AIMS For a better birth...

Why didn't she leave?

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AIMS Journal, 2019, Vol 30, No 4

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When they first met, she was obviously nervous. But excited, with a sense that something wonderful would happen. He promised her he would take care of her. That everything would be fine. She took such comfort in that. The future was bright and exciting, and she was filled with hope.

Over time, she found that he was pushy, no mistake. But he always had her best interests at heart, and she valued his advice. Sometimes she had her doubts, but she knew he was wiser, so she relented. She knew he would take care of her. Sometimes he was too busy to talk to her properly, but he always meant well. Sometimes he made her doubt her choices, and told her what she hoped for could never work. She wasn't always comfortable with that, but he always said if it really mattered, he'd help her to get what she needed.

Then the day came when she really needed his help, so she went to him. But he was so stressed from work and so worried about other things that he brushed her off. It was clear he did not care. He touched her in ways she did not want to be touched, and when she objected he told her that she was being silly, that she didn't know what she was saying. She stayed, because she didn't know what else she could do. He told her she was a failure, and that she needed him to help her, over and over again. She couldn't leave, and he wouldn't listen to her. Eventually he lost patience with her, and cut her up. It was for her own good, he told her.

She spent three days in hospital, and was permanently scarred. She would never be the same. She only learned later how bad the damage was. She was scared. He visited her house in the days following, and she smiled and nodded, just waiting for him to leave so that she could cry.

Then one day he asked her to come back to him. He understood that things had been really horrible for her, and he was honestly sorry. Things would be different this time, he said. And she knew he meant well.

Her mother encouraged her to return. Things were bad, she reasoned, but they could have been much worse if she hadn't had his support. And besides, she needed to think what was best for the baby. She'd be silly not to go back.

Anyone could see she shouldn't go back to him. They'd call her a fool.

This is my story. But it is not about a man who damaged me. It was my antenatal team. My midwives.