

# #metoo

**sexual harassment  
through the prism  
of neoliberalism**





The testimonies of the #metoo stories were collected by the 8th March Institute, with the help of Darja Zaviršek, Irena Šumi & Renata Šribar.

**#metoo**



# #metoo

In recent years, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom, we witness special events: women have stepped into the public, revealing their experiences of systematic misogyny.

The question with which the analyzes will undoubtedly continue to be occupied by is why such an outburst of revealing of these violent misogynous acts occurred: what factors merged, that there was a rare moment in the patriarchal social structure, when things that were concealed, normalized, disgraced, suddenly and forcefully revealed. It's so vehement that we're listening to warnings and objections, as if it's a witch-hunt, a demonization of men, a "retrograde" process, etc. On the contrary, some argue that these are processes that can be compared to those in the 1960s, when women in the Western world demanded and mostly claimed more freedom and personal autonomy in the field of sexuality, turned public, police and judicial perception of rape, they achieved reproductive rights, such as generally accessible and free contraception, and the right to freely decide upon one's own body.

The movement of #metoo has captured a moment in which there is a sufficient critical number of women witnesses who have close experiences of breaking the "glass ceiling" and overcoming "sticky floors" and at the same time this is a signal that stopping the misogyny requires women's solidarity and mutual support and that the enemy is far more powerless than it seems.

Finally, the movement of #metoo more than individual men in the position of power successfully revealed what we can guess that is part of the very essence of the structure and functioning of patriarchy and all inequalities and antagonisms that it supports, allows and normalizes. No to any patriarchy: the era of the global neoliberal "free market", which is shown as the only path, the last ideology, the authentic nature of the human world, is clearly strongly inclined to put just such infantile and violent representatives of "masculinity" to the positions of executive power. The victims of this type of modern patriarchy are all, regardless of gender: how many emotionally and sexually developed adults suffer from the supremacy of such a capricious "boss", political leader, religious leader ...?

There is no doubt that women in Slovenia also have a full spectrum of experiences alike to the ones that the women in the Anglo-Saxon world reacted to by speaking up. Even in Slovenia, women in professional life and in the public sphere experienced - perhaps even for years and sys-

tematically - humiliation, violence, sexual violence and intimidation. The question is how do women in Slovenia internalize and normalize violence that they only receive because they are women. We can safely say that the experience of sexual harassment is universal, that practically all women have experienced it in some way, regardless of their social status, age, type of employment, political affiliation and belief, single or married.

This publication is a collection of testimonies, received during the course of #jastudi, the Slovenian #metoo campaign. Its aim is to demonstrate the scope of sexual violence in Slovenia, and how capitalist society directly contributes to the oppression of women. We believe each testimony provides an insight into the structure of our social fabric and shows the potential for achieving positive social change.







**1** A man of 30, who often visited me, to chat »innocently« at first, became more and more intrusive. When he came behind me back, pushed me against the counter and I felt his erection, I immediately pushed him back decisively and went to tell this to my superior. She was great and forwarded this further. There have been many similar inappropriate situations during the years, but I was lucky enough to never stay quiet and to react immediately.  
*#metoo, July 2018*

**2** Once, when I was 17, I was leaving my practice, when a complete stranger asked me what the time is. That was the excuse for him to come closer; suddenly, he grabbed my face and forced his tongue down my mouth. Crazy! I hit him and ran away.  
*#metoo, July 2018*

**3** I think there is no woman, who wouldn't feel exposed, abused, or humiliated because she is a woman at least once in her life. Not a single woman without an experience, not a single one without a memory that she tries to suppress.

When I was 11, my father and I went to the swimming pool. He was swimming lengths and I was bathing in the thermal pool. After a couple of minutes an older man joined me. He was an older man, unknown to me. He sat right next

to me. We were the only two people there. »You have nice breasts,« were the words that got stuck in my mind, when he suddenly said it. These words made me plunge into the water up to my nose and move away from him, since I felt too uncomfortable to leave the place and he could look at me outside of the water. I felt disgusting, disgusting, disgusting, until he was the one who left because of my reaction.

In my first year of high school I almost slept with a boy that I liked. Almost; because it hurt and I pushed him away. He became angry. »C'mon, what am I supposed to say to my buddies!« It's funny how people remember some sentences for decades, even though we may not have understood what was wrong with them back then. I didn't understand and I felt guilty for not giving him what he wanted.

When I was fifteen, so a year later, I went to the last house party in my life. I wore a little flirty shirt and have felt guilty because of it long after that night. A boy from the previous story was there and so was his friend.

It is essential to understand that a teenager doesn't yet have the concepts of love, sexuality, and patriarchy cleared up. I still liked the sleazebag and I still felt some sort of guilt because of the situation that I interrupted a year before. With guilt, he managed to implement a feeling of duty in me. When we kissed on the couch in front of the others at the party, I felt safe and ready. That is why I responded

positively when he suggested we find some privacy. When his friend came over with us and locked the door in the bedroom, the feeling of safety disappeared.

I never talked about what happened, let alone about the details of what was going on. That is why I am not surprised that years after, I still have parts of that grotesque engraved in my memory. I remember the strength with which one of them held my hands, while the other explored how a “virgin looked like”. I remember the disgusting taste of sweat and feeling sick when my “crush” was sticking his male organ into my mouth and I remember the laughter from the other one when my body refused to take it in. I remember that it was then that I felt really powerless for the first time.

The whore status stuck with me until the end of high school and it would probably stay with me longer have I not avoided my ex schoolmates. The story about the »fun girl« spread fast and far enough so that I never could escape the predators until I wrote off my high school matura examination and escaped to Ljubljana. I have been in a serious and loving relationship for five years now and it hurts that I am not able to explain to my boyfriend why sometimes during sex I burst into tears.

And I haven't even mentioned all the disgusting everyday situations. Have you ever noticed how men, whose eyes you meet on the street, always wait for us to move our

look? It starts there.

*#metoo, July 2018*

4 In the introduction you mention how people in America and England were unresponsive despite the fact that they knew about the abuses, which is horrible and sad. But it is not much different here. You know that. Nowadays people who had a job at BBC when Jimmy Savile was there live in Slovenia and none of them reacted, although all of them knew. Today these people smile to us from the covers of Slovene magazines or give advice. The only one who dared to expose what Sir Jimmy Savile was doing was Sex Pistols frontman Johnny Rotten. But he was censored. The state of things in Slovenia is similar or even worse, because things are “socially” acceptable, which is very worrying. For example, when the case with the PEN club and (name removed) happened – nothing, (name removed) rape – nothing, director's beating of an actress/his wife – nothing, a famous painter from Ljubljana (who decorates Ljubljana every year) has a history of abuse, which is well known – nothing, Cicimici by (name removed) – very questionable video and text – nothing. The song is even promoted by the media as a “summer hit for the youngest”, etc., etc., etc. ... There are so many examples that there is no end to them. Everybody knows everything and nothing happens. This means that the situation is extremely worrying. And the most questionable is the inefficiency of

the police and the sympathy that the Slovene law shows towards the perpetrators of sexual violence, which is obvious to everyone.

This is perhaps the answer to why many sexual assaults go unrecorded and are not denounced to police or other responsible institutions. I know many victims who carry this burden and for them it is even hard to talk about it anonymously. Why this is so, I do not know. But I am sad, disappointed and angry because of the conscious inefficiency of the ones responsible.

I hope and wish for your action to achieve the wanted effect and for it to contribute to raising awareness. Oh and; me too and my cousins too.

*#metoo, June, 2018*

5

I was 17. Was, but I wanted to be a rebel. I went to nightclubs and drank alcohol. I drank everything, even tried LSD. After a couple of months I met a man in the club and he was about 25 then. We got close and I thought that my madness and rebellion is over now. And it was over.

I thought that he loved me. Every day he was telling me how beautiful I am, that he loves me, how lucky he is ... Then I became pregnant. I thought he was going to be happy, but he changed completely. He began with psychological violence and insults. After a couple of weeks he started beating me.

He was beating and torturing me

every day. His deepest sexual fantasies were carried out on me. Every day I was beaten, full of bruises, wounds, and then at night he was still using me for his fantasies.

Somehow I still had a feeling that I love him, since he was the father of my child.

I lost that feeling in the moment when he beat me so hard that I lost my child in the third month of pregnancy. When I told him about it after a couple of days, he scolded me and pushed me into a wall so that my skull broke.

I was in the hospital for two months and all that time he was whoring around in clubs ...

When I came back I saw him dead drunk. Out of pure anger, rage and hate I grabbed a bottle that he held in his hand and hit him all over his head and his body until it broke completely.

That same night I took all of my things and all the money he had, as well as his laptop and his phone. I discovered that he was watching child and animal pornography. I took the laptop to the police and they gave him a punishment of 15 years for violence, paedophilia and intentional manslaughter.

He cut his veins the next day. I can't believe that I let this monster into my life. I could not save my child. I still wonder what it would look like ...

I became asexual because of all that.

I am married now. I work as a nurse (in the USA) and I almost lost my current partner because of all of that. He was my patient, he was psychologically down and he admitted to me that I mean everything to him and that he loves me. I was afraid and turned him down because of that. They suggested him euthanasia ... But I realised what I feel about him and stopped it.

He doesn't feel as intensively and does not understand everything, but the thing that I see is that even very "normal" people can be monsters and the "psychopaths" can be loving and caring.

As a woman I am aware of the position of other women around the world and I wish to change how the world functions.

Clothes, make up, good looks, being hot blooded are not responsible for rapes ... The bastards without spines, who take it out on women, are! We carry the world in our hands and what do we get in return? I want to change this, I want to give all women the possibility of rights, of deciding and a free and independent will! I want to tell the world that it cannot go on like this anymore.

These are my story, my faith, my thoughts and my goals!

*#metoo, June 2018*

6

»This is how the boys show that you are beautiful.«

»You probably provoked it.«

»It was just a joke.«

»Take it as a compliment.«

»It's your own fault. What were you wearing?«

»Admit it, you liked it.«

»Don't be such a hard-ass, he just showed you that he likes you.«

»Why are you like this? All depressed. Be happy that a man is paying attention to you!«

»What were you doing there anyhow? If you had stayed at home, this wouldn't have happened!«

»You know, men cannot hold back. It's in their instinct.«

Etc.

These are the sentences which have followed me since I entered puberty. My feelings were never important: shame, uneasiness, sadness, self-hate and hate towards my own body, feelings of guilt... I was supposed to accept groping as something positive, as a sign of attention, of feeling welcome, as a compliment. As if I am the property of the one who has the right to take me – anytime, anywhere (on the hallway of the primary school, or now at my workplace, in the crowd at the concert...). I have to carry the image of the one who is to blame and the one who is causing this... if I react, he is the one who is the victim. The victim of my "attack", the victim of me not being silent, the victim of me standing up for myself, for my body. The victim of me – "the crazy, stupid, dumb,

messed up... a feminist who cannot take a compliment.”

When will it finally be clear that groping isn't fun, that it isn't attention, men's »need, urge«, but violence against our bodies, against us, disrespect, and misogyny?!

*#metoo, June 2018*

7

Interestingly, I haven't thought of it this way before, I told myself that it is just how it is, that such things happen and it had to happen to me as well. Actually ... there are 3 major things that I remember.

1) I was 15 when me and my friend went to an open-air concert. That is also where I met my boyfriend of the time, who was 3 years older than me. He pulled me aside to be alone with me and to take a walk, to move away from the crowd. I was naïve and followed him. We stopped by a bench under a tree, where he started touching me and undoing my bra. I told him to stop and tried to push him away, when he got on top of me and held my hands above my head so I could not move away, then lied on top of me. I tried to get away and started screaming that he must let me go. I had luck because in that moment my friend, who was looking for me because I was away for too long, came by. When she came, he saw her, stopped and let me go. I never saw him after this event and I am incredibly grateful to my friend.

2) About two months after the first incident I was at an event that is quite well known in Slovenia. While

I was enjoying the concert, an older man came up behind me, hugged me and started dancing with me. He was licking my shoulder, dead drunk, pressing his hard penis against me. I was so shocked that I didn't know how to react, but suddenly it took over me, something clicked inside of my head and I just pushed the man away and told him off. The people around me acted as if no one noticed anything.

3) The third such incident happened 10 years later, when I was working in a relatively decent café as a student just before graduating. That day there weren't many guests. A man around 50 spent a couple of hours behind the bar and chatted with me. First about some usual topics, and then he started with more and more uncomfortable ones. I asked him to stop, I told him that I can't chat and that he should leave me alone, that I have to work, but he didn't want to stop. I asked him to leave the café, but he didn't want to. He started telling me how big his penis is, how he likes my legs, my ass and explaining what he would do to me. He tried to grab my bottom and hug me but I luckily managed to move away. Then my boss came, he noticed what was going on and removed the guy from the café as fast as possible.

*#metoo, May 2018*

8

It was the sixth grade of my primary school when I got my first C at maths and my mother thought it would be better to get me a private

teacher. So she did. It was a guy she knew, but who was kicked out of a few schools where he worked as a teacher because of sexual harassment. He was generally known as such a guy. It is still not clear to me why my mother brought me to him and why was I supposed to have contact with such a person. Otherwise she was considered to be someone who would protect women and children. I suppose she thought that he wouldn't do anything bad to me, because they knew each other.

It started very soon. Because we knew each other, I also knew his daughter, I had a special »privilege«; he taught me in his daughter's room. Of course she was often away from home. He constantly touched me under my shirt, groped me, and made inappropriate comments. I felt utmost uncomfortable, horrible, I still remember the disgusting touch of his hands and most of all of feeling powerless. When after some time, when I was a bit older, I told my parents that I don't want to go there anymore, because of what I just described, my mother didn't believe me. She accused me that I was just too lazy to learn. I still don't know what is worse – what the tutor did (and he was definitely doing it to many girls before and after puberty) or the fact that my own mother didn't believe me. Let me say as well that I never felt less interest in studying and my school performance only worsened.

I feel sorry that I wasn't older, so that I could report him. A few years back I was still thinking that I

should go to the police despite everything, but then I heard that he is old and senile so I changed my mind and only hoped that there is god or someone or something that would pay him back for everything bad that he has done to so many girls.

*#metoo, May 2018*

**9** In August 2016 I went to a local bar. I had a few drinks and I don't remember anything else after that, only a few segments. I remember going to the toilet twice, then I just remember the voices in the bathroom back at my place. »We have to shower you with cold water!« and then again: »This is definitely not just alcohol, she didn't drink that much, someone slipped a drug in her drink!«, then darkness again. The next thing I remember is lying in my bed and a silhouette of a person, a black silhouette is standing above me. I didn't know who it was, I just saw this person kneeling above me and there was slight sunlight coming through the blinds, it had to be early morning, but I wasn't able to move or talk, then there was darkness again ...

I woke up in the morning, around 6 or 7, and saw a guy lying next to me on his stomach without his shirt on. His pants are on the couch. I am only wearing a bra, I am naked underneath, and my panties are lying next to him by the wall. I get up and go to the toilet, my private parts burn, I notice a bruise on my thigh and a bump on my forehead. I don't know what's going on; I am

ashamed that I cannot remember anything. »You weren't raped, it's impossible that it would happen to you!«

I go up to the guy and tell him to leave. I only knew him by sight. He is looking for his cigarettes; I ask him if the ones on the nightstand are his. He answers that they're not, takes the keys of his car and unlocks the apartment in order to leave. Something startles me: »Oh fuck, there was another person in my apartment.« I think of his friend, but I can't remember him well. The guy who woke up next to me hugs me and leaves. I ask myself »why did you hug me, ew, ew, what's going on, what am I going to do now. No one should find out!« was my first thought.

I go to the bathroom and throw up, I have diarrhoea, my body is shaking, my heart is pounding, I have trouble breathing. I go to the living room and notice that 100 euros were taken from me. I cry because I don't understand anything and call my friends to tell me what was going on. They tell me I went to the bathroom in the bar, fell unconscious, couldn't walk and that I was foaming at the mouth. The guy who was the main suspect later on has brought me back home together with my friend. The suspect left. Another friend came and they showered me a couple of times for me to regain consciousness. They told me they showered me and went home because I started walking and told them that I am fine. I don't remember it myself. They told me that they found out that three

guys came to my place later on. I notice white dust, probably drugs, on a chair in the living room. My world is starting to collapse and I shower to wash away the dirt off me. I feel worthless, I have 1000 question marks in my head: "Why did I go out, why did I leave my drink at the counter, why did they do this to me, and what did I do to deserve this?"

I reported the case too late. When I reported the theft as well, the money miraculously returned to my flat without someone breaking in. The prosecutors rejected the case, because there was not enough evidence and because, in my opinion, police didn't investigate the case thoroughly enough.

To me, I already won, because everyone thought that I am going to stay quiet. I was completely down but managed to pick myself up and got up even stronger and louder. I survived! I want to change the view on sexual assaults with my story. I want every woman to be heard and for the police to take such cases more seriously. I want to be the inspiration for everyone who does not have enough strength, to tell it out loud, for everyone, who fought but who could no longer handle it at the end, for everyone who remains silent and is yet too frightened to speak up.

Because I did not give up, my case is being send back to the prosecutor. I am waiting for his decision again.

If a woman is wearing a miniskirt

– that doesn't mean that you can rape her.

If a woman is drinking and is dizzy – that doesn't mean that she said yes.

If a woman is unconscious – that doesn't mean you can use that for your fun.

If a woman is dancing and flirting with you – that doesn't mean that she wants a sexual intercourse.

Drinking is not a crime, but rape is!

Report every criminal act to the police, go to the doctor right away and don't shower so you don't ruin the evidence.

**BE STRONG AND LOUD.  
SPEAK UP!**

*#metoo, May 2018*

**10**  
I was 6 or 7 when it started. My father abused me when we were home alone. My mother and my 2 brothers know nothing about it. I am ashamed. Even today, when I am 44, I am ashamed to talk about it. Only now, 1 year after my father's death, I dare to speak about it, secretly. When I was a child I never spoke up, because I knew I was going to break up my family and that it will be my fault. So I stayed quiet. When I was 20 and started to get my own pay check it happened again after a short break. I decided to leave. The next morning I took my suitcase and my dog and left. I slept at my friend's house for a couple of days, and

then moved around renting different rooms. I never had the money to rent my own flat. I just told my mother that I never want to see my father again. I was not able to tell her the truth. I told her that my father hit me and that I won't be taking it any longer. My two brothers never asked me what was going on. They thought I was a spoiled child. That is a heavy burden and I still think that my relatives are not prepared to carry it. They have enough of their own problems. I still don't believe that others can help you. You, the victim, carry everything on your back. But it is right that we talk about it more and that perhaps the perpetrators will get scared when the victim speaks up.

*#metoo, May 2018*

**11**  
I was at a music festival where I and my friend slept in the car for one night. My friend woke me up very early the next morning, because a middle age man was watching us sleep next to our car while masturbating. When he saw that we woke up, he started calling his friends, sat in his car and drove away.

*#metoo, May 2018*

**12**  
When I was talking to my female friends a while ago about this topic, each and every one of them had something to say. One was constantly being harassed on the public bus that she took to school – the same men kept on rubbing against her. The other was groped by her uncle in her own apartment, while



they were waiting for her mom to get back from work. The third one told me recently that nothing of the kind ever happened to her. But because we were schoolmates in high school, it didn't take long for us to realize that our geography teacher often caressed her arm in a sleazy way during lectures. She later also remembered that her uncle tried to squeeze next to her on the carriage when they worked together on the farm. She thought both incidents were disgusting, but just pushed them somewhere deep inside of her and lived her life convinced that such things only happen to girls who provoke it.

I can admit that I had trouble remembering such unpleasant incidents myself, but while I was reading the testimonies of other women recently published in *Mladina* magazine, they all started to resurface.

*#metoo, April, 2018*

# 13

When I was in primary school, I took the train to attend music school. Often a man would enter my coach, somehow pushed his way to the seat next to me, sat down and touched my knees with his. It was nothing more than that, but I felt trapped, pursued, attacked, and also uncertain, because none of the other passengers ever noticed that something was wrong. I didn't move or leave the seat, because I wasn't able to leave the train anyhow and he could follow me around even to the more secluded parts. I never wanted to be alone

with him. One time this is exactly what happened. I was sitting in an empty coach of the train on my way back from music school. He came there, but didn't sit facing me. He sat in the next line of seats on the other side. Then he lied down, opened his slit and pulled out his penis. I didn't want to look at it but I noticed it with the corner of my eye. Luckily, the train was very close to my station so I went to the hallway and left the train. My younger brother told me that this man is the father of my schoolmate. Not so long afterwards, he died. When I found out about it, I felt relieved.

*#metoo, April, 2018*

# 14

The first time I took the train from my home village to Jesenice was in my eighth grade of primary school. On my way from the train over the platform and through the waiting room, as well as on the street, men were whistling and catcalling after me. My first independent trip to the town was ruined. I felt completely uncomfortable. I felt trapped and attacked. I tried to avoid that place for the next four years of high school.

*#metoo, April, 2018*

# 15

After finishing primary school, I went on a school camping trip to the seaside. We were playful. We spent most of the time swimming and jumping into the water. Our PE teacher and the husband of our Slovene language teacher were swimming with us. Suddenly, my

PE teacher grabbed my breast in the water. It wasn't an accidental touch. So I pushed myself out of the water and slapped him. I never had trouble with him again, but since then, I became more aware of what was going on and noticed that both of the men are still playing games with the young female campers. Their wives never noticed anything or at least that's how it seemed.

*#metoo, April, 2018*

My PE teacher and athletics coach in high school called me one afternoon during practice at the stadium. He said I should come see him, because he has something to tell me. »I dreamt that we slept together,« he told me. To tell the truth, at first it didn't seem like a big thing to me – to lie down and sleep together. But his look and his grin revealed something else. »Did you tell this to your wife? I think she would be more interested in it than I am,« I told him and left in anger. Our relationship was more appropriate from then on.

*#metoo, April, 2018*

# 16

It was spring in the first year of my high school (May or June 1975). We were returning from an athletics competition with a van. I asked to get out near the train station, from where I would drive back home with a train. At the train station I realised that the train has already left. Because I didn't think the train station was a safe place, I found an orchard about a mile away from the station; I lied under a tree

and felt so tired that I fell asleep. In the morning some animals that were near woke me up. I got up in the early dawn and headed towards the train station to catch the first train back home. When I entered the waiting room, I noticed two men lying on the long benches. Something told me that I have to leave the place immediately, so I turned around and ran into the dark. They noticed me as well and started running after me. Because I didn't have much time to hide, I ran across the street to the narrow parking place in front of the train station, went behind a truck with a tender that was standing on the edge of the parking space and threw myself into the high grass there. I was numb there, waiting. The men came running from the train station building and because they didn't see me, ran towards the bridge and across the river onto the other side of the riverbank. Then they came back to the train station and wondered out loud how I disappeared. When I was listening to their conversation, it became clear to me, what would happen to me, if they caught me or found me. It is thanks to my own intuition, focus and quick reaction, as well as my fast and flexible body, that I was able to hide and that I got away without a scratch. I waited hiding until I heard a train approaching the station and then drove home.

