

FLIPSIDE

The Association of Participating Service Users



RELATIONSHIPS

No. 44 Winter 2017

INSIDE

Articles and Stories:

Editorial

To have loved and lost it all

The spirit within

Two things happened: I got clean,
while the world changed

A farewell to Sam

Evidence

The enduring power

To be continued

Our house is now a home

Under the hammer

Art:

Front cover: Street art in Fitzroy

Page 9: Flying is falling by Cina
Loren

Page 18: by Bradfield & Russell

All other illustrations are
photographs of street art around
Melbourne taken by APSU.

Flipside No.44 Winter 2017

Concept, editing and layout: Edita
Proofreading: Daina and Nicki

All contents featured in Flipside are produced by alcohol and other drug consumers (service users and family members).

DISCLAIMER:

The views and opinions expressed within Flipside do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of APSU.

If you have any original articles, poems or artwork that you would like to see in Flipside you may submit them to:

apsu@sharc.org.au

or **APSU 140 Grange Road Carnegie VIC 3163**

phone: **(03) 9573 1776**

ABN: 18052525948

Editorial

Modernisation in the Western society has increasingly shifted the focus from the community to the individual. Increased acknowledgment of the value of the individual challenged the traditional norms, and helped spread the awareness of human rights and individual choice. As a result, many traditionally disenfranchised groups, such as homosexuals, women or non-whites, today enjoy a better social status than they did in the past, and that certainly is a good thing.

However, this process has also weakened the family and community relationships, and the boom of information technology has made this even more pronounced. For example, only a few decades ago people were engaging in lively conversations the day after a popular TV show would air. This shared experience was also creating shared cultural references that almost everyone could relate to, thus nurturing the everyday, organic social cohesion. Today this happens much less, as on-demand options, catering to our individual tastes, are taking over our leisure time. So we share less, and we consequently relate less.

Yet, there is a strong evidence that social connection and intimate relationships are essential for a happy and healthy life. The Harvard Study of Adult Development (www.adultdevelopmentstudy.org) has found that good close relationships, even more than money or social class, are what makes us happy and keeps us healthy, both mentally and physically.

Close relationships provide comfort when life hits hard, and if connections are lacking, one may turn to find that comfort elsewhere. For some, this means turning to alcohol and drugs. But just like social isolation plays a role in perpetuating drug addiction, drug addiction is likely to injure the existing relationships. The most severe damage, however, is inflicted to the relationship with the self, and that is where the healing needs to begin for a person to arrive at a stage where they can open their heart to others.

In this issue you will find stories about relationships with loved ones, with the community, with drugs and with the self. Just like relationships, they are diverse and messy, and just like relationships, they continue beyond these pages. We thank our contributors for sharing them.

Edita

To have loved and lost it all

I want to tell you about the greatest love affair I've ever had, the longest union. Eighteen years of endless companionship and excitement – mainly. Her name was Alcohol...

We met through a mutual friend. I was seventeen, so naturally a bit shy, very naïve and reserved. After a few encounters in neutral settings, we decided to make it public. We burst into the party scene with a bang! And, being an apprentice chef of a prolific St Kilda restaurant, my bosses and co-workers accepted her with open arms. "Here we are everyone! We're in love, and we're getting married."

Through the long, tedious shifts in the kitchen, all I could think about was her. I knew she was always there patiently waiting for me. Every time she hit my lips and slid down my throat, I'd quake with satisfaction and instantly feel the heat rush through my body. I was a loyal partner, despite the madness of my work schedule, singing in my band and hectic social life. That was, until, I got the nine-year itch...



I felt the union had gotten a bit stale and tiresome. Sometimes I woke feeling rather ill after yet another intense evening with Alcohol. I needed something, someone extra to excite me and relieve me from Alcohol's endless needs. I bumped into her by accident. Her name was Bulimia...

The first tryst I had with Bulimia was thrilling. I felt cleansed and alive. All the filth from work and the constant nagging from Alcohol went away when Bulimia was around. We did it anywhere; the shower, public toilets, alleyways. My sordid mistress. Alcohol knew I had another lover on the side, but she didn't seem to mind that much. To my surprise, she was still there for me when I woke from my groggy slumber - any hour, in any state.

