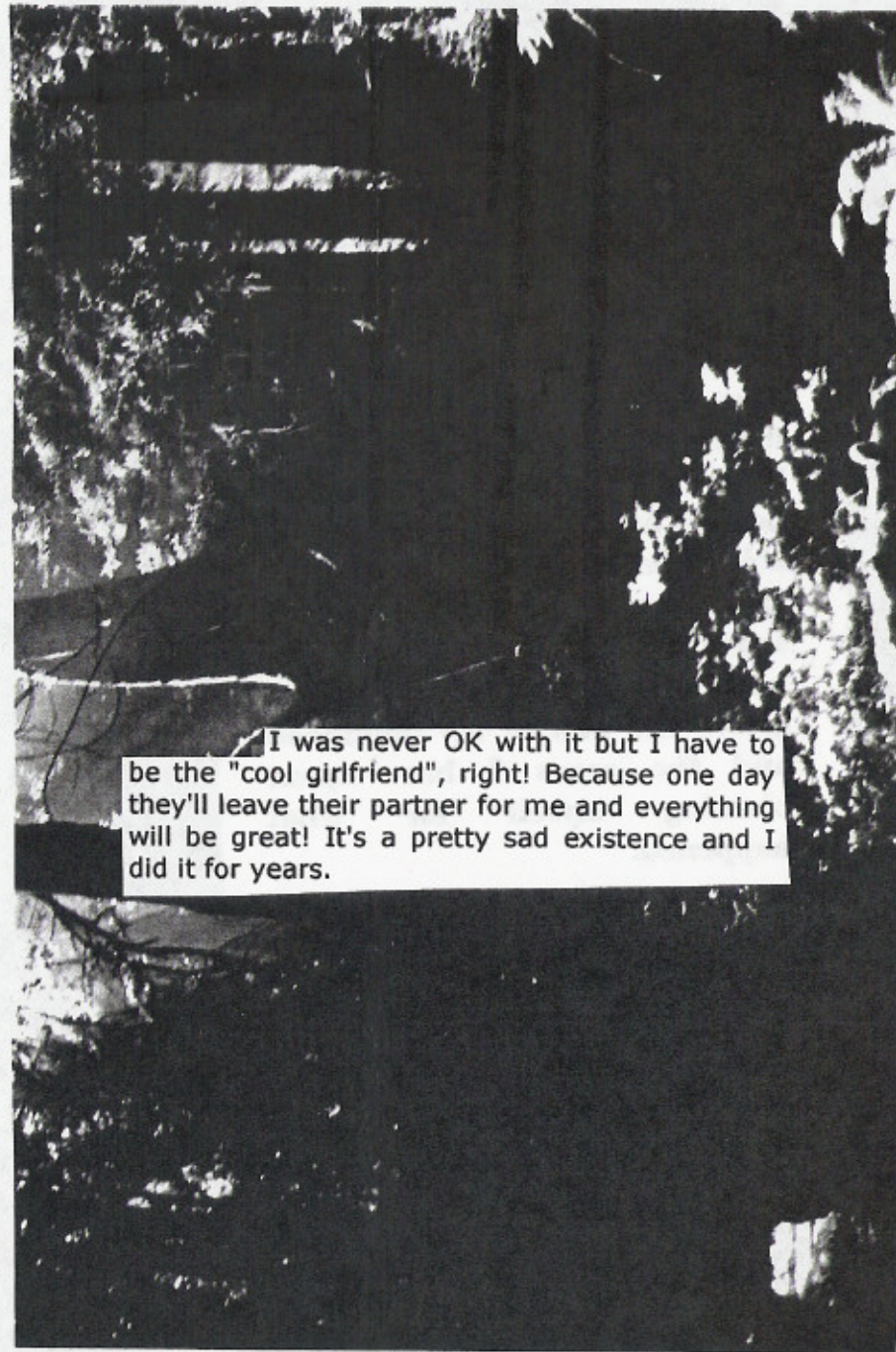
I was molested from the ages of maybe 5-10. I honestly can't recall how early it started and I blocked it out when it ended because my mom shipped us off to Florida and he was no longer a part of my life. The person who abused me was my mom's long-term off-and-on boyfriend of almost 20 years. He is also the father of my two younger sisters. I don't know why I never told my mom early on when it started, and sometimes I blame myself for it lasting that long. It's that age-old question, "Maybe I was asking for it?" I do recall finally telling my mom once after watching a special about child abuse.

But she didn't believe me because I was in a phase where I lied about everything and stole anything that wasn't tied down. I don't know if I was doing it for attention or if I was genuinely a badass kid. I remember my mom called him and put him on three-way with me and told me to repeat it while he was on the phone. I quietly did so and of course he denied it. Around that time he was suffering from seizure-like symptoms and mild amnesia. Oh, and he was also a lying sack of shit so of course he denied it. And that was that. We never spoke about it again. Eventually, he disappeared as he is prone to do every 6 months or so (you have to have some mechanism to keep up with your seeds). I'd heard he'd moved to Georgia to live

with his current fling



I'm really not clear on when the molestation started or ended - I can only remember 2-3 instances vividly. I don't know why I remember these particular events, but they haunt me to this day. I can recall every minute, what I was wearing, where I was touched, and how it felt. The last clear event occurred probably around



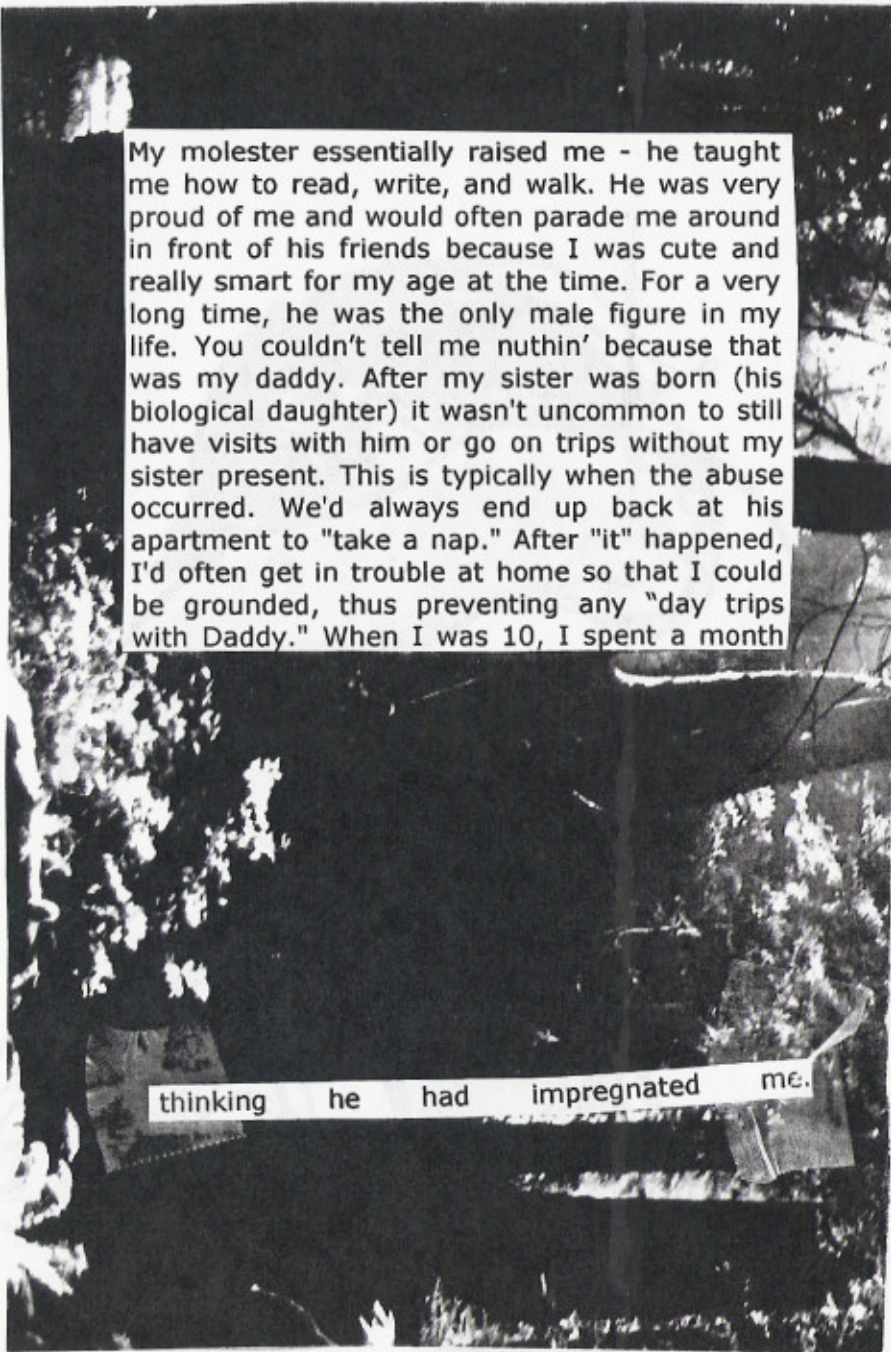
I was never OK with it but I have to be the "cool girlfriend", right! Because one day they'll leave their partner for me and everything will be great! It's a pretty sad existence and I did it for years.

