

Mishka: Being safe is no simple or single decision or task

If you oversimplify my world you lose sight of my challenges and my capacities

When I turned 40, I realised there had been this pattern with the three fathers of my children. Vastly different looking but they all had these behaviours. But each one was worse than the last. They all became obsessed with me. They wouldn't let me go and I would be stuck. It's been a very strange life.



The obligation and ownership “*what I’ve done for you*” but it’s all been about control. All the men I have had in my life are like the same person. My dad was violent to my mum, they were only together three years and he hated my siblings. It started with my dad really. He wasn’t violent to me, but he was to mum and my sister. I didn’t see it because I was a baby. But my sister reckons I picked up on it, all babies do pick up on violence. My son picked up on it, from seeing me being...

I don’t really want a partner. I don’t think it’s the answer to my happiness, it never has been really. I’ve never found the right person, they’ve all been abusive. They end up wanting to own me for some reason. They get possessive and obsessed. I don’t know why it keeps happening.

I am a unique person with unique experiences

I was pretty young like 22 or 23 and I was living in Northern NSW, I had a daughter and my relationship with her dad was a bit abusive, but not to the level that came after. Living up North was fun, I was in a band, and we used to play in Coffs Harbour. I played the drums, I played for years. I was fiercely independent. I had my sister there, my mum would come up, I got to know people in the community and I was free. It was a really beautiful time; I’m still friends with those people.

I met him through friends who lived down the valley. He was living on one of those communes and I went and lived with him. He had this music studio and we used to play together and I was in a band with him. It was pretty cool; you think you’re bloody invincible in your twenties. But he had a bad temper, to this day this guy still blames me, still hates me really. He is a horrible, vindictive and bitter person.

The violence I experience is an affront to my dignity

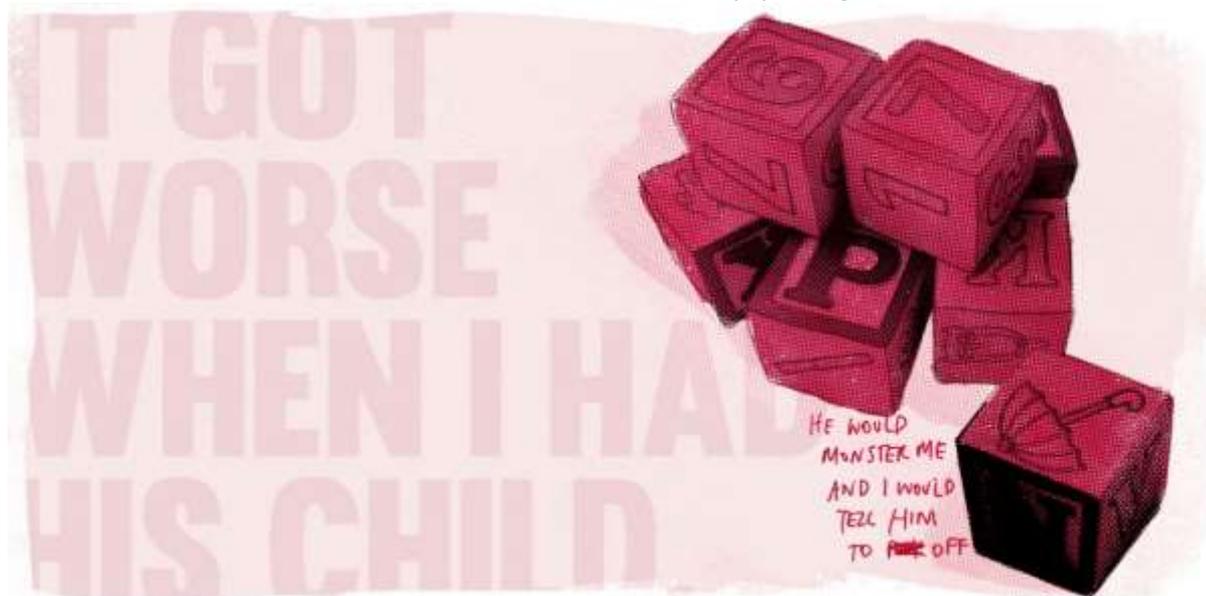
I was doing sex work when I met my second partner. I did it as a way to save up money. He knew that when I met him. Then I stopped doing it. The violence started quite early on. I’d be putting my daughter down to sleep at night and he’d get pissed off, not saying anything but be really pissed off. It’s weird he just started this dynamic. He thought I was withholding sex from him. He would be very, very put out. I’d feel really scared of him.