Years passed; I cooked and partied away as per usual. Even in my job changes, house moves and periods on unemployment, I still always provided well for Alcohol. Always the best for my princess. And Bulimia, well, she was always easy to please. She never asked me for a thing other than my company.

All seemed to be fine until I encountered a rude awakening - a shock to the system. Her name was Mallory. Mallory Weis Tear. Such a prudish name, and boy did she spoil my fun! Mallory didn't like my happy 'arrangement' with Alcohol and Bulimia. She found it absurd, and put a quick halt to it. For those who don't know, Mallory Weis Tear is a condition – a lacerated oesophagus to be exact. Basically because of my affairs, I began to start vomiting blood...

Mallory put me into hospital on numerous occasions. I became a human pin cushion, attached to drips, due to the combined effect of Alcohol and Bulimia's tempting influence on me. It took me nearly a year after I first met Mallory that I started to understand where she was coming from. I had to change. My health was at great risk, and I couldn't work and party as hard as I used to. I still needed Alcohol to get me through my day, but Bulimia had lost her appeal.

It took an assault on me in the city one Sunday night after work to set the ball rolling. I was sticking up for Alcohol yet again amongst a group of acquaintances, when 'crack!', I got punched in my right eye. Miraculously, I was somehow able to board the tram home. I couldn't see out of my right eye the next morning. I iced the swelling down and returned to work on the Wednesday...

I'd been arguing with my boss for a few weeks. He didn't like me answering back to his ridiculous comments. I was tired and sore and sick of being spoken to like a child. I was the head chef and always did extra work, thinking my workplace was one big happy family. I got told I'd been demoted that day, and my hours had been cut back. With

expensive rent, debts and bills up to my ears, I felt the anger rise up inside me. I quit my job and went to the hospital. My gut instinct was right - I had a 5cm fracture in my right eye socket. That explained the endless stabbing pain in my temples and my inability to concentrate properly and memory problems.

I was already behind in my rent, and with no savings, as I was always employed as a casual worker, the inevitable happened. I got locked out of my apartment with all my belongings inside. I couldn't afford the \$2,000 to get my things back so I was literally left with the clothes on my back. All of this occurred because I put Alcohol first...

I had to leave my beloved cat with a friend whilst I figured out what to do. Another friend had taken me in, but tragically lost his life due to big session with his best mate – Heroin. It was then I crawled into my counselling centre and admitted myself into a withdrawal unit. I had fun there, cooking for everyone and telling jokes, then immediately went into a day rehabilitation program afterwards. I was fine at first, but Alcohol came back and I couldn't say no...

I decided to admit myself into another withdrawal unit in the New Year and then gave the day rehabilitation program another shot. I passed, got my certificate, but I cheated a little. I ran back to Alcohol once the program ended, and needed her more than ever. One day after she made me wildly disoriented, I ran back to my centre and pleaded to be put into another withdrawal unit. Within a week, I was admitted to Curran Place.

Violently ill on my first day at Curran Place, I decided I wanted to file for divorce. I'd had enough. I made sure I had a great exit plan when I left. Study. Use my lived experience to help and encourage others to fight their demons and believe in themselves without the 'aid' of a destructive partner. Hospitality is laying to rest in the past now, along with my failed marriage and useless affair. Although I hated Mallory at first it was her firm words that made me wake up. I'm still unemployed, still broke, I live off the generosity of charity organisations, but I've never felt so free and alive! My eyes scream of hope and conviction now. A gift you can't put a price on. I guess what I'm trying to say is I had to lose it all to finally learn how to fall in love with someone I had ignored for thirty-five years. Myself.

