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A Survivor's Story

The following is written by a survivor of domestic violence and is being used with her permission. Identifying information has been changed, and some editing has been done to shorten this story, but the words are hers.

I met J and everything seemed to be just what I thought was the perfect relationship, however later it wasn't that at all. I had 2 cars, 8 credit cards, money in the bank. When I moved in with J, he was 3 months behind on his rent. I caught the bill up to date. Then I found out he was several months behind on his car, so I combined his car with my loan, which he said would be better to keep just 1 car payment. This sounded logical because I thought I was in love with him. He started using my credit cards which weren't used and had no or minimal balances. Before long 4 were maxed out. I silently cut up and cancelled all the others that hadn't been used. I was panicking by then being as he'd quit his job after we were together just a couple months. This meant I was supporting both of us, but, he stated he was trying to get another job.

He loved me but seemed to be flirting with other women a lot after we'd been together about 1 year. He stated he wanted children and so did I. He had a daughter whom we had custody of and I loved her very much. While I was pregnant he began doing strange things to me like putting pillows over my face and making me gasp and he said that was to make me tough. I began to get scared some and worried and told him so. I was still working and he'd been working in law enforcement when he lost his job. I kept asking why and he got violent, throwing objects and yelling and hitting the walls. I noticed he had a hickey on his neck and he said a guy was joking and did it with his hand. Later I found out it was a lady inmate. I was devastated and sick.

He made me quit work when I was almost 8 months into my pregnancy and we were struggling with funds. He started working again. When my daughter was born she had a heart problem. Little A was an angel sent to me from God and I wanted her badly. He, his mother and daughter left a lot to go shopping but I would not leave, my family stayed there with my baby and me. One day he said stop crying and let her go, you can have another, and she will always be sick and will always have problems. I was miserable and told him he was crazy. He didn't seem to care, and then I really started worrying. After she passed and was buried, I didn't want to live anymore. We lost my cars and he made me move away from my family to Louisiana and things kept getting worse.

I was pregnant with a little boy this time. J started hitting me when he'd get mad and call me names and I had bruises a lot. He graduated from the Police Academy and thought he was awesome. He said the brothers stick together and I couldn't say or do anything about him now. I was always scared now because he found a technique which he said would not cause a bruise and would hit me in the back of the head which would knock me out a couple seconds. I started getting headaches and he'd say it's just the baby, being as my little healthy bundle of joy, L was little and I stayed up with him a lot. I told him it was from him hitting me and he'd laugh. He would grab me by the neck when I had company and tell people "look what I can do" and I'd be choking and kicking and he'd put me back down. Or he'd grab my arms up behind my back till it was unbearable and I'd start to cry and he'd laugh and say I deserved it. He cheated on me a lot and I'd cry and he'd say your old and wore out I'm trading you in on a new model.

Once when I tried to leave him, he carried me to a bayou and there were 32 alligators and he started calling them and said he'd throw me in and nobody would know where I went. L started screaming and I was screaming and begging him to stop and I'd stay. He'd also tell me on the various times I'd try to leave that he had an uncle that'd killed a lot of people and got out on insanity and he'd come and kill me, whether it was 2 weeks or 10 years, he'd find and kill me.

One day he came into my work because he'd moved a girl into my home and I said I was leaving. He hit me in the head with his cop baton and my boss said he saw it. J's boss put him on leave till he got counseling or saw a Dr., however, J wouldn't go. Once I was running away to the truck with L in my arms, J threw a brick at me and hit me in the leg and I leaped in the truck and took off with the door open. Once when I was leaving he kicked over coffee tables and broke furniture and lamps and shot at me with a pistol. One time while his mother was at our home, J was playing with his pistol and was pointing it in my face and I was begging him not to shoot me and he laughed and told our baby that I was a bitch and was no good and he'd get rid of me. He shot the pistol and I screamed but a bullet didn't come out. He said "I scared you didn't I" and laughed a weird laugh.

I got pregnant again and was having a few problems this time, but he said he wanted a big family and so did I. I always thought he would get better. He would come to my work and watch me and if a guy came up and he thought the guy was flirting he'd cuss them out. He cussed several of my employers out.

We moved to Tennessee and one night L accidentally hit a lamp with a fly swat and J went off and hit L and knocked him down and busted his nose. I grabbed the baby and ran to the shower and told him he could kill me but to leave my baby alone. J then grabbed me and tore my clothes off and beat me and threw me up against a wall and knocked my breath out of me then threw me on the couch. When I tried reaching for the phone he unplugged it. I started bleeding and hurting really bad. I'd lost my baby, I knew it, a little girl I was naming R. When I went to the Dr. there was nothing there just a spongy ovary they said. J told them my family was giving me a hard time. He started hitting me for no reason after that and tying me up with handcuffs to get his way. I tried then to get help, but it seemed everyone loved J. Some would say, "I can't picture him violent". Come to find out I was pregnant again, my fourth.

One day he said I was going to start listening to him. All I wanted to do is go be with my family for a little while. They came over to get me and he locked me in the house and wouldn't let me go out to them. When my Dad came he let him in. I left with Daddy and my little baby. When I got home that night, my Bibles, religious books, porcelain dolls, and etc. were burnt up. He laughed and said that would teach me to leave. He said "you ain't got anything!" Then one Sunday he told me again I was going to start listening to him and if I didn't I'd face the consequences. He would take the cables off the truck, or take my keys or lock the doors to keep me from going to church and he said this night you're not going. I cried and said I was leaving and he hit me in the belly, I screamed and said he'd killed 2 babies! No more. I was leaving. I ran out with L and I heard a gun shot over my head. When I looked back he had his gun aimed at us and I screamed. Little K said "Dad who are you shooting at?" I was shaking and crying and grabbed L and told J I was calling my mom. He ran outside when I called her and cut the wire. I was scared. He told K to get in the truck with L and lock the doors. I ran and said I'm getting my baby and was crying. L jumped out and I went to grab him but J got him. L started crying, yelling he wanted his mommy. I grabbed him and when I did, J grabbed my thumb and twisted it and pulled and pain went all the way up my arm. He'd broke my thumb, I thought.

J dragged me in the house. I was still holding L when J grabbed my other arm twisting it up behind my back holding it tight and bruising. I was screaming, and saying "you're killing me" and he threw me down on the couch and grabbed behind L for my other arm, pinning me to the couch and standing on my toes. I told him to kill me but not in front of my babies. He grabbed the pistol and I moved but pain in my arms was too great. I couldn't move and I had pressure in my stomach, I thought I was losing my other baby. I was very sick about the time I heard a car pull up and it was Momma and my sister. Deliverance had come! J said, "The bell saves you". I stood half up hurting and barely made it to the car with my little L and Momma and Sis starting crying when they saw me.

My family took me to the cops. They took pictures of my injuries and I met Ms. Paula with Women Are Safe. The police took a warrant on J and went to arrest him. They knew that he had a gun. He had taken off but the officers kept looking. He was finally arrested. Women Are Safe took me to the shelter and I felt I was finally safe. Everyone was so nice, helpful, understanding and helped me in every way. I finally

slept for the first time in years. I couldn't have made it without them. This is a great program and I hope will be there forever for people like me that need help. I have now graduated from college with a Computer System Specialist Degree and 4 certificates and a great job. I give Women Are Safe the thanks! They gave me and my family the courage to live, fight and survive!

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