

Restoring Faith

I am 37 years old; I grew up without a father. I never admitted how growing up without a father affected me until I became a father myself just recently. For many years I lived with feelings of guilt, shame and disbelieving in humanity and love. For many years, I used to drink my pain away and I became alcoholic. Alcohol addiction made me dropout from school, it almost made me enter prison two times due to fights under alcohol effect, and I lost my driving license because of alcohol addiction. Now, I am trying to put myself together, I have to admit, I am trying to do this only for my baby girl, who is now two months old. It is a hard journey, specially that I am not part of any public support, I am afraid to shame my wife if I declare publicly that I am alcoholic. Even though, sometimes I feel that everyone knows and talk about it, but not in front of my face. Now I am having more sober days because of my baby girl, I want to be present for her.

One of the moments that I like to recall, whenever I need to restore my faith in a humanity is a moment where I was standing meters away from “Ljubljanica” river in Ljubljana. I suddenly saw people running down the river, I saw people jumping in the river, strangers jumping in the river and others throwing a rob. When I looked closer, I saw a woman in the river, she is a woman who jumped intentionally in the river, she tried to kill herself. But strangers from the street rushed after her, without any fear, those people risked their lives to save the life of a stranger. I cry each time I remember this story. I think “maybe my father turned his back on me, yes maybe he abandoned me without even explaining why, but love and humanity are still existing, and I shall stay sober for love, humanity and most importantly for my wife and daughter” This is how I think in my good days.

I hope

I remember the moment when I learned the news that we obtained a residency in Slovenia and that we will travel there. It was after a lot of efforts and determination from our father who was afraid for our safety. At that moment, I was very happy that I would come to Europe. I thought when I came here everything would change for the better, but when I came, I realised that I was wrong. I realised that migration might give you safety but it strips you from many other things. I used to think that in Europe there is no racism, but on the contrary, there is a lot of racism and discrimination. Discrimination stripped me from a lot of my social rights, it stripped me from my dreams for professional and educational development.

I remember one time when I went to a work interview. Once I entered the interview, even before sitting down and even before the interviewer asked me about my name, she asked me: Are you going to remove the headscarf? When I told her no, she said to me, "You cannot work with us, you must remove it, if you do not remove it and adapt to the situation here and be like us, you will never get a job or study." The interview is over, you can get out from here and you can leave from this country."

I hope the world will change her view, I hope people can see me for who I am, I hope the world will not judge people based on labels and false news. Sometimes I look to myself in the mirror and I wonder what some people see? I hope they can give us a chance to see our goodness and to see us for who we really are.

A woman like her

“A woman like her with a woman like me” This is how I verbalize my journey with self-reflection. It was a rainy day, she sat on the other side of the table with her blue trouser, the trouser I said once that I like very much. I sometimes wonder what was her first impression about me. I even wonder why I never asked her this question before our story came to its end. I think that I was cheesy, even though I tried so hard not to be. On that rainy day, I heard her talking about one event. I saw it as a chance, I said “Oh what kind of event is it? I would love to attend, but I have to leave home, it is a pity I am not living in Ljubljana”. I had my fantasy that she may offer me to stay at her place. I was very surprised when my fantasy came true, yes, she just looked at me with a very sweet smile “If you have no place to stay, you can stay at my place”. It was like that moment when I kept imagining that I will check the university website and my grade will be 10, and yes it was. I felt so excited until my self-confident got shaken, with my typical inner dialogue “a woman like her with a woman like me?” does she even knows about me? She is out there fearing nothing, I am living in secrets, I have double lives since I ever remember”.