Branka



The spirit within

by Darren Goodall

The dormant dreams that dwell within
Our mortal portals do compel
To go beyond the bounds of skin
And from behind the outer shell
To wonder and wander way out
Making waves or smoothing friction
To please, placate, ponder or pout
Considering facts from fiction
Seeking spirits that spawned sublime
In these circles, cycles of life
Birth, rebirth, testaments to time
With peaceful moments or in strife
Meeting mirages of the mind
Figments of imagination
Wise words woven with love we find
Betrothal to inspiration
Soaring like the golden God sun
Pining and divining our ways,
Married to the moon's mystic fun
And bound to always light our days
That fire within does spark the dark
To keep alive the flames of youth
The burning desire we do hark
To glean and gleam the once uncouth
Whether from Earth, Venus or Mars
Just as we shine and our clock ticks
So too do the planets and stars
In this universal matrix.

Two things happened: I got clean, while the world changed

I don't care about relationships, honestly. I just don't care anymore about pretending or being nice to people. I will be polite, I'm not rude and I have an amicable approach to everyone. But don't expect me to 'get to know you'. Lol. Maybe what I think is that you should be trying to 'let' me know you. The truth is I just don't have time or patience for small talk, and I've heard it all.

I'm now a lot older than I was. In my 20s and 30s I chased the dragon, and used all manner of other supports when old white-light was in hiding. I wasted those years following a pipe dream, thinking it was all 'going somewhere' special. Waiting for my last hoorah.... And during that time I amassed for myself quite a reputation, and not one to boast about. But I didn't care as I thought I was invincible and would live forever.

Now, 15 years sober later, I'm a fool. I've seen what could have, should have and would have been; and I've grovelled over the tear stained floor over all that. But I am what I am and I simply can't be anything else. I've become too smart for my own good (again) but in another way. I'm now smart in a way that would have helped me had I had those smarts in my teens. And if not for social pecking orders and statuses, I would probably be in a good place right now. In these last years I rebuilt my body-health and vanquished all manner of dirty clouds from my mind; leaving me squeaky clean and happy. But, and this is a big one, I am still that person. I don't do those addict things anymore, but I am still her. Time and again I squeezed me out, but she bounced back elasticised.

And this is what separates me from others and why my relationships are few. Because unless you walked a road like mine and made it to somewhere like 'here'; I won't know you, and you'll never know me unless you get that.

Most of my old stomping mates didn't make it out, not fully. They skirt around the edges of their prisons and get drawn back in at the slightest hint of social terror. And I get that, I get what it takes to step out beyond those confines, out of a world that has been your jailor and your keeper through the years of change when normal-others are making names and building lives for themselves. A world where the prisoners are children in ageing bodies. Owned by something else, suppressed. In there we look for a friendly helpful face to lead us out, but too many of those, sadly, turn out to be hyenas and poisonous snakes. They offer you help only to leave you stranded when they grow tired of you. Or they turn on you and bare their teeth just when you begin to grow trust. I had to crawl out at the end of the day on my own, because putting faith in others was a two edged sword.

It was safer for me to know where I stood at all times rather than have the rug pulled out, and the only way to know that was to rely on me alone. Sometimes I pulled my own rug out, that's true. But I could never hide from me too long, and that was something that I could control. The choice always fell back on me, and I left no stone unturned on my quest to annihilate that plasma that held me gripped.

So yeah, I found myself, and ultimately did not disappoint but there were indeed many self-loathing disappointments along the way. And no, I don't have any real friend, and

maybe that's this world. I walk around Melbourne looking for glimpses of a city that stood in the 70s and 80s; and see that in a time warp here and there. But it's a new reality with words we never heard back then, like cyber and nano and more. People live in their heads and not their cities anymore and that's not okay, but it also is. Because it is what it is and I have 3 good sons, all grown and growing and they get it.

Cause they were there, and I brought them with me through it all. So we rebuild from here, we grow our line forward, and hope for a better future somewhere in time where people get it once more. I've been re-born into my own life and been given another chance to make good. I don't need others to do that, but good people definitely help.

V.R.