age 9 or 10. This was the first time that he tried to penetrate me. The first time it felt wrong.

The first time I felt dirty.

I also stumbled into open relationships because I thought that it would be my only chance at forming some inkling of a relationship with someone.





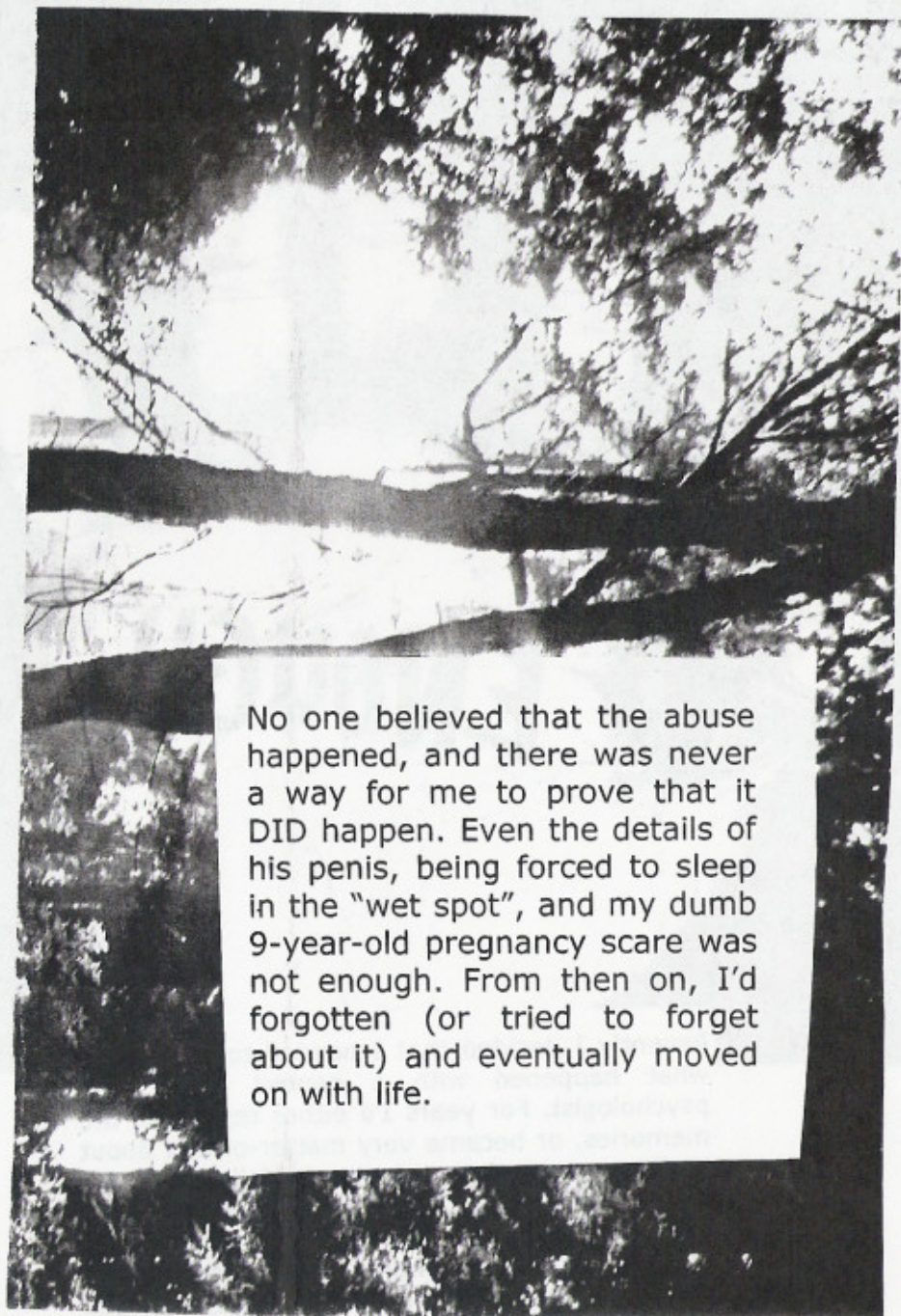
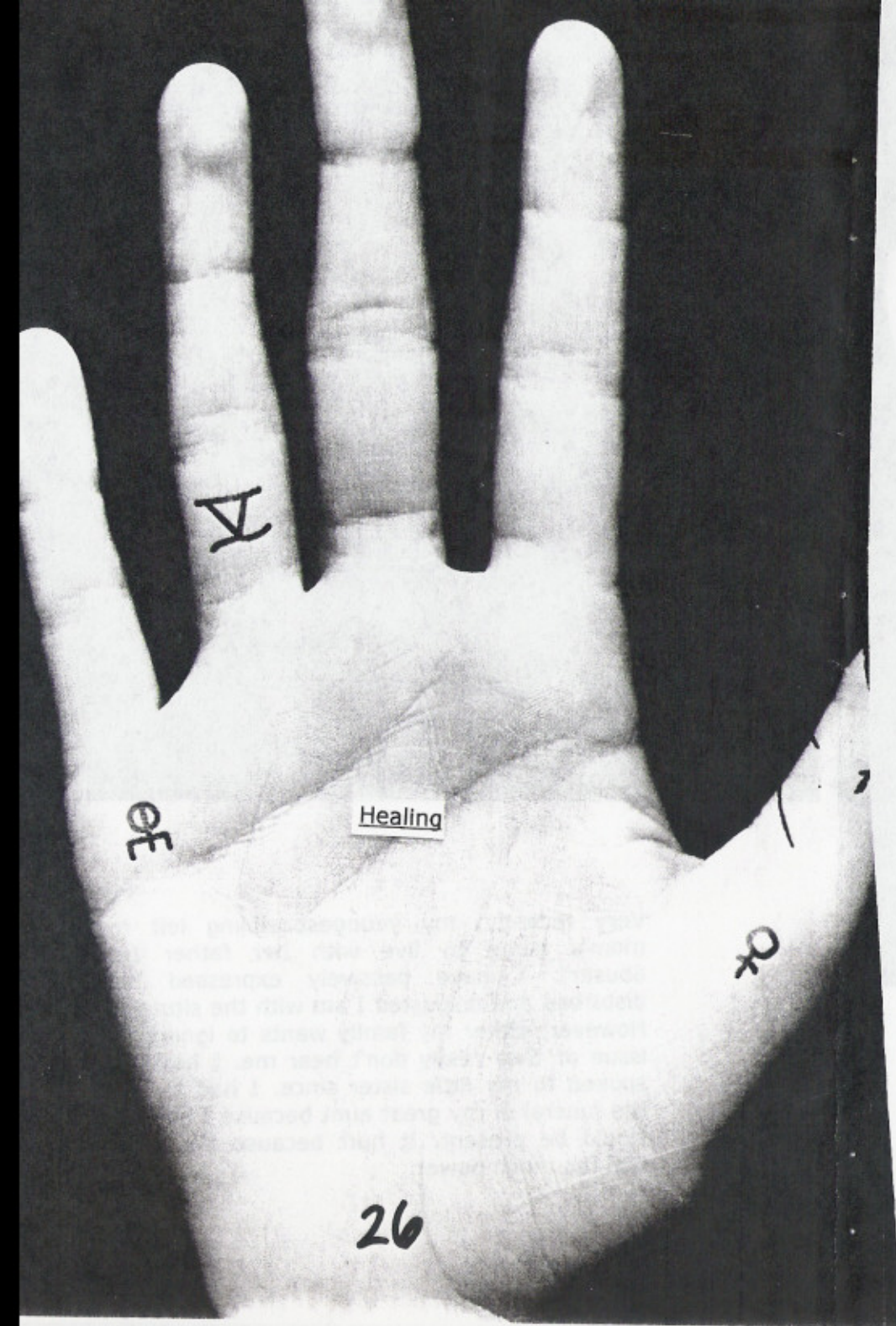
My molester essentially raised me - he taught me how to read, write, and walk. He was very proud of me and would often parade me around in front of his friends because I was cute and really smart for my age at the time. For a very long time, he was the only male figure in my life. You couldn't tell me nuthin' because that was my daddy. After my sister was born (his biological daughter) it wasn't uncommon to still have visits with him or go on trips without my sister present. This is typically when the abuse occurred. We'd always end up back at his apartment to "take a nap." After "it" happened, I'd often get in trouble at home so that I could be grounded, thus preventing any "day trips with Daddy." When I was 10, I spent a month

