

Alice #26

I'm 20. Fun, vivacious, outgoing, bubbly, probably dancing on a table at the pub you went to last weekend. This guy I kind of know through work is out one night at the same place I am. We talk, we laugh, we swap numbers. He's pretty sweet, he texts me all the time, calls me to say goodnight every night.

One afternoon I had to cancel our plans because I was feeling super tired and just wanted a night in my PJs watching TV. He sounded disappointed - he really does like me a lot. He's so cute, he popped over that evening to check I was ok because he was going to a friend's house around the corner from mine.

Now I'm 21. We've been together for 6 months. He still calls me all the time to see what I'm doing. Sometimes I wonder if he's interested or just checking on me. We fight quite a bit now. The fights are pretty dramatic, lots of shouting and occasional throwing of things. Well, not so occasional really. He doesn't like my friend Ben. I've asked Ben not to call me now because it always starts a fight. I wasn't allowed to go to work last week, we were fighting in the morning and he wanted to get it sorted before I left. He blocked the doorway and pushed me back inside. I guess he had a point, there's no point dragging it out over a few days.

We've been together for 8 months now. It's not a great morning. Ben texted me asking for a lift to work - it's raining and he didn't want to catch the bus. I couldn't reply because my phone is in about 700 pieces on the floor. I'm not going to work today. He asks me to go for a drive that afternoon. I'm a bit hesitant but go anyway, it's easier this way. Oh wow! He's proposed! We're going to get married! I can't wait to tell everyone. Well, everyone I still talk to. My friends have been a bit crap lately. He told me that they are probably jealous of me being happy. I didn't think that was it, but maybe he's right. After dinner I asked him about bridesmaids and said I wanted my best friend. She's not going to be my bridesmaid. I don't know what I said but I'm held against the wall by my throat. My feet don't reach the floor. I wish I could say this was the first time, but every other time was always my fault. I don't know what I did this time.

It's near Christmas. I've picked him up from a party and I'm driving him home. Such a good fiancé. He didn't like me asking who was there. He starts punching my head into the window whilst I'm driving. I pull over and he does it again. I eventually get us home. He's drunk. He's always a bit angry when he's drunk. I can't call anyone because none of my friends are talking to me. I'm starting to think he's the only one that cares.

I'm 22. I've been out for dinner with a girl from work. She's nice. He turns up to my dinner very drunk. I didn't invite him. He yells at me and tells me to leave. I go home. He gets home and we argue. I go to bed because I'm tired of arguing. He's not done. Because I wasn't answering he tries to wake me up. He starts punching me. I count the hits because that's what I do now. I have a rating scale of how many hits, how hard, different parts of the body get different scores. This is a bad one. 15 times in the ribs. 8 times in the face. He feels my nose break and stops. I go to sleep in another room...but, I don't really. I call the girl from work. She picks me up on the side of the road. I had to hide in the bushes when he drove past.

She takes me to the hospital. It's definitely broken. Ribs probably are too. They try and convince me to go to the police. It works. He gets arrested and charged with assault.

I'm 23. I'm sitting in a back room of the court house. I'm being hidden. It's a closed court because of the level of violence. The police are still the only ones that have been told all the details. We get permission for my friend to come in to the court and support me. He suddenly changes his plea. He gets an 8 month suspended sentence and an \$800 fine. I get a lifetime of horror and therapy.

I'm 32. My partner shouted at me for not doing the chore he had asked me to do 5 days in a row. I curl up in a ball on the bed and try not to hit myself in the head. It makes me shake my arms trying to stop. He apologises and brings me back down. I'm ok. I'm safe. It's not him.

I met a lady at work. She tells me about her ex partner. I don't sleep for a week. When I do I have nightmares.
I'm ok. I'm safe. It's not him.

I slowly get stronger. I'm going to be ok. I'm very safe. He can't hurt me anymore.
