

## Alice #27

He was such a gentle man, softly spoke, dark brown eyes and big dimples. Loved music from various musicals and Christian music, particularly songs sung by Elvis Presley. So did I. We saw, in concert, artists like Winifred Atwell and various other popular at that time. We had a pleasant courtship, but it all changed once we were married.

My elder daughter was 8 1/2 when we married and my younger daughter was 5 years old (both from my first marriage).

He moved into my house after we married. Without my knowledge he had changed the electricity and rates accounts into his name only. He held a senior position at his company. He earned a good wage, but allowed me only a pittance for food etc.

I had to use my girls 'endowment' allowance for shoes and clothes for them and me. (We had an account at a menswear shop.) If I asked friends over for a meal, he would reduce the housekeeping funds further, declaring "If you can afford to feed other people, I'm giving you too much money". I placed an advertisement in the local paper for my cake decorating services and classes. I had a really good response for classes and made arrangements with 10 ladies to begin the following week at 10am on the Tuesday. When that day came, I waited for the pupils to arrive. As time went on I began to get phone calls from pupils. Then had arrived on time, to be met at our private laneway by my spouse who told them the classes had all been cancelled and would not be held in future. Likewise, the cake decorating would not be available. It was also banned; he was not having his household disrupted.

It was about that time that I became pregnant. I had a baby girl two years into the marriage. He was very proud to be a father, but played no part in caring for his child. He would never drive me to do the shopping. There was no second car and I could not drive, so I had to walk 5 km along the footpath of the highway because my pram was too heavy to get it and my baby onto the bus. My spouse would not take me to or pick me up from food shopping or anything else...including when I had three fingernails on hand and two on the other removed at the doctor's surgery (with local anaesthetic). I had to go home on the 5.30pm bus and strap-hang all the way. I also had been told by him that girls would not be helping with the evening meal as it was my job and I would do it. But my eldest girl, about 13 years then, ignored him and prepared the meal and did the cleaning up after the meal. He was most upset by this, so I was 'punished'.

If I did something to 'upset' him, the girls were 'punished' i.e. he would not speak to them, nor could they have the chocolate bar he bought for them on 'pay days'. He would eat it in front of them. If the girls did something to 'upset' him, I would be 'punished'. My punishments were very rough, abusive sex. These 'punishments' caused me to have repair surgery at one stage.

It was my second daughter's school concert on the evening of the finger-nails removal. I had severe infections under my nails and in my fingers nearly down to the first joint. The anaesthetic was injected into the finger tips and sides. Very painful, they were even worse as it wore off. I asked my spouse if he would attend the concert in my place, much as I wished to go, I felt too ill. He told me it was my own fault for having this done to myself, therefore, I would go. He drove us there only because it was raining and we had five changes of costumes to get there safely. We were driven to the venue, with me dosed with panadol, but not right to the entrance as he did not want to get the car muddy. We and the clothes arrived slightly damp, but okay.

I was seated next to a lady I did not know and we enjoyed the show together. Right up until I clapped. I had become so engrossed with the whole thing, I wasn't feeling the pain. BIG mistake. I passed out and fell off the chair. My new 'friend' assisted me back onto my chair, asked how many more items my girl was in and I said 'just one'. After that one was over, she kindly drove us home, carrying most of the costumes. She stepped inside and just put things down on a chair. I thanked her sincerely and she left. Then the lecture started from my spouse.

He was absolutely mortified that I had asked someone else to bring me home, especially before the concert was finished, how dare I? I explained about the clapping etc...that really steamed him up. I just left him by himself and went to bed.

In the first few months of this marriage, on one Saturday afternoon, I walked (my then) two girls, to a birthday party and back home again. Upon arriving home I discovered my garden of about seven roses had been totally destroyed with the aid of the lawn mower; likewise the large strawberry patch. My two favourite gardens.

My girls had a toy room under the main bedroom where all the large toys were kept. They had black-boards on two walls and they really enjoyed them. The girls and I came home from a school fete one Saturday afternoon. They went into their toy room with something they had bought. Their toys had been taken to the tip and spouse had claimed it for his tool storage. The girls distress and mine did not bother him.

I had been given a very large, heavy timber storage chest which had been used as a linen chest by the giver's ancestors, who travelled by ship in the early 1800's from England to Australia. It was a bit tired looking, but very solid. It had very large decorative hinges on it and was a gift for my first baby. I had a baby wardrobe, so I covered the lid with pretty quilted material and put a flounce around the box itself. It was in my second daughter's room as a place for soft and small toys. It also served as a seat for two little girls to sit together and read (which they did often). We came home from a Sunday School Anniversary and the 'bandit spouse' has struck again. The toys were on the floor and the lid cover and flounce were with them. Along with the chest he took what had been my dolls pram which I had been given for Christmas in 1940. It was quite large and classy. It could carry a 12-18 month old sitting child. Both gone. The chest was now for his tools and the pram he used to throw scrap metal into.