thinking he had impregnated me.

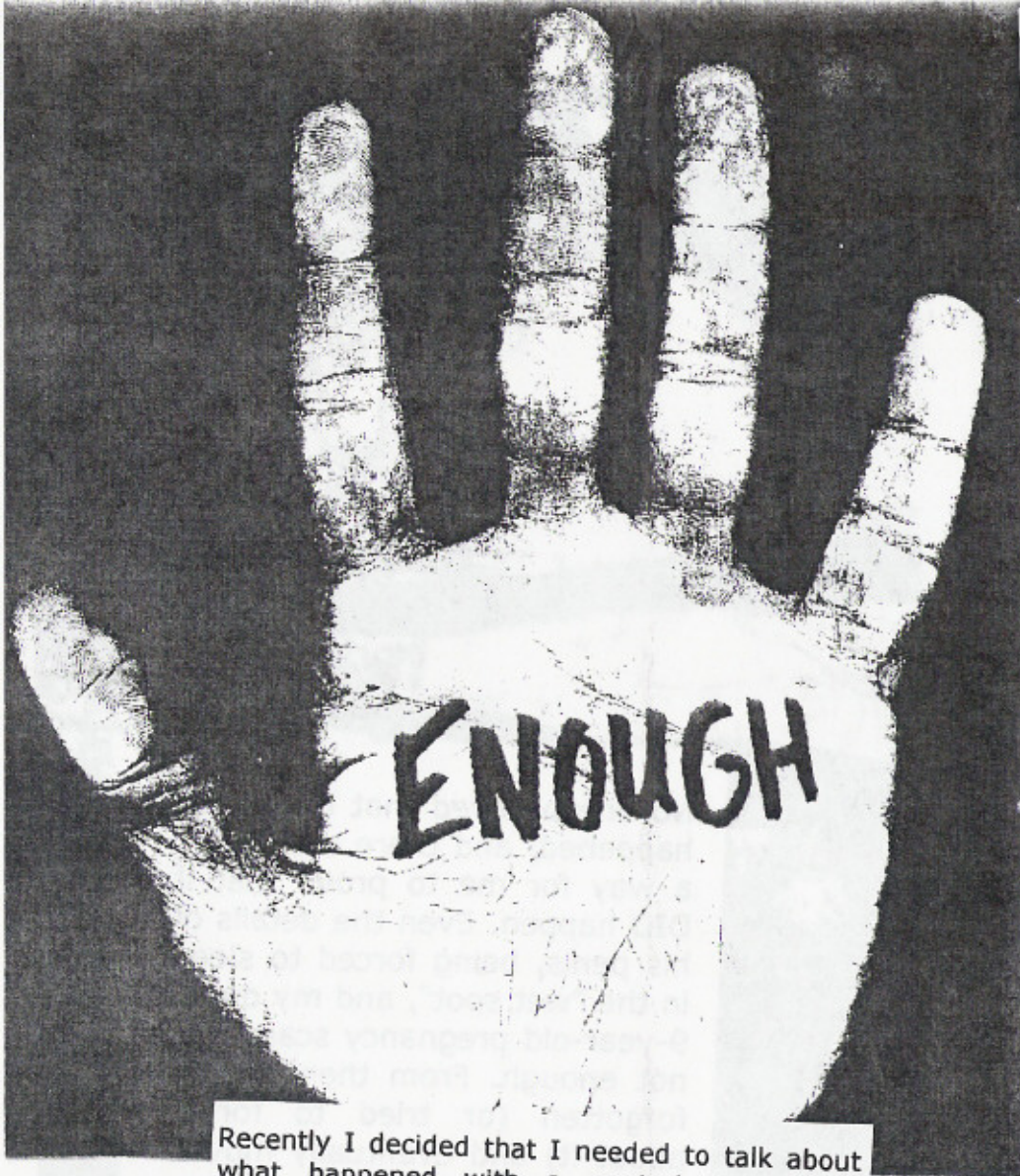
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Though I am in a committed relationship right now, I have had to re-learn how to function or handle the responsibility and emotions of being in one. In the past, it was easy because all I had to do was check out and let stuff happen. Once I removed myself from the situation, it was easy to engage in sexy situations that I wouldn't normally be into. When I was straight edge, this was a lot harder because there was nothing I could do other than distract myself by thinking about some awesome song, or how whoever it was I was fucking would be fall in love with me because I made them cum.

Right now I'm living day to day. I know how cliché that is, but it's the honest truth. I have good days where I love everyone and I want to befriend every stranger. Then I'll have days where any human interaction makes me nauseous. Thankfully, I have more good days than bad.

