

Alice #21

I grew up in a small country town that should have been idyllic, in some ways it was, I had horses, dogs and acres of land to explore. I also had a beautiful Gran who raised me and taught me so much.

Sadly I also had a Granddad who was what is known as an "outside angel/inside devil" He was president of the local branch of a well-respected service club, Club president of the Golf Club and well respected Business owner. He was also a mean drunk. He was a cruel, vindictive, abusive man who had the art of making sure his blows landed in places that could be hidden from the outside world.

I remember many occasions coming home from school and finding my Gran stoically getting dinner ready trying to hide the pain she was in from another beating. There was no point calling the local doctor, he was the secretary of the service club and a very close friend of my Granddad, so I did the best I could to strap up broken ribs and rub Grans special cream on ugly bruises.

I was about 6 when I also became his target, sometimes this occurred because I would try and protect my Gran other times it was because I was home alone and someone had to be the punching bag. My medical notes at the GP had me down as a clumsy girl, always falling, I clearly remember being at the surgery one day with three broken fingers, the GP said I should find another hobby because I was obviously not a very good horsewoman with all the falls I had, I was so mad with him I told him my Granddad did it, the GP told me bad things happen to little girls who tell lies!! He came to dinner that night and told my Granddad I shouldn't get any dinner because I had told a big fib. I got such a beating with the ironing cord that night I missed school for a week.

This was in the 60s, women had nowhere to go in such a small community so my Gran did the best she could to protect me. I refused to cry when I got hit, this only incensed my Granddad but it was the only way I could defy him. I still don't like crying in front of people.

Granddad would often come home with flowers, lollies and presents, all purchased locally so the other business owners would think of him as a caring loving man. Gran would always make a fuss about the gifts; I used to wonder why she could be so happy, as I got older I realized she was doing this to keep the peace.

We lived in a big house and my bedroom was at the back, it wasn't far enough away to hear the arguments, and the beatings and my Gran sobbing. I used to dream about getting something to hit my Granddad with but he always locked the bedroom door. I took to sleeping in the stables, it was safe and quiet.

My Granddad found out I was taking sanctuary with my horses and started coming down to the stables and playing "special games" that were our secret. I was told that if I said anything he would really hurt my Gran. He told me I was worthless and if it wasn't for him I would be in an orphanage, no one wanted me. You get told that enough times you believe it.

The special visits lasted until I got pregnant. We told no one. My Gran and I were the only ones that knew at first. I still used to get hit but the special games stopped. I was told I was a whore by my Granddad and I was filth.

My Granddad told the GP the same thing and asked him to be discreet to save his reputation. I had a baby girl just before my 16th birthday my Gran acted as midwife. I didn't see her, she was taken away by the GP and a private adoption arranged.

My Gran and I made a pact we would never let my Granddad hurt either of us again. My Gran said she would rather be in jail than see me hurt again. As it turned out the universe stepped in for us because he had a massive stroke not long after and spent the rest of his time in a nursing home. I never went to visit him.

I had counselling and moved on as best I could. The memories still hurt and I still have a great wall built around me for protection, not many people are allowed in but the ones I have let in have brought me some peace, friendship and love. All of which are great healers.

I am doing ok, I am a survivor.
