

What to do
if you
are being
stalked

Angelina
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Foreword

I dedicate this booklet to Bijan Ebrahimi (RIP) and Lauren McCluskey (RIP) and Shana Grice (RIP) and Molly McLaren (RIP) and Katrina Makunova (RIP) and Alice Ruggles (RIP) and Helen Pearson and way too many others.

These others have often needed to relocate across a major distance, some multiple times, after they became the target of a stalker who frequented their shop once or who was a friend of a friend and came along for a meal once or who found them on Twitch or YouTube and ordered some merchandise that happened to have a home address on it. Many have lost their job or their business, some their home. It's occurred to me that migrant women are particularly easy to target as they often do not have a (strong) support network in their host country and have an even bigger chasm to cross if they start looking for assistance. I haven't spotted any research in that area yet.

At the time of writing of this version, I have been the target of "something" for about 13 years. Although it is likely the result of a local community's highly warped sense of black humour, this "something" resembles what forensic psychologist Lorraine Sheridan has described as sadistic stalking. As I discovered on 2 October 2020, it has even contained elements derived from an earlier case of sadistic stalking that began right here where I live (that is, Gosport and Fareham). The perpetrator in that case is still in prison for attempted murder, however. In theory, he could have been released early about 13 years ago, but he wasn't.

I am referring to Anthony Burstow, who later changed his name to Anthony Hurdle, which is why he initially went unrecognised when he met the woman he would later try to kill. The case I am talking about concerns the stalking of Tracey Morgan, then known as Mrs Sant. Her husband left her over the stalking as it was she who was being stalked, not he, and he couldn't handle it. Burstow was a Navy communications specialist, into electronics. Among other things, he bugged the couple's home - including their bedroom.

He would often show up wherever she went. Now imagine Mrs Sant telling people that she is starting to wonder if someone has bugged her home or something... Burstow also apparently made himself a copy of the key to her home and felt free to rummage around, loosen water pipes and what not. He took some of her birth control pills and put them in a cup at her work. Imagine having to talk about that, as a stalking victim. Such stalkers tend to do this in a deliberate calculated manner to discredit their victim (and at the same time demand the attention that they crave from the victim and mess with the person's mind).

In my book "Is cruelty cool?" I wrote about some of my experiences as if they are a regular part of living in England. They may well be. However, there have been hints that I am dealing with someone who is autistic (Asperger's would be my guess), but then, there have also been indications that it concerns someone who has DID as well as hints that it is someone who is a malignant narcissist or psychopath (which, however, can be mistaken for Asperger's and vice versa).

This booklet is not about me or about who or what I may be dealing with, but now you know how I came to write it. This book is also not about the gaslighting attempts that I have been exposed to and often running into strangers who had clearly been told by someone that I was badly flawed in some way.

It is not about me having felt for years that I couldn't breathe.

It is for the many others out there who keep saying that they can't breathe and who are not being heard. It is for the many who have not said this yet but will at some point.

Forgive me this apparent appropriation, but I've been describing it this way for years, as not being able to breathe. In fact, I have said that it's like having a bunch of hippos sitting on your chest and not being able to do a damn thing. (That could also reflect that I had something going on in my lungs as the brain often works in mysterious ways.)

This booklet is also about and for many people who are demonised by the police and by society, instead of supported. I am talking about the people who engage in stalking behaviours. Many are merely misunderstood and perceived as stalkers because lay people do not know how to interpret their behaviour.

There is no way to tell whether someone will ultimately break into your home and stab you to death or strangle you unless you take action now to prevent it or whether you are merely dealing with an innocent soul whose communication style does not match yours.

You cannot tell this by looking at a person.

I know this only too well as my latanoprost eye drops have pigmented my irises so heavily that my now broody-looking eyes usually seem to have little expression other than anger and in combination with my heavy dark eyebrows, that often makes me look highly disturbed and potentially very dangerous. This is why I did some eyebrow-plucking yesterday morning. The older I get, the bushier my eyebrows grow, the more wrinkled my forehead becomes and the more dangerous I appear, certainly to the uninformed average insular person. And the more often young or old misogynistic jerks in Portsmouth abuse me, verbally or otherwise, the angrier I look. So strange. (Not!)

Age as well as poverty (lack of good and varied nutrition) and worries can make you look haggard and a haggard look can also make people perceive you as potentially dangerous.

By contrast, the genuinely dangerous psychopaths tend to go undetected and are often perceived as sweet and charming, aren't they?

We need a new way to deal with stalking and harassment and this should not involve the police. That now suddenly fits well within the growing call to defund and dismantle the police all around the world. I believe that politicians often misinterpret this call. This is not about wanting anarchy and condoning harmful crimes. See it as akin to wanting to abolish the abacus if that makes it clearer (but there was nothing wrong with the abacus).

Although it is less of an issue in some countries than in others, the global problem with police violence, racism and other forms of inequality perpetuated by the police and the many lives that are lost as a result has highlighted that there is at least a need for reform of the police.

For starters, as others have pointed out as well, you are more likely to be arrested for having stolen a sandwich than after having committed a much more serious crime. You are also far more likely to be tasered or subjected to other forms of police violence if you are not white or are not neurotypical.

“Policing is a threat to public health and human rights” is the title of a paper published in the British Medical Journal in December 2020. Should this be the true purpose of the existence of police forces? Is this where our taxes should go to?

I started following the art and science of policing years ago, though it was not my main focus. I have a stack of papers on the topic, not newspapers but articles published in professional journals, sitting in a now dusty box. That policing had gotten out of whack and that police officers were not being held to account by society for just about anything they did that was not right got my attention long before the murder of George Floyd.

Like most upstanding citizens, I had always had a great deal of faith in as well as respect and admiration for police officers, and also gratitude. I had no negative experiences with police officers until relatively recently.

And even after they stopped being the people to go to, for me, when you are dealing with serious trouble, I took a box of donuts to exhausted and stressed police officers guarding a local shopping centre during the 2011 riots in Britain. They clearly expected a complaint or lament from me. The change in the expression on their faces when they realised that all I had for them was donuts told the story better than I can ever paint in words.

In other words, I am not about to lambast all police officers.

For the sake of police officers, too, we need big changes. I have been living in the English county of Hampshire since the end of 2004. A few years after those 2011 riots, my attention was drawn to the low level of job satisfaction among police officers in Hampshire Police. It was not a temporary thing related to the heavy workload caused by the riots.

My interest in policing was renewed after I encountered an article in a Dutch major newspaper about the relentless and perhaps even sadistic tasing in so-called pain compliance mode of a patient who had already been separated from the general hospital population hence posed no risk of harm to others. The hospital, Amnesty International and many others spoke out, with Amnesty going as far as calling the incident torture. This got me to look into taser use in other countries and what I found was quite disturbing.