*#metoo, April, 2018*

## 17

Our geography teacher in high school had a weird habit of walking between the benches and caressing girls during class. That is why the girls agreed with the boys that we will sit in the inner side of the benches and the boys took the outer side. But it didn't help. The teacher made his way there and stroked our arms and necks or rubbed against us. He did that once with me – he came to me and started stroking my neck. I felt uncomfortable and angry, because I sat right in the middle, so that nothing would happen. That is when I decided to put an end to it. Because all the other girls were quietly putting up with his behaviour or just quietly hoped that it won't happen to them, I decided to try and get him to stop by using my voice. Because I was too scared to do it directly, I told him: "Teacher, I don't have it!" "You don't have what?" he asked me. "A necklace. That's what you're looking for, isn't it?" I replied. "Oh, no, no," he murmured, moved away from the benches and stopped harassing me for good.

*#metoo, April, 2018*

## 18

I was a young high school student when one day I was leaning against the fence of my neighbour's garden from where there was a good view of our local football field. I was looking at the boys playing the game that I played with them not so long ago. A neighbour, an older man, came and stood next to

me. He was the father of my childhood friend. He explained what he would do to me and for how long and how I would enjoy it. First I couldn't believe my ears, and then I turned around and left without a word. I was left with the feeling of obscenity, I don't remember the words anymore, but I still remember his shameless grinning face.

*#metoo, april, 2018*

## 19

When I took the Sunday train to Ljubljana in the early evening hours during my student years, sometimes a man would sit facing me, although the train was empty and he could have sat just about anywhere else. Then he stared at me. It was uncomfortable and annoying.

*#metoo, April, 2018*

## 20

At the pre-new year's party (it was the end of 80ies or the beginning of the 90ies) I had a deal with a boy of the same age from the warehouse to take me home after the party. Suddenly I was informed that my superior will take me home instead of him, because he wanted to do it himself. This hierarchical hustling didn't seem promising but I was polite and agreed. When he stopped the car near my home and I wanted to say goodbye he told me he would like to drink a coffee at my place. Because I knew what this would mean and I didn't feel like it, I told him that I unfortunately don't have coffee, I thanked him for the ride and wished him a good night. After a while, he said

that the only way for me to get a promotion was over his dead body.

*#metoo, April, 2018*

# 21

A while ago I rented a garage from my neighbour. When I came to see him to sign the contract and pay the rent, he invited me into his bedroom. I told him I am not interested in that. That kind of offer seems annoying, uncomfortable and inappropriate.

*#metoo, April, 2018*

# 22

While I had a student job in the casino, the guests often »affectionately« called me »little one, kitty, pussycat«. Later on, one of my co-workers also started calling me these names, as well as touching me. That was the point when I stopped working in the casino.

*#metoo, April, 2018*

# 23

I was 19. I was a member of an orchestra, in which an older man, who was probably over 40, played as well. One day we had a concert near my hometown, so I didn't have to worry about the ride back home. I just came there with my car. The already mentioned man wasn't from that town, so he rented a room in the hotel. I didn't pay any attention to him at practice, because I always hung out with the members of the orchestra who were my age. He was much more persistent during practice and tried to find ways to approach me. He managed to do

that. After the concert he followed me to my car and just as I unlocked it, I felt his hand on my shoulders. He turned me around and started to kiss me by force. I wanted to defend myself and run away but he was too strong. He started threatening me, so I was too afraid to do anything. We walked to his hotel and I still don't know why I didn't run away. When we came to his room, he undressed my jacket and pushed me against the wall, where he kissed me forcibly again. Then he threw me on his bed undressed and started taking my clothes off as well. This was when I thought to myself: »Are you crazy?! Just think of something!« I gained a lot of will and power to resist him and I told him that I am going to start screaming if he doesn't stop. He laughed and started groping me. I started to scream as loud as I could and that was when he stopped. I quickly put my clothes back on and ran towards my car. I never came back to the orchestra again. Until this day, no one knows about this.

*#metoo, April, 2018*

# 24

The worst story is the one that still marks me today. Every day, a flowerpot that I got as a gift reminds me of it. The unwanted touching in primary school and high school, the student jobs and indecent invitations, the forced "take it or leave it" jobs if you don't agree with "all the services", all this is nothing compared to what is going on later on at your workplace, at least as far as I've experienced it; the indecent

invitations, arranging business travels and hotel rooms together, the promises of promotion or on the contrary, of ruining your career, the career that you have put immense effort and enthusiasm in, and really fought for it for many years, all in the name of some higher purpose.

When I changed my job, I ended up at an office with an older lady, with whom I got pretty close in the next two years, before they moved us to new premises. Based on my own experiences later on, I have no reason not to believe what she has told me. She was the manager of an important department; she was respected and well esteemed initiator of many projects that still exist today. After a while she confided in me and told me the reason why she ended up in an office with a beginner... In her previous job, her boss called her to his office, and as she said, suggested »something more«. She was happily married and when she told him that she is not interested in such a relation with him, she was quickly removed from her position and moved to another job inside the organisation. She was degraded both in function and in position.

Her new director suggested her to give in an extraordinary notice of termination. She hired a lawyer so her rights would be protected, but at one moment she simply gave up. She wasn't a fighter but she was fully engaged in the content and the field of work that she was doing. She went on a sick leave for a year and then all of a sudden she died. Her family notified us that they do

not wish anyone from her work to be present at the funeral. Despite that, her ex co-workers, who knew her and loved her, decided to prepare an event in her memory. A memorial day was established and one of the projects was named after her.

The director was later removed, but he is still working in the wider organization, as is her ex manager. But she rests in peace.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 25

I was forced to have a sexual intercourse with a dog and set it on fire afterwards.

*#metoo, marec, 2018*

## 26

My story begins when I was four. When I was four years old and was forced to watch someone bathe and I still remember his penis and how he masturbated. After a year or so someone was touching me outside on the playground. When I went to primary school, my schoolmate abused me. Later on, when I had my first boyfriend, he stuck his fingers up my vagina on the first day, even though I didn't want that. I felt very uncomfortable and he later on abused me several times again. Later on my nightmare without an end started. At the end of my primary school I met a boy, a Macedonian from the workers dormitory and I fell madly in love with him. I was convinced that he was going to be my last boyfriend and that we will create a life together.

How old he was back then, I still don't know. He lied to me that he was 18 and I, as a minor, believed him. But he was at least 20 years older than I was. He took me to his residence and I met all of his one hundred and more friends there. He was abusing me in front of others under the blanket, even when someone was in the room with us, we had sex, and he was satisfying me. Later on his friends had sexual intercourse with me. He and his friends abused me for several years, I had to give them hand jobs, they rubbed against me, so they would come, I had to give them blowjobs, I was forced to have sex with them and sometimes recorded me while doing that. If I didn't want to do something, they beat me. For more than a year they threatened me over the phone, they followed me and terrorized me by saying that they will kill my family, since they knew where I lived. My boyfriend and some of his friends were working in the slaughterhouse and I often went to work with them and watched them torture animals, butcher them, cut their throats, legs, I will not describe what all was going on there when it was late at night and there was no other people there. I was raped there on a white towel. If I cried when they were killing the animals, they hit me and told me not to cry. Often they gave me a shot of heroin so that they could torture and rape me; I was an easier victim that way. Later I got addicted to heroin and I kept coming back to that place all the time. They tied me up with leads and raped me. I started cutting myself because of

them, I became very angry and sad, and I got diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. Because of all the sexual abuse, I became a stranger to myself. I mixed all of my emotions because I wasn't allowed to express them when I was a child. That left me enormous traumas from which I am not yet free. A co-worker raped me the first time when I went for a work practice at a bookbinder's shop. He offered me a lift back and drove me to the garage to park his car, and then he locked it and raped me. Oftentimes when I go out, someone wants to rape or abuse me, but now I am luckily able to at least somehow defend myself and I sometimes manage to avoid it. Sexual abuse keeps on happening to me because I am not able to defend myself, because they made me timid and I have the feeling that I don't have the right to defend myself.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 27

It happened in the middle of the day, I think it was in the summer when I was on my way to see my boyfriend. I wanted to take the bus and there were several people at the bus station already, but I also noticed a car parked where the bus usually stops. I didn't pay much attention to it; I passed by and stopped at the front of the bus station. I waited for the bus; I was thinking about random things and was looking around without a goal. Then this car drove closer and stopped next to me. This didn't seem unusual; I just thought he

was trying to move further away, so the bus could stop behind it. A few moments later I looked at the car and noticed something weird, so I fixed my eyes on it. The man who was sitting on the driver's seat (he was alone in the car) held his penis in his hands! When I think of it now, I think my reaction was almost funny – I became extremely embarrassed, as if I was the one who did something indecent, so I looked away. The car drove away right away, but I was still in shock and couldn't remember the registration number. I'm not sure what I would do with it, but later I felt a bit sorry that I didn't memorise it or write it down.

When I came to my boyfriend I somehow managed to tell him what happened. I think I was about to cry. He was very understanding. We hugged and lay like that, so I calmed down.

Sometimes I remember this situation and think – how long was he parked there? What would be the proper reaction? Did he do it before? I find it scary, now when I think of this man driving around half naked, harassing people.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 28

For almost a decade I have been asking myself if I really experienced sexual abuse or am I just overreacting and should just think of it as »boys will be boys«. When I was 15, I had my first boyfriend. Everything happened so fast. We wrote to each other a couple of times

and the first time we got together he told me that now that we're together we should start thinking about having sex. The next time I went to see him, he started touching my private parts, which I wasn't comfortable with, but I didn't say anything. I was hoping that he will notice that I wasn't up for it. But he didn't. Or he didn't care. Then a couple of times he told me that I have to have sex with him, otherwise he will have to find himself another girl. I am not sure whether I was so blindly in love (even though I still ask myself how I could be in love with someone like him) or perhaps I thought everyone was like that, because I had no one to compare him with. Then he decided to blackmail me in other, more sophisticated ways. When I visited him, he kept playing computer games while I was waiting for us to do something together, at least talk. When I asked him to stop playing, he told me that we can have sex, otherwise he will continue playing. At a certain moment he really wanted oral sex so he told me to get prepared. I asked him if I could try that next week (I just wanted to postpone it) and he said no. He said he won't wait any longer. He got undressed and I was watching his hard penis which was even bigger than the average, and that really scared me back then. "Well, put it in your mouth," he said. I didn't want to, but I didn't want to resist anymore. I was numb. He demanded it a few more times and slowly I bent down a little. In that moment he pulled my head with strength and pushed me onto his penis so

I would begin satisfying him with my mouth. I remember walking home and waiting for the bus. My eyes were wet with tears but I convinced myself – well, not exactly convinced, but I just “knew” that for someone to show me love in such a way is something completely normal, because he probably isn’t capable of doing it in some other way and all that. Soon afterwards I had to choose between watching him play computer games and having sex with him. Almost fed up with everything, I said “well then let’s have sex”. He told me to undress and I did. He was still playing games. Once he finished, he put on a condom and penetrated me. It hurt. It was soon over and then he said “see how good it is”. I had zero feelings. Then he demanded that I shave myself completely, because we wouldn’t have sex if I don’t. Or do anything else together. Then he wanted me to buy some sexy underwear, but I didn’t. Then he started to have stranger requests. He wanted to stitch up my vagina, he wanted to buy a lot of sex toys etc., and I didn’t want any of it – on the contrary, I was afraid of those kinds of things and I still am. What I was experiencing with him was mostly psychological violence, but I think that sexual violence was there as well. There was some physical violence too. When I left him, everything seemed ok. I thought I got rid of him. And in a way I did, but I did not escape the lack of trust and fear that I still feel today, when I am 24. With every partner that I had after him, even if he was not intrusive at all, I got the

feeling that he was trying to force me into something that I want, but don’t want to be pushed into it. I started feeling repelled even with my long-term partner. Once, when he asked me to have an intercourse with him, I started feeling mistrust, fear and inferiority, and a sort of invisible intrusiveness from his side, which brought me to the point where I didn’t want to have sexual intercourse anymore. It is still like that today, because every time I meet a man, I don’t analyse his character, his looks or whatever in my mind, but I simply sort him on the scale of intrusiveness. And even if he is just a little intrusive (or I see him as such, even though he might not be at all), I feel extremely uncomfortable having sex with him or I don’t even go there with him.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 29

It was New Year’s Eve when it happened to me. My friends and I went to celebrate New Year’s abroad with an agency, where young people were placed in hotel rooms. One day after New Year’s we went out to party in a club, where me and one of my friends met a couple of nice Austrian guys. They kept buying us drinks for the whole night. When the party ended, of course – two of them that stayed with us – wanted to get a place to sleep. We were still a bit drunk, so we thought this was going to be fun, because the guys were really nice and cute on top of that. We went to our hotel room together where each of us gave half of our bed to one of the guys. We



continued chatting but soon feel asleep. I fell asleep and when I woke up after a while the guy who was spooning me was also touching my private parts. I pushed his hand away, but he kept putting it back. Then all of a sudden he unbuttoned his pants and got aroused. I tried to get away and told him to stop, while he was trying to calm me down and told me to let him do it, because it will feel good. He covered my mouth and before I could say anything he was inside of me. He kept pushing into me but I was resisting and he soon stopped. Then I got out of the bed and told both of the guys to leave our hotel room. Then I went back to sleep so I would forget what just happened to me as soon as possible.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

# 30

High school, gymnasium... Third year, maybe fourth, I'm not sure anymore... the final new year's party, taking place before noon, and my gym teacher... a bunch of high school students having fun... I don't remember anymore... alcohol at the work place of adults leaves a mark on wounded children...

I don't remember anymore how he managed to take me away from that mass of people, he somehow just dragged me along with him, I still see those round steps leading to the upper level, he ordered alcohol for both of us and I was sitting there frightened and stiff like a stone, I see him coming towards me, the man I somehow trusted! And he is

getting closer... I remember him saying things I don't understand... about his wife, about leaving her for me, about wanting to spend the holidays with me, asking me where I will be... my ears were ringing and my body was paralyzed with alarm... he is already kissing me to wish me a happy new year... and I ran down the stairs... went out and hitchhiked home...

...I told that to my best friend at the time and she coldly told me »you know how he is«... that's one of the things that still hurt today... I was even more hurt by the fact that when this came out, the principle asked me not to call the media... in return I was excused from my gym class till the end of my school and the teacher got a restraining order.

Today I tell you dear gentlemen, YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELVES AND NO, I WOULD NOT BE QUIET AGAIN!

*#metoo, March, 2018*

# 31

I am 52 and only now I am aware that one of my bike rides was a sexual assault. My mother told me one day that a neighbour died and I was very happy and wondering why that is so. I told my mother that I think it is great that this bastard died. I couldn't believe myself. When I was walking back home from school, this neighbour offered me to drive me home on the top tube of his bike. I sat on it, not suspecting anything, but after a

while I felt something hard pushing against me. As a child, of course I didn't know what that is : (

*#metoo, marec, 2018*

# 32

I was six, when I and my friend played outside of our house. My father calls me up to him. He places me in front of the door and tells me to undress. He starts touching me. I felt disgusted and uneasy. But I didn't know what exactly was going on. I grew up in that moment and had nightmares for the next six years of my life when he was sexually harassing me. He bribed me with toys. He threatened me that I shouldn't tell anyone. When I was eight or around that age, I told my neighbour what he was doing. She was my age and I understand now that she didn't get what I was saying. I told her more or less just because I didn't know whether this is normal or not. The years went by and I knew that it isn't right. My aunt was my biggest savior, since she lived with me until I was ten. I was at her place a lot. Often times, when my mother wanted to go to a party at work, I asked her to stay at home. Because I was afraid to tell her about it, my relatives took it on me and told me that I am selfish since I don't let my mother relax. Often, my father wouldn't come home until the evening, because he went to the bar after work. That was when I knew I have to avoid him. I often pretended that I am deep asleep, so he would stop as soon as possible. He rubbed his penis between my legs, had me

for his sex toy and wanted me to masturbate in front of him. A few times I had to make a panic, so he would wake up a bit, since he went too far – he wanted to penetrate me. That “helped” sometimes. He would then go and cry in front of me, telling me how sorry he is. What's the worst is that he put me in the position of his therapist. I wet my bed until I was 14. It was the consequence of all the things that were happening to me, since I consciously didn't want to go to the toilet in the middle of the night, too afraid that he might wake up. At 13, when I was armed with information that I got by myself on the internet, a sobering came for my mother. In the morning, when she was drinking coffee, before going to work, I told her: “Mom, dad is sexually abusing me.” My mother fell silent. For all those years she didn't know what was going on behind her back. The court gave him 4 years, but after a half a year we found out that he was somehow already outside, staying with some priest in the coastal region.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

# 34

It was a night out at Metelkova. I was tired and around 1 am went to grab a slice of pizza from the place across the railway station. I felt sick and went to the toilet. I fell asleep for a short while when an employee came to the toilet and asked me if I'm ok. When I wanted to pick myself up, he locked the door behind him. He held me strongly and tried to pull off my pants, but I managed

to regain strength to turn myself towards the door. The good thing was that there was no key, but only a knob that I could turn and unlock the door. I did that and ran out of the toilet. I heard him screaming to fuck off. I never reported this event. Why? Because I had too many encounters with the police for me to believe that this man would get any kind of an epilogue. That was a few years back. I hope that in the future, the institutions responsible will think more wisely about how to treat victims of violence.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 35

My story is a painful one, similar to thousands of other untold stories.

The first time it was my uncle who abused me and I was about two years old. When I was seven, two teachers in my school brutally raped me. When I was 12, my »friend« almost raped me under the pretence of an innocent game.

Despite all this horrific facts I did not remember being abused until I was 34. Dissociative amnesia protected me from these painful memories, but all of a sudden my psyche decided for the truth to resurface. Remembering was the cruellest experience of my life. I spent all my energy exploring, understanding and getting to know myself. Suddenly my life was the greatest puzzle in the world. Suddenly I didn't know who I am anymore. I wondered how to even know who the woman that I see in the mirror is. I wondered who I really am – who

I would be, if my uncle hadn't abused me so early on and brought my emotional development to a standstill. I realised how much consequences I have been carrying with me for my whole life. I felt weird, depressed, different, problematic and more and more, but I didn't know why. I had nightmares since I can remember, I never had a good night sleep, I was harming myself, and I went from anorexia to compulsive overeating. I had the "syndrome of a good girl" and I used almost every spark of my energy to hide my "strange habits". I had no clue where all this pain and anguish are coming from. I had no clue that these were the consequences of sexual abuse!

I decided for therapy and the path I took was demanding and tiring. But looking back now, I am happy that I decided for it! I can finally breathe easily now! I am happy to be alive and that the sexual abuse doesn't keep a tight rein on me anymore, I keep a tight rein on it! Does it mean I am only happy and joyful now? No! It means that when memories tormenting me again, they are usually less intense and I am able to calm them down faster. I am satisfied with my path and I struggle a lot to help anyone going through this hell. Last year I published a book with my story because of three reasons. Firstly, I needed to do that for myself, because when you put your trauma into words, it is therapeutical and soothing. Secondly, because much too often, people have no clue about what the pain of sexual abuse

means and they belittle it with words, disdain and apathy. Thirdly, because a person who went through sexual assault can gain some courage and hope just from being aware that there are many of us who carry similar pain and being aware that it is possible to live a better life.

Sexual assault didn't just take my childhood away from me; it took a big part of my adult life as well. That is why I am much more cautious about my children and my wish is that all parents would know how to protect their little ones. Let's not turn a blind eye! Don't think this can only happen to others! My parents thought that as well.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

# 36

It happened one evening at my workplace. I was working in a club where events were taking place every weekend and they lasted till the morning. It was mostly female students working there. Experiences weren't important, it only mattered that we were able to serve drinks fast and that we looked good. It often happened to me that boys pushed the limits of what is appropriate because of my looks and because of how I acted. They sometimes crossed the line as well. That evening all of us students worked together. It was a fun night with good music and little alcohol. Sometimes we drank a shot during the night shift, so we could keep the energy at a similar level as our guests. For a while (a minute, maybe two) I left my glass hidden be-

hind the bar and went to get some drinks in the warehouse because there was no more left at the bar. When I came back, we toasted with my co-workers. After a while, when I was finishing the shift, I wasn't capable of counting the money anymore. From then on, I only remember walking from the club and waking up with my head aching in an unknown flat with two strangers. They abused me. I was ashamed and asked them to drive me home. They did that. Nothing can be seen on the cameras of the club, of course. There are no witnesses. At least not sober ones, as they say. Some told me that I got what I deserved. Because it seemed like I'm having fun. The rest were quiet and listened. No one stood up for me. That hurt the most. #metoo

*#metoo, March, 2018*

# 37

A girl between 5 and 7... touching, caressing, flashing his penis, inviting me to touch it – freeze response ... flashback, the memory is hidden, clumsy... and yet the sole thought of those events hurt... the soul cries for help ...

*#metoo, March, 2018*

# 38

In [redacted] there was a doctor at the occupational health clinic, who was known for sexually assaulting women. Everyone in [redacted] knew about it.

When we were young and had to take a medical exam for a driving

licence (in the 90ies), we had to go and see this doctor. I remember that everyone, from the driving school [redacted], where we had our first aid class, to our parents, was preparing us for the meeting with this doctor [redacted]... But they were preparing us in such a way that they were telling us what we were going to go through and what we have to submit to, since we wouldn't get our certificate otherwise (for the driving licence or for work). Mothers were triumphantly describing what he did to them, how they endured it and encouraged us by saying that we will manage to do it as well.

The doctor demanded from us that we undress and stand there in our underwear. During the examination, he took the liberty to weigh our breasts with his hands, to touch our pubic region, our bottoms, to rub against us, all while we were half naked in the examination room and while he was commenting on our appearance.

I didn't want to take off my bra and told him that this is not necessary for a driving licence examination. The doctor laughed and reached behind my bra with his hand. He knew what he could do, didn't he?

I never even thought of filing a complaint, because everyone talked about it as if it was some sort of folklore, almost an initiation ceremony that all women from [redacted] have to go through.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

**39**  
The first incident, for which I am sure happened to many girls and women before in a similar manner, happened at a public place, in front of a shop. My mother went into the shop while I grabbed a trolley. There were receipts from other costumers in it so I leaned to pick them and throw them away. In that moment, I heard comments from three male voices. "Look how beautiful this one is." "The things I would do to her." "Girl, would you share your trolley with me?" I was already in college back then so it wasn't the first sexist remark I experienced in my life. That is why I had no trouble turning around and politely responded: "No, thank you. Please, just leave me alone." This didn't stop them; they followed me into the shop where they continued with their remarks even though my mother was there with me. That was when I had enough and I snapped: "This is not the way to communicate with me just because I am a woman." After a few moments, feeling very angry, I added a well-known quote from a Slovene YouTube celebrity: "Remove yourself, monster." That did the trick, they were ashamed and one of the guys even apologized to me.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

**40**  
The second incident is from my high school days. I went to a language camp with my school. In the evening hours we organized a small get-together with board games etc.

