

LSFS23 14.06.1989

Amanda

Q: I mean, maybe we could just start with a bit of background, like how long you've been in England, 'cos you're from [NAME OF COUNTRY].

A: Yeah, right, yeah. I've been here for a year and a half now. I came over November the year before last so, yeah, it's eighteen months and I've been working for a year.

Q: And what made you come?

A: Well, I was born in [THE UK], so my father's [REDACTED], so I'd always planned to come back to go to [THE UK]. So I started saving up years ago and I eventually made the break. I'm not quite sure what actually eventually made me do it. But I did. And I fell in love with London.

Q: What and didn't go back, or did you come and go back?

A: Yeah, I had been back for a month. I went back last September.

Q: Was that alright with your family?

A: Well, I actually got asked to go back. I was asked to go back by the police. It was for a court case. So they actually flew me back and the court case lasted for two weeks and there was a re-trial and then I had two weeks' holiday and then came back. It was a return ticket provided so there wasn't any question of going back to London. It was quite nice seeing my family.

Q: 'Cos how many are there in your family?

A: I'm the eldest of four. I've got a younger sister and two brothers. My sister's just started growing up. Quite a surprise - I've just had a letter to say that my brother's got a girlfriend and my sister's decided what career she wants to have and she's settled down, so that's quite nice.

Q: Do you think any of them will want to come over?

A: Perhaps my youngest brother. I think he's more likely to travel than the rest. He's a bit more adventurous. No, I can't see my sister ever travelling.

Q: And your parents don't want to come back here? If you were born in [THE UK], is that because they were living ...?

A: Yeah, they lived in [THE UK] for a few years. I went over to [NAME OF COUNTRY] when I was three, four. No, they're great travelers - they spend a lot of time going between [COUNTRIES] on working holidays. No, they'd never come to England to settle. Ever. They might come for a holiday one day.

Q: Do you miss them?

A: No. No. To be honest, no, I never ever miss them. I've actually, I can actually say that I've been homesick once - only one time have I been upset and that was last year. I'm not quite sure why. I've lived away from home since I was just past sixteen, so, and then I didn't see my parents for a couple of years.

Q: What were you doing then?

A: Well no, they'd gone to [NAME OF COUNTRY 2]. So, we've just lived apart really for the last four, five years.

Q: So it's nothing new.

A: It sounds really sad when you're saying it to someone but yeah, no, it's a close family in one way and yet in the other way we're very distant. We've always lived apart.

Q: Has that made you quite independent?

A: Yes, considering my parents told me at sixteen that it was time that I went and made a life for myself and my father told me that I should go to England, you know, make a great step. Because, I mean, he'd gone to [NAME OF COUNTRY] originally

at seventeen, so, I mean, he's into this pioneering stuff. He's a great traveler, so he's always pushed us children out, so that's good, in a way.

Q: And did you think you'd like England, London?

A: I had a totally false idea about what London was going to be like. I'd always wanted to settle in [THE UK]. That was actually my plan. I went up to [REDACTED], stayed there for six months and when it came to getting a job, it was just impossible. There was no way I could set up a career. So that's why I came to London. And I also had a boyfriend which was part of the reason. It's not now! But now I've got no regrets about living in London. I really like it.

Q: And you didn't regret leaving friends back in [NAME OF COUNTRY]?

A: Yeah, I miss a few close girlfriends and a couple of boyfriends or male friends. But when I went back and saw them, I mean, two of them were married, and I mean, they had their own lives, so I mean... They plan to come over to travel one day. I haven't got any ties at all in [NAME OF COUNTRY].

Q: So, have you made a lot of friends here?

A: Mostly... I've got a few close friends but they're mainly through work. That's actually how I've met most people. For the last year I actually lived with a guy in London and I found, after the year was up and everything was going wrong, that I'd cocooned myself and I hadn't met anyone which was totally the wrong thing to do. I became really dependent on him so I only knew his friends and his family. So I had to make a fresh start at the beginning of this year again. So, it's working out though.

Q: Was he someone you were having a relationship with?

A: I actually met him in my first week over here. I went to [COUNTRY] for six months and we were writing to each other and I came down to see him for a couple of weekends. And when I moved down to London, it was quite natural to start seeing him as a boyfriend. And then we lived together for a few months last year. That's actually what caused all the problems, living together.

Q: What, it was alright when you weren't living together?

A: Yeah, it was perfect until we started living together but we're both extremely difficult people so it was just constant fights. It's quite good now. I mean, we'll remain friends and still see each other occasionally but just know that we're not quite the right people for each other. I've learnt the hard way!

Q: So I suppose... you say you cocooned yourself a bit, then you weren't going out to meet people so much as you will be now?

A: No, it was quite sad really. Because I've always either lived by myself or lived away from my family, so it's the first time I've actually depended on anyone. 'Cos when I was in [COUNTRY] I travelled around quite a lot and I was travelling by myself and I met quite a few people. And I'd been through [CONTINENT] on the way over so I really don't know why I ever got into the situation where I was living for one person. It was really quite strange. I became very unhappy. The reason we actually broke up was because he went to [COUNTRY 2] for six weeks and when he came back I'd booked a holiday to Malta with a group of girlfriends - there was ten of us going - and he said that if I went that was that. I had no right to travel, and I explained to him that I had come over to travel and that there was no way I was not going to go on this holiday. He had just been on one. And he told me that I was to wait until he could go with me next year and I said I was very sorry, but I was going. And that happened to be like three days after he got back so I went. And when I came back there was a letter from the [NAME OF COUNTRY] police saying that I had to go to [NAME OF COUNTRY] for four weeks and that was that. I mean, he just completely... So anyway, he told me before I went to the court case, that if I went back to my past then we were finished. So, I mean, I just looked at him and I

said, "Oh well, thank you very much for your time. I'm just packing my bags." So that was that.

Q: Well it doesn't sound as though he's very sensitive to your needs at all.

A: No, I think it's because he's the kind of person that runs away from problems or whatever, and he couldn't accept the fact that I wanted to go back to [NAME OF COUNTRY] to have a rapist convicted. He didn't see that as being important. So... I mean, so we've never been able to... as soon as he said that to me, I stopped feeling close to him 'cos I really felt like he'd betrayed me. So ever since, I haven't discussed it with him. Oh well, not discussed the case with him but the trip to [NAME OF COUNTRY]. And when we see each other now it's very superficial but we do get on. I suppose once you've been close to someone you do, don't you?

Q: Hopefully, yes, otherwise... There must be something there.

A: No, he wasn't very sensitive.

Q: And, I mean, it sounded... well, you say in the questionnaire about that, that you were gang-raped which is presumably what the court case was all about.

A: Yeah. It took two years to get one.

Q: That must have been awful.

A: Yeah, awful's quite a ... quite a descriptive word, yes.

Q: Well, awful is...

A: Yeah, there's no...

Q: There is no word...

A: To describe it. Yes. So anyway, three were convicted out of eight, so I suppose that's quite good odds. I think I was lucky.

Q: How old were you then?

A: Nineteen. Just turned nineteen. There was actually another rape a week later 'cos [NAME OF COUNTRY] gang rapes are quite common, believe it or not. They happen a lot. And another one that was raped, she was raped by eighteen and she's still now in a mental hospital. So, I mean, I think that compared to her, 'cos it was only a week apart, it could have been two different gangs and me in her place. And she was rather in a state after they'd finished with her. She was half dead. So, yeah, I think I did quite well.

Q: But, I mean, it's just awful to see it in those terms too, that you do quite well to come... sort of, horrendous that that goes on at all.

A: Yes, well, it will always go on. That's the horrible thing. And after it actually happened, I only went to the Red Cross once. I didn't actually take any counselling. I did all my own counselling. And I used to actually make myself write about it a lot, and my theory is that there's a lot of good things that came out of it. One, I... well, for a start, it didn't happen to my baby sister. So, I mean, if you start looking at the positive things, there are a few positive things, and you begin to think of yourself as being a rape survivor as opposed to being a rape victim. That's how you actually get through it.

Q: But you had to do that on your own?

A: Well my parents lived in [NAME OF COUNTRY 2]. So my mother, for instance, she didn't know about it until a year later. I was living with [A RELATIVE] at the time and we became extremely close. She's a great lady. I actually phoned her from the police station, so she was there from day one. She went through all the court cases with me, even the last one. So, yeah, I suppose she was like my mother-figure through it all.

Q: And very supportive?

A: Yeah, we became very close. I mean, it was... it actually affected her. She was as upset as I was, I think, looking back on it. I mean, there were certain things she couldn't relate to but, I mean, she used to sit down and cry about as much as I did.

Q: Could you talk about it or was it something you just didn't want to think about?

A: Yeah, no, I was open about it right from the beginning. Mainly because I lived in an extremely small town, so everyone knew about it within a few days. And also, the police made the mistake of releasing a statement that said that the rape occurred at my address, so when your address is actually printed in the newspaper everyone knows it's you immediately, so it was common knowledge. In some ways it was quite good because I'd have my mother's friends or older women or girlfriends coming up and just hugging me in the street and saying, "I'm sorry to hear...". You certainly find out who your friends are. You actually learn quite a lot about people when things like that happen. I suppose it's the same as with a death or...

Q: Yes, because you have to confront certain things.

A: You certainly learn... It's very, very strange how men react. I mean, women immediately can relate to it and they feel sympathetic because, I mean, every woman is aware of rape as being a threat to her. Whereas men, I've actually had men, like an uncle for instance - when he found out he couldn't look at me for months afterwards. He wouldn't even look at me. Every time I spoke to him, he actually looked down, as if I was... It was sad because he couldn't face up to it, but it was like I was in disgrace in some way and it was really, really... But I actually felt pity for him. I wasn't insulted or hurt. I just was so sad that this poor man... I mean, he was what? Forty-five, a grown man who couldn't look at me because I'd been raped. I mean, I felt like going up and kicking him, to be honest. It was just so silly.

Q: Did you find a lot of difference in the way men and women did react?

A: Definitely. Both of my brothers when I told them... I took... all my family I actually told them each alone by myself... when I told my mother she was just absolutely in shock, she couldn't speak. And I got really hysterical 'cos I wanted some kind of reaction from her, so I actually, like I was physically shaking her, saying, 'For God's sake, say something', and she couldn't. My mother just could not speak at all. It took about an hour.

Q: She was paralysed probably.

A: She was. She was... I actually thought she'd had a stroke at one stage. She was just staring straight ahead, and it was really quite frightening. My little sister was only... she's four years younger, so fifteen when I told her so it didn't really sink in 'cos I think she's quite naive so at fifteen she wasn't really aware what sex was, let alone rape. Both my brothers got extremely angry. Just their first reaction was to stand up and say, "Who did it? I want to kill them". It was quite strange seeing your little brothers, I mean, ones that come up to your shoulder...

Q: How old were they?

A: Well, at the time BEN was sixteen, so he was quite tiny. His voice hadn't even broken and there he was, standing there, going, "Oh right, I'm going to kill them". I had to sit him down and he really was very protective. Quite strange how the men all got violent. Both my uncle and my father had the same reaction.

Q: What, that reaction?

A: Revenge, revenge. My father went to the last court-case and there was actually a stage in the court proceedings where he got up to yell and my mother had to actually, like, remove him from the courtroom because the actual guy that had raped me was on the stand. And they'd shown him a photograph of me and said, "Do you know this girl?", and he said, "Don't know". And they said, "Have you ever seen this girl before?", "Yeah, might have". And then they said, "Have you had... did you rape

this girl?", "No". "Did you have sex with this girl?", "Might have". "You have seen this girl then?", "Yeah". "Was it the day, night in question?", "Yeah, it might have been, or it might have been the weekend before or after". And then they said to him, "But you would remember this night because you were working on the bar", or some such thing, and he said, "Oh yeah, I might have had sex with her. I might have popped out for five minutes or so. She must have been passing through selling towels". And my father just... that's when he actually lit up. He couldn't believe that there was this guy being flippant about the rape. And he was actually the person who had masterminded the whole thing. He was like the president of the gang or... [REDACTED]. And a murderous look on my father's face was quite frightening. It was the first time I'd ever seen one.

Q: Yeah, 'cos that must have... Did that upset you or...?

A: When I heard him say that?

Q: The reactions of... I mean, such angry reactions or was it something that you wanted in a way?

A: Yeah, I couldn't understand how my father could get angry about it because I wasn't. It was really strange because after the first court case - it was a dual one where two got convicted together - it was a year after this happened, when they phoned through to say that they had been convicted my mother came running down the stairs and she was happy, she was like crying with laughter and said, "They've both been found guilty. They've got eight years." And she went to hug me and I stepped back and she stopped and she said, "Aren't you happy?", and I just said, "Why?". I was like numb, I was just totally numb. I mean, I'd been on Cortisan for three days so I wasn't exactly with it and I can remember walking upstairs and just sitting and staring out of a window. And both my aunt and my mum were hugging each other and skipping round laughing. They were really excited because these two people had been put in prison. And my mother said to me, "For God's sake, say something. Aren't you pleased?" And I turned round, and I just said, "I didn't want them to go to prison. I just wanted them to say sorry". 'Cos, I mean, the whole thing, I mean... I just wanted them to be sorry that they'd actually done it, not that they'd been caught, which is the whole thing about the legal system really, isn't it?

Q: Yeah, it punishes, it doesn't actually...

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: It doesn't actually present any sort of relationship to what they've done to you.

A: Well, it's just being caught out doing something naughty. It's not... I used to actually sit and wonder whether the people that had raped me ever, ever said to themselves, "Why did I do it?" or "I wonder what she's doing now", "I wonder what's happened to her life", instead of, you know, self-centred, "Oh God, I've been caught. How am I going to get out of this?"