So now, strangely enough, a paper that I wrote before the murder of George Floyd took place and that I am incorporating into this booklet fits very well within current views that it is best to dismantle existing police forces and start over. As the police community is highly insular, it would be very hard to reform the police without ending up with the same structural problems.

We can build something much better, which is also wonderfully in line with the spirit of “building back better” after we’ve put the pandemic behind us. That, after all, is also about inclusivity, compassion, empathy and caring for our environment, not about constructing more soulless concrete skyscrapers and polluting plants.

Compassion and empathy are often used interchangeably, but not everyone considers them the same. Perhaps one could say that empathy is passive whereas compassion more often leads to positive action. The word “empathy” is often used when in fact “emotional empathy” is meant as opposed to “cognitive empathy” (also called “perspective-taking”). These two forms of empathy

engage different parts of the brain and not all people are capable of both. It is good to be aware of this and not confuse it with “character” or assign blame for it.

People with a narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) tend to have cognitive empathy only. Autistic people can sometimes come across in a similar way as people with NPD, but they may actually lack cognitive empathy and have an abundance of emotional empathy. All forms of neurodiversity exist along a spectrum.

What we particularly need, that is, what the medical profession needs to come up with, is ways of dealing with violent stalkers *before* they become violent. I am aware that this sounds far easier to accomplish when you sum it up the way I just did in the previous sentence than it is in practice. The Atlantic has published several articles on the topic of whether violent psychopaths can be rehabilitated or even cured.

In one of these articles, the mother of a child with conduct disorder writes “He started physically hurting me when his age was measured in months, rather than years. Consequences did not deter him.” Nobody was willing to listen to her concerns. Cases such as the child she describes are immensely challenging, but these may also be the cases that could eventually benefit from new technologies such as CRISPR.

Making sure that war situations become a thing of the past has to be part of such a development, but is not easy to accomplish yet either. We already can and should do much more, however. Making sure that non-judgemental healthcare is available for people who fall outside the neurotypical range and would like support is another one. Making sure that children who need it get good special support from the start is one too.

Within abolitionist thinking, the number of policing-related deaths is one of the reasons for considering policing a public health problem. The way police forces, certainly in England and Wales but also in the US, currently handle reports of stalking and harassment also leads to avoidable deaths.

Within the context of policing and crime, I should mention another initiative. For years, several (often now ex-) police officers have been campaigning for a very different approach to drug-related crime. I am talking about LEAP (Law Enforcement Action Partnership, a UN-accredited international organisation composed of people in law enforcement and the military as well as policy influencers who campaign for evidence-based drug policy)

So if this booklet isn’t about me or about what happened to me, then what it is about? It contains practical tips for those who know or suspect that they are being stalked. This booklet also discusses setting up a separate organisation that deals with all reported cases of stalking and harassment.

Please note that I take no responsibility for any decisions anyone makes on the basis of anything I state in this booklet or articles that I mention or for anything that may or may not happen to you or a loved one.

For starters, I do not know you, dear reader. I do not know your situation and I do not know who might be stalking or harassing you or a loved one.

Stay well. Stay safe. Stay true to the good and strong person you know that you are, no matter how much bad stuff happens in your life. (You do not need to be strong all the time, however. It's okay to be merely human.)

- Angelina



1. Stalking (and harassment)

Stalking is often a health problem rather than a policing issue. It can be caused by a health or neurodiversity-related issue on the side of the perpetrator. It usually results in health issues on the side of the victim.

I have long preferred to use the word “target” but because of its military connotations, it may be better to talk of “object” (the person who is on the receiving end of someone’s thoughts and unwanted actions) as the use of the word “victim” victimises a person by definition.

What happens when anyone files a complaint about stalking and/or harassment is that police officers make an arbitrary assessment of the action needed, if any, and take it from there. Any evidence is taken at face value. Investigating cases of stalking and harassment is time-consuming and knowledge-intensive. It is very expensive, in other words, and in practice is rarely seen as justifiable. (An attack that lands a human being in hospital qualifies as warranting an investigation.)

No risk assessment takes place (no triage). No psychology and psychiatry expertise is at hand. No IT expertise as at hand. Within one police department, let alone between different police departments, there is no exchange of the type of information that would enable such risk assessments in cases in which complaints have been made by others. A quick look at various stalking cases makes that clear enough.

Victims are usually abandoned, often not only by the police but also by friends and family, including partners. Not always. I am aware of one case in which the police advised a woman to relocate to a town to which she had no ties after her (ex) boyfriend had already tried to kill her once and continued to pursue her. Friends and family did not abandon her either. Her entire life got turned upside down.

That was also the case for the teenage object and her close family in the 1993 film “Moment of Truth: Stalking Back”, about a stalking case that took place in St Petersburg, Florida. I have lived there but the stalking occurred earlier and I only recently came across this case. That stalking case, however, represented a health care gap, not a policing matter.

The parents of the stalking target (Laurisa Anello) have said that the film depicts their experiences pretty accurately. There is a scene in which the parents and the perpetrator (Curt Harper) sit in front of a judge and Mr Harper asks – eager to please – “You want me to sign this? Okay, if that is what you want then I will sign this.” He proceeds to sign the document and – on the stairs to the court building – happily continues to talk with the people he has just promised to have no further contact with.

It is pretty obvious that something else was needed here rather than a prison sentence. He had no comprehension of the promise that he had just made; he merely wanted to please everyone and couldn’t understand why his behaviour was so upsetting to others. (Lack of cognitive empathy?)

He was drawn to the object of his attentions because she didn’t make fun of him and for that reason, he “loved” her. Many people were upset because the guy in question was in his twenties and the object of his “love” was a young teenager.

His mother described him as learning-disabled, however. Online, both his mother and the stalker have been described as “weird” by people who lived in the same neighbourhood. That – “weird” – is also often how autistic people are described. Autistic people can also have trouble understanding how their actions are perceived by others and often use a different kind of logic.

In spite of all the existing research and knowledge, societies (communities, cities, states, countries) still let stalking victims down as a rule. The same must also go for stalkers, then. If stalking victims have nowhere to turn to, stalkers who know that they have a problem and would like support with that will have nowhere to turn to either.

This means that the solutions for dealing with stalking have to come from stalking victims and from those who understand the behaviours of stalkers, by which I mean particularly the people around them, the people who grew up with them, the people who genuinely understand what motivates them as well as psychiatrists and psychologists. What we don't need is more demonisation of people who engage in stalking behaviours, as tempting as it may be.