At a certain point I left the room to make a phone call. When I came back to the room my place at the table was taken. The boy who took it offered me to sit in his lap. Although I didn't like the idea at all, I accepted it so I wouldn't be seen as the »weird« one by the others. Soon after I sat down, his hands were on my breasts. Everyone sitting behind the table found his move entertaining and funny. I felt disgraced, humiliated and powerless. Back then I was only capable to show a sour smile, but today I would tell him and the rest of the table what I felt.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 41

The third event happened in my high school. We were visiting my relatives. At some point the adults went into a separate room while I, my brother and my cousin stayed in the living room. My cousin was showing a new computer game to my brother and I was bored. I took a book that I found; I sat on the couch and started reading it. Soon my cousin came to sit next to me and told me that he'd like to make a selfie with me. I agreed because that is nothing unusual. After a few moments he started telling me how beautiful I am, how he likes me, how he is in love with me, and he started to caress my hair. In that moment I became frightened, because there was no one there to help me. All I could do was smile and tell him I urgently needed to go to the toilet. Luckily he didn't oppose it; I ran to the bathroom and wrote an SMS to my mother

telling her that I want to go home. My mother felt that something was wrong and we soon went home after that. I wasn't able to tell her the whole story, I was too ashamed. In the next months he often wrote to me and tried to force me to admit that I gave him signals that I like him when we were visiting his family. He bragged that he showed the picture of his girlfriend to his friends. It was the photo we took together, of course. After a couple of things he wrote, I had enough of him, so I blocked him. Half a year after the first event, we gathered at my grandmother's place. That was when I saw my cousin again and told him that he has no right of touching me, as well as saying what he was saying and writing to me in the past months. That was also the moment when I decided to tell the whole story to my mother. She believed me. We never saw these relatives again and I never spoke to my cousin again.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 42

The last event is from my childhood. Just as every year we went to the seaside in the summer. We went to a small Dalmatian town. We always started our mornings with big breakfasts and a part of the holiday morning routine was the walk to the store. We went to the shop around ten so we always met the same faces. When I was ten, my parents trusted me enough so that I and my younger brother were allowed to do the shopping by ourselves. One morning we came

across one of the local guys that we knew. He started telling us stories about fishing and about his life and work on the boat. At a certain moment he touched my shoulder and asked me if I want to play the »titties game«. Yes, that's a direct quote. My head began to swim and I murmured that our parents are waiting for us. The old man said that that's not a problem and that we can play some other time. We told what happened to our parents and since then we went to the shop earlier or later, and, if possible, together with my mother.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

# 13

My nightmare began when I was 6. When I was a little girl, I played outside in the village a lot. I never went to kindergarten or something similar. I liked going from one neighbour to another and sing to them. I liked visiting my father's aunt the most, since she rewarded me with candy whenever I sang. One day I went to her house, but she wasn't there. However, her adopted son was there. I don't remember how it happened, but he lured me into the stable and showed me his penis there. He wanted me to hold it and put it in my mouth. Because I didn't know how to do it, he taught me. From then on, he somehow lured me there every time he was home alone. We were in the living room, when he told me to undress. He started to kiss me with his tongue, he started licking my breasts and at the end - my private parts. I felt pleasure as every woman does. After that I had to satis-

fy him. Every time I left, he told me loud and clear that I cannot tell this to anyone. He always gave me a cigarette, some candy or toys. This was happening until I was 12, when I stopped responding to his invitations for a certain reason. I was in my sixth grade then. Since then, I suppressed this deep inside of me until ninth grade when our teacher was explaining sexual intercourses to us at biology class. I realised then that something severely wrong was happening to me. Then I suddenly started to withdraw and keep away from everyone. That was until the first year of high school, when I couldn't carry this pain anymore. I threatened with suicide, but nobody knew why. No one took me seriously. In second year of high school I found courage to tell about it to my school social worker. It was her professional obligation to call the police and I had to give a statement. Back then I really resented that, but today I know that without it, I wouldn't be alive anymore. I am grateful to her. Until September 2015 I was in severe depression and I was thinking about suicide every day.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

# 14

I work in a bar as a student. One December day a man grabbed my bottom while I was serving him. I was shocked; I jumped and asked what the hell was going on here. His friend answered that it is the happy December so we can all »feel up« each other a bit.

*#metoo, marec, 2018*

## 45

When I was around 11, we were just building an attic apartment at home. A man who later became my aunt's partner came to help us as well. The aunt lived in the same house. I don't know when it started, but it was summer. We kids were playing outside of the house or some 300 metres away along the stream. The man often joined us and somehow gained our trust. With me, my neighbour and my cousin he abused this trust. He started touching our breasts and bottoms, as well as between our legs, all while »playing« outside, on the courtyard and nearby. I still don't know how no one noticed it. To continue... We girls started talking about it and we felt that something must be wrong with this. Every one of us knew that we didn't like what he was doing, but we didn't know how to stop it. I had a close encounter with him as I was looking for my cousin on the lower floor. She wasn't there so he invited me to watch TV in the bedroom with him until she came back. I would certainly turn and wait for her outside, but back then a certain fear prevailed. As we were sitting on the bed, he moved me into a lying position and lay on top of me... My grandmother was in the house as well so I told him that I will start to scream and that I will tell everyone what he is doing... But he just smiled and said: "Who do you think they will believe; you or me?" and he let me go... And he was definitely right. When after a situation with him at the seaside

I finally gained the courage to tell my family, at first my father and my stepmother believed me, while my aunt and all the rest claimed that I was lying and that I persuaded my neighbour and cousin to do lie as well. When my cousin's father found out, he reported it to the police. Hearings ensued and this man got one year of prison sentence, but since he got three little girls during the trial that takes ages in our country, his sentence was lowered so he never even did a year prison. I don't know what hurts most... what he was doing or to finally gain the courage and tell what's been going on to you but then no one believes you. Even my father now claims that he did nothing to him and they often have beer together. This I will never understand. I somehow got over that but when I write and think about it, I get goosebumps and the anger, rage and anxiety that accompanied me back then come back. We shouldn't be quiet! The perpetrators must be punished! The ones in your vicinity realize what they were doing soon as well and they cannot sleep calmly as well... This is my story.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 46

When I was a child, my father would often touch my breasts, as if to say »let's see if they've grown«, even though I often expressed being uncomfortable (and resisted as well), he only laughed at me and always said that he is only »joking«. Once when some family friends were visiting, he told me »to show



my titties« and I became very uncomfortable. He added »if you won't show your titties, no boy will ever want you«. The ones around him started to frown, while he only added »what, isn't that so?«

*#metoo, March, 2018*

# 47

A while ago at a party I was not sober while I hooked up with a guy. We went to his place, where we had sex. In the state in which I was in, I didn't know that he recorded me. No matter what my state was, he didn't have the right to invade my intimacy without my consent. It took me a long time to realise that this too was an abuse.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

# 48

I was in my early thirties when a regular professor stopped me on the way from my office on the hallway. She was the head of the department. She told me to follow her into her office at the end of the hallway and to shut the door behind me.

Then she turned to me and told me that she got an invitation to lecture at a conference. I congratulated her and told her that it's great. I didn't understand why I was in her office if she was the one who got the invitation. Then she stepped away from her table towards me and told me: »I am so happy! Hug me!« and she threw herself into my arms, her arms around my waist, cheek to cheek, breast to breast, hip to hip.

I hardly wrenched away from her.

I was a father of two already back then.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

# 49

I was 30, sitting in my long narrow office. At the end of the office there was a small window, but otherwise there were just two desks in it, both with side drawers and with hardly enough space to put your legs underneath in order to work normally. So I was sitting behind that desk next to the door, I sit on my chair, work on my computer, translating and struggling with that. Suddenly, the door opened, and a regular professor steps into the office. She was the head of the department. She closed the door, took the second chair and put it next to me. She sat on the chair and moved her legs into the little opening under the table where I was sitting. Her thigh was next to my thigh, she put her arms around my shoulders, leaned her breasts on my back and held my hand with her other arm, saying: "Now show me what you have done this whole week!!"

I was a married father of two already back then.

*#metoo, marec, 2018*

# 50

I've had my lines crossed by many people. It was first crossed by my father; however I don't remember much besides the feeling that someone touched me in a strange way. My cousin crossed them many

times, when I was four. When we were visiting, he touched my intimate parts and sometimes rubbed against my body. It was disgusting but even as a child; I had no one there for me. Then another relative did it. A rape attempt followed when I was 18, at a festival, where I somehow managed to keep a clear head and escaped from under a man who pushed me to the ground with force. Then one time, in the middle of the night, my own boyfriend at the time took me against my will and then left me as well.

I am twenty eight and the fact is that this is happening to children of the new and the previous generations. Such things start to happen to children mostly from the side of their parents and as strange as it sounds – it often happened to our parents from the side of their parents as well.

The second important thing that I learned is that I am not a victim, but an adult woman. I have a lot of strength and the next time when someone touches me inappropriately or crosses the lines of my personal wellbeing I don't have to freeze but must stand up and say them out loud in front of people who are doing this, while realising at the same time that even those people are only human and that they probably experienced something similar themselves.

The children, who are powerless, are the victims. Adult women in Slovenia have the power to face professors, bosses and other people, who are crossing their lines and

show them loudly and clearly what they have crossed, as well as offer them help. For me, these people are the victims today.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

# 51

He asked if I would like to go out with him. He was using a fake profile without a picture on Facebook and I kindly declined the offer. A couple more messages followed and I ignored them, thinking he will get tired of it. He soon added half of the people from my high school and started writing little poems about me on his fake profile. My schoolmates thought it was funny, but I didn't feel the same. A lot of private messages followed, he was saying that he can't live without me, that I should leave my boyfriend, who is supposedly cheating on me, what he would do to me (he was describing my body parts with precision and when I was reading it I felt like throwing up, I felt dirty). He also wrote to me that he cycled to my house and that I wasn't there, but I thought that he was lying. Later my parents told me that two boys on bikes were looking for me. I blocked the profile and had peace for a while, then after a time he wasn't blocked anymore, which I still don't understand. My Facebook said that if you block someone, it takes 24 hours to unblock this person and then 24 hours again to block the person again. This boy figured this out and he waited 24 hours, wrote something to me and then blocked me. He got complete control over these messages. I felt

horrible. The messages took a really long time and at the end this person got a notice from an official person. Then it was peaceful for a while. Then, when I was 19, he appeared in the evening, when I was walking alone from a high school party. I didn't see him, but he suddenly bent my arms to my back. He had a knife. I got scared and froze completely, I couldn't move, scream, or defend myself. I just cried and waited for it to be over. I didn't tell this to anyone back then. A similar thing happened for a couple times until I gained the courage to find help (when things went so far that he beat me so I was almost unconscious). At the beginning I got a lot of remarks from the police, all placing me in the position of the perpetrator. What was I wearing, was I sure I didn't want it, what did I say, what did I do?

I can't really describe the feelings, I felt disgusted about all of it and wasn't able to stand myself anymore. All the touching, all the words, all the psychological blackmailing were cutting me like knives. As if I wanted to cry out all the horror that piled up inside of me, all the pain of being forced to feel him inside of me. It didn't go. The feeling of someone else having the control over your body is the worst. I still have troubles with my dreams, with my self-image. Only three years after the first rape I managed to tell it to my best friend, who has really been supportive all along. I wouldn't probably be here anymore without him. I slowly learn to live with it and accept it.

Slowly, with the help of my friend and my therapist, I am realising, that it wasn't my fault that I froze the first time when it happened. And that it wasn't my fault that he was stronger than me.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 52

At my work place in the health centre it happened an older doctor slapped my butt as a response to me saying hello to him, right there in the middle of the hallway. It was last year, not ages ago.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 53

I was riding with the city bus. An older man was standing a bit further, facing me. I had an unpleasant feeling about his look on me. When I finally looked at him, he was staring at me and masturbating. Other passengers were walking by. Maybe no one saw him, maybe they did, I just went off the bus. My friend asked me if I could understand the event as a compliment.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 54

That summer I turned 13 and it was the last summer that I spent without wearing a bra. But my breasts were already getting attention from unwanted male gazes and my childhood easiness was over. It was the summer when I was confused, I was starting to feel guilty because of men looking at me and making jokes. So I started to hide behind wide t-shirts.

I spent the holidays with my younger sister at my grandparents. From morning to evening we were running around with friends.

One evening I sat on the couch in front of the television with my grandfather. My grandmother and younger sister went to bed already. Suddenly, my grandfather jumped on me, he started laughing and tickling me from the side, saying: »Show me, show me how much your titties have grown.« He tried to grab my breasts from the side and from the back. I tried to pull away but he still managed to do it. He weighed my breasts in his hands, then let go of me, sat back on the couch and continued watching TV. As if nothing happened.

I sat in silence, stiff; I wasn't able to understand what just happened to me. An awful feeling of guilt and shame overcame me. I wanted to go away, I wanted to just disappear, but I was too afraid to move. I was sitting completely motionless until my grandfather dozed off. Then I ran into the bedroom and went to sleep myself.

Never again and never later did my grandfather do anything similar. But something changed in my relation towards him, even when he fell ill years later and died, I didn't feel anything towards him.

I never told anyone about this event.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

**55**  
My story has a happy ending because of a decisive and brave woman. I was 18 and I was doing a two week practice in the emergency department of the health center. A middle age doctor, who was working there, found out that he knew my parents (from high school, supposedly). After the first day he already offered me a ride back home. He basically just noticed me that he was going to take me home. I lived some 10 km away. I wasn't thrilled, but I was too naive to refuse it (since he knew my parents well!). When I mentioned this to a nurse in the clinic, she suddenly became alert and asked me why he wanted to take me home. I said that I don't know and that he just offered to do so. »If you need a ride home, I will take you,« she said. I went home by bus. I forgot her name, but I am still grateful to her!

*#metoo, March, 2018*

**56**  
I was about 11, and I still blame myself today, while at the same time I don't understand it, since I had no one who would protect me. It happened in the middle of the day. My peers did it. I remember the feeling and how only my body was there, while my thoughts and soul did not exist. It happened after some time again. I never told it to anyone, no one got punished and I thought that no one would believe me and that my family would get angry. I am almost 30 and I am still afraid of people, of trusting some-

one, of touching. My partner is the only person I ever told this and she is still the best person I ever met. I can't say that if I ever see them again, I wouldn't lose it due to anger and rage.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

# 57

I was 21. It was right before my arm surgery. I was lying on the surgery table, without clothes, covered with a green surgery sheet. An older surgeon came by, who had nothing to do with my surgery (I saw this in my file only later). He uncovered the sheet and looked at my body without reservations, mostly my breasts. Of course I was totally powerless... I could only wait for it to pass. Dirty old man.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

# 58

I won't be writing about the everyday harassment and unsuitable comments that I face every day, since I could write about it day and night. I would just like to point out a few events that followed me throughout my growing up and my adult years, up until the moment, when I realised that I wasn't able to face my past. I sought professional help and came to see that most of my experiences with men, my way of life and personal relationships are rooted in the events that happened to me and I suppressed them or just tried to somehow accept them in the sense of »it's your own fault!«

The first event that I wasn't able to

get rid of my mind happened to me when I was 6. I was playing with my uncle when he suddenly threw me on the bed, lied on top of me, held my hands so I couldn't move and wanted to »touch noses« with me. I screamed and asked him to let me go. I still hear the screams and I feel the anxiety that took over my little body back then. I started to cry and ask him to get off me. I screamed. I screamed at the top of my voice. The feeling of being trapped under him totally blurred my mind and I still know what followed and how I freed myself from being trapped underneath him. The next thing I remember was asking my grandmother and mother what was wrong with them, since they heard me screaming and didn't come to help me (they were on the lower floor at the time). I don't remember the answer, but I do know that I was crying and ran towards my neighbour, who asked me what happened, since she heard my screaming. I told her and said to her that my mother and grandmother heard me but didn't come to help me. I was angry at them, but it all ended with that. The story was forgotten... But since that day, I developed a phobia from being trapped, of being restricted.

The second event happened when I was approximately 12. I was on holidays at my grandma's. Her friend, her lover, I don't know what he was, came to visit. As soon as grandma left the kitchen, this man grabbed my hand, pulled me to him, hugged me, put a hand on my butt and squeezed me and kept tell-

ing me how beautiful I am, what a good girl I am and that I should kiss him. I felt trapped again and I was forced to hug him. I wanted to escape but didn't manage to. Luckily my grandma came back soon and he let me go. I ran into the room and stayed there until he left. When I came back home I was acting strangely. My mother kept coming to my room asking me what's the matter. I didn't want to tell her. I was persistent. I started crying. I told her what happened. And the response? My mother started laughing and asked me: »And what do you want me to do now?« I probably don't need to point out that after 19 years I am still not able to have a normal conversation with my mother. When she hugs me, I feel reluctance that cannot be described. She betrayed me for the second time.

The third event happened when I was 24. My friend and I went to a club. We sat behind a table when two boys, who seemed cute and nice, approached us. We started talking when they asked if they can offer us a drink. We said yes. The boys ordered us drinks and we toasted. The boy that I got along well with asked me, if I want to smoke a cigarette with him. I got up but then suddenly felt extremely dizzy (I took three sips of beer until that moment). However, I didn't pay much attention to it. We went into the smoking room, when I started to see blurry. The smoking room started to spin and I wasn't able to listen to what the guy was saying. I think I fainted. When I came to,

I saw the boy on top of me raping me. I looked around and I saw that we're on the lady's room. I asked him what is going on with me but he just told me that I should enjoy it! I was still dizzy, my body wasn't responding and I couldn't move. I heard someone knocking on the door. I asked him if he could stop and that we go out, since I wanted to go home. He stopped and stood up. I asked him if he can pick me up, since I still wasn't able to feel my body. When I managed to stand up, a strange wave came over me again and I lost consciousness again. I came to when he penetrated me again. We were at the men's room then. How we came there and how no one thought it was strange that I was nonresponsive while we were leaving the lady's room, I still don't know.

Then I gathered all my strength that I could and hit him. I hit him again. And again. And again. Nothing helped; he just laughed and kept on penetrating me. Then I started to scratch his face. I remember him saying: »Fuck, don't scratch me, my girl will get suspicious.« I didn't care about that. What he said gave me even more strength, so I started to resist with the rest of my body as well. I was still too dizzy, I started to wrestle out of his grip and I somehow managed to push him off me. How I managed this, I still don't know! When I gathered the last atoms of strength, I pushed him away and luckily, he fell. Then I quickly dressed and staggered out. People probably thought that I was dead drunk, but I only had

three sips of beer! I searched for my friend. I found her behind a table; she was half dead, lying on the floor. I called her but she was not responding. I looked around, but no one was paying any attention to us. I grabbed her by her hand and somehow managed to pull her on her legs, so we could go home, holding each other. My friend didn't remember anything the next day and she still doesn't know what happened to her until this day. I was more »lucky«, since I remember the events that happened to me at least partially, because it is my own »fault« that I somehow dared to trust someone who wanted my company.

These three events come to my mind every day. Despite the fact that I decided to find help, I am still not capable of talking about it out loud. The events don't navigate my life anymore, but they are still a part of my thoughts.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 50

»It's a funny thing; it never seemed to me that I will become one of the victims of sexual violence, but once you start thinking about this, you suddenly remember a bunch of situations in which men were behaving as they shouldn't have.«

I was thinking about this myself. Nothing severe ever happened to me, but there were several cases when men crossed the line of appropriate behaviour. It happened when I was in my early twenties and today I know I wouldn't let

them pass by just like that...

My boss at the management, where I did obligatory circulation in the time of my apprenticeship, was constantly touching his female co-workers (caressing, tickling) in a corny way. I looked at them, confused. When it was my turn, they were a bit embarrassed and just smiled bitterly.

I did skydiving in a tandem with a man and after the parachute opened, he pushed the handles into my hands, while he used this opportunity to grab my breasts. I was appalled by the situation, but also too scared to do something about it while in air. I still feel sorry that I didn't kick him in his groin, when we were already firmly on the ground, or to get back at him in some more sophisticated way...

The man who sat next to me on a plane and I started a polite conversation with him, put his hands on my knees all of a sudden...

The man with whom I went hiking with started to caress my calves when I was in the rocks ahead of him...

Today he would get a clear signal where my limits are.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 60

I worked behind a smaller stall in a big shopping mall. I was 18. Every day, security workers were passing by and we exchanged a few words. I got along with most of them. Then I met Tom (name was

changed). He liked passing by and we always chatted. But somehow our conversations started to get more and more intimate... I took it all as joking around and I joked as well. I was sure that he wasn't serious and that he was just teasing me and trying to make me laugh. He was around 45, he had moustache and a big belly. He should've known that he was not appropriate! For anything! That's what I thought. Besides, I told him that I am a lesbian. But I was naive. One evening, after work, he invited me up to the security workers' place. He was supposed to show me the cameras and all that. We were alone in that office. He kept offering me alcohol, tried to hug me and kept rubbing his head against mine. He kept telling me how he always wanted to have a triple with someone and similar stuff... Finally, my alarms went off. I somehow pushed him away and luckily had no trouble leaving. He soon went on a sick leave. I never told anyone, because I thought that it was my own fault for going up there. And that I should have known better, being 18. But I didn't.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 61

Some years back, when I was still in high school, my friend invited me to her birthday. We went to see a concert, where a man stepped up to me (he was at least 5 years older than I was) and started telling me that he likes me and that he would just marry me if he could. I never saw him before and he never

saw me. He was very persistent, he started hugging me, touching me and grabbed my bottom. I became pissed off and told him to get lost. He wasn't bothered by that and started groping me again. I kept trying to defend myself, but he wouldn't stop. My friend was with me all the time and everything that was going on just seemed very funny to her and she laughed out loud. I was becoming more desperate and powerless with every second that passed by. I didn't know where to run or how to get rid of him. Finally I managed to wriggle out and escaped home. I felt disgusting. I was scared and angry at my friend, who didn't do anything to help me. I will never forget this.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 62

I worked as a hostess via a student work service. One of the guests, customers, called me to him with a whistle and a flick of a finger (never mind that I am not a dog). He examined me from head to toe and said: »Are you already eighteen?« Of course I was, otherwise I couldn't have served alcohol. I was surprised by the question and just nodded. The guy then turned to his buddy and said: "Oh, see, so we can grab her ass," and he laughed. I was in such shock. I have never experienced something like that before. There was plenty of groping, rubbing against my ass, obscene commentaries and invitations to go home or to the toilet with someone etc., but this one really shocked me – that it came to that "gentleman's"



mind to humiliate me like this, and he thought that he was cool, as if he had just told the best joke in the world? And he bragged in front of his colleagues/co-workers/whatever they were? Where do we live???

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 63

When we girls entered puberty, the boys started »groping« us. A group of boys would isolate a girl, surround her and attack her by groping her breasts and intimate parts.

One evening I was out with my friend, I had to be around 12 or something. We got together with the boys from the neighbouring street in the playground. We giggled and chased each other a lot, until they trapped us into a corner of the playground, where we couldn't escape, and started touching us inappropriately. I started kicking, scratching, beating; I forced my way out and ran away. I heard the angry boys behind me: »You're not like a girl, you fight like a boy!« My friend came after me and scolded me, saying that one of the boys liked me, but that I have ruined my chances by fighting him.

I took the critique that I'm not »enough of a girl« to my heart. In the next months, when boys in the school kept closing us in the toilet to grope us, I was fighting myself – to be more of a girl and to resist less wildly. So I wouldn't ruin another chance of any of the attackers to like me...

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 64

I experienced a string of molestation and abuse, which luckily started in my late high school years and stopped soon after. Still, for a long time, I felt like something is wrong with me, that I am the »victim« who is »attracting it« and who cannot defend herself. Only through stories of others that have gone through the same as I have, I was able to establish an attitude towards myself that is not blaming and pathologising me.