Q: I saw a TV programme once, I think it was one of those American programmes probably, where they've had this experimental programme of confronting convicted people - usually who've done violent assaults or rape or something with the people they'd actually abused, sort of thing. And it was like they had to relate to them and actually talk about it and that was almost to, do you know what I mean? It actually worked in the sense that some of them were really overcome. They had to actually confront why they had done it and that this was a real person. Because a lot of them seemed to be otherwise able to remove it, do you know what I mean, by not seeing the person and then you can forget it or whatever?

A: Yeah.

Q: But actually having the, say, woman, man or whoever they'd bashed up, kind of raped or whatever there made it...

A: I always wanted the chance... there was... one of the men who was present at the rape, I thought right up until the moment he was actually going to help me. Because I'd spent all evening talking to this guy and he was quite friendly and he was actually, I think, the second or third person that raped me. I'm not quite sure, to be honest. And I had always wanted... Actually, when I knew he was first in prison, I made the mistake of asking the police whether I could go and see him and they couldn't relate to that at all. But I actually wanted to go and yell at him. I actually wanted to go and say, "Excuse me but why didn't you help me when you had the chance? And why the hell did you rape me, when up until the last moment you'd actually been trying to protect me from these people?" Because he was the only one there that wasn't subhuman, I mean, the others were all [REDACTED] and all horrible, you know, bearded horrible people. And he was... he had nothing to do with the gang and yet he'd got involved in a rape.

Q: Was he scared of them?

A: The actual... [REDACTED].

Q: Did you know any of them?

A: No, no. I was actually with a friend and he'd gone home, and I was going to leave and before I left I was raped.

Q: And no-one else was aware, or came to your aid or anything like that?

A: No. What actually happened was that we'd gone to a pub and then we'd gone on to a party and I still was with JACK - this friend who I'd gone out with in the evening, who's just like a neighbour. And we'd met up with this other guy. His name was RYAN which I found out later it wasn't his actual real name. And he was quite friendly. I mean, obviously JACK trusted him and he knew me quite well. So we all got in the car, the three of us, and went to a party together. And then I was going to give RYAN a lift home which wasn't ... it was like five miles away. And JACK disappeared at this party and left a note on my car saying that he'd gone home. So I was in the situation where this guy RYAN said, "Will you give me a lift?" So I said, "Alright then". I didn't realise that he actually was going back to the gang headquarters. He directed me to this town, and we parked outside this house and he said, "Would you like to come in for a drink?", so I did and we walked through this gate and into this house. It was a, like a gutted house. It was actually a gang headquarters. I got really, really, upset and he said, "No, it's alright, you're with me", and there was a few people who weren't in the gang and we started talking. And then he said, "Play one game of pool", so we played this game of pool, and then when I went to leave this gate was shut and three men grabbed me from behind and five hours later I escaped with no clothes on and rather worse for wear.

Q: Devastating.

A: Yes, well, I was rather naive, to say the least. I mean, walking into a gang headquarters! I mean, totally unaware. It was just a normal brick house from the outside. But, yes.

Q: But you don't have to be naive. In a way... it could happen to anyone. And you think, "It's alright. I'm in control", and you've got your car and you can sort of leave and...

A: Yeah, I had my own car and I wouldn't say I was streetwise, but, I mean, I've been living away from home for three years and, I mean, I didn't usually get into the situation where I was alone with a guy that I didn't know but, erm... it was platonic and he was... he was actually quite a nice guy. Even at the court-case my mother said, "I can't understand it. He looks such a harmless chap". And it turned out... it came into question whether he's actually taken me there deliberately as an initiation into the gang which... It's very complicated the kind of gang protocol they have in

[NAME OF COUNTRY]. It's actually a gang that's affiliated with the [REDACTED] who I've never ever heard of before that evening. But the police had, of course. I mean, I think... when they came to pick me up, I couldn't even tell them what the gang was. I'd forgotten their name. And all I had to say was where... what the area was, and they immediately knew who would be involved in the rape and they'd gone and picked up the rapists. I mean, there was like sixteen people at the gang headquarters or wherever they went and closed it all off and when I got to the police station, I mean, the drive was like ten minutes, they already had the photographs out.

Q: So they'd already all got photographs there, anyway.

A: Yes, lots of shots. But obviously I had a few problems identifying them 'cos they all look the same. They've all got black hair, black beards and black jackets and they all look extremely horrible. I could only identify four, two on paper and two from photographs. So... And then three of those have been convicted. The others they actually had to get through witness... eye-witness accounts.

Q: Did people actually come forward to give them?

A: Well, a guy in the gang and his girlfriend had seen the whole rape and they were actually asked to be witnesses. And then just before depositions they disappeared to [COUNTRY 2] to live. So although eight were charged, it all fell through and they could only get the three that I'd identified. One with name, 'cos I'd heard his name being said and two by photograph. It's still quite good odds, though, three out of eight, compared to some of the cases.

Q: Yes, where they either never come to court or they get off scot-free through something or other.

A: I actually... before I left [NAME OF COUNTRY] I actually set up a letter network. I was determined to meet other rape victims. And that was why I was disappointed. I went to Rape Crisis and asked them if they could put me in contact with another victim I could speak to and they didn't know one that they could let me talk to, even on the telephone. They said that it wasn't really a thing they could do. So I thought I'd do something about it myself. So I put an... wrote a letter to a women's problem page and they printed my letter and then asked for people to write to me. And I went to my postbox in town and opened it up and all these letters just fell out. I thought, "Oh no! What have I done?" So I went home and I just spent weeks writing to all these women. And it ended up just breaking my heart. It was so hard... One of the women... I was only the second person she had told in eight years. She'd been gang-raped at thirteen on her way home from school and had gone home and just carried on with her life as normal. And she got married and had two children and then one night had told her husband and he'd walked out on her. Or their marriage had fallen apart because she'd finally told someone and then started getting very upset about it and had to... and he couldn't... I presume the marriage had been going extremely badly because she said they'd had sexual problems so that's why she'd actually told him one night when they were in bed. And he'd actually accused her of being a liar at first and so I presume that's why the marriage broke up. And so, I was only the second person she had told. She still hadn't told her mother or her family or friends. It was just amazing.

Q: At thirteen.

A: At thirteen. Well, to be honest, looking at it, I mean, I can't see how a thirteen year old daughter could walk into a home and her parents and family not know. They must have been so ignorant or so unaware.

Q: Yeah, 'cos you'd be so kind of almost bashed up, wouldn't you?

A: Well, I don't know. Maybe a thirteen year old could cover it up, more so than a woman, because they wouldn't be so aware of the long-term effects. I presume if you just thought, "Oh, it was my fault", immediately and thought, "That will...", I mean, at thirteen you wouldn't really realise the effect it was going to have on you. So if you decided to cover it up and then buried it.

Q: And at that age you tend to think things are your fault so that, you know, it's something you've done wrong. Maybe, I don't know, did you ever, not feel it was your fault, but...

A: No! No!

Q: But there's a sort of... I don't know, I think there's often a guilt attached to things that comes from nowhere almost sometimes.

A: No, for some reason, I never ever let myself get... I never actually got angry about it though. I mean, I still don't really get angry. I hope that doesn't ever happen. I can't see it.

Q: I think it might have done by now.

A: I mean, there's a few times when I've actually like hit my head against a wall or screamed about it but I've never actually hated the rapists. I don't think very much of them, obviously, but I've never... I can't make myself feel hatred for them. I feel sorry for them. They're subhuman.

Q: Did it affect the way that you saw men after that?

A: It happened in MONTH and the first time I actually could be in a room with a lot of people was a Christmas party, so that was just like December. It was the first time I could be in a social situation with people drinking and laughing and talking loud around me because otherwise I'd just... So I remained quite quiet but I had exams because I was studying at night as well as working in the day, so I mean I kept to myself anyway. But no, it was only four months later that I slept with someone. Yeah, I have generally lost my respect for men, yes, definitely.

Q: And trust?

A: Yeah, well, definitely trust. It would have been at least a year before I was in a situation when I was alone... properly alone when there was no-one on the other side of a wall or within yelling distance, alone with a man, and even now when I'm alone with men, I sometimes... I actually... the thought occurs. I mean, I don't actually get scared, but I just become aware, or I just think, "I'm in a situation where I could be raped". That's quite sad when you're in a situation with someone that you do know and trust. And then you get upset because you've had the thoughts.

Q: Yes, because you must become so self-aware because of what has happened.

A: Well, the thing is, if I haven't thought about it for a long time, I'll actually be walking down the street and something will trigger it - I don't know, I'll see a guy that looks like a [REDACTED], for instance. And I'll cringe and then I'll think, "Oh, I hadn't thought about that for months". So I am, I'm constantly aware of it, it's just like... And I still don't laugh at rape jokes. I get extremely angry and stomp out of rooms.

Q: I'm not surprised.

A: My greatest accomplishment to date is being able to sit through "The Accused".

Q: Yes, I was going to say you must have identified with her.

A: Yeah, I thought that film was a little bit too real. The thought that when I actually... I went to see it by myself... There was a man sitting about three seats down and I'll swear he was enjoying it to this day. Maybe it's just because... I dunno... I was just totally numb after watching it. I didn't get upset. I just was surprised that they could have filmed it or that a woman could have acted it or that men could have acted it.

Q: Yeah, you kind of expect them to get upset acting it.

A: Yeah, well, I'd actually read a lot on the movie before I decided to go. Yeah, it took them days and days to shoot the rape sequence and the men that were actually acting it did break down and cry and some of the camera crew walked off the set and refused to film because it was too much. And Jodie Foster claimed that she was extremely depressed afterwards and she actually claims that she went through some of the feelings that a rape victim gets. You know, the depression and...

Q: Was it a deliberate decision to go on your own?

A: No, I actually asked a friend to go and at the last minute she said no and I thought, "I'll do it by myself". I should, you know, I thought, "You're twenty-one years old. You don't need someone to go and hold your hand to the movie theatre."

Q: Oh, I don't know. When it's a film like that, I think you do.

A: No, actually I think I was quite glad that I went by myself because afterwards I didn't want to say... I wouldn't have been in the mood to, you know, talk at all. I was just totally numb. I can remember going home and just... going home in a state of shock, just about - a very strange feeling.

Q: And was that when you were living with the other guy?

A: No, no. This was just when I was flatting, just before, before I moved in here. It was the first time I've been able to watch or see a rape scene without getting upset. I think it was because there was no element of surprise in it because I knew... I'd read so much about the movie that I knew when it was actually going to happen. And because you'd all been through the court-case you had a pretty fair idea. But in actual films on television where there's any kind of violent sex and it just happens all of a sudden, there's a few movies - what's that film? "Nine and a Half Weeks". Have you seen the movie?

Q: No, I haven't.

A: There's a part where she walks into the house and he just like picks her up and throws her on a table and I can remember watching it with a friend and I actually like nipped out of my chair and went running down the hall. And I was just hysterical. And she came out and she said, you know, "Do you want me to turn the movie off?", and I said, "No, it's alright, I'll just stay out here", and she said, "What's the matter?", I explained, I said, "I just can't watch that". And she said, "Oh, I think it's really good. It's really a nice movie", and I was saying, "Well I'm afraid I don't", you know. I said, "Can you tell me when that sequence is over, please". So she went back and she yelled out when it had finished. It was quite a strange movie. I didn't like it at all.

Q: No, I've heard that it's... well, I've only heard that it's... that I probably wouldn't have enjoyed it.

A: Yeah, no, I actually had read the book before and the book was fantastic. It was a very, very sad story and the movie makes it all too... like some erotic... makes it... I mean, so many women of my own age have said, "Oh, it's a really fantastic movie. I'd love to have a man like that". But if you actually read the book, he's actually terrifying. It actually gets to the stage where he's clothing this woman - it's a true story - he's clothing this woman and everything. He's got total control over her body. He put in her Tampax. Every possible thing you do with your body, he was doing with this woman. When she got home from work he'd actually handcuff her to the coffee-table and beat her and humiliate her and... and then I've got all these women saying to me it was a great film. You know?

Q: No, I can't understand that.

A: The film makes it seem to be sexy to have this guy beating you up and making you stomp round in stilettos. I mean, it's really...

Q: It's hardly sexy.

A: It's really evil.

Q: It's only sexy in a very male stereotype way.

A: Yeah. I think anyone that's read the book is really disgusted at the way that they've actually made it on film. 'Cos they've got this extremely goodlooking guy acting the part and he just kind of gives all these moody looks all the time when really he's a psychopath. I mean, everyone thinks he's so lovely. Very sad. I can't quite understand why women enjoy films like that.

Q: Before it all happened, had you had sort of various boyfriends and...?

A: Yeah. I'd had a normal sex life, I suppose. I hadn't had any long-term relationships. Just kind of lots of flings. I don't know why - I've had lots of bad experiences with men. I don't know how I... what I do to deserve it. I've never been in an attempted rape situation before, but I've had quite a bit of sexual harassment and all sorts of things. I've had a case where this hitchhiker would not get out of my car and every time I put the car into gear he would take it out of gear and he was just going to stop here and all kinds of weird and wonderful things. So I mean I... and having someone in your car is awfully frightening. So I ended up pulling into a driveway and saying it was a friend's house and actually leaping out of the car, taking the car keys and running and hiding under a bush and waiting for half an hour while he sat in the car and then when he disappeared.

Q: Was that in [NAME OF COUNTRY]?

A: Yeah. In [NAME OF COUNTRY], yet again. Awful place. Yes, so I've had a few small scares but nothing major.

Q: And had you had nice experiences with sex?