As long as police forces fail stalking targets, these people have to be highly proactive and claw back their freedom for themselves but as long as there is an obvious healthcare gap out there that means that some people engage in stalking behaviours, we must also be compassionate.

When you look at the description of sadistic stalking and also when you look at the Anthony Burstow story, the truth of the following quote by Thich Nhat Hanh is quite obvious. (Those who don't get this don't get what stares into their face. Nobody chooses to engage in activities that can land them in prison for many years unless they feel that they absolutely have no other choice. In the case of stalking, that indicates that the person needs help, one way or another.)

But this is not for stalking victims to address, certainly not all by themselves. It is the task of society, including the healthcare profession. This does not rule out that stalking objects can play a role in the provision of this help but the onus should not be on them. Currently, it is. Stalking victims bear the burden, too often all by themselves.

“When another person makes you suffer, it is because he suffers deeply within himself, and his suffering is spilling over. He does not need punishment; he needs help. That's the message he is sending.”

— Thich Nhat Hanh

“Freedom is not given to us by anyone. We have to cultivate it ourselves.”

– Thich Nhat Hanh



2. How you know that you are being stalked

None of us know what stalking is – the worrisome kind, not the innocent lovesick puppy kind that always fades away after a while – unless we have dealt with it before or until it is too late and our lives have already fallen apart.

Take sadistic stalking. It tends to come from people we barely know or may not even know at all.

A vague sense of unease, the feeling that things are not adding up about a particular person or strange and unpleasant things starting to happen in your life, those are good indicators, if they occur together.

Nowadays, these unpleasant things can be a mix of real-life happenings such as items left on your doorstep or the feeling that someone has been in your home and digital communications such as comments left on your website.

Ignore all the people who say that you are crazy or overreacting. If you know that something is wrong, you are probably right. You can use the old adage “trust, but verify”, also with regard to your impressions in this regard. You will likely find that people who have been stalked themselves are much more likely to take you serious and not dismiss your concerns as silly.

But keep the following in mind too. We all tend to want to believe in the good, the positive, because it is healthier. It helps keep our physiological stress levels down.

When we are under a great deal of physiological stress, we tend to *underestimate* danger.

This happens for the reason that I just mentioned, namely to keep physiological stress levels down.

In various media, you will read the advice not to respond to stalkers at all as well as the advice to tell a stalker in a clear manner that you are not interested in him or her and want the person to go away. In reality, there is no “one size fits all” approach.

Besides, how do you know that that business e-mail from Carol Shipley is actually coming from your stalker, for example? Carol Shipley is a name that I am making up right now, with my apologies to anyone who goes by that name. You click on that business mail. How can you not? You may even reply and whoever sent you that e-mail is bouncing in his chair with joy. A solution for independent professionals, the owners of small businesses as well as YouTubers and other influencers is to outsource all handling of comments, e-mails and incoming phone calls.

With regard to direct contact, some approaches may backfire with some stalkers. Some stalkers read anything they want into anything that you do or don't do.

Not responding to anything he does can be misinterpreted by him as a lack of protest. Singing a song in your kitchen can be misinterpreted by your stalker as a declaration of love for your stalker. You may not know that he is listening to you through your mobile phone that is on the counter, has placed a listening bug under your kitchen table or has approached your neighbour asking him or her to report any songs you may be singing so that he knows what gifts to give you for your birthday.

Any sign of compassion usually serves as encouragement, however, as far as I know.

In a sense, some stalkers are looking for someone who can heal them, re-parent them, regardless of whether they are aware of it or not. Don't kid yourself that you can do this – no matter how strong you are – because particularly sadistic stalkers will isolate you from the rest of the world in any way that they can come up with and they may well literally drive you crazy in the end. Some – maybe that should be “most”, with regard to sadistic stalkers – really love to mess with your mind.

Make sure you maintain a healthy distance. Even if you serve as a surrogate mother to a stalker on one level, on another, you are likely no more than an inanimate toy to him.

If you defend your personal boundaries and stand up for yourself, you will often be made to feel guilty, as if you are abandoning someone who really needs you and as if it is your fault that he is behaving the way he does. But your main obligation is to yourself, also because it puts you in the best position to look after others.

What follows first is a description of sadistic stalking. (Recognise anything?) It comes from forensic psychologist Lorraine Sheridan and her co-workers. See for example: Boon, J.C.W. and Sheridan, L. (2001). Stalker typologies: A law enforcement perspective. *Journal of Threat Assessment*, 1, 75-97.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SADISTIC STALKING

– *victim is an obsessive target of the offender, and who's life is seen as quarry and prey (incremental orientation)*

– *victim selection criteria is primarily rooted in the victim being:*

(i) someone worthy of spoiling, i.e. someone who is perceived by the stalker at the commencement as being:

– *happy*

– *'good'*

– *stable*

– *content*

and (ii) lacking in the victim's perception any just rationale as to why she was targeted

– *initial low level acquaintance*

– *apparently benign initially but unlike infatuation harassment the means of intervention tend to have negative orientation designed to disconcert, unnerve, and ergo take power away from the victim*

– *notes left in victim's locked car in order to unsettle target (cf. billet-doux of infatuated harassment)*

– *subtle evidence being left of having been in contact with the victim's personal items e.g. rifled underwear drawer, re-ordering/removal of private papers, cigarette ends left in ash trays, toilet having been used etc.*

- ‘helping’ mend victims car that stalker had previously disabled
- thereafter progressive escalation of control over all aspects (i.e. social, historical, professional, financial, physical) of the victim’s life
- offender gratification is rooted in the desire to extract evidence of the victim’s powerlessness with inverse implications for his power => sadism
- additional implication => self-perpetuating in desire to hone down relentlessly on individual victim(s)
- emotional coldness, deliberateness and psychopathy (cf. the heated nature of ex-partner harassment)
- tended to have a history of stalking behaviour and the controlling of others
- stalker tended to broaden out targets to family and friends in a bid to isolate the victim and further enhance his control
- communications tended to be a blend of loving and threatening (not hate) designed to de-stabilise and confuse the victim
- threats were either overt (“We’re going to die together”) or subtle (delivery of dead roses)
- stalker could be highly dangerous – in particular with psychological violence geared to the controlling of the victim with fear, loss of privacy and the curtailment of her social world
- physical violence was also entirely possible – especially by means which undermine the victim’s confidence in matters normally taken for granted e.g. disabling brake cables, disarming safety equipment, cutting power off
- sexual content of communications was aimed primarily to intimidate through the victim’s humiliation, disgust and general undermining of self-esteem
- the older the offender, the more likely he would have enacted sadistic stalking before and would not be likely to offend after 40 years of age if not engaged in such stalking before
- victim was likely to be re-visited after a seeming hiatus

