

## ALICE #1

My mother told me that when I was born, she believed that an ill wind had blown upon me. That happens to some people; it's like a curse handed to you by the wind Gods and from that moment on, your life will never be easy.

I remember the first time I decided I was leaving. I was 3 years old and I packed my own bag. It consisted of a carrot, a potato and a spare pair of pants. I headed out the front door and walked 3 blocks away, to my Auntie's place. She was worried, so she phoned them and they came in the car. My father beat me with a stick for running away. My Aunt tried to stop him. I remember her screaming and telling him to stop hitting me. "She's got to learn", he said, "I'll teach her not to run away from me".

Over the years I lost count of the amount of times that I tried to run away and I eventually stopped counting the beatings I got. The bruises eventually would fade away. It was always the same, she would start drinking, they would yell and fight, I would do something wrong and cop a flogging within an inch of my life. I would run when the yelling started and try to find a good spot to hide. In a cupboard, under the bed, up in a tree or down the side of the shed. I'd cover my mouth so he couldn't hear me breathing, stay real still and not move an inch. My heart would be beating so fast and so loud, that I feared it would give me away and he would find me, I would just hide there for hours, sometimes even all day. "I'm going to kill you when I find you", he'd say.

Eventually I would have to come out and the beatings would start. My mother seemed to take delight in it, I recall the smirk on her face. I deserved it, you know, I had ruined her life. It was my fault she had to marry him because she was pregnant with me. I had wrecked everything; she couldn't be who she wanted to be.

In my teenage years I wanted to die, I wanted it to end, the sound of their voices, the yelling, the sickness in my stomach from the feelings of worthlessness, not being good enough and the constant blame. I had such low worth that I started beating myself up with drugs and booze because I felt it would help hide the pain. One day I looked in a mirror and saw my mother and decided to break the chain.

It's now 30 years on and I have healed from my past. I refuse to let it own me because I'm a good person at last. My name is Alice, I'm strong, a survivor, I'm fearless and free, and I join the list of 100 stories to help others like me.