

Alice #49

I am Alice #49

My story starts at the age of 7-8 years old. Even though I have managed to blank a fair amount from my mind, it is times like this that the wound reopens and it gushes out.

My mother moved from a large city to a smaller city in our early years after meeting her new partner (soon to be our step-father). My mother had married her first husband in her teens and had six kids by the time she was in her mid-twenties. The marriage (although I only remember snippets) was volatile and they went their separate ways when I was about four.

Soon after moving to the new city, my siblings and I were enrolled in local sports where some of us excelled. My mother would take my older siblings to sporting events out of town, often staying away overnight.

My younger sister and I were left in the care of our step-father. He would come in to our room at all hours of the night and we originally thought he was a ghost and were too scared to move. He would pretend to be pulling the sheets up over me and would touch me in inappropriate places. At first I was not aware that this was intentional, but the more it happened the more scared I became and I would roll over and pretend to be asleep.

I awoke one night at ten years old with my legs over the side of the bed and I could feel something rubbing between them. I was rigid with fear at the reality of what was happening. This became a regular occurrence when my mother was away. I slept in a room with my younger sister who I felt compelled to protect as the years went on - I believed I was protecting her, because if he was doing this to me, then she was safe.

My step-father had rifles in a cabinet in the lounge room and would often bring them out and make comments about his early years in the army and shooting things dead. I was petrified that if I told anyone about what he did to me at night, that he would kill me and my family. However, as we got older and he got more confident knowing his action would be kept secret, he used to sit on the stairs outside our room to smoke whilst also masturbating and whispering in our window. My younger sister asked me about what he was doing to which I told her not to tell. I was scared that he would kill us if anyone found out so I told her he couldn't hurt me.

Not long after I was 12, I could not take it any longer and I got the courage as the bedroom door opened I would call out who's there and call out to mum. He would make out that he had gotten to the bedroom door first to see what was wrong. It was here that I think he realised that he may no longer be safe.

He began to demoralise me by telling me at the drop of a hat I was a selfish bitch; I had always been a problem child; no one liked me, and if I told no one would believe me. I told my cousin one day, and she blurted it out in class in anger to get at me. The teacher took me aside and arranged for me to be questioned by the school counsellor. I denied everything for fear of being taken away and losing my family... I could not believe that I had convinced them.

In my teens, I moved out of home as I could no longer live with the lies and the hate I felt for him. I began to blame myself and believed that he was just sick (he was on a lot of medication from an injury) and I began to believe he didn't know what he had done. I began to tell myself it was a bad dream and was gradually convincing myself of this. I began to blame myself for things that went wrong and believed I deserved it for being bad. I contemplated ending my life on many occasions, but then a friend committed suicide and I watched the pain his family went through. I knew I could never do this to my family who, I believed, that I had always protected from the evil truths.

I met my first serious boyfriend at this time and we became very close however it was not meant to work out. I remember telling him that I had skeletons in my closet and if one day they came out, I needed him to promise

me that he would always believe in me, we stayed friends over the years. I married and had 3 children. I never truly loved my first husband, but it was a better life that I thought I wasn't good enough to deserve.

Over the years my childhood came back to haunt me and I had little faith in myself. My first husband drank and was very obsessive and controlling - often accusing me of sleeping with other people. The relationship became violent and I blamed myself. On the outside (to others), I appeared to have a good marriage, so I was scared to leave for the shame others would see me as. I told my eldest sister I needed to leave. I was afraid of what she would think, but her unforgettable words "I don't expect anyone till live unhappy especially my own little sister" gave me the courage to leave.

I threw all my energy into my beautiful children - working to provide for them. My secret past was safe in my nightmares, which had become regular. I kept focus on being a good mum; my children gave me everything I never believed I could have: UNCONDITIONAL LOVE FOR ME, THE PERSON THEY TRULY KNOW, THEY LOVE ME FOR ME, and THEIR MUM.

After 10 years I left the marriage and moved on with my children. I became much stronger, independent and took charge of my destiny; I enrolled in courses, studied hard and obtained a secure career, and bought a house for me and my children. I was at my happiest and my demons were controlled.

I re-connected with my teenage boyfriend, sparks flew and we married and became a family. Twelve months later my husband became ill. It was hard caring for him and my 3 children. My sisters decided I needed a break and took my husband away for a week, I am not sure of the events, but on my husband's return he asked me if I remembered telling him about my skeletons when I was younger. He assured me that he had an idea from my younger sister and that it would never change a thing between us. I was heartbroken that my sister, in my view, had betrayed me and that my life would now be in turmoil. I was in my thirties and thought I had buried my past.

Soon after, I got a call from my younger sister telling me she was going to the police. I went into panic mode and told her she was selfish and she should think about our siblings and their families and my children - everyone in the community knew us and we would be labelled for going to the police - and whatever would follow. And what about mum - she was still married to him.

I eventually realised that my sister had lived through the horror of knowing this was happening and she also had had to deal with this all these years. We agreed that mum should be told and arranged to meet at my house where we told mum. She never questioned us, just said we were her babies and she had had no idea (I can only imagine that her whole world must have fallen apart at that time). I asked her to call her husband before she left and she asked him if there was something he needed to tell her. She told him that she was with my sister and I, and he told her everything and asked to meet him at the police station. I don't remember much from there as we never attended the police station.

My step-father was found a week later. He had committed suicide and we had a private funeral as the truth of his death was kept within the family and his was not a life to be celebrated.

Some years later I was working on a BBQ at a sporting event with a police officer I had known through the children's teams. We had worked together on the BBQ weekly for four years. One day, in conversation, it dawned on me that he was the investigating officer. I was unsure how I felt at that moment and took him aside to have a word. I asked if he remembered me, to which he responded that he had always known who I was and that he was very proud of me and what I had achieved since he had originally met me.

I think it was here that I realised I am the person I am and I should also be proud of who I am - no one or anything should change that. Now in my middle age, I have a wonderful husband, family and friends. I may have had a horrid past; however, this is only a portion and one part of the life that I have lived. I have a lot more than some and for that I am grateful. I have survived 😊

I hope my words along with many others will make a difference to at least one person who may read this. I trust that the re-telling of my story may give them hope that life can be everything you want it to be if you only believe in yourself ☺.
