

Interview with Harmony Dust

Author of

Scars and Stilettos

The Transformation of an Exotic Dancer

1. How does it feel to be “breaking the silence” on issues surrounding the sex industry?

It has been a journey to get to this point. I started small... sharing my story with one or two people at a time and gradually worked my way up to larger and larger groups of people. At first, I was terrified and found myself feeling concerned with what people with think of me. But over time, I became more confident and more focused on the people that would be impacted by me breaking the silence. Now, I am at the point where I am honored and humbled to be able to share my story. We are as sick as our secrets and I am passionate about exposing and shedding light on topics and hurts that people tend to keep hidden. There is so much breakthrough that happens in that.



2. In your book, *Scars and Stilettos*, you talk about blaming yourself. How does taking fault for something give you control?

This is a great question! Victimization, to a large degree, is an experience of absolute lack of control. You are subject to someone else’s choices and behavior. In a twisted way, placing blame on the perpetrators of the abuse I experienced would leave them in control. As long as my focus was on them and their behavior, it left me feeling powerless. Because I could never change them, and I couldn’t go back and change what they did to me. If I could somehow blame myself, shifting the focus from perpetrator to victim, then I was operating in the realm of something I could control—me.

3. Tell us about the brown leather Bible your grandmother sent you. Why is it important to you? Did its significance change at all during your journey?

The leather bible my grandmother gave me became important to me over time. At first I saw it as something she was using to try to get me to subscribe to her belief system. When she begged me to read it, I thought it was because she was afraid that her God would be angry with me if I didn’t. It never occurred to me that the bible had a message specifically for me. When I saw my



name faintly scribbled next to a scripture in my grandmother's handwriting, it became more personal. I realized that her faith was personal. That she was having a conversation with God and wanted me to have a conversation with Him too.

4. “It was just a little bit safer to be someone else,” (pg 152). What do you mean? Why is wearing a mask sometimes easier than reflecting who you really are?

“Hiding” is one of the first documented coping mechanisms. Adam and Eve realized they were naked and they hid behind fig leaves. I think when we realize our humanity and weakness we tend to feel shame. The dilemma then is to figure out how to deal with our shame. When we don't include Jesus in that solution, we are left to figure it out. Hiding behind a mask was my method of choice. You don't have to have a stripper persona to hide. Some people have a “church face”. Other people hide behind food, addictions, busyness, the list goes on. It is all one big attempt to deal with the pain of our separation from God. But I have found that all of those “mechanisms” of hiding keep us from what we truly need to heal—authentic, vulnerable relationship with God and other safe people.

5. Your story is one of wanting to feel secure, safe, and loved... things that so many women desperately want but don't know where to find. What do you want to say to those women?

We have been created for relationship. I believe that one of the deepest longings of the human heart is for true intimacy—to be in relationship where we are fully known, and unconditionally loved. So much of my time and effort was in trying to fill this longing with a laundry list of things that would never work. It is an issue of trying to meet legitimate needs in illegitimate ways. The well is deep, the longing is profound, and like the woman at the well who encountered Jesus (John 5), I have come to discover that only one thing will satisfy—Jesus himself. My hope and prayer for other women is that they would come to find the security, safety, and love they are looking for in Him.

6. What compelled you to write your story?

I was most compelled by the thought of the reader who has the potential to see herself in the pages of my book and will be inspired in her own healing journey.

When it comes to the sex industry, I am passionate about humanizing the woman on the other end of the dollar. When you know the story behind the woman, it is harder to objectify her. But the truth is, we all have a story and I believe that God is looking for people who are willing to open their mouths or put their pens to the paper, so that He can turn each of our stories into instruments of impact.

7. Who/what influenced you the most during the writing process?

Influence came from many places. I have been influenced by many books, including: Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird*, Sapphire's *PUSH* (which is the story behind the movie *Precious*), Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, and Janet Fitch's, *White Oleander*. Holly Wagner, author and founder of God Chicks, has been a mentor to me and has had one of the most profound positive influences in my life of any woman! Rita Williams, author of *If the Creek*



Don't Rise was a teacher and mentor to me, as well. I was also influenced by the women in my writing group who poured their hearts onto the page without filters and encouraged me to do the same. What can I say? I am rich in friendship and get to do life with some of the most amazing women!

8. You are the founder and executive director of Treasures Ministries. Tell us about what Treasures is and why you started it.

Treasures Ministries is a volunteer-driven, non-denominational, faith-based nonprofit focused on outreach and support for women in the sex industry. Each year, the Treasures Team visits more than 170 strip clubs in the Los Angeles, Orange County and Las Vegas areas. During these outreaches, we give out free gift bags filled with cosmetics, jewelry, and the simple message that the women working in the clubs are loved and valued. Each woman who contacts Treasures receives a care package containing a Bible, a copy of our devotional, *Treasures Reflections*, and other materials to encourage her faith. The Treasures Care Team also provides peer mentoring, resources and referrals to churches and professional counseling services for those who are interested.

I started Treasures because reaching and working with other women who find themselves trapped in this line of work—as I once was—is my passion! My favorite part is watching women go from feeling imprisoned, ashamed and isolated, to leading flourishing lives, planted in community and allowing God to use their own stories of brokenness to impact others.

You can find out more at www.iamatransure.com.