Case management implications

- should be taken very seriously
- acknowledge from outset that the stalker activity will be very difficult to eradicate
- acknowledge that there is no point whatsoever in appealing to the offender – indeed will exacerbate the problem
- never believe any assurances, alternative versions of events etc. which are given by the offender
- however, record them for use in legal action later

- the victim should be given as much understanding and support as can be made available*
- the victim should not be given false or unrealistic assurance or guarantees that s/he will be protected*
- the victim should carefully consider relocation. Geographical emphasis being less on distance per se, and more on where the offender is least able to find the victim*
- the police should have in mind that the sadistic stalker will be likely to:*
 - (i) carefully construct and calculate their activity to simultaneously minimise the risk of intervention by authorities while retaining maximum impact on victim,*
 - (ii) be almost impervious to intervention since the overcoming of obstacles provides new (iii) and potent means of demonstrating the victim's powerlessness (ergo self-perpetuating) and,*
 - (iii) if jailed will continue both personally and vicariously with the use of a network.*



3. What to do next

Okay, you are being stalked and it worries you. What do you do?

You act. You choose to be as proactive as possible.

A sense of unease or fear is a good indication that something really is wrong.

You do not wait to see what will happen. You do not reassure yourself that it will surely fizzle out. You don't tell yourself that you refuse to be driven away. You don't say to yourself that you are surely imagining it and making a mountain out of a molehill. You don't remind yourself that running away is not your style even if that is true.

You bolt.

If you can, plan it, quietly. Plan to move away, overnight (suddenly, unannounced) to a location to which you have no ties so that it will be much harder for your stalker to find you again.

If you have to leave stuff behind that can easily be replaced, do it. If you have to abandon items that cannot be replaced, abandon them. Shred any paperwork that you can't take with you, including names and contact data for people you used to know and bills. You'd be surprised to hear how all sorts of things can be used to either track you down again or mess with your life in the future.

Try to change as many details of your life as you can. If you used to play tennis, stop playing tennis. Heck, play squash or badminton instead. You catch my drift, I am sure. I don't want to give too many specific ideas because I would also be telling stalkers where to look for their victims after they have bolted.

Think about all of this before you bolt. Have solutions ready.

If you can't leave, upgrade your home security. Think high-end locks, and I mean several of them. Cameras may deter, but locks can delay entry long enough to thwart. If you can afford it, opt for both.

Assume that all your electronic equipment has already been hacked into. Whenever you want privacy, take the battery out of your phone. (Sadly, this is no longer possible with many phones.) Do not use wifi, not at home either. Keep your cameras on phones, laptops etc covered unless you are actively using them.

Change the passwords for your e-mail addresses, Amazon login, eBay login, Depop login, Netflix login and anything else where you have an online account and do this from a friend's or relative's home, preferably in another town. You may also want to talk to your bank.

Close your curtains in the evening. Have lights go on and off on timers, on all days, so that it is not instantly clear to anyone looking at your home whether someone is in or not. Consider doing the same for TV or radio or have a recording of you talking on the phone play or of you coughing. You can easily make it look and sound as if someone is in when you are in fact out. That said, this depends strongly on where you live, but you can still create some doubt that can deter someone from breaking into your home when you're out.

Shred all your outgoing paper and do not recycle anything that has not been shredded. You have no idea what information someone can pull from your trash.

Check the security of all the companies you have accounts with, such as electricity and internet, by having a friend call, pretending to be you and trying to change your address on your account to her address. If she succeeds, you need to switch to a different company, with better security.

Inform employer, colleagues, friends and family so that if someone were to call them with some story about how he is your ex or a good friend or your doctor or dentist or vet and claims the best of intentions, they won't fall for it. Keep it simple. Make it a business-like statement that informs people rather than arouses fear or accuses them.

"It looks like I may have a stalker. He may start calling people with some question that is easy to fall for, to fish for information. So, just to be on the safe side, should someone call about me, can you ask the person's details and then hang up, please? If the caller is genuine, he will call back. Or I can call the person on the basis of the information he gave you. There probably is no problem at all, but hey, better safe than sorry."

He may be an ex-boyfriend or someone you do not know. You do not want anyone to reveal information about you. Telling people to verify calls with you and not give out any information – even if nobody ends up calling – is better than having them accidentally reveal information and then later beating themselves up about it. You don't want this guy sitting next to you in the waiting room at your dentist or at the vet's.



4. When to contact the police

The official advice is always to contact the police and to gather as much evidence as you can.

If you want to drive yourself crazy and/or want to end up feeling even more powerless than you already are, sure, go ahead and do both.

You can easily end up with hundreds of pages after you have only gone through a short period of what's happened after your stalking began. The sheer amount of paperwork you are dealing with can be overwhelming and often only emphasises your powerlessness even more.

Anyway, what can you do with that mountain of evidence?

I once kept something in a fridge or freezer for a while, because of this instruction to keep all evidence, until I decided that I was not going to take it to the police after all. That turned out to be a wise decision. Because a police officer later informed me that he was not accepting any evidence that couldn't be scanned into a computer because it would only get lost. O-kay...

Police officers usually won't be able to do a thing until after you have been physically attacked. Attacked pretty seriously, that is. Even worse is that most police officers will dismiss your concerns as silly anyway. Many will assume that it concerns a simple (former) lovers' spat.

If you do report your experiences to the police, chances are that your stalker will be enraged that you ratted on him and will retaliate. He – it is usually men who do this to women, yes – will also feel empowered by the fact that the police won't do a thing.

Congratulations, you have just made things a lot worse for yourself.

There is more... Your stalker may have friends among the local police officers who he "successfully fools". He might even be a (former) police officer.

You may also find that police officers become annoyed with you and start harassing you too.

The only time when it makes sense to contact the police is if you really believe that you are in lethal danger and can't get away fast enough. Do not go to the police and mention the word stalking or anything like that. Do something that will force the police to take you into custody or at least take you to the station. Create a scene at a book store, whatever. Yes, that is bad, but whether you end up in a police cell or in a room at a psychiatric hospital, your stalker will be less likely to get to you there.

I am well aware that this sounds quite extreme, but you need to work with the reality that you are facing, not with a wishful-thinking scenario. If police officers can only take action **after** you have been seriously wounded or killed, then you have to do something to force them to protect you if protection is what you need, urgently, **before** that happens.

Don't bother completing a stalking risk assessment such as the 2009 VS-DASH if you only do it to hand it in to your local police. Most often, they won't care. You may want to complete one to assess your risk, though!