*#metoo, marec, 2018*

## 66

At the seaside (during the summer holidays) I met three guys who were on vacations in the house next to ours, where I have spent my whole childhood. I was 18, they were around 30. At least two of them were engaged. Because I didn't have other company and they had cigarettes and beer and we had nice conversations for hours and hours, I was there for hours that day. My family was on the next parcel and the neighbours were on the other side, so it was the scene that I knew well and I felt quite safe. We also ate something in the evening and I drank two beers that day, which was a lot for me, but I felt good. Then one of them suggested to go swimming in the night and we all agreed. Before going to the beach we all had a strong drink that one of them prepared. I never drank distilled spirits before, but they were persistent and I of course risked. So we went to the beach, we un-

dressed and jumped into the water. But then while I was swimming, I felt sick and I somehow just swam to the shore and passed out there. The lower half of my body was still in the water. That is why (and probably because of dissociation) I actually didn't feel anything until I opened my eyes. One of them was raping me. I managed to turn on my side, to murmur something, I tried getting up, I made a few steps but fell on the floor again (over the rocks on the beach). I was barely staying conscious. Then the second one came and he raped me as well. All I could do was to say No, no... Then I pulled myself from underneath him and wandered to my house, where I threw up. In that moment, my mother came looking for me and she helped me walk home. She didn't find out about the rapes, she just thought that »I got drunk with the neighbour's boys«. I was only able to tell her about the rapes 12 years later. I felt too guilty afterwards, I was too ashamed. Because I was with them the whole day and I talked to them and I went skinny dipping with them in the night. I should have known that they will rape me – or what?! I haven't gone to the seaside, where I grew up, much after that.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

67

I was 19 when I got caught up in a »romantic« story with a very famous Slovene writer who was 60 at the time. He taught me a lot and gave me a job. Because of that, it took me another 15 years to admit

to myself that despite the seeming »agreement of two adult, reasonable people« there was a huge difference in power (intimate and social) that he took advantage of. Among other things, he abused it to »convince« me to have sex with him in front of some unknown people by saying that this is our secret, that this is an act of love. I remember crying at night while my younger, completely innocent sister, who had no clue what I did that day, was sleeping in the next room. It happened that day and twice more. For a long time I haven't told this to anyone. Sometimes I'd just love to say it out loud, but I know that the consequences for me would be even worse than for him.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

68

I didn't think much about it back then. I just knew that something isn't right, but it took me years to realise what actually happened to me. When I was in my teenage years, while I was discovering myself and my homosexuality, I knew that this is not wrong. But I wanted the company of people who were like me. The only place back then that was openly friendly to LGBT people was Tiffany club. So I went to party to Ljubljana, wanting to meet some new friends among the gay people. I stepped into this club for the first time. The waiter there was bringing me Breezers for as long as I can remember. Then in the morning hours, he took me back to the storehouse and fucked me anally without a condom. To-

day I know that a drunk fifteen year old shouldn't be able to say yes to a sexual intercourse, but I didn't know that back then. This was my first experience with sex and it took me a long time to start believing in true love between two people again. But I will never again feel truly safe or relaxed in this "safe space". Men who are using their power positions for satisfying their sexual needs are EVERYWHERE! What hurts the most is that the society and the community usually excuse such behaviour and step on the side of the perpetrator, blaming the victim. Also in the community that should be more progressive regarding this.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

69

My friend and I were returning back home in the middle of the night. Each went her own way but after a while I had a feeling that someone is walking right behind me. I turned and noticed a young man. I wanted to pull my keys out of my bag, because I had a little knife on them. In that moment he grabbed my pubic region and ran away. I don't feel comfortable walking home at night.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

70

I was in my primary school. I would often spend the weekends with my older sister who was already married. We were all watching television together; me, my sister and her husband. Suddenly, her husband stretched his arms and touched my breasts. I was shocked; I grabbed

his arms and moved them away. I never told this to anyone, not even to my sister, and I am not sure whether she was aware of it, or perhaps saw it and just ignored it.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

71

As a 13 year old boy I was lured into a car by an older homosexual where he touched me until I escaped from the car. It was a horrible experience.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

72

I remember an event that happened to me in my fourth grade, when I was nine or ten years old. My mother gave me money to buy shoes and I went to the town to pick them out and buy them. Those were the first shoes that I was able to choose without my mother's help, so I was looking forward to it a lot.

I found the shoes and was returning back home with the bag in my hands. I lived in a smaller town where we all knew each other. My parents never scared me with evil uncles; I guess it wasn't that usual back then, so I was a very open, trusting and curious child.

While walking home I crossed a street in which a car with an older man in it stood. He lowered the car window and gestured that I should approach him. I thought that he will ask me for directions, so I came close to the car... the man was masturbating in the car and he pointed to his groin with his head. I quickly went away and I wasn't far from

home. I still remember the smell in that car and I feel like throwing up.

I never wanted to wear those shoes. My mother didn't know why, since I picked them myself. I was too scared to tell her what happened because I knew she would be angry because I came close to that man's car. I think that I was lucky that this experience didn't mark me in a much worse way – except for the smell and some other memories.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 73

I was 16. It was at one of the masquerade parties. I was dancing and having fun with my friends. In the crowd I was separated from my friends but kept dancing. A boy came behind me (I don't know who it was, I didn't even look at him) and put his hands around my waist. I moved away a bit but he was persistent and because I had a dress on, his hand went under my skirt and touched me. I moved his hand away but he repeated it. I pushed his hand away again and started to hustle through the crowd; my friend noticed me and pulled me to where they were, because the boy followed me. After a while he left.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 74

It all started in my primary school. The classic ass grabbing from schoolmates. Even though I stood up for myself, got into a fight, slapped someone, they never stopped. Why? It's not a big deal, everyone does it.

Then my first crush, my first kiss. Unfortunately it didn't stop there, but I was too weak to resist him. He pushed me against a wall. He covered my mouth with one hand and with the other helped himself, as he said, with my sweet parts. As if I would be on a damn menu. I was 14. I met him again about 5 years later, when he said that he is sorry.

A few years later it went all the way, unfortunately. He was a stranger, he was drunk. He was a part of our company, we had a nice time. I was nice when he was whining that he needs some fresh air and said that he must take his jacket out of his car. So we went on a walk through the town. When we came to the car, he pushed me inside and covered my mouth. I remember that it hurt a lot and that he was very violent. He kept telling me dirty words and threatened me. Before he came, he pulled it out and came all over me. As soon as I left the car I threw up and then ran to my friends. I started pouring alcohol into my mouth. I wasn't capable of doing anything else. He also came back and acted like nothing happened. That was my first sex.

Then there was the student festival Škis market, where a student pulled me on the side to be alone with me. His hands were everywhere. He told me that he knew I wanted it. That I want to be fucked till I drop. That he will suck everything out of me, you little bitch. Then I kicked him where it hurts the most, punched him in the cheek and ran away.

At home no one knows about any of this. I never told anyone. No one ever noticed anything. I told it to a friend for the first time, and even that was a few years after the rape. Why not before? Because I thought that it is my own fault. It was my own fault, because I was nice. Or too weak to fight back. And that is why I felt disgusted by myself. And by feeling disgusted, you come to the point where you think that you deserved it. Literally. It took quite a while for me to lift the level of love for myself. To realise that it was not my fault. I know that I still have problems with sex. I don't enjoy it. Because it reminds me of being humiliated. And of feeling disgusting. And of pain. But I want to enjoy it. I want to be happy, not just alone, but with someone.

These weren't all the things that I experienced and could have written as well. From various concerts, to being a waitress... idiots who see an invitation in every word you say, can be found everywhere. Or in every smile, the way you dress, the way you dance... Whatever. They will always find an excuse, if they see that you are too weak. Always. My body is my body. Your body is yours. You share it with the person that you love. That is why you must be strong and do not put yourself down.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

# 75

It happened years ago. I was a high school student and have decided to try and take the entrance examination for the Academy of The-

atre, Radio, Film and Television. I wanted to enrol in the acting department. I was 18. I agreed with a well-known Slovene actor (he was around 50 back then) from a local theatre for him to help me prepare for the entrance examination.

For some two weeks everything was ok, but then one day he started to tell me the story of shooting a film in which he played. They hired female students for extras and they shot erotic scenes. Things got out of hand and consequently, they had to cut out a few parts, since they were almost pornographic. »The girls were just a year or so older than you,« he said, when he finished telling me the »funny anecdote from a life of an actor«. Then he placed his hand on my thigh and told me that I shouldn't worry and that he is sure that because of my figure and my looks, they will accept me.

Then he asked me if I have a boyfriend and told me that I should rather get rid of him, because I don't need one in this business. He also said that he is not jealous though and would go for me even if I had a boyfriend.

I became very uncomfortable and I told him that I'm in a hurry to go home.

»Deal, I will see you to the door!«

We had to take an elevator to reach the exit and there he asked me when we will see each other again. I already decided in my mind that I won't be coming back, but I told

him that I will let him know. Before leaving, I told him »Goodbye!« and that was the moment he grabbed my wrist, pulled me towards him and told me that such a goodbye is not appropriate. He kissed me by force and tried to stick his tongue into my mouth.

I boiled with rage so I told him that he is disgusting and that I will never return.

I never tried taking the entrance examination for that Academy.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 76

Sunday evening. I am returning to Ljubljana because I have a lecture the next day. I came to the apartment late, around midnight. My roommate was hanging out with two guys who I knew. Hanging out, listening to music, drinking a couple of glasses of wine. One of the guys constantly tried to push a conversation about sex, which I directly opposed and told him that I am not interested in the length of his penis and when and with whom he had sex last. I went to my room. I felt a weird feeling inside of me, so I locked the room, even though I haven't done it before. I fell asleep. In the middle of the night someone was knocking on the door violently. I asked who it was and what he wants. I heard a male voice saying that I need to open the door because he needs a lighter. I was half asleep when I opened the door. A man in his underwear with a knife in his hand appeared in front of me. I was shocked. He tried to

force his way into the room, but I was quick to react. Unfortunately I have experienced a lot of violence in my life. I took the knife, I hurt myself but I didn't feel the pain. I didn't get scared, I didn't step back. I attacked, grabbed the handle of the door and nail his hand with it with all my power. He whined and moved away. I didn't know what to do. I locked myself in, I shook, I cried. Why again? Why is this happening to me again? I called the police and they needed 45 minutes to arrive. (The apartment is within the bypass and it was 3 or 4 am in the morning). How the police acted when they came is another topic. All in all, nothing happened to him...

*#metoo, March, 2018*

## 77

Summer language camp with a private company in a Slovene town. The son of the boss (probably somehow mentally impaired) was touching me, hugging me and trying to French kiss me – I was 8. I avoided him, I didn't tell anyone. Not even to my parents. I repressed it. 20 years later (!) the memories resurfaced. Luckily I don't carry many other consequences, but I AM AFRAID, I am so very afraid for my two little girls, for when they will go on a summer camp alone... (I still sometimes ask myself whether I should go and find that man...)

*#metoo, marec, 2018*

78

The instructor in the driving school kept telling me obscene jokes. When we were on a country drive, he asked me what kind of underwear I am wearing. »Sexy thongs I'm sure...« And asked me if I want to show them to him. I told him »My grandmother's. Stretched, shitty.« But I was scared to death inside of me. On another occasion when he told another obscene joke, I stepped out of the car in front of the traffic lights in protest. I never told anyone; after a couple of years when I finally did my dad was angry at me, because he would have »fixed it with that imbecile«.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

79

During my work as a student my boss grabbed my bottom. As if this is the most normal thing in the world... He was very surprised when I told him »that I don't allow that and that I have a boyfriend« while my skin burned with disgust. I kept working there and he never did it again, he just said that I am the first one to have opposed it... I never told anyone. After a couple of years I told my husband.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

80

I was a teenager. A man sat on the bus next to me and he started masturbating. He was on the outer sit and he was so big that I wasn't able to move away. I was terrified so I stood up and despite my tiny pos-

ture, pushed him away, so he fell on the floor and I moved away. I don't remember the exact commentaries from the people around, but I know that they were something like »ill-bred punk«. Luckily, my stop came soon. I never told this to anyone, except to my husband, years later.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

81

I was a student. My car was parked in the nearby park. In the dark winter afternoon my way to the car was »variegated« by someone who was exposing his package to me. I was older and more confident so I told him »to hide his poor little thing« and that I will call the police. The guy escaped running.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

82

I am 48 years old. A couple of years ago I moved from the town to the village and I live alone in my house. I never thought I might become the target of sexual violence from the side of my fellow villagers. When it happened for the first time, I went numb with surprise. Because I was raped as a teenager, I was always afraid of violent men, even though they were only violent verbally.

Last summer a man stopped by my garden. I later found out that he was the brother of a neighbour who lives nearby, and with whose family I have quite genuine relations. He first talked about my work in the garden and how I do everything by myself and how much work

I have, and then he asked me directly if I would mind if he would knock on my window in the evening. Because I must be alone and horny. I told him that he probably has a wife and that it would be very immoral to do this to his wife. He laughed at this, saying that he is not married and that he only lives with a woman (with whom he has two adult children). Because I did not react to his hints, he started insulting me. He told me that my nipples are hard and that he is aroused only by looking at them and that it is visible that I don't "get any" because I am like this.

It is true that I live alone, but I do have a partner and we have been together for several years. We just live separately, because we like it that way, but we see each other regularly. When he came over I told him all about it. In that time I already knew who this guy was, so my partner went straight to his house. The guy denied everything at first, but then admitted and told him that it was only a joke and that he didn't mean anything serious. My partner told him that it would be right if he would apologize to me, but he didn't.

Since then, I am strictly avoiding any contact with men and if possible, move away from the garden when someone passes by. I don't feel safe and I am actually afraid.

*#metoo, March, 2018*

**83**  
I was 15 years old.

My family and I had recently moved to a small village. Although we were newcomers, we seemed to fit in nicely. I was the eldest of the children.

Sex was never discussed at home, as far as I can remember. Nudity was also a taboo. I had never seen my parents naked, and the children also changed in the bathroom. When I was 11, I got my first period. I was horrified and convinced I had fallen ill. My friends and I had never talked about sex. Their upbringing was similar to mine, so the subject was a mystery.

I was no different from my friends. We were all equally well-developed, we had a similar taste in clothing, in short, I was in no way out of the ordinary. Except for the fact that I would sneak out of my house on Friday nights to go to the disco. Back in my day, discotheques would open at nine p. m., and we would be on our way home by midnight. I loved going dancing.

The village youth had a habit of going swimming in the nearby river. Once, a local businessowner decided to join us. He was around 20 years older than I was, give or take, an old man by my standards. But he was friendly enough, so we chatted. The other children knew him better than I did. I wasn't in the habit of hanging out with older people. During the course of our chat I mentioned my Friday



outings to the disco. I basically bragged about sneaking out of my house unbeknownst to my parents. I thought myself was quite clever. He offered to give me a ride the following Friday, so I wouldn't have to walk and hitchhike. Oh, I was so thrilled he had offered. We set a meeting spot.

When I got in the car, I couldn't wait to get out, I was so anxious for the dancing to begin. However, I soon noticed we weren't going in the direction of the disco and mentioned it to him. He replied that we were going to stop by Bled first for a drink. I sulked that I didn't want to go, that I wanted to go dancing. He ignored me. We had a drink at Bled, but I wouldn't drink. I continued to sulk and whine, asking him to take me where he had promised. When we got back in the car, he drove up to the Bled Castle, stopped the car, and tried to kiss me. I turned him down. I was appalled and told him what he was proposing was disgusting, and that I wasn't about to kiss an old man. He yelled, "Get out of the car." I didn't move. "You drove me here, so you're going to drive me back," I replied stubbornly. The only thing going through my mind was how I was going to walk home by myself, and that I couldn't possibly walk all that distance in a few hours. He had to drive me home. He turned on the engine and hissed, "I'll fuck you so hard you'll never forget it." I wasn't yet capable of understanding what he had meant. I just figured he was offended, but that he would take me home.

On the way back, he drove the car off the road into a corn field. He stopped by the woods. I had already begun to protest that I wanted to go home, and that I didn't want to make any more stops. He turned on the car's central locking system. Most cars didn't have those then, so I didn't know what it was. He turned to me and said, "Take off your clothes." My jaw dropped. I told him I would do no such thing. I tried to open the door and escape, but it was closed. He lowered my seat's backrest, lay on top of me, and repeated his command. I wouldn't undress. He hit me. I was in shock. I have no idea how he took off my pants. Whenever I try to remember, all I can see is a dense fog. I know he penetrated me. I know he wiped his semen onto some tissue paper, got dressed, ordered me to get dressed, and drove me home. When I got out of the car, he yelled after me that it was good and that we should do it again sometime. I didn't realize I had been raped until later. That that was what rape had to be, the rape I had only vaguely heard about, because where I was from, people didn't talk about those things.

I felt awful. There was nobody I could talk to about what had happened. I felt dirty, worthless and very lonely. Once, my father casually mentioned that he had overheard people at the local inn saying I would rather put out than walk home and commented that I was a whore. That was it.

Time passed. I wondered how to go on living. Should I renounce

all men or... I chose to walk down another path. I chose promiscuity. I barely knew the boys; I never talked to them. I went from one to the other, drank heavily, even self-harmed. I ran away from home. Dropped out of school. I fell into a bottomless pit and didn't see a way out. Nobody came looking for me either. The whole village knew about what had happened to me. Nobody ever approached me with advice, and I didn't know where to turn. My parents failed me. My life was a nightmare. I abused my body, I felt empty and abandoned. None of the boys were ever unkind to me, most were very attentive and wanted to help. Their kindness helped me slowly fill up the pit I had fallen into. Until I finally felt that I had had enough. That I had been freed of something. I stopped my promiscuous behaviour. I met a man who was prepared to listen and help me on my path to recovery. My rapist died during that time, which also helped considerably. However, 30 years later, I still shudder to think of his words; that he would fuck me so hard I would never forget it. He was right. I wouldn't.

*#metoo, March 2018*

# 84

During a school field trip, I was friends with a classmate who had also grown up without one of his parents. One day, my father decided to leave our modest one-bedroom apartment and move to the coast with Natalija. He adopted her son Rihard and forgot about me. Anyway, my classmate lured

me into the room where him and the other boys were hanging out. He introduced me to a cute boy who lived in the nearby city. When we were talking about our favourite movies, I mentioned Bridget Jones' Diary and he started laughing. He then slapped my ass and told me to fuck off. I felt humiliated. I told the teacher, but she did nothing and only looked at me mockingly.

*#metoo, March 2018*

# 85

It happened to #metoo; when I worked in an inn, I was the target of sexist comments on a daily basis. One day, my boss put his hands on my back, then slid them down to my hips, and said, "Oh, baby, the things I would do to you." I walked away and said nothing. I had no words, all I felt were fear and disgust. I later began to avoid him and quit my job soon after. I have never shared this with anybody.

*#metoo, March 2018*

# 86

He was my best friend's father, our neighbour. He cornered me in the hallway of their house and felt me up. I was in my early teens. It happened several times. I never told anybody, not even my parents.

He was the husband of the lady that babysat me before I started kindergarten. He was like a father to me, I trusted him. When I would visit them in later years, he'd grab my breasts when we were alone in the kitchen and compliment me on how well-developed I was. I was 11

or 12 years old. It happened several times. I never told anybody, not even my parents.

He was my uncle. My favourite uncle. When we were alone in my home, he hugged me tightly, put my hand on his member, and murmured what a good and pretty girl I was. I was about 12 years old. It happened once. I never told anybody. Not even my parents.

He was a musician at a family function. He cornered me in the unisex bathroom, pushed me against a door, touched me and forcefully kissed me. I was 14 years old. I told my parents after a while. They didn't support me. When I threatened to go to the police, my father snapped, "And how do you intend on proving it?"

My only confidant throughout these years has been my teenage diary. I started rereading my diaries about a year ago and came across the entries where I describe these events. I can no longer read them; they drive me to tears. I told these stories to my partner and my two friends. It gets easier, but you never forget. You never forget the touches, nor the helplessness, nor your parents' betrayal.

*#metoo, March 2018*

# 87

This incident happened in 2016, by a lake near a small town. It was a Saturday in June; I had arrived at the lake at around 5 p. m. and put my things down on the beach by the bar. Behind me on my left

was a group of adults who were speaking a Slavic language, I didn't pay them much attention. When I went swimming, one of the men from the group, he was around 60 years old, followed me and stared at me. I ignored him at first and went back to the beach because I had meant to go home after having had a swim. The guy came closer to me while we were still in the water, stopped about two metres away from me, and continued staring. I told him to quit it and gestured for him to leave. I'm certain he understood Slovene because a child had spoken to him earlier and they had seemed to understand each other. He nodded understandingly and left. Furiously, I put on my clothes, told him he should be ashamed of himself, and left. As I was walking on the path that leads to the main road, an eerie feeling came over me. I turned around and saw him. He had been following me in his bathing suit! It became clear that he wasn't going to stop harassing me. We were alone and out of sight from anybody from the beach. Nobody was driving past; we were about 20 metres away from the main road. I loudly and sternly yelled at him to go away and leave me alone. He calmly replied, "Restaurant? Beer?" while pointing at the nearby restaurant; it was closed anyway. I started screaming, "Police! Harassment! Go away!" The guy would smile at me, slowly turn to walk towards the closed restaurant, then start walking towards me again while repeating his question, "Beer?" I thought I was going to lose my mind and that I'd never be rid of him. It was

completely disrespectful; he crossed a line by acting as if I didn't even exist. It was awful, I felt completely alone. My yelling didn't have any effect on him. Luckily, a car came down the path, and I used the opportunity to sprint to the main road. The 20-minute walk back into town was like something out of a movie; I kept glancing behind me to make sure he wasn't going to jump out of the woods or follow me with his car.

*#metoo, March 2018*

88

I have received many intrusive comments because of the way I look. I've always had short hair and I've never worn feminine clothes, which according to some makes me look "butch". I don't really care, I'm me and I wear whatever I like. I'm a lesbian but that's not relevant to the story.

I've had unpleasant experiences happen to me in a discotheque and two bars. Whole groups of people have been concerned about my gender, loudly guessed if I was a man, a woman, a dyke, a fag or an "it". Young men usually laugh in my face, their female companions normally stand in the background, giggling.

The worst incident happened twenty years ago when I was visiting my small hometown. My group of friends and I had gone out for a drink on a Friday night. Suddenly, a young man approached us and asked me to tell him my gender. His table had placed bets, trying to

guess if I was a man or a woman, and now they needed a "result". My friends looked like they wanted the earth to swallow them up. Not knowing how to react, they decided to act like nothing was happening. I didn't know how to react either. I would have liked to be anywhere but there. All I managed to do was tell him my gender was none of their business. The only thing on my mind after that was how I could finish my drink as soon as possible so we could leave.

What I want to say, is that people feel entitled to "demand" you clarify their doubts and anxieties by immediately revealing your gender. They show no shame in doing so, no politeness and no respect.

*#metoo, March 2018*

89

It was the day before finals in high school. Because it was still very hot, I was studying with my doors and windows open to increase airflow. I don't know whether it was because of the draught, but around 6 p.m. my ear started hurting. I thought it might have been an ear infection. Because it was the last night before my final exams, I was afraid the pain could end up keeping me up all night, and of that affecting my score, so at 10 p.m., I went to see the doctor on call at [redacted]. When I knocked on the door, a doctor aged about 40 answered. It appeared we were the only two people in the medical centre. I told him about the pain in my ear and asked him if he could prescribe some drops. He did, then sat at his

computer to write a note for my GP because, as he had explained, all other medical staff was tending to an emergency in [redacted]. After he had finished, he told me to come closer, to his side of the desk. I was a little confused, I didn't see why that was necessary. He encouraged me, "Come, come, I want to show you something." I remember standing up hesitantly. I must have been moving too slowly and too carefully because when I was about halfway there, he turned the computer screen towards me. There was a pornographic film playing on it. When he was sure I had seen what he had wanted me to see, he asked me if I liked it. I was very confused because I hadn't expected a doctor to act like that. I didn't know how to react. I felt threatened because there was nobody else in the medical centre. In my mind, I started searching for a way out, I started shaking with fear. In that moment, the door opened, and a young paramedic walked in. When he saw what was happening, he got visibly angry and told the doctor, "Are you showing that stuff again? Stop it." The doctor quickly turned off the porno but there was no shame on his face. I can't remember what exactly he said to the paramedic. I do remember that he played it off as if it was all a fun joke. The paramedic didn't laugh, he remained visibly angry. I grabbed my health card and rushed out, taking advantage of the paramedic's presence to get away safely. I still wonder what would have happened that night if we hadn't been interrupted, how many girls had been in my position,

or worse, before me, and if the doctor continued with his little games, since (according to the paramedic) it hadn't been the first time.

