


WAGE THEFT

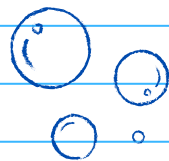
part 2



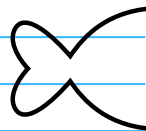
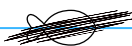
A close-up portrait of a woman with dark skin and dark hair styled in braids. She has a silver nose ring in her nostril. On her forehead, there is a small, rectangular piece of white paper with a torn edge, containing the text "Family business my ass". She is wearing a headband with brown, fuzzy, bear-like characters that have pink and blue eyes. The background is blurred, showing some blue and white colors.

Family business my ass

When I first got the job, I was taking another break from Ideation to doomscroll through Indeed.ie. With the weight of the world still on my shoulders, I received an email notification. They seemed eager to hire me.



They confessed at the first meeting that the person who left the job did so because she was going to get her Masters in Digital Marketing. "Weird," I thought, "I have a masters in digital marketing." I wonder what she had that I didn't, I kept thinking as I looked the manager, my former professor, square in the face. I was excited, I had a chance to build a career in my field, with an Irish family business that actually gave a fuck about the environment...pristine waters, Connemara Gaeltacht, sustainably harvested and all those wish-washy green terms were written all over the website. It was perfect!



At the meeting, they also confessed that it would be part-time, 40 hours a month, and no contract. Also somehow they failed to mention that the job was strictly remote and a year after I had to chase them down for a work email. The company itself was unstructured. With meetings scheduled informally and the link sent seconds before the agreed time. It was tiring.

After a month or a year idk. I asked them about my career progression. "When am I getting that contract? That full-time opportunity?"

They answered telling me that this was what I deserved and yes soon soon soon I would get it. Laying down a progression of my hours each month from 40 to 50 to 60 to 70 to 80 in black and white (Google Sheets).



Remember
this shit!
It's
important
later



Working three jobs at the time, it was cleaner at Kinlay, a DIGITAL MARKETING EXECUTIVE at this family business and a Christmas whore at the market. On the first day it opened, white women will come over and pull my hair to its full length, taking pictures of it like it was a foot long. They did close-ups too! without asking my permission of course, 'cause you see, to them, I was a prop, a giant plastic gingerbread man, colourful yet brown all over!

Christmas was drawing closer and I was no longer needed at the chalet, sadly! I missed the extra pay and counteracting almost getting frostbitten by practically scalding my fingerprints off with my stainless steel cup of tea.

The other woman who worked there advised me to walk out of Kinlay. "Just don't show up," she said. After I cried to her, saying "I think they are going to fire me, they accused me of slacking off, taking too long breaks, arriving late and other shady things, idk what to do". Little did I know I was laying the groundwork for some old-fashioned foreshadowing.



\$ ad girlz

I knew exactly what to do. Quit! I had it in me this time because I had the family business, the second time I did not have it in me because all I had WAS the family business.

Houseless and depressed, I started to feel a wave of underappreciation, AGAIN. Except I could not point it out. Mostly because I had my hands around my eyes and so when I would reach out my hands to point out where the pain was coming from, my fingers would get hit again, soon after I was too tired to keep searching.

Was it the transphobic people who were kind enough to give me their couch and attic space for months on end or was it the n***a who literally, muted my mic as I spoke mid-way in a one-on-one Zoom call with him? where I dared to stand up to him about how poorly he treated me and referred to my skillset at work.

Luv €

"He doesn't speak to me that way," another woman, a wyt woman, at the festival said to me.

A year after she took that back saying "Omg he hates me!" with a laugh, desperately trying to bond with me over talking shit about this undoubtedly awful person and how poorly he treated her, without falling prey-dator to the white-woman-black-man stereotype. I appreciated that, but ultimately I just looked at her with my symmetrically lined eyes, like:

"Now? bitch. Okay, I'm gonna get up now and go into that black af queer af party and forget about the fight I just had with my fiance."

Nice lady though,
always sent me money
when I needed it.



"Why is this happening to me?" I asked my friend, wondering why no one wanted to hire me, and this guy was treating me like shit. "Idk Tosin, maybe it's the places you're applying to" she gaslit appropriately. It would've been so much better if she said "Because you're a woman of colour luv, because you're black" But that's the thing about privilege*

She said this days after my birthday and weeks after she loaned me that 400 euros. I remember her calling me, my first time back home after the hell that was my first two years in Ireland.