There is another reason for not going to the police to report concerns about stalking. If (when) they dismiss your concerns, they may fine you for having wasted police time and do god knows what else.

And when they leave you struggling on your own, you will often have no choice but try to negotiate a workable situation and do your best to keep whoever is pestering you in a positive mood. You need to find a way to make your life work, after all, keep it liveable. One way is to relocate to Timbuktu overnight, yes, but not everyone can do that instantly. So another way is trying to find out who you are dealing with and what he wants from you, so that you can hopefully limit the damage being done to your life. This is something that a lot of people will want to do, because it is the natural thing to do. The police and possibly also later the prosecutor will usually hold that against you if you have reported your concerns. It would weaken the case if your stalker were to be prosecuted. It's often a Catch-22, though.

As goes for the rest of this book, I take no responsibility for any decisions you make on the basis of anything I have written here. For starters, I do not know you. I do not know your situation and I do not know anyone who might be stalking or harassing you or a loved one.



5. What others can do

Something very important that you can do is listen to any woman who tells you that she believes she is being stalked or who talks to you about some crazy experiences she is having that she doesn't know what to make of.

Most people walk away at that point and abandon the victim. As you've seen in the foreword, even Ms Morgan's husband abandoned her over the stalking.

A great deal of the psychological damage that can result from being stalked is caused by the many people who let the victim down.

If you are in any position to help, for example, by letting the victim stay in your holiday cottage for a while, offer that help. Don't make an offer of help to anyone who is being stalked only to withdraw it at the last minute, though. It is an extremely low thing to do. It is cruel.

Give the person space! Do not victimise the person any further. Don't tell her that she is overreacting, for example, or otherwise suggest that something is wrong with her. That is gaslighting and it's despicable. It means that you are effectively taking over the role of the stalker. (This also applies for victims of narcissistic domestic abuse.)

It is not true that only celebrities get stalked. It's not true that only young women get stalked. It's not true that the victim must have done something to deserve it. Anyone can get stalked. A victim may have passed a man on the pavement or talked with a shop employee and unwittingly reminded the man of his mother, for example.

Also, don't throw your compassion overboard because stalkers can do a lot of damage to a woman's life. Obsessive sadistic stalkers clearly can't help what they are doing. They see a reality that is not shared by the world at large and they consistently adjust their explanations – also to other people – to make “reality” fit their view of it.

This is why these stalkers can be very convincing when they talk with, for example, police officers. It's because they are convinced that what they are saying is true. Victims, on the other hand, sound insecure and crazy. They're often all over the place and don't know what to think. They may even be scared out of their mind.

The way we humans tick, the way our brains work, anyone who challenges someone else's firm beliefs will – certainly initially – be experienced as unpleasant and possibly even threatening.

You can also read research papers published by various forensic psychologists on the topic.

Finally – and this is very important – if you are being contacted by someone about the victim, whether you are actively helping the victim or not, you must assume that it is the stalker. It does not matter whether the person tells you that he or she is a doctor or a police officer or a good friend, you must assume that it is the stalker. There is free and paid software out there that enables a stalker to change the gender and accent of his voice.

Some stalkers even go as far as to hire a voice talent to make a caller sound like someone else. “Just playing a joke on a friend. Here is your payment, thanks mate.”

Why? To mess with the victim's mind, in some cases. When she receives a call from someone who died recently, for example. It can also be done, for example, to discredit the victim when she believes that she received calls from Ms X and Ms Y and both saying that they know nothing about this.

Or to make **you** think that you are talking to someone you know. Stalkers are dedicated and go to extreme lengths. They tend to dedicate as many of their waking hours as possible to the stalking.

Has it occurred to you that someone may also record someone else's voice during a phone call, then call someone and play bits of these recordings to make it look like it is the person whose voice has been recorded who is making the call? Phone numbers can as easily be spoofed as e-mails.



6. Verbal self-defence

If you are in danger of being raped, do what you can to convince whoever is threatening to rape you that you are HIV-positive or have some similar contagious serious disease. (This is a tip from a woman who was drugged and abducted into a cult in Canada while temporarily working at a Canadian university for a PhD in her home country. She did survive, she did not get raped, she was rescued and she is a full professor now.)

If you are being accosted in public, by any male, threaten – or, rather, *ask*, depending on the situation – to cut off his dick if he comes any closer. “I have a knife. Want me to cut off your dick?” “Come here, then. Let’s see if you’re still laughing when you’re bleeding from the hole where your dick used to be.” Repeat versions of “I am gonna cut off your dick” a few times. Make sure you convince him that you mean it or at least confuse him enough to make him stay at a safe distance. The mere idea that you might be a really crazy dangerous woman can be enough to make someone leave you in peace.

Extreme? Yes. But it already starts with this being about his life versus yours and it does not get more extreme than that.



7. Hacking

Go back to the last bits of Chapter 3 about what to do.

Stalking tends to include the digital realm nowadays. Police forces but also many stalking victims advocacy organisations are still firmly stuck in the 20th century in that regard. This is slowly starting to change, but the bottom line is that you have to assume that all your equipment has been hacked and that there is nothing you can do about it.

If you can, restrict all your communications to real life contacts and video calls only. If you have any doubt about the authenticity of a video call, ask the person to turn around instantly. If he or she cannot do that, or takes too long, you may be talking to pre-recorded video.

Indeed, the things and people that you thought you could rely on, those you can no longer depend on. I, for example, used to think that I could rely on knowing people's voices, but I learned the hard way that I was wrong about that.

Within the context of stalking, you must also assume that "hacking" means that someone has full control over everything you do on your tablet(s), phone(s), computer(s) and/or laptop(s). Do not rule out that he has also hacked into your friends', relatives' or partner's equipment.

I have one tip for you that you can use if you have the feeling that someone is messing with you on your screen, in a DM, your phone, e-mail, whatever. If you are being stalked, try this. Type:

"Hi, this is PCSO 1646212. Who are you?"

(But only this, no more!)

Unless your stalker literally has eyes and ears on you, he has no way of knowing whether a police officer is there with you or not, sitting by your side to support you. The collar number is bullshit that I made up, so you aren't actually impersonating a police officer. I have no idea what PCSO stands for. You? You can turn it into PCBO or PCFO or PCTO if you want. You are not impersonating a police officer but desperately making up shit in the hope to get your stalker off your back and your life back.



8. Keep smiling

Particularly if you are being stalked anonymously, your overwhelming powerlessness – not even being able to yell at whoever is making your life hell – will cause you to act out at times.

Me, I have sometimes found myself yelling at strangers, such as the driver of a car that cut me off when I crossed a side street. I was not yelling at that driver. And I knew it.