A: No. No. It was actually quite sad. Only since. No, beforehand it was all kind of fumbling in the back of cars, I suppose. I'd only had one proper boyfriend who I'd seen on and off for a year in between travelling around. But no, I was rather scared of sex actually, because I didn't actually have sex until I was seventeen. I wasn't very... I didn't... A lot of my friends were quite promiscuous, and they actually put me off sex. I'd hear all these horror stories, about what they got up to, you know - back-seats of cars. I would just think it was the most terrible thing I'd heard of. So I decided to wait until I met the right person.

Q: And was it... was it the right person?

A: Well actually, I must admit, the first time I actually slept with someone was an absolute nightmare, but the second boy I slept with was quite special. Well, for then, it was quite special. I mean, looking back on it, it was rather silly. But yes, I can remember kind of glowing afterwards and thinking that this was what life was about. But... no, looking back on it, it was quite hilarious. I suppose the only thing I can really say about the men in my life is that they're all extremely... older than I am. I've never ever gone out with anyone within five or six years even of my age.

Q: Really? Even when you were seventeen?

A: Yeah, he was twenty-three, so... And they keep getting older. I've got it back down to twenty-eight at the moment but, yeah, I don't know why. Maybe that's why I have so many problems.

Q: I don't know. I've met quite a few people who are sort of attracted to, prefer men who are at least sort of six, seven years older than them from sort of seventeen, eighteen years old upwards.

A: Well I think it's also a habit you get into, because I wouldn't really even consider seeing someone my own age. It just seems so...

Q: And when you first had sex, was it your decision or was it somebody else's decision?

A: It was my decision up until the last moment when I got extremely scared. I was extremely drunk, and I'd actually been given drugs. What a life, I tell you! And it was my boyfriend's best friend and it was extremely... it was really dirty and horrible. And I can remember waking up the next morning and just... you know when you have that feeling, "Oh my God, what have I done! I just want to die."

Q: Did your boyfriend know?

A: Yes. We'd actually been seeing each other for quite a few months, and we were quite close, and I think we held hands for another six months or so. So it was actually... He forgave me. I could disclaim all responsibility, but I won't. I was actually given acid which was rather a nasty thing to do to someone and it was the first and last time I've ever taken acid.

Q: Without you knowing?

A: No, well, I was pretty naive. I had a fair idea when someone gave me a pill that it was going to be pretty hairy, but I didn't realise quite what he was on. So I don't actually remember that much of it. It was actually quite a strange experience.

Q: Yes. Was it quite dreamlike then or nightmarelike?

A: No, it was actually like flashes of all sorts of things. And I can remember having a few hallucinations. Like walking along the pavement - it was all corrugated - and really strange things like that. And then going back to this boy's parents' house and having sex and I can remember it was really awful because he obviously thought that I'd had sex before and we'd actually got to the stage where he was about to enter me and then, the next thing I know, he has thrown me over and actually took me from behind. And I can remember just thinking, "Oh my goodness, what am I doing?" And it was just... up until then I was really quite scared and then I relaxed and then I just thought, "Oh well, I suppose that this is what's supposed to happen".

Q: What? Having intercourse or anal sex?

A: No, no.

Q: Just entering you from behind.

A: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, so it was quite painful, but I can't actually remember a lot of it. I can only remember that and then flashes in between. And then falling asleep afterwards and then him waking me up and then banishing me to the spare bedroom so that his mother didn't find us in the morning.

Q: 'Cos how did that make you feel?

A: Lovely! First time... I mean, everyone's first time is usually really embarrassing or awful but that has to beat it all! I can remember being really, really disappointed in myself because ANTHONY, my boyfriend... I was just terrified of what he'd say, what he'd do, how he'd feel. And I felt like I'd really, really betrayed him. And unfortunately the person that I'd actually been to bed with... I knew that ANTHONY was going to find out within an hour of me getting home, so that was quite sad. I remember crying all the way home because I'd lost my first love.

Q: And did you ever have sex with your boyfriend?

A: Yeah, about six months later. And that was quite sweet. He was... we didn't actually have sex very often. He was more into holding hands. He was a really, really, nice, sweet guy. I suppose he must have been to put up with me after that. It would usually put you off if someone said they'd slept with your best friend and then tried to say that it wasn't their fault because... and then listed ten reasons why it shouldn't have happened.

Q: Well, it probably shouldn't have. I mean, in terms of... if you'd not been on acid and things like that.

A: But yes, we stayed friends for quite a few years afterwards. I didn't see him when I was back in [NAME OF COUNTRY] this time but I keep in touch with his family, so that's quite nice.

Q: And did it affect your expectations of sex or sexual pleasure or anything like that?

A: Yeah. No, I didn't actually like sex at all. Not actually until I met... at the beginning of last year. I mean, sorry, when I first came down to London when we started having a sexual relationship. That was actually when I made a few discoveries that it wasn't quite so bad after all.

Q: What sort of discoveries were they?

A: Oh, well, just things like talking to each other afterwards, you know, those little things that make it so important, that it's actually... well, forget him now, but the boyfriend I've got at the moment is really nice. They seem to be improving as time goes, well obviously... there must be a lot of change in myself as well.

Q: Presumably, I'm sure.

A: Not only the men, obviously. And also, I've come to realise that it doesn't matter how often you sleep with people, it's actually the same person that counts. You know, what your mother tells you and you don't believe, but it is true. You can't ever expect sex to be good in any way unless it's with the same person, I think. Well I suppose you can have good sex but it's not quite the same, is it?

Q: No, I suppose... I mean, would you say it's kind of emotionally in the sense that you've changed about sex rather than the actual mechanical process?

A: Yeah, I attach a lot more importance to it and I did say that I wasn't going to sleep with someone until I actually felt that there was something really there. And luckily, I met a guy that actually felt the same. This is the first person I have come across that has not slept with many people at all. He's a very, very serious person which is quite nice. And so we had actually decided that we weren't going to sleep together so we actually carried on like this for the last two months quite well but we actually slept together and we both weakened - which we both really laughed about afterwards because we'd actually decided that we weren't going to sleep together. We were going to try to remain celibate and still be platonic friends and just hold hands for the next year or so, but it doesn't work like that.

Q: No.

A: I think it's my passion, unfortunately.

Q: Passion can be very nice. It doesn't have to be unfortunate.

A: I've discovered "frottage" which was quite nice because, you know, unless you go back to the time when you were fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, you forget what it's like to sit and kiss for three, four, five hours and then look at your watch and realise how much time's passed. I mean, because I used to really enjoy kissing, actually. I forgot what it was all about so that was quite nice. That was a good discovery, I think.

Q: But you said he was the first person you hadn't been able to tell about the rape?

A: I've actually told him since.

Q: You have?

A: It was totally by accident too. We actually had sex and I burst into tears. I'd been reading a box of letters - sitting up in bed in the morning, reading a box of letters, and I'd come across a card from another rape victim I still write to. And it had actually made me think I hadn't told DEC yet etcetera. And he'd come back to bed and we'd actually started having sex and I pulled away and burst into tears. And I couldn't... I was really, really upset. So anyway, we just lay there and then he got up and he said, "I'll make you a cup of coffee". And then he handed me a box of tissues and made me sit there and he just watched me drink my coffee and he was obviously waiting for me to say something. So anyway, I just turned round and said,

"Well, I think I should tell you", and then I stayed quiet for another five minutes 'cos, I mean, it's an awfully hard thing once you've put yourself in a situation where you've either got to say something or say "Oh, it's nothing much. I can't tell you". I mean, you know, after you've just burst into tears. So anyway, I told him and he's the first guy that's actually got upset and actually hugged me. It was really nice. I mean, even this guy I was with last year went, "Oh, that's not very nice, is it?", and that was about it. His attitude was, "You shouldn't really get upset about it because it was a long time ago".

Q: Well, it's not as simple as that.

A: No, well obviously he's got no idea of how hurtful certain things can be. I mean, he just had no understanding.

Q: Does it seem like a sort of hurdle almost that you'd have to get over with any relationship?

A: Yeah, it's always been an automatic thing to tell someone before I slept with them or even sometimes when I first meet a guy. I used to be really quite bad - well, bad! It was very automatic straight after the rape. I used to deliberately bring it into the conversation. I think it was partly because I was angry at all men, so I thought it was something that I should tell men had happened, so they actually thought about it. And also, I made it quite clear that... to like close male friends, that I would never be raped again. It was a way of protecting myself, I think. To kind of make it quite clear that, thank you, I've been raped and it's not going to happen again, so I'm telling you, so you know. It was really quite strange. I've got over that now.

Q: So it's a bit like making a statement almost before you got on to anything else?

A: Yeah. And also, the thought of having sex with someone and them now knowing... because what actually happened was the first guy that I actually slept with after the rape, I hadn't told him. And that's why I've told everyone since. Actually, we went to have sex - we didn't actually have sex - we went to have sex and I actually threw him physically across to the other side of the room. And so, then I told him and then we continued seeing each other for a while. And I thought, "Goodness, I can't go around karate chopping every man that comes within five foot of me". So it just became automatic to tell everyone. Most people knew anyway where I'd lived. I think I do it also to explain my behaviour in case I do something strange, like get upset if I see someone in a black leather jacket or something really... that's quite normal.

Q: It's like wanting people to kind of.... or anyone you want to be close to, to understand you and your reactions to things.

A: Yeah, and I also think that it's... I don't know why I find it necessary to tell people actually. I think it's just... I really do feel the more I talk about it and the more I write about it that just... the better I feel. And some people say that... it's coming up YEARS this MONTH and they'll say, "Oh, that's a lifetime ago". Or they think of that as being a long time but it's not really. I mean, especially if you put rape on a par with death, a death of someone close, because I think death's the only thing you can really relate it to. No, I don't think it's a long time at all.

Q: No, YEARS is not a long time.

A: And also, I'm extremely interested in what people think about rape. I actually do like to hear what people think about rape. Sometimes it's quite upsetting. I actually made the mistake of asking one chap and he said, "To be honest, I can't really see how girls do get raped".

Q: I've heard that before.

A: And he really had no understanding of the biological functions of a woman and he said, "Well, you know, she's got to be aroused or she can't be raped". This is a guy

that I think was only about nineteen, twenty at the time. He was my brother's friend. I... well, I still can't relate to it. I just get too confused when I think about it. So I said to him, "That's why it's forced. It's a forceful thing". He just said, "Oh well, I can't understand it". With a classic male ego, he said, "Well, I don't know. I'm so big that if a girl didn't want me, I couldn't have her". And I just thought, "Right, he's just impossible, this male". I mean, what an intelligent statement! I mean, you can't explain it to people like that can you? I mean, if at nineteen, twenty he really believes that people can't be raped, he's really got a problem.

Q: Well, yeah.

A: Oh, one thing that I do do to men is I say to them, "Have you been raped?" And their reactions! "I beg your pardon!" I mean, it's just never occurred to them that men get raped. Or otherwise, it's occurred to them, but they wouldn't really want to know that it's something they're scared of.

Q: So do they get really up tight when you say that?

A: Yeah. Some of the reactions I've had! Goodness me! You know... they don't like the thought of that at all. I mean, a few men have been able to say, "Yeah, actually, I have thought about it. It's something that really scares me", and "If I was ever in the position where I was being sent to prison or somewhere where it was really likely to happen, I would be in fear of my life", you know, and "I can see how women feel about rape because I'm scared of being raped". But that's definitely the minority. Most of them, I mean, because they're men, they think they're in the physical... they think they're big enough to fight off an attacker.

Q: Which isn't always the case.

A: No, especially, I mean 'cos it's actually a lot more common than people think. And of course, men can't really admit to it, can they, in society? And it's nothing... it's not something that's usually talked about. It's very sad.

Q: And when you had your various boyfriends and sexual experiences before that in [NAME OF COUNTRY], did you think about contraception and things like that or did you just sort of go off and have a good time without it?

A: I've been on the pill on and off, so, yes, I always thought of the pill as being the only contraception for me. And up until six weeks ago... this is the first time I've slept with anyone with a condom. It just never occurred to me because I've always thought it's the most terrible thing.

Q: What? Terrible in what way?

A: Just... to me it's so unnatural having a foreign object between two people. Yeah, so, I've always just thought of the pill as being the natural choice. I had gone through stages where I'd been really unhappy with it because I do find that it makes me quite moody and I mean, it's unnatural to be pumping hormones into your body. But on the same hand, I wouldn't consider the coil. Perhaps the cap I think is the only other one I'd look at. But I mean that's, "Excuse me a moment, I'm just going to go to the bathroom for ten minutes and ping the flying saucer around!"

Q: That's right, yeah.

A: No, I must admit, I'm quite shocking when it comes to contraception. I've had quite a few close calls. Whenever I thought about it a few days afterwards or last moment panic... 'Cos I have a bad habit - I keep going off the pill.

Q: What off altogether or just...?

A: I'm just so forgetful as well... or otherwise I'll stop for a month for some reason. So, yes, I'm not very wise when it comes to contraception. I mean, it's not like I'm not educated. I'm quite aware of the risks and I'm quite aware of exactly what's available. It's just I'm extremely lazy. And considering the amount of friends I've had

that have had abortions or have had bad experiences getting pregnant or have had children...

Q: No, I was just about to ask you if you'd thought about being pregnant or whether that just doesn't seem a possibility.

A: No, well, it seems strange but before I used to be... I can remember finding out that a friend of mine wasn't using any contraception and I can remember going absolutely mad with her and explaining the risks and everything. And she'd actually said to me, "Oh no. I think that if God wants it to happen it will happen". So, what happened? A year later she got pregnant and she had to have an abortion. It broke her heart and she still hasn't forgiven herself for it. So, I mean, I am aware of the risks. I just... Crazy!