"I want my money back Tosin, you're lying, I don't have to wait till you get a job, you told me your family had money, I know you can get me the money back!"

The worst part was I had no one to cry to. What happened to "Pay whenever you can Tosin, it's all okay" She apologized the next day, of course, she had no idea what came over her. The only other time I ever saw her react that angrily, race also had something to do with it. She was the first person I told I got the job when I got it, not because I was happy to share some great news, but because I could finally confidently tell her her money was coming soon. I'm ashamed it took me a while to realise that this friendship didn't suit me, alas worse was yet to come :D

Where was I? Oh right Christmas!



I had nowhere to spend Christmas, literally. All my options were too sad. Yeah, I didn't have a home but at least I had a job and friends who loved me, why wasn't I happy? It didn't take long for me to realise that years of abuse were rearing its ugly head in my day-to-day and my body was reacting as my body would. Afraid. That Christmas I thought, I would travel to another county with my friend and her friends. I didn't know them all too well but I sorta trusted them. At least enough to know that they were on the right side of history. You know, not bigots or whatever. We were gonna go to Limerick and Cork.

"Be careful" my family said, "You're the only black person in da group" I rolled my eyes. "It's giving this horror film, it's giving that horror film" I went anyway. I had fun. As soon as I was sure I didn't have COVID I let loose. We barely had enough for food and it made me feel closer to them, they were also language-exchanging creatives so in a way I was sure these were my people.



We talked a lot about shite I don't remember and had little drag performances of our own in the bedroom. We walked all over town sightseeing and pointing to whatever spoke to us, Limerick was dreary and the buildings were hideous, it was the perfect place to set my short film. Cork however, was a haze, we were high all the time, and at this point, I had enough bad experiences to know to ignore the voices that told me these weren't my real friends, I kinda sucked, I am a homeless, jobless worthless piece of shit who should take her life and went to bed early, while the girls betrayed me by sleeping through every film I painstakingly curated for them. Lol. I loved them and they loved me. I was there for them, and they helped me through my meltdowns and cheered my creative efforts.

Yet I never felt so unsafe around white people.

You see every shop we went to including the BnB we stayed at, they managed to steal from and congratulate themselves in doing so. It scared me. But I didn't want to lose them so I said nothing. Just ranted to my family who returned safely to Dublin.



I Loved working with my partner at the time. I loved LOVED her. We would do everything together, well only her things. But together! We would work nights, listening to music she chose together! and I stayed up with her until she fell asleep. Say it with me: Together!

She gave me the strength to speak up about what happened in Limerick. I only cared enough to say it to one person. One person was all it took.

"What do you think would've happened if we got caught? Do you think they would arrest y'all? Who do you think they'd take in for questioning, who among us immigrants French, Austrian, French, Naija* would they scream at to go back to whence they came? Just one day after I had just renewed my unforgivably expensive visa, you take me out robbing"

I could never trust my baby bro or sis with these hoes. Like lol. Nope! I didn't feel safe, because I wasn't safe.

• Put on a turf fire and sit with the family

Be it the warmth of being around family, or the actual warmth of a good ol' turf fire. Sitting around and having a chat is a but important way of starting the season. Ye could Catch up! School, work, partners, holiday plans, rising sea levels, oil spills, pirates, vikings, p oppression etc.



I get profiled and kicked out of a post office for asking for my money while black, and you tell me to sneak there at night and trash the place. wut?!

That's some white shit, I responded to someone in the clique about this same white shite. He was enraged. "You have to hit them where it hurts, their profits," he said. I have no idea what books these n****s were reading. Dafuq? Am I missing something?

So these companies exploit their coloured garment workers and to make them pay for that, you show your respect for these BIPOC women by stealing their hard-earned work. Who do you think they're going to keep a watchful eye on once they notice things go missing? The white customers? Who do you think they will put even more barriers to hiring? The white jobseekers? The actual fuck. They really thought they were doing some good.

I was sooooo grateful to my partner at the time for ginger-ing* me up to speak up back then. 6 months later when I realised she told the policemen how much I earned, I took those words back.



Apparently, when they accused her of borderline trafficking me, she told them how much I earned. Because of course, there exists a cut-off wage to qualify as a battered woman. "You have help if you want it, we're here for you," the translator said to me that morning. I could barely listen to him, all I could see was her, the car chase and being stopped and searched in my lil' weed socks (i'll say it again, fuck you Kyan) hands where they could see `em, guns were being pointed at us. Welcome to Brazil!