For me, this piece represents my relationship with myself and with coming to terms with my past and recognising the impacts of trauma, loss, grief, hurt, violence and abuse have had upon my life, myself, my heart, my mind, my body, my soul, my spirit and my relationships with my family, community and intimate relationships. Some of the cuts and fissures in this heart turn into trees and grow, whereas other cuts and fissures die out or lead nowhere. This piece represents how my experiences have made me who I am today, have given me wings to learn, grow and fly and have made me as strong as I am today, whilst also recognising I still have a long way to go in my own life long journey of healing. For me, this piece was about owning my histories and attempting to heal my relationship with myself and the disconnect stigma, discrimination and hate created within myself and within my relationship with myself, to set myself free from all that, and to not care what anyone else thinks of me, cos what I think of myself matters most.

Cina Loren

A farewell to Sam

Tomorrow I am meeting friends in King Lake where we will ride motorbikes to a place in the Black Spur to scatter the remains of my partner of 11 years, Sam. Sam was a member of the recovery community for over 20 years. His recovery was not easy, but he managed to clock up 12 years before dying of liver cancer on April 28. Sam was aged 61. Unfortunately liver cancer, related to years of living with Hep C, has taken the lives of many of our friends and family in the recovery community. Conversely, many people have also responded well to treatment and live healthy and full lives.

Sam left Lebanon with his family in the early 1970's to live in Australia; he was 11 years old at the time. Sam spoke about the difficulties of fitting in; unable to speak the language, the awkwardness of being pre-pubescent and dealing with bullying and racism. Sam started to learn karate so he could defend himself. Sam found himself on the fringe, and spoke of hanging out with older men who introduced him to the 'underworld' which led him into a life of crime and poly drug use. Sam spent time in Pentridge in the early 1980's. His biggest memory of that time was the cold, stiff blankets and watching your back. He said you had to 'assert yourself' from day one or your life would be hell.

In the 1990's an old school friend introduced him to recovery. Sam had found somewhere to belong. Those who knew Sam would agree that he stood out. He had a swagger, a look that not just anyone could pull off; gold chains and ruby rings. When I first met him, I found him to be cheeky, funny and kinda goofy looking. Snake skin boots..... he was almost a caricature; but he was genuine.



Sam was semi illiterate but he learnt to use a computer at 52 years of age, enrolled in Tafe and achieved a Diploma in AOD and Mental Health. Sam worked in the field of AOD for 11 years. Sam was a mentor and friend to many. His funeral was held in Castlemaine, our home for the last 3 months. Over 160 people attended. The day was filled with people telling me how much Sam had helped them with their own recovery; this is not to say the man was perfect....like so many of us, he struggled with his demons. He shared the good and the bad, he shared his all.

I read this short poem at his funeral as Sam loved pomegranates:

*And what is the purpose
of the pomegranate
if not to give ruby seeds;
it's beauty being in sacrifice*

Emma

The evidence

I remember. I would have been 14 or 15. I'd been robbing a few homes this day. I was in this old person's home. I looked in the bathroom cabinet and it was full of prescription medications. Bottles and bottles of them. I took them back home with me. Where I rented a room off these old junkies. They were in their 40's. They liked having me around. I was resourceful.

In my room, I tipped all these pills out on my bed and swirled them all around, together, with my fingertips. Then I scooped up a handful. Maybe 30 pills. Too many for one mouthful. I washed them down with whatever alcohol was my flavour of the month back then. I think VB. I had already injected myself with speed a couple times that day.

Next I remember lying in the middle of New St in Ringwood. It's night. I can't move. I'm paralysed. I'm calling out for help, but I'm in a big fish tank. Somehow it's electrified. My voice keeps bouncing and echoing back to me with this strange electronic quality. Like interference on a digital TV. Although they didn't have them back then.

I remember my Dad in a panic. Driving me to hospital. So fast all the fluorescent trees were bending and leaning towards us. The nurse trying to calm me as I warned her of all the dangers approaching from the ceiling.

I remember the fear.

I remember those old junkies teaching me how to mull up and inject prolodone because heroin wasn't as readily available in the late 80's as it is now.

I remember knowing, without a doubt, that no one could ever help me. No one would ever understand. Not my family. Not my friends. Not the cops or courts. Not the counsellors or shrinks they sent me to.