Q: But you just take them?

A: Mm. I'm usually quite careful. I do it on a cycle basis. I'm always covered over the two or three weeks in between. Yes, no, yes. Totally irresponsible.

Q: Are you on the pill now?

A: Yes, I'm on the pill now. Yes, I am totally irresponsible.

Q: Do you think you take risks in other areas of life in general?

A: Yes.

Q: What in particular?

A: I'm just a great gambler. Well, I was brought up in a gambling family, so I suppose... What other risks? I suppose I drive fast and do things like that.

Q: Do you drink, smoke?

A: Yes, I smoke. And I drink. I don't drink and drive though.

Q: That's very good. That's more than a lot of people.

A: I'm feeling totally irresponsible. I mean, until I actually sit and think about it and explain the risks I actually take, I don't really think about it. I suppose I should feel more guilty than I do because I'm really involving another person or three people.

Q: What about things like drugs?

A: Um, no. Not anymore. I used to until I actually left [NAME OF COUNTRY] - well, until I was eighteen, nineteen. And then I decided to clean up my act, so I do still smoke but I don't smoke pot anymore and I don't take any tablets or acid or anything like that. I've never taken coke or heroin or anything extremely nasty. Are you wondering... I was just wondering whether you asked because I smoked roll-ups. I suppose it's not very usual to roll tobacco. It's just... a friend came back from Holland and...

Q: Other people roll tobacco. I think it was just you were having a Silk Cut there as well. And often people who I know smoke roll-ups because they're trying to economise or not smoke so much because it takes them half an hour longer to do a roll-up than it does to get a cigarette out.

A: Yeah, I actually buy those as a special treat when I'm going to a client's during the day because I can't really do this in the middle of a meeting or after one, so I have to smoke kind of tailor-made cigarettes. I mean, can you imagine doing this in the middle of a meeting? "Excuse me, I'm just going to roll a cigarette. You were saying?"

Q: I think it's very quaint.

A: I've been told it's not very feminine by some people. "Isn't it men who roll their cigarettes" or "Why don't you smoke a pipe if you're going to go that far?" "If you want to be a man, smoke a pipe."

Q: Going back to... well, even further back in a way, and thinking about things like sex education... I mean, it sounded to me, or it seemed to me from your questionnaire, that you didn't get an awful lot from school?

A: No.

Q: That it was more from other people or parents or friends or whatever that you'd learnt the things that you knew.

A: Well, I had so little sex education at school that I can remember them quite clearly, the actual classes. I can remember the first film we were shown at eleven or twelve and one talk from the teacher. And it was the most ridiculous talk. I mean, looking back on it, I didn't know what she was talking about because she said, "Now, we're going away on holiday, girls, so if you have your thingies, yes, come and see me for some what-you-me-call-its. I'll be carrying them with me. Now, if you need any of these things, please come and see me". I can remember sitting there and just thinking, "What is she talking about?" And a few of the girls of course were kind of nodding and winking at each other because they know what she's talking about. And I just felt totally left out and I had to go home and ask my mother. You know, "What are thingies and what-you-me-call-its?"

Q: And then did your mother tell you?

A: Oh, my mother had already explained to me. She said, "Oh, don't worry, sit down. What she's talking about is periods". And I said, "Why didn't she say?", and mum said, "Oh, well, she's an old bat! She's probably too embarrassed", because this teacher was an old maid. And then another one at fifteen, sixteen, no, it must have been sixteen because you have to be sixteen in [NAME OF COUNTRY] to have any sex education on contraception. And they came to school and they held up lots of CONDOMS and handed them round and IUDs and caps and things for people to throw around the classroom at each other and laugh.

Q: Is that what people did generally?

A: Yes. Yeah. And the girls that were trying to look awfully sophisticated were like trying to hold up CONDOMS as if knew exactly what you did with these things, kind of trying to look...

Q: 'Cos was that in a... I can't remember, was it in a mixed class or was it in an all girls...?

A: All girls. Which makes it... I suppose it takes the... perhaps it would have been more serious if boys had been there. Well, I don't know 'cos I didn't go to a co-ed school, so I never had that.

Q: Yes, I don't know.

A: The only time I went to a co-ed school, I'd actually gone back as an adult student, so I was more removed. From the time I was twelve I didn't really have much to do at all with boys. I used to look at them over the school fence if I was cycling past. That was about all the contact I had. It's quite funny.

Q: So could you talk to your mum a lot about things?

A: Yeah, I can actually remember my mother sitting me down from nine or ten. I'll never forget the first time she said to me... she said, "AMANDA, could you sit down. I want to talk to you about sex". And I said, "I know all about rooting", and my mother was so shocked. I can still remember her going, "Oh goodness, I can see I've really got to talk to you now". She made me sit there and we made ourselves a cup of coffee. She was probably shaking. And she came back, and she sat down, and she made me explain exactly what I meant.

Q: What, by rooting?

A: Yeah, "What do you call rooting?" So anyway, we talked about it and then she explained all sorts of things to me and she ended up teaching me about vasectomies 'cos that was the only thing that she could find that I really had no idea about! So she actually drew diagrams of testicles and all sorts of things which... of

course, she's a CARING ROLE so she'd told us right from a young age about having babies and we obviously had obstetric books lying around the house.

Q: Right, so there was a lot of information around.

A: Whereas my father... you just never discussed pantie-hose in front of him - very, very BRITISH traditionalist and old-fashioned.

Q: And could you talk about other more intimate things with friends or family like, I suppose, masturbation and those sorts of areas?

A: No, I've never discussed masturbation with my mum!

Q: I don't think many people have.

A: Well actually, no. It's quite strange... my actual brothers and sister were more... Because I left home quite young, I dunno. No, I'm quite cold with my mother. I don't know. We don't really get on very close. 'Cos I can remember my sister at sixteen teasing my mum about having a vibrator. My mother had bought this one on holiday. And I can remember being shocked that my mother had a vibrator. And my sister knew, and she even knew where my mother kept it. And I was really horrified. So my mother's really open - my mother is very open but it's just something that I'd never discuss with her because I thought it was none of her business what I did. And likewise... But yes, I have sat down and actually talked to her about sexual relationships. Just before I came over I actually had a boyfriend of thirty-seven and when my mother found out she kind of threw me down on the couch and said, "What do you think you're doing seeing someone my age?" And I said, "Well, to be honest mum, he's great in bed!", and we started laughing. And she sat down and said, "Well, I'm pleased for you". And then she said, "Go on, what's he like?" So we actually had... that was the most frank discussion we've ever had about sex. That was quite nice. Yeah, so open but still... because mother and daughter there are certain things you don't want to admit to.

Q: Yeah, it's quite tricky the line that you can cross or not.

A: Well, I mean, my mother has rather a shocking sex life with my father.

Q: Why is it shocking?

A: They don't have sex, so my mother... my mother will say how sexually frustrated she is and, "Damn man! Where is he?", because he goes to [COUNTRY 2] for months on end and all sorts of things. So, I mean, I find it hard to be really, really open with her when she's not actually having sex.

Q: Yes, they must have to have you at some point, I presume 'cos there are other ways.

A: Well, from what I can remember, they used to have quite an active sex life up until I was about twelve, thirteen 'cos they used to always be in bed in the day and all sorts of things. But they went through a stage - I mean, it was quite obvious to us children - where they weren't even kissing or showing any affection. My father wouldn't have anything to do with my mother and likewise. It was quite a strange... I think they went through their... you know, just went off each other for a while. And now they barely spend any time together. So... not a very happy marriage.

Q: No, it sounds as though it's sort of drifted apart.

A: Mm. Yeah, well, when I was back... I think my father had been away for six months and he arrived - his plane was due in at twelve. My mother wouldn't even go to the airport to pick him up, so he had to get a bus home. And it took... it was like a three-hour trip. I mean... So anyway, he arrived at three or four in the morning and I said to her before mum went to bed, "Would you like me to wake you up?", "No". I thought, "Alright, OK then". So anyway, I waited up for dad and then we sat and we talked for hours and then we had breakfast. I mean, the poor guy had been travelling for... he'd actually driven from the top of [COUNTRY 2] down so he'd been

travelling for like forty-eight hours constantly and flying. And then at breakfast-time I said, "Oh, I'll just go and get mum", and she'd gone out for the day. It was so embarrassing having to go out and say, "Dad, well actually she's not here". She'd actually just got up and just gone off for the day. She didn't want to see him.

Q: That seems a bit cruel, really.

A: Oh, well, I don't think dad was particularly perturbed either. He just went, "Oh, do you know where she's gone?" I said, "No". It was quite strange because when she came back at lunchtime she said, "Oh, you're here", you know, and gave him a hug and a kiss and said, "How are you?" But they were just like friends - very, very cool with each other.

Q: A bit strange, really. Did they ever... thinking about AIDS now, did they ever teach you about AIDS or any programmes that you might have seen?

A: No actually, I was quite surprised. I was actually talking to my mum about AIDS and I said that I wanted to go and have an AIDS test. And she said, "Why?" And I said, "Well, I haven't taken any precautions and I've also been raped, and I don't know anything about the people's backgrounds". I said, "It's quite obvious why". And she... and it was then that I discovered she knew... didn't know very much about AIDS at all. And I was quite surprised because she is actually a CARING ROLE. And I can remember saying, "Goodness mum. Their past history for seven years. And there's an incubation period... even if I have a test now, I could still be positive within a year's time". She wasn't aware of any of that. And I can remember being quite surprised. And she was actually shocked that I wanted to have a test. And I went to see a doctor and he refused to give me one.

Q: Why?

A: He told me that there was no cause for alarm because we were living in [NAME OF COUNTRY] and AIDS hadn't got to us yet. Oh yes, thank you, doctor, thank you for your concern.

Q: So what did you do?

A: Oh, he was an extremely old dodderly doctor, so I left it and when I came over here I had an AIDS test with [NAME OF HOSPITAL]. I'd actually gone and... with thrush and cystitis and I was just totally fed up and I stormed in. And in the waiting room they were actually giving out questionnaires saying, "Would you mind if we take a blood test? We're trying to screen all the women that come in and trying to get an idea of...", and then right down the bottom it said, "If you would like the results of your test please let us know". So I ticked "yes" and God, this is going to sound terrible, so I went back two weeks later for a follow-up examination and I said, "The results?", and he said, "No, it'll be another week". He said, "Because we've had such a flood of samples coming in" or whatever, and so I never bothered going back to find out. I was meant to go back about a week later. And I presumed because I hadn't heard from them that the test was negative.

Q: Would they have sent it by letter as well?

A: Yeah, I'm pretty sure because they said, "If there's any cause for alarm", talking about test results, "we always advise patients in the post". And I said, "Will that be for the HIV test as well?" And they said, "Yes, of course. It's standard procedure. You've asked for the results, so we have to follow it through". So I presume I'm negative. But I plan to go for another test anyway so I'll...

Q: I would have thought they would have sent it if you had it.

A: Yes, I think so. 'Cos I think with AIDS it's compulsory - so that once you've had a test and you've asked for the results, I mean they do...

Q: Notify you one way or the other rather than just depending on you making yourself another appointment. Is it something that you think about?

A: Well, I'm aware that it's quite possible that I could actually be HIV positive, but I'm secure that I've had one test and pretty positive that the results would have been negative. So I'm going for another test in a year's time and in the meantime I plan not to have any extra sexual partners, so I'll consider myself quite safe after that.

Q: 'Cos do you... do you protect yourself from AIDS with your present partner?

A: No.

Q: And is that because you think he's alright or...?

A: Yeah. Well, we actually talked about it and he was extremely concerned about AIDS. And he asked me if I'd actually had a test and I said, "No", 'cos I thought, "I'd better not say yes because I've only had half of one"! And although we first started having sex with condoms, we had so many accidents we gave up on that and I went on the pill! I think it's the most... I just do not like them. They're just so ridiculous. And I never actually asked him to stop using them. I said, "I want to go on the pill as a form of contraception", and he said, "Good!". So, I mean, he's quite sure and I know that he's only had two sexual partners and he's twenty-eight so... He's been in a relationship for five years so he's a lot less likely than I am so...

Q: So, in a way, although it's a bit stereotyped to think of maybe women at risk from men and things like that, I mean, in a sense from what you've been saying, he might be more at risk from having a relationship with you than you with him.

A: Yeah, definitely. Mm. Yes, I would say that it would be more likely if it was going to actually happen that it would be myself that would be... yeah, no, I... But I mean, it's not only myself. I'm quite concerned when I look at other friends as well. I think everyone's still not taking precautions.

Q: Do any of your friends take precautions against AIDS?

A: No, none. Oh, except for the ones that are either in a long-term relationship, so they don't really consider it. You know what I mean? They just think, "AIDS, oh well, I'm safe because I've been in a long-term relationship for so many years. I'm not likely to have an affair. My boyfriend's being faithful." So they don't really think about it. Although a male friend... I know that he has got no qualms about sleeping with people on one-night stands and he's actually slept with a prostitute. And I can remember explaining to him that he should go for an AIDS test and he got extremely angry. And he's a blood donor and he hasn't donated blood for a year but because he was a blood donor a year ago, he feels that he's safe. His attitude is, "They would have told me if I had AIDS", which I think is quite ignorant. I'm not quite that bad.

Q: 'Cos who do you feel are the people who are most at risk from AIDS?

A: Well, the obvious high-risk groups but, erm, people that are promiscuous. I think it's the people who are promiscuous because there are so many of them. Actually, I would count myself as a person who has been promiscuous, definitely. I think that if AIDS... well, I think there's going to be an explosion in three to five years' time and it's going to be horrific because people, I mean, there's so many people that still believe that it's only homosexuals, only prostitutes and only drug-users that get AIDS. I can remember that I used to joke saying, "I think I'll become a lesbian because they're the only low-risk group".