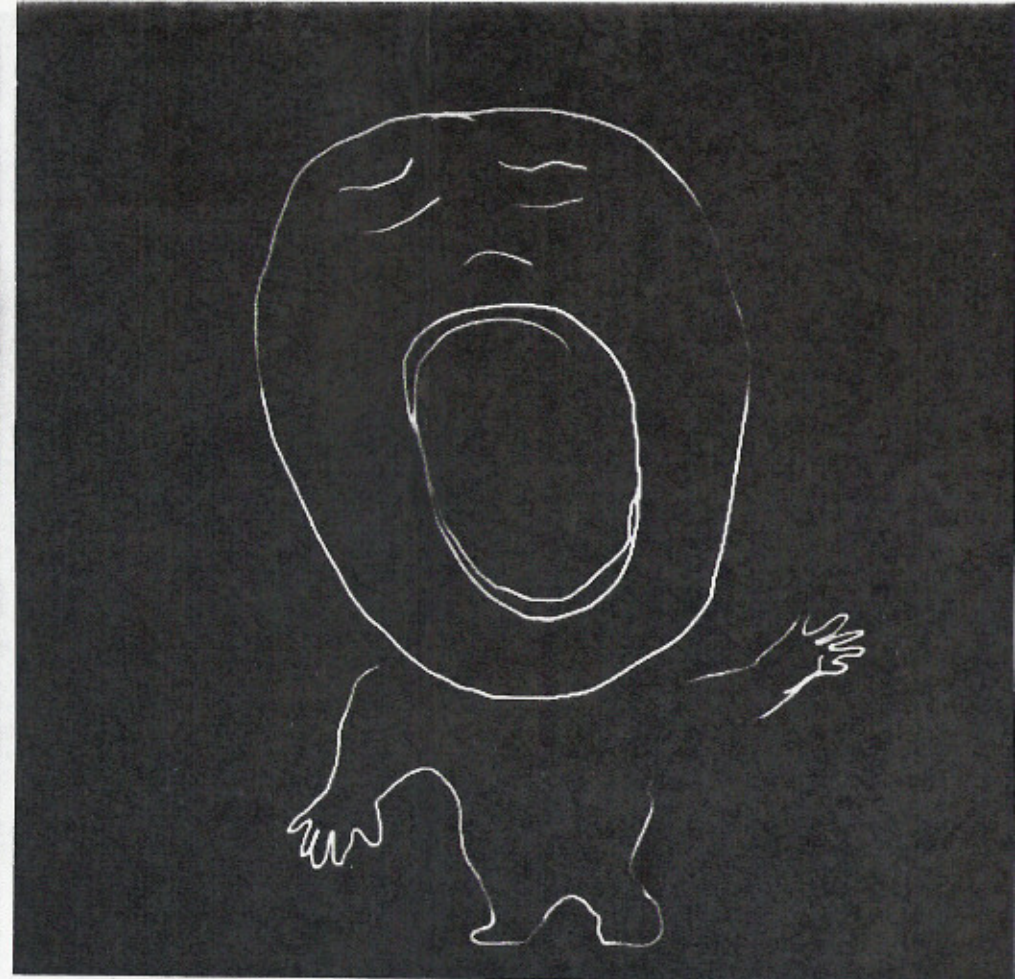


No one believed that the abuse happened, and there was never a way for me to prove that it DID happen. Even the details of his penis, being forced to sleep in the "wet spot", and my dumb 9-year-old pregnancy scare was not enough. From then on, I'd forgotten (or tried to forget about it) and eventually moved on with life.



Recently I decided that I needed to talk about what happened with a neutral party - a psychologist. For years I'd either repressed the memories, or became very matter-of-fact about it. I'd never had the chance to talk about the details and the effect that it has had on my life and in relationships until now. It wasn't until about 5 years ago when I actually said it out loud to a group of female peers. No one judged me, no one ridiculed me, yet I still wasn't comfortable talking about the details because I was shamed.

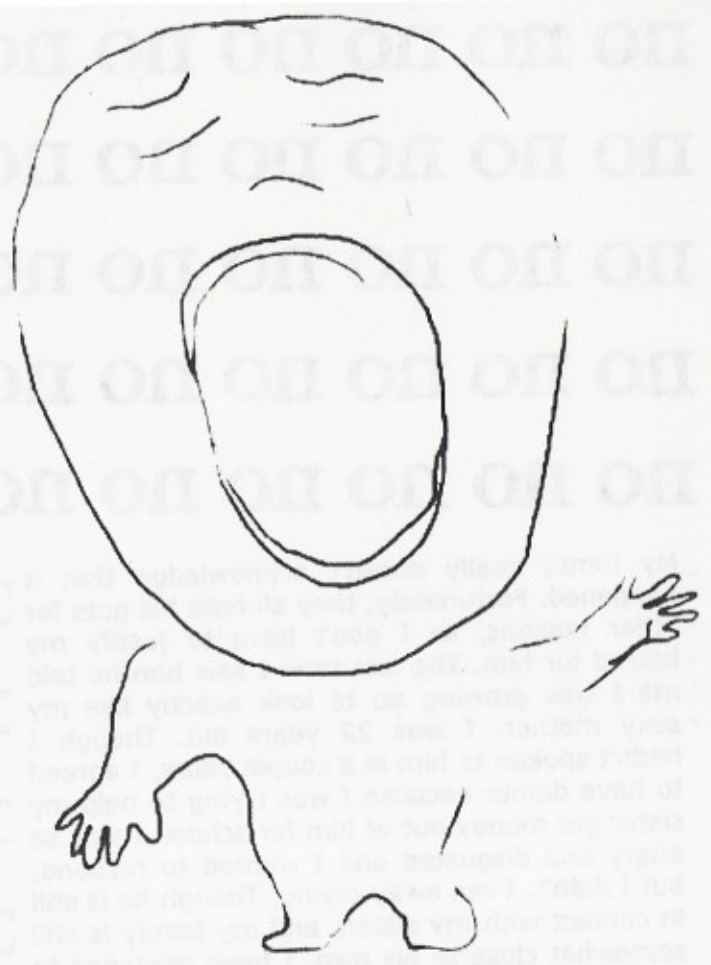
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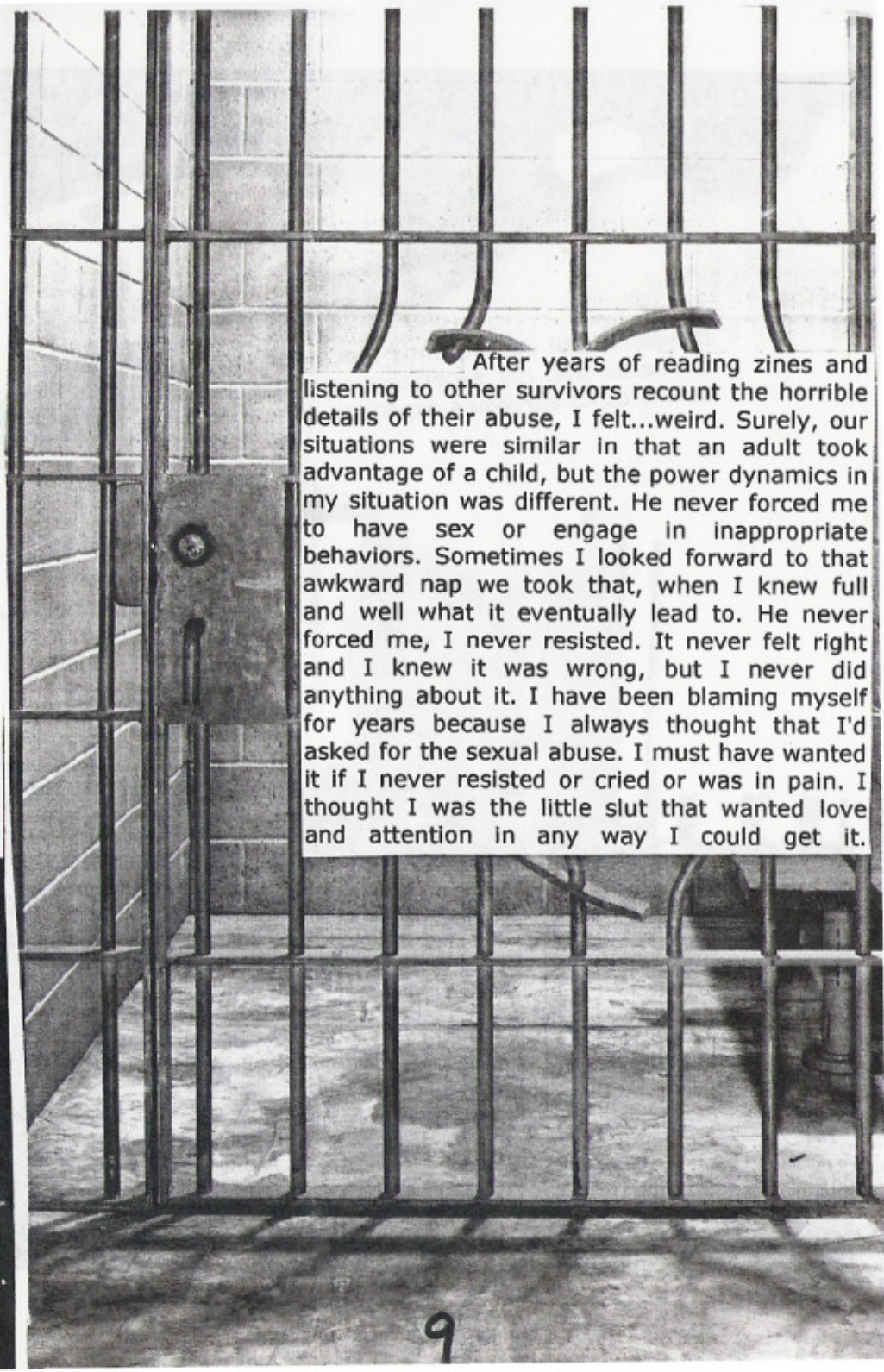
Very recently, my youngest sibling left my mom's home to live with her father (my abuser). I have passively expressed how disturbed and disgusted I am with the situation. However, either my family wants to ignore the issue or they really don't hear me. I have not spoken to my little sister since. I had to miss the funeral of my great aunt because I knew he would be present. It hurt because I'm giving him too much power.