*#metoo, March 2018*

90

I would rather not reveal the particulars of the event, but rather how it made me feel and the mark sexual violence has left on me.

I was 17 years old when I was raped. It's still hard for me to write these words. I cannot utter them without breaking. But I didn't cry when it happened. It was different from anything I could have imagined. Much quieter and quicker and he had seemed so normal. A man you'd cross on the street, who maybe has a wife, a family, a job. I also felt different than I thought I should have. I blamed myself for it, and it was the absence of hatred that led to me telling myself it hadn't happened. There had been no tears, no sadness, no anger. Just a feeling of complete numbness. Like I had somehow exited my body, or was somewhere else, or watching everything unfold from a distance.

Reporting it had never even crossed my mind. Where was my proof? Would my trembling lip, my words and my smeared makeup hold up in court? Was the revulsion I felt oozing out of my body like tar any proof at all? That revulsion was what prevented me from fighting for justice. I would have been my own worst tormentor if I had made myself relive it. Besides, I didn't want to bring shame upon my fam-

ily. And I hadn't even known his name.

Sometimes I feel like he isn't even real. That I live in a parallel universe where it never happened. But it did, and it split me in two: there is the person I was before, and the one after. I don't know what is normal anymore; I don't know what I would be like without this looming over me. Sometimes I can't sleep at night. Sometimes I seek out men, looking for something I lost that day. Sometimes I search for stories told by other women who had the same experience, except theirs was crueller and more violent. Just so I can say others have it worse than I do.

I wish I could find peace. And grant the same peace to every single woman. I wish that when I said #metoo, the world listened, remembered, and never forgot.  
*#metoo, March 2018*

# 91

There are several stories to tell... Each has its own weight and pain, but I'd like to focus on one in particular:

I was in my first year of high school. I was a young, driven and lively young lady. Me and the other students who had to drive to school from other towns took afternoon classes. We depended almost completely on the bus drivers who stopped on the bus stops, except when they didn't. It really depended on your luck.

The intercity bus was practical-

ly empty one morning around 11 a. m. People had kept getting off, I had had to drive to the terminal station. It was just the driver and me... He drove the bus to the very edge of the terminal... I wanted to get off, but the door remained closed. He got up...

I don't remember much, just scratched skin on my left cheek, his dark brown beard, the ripped lining of my winter coat, and a burning pain on my thigh.

I walked across town... I made it to the school but couldn't manage to climb the grey staircase. I cut class exactly once in four years... I never took the 11 a.m. intercity bus again.

*#metoo, March 2018*

# 92

When I was a student, I waited tables in a bar. A middle-aged man would regularly come in. Soon, he started calling me "pretty Tina" [name made up], although I repeatedly asked him to stop. He said he was just being kind. He would buy me drinks, despite my consistent refusal to accept them. He would tell me I needed to smile more. After I told him I was there to serve the customers, not to please them, he replied that I shouldn't be a waitress then. Finally, he started inviting me to his house after work. By then it had made me uncomfortable enough to quit my job.

*#metoo, March 2018*

93

When I was in the 7th grade, a classmate "jokingly" touched my crotch during Slovene class. I told my mother who went to the school councillor. She set up a meeting and came to the conclusion that, "I had to understand he had had a difficult childhood."

When the same thing happened in my first year of high school with a different boy, I answered violence with violence, despite knowing it wasn't the right thing to do. I hit him and yelled at him to leave me alone. The male professor who saw everything just laughed.

*#metoo, March 2018*

94

This story isn't shocking. Or maybe it is. I can't tell what's "normal" or not anymore. I do know it's a story about children, and about how we forgive everything under the guise of "boys will be boys". Nonsense.

My parents had always taught me that my body was untouchable. I punished every inappropriate touch with a slap. The penalty I faced for it was ostracizing and physical violence. I know I should have reacted differently, but how? How do you react when people think they can get away with anything? When everybody laughs at you, including the girls?

Once in sixth grade, I was walking up the stairs to the second floor. My classmate came up behind me and poked my butt with his fin-

ger. I turned around and slapped him. He called me weird and said only "cool" girls got groped. There went my chances of being "cool". Children can be cruel. Sometime later we went to summer camp, the same thing happened, a classmate grabbed my butt. This time I kicked him. He ran away. At night, when I was alone in my room, he came and started hitting me. I fought back, of course. Let's not forget, we were 11, 12 years old.

When I was 18, I worked in a busy and at the time very popular bar. There was an enormous amount of groping, and each refusal was met with name-calling. There was another time that scared me. I was at a concert when a man who was standing behind me grabbed my ass. I turned around and slapped him. Everything went quiet. The band jumped off the stage and got between me and the man, who had taken off his shirt and lunged towards me. I had just slapped a newly-released convict. Everything turned out alright. The guys in the band managed to defend me without suffering any injuries.

These are only some of the more noteworthy stories in the life of an average nerd, who until she was 30 surrounded herself with men who made her feel safe, especially at parties. I assume women who take greater care of their outward appearance have it much worse. My story is unremarkable. It's the story of most women. I haven't gone into detail about all the instances of groping because you'll receive far worse stories. What I want to

point out is that we need to tackle the problem of sexual harassment earlier, not ignore it by spewing nonsense about how hormonal teenagers are. Groping is founded on the underlying belief that a woman's body is public property, that everybody can have access to it, and with each passing year, boys and men allow themselves to go further and further. To them, groping was considered to be perfectly normal, after all. We also need to teach women how to react. I know, physical violence isn't the right answer to sexual harassment, but I do not regret a single slap.

*#metoo, March 2018*

95

My former boss raped me.

*#metoo, March 2018*

96

I ran into an acquaintance at the store today. He is a self-employed taxi driver who has his own vehicle. I asked him how much it would cost to get from point A to point B. He replied, "One sex." He has a wife at home, whom I know as well.

It's also possible to get there by bus. I am 61 years old.

*#metoo, March 2018*

97

At around 3 a.m., I was going home from a party. I had just said goodbye to my friend because I was pretty close to home. A group of people in front of me crossed the

empty street at a red light. As soon as I saw them, I hurried after them.

Because I was the last one, I got stopped by two police officers. I knew I had committed a misdemeanour, I didn't resist, but when I was looking for my ID, my phone started ringing.

Both officers started saying things like, "Is it a booty call? You have to answer that, go on, answer, we'll wait! You can't miss something like that. Do you need me to hold your bag? Oh, dear, now he's going to be mad."

Because they were law enforcement, I didn't say anything. I hung up the call and gave them my ID. The comments continued as they were giving me a ticket, I said nothing. Worse, I even smiled like they had made a funny joke, then walked home with tears in my eyes.

*#metoo, March 2018*

98

One of my part-time jobs as a student was as a children's mascot at parties and birthdays. I wore a cat costume. Once, when I was working a surprise party, me and my friend were met by a large group of drunken dads. They kept pulling the cat mascot's tail and asking me if my pussy was wet.

*#metoo, March 2018*

99

An esteemed professor that would regularly hold lectures at one of Ljubljana's faculties of social sciences offered to "make me famous"



if I agreed to sleep with him. He was from the UK and adored by his female students. He would come to Ljubljana with his wife. His visits stopped when other women started reporting sexual harassment. It was important that we started talking about him; we soon realized that he had used similar strategies to solicit sexual favours.

Another esteemed professor from Germany, a married man and father of two daughters, offered to take me with him on one his anthropological field research trips, even as far as India, if I slept with him. He, too, often came to Ljubljana. He said he knew about my committed relationship but that they didn't have to find out about the sex, and that I should just "relax". After I turned him down, he stopped showing any interest in me.

*#metoo, March 2018*

# 100

My cries for help weren't enough for my mother to protect me. I still remember how he used to touch me everywhere, but nothing will be worse than the day he raped me. I will never forget how it felt when he penetrated me while I cried. It was so awful that I left my body, emotionally, it was as if my soul had left me, like a part of me was watching what he was doing to me from a distance. Only somebody who has lived through something like that can truly know what it's like. I decided to seek justice in court, despite everything he did to me for three years until I ran away

from home at the age of 15; despite my mother not believing me and beating me every day. Something inside me kept telling me that he had to be punished for what he had done, and he was. Thank God. But his sentence was too short. He got three years for me and my sister, whom he had also abused. I wasn't satisfied. What did satisfy me was hearing he had been involved in a fatal accident. Many might find this incomprehensible, but I felt like he had finally gotten what he deserved. Today, 23 years later, I can finally say I have learned how to live with it and that I have come to terms with what happened, because I know I cannot change the past. I forgave my mother for everything she did to me. A women's counselling service helped me find a therapist and visiting a support group helped me get to a place in life where I can say I am happy to be alive, and grateful, in a way, for all my bad experiences because I can use them to help somebody. I wish all victims a peaceful life, and that they forgive their aggressors because it will make their life easier and more serene, which is something we all deserve. Good luck to you all.

*#metoo, March 2018*

# 101

I have been touched inappropriately by men, both my age and older. The worst thing is when my boyfriend's uncle touches me, and my boyfriend doesn't see anything. I am 17 years old, and I'm embarrassed that the people close to me

never notice what is happening.

*#metoo, March 2018*

## 102

It happened a few times. The first time was when I was a little girl and an older boy touched my privates inappropriately when we were in his basement. The second time was at [redacted] driving school by a driving instructor against whom I filed a complaint. Nothing happened. They only reassigned him. The third time I was attacked in the garage of my holiday home by my neighbour's guest, who grabbed my breasts. After recovering from the shock, I confronted my neighbour. His wife told me that I was old enough to have fought him off. The trouble is that he comes to the house next to mine every summer, and I am forced to keep seeing him. It is awful for me because now I feel embarrassed and have to take extra special care to avoid him. There is no solution so long as everybody feels this is completely normal and nobody does anything to stop it, not the husband, nor the brother, and not even the neighbour, as a fellow woman.

*#metoo, March 2018*

## 103

Because of all the stories that have begun to appear in the press in this past time, I have decided to share my experience. I could tell you about how, a few years ago, I ended up in a traditionally patriarchal workplace; I stayed for all of four months and ended up leaving because I couldn't stand their "com-

mon sense" remarks about women's roles any longer. Maybe one or two experiences of misogynist professors on a catholic school. I could go on about my long-time experience with a teacher, a paedophile, who suppressed my then-emerging femininity to such an extent that it took me years of struggle before I only recently managed to finally recover it. All these stories would elicit sympathetic nods from readers, who would marvel at the details and know exactly who to judge and why. Black and white stories with clear-cut victims and perpetrators. They should be talked about, but these are not the stories that create controversy. Small anecdotes, casual remarks and comments cause trouble. We get used to them, they start to pile up, and before you know it, escalate into one of those stories it's harder to overlook.

It begins innocently enough. Pink dresses and being told to not sit with your legs so far apart, for Christ's sakes. By tolerating male classmates' and brothers' roughhousing (boys will be boys), harassment (try to be patient, can't you see he's in love with you), comments about the length of your skirt or the tightness of your pants. In my experience, most of these comments come from women. Our mothers, grandmothers, aunts, friends, acquaintances, random ladies who butt into every detail: from the colour of your lipstick to the depth of your cleavage, your haircut, the way you communicate with the opposite sex... Girls shouldn't whistle. Girls aren't the technical type. Boys

don't like it when a girl is too loud.

At this point, many break away. Become the rebel, the family disappointment. Most others manage to successfully play the part of the unproblematic supporting actress – if you want to be part of the men's world, you need to act accordingly. Otherwise, you're quickly branded as "one of those lesbian feminists – you know what I mean," as one of my male colleagues put it the other day. After years of training, you learn to not even flinch at sexist and vulgar comments. The threshold of what is acceptable is extremely low. Let's get it on, babe.

They hurt. All these comments hurt so badly. The countless friendly insinuations of why my skirts are so short; and the comments about which one of my female co-workers must not be getting enough sex. The whistling and the honking when you go for a jog. Damn, look at those legs. No, dear men, that is not a compliment. Could you imagine if I reacted the way I feel I should every single time?

Reacting means risking being excluded from society, which is something few women can afford, both financially and socially. That is why we only come forward under extreme circumstances. I know of another victim of the paedophile I mentioned earlier, who keeps her story to herself because she cannot afford to risk the public wrath that comes with accusing such a reputable family man. Her, the unemployed unmarried woman. The attention is always focused on the

victim: is she vindictive? Envious? Is she unhappy with her life, and looking for somebody to blame for her problems? Perhaps she is not as innocent as she appears? Or the sometimes equally unbearable feeling that everybody feels sorry for you.

No, that is why women prefer to keep silent and leave the fight to others. That's what we were taught by our mothers, who were taught the same by their mothers, and so on, for as long as this power play exists. Don't judge us, we are each fighting a lonely battle, step by step, on all fronts simultaneously. It would be nice to band together, but to do that, we'd need the help of all those who content themselves with raising their eyebrows at sexist comments because they are not directly targeted by them; of all those who nod sympathetically when listening to stories of rape, harassment and violence, but later avoid the victim because of their own feelings of unease. Because we can be angry, depressive, neurotic, problematic – in short, women. My mother taught me that being a woman was bad. Was she right?

*#metoo, March 2018*

# 104

Last week, a man was sitting in a stall in the ladies' room at the library. When I went to the bathroom, I unwittingly got into the stall next to him and took off my clothes, only to see a hand emerge from the next stall, holding a cell phone that had probably been recording me. Before I had time to

react, it had disappeared. I yelled at the man, furiously. He did nothing but quietly sit there. I reported him to the security guard but do not know what happened afterwards.

In that same library (and elsewhere) I have also experienced a man lewdly masturbating while talking to me. All women have experienced countless instances of being catcalled and groped in clubs. There are a million of these stories.

Raising awareness allows us to (at least) teach our sons to behave differently. Thank you for this campaign, but please keep it anonymous.

*#metoo, March 2018*

## 105

Now to the half-story that I feel has no place in the #metoo movement, or perhaps I haven't understood the movement. Why a half-story? Because I sadly cannot remember it. It happened about 20 years ago when I was 7. I lived in a small village and loved to wander around and play. Of course, I knew the village sexton who was in charge of ringing the bells and keeping the church tidy. Sometimes we would play a strange game. After lunch one day, we played this strange game. His hands were on my private parts, and when we danced, he paid a lot of attention to my butt, against which he rubbed himself. What is striking, is that the way he did it didn't cause me to be alarmed. There may have been a red flag or two, but if you're taught your place from a young age, you need a great

deal more red flags to find something alarming at that age.

Another story comes from my teenage years. My friend and I went for a walk to the seaside. We were free until 9 p. m. and we had just had dinner at the student dormitory. All of a sudden, a group dressed in traditional carnival costumes of devils and guys with bells passed by. What are they called again? They were all over the towns just now with their drunken and smelly dancing. Of course, the devil dances past us, grabs one, grabs the other, starts rubbing on us like a dog that has never been in heat before, groping us. We somehow manage to hit him in the balls because all the others were just watching us. They were amused because, naturally, this is supposed to be funny.

All this happened in my 27 years of existence. I'm not at all looking forward to what's in store for me because, to men, we are clearly just something that's there to be used. I think relationships in which one of them is with the other just for the sex, while the other person is in love with the first or vice versa are also some form of abuse. After he's through with her, he throws her away because he's found something better. These types of situations happen to women like me because our parents and society have taught us our place ever since we were little girls through humiliation, abuse, silence etc. and none of us have any idea what we're doing.

*#metoo, March 2018*

# 106

When I was 18 years old, I took driving lessons.

During our first lesson, the instructor showed me the car, the engine... asked me if I wouldn't tell my mother. I didn't know what he was referring to, so I said no. Then he took me by the hand.

I soon found out he was in the habit of touching girls inappropriately and inviting them to have sex with him. In exchange for sex he wouldn't charge them for the lessons.

He touched me too; my arms, my legs, said vulgar things and invited me to have sex with him.

Because it was all too much for me, I stopped the lessons. I was afraid to tell anybody. Apparently, none of the other girls told either. I knew one, she had been my classmate in primary school. We met once a few years later and agreed that the instructor was "a weirdo". That was all we could say on the subject.

I had told the instructor to stop, and that I would stop coming to lessons if he didn't. There was only one other driving instructor in the town, but he would shout at his students and everybody was afraid of him. A few years later, I came across him again. He offered to only charge for half the classes needed to get my permit. I accepted. This time, he was less pushy, but he told me to come to his apartment before the driving test. I don't know

how I could have been so stupid, but I obeyed him. He grabbed my breasts, I fought him, he didn't rape me. I was so nervous during the test that I failed (well, I could have failed either way). The same thing happened before my second attempt, he told me to come to his apartment. Miraculously, the instructor was waiting for me at the gas station. This time, I passed the exam and was rid of him.

Some 10 years after that, I happened to rent an apartment in a block of flats where he lived. I almost had a stroke when I found out. I would see young girls walking with him, as I used to years ago. We ran into each other in the hallway once. The light went out, I searched, frantically, for the light switch, so he wouldn't start touching me again (he had said that darkness worked just fine). Luckily, I found the light switch and managed to get away. I never want to see him again for as long as I live.

When I was in high school, a priest "patted" me on the butt. I was so shocked that all I did was laugh. Luckily, I never saw him again.

Towards the end of primary school, a builder would come by our house because we were having some work done on it. He was an older, already retired man. He "loved" me and wanted me to sit with him at dinner. I felt awful, abused. My parents humoured him, and I had to take drinks to him while he was working and sit at his table while he was having dinner. My food would stick to my throat and I kept

wondering when the nightmare would end.

Later in life, I got involved with an older man (he was 20 years older than me), who was violent and used me for sex (you have to have sex with me in this and this way). I have never been satisfied during sex, despite having had multiple (sexual) partners.

I have never been able to shake the feeling that men's inappropriate behaviour towards me was my fault (I have large breasts), so I sometimes wanted to make myself unattractive. I gorged myself and got fat. Unfortunately, I found out that, even fat, there would always be a gross man that would find me attractive enough to have sex with so he could relieve his sexual tension. Once, I got involved with a plumber; our relationship was purely sexual. Later, when I needed a favour and wanted to pay him (sex with him was revolting), he wouldn't accept payment, instead, he pressured me into sex. I had thought we were friends, but later realised he only saw me as a sexual object and had no respect for my needs and my decisions (to no longer have sex with him). I never asked him to repair anything again, although he is very good at what he does.

Once, I was in a very psychologically vulnerable state. A police officer had come to my apartment to deal with some matter, and even though I didn't want to let him in, he made it through the door and locked it. He started to take off his clothes (he took off his belt and

gun, undid his tie). When he took off his pants, I couldn't believe what was happening. I ran to the hallway and escaped to the bathroom. I tried to wriggle away from him, I crouched down... I soon discovered I didn't stand a chance. I agreed to some quick sex, like so many times before with my partners. I figured it was better than him raping and hurting me. I mentioned it once to a police officer. Of course, he didn't believe me. I have never told anyone since, nor do I plan to.

For years, I've been going to psychotherapy and visiting a group for women who have experienced violence, although I cannot talk about my experience with sexual harassment (yet). I mentioned once that I also went through something, but I didn't go into details.

I finally got it off my chest.

*#metoo, March 2018*

# 107

I was walking in [redacted] with the girl I liked. As we were crossing the bridge at [redacted], three men appeared and one of them slapped her ass. She charged at him, he ran, and I started cursing out the remaining two and demanding they apologise to her and leave us alone. All of a sudden, one of them threateningly showed me a knife he had in his sleeve. She had come back to where we were standing, and I pulled her away and told her to just leave them. The boy who was holding the knife smirked, he seemed to revel in our fear.

*#metoo, July 2018*

## 108

I have experienced my fair share of unpleasantness, but this story is not like the others. Firstly, because I wasn't the target, and secondly, because I had the unique opportunity to see a paedophile's duplicitous nature in action. It was a nice evening; my friends and I were at our friend's house drinking fine wine. We got nostalgic and started talking about primary school. One of the things we remembered was – my generation had experienced the rise of this trend when computers became widespread – how we would go on message boards, MSN, anonymous chatrooms etc. Members of a generation have a shared memory of events, so it wasn't long before we started looking up old chatrooms online. The website we used to know had changed its name to [redacted]. Instead of the usual strangers of similar ages with whom you could discuss movies and school, it is now full of perverts who frequent it to anonymously satisfy their sexual urges. Before the evening had led us to such a conclusion, the three of us, driven by nostalgia, naively, drunkenly and excitedly made an account under the name Ana. Just for laughs, because "nobody takes these sites seriously anyway." Oh, but they do. Three seconds after logging in, we (Ana) were messaged by a record number of men. As usual, they skipped the greeting and immediately demanded to know our age. You are expected to engage in vulgarity from the outset, the woman has no choice in the

matter, she either plays the part of the anonymous sexual object or is no longer welcome. But let's leave that aside. A man whose name kept flashing at the top drew our attention. His handle was something like looking4\_younggirl. We immediately realised what we were dealing with. Despite our disgust we felt a moral sense of duty to engage him. We told him our name was Ana, and that we were 15 years old. He seemed very interested. We responded to everything he said during our conversation, to see where it would lead. The older man came on to "Ana" and invited her to come to his home. We thought we played the part of an underage girl rather well – we made excuses about having to catch the bus, that we could sneak out later after our parents were asleep, asked him what would happen when we came over, things like that. He believed us and described the sexual relations they would "try" in great detail. He even told us where he lived so she could "find his place later". He offered to give her a ride home "after".

We chatted with him for several hours, trying to learn as much about him as possible. "Ana" wanted to know the details of what would happen at his place because she was "an inexperienced teenager". He did not hesitate to explain what she "could" and "would have to" do, that it was just how things were done. We arranged a meeting place, set a time, and agreed on where he would be waiting for her and where he would take her. It's difficult to describe how he

communicated; he was very discreet. It was plain to see that he had no interest in the girl herself, aside from in her being "young enough", and in how he was going to get her to meet with him while asking the least possible amount of questions. His caution when we were discussing things that could alert his suspicions led us to believe that he had done this sort of thing before, that he knew the law very well, and that he was no stranger to talking to children. I think none of us knew what we were trying to achieve, but we felt like we had to do something. Should we actually meet with him, print out the conversation and alert the police? Should we file an anonymous police report? Should we contact somebody else? What can one do in such a situation anyway? We decided to postpone our decision and focus mainly on getting as much personal information about him as possible. At some point, the man asked "Ana" to send him a picture of herself. He clearly believed us or thought that fifteen-year-olds were dumb – he gave us his real e-mail address. We sent him a picture we found online to keep him occupied while we tried to discover who this person was and what he looked like. We found [redacted] on Facebook. Based on all the information he had given us we were 100% certain it was him. His stupid face on his profile picture disgusted us. I can't really describe how we felt. You're somehow safe, surrounded by friends, inside, where it's warm, completely anonymous and taking part in a conversation that isn't re-

ally meant for you. Watching this potential situation unfold is even more frightening. All the while you're looking at a photograph of this man, at his profile, and he seems so normal. You look at the projects he works on, the normal things he shares, his normal life, and yet you know THAT. The flood of emotions (or confusion of emotions) was too strong, we had to stop. We sent him a message saying we knew who he was, that Ana didn't exist and wasn't going to meet him, that he was disgusting and ordered him to never do anything like it again. We then quickly turned off the computer. Nostalgic online fun had rapidly turned into a burden that would cause each of us to be suspicious of every man we saw on the street. Life isn't a fairy tale, where the monsters are ugly, and you know to avoid them. How many more are there? Living their perfectly normal lives, going to work, volunteering for projects? How many, after reading their son a bedtime story and kissing their wife good night log onto the internet to prey on little girls? How many men sleep with their wives and wish that her hair wasn't grey, that her breasts weren't so large, in short, that she were a few decades younger? How many doctors, teachers, clerks, cooks maybe fantasize about your teenage daughter late at night? Monsters don't live in dark caves; they walk among us. Our story reached its conclusion when we saw [redacted] at this year's [redacted]. Seeing him on a photograph was already surreal but seeing him in person – especially



because he had no idea who we were – was disturbing. Whenever I remember that evening, I'm glad we decided to go online when we did. What if there was a real Ana, a real fifteen-year-old there at the same time? When I think of what I was like at that age, I shudder at the thought that the real Ana might have gone out to meet [redacted]. Who knows?

