

envelope  
untracked. @ 40 Hz low

# In Silence Script TWO: Mrs O

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I begin my story recounting my own travels from St Lucia, travelling through the Caribbean islands on my way to Canada. . I recall the mountains of my childhood home that I fell in love with. But it has been a long time since I have been there- almost 30 years- and all I have are weathered photographs and

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google images of the sites I lived in... nothing is as powerful as my memories, but even that is slowly fading. Sometimes I stare into the distance just trying to make out the scenes in my mind... I have gotten used to the realization that I may never see these in person ever again. . . . . I came to Canada with nothing

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When I was in my early twenties I got a job as a youth worker at a community centre here, and began seeing myself less as a victim, and rather, as a foundation for the underserved in the community. I had to be strong and become that person. It was what was needed. After working for a number of years, I became

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confident in my role, I was articulate and professional, at the same time warm and personable... people saw my humour and the way I could hold their attention in a conversation or give a fantastic toast, and I returned their trust with resourcefulness and love. The children in the community treated me as a big sister, a

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friend and even a mom. At the height of my work I started a community hub and worked hard to develop the space, getting donations for food, supplies and making connections for grants, funding. I recall how tired I was constantly, how my brow was always covered in sweat, how my eyes seemed to fall shut the moment

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I got home every night; but also how I somehow found the energy for anyone who had a question, a request or just needed help. I got married, had kids, had a whirlwind of a decade where I established myself as a leader in the community, even winning an award conferred by the federal government of Canada.

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I recall waking up on night to the piercing sound of my phone ringing, I remember the confusion on the phone -- I heard the words "fire" and "all gone" and I realized what had happened. My youth centre had been burnt to the ground- an electrical fault or a careless stove top accident nobody ever found out

billowing of  
smoke

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My centre had been the one stop shop for kids, youth, the elderly in the community to come by to be cared for every single day and now it was gone. And I had to remain strong. In the months following, all other community hubs became overrun with the poor, the hungry and the homeless who had lost a place to go

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and very quickly things started falling apart. Emergency aid was stretched to the limit, and as the Pandemic began and soared in our neighbourhood, substance abuse, domestic violence and death became more prevalent than they had ever been. In one of my visits to a shelter, I recall meeting an abused woman

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who had been forced to exchange sexual favors for feminine hygiene products. I met a substance abuser and her care-giver, and listened as they cried together about withdrawal, hallucination and the gaping wound that the Pandemic had left on all of us. I remembered a chair I saw that was covered in feces

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. I remember the smell, and the sounds in the space and the despair that seemed to be written into the very walls around me, and I remembered once again how far away my home and the mountains in St Lucia had felt.