

## Alice #65

### No way of knowing

A decade ago I always saw myself as a confident, driven, independent and kind person. I came from a loving caring family, I was active member of the community. I was an educated professional.

If you had told me around that time that I would be subject to ongoing domestic abuse, I would have told you that you had the wrong girl.

If you had have told me that I would be living in such fear of doing anything that might displease my partner, that I would change anything and everything just to keep the peace, I would have laughed as it was just not a conceivable possibility.

If you would have told me I would start taking on blame for everything that went wrong no matter how contradictory or how lacking in evidence, I would have looked at you very confused.

Finally, if you had told me I would stay trying to fix things to the point I had no choice but to flee and go into hiding with my children, I would have been upset that you felt my judgement would be so poor.

That was a decade ago. Now I would believe every word as the experience is real.

Coming from an educated professional back ground, I am often told I don't "fit the norm" of domestic violence and abuse. I have be told that I seem "too confident" to put up with such abuse. I have been told I am a smart person and "should have known better" than to put up with it for so long. However the most painful things I have heard are from people who tell me my husband "doesn't seem like that sort of person" or hearing my husband and his legal team say "I am paranoid and mentally unwell" and that he is simply an "innocent victim" without any remorse for anything that has happened. After all it was "all my fault" and "I made him" do these things.

If I have learned anything the last few months it is that you just do not know what goes on behind closed doors. You can never judge a person's fears and experience as they are not yours to judge. After all, you are not that person. In my case it was not until I sought help for depression that I was told that I may not be in a supportive or healthy relationship. I didn't listen, in fact at that stage I defended my husband. A year on another therapist, completely independent, said the exact same thing, then another. I couldn't ignore what was happening anymore.

As I started to learn more I began to set boundaries and look after myself, this aggravated my husband and things became dire fast. Boundaries hindered his control, so his tactics to control me began to get even scarier. He would threaten his life, withhold love from the children and he would inflict significant sexual violence on myself. The healthier I tried to make our relationship the unhealthier it became. It was no longer safe, the children and I had to get out.

While easy to say in hindsight, the only regret I have is that I didn't listen sooner. Instead I defended him and blamed myself. When I did start listening I minimised and still trusted him, telling lawyers and psychologists who told me to note things and copy documents, I had to tell him everything. At that stage I felt he was genuinely ill and just needed help. My honesty with my husband, was as they had warned, used against me to his advantage. Documents vanished as did many of my own personal files which he accesses and sends out now to intimidate, defame and prove anything he can of his own accord. All the money vanished too. To him everything is his alone, including the children and myself. We are possessions. He is entitled to control and we need to obey him or suffer at his hand.

I have spent months trying to write this story to add to the Alice collection as I feel that had I read similar earlier, maybe I would have left sooner. Every time I sit to write I end up in panic and despair and have had to stop. Today is different. I sat in court this week and while on the stand for hours I was torn to shreds by his

legal team. His team are actively focusing on pulling me to pieces, painting me as a paranoid, neglectful parent. While in contradiction to this, they state that they only want the children (with my husband) less than half the time.

While the experience was horrendous, I found some inner peace in knowing that what the last 8 months living in hiding has taught me is that I am a good mother who has protected her children. I am a good mother who will fight for their safety. I am a good person, who despite everything, I have not and will not say a bad word to my children about their father, and if they want to talk about him I am happy to engage positively but will not taint their view. I am a good person, who throughout the whole process, has never withheld or tried to block his relationship with the children, rather offered methods to continue that in ways the children and myself can remain safe and he can rebuild broken trust.

My inner strength to write this story today came from knowing in my heart and through my actions that the person my husband is trying to paint me as bears no resemblance to person I am. It was a penny drop moment in which I realised that by my husband was actively feeding my fear for him through his actions, and then telling everyone I am paranoid, he is yet again trying to control how I am perceived. I am under no obligation to give him that. And I won't.

We still have a long way to go. However I am now in a place where we have built up a support network to help protect the children and myself when my husband attacks. Knowing I am not the sole protector and being able to trust the system and support around us gives me the ability to say

***“I am the only person who can control me,  
in doing so, I can and will, control where my energy is spent.”***

Fearing someone takes an extraordinary amount of energy. My husband does not deserve that energy, now we are safe and have supports looking out for us so I have no need to allow him to have my energy again. That thought alone brings me so much peace.

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