At home, when I repeated what the translator said, she laughed at me and reminded me of all the racial slurs they used against me when talking about me. I was confused, I thought she would protect me from the truth of what these men really thought of dark-skinned foreigners, I guess it's my fault for not initially protecting her when the police got to us. I should've said I stepped on glass.

"Is she an intern?" Her friend asked when she found out how much I earned one time, and she laughed. That hurt me, I told my partner. But she didn't stand up for me.

1. Cause it was funny! She made fun of me a lot for "earning less than her even though it is in a higher currency". That joke was never old.

2. Cause well we need this white woman and she doesn't need to understand how she benefits from a system that would never treat her the same way I was being treated if she migrated to Ireland.

Sigh.



So one time I asked my brother for money, and he promised us 400 euros. I remember my sister telling me to spend it on my debts and my partner at the time calling her a bitch. That hurt me. Unfortunately, due to technicalities, the money took 20 days to come through, and my partner really needed it. That night she felt pressured and screamed at me in anger, so loud it reminded me of my dad, she threatened me and said awful things. I was scared, I ran to the next room and did something I was not proud of. I called my boss and asked for help. Asked him to send the money, promising to pay him soon. It was an emergency, after all. I knew two things for sure that night and I was wrong about one,

1. This would change or somewhat (I feared) cement how my boss saw me

2. If I did this one thing it would appease my partner once and for all, one magic trick! and the goalpost would stop moving.



I bet you're wondering why,
I'm talking about my ex so
much all of a sudden. How did
it start and where is this
going?!

Well,

Alas,



She also was a cunt-faced employer.

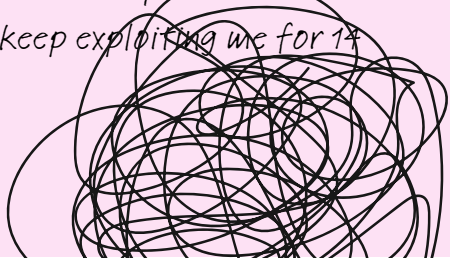
There is an increasing intellectual shift towards individualistic rather than collective explanations of labour market disparities. Such explanations absolve society of responsibility and blames victims for their marginalisation. (Joseph, 2020)

The fourth time I escaped my abuser, it didn't take long before once again we both were at the hotel. I was set to have a meeting the next morning, and there I was prepared to tell the family business off for exploiting me like my partner led me to believe so many times. When these fuckers turned the tables back at me and accused me of exploiting them, inflating my hours, and stealing from them, I was shocked. Wasn't the first time or the last time I would get this sort of response, but still I was shocked. I didn't know who to believe, them or my partner. I had no idea I was a third option, that I was a viable witness.

You see, I was supposed to be working with incremental hours each month, (remember that shit on page 2) like it was designed in black and white, but according to them, I never worked those hours, I just never did. In fact, I was supposed to be working way less hours than I was reporting because by now, I should be good at this, quick at this. What the hell Tosin? And so I was in fact cheating them and stealing from them. I was supposed to prove I could work long hours and earn long-hour wages, by doing the same work and reporting shorter hours. Then and only then will I be rewarded with what was promised. It's not confusion dearie, it's manipulation. But how could I stand tall with these fuckers, when I was letting her back into my life again. I didn't realise it at the time but I had been conditioned to collude with a system designed to weaken me in order to keep taking from me. With them, with her, with her, with them.

"I'm not about to let someone scam my parents," he said.

In the blink of an eye I folded, and I confessed? Told them that indeed I inflated my hours, and cheated them because I was so poor and needy, just as they had seen. I told them what they needed to hear, perhaps they would show mercy. That was all I said, and that was all they needed to keep exploiting me for 14 more months.



That Christmas I didn't get the bonus I was promised, "We need you to restore faith Tosin, we just don't trust you yet" they said. Consequently, my partner would make fun of me and refer to me as though I didn't have a job. "Since you're practically unemployed now, perhaps you could help my sister sell some food" she would say.

New Year came, they demoted me and slashed my hours and wages in half. I fought back but..."We're a family business Tosin!" These fuckers are on Amazon, Walmart and eBay.