I remember knowing I was completely alone. Me against the world.

I remember the rage. No one wanted to fight me. Not because I was a good fighter, but because if I did beat you I'd stomp on your head. Jumping. Both feet. Trying to mash you into the ground....or worse. A fury that scared me.

I remember the guilt. Stealing from my family. From my partners. From everyone.

I remember thinking 'Shit, I'm going to lose my son'.

I remember the boy's homes and prisons. The hopelessness and despair. Crowded so close in a cell. One fit, many men, and some bupe spat from a mouth.

I remember telling myself. 'You're the strongest the toughest the meanest. They can't break you. In fact, you dare them to try. You will survive. You will overcome'

I remember telling them 'It's ok. I'm fine. There's NOTHING wrong.'

I remember smiling to convince them. Diverting. Changing the subject.

I remember feeling I must surely implode or explode before I let anyone see.

I remember thinking 'What the fuck's wrong with you. Can't you fucking see what's happening here? Do I really have to tell you... because I can't. I don't know how'.

I remember sitting in solitary in Barwon prison. Being told of a death. The only person that maybe knew me. So completely alone now...

I remember the ambos. The emergency rooms. They were in on it too. Can't they just let me die? Don't they know my heart is broken? Stop trying to fuckin save me. Why does EVERYONE keep fucking with me? Mind your business cunts and I'll mind mine.

I remember not knowing where I'd live. How I'd get on. But, knowing I'd find a way. I always found a way... until I couldn't find a way.

I remember overdosing in the car with my son in the back. He was 3 years old. And thinking, it's ok. No harm done.

I remember being told I have Hep C. No big surprise. Being surprised I don't have HIV.

I remember the "dentists" in jail. "We can't fill that". Ripping my teeth from my head.

I remember the look of hurt, desperation, helplessness on the faces of my parents. Seeing them physically age and bend under the strain.

I remember spilling the mix on the floor in public toilets. Dropping a filter in it and sucking it back up. Fishing fits out of disposal containers.

I remember the dirty hits. Writhing on the floor. Vomiting. Someone with a jackhammer inside my skull. Feeling comfortable like that. As if this is what I deserve.

I remember knowing I should just kill myself, but not being able.



I remember coming to NA. Almost 39 now. Finding out, with relief, I was wrong. About everything. Everything. There was no conspiracy. Everything wasn't everyone else's fault. My problems are my doing! And an answer to why. "Because you're an addict" Fuckin so simple. Blew me away!!

I remember making a commitment. To me. One that I'll keep. I'll take the freedom you offer. I'll share it too. Made sense to me.

Now I look at my life. The stuff I just wrote. I don't know that mother fucker. I know he's not dead, but I've left him behind. He still tries to follow. To tag along. So I keep moving to outpace him. My friends in the fellowship run interference. Block his way. Keep him distant when my pace slows. I'm not going back for him. I know he'll kill me.

For the first time since I was 14. I have no court cases pending. No parole. No suspended sentences. No court orders of any kind. No fines. I got off my P plates for the first time the other day, I'm 41. No one is chasing me for money. My accommodation is stable. My bills are payed. I have relationships not built on lies and deceit. I work and take responsibility for my life..... I like this.

These things are just a side effect of what happens inside me when I try my best to live our program of recovery. I wouldn't trade my life for anyone else's. I feel....like....free or something.

To simply say I'm grateful means fuck all. So if you watch, you'll see me doing service and giving back. And, if you don't watch I'll still be doing it. There's no way I can give as much as I've been given, but I'll make an attempt.

Now it's new memories. Of meetings and second halves. NA members packing out court rooms to support me. Stacks of references written by NA members.

Learning to snowboard with NA members. Trying to surf with members. Jumping out of a plane. Travelling overseas. Speaking at an NA convention in Nepal. Members there welcoming me like family.