First night, I came to her lovely apartment, it was as magical and as cozy as I fantasized it. She had an arrogant and cute cat. I felt that the cat knows what is going on in my mind and he did not quite approve it. It was a moment of butterflies and excitement, she showed me her bed and told me that I can sleep there or on the couch. She told me that she does not mind to share her bed with me if I would feel more comfortable to sleep in a bed rather than on couch. I just smiled and said “Yes, I would love to share the bed with you, if you do not mind”. We kept talking from around 10 pm till morning, we watched movies we talked and chatted until we fall asleep. I would usually be open and kiss the woman I like as fast as I feel it, I have to say it was my self-confident that hindered me from doing so. I was feeling that I am not good enough as I am not out there like her. I just thought I am not good enough to be with such a woman. However, I kept finding excuses to sleep over at her place. I enjoyed the feelings looking to her lovely angelic smile, warm face and soft skin. At one night as I was so close to her, and getting closer to enjoy her soft breath as she talks, she asked me if she may kiss me, my heart beats became faster. She smiled as she gets me. I immediately got so close to her and I kissed her very passionately. It was a great feeling. It became a memory that I will keep to remember whenever I need a smile. Yes, a memory because a woman like her can be with a woman like me only in memories. Because the truth of the sun and the lies of the moon can align once or twice every few years in a form of a sweet-sour memories.

My moments of pride

My moments of pride are connected to the person who makes me happy and means the most to me in the world, he is my son. He is two and a half years old. He is playful, happy and full of energy. We first met in January 2018 when I heard his heartbeat on an ultrasound. It was love at first sight and I could hardly wait for it to take 9 months to meet him. It was the longest and most exhausting 9 months, but still the most beautiful and full of expectations. When I first got him in my arms in October 2018, it was the most beautiful and happiest day of my life. Before his birth, I was relaxed, carefree, full of energy, I loved going to parties, watching TV late at night or chatting and hanging out with friends, and laying in bed longer in the morning. With his birth, all that changed. Suddenly, I was given the greatest responsibility in the world. Caring for the child and his needs came first. There were no more parties, watching TV and hanging out late into the night, I woke up in the morning when he woke up. I also woke up at night and fed him. The relaxed girl full of energy became most exhausted and tired overnight. But that is what all moms are like. Tired, without energy, but still the happiest and the proudest of their little treasures.

I was most proud when he first uttered the word mom and smiled at me. It was Sunday and lunch time. I will never forget that. I think I shed a tear of happiness. The kitchen smelled of beef soup and fried steaks. We ate and as a thank you for lunch I got the most beautiful word in the world 'Mom'. From that moment on, I worked even harder for him, giving him even more attention and talking to him a lot. Of course, we mothers are always proud of our children. When they take the first steps, when they put together the first puzzle, when they hold a spoon in their hand for the first time and eat lunch on their own, when they for the first time put on a shoes on their own, and of course when they know how to say thank you, even for the smallest detail. However, things don't always go the way you might want. There come days when kids are fluent and looking for a lot more attention. Maybe something hurts them and you think about how you can help them. There come days when they get sick but you can't help it. When he was 4 months old, we landed in the hospital. There was nothing seriously bad, just some virus, but he had to receive infusions due to dehydration. I was very depressed and sad. You watch a child tied to an infusion and you can't help it. If it was possible, I would take all the pain upon myself without hesitation. When I fed him, I took him in my arms. At that moment, despite his exhaustion and pain, he smiled at me. It was the most beautiful but at the same time the saddest smile. However, I was very proud of him, as he probably thanked me with a smile for all the support and care and that I was by his side in those moments.

Am I living for myself?

For many people bag is an object, for me, a bag can be my life, an essential part of my identity and being. To Ljubljana 10 years ago I arrived with no people with nothing but just with one bag. My way to Ljubljana was not an actual thought, my way to Ljubljana was not an actual plan, my way to Ljubljana was an outcome of a moment of realization. An actual moment of discovering how becoming me can be as hurtful as a bullet. In my whiteness and white privilege, I did not experience war nor the sound of a terrifying bomb. I had a totally different experience. An experience of how being me, made me experience how words may hurt, how words may shatter the sense of safety, stability and belonging. How words can be as powerful as a bullet, with its amplified sound shattering a dream of a little child. A child who grew with the smell of a Farm.

