

APRIL 24, 2017
BORNEBACKCEASELESSLY

Why I stayed.

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The first time he called me a "fucking bitch" was on our honeymoon. (I found out years later he had kicked his first wife on theirs.) A month later he physically prevented me from leaving the house. Less than two months after that, I filed a protective order with the police because he punched in the glass on our front door while I was locked inside. We bought a house to make up for it. Just after our one year anniversary, he pulled me, naked and dripping, from the shower to yell at me.

Everyone loved him. People commented all the time how lucky I was. Strangers complimented him to me every time we went out. But in my home, the abuse was insidious. The threats were personal. The terror was real. And yet I stayed.

When I tried to get help, I was counseled to consider carefully how what I said might affect his career. And so I kept my mouth shut and stayed. I was told, yes, he was deeply flawed, but then again so was I. And so I worked on myself and stayed. If he was a monster all the time, perhaps it would have been easier to leave. But he could be kind and sensitive. And so I stayed. He cried and apologized. And so I stayed. He offered to get help and even went to a few counseling sessions and therapy groups. And so I stayed. He belittled my intelligence and destroyed my confidence. And so I stayed. I felt ashamed and trapped. And so I stayed. Friends and clergy didn't believe me. And so I stayed. I was pregnant. And so I stayed. I lost the pregnancy and became depressed. And so I stayed.

Abuse is indifferent to education level, socio-economic status, race, age, or gender. And no one can ever know the dynamics of another's relationship. My cycle continued for four more years. Afterward, I let go and welcomed the hard work of healing and forgiveness. My experience made me stronger and able to love more deeply. But my heart breaks for him. In the end, who is the real victim of his choices?