Members telling me not to sell myself short. Members keeping it simple and calming my mind when life feels overwhelming. My sponsor telling me not to do anything else I'll have to put in my 4th. Asking me "what kind of person do you want to be?" Members taking me up on my offer "call me anytime". 3 a.m. phone calls from those struggling. The esteem built through knowing I helped someone. Days spent with my sponsor going through steps. Days spent with my sponsees going through steps. The hugs afterwards. The constant, knowing no matter what life deals me, NA meetings and members are there for me. Knowing this gives me courage and strength to live life on life's terms.

I have evidence of God in my life. I turned my will and my life over to God's care. Miracles have been happening every day since.



The enduring power

When I look back at my life, the bad choices and the inability to recognise the effects my behaviour was having on those around me, I often wonder why it is that those closest to me still hung in there, still continued to support me. I know that without it things would've been very different, it's been the strength of these relationships that has allowed me to keep fighting, a reminder that there are those that care for my well-being, even if I did not.

When I talk to people about my ongoing recovery from addiction and mental health issues, I often mention the enduring power of these key relationships. I contrast my fortunes to those who might not have had these relationships, as I see them as a major factor in why I'm still alive and not homeless or in jail. I don't mention that in a flippant way, it is a very real thing. I stole money, I sold all that I owned to buy illicit drugs, I lied to my employers, I lied to those closest to me, I entered into contracts I knew I couldn't keep and I willingly put myself at risk of disease and illness. I sacrificed my marriage, my relationship with my then young child and I thought about harming others in a way that would leave them and I permanently scarred in the hope that I could then take my own life.

Having done all this, spoken of all this to clinicians and those closest to me, these same key relationships remained. Some like my marriage didn't, but I am now friends with my ex-wife and we co-parent our child, discussing key issues about his wellbeing and we even go on holidays as a family, not often, but it happens much to the delight of our child. I would never have thought this possible even five years ago, but it's my new normal, and as much as others wonder how it is that a divorced couple can be friends, I can't see why it is that others in similar circumstances can't just find a way to get along for the sake of their children.

I've realised for some time that it's been this ability to hold onto key relationships that has kept me well. Now it's not that all the relationships I had were positive influences in my overall recovery. Some have been destructive and frustrating in that I've felt like I've had to justify my illness and endlessly explain why it is that I can't 'just get over it all'. It's not that all my family and friends were incredible at giving advice, or that they gave me large sums of money, free shelter or infinite patience. It is more that they engaged me in conversation about what I wanted in life, they reminded me of my strengths and skills and they showed me that love and compassion towards yourself are more important than any one type of therapy one might undertake. I can't say though which relationship in particular has been the most positive or useful, as each has had a different impact upon my ongoing recovery, but then again, it's not a contest.

I see my family, friends, support workers, peers and clinicians as all part of the one network. One where I'm not at the centre, but one where we are all after the same thing, our ongoing happiness and ability to live a life that gives ourselves and others value and meaning. I think it's this which should be a central point to all our interactions with each other, more concern for each other's welfare and less concern with our material wealth.

Brendan

To be continued

8th August 2005

'I would be a bit careful if I was you how many guys have you had over since you have been with your boyfriend, 4 or 3, I can't remember oh well and you say I have no respect at least I respect myself' Text message from housemate when we were fighting.

My boyfriend read this off my phone as it comes up on the screen...

Adrenaline runs through my body, I feel sick to my stomach and yes this is a lesson I didn't properly learn the first time. I feel gutted. I had everything but I wanted it all... I put his feelings to the side whilst I was selfish. I can't believe I knew all along this would happen, even fighting all this time against myself, against the truth, against the inevitable outcome. I feel so overwhelmed and terribly alone. I haven't been honest to anyone, it's been lie after lie. I have hurt the gorgeous kind man in my life. My world is crushed. He thinks ill of me, I think ill of myself. He had no idea I was a prostitute until now... He couldn't believe it when I told him. The last thing on his mind. I feel in my heart this was the first step to regaining my sanity knowing he has heard it from me and now there's no more risk of him hearing it from someone else. He still held me, touched me in bed throughout the night and listened to me cry. We are both crushed I could have saved all this pain by not getting involved, by not falling in love, But I wanted him, I pressured him, I lied and manipulated him to stay, to fall in love with me back, to feel for me, to help me. He has to make a decision if he chooses to forget and move on or to stay close and see if I change. We cuddled until the break of day and we cried together when he dropped me home. He says he'll never find another girl that holds him and touches him like I do. He says he doesn't want to trust another woman again. Last night I could almost hear his heart breaking as he wept.