Q: Right, yeah.

A: No, when you actually look at the statistics, I mean, if you consider if everyone's had five sexual partners and you multiply that, you know, going back over seven years' time...

Q: What an enormous...

A: It actually really raises your eyebrows. I mean, only one of those people has to have slept with a high-risk group of, well, if you're just looking at a houseful of

people and one has slept with a high-risk group, everyone in that group they've slept with is extremely likely to have AIDS. It's not very nice is it?

Q: And did you ever think of taking precautions at all before?

A: My actual plan was not to sleep with anyone for another year. I actually didn't sleep with anyone for four months, so I did quite well. Four months, what a record!

Q: But was that because of the rape rather than because of AIDS?

A: No, no, this is this year.

Q: Oh, this is this year?

A: Yeah.

Q: Oh right.

A: I actually became more promiscuous after being raped than beforehand.

Q: Really? Why do you think that was?

A: Because I could sleep with people without any emotion attached at all and it was... I actually can remember sitting down with my aunt and getting really upset one day and saying, "I might as well become a hooker. This is ridiculous because whenever I have sex with someone, I can't even feel anything physically. It's just like I'm totally removed from it."

Q: So, did that last for a long time?

A: A year.

Q: Was that kind of one-night stands you were having or was that with longer-term people too?

A: A few one-night stands and a few weak relationships - these things that you know aren't going to go anywhere and you don't particularly even like the person, but you just see them half a dozen times.

Q: And was sex actually... you say you didn't actually feel anything physically or... was that kind of much different to before then? I mean, before then you'd said that you hadn't enjoyed sex all that much.

A: No, I was so self-conscious.

Q: Before?

A: 'Cos I was quite young then. I found sex rather an ordeal. You know, you had to take your clothes off and lie and make strange noises. "I mean, this is really not very nice. What if someone's watching us?", you know, it was that kind of...

Q: Did you feel you had to make strange noises?

A: Yes, yeah, you see I thought it was the done thing. I can remember at about fifteen walking past a house one night and the windows were open and I could hear this couple inside, this woman wailing. And I can remember actually walking along with a friend and we sat down on a stone wall and actually sat there and had a cigarette listening to this woman. I can remember saying, "Does everyone do that?" And she said, "Oh I don't know. My parents don't do that", and I remember saying, "Neither do mine". I said, "Maybe they're just quiet 'cos they've got children. Maybe that's what you're meant to do". I can remember sitting there listening to this woman. I mean, it was like half an hour. It was so funny. I can remember us both kind of going off scratching our heads thinking, "Oh right, so that's what you do!"

Q: What, and then doing it?

A: Yeah, and I mean you go through the stage when you have really noisy flat mates and you actually think, "Oh, everyone else is making so much noise. What about me? Why am I so quiet?" But it's quite...

Q: 'Cos did you actually get orgasms then?

A: No.

Q: Do you get orgasms now?

A: No. I had quite a difficult time with my last boyfriend because he felt that every time he had sex with a woman she should have at least five. And it just didn't happen. It didn't work. And, I mean, he used to make me feel extremely guilty for not having them, you know.

Q: Kind of a duty.

A: "What's wrong with you girl?" So, I mean, it worked occasionally when I didn't feel pressurised and it was all quite nice. But now, I mean, with my latest boyfriend there's just no pressure at all. And I think because... since I've known him we've talked and held hands and whatever a lot and it's a bit different. I mean, we didn't jump into bed straight away which I've usually done and then become friends afterwards. It's not quite the same.

Q: And things about sex and sexuality that aren't particularly to do with intercourse, have they come into your life as well?

A: Sorry, how do you mean?

Q: Well, I suppose sex that isn't actual entry or penetration. More foreplay and kind of oral sex and things like that.

A: Only with the last two boyfriends - long-term. Never on one-night stands. I actually wouldn't allow it. That sounds... I just thought that it was too personal. Up until recently or up until just a few months ago or whatever, I always thought of actual intercourse as being quite an impersonal thing.

Q: So other sorts of sort of touching and whatever are actually more personal?

A: Yeah. Well, I mean, well, there's no violence involved. I mean, 'cos sex can be quite violent so I mean, it can be quite scary - scary or painful. Whereas, I mean, touching people and oral sex and whatever, I mean, that's quite intimate. I mean, it's a lot more intimate and you can talk and... I don't know.

Q: And do you have it?

A: Yeah, and I prefer it now because I feel like I've got more control over the situation whereas with sex, I mean, especially if you're on your back, I really do feel sometimes like I'm going to lose control. Not as in going to have an orgasm but actually like, "Could I stop this right now if I wanted to?" Because, I mean, that's really important for me now. All the time I've got to be aware that I'm not necessarily in control as being dominant, but just that if I get scared, you know, can I stop it?

Q: No, I can understand that. Well, in some ways too you saying about the violence, just the act of penetrating is in a way itself a form of violence by its very nature.

A: And it was quite strange. Until a while ago I couldn't bear the thought of being on top of men. It was... I'm not sure whether it was because it was being dominant or because actually it's not quite the same kind of penetration. I mean, you've actually got control over when it's going to happen or how it's going to happen. Yeah, and I also didn't like being on top of someone. It was really quite strange.

Q: What didn't you like about it?

A: I think it was feeling conscious of being dominant. I'm not sure. I can't really explain it. I mean, it doesn't worry me now. I mean, I can't think back to what it was like. I used to actually find it quite scary. I used to actually be scared of having control. And also... I mean, also you don't... I was unsure as to what was expected of me. That's probably more what it was. I didn't really know what I was quite meant to do.

Q: Well, it's difficult to know unless someone's taught you or you've looked at all the books or something like that.

A: Well, that's the thing. I mean, I always seem to have found men that don't explain anything, or don't... If you ask them, they don't... Well, no, you don't bother asking. You don't want to put them in a position where they have to explain something. Or

they are just not the kind of person that you can really, really talk to or ask anything intimate or say, you know, "Please do something", or "Please don't do something". I get awfully puzzled when I start talking about sex because... I think it's quite a dangerous thing in some ways.

Q: In what ways?

A: I mean, even now... even if I'm having sex with someone that I'm close to, sometimes I've got to stop it because if it gets to the point where I think that I've lost control and that this person isn't going to stop then I just immediately feel like I'm being raped.

Q: What, and then you...?

A: I don't know. It's really hard to explain. I just sort of am scared of feeling that way. Well, I never want to be raped again. That about sums it up, doesn't it?

Q: Yes.

A: I mean, sometimes there's an incredibly fine line between what rape is and... 'Cos I mean, if you're close to someone and they take you forcefully, I mean, you know, it's quite strange.

(Coffee)

Q: 'Cos when... I can't remember, what were we talking about?

A: We were just saying, I think, how sex can be quite violent.

Q: That's right, yeah.

A: Yeah, I don't know. I've got quite mixed feelings about sex...

Q: Understandably.

A: Which is why I had decided not to sleep with people... sleep with anyone. Well, I don't plan to sleep with "people" ever again. 'Cos I used to actually keep count of the amount of people I'd slept with and then I forgot to keep count one day and then a few months later I thought, "Oh goodness, how many people have I slept with?" and I thought, "Right, I'll just add them up", and I actually got to the stage where I couldn't remember names and I was thinking, "I think it's time to slow down here and I think... considering how young you are and how stupid you are...", I thought, "Right, it's time to stop". Yes, so, it puts you off a little bit.

Q: Yeah, it must bring you up with a bit of a jolt.

A: Well it does. I'm really, really flippant at work, you know. It's just kind of standard. I say to a lot of the girls at work, "Oh, how's your sex life?" and we just joke. And I can remember actually talking with a friend at work one day and I said to her, "Do you ever keep count of the amount of people you sleep with or do you think that's a strange thing to do?" And she said, "Why?", and I said, "Well, is it bad to have to keep count?" And we started talking about it and she said, "Well, I know how many people I've slept with", and she said, "And I know that they're all friends now. I could call them up anytime to have a chat or whatever", and I said, "Oh, well, I can't with some of mine". And so, we really started talking and I said, "Well, I know the star sign and the first and last name and most of the middle names of the people I've slept with". And she just stopped, and she looked at me and she said, "Yeah, but it's not much to say to someone – 'Excuse me. What's your name? What's your star sign? Do you want to come to bed?'" And that really made me stop and think. I mean, I thought, "It's one thing to brag - to say you know the name of everyone you've slept with - but once it's got to the stage where you think that's clever... mm, yes!" I mean, I've... just friends, you know, talking about how many people you've slept with... you know, friends that are absolutely horrified because they've finally reached double figures. Great arguments about whether you count that one or not because...

Q: What? Of what happened?

A: Yes.

Q: But do you think that's because... that sort of attitude was because you were younger? I mean, do you think you've grown out of that or has it got to do with...?

A: No, because quite a few girlfriends at work - I think of twenty-four, twenty-six or twenty-seven - we've actually sat round and joked about how many people we've slept with, so I think people are... I think people have been promiscuous for a long time.

Q: Do you think people are getting less promiscuous? I'm thinking obviously, you know, with AIDS and things whether that has made any difference.

A: I think a lot of people will say, "Oh, I've decided because of AIDS, for instance, you know, I'm not going to sleep with so many people". Or the risk of pregnancy because they've gone off the pill or whatever reason they say, "I've decided not to sleep with anyone, so I'm going to wait until the right person comes along and I'm going to do it right this time", whatever. But it doesn't work like that. I mean, three months later they find that it hasn't worked out or whatever. No, I don't think people have become more careful. Out of all the people I know only one is celibate. And even she'll say that that won't last much longer because she's actually started seeing someone long-term. So I mean, I know one person who is celibate. Everyone I know has had more than ten sexual partners.

Q: Are you talking about women and men?

A: Women. Oh, and men! When it's men, I mean, you're talking about fifteen and over twenty, a lot of them. I know men that have slept with thirty, forty women and they can't even remember their names. They can only think of the places where it happened. Oh, it's quite shocking, really!

Q: And that's here as well?

A: Yeah, here, as well as in [NAME OF COUNTRY]. 'Cos I've always... I always talk about sex quite a lot. I mean, it's quite a joke at work because we're all quite open so... It's a really young company - everyone's under thirty. The oldest person is the MD and he's thirty-one. So it's a quite young company. Everyone's quite ambitious and I think there's only three married people in the whole company out of twenty-five. And we always laugh because when we go out for a drink after work, or a meal, it takes about ten minutes before the subject comes round to sex.

Q: That's not long.

A: And, I mean, some of the subjects would make some people's hair fall out! I mean, you don't talk about really, really intimate things or, "Guess what happened to me last night?" It's all, you know, just general joking.

Q: What about sexual experiences and...?

A: Oh, yes. Things like, "Are you in the Mile High Club?" and just joking about it and saying things like, "Oh, so how old were you?" and usually things that are long past. Nothing really personal like, "How's your sexual relationship?" I mean, nothing intimate.

Q: All quite safe things to talk about?

A: Yeah, very safe. All very...

Q: What's the Mile High Club?

A: Oh, actually it's really, really funny. We were talking about the Mile High Club - it's when you've had sex in an aeroplane - and we were talking about it one day and this guy at work had said, "Oh, I'm in the Mile High Club", and we were laughing about it. And a girl at work - she's about twenty-six and she's been in this relationship about eight years and she's Jewish and she's prepared to get married and she doesn't believe in extra-marital sex or pre-marital sex or anything - and she walked into the office as we were talking about this Mile High Club. And she said,

"Oh, I've always wanted to join that. You get a certificate don't you, and a badge?" And we all just turned round and she goes, "Oh, I've heard about that. Who was saying the other day something about the Mile High Club?" She said, "Oh, ANDREW" - this is her boyfriend - "and I are going on holiday soon. Do you think that they'd let us join?" And I mean everyone was just standing with their mouths hanging open. She said, "Is it British Airways that does it?" And then she stopped because she realised that everyone was just gaping at her. And I said, "SOPHIA, do you know what the Mile High Club is?" And I mean, everyone looked at each other because we were thinking who the hell is going to tell her now that she's said she wants to join! And when we told her, I've never seen anyone so embarrassed! Well, actually, she thought it was hilarious.

Q: Well, that's good.

A: She said, "Oh my God! Don't you dare tell ANDREW what I just said!", you know, so it was quite funny. So that's what the Mile High Club is.

Q: Yes, that figures actually. And do you talk like... well, it sounds as though you obviously do... talk about sex to your girlfriends and colleagues and whatever a lot?

A: Yeah.

Q: Would you say that's quite easy?

A: Well I mean, we are quite open in the house, like, (name) was just teasing me the other night, we were out for dinner and she just stopped in the middle of dinner and said, "You wouldn't have a headboard on your bed by any chance would you". She was teasing me about making a lot of noise one evening. Oh, it was really embarrassing, and I said, "Oh, I'm really sorry about that" and she said, "Half past one and I couldn't get to sleep". Yes, I mean, yes I do, but I don't ever discuss problems with friends, only with the person I'm actually sleeping with. Although occasionally, a couple of friends, they'll say to me, "what shall I do about?", or I ask them for advice. And we usually don't know anyway! And we'll say, I think you should talk to someone about that because I don't know, never heard of it before or whatever. So, no not really intimate things. Because I think everyone's got to keep something to themselves. And there are certain things that you don't talk about outside the bedroom. I mean, however open you are about sex, especially when it comes to things that you are insecure about. People are very careful about what they say. I mean, you don't hear many men sitting in the pub saying, "Oh, well I'm impotent at the moment". You just don't do it, you don't admit to the fact that you've got problems.

