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Life can be Beautiful, Life can be Hell

How Prison Life Changed My World

by Mel

Article appeared in Polare magazine: July 2011 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



... lately my life has become a little better than before.

My name is Mel. I am a male-to-female transgender in my mid thirties. I want to believe that life is beautiful, but as I become older I realise, more strongly each day, that it is not. Life is full of lies and pain.

Even now I relive my memories every day and I have nightmares every night.

Every morning I wake to my routine, coffee, breakfast, life. I follow a routine but I can't find the purpose of my routine. What is my reason to live? I ask myself this every day and I never find an answer.

When I was eighteen I lived in Osaka in Japan and worked in a trans club. They called us 'ogama' (transgenders). I learned how to use make-up, how to dance, how to drink and how to make men happy to spend their money on me. I learned the night life. I was young and I couldn't see how shallow and pointless it all was. I didn't know what my life could or should be.

I never miss those times. I can't handle that kind of existence any more, but at least in Osaka there were many places for us to go. In Sydney there is only one, the Taxi Club. Or I could mix with the straight guys and girls and pretend to be one of them. But I don't.

Part of the reason I stopped going out is that for the past two and a half years I have been in prison, a maximum security men's prison. It was a dreadful experience which has left wounds I do not think will ever heal.

In the male gaol I went through extra punishment, physically, mentally, emotionally. I didn't expect it to be easy but I didn't expect to be raped more than twenty times.

I didn't expect the physical as well as the sexual violence. I was terrified most of the time and only exhaustion brought me sleep.

I'm not asking for sympathy. I don't need sympathy. My ordeal was real, and it lasted for thirty months, day and night. Nobody could protect me and nobody can protect me from my memories.

Even now I relive my memories every day and I have nightmares every night.

I have been told that God gives us all a different size bowl of pain. Some people are lucky to have a small bowl. I think God must think me very strong to give me such a big one.

My life is not over. I will live every day and lately my life has become a little better than before. I will try to forget my life in prison and the people who sent me there.

But I will not forget anything until I have written my book about prison life and how it changed my world.

I will keep looking for work and hoping for a chance to live well.

And I still want to believe that life is beautiful.

Polare Magazine is published quarterly in Australia by The Gender Centre Inc, which is funded by the Department of Family & Community Services under the S.A.A.P. program and supported by the N.S.W. Health Department through the AIDS and Infectious Diseases Branch. Polare provides a forum for discussion and debate on gender issues. Unsolicited contributions are welcome, the editor reserves the right to edit such contributions without notification. Any submission which appears in Polare may be published on our internet site. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor, The Gender Centre Inc., the Department of Family & Community Services or the N.S.W. Department of Health.

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