In the moments leading up to this, it was easier to lie than to gain the courage to face the man I so care about and tell him I'm the person and woman he never wanted. I was a slut, a cheater, a liar... everything no one wanted. I knew all along he would have never been with me if he knew the horrible truth. I was with him on borrowed time. I would stare at his handsome looks and feel I was a traitor. I was with him knowing what I have done

and what I'm capable of. I have ripped him up. I have killed my fantasy future.

The division between my personal and professional life, maintaining another job, the difficulties of keeping a boyfriend, maintaining a family life, friendships... It's a schizophrenic existence. The thing is I spend a lot of my time lying to protect my loved ones... and myself. And they have to lie for me and to themselves for the same reasons.

I want to be honest about my profession but the only way I can do that is to write about it.

He decides he still wants to continue the relationship as long as I stop working. I agree. The bills pile up and the landlord gives me an ultimatum. I become more and more unhappy. We constantly fight because of the distrust and hurt. He punishes me over and over and throws the past back in my face when we fight. It twists me up psychologically. I think long and hard and decide the pain is unbearable for both of us. I love him, but I hate this. He can't support me financially and I slip more and more into debt. Talk after talk. We go round in circles. We go our own ways. I change my phone number and time passes.



Eventually I return back to working the rooms, this time half in Melbourne and half in Sydney, and life goes on. He moves on too, goes out with his friends, and gets a job. We cross paths again and it's such a relief to know he doesn't hate me. I would not be able to stand it if he hated me. Phone numbers are exchanged and the text messages start. Every few weeks or so he comes over to spend the night with me, we talk and laugh but we never talk about the elephant in the room.

Years pass and its late June in 2008. Things between us stay the same and we casually date other people. The connection and lust we share is what fuels the relationship but the mistrust and hurt are never too far away, always just under the surface.

Every day I expect my period to come but it doesn't... I'm so concerned I am over run by butterflies, I feel sick... And I think I am...

I drive to the shops to buy a test... I wait anxiously until the two lines appear. Pregnant! OMG! I pick up the phone and ask him to come over.

Indiana

Our house is now a home

I was drinking heavily and doing drugs by the time I was 18. My relationship with my family suffered immediately. I avoided as many family gatherings as possible. When I did go, I made excuses to leave as early as I could. Almost all of my 'friends' were also alcoholics and drug addicts. I thought that there was nothing wrong with me, because everyone I knew was doing the same thing. But I need to say that these were not 'friends', because when I stopped going to pub every night and decided to clean up my life, I have never heard from any of these people. My choice to walk away from that life was not what these people wanted to see.

I have had various intimate relationships during this time, always with someone who was like me. And, as any addict knows, these relationships do not last, and they are often abusive.

Twelve years ago, I met my husband at a New Year's Eve party. We were both drinking heavily, and, later that evening, also began to use drugs.

I was an alcoholic. Then one day I just decided I had had enough. My husband, by now a full-blown alcoholic, didn't like my decision. He resented me for stopping, and felt we could no longer have a good time. He continued to drink, and I discovered the types of drunk he could be. Sometimes happy, sometimes crying (the 'woe is me' act), and sometimes just down right mean. During this time we were still occasionally taking drugs, and I noticed that he drank less if we took more drugs. So, we became again all day, every day, addicts.

In the 12 years we have known each other, my husband has been to several detoxes and rehabs, but these only worked for a short period of time. Perhaps because of me, as I refused to attend treatment, and detoxed myself at home.