Do anything that makes you feel good and combats your sense of powerlessness. It does not matter whether it is fixing a door, rehabbing a pigeon, helping someone cross a busy street, cheering when two women win a historically highly significant Nobel Prize in Chemistry or soaking in a bathtub.

Stay grounded.

Fixing things and helping others do a lot towards that.

This too shall pass, sister.

And with regards to the people who have let you down, many of them did that so that they could reassure themselves and tell themselves that something like this will never happen to them.

But you have my permission to hit them on the head with a baseball bat... Figuratively speaking, of course.



9. A new way forward

The current practice of dealing with cases of stalking and harassment fails both victims and (potential) offenders. This was also confirmed by a recent semi-internal investigation of 112 cases in the United Kingdom.

A solution is to establish new, specialised national organisations to deal exclusively with such cases and to encourage as well as enable victims – particularly of sadistic stalking, which seeks to isolate the victims – to assist each other via local self-support groups. These new national organisations should also provide support to (potential) offenders.

Existing stalking clinics are of little use even if they provide high-quality services if stalking victims tend to be dismissed because it means that few stalkers are ever referred to such a stalking clinic.

The current practice of dealing with cases of stalking and harassment is letting both victims and perpetrators down, while even the past contains important lessons that continue to be ignored. The recent cases of Shana Grice, Bijan Ebrahimi and Molly McLaren in the UK and of Lauren McCluskey in the US are unfortunate illustrations of why the current practice of dealing with serious stalking and harassment behaviours is inadequate and why random police officers should stop having to play a role in mental health assessments.

These four individuals were all murdered by their stalkers/harassers. Each of these victims had contacted the police.

Shana Grice was subsequently fined for having wasted police time (see for example BBC News, 2017a), in spite of the fact that the man who ended up killing her previously been reported to the police by thirteen other victims (Roberts, 2017). Her stalker had indicated that something was wrong with him and that he might need “to be locked up or something” (Le Duc, 2017).

In a horrible case of discrimination and targeted harassment, the police and others (council staff and neighbours in two neighbourhoods) victimised Bijan Ebrahimi (see for example BBC News, 2017b and Morris, 2017, 2018). Two police officers received custodian sentences after his death.

In the case of Molly McLaren, a police officer may have unwittingly provoked the murder as well have missed the stalker’s announcement of that murder (see for example Harrison, 2018 and BBC News, 2018).

In the case of Lauren McCluskey, the required IT expertise was not at hand. The availability of that expertise could have saved her life as it might have led to the timely identification of her stalker as the sender of various spoofed communications (Anderson, 2018).

These four cases alone highlight the main causes of the problem. Random police officers lack the expertise needed to assess such cases, both in the area of mental health, stalking and of IT. There is also a lack of operational coordination and communication.

Unfortunately, there have been many more cases. Alice Ruggles was killed by her ex-boyfriend days after she reported him to the police for stalking (Wilford, 2017) and Helen Pearson was stabbed in the face and neck after 125 reports that she made to the police (Bulman, 2017a).

When a stalking victim in the UK goes to the local police station, usually a version of the following happens. The current practice in other countries is likely not very different. The officer at the desk will respond with what comes across as boredom and/or annoyance, certainly when compared against the eager response police officers give when someone claims to have a tip about ongoing money-laundering.

If the victim is persistent, a police officer may tell the victim to be prudent and to try and take a photo of the stalker. If the victim brings any evidence along, the police officer will take this at face value and assess it without any applicable knowledge. A print of an e-mail, whether genuine or faked, is likely to be accepted because it can be scanned. Any evidence that cannot be scanned into the computer is only likely to get lost (according to an officer on duty at Southampton's central police station; case number available upon motivated request). The police officer may also tell the victim to call the police if the victim is being attacked (also if the victim's phone has been hacked and the victim may not even be able to make such a call). He or she may also tell the victim frankly that investigating stalking takes up too many resources, particularly when digital technology is involved, but such honesty is still much better than offering the victim false reassurances or giving her the impression that the officer in question is dismissing the victim's report.

The police officer may advise the victim to go to the police station where the first report was filed, if such an earlier report was filed elsewhere, stating that it is not possible for police officers at the present station to access that information on the computer system. If the victim, who it may take some time to scrape the travel sum together, finally makes it to the police station in the other town, the officer at that desk may refer the victim back to the police station in the town where the victim just came from.

What can also happen is that a police officer at a main police station advises a stalking victim to do her or his own investigating if the identity of the stalker is not known. If the victim follows up on this, however, it may then prompt officers from another, smaller station in the same town to inquire as to what the victim is doing as those officers appear to have no knowledge of the communications between victim and officers at the desk of the main police station.

In fact, even at the same station as where the advice is given, other police officers at the same desk may be completely unaware of that advice and of the request to report back to police, causing them to ask the victim why she keeps handing in her reports. This lack of coordination or access to the police's own files was also a problem in for example the cases of Shana Grice and possibly in the case of Katrina Makunova as well.

Doing one's own investigating can pose risks to the victim as 1) the stalker or someone in the stalker's environment may respond with anger and 2) the stalker or someone in the stalker's environment may report the victim for criminal harassment and may leave the victim with a criminal record. The victim is unlikely to be aware of the details of the applicable legislation that do allow a victim to carry out such activities (at least in England and Wales). A duty solicitor may well choose to disregard the applicable details of the law that allow the victim to engage in a behaviour for the sake of stopping or detecting crime (at least in England and Wales) for the sake of his or her time management.

In the interactions between victims and police officers, police officers may come across as considering themselves experts in the areas of IT, mental health and stalking techniques as well as stalkers' motives. In reality, most police officers have no more knowledge of these areas than a typical industrious takeaway owner without website or the average homeless drug addict. Police officers also tend to assume that stalkers always contact their victims under their own names.

In reality, some stalkers may even deliberately hand police officers proof of their activities, safe in the knowledge that the police officers will not even recognise it as such. In the UK, particularly the work of Sheridan and co-workers (e.g., Boon and Sheridan, 2001) should be well known among police officers, yet does not appear to be at all.

In the UK, a possible reason for much of the present problem may be a relatively recent update in legislation, which on the one hand was a positive development, but on the other hand results in police officers now often being confronted with many reports of "he said she said" interactions that may not pose a threat to anyone and getting snowed under by them.

Police officers often have to follow up on these simpler complaints because these cases tend to offer a relatively high degree of clarity. Alleged victim and alleged perpetrator are clear, with names and addresses usually known, so in practice, police officers will often have no choice but to assume that the reported stalking and/or harassment is a legitimate complaint and travel to the alleged offender's address to deliver a written warning (called a Police Information Notice or PIN in the UK), without having to do any investigation or verification.

