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Sometimes she thought Alec was right

by Lawrence Howard

Sometimes she thought Alec was right – you believed in things because you needed to. The control her husband had exercised over her for so many years had affected her badly. Over time he'd conditioned her to lose faith in her own judgement. When they met he'd shown total adoration for her, but now he had become more critical. Sometimes she would say and do things that made him so angry. He made her believe it was her fault and that she was stupid; that he was reacting in the way any intelligent and sane man would. However, with practice she was getting better and learning not to be - as he would say - “antagonistic”.

But she knew deep down that occasionally he could be wrong and he could sense this. This made him feel as though she was trying to mock him. In private he would resort to screaming and shouting at her. On more than one occasion things got really out of hand and he pushed her down the stairs. She wasn't hurt physically, but it left an emotional wound that wouldn't heal. After a while she would start to forgive, until another incident flared up and the wound would reopen like a deep gash being pulled apart to start bleeding again. And like a wound of this nature, the scarring became more visible and more pronounced.

In the end she believed him. Without him she was useless, hopeless and worthless and needed his help, his support and guidance. He said that she couldn't survive on her own and she believed he was right.

And yet, she knew that she hadn't always been like this. But she felt so weakened by everything and having lost most of her friends she no longer had the strength to leave.

And then she met Alec on the bus on the way back from the shops. She'd stupidly dropped her bag and everything had spilled out. He kindly helped her pick everything up and that's where it all started. Alec said that it was awful the way her husband treated her. He made her feel good again and worthwhile. He began to heal her and she could help him.

Alec was also in an abusive relationship. His wife often said cruel things to him to humiliate him. They both wanted the same thing. A happy and loving relationship where they weren't criticised. And after many months of meeting up they both found the strength to leave their partners.

Now, three years later, they are together. She loves Alec and only wants to do good by him. She wants everything to be perfect, but still she is so stupid. Has she learned nothing? Why does she say these things that make him so angry...