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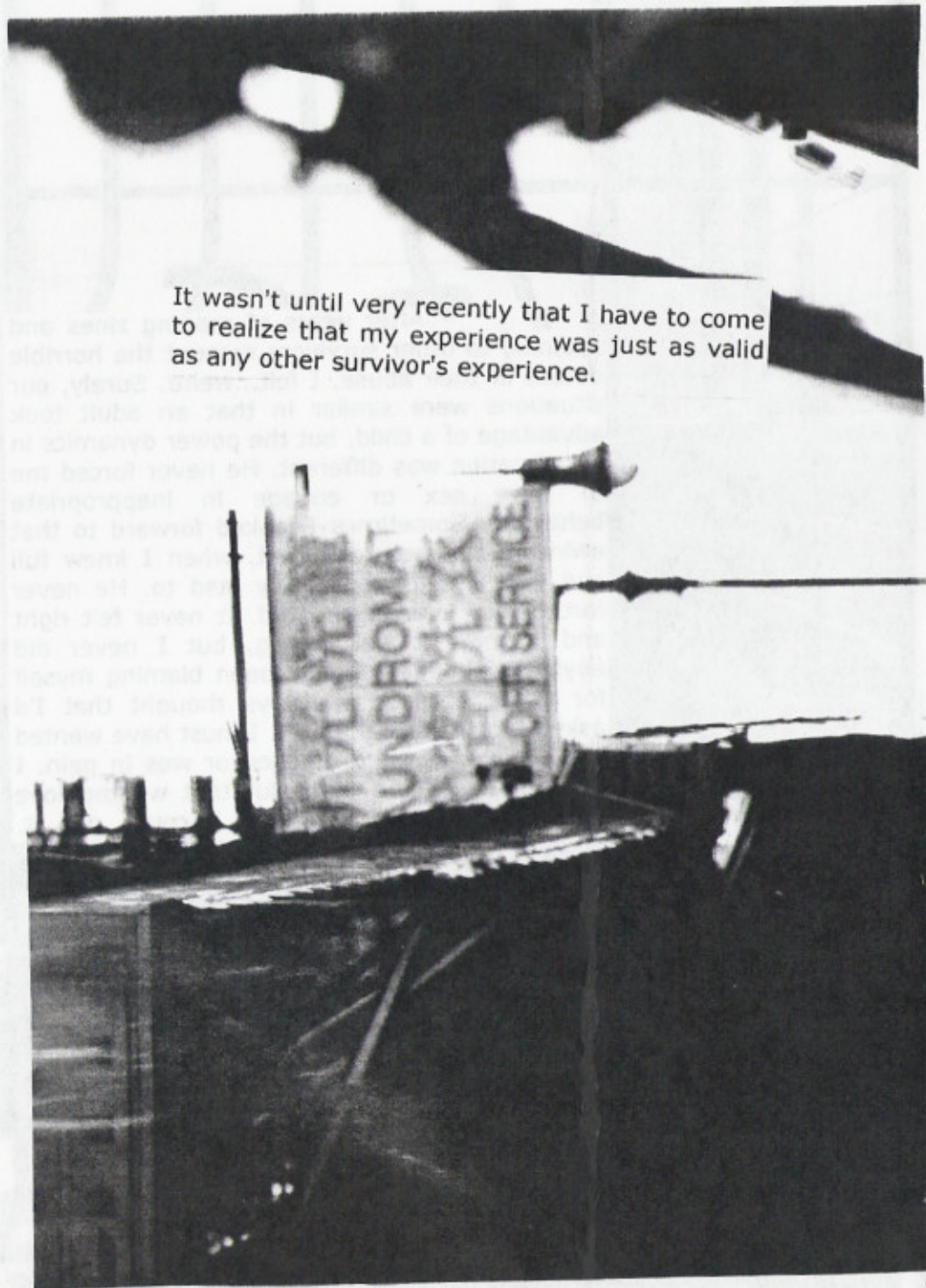
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I'm also on the fence about mentioning this to my family because I fear the repercussions. West-Indians are adamant about keeping family business in the family. I haven't told anyone that I'd be doing this zine because I didn't want to have to defend why I was putting our dirty laundry out for the world to see. We've been through a lot and this is the last thing they'd want to be ridiculed about.



After years of reading zines and listening to other survivors recount the horrible details of their abuse, I felt...weird. Surely, our situations were similar in that an adult took advantage of a child, but the power dynamics in my situation was different. He never forced me to have sex or engage in inappropriate behaviors. Sometimes I looked forward to that awkward nap we took that, when I knew full and well what it eventually lead to. He never forced me, I never resisted. It never felt right and I knew it was wrong, but I never did anything about it. I have been blaming myself for years because I always thought that I'd asked for the sexual abuse. I must have wanted it if I never resisted or cried or was in pain. I thought I was the little slut that wanted love and attention in any way I could get it.



It wasn't until very recently that I have to come to realize that my experience was just as valid as any other survivor's experience.

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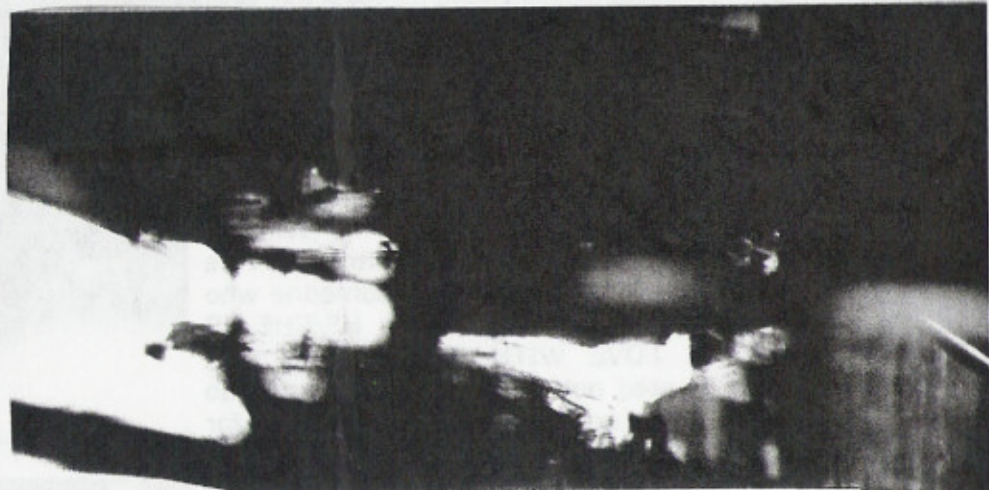
no . My family really doesn't acknowledge that it happened. Fortunately, they all hate his guts for other reasons, so I don't have to justify my hatred for him. The last time I saw him he told me I was growing up to look exactly like my sexy mother. I was 22 years old. Though I hadn't spoken to him in a couple years, I agreed to have dinner because I was trying to help my sister get money out of him for school. I was so angry and disgusted and I wanted to respond, but I didn't. I ran away crying. Though he is still in contact with my sisters and my family is still somewhat close to his own, I have managed to not have contact with him for almost 5 years.

