

# My sauna slave hell: Former prostitute reveals harrowing life on 'conveyor belt of sleaze' in shocking account of Scotland's vice industry

15 February 2016  
Annie Brown

Read more at <http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/sauna-slave-hell-former-prostitute-7372268#ydcufUcxELgdRDTk.99>

A FORMER prostitute today provides the most detailed and harrowing account of a vice industry that ensnared her from the age of just 17. Her shocking interview takes us inside the sordid world of Scotland's saunas, where women are sold on a "conveyor belt" of sleaze.

Cassie, now 32, reveals how women were enslaved by pimps, raped and trapped in a cycle of drugs and despair. Her exposé of the desperate and dangerous world comes as police in Aberdeen investigate the murder of a woman they believe to have been a prostitute.

Cassie worked as a sauna girl and and escort for over a decade, and witnessed women being "broken" by the sordid trade that treated people as if they were mere commodities.

She said: "It was almost like working in a factory. Stuff comes down the conveyer belt - you pack it, it goes."

She talks of how:

- \* women had to buy their freedom from their pimp
- \* Saunas took 50 per cent of everything the girls earned
- \* Pimps bound foreign women by stealing their passports
- \* women often became pregnant and infected with sexually transmitted disease
- \* Violence and rape is common and girls simply "disappear".

Speaking in a groundbreaking series of podcast interviews, launched today by organisation End Prostitution Now, Cassie's portrait of the sex industry is far from the "Pretty Woman" image, vice kingpins would have us believe.

Cassie is not lobbying for or against the trade, but she said: "It wasn't glamorous at all."

Still only a teenager, she responded to an advert for a job in an Edinburgh sauna, naively assuming she would be folding towels and answering calls.

She was talked in to sex for sale and went from £100 a week as a trainee hairdresser to £200 a day prostitute.

Then a pre-operation transsexual, Cassie was considered a "specialty" and the sauna owner charged extra for her.

Inside the saunas, up to 14 women would do 12 hour shifts, with some girls accommodating up to 12 punters a day.

The sauna owners would take up to half the money.

Cassie said: "The shifts in the sauna were horrendous, literally you'd start at ten in the morning till eleven in the evening.

"You had like maybe five or ten minutes to give yourself, you call it a whore's wash, but where you give yourself a quick wash, before the next one. It was very tiring, and it's made out as though you've got choice but actually, you're not forced but you do feel obliged to have to do any client that comes in."

They weren't allowed to leave mid shift and the doorman would go for their food.

Cassie said: "You could have four girls, or you could have fourteen girls. At the weekends you were fighting for rooms.

"There was a lot of competition between everyone. Weekends were the worst or when it was school holidays and mothers got their kids away with their dad or whoever and they'd come in and work so there'd always be loads of us."

Cassie was shocked by the normality of the punters who would come through the door.

She said: "I would think 'Oh my God, you could be my dad or you could be my uncle."

Boyfriends of her friends even turned up, knowing it would be her but she refused to deal with them.

She said: "The punters didn't value me, I didn't value them. There was no valuing involved."

She said the foreign girls, mainly Romanian or Polish, were treated worse than her by the pimps because she was Scottish with a network of friends and family.

She said: "I'd watch them take passports off girls and I'd watch them make them work constantly. [They would] make them live in the flats and control them. A lot of them were being used and abused. Pimps actually owned them because they have to buy their passport back. Six months into it they're doing absolutely everything without using condoms. They've got no one around them to ground them, to bring them back to who they really are. Instead you're just that person that's a prostitute and that earns money."

When she wanted to move into escorting she advertised on Gumtree and one of the pimps who scour the internet for women, picked her up.

Her pimp promised her the earth but she ended up paying him fortunes for an inferior £9 phone and the privilege of his "representation", which in effect amounted to nothing in exchange for a 30 per cent share of her takings.

Cassie said: "When I worked in the flats with pimps, I've seen so many girls just fall apart and so many girls would come into it with a sparkle in their eye and they'd leave like a shadow of themselves. A lot of damaged girls, a lot of girls getting pregnant from clients. A lot of them getting really bad STI's.

"The more broken these girls are the more control the pimps have over them. Then there's some drugs, I'll get you some drugs, it'll keep you working all night so I'll give you more drugs."

Cassie said she was beaten up by clients and raped by three men.

“They will not take no for an answer, hold you down and just do what they want to do anyway.

“So many girls go missing, and the girls that do go missing if they’re working in the sex industry, they’re ignored. Nobody makes a big deal about an escort going missing.

“If you get through that day and you’re still alive at the end of it you’re kind of like ‘oh well that’s been a good day’.”

Cassie started taking drugs to drown out the horror of the job and she realised that she was often working to feed her habit of ketamine and crack. Pimps encouraged the girls to get addicted.

She said: “Every time the phone rings your stomach just drops. If I was doing drugs at the time I had to do some drugs before I went. That’s how you prepare yourself really. Once you’re in that room and you’re with them you just click into this mode. You’re there, you become this character. Everything’s make believe, nothing’s real, nothing’s actually genuine about myself then.”

She tried to be safe when she was escorting, always making sure a friend had the address of the flat she was visiting.

She said: “I’d always take money off them and then go to the bathroom. I’d cut a slit on the inside lining on my handbags so you couldn’t really see it so I’d poke all the money down there. You learn all these tricks.

“You would always want to see them pour a drink because they could put drugs in it, anything. You just learn over time, through mistakes and through bad experiences.”

She said pimps extorted money from girls who wanted to leave.

Cassie said: “If you threaten to leave, you were told that you wouldn’t be able to work in Edinburgh. Or you’d have to give him a big payment there and then, to pay him off.”

Even after the pay off, Cassie was hounded by her pimp who wrote vile comments about her on Punternet, an abhorrent site which “reviews” women in the sex industry.

Cassie said: “They’ll write things that is just really graphic, horrendous stuff you don’t want to read about yourself. Really demeaning, really degrading. You’re like ‘How dare someone speak about me like that on a forum’ but then you have to think to yourself you are just a piece of meat to them, you are just another girl that’s selling sex in Edinburgh.

Linda Thompson of Linda Thompson from the Women’s Support Project conducted the interviews which will be from today and for the next two Mondays.

Linda said: “Cassie really brought it home to me how women are treated behind the closed doors of Edinburgh’s sex industry and how any vulnerability will be exploited for the benefit and profit of others”