Q: But can you, say, sit around discussing for instance your sexual expectations of pleasure or not having pleasure or things like that, which is slightly more abstract in a way, but still quite personal?

A: Not with men, not men I work with or male friends.

Q: I was thinking more of your female friends.

A: Yes, we do talk about disappointments, and when things have gone especially well. We'll say guess what I've discovered I really like, yeah, we do with close friends. Everyone jokes about it amongst work colleagues, and acquaintances, but it is only with really close friends that you do talk about things like that. But I get quite embarrassed, even with friends, I blush -

Q: And things like, I don't know, you were talking about thrush and cystitis and things like that?

A: Yeah, very open about things like that. Even at work. Because it is such a young company it is quite nice. The company director, she's been known to come and say, "I'm off everyone, I'm off, I've got cystitis, there's no way I'm hanging around here, I'm in agony". And then, cystitis, that's pretty mild. I openly admit to people that I had

herpes after I was raped, and I actually was hospitalised for it. Well I don't tell many people, no (both laugh) I mean, it's not exactly something you tell someone while you are having dinner. "Oh, guess what happened to me?" Actually, that was horrible, I was in a gynecological ward and I had seven... what happened was the student doctor came to me and she said, "We're taking you for an examination. Would you mind if there was actually a class held for students? Because you've got the most interesting case we've seen for a long time." And so, they actually helped me down and they took scrapings and there was like six people taking notes. 'Cos it was their first external examination of the labia or whatever, and they wanted to see how he did a scraping and measuring things. Horrible! You know, your feet up in stirrups and a nurse holding you down because it's so painful. 'Cos I was in hospital for three days. It was quite painful.

Q: Was that straight afterwards?

A: No, it was six months.

Q: Yeah, 'cos it sometimes takes a while to develop.

A: Yeah, I was quite surprised because of course when I got it, I was actually seeing someone at the time. I was really horrified because I thought I'd obviously got it off them. It wasn't until the doctor reassured me that... and it turned out this person actually went and had an examination and it was actually me. So, yes, it's not something I'd like to relive. That is painful.

Q: Yes.

A: Not being able to sit or go to the toilet or do anything normal.

Q: God, how uncomfortable!

A: Yes, and I can remember refusing to have a catheter put in so I didn't pass water for something like four days which was making things worse.

Q: That must have left you pretty fed-up and angry, I would have thought, that you would have to go through that for them as well.

A: Yeah, I had a... I was actually in hospital three times because of the rape. [REDACTED]. Yeah, so, I think you just come to accept the fact that there's a lot of...

Q: So, I mean, it wasn't finished when it was finished, in a way, because you had to go through all these other...

A: Well, I mean, besides all the emotional hassle, I had physical problems as well and...

Q: Fortunately, you weren't pregnant.

A: No, thank goodness. It was really horrible. The police doctor forgot to give me the morning-after pill.

Q: Great!

A: And what actually happened was, when I left the police-station, I got out twelve hours later, I mean, I'd gone and I'd got there and I'd got out, like, 6 o'clock the next evening. I'd been in there for questioning all day. I wasn't allowed a shower until about 4 o'clock the next day. So anyway, when I'd finally got home, ... I went to see my local GP ... And he said to me, "Have you felt nauseous yet?", "Sorry?" And it hadn't even occurred to me until then. 'Cos, I mean, I was still in a state of shock and my aunt was obviously in a state of shock and hadn't even thought about it either. And we both stopped and said, "Sorry, what do you mean?", and he said, "You know, from the pill... the police doctor". And it turned out he hadn't actually given me one. He rung to check and... so he gave me some to take the next day. 'Cos, I mean, you have got seventy-two hours. But, I can remember just bursting into tears because I hadn't...

Q: Hadn't even thought of it, probably.

A: Yeah. And to make matters worse - I presume it was because of the stress I was under - even though I'd taken the morning-after pill it took... I think it was like the Friday after, which is what, six days or five, six days for my period to begin. So, I mean, I was agonising over it 'cos I just... you know, that would be the worst possible thing that could happen to a woman, I think. And the worst thing was my aunt had sat me down because she is pro-abortion and she'd said, "Well, don't worry, it's clear-cut. If you are pregnant it's obvious what you'll do." And I said, "No, I won't, because I don't believe in abortion". And that's why I was so scared because I had visions of having to go through that pregnancy. Now you can't understand why I'm so... take so many risks.

Q: Do you think it's made you feel more sort of fatalistic about things?

A: Yeah, definitely. I mean, 'cos I was just so matter-of-fact about it afterwards. You know, I mean, people - friends or family would say, "Oh, my God!", and I would say, "Oh well, I suppose it had to happen to someone. I was in the wrong place at the wrong time". And I was just... I mean, even now I'm quite matter-of-fact about it. I'm just glad it wasn't my sister, I'm glad that it wasn't... I'd had sex beforehand and I'm glad I wasn't married, I'm glad I didn't have children because the idea of having a husband or having children and having to go through that. I'm glad I wasn't sodomised - thank God! Yeah. Except for the violence... it was quite violent - I mean, I was beaten up quite a lot, but there wasn't any knives or bottles or anything like that.

Q: There must have been a point when you sort of knew that they were going to do it.

A: Yeah, well, when the actual original, like, scuffle started out with these three guys pulling me down the back of this house, I was just screaming and you know, yelling and kicking and...

Q: So you were outside rather than being in the headquarters?

A: Yeah, I was outside. And all the time all I could think was, "Why do they want to beat me up? This is awfully strange. What have I done?" And all I... it never occurred to me... I mean... all I was aware of was these three people around me. One was walking along and two had me on each side and all I can remember thinking was, "They want to hurt me", and it was just like a physical fear. I just thought they were going to hit me. And it wasn't until they'd thrown me up against a car and the two of them had me on each side and they were trying to get their hands inside my trousers or whatever, and I'd actually yelled out to this guy RYAN for help and he'd actually just hit me across the face. And that's the moment that I thought, "Right, I'm alone". And then when he stood in front of me and actually ripped my trousers down, it still didn't occur to me. I actually thought, "Why do they want to take my clothes off?" But I'll never forget the moment that I knew I was going to be raped. It was just God-awful. They had actually dragged me across the front of this car and I can remember becoming absolutely hysterical 'cos I lost a shoe and it fell off and for some reason it was quite significant to me that I'd lost a shoe. 'Cos even though I had my trousers kind of ripped and dangling down, I was just aware that it was very important to keep all my clothes on and because I'd lost a shoe I was in a lot of trouble. And I can remember just screaming at the top of my voice, "I want my shoe, I want my shoe!" And I was just like, you know, "If you don't give me my shoe, you're in trouble", kind of thing. And then they went to take me inside and that's when it just dawned on me. I can just remember this thought, just, "They're going to rape me". And I remember... 'cos just before being dragged inside... 'cos it's a bit different when you're out in the open air and you feel...

Q: Someone might hear you and come.

A: Yeah.

Q: Or you might run away, I mean, were you to be able to ever get that far.

A: Yeah, well I mean, I was in the middle of the residential area. I mean it was just crazy that no one came. Yeah... the fact of being outside... but as soon as you're going into a building, you've obviously got no escape. You're within four walls. And then these three guys threw me down on this concrete floor and they proceeded to rape me and while the first guy raped me the two held me. And then the second guy raped me and then while he was actually raping me a group of men walked into the room and were just standing round in a circle. And they were cheering. And I can remember just staring out this window at the moon and thinking about my little sister. And I can remember thinking all these just crazy disjointed thoughts, nothing to do with rape at all. I mean, I was thinking things like, "Oh, I haven't been horse riding for a while. I must go out round the back of the farm and catch the horse tomorrow." And I mean, meanwhile I am being raped on a concrete floor. And I can remember actually saying out loud 'cos this window... there was a cross in it, and I can remember just looking at it and thinking, "That's really beautiful". I thought, "There's a God up there somewhere, isn't there?" Just these really crystal-clear thoughts that had nothing to do with being raped or anything.

Q: So how did you get free? Or did they let you go?

A: Oh, well, we just kind of had this like huge struggle continuously. I don't even know how many times I was raped on the floor. I know there was three. The police say there was four. And they had an eye-witness, I didn't. I wasn't really watching, I was looking out the window. And anyway, then they dragged me to my feet and then they all started kind of dragging me upstairs. It was in this kind of backyard shed, garage thing and they pushed me up into this loft and that's when I came across this girl and her boyfriend. And she was sitting in this room and I went running to her and I was mouthing to her so they couldn't hear me because they were coming up the stairs behind me saying, "I'm being raped, help me!" Then she stood up and I'll never forget... I actually thought I was saved. That's how stupid I was even at that stage. I mean, I had just been raped three times. And she went, "Oh, Karen" and hugged me. And these men came into the room behind me and there was like three or four of them. There was all this scuffle and they pulled her boyfriend who was also holding me back... away... holding them away from me, you know, kind of standing... And they pushed him out of the way and started hitting him and then they said, "Keep out of this!" I remember this big fight starting and this scuffle and that and this guy was going, "Get out of my room! You've got no right to come in here", and this girl... she actually stood in front of me with her back to me and she had her hands holding my hands and she was going, "You can't touch her. She's a friend. Leave her alone." And they were going, "Where do you know her from?" and she said, "Oh, I've known her for years." And they just started laughing and then they just started slapping her around, you know? And then they dragged me back outside and raped me over a car a couple of times. And then this guy came out and took me into this room and this guy held me down while he raped me three times. And then eventually I begged him to let me go to the toilet which is how I actually escaped. And... because when they'd actually carried me into this room I was unconscious... unconscious on the car because they'd actually thrown me down on this gravel and beaten me up which was where the police said a couple of other people raped me which I can't remember. But I can... the only thing I remember about being carried into this room is just going up these three stairs. And I can remember when he was actually raping me on the bed remembering those three stairs so I asked him if I could go to the toilet and he actually made me urinate on

the floor in front of him. So I actually had to say to him, "I want to have a shit". So he said, "Get outside", and hit me across the face. So I kind of slunk across the room and I knew that there were three stairs going down. And I went down these three stairs and then I can remember crouching down, making myself count to three and then going for it. I can remember running back to the car with the fight of.. And someone had folded up my top... my two tops and put my handbag on top of it. This was where the original fight had broken out.

Q: But they had bothered to fold them up?

A: And they'd also... I found out... they had gone through and taken all my cigarettes, all my money. So anyway, I got both tops and I tied one round like that and then the other round like that. 'Cos I had to have clothes before going out in public.

Q: Were they chasing you at this point?

A: No, no. 'Cos this guy was still in the bedroom and I picked up this bag and then I ran to the front of the house where they had this high fence with barbed wire. It was at the side of the house and I had to climb up on this thing to go over it. And he actually shouted out my name. He saw me from the doorway, and he shouted out, "Hey, bitch!" And I can remember just feeling this amazing strength and I just kind of leapt over this wall and actually ran. I just kept running and running until I came to this house with lights on. And this is like five o'clock in the morning. Yes, so...

Q: And they presumably looked after you?

A: Well, no. I knocked on this lady's door and I found out what I'd said later from court, I mean, because she had testified. She said she opened the door and there was this "woman looking utterly distressed with all her hair everywhere and no clothes on and cuts and bruises and bleeding and could barely walk" and she said, "I said, Oh my God!" and "Come in", and I'd said to her, "Excuse me, could I please use your telephone". She'd said to me, "Yes, of course, come in". And I said, "Do you mind?" Here I am standing there, you know, kind of half dead saying...

Q: Still concerned with being polite!

A: Yeah well, 'cos I thought, "Well, I don't want to drop blood on everything". And she said, "Go on in". And I picked up the telephone and I dialed [REDACTED].

...

A: Yeah. And I'd said, "Hello, police", and they'd put me through to the police. And she said that I was just as calm as anything and I'd said on the telephone, "Hello, my name's AMANDA, I've just been raped. Could you please send a car? I'd like to press charges." And she said she just couldn't believe it - this woman standing there, kind of saying, "Send someone now". And then they said to me on the telephone... and I can still remember them saying, "What's the address?" and I can remember just going absolutely crazy because I didn't know where I was. And that's when I actually broke down. I was going, "Oh my God, I don't know". And this policeman on the end saying, "Now calm down. Is there someone else there?", so I had to put this lady on the phone. And then the police arrived, my heroes.

Q: Were they alright?

A: Yeah. Right from the beginning two officers arrived. All I can remember is seeing two uniformed police. And they were there so quick 'cos I can remember this lady... by the time she made me a cup of coffee, the police had arrived. And she wouldn't let me put on any of her clothes which was very wise of her, looking back at it. Yeah, so these two uniformed policemen... and then they must have radioed or something, because the next thing there was a detective. And that same detective... right from then... was right through the last court-case and even writes to me now sometimes. He became a good friend.

Q: So he's been supportive.

A: I mean, even though this last case he had nothing to do with, he sat there for six days of court, outside the courtroom or in the courtroom, sitting next to me all the way through. So that was quite nice. And then... because of the kind of person I am he made it so easy. 'Cos I can remember I had to... you know, going through to the statement we got to this bit where he, CLARK, the detective... he'd ordered me breakfast and it just arrived and there was this sausage on the plate. And we were just at this part of the statement when this guy had forced his penis into my mouth! And I was just saying it and they put down this plate with this sausage and egg and baked beans or something equally revolting, I think it was. And I just immediately felt nauseous and I just picked up this rubbish bin and said, "Oh my God, I'm going to be sick!" And he thumped his fist on the desk and he said, "Not in my bloody office, you're not!" And I can remember immediately this nausea just disappeared and I went, "Oh, oh, sorry". So I mean, right from then we got on really well. And he was quite tough with me yet, you know... but he'd hand me a box of tissues at the right time, kind of thing. But he was really good. Yeah, so, I would recommend going to the police.