I remember calling my parents once and apologising for not adapting to the areas of least resistance. Hospices and Nursing homes. Not trying hard enough to get a paying job. Idk I think I tried, I got rejected by all the Supermarkets notoriously hard to get into and even McDonald's didn't want me. Zevo Health you fucks! "You're the selected candidate," the email said "and you will begin in X month" They proceeded to ghost me, and then informed me after weeks of badgering that the position had been dissolved.

After the new year, I was back with her and this time working for her. She was quite the boss guys, Really! Called me distracted, slow and stupid every hour. We worked all night with no breaks, and I wasn't allowed to say I did not want to. I worked on her projects even though I did not understand the language, I stopped when she stopped and slept when she slept.

"I'm no one's slave" she would say to me, though I cooked, cleaned, and looked after the dog. "How can I be working while you're sleeping" She would say, though I paid the rent, water, internet and electricity.

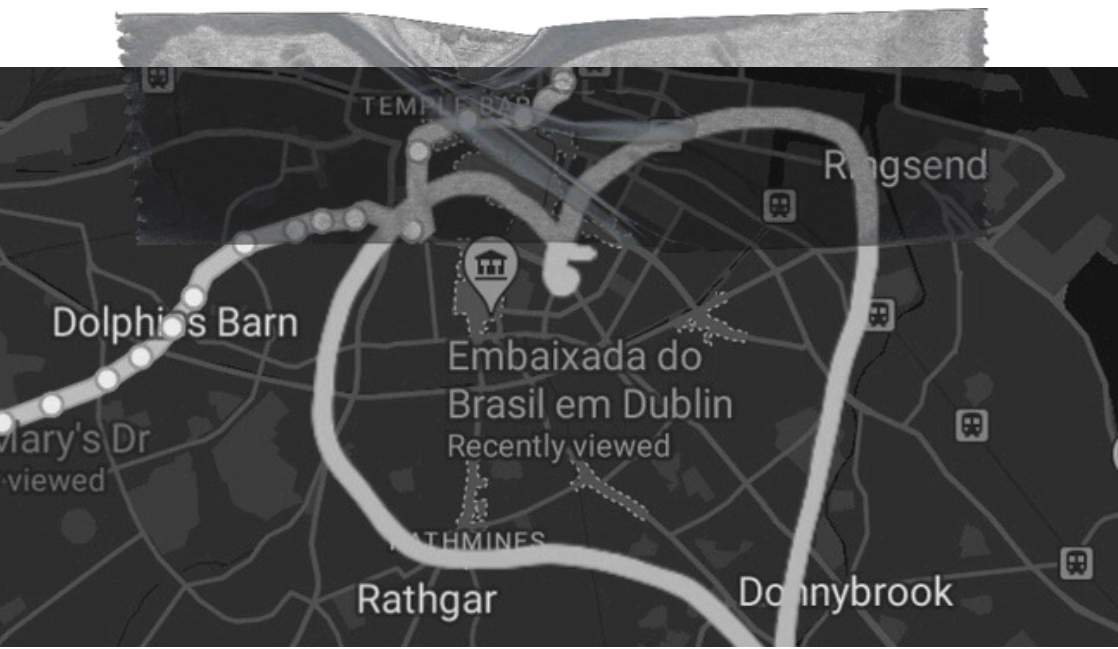


One time she got so angry with my repeated mistakes, she stormed to the bedroom. Relieved I turned off the light and tried to get some shuteye on the couch.

ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING ME?! She screamed, god knows how long after.

I shot up immediately and rubbed my eyes. "I was just lying down," I said, "I wasn't sleeping". She pushed me so hard my back hit the arm of the recliner and I screamed in pain, I couldn't walk well for days.

When I told this to her sister, she asked me to pray. Seconds after, she softly called me into the bedroom to take a picture of her and the dog, I quickly, wiped off my tears and snot and ran over, my hands shaking. I still have that picture.





The last time I ever heard her voice, she was showing the police and social workers who stood guard at the shelter I was hiding in, pictures of us smiling on our very recent birthday and telling them how much I earned. No way I had reason to run from her.

The last time I saw my boss, it was the day before Yemonja's day. After over two years, he fired me without notice and told me this had nothing with me, Just times are hard. "There's no easy way to say this..." he said. "...today is your last day," he said. The owner didn't even have the gall to show her face, just sent a cowardly message after.

The cauca-city!

HOSTEL
Snoozies

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