*#metoo, July 2018*

**109**  
A "special" man lives in the village where I grew up. The whole village knows him, we all know he is mentally disabled. He's normally pretty friendly, and everybody in the village is kind to him. He lives alone. The problem is, he lacks love in his life. That's why I was neither the first nor the last person to be seriously uncomfortable in his company. The "torture" began in earnest when I started to grow up, at around 13, 14. I'd say he was about 30 at the time. I used to walk to school. Towards the end of my primary school years, in seventh, eighth grade, I would have given anything to have had a ride. It was quite a long walk, I had to go from one end of the village to the other, and I was very likely to run into [redacted] on the way. As soon as my breasts had started to develop and I had gotten my first pimples, he began approaching me and asking me to "be his girlfriend". He did this to all the other girls too. He must have not developed mentally past a certain age, because he always "targeted" girls under 20. It

might seem innocent, but I don't have fond memories of those years. He would ask me the same question incessantly, whenever he saw me. It was more than just annoying, it made me uncomfortable, while at the same time I felt like I couldn't reject him too harshly because of his mental state. That's why I always just smiled and ran away. It began to escalate. Soon, [redacted] started preying on me in the centre of the village, outside the library, at the market, outside my dentist. It didn't help that he lived nearby. I felt like I ran into him wherever I went. The years passed, I started high school. I ran into him on the bus a few times, he sat right next to me and started asking me inappropriate questions. When I wanted to tell my family about it, my words were deflected with phrases like "you know what [redacted] is like," "it's just a joke," "don't take everything so seriously." Part of me understood – it wasn't his fault, he had no boundaries, nor would he be capable of understanding them, he had meant no harm. On the other hand, I didn't know how to nevertheless demand respect for myself and my body.

I attended high school in another town, so I saw less of him, although our encounters were still frequent. It had gotten to the point where he always wanted to hug me when he saw me. I'm not really "a hugger" by nature and touching somebody that makes me uncomfortable is even more awful for me. A lot of other girls and myself felt like we were being harassed. Once, I was

in the village pizzeria with my parents and some others. [Redacted] approached me and asked me if I wanted to dance. I didn't. I didn't want to touch or talk to him; I wanted to eat my pizza and mind my own business. I must have been around 17, he was a little over 30; the age difference between us wasn't so obvious at first glance, and everybody at the table thought him flirting with me was hilarious. My parents and their friends started to encourage me to dance with him and "humour him", despite my quietly repeating that I didn't dance. Those few minutes were hell, everybody was staring at us, nobody else was dancing (it was a pizzeria, after all, not a dancefloor), so the whole restaurant was looking at us, everybody was laughing and cracking jokes. I felt completely humiliated, at the same time I was trying to stay as far away from him as possible and kept turning my head the other way. At one point, the men at our table started encouraging him to "hold me closer" – I still resent my parents for delighting in my misery –, and [redacted] grabbed my behind without my permission and flashed the men a stupid smile. I hated him, and I hated them even more for encouraging him and making him feel like what he was doing was right. Most of all, I hated myself for not being able to reject a boy just because he was mentally ill. I froze and didn't know what to do. I was on the verge of tears, but I knew how everybody would react if I pushed [redacted] away, so I left his hands where they were, and our "audi-

ence" loved it. "[Redacted] finally has a girlfriend," "would you look at that," "[redacted] is a real man," were some of the comments that were thrown around, and I suddenly felt like I was being groped by the whole village. Suddenly, the crowd started cheering for him to kiss me, which is when I finally broke free and went back to my table. I didn't look at [redacted] again, I ate my cold pizza, my eyes fixed on the table. I was furious. When I got home, I felt sick to my stomach thinking of his hands on my butt, the smell of his breath, and the grins of everybody watching, especially the indulgent smiles of my parents. That was the moment when I decided his psychological state was irrelevant. From then on, I treated him just as I would any other intrusive man. If he made unpleasant or vulgar remarks, I turned him down sharply. If he was pushy, I told him outright to leave me alone. If I saw him coming my way, I no longer ran, but told him I wasn't interested. I never hugged or touched him again, and eventually he stopped trying. One day, I finally stopped running into him altogether. I still feel sorry for him because nobody taught him how to behave around others. But that is not my job. Maybe somebody will see this story as being "moralistic" and its message being that if girls just said no, there wouldn't be any sexual violence. That would be a sloppy generalisation, not to mention that this has proven to be false in countless cases. Society teaches girls that it's "rude", "inappropriate" and "ugly" to say no. They teach us to

"humour him" – especially when it comes to somebody that cannot be held accountable for their actions. They teach us to put ourselves and our bodies in harms' way to avoid being unladylike. They teach us that "it's no big deal". By doing so, they fail to teach us how rejection works. That it's okay to not want to do something. That we do not owe anybody anything. I learned how to say no of my own accord, after years of unpleasant situations, not only with [redacted]. Even after I started saying "no", it took a long time before he was able to accept it. It took me years to get rid of him. He is like most men in that sense. Because girls aren't taught to reject men, men aren't taught how to accept rejection. That is why they often just don't get it. Or why they get angry. They usually get angry; they insult and threaten us. Because society has taught them that we are their property. They only asked out of politeness. I was afraid to reject [redacted] because it would have hurt his feelings. I think that is a perfect representation of how bizarre this situation is. We are so used to our wants and feelings being side-lined that we internalize such behaviours. Then there's the fear. What will happen if I say no? We've learned that men are entitled to control us and our sexuality, so we "logically" assume that a man who is rejected will become angry, vengeful. Will he want to hurt me? Will he follow me until he gets what he wants? That's why we often accept the lesser of two evils. Is that right?

Then there is the crowd of people in the pizzeria, including my parents, who found the spectacle of an underage girl being uncomfortable amusing. What in that moment was to me an overtly sexual situation (dancing and my behind being grabbed) pleased them, and they even encouraged the man to take things further. How I felt was of no importance to them. At the same time, they made sure I would be judged for not participating in their sick game. You simply cannot instigate such a situation and say, "You could have said no if you didn't like it." Could I have? Or would it have just caused me to be mocked for being a killjoy by people twice my age? Of being rude to somebody who is mentally ill? Of overreacting and being overdramatic? Of course, a woman has a choice. But first she needs to live in an environment that enables her to truly make that choice. Societal norms are chains unto themselves, and just because something is permitted, it does not mean it comes without consequences.

I would here like to appeal to parents. First and foremost, to parents of special needs children – make sure your child learns how to interact with others in an appropriate and healthy manner. Don't rob them of the possibility of establishing intimate and loving relationships in the future by not setting any boundaries. With a little effort, they are capable of understanding them just as well as anybody else. Furthermore, your child needs to feel comfortable saying no to some-

thing that makes them uncomfortable, especially if it concerns interpersonal relationships. Your child should not have to hug a stranger, and you should not feel ashamed if they refuse to. Your child needs to have autonomy over their body, and that is something you need to teach them. They should never be forced to renounce that autonomy for somebody else's amusement. You need to teach them that, too. Teach them to demand respect. Teach them to say no and teach them to take no for an answer. Do not, under any circumstance, stand idly by with a smile on your face as they suffer sexual harassment. They will never trust you again.

*#metoo, July 2018*

# 110

Denial. Guilt. Shame. Denial. Silence.

I was 17 years old and at a birthday party. It was the first time I was very drunk. The birthday boy helped me get to one of the bedrooms, and I was asleep moments later. Every once in a while, I managed to open my eyes for a second or two before closing them again. I hadn't heard him come in. I could feel him touching my arms, my breasts, between my thighs. He reached into my panties and shoved his fingers inside me. Did I try to fight back? I can't remember. I didn't want him touching me. Darkness. I could feel the weight of his body. Darkness. When I woke up, I was practically naked. I looked at my arms. You could see my self-harm wounds. I got dressed and went home. I stood

under the shower for over thirty minutes to wash away the disgust.

I ran into him the next day. He was supposed to be my friend. He leaned in and asked if I had liked it. "You seemed to be enjoying it." I told him I couldn't remember what had happened. He said we had had fun, but that he had seen what I had been doing, "You cut yourself." There was no point in denying it. "Don't tell anybody," I asked. He said it would be best if we both just forgot about the night before.

Maybe he was right. Maybe I had enjoyed it. Maybe I had led him on or seduced him. Maybe it really had been my fault. I don't know because I can't remember. I broke off all contact with him and everybody in that group.

I ran into him again some eight years later. I had spent some of that time in a psychiatric hospital after years of self-harm, depression and eating disorders. I never told anybody about that night. Not my family, nor psychologists or other experts. If nobody knows, then it didn't happen, or at least I can pretend that it didn't. Facing him felt like being kicked in the stomach. It was the first time I consciously realised that what had happened to me was wrong. But I never told anybody. Until today.

*#metoo, July 2018*

# 111

Countless gropings at concerts, on buses, in bars, while hitchhiking. It chills me to the bone to remember how, when I was 12 years old, my mother's partner would touch my private parts and shove his tongue in my mouth. Gross. I told my mom he was "touching" me in front of him. I asked her to tell him to stop, and all she did was quietly walk away. Now, at the age of 30, that hurts more than the touching. When I hit puberty, my dad drunkenly "felt to see if my breasts were real." I was shocked, but still told him I would start screaming if he didn't let me go – and he did. Today, the whole family pretends nothing happened, though I still suffer because of it. This is the first time I've ever talked about it.

*#metoo, July 2018*

# 112

My story concerns a politician that has been appearing in the media a lot recently. Him being a famous and influential man, I had never told this story to anybody before because I was convinced nobody would believe me. You still might not. I don't care, I know the true nature of the man from the news.

Despite being an older woman, I didn't think twice about wearing a low-cut dress to a formal gala event. I didn't find it sexy, precisely because of my age, I thought it was a beautiful dress and I didn't even consider the neckline as being inappropriate or anything of the

sort. I'll admit I have a fuller figure, and my breasts are quite large, but I didn't consider that as being neither good nor bad, I have the body I have. Look at me, defending myself for wearing a low-cut dress, despite being an older woman with fuller breasts!

This politician came up to me and said, "My, what a dress!" He gestured with both hands, so it was clear he was referring to my breasts. I was terribly embarrassed and looked around to see if anybody had heard him. In truth, I no longer know who else was there and what went on, because I was suddenly overcome by such a feeling of shame and unease for having allowed myself to wear something so inappropriate at my age and with my body-type. That was my first reaction. I told nobody and hid the dress deep in my closet because I felt humiliated. I later realised that he was the one who should have been ashamed for his rude and sexist behaviour, and for having made fun of me. Especially because he did it from a position of power and took me off guard so I couldn't retort. I have no respect for him whatsoever, and I know he treats women unfairly and judges them based on the size of their breasts.

Might I add that this gentleman is younger than me, which made the whole situation even more embarrassing. Famous people have a great deal to hide behind their masks. I also know that nobody would believe me if I went public with this story about how a famous politician mocked my appearance and my

breasts, and I would feel ashamed, despite my age, my education and my confidence.

I thought a lot about the shame that I think victims of violence or harassment must feel. What happened to me had no lasting effect on me, the shame and humiliation I felt weren't especially traumatic, they did, however, exist and impact me. I was the one that felt ashamed, not the politician. That is the point of all harassment and violence; the roles of the victim and the aggressor are reversed.

*#metoo, August 2018*

# 113

Six years ago, I was raped by two men.

I had gone out with my friends. A little after midnight, I got hungry, so I left my friends to go buy a slice of pizza at a nearby bakery. As I sat outside eating, a group of drunken men came by; they were a little over 50. Two or three kept glancing towards me, one in particular couldn't keep his eyes off me. He looked me over from top to bottom, and I really wished I had one of those burqas or something to cover me so I could finish eating my pizza in peace without being looked at. Alarm bells were going off in my head. It's what women have been taught to feel thanks to years of rape culture. I glanced at them every once in a while; because you can feel when somebody is looking at you and because, as a woman, you feel compelled to check if they're still a safe distance

away.

Safe in the company of his friends, he caught me looking at him, winked at me and grinned while nodding approvingly and slowly looking me over. He managed to make me feel uncomfortable in what I was wearing for the first time that night – all my clothes suddenly felt too short, too tight; I felt as though I was shining like a lightbulb and attracting moths. His eyes (finally) came back to my face, and he must have seen my disgusted expression because he suddenly looked confused, and immediately annoyed. He frowned and turned to face me. I'm more than familiar with that move, so I became incredibly angry. Apparently, I have no right to mind my own business if some gross old man decides to choose me as the object of his ego-trip. I should act excited and a little embarrassed, thank him a thousand times for noticing me. Disgusting.

Of course, he felt compelled to remind me that I was being "rude". His confidence prohibited him from understanding how at my ripe young age of 20, his bald spot, fat belly and aggressive demeanour weren't attractive. That's why he decided that I probably only hadn't understood his superb non-verbal communication skills. Girls aren't that rational after all, right, we're more emotional, so I might have been too rash, and was definitely overreacting, so he was "nice" enough to remind me again that he had noticed me by saying, "Nice, damn," while visibly nodding and keeping his gaze dangerously some-

where below my neck.

I had also decided that he probably only hadn't understood my body language, so I contorted my face into a very clear expression of disgust, zipped up my jacket, and turned to face away from him. We shouldn't forget that he was standing in a group of some five men, and if there's anything worse than the ego of a man who's just been rejected, it's the ego of a man who's just been rejected in front of his friends. How horrible. Of course, he took it as an invitation to come talk to me about my manners, because how dare I.

He broke off from his group that was now intently watching the goings-on, walked up to me, grabbed me by the arm, with which I was holding the pizza, and turned me towards him. He wasn't exactly rough, but he was definitely determined, strong enough for me to drop my pizza, and 1000% unwelcome. As we stood eye to eye, all this happened in mere seconds, he kept a steady grip on my shoulder. "Aren't you at least going to thank me for the compliment," he said, not really a question, more a statement, with a reassuring (?) smile on his face and a certain anger in his eyes. "Why?" I asked quite calmly, shaking his hand off my shoulder. "Why did you get all dressed up if you don't want to be looked at?" At that point he moved as if trying to give me a friendly hug, but he turned to look at his friends who were laughing and watching us. I managed to slip away to the side, I hadn't bothered to answer him.

It was clear that I had to get home ASAP, but I didn't know how.

The man, who was now hugging me from the side and leaning on me with his whole weight, looked at the floor and laughed, "You dropped your pizza, do you want another one?" "No, thank you." My voice had lost all its anger and determination, fear had made me obedient. He seemed to like that. "Come, come, I don't want you to be mad at me." I didn't even know how to react. His friends were laughing their asses off. "I'm not hungry anymore." Despite that, he dragged me back into the bakery and told me to choose whatever I wanted as he pulled out his wallet and opened it wide (maybe its contents were meant to impress me? How should I know). These all too familiar patterns completely pissed me off, and I once again found my courage, broke free from his grip and left the bakery without saying a word. I started walking back to [redacted], which is when the whole herd quickly stepped in. Their prey was getting away.

Two of the men quickly walked up to me and cut me off, "Where are you hurrying off to?" In the meantime, my non-chosen-one had come out of the bakery completely enraged. It was somewhere around the fifth time he had been rejected that night and he wouldn't stand for it. He started shouting at me, asking what was wrong with us "bitches", who led them on and then nothing, that I had offended him in front of his friends, that all we did was fish for compliments

and free drinks, that we took advantage of them, that mine was "the worst kind" etc. etc. I couldn't believe this was really happening. "Leave me alone," I said, and tried to wriggle past the other two. These three were the only ones left, I never saw the rest again. When one blocked my path, I pushed him away. The other took this as a sign, and heartthrob number 1 twisted my arm behind my back. He was a little smaller than me, and had he been alone, I probably would have been able to fight him off because I'm an athlete, but there were three. He loudly said, probably in case anybody was listening, "You've had enough to drink for today," I hadn't even been drinking, "Let's get you home." He kept holding my arm as we walked, one on every side of me and one behind. There was an empty taxi parked around the corner – this must have been the taxi driver and his two friends.

They made me get in the back, and one of the two buddies got in next to me. Heartthrob number 1 got in the driver's seat, and the third had somehow left the scene. Maybe he figured they could handle it. I thought about jumping out of the car while it was still moving slowly enough. I quickly realised that was why one of the men was sitting next to me and not in the front. He threateningly put his hand on my thigh. The car started moving, and I wondered where they were taking me. The one next to me seemed to be watching my every move. At one point, I reached into my purse to grab my phone and call the police.

He ripped it out of my hands and put it on the other side of him, out of my reach. I was paralyzed with fear. We were driving towards [redacted], and the hand on my thigh started moving dangerously. I froze and moved as close to the door as possible. That angered him. He grabbed my face with his other hand, violently turned it towards him, and gave me something I'm assuming he would describe as a kiss. After he had gotten his drool all over my teeth, I somehow managed to push him away with one leg. He hit me over the ear with a half fist. I heard the driver say, "That's exactly the kind of behaviour that will cost you dearly." I became enraged for the hundredth time that night and started kicking and hitting him with all my might. He didn't put up much of a fight, I could only see by his face that he was becoming increasingly irritated. Then, I don't know how much time had passed, the taxi driver stopped the car behind a supermarket. I didn't know where we were or what store it was, only that it was very big and there was nobody around. When something like this happens, you're never really there because you can't believe it's actually happening. I saw the door at the back of the building and had a panicked thought that I couldn't believe I was going to die in a supermarket warehouse. From some reason, I found the thought completely hysterical and unwittingly let out a manic laugh. The car had stopped, the driver got out and opened the back door on my side.



When I turned towards him to see what was happening, the guy behind me grabbed my arms. After a relatively short fight (I would not stop kicking), the taxi driver managed to grab my legs. They dragged me out of the car but didn't make it farther than a few meters because I tensed all my muscles and made myself heavy. They dropped me and I fell on my back. I got the wind knocked out of me for a second, but a second was enough. My memory of the next few minutes is fuzzy. I remember looking for their crotches but never being able to kick or hit them hard enough. I managed to successfully kick the taxi driver in the knee hard enough for him to fall. He fell on top of me. After that, he lost it completely and punched me in the face a few times. I don't know if he was more annoyed because of the kick or because of my screaming. Then I lost consciousness. When I woke up, we were somewhere else. I couldn't recognize the place; the floor was gravel. I know because it felt rough against my back. I didn't wake up gradually, but right away because of the pain. The taxi driver was holding my entire body in a vice grip under him and pounding into me. When I opened my eyes, I saw his contorted face, I felt sick. He had pinned my arms above my head by the wrists. I could feel the sharp gravel underneath my knuckles. I wasn't fully there, I felt dizzy. I could feel the pounding, and each time my naked behind burned as it dragged across the sandy surface. The driver noticed I was awake and stopped, maybe out of fear that I

would start resisting again. I could feel his dick become flaccid inside me. I was afraid he'd think the easiest thing would be to knock me out again, so I didn't move a muscle. When he saw I wasn't moving, he got to his knees and started masturbating so he could continue. He spit in his hand twice.

A few meters in front of me, there were some horses behind a fence. I looked at them as he got on top of me again. He couldn't do it. Maybe my (semi) conscious face bothered him. That's when his buddy joined in. I had forgotten about him. I smelled the stench of cigarettes. He squatted down next to us and I felt a burning pain where my privates met my thigh. The pain was so strong my eyes rolled back in my head. When he heard my stifled cry, he got hard again. He penetrated me violently while I stared at the horses. I couldn't feel much of anything at all, everything was dulled by the pain of the burn. Soon, his body jerked; somewhere, far off in my thoughts, I realised he must have been close. The thought made me happy. It would be over soon. He came all over my ripped t-shirt. I noticed some of the horses were much smaller than others. As the taxi driver was getting up and I could hear his panting and muffled breathing, I thought about what a young horse was called. I was mad at myself for not being able to remember.

The smell of cigarettes came wafting over, and that was enough to alert me. It must have reminded me of the recent burn and the pain that

came with it. At least a dozen conscious thoughts flooded my brain. Cigarettes equal pain. Something's moving behind the car. I don't know where I am, but I'm in danger. A foal. My vision cleared and I finally realised what was going on.

I didn't have the strength to run, and I had no idea where to go. I sat up. There were fences with horses on either side of me. We were in the middle of a gravel parking lot. I had never been here, and I had no idea if we were still in [redacted]. I panicked. The taxi driver's buddy came back and stood next to him. The driver was busy buckling his belt. "Got some sleep, I see," he said. "Good." He was smiling, the taxi driver smiled too. His friend offered me his hand, I took it and stood up. I wasn't wearing any pants or underwear and couldn't see them lying around. I thought they might have been in the car. I remembered my phone was there too and thought maybe I could go get them and try calling the police. Getting dressed would give me enough time to look up where I was on Google Maps. We stood there. They stared at me, their eyes lingering on the sperm on my shirt and my bare behind. The buddy who had been smoking a cigarette started scratching his crotch. I asked if I could go get dressed now. They both started laughing. The taxi driver walked away and the other one threw his cigarette away (thank God) and began taking off his pants. I noticed he wasn't wearing a belt. The buckle wouldn't hurt my thighs like with the first

one. Nice. I didn't know what to do, how to stand. I felt a little embarrassed. How does one even prepare to be raped?

Heartthrob number 2 quickly saved me from any awkwardness. He got behind me and pressed my head against the hood of the car. I could feel him "throw" his penis onto my back and drag it to and fro. I remember finding it very odd. Then he started touching me until I got wet. I felt like my body had betrayed me. He made awkward motions and stuck his fingers into my vagina while rubbing his palm along the length of it. I wasn't ready. When he pushed his fingers into my ass it hurt a lot and I let out a scream. At that moment I felt his dick that had been pressed up against me harden. I think I knew what was about to happen and I started to cry. I think that was the first moment when I was truly present in the situation. He raped me anally, and it took a very long time. I could feel something running between my legs. I thought it was his sperm. Hours later in daylight I realised it had been my blood. My crying seemed to turn him on. As I sobbed, he pressed the upper part of my body into the hood of the car and raped me savagely. He came inside me. I could tell when it happened, because the pressure was very painful, and he squeezed the hand that was on my back. I felt so humiliated.