I can set up an e-mail account under someone else's name, send myself a horrible e-mail, print it, take it to a police station and it is likely to be accepted as evidence of someone else having sent me a horrible e-mail. Depending on the exact nature of the e-mail, an officer will then be dispatched to the home of someone else, who did not actually send that e-mail and who will not even get to see a copy of the email but will receive a PIN, in the UK.

In some cases, police officers decide to target the victim after he or she contacted the police, perhaps because they are of the opinion that the victim's age or physique makes it unlikely that he or she is being stalked and suspect that the opposite is the case and/or blindly accuse the victim of lying. This happened in, for example, the case of Shana Grice.

In summary, going to the police tends to victimise victims of serious cases of stalking further.

Firstly, because the victims feel not heard and secondly, because when a stalker becomes aware of the fact that the victim has contacted the police, the stalker may become enraged as a result and subsequently feel empowered upon the discovery that the police is not responding to the victim's complaints. In some cases, stalkers even have friends among police officers.

Thus, victims of severe forms of stalking may struggle for years (sometimes only to be vilified by police officers when victims desperately try to make their lives work in spite of being stalked and, for example, make attempts to remedy the situation) or be murdered by their stalkers shortly after.

At the moment, the best advice to victims of stalking and harassment, in my opinion, is to refrain from contacting the police at all in any cases of stalking and harassment, but instead to relocate across a great distance immediately and start living under an assumed name. Unfortunately, none of

us know how stalking begins if we have never been stalked before. It is neither logical nor feasible to expect everyone to be a possible stalker.

A “joint report by the Inspectorate of Constabulary and the CPS released in July 2018 looked at 112 cases of stalking in England and Wales and found that not one of them had been dealt with properly” (Ditum, 2018; HMIC, 2017). One could consider this too an example of policing being “a threat to public health and human rights” (Deivanayagam et al., 2020).

Investigating stalking and harassment should not be a standard police matter at all. Instead, I argue for the establishment of independent national organisations, which have teams containing specialised IT professionals, specialised psychologists and psychiatrists as well as experienced specialised investigators.

Ideally, this would have the following advantages:

- Reported cases of stalking can be swiftly and accurately assessed for their risk levels (triage, for example, according to Sheridan’s classification).
- Professional mediation can take place. Some police stations have posters on the wall about organisations that can mediate in cases in which people with certain learning disabilities engage in behaviours that pose no risk but are experienced as so puzzling, worrisome or upsetting by others that those others report them to the police.
- Individuals at risk of committing serious crimes are not ignored, as happened in the case of Shana Grice, but receive the assistance they need.
- It would also take a big load off existing police forces (that is, if they continue to exist), as it would put a stop to the large effort currently taken up by “he said she said” reports, delivery of PINs and the resulting mental fatigue among police officers.
- It would result in a much more effective use of the funds that are currently associated with all reports of stalking and harassment.
- It would save lives, both of victims and of offenders.

These teams might have to acquire the power to add various types of brain scans to the practice of taking DNA and fingerprints (already standard in England and Wales), as individuals who may be more likely to engage in serious stalking behaviours and be incapable of compliance, such as those with a narcissistic personality disorder or with antisocial personality disorder, have structural brain differences (see for example Schulze et al., 2013). Not only could this help in the assessment of the risk in individual cases, it could also stop potential offenders from becoming actual offenders, as it might enable them to receive timely specialised support. Health care for such brain-related conditions and other mental health conditions lags behind considerably on health care for physical conditions that have no consequences for behaviour.

There are obvious ethical issues attached. However, while it may not be possible to support some offenders or potential offenders (perhaps notably those who have these structural brain differences without having experienced abuse), it may be possible to do something for those whose brains developed abnormally as a result of persistent severe early-childhood abuse. As it is already

standard police practice in many jurisdictions to take DNA and fingerprints from possible offenders (including those who are innocent), the step to scans may not be as large as it may initially seem. Also, within the medical community, there are calls for including brain scans as a standard component of health checkups.

Sheridan and her co-workers (e.g., Boon and Sheridan, 2001) examined a number of stalking cases, but mainly focused on the offenses as experienced by the victims. They came up with four broad categories of stalking, of which some characteristics can overlap. Part of their description of sadistic stalking is that these offenders seek out victims who at the beginning of the stalking are considered happy, “good”, stable, and content and who appear “worthy of spoiling”.

I argue that there may be cases in which this occurs because the offender is subconsciously looking for people who are capable of re-parenting him or her and are least likely to reject the stalker. (To themselves, these stalkers may justify their activities as aiming to “cure” or “heal” their target, who they may see as flawed individuals, for example, because they are kind.) I also argue that many of these offenders may have a severe narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), likely in combination with other pathological traits (co-morbidity). Individuals along this spectrum from mild NPD to severe NPD with “psychopathy” may not respond well or at all to punishment, but often respond well to what they consider rewards.

They may dole out punishments as part of the stalking and particularly individuals on the NPD end of the spectrum can respond badly to perceived slights. A perceived slight can be anything, just like a reward from the victim may only be perceived as such by the stalker. Narcissistic supply, for example, does not always exist in reality, by which I mean that it can be fully imagined on the side of a sadistic stalker, as with delusional fixation stalking. This may hold keys for how to manage them. The typical and understandable responses from victims – including contacting the police – may trigger the negative responses that then result in the victim's “destruction”.

All of this is also connected with another way in which police officers currently sometimes victimise victims of serious stalking even further. In a way, they hold victims responsible for not knowing how to deal with a stalker and for doing what he or she can in order to make his or her own life as liveable as possible in the presence of stalking, which I've briefly mentioned before. This can include negotiating with a stalker, as this would be a normal behaviour in normal circumstances, or attempting to find out who or what they are dealing with. Police officers sometimes even seem to blame victims for not having recognised that someone was a potential stalker, hence for not having relocated instantly upon having met the person in question, in spite of the fact that this person may have been a stranger who the victim may not even have had any dealings with in person. Finally, the immense stress that stalking victims experience, particularly when they are not heard by police and perhaps in particular when the stalking occurs anonymously, can cause victims to act out, potentially leading to further victimisation by police. Here too, having specialised teams deal with all cases of stalking and harassment could make a major difference.

It might be a good idea to start local groups for stalking victims, in which they can support each other and prevent the isolation as well as ameliorate feelings of vulnerability that are common among stalking victims. While it may in first instance sound regrettable to put some of the onus on victims, the potential benefits for them far outweigh the downsides. The powerlessness experienced by stalking victims could be greatly reduced this way and lead to actual empowerment, with women

educating each other on best practices, for example for women who run their own businesses and therefore have to be active and visible online.