This time I had a bit of a win. A friend was told about this event. She told me that she knew a lady who was interested in buying old things, perhaps I might like to think about selling them. I decided that it was a good idea. Someone who appreciated those things would look after them. The lady came to see just the pram (I had to get spouse to unlock the door before he went to his mother's.) When the lady saw the pram she said 'Oh! Yes please.' And then saw the box and said 'can I buy that too?' I received a very good price for both items, and while I was sorry to lose them, I knew that they would not now be destroyed.

Of course I had to be 'punished' for that and it was brutal. In the 7th year of this marriage, I was diagnosed with progressive heart disease. I was told by my doctor that I had about nine months to live. I was terrified for my children. When I did find the courage to tell my spouse this news, his response was 'well, you will be leaving us high and dry if you do this, but you will look after the girls and me while you are here. Do not expect the girls or me to do your chores, and I want you to realise that I will be claiming my conjugal rights.'

Six months later I had the angiogram which cleared me of the heart diagnosis. I was suffering from stress - severe enough to cause high blood pressure, kidney malfunction, and a heart problem. It was not my heart at fault.

Prior to the correct diagnosis, I was advised by my doctor to not accompany my family on weekends away caravanning. This was difficult for me, but I had no choice as I had to stay close to the hospital. We had been on a number of caravanning holidays over the years. I remember well the first one.

We travelled about three hours to our destination which was a caravan park next to a beach, and just a short walk to the 'holiday town'. It was early evening, we all went walking 'up town' and had some fish and chips for our evening meal. Then a pleasant walk back to our van. All very relaxing. The next morning, after breakfast, spouse said 'okay, swimmers on, we are heading for the beach'. We all followed instructions, then filed out of the van - I was at the rear. As I got to the van door, spouse placed his arm across the doorway, blocking me and said 'where do you think you're going?'. I replied, 'to the beach with the rest of you.' 'Oh no, you're not, the reason you are here is to feed us, keep the van clean and wash our clothes etc.' Right now, get dressed, go up the street and buy something to cook for our lunch and our tea tonight. Follow the rules or you know what.'

I went to the shops. In doing so, I walked into an art supply shop. There was a man and his wife working in there. She was working in the shop and he was painting pictures and welcoming onlookers. I became an ardent

onlooker over several holidays. Then I started to paint. Then I started selling paintings. For some reason this was permitted by spouse, unless I neglected my household chores. I never did explain where I learned to paint.

At about 16 years old, my eldest girl started a part-time job so did not go on anymore weekends away. She had decided not to go anymore, prior to that because 'Dad', as he was called, seemed to have trouble focusing his eyes on anything but her bosom when she had her swim suit on. I told her that this was fairly common with any man and to wear a top over her swim-wear. At no stage did it occur to me that it would be anything else. My other daughters continued on the beach weekend trips and appeared to enjoy them.

I was at this time painting quite frequently and it was being a real help to me in trying and finding myself again. I had become so diminished and nervous, I couldn't get on a bus or go into a shop or anywhere there was more than about three people. My doctor helped me with this and encouraged me with the painting. I gradually found 'ME' again. Then I found the courage to tell 'spouse' I wasn't playing his stupid games anymore. He could grow up or get out. He said that he was too old to change, so I told him to go. It took two weeks for him to do so, with him counting down the days he had left at the dinner table each night - but no one asked him to stay.

After my divorce went through, he rang me and said that he was informed that he was entitled to half the value of the house and property. I spoke to my solicitor on this and he informed me that was correct as I was entitled to half the value of his car, truck, trailer, caravan, plumbing tools and bank balance and superannuation and all around he would still come out of it owing me \$5000. That was the last I heard about that.

Several years later he died of throat cancer. We visited him and my new husband regularly took my young daughters to spend short visits with their father. I went only once. He made apologies for his behaviour towards me and the girls.

He asked if I thought my second girl would ever forgive him. I thought he was referring to the fact that she was a very fast runner - chosen for all the inter-school sports. Also chosen for inter-state meetings which she could not attend as she had no shoes to run in. She was running in bare feet. He would not provide shoes for her. She had to give it up as running barefoot was causing problems with her ankles.

I didn't find out until after she was married and had her second child that she was suffering from a psychological issue that what he wanted forgiveness for was for sexually molesting her while on the caravan trips.

My eldest girl was not allowed to become a teacher, which is what she wanted to do. Be a school teacher. No, he said that he was 'grooming her to look after him in his old age.' He played the girls against each other and also them against me.

In his opinion, we belonged to him. Many times he tried to force me to call him 'Master', and I would tell him that only God Almighty was my master.

Being punched or hit is bad, but it is not the only form of abuse. His type of 'quiet abuse' is very destructive.