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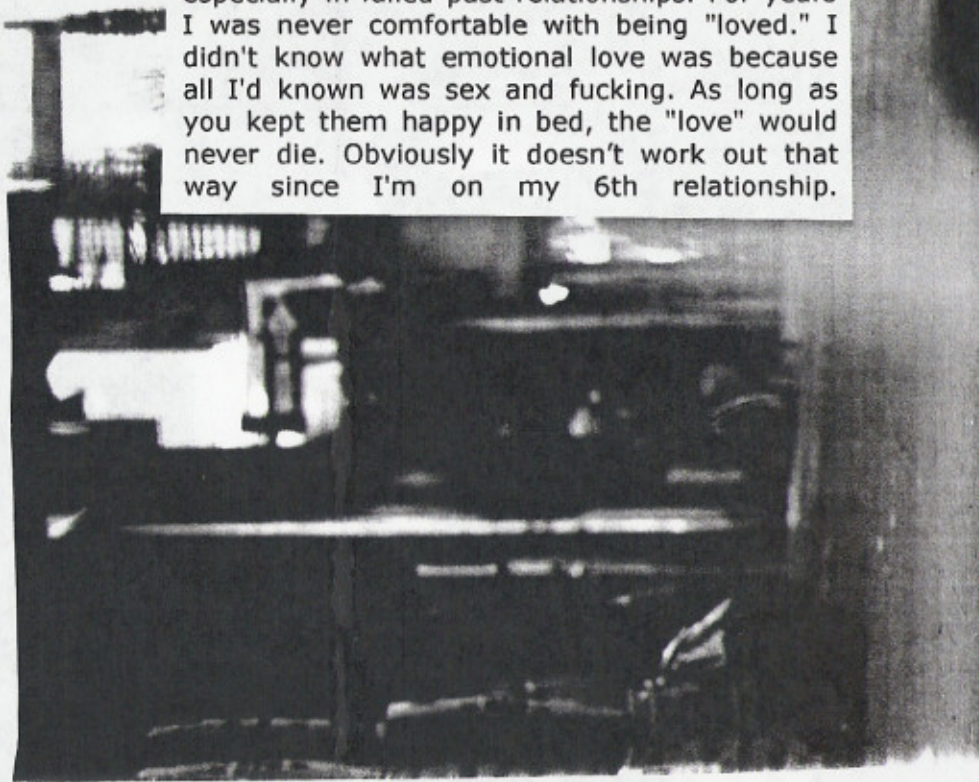
I'm not looking for anyone to blame - I'm just searching for someone to acknowledge that yes, it happened, and it's fucked up, and still love or accept me. I'm not looking to be a victim, but I need that closure. I've spoken with my therapist about it, but I'm still not comfortable rehashing this part of my past with my family. I think the best route would be to talk to my sister about it, but I hesitate doing that because he is her biological father. I'm sure she'd believe me.

22

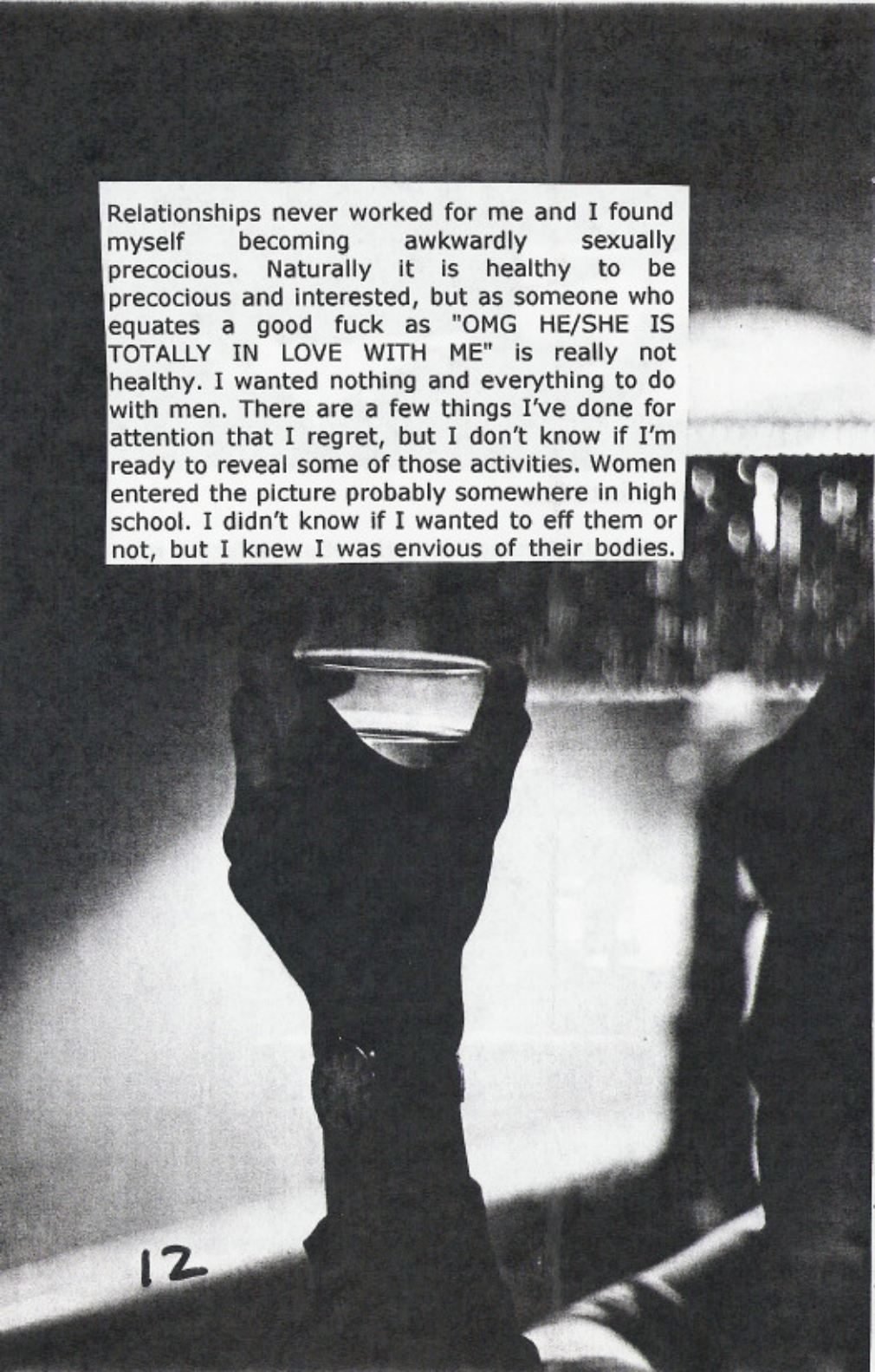


Relationships:

I never understood how the abuse affected me, especially in failed past relationships. For years I was never comfortable with being "loved." I didn't know what emotional love was because all I'd known was sex and fucking. As long as you kept them happy in bed, the "love" would never die. Obviously it doesn't work out that way since I'm on my 6th relationship.