Apparently, 1 in 5 women in the UK will get stalked in her lifetime, and 1 in 10 men. Based on data from a Crime Survey for England and Wales in combination with data from a study by Sheridan and co-workers (Boon and Sheridan, 2001), I arrived at a number of up to roughly 45 women being subjected to sadistic stalking in a town like Portsmouth (Hampshire, England), which has a little over 200,000 inhabitants. In reality, some types of stalking will be more prevalent in areas in which that type of stalking is easier.

According to National Stalking Advocacy Service Paladin, “data from the Crime Survey of England and Wales shows up to 700,000 women are stalked each year (2009-12)”. If 12.9% of those cases concern sadistic stalking, as in Sheridan’s study, that could include 90,300 victims of sadistic stalking, then. The size of the combined populations of England (53.01 million in 2011) and Wales (approximately 3,063,456 in 2011) was 56,063,456. 700,000 stalked women represent a little over 1% of that total population, but that population also contains minors and men. So let’s say that about 0.5% of women are stalked. (This excludes stalking that is 100% cyberstalking.) For this calculation, I assumed that stalking is distributed evenly across the population and geography, which it won’t be as some environments make stalking easier to do.

Portsmouth’s population in 2010 was 207,100; its working-age population was 145,000. If I take 50% of that as the number of women, I end up with up to about 360 stalked women in Portsmouth alone. If 12.9% of those cases concern sadistic stalking, as in Sheridan’s study, then about 45 women in Portsmouth were targeted by sadistic stalkers in 2010/2011.

What this means in practice, is that the numbers of local victims appear to be sufficiently high for local victims’ self-support groups to have the potential to make a real difference. For starters, it could help victims break out of the isolation they are often backed into.

Clearly, establishing a new agency that deals exclusively with cases of stalking and harassment would require funds. However, this could likely be simply a matter of reallocating funds that are currently spent by police forces on such cases. The 2017 report (HMIC, 2017) did not include any budget data and I received no response to an e-mail inquiry I made in 2019. I have meanwhile followed this up with a Freedom of Information request. The HMICFRS intends to respond by 22 June 2021 and I will later add any data they send me.

As the police forces would be able to function much more efficiently from that point on, working on other types of crimes, and the new agency would undoubtedly be much more effective, the establishment of such an agency also makes sense from a budget perspective if you do not abolish existing police forces.

Victims of serious stalking and harassment are currently often left in the cold, along with (potential) offenders who require support. Investigations of stalking and harassment should not be a standard police matter, but should become the task of specialised national organisations with teams of specialists in IT, psychology, psychiatry and investigative techniques. This would unburden police forces, should stop some (potential) offenders from becoming offenders or from committing even more serious crimes and prevent that some victims are either murdered or have their lives ripped to

shreds. Local support groups in which victims join hands might go a long way toward undoing or preventing some of the damage stalking can do to victims' lives. Professional support and mediation instead of criminalisation of should be offered to offenders and potential offenders. Brain scans should become standard in medical checkups as well as in stalking and harassment risk assessments to detect brain-based conditions over which the affected individuals have little control but that can affect behaviour, including compliance with laws.



10. What stalkers want?

The main thing that all stalkers effectively seem to be after, even the ones who rejoice in messing with their victims' minds, is full acceptance of what and who they are, without judgement. It is a cry for attention in all cases and it is sometimes a call for help. Stalkers do not necessarily want an understanding of who they are and how they tick because they either don't expect that to be possible or may not want to be understood at all because that would make them vulnerable. Acceptance and/or acknowledgement, that is what they seem to be after, whether they realise it or not.



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About the author

According to the urban slang dictionary, Angelina Souren is a boss. She goes her own way. She is not into consumerism, is a feminist, and went to university relatively late in life. She is not married, does not have any children, but has done a lot of mothering, particularly as a teenager.

She's been residing in southern England since the end of 2004. She's previously lived in balmy and blissful Florida as well as in Amsterdam and its environs.

Souren is a highly versatile critical thinker and researcher with a solid background in earth & life sciences. She recently developed an interest in bioethics *sensu lato*. She is therefore also an advocate for nonhuman animals as well as for the planet, the habitat that we all share.

She is a former board member of the Environmental Chemistry (and Toxicology) Section of the Royal Netherlands Chemical Society and a former associate editor of the international newsletter of the US-based Geochemical Society. She has also been very active in the NIMF foundation, a Dutch network for women in science and technology, which she joined in 1988 when she was working on her Master's degree.

Prior to her scientific endeavours, she was employed in tourism and hospitality in Amsterdam. She graduated with distinction and with an extra diploma for chemical oceanography research as well as two course certificates from the Netherlands School for Journalism. Her parents had little more than a mere primary school education, so by that time, she had already come a long way. She became self-employed in 1997.

She has one friend who has NPD (with insight) and one friend who is slightly autistic. She had known both women for decades before this dawned on her after she started reading up on neurodiversity and personality disorders. (The friend with NPD appears to have chosen to fade away now. Souren initially responded badly to the realisation of her friend's NPD as there is a lot of fear-mongering but little good education about NPD. NPD should not be dismissed as a bagatelle, however.)

She herself is fairly neurotypical. She had herself assessed pretty thoroughly in her early twenties and later completed an MMPI. She thinks that her father had a pretty severe borderline personality disorder and went no-contact with him when she was in her early 20s. (She is aware that this is a risky statement to make; many people will be quick to assume that she inherited not only her dad's physique but also his brain condition. If you want to tag her with something, then tag her with flare-ups of PTSD, perhaps, or with being a boss and not liking it much when English people try to walk all over her. Deal with it.) Her mother had already passed away earlier after prolonged illness (vastly metastasised and twice-misdiagnosed breast cancer). She is the eldest of three daughters. The two other daughters are also independent business owners as was their dad and they all have the musical talent from their mother's side of the family.

A few fun facts about her? She flew a small aircraft for a few minutes during a flying lesson that she took before she had even learned how to start a car. She's had blue, pink and turquoise hair a few times when she was around 50. She once got bitten by a bat that she picked up in what happened to be a rabies quarantine area when she was living in Florida and then had to have seven shots (jabs). She's also parked her car in a deep ditch while she was carrying out geological fieldwork in Sweden. Not once but twice.

If you want to connect with her, you may be able to follow her on [LinkedIn](#) or on Twitter ([@littlesandgrain](#)), on [YouTube](#) or at [angelinasouren.com](#). You can also find her [on Amazon](#) and at a few other places on the web provided that it is not a Facebook-owned medium.