Arguments occurred daily in our house. One day, after a rehab appointment, he was a ripe mess, and when I asked how things went, hell took over. He was in a blackout and began to assault me. Things were flying around our house: me, photo frames and glass, suitcases (which I was trying to pack), and I threw my husband's hobby across the room in retaliation. I left immediately and went straight to the police station. I reported the assault, was reviewed by ambulance officers, and then went to stay with my mum.

He was picked up by the police, whilst smoking drugs. When they read my statement to him, he could not remember any of it happening. Several days later we had to go to court. Seeing the police officer before entering the court room, I felt pressured into having no further contact with my husband, getting a permanent restraining order and never speaking to him again.

I understood that he was in a blackout, and seeing him at the courthouse I could also tell how much pain he was in for doing something that he didn't remember. So I told the police that I would not go through with the decision to cut him from my life. I left, but my husband remained there for another 3 hours. He was told that he would be on a good behaviour bond, and would need to come back in six months.

He returned home to find me, and we began to talk. During those six months, my husband went to AA every day, sometimes twice a day. I knew how bad he felt and was trying his best to change.

Nineteen months later, after the birth of his grandsons, we decided to celebrate with a

drink and cigarettes. It didn't take long before we were both drinking again, which, of course, lead us back to drugs.

For 29 years, I was on this path of destruction. Finally getting off the merry-go-round only to find myself back on it, for another 12 months. It had only been in the last two years that I had said the words "I am an addict" at an NA meeting. And after those 12 months, both my husband and I decided we would do a detox.

My husband left his detox early. I was furious, so I left mine too. Staying clean, I told him that I wanted to enter the detox again, as I didn't find that I gained any tools to help me stay clean. Then I got pamphlets for something to do every day of the week to keep busy, and not stuck in our four walls, staring at each other, waiting to see who would crack first.

One of the things we did was to attend Recovery Church. This has given us back to each other. We talk. Our house is now a home. We have made friends who actually care about us, but most importantly, they don't judge us. I have just started part time work through the church, and they hired me knowing about my past. For that I am grateful.

MJR

Under the hammer

by Russell C.

Some say love is like a trip through the stars
I say that's for suckers. Let's go to Mars!
This is our secret just before we begin
Take hold of your stock 'cause I've a hell of a spin

I'll make your body twitch, shake and tremble
There'll be days to come you don't even remember
There'll be nights ahead where we glow in the dark
Through hellfire and back, squeezing out sparks

You're gonna want me so hard it'll make you weep
There'll be moments so tender we just curl up and sleep
Well you've been to Paris and you've been to Spain
Now it's me you want again and again

If the wolf's at the door you'll bring me his head
If you get the cash, we'll spend Winter in bed
I'll end your sorrows
There'll be no need to sigh
We'll be blood lovers till the day you die.



APSU believes that people who use alcohol and other drug treatment services are the reason the system exists; their needs, strengths and expertise should drive the system. APSU is run by service users for service users and has an active member base. We invite you to join us in having a say. APSU membership is free, confidential and open to anyone interested in voicing their opinions and ideas on the issues facing AOD service users today. We need your help to give us all a fair go. To become a member please fill out the form below and post to: 140 Grange Road, Carnegie VIC 3163 or fax to: 03 9572 3498 or go to: www.apsuonline.org.au to register online.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

By becoming a member of APSU you will:

- ◆ Receive the triannual APSU FLIPSIDE magazine
- ◆ Be sent information on how to become involved

I wish to become a member of APSU.

I am a: Service user Service provider Family member Other

How did you find out about APSU? _____

Language spoken at home: _____

Cultural identity: _____

Age: 16-25 25-35 36-45 46-65 over 65

Other issues: Physical disability Mental health Visual Hearing

Speech Acquired brain injury

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/Suburb: _____ Postcode: _____

Phone: _____ Mobile: _____

Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT: All personal details obtained by APSU will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes outlined above.

140 Grange Road, Carnegie VIC 3163
Ph: 03 9573 3236 Fax: 03 9572 3466
Email: apsu@share.org.au
www.apsuonline.org.au



APSU is a member of share



Self Help Addiction Resource Centre