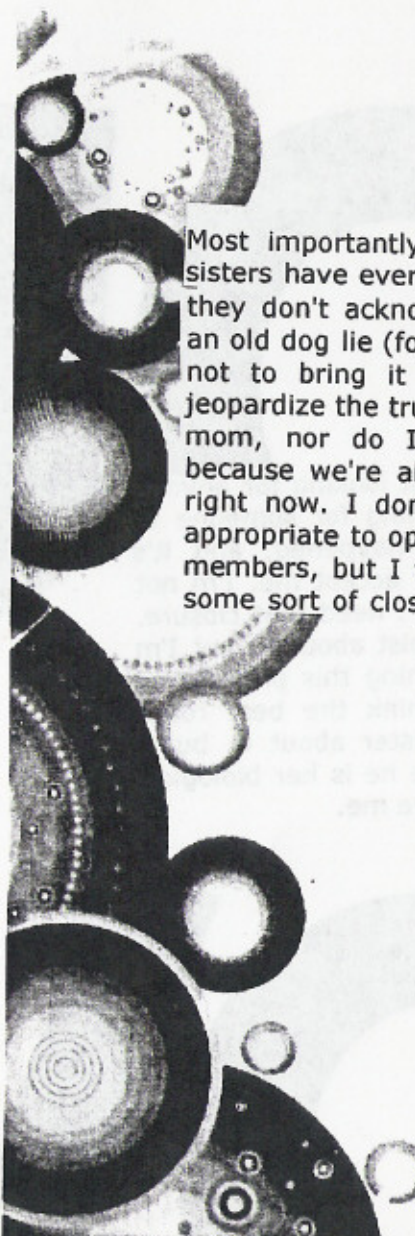


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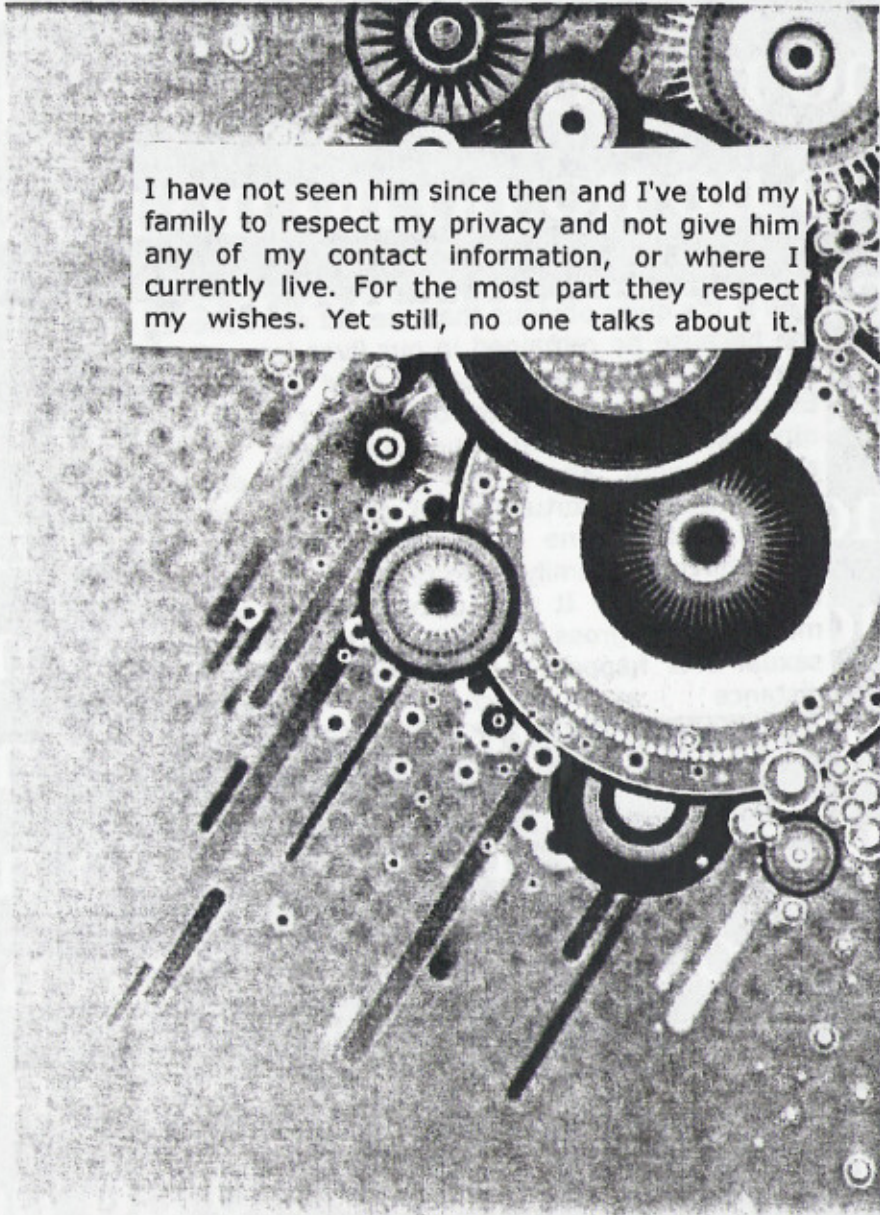
Relationships never worked for me and I found myself becoming awkwardly sexually precocious. Naturally it is healthy to be precocious and interested, but as someone who equates a good fuck as "OMG HE/SHE IS TOTALLY IN LOVE WITH ME" is really not healthy. I wanted nothing and everything to do with men. There are a few things I've done for attention that I regret, but I don't know if I'm ready to reveal some of those activities. Women entered the picture probably somewhere in high school. I didn't know if I wanted to eff them or not, but I knew I was envious of their bodies.

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Most importantly, neither my mother nor my sisters have ever talked about the abuse. Either they don't acknowledge it, or would rather let an old dog lie (for lack of a better phrase). I try not to bring it up because I don't want to jeopardize the trust that I have built up with my mom, nor do I want to cause undo stress because we're all going through difficult times right now. I don't know when it will ever be appropriate to openly discuss this among family members, but I think I need it in order to feel some sort of closer.