Everything after that happened very quickly. I sat down in front of the car and one of them threw my pants at me. They didn't give

me back my purse, my phone or my panties. I quickly put my jeans back on. I didn't know what was going to happen. They got in the car and I heard that song, Gangnam Style on the radio. The whole thing seemed surreal, like it wasn't happening to me. I was completely absent once again. The car started. Today, I'm angry at myself for not remembering the name of the taxi company, let alone the licence plate, when I had had every opportunity. They turned the car around me and covered me in dust. I stood up. The friend yelled out, "You're a good fuck," from the passenger seat. They drove off. I got home by following the road they had driven off on. Although I had thought we were miles away from [redacted], it turned out we were only a few kilometres from where we had started, behind the highway. After about half an hour, I made it back to [redacted].

A good fuck, a good fuck, a good fuck, a good fuck kept ringing in my head. I looked down and saw the blood on my thighs had seeped through my jeans. I felt ashamed at what passers-by might think. I walked all the way back to [redacted] where I lived. My mind was vacant, and I don't remember much. Maybe a strange look here and there. It was late morning by the time I got home. My roommates were at work and at university, and I didn't have my keys, my wallet or my phone. I sat outside the apartment building until three p. m. when one of them came home. I couldn't tell her anything. Luckily, she understood. She

got me in the bath and sat down beside me. I cried while she showered me with hot water for hours. I knew she had seen the blood, the burn, the scrapes and bruises, and I was thankful that she didn't make me talk. She was a saint and stayed by my side 24/7 for two weeks. I cancelled all my credit cards and documents the next day and bought a new phone soon after. I knew she was waiting for me to share what had happened, but I couldn't. I took no action. I just wanted to forget anything had happened to me. I knew she knew, so her attentive presence soon started to annoy me. With the new documents, phone and clothes, she was the only physical reminder of the event. I moved out within the month and never spoke to either of them again.

I wrote down this story because I'm incapable of telling it. I never have. I vividly remember every detail even six years later. They run through my head at least once a day, every day. Do I wish I had reported it? No. I wish it hadn't happened. It has affected every relationship I have ever had with anybody in my life. I'm incapable of engaging in romantic relationships; my lack of trust and unwillingness to have sex chases every potential partner away. I'm waiting for the day when you the burn fades, and for a few more years to pass. A dim memory is something I look forward to in this case. If a man gives me what he considers to be a compliment, I say thank you, just to be safe. And I get a lump in my throat every time

I see a horse.

*#metoo, July 2018*

# 114

We were out, it was early morning and we were pretty drunk. She seemed like a nice girl and wanted to come home with me. I declined and offered to meet up with her some other day when we were more sober. I ordered a taxi and she got in without an invitation. She said we could share it but didn't give the driver her address. During the ride, she sat in my lap and started kissing and touching me. I didn't want her to, but that's not something you're supposed to say. I should have been happy.

She got out of the taxi with me outside my apartment. We're just going to sleep, I say. I'm too tired for anything else. She takes off my clothes. Demands sex. I refuse. She insists. I try to but can't. I'm met by a flurry of insults calling me incompetent and less of a man. She must have woken up half the building. I fall onto the bed helplessly. She attacks my crotch with something resembling rough foreplay, determined to get her way. Whether I like it or not. You don't say no to a hot chick, or so they say. You can't be rough to women either. Words don't work. I have nothing left to fight with. After some twenty minutes of agony she curses me out for goodnight.

A few days later, my doctor takes a look at my bruised and scraped privates. Be more careful next time. Men can handle themselves, or so

they say. I ended up alone, steadfastly avoiding anything to do with intimacy.

*#metoo, August 2018*

# 115

I've been living in a non-marital partnership for 30 years now. When I realised my partner had been abusing me, I decided to share my story. He is 13 years older than me; a once-influential Slovenian manager type, way past his expiration date. Ha hasn't gotten married because he thought wedding clothes were too expensive, he didn't get around to it, his two sons wouldn't let him. Today they have their own families and don't care about their father. He's insane, accuses me of things I didn't do. He has a daughter with me, his third, that needs 24-hour care. We went to [redacted] for help, and he prescribed medication that leaves her drugged. Because most of my sexual abuse happens at night, I fear the same might be happening to my daughter.

*#metoo, August 2018*

# 116

I am 33 years old and have never had a job where I didn't experience verbal harassment from my male superiors. I think the worst are the formal ones. "It's a joy to greet you when you're wearing a skirt, madam." Or messages sent during meetings, "You look good today, madam." It makes me sick. "The male gaze starts where the skirt ends." To make matters worse, some are extremely religious. I didn't choose

to live in a society where women have to put on a fake smile and put up with these types of comments. Where we have little else to do but awkwardly smile at, "There are only cute girls working here," because it's unwelcome to talk back. Show me one woman who hasn't been at least verbally harassed in the workplace. I doubt things are going to change any time soon because our society works hard to protect the fragile male ego that dominates it, despite the origin of its power being unknown; they must have just taken it for themselves at some point, and now guard it with a jealous rage.

*#metoo, August 2018*

# 117

Each of us has their own story that has shaped and marked them.

A few years ago, I had a very different perception of my experience. I hid it from the world, ashamed, because it's a taboo that is rarely spoken about in public (although that has luckily started to change in recent years).

I felt guilty and embarrassed that I had to go through what I did. Now I want to share my experiences because maybe they can help somebody realise that they are not alone, that there are people out there that believe you, and that you can still live a rich and full life despite it.

When I was nine years old, my grandfather molested me for two months. I still find it very difficult to talk about because it's still very

painful. According to research, a lot of children never speak out. One morning, when I couldn't sleep because of the nightmares and the fear of getting pregnant, I told my grandmother. I loved her dearly. Now, I can understand and interpret her reaction differently, but it devastated me as a child. "If I can't get pregnant, you won't either," were words that rang through my head for a long time.

I promised her not to tell my parents about these "events", and that she would handle it by talking to him. The abuse ended with his death when I was ten. His death made me feel firstly relieved that it would ever happen again, and also incredibly guilty for not mourning like everybody around me.

*#metoo, August 2018*

# 118

I was eight years old. Our neighbour in our apartment block asked me for help in the basement. I went with him because I knew him. When we got there, he blocked the door and ordered me to take my clothes off. After I cried for a long time, he told me I could go if I kissed him on the mouth. I have hated going into basements ever since.

*#metoo, August 2018*

# 119

I had a nice and pleasant childhood. A big family, vacations, trips, nice clothes, anything I wanted. Soon, my fairy tale turned into a horror movie. My parents had

been divorced ever since I could remember, and I soon got a step-mother and stepfather. I didn't get along with either of them. My life was hell, it was tough to imagine how it could possibly be any worse. I was horribly wrong. One night when I was 11, I was watching a movie with my mother and stepfather. One scene showed a naked alien woman, and of course my stepfather had to loudly comment on it. A few days later, we were alone. Up until that point our relationship had been okay, even great at times. He started playfully tickling me, and it wasn't long before his hands reached my breasts and private parts. He pressed me up against him very strongly, so I felt his erection. He reached his hands under my clothes, touched my breasts, and started penetrating me with his fingers. This became part of my day-to-day for the next three years. Although at first, I didn't realise what was happening, I started sinking into an ever-deeper darkness. I have lost most of my memories of that time, the only things that remain are feelings of dread, shame, and helplessness. I was drowning, yet nobody noticed. When I was 13, I told my mother, my father, and my grandmothers. They believed me but didn't know what to do with the information. My mother told me it was my own fault, my father wanted to forget about it as soon as possible, others said nothing at all, and some still don't know.

The court sentenced my stepfather to 2 years in prison. He was re-

leased after 8 months on account of good behaviour. Back then, I had no help in dealing with the trauma, and because I'm great at pretending, everybody assumed I was okay. In reality, I was slowly fading away into nothingness, until something in me snapped one day. I've survived three suicide attempts. In the past 10 years, not a day has gone by without me thinking about killing myself. People have forgotten about my trauma, but I haven't. My final year of university, I fell into a deep depression. All I did during the day was lie in bed, not eat, and wait for death. My roommate suggested I get some professional help, which I did. I decided to give life another chance. I worked with two therapists, one of whom I still go to, and slowly retook control of my life. Today, I'm finally okay and look forward to the next day. But I'm still fighting, and I must admit I still haven't come to terms with having to live my whole life with my childhood traumas. But I have hope that everything will turn out alright.

*#metoo, August 2018*

# 120

The beginning of summer in 2012, at the end of my first year in high school. The magical feeling of going to the same school with a certain individual, and the even nicer fact that they are part of your so-called "group of friends". I was in a relationship, and my then-partner knew him as well. I had been getting invitations and compliments, all of which I ignored, way before

the actual event.

It happened at the start of summer, when girls wear sleeveless shirts and short shorts. As the [redacted] courthouse later informed me, they're called "booty shorts". His lawyer told me I had provoked him with what I had been wearing. And here I thought that was something that only happened in American movies...

I had been invited to an afternoon get-together in a biker club that has now luckily been demolished. I was told there would be several people there. In the end, I was left alone with him because his friend had locked us in a room together. He first tried to win me over, until he realised that I didn't want him touching me in any way. He said nobody would know and asked me to do it for him because he was going abroad and wouldn't be back for a long time. A normal conversation quickly escalated into him forcing himself on me. Because he did martial arts, I was afraid to fight back...

After he was done, he sat on the floor. He was crying. He claimed he didn't remember anything because he had forgotten to take the pills prescribed him by his psychiatrist. He had also told me he would beat me if I didn't give in. Another thing that worked to my disadvantage was the absence of any reception. I waited for the door to be unlocked and went home.

I reported everything to the police and spent the night at the police

station and in the emergency room. They wrote up the report twice. I heard back from the courthouse after two years. The most encouraging words came from the female judge who after the trial nonchalantly told me the whole thing was pointless. That the whole procedure was completely useless because at the end of the day we were just numbers in a statistic that apparently has no room for improvement.

*#metoo, September 2018*

# 121

I just found out the man who sexually assaulted me has been acquitted. I'm back to being as helpless as I was then. He's won again and all my efforts were in vain.

*#metoo, September 2018*

# 122

When I was 13, I was sexually assaulted by an older man whom I didn't know. Too young to understand it, and too young to know how to deal with it on my own, but old enough to know it was wrong and that it would leave a mark. And it has. Five years later, I mustered up the courage to speak out for the first time. Everything happened very fast, and pretty soon we were in court. Looking back, I think what he did to me wasn't half as bad as what they put me through in court.

The trial is over now. He won, and I'm helpless once again.

*#metoo, September 2018*

## 123

I'm speaking out now, 35 years later, with children, and after the man responsible has long been dead. Luckily. I was a 5-year-old girl when, during the holidays me and my brother spent at our grandparents' house, the nightmare began. He would "wash" me in the bath... This continued until I was 10, when he moved on from touching and washing me to forcefully kissing me and washing my breasts. During this time, my grandmother rejected and insulted me, calling me an ugly, fat little girl. I understand now... I'm glad my parents got divorced at that time and I no longer had to visit his father... The memory of him remains. Alive.

*#metoo, October 2018*

## 124

I was 13. There was a celebration in our village. I don't know what for, but a lot of us were there. My friend and I left the party to go for a walk. We had wanted to see the boys we liked, who were at another party, maybe a 10–15-minute walk away. They may have had the same idea because, halfway there, we ran into each other. It was an innocent gathering of primary-schoolers, boys and girls with crushes. Until suddenly everything changed. I don't know how it happened, but I remember lying on the ground. There were four guys. One was standing to the side, holding my friend. Three were around me. One held my arms, the other held my legs, the third was trying

to unbuckle my belt. It must have been a special type of belt because he couldn't. All this happened near the [redacted] town road in the tall grass. I think somebody must have come down the road because they suddenly disappeared. My friend and I got out of there. We went back to the party and decided not to tell anybody. At the party, my emotions got the best of me and I cried for a long time. I told my parents the next day. They didn't believe me. My mother asked me if I was sure it had really happened. I was appalled. I couldn't believe somebody could not believe a story like that. Why would I have been making it up? She had seen me the day before when I was a wreck. We went to the school on Monday. Almost everybody in the village went to the same school. We had a talk with the school councillor. A report was written up. Then nothing. No lecture on violence, no seminar. Only the mocking that followed. After all these years, I've repressed all the names I was called. A few years later, I was at university. We were in a club, and me and a boy had been flirting all night. We started kissing. After a while, we went somewhere to the side and started passionately making out. We wanted to have sex but neither one of us had a condom. We continued kissing, and suddenly I felt his member in my mouth. I hadn't been ready for it. He thrust it into my mouth hard and fast until he came somewhere outside. Then to his dorm room and slept while his roommate slept in the next bed. This was some 15 years ago. Today



I realised I was raped.  
*#metoo, November 2018*

# 125

I went to primary school in [redacted], a place in the Dolenjska Region. I had three brothers. Two are still alive today.

When we were children, we would play around the house, in the meadows, in the bushes.

The bushes were where it happened; I don't know how old I was, I must have been about four or five; one of my brothers made me take off my underwear so he could take a look at me. I'm now 61 years old. To this day, I feel uncomfortable, ashamed, whenever I think of it.

I liked going to school. I was a straight-A student. In third grade, I had a male teacher. He was young, recently married, some ten or so years older than me. I can't remember when exactly he started teaching chess. I remember travelling alone with him when I was 12 to go to a competition in [redacted]. It was normal for a child to travel alone with their teacher. It was a Sunday and we were walking through the empty streets in [redacted]. He held my hand. I felt helpless. I did nothing.

I can't remember how I did in the competition.

Later, we would practice for competitions in the town's rec centre. Because I'm from a traditional Catholic family I would walk to mass to [redacted] every Sunday

morning. After mass, I'd wait until 10 a. m. at my friend's house. That was when we would meet with the older chess players, I only remember the male ones, to prepare for competitions. My teacher had instructed me to come half an hour early. He made me sit on his lap, hugged me, gave me wet kisses. I went along with it in a way. I can no longer remember what he would say to me. I never told anybody. I went regularly. I did nothing. For a time, it made me feel very grown-up. Once, he was waiting for me on a path that crossed a meadow. He had known when I would be there. He started telling me that it was a shame he was married because if he hadn't been, things would have been different for us. I didn't reply.

When I was 14, I fell in love with a boy from [redacted], whom I had met at a chess competition. I told my teacher there was somebody else and ceased all physical contact with him. Once, when I was in the hospital, he sent me a letter. I sent him a letter and addressed it to the school. His wife was a secretary at the school and opened it. She confronted me about its contents in the hallway.

When I was eight or nine, my eldest brother [redacted] often brought his friend [redacted] home. It was a welcome change to the routine of our day-to-day life. However, at night, when I was in bed, this man would come give me slobbery kisses on the mouth. I still shudder to think about it.

Whenever I would go to a chess

competition – they usually lasted around two weeks – I would fall in love. Sometimes "hopelessly". I was always looking for a boyfriend, always in love. I broke off relationships when, usually overnight, the infatuation passed. I got married soon because I got pregnant. I've been divorced for 25 years.

When I was around 45, I told my mother and two of my brothers everything. Neither one said anything. Anything. Neither one asked about it ever again. Their silence hurt for a long time. Just as much as the sexual abuse.

A few years before retirement, I broke down. The mobbing was so ruthless that I took a long sick leave. When I came to see a psychiatrist whom I had worked with professionally a few years earlier, he asked, "What are you doing here?"

"I need you so badly," I said and started bawling.

Today, I'm retired. It took two years, but I made it.

My psychiatrist explained that bad experiences resurface in light of a similar situation.

He said, "Madam, what happened to you at the ages of 12 and 60 should not have happened." I often remember his understanding words.

I felt like there was somebody who fully understood and supported me. He had only kind words for me. Because I used to work in social services and healthcare, I know

that there aren't many such medical professionals.

*#metoo, December 2018*

## 126

When I was 10, a stranger had been watching me write sheet music in music school. When I glanced at him, I could see his hand moving rapidly inside his pants. It made me sick. *#Sunflower*.

*#metoo, December 2018*

## 127

I'm a *#sunflower* too. After we broke up, my ex-boyfriend would often harass me over the phone and send me messages with inappropriate or sexual content. He tried to get my attention with countless calls, would tell me "what he would do to me," and sent messages that he missed me and wanted me back etc.

*#metoo, December 2018*

## 128

In primary school, male classmates would often touch my butt. I wasn't the only one. They'd often "jokingly" blackmail me, saying that they would tell somebody if I didn't let them. Often, one of the boys would hit one of the girls, and if she did anything other than laugh, he only became more aggressive.

*#metoo, December 2018*

## 129

My story is too painful to write down in its particulars, despite it having happened two years ago and

this being anonymous.

When it happened, I was too ashamed and afraid to tell anybody or to cry out. I didn't want anybody knowing about it because there would be no hope of pretending it didn't happen, so I kept quiet in hopes of forgetting.

Girls, remember:

- no, you never forget, and far too many things remind you of it over and over again;

- no, you almost certainly won't stop feeling ashamed, and he almost certainly won't start to feel shame;

- it will be more than just a bad memory – in my case, it led to being afraid of any man that looked at me lustfully; feeling disgust at the sight of a male sexual organ – I don't know if I'll ever be capable of having sex again, despite instinctively wanting to; I've even had nightmares about it;

- no, it's not your fault. Don't think about what could have happened had you reacted differently, what you should have done, how you could have stopped it. You are not to blame for anything that happened after you said "no" and indicated your refusal. Even if you were walking semi-nude, drunk, alone, in the darkness... None of it is your fault. Men are the ones who cannot control themselves. If you leave your house unlocked, tell everybody where you live, where you keep your money and when you're not going to be home... and get

robbed; if the police catch them, will they tell you they're not guilty because you had been irresponsible? No. They will punish them for having committed a crime. They robbed a house, which is something they shouldn't have done. Period. Nothing else matters. The same is true in our case. Nobody has the right to enter a house without an invitation. Everybody knows that, even if they walk right past an open door. Men are the ones who need to resist the temptation of walking in because they know full well that they don't have permission to walk into a stranger's home. Let us therefore stop searching for blame within ourselves and analysing what we could or should have done. It was bad enough that somebody broke into our home. We shouldn't torture ourselves with self-blame.

*#metoo, December 2018*

# 130

It happened over 10 years ago. That night, I had broken up with my boyfriend and ran, crying, out into the [redacted] street. I had drunk too much and in the chaos of the evening I ran into a friend of a very good friend of mine whom I had known for a few years in [name of club redacted]. I had liked him before. From the moment we ran into each other, he stayed with me and took care of me because I was very drunk. He waited while I threw up in the bathroom etc. Because I felt sick, he took a taxi home with me. There, he told me he liked me too, we kissed. When we got to my place, the taxi drove away. He

was standing outside with me and I told him he could come up. I remember him asking me if I knew what that meant. I didn't think much of it, the trust I felt towards my good friend somehow extended to him. We had gone out together before, and in my group of friends it was normal to go to somebody's place after the party and sleep over. I didn't think anything of it. In the apartment, I took off my clothes and fell asleep, still drunk. It wasn't the smartest thing to do, but it happened. He had nothing to do, so he got in bed next to me. I fell asleep instantly. In the middle of the night I woke up to see [redacted] having sex with me. I remember feeling like what was happening was none of my business, at the same time, it was very much my business. Still half asleep, drunk and emotional, I told him I didn't want to, I asked him to stop, and he did. I fell asleep again. When I woke up again, he was having sex with me again. He had even put on a condom. I told him I didn't want to, I asked him to stop, and he stopped again. When we woke up, we went our separate ways, my memory of the previous night's events was blurry. I slowly managed to piece together my memories, and what had happened. I didn't even want to greet him; once, when I couldn't avoid him, I told him why. He said he had thought I had wanted to have sex with him, my version of events surprised him. I vividly remember waking up and seeing him on top of me and telling him to stop. The image has stayed with me; every once in a while, I remember it. I

liked him but I didn't want to sleep with him.

*#metoo, January 2019*

# 131

He was a family friend. I was 11 or 12. When we were building out house, he caught me on the construction site and started touching my breasts, saying breasts needed to be kneaded for them to grow. The memory still disgusts me, I felt dirty.

*#metoo, January 2019*

# 132

Ever since I was 11, I have been ogled and groped; I have heard men describe how appropriate I would be to satisfy their needs.

While looking at a store window in [redacted] my most intimate body parts have been groped, pinched and grabbed by passing men. I've grown used to constantly looking over my shoulder, being on the lookout, avoiding things and places. The constant feeling of being threatened, and not being safe even when alone in a crowd; I never have been. When I turned 18, I became more courageous and started verbally defending myself against such attacks. The reactions I received were mostly shock and aggression, making my escape more difficult than if I had just said nothing. When I was changing in the changing room of the public pool in [redacted], a group of men were loudly commenting and describing the details of my naked body. It took me a while to realize that a few were

huddled in the next stall, looking at their desired object – me – through a hole they had drilled in the wall. When I went swimming, two men touched my private parts and loudly congratulated themselves on their success. I couldn't complain, nor defend myself, nor seek help. The only possible solution was not to go out in the street or to the public pool alone!

My boyfriend had trouble understanding what happened if I was alone, because men behaved normally when we were out together.

So much for western culture. We don't have to comment on how women are treated in less developed societies – all women know how they're treated in ours.

*#metoo, January 2019*

## 133

I used to work in a bar where a client would regularly come in and show his penis. I didn't believe it until it happened to me. I freaked out and everybody told me I was overreacting and asked me if I had never seen a dick before. I was more shocked by people's reactions than by the exhibitionism itself. That kind of mindset has to change!

Exhibitionism is a sickness that stems from a lack of attention in the person's primary family environment. Sex is performed on the level of fantasy, not in reality itself, which is why these people can never form a real relationship. These people need help, not encouragement.

*#metoo, January 2019*

## 134

I just got back from a meeting about my thesis that I've almost finished. The professor with whom I met has been my mentor since last year. This time, he crossed a line and touched my breasts, commenting that he liked my cleavage. I had heard a similar story from another classmate, but we had all assumed she had just misinterpreted it. I don't know what to do, I need to take an exam for his class and finish my diploma. He is a renowned academic who also appears on television.

*#metoo, January 2019*

## 135

I was a petite brunette; I was 7 years old. When my father started caressing and touching me, I thought it was just fatherly love, until the caresses turned into him touching my naked body and having sex with me. Because he was a big man, I couldn't shake or fight him off. I was as helpless as a tiny little mouse.

He did all these terrible things to me until I was 18, when I moved out and went to live with my then-boyfriend. When I turned 20, my ex-boyfriend started psychologically harassing me. In my anger, I told him I had been sexually abused by my father. He went to the police and reported it.

The affair went to court, which is where the nightmare began. I had to tell the story countless times and watch my mother and father cry

while hugging each other. It still hurts to think about it.

The court of [redacted] gave my father parole but after an appeal the high court of [redacted] gave him a prison sentence of a year and two months. When he was in prison, my whole family visited him... They wouldn't even look at me. What hurts the most is that my mother would go and sit in his lap, hug him, give him love and support. I know they had promised to stick by each other through thick and thin, but what about ME?

While my father was in prison, my ex-partner psychologically and physically harassed my son and me. We managed to get rid of him. My father still had power despite being in prison. When I was 27, he told me to come over so he could fuck me one last time, and said, go on, report me again, prison wasn't that bad.