Q: And were they quite sensitive about examining you and questions that they...?

A: No, the police doctor was awful. He didn't say a word to me. He just walked straight in and said to my aunt, "Are you going to come in?" And I can remember... I was shaking all over my aunt. And the way I handle things is by laughing so when he was... when he went to do the internal examination I went, "Oh my God! Not again", and started laughing 'cos my aunt was holding my hand and she was going, "Ssh, don't be so stupid". And he kind of rolled his eyes. And in this bit where, you know, you've got to have a chewing-gum sample or saliva sample, he held out his little bag and I spat at it and it missed and he went, "Oh God!" You could just tell he was really angry at having been dragged into the police-station at seven o'clock on a Sunday morning and he decided to take it out on me. And I mean, the only reason I was joking was because I was trying to be a bit light-hearted about the fact that I was having an examination. And he honestly didn't say a word all the way through the examination. He didn't explain what he was doing or anything. But the strange thing was I had read quite a lot so I knew what the gum was for but, I mean, if there had been like a sixteen or seventeen year old girl or well, it doesn't have to be young, does it - anyone that hadn't read about police examinations... I mean, you know, there he is plucking out pubic hairs and you're not expected to say anything.

Q: Mm. They could at least sort of talk you through it.

A: Yeah, and the funniest one was he refused to come to court to testify. Very strange man. Oh no, sorry - he came to the first court-case. He did come to the first one and they said, "Do you recognise...?" I mean, this is three months afterwards and he went, "No, I don't think she's here". I was sitting there going, "It's me, you know, over here. You know, the girl you didn't talk to".

Q: "Did you have your eyes shut as well?"

A: I mean, three months...

Q: Yes, you don't forget in three months.

A: And anyway, he just read straight from the case notes and they asked him a few questions and he said, "Oh, I don't remember". I mean, he didn't remember anything about it. I mean, it's just like another... 'Cos he was a normal GP that gets called in to the police station. So he's not doing it all the time and he's quite young.

Q: Doesn't sound like he ought to be doing it.

A: No. But one thing people don't understand. I would prefer to have a male doctor than female, I think. I mean, I say that, I don't...

Q: But he was a male doctor?

A: Yeah. I dunno. I've had as many bad experiences with female doctors.

Q: As with men?

A: Yes, so I don't really opt for female doctors. I mean, because I've seen women at like gynecological units or whatever that have said, "I'm sorry, I'll wait for two hours if...", you know, they're willing to wait like two hours if they've got to see a female doctor.

Q: How many court-cases were there?

A: Counting depositions, five.

Q: Five?

A: Five. 'Cos, I mean, you've got to have your preliminary hearing and then there was a retrial at the last one. The jury hung after ten hours.

Q: Why did they hang?

A: It was actually my fault because in the first court-case I could talk about it really easily and that, but my father hadn't been there. In this one, my father had been there. And CLARK had said to me beforehand, "Is there going to be a problem with your dad there?" He said, "I find with rape victims if your father's there you can't talk. You just can't really talk like you did last time." He said, "Because you're a good witness. You don't get upset but, if there's going to be any problems say now and I'll ask your dad not to go in if that's what you want." And I didn't want my father to go in but I couldn't... I didn't want my dad to know that. I mean, 'cos he really wanted to be part of it so... and he really wanted to see the court-case. And through the first court-case there was bits like, what was it, when the guy put his penis in my mouth, I refused to talk about it. I mean, sitting on a witness-stand I said to them, "Sorry, I won't say". I just couldn't because my father was there, and I didn't want him to know. And anyway, it wasn't until the jury actually hung and I got really, really upset and my father actually sat down and cried... and when I went back to court for the retrial, having my father there didn't make any difference at all. I actually wanted him there the second time because he'd been so supportive.

Q: So you could talk about it then?

A: Yes, the second time I was much more open, and I said things that this guy had said. Oh, the defense just ripped me to pieces. "Oh, you've remembered this since last week, have you, AMANDA?" and things like that. So anyway, in the second one the jury was only out for two hours so that's quite...

Q: It must make you feel very exposed, doesn't it?

A: Yeah. The worst defense council I ever had... the worst defense lawyer was in the first case defending one of them. He just absolutely tore me to pieces on the stand. And the most ironic thing was when I went back to [NAME OF COUNTRY] this time, he was actually at the court-case in another case and he came up and said, "Hello, how are you?" And I just looked at him and we'd actually sat down, and he'd said, "Do you know what? You're one of the best rape victims I've ever seen for going on the stand. You did really well." And I can remember thinking, "Is that because he thinks I acted?" So anyway, we talked for quite a while. He was telling me about a couple of cases he had done, and he happened to mention a case he had done with this [REDACTED] who had been raped violently. And he said, "But don't worry, I showed her up for being the promiscuous little miss that she was". So anyway, the only reason I was talking to this guy was I was thinking, "This is fascinating. This man is allowed to go out in public". And right at the end I said to him, "Do you think (name's) guilty now?" And he said, "No, I don't think he was". He said, "I think you've made a big mistake". And I can remember just thinking, "My God, I don't believe it. I've got this man sitting here who's been through the whole

case. He knows that the guy's guilty and he's telling me a year later he's not". And then he said... he actually appealed against his sentence and I said, "Did you defend him?" and he said, "No". And I said, "Why?" and he said, "'Cos it was a very weak case". I said, "It might have had something to do with the fact that he was a rapist".

Q: Did it affect the way you felt about your own body and your sexuality and things?

A: Um... I wouldn't wear a skirt afterwards. It sounds really crazy... I couldn't wear a skirt, not out at night. It was just... I didn't really want to be thought of as a woman and I actually stopped... started wearing trousers a lot more. I mean, strange things like that - yeah, and I did become very modest, well, very self-conscious. Well, I was beforehand, but more so.

Q: I mean, did it make you not want to touch yourself... presuming you might have touched yourself before but like areas might become dangerous almost or...?

A: Yeah, it did take quite a while and actually the first time I masturbated afterwards, when I actually realised what I had done I was horrified. And I actually...

Q: Why?

A: I was horrified because I thought... I actually thought that because I'd been raped I shouldn't have done it. No, I didn't think I shouldn't have done it. I thought it was too soon afterwards 'cos it was like, say, three or four months. And I thought, 'My goodness, you could have waited longer', but then, I mean... Because, I mean, there is the thing that after you've been raped you wonder why you haven't lost your sexual needs or whatever. I mean, you do really think that you are meant to become sexless, completely sexless, like you think that if you say to your mother, "Oh, he's attractive", she's going to think, "She was raped. How can she say that?" So, I didn't actually... I still feel embarrassed admitting to people that I slept with someone four months afterwards. I mean, I still feel like it's something that I shouldn't have done.

Q: As though there's some sort of respectable time that you should wait.

A: Yeah, exactly.

Q: Which in a way is ludicrous. I mean, if you wanted to in a sense there's no respectability or unrespectability about...

A: And also, there's the aspect of it that I actually had sex with someone to prove that I could do it to myself, which was for the totally wrong reason, but that's why I did it. And every time I had sex with someone after that it was kind of, "I've done it. Aren't I clever? And I didn't get scared this time." And it became something that if I did it, I was a bit stronger than last time.

Q: Almost proving certain things to yourself.

A: It wasn't... the worst one was about six months after the rape. I picked up a man - the first time I've ever actually picked up a man. I didn't know him from Adam. I actually met him in a restaurant, and he said, "Would you like to come back to my place for a coffee?" I mean, the scenario! I mean, so I went back for a coffee, we listened to some music and then he said, "Would you like to stay the night?" And I just looked at him and I said, "Yes". So we just got up and walked to his bedroom. I mean, looking back on it, it's awful! And we got into bed and we... oh no, we took our clothes off, got into bed and had sex. Anyway, straight after having sex I thought, "Oh my God, what have I done?" So I waited for him to go to sleep, I got out of bed, picked all my clothes up, climbed out of the window. In the garden I put my clothes on and ran all the way home.

Q: And never saw him again?

A: No, never saw him again. And the worst thing was my best friend - she lived opposite [HIS WORKPLACE]. And I was terrified of seeing him. I used to have to sneak into her house, you know, 'cos it was right opposite the staff room and I was

sure I was going to see him one day. But luckily, I never did. I mean, running away in the middle of the night! But I was just absolutely disgusted with myself for sleeping with this person that I... I didn't even like him at all. I mean, 'cos he'd just sat there and talked about his salary for an hour beforehand and I mean, you know, sitting there and listening to him, I was just kind of staring at the wall.

Q: What?

A: His salary?

Q: What he gets?

A: Yeah, and I was just thinking, "This is the most boring person I have ever talked to". And then all of a sudden he just stopped and said, "Would you like to go to bed?" and I'd said "Yes"? I should have slapped his face.

Q: You mentioned in the questionnaire that somebody had actually forced you to have anal sex?

A: Yeah. It was my ex-boyfriend.

Q: What, from... sort of previously?

A: Yeah, when he came back from COUNTRY I'd been unfaithful to him and it was his way of punishing me. We were actually having sex in bed and then all of a sudden, he got really angry and he said, "I don't really want to be having sex with you". And then he said, "Why can't you cry? Why don't you feel guilty?" And I said, "I'm sorry, I can't feel guilty for being unfaithful", and he just raped me and turned me over and then tried to make me feel guilty.

Q: He was strong enough to do that?

A: I was just completely passive. I didn't fight. I was just lying there and crying. And then afterwards he got straight out of bed and actually got a blanket and lay on the floor and I started really sobbing and saying, "You've really, really hurt me". And he said, "Well, I hope you're as hurt as I am". Which is another reason why I left him. So anyway...

Q: Is that the one before last?

A: Yup. So anyway... So, I've only ever told one friend that. 'Cos you're not meant to get raped twice, are you? And I think... the second time I feel more responsible because I could have stopped it, I think, if I'd fought, if I'd screamed or something.

Q: Maybe you didn't really believe that he was going to do it.

A: No, well, it was rather painful and fast, and it was extremely violent.

Q: Well, I think it is quite a... especially in that context.

A: He was deliberately hurting me, deliberately. And the thing was the enjoyment - he actually got enjoyment from it. I mean, it wasn't even like rape in the sense where it's not sexual at all, it's just like violent.

Q: Like sort of violent abuse of you rather than any...

A: I mean, this was sexual as well as violent. It was just really...

Q: Yes, well, you're well out of that.

A: And the worst thing I did was, I actually read his diary and I'd actually found out from reading his diary from when he'd been with his ex-girlfriend, he'd actually been hitting her. And I thought, "Oh dear. Oh dear." Although he'd never been violent with me before that, there was only once when I was actually kind of scared of him. We were having a playfight and I said, "Stop. That hurt", and he kept going and he was laughing. I did stop and think then. I thought... Although it was a playfight situation I thought, "What if he'd been angry and thought it was funny?"

Q: And just didn't stop.

A: Mm. I sure pick them, don't I? Yes, anyway, that was quite a strange relationship. I mean, he doesn't know where I live now, although he's phoned me at work and we've spoken on the telephone. He knows where I work, but he knows that I don't

want him to have anything to do with my life, so he's quite aware of that so he just stays away. 'Cos in his own way he's... I think he's actually pretty screwed up, so I don't think he actually wants anyone to hate him. I think he feels sorry for himself. He's quite a pathetic creature, really. So, I mean, I think he's quite willing to leave it as it is.

Q: That must have made you feel quite bad about sex?

A: Yeah, well I mean, 'cos I'd always thought that once you'd got to a certain stage in a relationship and you really did trust each other and whatever... well, what I forgot was that in a relationship you can still be raped. So, I mean, when I discovered that as well, I was really, really well and truly put off men because although you know most rapes are from people you know or acquaintances...

Q: One of the awful aspects is the familiarity. It doesn't have to be strangers.

A: Yeah, I find it really, really scary. I really wish that people were more open about the bad experiences they have had because, I mean, [REDACTED].

Q: It doesn't encourage you, does it?

A: So, I mean, it makes me wonder. If there's that kind of statistics within just a group of six women that I know quite well and have grown up with, imagine...

Q: Yeah, 'cos it's very easy just to keep things, as you've said earlier, to yourself. I mean, for instance, all those people who wrote to you about their rape experiences.

A: Yeah, the funniest one is that rape victims have all got this thing that when they are talking about it or they write to each other they say, "Yours was worse than mine". Yeah, 'cos a lot of women wrote to me. They were quite apologetic. They put at the beginning of the letter, "Well, I wasn't gang-raped. I'm sorry, I was only raped by one person", or, "I was only raped by two". I mean, you know, they were apologetic, you know, "I'm sorry I'm bothering you but..."

Q: Yes, as though there's some kind of hierarchy of rape.

A: Yes, 'cos people think of gang-rapes as being worse but when you think about it at least it's not someone you know. I mean, at least... 'cos that's the worst. I don't know. It's a crazy world, isn't it?

Q: So you said that you hoped to actually do something that might involve kind of working with rape victims. Do you think you will?

A: I really do think that when someone has been raped, the most important thing is to talk to someone else that has been raped because, you know, it's the same when someone's died. They say, "I understand how you're feeling", and I can remember saying to this woman in Rape Crisis, "Have you been raped?", and she said, "No, but I've read a lot of books on it". And she said, "I'm a trained counsellor", and she went on to explain. And I just thought, "This is really ridiculous. I've got this woman sitting here saying" - 'cos she'd said to me dozens of times - "I know exactly what you're going through" and I was thinking, "You don't know what I'm going through, you silly woman". But that's not her fault, obviously. I think it's really good that she's a counsellor.