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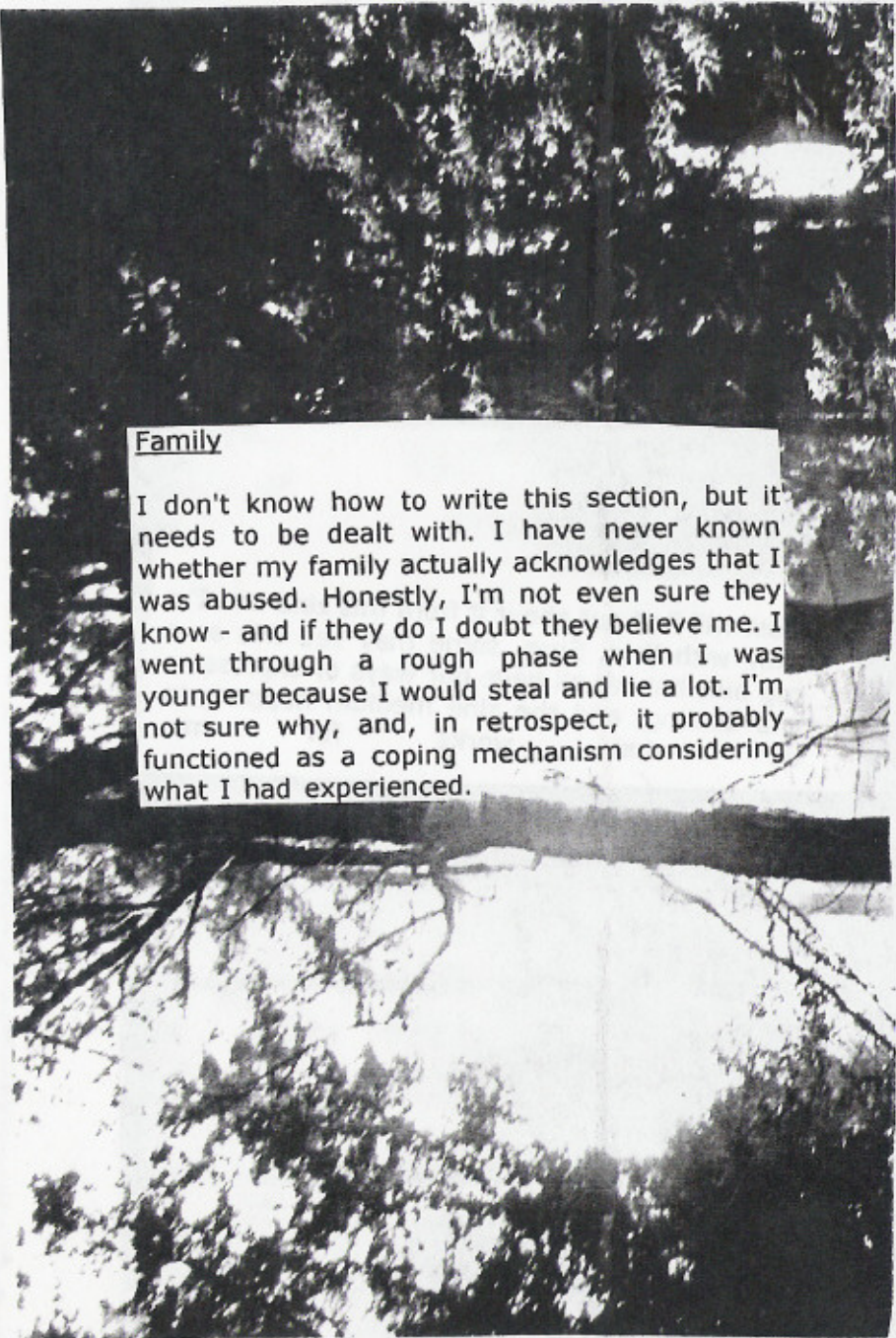


I have not seen him since then and I've told my family to respect my privacy and not give him any of my contact information, or where I currently live. For the most part they respect my wishes. Yet still, no one talks about it.



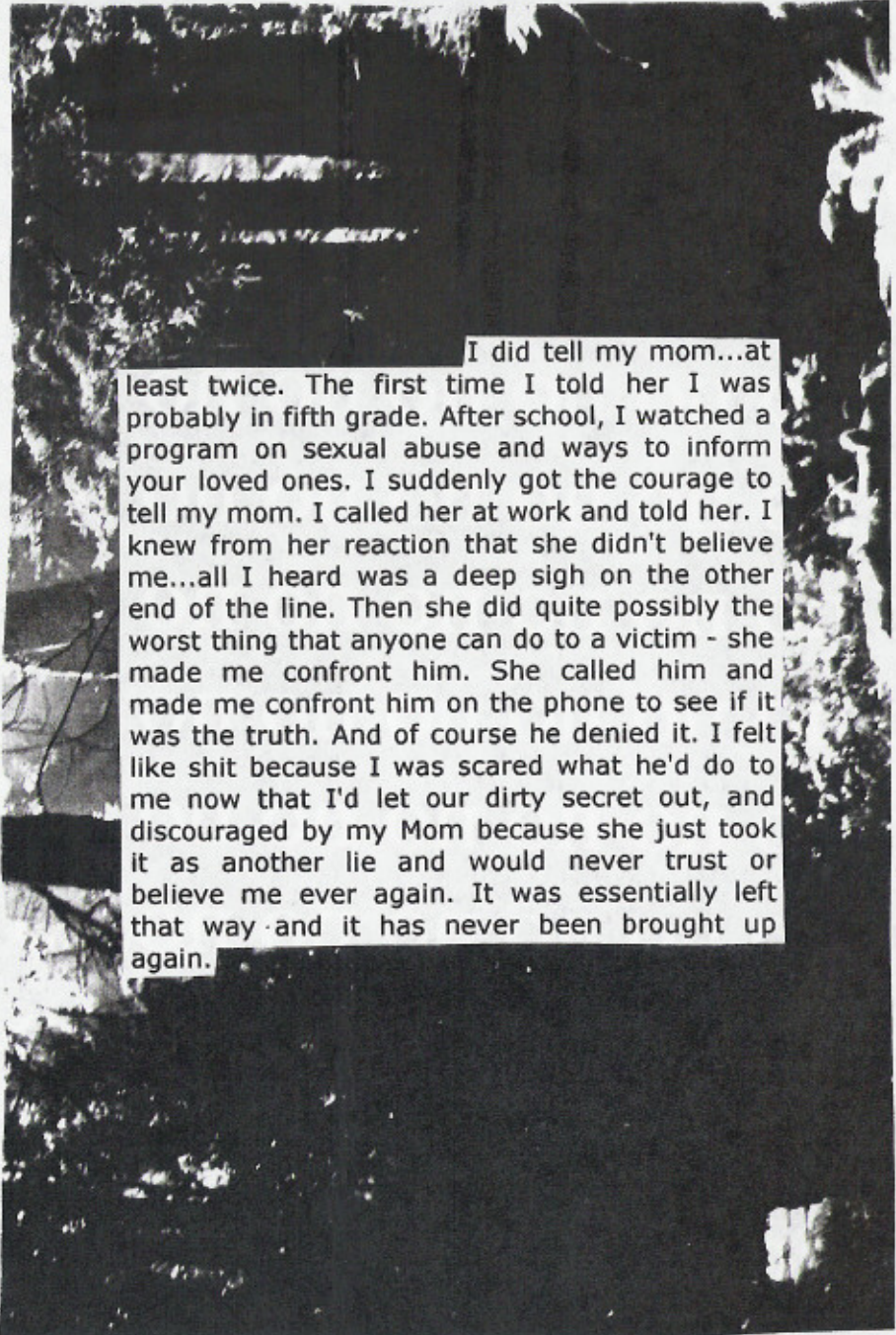
The girls I drooled over possessed the figures men got hard-ons for and I envied them. Because I craved male attention, I envied their bodies. It took me years to come to the conclusion that I was attracted to women and that it wasn't all a fluke.

Once I discovered the Internet, my desperateness to connect to some one got worse. I found myself seeking out the attention of anyone who could potentially fill the void I've been trying to fill for years. I experimented with a few "gentlemen" of which I really don't care to expand on. One of them took my virginity unwillingly and I ended up with a kidney infection because I was in too much pain/too scared to get up and pee. That was fun. The worst part is that I caught up with him a year or two ago and he had no idea who I was. What he didn't realize is that I'd never had actual sex before then, I'd never had a P in my V (not counting the abuse). I lost my virginity to some random asshole I met online. Yeah, losing my "virginity" was special all right.



Family

I don't know how to write this section, but it needs to be dealt with. I have never known whether my family actually acknowledges that I was abused. Honestly, I'm not even sure they know - and if they do I doubt they believe me. I went through a rough phase when I was younger because I would steal and lie a lot. I'm not sure why, and, in retrospect, it probably functioned as a coping mechanism considering what I had experienced.



I did tell my mom...at least twice. The first time I told her I was probably in fifth grade. After school, I watched a program on sexual abuse and ways to inform your loved ones. I suddenly got the courage to tell my mom. I called her at work and told her. I knew from her reaction that she didn't believe me...all I heard was a deep sigh on the other end of the line. Then she did quite possibly the worst thing that anyone can do to a victim - she made me confront him. She called him and made me confront him on the phone to see if it was the truth. And of course he denied it. I felt like shit because I was scared what he'd do to me now that I'd let our dirty secret out, and discouraged by my Mom because she just took it as another lie and would never trust or believe me ever again. It was essentially left that way and it has never been brought up again.