For the whole relationship he just kept at me about sex work, at me about it for years. “*You slut, you whore*” all that. I was like “*listen mate, grow up. If you can’t move on then fuck off*”.

It got worse when I had his child, he would monster me, and I would tell him to fuck off. When the abuse is psychological it's hard to put a finger on what the problem is. In the end I was like *"for fuck sake hit me"*. Because he was threatening to hit me all the time, I just wished he would, just to get it over with. He repulsed me, I was like *"what the hell do you want from me?"* At the start I thought there was a natural attraction, but in the end he would just torment me, say horrible horrible things. And then I would just want to leave. I did leave, but I would feel really scared of him, because he would threaten me. He did bash me in the head.

In the end, my sister gave me this bloody stupid advice about how to get away from him. I should've done something else though.

He is like a bloody Greek tragedy, really painful to experience and he just keeps going on and on and on. I didn't really know what the issues were even about in the end. It was the psychological violence.



Violence and coercive control limit my options

The guy I am with now is really possessive and just won't let me go, but he didn't start like that. I was grieving at the time we met; I had lost some people who were very close to me. I was just absolutely heart broken. I spiralled emotionally and was taking drugs to make things feel better. In that crazy chaos I had to move. I was behind in rent and fuck... he became my knight in shining armour. He had a bit of money. He offered to help me pack and he had a car. We got this place and moved in together with my son. He tries to mould himself to be what I want. *'I'll buy you a drum kit, and you can teach.'* He was taking care of me, but he wasn't really nurturing.

He's ex-army, a really strong guy. But there was something wrong, he could never sleep. He hadn't slept well in years. And every time he sleeps near me, he reckons he can sleep. He'll cry and say that I saved him.

I anticipate and respond to threats wherever I go

He thinks things have improved but he still projects this verbal abuse at me. I argue with him. I have given him way too many chances to change. But I'm done with it, I've exhausted myself. But he is relentless. *I've tried to leave him that many times.* I've left houses. I've fled and lost heaps of my stuff, I lost my drums. It was pretty heart breaking losing my instruments because it's what keeps me sane; it's my pulse and my passion.

One night he lured me to a hotel and held me captive for nine hours, he was on top of me terrorising me. But no one could hear anything because the place was sound proofed as hell and it was on the top floor. He was in my face all night, going on about how he is going to hurt me, my daughter and her boyfriend. My kids.

I couldn't move, I am like what the fuck am I going to do, so I just go completely submissive and completely into myself. Just to survive. He eventually fell asleep and I made a run for it.



Something that makes me safer in the short term might make me less safe in the future

He is still wanted by the police for that incident. He is now out of the state. If the cops get him he will probably get two years jail, max or maybe just one. What's that? Nothing. He gets out and he's worse, he wants revenge and then I have to disappear off the face of the planet right? So I am safer if he is not in jail, because he won't come back to NSW because he doesn't want to be arrested.

He keeps calling me leaving voice mails and texting me, saying all this shit, saying he will get physical. I have a hard drive just for him to save all the crazy shit he says.

I have strategies of resistance that uphold my dignity and keep me safe

People say change your number, but then I am a sitting duck. If I don't change my number then I know where he is. I have made a decision not to fully extract myself away from him because I don't want to aggravate the situation. I have just got this fucking fear of what he might do, if I cut him off. You know, keep your enemies close.