Q: I suppose it's quite important to feel that somebody's actually vaguely experienced the same...

A: That's why I had like eighty replies to this letter just saying, "I have always wanted to meet another rape victim or write to another rape victim". I can remember this one woman I met, she actually said, "Oh, I know a girl that's been raped but you wouldn't want to meet her because she's very mixed-up". And I thought... she said, "Oh, she's only sixteen and she's been raped but, you know, if you want to meet a rape victim I could probably give you her phone number, but I don't think you'd want to because she's very mixed-up". And I thought, "I wonder why!", you know.

Q: Isn't anyone mixed-up if you've had that kind of...?

A: So yeah, I would really like to work with rape victims, but the only problem is I'd like to give it more time because I still want to as much as I have, but I still think I've got a long way to go before I can actually talk about it without... I don't know. Maybe it's better if... I'm not sure, because at least if you're being counselled and it hasn't happened to the person, their own experience isn't going to come into it so it's totally objective, whereas if you're talking to someone that's been raped, you know, I don't know whether you'd be more open or less open about some things.

Q: 'Cos have you spoken, since then, with anyone who has?

A: At a ... party. There was a case in [NAME OF COUNTRY] where a young girl had been raped - REDACTED - and we were at this ... party, my first and last ... party, and no-one actually... it was only a little while after the rape and no-one knew that I'd been raped and it was a kind of an acquaintance through work. And we were all sitting there, and we started about this case and I was getting quite upset about it, saying, "I think it's...", I was getting quite emotional. And then this woman next to me said, "Oh, I think something should be done. I think it's shocking these women that get raped that kick up a fuss. I mean, it's not as if they can't look after themselves." She said, "It's the children we've got to worry about", or something. And I could just feel myself going to lose control. And I was just getting angry. It's one of the few times when I've really lost my temper. And then she said... she cracked a joke, "A man can run faster with his...", no, "A woman can run faster with her skirt up than a man with his trousers down". And it all went quiet and I think it was because I was just sitting there, kind of frothing at the mouth. And I just stood up... and I mean, I didn't know this woman, and I just said, "I think you are despicable", and I was just yelling and I just started going, "I can't bear people like you! You don't deserve to live!" I was saying, "You're a woman. You're a shame to the sex", and I was yelling at her. I was just, like, absolutely hysterical. "You don't know what you're talking about. You're just totally ignorant and how dare you joke about rape. It's not something that's to be laughed at!" And ROSA, the girl whose ... party it was, stands up and says, "Well everyone, I've got a new bookshelf. Would you all like to come and look at it?" So everyone went trooping off to her bedroom to look at her new bookshelf. And this woman, MEL, turned round and she said, "When were you raped?" She just looked at me and said, "When were you raped?" And I just burst into tears and I sat down, kind of fell down on my chair - I was exhausted - and I said, "Three months ago". And she said, "Well, I'm sorry. I was raped when I was five, that's why I stick up for children". And she said, "I shouldn't have joked". And we both sat there and started crying and going, "Oh God, isn't this this terrible!", you know. So everyone came trooping back in after seeing the bookshelf. Oh, it was funny! The look on their faces with these two people sitting there blubbing away in the corner of the room, you know, going...

Q: And do you plan to get married and have children or have you got views on...?

A: Well, yeah, I don't know how I feel about marriage 'cos part of me thinks that it's something extremely special and I don't know whether I'd ever be lucky enough to meet someone that would have me or...

Q: I don't see why they wouldn't have you!

A: Or otherwise whether I'd be lucky enough to find someone that special 'cos, I mean, I haven't felt about anyone... I've never met anyone that I could even imagine spending the next two years with let alone the rest of my life. And then sometimes I get a bit angry about marriage. I think it's just this legal agreement that enslaves this poor woman. Because I don't want to really take on someone else's name or wear a ring but...

Q: Well, you don't have to do that.

A: Yeah, I know. But some of the things that go with marriage seem a bit of a rough deal. But yes, definitely I'll have children. Yeah, no, I would like to have children but not for three or four or five... five years, I think, late twenties at least. I don't want to be an old parent, but I don't think that I'm responsible enough to have children. I'm aware that I'm irresponsible...

Q: And are you going to travel?

A: Yeah, yeah. Africa's my first priority. They kill off too many elephants. Yes, I want to go to Africa before they totally destroy it and I'm spending a month in Europe over the summer this year which I've been trying to get round to since I've been over here. I got too wrapped up in my job. And then I think Asia's on the cards after that. I think after that I'll be so poor that I'll have to settle down and get married. Find someone rich to support me because I'll have so many debts, you know, running up all these credit cards round the world!

Q: So how long do you think that you'll stay in the job that you're in now?

A: I'm planning to stay for another year because one day I want to... I mean, because it's good to get experience in PR and marketing. My dream job would be working as Press Officer in something like Greenpeace or a conservation trust of some description.

Q: Over here?

A: I think Britain needs a lot more help than [NAME OF COUNTRY]. REDACTED. 'Cos I think Britain is so traditional. I mean, well, they've only just got round to changing from pounds and pence, I mean, pounds and pence! Pounds and ounces.

Q: Yeah.

A: So I think they need a bit of a hurry up.

Q: And if you had to describe yourself as a person, how would you do it?

A: Enthusiastic... enthusiastic and irresponsible! I'm quite ambitious at work. I'm quite ambitious. Extremely talkative. I swing from extremes - I'm both moody and at times I'm extremely self-confident and then I'll swing to being extremely un-self-confident. Quite arrogant, quite kind, very concerned about things in general. I like to think of myself as being a feminist. And I try to be a good friend, but it doesn't always work.

Q: Why not?

A: Well, I mean, sometimes you let people down when you don't mean to, etcetera. Yes. And I've got funny knees.

Q: On top of all that!

A: On top of all of that! Oh, and I'm a hypocrite because I smoke - I just spotted my cigarette. I go round - I've changed the office. It's all become non-smoking. I'm a smoker but the office has become non-smoking and o-zone-friendly, so I have to go out of the office to have a cigarette at work just on principle.

Q: That's very community-minded.

A: Very hypocritical as well!

Q: Where... if you go out now to meet people where do you mainly go to meet people?

A: I used to be a pub drinker. I still go to pubs but not nearly as much. I've got a thing for restaurants at the moment. Sometimes I eat out every night of the week. It's getting quite ridiculous actually - extremely expensive. I've just got a rude letter from my bank! Yes, so, eating out and I'm a member of a health club in LONDON BOROUGH. I mainly socialise through work because my closest friend, JESS, she's at work. And I've got family in [THE UK] and she's got family in Scotland, so if we go away for weekends that's where we go. Yeah, that's mainly it.

Q: 'Cos how did you meet this guy that you're having a relationship with at the moment?

A: He's JESS'S flat mate.

Q: That's right.

A: Yeah, he's a friend's flat mate. So that was quite a nice way to meet someone 'cos he didn't have any choice. 'Cos of course if it's a good friend it's quite nice 'cos you really had the opportunity to get to know someone. You weren't in a social situation, so there was no pressure, so we actually did decide we genuinely liked each other. It wasn't a mistake at all.

Q: And do you still do quite a lot of things with your girlfriend?

A: Yes, actually it's quite funny because it overlaps. Like, for instance last night, I went out with JESS after work. We went swimming and then had a meal and then went home to her place and DEC was there, so we deliberately did some work together. Poor guy, I mean, I neglect him. I mean, it was kind of my night with JESS, so it was quite unusual. But he's quite nice.

Q: So he understands that you're having a night with her and that he can't just sweep you off, sort of thing?

A: Yeah. And likewise, if we're going to spend the night out and go out, he usually comes here. We go from here. Yeah, it does work quite well. Luckily JESS is quite a good friend. 'Cos some friends wouldn't particularly... 'cos, I mean, it must be difficult for her 'cos, you know, when I telephone, sometimes she must wonder whether I'm actually phoning to speak to her or DEC. We've actually got a system where I... I actually phone when I know DEC's going to be in and JESS is going to be out or likewise where I just don't bother phoning 'cos, you know... Yes, it's working out. It's going to be more awkward if we break up.

Q: Yes, that's true.

A: We'd still be friends though. I'm pretty confident of that.

Q: But is he somebody you could get serious about or is it just a...?

A: Yeah.

Q: You could?

A: Yes. And I've only said that once before so it's not a habit. I think it's just because he's so genuine. He's actually just extremely nice.

Q: What does he do?

A: He's a SKILLED ROLE. So he's come to London and he's... he's actually come for like two, three years and he's just staying long-term before he sets up his own practice. And he speaks quite good English, so he plans to become pretty fluent. So that's why he's in London. It will be quite interesting to see how it works out. 'Cos I don't plan to go back to [NAME OF COUNTRY] but it looks like he's planning to go back to EUROPEAN COUNTRY.

Q: Oh, I didn't realise he was OTHER EUROPEAN.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Obviously I hadn't read that, or I hadn't listened.

A: Yeah, no, I don't think I said he was OTHER EUROPEAN actually. Just kind of throwing that in, you know, he's going back to COUNTRY.

Q: Yes, I was suddenly thinking - "He speaks quite good English"! I hadn't assumed he didn't!

A: Actually, we were joking about it the other night. I said to him, "Do you think you'd like me quite so much if I spoke LANGUAGE?" 'Cos it would be... 'cos it's quite strange 'cos he doesn't speak English as a first language. It makes it a lot easier in bed because everything has to be explained thoroughly! And it's quite nice when you're talking. 'Cos you have to speak so frankly, you know. 'Cos if I say to him, "I

think you're really sweet", he'll go, "Why?" So we often get the dictionary out, you know, I've got a thesaurus and he'll go through all the different words.

Q: So you really have to define what you're saying.

A: Yes, it's good. I mean, there's certainly not a communication problem. He's the first guy that's actually said to me, "I like you because you talk so much". It's usually the opposite way round. He said, "You're good for my English and you explain everything very well". So I give him English lessons with my [NAME OF COUNTRY] accent.

Q: He should have a good accent at the end.

A: He's starting to sound like a South African, actually, because the combination of OTHER EUROPEAN and [NAME OF COUNTRY]...

Q: Yes.

A: I don't want to tell him, though. He'll lose confidence at this stage. I'll work on the accent later, I think!

Q: Does he help on your confidence or has your confidence always been...?

A: No, he's really sweet. Um, he's actually the first... well, my last boyfriend was totally... I couldn't talk about anything that I was interested in. He sounds lovely, doesn't he?

Q: He sounds great, yes!

A: I bet you'd love to meet him! Yeah, no, I mean, DEC will just talk continuously about work and... he's really interested in things that I do so that's really nice. It's the first time I've had someone that's actually interested in things that I do because I do them, you know?

Q: And has he helped in terms of sexual self-confidence?

A: Well, the funniest thing is that he's quite inexperienced. He had rather a rough relationship where, I think for the last three years they had sex four or five times. It was a real brother/sister relationship and he said he found it very frustrating. So, I mean, he's rather keen! Um, so, yeah, he's mature and yet he's... and he's really caring and, you know, I can really explain things to him. It's good. Yes, I think we have great potential together! I feel really confident with him which is nice. I don't feel self-conscious at all. Unfortunately, it makes life difficult for my flat mates.

Q: Yes, well, they'll have to start making some noise themselves!

A: Yeah, no, it's because I've moved my stereo up here. I'll have to get a radio, I think.

Q: Oh, and one other thing. I keep going backwards sometimes instead of forwards! In terms of just... when you were talking about your education - are those three things... are they equivalent to "A" levels? You were suggesting...

A: No ..[REDACTED].

Q: So did you go to college?

A: No. I did... well, it was either a choice between spending another three years in [NAME OF COUNTRY] and going through college or travelling now. So I decided to do that and because I'm getting on quite well in my job I've decided I don't really need to go now. I haven't got a qualification to fall back on, unfortunately.

Q: 'Cos how... when did you leave school in [NAME OF COUNTRY]?

A: Well, I left school early, but I actually studied correspondence courses.

Q: That's right.

A: So I did three extra years, just, you know, by working in the day and studying in the evening. It was quite a nice way to do it.

Q: What were you working at?

A: Sorry?

Q: What were you working as?

A: Lots and lots of things. [REDACTED]. Student jobs.

Q: So you've had quite a lot of varied experience in general?

A: [REDACTED].

Q: What can I say? Quite a handy person to have around.

A: Yeah. No, never again! [REDACTED].

Q: Is there anything else you can think of about kind of your sexuality, women's sexuality that's important to talk about in terms of your own experiences approaching men and trusting men and things like that?

A: Um, the only thing I can say really is that I think of every man as being a potential rapist, and that it takes a very long time for me to trust people now. Even women.

Q: Even women?

A: Yeah, based on a lot of... who I thought were friends and their reactions from past things. And that I think things will get better. And I'm pretty sure that statistically I shouldn't be raped again. Yeah, no, I'm pretty confident I won't even put myself in a dangerous situation where it can happen. I'll just have to hope that I choose the right people from now on.

Q: And does it make you look for a long-term relationship or sort of avoid...?

A: Well, it did make me avoid them but now I'm only interested in serious relationships. I mean, apart from all the risks involved, but also having someone you can depend on. It's quite nice 'cos, I mean, I don't know... well, to have a lover and a friend in one person is pretty good. So hopefully it will work. Yes, I can see myself marrying and having children in ten years' time. The thing is, I've got so much to do. I've got so many plans and I'm not quite sure how to fit them all in.

End of interview.