My journey started in calm and peaceful village, seeing the colourful world through my mother and dad. I had my own doubts when family friends were asking if I am boy or a girl. For me I was me comfortable with my own skin, a little girl with a short hair. A little girl who enjoyed shorts more than skirts, soccer more than barbies and definitely enjoyed being the little girl she is out of social boxes.

As a child I never minded the words that questioned my being and existence, not even that time when a woman looked at me and said “you supposed to be born as a boy, you are a mistake of god”. I remember the echo of these words, tackling my deep thoughts, but as bright child surrounded by father’s and mother’s love, I just let them go. I remember that specific time staring at myself in the mirror, recalling this statement “You are a mistake of God”, I looked deep in my eyes, I looked close enough trying to reach for God, I learned that God is perfectionist how come it did a mistake? How come I am a mistake? Am I mistake? I laughed it away and moved on. As the years passed, I changed my outlook trying to fit in, trying to avoid the hurtful words. I got a boyfriend I drew on a smile surrounded by parent’s love, avoiding the rough words of people’s unjustified doubts. But life is a dream, and death is our wakeup call. The moment I lost my father was a stressful moment, a moment that I would never forget, it happened out of sudden stripping me from all of the illusions I surrounded myself with. For the first time I started to question the concept of life. Am I living for myself or for the people around? Who I am and what I want from my life? My essential nature spoke out for itself; I broke up with my boyfriend, I cut the tuft of my hair, the tuft that I felt that they were

tying me to boxes of whom I shall be and how shall I look. Tufts that were tying me to somewhere where I do not belong.

On the bench

Over the years he has put people above his own needs. He paid taxes he worked hard. Over the years he neglected his boundaries and he put everyone else above his own needs. Him on his bench, he strives for peace and self-dignity on a bench he built from his own savings. A small tiny bench something rare for his own self-neglecting being. On his bench he observed the waves of illegal migrants, he was still soft in his heart wishing all the best for all these poor illegal beings.

As he was crocheting on his bench one of the migrants came to set on his bench he looked at them and said “ this is my bench!” the migrant replied “you are being aggressive, just relax I am only sitting on the bench because I lost my only child on the way. I am in a huge pain; I need to rest”. The man on the bench remembered his old boss who kicked him out from his previous job with no justification. He remembered every time he was ordered to relax, when he cried, when he coughed, when he crocheted. The man on the bench was how he was and everyone told him that he has to set his own boundaries.

He screamed he yelled and he kicked the illegal migrant “Memo” out. Memo looked at his face and he immediately realized it is not about them, it is not about now. It is about years of feeling weak and now the man with the bench got the right moment to make a glory. A glory against an illegal migrant who just lost their child. The man on the bench told Memo “It is not about the bench; it is not about the fact that you are sitting on the bench! it is about the way you responded to my boundaries when I said “This is my bench”. Memo took a deep breath and smiled, OK, if this will make you feel better, then yes you are right and I am sorry. Memo, left forward, “We give our power away, if we try to prove others wrong”, Memo said this while smiling at me waving with their hand to me as I was hanging from the tree.

Memo, left! The man on the bench felt victory, finally he can brag about the one time when he fought for his boundaries against Memo. Memo, who wanted to use the loss of their child and their struggle with illegal migration to set on the bench and to disrespect the feelings of the man who finally managed to buy his own bench. I have to say the man on the bench enjoyed showing off about the one time when he put his own needs before others. He kept repeating to

people, you know I am progressive! It is not about the bench. It is about the way Memo responded to my feelings, asking me to relax when I told them clearly how I feel that this is my bench, this is my boundaries. I listened to the man on the bench saying this to his friend who used to and still telling him how to crochet and when. On a bench that he still pays taxes for, to a government that takes taxes only from people like him while leaving big corporate on!