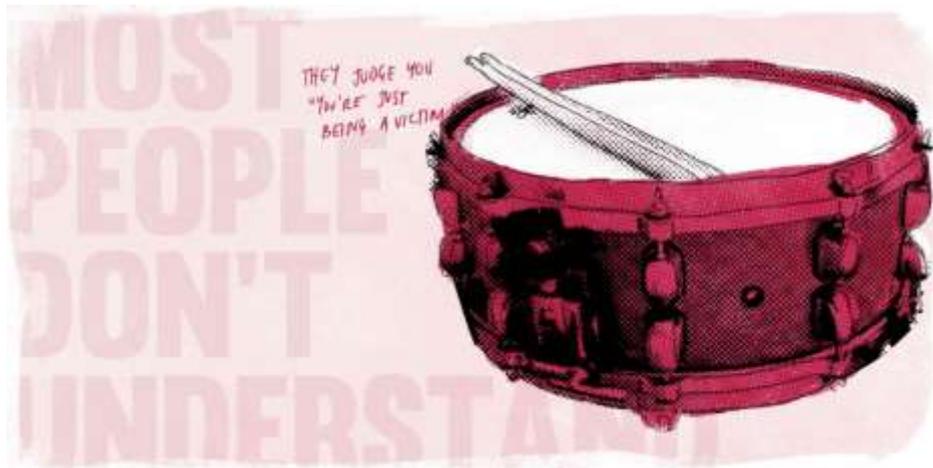
But I've got to move on, I can't be stuck like this forever, it's getting to me and wasting my life.

How people respond to me can cause immense harm

With some of my family it's a thing that I keep going back to this dude. It's been four years. But they don't understand because severing contact is like being on the edge and jumping. It's a safety thing. The distance and minimal contact feels safer than severing contact altogether. But it does my head in. What friends and family think is embarrassing. Most people don't understand. They judge you *'you're just being a victim.'*

So I just don't tell some people what's going on because I just end up getting judged and it's draining. It doesn't matter how open minded people are some people just don't understand unless they have lived experience.

The ones with lived experience get it, they completely get it. They just accept what you say, my daughter for example, I know she has thoughts but she is just accepting.



I am an active agent not a passive victim

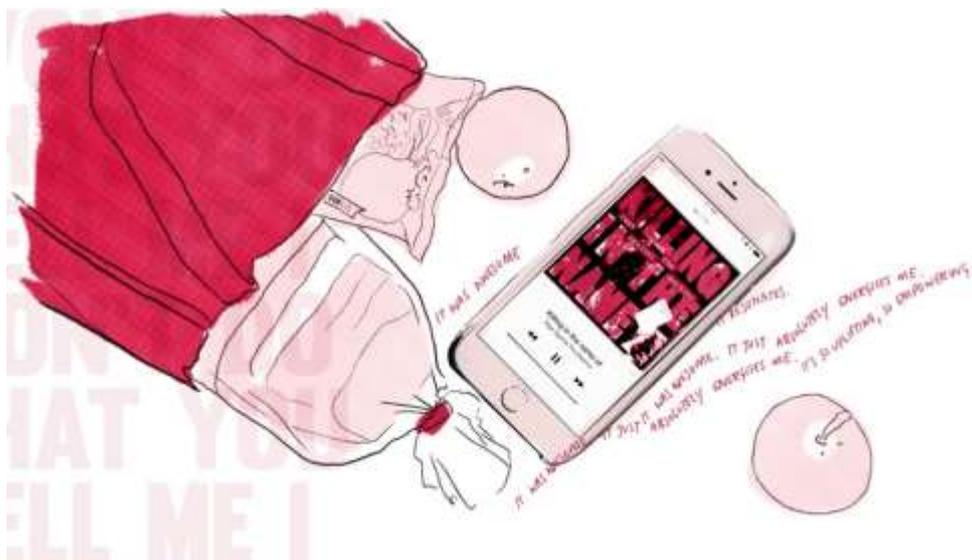
I have got three kids, two are grown up and one is 17 (he is nearly grown up). I have got my 30 year old daughter and her partner living with me at the moment. She's six months pregnant and trying to find a place.

I've been in abject poverty, trying to escape. It's tough and I have to do things out of desperation. I got done for stealing. It's so embarrassing, just stealing from a fucking supermarket. But food costs a lot. I'd rather pay for things but I can only afford so much and my boy eats heaps.

I am trying to do this course, so I can get some work. But I don't know if I would be any good at it, I also don't have a car and then there's police checks that I won't pass...

But life is happening, there are more possibilities and I'm trying to take small steps. The possibilities hold hope for me. Ultimately I would like to be a drum teacher because I love it.

Me and my boy went to see Rage Against The Machine. It was awesome, jumping up and down, doing my job to embarrass my son, but he got into it, it was really cool. During their encore they played that song "fuck you I won't do what you tell me". It was awesome. It just absolutely energises me. It's so uplifting, so empowering. It resonates.



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