

# A Narrative about PTSD, Abuse, and Confidentiality

Anonymous

“I know what he did to you,” my significant other’s boss said to me as I drove her to the airport. The dense island humidity weighed on my chest as my stomach twisted into a knot. She went on to regurgitate an inaccurate, exaggerated account of a traumatic week that I’d endured with him.

“I tried to fire him because of it,” she continued, “but my husband wouldn’t let me.” She went on to offer a glimpse into her experiences with abuse and trauma.

I clenched the steering wheel to keep my hands from trembling.

“Don’t tell anyone I told you any of this, but this is a small island, and people talk.”

I nodded and my mind raced back to an evening, several nights prior, when I saw my significant other’s boss dining with the one woman whom I’d confided in about that traumatic week... my counselor, the director of a women’s and children’s shelter, to whom this woman was planning to donate large amounts of money.

I was her sacrificial lamb, I thought to myself... my story was stolen from me, and twisted and turned to better serve her, at the expense of my safety and livelihood, for nothing more than the almighty dollar.

I thought about what would happen if he had been fired and we went back to solely surviving on my income again—how we would suffer from his self deprecation and all the pain and misdirected anger that comes with it, rather than appreciate the confidence he gains from doing what he does so well... what he was born and bred to do... what brings him much needed peace and clarity—captain a vessel through the waters he was raised upon.

The woman continued to berate him as my golf cart tumbled along the narrow cobblestone street. She spoke of triggers, which I couldn’t blame her for, and as I pursed my lips and nodded, her voice became nothing more than an annoying hum. The butterflies that twisted and turned in my stomach rose up my chest and tightened into a knot in the back of my throat that I kept swallowing to keep tears from welling in my eyes.

*We're almost there*, I kept telling myself through deep, shaky breaths, as the hum of her chatter continued.



Upon her departure I found a quiet place to allow the bullets that rattled my soul from the trigger that she had just pulled, settle in as years of trauma began to slowly kill my newly found sense of confidence.

Years of trauma caused by many men began to tease and taunt me until I was covered in a film of hatred and disgust, which made most sense to numb by any means possible. It was years of my sexuality being thrown in my face, over and over again, then being told that I didn't amount to anything... but the victim shaming, the betrayal from those who I thought cared the most... that was a harrowing plot twist to a story that grew heavier and heavier on my shoulders til it was too much weight to bear.

Til it was so heavy that I found myself crumbled on my bathroom floor in a fit of tears... I had risen out of my body and watched in horror as I slapped myself across the face over and over again, as hard as I could, til my face and my hand stung so much that I didn't care about anything else. I crawled into bed and let the residual tears blanket my face as I fell into a numb slumber.

It's been almost three weeks since those words were unconscionably spoken to me "*I know what he did to you.*" It's been almost three weeks, and they still resonate deep within. Sometimes it's a whisper that I can ignore with the help of a glass of wine or two, and sometimes it echoes with a vengeance, sending me into a tailspin of frustration and humiliation and agony, which is what led me to share this story—so that I can get it out of my body, so that I can get it out of my mind, so that I can hand the grief to another part of the universe and lay this situation to rest.

And as I do this, I'm left with one question to whomever thought that my story was theirs to tell... was it worth it?