

Student relations: a

Elizabeth is 28 years old, she is a student, a single mother, and a feminist. She is well travelled and highly intelligent. Frequently, Elizabeth goes shopping for second hand clothes to send to any one of the 20 or so needy families she has met in

her travels overseas. Elizabeth has a GPA of 8 and she will go in to Honors next year, after which she plans to do graduate studies abroad. Meanwhile, when she's not studying or spending time with her children, she's working at her part time job. Elizabeth is a prostitute...

Do you get many students?

I get a few profs once in a while. (laughing)
I don't go in for frat jokes and stuff like that. If more than two guys come in together, we separate their appointments or, if there's two or three of us working, we'll split them up.

You get profs every once in a while?

Yes, but they never come back once they find out that I'm a student.

How do they find out that you're a student?

They usually just say "I'm a professor at the university" and I say "Oh yea, I'm a student there" and then they kind of go (choking gesture).

Do you have a social life around the university?

No, I have friends all over the place though, country people up North, people in private clubs here in town - everything from judges to whores.
I don't avoid people at the university, it's just that I'm really busy trying to keep my family life stable and keep my grades up. With work, children, home, and school, there isn't much time for a social life.

Do your friends know what you do?

A few of them - some do, some don't. Most of them think I work at a hotel as a waitress. With some people I worry about how they would take it.

It's just as boring as any other job. I get a lot of satisfaction from simpler things - like doing an assignment and getting a good grade on it.

How do most people react when they find out what you do?

Very few people know. Sometimes it's a shock but I've never lost a friendship over it. I'm pretty discreet about it, I mean you can sort of tell who would be able to take it and who wouldn't.
Sometimes I get teased and that hurts. Like when someone is bitching about their job and they'll say something like "Well, everyone's got to do something for their money, eh?" nudge, nudge.

Why does that hurt, are you ashamed?

Some people think that we just go in there and come out with a lot of money without any real effort. I'm not talking so much about physical effort, it takes a lot of mental effort. There's a lot of rationalizing - I'm not exactly the happy hooker or anything.
The job is hard on my self esteem sometimes. I'll admit that. It's the competitive nature of the business, there's a lot of stress.
I have my clients that I enjoy being with but there are a lot of people that I think are absolute assholes too. I try not to internalize it. What I do (when I'm with an unpleasant one) is I dwell on the bucks, I just think about how much money I'm making that day. Then, when another one comes in, I play the little adding game again.

I get the feeling you're on pretty good terms with your regular clients. Do you think they're nice people?

Oh yea, they are. I have some good clients. I have to maintain a business attitude though so I usually try to get business over with first and then we just sort of pretend that it (business) doesn't exist. That's what they're looking for, they're just lonely.
A lot of men are from out of town like men that have worked up north for 30 years. They have no real way of going about meeting women or knowing how to talk to them whereas I've lived in rural areas, I know how to talk to oil riggers and such, so there's some form of connection there for them.

Do you run in to clients outside of work?

Yes, if they're single they usually say "Hi, how are you?" but usually it's better if I act as though I don't know them. I don't want any trouble - they're paying big bucks.

How old are most of your clients and what are their backgrounds?

I'd say they're 35 and older - some are elderly. Some of them are very gentle men and some are grumpy, grabby, creepy old goats. We get mostly businessmen and oilmen.

What was your childhood like?

Very stable. Very average. My family moved around a lot but other than that it was very normal. It was a very loving, strict, religious family.
I was just a wild child, I don't know why. It seems I had to prove something. I was very bored with school by about grade 2.

Were you sexually active at a young age?

I've been sexually active since I was 14 - about average.

How did you get started?

I got started in this business through a friend. I didn't really know what was involved - I thought it was just massage. You see, the extra-curricular activities that are involved aren't really condoned by the (place of) work. The most that is condoned is a hand job or what is known as a "complete". That's what I was told when I started and I said, "You mean until they come?!"
Basically, by the time I found out I was already in it and the money was there.

How do you feel about what you do?

I found that before I had school the job had developed in to a material thing - lots of money, new clothes, good drugs, etc. but it was very empty, you know? When I came back to school I had something to go for. Now it's just a means to an end. I rationalize it - I'm in it for the money because I have other priorities.



How do you feel about other forms of prostitution like that involving teens or children?

How can I feel anything about it?...It's sick.

Where do you draw the line between what you do and what they do?

That's sort of a weird question, it's like asking me how I feel about mass murderers. How can I have any good feelings about something I know is wrong - something that upsets my stomach?
It's not so much the girls that I'm disgusted with, it's the clients. They never seem to come in to the matter at all - the kind who would go after children in the first place.
When I think of teen prostitution I think of the girls out on the drag. They have no souls, they're all wired (on drugs) or else they have obligations to other people who are wired. They're just soulless.
They don't have the opportunities that I have. I can afford to be objective - a lot of these kids have no alternatives and if they do, they don't realize it.

Would you like to see prostitution legalized?

Maybe it wouldn't need to be legalized but even a union or some form of coalition would be alright too. If it were legislated, we'd have far less dangerous characters coming through the door. We wouldn't have to sniff them out ourselves because they wouldn't be coming around. They'd know they were being observed by law enforcement officers.
Legislation would be good in other ways too. I find there's a lot of competition and undercutting (of price) among the girls. You lose clients that way. If it were legalized, it would also be safer in terms of disease and that kind of thing.

Are prostitutes protected against sexual and violent crimes like other citizens?

No way. If a prostitute is raped, (the feeling is) she deserves it, just like if a woman goes out drinking until 2 am and she gets raped - she deserves it. This is the way it is in the eyes of our legal system which, as you know, is primarily male dominated.
Every once in a while a cop comes in but you can sort of smell them.

Do they come by to check on your safety?

Oh no. They wouldn't come around to check on us and say "Hi, how are you doing today? Are you alright?"

You work in a "massage studio" is it safe?

Yes, there are security guards.

You mean bouncers don't you?

No, I mean (corporate name) Security Guards.
This place is known as a legitimate establishment, most of these places are. They (the guards) stop in for coffee, they don't realize what we're up to.

How do your clients react to the guards?

Like I said, the place has been established for a long time. We have our regulars and if we don't know somebody, there's no way they're going to get in anyway - well, they'll get in for a massage, but that's it.