It took a great toll on me and I went from therapist to therapist. Suddenly, a reporter from the Slovenian Radio-Television contacted me and we recorded my story for a program. A lot of people saw it, some women who had lived through similar experiences called me. We met up for coffee to chat... to cry... to say something positive to each other. Doing the show helped, I felt relieved, but I could never understand why my mom hated me so much. I know I couldn't admit it to myself, not even in my wildest dreams, that she was an accomplice to that hideousness, I lost a few years of my life worrying about

it. Until my mom came up to me one day and said, I'm sorry, baby girl, for never being able to love you. On my 35th birthday, an acquaintance of my mother told me they had hidden my existence from everybody; she hadn't even known I existed until then, but she had known about my sister. A part of me still hoped that it couldn't be true. Of course, a mother loves her child.

I held on to that hope and delusion until I saw a therapist in [redacted]. There is a large painting in her office with a lot of dark blue. During our sessions, moments from my past flashed in front of my eyes, and I realized my mother had been an accomplice to my suffering.

Now, nobody in my family speaks to me, and I don't want them to. But it hurts to see my parents walking through the city and going to stores hand in hand. I think some of the pain will always be there, but I try to think of it as something positive because I know I love and support my son however I can.

*#metoo, January 2019*

# 136

I want to forget, but the more I try, the more I fail. I have never pretended it didn't happen and have wanted to talk about it on several occasions but have often failed to utter the words "sexual abuse". I often feel faint at the thought that I was sexually abused during childhood – I cannot remember my exact age, but I think the first time it happened I must have been in the

third grade. The person who did it was somebody who meant a lot to me, my cousin. It started off as exhibitionism when he would come to our house to shower. He would take off his clothes and start touching himself in front of me whenever I went to the bathroom. It later escalated into sexual abuse. The first time it happened was my room, on my bed. While I was sleeping, I felt his breath and his hands touching me. I opened my eyes, and even though I kept telling myself I was dreaming, I wasn't. He started undressing and touching me, then he raped me. He zipped up his pants and left without saying a word. It happened again in the living room, in the bathroom at his house, in the bedroom, everywhere. He had me to himself for years. One day, he started sharing me with his neighbour. They lured me into his workshop (it's gone now, there's an apartment in its place, where he lives with his wife and three children). They offered me a glass of something they claimed was juice. It wasn't. I have no idea how they managed to get me drunk because I had never even tried a drop of alcohol until then. All I can remember is them unzipping their pants and raping me together. I felt used, dirty, taken advantage off, disgusting. It was the first time I thought life wasn't worth living. I don't know how I mustered the strength not to act on it, but I still hated myself. I thought it had ended. I was wrong. They kept doing it over and over again. I said nothing, I feared there was nobody I could turn to. When I threatened to tell

somebody, my cousin, who had been fixing up the old house and building an apartment for himself on the top floor, grabbed me by the neck and threatened me. If my grandmother hadn't walked by and slapped him, he would have surely killed me. I was terrified and continued to stay silent. Until I got pregnant. I knew I was pregnant and that I couldn't tell anybody. Luckily, I had somebody in my life who supported me and told me what to do. It wasn't too late, after a check-up, they prescribed an abortion pill. I remember feeling dizzy and vomiting afterwards, I started bleeding. At home, I came up with a million excuses to hide what was happening. After every rape, I became more closed off, less sociable, more bitter. I never forgave myself that the abuse had made me kill the innocent being that had been growing inside me. I mustered up the courage to tell my mother. It was too big of a shock for her, she denied it, insisted I was making it up, and finally burst into tears as I comforted her. I don't know if my father knew or not. I never thought about it because my aunt and a few other people told us either me or my mother would get hurt if it ever got out. They wanted me to lay the blame on my father, said he had mistresses and that he was an alcoholic. Who wouldn't be, surrounded by such evil people – I understand him now, but why he chose to seek refuge in alcohol and violence instead of protecting me will always puzzle me; I still don't know the answer, I hope I will one day. Sometime after that,

he moved far away. During this time, the pressure was too much to handle and I attempted suicide. I still don't know how I beat "the devil"; they say it was because of my strong will to live. I tried to kill myself a few more times after that, before deciding I wanted to live. I took matters into my own hands and after a long, torturous road to recovery stopped feeling suicidal and self-harming. When my mother knew she was dying, she "banished" me; I still know and believe she did it because she knew I wouldn't make it in a small village and that I had been marked for the rest of my life. I went to see my father. If I'm honest, what I wanted was to "find the truth". I wanted to hear his side of the story, then move far away, to the US where I would continue my life and become successful. I had every opportunity but, like it or not, I met somebody at the gym I used to go to in between my two jobs. It was love at first sight. He was kind to me; I liked the fact that there was finally somebody who loved me for who I am. I had no idea my childhood was about to happen all over again. At the beginning of our relationship, he drank heavily. I don't think there was a day we would meet up without him being drunk. After I told him I didn't like it, he started drinking less, but never fully stopped. It wasn't long before he started abusing me; first psychologically (insults, taunts...), then physically, and when that wasn't enough, sexually.

I remember coming home af-

ter a difficult operation. He left me alone that day. The following day, he wanted to have sex. After I told him I couldn't, that night, he pinned me onto his bed by my injured hands, threatened me and pushed me onto the bed. Luckily, one of his relatives knocked on our bedroom door; I don't know if it was his sister or his parents. He left me go and nothing happened. I thought the worst was behind me, but he cornered me again the following day and sexually assaulted me. It happened a few more times. I kept spiraling deeper and deeper into darkness. I stopped resisting because he always ended up getting his way. I stayed quiet, hoping he'd be done soon so I could be left alone. The physical violence escalated as well. I was often bruised but said nothing out of fear of his wealthy family, and because I had nobody I could trust at that time. He started imposing limits on my social life as well. I could only rarely go out without him or alone (most of the time when he was at work), and I could rarely receive visits; when I did, he would be there, watching me threateningly. I didn't even want to think about telling anybody, not that I would actually do it. Later, when I started attending university in [redacted] and stayed there during the week, sometimes on weekends, he would often visit me under the guise of loving me, only to abuse me. He'd often verbally attack me over the phone and insult me, then come to [redacted] as if nothing had happened. When he wanted sex, we had to have sex. It didn't mat-



ter whether I enjoyed it or not, all that mattered was that he satisfied his needs. He would often check up on me at work. I worked for a large retailer. He would often check if I was at work, saying he needed to buy something that [redacted] didn't have. He always found an excuse and a justification for his actions. So did his parents. One time it was the neighbour's fault for him being in a bad mood, then it was work, then the full moon... After my mother died, he started pressuring me to have children. I didn't want to, but he started threatening to leave me, to tell everybody I was useless, to make sure I would never get a job... Because I couldn't get pregnant right away, he accused me of taking the pill, which I was (unbeknownst to him), to delay the pregnancy. He threw them in the garbage when he found them and continued with his "mission". We had to have sex whether I wanted to or not. I would come home from university and work incredibly exhausted, the only thing I wanted to do was sleep, but he would attack me anyway. After a while, I got pregnant. I'll admit I was happy, despite having second thoughts and worrying about how I was going to protect my child. I had to find a way. Although my daughter was conceived by force, I didn't hold it against her. Quite the contrary, I wanted to have her and assume all responsibility for her because a part of me secretly knew he wouldn't. His violence continued during my pregnancy; verbally, sexually, physically. He beat me up several times. I tried to get help but

was too afraid to speak out because they had me under their thumb. His family knew he beat me during my pregnancy but didn't want to act. All they did was tell me to call them if anything happened, and that they would handle it. They did, but by defending and protecting him, while leaving me and my unborn daughter in the hands of fate. I wanted to get an abortion, but I couldn't. I didn't want to kill the being that was growing inside me again. I couldn't, I wanted her, even though she had been conceived through violence. The abuse continued after her birth and became more frequent and more intensive. His parents knew about it but defended him. I think our neighbours knew as well, but nobody did anything. I was afraid of him hurting our daughter, so I shielded her with my body... He started telling me he felt like a paedophile next to her because she didn't have a willy. That's when alarm bells started going off in my head, but I stuck around for a while after that and protected my daughter by never leaving him alone with her. Until he beat me up again. That's when I knew I had to leave him forever, and I did.

*#metoo, January 2019*

# 137

The #MeToo movement is about abuses perpetrated by individuals in positions of power. They are driven by their sexual appetite that they use to abuse helpless victims. Because this is something that happens in everywhere, we don't really

care about Hollywood anymore, although that is where it all started, and we can only imagine what things are actually like over there.

Well, not me. I experienced it firsthand.

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We were four friends travelling across the US. Backpacking with a few ten dollars in our pockets. Students. On a budget. We'd stop in cheap inns only occasionally, mostly when we needed rest and access to basic hygiene. Otherwise we purposefully travelled with night buses, so we could sleep on the bus and be ready to adventure in a new city come daylight. Like true adventurers, we uncovered the true spirit of this great land day after day. We didn't shirk away from tourist sites, where everything seems forced, but we still preferred to live on the street surrounded by simple folk.

We enjoyed their authenticity.

That was how we managed to save up some money. Just enough to rent a respectable car. After that, we cruised on the long desert roads, from the West Coast to the interior. A while on Route 66, mostly on other, lesser-known roads that were no less picturesque. We stopped in Death Valley and a ghost town.

That was nothing compared to the nights.

Desert nights, lying on the hood of your car, sipping whiskey; deep in thought and looking out to a

sky filled with a myriad of different stars, recognizing the melody coming from the car underneath you, carried over by the cold desert wind... I wanna sleep with you in the desert tonight, with a million stars all around... That's the magical moment when emotions overwhelm you. But the radio knows no mercy. It keeps playing. Then it stops for a moment before you hear the first notes and the familiar melancholy voice crooning, On the dark desert highway, cool wind in my hair, warm smell of colitas, rising up through the air... And then? I don't know. I really don't know. Tears? Laughter? Self-discovery? A feeling of gratitude and deep humility?

Then came Las Vegas and after a few more adventures our friends and I had to go our separate ways. They were headed south, to Mexico, I was going back to the City of Angels. Farewell. I'll never forget that moment. We were standing in a dark parking lot behind the bus station, a few blocks away from the glittering neon lights. We shook hands and said goodbye (it all happened so quickly). Next thing I knew, they got in the car and slowly drove away, while I stood in the lot for a long time watching them go. I continued watching them even when they were nothing but a tiny speck on the horizon, against the backdrop of the setting sun. Then I sighed. I was alone.

All alone.

I got to Los Angeles after a long

journey during the night. Just tired enough to rent a bed in a shared room of the first youth hostel I found. In the following days, I saw the city from every angle.

Glamour and misery.

What else.

There were a few nightclubs on the Sunset Strip left on my list. The Viper Room; LA was still the mecca of music back then and playing the Viper Room meant guaranteed success; River Phoenix had died there, right outside, one night when he had gone to see the owner, Johnny Depp. And of course, the Whisky A-Go-Go. That club will always bear a connection to the rock legends of the nineties because it was there that our idols had their first gigs (and first got in touch with managers and record labels).

That night I (literally) ran into a screenwriter. Or maybe he ran into me?

I was standing on a street, the house numbers of which went first up into the hundreds, then thousands, looking at the piece of paper with the address of where I was going. I realized I wouldn't be able to make it without taking a bus, so I was consulting the bus map in my other hand. So, if I take this line to there, I can take this bus here and... Bam! We collided.

A middle-aged man and me. On the sidewalk outside a restaurant.

He was well over 40. Grey hair, parted in the middle, a big belly,

and a smile from ear to ear. We instantly started apologising to each other. When we realised that we were both OK, we laughed for a while, then started chatting. He wanted to know where I was from, what I did, things like that. Normal things you ask when you're talking to a stranger. I had already figured out that Americans were very friendly, so I replied without reservations. He invited me to join him at breakfast. I had no reason not to, so I accepted.

We stepped into the restaurant and continued our conversation.

He told me he was a screenwriter. He described his famous first film, the documentary [redacted] that received awards at several festivals. He told me about the other films he had also worked on. And how movies were made, what was involved in the process, that he was a member of the Academy, that he was good friends with president Clinton, and active in the Democratic Party etc.

He said all of this very calmly, like it was nothing special. Nothing about him seemed like he was boasting or making it up. On the other hand, why would he? What would he have to gain? He seemed to answer all my questions honestly. I slowly started to realize I had happened upon somebody incredibly influential in the film industry. Although I had never had any ambitions to make it in the industry, it was still an interesting encounter. So many people dream of meeting somebody like that, and I was enjoying

a sumptuous American breakfast in this restaurant. That's when I noticed quite a few girls glancing in our direction and talking about us.

Incredible!

What if it was all true?

I ate my plate of maple syrup pancakes and returned the girls' glances.

As we left the restaurant, I thought this would be a fun anecdote that I'd often think of.

Because he had time to spare, he offered to drive me where I needed to go. I accepted. I knew I was just as interesting to him as he was to me because, despite my age, I had had quite a few life experiences that he listened to with interest. On the way, he told me about a screenplay he was finishing up. Of course, it wasn't a lie. He was far too serious for it to have been a lie. And too unspectacular. He just told me about a plot point and how it would be resolved. That was it. Nothing special.

When we got to our destination, we continued chatting. All of a sudden, he asked me if I would like to try acting. I didn't have an answer prepared (but the question did shake me to my core), he said he was good at reading people. Then he asked me for a document that had my picture on it. I gave him my scuba diving ID. He held it out in front of him and started describing the physiognomy of my face. He was very convincing in describing why the camera would love me.

I nodded. Interesting, I said, before slowly getting out of the car. I needed some air; it was all too much. What exactly was happening? Me and cameras? Hollywood? WTF?

He noticed the confusion on my face and smiled. He gave me his card and invited me to stay with him, saying it was no big deal because he had a big house with a lot of guest rooms. He told me not to worry, that he was a very wealthy man, and not to be afraid because he wasn't expecting anything from me. All he wanted was to hang out with me and listen to my interesting anecdotes.

When we said goodbye, I was confused. If anybody had told me this crazy story, I'd probably make fun of them. And yet...

Yes, crazy! Totally crazy!

And it had happened to me of all people?!

I barely made it to the inside of the first night club and ordered a double whiskey; with Coca Cola and ice, of course, that's how rock stars drink it, isn't it? Then I numbly stared at the glaring display of whiskey bottles on the other side of the bar, watching my reflection in the mirror. Lost in thought. In my own world. Completely detached from reality. Slash himself could have been standing right next to me and I wouldn't have noticed. Maybe Motley Crue themselves were doing a sound check? They sure looked like them.

For the next few days, I tried to forget about the event. I couldn't. The seed had been sown. The seed of what? Hope? Doubt? Fear of having passed up an opportunity so many people dream of. Every day, buses come to LA packed with aspiring actors and actresses, and every single one of them would do anything it took if it would guarantee them even the tiniest hope of success. Here I was, with an open invitation. And I was still hesitant. Why was that? I went to the library to read up on the [redacted] film, and everything he had told me proved true. I looked him up as well. It was all true! I was relieved to find out that he hadn't lied about anything he said. I stared at his picture on the screen (the Internet was so slow and clunky back then) and read about his life.

This man wants me as his guest, and I'm... what? What's my excuse? Just a dumbass?

He sounded happy when I called. He picked me up the same day. On the way to his house, we stopped by the supermarket to buy groceries for dinner (he offered to cook), and cigarettes. A whole carton (ten packets) of Lucky Strikes. Like a true insider, he told me about the war between Luckies and Marlboro and regretted that it looked like the latter would come out on top. I agreed. At home he made dinner, which we ate on the deck. During dinner, he told me about the film industry, and about its fun part; the only part us mortals get to see. He talked some more about the script he had told me about the day be-

fore, about what types of roles I could play (!!!), and about the movie he was working on, of course. It was a normal, spontaneous conversation, with no sign of hyperbole.

I got to the guest room, buried myself in the soft covers and fell into a deep sleep. It was more luxury than I had seen in the past few months. It was heaven.

Next morning, he went to work, and I had the house to myself. There were thousands of films in the video library, he also had an Internet connection (!), fax machines and telephones, and the closets and shelves were filled with screenplays and other notebooks. The photographs of him and the Clintons hung on the walls, surrounded by various awards and prizes.

He was a character, for sure.

I walked around the estate and grabbed a bike from the garage. After putting on my helmet, I drove off towards the centre of Hollywood that I would soon be a part of, myself. Right? I walked around souvenir shops, weaved through the stars on the Walk of Fame and enjoyed the many hours of idleness until nightfall. *Dolce Far Niente*.

In the evening, we went out for dinner (everybody was staring at me again. Who knows, maybe they were trying to guess who the new star was?), then we went back the same way, past his house, all the way up to Griffith Planetarium at the top of a hill. I immediately recognized the spot where the iconic

Rebel Without a Cause was filmed. Surprisingly enough, there weren't a lot of tourists there that night, allowing me to really take in the majesticness of the place and the fantastic view of the city. We stopped by at a nice lady's house on the way back. After a brief conversation, she waved us off. He told me she was his neighbour. That much was obvious. And [redacted]'s mother.

Wow, can you believe it?

Then we got home.

That was when the inevitable happened...

He told me he was certain I could make it in the movie business. That I had a great face and a great accent that would allow me to play very specific roles, and that if all else failed, he would cast me in his upcoming movie etc.

Now, he would like to see my body because it was very important how the camera would see it.

?!?

That threw me off guard. The request might have been justified under the right conditions, under lighting, in the presence of experts, but not...

I said I understood. Before getting the chance to say anything else, he went to his room and called me in after a few minutes.

You don't mean... Does it really have to be like this?

The disappointment hit me like a

punch in the gut.

I don't know why (maybe a part of me still hoped it wouldn't be an indecent proposal) I went to the room. That's when I saw him.

He was sitting on the bed, his belly flopping over his stretched-out legs. He was propping himself up on a mountain of pillows with one hand and holding a wine glass with the other.

He was wearing nothing but underwear.

There was a strange type of saliva around his mouth. There was a different look in his eyes. Manic. Not even his smile was the same. What ever happened to Mr. [redacted]? Was he just an old pervert? I could see he was aroused because he was breathing heavily.

He beckoned for me to join him.

I'll admit I was taller than him and could easily have overpowered him, but the sight of him made me feel uncomfortable. I shook my head, disappointed, and looked at my feet. I sighed, went back to my room and quickly packed my things.

We ran into each other at the front gate.

He didn't apologise. Neither did I.

I asked him if I owed him anything. He said no.

I opened the door and almost walked out without a word before turning around and shaking his

hand. I owed him that much.

I thanked him for everything and walked off down the street. Where was that youth hostel again?

*#metoo, January 2019*

# 138

I was in 7th grade, so I must have been around 13. Our PE teacher was grading our sprints. When I made it to the finish line, he said, "Oh my, they're so bouncy." I felt very ashamed.

*#metoo, January 2019*

# 139

During our final years of primary school, the boys made use of every opportunity to "grope" the girls. Walking around the narrow hallways was very uncomfortable because of the constant fear that some hand was going to land on your butt. The worst part was that the girls that got groped most often were called "easy" by the others. They'd tell them they were "asking for it" and things like that, as if they wanted it to happen. The teachers, both male and female, seemed helpless (or was it indifferent?) to stop it. I don't remember them ever addressing it.

*#metoo, January 2019*

# 140

When I was in 7th grade, the boys I went to catechism with started groping the girls. They did it by standing in two rows at the exit of the church after class. If you wanted to get out, you had to go past

them. They were very aggressive; I was afraid. We would come up with various ways to get past them and avoid being touched a lot. We would wait for the chaplain, so we could go out with him; run and wave our hands to avoid theirs etc. Going to catechism started getting harder and harder. I was used to boys groping girls from school, but I had always felt safer there; more people, a higher probability of avoiding it, I don't know, it rarely happened to me, so I wasn't afraid, unlike here. The chaplain was completely unprepared and wasn't capable of dealing with it effectively. He was uncomfortable too. It got to the point where a classmate followed me on his bike almost to my house just so he could touch me. I had gotten on my bike – I lived in the next village, two kilometres away, and a lot of my journey home was through solitary pastures and fields – when one of my especially aggressive classmates started following me. He kept gesturing and telling me that he was going to grab my butt when he caught up with me. I sped up as much as I could when we were on the solitary portion of our journey and left him behind me. He kept laughing, trying to catch up, and gesturing to show me how he would grab me. I was terrified. I was afraid to think what would happen if he actually caught up with me. Luckily, he gave up halfway through and turned around. I didn't want to go to catechism the following week, and I told my mom in the morning that I didn't want to go anymore. She pressured me into

telling her what had happened, so I did. She promised she would come wait for me at the end of class, and she did. If I remember correctly, she said something to the boys as well. I felt protected, safe. I think she came to pick me up for a while. The groping stopped. Whenever I hear a man say it's just hormones and it's a normal part of growing up, I think about how little some people know about sexual violence and abuse.

*#metoo, January 2019*

## 141

When I was doing my internship, a patient wanted to rape me during a check-up. I was looking for the evaluations' folder in the closet, when he locked the door and started walking towards me with a disgusting smile on his face as he unbuckled his belt. I knew I wouldn't be able to make it to the door, so I lied and said I was busy but that I would come to see him in bed later. Luckily, he believed me, and I ran out and took a week of sick-leave because I was too afraid to go back. I never told anybody because I was afraid it would ruin my chances of getting a job.

*#metoo, February 2019*

## 142

I was around 10 years old. My stepfather and I were home alone. He was sitting at the table; I was standing beside him. Although I didn't really care to hear it and was too afraid to say anything, he started explaining where babies come from. The whole family knew how

aggressive he could be, so I was used to not being allowed to talk back.

His sexual education got increasingly stranger. He showed me his penis, gross, I thought it was awful, fat and ugly. Of course, I didn't dare tell him that. I had to take off my underwear and show him where my privates are. My stepfather always thought himself very intelligent, when in reality he was nothing but an emotionally immature asshole.

Whenever we were home alone, this escalated into him touching me, kissing me, rubbing on me, having sex. He would tell me I was more mature than my peers thanks to him because he had showed me how to do things that they knew nothing about. At that point, I didn't feel anything anymore, and I wasn't even capable of thinking about what was happening.

My mother worked, nights too, she made sure we didn't want for anything, she was exhausted. Now she tells me she never noticed anything. Where the hell were her eyes?

When I started university, I moved away and distanced myself from my family. I was sure that was enough for me to start a new life, which I did, but with the values I had known at home: callousness, alienation, fear, cockiness and a distorted perception of sex.

However, I was hardworking and diligent because that had always been very important in my house-



hold; we always ate at exactly the same time, our car was always clean, my grades were always good. That order and discipline has benefited me, I give off the appearance of being very put-together. I like going to the theatre too, because in the small town where we lived, my stepfather was a respected amateur actor. Then [redacted] from the association against sexual harassment told authorities not to hire him to play Santa anymore, ruining his annual fun. Thank you, [redacted], in the name of all the other children he'd habitually drool over. I recently found a picture of him kissing a three-year-old on the mouth. How sleazy.

I do hold it against my mother and half-brother, who, when as an adult I was finally able to tell them the truth, continued to uphold the façade of a family, while I battled with my traumas and their lack of understanding. It's often the same now that he's dead. My mother still berates me for not having gone to his funeral.

Now that my mother lives alone, I visit her almost every month. Even though we start off our meetings by digging up past grudges and insults, there are occasional moments of closeness. Last time I even cried, which was a big step. I have a feeling that my mother despises me being emotional.

My brother and I are strangers. This family was a toxic environment where affection and good interpersonal relationships couldn't develop. We lived in the same

apartment, but each of us was isolated, alone, and fighting to survive however they knew. My life is still often like that, even today.

*#metoo, February 2019*

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